

**Editorial:**  
**Alternative Education as Power**  
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*Other Education* has never been much about therapy or the therapeutic. Now however, things have changed. The world is burning or it is drowning. Most people feel worried about the state of the world. Many feel adrift in issues that aren't postmodern in fearsome "unanchoredness," but are literally without theory with which a position of any kind might be taken. The situation is of mental chaos. Positions taken are ridiculous or extreme in a manner that has nothing to do with new thought and much more to do with mortality. We need a lighthouse to guide these mental seas and at *Other Education* we consider that lighthouse is democratic education saturated through generations. We start here. Our alternative education is now both powerfully therapeutic *and* globally required.

People mostly have no idea what to do or what to fruitfully say or rightly think about our burning/flooded/poisoned/etc world. Frankly, this—we contest—is not entirely (because the chaos is so challenging) but mainly because at school they were told, generation after generation, what to do, told what to think and required to say not much. So, people do not have the skills to navigate this new world disorder. They didn't grow the skills to avoid it. They need these skills, key among which is co-operation and understanding of what it means to be among others in community. The people of our current world have been, through too many generations now, taught to behave a certain way, listen carefully (which didn't really work), judge, compete at the expense of others and profit at all costs to be the number one. The price we pay for this "ordered curriculum" is hard to bear.

But there is another way, and we have always known that. Alternative education as power to navigate: using the power of emergent chaos productively to create ordered peace through negotiations via dialogue. We need people with minds of their own going forwards. We need collaborative people, people with care in their hearts, co-operating, sharing, and exchanging. More traditional schools will discuss the importance of social emotional learning as their "therapeutic" entry into the souls of their students, and whilst we share the idea that it is an important aspect of education to learn, we also think this attempt to learn about democratic togetherness is woefully "lite." For what is to come still will be tougher than our

current imagination allows. It will require the greatest of inner resources to live well. It will require community and it will require therapy. By the way, we at *Other Education* contend that good people who grew democratic manners through education will always survive and thrive in an emergency context better, as they have the personal and interpersonal tools to do so and they have a light of understanding within that guides them forwards well. This is perhaps a belief. We hold fast to it.

In alternative education as *Other Education* broadly conceives of it, the power dynamics between teachers and students are equalised, so that people can think with their own minds—not the mind of the teacher or the curriculum forced on the teacher by unseen and unmet forces with whom no dialogue is possible. Our education is more about facilitation, a sharing of ideas, and increasing intrinsic motivation. To do this balancing act of fairness and voice, both the education and outcomes need to be centered around the ideas and thoughts of the students we teach; the next generation: the ones who have the power to address current chaos and introduce fair order born of connection.

We need alternative education in this world and for this world now, if it is to have some semblance of survival going into the future. This sounds very dramatic, granted. Speak to the climate scientists. They won't think we have gone far enough with a mention of education. They will say "Stop the fossil fuels NOW!" and won't be bothered about education. We have our own difficult (because it isn't immediate) but strong position and we will say: "Give us a child and we will allow and enable them to express and learn responsibility – no other plan will work."

We need an "alternative education" with the power to allow people to be their best selves—which we consider is a natural goodness. The kind of people then who save, rather than perpetuate a heated world through uncaring behaviours born of their own internal traumas and unseen, unmet needs and their unfortunate exposure to an education that killed something precious and saving inside. We need education not afraid of the therapeutic need to care for self and other and take responsibility within. We at *Other Education* know alternative education has this therapeutic power intrinsic to its modality and its philosophies about what people are. So long as you don't school them to destroy each other and their environment.

Helen and Gina



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