

A Parental Right?

Written by Idzie Desmarais.

Whenever I hear people saying things like “Unschooling obviously wouldn’t work for everyone, but parents should have a right to choose what’s best for their kids,” or one of the hundred other variants on that same sentiment, I always feeling a niggling sense of unease. It’s never a statement I’ve agreed with. But until recently, I wasn’t entirely sure *why* it bothered me! I mean, there’s the obvious in that I believe unschooling can work for anyone, as unschooling is really free choice in education, so a child could choose something very structured, like their parent teaching them with a curriculum or going to school. But there was something more than that bothering me, and I only realized yesterday what it was.

That type of statement puts the focus on *parental* rights. “It’s a parents right to educate their children however they choose!”

But to me? Unschooling isn’t about parental rights. It’s about *children’s* rights. A *childs right* to choose their own path in life, with the support and assistance of parental or other care-giving figures in their life.

In a society where children are truly an oppressed class, denied the rights given to older people, I suppose it shouldn’t be surprising that something I see as potentially majorly liberating for children, the right to take control of their own education, is couched as being a parental right instead. For sure, I think it’s important for parents to have the right to make decisions about their children’s care, instead of the government or other powerful institutions, but in talking about a “parents right to unschool,” I feel like we’re taking away the power, in words at the very least, and words to a large extent shape thoughts, from the children themselves. And that’s definitely not something I think anyone should be doing.

Am I, once again, just quibbling over small details in the language used? Perhaps. But when something unsettles me, even if it seems like just a small something, I feel it’s important to examine why, and I often just like working out or sharing my reasoning here on the blog!

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