

COLLEGE IS NOT A DAYCARE

by Everett Piper, President, Oklahoma Wesleyan University. Author of *Why I Am a Liberal and Other Conservative Ideas*. (<http://www.okwu.edu/>)

The school year has started and the “snowflake” rebellion of 2015 is anything but dead. Micro-aggressions, trigger warnings, and demands for “safe spaces” continue to dom-

inate the campus news from coast to coast. As the university president who

wrote the viral “This is Not a Day Care” op-ed, I have been called by the media in recent days with essentially this question: “Dr. Piper, okay — your “Not a Day Care” piece identified the problem, but what’s the solution?”

Here’s my answer:

In 1948, Richard Weaver told us “ideas have consequences.” A few short years earlier, Hitler said, “let me control the textbooks and I will control the State.” Aldous Huxley and George Orwell warned of dystopias where education would be used as a means to total power and total control. Yes, ideas clearly do have consequences. Good ideas lead to good culture and good government, and bad ideas lead to bad culture and bad government. As your grandmother might have said: garbage in, garbage out. She was right — ideas matter.

Education today is clearly in crisis. The contemporary university is no longer known for pursuing truth, but rather for celebrating tolerance, and in the name of tolerance we are told that our intolerance is intolerable. Education’s elites actually parrot this pablum, and they do so with a straight face. It would be humorous if this self-refuting duplicity were not so sad.

The result of this nonsense is that the tradition of good teaching has become a dark flag of tyranny almost overnight. What was academic freedom just yesterday is ideological fascism today. Rather than celebrating liberty, liberals now demand conformity. Campuses are now bastions of speech codes rather than bulwarks of free speech. Faculty and students alike are more interested in “trigger warnings” than they are in pursuing truth. Run by the State and its thought police, colleges across the land have become indoctrination camps more so than campuses of open inquiry. Propaganda and power now reign where there used to be a pursuit of truth.

Our track record is terrible. Decade after decade, we have taught our next generation “it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as it works for you,” that all morality is relative, and that good and evil are merely subjective social constructs. Year after year we have preached that pastors and priests are stupid and that liberation theology is the only “good religion.” Day in and day out, we’ve fomented class resentment and racial animus and diminished excellence while extolling entitlement. Why are we surprised at the result? Our leaders have lost their courage. Our Congress has lost its consciences, our children have lost their character, and our culture has lost its soul.

Yes, ideas do have consequences and the lousy ideas we have been teaching in our colleges and univer-

sities for the past several decades are bearing themselves out daily before our eyes.

The answer to this absurdity is found in the historical liberal arts and the premise that there are certain moral and intellectual laws tested by time, defended by reason, validated by experience and endowed to us by our Creator. As far back as Moses, and later from Jefferson, we are told that only by trusting in this “paradox of liberty and Law” can we ever hope to protect our unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and, thereby, be a free people and free country.

Freedom trusts in principles rather than people, power, or politics. Freedom honors the debate because it knows there is an answer — a true north — a “measuring rod outside of those things being measured,” as C.S. Lewis put it.

G.K. Chesterton once told us, if you get rid of the big Laws, you don’t get liberty but rather thousands of little laws that rush in to fill the vacuum. Academic freedom has never been found in the rules of government, the power of professors or the temper tantrums of students but, rather, in the few and simple Laws of Nature and Nature’s God. There is a reason that dozens of universities were once emblazoned with the motto “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.” There is no liberty without Law and there is no freedom if you stop teaching this truth.

