

The Real Crisis Behind America's Unrest Begins in the Classroom

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Imagine what could happen if we reclaimed our schools for truth.



Across America today, the sounds of unrest—riots, division, and violence—echo through our streets and flood our screens. We witness the destruction, the hatred, the confusion, and too often, we respond with temporary solutions.

We debate policies, propose reforms, or seek to manage the chaos at the surface level. But the real crisis is far deeper and far more uncomfortable to confront: the unrest we see is the natural consequence of moral and spiritual decay. And that decay didn't come from nowhere. It was cultivated deliberately, over decades, in our nation's classrooms.

For generations, education in America had a noble purpose. It wasn't just about imparting knowledge—it was about forming character. Schools worked hand in hand with families and communities to instill timeless values: respect for authority, love of country, personal responsibility, faith, and virtue. These were the qualities that prepared young men and women to become productive citizens and moral leaders. But somewhere along the way, we abandoned that mission.

As a university president, I've had the privilege of meeting many remarkable young people. But far too often, I encounter students who arrive at our institution after years in schools that failed them—not in academics, but in moral formation. These students are bright, capable, and eager to learn, yet they are searching for purpose and clarity in a world that has taught them to question everything that once provided stability. I remember one student who told me, "I don't even know what I believe anymore. It feels like everything is up for debate." Years in the public education system had led him to question everything he once held to be true.

I think too of a transfer student who shared how, at his previous school, he felt pressured to abandon the values he'd been raised with—just to fit in. He told me, "It felt like I had

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to choose between staying true to my faith or being accepted by my peers and professors." That tension should never exist in any learning environment. But this is the result when education drifts from its true purpose and becomes an instrument of ideology rather than truth.

In the name of progress, we stripped our classrooms of the very principles that once anchored our society. Objective truth was replaced by subjective feeling. Moral absolutes were dismissed as oppressive. The pursuit of wisdom gave way to ideological agendas. Faith was pushed out in favor of secularism, and virtue was mocked as outdated.

Instead of teaching students to seek what is true, good, and right, we taught them that truth is whatever they decide it to be. That virtue is whatever feels good in the moment. That they answer to no authority higher than themselves.

The damage is everywhere. We see it in the breakdown of the family. In the loss of respect for life and law. In a culture that celebrates victimhood over responsibility and division over unity. In the violence that erupts on our streets and the hostility that poisons our public discourse.



A sign sits erected at the pro-Palestinian demonstration encampment at Columbia University in New York, Monday, April 22, 2024. (AP Photo/Stefan Jeremiah)

This did not happen overnight. It was not an accident. For decades, radicals worked to reshape education—not to form virtuous citizens, but to reshape society according to their ideology. They knew that if they controlled what was taught, they could control what was believed—and ultimately, control what America would become.

And too often, we stood by and let it happen. The Church, too, bears responsibility. When courage was required, too many chose comfort. When truth demanded a voice, too many pulpits fell silent. We chose relevance over righteousness, and as a result, the moral compass of the nation was lost.

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Imagine what could happen if we reclaimed our schools for truth. Classrooms where students learn to honor life, value virtue, and seek wisdom rather than ideology. Schools that partner with families to form character—not just opinions. A generation raised with moral clarity, equipped to build rather than destroy, to unite rather than divide, to serve rather than take.

This is not just about saving our schools. It's about saving our nation. The violence and division we see today are not the disease—they are the symptom. The real disease is moral and spiritual decay. And the cure begins with truth.

If we want to rebuild America, we must start with the minds and hearts of our children. We must start in the classroom. Let this be the moment when we stop treating the symptoms and confront the cause. Let us rise with clarity and conviction to reclaim our schools, our culture, and our future.

Because if we fail to do so, the unrest we see today will be nothing compared to the chaos that awaits tomorrow.

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