

My siblings and I were homeschooled to protect us from the evil indoctrinations of public school. In some respects, this was both religious and political, as the two were closely intertwined growing up. My parents wanted us to know that men and women had defined roles, that the earth was only a few thousand years old, and evolution was a myth. No other viewpoints were shared with us or tolerated. We lived in Washington State, which has moderate homeschooling restrictions, including required minimum hours, notice to the school board, annual testing, and some college education for one of the teaching parents. Our annual testing did not continue past 8th grade, despite legal requirements to do so. The minimum hours were never met, even though my parents signed a form every year stating otherwise. My father held a bachelor's degree, and my mother had an associate's degree, but neither were qualified to teach.

The gender divide in our education was striking. My singular brother, Child #2, was berated and physically abused for not completing his homework or doing poorly academically. My brother was treated like a failure for not wanting to continue his education beyond an associate's degree. He was encouraged to take math classes at the community college through calculus 2, despite the fact no one had taught him basic math past long division. Yet no one helped him. No one tutored him or taught him in any meaningful way.

The last time I remember either of my parents sitting down to actively teach me was in second grade. From third through eighth grade, I was allowed to ask questions. After eighth grade, my parents were too busy to answer any of my questions. I was responsible for teaching myself the material, grading my own homework and exams, and usually keeping my siblings entertained while I studied. My academic performance was much better than my brother, but treated as background noise – something I should use to teach my own children and a backup if I needed to find a job before I was able to find a husband. Any career aspirations of mine came after my duty to bear children and homeschool them. Even my educational needs came after my mother's God-given role to multiply and fill the earth as she had more children than she could care for. It was more important that they have as many Christian babies as possible, and that I help parent them, than it was for me to learn how to be a valuable member of the community.

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When I started pursuing further education, I was an outcast for leaving home to continue my education (completing both a bachelor's and a master's degree) and had "abandoned my duty to the family" because I was no longer raising my baby siblings.

When I started community college, I struggled immensely with math. I understood how to multiply and divide fractions but anything beyond that was a mystery. I had to take multiple remedial math classes. Science was also difficult. Even though I now have multiple degrees, I have random gaps in understanding science, math, and history. Since we lived at home during community college (and were minors), my brother and I were forbidden from taking psychology, sociology, art, or art history courses. My parents considered the possibility of being exposed to nudity in art unacceptable. Sociology and psychology were the wrong kinds of science and they feared we might reject some religious tenet if exposed to what they considered pseudoscience. Our parents carefully vetted the science classes we signed up for, forbidding sections of anatomy and physiology, biology, or other science classes, unless we took them with a specific Christian professor known to the homeschooling community.

I worked extremely hard to overcome my lack of childhood education, but I wish no child had to go through that. I went through an extreme culture shock adjusting to university. It took years to understand the depth of the abuse I had gone through. What I thought were lighthearted stories turned out to be shining examples of neglect, abuse, and horror. My parents have faced no repercussions for their actions. Yet my siblings and I still suffer the results of educational neglect. Some of them are still underage and I can only hope we will have a chance to help rectify their education and give them a future before they fall prey to more abuse.

Signed,
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