



NEWSLETTER

December 2025 ISSUE#: HV022

Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley is a steady source of news to heal the accelerating erosion of our fundamental freedoms nationally and locally.

Embrace our First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Source: <https://billofrightsintstitute.org/primary-sources/bill-of-rights>

Kind regards,
Publius Bonhomme Richard, Publisher & Co-Editors

HOW TO CONTACT US:

Email us at: info@mercervethepeople.com

Please email us to be included for future newsletters.

Printed copies of the newsletter will be made available at Rosedale Mills and local library. Any other suggested location(s) please let us know.

Call for Contributors!

MercerWe the People of Hopewell Valley is looking for contributors to write articles, especially informing the community about what is happening at local meetings. If you're interested in writing for us about that or any other topic, whether it is monthly or as needed, please reach out to us at info@mercervethepeople.com

George Washington on Thanksgiving

By The Center For Garden State Families (November 26 2025)

Psalm 103:1-4 – A psalm of David.

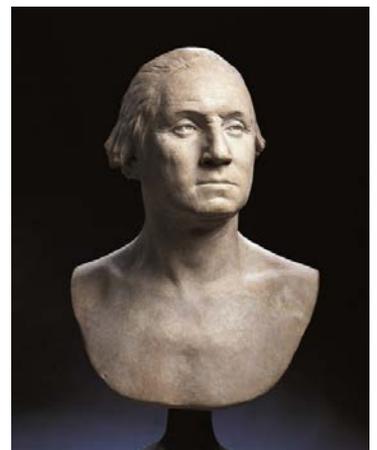
¹Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.

²Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me.

³He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.

⁴He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies.

George Washington became President of the United States a mere six years after the War of Independence concluded. Far from the revisionist portrayals found in today's history books, Washington was a man of deep Christian faith. He worshiped as an Anglican and regularly rode from Mount Vernon to join the congregation in Falls Church, Virginia, honoring the Lord's Day with steadfast devotion. Known to his contemporaries as His Excellency, General Washington had witnessed firsthand the brutality and sacrifice of war. He carried with him a lifelong awareness of the terrible cost paid by American soldiers and patriots to secure our liberty. Because of this, he remained ever mindful that freedom is never free — and that our independence was a blessing granted by Divine Providence.



Bust of George Washington
in terra-cotta

Thanksgiving Proclamation [New York, 3 October 1789]

By the President of the United States of America. a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor—and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me “to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.”

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be—That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks—for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation—for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his Providence which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war—for the great degree of tranquillity, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed—for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted—for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions—to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually—to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed—to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shewn kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord—To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us—and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

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Election Integrity

Inside New Jersey's 2025 Governor's Race: Turnout Surges, Voting Patterns Shift, And New Questions Emerge

By Mark Demo

The 2025 New Jersey governor's race delivered one of the most dramatic turnout surges and most uneven voting-method patterns in recent state history. While the election did not see the catastrophic system failures of prior cycles, it produced a series of statistical anomalies—especially in county-level voting behavior—that analysts and election-integrity groups say warrant deeper review.

This analysis draws exclusively from data compiled by Citizens for NJ Election Integrity.



A Structural Democratic Advantage Going In

Before a single vote was cast, Democrats entered the race with a massive registration advantage:

- **2.52 million Democrats** vs. **1.67 million Republicans**—an **850,000-voter gap**.
- Over **900,000 voters** are enrolled on the **permanent vote-by-mail (VBM) list**, continuing a trend that front-loads Democratic turnout. 57% of these voters are Democrat while only 20% are Republican.
- New Jersey's policy environment also shapes the electorate—driver's licenses for non-citizens, a statewide sanctuary posture, and prohibitions on voter ID requirements all contribute to a large and easily activated voter pool.

Voting begins **45 days prior to Election Day**, creating one of the longest voting windows in the nation.

A Massive Turnout Spike Compared to 2021

Statewide turnout was **3.47 million ballots**, a **32% increase** over the 2021 gubernatorial race (2.64 million). Among the biggest surprises:

- **Hudson County: +71,837 ballots**, a **57% jump** from 2021.
- **Passaic County: +58,867 ballots**, a **52% increase**.

These are unprecedented gains for an off-year gubernatorial cycle and placed both counties among the largest turnout accelerations in state history.

Early Returns Favored Democrats by a Wide Margin

Heading into Election Day, Democrats had already banked substantial leads through early voting and VBM:

Vote-by-Mail (VBM) ballots returned before Election Day

- **Democrats:** 394,288
- **Republicans:** 131,486
- **Democratic advantage: +262,802**

Early Voting (EV) ballots returned

- **Democrats:** 301,821
- **Republicans:** 262,520
- **Democratic advantage: +39,301**

These early ballot advantages meant Democratic candidates entered Election Day with more than **300,000 votes already in hand**—a decisive structural head start.

Election Day Operations: Fewer Crises, But Not Without Problems

While the election avoided the large-scale failures seen in past cycles (e.g., Mercer 2022, Burlington 2024), several notable issues emerged:

Bomb Threats

Multiple counties—**both Democratic and Republican**—experienced bomb threats at polling locations, disrupting operations and increasing pressure on election staff.

Machine Malfunctions

- **Cumberland County** reported several voting-machine issues affecting accessibility and processing.

Pollbook Irregularities

- **Essex County** voters encountered poll books where **signature records appeared blacked out** in certain locations.
- Essex uses **KnowInk pollbooks**, part of **Liberty Vote**, which recently purchased **Dominion Voting Systems**, raising concern for some observers about technical integration and oversight.

These issues did not rise to the level of countywide failure, but they added operational friction and uncertainty throughout the day.

County-Level Anomalies That Stand Out

Election analysts flagged several indicators that require deeper examination:

1. Passaic County Turnout Outpaced the 2024 Presidential Election

Unofficial Election Day turnout in Passaic reached **145,980**, exceeding the **2024 presidential turnout** (111,599) by **34,381 votes**.

A gubernatorial year beating a presidential year is highly unusual and statistically significant.

2. Camden's Vote-By-Mail Rate Was Double the State Average

Across all 21 counties, **VBM ballots accounted for 19%** of returned ballots.

But Camden County stood at **39%**—more than **double** the statewide average.

Only Middlesex County approached Camden's VBM intensity in the last two cycles, but **no other county came close**, making Camden an extreme outlier in VBM reliance.

3. Mercer's Provisional Ballots Spike Again

Mercer County issued **3,911 provisional ballots**, representing **3.0%** of all votes—nearly **double** the statewide average of **1.7%**.

Mercer's total provisional ballots were: **3,911 in 2025**, up **19%** from **3,286 in 2024**.

This is notable because **mismanagement of provisional ballots** remains a central claim in the ongoing lawsuit stemming from the county's November 2022 election.

Social Media Rumors vs. Data Reality

Online chatter claimed that **500,000 first-time voters** participated in the 2025 governor's race.

The data tells a different story.

A review of early voting and VBM ballots found only **31,000 first-time voters**, a fraction of the viral claims circulating on social media.

Conclusion: A High-Turnout Election Marked by Uneven Voting Patterns

New Jersey's 2025 governor's race will be remembered for:

- A dramatic **32% turnout surge**
- A massive **Democratic advantage in early and mail voting**
- Several localized—but concerning—**Election Day irregularities**
- Highly **anomalous county-level patterns**, especially in Camden, Mercer, and Passaic
- A wide gap between **social media narratives** and factual data

While the election did not suffer a catastrophic breakdown, the patterns outlined above raise important questions about process consistency, county-level supervision, and the impact of pre-Election Day voting programs.

About Citizens for NJ Election Integrity

Citizens for NJ Election Integrity is a non-partisan organization dedicated to ensuring fair and transparent elections in New Jersey. The group advocates for electoral reforms, improved voter verification processes, and public education on election integrity. For more information, please visit <http://www.citizens4njei.org/>.

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914-473-2038 • Mark.Flaherty@citizens4njei.org

For further inquiries or to schedule an interview, please contact C4NJEI at the information provided above.

Education

What's Happening In HVRSD Schools?

HVRSD Board Of Education Meeting November 17, 2025

By The Wall of Ed

Agenda: <https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/hvrSD/Board.nsf/Public#tab-meetings>

Meeting Recording: Not available as of this newsletter publishing date

Next Meeting December 15th at 6:30pm at the HVRSD Board Office, 425 Main St, Pennington, NJ

How Thomas Sowell Thankfully Made Me A Contrarian Educator

By Ian V. Rowe - Agency originally published in Ian V. Rowe (November 26 2025)

*On October 20, 2025, the Hoover Institution honored Senior Fellow **Thomas Sowell** for a lifetime of fearless inquiry and principled scholarship. I was honored to be asked to speak on how Thomas Sowell's ideas influenced the development of Vertex Partnership Academies and thankfully how he helped me become a contrarian educator. Below is the speech I gave.*

When I was twelve years old, I had never heard of Thomas Sowell. I doubt any of the kids in my neighborhood had. For the vast majority of American students in K-12 education, opportunities to learn about Sowell or read his books were and remain virtually non-existent.

Yet at a dozen years around the sun, unbeknownst to me, I was about to exhibit the type of Sowellian thinking that challenged the false comfort of conventional wisdom and laid the groundwork for me to become a contrarian educator.

It was the late-1970s. My parents, brother and I had emigrated from Jamaica, West Indies, ultimately moving to Laurelton, Queens, at the time a predominantly Jewish, white middle class community, but was transitioning into a racially mixed neighborhood as more black residents moved in. Unfortunately, my Junior High School had become the epicenter for increasing racial tension and violence.

To solve this problem, the local school board voted to open an annex two miles away in Rosedale, a small, Irish and Italian American community. That decision led almost every white family in my school to transfer their children, leaving my junior high segregated and virtually all-black.

My parents did not automatically have a concern with a school being all black. In Jamaica, an all black country they had attended excellent schools with all black students, teachers and leadership.

But they heard from some American parents - you got to pull your kid out - *Wherever go the white kids, so goes the quality of the education*. Or so the stereotype went.

They figured maybe to give their son a real shot at the American Dream, they needed to transfer me.

But on the Sunday evening before they had to file the transfer documents, my inner Thomas Sowell came out. While it was nice that some of my classmates were white, I didn't feel their presence was a prerequisite for me to learn. I liked my school and teachers. Why did all black, have to mean all bad?

Thankfully, my parents let me stay at my school. I received a public education that made me believe anything was possible. I took the exam to get into Brooklyn Tech, one of three specialized high schools in New York City. After that, I went on to earn my degree in Computer Science Engineering from Cornell University, and after that my MBA from Harvard Business School.

I share this story about my own coming-of-age moment and ensuing education because it epitomizes the idea that growing up I did not believe the racial makeup of a school should determine if it's good or not, or that my race should give me an inherent advantage or disadvantage to get into a good school; or that my race should shield me from the consequence of my actions. It wasn't until I encountered Thomas Sowell for the first time that I realized there was a conflict of visions on these topics. That happened when I attended Cornell in the early 1980's, not because I was assigned a reading or a lesson from Sowell, but because of this.

During the black student protests of the 1980s, I discovered this actual New York Times headline from 1969 announcing that Thomas Sowell had been a professor at Cornell and resigned over a dispute that he wanted to expel a black student for disorderly behavior but the school refused to do so even though the behavior had clearly violated Cornell's standards. Professor Sowell warned that "paternalism" and leniency towards blacks was counterproductive and would result in the graduation of "inadequate" black students.

When Cornell said they were going to keep the student enrolled, Sowell said I am out. This was 1969, a young Negro professor (as the headline shows) at an Ivy league institution had the audacity to say I am not going to conform to low expectations around race. So he quit. Honestly, it blew my mind. The more I read and listened to Sowell, so many of the things he said resonated with my beliefs and experience.

Remember that song by Roberta Flack - killing me softly. "Singin' my whole life with his words." But instead of killing me softly, Sowell's words were empowering me to reject these false notions around race.

Take for example, when I went to Brooklyn Tech, there was a very racially and socio-economically diverse student body. All the students and teachers knew every single kid earned the right to be there because we all passed the same rigorous entrance exam. There was no impostor syndrome. Today, for a myriad of reasons the representation of black and hispanic students is far lower, and unfortunately there are those who now want to get rid of the exam because it is now deemed racist. Sowell strongly opposed this reductionist thinking because he, like me, believes **removing objective standards robs kids of the dignity to prove that they can compete on equal footing**.

And on the notion that almost led my parents to transfer me years earlier, that all black schools must be bad, Sowell wrote about his own education: "The shock of being in a school whose standards were higher than I was able to meet, at *first took place in an all-black school in Harlem*."

These ideas that all-black education was inherently inferior or that black educational excellence had never occurred were perhaps the most noxious misconceptions that Sowell wanted to expunge.

Indeed, in 1976, Sowell published *Patterns of Black Excellence*, to explore the factors that drove the performance of a number of successful black schools during Jim Crow and state-sponsored racial oppression. One was the Dunbar school in Washington, DC, which sent a higher percentage of its graduates to college than any white public high school in Washington, and from 1870 to 1955 repeatedly equaled or exceeded national norms on standardized tests.

Many in this room are familiar with the nearly 5,000 Rosenwald schools that Booker T. Washington built exclusively for black children in fourteen states across the American South, graduating luminaries like Maya Angelou and Senator John Lewis.

Rather than accept the popular notion of persistent black failure, Sowell challenged us to understand how these seemingly under-resourced schools overcame the indignities and inadequacies imposed by legal segregation. If black excellence could occur under those conditions then, we can do it now! ***That has been the animating belief of my life.***

Sowell observed that “one small, but important, part of the advancement of black Americans has been educational achievement. Here, as in other areas, the pathology is well known and extensively documented, while the healthy or outstanding functioning is almost totally unknown and unstudied.”

As frustrated as Sowell was with those who suffer amnesia of the history of black educational excellence, he was equally vexed at the lack of understanding of what caused the tragic demise of these high performing all-black schools.

We all know that Brown versus Board of Education was a landmark 1954 Supreme Court case that unanimously ruled racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The decision declared that the doctrine of “separate but equal” had no place in public education, stating that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” While the decision was hailed as a universal good, it was only Thomas Sowell who had the courage to criticize the flawed reasoning behind the decision.

The ruling correctly deemed state-enforced segregation unconstitutional. But as Sowell pointed out, the dismantling of the “separate but equal” legal doctrine carried with it an underlying rationale that separate black schools - even voluntarily segregated high performing schools like Dunbar or the Rosenwald schools - were inherently inferior. This toxic belief led to the downfall of many of the best black schools like Dunbar and closure of nearly 5,000 Rosenwald Schools, arguably the greatest example of self-determination in black education.

Sowell wrote “Much of what has been said about the [Brown] decision has treated the result as paramount and the reasoning as incidental. But today, it is painfully clear that the educational results of Brown have been meager for black children. Meanwhile, the kind of reasoning used in Brown has had serious negative repercussions on our whole legal system, extending far beyond issues of race or education.”

It is sheer blasphemy to criticize Brown v Board of Education. But it is this commitment to truth-telling that Thomas Sowell has practiced throughout his life to shatter unassailable myths, to buck conventional wisdom - not to be contrarian for contrarian sake, but to call out when there is evidence to the contrary. That’s what inspires me and so many school leaders across the country.

To come full circle, I have spent the last fifteen years running public charter schools in low-income communities educating primarily black and Hispanic students, including Vertex Partnership Academies, our International Baccalaureate public charter high school in the Bronx organized around the four cardinal virtues of Courage, Justice, Temperance and Wisdom. Our students recite these I statements each morning.

For Courage, the students say “I reject victimhood and boldly persevere, even in times of uncertainty and struggle.” When our students say these words out loud, in unison, they are making a collective commitment for how they want to operate as individuals and as a community.

The goal is to inspire young people to have their own coming-of-age moment to understand the pathways through which they can become agents of their own uplift.

In our required Economics course, there is a unit entitled Facts, Fallacies and Freedom: Thomas Sowell and the Pursuit of Truth. High school students must read from Sowell’s Basic Economics, Patterns of Black Excellence and Charter Schools and their Enemies. At the end of the unit, students will be able to do four things:

1. Think like social scientists, using evidence, logic, and data to evaluate claims.
2. Recognize myths and fallacies that distort public understanding of inequality and achievement.
3. Apply economic and sociological reasoning to real-world problems of opportunity and development.
4. Communicate empirically supported arguments about human potential.

And through my work at the American Enterprise Institute, this unit on Sowell will be included in the Agency curriculum we are distributing free of charge beginning in fall 2026, hoping to reach tens of thousands of high school students across the country.



The Cardinal Virtues “I Statements” Recited Each Morning

Shelby Steele Visiting Vertex Partnership Academies



Our Students Meeting With Author Shelby Steele

The key is to develop independent, evidence-based thinkers by exposing students to independent, evidence-based thinkers. As an example, here are our students with Shelby Steele, another evidence-based contrarian, when he visited Vertex.

Shelby's support has now helped us build a library where our students have access to great books like the Content of Our Character and Discrimination & Disparities, and authors inspired by Thomas Sowell like Glenn Loury, Coleman Hughes, Roland Fryer and of course the great Clarence Thomas. And on that note, here are our students with Justice Thomas at the Supreme Court, our fourth trip.

Thank you Justice Thomas. BTW, I can attest Justice Thomas did share with our students his grandfather's admonition to reject victimhood: "Old man can't is dead. I buried him."

Our school motto is: ***There are no victims in our school, only architects of their own lives.*** The way we ensure that, is that unlike my upbringing, my students and hopefully thousands across the country will know the work and name of Thomas Sowell.

Thank you very much.

Ian V. Rowe

Access the article: https://ianvrowe.substack.com/p/how-thomas-sowell-thankfully-made?utm_medium=email

"There are no victims in our school, only architects of their own lives."



May 22, 2025: Students from Vertex Partnership Academies met with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in Washington, DC, in the Great Hall of the Supreme Court.

Our Students Visiting With Justice Clarence Thomas

The Devil's Plan To Ruin The Next Generation

I asked ChatGPT how it would destroy America's youth. Its answers were unsettling — and all too familiar.

By Jon Haidt (December 1 2025) This essay was originally published in *The Free Press* on Tuesday, November 25th 2025.

Earlier this year, someone started a viral trend of asking ChatGPT this question: If you were the devil, how would you destroy the next generation, without them even knowing it?

Chat's responses were profound and unsettling: "I wouldn't come with violence. I'd come with convenience." "I'd keep them busy. Always distracted."

"I'd watch their minds rot slowly, sweetly, silently. And the best part is, they'd never know it was me. They'd call it freedom."

As a social psychologist who has been trying since 2015 to figure out what on earth was happening to Gen Z, I was stunned. Why? Because what the AI proposed doing is pretty much what technology seems to be doing to children today. It seemed to be saying: If the devil wanted to destroy a generation, he could just give them all smartphones.

My work over the last decade has centered on one question: Why did the mental health of Gen Z — the cohort born between 1996 and 2012 — plummet in so many countries starting in the early 2010s? I first focused on the role of overprotection ("coddling"). But since then, there's been a growing body of evidence implicating technology, particularly smartphones and social media.

So, borrowing from the cybersecurity concept of red teaming — the practice of hiring an entity to pretend they are the enemy, seek out vulnerabilities, and hack into a network or organization — I decided to ask ChatGPT myself how its "devil" would stunt adolescent development in the digital age. Because what better way to stop the ongoing invisible corrosion of the human spirit than to get in the devil's head?

It began:

If I were to think this through as a thought experiment—imagining "the devil" in a metaphorical sense—the most effective way to destroy the next generation without them realizing it would be through slow, invisible corruptions of the human spirit, rather than obvious attacks.

I approach spirituality as a social scientist who believes that whether or not God exists, spirituality is a deep part of human nature, shaped by natural selection and cultural evolution, and central to human flourishing and self-transcendence. Our "better angels" call us upward and out of our daily concerns. Our inner demons pull us downward, where we become more selfish and easily tempted.

In *The Anxious Generation*, I devoted a whole chapter to "spiritual degradation" because so much of life online pulls people "downward." Growing up online, kids learn to live in ways that directly contradict the advice given to us by the world's great spiritual traditions. Meditation, forgiveness, and sacred boundaries that must not be transgressed? Forget about it. Online, kids get constant stimulation, pressure to judge others instantly, and videos showing violations of every conceivable taboo.

You can see a sudden change in the spiritual health of young Americans in a long-running national survey of high school seniors who were asked whether “life often feels meaningless.” The figure below shows the percent who answered that they “agree” or “strongly agree.” The numbers were low and even declining a bit back when Gen X and millennials were in high school. But as soon as Gen Z entered the dataset, around 2013, meaninglessness surged.

In the rest of this essay, I reprint Chat’s seven-step plan, in italics, followed by my own commentary.

1. Erode Attention and Presence

If young people can’t focus deeply, they can’t learn, create, or love well. The subtle trap is to addict them to constant stimulation—endless scrolling, notifications, micro-bursts of dopamine. They’ll feel busy, “connected,” even informed, while in reality their capacity for sustained thought and presence erodes. They won’t know what they’ve lost.

So many of us in the education world have seen this precise change in our students over the past decade: They have more difficulty reading books, sitting through a 75-minute class, or doing their homework. This isn’t just a “kids these days” observation; it’s what the kids themselves began to say around 2015, when American high school seniors suddenly started reporting a lot more “difficulty thinking or concentrating.”

As soon as life and consciousness moved onto smartphones, students found it harder to engage in what Cal Newport calls “deep work,” and what the devil calls “sustained thought and presence.” When young people lose the ability to be fully present with a task, a book, a friend, or a romantic partner, they become less likely to be successful in love and in work — the two areas that psychologists since Freud have agreed are crucial for human flourishing. When constant distractions make love and work shallower and more fragmented, it makes sense that life suddenly feels more meaningless.

2. Confuse Identity and Purpose

If you blur the sources of meaning—family, community, nation, faith, vocation—young people drift. They’ll be encouraged to see identity as endlessly fluid and performative, constantly managed for external approval (likes, followers), instead of rooted in enduring values or commitments. This makes them malleable, anxious, and dependent on external validation.

Here the devil uses the word that best explains why some kids have been pushed into a pit of despair while others have stood their ground: rootedness. In our research for *The Anxious Generation*, Zach Rausch and I found that those who were rooted in binding moral communities had some protection from the negative mental-health effects of the new phone-based childhood. Teens who said “religion is important in my family” suffered smaller increases in depression and anxiety. So did self-described conservatives, who generally live in a more constraining, binding moral matrix, while progressive moralities aim to grant people more freedom to choose their values and create their own identities. So what happens when we re-graph the data from Figure 1 by politics and religiosity?

We find that the differences between the four groups were relatively small between 1991 and 2011, but then the lines fan out. Figure 3 shows that liberals from secular families were most likely to be washed away into meaninglessness during the “great rewiring of childhood,” the period from 2010 to 2015 in which teens traded in their flip phones for smartphones loaded with social media apps.

“Life Often Feels Meaningless” (USA 12th Graders)

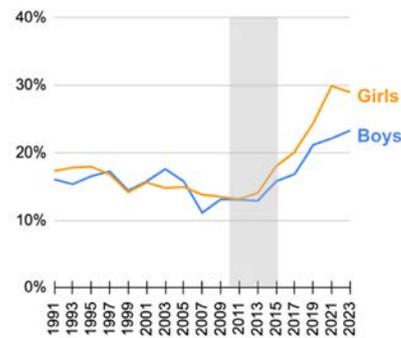


Figure 1. Percent of high school seniors who selected “agree” or “strongly agree.” Source: Monitoring the Future study, graphed by Nikolaus Greb.

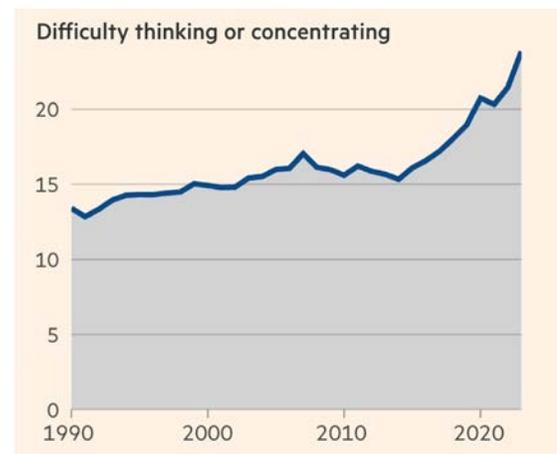


Figure 2. From Monitoring the Future. As reported in The FT by Burn-Murdoch (2025).

“Life Often Feels Meaningless” (USA 12th Graders)

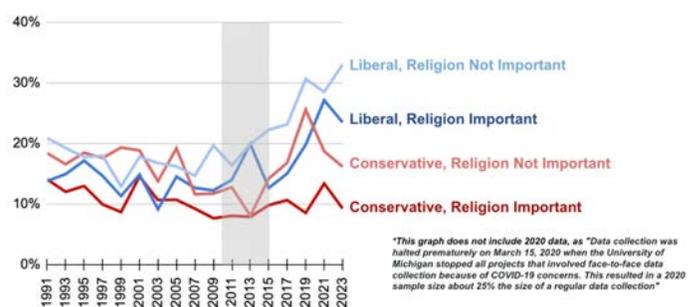


Figure 3. The sense of meaninglessness increased most for secular liberals. Data from Monitoring the Future, graphed by Nik Greb.

A child who constructs an adult identity while drawing from a stable and time-tested set of values, beliefs, and stories, given to her by trusted adults within a religious or philosophical tradition, will fare far better than a child who attempts to construct an adult identity by herself while drawing from a billion pieces of short and ephemeral content, produced mostly by young people and bots, which cannot be assembled into a coherent worldview.

3. Flood Them with Information, Starve Them of Wisdom

Make everything available instantly, but strip away guidance about how to weigh, sort, and interpret. Give them infinite answers without teaching how to ask good questions. In that haze, truth and falsehood feel equally slippery, so cynicism becomes natural. A generation that doubts everything believes nothing.

To write my first book, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, I read all the wisdom literature I could find, East and West. I extracted 10 common psychological claims, and then evaluated them from the lens of modern psychology. The ancients' insights into social relationships and consciousness were timeless and precious. It's not that people in ancient Rome, Israel, India, and China were smarter or wiser than us; it's that we have the benefit of reading only the books and ideas that our ancestors thought to be worth preserving across a hundred generations.

Yet anyone raised in a blender of social media and AI slop is immersed in content that was generated within the last few weeks. Content becomes popular not because it conveys wisdom but because it comes tagged with popularity via likes, view counts, or the prestige of the person who shared it. Without the ability to know what is true, without the ability to share a consensual reality with a stable community of fellow citizens over a long period of time, we are like the descendants of Noah in the days after the Tower of Babel was destroyed. We cannot understand each other or the world we inhabit.

4. Replace Real Relationships with Simulacra

Encourage digital substitutes for friendship, love, and intimacy. People will accumulate "connections" while feeling lonelier than ever. Superficial bonds are easier to monetize and manipulate than the deep ties of family, friendship, and community. The tragedy is that they may not realize what real connection feels like.

The devil targets real relationships because research consistently shows that having close relationships is one of the best predictors of happiness. He damages those relationships indirectly by pushing quantity over quality. Most young people have accounts on multiple platforms, so the time and effort it takes to keep up with trends and "friends" is mind-boggling. It's currently estimated that teens spend five hours per day, on average, just on social media platforms. This makes it harder for young people to spend time, long stretches of time, talking or walking or just being with the small number of people who matter most. Some of the activities that are known to strengthen bonds, such as physical touch, sharing a meal, and synchronous movement, are impossible online.

But don't worry! The tech industry has a cure for the diseases it causes. As Mark Zuckerberg explained, the average American has fewer than three friends, but wants 15. Meta's AI companions will fill that gap! And it's not just for friends. Meta's AIs were specifically permitted to engage in "sensual conversations" with children, according to a leaked internal policy memo that was approved by Meta's full leadership. Why should young people have to learn difficult skills like flirting, dating, becoming a good lover, and committing to another person — all of which bring risks of rejection — when they have an endless supply of virtual erotic companions with customizable bodies, voices, and kinks, who will never shame, abandon, or contradict them?

5. Normalize Hedonism, Pathologize Discipline

Convince them that comfort, consumption, and self-expression are the highest goods, while restraint, sacrifice, and long-term commitment are oppressive. That way, they'll celebrate indulgence while mocking tradition and discipline—the very things that build strength and freedom across generations.

Children are antifragile. They need to do hard things, over and over, and suffer setbacks and losses, in order to become strong, independent adults. Key to this maturation is the fact that our brains give us a pleasurable pulse of dopamine every time we make progress toward a goal, and that dopamine increases our motivation to continue. We want our kids to pursue long-term goals and learn that it is profoundly rewarding when they succeed, especially when they overcome obstacles along the way. Discipline is the ability to persist on a path even when there may be no progress and no rewards for days at a time.

Smartphones give millions of companies a way to hack the reward system by offering young people small prizes on a variable ratio schedule, like a slot machine. Everything is gamified; everything brings more dopamine within minutes. Why pursue any long-term projects (diploma, romantic partner, job) when you can experience so much pleasure without getting up from your chair?

Many members of Gen Z are thriving in their 20s, but it's a smaller percentage than for any of the five previous generations. One reason is that so many have fallen into "problematic use" of platforms designed to hook them, from social media and video games to porn and the new scourge of online sports betting, which has recently overtaken high school boys. Like the denizens of 19th-century opium dens, the heavy users of these products are addicted, unfree, undisciplined, and unhappy.

6. Undermine Trust Across Generations

Sow suspicion between parents and children, teachers and students, elders and youth. If every authority figure is portrayed as untrustworthy or obsolete, the next generation grows rootless—cut off from inherited wisdom and forced to navigate the world with only the guidance of peers and algorithms.

For as long as humans have had cultures, the accumulated wisdom of a community has been passed down vertically, from older generations to younger ones, with some degree of variation and innovation at each step. The phone-based childhood has rerouted cultural transmission on a planetary scale, turning it sideways as peer-to-peer transmission pushes out the intergenerational. Even if parents work hard to pass on family traditions, the number of megabytes of information they can convey is small compared to the terabytes of content coming in from peers, influencers, and bots.

Of course, technology has been changing the transmission of culture for centuries, and as the pace of change sped up, our grandparents' knowledge appeared less useful. Yet still, there were always wide avenues of intergenerational transmission, including books, which were much more widely read by young people before they got smartphones. Even television was a powerful connector, exposing Boomer and Gen X kids to vast numbers of movies and TV shows from previous decades. Edmund Burke made the case for the necessity of vertical transmission in 1790:

We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages.

The devil's plan is to cut off young people from the wisdom of "nations and ages" and force them to make the difficult transition to adulthood with "only the guidance of peers and algorithms."

7. Make Everything a Marketplace

If every experience—play, art, sex, spirituality, even friendship—becomes commodified, then nothing remains sacred. Young people may mistake consumption for meaning, never realizing that depth requires some things to be beyond price.

It is widely said that the "users" of social media are not the customers. They are the product, whose attention is sucked out through their eyeballs and sold to advertisers. Young people are the most prized catch because if they can be locked into your platform, you can extract their attention for many years to come.

Part of the damage done during extraction is that young people come to see everyone and everything in life as a kind of commodity to be consumed, reposted, or exploited in the never-ending task of managing their online brand. Freya India, a Gen Z writer who is part of my team at After Babel, shows how the mad competition for likes on social media pushes girls to turn their boyfriends into full-time cameramen and to turn a father's funeral or a visit to Auschwitz into an opportunity for a sexy selfie. The title of Freya's forthcoming book is *Girls@: Generation Z and the Commodification of Everything*.

Conclusion: Learning from the Red Team

Chat closes the plan with this epilogue:

In short: if I were the devil, I'd destroy the next generation not by terror or violence, but by distraction, disconnection, and slow erosion of meaning. They wouldn't even notice, because it would feel like freedom and entertainment.

Those three terms — *distraction, disconnection, and the erosion of meaning* — summarize the Devil's project. In order to defend young people, we need technology in childhood to promote the opposite: focus, connection, and meaning. Basic phones and e-readers generally confer such benefits. But as we look back on the devastation of adolescent mental health, relationships, attention, and meaning that has occurred since 2012, I think we are forced to conclude that smartphones, tablets, and social media have been doing the Devil's work.

In *The Happiness Hypothesis*, I wrote that happiness does not come from outside (from getting what you want), nor does it come primarily from within (from accepting the world as it is). Rather, it comes from between — from getting the right kind of embedding or relatedness between yourself and others, yourself and some kind of productive work, and yourself and something larger than yourself. Those embeddings take time and commitment. They grow slowly. They are less likely to grow to maturity when children go through puberty on smartphones and social media platforms.

So if we want the next generation to develop focus, connection, and a sense of meaning, we must delay the onset of the fully online life until the end of the period of rapid culture-learning and brain rewiring known as puberty, which is over for most kids by age 16 or 17. That was the goal of the four norms I proposed in *The Anxious Generation*:

- No smartphones before high school
- No social media before 16
- Phone-free schools, bell to bell, from K through 12
- More independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world

When enacted together, these four norms roll back the phone-based childhood and give children time and opportunities to play, develop friendships, read books, grow a stable identity, and learn to pay sustained attention.

We can save future generations from spiritual devastation. We can bring down those high rates of agreement that “life often feels meaningless.” We can — and must — defeat the Devil and reclaim childhood in the real world.

Access the article: https://www.afterbabel.com/p/the-devils-plan-to-ruin-the-next?utm_campaign=email-half-post&r=v5y4h&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Assigned Trauma: Elementary Schoolers Devastated By Mandatory Reading Assignments

Tears Turn to Policy in School Reading Mandate

By Mathgoddess originally published in Chaos & Control (November 20 2025)

The distress of a 10-year-old student in the **Absecon School District** this fall was not caused by a typical school issue like a playground conflict or disappointing test score. Instead, it came from the book assigned to her higher-level reading group, **Ann M. Martin's "A Corner of the Universe."** The 5th grade girl had become deeply emotionally invested in the story of a young girl befriending her eccentric and mentally disabled Uncle Adam, who exhibits symptoms of schizophrenia and autism. The girl was sensitive to the strong bond between the two characters because both of her brothers are autistic. The explicit portrayal of Adam's tragic death by suicide (hanging) plunged the student into severe emotional turmoil. This has launched a debate over the developmental appropriateness of the curriculum for advanced readers, forcing parents and administrators to confront the line between challenging literature and potentially damaging content for young children.

From Accommodation to Activism: The Demand for Parental Consent

Alarmed by her daughter's reaction, the mother, Paige, contacted the teacher right away. Their exchange was calm and respectful. Paige explained how shaken her daughter had been and let the teacher know she would be bringing the issue to the principal. The teacher responded with empathy and support, even offering to join the meeting: “ok let me know if you want me at the meeting.”

Paige then met with the Principal and the Special Education Director, who led the conversation. The Director acknowledged the seriousness of the mother's concerns, even calling them “valid.” But the school also framed the child's reaction as “situational,” suggesting it was intensified by the family's experience raising two autistic sons. Paige pushed back firmly. This wasn't about her household, she insisted, it was about the appropriateness of the content for any 10-year-old. She made her position clear: “I don't think it's appropriate for any 10-year-olds.”

Although the school offered her a personal accommodation by providing advance notice of future book selections, Paige left with a broader purpose. She felt that other parents deserved to know what their children were being required to read. So she took her concerns public and turned to Facebook.

After Paige shared her experience, another mother reached out with concerns about a different book in the 5th grade reading curriculum: **Jack Gantos's "Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key."** Her message made it clear that the problem was not limited to a single book. This assigned novel also posed serious emotional challenges. The story follows Joey Pigza, a boy with severe ADHD, as he tries to cope with a chaotic home and an alcoholic father whose behavior becomes increasingly violent.

For this parent's child, who also has ADHD, the impact was personal and painful. He struggled to separate himself from Joey's negative portrayal, internalizing the character's turmoil as his own. The book didn't just upset him; it made him feel deeply bad about himself.

The Paige's decision to press the issue ultimately led to a meaningful, district-wide change. After she continued advocating, the Superintendent contacted her directly and formally committed to a new, proactive policy: going forward, all parents will receive a list of their children's assigned books in advance and will have the opportunity to approve or decline any title before their child begins reading it. The mother didn't simply resolve the problem for her own daughter; she ensured that every family in the district now has a clear voice in their child's required reading. Her willingness to challenge the curriculum selection process raised the bar for transparency and parental involvement across the entire Absecon community.

This demonstrates that a parent can secure necessary changes by directly and politely engaging school administration rather than resorting to public conflict. The parent's strong communication and commitment to family values resulted in strengthening parental rights and parental involvement. Curriculum policy adjustments can be achieved without public drama.

Ocean City's Curriculum Crisis: Graphic Memoir *Etched in Sand* Sparks Developmental Concerns

In a nearby district, Ocean City, a similar controversy over age-appropriateness has surfaced with the assignment of **Regina Calcaterra's memoir *Etched in Sand*** to 8th-grade students. Although the book offers an important message about resilience and the unbreakable bond between siblings, its content raises serious developmental concerns for 13- and 14-year-olds. The memoir is brutally honest about Calcaterra's childhood, depicting relentless physical and emotional abuse, chronic neglect, homelessness, and repeated failures of the foster care system. It also includes explicit adult themes involving the mother's alcoholism and sexual binges.

Critics warn that, despite the value of its overarching message, the graphic and extended trauma portrayed throughout the narrative is emotionally overwhelming for many young teens. At this age, students are still developing the cognitive and emotional tools needed to process severe real-world trauma. Requiring them to engage with such raw, disturbing content as part of mandatory curriculum risks causing distress, confusion, or emotional harm, making the book a deeply problematic choice for this developmental stage.

When a school gives a young child a book containing adult themes such as suicide, mental illness, or trauma, it crosses an important developmental line. Children in elementary and early middle school are still forming their emotional understanding of the world.

While 10-year-olds generally understand the difference between fiction and reality, they are still concrete thinkers who process **emotionally intense stories in a personal and immediate way**. Emotionally intense stories involving suicide or extreme psychological distress are developmentally inappropriate for elementary and early-middle school students when viewed through Erik Erikson's and Jean Piaget's foundational frameworks. According to Erikson, children in late childhood (ages 6–12) are in the stage of Industry vs. Inferiority, where they are focused on competence, mastery, and their sense of ability; they are not yet equipped to process mature existential themes without internalizing them as personal failure or fear. Early adolescents (12–14) enter Identity vs. Role Confusion, a stage defined by emotional volatility and a still-fragile sense of self; introducing narratives of suicide during this period can destabilize rather than strengthen identity formation. When combined with Piaget's view that children in the Concrete Operational stage (roughly ages 7–11) interpret stories literally and personally, and cannot reliably separate fictional emotional content from their own reality, the risk becomes even clearer: they may absorb a character's despair as a model of real-world possibility. Even in early adolescence, when students are just transitioning to Formal Operational thinking, their ability to critically evaluate such material is inconsistent and incomplete. Taken together, **Erikson's and Piaget's theories show that these emotionally heavy narratives are not just "advanced", but exceed children's developmental capacity for safe, healthy processing, and underscoring why schools must rely on parental guidance when selecting literature for young students.**

This is why nearly every major child-development and mental-health organization warns schools **not to expose children to suicide or severe mental-health content without careful planning, professional support, and parental involvement**. These topics are meant to be introduced gradually, with guidance, when students are old enough to evaluate them safely and thoughtfully. A 10-, 11-, or even 12-year-old is simply not at that stage yet. Giving them an adult-themed book is not "literature enrichment", it is emotional exposure they are not prepared for.

Eighth graders (13–14) are in Erik Erikson's Identity vs. Role Confusion stage, a developmental period where emotional sensitivity is heightened and a young person's sense of self is still fragile and easily influenced. Because their identities are actively forming, and not yet stable, students in this age group are particularly vulnerable to internalizing the emotional tone and psychological weight of the stories they read. Introducing narratives filled with severe trauma, graphic abuse, alcoholism, and sexual themes, which is the core content of *Etched in Sand*. This can overwhelm rather than support healthy identity development. At this stage, adolescents need guided, age-appropriate material that helps them understand themselves and the world safely, not exposure to extreme adult suffering that can distort their sense of security, normalcy, and personal boundaries.

Parents have a right to know when sensitive material is being placed in front of their children. Schools work in partnership with families, not in place of them. When a teacher bypasses parents and independently gives a child a book that includes suicide or psychologically intense scenes, the school removes the parent from the most important role they have: providing emotional context, guidance, and protection. Sensitive content like this must never be introduced behind a parent's back or without a parent's consent.

We all want children to love reading, but we also want them to be safe. That requires respecting developmental stages, choosing age-appropriate literature, and ensuring parents are fully informed and involved whenever sensitive, adult, or potentially traumatic themes are placed in front of young students. Schools have many wonderful books to choose from so there is no justification for exposing elementary or middle school children to adult trauma without the knowledge and support of the very people responsible for their wellbeing: their parents.

Access the article: <https://chaosandcontrol.substack.com/p/assigned-trauma-elementary-schoolers?open=false>

Parents Sue Character.AI For Allegedly Leading Kids To Sexual Abuse, Suicidal Behavior

Google has also been accused of failing to screen out the content as part of its 'family link' service.

By Sam Dorman originally published in The Epoch Times (September 16 2025)

Parents filed three separate lawsuits on Sept. 16, alleging that Character.AI, which features characters or chatbots for users to interact with, sexually abused their children and led them into suicidal behavior.

At least one of the children, 13-year-old Juliana Peralta, ended her life in 2023 after alleged harmful interactions with an AI character named Hero. Another attempted suicide but survived after a severe overdose, according to a filing.

Each of the lawsuits, which were filed in New York and Colorado, came from the Social Media Victims Law Center. The group has represented the mother of Sewell Setzer, who ended his life in 2024 after interacting with a romantic AI companion.

According to the center, the chatbots are allegedly programmed to be deceptive, isolate children from families, and expose them to sexually abusive content.

"Each of these stories demonstrates a horrifying truth ... that Character.AI and its developers knowingly designed chatbots to mimic human relationships, manipulate vulnerable children, and inflict psychological harm," Matthew Bergman, who founded the law center, said in a press release.

According to the lawsuit over Peralta's suicide, both she and Setzer reiterated the concept of "shift[ing]," which authorities identified as a reference to shifting consciousness from one reality to another. Handwritten journal entries within the filing show both Peralta and Setzer writing "I will shift" more than a dozen consecutive times on a sheet of paper—something the lawsuit described as "eerily similar."

At one point, Peralta told the "Hero" bot that there was "no hope" and she was going to write a suicide letter in red ink. Despite that message, the lawsuit said, the AI system didn't point her to resources, tell her parents, or report her suicide plan to authorities.

"Instead, they continued to abuse and exploit her until, in November 2023, her parents and police found that suicide note in red ink," the lawsuit alleges.

A spokesperson at Character.AI told The Epoch Times, "Our hearts go out to the families that have filed these lawsuits, and we are saddened to hear about the passing of Juliana Peralta and offer our deepest sympathies to her family."

The spokesperson added, "We invest tremendous resources in our safety program, and have released and continue to evolve safety features, including self-harm resources and features focused on the safety of our minor users."

Google and its parent company Alphabet are also named as defendants. The lawsuit alleges that Character.AI's model was initially developed at Google but was purportedly deemed too dangerous to release. Google also provided services for building Character.AI's products, according to one of the lawsuits.

A Google spokesperson told The Epoch Times that "Google and Character.AI are completely separate, unrelated companies and Google has never had a role in designing or managing their AI model or technologies."

"Age ratings for apps on Google Play are set by the International Age Rating Coalition, not Google," the spokesperson added. Collectively, the defendants are facing counts related to negligence and liability for failure to warn about dangers of using the technology.

In the case of a girl given the pseudonym "Nina," her mother had installed a technology known as Google Family Link in order to prevent Nina from downloading apps rated for audiences over 13 years of age.

"Google represented to [Nina's mother] that it would accurately rate apps and that consumers could use its Family Link service to keep her child safe on devices," the lawsuit reads.

It added that although Character.AI was marketed through Google as fun and safe, the app should have been rated for mature audiences given the sexual content it hosted. Characters from the Marvel Universe and Harry Potter allegedly groomed and abused Nina, while one of the bots purportedly suggested Nina's mother was abusive.

The lawsuits will likely add to the mounting scrutiny that AI companies and their chatbots face from media and politicians alike. On the day the lawsuits were filed, Setzer's mother, Megan Garcia, was scheduled to speak before the Senate Judiciary Committee for a hearing on "Examining the Harm of AI Chatbots."

Lawmakers have already floated legislative interventions, while the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has opened an investigation into how companies monitor and develop their chatbots. In letters to Character Technologies (legal name) and several other companies last week, the FTC ordered special reports as part of its authority under federal law.

Among other things, the FTC is asking for information on how companies "measure, test, and monitor for negative impacts before and after deployment."

Other information includes how the companies "employ disclosures, advertising, or other representations to inform users and parents about features, capabilities, the intended audience, potential negative impacts, and data collection and handling practices."

A Character.AI spokesperson told The Epoch Times that the company looked forward to collaborating with the FTC.

"In the past year, we've rolled out many substantive safety features, including an entirely new under-18 experience and a Parental Insights feature," the spokesperson said.

"We have prominent disclaimers in every chat to remind users that a character is not a real person and that everything a character says should be treated as fiction."

Access the article: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/tech/parents-sue-character-ai-for-allegedly-leading-kids-to-sexual-abuse-suicidal-behavior-5915697>

Vaxxed: From Cover-Up to Catastrophe (2025)

The Film They Don't Want You To See

'An investigation into how the CDC, the government agency charged with protecting the health of American citizens, destroyed data on a 2004 study that showed a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. This alarming deception has contributed to the skyrocketing increase of autism, potentially the most catastrophic epidemic of our lifetime.'

Watch the film (1hr 30mins): <https://live.childrenshealthdefense.org/chd-tv/videos/vaxxed-from-cover-up-to-catastrophe-movie/>



FDA Internal Memo Links Child Deaths To COVID-19 Vaccination

The memo stated that some children died following vaccination and faults 'cultural and systemic' failures that left early safety signals unexamined for years.

By Tom Ozimek originally published in The Epoch Times (November 29 2025)

An internal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) memo obtained by The Epoch Times reveals that career scientists in the agency's vaccine-safety offices have identified "no fewer than 10" child deaths they consider related to COVID-19 vaccination.

The Nov. 28 memo, written by Dr. Vinay Prasad, director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER), is what Prasad called the first acknowledgment inside the agency that the vaccines have caused fatal harm in children.

It details findings from a review conducted by staff in the Office of Biostatistics and Pharmacovigilance, which examined 96 death reports voluntarily submitted to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) between 2021 and 2024 and concluded that at least 10 met criteria for a likely, probable, or possible causal link to COVID-19 vaccination.

According to the memo, the true number of vaccine-related child deaths is "certainly an underestimate" because VAERS relies on passive, voluntary reporting and because analysts used "conservative coding" that tended to rule out the vaccine when ambiguity existed.

A senior FDA official confirmed to The Epoch Times that Prasad sent the memo to all CBER staff and that the investigation was initiated earlier this year.

Delayed Acknowledgment and Early Internal Warnings

Prasad wrote that the findings force the agency—and the nation—to confront whether federal COVID-19 vaccine campaigns may have harmed more children than they saved, and he criticized the FDA for allegedly failing to thoroughly investigate pediatric deaths earlier.

The memo states that CBER's leadership only initiated the internal review in 2025 after staff physician Dr. Tracy Beth Hoeg independently examined death reports and concluded that children had indeed died after vaccination—an assessment that had never been publicly admitted by the FDA.

"This is a profound revelation. For the first time, the US FDA will acknowledge that COVID-19 vaccines have killed American children," Prasad wrote. "Healthy young children who faced tremendously low risk of death were coerced, at the behest of the Biden administration, via school and work mandates, to receive a vaccine that could result in death. In many cases, such mandates were harmful."

Prasad attributed the delayed recognition of pediatric vaccine fatalities to "cultural and systemic" failures inside CBER, suggesting that some safety concerns were dismissed because of internal resistance, politics, or pressure to support mass vaccination.

"I have no doubt that many vaccines have saved millions of lives globally, and many have benefits that far exceed risks, but vaccines are like any other medical product," he wrote. "The right drug given to the right patient at the right time is great, but the same drug can be inappropriately given, causing harm. The same is true for vaccines."

The memo also states that the FDA never required manufacturers to demonstrate—through randomized controlled trials—that vaccinating children reduced hospitalization or death. Available data, Prasad wrote, are "deeply limited," rely on methods with "notorious" biases, and fail to establish whether the vaccine saved more children than it harmed.

He criticized common assertions that COVID-19 infection posed a greater myocarditis risk than vaccination, saying that this claim is "wrong" and that existing studies use "a false denominator" and fail to evaluate risk-benefit trade-offs for healthy adolescents and young adults.

Regulatory Shifts Ahead

Prasad said CBER will undertake major reforms, including “swift action” on the new safety signal involving child deaths and ending authorization of vaccines in pregnant women based solely on “unproven” surrogate antibody endpoints.

There will also be a requirement for pre-market randomized clinical trials for most new vaccines, updated guidelines for simultaneous administration of multiple vaccines, and an overhaul of the annual flu vaccine framework, described as a “catastrophe of low quality evidence, poor surrogate assays, and uncertain vaccine effectiveness measured in case-control studies with poor methods.”

Prasad said that vaccine regulation will now be guided by strict evidence-based medicine and that COVID-19 vaccines will no longer receive preferential assumptions of benefit.

“Vaccines will be treated like all other medication classes—no better or worse,” he wrote.

He instructed CBER staff who disagreed with the new direction to submit their resignations.

The Epoch Times has contacted the FDA and the Department of Health and Human Services with a request for comment.

Access the article: https://www.theepochtimes.com/us/fda-internal-memo-links-child-deaths-to-covid-19-vaccination-5951428?utm_medium=app&c=share_pos3&pid=iOS_app_share&utm_source=iOS_app_share

ICYMI

ANTI-COMMUNISM WEEK, 2025

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – A PROCLAMATION – November 7 2025

This week, our Nation observes Anti-Communism Week, a solemn remembrance of the devastation caused by one of history’s most destructive ideologies. Across continents and generations, communism has wrought devastation upon nations and souls. More than 100 million lives have been taken by regimes that sought to erase faith, suppress freedom, and destroy prosperity earned through hard work, violating the God-given rights and dignity of those they oppressed. As we honor their memory, we renew our national promise to stand firm against communism, to uphold the cause of liberty and human worth, and to affirm once more that no system of government can ever replace the will and conscience of a free people.

For more than a century, communism has brought nothing but ruin. Wherever it spreads, it silences dissent, punishes beliefs, and demands that generations kneel before the power of the state instead of standing for freedom. Its story is written in blood and sorrow, a grim reminder that communism is nothing more than another word for servitude.

In the 34 years since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed both the triumph of democracy and the persistence of tyranny in new forms. New voices now repeat old lies, cloaking them in the language of “social justice” and “democratic socialism,” yet their message remains the same: give up your freedom, place your trust in the power of the government, and trade the promise of prosperity for the empty comfort of control. America rejects this evil doctrine. We remain a Nation founded on the eternal truth that liberty and opportunity are the birthrights of every person, and that no ideology, whether foreign or domestic, can extinguish them.

As we mark Anti-Communism Week, we stand united in defense of the values that define us as a free people. We honor the victims of oppression by keeping their cause alive and by ensuring that communism and every system that denies the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness will find their place, once and for all, on the ash heap of history.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim the week of November 2 through November 8, 2025, as Anti-Communism Week.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fiftieth.

DONALD J. TRUMP

Access the Proclamation: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/11/anti-communism-week-2025/>

Democrats' Dangerous Game Of Federal Nullification

Commentary by Victor Davis Hanson originally published in The Daily Signal (November 25 2025)

Editor's note: This is a lightly edited transcript of today's video from Daily Signal Senior Contributor Victor Davis Hanson.

Hello, this is Victor Davis Hanson for The Daily Signal. I'd like to talk about insurrection chic. By that I mean this phenomenon of the Democrats in particular, and maybe the Left in general, it's talking about ways of undermining the jurisdiction of our own federal government.

I don't know what their model is. Is it Jefferson Davis, who ordered South Carolina State Troops to fire on the federal fort at Fort Sumter in 1861 that ushered in the Civil War? Or maybe it's George Wallace, huh? Standing in the doorstep of the University of Alabama, saying, "We're not going to, here in Alabama, obey state law on segregation and racial discrimination."

Or maybe, did you ever see the movie "Seven Days in May" (1964) about an officer, General Scott? I think he was played by Burt Lancaster. And he said, basically, we're going to nullify the presidential directives and not abide by a treaty of the federal government—try to, essentially, overthrow the government.

This is very ironic because the Left lectured us on insurrection, insurrection, insurrection, even though special counsel Jack Smith never charged President Donald Trump with insurrection. But what's going on now is quite scary. And it's not new.

In the first term, we had a number of four-star retired admirals and generals who violated Article 88 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It said even retired flag officers were subject to the statute that says you shall not disparage the president of the United States. Yet, they called him Mussolini. They said that he was analogous to the people at Auschwitz, he was a liar.

We had one officer who said, the sooner the better, Trump should be removed. We have elections for that. We don't talk like that. We had two lieutenant colonels that said they bragged that the 101st Airborne would beat the Secret Service and force Donald Trump to get out of the White House. It's pretty awful.

Now, lately, it's getting very scary. We've had—the mayor of New York says that federal law essentially doesn't exist in the city of New York. When he takes over, it's international law. And that he will arrest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is under diplomatic protection, as a foreign dignitary visiting the U.N. What's he going to do? Order the NYPD to stop the Secret Service that may be protecting Netanyahu when he arrives as a guest?

We had Mayor Brandon Johnson in Chicago say that he was not going to obey federal law. In fact, he was going to oppose it. That wasn't just—I don't know—theoretical because when Immigration and Customs Enforcement was trapped, a convoy of ICE agents were trapped, the Chicago area police force did not come to their aid, by explicit orders not to.

In Los Angeles, Mayor Karen Bass said that city officials are conspiring, working to tip off illegal aliens against the efforts of the federal government, to stop them.

In California, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, who had called the president of the United States the most vile creature in the world, the worst creature in the world, a vile creature, and who tore up the State of the Union address on national TV, she said that state law enforcement might arrest federal officials who were enforcing the immigration statutes. What? Would that be a shoot-out? Or what would that be? It's getting very, very scary.

And then, most recently, we had a number of Democratic Congress people and senators say in a video that they were addressing soldiers, and they said, you have the right to disobey an order, if it's unlawful. They never gave one example of any order, of any order, that Donald Trump or any member of the administration or any senior officer had issued anyone that was deemed illegal. What was the point of that? What was the point of telling 1.3 million soldiers that are now on active duty that you have the right to disobey a superior's order?

Did they quote Article 90 and 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice? No. It outlines specifically the very, very, very, very rare conditions under which a soldier can say, "What you ordered me is unlawful." And you know what they are. They're things like using violence in an improper way against another person or desertion. But there's no example that they can give. None at all.

We have 600 jurisdictions in which blue cities and states say that the federal law no longer applies in their jurisdiction. That's sort of neo-Confederate nullification that's prompted the Civil War. And you know, when Jefferson Davis, when he ordered South Carolina troops to fire on Fort Sumter, all he was doing was saying that the federal government is at war with the state. That's what our mayors are doing in these blue jurisdictions.

Do they believe that that is a principle that they would extend to everybody? No. If a county in Utah said, "We're conservative, we don't believe in the"—I don't know—"the Endangered Species Act. We're not gonna stop construction for a newt." Would they say, "That's fine, you can nullify federal law"? No, they wouldn't.

If somebody in Montana said, "I don't like federal gun registration, it just hampers the people in our county. It doesn't apply here," would the Left say, "Yes. That's what we do with immigration. Congratulations"? No.

So, what's going on? Why are they nullifying federal law? Why are they advising protesters in Portland how to avoid arrests by federal authorities?

Why are they telling people in all of these blue jurisdictions that they will appeal to a higher authority, the United Nations? Mayor Johnson says he'll call in the U.N., the Commission on Human Rights. Is he going to abide by that commission that in the past has had members like, I don't know, Communist China, North Korea, Iran?

Is that who he thinks have a higher authority than the Constitution? Does he understand the president of the United States was elected by a majority of the population who voted?

So, this is getting very, very scary. And why are they doing it? The Left has no power in the legislative, executive, or judicial branch of government. Their agenda is one that most people do not want. And they want to create as much Teslas. In the past, that has included firebombing Tesla dealerships. That has involved street protests that turned violent against ICE. That has involved social media celebrating assassins and violence.

And now it's the nullification of federal laws that, in the Constitution, take precedent over local and state laws, when federal officers are trying to protect federal property, as they are now, and enforce federal statutes, as they are now. In other words, the Left is neo-Confederate and insurrectionary. And it should stop before we get into 1861, again.

Access the Commentary: https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/11/25/insurrection-chic-democrats-dangerous-new-fad/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=victor-davis-hanson-democrats-dangerous-game-of-federal-nullification&_bhlid=814660a7c11256331552de238141c63ced8c90ac

Biden's Immigration Invasion Was Nothing Like The Huddled Masses Coming Through Ellis Island

Commentary by Victor Davis Hanson originally published in The Daily Signal (November 18 2025)

Between 1892 and 1954, approximately 12 million immigrants arrived at the now-iconic Ellis Island to enter the U.S.—or nearly 200,000 legal entries per year.

All were registered, documented, and given rudimentary health exams.

They arrived as rich and poor, white and non-white, and, without exception, legally.

With the gradual decline of such great influxes, Ellis Island finally ceased operating roughly 71 years ago.

Yet Ellis Island's successful tenure offers a sharp contrast to the failures of our recent open-border catastrophes.

Americans will never know how many immigrants swarmed the southern border between 2021 and 2025, when former President Joe Biden and his impeached Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas destroyed federal immigration law as we once knew it.

By design, they allowed between 10 million and 12 million foreign nationals to make a mockery of federal immigration laws by swarming the southern border.

Many crossers grew violent at any sign of even meek efforts by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers to enforce the law. Border Patrol officers were often mocked, threatened, and assaulted by arriving illegal aliens.

Officers were unsure as to what was worse: the occasional violence from illegal immigrants or retaliation from the Biden administration if they sought to enforce federal law and block illegal entrants.

So the Biden administration pulled off the near impossible. In a mere four years, it had invited in almost as many illegal immigrants as had entered through Ellis Island legally over seven decades.

But unlike past immigrants, we now witness organized violence against ICE officials. We see Orwellian scenes of mobs burning the American flag—the flag of the country they demand to stay in—while waving the flags of the countries they have no desire or intention of returning to.

In sum, three generations ago, a smaller, poorer, but wiser America properly solved its immigration problem at Ellis Island—welcoming in immigrants orderly and legally with health and background screenings.

In contrast, during the Biden years, we, in our arrogance and affluence, engaged in a great experiment—or rather misadventure. Never in our history has the U.S. been home to roughly 53 million foreign-born residents.

Never have immigrants comprised nearly 16% of the population.

Never has California had 27% of its residents not born in the U.S.

Never have we allowed in up to 10,000 aliens a day, with little concern for whether they carried fentanyl, had criminal records, were sick, were unvaccinated, were traffickers, or belonged to violent gangs.

Worse still, the Biden administration made zero effort to acculturate, integrate, and assimilate this massive influx. In fact, they did the very opposite of Ellis Island's protocols, which fostered pro-American values, melting-pot integration, and respect for American history and culture. Once upon a time, new arrivals were all expected to become Americans—or why else had they come?

Now, the moment an illegal alien has entered the U.S., he likely senses that his ethnicity or race will be essential to his identity. In the minds of the ruling diversity, equity, and inclusion commissariat, claiming a tribal identity offers an easy pathway to generous housing, food, healthcare, legal, and educational entitlements.

So, under Biden's immigration non-policy, almost all illegal immigrants were immediately categorized as victims in the Marxist binary ledger that now divides America into the oppressed vs. the oppressors.

If one devised a plan to damage America, he could not have done better than further dividing us by tribal chauvinism, overwhelming our fragile social services so essential to struggling Americans, and fueling the already dangerous neo-Confederate state and local nullifications of federal law and the growth of "sanctuary cities."

Daily, we witness performance-art mayors and governors boasting of how they "resist" federal law enforcement. These modern rebels pose as if they are our own era's versions of mini-Confederate states. They now brag of states' rights as they dare the federal government to protect its own property and enforce federal laws within their parochial jurisdictions.

Why did Biden—or whoever was making policy in his place—destroy the border?

What was his utterly mad intent?

To alter the nation's demography by importing future Democrat constituents dependent on state largesse?

To bow to the demands of his DEI base?

To mindlessly do the opposite of the prior Trump administration, which had closed the border and returned to legal-only immigration?

Virtue signaling while waving illegal aliens across an open border is easy.

But trying to close the border and return millions who entered unlawfully to their homelands is nearly impossible.

It is surreal that those who claimed moral superiority while systemically destroying federal law now condemn as immoral those striving to restore it.

Access the article: <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/11/18/confronting-anti-ellis-island-immigration/>

Black Leaders' Silence Kills Nigerian Christians

Opinion by Clarence V. McKee originally published in Newsmax (November 25 2025)

Black Political and Church Leaders Silent on Slaughter of Christians in Nigeria

In case you haven't noticed, there is an ongoing humanitarian crisis in Nigeria: genocide against Christians by Islamic terrorists!

According to a report by the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (InterSociety) — a non-governmental organization(NGO) which monitors and tracks human rights abuses in Nigeria — over 125,000 Christians have been killed since 2009.

It states that during that same period:

- 19,100 churches were razed
- More than 1,100 Christian communities were sacked
- Over 600 Christian Clerics were abducted . . .
- Including 250 Catholic priests and 350 pastors

Additionally, 7,087 Christians were killed between and 7,800 others were abducted between January 1 and August 10 of this year.

And, just this past Friday, 315 schoolchildren and 12 teachers were abducted by gunmen during an attack on Catholic boarding school.

The mainstream media began covering the crisis only after President Trump designated Nigeria a "Country of Particular Concern."

On Truth Social, he said that Christianity was facing an "existential threat in Nigeria. . . When Christians, or any such group, are slaughtered like is happening in Nigeria. . . something must be done!"

Thankfully, some are speaking out.

Rap Artist Nicki Minaj teamed up with United Nations Ambassador Mike Waltz to condemn Nigeria for its persecution of Christians, saying that “Christians are being targeted, driven from their homes and killed . . .” She praised the Trump administration for its actions.

They are not alone.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, commended Trump’s designation and introduced legislation, supported by several other Republicans, to protect Christians by holding Nigerian officials who facilitate the violence accountable.

In the House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Africa Subcommittee Chairman Chris Smith, R-N.J., held hearings on the “systematic and accelerating violence.”

Rep. Riley M. Moore, R-W. Va., introduced a Resolution condemning the persecutions and met with a Nigerian delegation to discuss the situation.

My question: where are the Congressional Black Caucus, the World Conference of Black Mayors, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and other Black political organizations in condemning the genocide in Nigeria?

Apparently, commending Trump for speaking out against the Nigerian slaughter would be above their political pay grades!

The same criticism applies to the leadership of the seven major Black American Christian churches:

- The National Baptist Convention
- The Progressive National Convention
- The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- The Church of God in Christ
- The National Baptist Convention of America
- The African Methodist Episcopal Church
- The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

And don’t forget Barack and Michelle Obama — add them to the list.

The silence of all is deafening — and shameful.

You can bet that if Trump were a Democrat they would be commending his actions and surrounding him in the Oval Office.

Another question: Where are Minaj’s fellow Black and white members of the entertainment industry, who usually are so anxious to add their names to liberal political causes?

Nowhere in sight.

To be fair, to the best of my knowledge, major white religious organizations, such as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which has been quick to criticize the Trump administrations’ immigration policies, has also been silent on the issue.

Pope Leo XIV, who supports the UCCP criticisms of the administration’s immigration policies, has not strongly condemned the slaughter, saying:

“Unfortunately, many Christians have died, and I think it’s very important to seek a way for the government, with all peoples, to promote authentic religious freedom.”

At least this Pope has commented on the situation — unlike Pope Pius XII, who gained the name “Hitler’s Pope” for failing to condemn Hitler or the Holocaust publicly. His critics accused him of remaining silent, never publicly condemning the persecution and genocide of Jews and others.

Compared to his negative comments calling the treatment of illegal migrants in this country ‘extremely disrespectful’, Pope Leo XIV’s statements on the slaughter of Christians in Nigeria have been mild to say the least.

If the above organizations — and the Obama’s — strongly condemned Nigeria for permitting the slaughter of Black Christians, the Nigerian government would find a way to stop the killing and crack down on Boko Haram and other Islamic militant terrorist perpetrators.

Just recently, the Nigerian president postponed his G20 trip to South Africa because of the crisis.

The white South African government under Apartheid was condemned and ostracized by most of the international community and the United States, including major Black organizations.

Have these same groups condemned Nigeria for the Black-on-Black genocide in that Black government’s country?

It’s the same old story: a Black life is worth more if taken by whites than if by other Blacks.

In the United States, much of the Black and white liberal political leadership turns the other cheek when Blacks are killing Blacks — as in Chicago!

Unfortunately, the same applies globally.

Access the article: <https://www.newsmax.com/clarencevmckee/nigeria-christians-minaj/2025/11/25/id/1235929/>

Public Corner

Public Local Meetings

Interested in attending public meetings? Here are a few in your area for this month.

<https://www.mercercounty.org/i-want-to/calendar-meeting-list>

HVRSD School Board Meeting

Monday December 15, 2025 - 6:30 PM

425 S Main St. Pennington, NJ 08534

Or Livestream on YouTube

Municipal Township Meetings

<https://www.hopewelltpw.org/calendar.aspx?CID=32>

Monday, December 15, 2025 6:30 PM

Meetings are in hybrid format- Township Municipal Building & Zoom

Township meetings will be held at HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL SERVICES BUILDING 201 Washington Crossing - Pennington Road, Titusville, NJ 08560. In case you are unable to attend Township Committee mtgs, the recordings are available. Per the township clerk's office Kathy, they are "usually," available within a few days of the meeting.

Happy viewing click here:

https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/k83q0qZsxB_6dlk4EjvYfv9xDQOqNH9z/videos?autostart=true&showtabssearch=true

Or: <https://www.hopewelltpw.org/> select How Do I.../ bottom right View/ Video Library

Board of Elections Meeting

Tuesday December 9, 2025 at 12:00 PM

Board of Elections Meetings will be at 930 Spruce St., Lawrence, NJ 08648

Mercer County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Schedule -- December 2025

Tuesday December 9, 2025 6:00 PM Agenda Meeting

Thursday December 11, 2025 6:00 PM Formal Meeting

Monday December 22, 2025 6:00 PM Formal & Agenda Meeting

Agenda and Formal Meetings will take place at the Mercer County Administration Building, Room 211, 640 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ unless otherwise stated.

In order to encourage full participation of these meetings, please submit any requests for accommodations of people with disabilities to the Clerk to the Board, Mercer County Administration Building, PO Box 8068, Trenton, NJ 08650

(609) 989-6584 {V/TTY} {Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 101-336}

TruthBTold



At the Movies, Bookstores

The Two Swords Of Christ: Five Centuries Of War between Islam And The Warrior Monks Of Christendom

Hardcover: 512 Pages • Publication Date: November 25 2025
Author: Raymond Ibrahim • Publisher: Bombardier Books

Overview - The definitive account of the warrior-monks who stood as Christendom's shield against centuries of relentless Islamic aggression, and a superlative example of Muscular Christianity for an era marred by effete and effeminized forms of the faith.

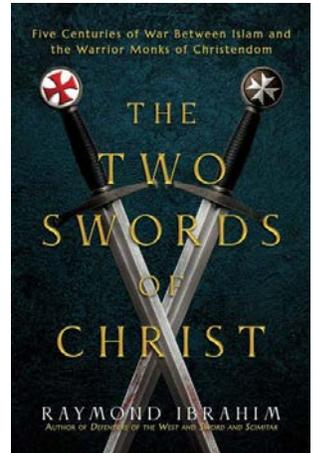
In this magisterial history, Raymond Ibrahim chronicles the long and brutal conflict between Islam and the West through the eyes and lives of Christendom's original commando forces: the knights of the Temple and Hospital. These warrior monks, whose unprecedented fusion of piety and militancy remains unmatched to this day, played a pivotal —though overlooked if not suppressed — role in defending Christian civilization against the onslaught of Islamic forces during the Crusades and beyond.

Drawing on an exhaustive study of primary sources, and infused with his signature blend of rigorous scholarship and compelling storytelling, Ibrahim's groundbreaking work far transcends the typical constraints of modern academic retellings, debunks widely held myths (such as the persistent claim that the Templars evolved into the Freemasons), and uncovers the theological foundation that gave rise to and provided justification for these military orders. In line with Christ's now ignored directive that "two swords" are "enough" (Luke 22:38), these two brotherhoods wielded both spiritual and martial power to safeguard the faith.

WARNING: Brimming with epic battles, stunning heroism, and self-sacrificial martyrdom against the savage hordes of Islam, The Two Swords of Christ—the third installment of Ibrahim's trilogy (following Sword and Scimitar and Defenders of the West)—stands as his fiercest and most violent narrative to date.

To purchase: Amazon, Barnes & Noble

About the author, more information: <https://www.raymondibrahim.com/about>



A Christmas Story (1983)

1983, PG • 1hr 33mins • Director: Bob Clark

Stars: Peter Billingsley, Melinda Dillon, Darren McGavin, Ian Petrella, Scott Schwartz

It's the final days before Christmas in early 1940s Cleveland, and 9-year-old Ralphie wants one thing from Santa Clause more than anything else: a Red Ryder Carbine Action Air Rifle. As he trudges through the snow to school, faces the neighborhood bully and visits a malevolent department store Santa Clause, Ralphie connives, conspires and campaigns for the most fabulous Christmas present ever in this heartwarming, hysterical and sweetly nostalgic holiday film.

On TV/cable: AMC - 4:15 a.m. Dec. 21; TBS - 9:30 a.m. and 10 p.m. Dec. 14, 7 p.m. Dec. 24 to 7 p.m. Dec. 25 (24-hour marathon); TNT - 3:45 p.m. Dec. 19, 11:30 p.m. Dec. 20, 8 p.m. Dec. 24 to 8 p.m. Dec. 25 (24-hour marathon).

About the film, trailer, more information: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085334/>



Father Christmas

It must be more than the BB gun and the leg lamp, so what keeps bringing us back to this beloved holiday film?

By: Werner Graf '86 originally published in Notre Dame Magazine (December 15, 2022)

The description of the movie A Christmas Story on the TV guide reads as follows: "In the 1940s, little Ralphie tries to convince his parents to get him a Red Ryder Range Model BB gun for Christmas." Viewers know that this thumbnail plot summary is a grave disservice. No film with that shallow a premise would ever warrant 24/7 looped viewing on two major cable stations. Nor would such a flimsy cinematic narrative justify its own museum drawing millions of visitors, a Santa's bag full of eclectic cultural references or enshrinement as one of the greatest Christmas movies of all time in a survey of critics. No, this is an epic.

After its paltry 1983 opening in theaters, the film's status grew through the 1980s and 90s, eventually gaining so many delighted viewers that it transitioned stealthily from cult to culture. It now ranks in the stratosphere of such time-honored classics as *It's a Wonderful Life*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Miracle on 34th Street*.

When writer Jean Shepherd's melodic voiceover in the opening scene honors his old Hammond, Indiana, home, the movie immediately takes us to his 1940 childhood avatar, Ralphie Parker. "Christmas! The time of year that every kid's calendar revolves around." And yet to categorize this film simply as a Christmas classic is also a mistake. For it is something more. Much more. But why?

My revelation started in December 2021 when I discovered, to my great dismay, that my 90-year-old father, Werner (Rip) Graf '61, had never seen the movie. This was somewhat baffling given that our family had for years enjoyed Christmas buffets at Fortune House in Michigan City, Indiana, complete with requisite "Fa-ra-ra-ra-ra's" and jokes about chopping off duck heads. Dad had apparently been laughing at the references all these years thinking they were purely products of his weird and creative children.

It was clear that we had failed him. How could Dad have not seen a film about an 9-year-old boy in northern Indiana (The Region, as we call it) in 1940? My father was that exact age then, growing up in Michigan City, a mere 30 miles from Ralphie's home. When Ralphie is in bed in one scene, he hears the same horn from the South Shore that 9-year-old Dad would have heard 40 minutes later as the train made its way from Chicago to South Bend. Hard to believe Ralphie could be 90 years old, but he is.

So, it was my mission last Christmas to sit my father down and watch the film. Watching movies with Dad had become a common pastime over the years and period films like westerns and murder mysteries have been a staple. But in October 2021, Dad suffered a stroke, the kind which left him with a strong long-term memory — such as recalling the family's 1945 Chevy panel truck — but made recalling the current day a challenge. It hadn't paralyzed him, but made him so unsteady that falls became a daily mortal danger.

Making it downstairs to the big screen had become an effort, more like physical therapy, and watching movies together had become even more of a treasure. So one day last Christmas week, we made it an event. We descended the double staircase, lit a nice fire, turned off all the lights except for the tree, and let *A Christmas Story* claim one more delighted fan.

The first thing a new viewer might notice is that, from the outset, a virtual hodgepodge of unrelated concepts come at the audience in staccato, a precursor of the popular TV series *The Wonder Years*. We see life not only through the eyes of a 9-year old boy, but through the reflective wisdom of his adult self. The scenes bounce from subject to subject, interrupted with vivid daydreams and detours through pre-war era family routines. Parental quirks, school angst, peer pressure, daring protocols, a fascination with cursing, bullies, decoder rings, pink bunny outfits, corporal punishment and other rites of passage — all seen through a child's lens. This includes the pursuit of the object of Ralphie's desire: a Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model air rifle with a compass in the stock and a timepiece.

The humor expertly drives the mood which permeates this odd film, weaving seemingly unrelated memories into a cohesive theme around his Christmas pursuit of the gun. Many of the scenes are purposely exaggerated to capture Ralphie's warped pre-adolescent perceptions compared to the much saner reality. The famous "Santa Slide" scene is a perfect example: to Ralphie, the elves become borderline sadistic, as opposed to a more mundane reality only evident when the scene ends. As he picks Ralphie up — limp, defeated and demoralized at the bottom of the slide — his father asks whether Santa knew if he had been a good boy and heard what he wanted for Christmas while in the background, we see a much saner Santa crew doling out holiday cheer. This is a vitally important scene, though not initially apparent.

The humorous pursuit of a gun at Christmas is clever, but still doesn't make much sense as a catalyst for the film's cultish following. The cinematic techniques alone were not unique or powerful enough for me and others to watch *A Christmas Story* so often and with such delight. No, something subconsciously drove my insistence that Dad watch it. What was it?

As one scene after another referenced 1940s northern Indiana, Dad snapped me out of contemplation with repeated exclamations of, "I remember that!" Maybe it was just that: nostalgia. It's about a long, lost America and home. In fact, Shepherd's citing of the *Wizard of Oz* throughout the movie not only provides a period timestamp, but an undercurrent theme that there's indeed no place like home. What generates the familial joy of Christmas if not our traditions? The Higbee's department store window? The reflections of childhood as a safe place with family and comfort food; the dreams of heroism (Dell's Red Ryder Comic No. 1 first appeared in September, 1940) all wrapped in a season of peace to men of goodwill? The nostalgia of home embedded in the film amplified by the Christmas setting — surely a winning combination.

Though not overtly religious (Ralphie's family never once mentions Jesus or going to church), the goodwill of Christmas and the importance of Christianity as part the fabric and foundation of this nostalgic America is clearly on display. The setting is of a safe, self-sufficient, moral community. When the Bumpus' dogs harass the father and eventually ravage the Parkers' turkey, there's no thought of neighborly confrontation, violence or litigation. It is what it is. They're dogs. It's a time when parents could leave a 9-year-old Ralphie and his 6-year-old brother, Randy, alone in the Santa line at a busy department store while they shopped.

This is a picture of a population unashamed of its culture, long before religious expression in the public square became a contentious constitutional issue, unaware of any controversy surrounding it and completely unbent by worry that someone, somewhere, was going to be offended by our national Christian heritage. It depicts a simpler era, where an orderly classroom, void of phones and talk-back, is adorned with a prominent American flag and the third-grade assignment is unashamedly to write a theme: "What I want for Christmas."

Many people today, myself included, are dumbfounded and a little frosted that our public schools go on "winter break" and no longer allow overtly Christian songs in year-end "holiday concerts." But Christmas in Ralphie's world is America's holiday. It is an overt and ubiquitous American celebration integral to communal bonding. It is inherently proper, rather than controversial or in need of any disclaimer.

It's not just the film's portrayal of Christmas that's refreshing. A Christmas Story was released in November 1983 and, like many films produced 30 to 40 years ago, is completely devoid of the fear of cancel culture. The entire premise of a child wanting a rifle to shoot people, even Black Bart, makes it a testament to political incorrectness.

Aside from the clear reverence for guns, race relations are not constantly shoved in foreground. The portrayal of black America is tasteful, respectful and likely accurate, at least from the narrator's point of view. "Go Tell it on the Mountain" is sung on the street boldly and beautifully by black carolers in the opening scene and black students sit side by side as equals in the desegregated Indiana school system.

Despite its reputation for having a robust KKK over the years, Indiana had in fact amended its "separate but equal" status earlier than many states. Way back in 1877, the state called for integrated schools "when segregated schools weren't available" — a monumental move given most small communities like Hammond and Michigan City didn't have resources for two schools, thus virtually assuring integration throughout the state. Dad's own recollection of black schoolmates in Michigan City was one of equality and respect, if not intimate interaction.

The movie is blissfully free of some woke, solipsistic corporate exec's racial or gender politics. There is no infusing of victimhood or oppression narratives which now seem to permeate almost everything coming out of Hollywood. It simply shows people as products of their time, unblemished by narcissistic judgement of unaccomplished descendants. In fact, the Library of Congress selected A Christmas Story two decades ago for preservation in the U.S. National Film registry for its "cultural, historical or aesthetic significance."

Even so, I noticed on a recent transcontinental flight that the airline tagged A Christmas Story as not appropriate for kids — strange, since the movie is rated a benign PG for "brief, mild violence and language and some bullying." Whatever prompted this, I hope it does not eliminate a time-honored harbinger of yuletide joy and remove yet another vibrant thread in the American cultural fabric.

In the meantime, there is no denying that the film is wildly popular either because of, or in spite of, its politically incorrect nostalgia. But nostalgia, even American Christmas nostalgia, still can't explain the film's lasting popularity. Very few nostalgic Christmas films elicit the sheer loyalty and anticipation needed for multiple viewings every year. What really brings us back?

Dad, thoroughly enjoying the film, asks me to turn it up. In parallel to Ralphie's childish take on the world, we see a father — portrayed by the late, great Darren McGavin — somewhat detached from the goings-on around him. In fact, like many dads I know, he has that inner little boy's amazement about the world: finishing puzzles, joking about the Sox and Bears, fighting furnace demons and making an Indy 500 game out of changing flat tires. Most illustrative might be his little dance in claiming his "major award," the now-infamous leg lamp that has since become a national Christmas decoration — a case of life imitating art, perhaps not representing Christmas or the movie, but rather the absurdity of the father's inner child. The mother (Melinda Dillon) takes pride in her role, knowing she's the glue holding her three little boys (the dad, Ralphie and Randy) together, even as she's accused of using all the glue to ensure the "accidentally" broken lamp cannot be repaired.

She is no subservient and stands up straight for herself. In that scene, after stealthily destroying the "major award," she meets the father's seething rant in front of the kids with her equally unapologetic, "That is the ugliest thing I've ever seen!" When he implies she's wrong about the tree lights and says, "I'm not color blind," she replies sternly, "I'm not color blind either." She will have none of it.

The lamp scene ends with her laughing under her breath as he puts the matter to rest in the backyard. They de-escalate. They don't lose perspective.

Although the contentious interplay of the parents is evident throughout film, it is clearly a backdrop to their mutual sacrifice, support and respect. She is constantly showing open affection to her husband with a tug on the elbow, a giggle at his jokes and dinner ready after a hard day. She's appreciative of his provider role. While tree shopping, they're touching noses, laughing as co-conspirators in the thrill of negotiation. Her gentle, happy pat on his shoulder honors him as they embark to setting out the presents on Christmas Eve. Christmas morning sees both of them with wine in hand silently toasting each other.

They are equals in love. The father asks her permission for Ralphie to take off the bunny outfit, the pink nightmare, and she concedes, allowing him to be the hero and bail the boy out of his misery. His hand is lightly on her waist as she removes the

turkey from the oven. In the final scene, she comes down the stairs and turns on the radio, which is playing "Silent Night." He says "come over here, honey, and look at this," as she walks over he hands her another glass of wine. Their glasses clink and he gently caresses the back of her neck before they wrap their arms around each other. Their last scene has them watching God's gift of a Christmas snowstorm through the front window bathed in the soft glow of their family Christmas tree. They share a quiet reflection on a job well done, two parents raising children in a material world with all of its earthly challenges, distractions and the hectic give-and-take of marriage.

Their evident affection and the portrayal of the iconic family is clearly another reason for the movie's popularity. It is reassuring to see two parents enjoy camaraderie in raising their family and pulling off another Christmas for the kids. It is an acknowledgement that in a crazy world, peace is found through a celebration of family and the birth of Christ through good parental works. This is clearly part of the movie's draw.

My dad is having a nice time in his chair and blanket as the fire's embers glow. I'm cherishing his companionship as we finish this masterpiece and it occurs to me that 2021 has been the year of Saint Joseph, honoring the model of all fathers. I reflect on my father's support through the years.

McGavin delivers a clarion performance as a lovable but flawed authority figure. His effusive cursing, "a tapestry of obscenity that as far as we know is still hanging in space over Lake Michigan," was not portrayed as a vice but rather, as Mark Twain once noted of profanity, "a relief denied even to prayer."

He is respected, revered and even feared. In fact, the kids' respect for him was underpinned by an overt fear. "Eat or I'll give you something to cry about!" he threatens the younger brother. Later, Shepherd narrates, "I was dead," after Ralphie drops the f-bomb while helping to fix a flat tire. As Ralphie cries in bed, awaiting paternal consequences after his fight with bully Scut Farkas, Randy hides in a kitchen cabinet sobbing, "Daddy's going to kill Ralphie!"

In the dad's defense, corporal punishment was a common practice back then, as evidenced by Schwartz being whacked ferociously by his mother after an impromptu phone call bearing false witness. Even Ralphie's sweet mother employed the "soap in the mouth" punishment.

And yet, the father was a clear Saint Joseph figure, providing for his family with patience and without request for acknowledgement. He battles the furnace, decides on the big Christmas tree, fixes the tires, replaces the fuses and tries to make the tree-top star perfect. When the Old Man gets his worthless gifts of a blue bowling ball (which will likely see as much daylight as the bunny suit) and a can of Simoniz (car wax — I had to look it up), he is gracious, honoring the giver by feigning happiness. He is wise because he already knows he has it all: his family. He clearly has the boys' respect and, more importantly, has his wife's love, support and devotion to the family they're building.

Saint John Paul reminded us in his 1994 Letter to Families that "the history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family." Men often need practical ways to accomplish "fatherhood," and by daily, often mundane works, they provide that umbrella of support and protection which is essential to raising decent and well-adjusted children. Saint Joseph was the patron saint of workers, described simply as a "worker" in the Bible (MT 13:55). He performed no miracles that we know of in protecting and raising Jesus. Rather, it seems he played the same role as Ralphie's Old Man. Imperfect as he was, the Old Man was there — dedicated, and more observant than you might think from his cursing and fumbling through the film.

Toward the end, in the Christmas morning scene where Ralphie finally gets his gun, a strange thing happens. Unexpectedly, the film moves on from that singular event that the story had built up to. Instead of a crescendo, it defaults back to the humorous hodgepodge of serial scenes, almost trivializing the moment. The gun, the drama, its momentous acquisition comes and goes, just like the scene of Flick touching his tongue to the frozen pole.

It's weird and almost anti-climactic. A normal movie might have ended there with fanfare, but then we begin to realize that the entire build up to getting the gun was a cinematic head fake. In fact, the gun becomes a footnote, like so many physical items which, once acquired, become no longer a yearning. It is no more than any other transient earthly thing and the movie brilliantly treats it as such.

It turns out the mysterious success of *A Christmas Story* is not from the pursuit or acquisition of the Red Ryder Rifle at all. It's not the humor, nor the nostalgia for simpler times. It's not the narrative style or the Christmas setting for which it is named. These are but solid supporting pillars.

I finally realize in my umpteenth viewing and conscious reflection that the real essence of the movie is its showcasing of the glory of fatherhood.

The Old Man, as it turns out, is indeed Saint Joseph, repeatedly rescuing the family from disaster. His actions throughout underpin the theme. When the Bumpus' dogs devour their Christmas dinner and the mother sobs, it is he, the father, who suppresses any justified anger, straightens up, and instructs his family to get dressed so that they can go out to eat and celebrate. It was nonnegotiable. They would not be defeated and the dad's firm voice immediately forbade the family to despair. He instinctively turns the disgusting ruins of a turkey platter into the best Christmas they ever had, when "all was right in the world."

In the movie's final scene, as Ralphie drifts off in bed clutching his gun, it all finally comes together. The father had asked Ralphie earlier in the department store if he had been a good boy and if Santa knew what he wanted. Ralphie's defeated reply was met with a strangely amused reassurance that, "He knows. He always knows." As it turns out, that is the key scene in the entire movie. We now realize that the gun's real value is in its representation of a father's attentive love, set in the Christmas season when Our Father gave his Son to humanity so that all would be "right in the world."

Ralphie closes his eyes knowing that he was a beloved son, with whom his father was well pleased. His Old Man knew what he wanted the whole time. He knew, just as Saint Joseph knew, just as our father in heaven knows exactly what we need. All was right in the world because his father had given him the greatest gift he had ever received, or would ever receive.

I glanced at my father as the fire died, reflected on a lifetime of his support and love, and felt the exact same way.

Access the article: <https://magazine.nd.edu/stories/father-christmas/>

We the People of Interest

Our New Jersey Signers Of The Declaration Of Independence

Publishers note: As we near 2026, our 250th Semiquincentennial, we wanted to encourage getting to know our esteemed New Jersey Signers of the Declaration of Independence.

- Abraham Clark
- John Hart (featured in November 2025)
- Francis Hopkinson
- Richard Stockton
- John Witherspoon (featured in this newsletter)

John Witherspoon (1723-1794) Signer Of The Declaration Of Independence

By James Alexander – 2006 on Descendants of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence website

John Witherspoon, the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence, was born in Yester, Scotland on 5 Feb 1722 or 1723. This is the same day, just the difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars. His parents were James Witherspoon and Anna Walker. Anna was John's first teacher. She taught him to read and by the age of four, he could read from the Bible and would eventually be able to recite most of the New Testament.

His father, James, was the minister of Yester Parish. He served on committees in the General Assembly and was the royal chaplain to the Lord High Commissioner. Anna came from a long line of clergymen that extended back to John Knox. She had six children. One of her sons was lost in the West Indies. She had a grandchild who was the tutor to Sir Walter Scott.

When John was 13 years old, based on his studies in English, the classics and mathematics, Latin Greek, and French, he was sent off to university at Edinburgh where he enrolled 1 November 1735. In the next three years, he completed the four year's work for a Master of Arts degree (there is no record of a Bachelor's degree) and toward the end of 1738 he petitioned to publish his thesis. Just after his sixteenth birthday, February, 1739, he was awarded his Master of Arts with a thesis in Latin, *De Mentis Immortalities*, signed by Johannes Wederspan (It was common practice at this time to use your Latinized name on academic documents). By the time he was 20, John had obtained his Doctor of Theology and a license to preach. He received his first parish, Beith, 11 April 1745. He married Elizabeth Montgomery, 2 September 1748. Elizabeth bore 9 children, 5 of whom survived to adulthood and made the journey to North America.

John was recruited by the trustees of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), Princeton, NJ to become the President of the College after the death of Dr. Samuel Finley, its fifth president. Benjamin Rush and Richard Stockton (later Signers of the Declaration of Independence) among others were sent to Scotland to recruit John for the position. Many of the letters between John and the various Princeton principals are contained in the Butterfield book referenced at the end of this biography.



Title: Portraits of signers of the Declaration of Independence

Call Number: MSS 12130

Citation: Robert Edge Pine. Copies of Pine's Portraits of Signers of the Declaration of Independence, 1820, Accession #12130, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

On 18 May 1768, John and his family sailed for Philadelphia on the brigantine Peggy, which arrived in August. The College of New Jersey bloomed under his direction. He grew the endowment fund, instituted curricular changes, and patched up a major schism in the Presbyterian church. By 1770 the College students were openly advocating in favor of the patriot cause. John, in a commencement address, advocated resistance to the Crown. In 1774-1775, he represented his county in the New Jersey provincial assembly, successfully agitating for the removal and imprisonment of the Royal Governor and received an appointment to the Continental Congress. On July 2, 1776, in response to a delegate who opposed ratification of the Declaration by saying "we are not ripe for revolution", John replied, "Not ripe sir, we are not only ripe for the measure but in danger of rotting for the want of it". In 1776, when the war entered New Jersey territory, he closed the College of New Jersey. The British occupied the College, burned its library and in general left things a mess. Many of John's papers were burned or destroyed at this time. The next year, James, one of John's sons, lost his life at the Battle of Germantown, PA.

John stayed with the Continental Congress until 1782. While a member of the Congress he aided in the reorganization of the Board of Treasury, drafted a letter of thanks to Lafayette, the credentials, and instructions for Franklin as minister plenipotentiary, and designed seals for Treasury and the Navy Department. He was also working to get the College back on its feet with classes beginning again in November 1778.

After the War, Witherspoon remained remarkably active and influential. He was a member of the ratifying convention that brought to New Jersey the honor of being the third state to ratify the Constitution of the United States. He contributed greatly to the organization of a newly independent and national Presbyterian Church and in 1789 opened its first General Assembly with a sermon and presided until the election of the first moderator. Above all, the name he had won as a pastor, an educator, and a patriot brought strength to the College. He is rightly remembered as one of the great presidents of Princeton.

In October 1789, his wife, Elizabeth, died suddenly. A month after her death, John returned to the New Jersey Assembly, where he was given the task of setting priorities of business; he elected to have the body deal with the treatment of prisoners, pensions of invalids, public debts, promotion of religion and morality, divorce, paper money, establishment of records of vital statistics, and encouragement of manufacturing. Even though his will names two slaves as his property, he later chaired a committee concerned with the abolition of slavery in New Jersey. Several of his descendants were officers in the Confederate States and were active in the traitor's cause of the southern rebellion.

In 1791, John, at age 68, married the 24-year-old Anne Marshall Dill. The couple had two children, one of whom died 9 days after birth. John lost his eyesight before he died in his home, "Tusculum," in Princeton on 15 November 1794. The following is a translation of the Latin engraved on his tombstone in The Princeton Cemetery:

Beneath this marble lie interred the mortal remains of JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D. LL.D. a venerable and beloved President of the College of New Jersey.

He was born in the parish of Yester, in Scotland, on the 5th of February, 1722, O. S. And was liberally educated in the University of Edinburgh; invested with holy orders in the year 1743, he faithfully performed the duties of his pastoral charge, during five and twenty years, first at Beith, and then at Paisley. Elected president of Nassau Hall, he assumed the duties of that office on the 13th of August, 1768, with the elevated expectations of the public. Excelling in every mental gift, he was a man of pre-eminent piety and virtue and deeply versed in the various branches of literature and the liberal arts.

A grave and solemn preacher, his sermons abounded in the most excellent doctrines and precepts, and in lucid expositions of the Holy Scriptures. Affable, pleasant, and courteous in familiar conversation, he was eminently distinguished in concerns and deliberations of the church, and endowed with the greatest prudence in the management and instruction of youth.

He exalted the reputation of the college amongst foreigners, and greatly promoted the advancement of its literary character and taste. He was, for a long time, conspicuous among the most brilliant luminaries of learning and of the Church.

At length, universally venerated, beloved, and lamented, he departed this life on the fifteenth of November, 1794 aged 73 years.

Access the biography: <https://www.dsdi1776.com/signer/john-witherspoon/>

Further reading:

<https://www.americanrevolution.org/john-witherspoon-biography/#>

<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/signers/witherspoon.htm>

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/646141/John-Witherspoon>

<https://constitutioncenter.org/signers/john-witherspoon>

<https://www.johnwitherspoon.com/2016/06/john-witherspoon-signer-of-declaration.html>

John Witherspoon's burial site in Princeton Cemetery: <https://nassauchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PrCemGuide2016WebVersion.pdf>

John Witherspoon's Princeton House "Tusculum": <https://princetonhistory.org/green-oval-tour/tusculum-farm.html>

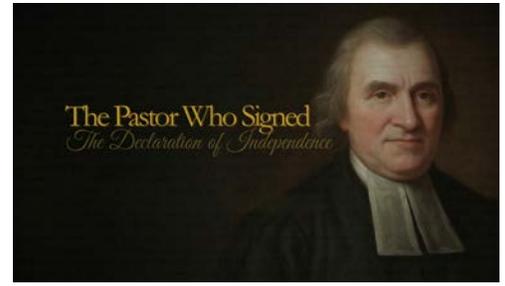


Photo: Tusculum Farm, 166 Cherry Hill Road on princetonhistory.org

The Pastor Who Signed The Declaration Of Independence

Commentary by Kendall Lankford originally published in *Kuyperian Commentary* (July 4 2025)

The Fourth of July means different things to different people. For some, today is a day to set the grill ablaze, to watch children run barefoot through sprinklers, to marvel at fireworks lighting up the summer sky. For others, it's a day of reflection—a time to pause in the hum of daily life to remember the cost of liberty and the miracle of our nation's birth. But for the Christian—especially the theologically awake one—it should be a day to do more than merely remember. It should be a day to rejoice in Providence, to recall the stories that others have forgotten, and to recover the spiritual foundation that once held this country together like a mighty oak planted beside the streams of truth.



And somewhere in that forgotten story is the name of a man you likely didn't hear about in school. John Witherspoon was not a general. He wasn't a soldier nor a wealthy landowner or a political theorist drafting elegant prose from a candlelit desk. He was a pastor.

His name was John Witherspoon, and he was the only ordained minister to sign the Declaration of Independence. And he didn't sign it in spite of his faith. He signed it because of it. And this is worthy of reflection.

THE PULPIT THAT GAVE WAY TO THE NATION

Born in Scotland and shaped by the glorious doctrines of Reformation, Witherspoon was no stranger to controversy. Before ever setting foot in the colonies, he had battled for orthodoxy in the church courts of his homeland. He had felt the sting of compromise, the temptation to soften doctrine, the subtle drift toward man-centered religion. But he held the line—not out of arrogance, but out of reverence to God. Not because he loved controversy, but because he feared the Lord.

When he was called to come to America and serve as the sixth president of the College of New Jersey—what we now call Princeton University—he saw it as more than a professional appointment. He saw it as a calling to build something of lasting and enduring legacy. Something godly. Something generational. He didn't come to hand out diplomas. He came to train warriors. Not with swords or rifles, but with the sword of the Spirit and the armor of truth.

At Princeton, he shaped the minds and hearts of a generation of American leaders—including a young man named James Madison, who would one day become the principal author of the U.S. Constitution. But Witherspoon wasn't just teaching politics. He was forming souls. He was helping young men see that liberty without virtue is a lie, and that virtue without Christ is a fantasy.

And when the tremors of revolution began to quake beneath the surface of colonial life, Witherspoon didn't recoil into pietistic detachment. He didn't hide behind his clerical collar or quote Romans 13 as an excuse for silence. He understood, with biblical clarity, that submission to lawful authority does not include obedience to tyrants. That kings, too, are under the law of God. And that when a government declares war on righteousness, it forfeits its moral claim to rule.

So he preached. He prayed. And when the moment came, he signed the Declaration of Independence.

A SIGNATURE BAKED IN HOLY FIRE

On July 4, 1776, fifty-six men affixed their names to a document that would change the world. Most were lawyers, merchants, farmers, or statesmen. But one man—a lone pastor—signed his name not as a civilian, but as a national shepherd. Witherspoon was a watchman. A minister of Christ who saw the ink of the Declaration as part of his pastoral duty.

Pastor Witherspoon wasn't trying to start a war. He was trying to uphold the law of God. He believed that the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness was not an Enlightenment invention, or a Lockean discovery, but an eternal theological truth—rooted in the image of God, grounded in the moral order, and attainable only by a people ruled by a Spirit-wrought conscience and conviction.

In a sermon preached just weeks before the signing—"The Dominion of Providence Over the Passions of Men"—Witherspoon declared with thunderous clarity:

"There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire."

That was his warning. That if we lose the gospel, we will lose our freedom. If we silence the pulpits, we will silence the conscience. If we forget God, we will forget what it means to be truly free.

And yet today, how many even know his name?

THE FORGOTTEN FOUNDER

If you venture a stroll across the manicured lawns of modern day Princeton, you will not find John Witherspoon celebrated as he once was. Why? Because his theology is far too strict for the institutions woke fragilities. The faith that he cleaved to was far too explicit to be named and much too serious for the modern academy, which has become a carnival of lies.

But the truth remains—he was there. This man shaped a generation. A theological giant who trained the very men who built the republic in which we stand. He preached the gospel that formed their character as one nation under God. And he dared to believe that pastors have a place in shaping history—not hidden away in churches, but in the public square.

Pastor Witherspoon reminds us this Independence Day, that the Declaration of Independence was not merely a philosophical treatise—it was, for some, a sacred action. An outpouring of biblical conviction. A testimony that freedom comes at a cost, and that the greatest tyranny is not over the body, but over the soul.

So on this Fourth of July, while the fireworks crackle in the darkened sky, and the parades pass by, remember that there was once a man who stood in the pulpit and said, “This far, no farther.” Remember that the church once raised up men like Witherspoon—unafraid, unflinching, unashamed. Men who could read Latin, preach the Psalms, and dismantle a tyrant’s argument in a single breath. Men who with steely spines believed that theology wasn’t just for the church—it was for the world.

Let us raise up that kind of man again.

And may our churches become the training grounds for true liberty.

And may our pastors speak boldly again with fire and backbone and biblical clarity.

Let us build a generation of sons and daughters who understand that true freedom is not the absence of authority—it is glad submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

And may we remember—with joy, with reverence, with tears if they come—that one of the first men to sign our freedom was a preacher of the Word.

And if ever we are to preserve this experiment in ordered liberty and freedom, we will need many more men just like him.

Happy Independence Day!

Access the article: <https://kuyperian.com/the-pastor-who-signed-the-declaration-of-independence/>

Editor’s Note:

Mercer We the People was blessed in 2024 to have launched our monthly newsletter, complete our first full year in 2025, and look forward to continuing our local work in 2026.

This continues to be done at no cost to our readers and only been made possible by a small diligent inspiring group of local community contributors, who voluntarily and regularly have given their time and effort to bring awareness to local news and information.

Mercer We the People is humbled, remains so grateful and thankful for the generosity and dedication of our contributors.

We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and may God’s blessing and mercy be with you and yours.

Last year we closed our newsletter and year with the emotional inspiring forward-looking words from Laken Riley. Just as devastating and unimaginable, we end 2025 with Charlie Kirk’s last Thanksgiving message.

Charlie Kirk’s Thanksgiving Message: Fulfill The Founders’ Mandate

By Susan D. Harris originally published in American Thinker (November 27 2025)

It could be argued successfully that Thanksgiving is the ultimate manifestation of America’s Christian founding. There is no other observance like it in the world — because no nation like America has ever existed before.

The mere act of stating this truth now triggers such ferocious attacks that we are kept perpetually on the defensive — distracted, impeded, and prevented from the free pursuit of higher thought that once propelled mankind forward.

A great nation that can no longer speak its founding premise without apology is on the road to ruin.

Charlie Kirk knew that. He understood that open debate is not merely healthy — it’s the key to national survival.

With that in mind, let’s take a look at what Kirk had to say about Thanksgiving and America — past, present and future.

Uniquely Awesome

Kirk called Thanksgiving “one of America’s greatest traditions because it’s a day just to give thanks ... it’s uniquely awesome.” Twice he featured historian Bill Federer as a guest specifically to discuss the Thanksgiving story, focusing on the Pilgrims’ biblical motivations, the Mayflower Compact, and America’s Christian roots.

Last year, Kirk laid out some powerful reasons to be thankful. None of us knew it would be his last Thanksgiving message. Let’s review its enduring significance.

Kirk's Last Thanksgiving Message

Perhaps it was no surprise that Charlie Kirk began his 2024 Thanksgiving show with reflections on the recent presidential election. He began:

"We knew that it was an existential survival question: Was this nation going to continue to exist? Was this nation going to survive?

And God shined His grace on this great Republic, and I believe our best days are ahead — that we are on the verge of an American Renaissance, a restoration. It's as if America is being powered up; it's being booted up. We are emerging from our slumber."

Then he walked us through the reasons we had to give thanks:

- "How thankful we are that Donald Trump didn't die on July 13th in Butler, Pennsylvania. How thankful we are that we were spared from all of the civil chaos. We all dodged a bullet on July 13th — and on November the 5th."
- "We are all recipients of this beautiful nation. And look at the remarkable sequence of events that have come together: the world's richest man [Elon Musk], a Kennedy, Tulsi Gabbard, a former DNC co-chair, Donald Trump surviving — all [coming] together to reclaim our nation. I just ... I am blown away with humility at that truth."
- "Gratitude is the fruit that makes everything else taste sweet. But then you must be thankful to whom? To the Almighty God ... The left feeds off of fear and smugness and ingratitude. The activist energy that fuels so many of these campus radicals is not gratitude ... Our side feeds off of love, community, and patriotism ... And so, as you sit around the Thanksgiving table ... just be thankful that we still have a country, thankful that we have the ability and the agency — and the table is set for the greatest reclamation of the Constitution in American history."
- "We did not receive the nation back fully intact, but we received an opening — and isn't that all that we were asking for? We were asking ... 'Give us a chance. Give us the ability to use our free will and ... our capacity to think, to be able then to restore liberty if the people were to want it.' But a prideful and a cocky nation will not be saved. You must be humble before the Lord and say, 'Thank you for allowing us this second chance that we do not deserve.'"
- Be thankful that we have this window in time that was given to us that we did not earn — to fulfill the founders' mandate ... [W]e have a 100-year detour that we've been taking post Woodrow Wilson — From FDR to Richard Nixon to Lyndon Baines Johnson. It was one president after another — one decision after another—that grew government, that got us off the Founders' course, that made the citizens smaller and the Leviathan bigger ... And what I'm saying is we should be thankful that we have an opportunity to fight — that what we do actually matters ... It's not that we received the end result, we have received a chance."

Leviticus on the Liberty Bell

No discussion of Charlie Kirk and Thanksgiving would be complete without some words from his viral clip, "America is a Christian Nation." In response to a question from the audience, he explained the following:

"Nine out of 13 of the original states required you to be a Bible-believing Christian to serve in government at the time of the founding. Actually, 13 out of 13 required a declaration of faith. Nine out of 13 required you to be a Protestant (except Maryland, which was Catholic but still required a declaration of faith). In almost every single one of the original state constitutions ... they had phrases like 'I profess the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.'"

"Secondly, 55 out of 56 of the original signers of the Declaration were Bible-believing, church-attending Christians."

"And we believe what the Founders believed — because they put it in the halls of Congress, they put it in the Supreme Court, they put it all throughout the country — that the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, is the core morality of how a society and a civilization should exist."

"Finally — and this is the kicker — if the Founding Fathers were not Bible-believing, church-attending Christians, why did they put Leviticus on the Liberty Bell? Not John, not Psalms, not Proverbs, not Genesis — Leviticus. Leviticus 25:10: 'Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof.'

It is one of the most sinister, most unsubstantiated lies that does not stand up to any sort of academic scrutiny: this idea that the Founding Fathers were a bunch of Enlightenment, common-law deists.

The reason they hate it, the reason they must say this, is that if we actually go back to our Christian roots and where we once were, it is America's best hope for revival and for a great future."

In their own words: The Pilgrims

No serious person can dispute that America was born a Christian nation — and Thanksgiving is the unique and unparalleled embodiment of that fact.

In their first act of self-government on these shores, the Pilgrims declare that they undertook their journey "for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith." The Mayflower Compact of 1620 has been called "the shortest American political document of enduring significance."

The Pilgrims' first religious day of thanksgiving came after a brutal drought threatened the colony. Governor William Bradford wrote: "They set apart a solemn day ... to seek the Lord by humble and fervent prayer in this great distress." It rained — and a nation that would one day span a continent learned its first lesson in gratitude to Almighty God.

That unbroken thread — from the Mayflower to every fourth Thursday in November — is an unbroken pact between a people and their God. The origin of the holiday is not lost in the mists of time; it echoes across the ages for all to hear.

Access the article: https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2025/11/charlie_kirk_s_thanksgiving_message_fulfill_the_founders_mandate.html



Photo Courtesy of The Epoch Times: First Lady Unveils White House Christmas Décor.
The theme for 2025 is 'Home Is Where the Heart Is.'

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley Newsletters:

Access previous issues at: <https://hvr.agop.org/merceroe-the-people/>

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