

RAD

DAD

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*Finally, how do you see parenting as political?*

Well some people like to see parenting as kind of a tug of war: pulling my kid to my values away from whatever we're scared of and it's a constant struggle. Or we can see that it is not a tug of war and that our kids are growing up trying to figure out what's going on and make their own decisions and they need somebody there as an ally to stand with them and help them develop the capacity to think well about what's going on. That's a pretty radical place to be with young people: to actually trust them in that capacity, to be an ally and not a protector or some other role, to just help them be who they are, to believe that whatever they are is fine. This doesn't mean they don't make mistakes or need help and this view isn't an excuse for fathers to be absent, but it's an opening to be really present with them rather than our past, our pressures, our fears.

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## what we value

by tomas

This time, making rad dad 3 felt like having my third kid: welcome, familiar, surrounded by family and friends. It was made that way by all the encouragement I got from strangers about hope, from new friends like vikki and china and artnoose who remind me that art can save, from family showing me that what we value is what we choose to: empty boxes, stories, bed time, that what alice walker says is so true, "we alone can devalue gold...this could be our revolution: to love what is plentiful as much as what is scarce." I keep this sentiment close as I walk my kids to school, as I sense that the time I am blessed to spend with them as well as everyone else ticks on and on. Enjoy what is in front of you ...

p.s. send stuff in for number 4 out in july...

back issues of 1 and 2 (w/o the cool cover, sorry) are available for \$2 + postage:

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## storytelling

by tomas

Parenting starts with a story:

My grandma, worried that her 3-year old son had not spoken a word yet, had him chase down a grasshopper. Diligently, without complaint, the boy did and returned with a smile. Open she said; confused but without hesitation, he opened wide. Wide. She shoved it in and closed his mouth. "Habras, mijo, hablas." He spit it out crying. Crying and yelling. He has not stopped either since she says and smiles thinking of her now 50 year old son talking his time away in a New Mexican state penitentiary.

This is my father. He smiles when he tells this story now on a snowy day to my children in his trailer on the outskirts of town. He has been out of jail for a year now. My kids look to me for guidance. Do we believe? I can only smile. Teasing, my father says, "What, mija, you don't believe me? Come here, I'll tell you more."

I realize this is so central to my parenting. Stories. But I did not know this when I became a father. I didn't know those afternoons or early mornings when my partner had to leave to culinary school and I had to discover what to do for the next eight hours that I was talking to both my newborn son and myself. I was showing us the way. I was imagining the path home. Telling myself, telling my son that success is possible, that despite my fear, my ignorance, my loneliness this path was traversable. It's the stories that we tell each other that create connections, that foster empathy, that teach.

But we aren't the only ones telling tales. I see now how storytelling works in a cultural, social level as well; how myths of capitalism, christianity, patriarchy are told over and over and over until our kids tell them back to

