

Safe Spaces Or Dangerous Places? The Assault Upon Our Future (Part Two)

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In Part One, we described the contaminated mindset that has overrun the education culture in the Western world with its assault on free speech, conservative values, and critical thinking inside the classroom. This mindset has been percolating within our schools for decades, but with its introduction to the hyper-coddled Millennials—sometimes called the Snowflake Generation—its impact on our culture could reach critical proportions.

Many observers fear the potential for disastrous consequences as snowflake Millennials begin to graduate and move into positions of power and production in our society. While it is common for each generation to live in unwarranted fear of the deficits and flaws of the generations that follow it, we may have finally reached a tipping point in the Age of Man where those fears are more justified.

“The mental state of students is now so precarious for so many,” says Steven Hyman, provost of Harvard University and former director of the National Institute of Mental Health, “it is interfering with the core mission of the university.”

“There’s this idea that speech is violent,” says Jack Foley of the Berkeley College Republicans, “that simply by espousing a view that you don’t like, I am attacking you, I am oppressing you, I am assaulting you. That view is fundamentally incompatible with a Western, liberal democratic society.”

Sara Badge, of the Future Female Leaders movement, denounces the lack of expressive freedom throughout the public educational experience: “[Students’] thoughts and actions are strictly regulated by public school systems, and all of this has resulted in a generation of people that cannot think for themselves and cannot function in society without constant coddling.”

Claire Fox, Director of the Institute of Ideas, decries

this generation’s almost belligerent sense of entitlement. They assume their emotional suffering takes precedence. . . . Speaking at numerous school and university events in recent years, I’ve noticed an increasingly aggrieved response from my young audience to any argument I put forward that they don’t like. . . . Even making a general case for free speech can lead to gasps of disbelief. . . . We need a younger generation that’s prepared to grow a backbone, go out into the world, take risks, and make difficult decisions. Otherwise, the future doesn’t bode well for any of us.

New York Times editorialist Bret Stephens, in his commencement address to the class of 2017 at Hampden-Sydney College, admonished:

In the name of being “safe,” students with traditional religious values or conservative political views now feel decidedly unsafe about expressing their views on campus. . . . We are gravely jeopardizing the central task of any serious liberal education.

Moreover, he warns:

Instead of wanting to emerge at last from the cocoons of their “safe spaces,” [these students] want to extend the domain of those spaces into the next stages of their lives. . . . They believe that it is imperative to keep a very safe distance between themselves and the ideas that so disturb them. This is what I fear we are at risk of losing in America today. Too many of our schools are producing students who have never learned properly to engage, understand, or accept an alternative point of view.

Author and clinical psychologist Leon Pomeroy, Ph.D., asks a pertinent question: “Have these students become some sort of canary in the mine of today’s society or civilization itself? Is their behavior indicative of a rising tide of a new form of collective insanity that could spread over time?”

While some observers believe all the criticism and panic to be overwrought, many others, like author and journalist James Howard Kunstler, have even greater fears: “The sanctioning of this deranged hypocrisy is shaping a generation that could easily turn into political monsters when they eventually come into power.” Daniel Greenfield of FrontpageMag.com cautions that “Safe spaces are not where the weak and vulnerable retreat. They are expanding spaces of abuse. From Mizzou to Evergreen, we have seen how the call for safe spaces is a shield for intimidation and violence.”

As we hurtle forward into more troublesome times, the challenges to be faced in the classroom, the boardroom, or the political arena will require greater morality, courage, and leadership skills than, perhaps, ever. Notwithstanding, we are raising and graduating a troubled generation to lead Western civilization through the final days of the Age of Man (Isaiah 3:4-5). Little wonder that many Christians fear the worst.