

I was homeschooled in Minnesota from the first day of preschool until I entered college. My mother is a former hairstylist with a high school education, and my father is a contractor who also has a high school education. They homeschooled my brother and I to “protect” us from the contaminating influences of the mainstream world. Both were deeply religious, and subscribed to fundamentalist Christianity. Among other things, they believe that gay people are perversions and that women should not pursue higher education because their place is in the home. As a gay woman, this made self-acceptance and envisioning my future difficult for me, and at times threatened my sense of safety in my home.

I debated long and hard about whether to attend college when the time came because I had been told it was a sin for me, a woman, to do so. While I did eventually decide that college would not be a sin for me, I was woefully under-prepared to begin it because my parents had deliberately deprived me of education in math and science. By the time I reached eighth grade, my mother no longer understood the math and science she was tasked with teaching me. Because it was my parents’ religious conviction that women should not pursue higher education, my mother did not see my lack of a teacher as a serious enough problem to remediate by finding me an alternative teacher.

In response, I spent the last few years of my high school career attempting to teach myself basic algebra and science, and failing miserably. I had to begin my college career with remedial classes, which I did very well in. The problem had never been with my ability to learn; it was that I was denied the opportunity to be taught.

No child should have to experience what I experienced. My heart aches for the homeschooled girls who are, even now, trapped in similar situations because their parents exploit religious educational exemptions to neglect, abuse, and isolate them in the name of faith. These children deserve protection, care and access to the world, even when their parents are unwilling or psychologically incapable of providing it.

Signed,  
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