

I was educationally neglected due to my parents' religious beliefs. My parents homeschooled me in New York State from ages 5-18. My parents belonged to a small non-denominational church affiliated with International House of Prayer (or IHOP-KC), and their interpretation of their belief system demanded that they subordinate my basic education to preparation for working in their religion's ministry.

My curriculum consisted mostly of non-accredited textbooks at first, but my education devolved once I reached high school. Since my parents believed that God ordained me to work in ministry in the future, they did not teach me basic subjects once I reached the high school level. I never moved on to high school level math, and never learned any history or science at the high school level. Since my future (according to my parents) was working in ministry, these courses weren't necessary.

Instead, throughout high school, I would repeat courses I had previously taken because my mom was unconvinced that I learned the material the first time. I received no instructions, and was instead shown the material and told to "figure out how to do it." I was often brought to tears with frustration, and felt stupid and hopeless.

I received no high school diploma, and was able to get a GED by the skin of my teeth. From there, I attended community college and flunked out of nearly every math, science and history course I took. When I expressed this difficulty to my parents, they communicated their disappointment in me that I now had friends outside of the church and blamed them for my poor grades.

I feel it's important to share this because I am one of the lucky ones. I have spoken with other homeschooled adults who never learned multiplication until well into their 20s, and were left completely unschooled for the better part of their lives. I regard myself as fortunate because I at least had something resembling an education.

When left without safeguards, parents with a desire to withhold information and control their children will do so. We cannot rely on the claimed good graces of these communities and simply trust they will not harm, or in some cases kill, their children. For some in these communities, children are property, not human beings. Children deserve to know information about the world they live in, even if their parents find that information disagreeable. Children at their core are people, and censorship is not the answer for long-term educational success.

Signed,
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