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## Congressional Hearing: Tough Love or Teen Torment: Will the Industry Finally Be Regulated?

Posted October 8, 2007 | 03:14 PM (EST)

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Congress is finally looking into the "troubled teen" industry and the deaths, human rights abuses and other problems of "wilderness programs" and other "tough love" residential settings. In many states, these institutions are less regulated

On Wednesday, Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee, will hold a full committee hearing on the results from a Government Accountability Office report that he commissioned. The investigation promises to be revealing about the industry claims that it can regulate itself.

My book, *Help at Any Cost: How the Troubled-Teen Industry Cons Parents and Hurts Kids* (Riverhead, 2006), was the first to expose the industry and the complete lack of regulatory oversight on programs that are essentially private jails for kids. The lack of legislation.

As it stands now, there is more federal regulation protecting mule deer than there is preserving the rights of children in the "troubled teen" industry - there are no qualifications required, nor criminal background checks. Some owners have even made deals with prosecutors to keep their facilities, due to accusations of sexual and other kinds of child abuse. But they were not made to leave the industry.

And no legal authority is required to inspect these facilities or see to it that kids are well-treated in them.

Teens placed in these settings do not have any right to appeal their confinement: they may be held without contact with their families.

Moreover, in the programs, they are often subject to "therapies" that many consider torturous: food deprivation, sleep deprivation, physical restraint and constant emotional and even sexual humiliation. When such tactics are used on suspected terrorists, the programs have done everything short of water-boarding kids with impunity for decades.

For example, one girl was made to dress as a prostitute, wearing a nametag that said "Shameful Slut." "Slut, 25 cents" she had to yell "slut" and "ho" and "bitch" at her. Others were made to wear diapers and boys were dressed in drag and castrated with Kotex; another was made to clean toilets with her bare hands. Some children had to use their toothbrushes as toothbrushes.

That's not to mention the dozens of gruesome deaths that have occurred because "tough love" ideology does not accept legitimate medical complaints. One boy lost control of his urine and bowels as he began to die-- and was humiliated for it deliberately. Another, also accused of faking, had two and a half quarts of pus in his chest when he was autopsied.

Right now, of course, seven boot camp guards and a nurse in Florida are on trial for manslaughter in another death-- the complete required exercises and was beaten and forced to inhale ammonia to prove he wasn't faking. He died proving

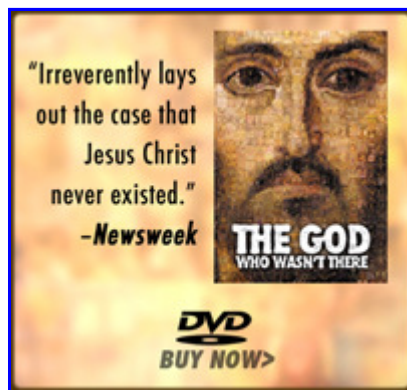
I hope that these hearings will bring national attention to this issue. Hundreds of thousands of teens have been sent on and continues to grow. There is no proof that its "product" helps anyone-- and a great deal of research suggesting that the harm.

We don't allow amateurs to diagnose and treat physical illnesses-- so why are we letting untrained people have total control over vulnerable teens who have no way of contesting their confinement? I will have more after the hearings.

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I don't know about 'dozens' of deaths but I do know about one. In the late 70's my father-in-law and his wife began a program with a 100% success rate. At least one of the kids quit getting into trouble by dying.

This girl was placed in the program and within a week her behavior became erratic. She complained of headaches and other complaints seriously she was accused of malingering and 'antisocial' behavior. At one point she was put into a room with adults and some of the 'senior' kids. She was told the headaches, nausea and vomiting were her body's reaction to the

she was learning and who she had been.

She was finally pulled from the program and taken to a physician. Within a year she was dead. A tumor the size of an the tumor would have been operable if diagnosed six months earlier when she first complained of the headaches is ur neither the comfort of pain management or her family during much of its growth.

The program was finally shut down SIX MONTHS after my husband's younger sisters were removed and placed with emotional and mental abuses." A judge had to rule that DSS had standing as there were no rules on the books about |

My inlaws still claim to have cured my husband of sociopathy. They still apply to a different state to treat foster kids. TI wrongful death are all sealed and won't be discovered if their application is taken seriously. My husband, his sisters ar doesn't win out over effective.

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These places are run by sadistic people or simply for profit...they harm more then help.  
there are plenty of trained pros (and low cost ones) for troubled kids.  
parents should care for their kids: not sweep them under the rug.

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GREAT COLUMN...thanks

These MOTHERF\*CKIN CAMPS are killing queer youths....their parents send to "wash-away-the-gay"

lock and load

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Outlawing tough love programs is the regulation we need to stop this abominable practice.

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How about pointing out that we have a man running for president right now who has a long history of association with apparently lined a good number of his cofers off the misfortune of teenagers with desperate or derranged parents.

It should come as no surprise that he wants to double the size of Guantanamo. The real question is would he keep Blk to get those pesky kids in line?

Also interesting that the same religious groups who adamantly proclaim abortion to be murder, seem to have no probl are people, teenagers are not.

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It becomes the government's fault when abuses are reported and never investigated, when kids die and their murdere

Many of these camps seem to have close ties with fundy/nutcase religious groups that governments don't want to ang

Yes, parents have got to be bonkers to do this to their children, but no parent has the right to authorize anyone else to such "authorization" is illegal and therefore does not absolve the institutions.

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"dozens of gruesome deaths"

Can you actually document "dozens" of deaths? Just wondering.

Accepting that there are serious problems, the responsibility for enacting and enforcing regulations resides at the state

"why are we letting untrained people have total control"

By "we", you mean the parents who actually send their kids to these places, right? You know: the ones who should be send their kids to camp in the first place; the ones who should, but probably don't, read the camp contract in its entirety, want to look inward at their own parenting skills (or lack thereof) and consider making improvements WITH their child, fault and shipping off the problem rather than fixing it themselves. It may be the job of gov't (STATE gov't) to regulate it is that of the parents to raise their kids themselves and be less willing to pawn them off on third-parties. And, if the parents on their own, do they take the therapy and medication route first or do they try the scared straight approach first?

The lack of regulation doesn't make it the government's fault that these (some maybe lazy, some maybe bad) parents

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All that just to prove how ignorant of the process you are.

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i hope that this isn't news to you, but parents do not own their children.

that being said, the government has, and further, SHOULD have, the authority to make sure that these children especially if, their parents could care less.

but leave it to a right winger to think that every problem could be solved by employing the model of the owner

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