



Finding Hope at Home

If eight years of the Clinton regime have turned you into a pessimist about America's future, perhaps a look at the awesome successes of the homeschool movement might turn you into an optimist. Ten years ago, few Americans knew anything about homeschooling. Today, with 12-year-old homeschooler George Thampy winning the National Spelling Bee, and second and third finalists also being homeschoolers, everybody now knows about homeschooling. The newspapers can't get enough of it. Thampy also came in second in the National Geography Bee. And who can forget the ebullient Rebecca Sealfon, the homeschooler from Brooklyn who won the Spelling Bee in 1997. And this is just the beginning.

The homeschool movement is producing its first wave of graduates, and they are getting into the best universities and colleges in the nation. Even the military has changed its policies toward homeschoolers, who were previously classified as dropouts. According to the *Washington Times*, the Air Force enlisted 10 homeschoolers in 1998, but 200 in fiscal 1999. The Navy enlisted 23 in 1998, as compared to 1,050 in 1999. With the armed services hungry for literate recruits, they have finally recognized the talents and skills of homeschoolers.

Homeschoolers are also scoring impressively on the SAT and ACT college entrance exams, consistently outperforming their public school counterparts. This year, for example, homeschoolers scored an average of 22.8 on the ACT, while their public- and private-school counterparts scored an average of 21. As for the SAT, this year homeschoolers scored an average of 1,100, or 81 points above the national average of 1,019.

Freedom at Work

The most important thing to know about homeschooling is that it is educational freedom at work. And freedom produces better results than coercion. This country has gone so far down the road to socialism that most people have no idea what educational freedom means. What it means is freeing your family from the shackles of government education, and educating your children in conformity with your family's religious and moral values.

But freeing yourself from a government institution like the public school is not only a cultural act, but a political one as well. For you'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to realize that the public schools are being used by Gramscian change agents to transform America into a totalitarian state. Those change agents want to remake America by capturing control of the youth. Just imagine the long-term political and cultural implications of denying them access!

The act of removing your child from the public school affects the most important statist institution in our society: the government education system. Statism requires compulsory government schooling if it is to succeed in brainwashing the children of the country, for it is the children who will make the future.

The government schools are creating millions of dysfunctional young adults without brain power, unfit to do anything that requires intellectual effort. Their source of stimuli is the television set and its statist messages. They are increasingly unable to understand or even defend the legacy of freedom we've inherited from our Founding Fathers. And their lack of academic skills relegates them to the bottom of American society. That is why our high-tech industries clamor to import technically skilled workers from abroad to fill the jobs that many young Americans cannot handle.

But through homeschooling (and other private alternatives), concerned parents are providing hope for the future. In the time span of less than a generation, homeschooling has grown from a small counter-



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cultural phenomenon to a vibrant mainstream movement consisting of an estimated 1.7 million homeschoolers. These homeschoolers will grow and blossom into independent-minded, well-educated, and skilled young adults who possess the values of their parents, who will know how to read and write, multiply and divide, who will know the history of our country, and who will exhibit a true love of freedom and the Constitution. If you want proof of this, simply attend a large homeschool convention and watch as parents go from vendor to vendor, poring over programs and books, choosing carefully what they want for their children. Watch the parents attending lectures and workshops, taking notes, buying tapes so that they can listen to the wisdom of the many wonderful speakers that lecture at these conventions.

As a participant in these activities, I've watched the homeschool movement grow by leaps and bounds. For example, 11 years ago, when the Massachusetts homeschool organization held its first convention in a church basement, about 300 people showed up. At the last convention in April 2000, which had to be held at the Worcester Convention Center because there wasn't a hotel in the state large enough to accommodate the gathering, more than 3,000 people showed up. This same kind of growth is taking place nationwide. For example, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, there were 1,126 homeschoolers in Wisconsin in 1985. In 1998, the number was up to 18,712, an increase of 1,562 percent.

I have spoken at many large homeschooling conventions and what is truly amazing is the quality of the people who attend, the wonderful behavior of their youngsters, the dedication and devotion to learning, and their hunger for the values that made this country the freest and most successful in history. They love the Constitution and want to preserve it.

While there is a growing number of secular homeschoolers entering the movement, most homeschoolers strongly adhere to a God-centered worldview, whether they be Protestants, Catholics, or Mormons. (It should be noted that there is a small but growing number of Jewish homeschoolers.) Religion plays a very important part in the life of these families. They study the Bible, have family devotions, and (oftentimes) are members of churches where most of the congregation are also homeschoolers. They derive their inspiration from the book of Deuteronomy, in which God commands parents to educate their children in the love and admonition of the Lord.

Great Results

I have been in the homes of many homeschoolers, and there you find a love of reading, a reverence for good literature, a love of knowledge, and an appreciation of art and music. Learning becomes the center of family life.

As for socialization, which is one issue government educators frequently use to browbeat homeschoolers, it is quite apparent that the family is a far better place to develop social skills than the public school. At home, members of the family learn that they have responsibilities and chores that must be done, and they have the time in which to do them, for homeschoolers own all of their own time. The typical public schooler, on the other hand, comes home after a tiring, boring day confined in a school building and wants to relax and watch TV, listen to rock music in his or her bedroom, or hang out with friends at the mall. Getting the public schooler to pick up clothes or clean dishes becomes a struggle for parents who want to instill discipline in a child on the verge of rebellion. And rebellion is the result of the kind of socialization that goes on in public school.

At Columbine High School there was plenty of socialization, mainly of the wrong kind. And we all know



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the results — 12 students and a teacher dead, plus the suicide of the two students who carried out the massacre. But the Columbine tragedy has awakened a lot of parents. According to Michael Farris of the Home School Legal Defense Association, “the day after Columbine, our phones started ringing off the hook. People called us saying, ‘We really need to begin home schooling. We’ve been thinking about this for a long time, and this is the straw that broke the camel’s back.’”

The Home School Legal Defense Association was founded in 1983 by Christian homeschooling lawyers to defend homeschoolers against state and local harassment. Since then, the legal climate for homeschooling has improved markedly. So has the public perception of homeschooling — thanks in large measure to the movement’s dramatic growth and its stunning success. And as a growing number of today’s homeschoolers come of age, many of them will undoubtedly contribute to the restoration of America.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld is the author of The Whole Language Hoax, NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education, and other important books on the subject of education.



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