

# THE TORCH

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## Children and Mental Health - Who Makes the Decisions?

By **Trayce Bradford**, EF Issue Chair for Human Trafficking and former TEF President

In January 2019, the Texas Legislature sent shock waves across the state when it announced that children’s mental health would be a top priority for the session. The response from conservative activist groups was swift. Immediately focus shifted from other legislative issues to stopping yet another massive government intrusion on parental rights and protecting children.

Most parents and conservatives experience a visceral response anytime the government starts talking about ways to ‘help.’ But the suggestion that government

also belonged squarely in the center of children’s mental health as protector and guarantor launched a wave of fury.

The attitude behind this shocking intrusion into the area of children and mental health has been spreading slowly and steadily across the political landscape for several the decades. In the 1940’s, education policy, psychiatric experts and big names in philanthropy came together to promote the idea of creating a “controlled psychological environment” for children with the intent to mold future generations

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in a pre-determined image. The end-goal of this concerted effort was “freedom from morality,” which required the “eradication of right and wrong.” But to achieve this utopian vision, parents would have to be forced to step aside.<sup>1</sup>

The resulting policy campaigns, supported by Republican and Democratic politicians alike, have flown under several banners including No Child Left Behind, Common Core, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL), just to name a few. The defining feature of these programs is a deliberate re-ordering of the purpose and priorities of education away from academics. The new narrative says the most important role of education today is promoting self-awareness, empathy, inclusion, and socially aware decision-making in children. This re-ordering of education, proponents claim, is necessary to prevent mental illness in children.

The insinuation is, of course, that if you oppose their effort to fundamentally transform education in America, you must want children to suffer from mental illness.

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Of course, protecting the mental health of children is a priority. But who is primarily responsible for raising happy, healthy children? The Conservative answer has been and always will be parents. This isn't to say that schools haven't had some part to play in raising stable, functioning, virtuous adults. For as long as it can be remembered, schools have placed emphasis on good character, basic decency, and respect for others. For generations, students have benefited from teachers and administrators modeling and promoting pro-social behavior and traditional morality.

However, this is no longer where we find ourselves. As the 2022 school year kicked off, students in Texas were administered graded online quizzes with questions such as, *what are your preferred pronouns? What is your obsession? What name do you want to be called in front of your parents?*

In schools across America, teachers are over-burdened with the responsibility of gathering data on students' emotional health, providing regular check-ins (which some argue crosses the legal and ethical line of offering professional therapy by a non-professional), and dedicating hours of class each week to 'circle time' where children share emotional concerns in front of their peers. Academics are being pushed aside to make time for indoctrinating children on the virtues of collectivism and how to become an army of “social change agents” who will divide and dismantle inequitable systems (i.e., America).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, many Texas school districts require SEL standards be incorporated into every subject.

This fundamental reorganization of education in America has been made possible by an overwhelming injection of investments by Big Tech into Big Ed. In return, vast amounts of data are being collected in “data backpacks” to follow students throughout their schooling lifetime. Several school districts have rolled-out apps such as Rhithm<sup>3</sup> to track student mental health through daily digital check-ins. District-provided devices and apps have also become a way to circumvent parental consent and notification by claiming the district's technology waiver parents signed to allow their child to access math and reading assignments online covered emotional assessments as well. However, it is very difficult to find out where the data being collected is going and how it's being used, raising important questions such as, *who has access to it? Can parents request copies of their student's digital profile? What is the process for requesting a data backpack be deleted?*

Why is it not standard practice – or even the law – that parents must be involved before, during, and after any emotional health screenings or assessments are given to a child at school, especially by someone who is not trained and licensed to offer counseling services? Why does current state law (Texas Family Code, Sec. 32.004) undermine parental rights by allowing any child, with no minimum age limit, to consent to counseling for suicide prevention, substance addiction, and physical, sexual and emotion abuse?

Where does this leave parents and their fundamental rights in raising their children?

Parents must always be recognized as the primary party responsible for raising, training, and teaching their children. Children ought to be protected from intrusive assessments, data collection, and labeling by lackey school districts and their Big Tech/Big Ed overseers.

We as parents and as a state must remain vigilant in the struggle to return every school – public or private – to its appropriate role in education. Our children and future depend on it.

*NOTE: Texas Eagle Forum is committed to addressing legislative issues impacting parents and students. We are working tirelessly to help our elected officials in Austin fight for parental rights, redeem education, take back the ground we have lost to the Left, and restore traditional family values in Texas politics.*

# Men Have Forgotten God

Excerpted from **Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn**,  
“Godlessness: the First Step to the Gulag,”  
Templeton Prize Lecture, 10 May 1983 (London).

**M**ore than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.

Since then I have spent well-nigh fifty years working on the history of our Revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.

The failings of human consciousness, deprived of its divine dimension, have been a determining factor in all the major crimes of this century.

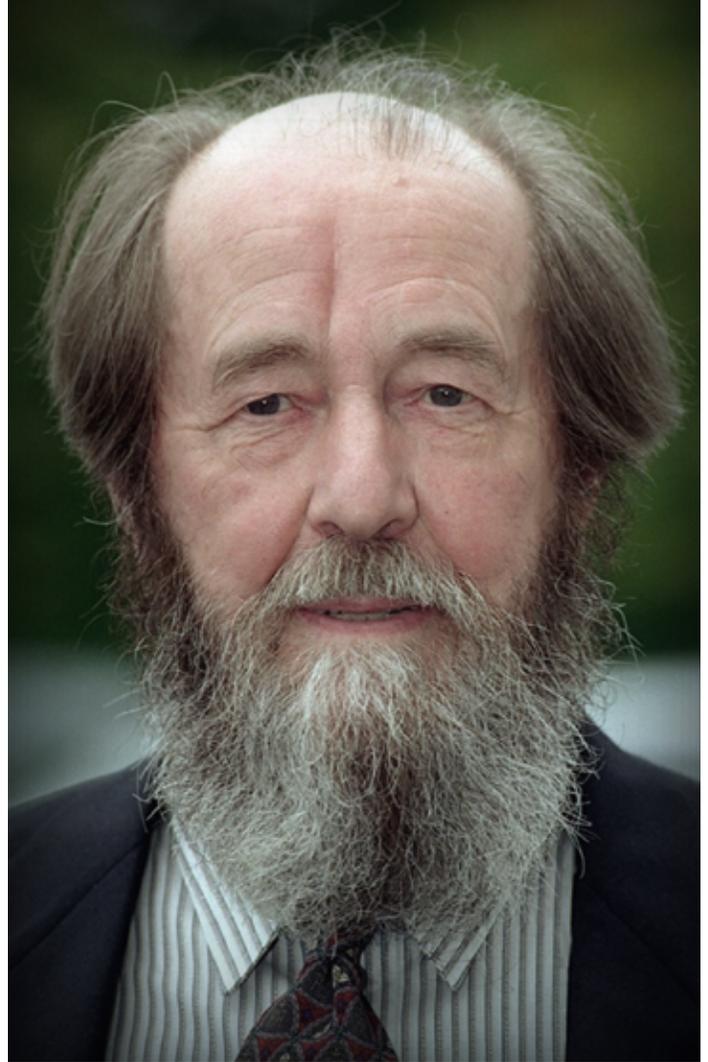
Imperceptibly, through decades of gradual erosion, the meaning of life in the West has ceased to be seen as anything more lofty than the “pursuit of happiness,” a goal that has even been solemnly guaranteed by constitutions. The concepts of good and evil have been ridiculed for several centuries; banished from common use, they have been replaced by political or class considerations of short lived value. It has become embarrassing to state that evil makes its home in the individual human heart before it enters a political system.

Judging by the continuing landslide of concessions made before the eyes of our very own generation, the West is ineluctably slipping toward the abyss. Western societies are losing more and more of their religious essence as they thoughtlessly yield up their younger generation to atheism.

Atheist teachers in the West are bringing up a younger generation in a spirit of hatred of their own society... This eager fanning of the flames of hatred is becoming the mark of today’s free world. Indeed, the broader the personal freedoms are, the higher the level of prosperity or even of abundance—the more vehement, paradoxically, does this blind hatred become. The contemporary developed West thus demonstrates by its own example that human salvation can be found neither in the profusion of material goods nor in merely making money.

Here again we witness the single outcome of a worldwide process, with East and West yielding the same results, and once again for the same reason: Men have forgotten God.

With such global events looming over us like mountains, nay, like entire mountain ranges, it may seem incongruous and inappropriate to recall that the primary key to our being or non-being resides in each individual human heart, in the heart’s



**Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, October 1993**

preference for specific good or evil. Yet this remains true even today, and it is, in fact, the most reliable key we have. The social theories that promised so much have demonstrated their bankruptcy, leaving us at a dead end. The free people of the West could reasonably have been expected to realize that they are beset by numerous freely nurtured falsehoods, and not to allow lies to be foisted upon them so easily. All attempts to find a way out of the plight of today’s world are fruitless unless we redirect our consciousness, in repentance, to the Creator of all: without this, no exit will be illumined, and we shall seek it in vain. The resources we have set aside for ourselves are too impoverished for the task. We must first recognize the horror perpetrated not by some outside force, not by class or national enemies, but within each of us individually, and within every society. This is especially true of a free and highly developed society, for here in particular we have surely brought everything upon ourselves, of our own free will. We ourselves, in our daily unthinking selfishness, are pulling tight that noose...

Our life consists not in the pursuit of material success but in the quest for worthy spiritual growth. Our entire earthly existence is but a transitional stage in the movement toward something higher, and we must not stumble and fall, nor must we linger fruitlessly on one rung of the ladder.

Our five continents are caught in a whirlwind. But it is during trials such as these that the highest gifts of the human spirit are manifested.



## **Stanford University Publishes List of ‘Harmful’ Words to Avoid**

Stanford University administrators published a guide to “harmful language” that calls for the elimination of words including “man” and “American.” The university created an index of forbidden words that it plans on eliminating from its websites and computer code, with a list of alternative terms to replace them with. The attempted changes to the English language are part of a decades-long campaign by far-left groups to impose Marxist “critical theory” on the whole of society, resulting in the “woke” movement. In the guide, Stanford discourages students and staff from calling themselves “American” because it is an insult to people from the rest of the Americas. The index insists that “pronouns” be used instead of “‘preferred’ pronouns” because “the word ‘preferred’ suggests that non-binary gender identity is a choice and a preference.” The publication of this approved speech list raises questions on how Stanford plans to use tuition funds to monitor and enforce speech restrictions on its student body and staff.

SOURCE: Bryan Young, “Stanford Updates Guide to Canceling ‘Harmful Language’ Including Words Like ‘Man’ and ‘American,’” The Epoch Times, December 20, 2022.

## **Vatican De-Frocks Pro-Life Amarillo Priest**

The Vatican defrocked pro-life priest Father Frank Pavone from the Catholic Diocese of Amarillo for alleged disobedience to his bishop. In a letter to American bishops from the Vatican ambassador to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre explained the decision and stated, “there was no chance for... appeal.” Pavone claims that his removal from the priesthood stems from a yearslong effort by Amarillo Bishop Patrick J. Zurek and others in the Catholic hierarchy to silence and punish him for his outspoken political views. Pavone defiantly asserted that the Vatican’s decree removing him from the priesthood is not final and has vowed to continue exposing abortion, Democrats, and “the Swamp.”

SOURCE: Amy Furr, “Vatican Defrocks Pro-Life Priest Frank Pavone for ‘Blasphemous Communications,’” Breitbart News, December 18, 2022.

## **Gov. Abbott’s Appeal for Help Securing the Border**

“In January 2023 when the next Congress is sworn in, we must remind our representatives in Washington that securing the border is the federal government’s responsibility under Article I, § 8 and Article IV, § 4 of the U.S. Constitution. Congress should reimburse the State of Texas for the billions of dollars we have had to spend on border security in the Biden Administration’s absence. Federal officials who will not faithfully execute the immigrations laws should face hearings and even impeachment. Finally, Congress should amend statutes like 18 U.S.C. § 242 to ensure that our Troopers and Guardsmen are not exposed to federal criminal prosecution for protecting Texas against illegal entry between the ports of entry. Join me in sending this urgent message to our congressional delegation, which has the power to act under Article I, § 8 of the U.S. Constitution. Texas has done more than its fair share for far too long. The time has come for the federal government to do its job.”

SOURCE: Gov. Greg Abbott, Letter to The Honorable David R. Saucedo, Judge of Maverick County, November 14, 2022.

## **Parenting with Due Diligence**

Years ago, my husband and I were considering a new option for our children’s education... During this process... a thought occurred to me, *why haven’t I ever asked or investigated the curriculum my children have been learning all along?* Then I really began to think... *Who was teaching my children? What did they believe? When were they being taught what they were being taught? Was the information being taught developmentally appropriate? Did they share the same values?* I learned a valuable lesson in that season. Regardless of who is teaching or training my children, I, as the parent, am responsible for what my children are being fed and what they are ingesting. If you are a parent, then the Lord has placed you in a leadership role. To lead simply means to go first. We go ahead of our children to ensure their safety and therefore their security. Parenting requires due diligence.

SOURCE: Suzanne Phillips, “Due Diligence Needed,” Celebrate Kids, May 2021.

## Quote of the Month

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*“The wit was not wrong who defined education in this way: Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten everything he learned in school.”*

~ Albert Einstein,  
*Ideas and Opinions, 1922.*

## Great American Quote

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*“Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man.”*

~ Benjamin Franklin

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