

***What's Wrong with  
Homeschooling?***  
**by Elise LaTorre**

Recent events have caused me to take a closer look at a word I have never been all that fond of, but could never put my finger on why not: Homeschooler. By just about every definition, I am one, so why do I resist being called this?

It is too facile to say that since what our family engages in neither occurs primarily at home nor resembles a traditional school (least of all a government-funded one) we are not homeschoolers. There is truth to this but there is a bigger, far more important truth.

By labelling that which is a normal and natural activity – the nurturing and education of children by their parents – there is the implication that there is something *not* quite natural about it. Let's face it: at best, homeschooling is portrayed as the purview of slightly eccentric individualists who are making a noble sacrifice for their children; at worst it's presented as a haven for those who would deny their children any education at all. Although it may be tempting to virtuously agree with the first characterization, the sad reality is that in both examples it is abundantly clear, homeschooling is not being presented as a natural part of life.

Yet what could be less natural than shipping our children off to the custody of strangers for anywhere from six to ten hours each day? And what could be less logical than the notion that education best occurs in schools?

More to the point, how did our collective view become so distorted? I am reminded of the comments I heard when I would take my two-year-old daughter with me on my errands: "Where does she go to school?" "No school today?" "Why isn't she in preschool?" What radical shift in human thought and emotion has occurred to lead so many people to question why a young child would be in the care of her mother? How is it that we read our children countless books in which the care of baby animals by their mothers is a prominent feature, yet discount those same needs in

human animals? What influences are at work that lead to the belief that two-year-olds should be attending some form of institutionalized day care (euphemistically called 'preschool') rather than spending time with their mothers?

Until very recently, children simply did not go to school. They learned by example. Or perhaps an older sibling taught them. A few had tutors or mentors. And some were apprenticed to masters. In each of these situations, however, one thing was shared: each family made the choice that was right and feasible for them. And somehow, the world produced some of its greatest thinkers, from Plato to Galileo to Franklin to Einstein. I could name hundreds of others and I am sure you can, too. Lists of "famous homeschoolers" have floated around the Internet for several years. And most of us are aware that more learning occurs in the first year of a child's life – a year typically spent at home with mom (or dad) – than in all the other years put together.

Yet in spite of this, and in spite of frequent news stories reminding us that the government is rarely, if ever, the expert at anything, most people accept the idea of sending children to government run schools as the thing to do. The brainwashing of families that came into full throttle in the 1970's has led many to believe that the education of children is too difficult for parents to undertake and is best left to the State.

The propaganda machine that delivered this message did so in a number of ways. It encouraged women to be fulfilled by working outside the home and implemented economic policies that guaranteed that a significant portion of the population would not be able to live as well as their parents had unless both husband and wife worked. It relentlessly promoted the companion ideas that all children are entitled to a government funded education and that government has a vested interest in an "educated populace." Perhaps worst of all, it recklessly and dishonestly claimed that all children could attain equal levels of academic achievement, something that has come true only by dumbing down the standards to the absolute lowest common denominator.

In exchange for a "free" education and greater

household income, parents willingly turned their children over to the State, with devastating effects. Still, for most, sending children off to schools at increasingly younger ages has become the established norm. At the same time, those of us who believe that our children's education is just one of the loving responsibilities that go with the territory of being a parent are the ones who are being labelled

From my perspective, I do not homeschool any more than I homelaundry or homecook or homemother.

A friend of mine recently posted to an email list we both subscribe to, "Homebathing? Homefeeding? Homerecreation? Homesleeping? Homenurturing? What method do you use to feed? Sleep? Nurture? Recreate? It is right as rain to just forget ANY term and go on with it."

So I think I will just go on with it and try not to think about the label. Because the only label that really fits what I do is the one called "parenting."

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