



Written by [Julio Severo](#) on April 23, 2021

Thanks to U.S. Help, Homeschooling Receiving More Support in Brazil During Pandemic

Even though homeschooling is officially illegal in Brazil, it is starting to see support among conservatives in the administration of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, thanks in large part to the influence of American homeschooling families and organizations.

Brazilian Minister of Education Milton Ribeiro, a Presbyterian minister, has taken part in congressional hearings for the approval of homeschooling. Strong government support has also come from Damares Alves, a Pentecostal minister, who heads the Ministry of Human Rights and Women.



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The two are working to guarantee Christian conservative families the right to educate their children according to Christian principles.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, government schools in Brazil are using remote education, demonstrating that that education far away from the school building is possible. Bolsonaro, Alves, and Ribeiro believe this, even though they do not use homeschooling to educate their children.

With his vast experience, Michael Donnelly, director of global outreach for the U.S.-based Home School Legal Defense Association, has also participated in the Brazilian congressional hearings.

Such high-level national and international involvement to advance homeschooling would have been impossible in Brazil some 20 years ago. In the early 2000s, federal justices had proclaimed that “children belong to the State,” essentially saying that parents are just babysitters working for the government.

Indeed, under the administration of socialist President Luiz Inacio “Lula” da Silva, homeschool families were persecuted as child abusers by the Brazilian counterpart of the U.S. Child Protective Services.

In the past, Brazil knew some form of home education, because there was no public education system and private education was only available to the wealthy and powerful.

When public education became available to the masses, successive right-wing and, especially, left-wing administrations strengthened the false idea that government is essential to education.

So while the left-wing stranglehold on education was increasing, right-wingers were not opposing it.

Resistance to government education began after the Internet made available to the whole world the U.S. example, without which homeschooling in Brazil would not be possible.

Conservative American Christian families, most notably U.S. missionaries in Brazil taking the responsibility to homeschool their children to save them from the left-wing stranglehold on public education, were a powerful inspiration for Brazilian families to homeschool their kids.



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Homeschool groups were created and have spread throughout Brazil in the last few years to advocate for city, state, and federal laws guaranteeing families the right and freedom to homeschool without government persecution. One of these efforts was a pro-homeschool bill this writer helped draft for a Catholic representative in the Brazilian Congress some 15 years ago. The legal battle eventually reached the higher courts, which rejected homeschooling for ideological reasons. Homeschooling was vilified as anti-Brazilian.

In 2007, this writer launched a Brazilian Portuguese translation of the pro-homeschooling book *The Way Home: Beyond Feminism Back to Reality* by Mary Pride. No major evangelical publisher accepted it because they did not see a market for homeschooling in Brazil, which was an indictment on the cultural and political reality in Brazil. A small Mennonite publisher eventually published it.

There is clearly a left-wing stranglehold on public education in Brazil — as there is in many countries, including the United States — and this is likely the only reason left-wingers fight to keep children in the public school system.

The Left fears people realizing that education apart from their ideological indoctrination in the public schools is possible.

No parent or family should be forced to keep their children in a system that violates their moral or religious principles. Parents who homeschool should be as respected as parents who send their children to public school. This is the understanding of Minister Alves, the main government official fighting for homeschooling in Brazil. For parents desperate to help their children, homeschooling has been considered and even embraced.



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