

## OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

### **Tributes to Daniel Greenberg, a Founder of the Sudbury Valley School (28 September 1934 - 2 December 2021)**

Various Contributors  
Globally

#### **By Derry Hannam, Seaford, UK**

It is a mighty privilege indeed to be invited to pay tribute from the UK to Daniel Greenberg, one of the educational “greats” of the last 50 years. I will call him “Danny” as that is how he introduced himself when I visited Sudbury Valley School for two weeks in the fall of 1995. I had been told about the school by David Gribble, another “great,” also sadly lost to us in recent months. Both Danny and David shared a passionate commitment to children as naturally curious learners when given the freedom to do so in an environment of respect for democracy and human rights. Both “DGs” combined the ability to write powerfully in support of their beliefs with the determination to evidence their arguments through the creation of living schools. (By a strange piece of synchronicity, books by Greenberg and Gribble sit next to each other on my bookshelf.)

I was touched by Danny’s interest in my own experience in the UK state sector, inspired by the writings of another “great” who evidenced his ideas through a living school (A.S. Neill and Summerhill). Sometimes people working in alternative schools are sceptical of the value of the

work done by those of us who choose to introduce some democracy and remove some coercion from a corner of the state system. This was not at all Danny’s attitude, though I think he was puzzled that anyone who shared so much of his thinking—as I did—could be a school inspector!

Twenty-five years ago, Danny’s writings and the story of Sudbury Valley School were relatively unknown on this side of the Atlantic. Yaacov Hecht had told me about the influence that Danny had had on the development of the democratic school at Hadera and I had discovered the Gray and Chanoff study of 1986, but there were no Sudbury schools [in Europe] and little talk of a Sudbury model.

This is no longer the case. Sudbury schools have emerged in the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, France, Belgium, and now, I am delighted to say, in the UK. The founders all pay tribute to the inspiration they have drawn from the theoretical writings of Danny Greenberg, backed by the alumni studies of his co-founders, and the existence of the Sudbury model. Although some of these schools have had difficulties with their national inspection regimes, sometimes leading to closure, in

other cases the possibility of self-directed education in a democratic and rights respecting context has begun to impinge on official thinking.

### **About Derry Hannam**

*Derry was for twenty years a democratic teacher and vice-principal in state community high schools in England. He then became a school inspector working at national and European levels to introduce Education for Democracy and Human Rights into state systems. He has been described as a “bridge” person facilitating the exchange of ideas and information between the mainly private democratic schools in Europe, which he regards as “pioneers of possibility,” and national publicly funded state schools. He is the author of Another Way Is Possible: Becoming a Democratic Teacher in a State School published as an e-book by Smashwords*

*(<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/1029100>) and as a paperback by Amazon.*

### **By Kezia Cantwell-Wright, East Kent Sudbury, UK**

Without a doubt, Daniel Greenberg’s vision of education has changed the course of countless lives, including my own and my children. Many people have radical ideas, some even go on to create institutions based on those ideas, but very few have the qualities that Daniel Greenberg had. His commitment to Sudbury Valley School and to trusting children with the responsibility for their own education was unwavering. It’s hard to imagine working in the same job for 53 years, yet when I met Danny in 2017, his energy and zest for Sudbury Valley School and its students was as fresh

as I imagine it would have been 50 years earlier, maybe even more so; invigorated by the experience of having watched so many young people successfully create lives for themselves. I am immensely grateful for the legacy Danny left behind. The meticulous way he laid out his vision and then continued to refine his thinking through 20 books and even more essays and articles has enabled myself and hundreds of others to challenge our own thinking about what it means to be free, to be educated, and to take responsibility for our lives. I will remember Danny most from the brief encounter we had in 2017. I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone who lit up a room in that way before or since. He was a brilliant storyteller, witty and charming, but above all he was generous. He seemed to know what others needed and gave it without being asked. He was brilliant, determined, funny, and kind.

### **About Kezia Cantwell-Wright**

*Kezia is founder and a staff member of East Kent Sudbury School, UK. <https://eastkentsudbury.org.uk/> Having experienced varied educational styles growing up, Kezia attended both mainstream schools and the world’s first democratic school, Summerhill in Leiston, Suffolk—an experience which left a lasting impact. Later on Kezia graduated in 2003 in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design, going on to establish a career in digital design and marketing, heading up a creative team at a London marketing agency before establishing her own company Draw(). Now mother to two daughters Kezia chose to stay home with her family and home educate her children before embarking on founding East Kent Sudbury.*

**By Jo Symes, ProgressiveEducation.org**

It is with great sadness that I learnt of the passing of Daniel Greenberg this month. As one of the pioneering founders of Sudbury Valley School in 1968, the author and professor [physics professor at Columbia University in the early 60's] had a clear vision of “the individual freedom needed by children to flourish, and of a community governed equally by all its members.” His ground-breaking democratic school, where students are free to self-direct their learning, continues to be an inspiration to countless parents, educators and students across the globe. There are now over 35 Sudbury-inspired schools around the world. What an incredible legacy to leave behind. His work has touched the lives of so many children and young people, changing lives for generations to come. On behalf of the Progressive Education community (which includes a growing number of aspiring founders of democratic schools), thank you Daniel Greenberg for inspiring us. Your legacy will live on. Our deepest sympathy goes out to the Greenberg family, and to all your students and colleagues at Sudbury Valley.

**About Jo Symes**

*Jo is the founder of ProgressiveEducation.org which launched in 2020 following the success of her Progressive Education Group on Facebook. Jo hopes that her website will help parents whose children struggle at school, by presenting the educational choices available to them, including home education, democratic education, Self-Directed Education, Forest School, and Montessori schooling.*

**By Derek Sheppard, The Booroobin Sudbury School, Australia**

Daniel Greenberg was a giant in education. I became aware of his writings while in a group that had formed randomly in response to a single small A4 sign in the window of a LETS office. My wife and I were researching schools around the world that might come close to matching our education needs in order to form our own independent school (the group included our children, who, even then, our values dictated, had a voice equal to ours). That was in 1994. We might have been on a different continent, but discovering the democratic Sudbury Valley School (SVS)—a direct, participatory democracy—was a revelation. From before 1968 when SVS was founded, founders were very clear that children ought to have and exercise the same rights and responsibilities as conferred by the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. That was one hell of a revolutionary thing to decide, but fortunately, it was the 1960's, and Massachusetts, where it was possible for individuals to decide to open a school, and do it, subject to local health, safety and planning regulations. Dan Greenberg, along with others, including especially Mimsy Sadofsky, were at the heart of SVS. Having read or skimmed most of what Greenberg has written both before then, and since, it became clear he was a founder and the persistent, determined, convinced and convincing, highly intellectual communicator and continuously annually elected Staff who was one of the beating hearts of Sudbury. I'll miss him, although I only met him once. Fortunately, his words will live on in many media, including books, audio, videos and other Sudbury

publications. May his legacy go on to inspire millions of others, and may many more centres of learning open and operate around the world founded on Sudbury's and the United States' democratic values, which put children at the centre of education.

### ***About Derek Sheppard***

*Derek is a father and grandfather. He is the Founder and elected Staff of one of only two Sudbury model Schools in Australia—The Booroobin Sudbury School—a centre of learning. Booroobin operated for eight wonderful years on 40 acres as a school and two and half years as a self-funded democratic centre of learning, until the State closed both, which is the only reason it is not still operating. For over a decade, Derek has convened the Facebook group, Democratic Learning and Living, to provide information about democratic education. Derek has been married for 44 years to his wife, Jo, a wonderful mother and grandmother and ceramicist, former nanny and disability support worker.*

### **By Caleb Collier, Other Education**

There are few figures in the history of education who had such a high view of children as Daniel Greenberg. He believed that each and every child was a genius, capable of choosing their lives for themselves. As such, he also showcased a high view of humanity, an unwavering belief that each and every one of us is capable of extraordinary things. We've lost a true believer in the goodness and greatness of humanity. May we carry on his work.

### **About Caleb Collier**

*Caleb is on the Editorial Board of and the Relations Manager for Other Education. He recently obtained his doctorate in the history and theory of self-directed learning from Georgia State University: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/mse\\_diss/120/](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/mse_diss/120/)*

### **By Robyn Robertson**

A few years ago, Daniel and I connected for an interview on my podcast. He graciously agreed to come on my show to talk about the beginnings of Sudbury Valley Democratic school and the philosophy behind it. But before he did so, he wanted to make sure that I understood that Sudbury Valley was not about homeschooling or even unschooling. As he said, "Sudbury Valley is framed on the belief that each individual has the undeniable rights to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The right to pursue a meaningful existence. And this includes kids." "I understand," I told him. "And that's why I contacted the school. I want to offer another platform for the story to be told." For me, it was an afternoon that I still reflect on. Daniel's passion was evident and he had me thinking about my personal beliefs on learning, childhood, freedom, and my role as a parent for weeks afterward.

I want to thank Daniel for that. For his enthusiasm, his trust in the personal learning process of each individual, and his beliefs in those freedoms. He extended an invitation to come and visit Sudbury Valley School and I wish that I hadn't waited to take him up on that offer. I will still visit, but Daniel you will be greatly missed. Rest In Peace.

### **About Robyn Robertson**

Robyn has fifteen years' experience in education, starting as an ESL teacher before joining a private school as admissions and outreach director. Currently, she's an unschooling mom of 2, podcast host, and school board trustee. Robyn's experiences traveling while home-educating had Robyn questioning her past beliefs around parenting, how we learn, and the education system. It also highlighted the need for community. This led Robyn to launch her podcast Honey! I'm Homeschooling the Kids, which is a platform to share ideas, stories and information about the joys and challenges of home education and self directed learning. The podcast also serves as a place to bring together a collective voice for change in the broader education system. Today, Robyn advocates politically for home education and self-directed learning. With her experience and trustee position she bridges the gaps between the homeschool community and local educators.



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