This Private School Momâ€™s Unconventional, Hippie, Home-Schooling, Vegan Upbringing

Description

Me and my kids, Oct. 2010

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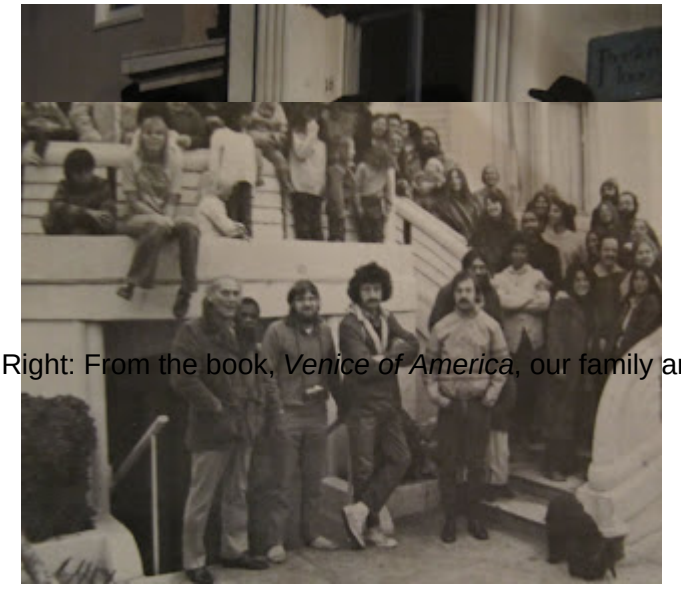
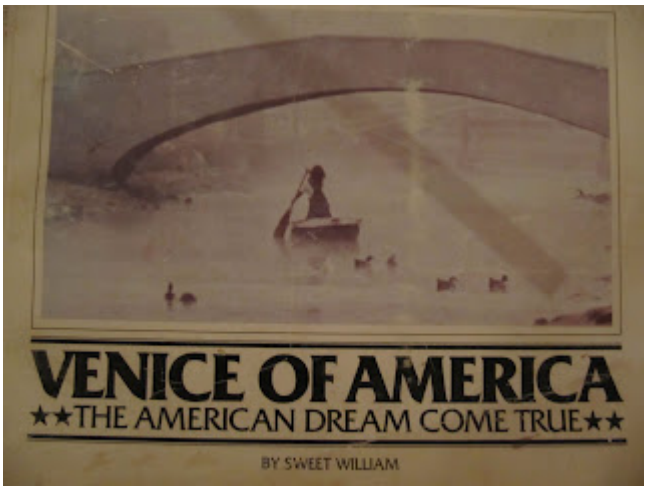


Right: Thornton Ave. Reunion, 1996.

Right: From the book, *Venice of America*, our family and neighbors, Thornton Ave. Venice



Venice Of America By Sweet William, 1976

From the book, *Venice of America.* Birthday party at our house, 22 Thornton Ave. Venice.
Me with ponytails. To my right, my late sister, Nani.

When I invited guest blogger Jenny Heitz to write a piece about Perfect Mommy Syndrome at LA private elementary schools, I though it would be of interest to our blog readers, many of whom are mid-way through the intensely competitive LA private elementary school admissions process. Our blog also focuses on what life at private elementary schools is like for moms and kids. These schools are filled with â€œperfect momsâ€• of one type or another. Jennyâ€™s piece accurately depicts the most common types of moms afflicted with â€œPerfect Mommy Syndromeâ€•. Iâ€™m not a perfect momâ€¦far from it. Read on and youâ€™ll find out why.

I thought it would be interesting to quote two celebrities who have strong (and controversial) opinions about parenting. Supermodel Gisele and Mayim Bialik have both been outspoken about their personal parenting opinions, both quoted in *People* magazines and other national publications. I asked the question, â€œAre Celebrity Moms *Too* Perfectâ€• as the lead-in to Jennyâ€™s piece.

Wow! Mayim responded with a blog piece of her own. Thatâ€™s great. What astonished Jenny and me were the comments left on this blog by Mayimâ€™s followers (otherwise known as â€œtrollsâ€• or people who leave nasty comments on blogs they donâ€™t usually read).These were some of the most hate-filled, ignorant and angry comments Iâ€™ve seen on a blog. Here are a few choice comments by anonymous posters:

> **â€œBy pulling headlines and making up stuff, you just look dumb.â€• â€œAnonymousâ€•**

> **â€œWhat pathetic judgmental drivel! Jealous much? â€¨Oh and Josie, you are kidding right? How much did you research your CHOICE to inject toxins in your childâ€™s blood veins? Trust me I know WAY MORE on the topic than you do! So yeah, I am a better parent if I took the time to research fully and not just take doctors (who are human and failable and many are just as ignorant and ill informed as many parents they are leading on) on their word seeing as they have the pharmaceutical reps in their back pocket! â€¨â€¨And what do you know about homeschool? Except that you would be a terrible homeschooling parent.â€¨â€¨Get a life lady, you have no clue about the world around you! â€œAnonymousâ€•**

(Note: the troll above misspelled the word â€œfallibleâ€•)

My Hippie Childhood:

What very few people know about me is that I may not be a â€œtypicalâ€• private elementary school mom. I was raised in Venice, CA. We moved to Topanga when I was 10 years old. I was home-schooled until 4th grade, when I enrolled at Topanga Elementary School. We were strict vegans. That meant no animal products and in addition, no sugar, white flour or anything else my parents deemed to be â€œtoxicâ€•.We left many activities like the Girl Scouts and other official functions because they served cookies or meat. It was strict and extreme.

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Mine was a hippie family, in every way. From Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix and Black Panthers as idols to the â€œitâ€™s ok to be nude 24/7â€• attitude. My mom was African American. My dad, white. We were the onlyâ€”or one of the onlyâ€“ mixed race families in Topanga as far as I could tell. How do I know that? I was called â€œZebraâ€• too many times to count. The first time I went to the dentist, I was 12 years old. I had more than 25 cavities, that took a year to deal with. I lost 2 teeth as a result. I never saw a pediatrician. Headaches were not treated with Tylenol, but instead with herbal tea. My parents followed various Indian gurus, did yoga and lived a rather secluded life. We gardened, ate organic and composted. We shopped at health food stores. We didnâ€™t have a television. My parents smoked pot. Our clothes were from thrift stores. We didnâ€™t, however, live on a commune.

Death Without Doctors. When I was about 11 years old, the unimaginable happened. My mom, age 40, was self-diagnosed with breast cancer. She told us she injured her breast running on Venice beach years earlier (not true). Over time, she became very ill. She didnâ€™t believe in Western medicine and refused to see a doctor. She was tired. She lost weight. By the time I was 17, she was extremely ill. At home, my sister, dad and I cared for her the best we could. No nurses or hospice. Iâ€™ll spare you the worst details, but if youâ€™ve ever taken care of a dying person, it is something I wouldnâ€™t wish on anyone. The suffering of my mom is etched in my mind forever. She flew to the Phillipines to seek treatment from a holistic healer. It didnâ€™t work. I begged her to live. I told her I still needed her, that I was only 18. She got sicker. Still no doctor. Paralysis set in. Then blindness. Brain damage. Coma. Death. I was 19 years old. She was 50 years old. I miss her every day. Somehow, I picked up the pieces of my broken soul and went off to UC Berkeley. My late sister also went to Berkeley and then to Harvard Law School (thatâ€™s how she met my husband, Barry, and introduced us).

Seeking Balance: Since Iâ€™ve had kids, Iâ€™ve realized that *balance* is key in all aspects of my familyâ€™s life. Celebrity moms influence us, without question. We look to them as perfect, even when we know they are not. My family isnâ€™t vegan, but there are vegan restaurants we go to (I love Vegan Glory on Beverly Blvd.). We eat organic sometimes. I could care less how much sugar my kidsâ€™ progressive school serves on Halloween.

My Life Now: So there! Now you know a little bit more about me. Iâ€™ve lived the bohemian life. I know it inside and out. To me, itâ€™s not glamorous. But, itâ€™s the right choice for some families. Just not mine. What

am I like now? I love Prada and Chloe handbags. I wear J. Crew and 7 For All Mankind jeans. My politics are left-of-center. I spent years working on staff for LA County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. I married someone from a wealthy, conservative Jewish background. Our upbringings are totally dissimilar. Iâ€™ve never met his parents because Iâ€™m black (or according to them, an â€œNâ€• word).We give as much money as we can to charities, progressive elected officials and our kidsâ€™ school. My favorite writers are Cormac McCarthy, J.M. Coetzee and Toni Morrison. I never, ever shop on sale and I canâ€™t stand vintage clothing. Oh, and my medicine cabinet is filled with Tylenol and other good stuff.

One of the things I loved most about my family was their tolerance for everyone. That, my friends, is *absent* in Mayimâ€™s followerâ€™s comments on this blog. As for those celebrity moms who give interviews about parenting to national magazines? If you canâ€™t handle having your quotes repeated, donâ€™t say them in the first place!

Category

1. Beyond The Brochure

Tags

1. Guest Blogger Jenny Heitz

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