

LEARNING

AND

LIBERATION



DIGITAL PRESS KIT

a documentary series by
GENEVIEVE SHADE and
BEN REHRMAN

LEARNING AND LIBERATION

Run Time: Eight 15-20 minute episodes

Genre: Documentary

Year of Production: 2023-2024

Language: English

Links:

Crowdfunder: <https://seedandspark.com/fund/learning-and-liberation>

Official Website: <https://www.learningandlib.com>

Official Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/learningandlib>

Official Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/learningandlib/>

Official TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@learningandlib>

Official YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@learningandliberation>

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This series is currently in pre-production. Crowdfunding launches on March 3rd, 2023. Production starts September 2023, and ends in May 2024.

LOGLINE

Learning and Liberation is a documentary series that explores eight people and places that allow children to grow, play, and learn outside of traditional school.

SYNOPSIS

This series focuses on exploring the many alternative forms of education that allow young people to learn outside of the traditional school system. We will follow Ben and Genevieve, two 18-year-olds who left the traditional path and chose to “unschool” their education, as they travel around the United States visiting different spaces, people, and groups practicing self-directed education. In each episode, Ben and Genevieve will focus on a different subject and tell the story of this space or organization through interviews with young people, adult facilitators, and experts.

ARTISTIC APPROACH

Episodes will consist of interviews with both self-directed education (SDE) facilitators and young people, in addition to “fly on the wall” segments that paint a picture of what a particular model of education looks like on a daily basis. We want to accurately depict how each model of education functions, making it feel tangible for the audience.

Often when people first hear about SDE, they struggle to form a picture of what it looks like on a day to day basis. We want to make SDE feel real and accessible. We want the magic and chaos that is created and felt in SDE spaces to translate to the screen. When applicable, we will include an overview of the history and background of the subject, including archival footage and images from research.

We want to honor the principles and ethics of self directed education while making this series. This entails centering young people’s voices. Interviews will not focus solely on adults. We also aim to focus on diversity in this series. We want to explore self directed education’s impact on POC and LGBTQ+ communities, communities that are sometimes overlooked when discussing SDE.

As two young adults and long time self directed learners, we have the perspective and experience to make this series. The experience of traveling and making this documentary is in itself a form of self directed learning for us. Because of this, we would like to incorporate our travel and personalities into the series in addition to the information and interview based portions. We want the audience to be invested in the stories we’re covering as well as our ongoing story of travel.



BEN REHRMAN, DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/EDITOR (they/them)

Ben is a filmmaker and lifelong unschooler from Eastern Pennsylvania. Their interest in film started as a child. They used all of their free time to experiment with animation and live action story telling. As a teenager they started a YouTube channel, where they began uploading educational and autobiographical videos. These videos slowly gained traction online, growing an audience for their work. Ben is interested in narrative and documentary film, having made multiple short films.

Unschooling and self directed education are some of their main creative inspirations. From informing audiences about the basics of self directed education, to making autobiographical videos about their life to show what unschooling is like, to interviewing other people in the space, unschooling has driven their work.

Their films have been official selections in The All American High School Film Festival, The Sun Valley High School Film Festival, The Saul Zaentz High School Film Festival, and the SE Pennsylvania Teen Filmmakers Showcase. Videos on their youtube channel have garnered almost half a million views, making them one of the most viewed video sources about unschooling.





GENEVIEVE SHADE, DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/DP (she/her)

Genevieve is a Pittsburgh based multidisciplinary artist and creator of the zine “Youth Liberation Now” (YLN). YLN touches on topics of youth rights, education, the history of youth movements, and politics. Through grassroots distribution, YLN has spread across the US and internationally.

Beyond YLN, Genevieve is a fine artist, writer, and researcher. Her film photography work was shown at the Mattress Factory in May 2022, and at Bankrupt Bodega in November 2022. She is also a printmaker, painter, and people’s history enthusiast. One of her latest projects is a collaborative research project with her mentor Shaun Slifer, focusing on 1970s high school student activism in Pittsburgh.

She is very passionate about education, having experienced 5 different models of education throughout her life. In 2020 Genevieve decided to leave public high school (one of the best decisions she’s ever made) and she has been happily unschooling for the past three years.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

“Self-directed education means the world to me. Since leaving high school and deciding to unschool three years ago, SDE has propelled my life in directions I never realized were possible. I’ve spent the past three years of my life thinking about and researching alternative education, and I am thrilled to apply that knowledge and passion to this series. I believe that self-directed education is one particularly effective solution to the many issues with our current education system. My biggest hope is that this series will connect with people who are struggling with the current education system, as I once was. And that it will help them recognize that there are alternatives to traditional education that create happy, full, and exuberant lives.”

GENEVIEVE SHADE

“As a lifelong self directed learner and unschooler I’ve seen how exciting, impactful, and freeing self-directed education can be. A lot of my energy behind this project comes from my long-time desire to share SDE from the perspective of someone who has experienced it. Media and news coverage of SDE is often sensationalized and inaccurate, showing a biased view of what SDE truly is. There are so many interesting ideas, people, and stories in this space that have never been shared in the way I believe they deserve to be. I really hope that with this project we can help audiences understand these alternative forms of education, the people behind them, and how they can free and transform the way we think about life and education.”

BEN REHRMAN

FAQ

WHAT IS SELF-DIRECTED EDUCATION?

Self-directed education (SDE) is an educational model based on the idea that learning happens naturally in everyday life. SDE decouples education from school, viewing education as a whole life process. Self-directed learners choose what, when, how, and where they learn.

There are many models that stem from the basic philosophy of self-directed education. Some that we will feature in this series include unschooling, agile learning centers, democratic or free schools, liberated learners centers, and flying squads.

WHAT IS UNSCHOOLING?

Unschooling is a model of self-directed education. It is a lot like homeschooling, but children are given a greater degree of autonomy with how and what they learn. There is no set curriculum and parents don't act as teachers unless young people request it. Unschoolers pursue and study their individual interests and hobbies, rather than traditional school subjects.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME?

Since the pandemic, more people than ever before are seeking alternatives to traditional school. The number of families homeschooling or cyber schooling have greatly increased. The lockdown led many families to realize that there were viable alternatives to traditional school that work better for their individual children.

More and more people are also realizing the damage that traditional schooling does to young people. We are at a distinct turning point in the conversation about education, where many people are questioning the way things are. We hope this series will add to this conversation, showing the vast range of educational possibilities there are.

HOW HAVE YOUR BACKGROUNDS PREPARED YOU TO MAKE THIS PROJECT? WHY ARE YOU THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO MAKE THIS SERIES?

We are two 18-year-old self-directed learners. We have the unique perspective to make this series as two people who truly know what it is like to be alternatively educated. Ben has never been to school, and Genevieve chose to leave school after 9th grade. We know how to tell the story of these spaces intuitively and from an insider's perspective. We will be able to easily relate to the young people we are interviewing.

Unschooling has also uniquely prepared us to make this series in that we've been able to dedicate large amounts of our time to learning filmmaking. Ben has dedicated most of their teen years to filmmaking, knowing that they've wanted to be a filmmaker since they were 12.

HOW WILL YOU DISTRIBUTE THE SERIES?

We will release the full series for free on YouTube, in addition to providing free downloads for screenings. We will encourage groups that want to do monthly screenings of the series as we release it, providing discussion guides and supplemental materials for each episode. We will also screen the series at various schools and locations once it is finished.

We want this series to be incredibly accessible to all people. We are prioritizing reaching a wide audience over profiting off of this series.

WHAT IMPACT DO YOU HOPE THIS SERIES WILL HAVE?

We hope that it inspires young people, parents, teachers, and everyone in between to think differently about education. We hope that many groups will screen the series monthly, and that it will foster discussions in communities about changing and reinventing education.

WHAT DOES THE TIMELINE FOR THIS SERIES LOOK LIKE?

We are currently in pre-production on this series. Production starts September 2023, and ends in June 2024. The series will be released and distributed concurrently with production, one episode per month from October 2023 through June 2024.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN?

We are crowdfunding for 30 days from March 3rd through April 1st. The campaign is located on [Seed and Spark](#), a crowdfunding platform specifically for filmmakers. We are aiming to raise \$18,000 (a little less than half of our total budget for the series).

HAS ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEEN MADE BEFORE? HAS ANYONE MADE A FILM ABOUT SELF-DIRECTED EDUCATION THAT IS BY SELF-DIRECTED LEARNERS THEMSELVES?

Not as far as we know. There have been a few small projects and attempts, but nothing at this scale. This makes this project incredibly unique. We will be the first teenage self-directed learners to make a film about self-directed education. Additionally, this will be one of very few *free* film resources about self-directed education online.