

Prison, Plantation, and Indoctrination Center



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Imagine a place where you aren’t allowed to leave for certain hours of the day, most days of the week, most weeks of the year; where you aren’t allowed to go to the bathroom when you needed to; where you aren’t allowed to eat when you want, or even to chew a piece of gum; where your movement from area to area was determined by a loud ring. Also imagine a place where you must labor without pay; where you must perform tasks that others have assigned for you; where your worth as a person is determined by how well you perform those tasks. Now imagine a place where other people have decided what you should think about; what and how much of it you should know; where you are required to memorize certain facts and processes, in order to pass tests that you are required take; where you aren’t allowed to question or disagree with the facts or processes being memorized. Can you imagine these kinds of places? I can. In fact, it’s quite obvious to me that the first place is a prison, the second a slave-worked plantation, and the third an indoctrination center. Or are they?

How Homo Sapiens Learn

Evolutionary psychologist Peter Gray wrote a book on how, from the earliest ages, human beings learn, titled *Free to Learn*. While I’ve yet to finish it, I can attest that the first four chapters were very enlightening. Chapter Two is all about how, studying ancient and modern hunter/gatherer societies, human beings were raised over hundreds of thousands of years. His research shows that during the first couple years of life, babies and infants were seemingly attached to the adults in their life. Rarely was a baby not being held or coddled by someone in the tribe, nor were they ever alone when sleeping or napping or ever forced to “self-soothe” or “cry it out.”

By the age of around four children became, quite naturally, fiercely independent. They would begin playing with and following around all of the older kids. They would be allowed to handle knives and tools in order to gain proficiency and the skills needed for survival. And from dawn until dusk they were engaged in play. Their play-filled days continued until

late adolescence (15-18). Once capable, they would naturally transition into adulthood, joining their elders on hunts or trips to gather food. Your typical hunter/gatherer adult's life was likewise filled with recreation and relaxation. Stress, depression, mental illness, and suicide were/are non-existent. What this goes to show is just how far human beings have strayed from the type of parenting, education, and lifestyles their evolutionary ancestors enjoyed.

How Not to Pursue Education

When you consider how we were programmed by hundreds of thousands of years of evolution to learn and gain knowledge about the world, ie. education, it's rather asinine to put children in school. Everything about school is antithetical to human nature. Like prison, school keeps children locked up and their activities regimented. Like a slave-worked plantation, school makes children labor away at tasks assigned by others. Like an indoctrination center, schools tell children what they must think, the knowledge that they must have and memorize in order to regurgitate later so that they can be evaluated, or in other words have their worth as a human being determined, and that they shouldn't think too critically about the facts or processes that are being poured into their minds.

Children were not meant to learn or live like this. It goes against their nature as rational, creative, playful, adaptable, curious human beings. Is it any wonder that children hate school? They know it's a prison where they can't escape, a plantation where they're forced to work, and an indoctrination center where they learn things against their will. Their instincts from eons of evolution tell them that school is not a good place to be. Why so many are forced to endure schooling is the subject of Chapter Three of Peter Gray's book, so I'll leave it to you to pick it up and expand your understanding of both schooling and how children were born to learn (the rest of the book).

Final Thoughts

It's that time of year when most parents feel so relieved that their children, who've been home for three months, are finally going back to school. It's very sad, really, when you think about it. Parents are excited and eager to stick their children back in prison, on the plantation, and to be the receivers of intense indoctrination. I can proudly say, "Not in my house!" Our children have wisely chosen *not* to suffer the horrors of school. Though they are free to try it out if and when they choose to, that it's their choice will make all the difference in the world in the type of experience they will have. Their time is theirs to plan; their lives are theirs to control; and their minds are theirs to fill with the knowledge that they find useful and meaningful. I wish every child were allowed to experience likewise.