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The Review

Embrace “The Homeschool Awakening” — Your Kids Are Worth It!

by **Annalisa Pesek**

On June 14, actor Kirk Cameron (*Growing Pains*; *Left Behind* series) premiered the inspiring documentary *The Homeschool Awakening*, reminding parents that the world is their classroom, and it’s time to teach it.



While the box-office blockbuster *Jurassic World* played in the theater next door, *Homeschool* offered its own refreshing escape and was surprisingly well attended for a theater in a suburb of “woke” Seattle.

A few seats from where this writer sat was a busy toddler seemingly mesmerized by the montages on the big screen; her laughter was contagious, as she pointed to and repeated the words and actions of families in the midst of story time, cooking, or playing outdoor games.

To paraphrase one father featured in the film: “Wealth is not about the material things we own; real wealth is found in the family, and parents must take seriously their responsibility as both educator and caretaker.”

And as the Bible teaches in Proverbs 22:6, “Parents, train a child in the way he should go, so that even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Homeschool embraces both of these ideas and ultimately challenges parents to assume sole responsibility of their children’s education.

In a film that features 17 families from all backgrounds, races, colors, and creeds — some kids work on farms but live in the city; another is a pilot at age 14 — the message Cameron sends is that homeschooling can offer a “hands-on workshop where you get to learn together from other families through curriculums that are built by education experts.... You can do it in a tailor-made way that doesn’t undermine your faith and values, and it doesn’t replace family time. It actually enhances those things.”

Parent-led Education

Multiple award-winner Cameron, the teenage heartthrob-turned-American activist — most widely known for his role as Mike Seaver in the popular 1980-90s TV sitcom *Growing Pains* — stars in the film, along with his family, and is also the film’s executive producer. He describes the overarching theme of the film in a few words in an interview with *The Epoch Times’* “American Thought Leaders” host Jan Jekielek:

“God gave your children to you as mom and dad, not to the federal government, and you get to decide what is the best way to support, encourage, and educate your kids.”



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Cameron and other presenters in the film, such as author and journalist Alex Newman (founder of Public School Exit and co-author of *Crimes of the Educators: How Utopians Are Using Government Schools to Destroy America's Children*) and Dr. Kathy Koch (founder of Celebrate Kids, Inc. and author of the book *8 Great Smarts*), remind viewers that for more than one hundred years early education in America was based in the home and was not in the hands of the federal government.

“In fact,” says Newman, “the word *education* is not in the Constitution. And the Founders also state explicitly in the 10th Amendment that anything that is not mentioned in the Constitution is specifically prohibited by the federal government. So the Founding Fathers actually prohibited getting federal government involvement in education.”

“[Education] was a private thing,” Cameron told Jekielek. “It certainly wasn’t funded by the government until later, and parents took their responsibility as a sacred duty to shape the hearts and minds of their children. And they didn’t do it alone; they were doing it in community with other families, and they saw their whole world as their classroom.”

One family in the film with a daughter named Abby who has Down syndrome explained that a public-school aide told them that Abby could not play in the same way as the other children, owing to her disability. The family grappled with whether to take their daughter out of the school.

“I wanted Abby to be in an environment where she would be allowed to try things and not told that she couldn’t do something because she was different,” said Abby’s mother. Added Abby’s father, “If we put half as much time into homeschooling our child as we’re putting into trying to [write these articles and find out what was legal], all that energy we were wasting in that direction, I thought she’d be better off. We didn’t have to be a special-needs teacher, we only have to be a teacher to our daughter.”



Halfpoint/ iStock / Getty Images Plus

Being a teacher to four children, another mom in the film noted that “every single school day starts with prayer and a devotional.” Some of her children are more hands-on, she explained, others less so but moving in that direction. “Each kid has his or her own crate ... with whatever we’re working on that week. Nothing more. Only the workbooks we’re working on that week. Our school looks different every day,” she said.

Her eldest daughter, Chloe, a beautiful young girl with wonder in her eyes, said, “I will start college at 12 and at my third year, I will graduate with my degree at 15. At my fourth year I will graduate with my



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Master's at 16."

"She is actually in the middle of finalizing her internship with NASA," said her mother.

In a touching scene, Chloe thanked her mother for all she has done for her: "I am encouraged by what she does for me because I know she doesn't have to do this for me.... She made sure I had everything I needed." Chloe is crying as she looks at her mom and says, "she has no idea, she has no idea."

A Day in the Life

"Homeschooling was never on our radar, but it all of a sudden sounded really nice," said one mom of two who is also a small-business owner. "Our eldest was in private school, and I knew in my heart if he stayed in school it was going to be an uphill battle to preserve who he was. I didn't feel like I had the time. I really felt clearly that God said I will create time where there is no time."

Another mom, who admitted she is *not* a morning person, chuckled as she remarked that "when all of [our] friends were chasing the bus, we would all pile into bed and read a book and giggle at the fact that everybody else was awake and onto the grind and here we are all cuddled up doing a read-aloud and having a cup of coffee in our jammies."

Yet another mother, whose father was a senator and passed a bill that if a teacher was assigning explicit material, the parents should be notified, described how her family was flooded with emails from teachers telling her to get out of the way: Your child's education is not your business; we have the degrees and the expertise.

Many of these parents who once had their children in public schools have had to "un-public school themselves" and learn to teach their kids how to learn for themselves. While all admit the process has been challenging, all also said it has been the greatest gift they were given.

"What's the worst thing that could happen," said one parent to his wife while discussing the option of home-based learning. Their son, Nathaniel, had been repeatedly bullied at school, but once at home he wasn't dealing with those same pressures.

"We were no longer chained to the school schedule," said Nathaniel's mom. "I was worried about losing freedom but what I discovered was that the freedom we had was so worth this small sacrifice. [That sacrifice] was to teach the kids. Now 12 years later, I realize it wasn't a sacrifice; it was a total gift."

In one compelling scene, a college dean of admissions explains that, if test scores are equal, they prefer homeschooled kids because they have such a well-roundedness about them. "Their socialization is exceptional. They're used to being around and working with adults and children! They're initiative-takers, they're out of the box thinkers, they're pioneer families, and we want more like that."

Teaching Children, Not Content

As the parents of six children, four of whom were adopted, Cameron and his wife, Chelsea, speak candidly about their own decision to homeschool, which they did not make until their children had completed six years of private schooling.

With the meteoric rise of the homeschool movement, a fast-growing trend that shows no signs of slowing, the number of American families opting for a home-based education for their children has increased a stunning 63 percent over the 2020-21 school year, and the percentage continues to soar.



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There are dozens of homeschool co-ops and networks popping up across the nation, as well as homeschool conventions (which Cameron discusses in the film and which can be found on the *Homeschool Awakening* website).

For example, FreedomProject Academy, an affiliate of The John Birch Society, offers a fully accredited, Common Core-free, classical education for kindergarten through high school, preparing students to become proud leaders of a country they love.

To critics of homeschooling who question whether it is possible for the single mom or dad to homeschool because it is too costly or too time-consuming, Cameron said, “Homeschooling is becoming so popular and so many people are there to help that homeschooling has become very, very affordable. And you’re not doing this alone. You have the support of a vast community of millions of families who are doing it successfully.”

“Instead of saying I can’t afford to do anything but the status quo,” urged Cameron, “ask yourself can I afford not to look into something that might be better for my kids and really help them succeed and flourish? As a parent, no one is going to love them and care for them as much as I do, and I need to take the lead in discovering where my priorities are and how to find a way to do the things that are important to me.”

U.S. Should Eschew, Not Emulate, Europe’s Errors

by William P. Hoar

Eurotrash: Why America Must Reject the Failed Ideas of a Dying Continent, by David Harsanyi, New York: Broadside Books, 2021, 320 pages, hardcover.

There are plenty of reasons why about three times as many Europeans move to the United States yearly compared to the number of Americans who go in the other direction. It is not a function of better air flights.

Among the causes affecting Europeans, argues author David Harsanyi, are the continent’s ill-controlled mass migration, overregulation, constraints of economic life, high rates of unemployment, diminishing populations, growing oppressive governments, and “most devastating, a loss of faith in their best ideas.” Chapters cover these topics and more.

This first-rate and wide-ranging polemic under review does not attempt to absolve the United States of its own shortcomings; its primary focus is on the problems that Europe has brought upon herself. In so doing, however, the author does warn Americans not to follow further down the destructive path trod by too many Europeans.

Throughout his book, Harsanyi displays his dislike for “Europhiles,” including academics, politicians, and journalists. These devotees determinedly exhibit, as he puts it, the “destructive love affair left-wing Americans have with Western Europe and members of the European Union.”

David Harsanyi is a conservative writer, opinion columnist, and author of several other books. He has had a varied career. A nationally syndicated columnist (through Creators Syndicate), he is senior writer at *National Review* and a columnist at the *New York Post*. Harsanyi previously served as senior editor of *The Federalist*, editor of *Human Events*, and a columnist with *The Denver Post*. His writings have appeared in, among others, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Washington Post*, *USA*



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Today, Reason, The Jerusalem Post, and The Globe and Mail.

Of note, particularly considering the theme of the book, he gives special thanks herein to his parents for defecting from communist Hungary “to ensure my life in the new world.”

Dissecting Socialized Medicine, Nordic “Utopias”

Strong early chapters cover, among other topics, “The Nordic ‘Utopias’” and “Europe’s Health Care Disasters,” combining opinions with facts that back up assertions. For instance, here’s a bit from the author on Scandinavia, so admired by Europhiles:

If the United States wanted to duplicate Scandinavia’s munificent social welfare on a massive scale, we would need to significantly raise income taxes on the middle class to broaden the tax base and adopt a value-added tax — a consumption tax put on all goods whenever value is added during the supply chain — which will be paid by the middle class.

... The ratio of government taking in the United States is 24.3 percent. [Keep in mind that this refers to the take before Biden’s huge planned expansions take effect.] Put it this way: In American terms, a person earning \$60,000 a year would be subjected to a 60 percent tax rate in Sweden. What do you get? You get what the government decides you get, in the way government decides to give it to you. That is why Sweden has been slowly trying to cut more taxes, scale back the welfare programs, and create a more vibrant private sector.

Sweden has indeed been rolling back its social-welfare system, and it is not alone in Scandinavia in that regard. Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen made a point to elucidate attendees (in 2015) at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government about the “Nordic model” and those who associate it with “some sort of socialism.” Denmark, he insisted, “is far from a socialist planned economy.”

One way to differentiate national healthcare systems is to examine the “wonders” of socialized medicine in Europe. And by this we mean that there’s no wonder why up to two million people fly each year to the United States for medical treatment, about a quarter of them from Europe. These people, as Harsanyi explains, “are what is known as medical tourists (we just call it ‘going to the doctor’).”

Back home they may have “free” treatment available. But there is a real cost otherwise. Consider the vaunted British National Health Service, which was founded in 1942. Also note the U.K.’s major shortage of nurses and doctors. So how does care work there? Well, the driving force is for the government to constrain who will qualify for treatment. The agency within the NHS “in charge of aggressively restricting the procedures, treatments, and drugs patients receive is the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE),” writes the author. In other words, “the ironically named NICE oversees rationing. Rationing isn’t a dirty word in the British system; it is the system.”

The U.K.’s seven-decade-plus experiment with socialized medicine is, says Harsanyi, “a gift to the United States in that it teaches us what not to do.”

Imagine, Open Borders

There are also a goodly number of valuable points raised in the book’s chapters on the European Union and mass migration (titled, respectively, “The United States of Europe” and “Imagine, No Countries”).



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The divergences between the U.S. Constitution and the EU's founding documents are dramatically drawn.

Even the verbiage of the founding documents exposes their differences in functions and philosophy. The author points, for instance, to the 52 words in the Constitution's preamble and the fact that our founding document has been amended only 27 times in more than two hundred years, and just twice in the past five decades. On the other hand, writes Harsanyi,

... the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe that was adopted by the twenty-five European nations in Brussels in June 2004 was birthed with 448 Articles, 36 Protocols, 30 Declarations, 20 Declarations on the Protocols, and 2 Annexes, and was 70,000 words of fashionable policy concerns (now 250,000). The European Constitution did not read like an organization of a national consciousness, but rather like the minutes of a corporate merger.

More importantly, as the author explains, America "excels in its system for checking power." The three branches of the federal government "are intended, ideally, to obstruct the abuse of power through a series of checks and balances." Meanwhile, the European executive, legislature, and court "perpetually reinforce, expand, and centralize the power of the European superstate."

While this book is on target in many ways, it does disappoint in spots. (For example, the author equivocates on the value of the Marshall Plan, and we take issue with his passing tribute to the early history of the Southern Poverty Law Center.) In places, he stops short of offering readers a more complete story. Consider:

- The author does describe how a "European superstate is a long-running utopian project of the continent's elite" — dating well before the founding of the European Union — including Clarence Streit's call for a federation of "North American democracies" with a constitution, common defense and a single currency.
- He also mentions how Europhiles promote the EU "as a progressive alternative to unruly American democracy."
- And Harsanyi mocks the comments of the European Commission's president to elites in 2016, when Jean-Claude Juncker (a Luxembourger) told his audience that "borders are the worst invention ever made by politicians."

Still, why not buttress one's points? Make clear that the European Union (as well as the United Nations) is just doing what it is intended to do — that is, serving as an instrument in an eventual world government. And Harsanyi certainly knows the difference between democracies and republics. In fact, he wrote an entire book fleshing out those principles in 2014 — *The People Have Spoken (and They Are Wrong): The Case Against Democracy* — explaining how "democracy" undermines self-government and detailing why the Constitution's framers were intent on establishing a republic, not a "democracy."

Nonetheless, *Eurotrash* is not just a list of silly or horrendous mistakes. Amid the discussion of mass immigration, the author does draw conclusions, saying, for example, that the "Europhiles who demand an open door for all the world's refugees happen to advocate for policies that disincentivize work, initiative, and thus acclimatization, undercutting the dynamics that make assimilation work." That principle is behind the long-standing U.S. policy against admitting a noncitizen who might become a



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“public charge.” That is the spirit of the policy, although, as Harsanyi acknowledges, it is not always enforced.

Ethnic islands can be found through Europe, just one of the problems associated with mass immigration. There are “no-go zones” where police appear afraid to patrol. *Eurotrash* examines other outcomes, too. For example:

With the sudden influx of migrants, and shiftlessness spurred by unemployment, many European cities have seen a spike of crime, a resurgence of hate crimes, and political unrest. Though numbers are hard to come by, it is likely that Muslims make up 50 percent of French jails. Migrants make up 26 percent of Sweden’s prison population and about 50 percent of those in prison for serious offenses. One study found that two hundred foreign suspects were being arrested every day in London.

Meanwhile, Europhiles demand an open door for all the refugees in the world.

For the Planet and Censoring, but Anti-children

Freedom of speech means a different thing, in general, to Europeans and Americans. The notion of protecting speech, even “hateful” speech, seems foreign to a growing number of Europeans. For example, in a major poll, people in six major European cities were asked if they would approve of censoring speech that was found to be offensive by minorities.

As summarized in *Eurotrash*, “nearly 50 percent were fine with it. The number was 70 percent among Germans, 62 percent among Italians, and 50 percent of Poles. In Scotland, only 5 percent disagree with the statement ‘Free speech is an important right,’ and yet 21 percent, in the same poll, say it should be a criminal offense to say that someone born biologically male cannot become a woman — and 40 percent under the age of twenty-five believe so.”



Big government: What once began as a free-trade pact between several western European nations has evolved into a massive bureaucratic superstate that micromanages the affairs of nearly all nations of Europe. (*Photo credit: bloodua/ iStock / Getty Images Plus*)

Another major topic covered in the book is the “depopulation” of Europe — with the birth rates of 27 EU



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nations all being below replacement level. Some of this outcome is driven by a European media that “offers a steady stream of commentary and news coverage warning that having children is a crime against Mother Earth.” Other factors are involved, including an aging population and having more women in the labor force.

There are differences (and for that we should be thankful) between the beliefs of many Americans and Europeans. *Eurotrash* cites some. For instance, 70 percent of Americans believe that the poor can escape poverty through hard work, while only 35 percent of Europeans agree with that notion.

This book, as Harsanyi stresses, does not contend that, for example, “Dante and Dostoevsky and Dickens are not worth our time.” And, yes, the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, the parliament building in Budapest, and the Florence Cathedral are “awe inspiring.” Moreover, the continent is truly filled with the “wonderous cultural and societal accomplishment of an ancient society.” Further, the author emphasizes that the people of Europe themselves are not “nefarious or our enemies.” After all, as he puts it, Europe is the “second-best place on earth.”

The main point that Harsanyi is underscoring is that Europe keeps abandoning its best ideas. We Americans, he insists, “have no reason to follow.”



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