

I was homeschooled in Illinois from 1998-2006, from grades 5-12. Illinois's lax homeschooling laws meant that no one stepped in to stop the educational neglect I experienced. Specifically, my parents were able to deny me education in critical subjects because I was a girl, and they did so on the basis of their particular interpretation of Catholicism.

I spent my early elementary years in a parochial school, but parents chose to homeschool me and my siblings out of a desire to separate us from a world they deemed to be inundated with evil. My new education was to be focused on bringing about a new world order, winning over the United State of America for Catholicism, and embedding Catholic doctrine into our government.

As I entered middle and high school years, I wanted access to a more rigorous curriculum, particularly higher level math such as Trigonometry and Calculus, and full access to the core subjects I would need if I ever wanted to go to college. However, my parents denied me the opportunity. They told me that it's far more critical for girls to learn how to manage a home than Algebra and that God teaches that too much knowledge is not good for a female's brain because they need to focus on children." These are a few of the many responses I received when I advocated for myself and my education.

On the whole, even in subjects that I was apparently "taught," my mother deliberately set me back. Our curriculum would shift depending on the whims and fears of my mother. Curriculums and textbooks would come and go as the content would be deemed too Protestant, too Mennonite, too Mormon, too secular. Weeks of work would be tossed to the side, new books procured, and the process would start all over from scratch. I was a child, but I knew even then I was falling behind. I supplemented my education in secret using library books until finally a few adults outside of our culture advocated that I be allowed to enroll in a homeschool curriculum provided by a parochial school. My mother eventually agreed, but the damage had been done in terms of my math education

It wasn't just me. I looked around at my homeschool peers in silent horror as they swapped Math classes for canning and sewing classes, chopping cords of wood and squirrel hunting instead of Science, keeping house and cooking instead of Social Studies.

My parents, like many others, homeschooled in an effort to protect us from the ills of society: drugs, abuse, violence. Yet, what about the violence, drugs, and abuse in our homes? No one protected me from the religiously motivated physical violence I was subject to, no one protected me from a father who was sexually abusing me, no one protected my homeschooled peers from their fathers who used opioids, alcohol, and beat their wives and children in private.

Signed,  
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