

# BRADBAD

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Special needs children  
Traditional Japanese grandparents  
Queer male allies  
The ABC of Anarchism interview

## # 20





## Rad Dad #20

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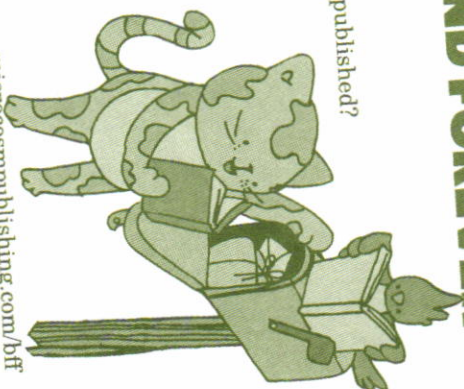
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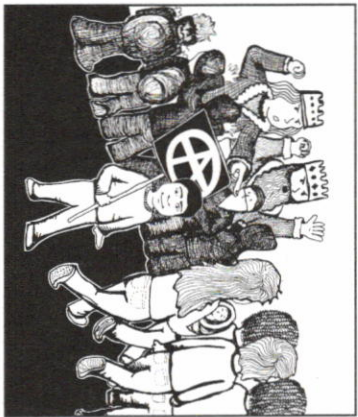
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## Intro by Tomas Moniz

This is the final issue before the book *Rad Dad: Dispatches From The Frontiers of Fatherhood* is released. Look for a book tour through the parks, infoshops, bookstores, and cafes in your town... and feel free to create *Rad Dad* events of your own; read some of the articles, read your own pieces, start parenting support playgroups.

In San Francisco, we will do an October tour called "Out Of The Bookstores, Into The Parks," a series of four Saturday discussions/reading at parks throughout the city. Come join us!

We want to do this because we're fathers; we want to do this because we know we are better fathers when we have community.

Because of that, the next issue of *Rad Dad* won't be released until December 2011.

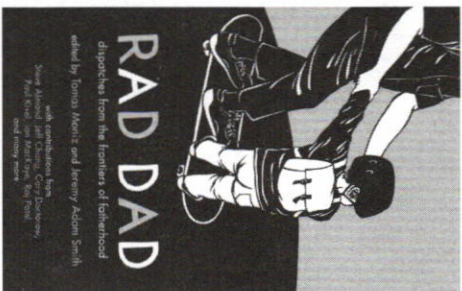
Please spread the word and write for *Rad Dad* #21!

I am open to essays, rants, collaborations, interviews, birth stories. The deadline is Halloween.

Pre-order a copy of *Rad Dad: Dispatches from the Frontiers Of Fatherhood*, co-published by PM Press and Microcosm Publishing, by visiting:  
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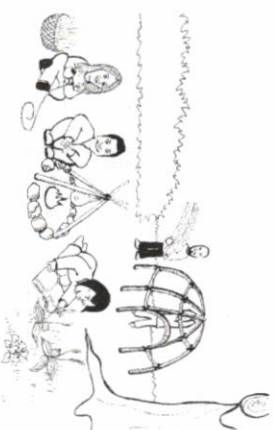
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male. Youth are important. Young energy is important. We need it-them-you to break through the visible barriers of oppression. But to forget that others are fighting the same battle on other fronts—from within the belly of the beast, from within the belly, literally, of the mother, from within the daily rituals of childcare, of keeping a home, from within our relationships with lovers, partners, family members—to forget all of the everyday sites of struggle, oppression, and emancipation is to dangerously cheapen our understanding of resistance. Let us encompass parenting and childrearing into our thought processes about prefigurative politics and living. Let us weave them into the very fabric of our social relationships and revolutionary aspirations.

A dear friend of mine said to me, in response to my bemoaning the lack of support for me as a parent in our "anarchist community" here in the San Francisco Bay Area (many overlapping communities), that I decided to have a child and so I cannot expect anyone other than myself



to take responsibility for her. He followed this, with, "I mean, I don't expect you to do my job for me, do I? I chose my work and I am responsible for it." I was, and continue to be, dumbfounded by this comment. For its lack of recognition that the labor of childrearing is unpaid and that it is work done on top of whatever "career" or paid work one has. The lack of recognition that reproduction is a site of social struggle, of concern to all of us. From the simple lack of caring about changing the structures of caregiving and mutual aid in this particular domain when others—like workers' struggles—are prioritized. All of this is from someone who enjoys being with my child, who shows love and affection to her when she is around. It seems that, despite knowing much better, so many of us are stuck in a masculinist, heroic notion of revolution that ignores the "feminine," affective work of everyday life.

It seems we are quick to forget, as Silvia Federici says in her wonderful article *Precarious Labor: a Feminist Viewpoint* (published in *In the Middle of a Whirlwind*, 2008):

"One of the most important contributions of feminist theory and struggle, which is the redefinition of work, and the recognition of women's unpaid reproductive labor as a key source of capitalist accumulation."

(Of course for our purposes here, the



agitators, what I want from all of us, is the expectation that children will be a part of all that we do. A part of our gatherings, our dinners, our meetings. Because they are as much a part of our community as every person of every other age. Not only are they a part of our community now, at ages 2, 6, or 12, but they will soon be adults, contributing positively, we hope, to the world they've inherited from us, and maybe, maybe even carrying the banner of revolution. They contribute and learn from everything, all the time. They need us all to guide them, to expose them to the values of a free society, to teach them an open mind, as much as we need them to help us stay humble, vulnerable, giving, and wise.

What I want is a commitment to changing our childrearing and pedagogical structures, not in some future non-existent society, but in the here and now. In small ways, in fundamental ways, amongst us. Let us change how we think about responsibility, and shake free the values and social structures of capitalist civilization in more ways than just those that are convenient and easy. I'm not asking everyone to love kids. I'm not asking everyone to take on childcare. But I am asking that we start to act as if we believe in communal and reciprocal living, on a larger social level. I don't have answers for what this would look like. But it would be great to start this conversation.

## Everyday Politics and Rubber Babies

Patti Smith, in an interview with Stephen Colbert, explained that being an artist is like being a mother—there are sacrifices that must be made. Colbert, without a moment's hesitation, quipped, "That's why I'm a father." I laughed. Patti Smith laughed. The audience laughed.

And then I stopped. Actually that's not funny. It's kinda horrifying in its truthfulness.

Two points stuck out to me: As people attempting to be conscientious in our parenting, it's true—we make sacrifices to be the parents we want to be. Sometimes it's tough, painful, sometimes we, like the cliché states, have to grin and bear it.

And bear it we must.

For me, the thing that makes the sacrifices bearable is the community we create. Sometimes the best way to bear the weight is to lean on others.

As a young father in my twenties, I sacrificed lots of incredibly important things: my fantasy to travel across the country hopping trains; opportunities to participate in things like tree sits in Northern California as well as in sexy, smoky beat-like literary events in the City because I had to watch my two year old sleep. In retrospect, I know I should have taken him along to everything, and,

believe me, there were times when I did, but it was hard to be the only one with a child at events where children were tolerated, not welcomed. And let's not forget I sacrificed my ability to party with my friends like only a young twenty year old can; I missed many a late night revelry on MUNI buses coming back from shows or events.

I hate to admit it, but it was hard at times. Especially when my partner was making her own sacrifices, working late into the evenings, taking those same MUNI buses home after closing the restaurant she worked at smelling like tortilla chips, only to have me and her son already be asleep.

We had such little time together, but we soothed each other during the few days we did have.

We didn't have a lot of other young parents around us. But we had each other to bear some of the weight. I see the privilege now of having a partner, of not having to do it all alone as a single parent; I hope I saw it then, but I probably didn't.

This spring I was on a little zine tour of the East Coast, and I was reminded what community can look like. I had a reading at Libertia Autonomous Space in Providence, RI. I met a couple with an animated, adorable nine month old. They shared with me stories of the sacrifices they were in the middle of making, the commute and continuous work schedule



that would take the father away weeks at a time, the loneliness and anxiety the mother felt through the first few months of winter with her brand new baby.

They were working hard to support each other.

But incredibly they also were in the process of creating a new community center, which I got to witness coalesce at one of its first events.

She put a call out that the space was hosting a reading about radical parenting since I was in town. She wrote to me and asked if I would come to the space and do an afternoon event because she knew there were lots of parents in the neighborhood, and she hoped they would come.

The day of the event, we wondered

how many people would show. We walked around the city and talked politics and parenting and she shared her realizations as she transitioned from a young, autonomous person to a young mother; she realized her politics were everyday things, no longer disconnected, abstract arguments.

And she realized she too needed connection with other parents, other adults to help deal with and handle those everyday things.

Incredibly, we've had over ten babies under two running beautifully amok while the parents—twenty individuals who kind of knew each other—planned childcare co-ops, free school possibilities, ways to use the community space.

Even the young childless men who

## Children, Love, Labor, and Our Struggles: A letter to (mostly) young anarchists

At the risk of sounding clichéd: Our children are our teachers. If we let them, they teach us to question. If we let them, they teach us patience; to be proud rather than arrogant; to strive harder to find democratic solutions, to create an atmosphere of understanding and respect. Children force us out of complacency, out from behind the heavy curtains of habits and assumptions. They teach us to love fully, to open wide our hearts. This body memory, this feeling, carries over. It is not just about our children. It is about our openness to life, to love, to fellow human beings. Our children show us to how see the world through new eyes—theirs, and, if we pay attention, ours. Every day.

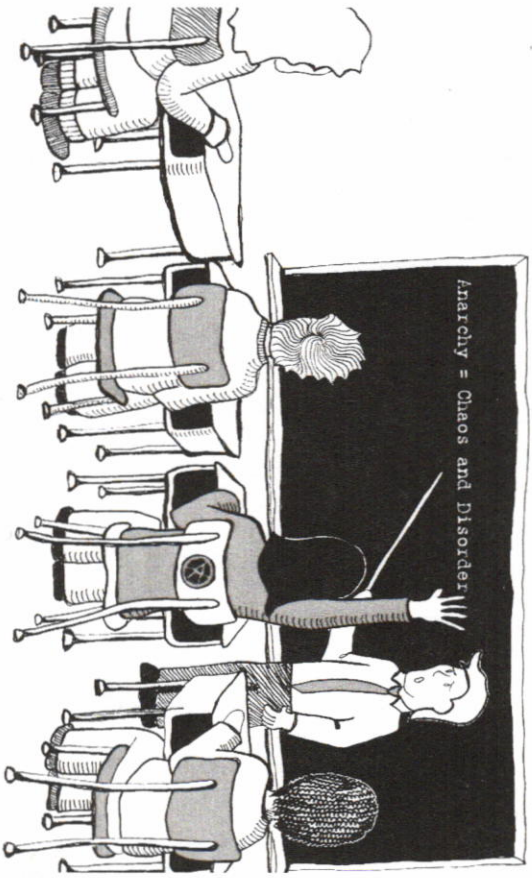
Children teach us to fail, try, fail, try, and try again. With them we face, head on, often painfully, our failings to live up to our ideals and even, sometimes, our most basic values. We are unceremoniously forced to see our flaws and imperfections, the contradictions between who we are and who we want to be, between what we believe and what we do. We are constantly learning, constantly falling short, constantly humbled. We learn to abandon any idea of perfection, and—what a gift!—to live in the here and

now. The future is, after all, built through the honesty and integrity of our efforts to live righteously in the present.

If we let them, our children can help us become vulnerable and open to the world. With them we constantly reaffirm our desire to keep life going; they give us the humanity to take each next step. It is a humbling process. When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and open rather than hardened, that is the moment at which we can talk about building a better world.

Children are not possessions. They are you, they are me, they are our grandparents, they are our ancestors, they are our future. They belong, as we all do, to community. They are nurtured and taught by all of life around them. They are here, because for some crazy reason we have an irrepressible urge to go on with life. Our movements need our children to be present and part of the daily life that constitutes them. They need our children not to belong, in some materialist, ownership sense, to their primary caretakers, birth parent or other, but to the community, and even then, there should be no question of "ownership." It seems strange to say so, but think about it, isn't that the underlying message given when primary parents are told that their kids are theirs to take care of, educate, raise, and nurture?

What I want from my non-parent friends and fellow anti-capitalist



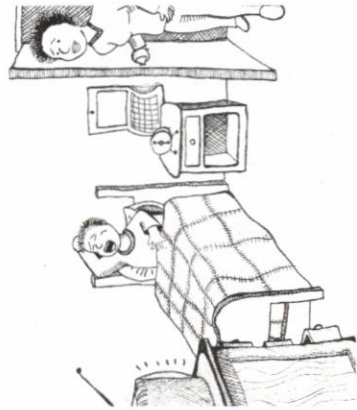


the images, half the people look simple, and the other half have a more complex style to their eyes, mouths, and noses and such.

*How has becoming a parent changed your relationship with your community: have they been welcoming, etc...*

In a way, I'm not sure how I would describe my community. I have family close by, but I don't get to see them often because all of our schedules are weird. I have friends who I would love to say were a part of my community...or rather, there are people whose community I would love to be a part of, but I honestly don't have time. I work too much, and that's probably why I want to abolish work. I have family and friends who think the concept of abolishing work is ridiculous, but I guess they have more time, or better paying jobs than I do.

But, of those people who I wish to be more involved with, yes, they have been welcoming. It's been something that



many people are aware of, and have been aware of for a few years now. I have some friends who had kid's before we did, and, even though it may not always be successful, I think there is an effort to integrate kids into some of the different circles and communities where we are.

*What's your favorite book to read or story to tell with your child right now? Other recommendations?*

This sounds boring, but my daughter loves *Are You My Mother?* She stares at those pictures and listens to the story. I think that might be the only book she really sits through.

*I have two daughters and my youngest is this articulate, empathetic, young woman who just so happens to be obsessed with shopping at Target, Old Navy, H&M, How can we counter the massive push of consumer culture?*

Oh God, I have no idea. We have a subscription to *Bitch: A Feminist Response To Pop Culture*, so hopefully raising a daughter on *Bitch* will help. My wife and I are constantly discussing pop and consumer culture, and constantly analyze and evaluate our spending habits, so I'm hoping our discussions will help influence our kid.

By the time our daughter is old enough, we'll have abolished work and have ample time to make all of our clothes and needs and desires from scratch.

staffed the space were amazed and excited to see it come together.

They had all worked hard to create something, and their sacrifices paid off.

The second point in Colbert's comment: for fathers, there has been a history of refusal, a rigidity to sacrifice, to give up careers, hobbies, behaviors, you name it...

This is changing. I see it every day when I hear stories of stay at home dads, or walk through farmer's markets, or art murmurs, or coffee shops and see so many fathers alone, caring for their children. I know that is not enough to relax, to let down our guard about the way patriarchy and society expects fathers to behave, but it makes me smile.

And some days that is important. Because other days I am reminded about how many fathers have let down their children, how much anger there is out in the world, how so many children are living under the poverty line, attending schools that are being closed down and reorganized; of course, they learn from that what we as a society value; they learn schools, teachers, the notion of community are incidental, not a priority.

Our kids face terrifying, daunting realities in the future.

Some days I need to smile at a young father walking with his child because it's everyday things that get us through it all. Sometimes I need stories to remind me how powerful and important what we do

is.

Let me end with a story from an old friend I got to spend a quick hour with. We were talking about the pain and the fear of knowing that our children will have to confront so much shit in the world on their own. There is no way they can avoid being so disappointed, so deceived, and so devastated. But part of the sacrifices we have to make as parents is to let go of the desire to protect, to shield our children from that pain.

But she looked me in the eye, and with a mischievous grin, announced in her most reassuring tone that she has a plan; she is trying to make rubber babies.

She wants them to have the ability to bounce back.

She wants them, when they fall, and they will, to have the strength and resiliency to be able to bounce back up and continue on.

Everyday politics and rubber babies.

What more do you need?

Welcome to *Rad Dad #20*—I hope it keeps you strong when you need it.



# Being an Ally to Parents & Kids

by Sasha Vodnik

Ever since my mid-20s, I've wanted to be a parent. The stars have never exactly aligned on that front, however. As a queer non-trans guy dating mostly other non-trans guys, the biology of my relationships has never lent itself to reproduction. And while I've explored other avenues to becoming a parent, the guys I've gotten seriously involved with haven't wanted a guy I love to pieces who's clear that he doesn't see himself as a dad. The decision to commit to our relationship was possible because I went through a process of re-envisioning what being a significant presence in the lives of kids could look like.

I am an uncle of three awesome kids. Ever since leaving home in the Midwest, I've returned twice a year to visit my family. For two weeks every year, I get to spend time with my nieces and nephew. I've gotten to give them bottles and rock them to sleep as infants, help out with parties in their grade school classrooms, watch them play softball, and take them to movies. I've gotten to hear about their friends, their struggles, and what fires them up.

Back home in San Francisco, I also play a significant role in the life of an 8 year old—the child of two friends, and now a friend in her own right. I took her

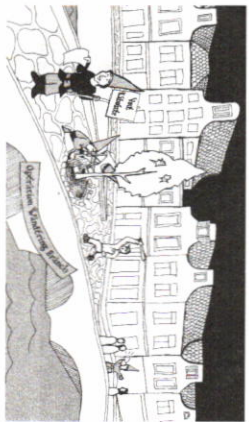
to school once a week for her first few years of school, and recently I've started spending an hour a week in her classroom. She and I have also kept a standing date to hang out for an afternoon one weekend a month, going to the park or the library or simply making crafts and drinking tea together.

My role in the lives of all these kids is part circumstance and part choice. And I think the choice piece of that, in particular, is a crucial part of the work for social justice that's fundamental to how I live my life.

## Finding my way

At age 28, I'd been interested in being a parent for a few years. I was single, and I decided that if I wasn't in a relationship by age 30, I'd pursue single parenting. At 30, in a relationship, I discovered my then-boyfriend didn't want to be a parent, and at 31, newly single, I went through foster parent training and certification. Living in Virginia at the time, I was overwhelmed by visions of kids being taken away from queer parents—stories like those of Sharon Bottoms, a lesbian whose mother successfully sued to have Sharon's own biological children removed from her custody, arguing that, as gay sex was illegal in the state at the time, Sharon was a criminal, and thus "an unfit parent."

While I didn't shy from the idea of that sort of fight, I couldn't stomach the idea of the life of a child I cared about being turned upside down because of it,



my plate and not enough time.

So maybe in some ways I'm less of an activist, and in other ways, a little more determined to live and learn and create in ways that I think will help the world. I'm also excited to see what my daughter thinks and if she has any better ideas.

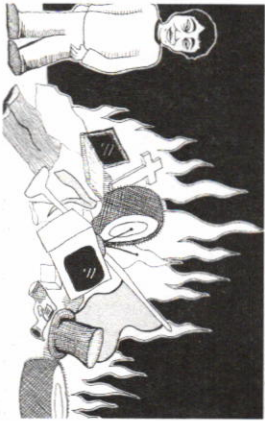
*One of the goals I had with Rad Dad was to try to present voices from a diverse group of fathers and parents. I was always shocked by the media that it seemed to portray a relatively homogeneous group: generally white and middle-class. So in what ways do you confront or grapple with issues of parenting as they intersect with issues of privilege or class or race?*

My privilege is in my face every day—if it weren't for my parents and parents-in-law, we'd be homeless right now. I hear people say that we're a downwardly mobile generation (I'm 34), where many of us are worse off financially than our parents. And while I get frustrated with that fact, I'm eternally grateful that I have parents who are now able to help us out when we need it.

In terms of the ABC's of Anarchy, I

had to go back and redraw many of the people in my book. It was one of those humbling moments when I realized I wasn't as great of a person as I thought I was. After I put my draft version of ABC's out there for people to comment on, many people made the observation that I drew a world of white people. I was talking to my wife about it and I told her that I wasn't drawing people of a particular race, I was just drawing simple generic faces. And she reminded me that the face I was calling "generic" was the face I saw in the mirror every day, and the face of most of my friends and family.

I am incredibly grateful to an amazing artist Cristy Road, who ended up giving me some great insight and knowledge about dealing with race in drawings, and I decided to put my project on hold for a few months. In that time I studied faces. I gathered hundreds of faces of people from as many different cultures and races and backgrounds as possible, and tried to draw each face as best I could, and tried to study how a black and white line drawings can represent people of varying races and colors. So, in many of





culture where a male character would not be able to handle his wife making more money...I have no idea how to relate to that character. If I had my way, my wife would be bringing home all the money and I'd be a very proud stay at home dad. We're working on that, I think.

*I am very interested in hearing about your attempt to integrate your role as a parent and an activist and as an artist (both successfully and at perhaps unsuccessfully): or how has parenting informed your activism.*

I plan on integrating my child into my life in total, regardless. I'm absolutely curious what her views are going to be, and I am looking forward to her "why?" stage in life. Now, to be fair, I don't think anyone would look at my life and think I'm an activist...I don't think I'm an activist. I used to go to protests, marches, demonstrations, and things, but now I don't have the time.

If there's anything I do that can be considered "activism," it's that I've decided that one of my main long-term goals in life is to figure out how all of humanity can opt out of work. I'm taking baby steps, one of which is to learn about wild edible plants. I've been teaching myself as much as I can for the last few years, and a few of us in my city have started to host wild food/edible weed dinners. Our daughter has attended all the ones that have happened since she

was born, and I've introduced chickweed and violet into her diet. And the other book I want to do is going to be an ABCs of Edible Weeds or ABCs of the Edible Wild, from Acorn to Zizania (wild rice) progressing through the year chronologically, focusing on gathering and cooking techniques. I have the outline for that finished, and have sketched out a lot of the book, so it's coming along.

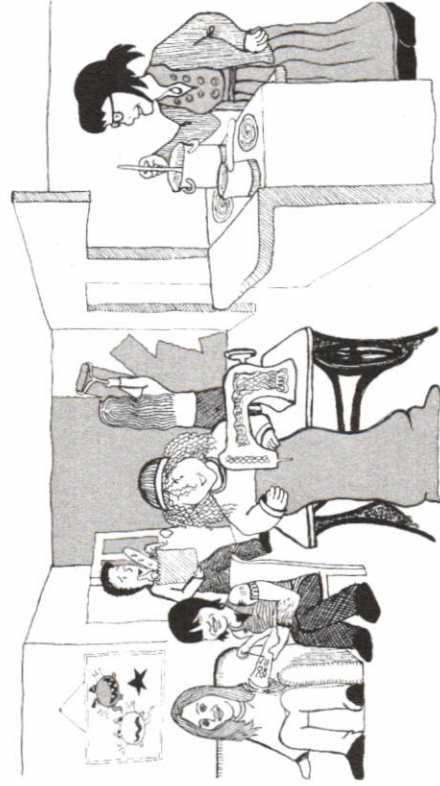
So, is that "activism?" I'm not sure, but I have a few long term goals which include getting cities to plant more fruit trees and edible landscapes to encourage public foraging, which would in turn encourage fewer pesticides and poisons being dumped into our Earth. I'd like to play a part in helping people realize how much food is growing without any human toil involved, and more people will come to the realization that abolition of work is that much closer to a reality.

Additionally, I'm an architect and I'd like to start designing and building Earth Shelters as ultra-local and sustainable design. Although I don't know enough to get started on that yet. Once again, the problem of work: I have way too much on



and I ultimately opted not to be a foster parent.

A few years later, back in San Francisco, I went through foster parent certification again. At the end of the process, though, I was left with the merest hint of what single parenting might look like, and it shook my determination. I couldn't afford an apartment with an extra bedroom, as required by foster care regulations, and had no clear idea how I'd realistically balance a 40 hour a week job with caring for a child. I realized that millions of people—mostly working-class and poor women—do these things, in the vast majority of cases making things work through force of will and a willingness to ask for help. I have deep respect and admiration for single parents, but for myself, I was unsure I could pull it off. And in the moments when I thought I could, I feared the sacrifices it might require of me.



So after years of moving forward based almost solely on determination, and then stopping short, I stepped back and took a look at my situation, along with my assumptions and my options.

I struggled with what it meant to be a "parent" versus what it meant to be "someone who helps out with kids." When I worked my way past some of my assumptions about the relative values of these roles, I was able to hear a little more clearly some things that people in my communities were telling me. One was that, as I imagined, being a single parent could be a herculean task, in many cases it is, and single parents—and most other parents—could use breaks from time to time. I also heard that kids could use as wide a variety of safe role models as possible, meaning that getting to spend time with attentive adults who are looking out for them and who aren't their parents gives kids wider sets of



emotional resources as well as expanded possibilities.

## What I've Learned

I've been fortunate to see and hear about the experiences of close friends who I work with in movements for social justice and who are parents—the joys and challenges of being parents, along with the widespread difficulty of finding or creating a continued place in the cultures of our movements as parents. I'm convinced that we can't afford single-generation movements, and that we deserve multigenerational movements. For all of us who want to see a strong left, who want to take steps toward a just world, I think we need to see ourselves as part of building and sustaining multigenerational community. Young adults shouldn't be isolated, trying to reinvent the wheel simply for lack of authentic relationships with movement elders, and none of us who are grown should leave our children to that fate. By prioritizing children—and elders—at the hearts of our movements, and putting effort into maintaining that space and strengthening it, we can continue to knit these bonds of community and affinity and mutual aid that must be part of the foundations of strong, vibrant movements for justice.

I'm equally convinced that for all of us who aren't parents, there are roles for us in the lives of children. For anyone trying to figure out how to take the next

step, here are some pieces of advice I've gotten from parents along with some things I've learned along the way:

- You need to show up. Wanting to support kids and parents is an important first step, but it isn't enough. You need to be prepared to make commitments, you need to be serious about them, and you need to follow through. If you forget some of your commitments to spending time with kids, or if you often cancel at the last minute, parents can't depend on you, and kids, depending on their ages, will draw their own conclusions—generally not flattering ones. In addition, as with any two people getting to know each other, your actions are more important in a kid's eyes than your intentions, however honorable.

- Listen to children. Anybody can tell a kid what to do—and in case you don't remember, kids get a lot of that already. What kids need is more listening. Whether you're going on an outing or playing a game, it can be as simple as asking what they want to do. Once you get to know specific kids better, you can ask about things that may be different on a given day, like a different mood or something they seem particularly proud of. Create space for kids to let you know who they are, and then create even more space for them to safely be who they are when they're with you.

it's probably irrational.

*How has parenthood changed your life?*

Logistically, things are crazy. We have one car, and we both work far from home. I take the bus some days and that's four hours of commuting time for three hours of work—it's quite stupid.

In terms of metaphysical stuff, I'm the same guy. Before we had our own, I loved talking to and hanging out with kids. If anything, now that I have a daughter of my own, I have an even more urgent need to implement my long-term plan of abolishing work. It's a loose plan—it's not a plan at all—just a dream at this point.

Before I heard of Bob Black's *The Abolition of Work*, I came to the realization that work had to go. Humanity is meant for spending time with family and friends, and very few of us do that. It's awful that I send my kid to daycare so I can go to work so I can pay for our house/utilities/food and stuff. I hate it.

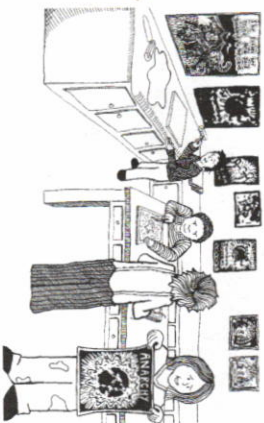
If I ever have time to illustrate another book, one of my ideas is to write about careers and jobs. You know how there are

books where kids see all sorts of careers like “police officer” or “fireperson” or “architect.” I want to write a book where there's a kid who's being introduced to a whole bunch of careers. On the first page, the kid says: “Maybe I want to be an architect. I could build amazing buildings and homes for people.” Then, you turn the page and the illustration will be of a whole bunch of people working through the night on horrible Construction Documents, ripping out their hair, yelling etc., and the text will mention how many of those people miss out on seeing their families and friends.

*One key area for parents is the division of labor with the other parent: how do you deal with that, where do you fall short? How do you fight against those shortcomings?*

Unfortunately, if you were to look at the way my wife and I have divided things up, she does most of the cooking and cleaning, and child-stuff. And I have three jobs at the moment, two of which are working from a home office: so that means I'm always working. Not only does that suck on the surface level, but I enjoy cooking and kitchen stuff, and want to hang out with my family much more.

If I could reverse things I would in a second—as long as that was cool with Renee. When we lived in NYC my wife's salary was almost twice that of mine. I didn't care one bit. Every once in a while I would see something in popular





# ABC's of Anarchy

by  
Brian Heagney



*Can you tell us about your family and a little about what led you to create the book The ABCs of Anarchy?*

I "found" Anarchy one day in a Brooklyn coffee shop in 2002. I picked up a copy of *Fighting for our Lives* in Tillie's coffee shop in Brooklyn, and realized that Anarchy was exactly what I was looking for my entire life. I think the way I feel about Anarchy is the same way Born-again feel about the Lord. I wanted to tell my friends, my family, strangers, and little kids all about the wonders of Anarchy.

Shortly after that, I heard "ABCs of Anarchism" by Chumbawamba and Negativland, and I thought, "Yeah! Someone should make a kid's book of Anarchy." As a newborn anarchist, I wanted to spread "the word" far and wide, and my sister was about to have

her second child and I wanted to have an ABC's of Anarchy book for them...but I never found one. After a few more years of looking, my sister was pregnant again, and I thought I'd go ahead and make one myself. So I started compiling a list in my head that never materialized.

My wife and I made a big move from NYC to North Carolina, and it was then, in 2007 that I started putting the list down on paper. From that point on, it took about three years to finish.

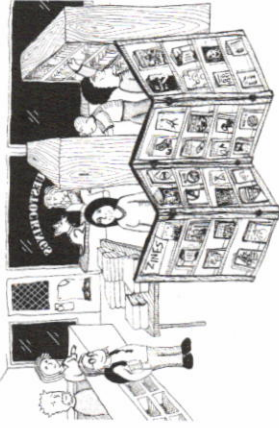
The bulk of the work happened during my wife's pregnancy—I became determined to finish the book in time for my own kid's birth. I feel strongly about raising my daughter to identify with Anarchy in general. It's an awesome concept, fit for kids and adults alike. So this book is an artifact I wanted to share with not only my child, but any child, and any adult for that matter.

*Was it a specific choice to become a parent? What were your fears, worries?*

As long as I can remember I've wanted to be a dad, and so far I love it, it's everything I thought it would be. My only fears and worries concerned the health and safety of my wife and daughter as the birth-day approached. I also look at the way she smiles and laughs and just thinks life is amazing. And I fear that one day she'll be genuinely sad. I want everything to be amazing for her, so, yeah, I worry about that, even though

• Listen to parents. If you want to be an ally to parents, it doesn't work to come in with your own agenda. You need to be clear about what you can offer and what you can't, but you need to ask and listen to parents when it comes to what they want and need. Your role is to support parents in the complex web of responsibilities and roles that make up the layers of their lives. If you're listening, you'll hear them spell out for you where that web is weakest, where it seems to be fraying, where a little support from you would make a world of difference for them and their children.

• Children have to come first. Being involved in a kid's life can be downright harmful if you're there only to score cred. Being an effective ally for parents and kids isn't going to work if you merely think it's important. It's important to be able to embrace the creative chaos that's one of the many ways that children enrich vibrant communities. For me, helping kids grow has by necessity been a process of getting outside my own head, even getting silly sometimes. It's also been serious



practice at stepping outside my experience as a single nonparent—where the choices and goals are up to me—and learning to set my own stuff aside sometimes.

• Bring your authentic self. Kids don't need some idealized model adult; they need you. By modeling who you are—whoever that is—you give kids the chance to experience what makes you you: your tastes, your cultural practices, your ways of expressing yourself. Kids aren't carbon copies of their parents, so more role models means more tools for them in being themselves.

• Have fun! For me, being involved in kids' lives nudges me to take myself less seriously, gives me honest feedback (little kids don't pull punches!), and gives chances to hear how kids see the world. As a bonus, I get to be part of stronger multigenerational movements that welcome the energy and experience and perspectives of both kids and parents.

The first time my nephew and older niece sent me a Father's Day card, I was so surprised and happy that I started crying. They still send cards every year (I still get weepy)—caring gestures from strong, loving kids who are rapidly turning into strong, loving adults. It's a tangible moment every year that reminds me that parents aren't the only loving adults that kids need in their lives, that there's room for all of us. Indeed, all of us are needed.



## Special Needs Parenting

by Burke Stansbury

### Capturing the real Lucas (Oct. 21)

The day after Lucas's positive health reports and development, Krista and nurse Florence were at the hospital with Lucas for another routine visit. Getting off the elevator someone walked by, looked at Lucas in his chair, and let out a sad "awww." Then, a moment later in the waiting room a man came up and said, "It must be really hard." Throughout the long wait Krista and Florence could feel the eyes in the room on them and Lucas, each time they fired up the suction machine to clear the saliva out of his mouth or adjust the vent circuit in a way that led to that familiar, loud beeping.

It's weird that the same day Lucas was getting compliments on his blog—about how good he looks and the excitement of all the progress he's made—people at the hospital were going out of their way to remind us of his dramatic limitations. We haven't figured out how to get him comfortable in his new stroller/wheelchair, so he often looks out of it when we're rolling around. And a glance at the tracheostomy, the vent tube, and the monitor wire connected to his toe can be jarring, even at a children's hospital where difference is often on display.

But what you don't capture in a five second snapshot of Lucas is everything. We're lucky—we get to spend lots of time with the little guy and see him at his best: when he's cracking up because someone is about to raspberry his tummy, when he's exploring a fascinating new toy and deliberating on how to best get it into his mouth, or when he's splashing his legs around in his undersized bathtub. With Lucas, patience is a virtue. The more time you spend with him and allow him to do his thing, the more remarkable he becomes.

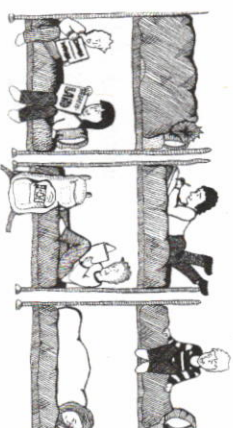
So it wasn't surprising that it was Florence who immediately piped up when the man in the waiting room expressed his sympathy about Lucas's condition. "That's ok," she said, "actually, he's doing great!" The man eventually sat down and asked more questions about Lucas, spent some time talking with him as well as Krista and Florence, and it ended up being a very positive interaction (he was from El Salvador so he and Krista had a lot to talk about.)

Even though it can be awkward at first, we appreciate it when people ask about Lucas, as opposed to the more common reaction of averting eyes in an attempt to avoid the reality of a child connected to a ventilator. We don't hold the latter reaction against anyone—we've had it ourselves when confronted with people who have disabilities. But as this

unity of message even back in those days). Families, like coalitions, like communities of struggle, are what we make of them—there are few healthy templates within the U.S. left. Our new lines of demarcation must reach well beyond the comfortable choirs of those already convinced of the need for radical change. With principles which our children would be proud of, we must begin to follow their urgent and youthful lead.

Hope, that characteristic of my mom which so often seemed exaggerated and over-done to the childhood me, turns out to be one of the great necessities for well-grounded and victorious struggle. W.E.B. DuBois, in whose Ghanaian Center we memorialized Grandpa Bill's life, reminded us—in writing about those things which make life worth living: liberty and justice—that "Some day the Awakening will come, when the pent-up vigor of ten million souls shall sweep irresistibly toward the Goal!"

Revolutionary Parenthood reminds us: We must get ready.



## R is for Rad Dad!

Interview with Brian Heagney, *Rad Dad* 20 Cover Artist and Kids Book writer

When my daughter's 15-year-old friend asked if there were any kids' books or books for teens that explained anarchism, I was stumped. I realized how the absence of radical books for kids reflects a community that is pretty one dimensional, or should I say unigenerational, a community that simply speaks to itself.

I searched for years for radical kids' books that were explicitly anarchist, and I found a few over time. *The Little Squatter's Handbook* is to this day the greatest kid's book ever, but then I came across *The ABC's of Anarchy*; needless to say I love the book! Every one of my nieces and nephews has a copy, especially since the entry for Z is...

You guessed it—zine!

How fucking awesome is that? In fact I was angry that I didn't have this book for my kids when they were 1, or 3 or 7. But yes I did read it to them at 13 and 15, much to their dismay... "come over to the couch girls. It's radical story time."

Grans.

So I was delighted that Brian was willing to let me use his images for the pages and cover of *Rad Dad*. Below is a wonderful self-reflective interview to accompany his work.



resistance movement of the early 1980s, or when dad burned his draft card from Korea in solidarity with what we were trying to build, you were more than Another Mother for Peace.

Was it radical when you took up with Bill, an African-American gentleman who—though a strong part of the revolutionary nonviolence conspiracy/community which we all shared—had been worlds away from your white, Brooklyn experiences? He had been my mentor, then my colleague; was this another way, late in life, to keep checks on me and my mindset? Was it love, mom, that meant—just weeks after his passing—that your health would spiral in an unexpected and unprecedented decline, making your death inevitable less than two months later?

My baby Michael, almost ten at the time, couldn't visit you at hospital or nursing home, too full of the energy of life to go near those troubling places, too fearful of the ends which he guessed were approaching to come too close to your falling body. The stench of your apartment in those last days, our old apartment where I had grown up, was also more than he could handle, home as it had been to the magic and music, the drama and histrionics of my childhood. How did you time your death, such that Michael and my trip to Ghana, to help bury Grandpa Bill, would be barely affected? Your passing came less than one

curious man in the waiting room found out, there are great rewards to having the courage and patience to get to know someone like Lucas.

### Coming home with new information (Feb. 8)

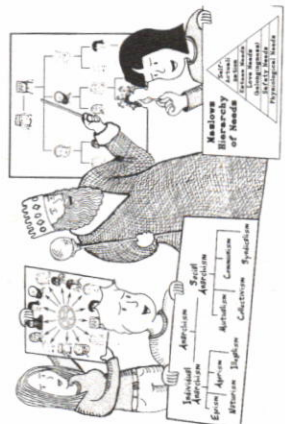
Lucas will be discharged tomorrow morning from Children's and hopefully we'll make it safely home before the next big snowstorm hits in the afternoon. He's back to his old self, but there's a few things that are weird, such as an occasionally high heart rate, some residual swelling, and a new, gooly eye twitch. There's so much going on with him sometimes that it's hard to know what is significant and what isn't, but we're confident along with the doctors that he's ready to come home.

As promised, we've taken advantage of our days in the pediatric ICU to access all the specialists that might be able to help tackle Lucas's broader challenges, and through the various consults and tests over the last week we may finally have an answer. It's not something that's easy to share but we know that some of

you reading this right now have followed Lucas's progress from his early days of life and so it's important to explain the new information. This morning Lucas underwent an electronic test of the muscles that confirmed that he has a congenital muscle disease, most likely a genetic disorder called Myotubular Myopathy. It's devastating news—hard to even write these words—but based on our own research we're convinced he will ultimately be diagnosed with this particular disease.

Like us, you probably have lots of questions about what this means for Lucas and we won't try to answer them all right now. Many thoughts have been going through our minds over the last few days and it's impossible to sort through them when the realization is so raw. In some ways the news wasn't a total shock: Lucas's hypotonia has improved very slowly since he was born and we had begun to doubt the theory that a brain injury alone had caused his low muscle tone. Upon seeing Lucas the other day, the neuromuscular doctor confirmed our fears, and the conversations we've had with this thoughtful, humble man over the past few days have helped begin our process of understanding Lucas's disease.

Myotubular Myopathy is a muscular disorder that affects approximately 1 in every 50,000 boys. It is not degenerative like most muscle diseases, but there is





not a cure or treatment for it. Lucas may gain some strength and muscle tone in the months and years to come (especially with the help of therapy), but he will likely always need assistive technology to breathe, move from place to place, and communicate with the outside world. Research on this disease began in the 1990s. Prior to that, it was assumed that anyone with Myotubular Myopathy would die in infancy. Since then some boys have survived into their teenage years, and some attend school—unlike some muscular diseases it does not affect cognition, and intelligence levels for those who survive tend to be high.

Right now, Lucas's future remains unknown, but we can say this: Lucas hasn't changed, just the information we know about him has changed. He's still the same beautiful, little fighter that we've been lucky enough to know and love over the last five and a half months. He has taught us so much. We will continue to experience great joy as a family. And we can't wait to have him home again.

## Starting to learn about Myotubular Myopathy (Feb. 26)

We haven't heard results about Lucas's blood that was sent to the University of Chicago to test for the genetic mutation that causes Myotubular Myopathy (MTM). However, since our meetings with Dr. Leshner we've been going about life as if it were confirmed that Lucas has the

disease. That might sound odd, since it's not something we want, but our research has only reinforced the theory, and all the pieces seem to fit. It will be weeks before we hear back on the genetics test, which means it will be weeks before we can ask Dr. Leshner about some of our specific questions about possibilities for Lucas's future. In the meantime we continue to do our own research and learning.

Researching your baby's debilitating disease is not an easy thing. At times we find stories of other children exceeding expectations in life that give us hope; at other moments we learn things that present difficult possibilities for Lucas's future. Our goal has not been to find out every piece of information possible by throwing ourselves entirely into the world of MTM and muscle disease. Rather, we're adjusting to Lucas's diagnosis, holding in our hearts the many intense feelings that it brings, and adjusting our hopes for the future as we let go of some dreams and embrace new ones. All the while, Lucas is growing and changing and we get to keep enjoying the everyday wonders of being with him.

While we're far from definitive conclusions, there are a few things we're learning from our research and from stories people have shared with us. First, a diagnosis does not mean a definitive prognosis, since diseases like MTM manifest themselves in distinct ways with varying levels of severity. Reading

talking, reading the Kaddish aloud, and your memory in my head now almost a year after you've been gone,

And how Death is that remedy all singers dream of, sing, remember,

Prophecy,

Dreaming back thru life, Your time—and mine accelerating toward Apocalypse, the final moment—and what comes after, and the great dream of Me or Africa, or you and a phantom America, the "I have a Dream" of your most cartoonishly optimistic hopes, and our empire's scary nightmares. Strange now, worlds and word as old as me, as old as Ginsberg's poem, old Jewish ritual-poems and Brooklyn remembrances, radical parenting—or was it liberal opportunism to open my young eyes to the opportunities of the power of words and worlds beyond our reach?

Parenting that included those fiery images of Vietnamese dead, flashing across the TV screen, American dead and lost, losing, body bags, flags draped across special delivery coffins, I called you a "natural born pacifist," mom, a phrase I think you'd like, that early morning obituary one year old now, written between the time the hospital made their final call to me and the time when my four-year-old daughter, our Molly Soo named after grandma, woke up to the new, grey morning.

I had no red diapers, no demonstrations viewed from the comfort

of a stroller like your grandchildren, but those TV images seared their message, and were not censored like the shows you somehow thought not yet appropriate for my young eyes and mind. Somehow only snippets of *Star Trek* and *Laugh-In* got through, but the news was the news, I was intrinsically taught, and those body bags were the record of my childhood.

Your parenting included more local activity, baking for school functions, waiting for dad and the endless, scary union meetings, tension in every corner of our small apartment, waiting to see if he would still have a job to go to: a school to teach English at where there would be respect, job security, and pay that would enable us to pretend to crawl into a middle-class slightly more secure in its comforts than grandma Mollie's meager, roach infested existence.

It didn't seem radical, even as you supported my inter-racial friendships, my questioning of school and synagogue authority, my high school anti-militarist inclinations. It didn't seem radical as you followed me into the left as I left for college and joined the movement. I assumed you were being a Jewish mother, smothering me by appearing progressive but using politics as an excuse to check in on what I was doing even as I was attempting my first steps of independence from the family. But was there something more to it, serving as an un-indicted co-conspirator to the draft registration



The kids didn't say much, and I felt like they were thinking that this was another one of "dad's talks" that they had to appear to pay attention and nod until it was over and could leave. At that moment, it did not matter, because I was doing it for me, and felt better by owning up to my own shit; showing that living our values is hard sometimes. But then the kids surprised me, said, "It's okay dad, don't let it happen again," and came over to give me a hug before they left the room. It was what I usually do for them. I felt like I was still loved even though they knew that I had messed up.

I appreciated that. My kids nudged me back on the path. I was humbled. And it gave me hope for my kids. It gave me hope for myself. I realized there is nothing like love when you have made a mistake to give you the strength to do better.



## Red Dads and Revolutionary Grandparents

by Matt Meyer

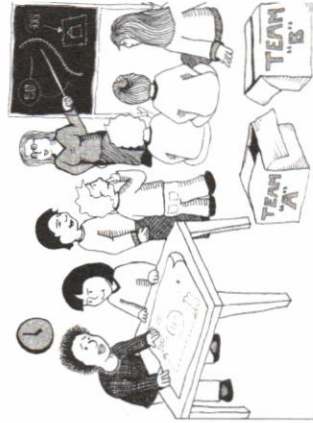
More than two years after writing for *Rad Dad*, I find myself on another holiday break—in a rare moment of quiet this President's Day, while my partner is out with the kids. Bill has joined Simon in death, and my mom has "joined the ancestors" as they say in Pan-African circles. That was 2010—my family's year of death—when Bill and Marilyn, and my then 102-year-old grandmother (Simon's mother) finally succumbed to illness and old age. It was a year when radical parenting seemed to be supplanted by just keeping on, trying to provide space for my children as they said their good-byes to the only grandparents they knew, and the great-grandmother they hardly knew.

Strange now to think of you, gone without corsets and eyes, while I walk on the sunny pavement of Greenwich Village. Strange to mimic and appreciate the poetry and howls of Allen Ginsberg, the man so many say I look like when I'm away from New York City. Is it because they have hardly seen Jewish men with white beards and a pot belly?

Downtown Manhattan, clear spring Saturday. I've been up all night, talking,

about different young boys with MTM has reinforced that. Lucas likely has the x-linked form of Myotubular Myopathy which is the most common and severe form, but still there is a lot of variation in how it manifests itself. There are over a hundred different mutations of the gene that can cause MTM, and it seems that the type of mutation and where it is on the gene strand can impact the prognosis.

Second, though there are organizations and foundations funding research on Myotubular Myopathy and groups of doctors carrying out that research, the knowledge and technology related to genetic disease don't seem to be at a place where a cure is likely any time soon. There do seem to be possibilities related to treatment and therapy that could be helpful for Lucas in the future. The fact that we're not hopeful for a "cure" any time soon means that we can be forthright about the likelihood that this disease will affect Lucas for his whole life, which in turn helps us accept the challenges that lay ahead.



We're also continuing to connect with new people, especially other parents of kids with disabilities, as well as communities of people who are living with life-altering physical differences and figuring out ways to embrace those differences. So far we've just begun to tap into the amazing knowledge and support of other parents of children who have MTM. We've found a couple different online support groups, joined some list-serves and a Facebook group, and connected with people through the tracheostomy.com website. We've learned about the first MTM family conference, which happened last year right before Lucas was born. Most importantly, we've connected by email with some parents of children with MTM and we've excited about continuing to develop relationships with them.

And it's not just families that have kids with MTM that have a lot to teach us. A number of people have related stories about family members, friends or heroes who have dealt with muscle disease or other similar disabilities/different abilities, and that support and solidarity has been incredibly helpful. We appreciate that people are thinking about Lucas's disease right now, and we are grateful for all of you sharing stories, articles, and introductions to new people and paths to explore.



## (Birth) Mothering

### from Prison

by Rachel Galindo

*This originally appeared in the zine Tenacious: Art & Writings from Women in Prison #22. Each year, to recognize that over 2/3 of women in prison are mothers to children under the age of 18, Tenacious publishes a Mother's Day issue.*

Some facts to think about when reading stories about mothers in prison:

\*In 2007, over 147,000 children under the age of 18 had mothers in prison in the U.S.

\*Children of incarcerated mothers are five times more likely than children of incarcerated fathers to end up in foster care."

\*In 1997, Congress passed the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requiring that if a child is in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months, the state must begin proceedings to terminate the parent's legal rights. These terminations are irrevocable, meaning that the parent will have no more rights to the child than a stranger in the grocery store. Only three states make exceptions in the case of incarcerated parents."

\*Given these circumstances, one can see open adoption as one of the few ways that incarcerated mothers might be able to maintain long-term contact with their child(ren)."

Though I have a son, I have never had to roll up my sleeves for diaper

duty or bribe him to eat certain foods. I was not the one to decide what kind of classroom he will sit in for the next few years, and I am not able to cheer for him as he runs up and down the soccer field. Because I have been incarcerated since early pregnancy, and since I chose for my now-six-year-old son to be raised in an open adoption before he was born, I have not had many common experiences of motherhood.

Technically I am a birth mother, a title I was slow to warm up to. For a long time, it sounded to me like the name for a baby-producing robot. Although my son knows me as "Rachel," simply enough I have played my role as mother in choosing adoption. I was able to choose an open adoption, which allows me and his father (and our families) to keep in contact with him and his parents. My incarceration was a large factor in our adoption process, and still influences our relationship. Along every step of the way, we have had to take into consideration how my separation and imprisonment plays into how much we are able to be involved in each other's lives and in what ways.

Like other mothers in prison, I deal with severely limited contact with my child. I have to limit expensive phone calls (\$4.60 for 10 minutes), send/receive written messages, mail out crafted gifts as special gestures, and rely on updates from others. Since my son lives a few states away, he and his parents are able to visit every couple of years. This situation is frustrating, can be depressing, and

## Nothing like Love

by Craig Elliott

One of the best and most humbling parts about parenting has been to learn lessons through my kids. Normally, I spend a great deal of energy herding the kids through their days, gently nudging them on one edge or another so that they stay on the path of good choices as defined by the values that my partner and I agreed upon for our family: compassion, justice, wellness, freedom, and love. When they stray from that path, the energy goes to discussing what we expect of them, how they can exercise these values, and how to accept the consequences that come with our actions. This process works, and our kids seem to be learning, and spending more time on that path than off of it.

About a month ago, I was presented with an "opportunity" to learn about the path from my kids. The night before I attended a fundraiser for work, and was having a lot of fun. Too much fun as it turned out, because I ended up drinking too much wine. As a result, I needed to leave my car at work and get a ride home from a friend, and spent the night and morning puking in the toilet. This was the kind of sick that I last remembered in college 20 years ago, and my body did not much appreciate the reminder. It was a brutal experience, and I was wrecked the next day.

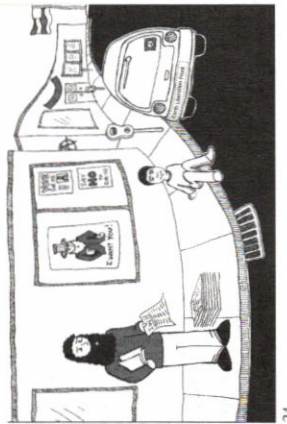
As I lay in bed the next morning, embarrassed, trying to get some sleep, and focusing on something other than the pounding headache and the queasy stomach, I saw my kids peak their heads in the bedroom every hour or so. It dawned on me that the kids were worried about me, never having seen me incapacitated like this. It occurred to me that I would not be able to play with them like I normally do on Sunday mornings, when we watch a little TV, play Wii, make breakfast, read books together, and play outside. As I lay there feeling sorry for myself, I realized that this was also an opportunity for me to role model how to acknowledge a mistake and to accept the consequences of my choices, rather than trying to hide, or pretend they did not notice.

I asked the kids to come in the next time they peaked in the room, and I explained to them that I had had too much to drink last night, that it was not a good choice for me to drink so much because I knew this is what happened. While I made a good choice to get a ride home rather than driving and endangering myself and others, I had to suffer the consequences of being violently sick, getting no sleep, and missing out on our father-kid time. I shared that I was embarrassed, and I let myself down, and I committed to not letting this happen again. I recommitted to living up to my own values.



a fire that will burn down the house. She will not remember pictures of our dead placed in the obitsudan just next to my grandfather's chair at the head of the dining room table. Nor will she remember the flimsy deck of cards Grandpa played with for one year only replacing the deck each New Year's day. The layered Jell-o, the five-dollar poker, the stories of my uncle showing up on my parents' porch piss drunk, the story of why we only eat the red sashimi—she will not remember these stories turned into incantations, these recipes turned into rituals, she will not be able to touch these memories with her hands, turn them over and smell them. I know she will not remember because I, too, do not remember.

I do not remember my grandmother, Kayo, because I was too young to form a lasting memory. A single photo documents that we both lived at the same time: me in her lap, and she in her chair. She was so old and I was so young, I sometimes think that between us we added up to one full person. When I see this image of us, without a recording



of her voice or a video of her movement, I almost do not believe that she is real.

Maybe this is what he is fighting: the inevitability of his disappearance from Earth. I am not sure that I blame him. Death is a mystery and for that reason scary, and no matter the spirit or story or myth we use, we must make sense of it. Why not a name? A name must be pronounced and recognized, fumbled over and explained; it unsuspectingly fastens memories and stories to its user. It lives. It is pondered. A name can live for as long as there are tongues and memories, passed on and on, person-to-person, while a person who carries that name cannot. And perhaps, this is what he has always wanted: someone to remember him. Or rather, someone who promises not to forget. To hell with his rules.

Recently, we moved Grandpa into a full-time care facility, and I brought Twyla to cheer him up. For the first hour, she refused to get close. She shook her head back-and-forth, "No, no, no," like only a one year old can do. She cannot hide her fears or her desires, but eventually, after using cereal to bait her closer and closer, I was able to take pictures of her standing on his bed, slightly afraid but willing enough to give him a small, high-five, and him smiling.

"I will remember you," I think to myself, "and so will she."

sometimes I grieve for a lot of experiences I don't get to have with my son because I am locked up.

It is largely in mind, thoughts, and memories that my son remains a part of my daily life. A ten-minute conversation with him lasts for weeks! Every form of contact I have is valuable and encourages me to be active within the confines of my position as a birth mother in prison. Even in limited forms, I make efforts to reinforce a bond with my son and his parents. This is true for other incarcerated mothers. We must fight to reach out to our children despite state-imposed barriers. While sometimes this involves directly challenging policy, it always means doing what we can to connect. We must know that we are worthy of being called mother, even with felony convictions.

Some may not perceive the ways we can parent. Others may not believe we should play a role in our kids' lives because we are in prison. However, it should be acknowledged that we should, can, and do parent from prison. There are challenges, but our being in prison is a more urgent reason to be consciously active in reaching out to our kids. Parenting from prison may include cooperating and communicating with our kids' current caretakers. I encourage those in the lives of children with incarcerated parents to be supportive of efforts to cultivate and maintain parent-child relationships.

If being incarcerated is traumatic, and if having a loved one in prison is

traumatic, imagine how it is for children with parents in prison. Imagine what it means to children to experience their parents as a sustained presence in their lives, even with the given limits of prison. Regardless of what we have done, and whether we are serving a few months or twenty years, we have a place of significance in the minds and hearts of our children. We can parent from prison by offering honesty, love, support, and open communication. This is crucial in ensuring a foundation with our kids, whose role in our daily lives may grow once we are released, or in one way or another in the future.

We each have our own set of circumstances to contend with, but we should not let the additional difficulties and conditions of being an incarcerated parent keep us from doing whatever we can to connect with our children.

Rachel Galindo

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# Fatherhood, Food, and Football

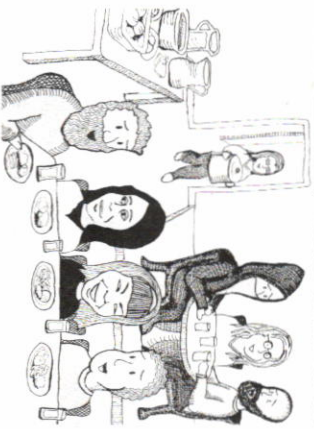
by Anwar Young

Eating out has more disadvantages than eating at home in my opinion. Society tells you different. Society would tell you that eating out is easier than coming back home from a hard day at work or school and cooking for yourself or your family. Sadly, it seems that Americans are enthusiastic about easier or faster methods for everything. It is like we are more interested in making our situations more convenient time-wise than health-wise. For example, I'm pretty sure the majority of American parents would rather pay for fast food for their children when they're fatigued from their day's activities than come home, prepare and cook a meal, clean up the kitchen, and get them ready for bed. It's common knowledge that fast food is rapidly making us a nation of obese and unhealthy people, yet Americans continue to poison themselves because of the convenience of the situation.

I think that some Americans are a little ignorant of the money they could save from just eating at the house. I've conducted a little experiment to show the financial and social difference between eating out and preparing and cooking your own food.

On a regular Sunday my mother, my daughter, and I want to stay

in the house most of the day and watch football. But we want food! My family is very serious about football on Sundays and watch it from 10:00 in the morning until 8:30 in the evening. So, we don't want to miss anything. Plus there aren't many non fast food restaurants around where we live. There is a Chinese food restaurant called "Sticky Rice" around the corner, but they are very expensive. Besides L&L Hawaiian BBQ and Pelayos Mexican Food, there aren't non fast food restaurants close by. We'd have to drive 20 minutes into town—out of the question on a Sunday. However, there are eight different fast food restaurants close by. So, for breakfast we probably would go to McDonalds. My daughter loves their hashbrowns. My daughter's Happy Meal would be no more than four dollars. My meal would be no more than seven dollars (I like to get two sandwiches, I'm a big boy), and since my mother won't eat fast food for breakfast she'd probably get their coffee (something she does like from McDonalds) which would be no



announcement to the rest of my family, I took my grandfather aside. He had grown much older. He replaced his cigarettes with oxygen tubes plugged into his nose that crisscrossed the floor behind him to a machine the size of his mini fridge. He no longer slept in his bedroom, but on the couch in the living room so he could fall asleep while watching television. "Grandpa," I told him, "you have to love this child whether it's a girl or a boy." He nodded. "All you need to do is to hope that it's a healthy baby." And he nodded again, yes, yes. A healthy baby, yes, and I felt like maybe this issue of being the number one grandson, his insistence on passing the names down only through boys, had been resolved. And I admit that I felt a little proud that maybe we had changed this for good. But those were the naïve feelings of a father-to-be. Of course, the next day my sister reported that Grandpa had cornered and told her: first, he would wait to die until she got married; and second, that it would be nice if the baby turned out to be a boy. What did I expect?

When Twyla emerged from her mother after 40 hours of labor, in a stubborn and spiteful kind of way, I was too tired to care much about what my grandfather thought about whether his name had been passed down according to his rules. Before her birth, I had been quite sure that my son or daughter would feel that s/he should honor his or her

family in his or her own way, not merely through the birthing of offspring or the passing down of names. I had thought this through, and I didn't want my child to have to think through these things as I did. But as we filled out the name form for the county, I wanted her to carry the name. I cannot explain the urge. We discussed whether to hyphenate or join our names, but we eventually agreed that hyphenation seemed too 1990s and creating a completely new name on the fly was complicated, and so when Susan, fatigued and happy, said ok, we decided on her last name: Hoshida. I wondered if it was enough.

This year was our last in my grandfather's house for oshogatsu, and it was Twyla's second New Year with our family. I had hoped that we would continue meeting there until she was three or four, maybe even five, so she could remember, but she will not.

She will not remember his house on New Year's day, and no amount of explaining and writing will do it justice. She won't be able to smell the stale remembrance of cigarettes and fried grease that lingered in the long blue and green shag carpet. We won't be able to replicate the stuffy 80-degree heat blowing out of the vents in the living room, and she will not wonder if using a brown paper bag as a grease cover for the fried chicken, like Grandma did, might cause



to cop a laugh, to field a question. I've seen strangers go get sucked into this pit; recovery is slow. Thankfully, he acquiesced, at least a little bit. He seemed to get it, and began to give out equal amounts of money for birthdays. But still, he would make statements that started with, "My number one grandson," or "There's nothing better than having a grandson," and though he wouldn't put up a fight if we disagreed with him or insisted that he stop, it was clear that such an old dog would not learn new tricks.

As he grew older, the pace of his obsession did not let up, and while he was healthy despite smoking regularly, it widened a space between all of us. In adolescence and my twenties, I could only match his insistent belief in these old traditions with my own inward ambivalence toward fatherhood and family. "No children," I told my partners. I didn't want to pass this curse along to them, boy or girl. For the rest of my family, his unwavering focus on sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons made him an ingrate. Even though he sat at the head of the table, it was his wife, our grandma, who was the true host and center of our family. She would fly between the kitchen and table, stopping to nibble a bite or sip a Seven-and-Seven, cooking, serving, and cleaning while we sat and listened to him. It was not him, not me, and not our name that brought us together, but it was Grandma. Her

memory quickly deteriorated while I was away at college, and at one point when she no longer recognized me, only flirting with me again and again as her memory saw fit, I realized that I had taken too long to properly thank her. Around this time, I slowly became resentful of him, the traditions to which he clung, and the loss of a relationship that I had once treasured.

But things change.

After a series of events that marked my entrance into middle-age—marriage, steady work, nose hairs—I found myself driving to his house in Lincoln to announce that inside Susan's belly was growing the next generation of the Hoshida family.

In preparation for this momentous occasion, Susan made me promise that I would have a heart-to-heart with him to ensure that he would love this child no matter its sex, and I whole-heartedly agreed. It felt that for once, I could be straight with him. So, after the initial



more than two dollars. So I would say we spent no more than \$13 on breakfast.

Around lunchtime (any time from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.) we would be into the football games so not one of us would want to leave for food. Well, as I mentioned earlier we have plenty of fast food restaurants nearby and one of those restaurants is Roundtable. Guess what? They deliver! So we would order a large pizza (half pepperoni and half combination because of my mother and daughter's different tastes) for delivery which would be no more than \$28 including tax and delivery charges. The approximate balance for today's food spending so far: \$41.

Now dinnertime has arrived and the football games are all over. That means we don't have to worry about missing anything so we'd probably go into town to eat. However, tomorrow would be Monday so we wouldn't want to be out too late because we still have to get ready for tomorrow morning (school and work time). So we'd probably just go to In-N-Out Burger. My daughter's meal would be no more than four dollars again. My mother loves In-N-Out Burger so she would participate in this meal even though she doesn't like most drive-thru food. Her meal would be no more than six dollars. The same with me also, my meal wouldn't be more than six dollars. We'd spend no more than \$16 on dinner. So we would have spent under \$60 on

food. In my opinion, that's ridiculous considering that there's better-tasting food at Safeway or in your own refrigerator.

A regular Sunday with my family where we don't eat out and only prepare and cook our food in the house looks like this. We make one trip to the Safeway right around the corner in the morning and the rest of the day we'd be eating, cooking, and enjoying the football games. For breakfast I make pancakes, eggs, and bacon. My mother loves my eggs and my daughter loves my pancakes so I know they'd both enjoy this meal. For lunch, I would make hotdogs. We like our hotdogs with just bbq sauce. For dinner, I would make my famous chicken tacos for me and my mother. My daughter's kind of funny with food and hasn't tried to taste my tacos yet, so I bought her favorite Campbell's chicken noodle soup for dinner. Don't get me wrong, all of the ingredients for these meals cost money too.

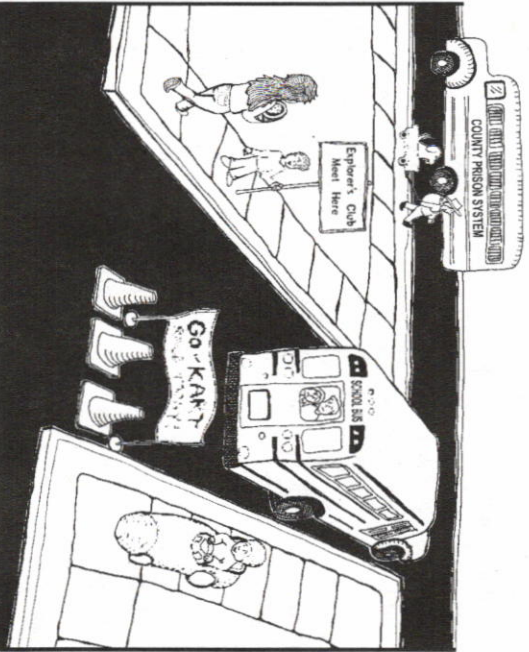
Everything I bought from Safeway cost under \$50. The great thing is that I can reuse most of the stuff I bought. The single thing I couldn't put up for future use is my daughter's can of chicken noodle soup. The advantages of cooking and eating at home are plentiful: You can create leftovers from your meals; You don't spend gas money going to places every four or five hours looking for unhealthy, fattening food. Speaking of fattening and unhealthy, my daughter's chicken noodle soup with carrots and celery is way better



for her than In-N-Out Burger. Another advantage is getting to spend quality time with your family while cooking and preparing meals. And while preparing meals you relate to the food you're cooking (You're more curious about the source of your food). When people unwrap a burger and start feeding their face they never wonder about the cow, where the cheese came from, or any of that stuff. When you make a burger from scratch you tend to be curious about it.

The ingredients for the meals I bought came out to be cheaper than the fast food and in my experiment I shopped at Safeway because it is the closest grocery store in my neighborhood. Fast food rarely has leftovers and more food

for less is the better option. Something else to consider is that people already have some of the ingredients I mentioned such as: eggs, milk, vegetable oil, bbq sauce, tomatoes and onions. So that could reduce the price of the groceries. So, you could end up spending a third of what you spent eating out. When you cook at home you know your food is safe to eat. Do you know what is happening to your food behind the glass drive-thru doors or behind the fast food counter? You hope whoever is preparing your food is safe and clean. That's a little too much to hope for. Why not do it yourself?



## Through My Grandfather's Eyes

by Scott Hoshida

I was the first: the first grandchild, the first grandson, and, in my grandfather's eyes, the person responsible for passing his name—my name—our name into the infinite future, into the abyss of eternity. And how? By having sons, of course. This is how things work if you come from old-school Japan. He did not want our name to die on his watch, and from a young age he impressed upon me that not only was it my duty to do this, but my privilege. To carry the name was an honor. I feared that I would not be worthy.

As a child, I told him during our New Year's Day feast that rather than serve both red and white sashimi, he should only serve the red one, the tuna. He would imitate my young voice: "Grandpa," he'd say, his voice an octave higher, "I don't like the red one." From that New Year's Day forward, he would only buy tuna for the entire family, no matter what anyone else said. It was his first grandson's wish, and that meant that all else would fall into line. I do not remember ever saying this, of course, but the re-telling of this story has become a ritual of New Year's Day. For all of its problems, it has become family lore that everyone can repeat and tell on their own, but it doesn't sound right unless Grandpa

is the one who is doing the telling. "How old was he?" my aunt might tease, and he would say, "four, no three years old." "Don't you mean two?" someone else would say, and he might shrug. Age is not what matters, but what it means: I am the privileged grandson.

These privileges were extended to innumerable domains, and I enjoyed the spoils of such authority—unlimited Pepsi and salami before dinner, a choice of restaurants for my birthday (always a steakhouse), and first dibs on the sashimi on New Year's Day. Of course, such privilege did not last because such old-school cronyism was unfair. The old boys' club had to shut down.

My sister was born and then two cousins, neither boys, and as the disparities between them and me became apparent, the women of my family, my aunts and my mother fought him every step of the way. During most dinners, he would broach the subject and then quickly receive a quick volley of eye rolls and sidelong glances of annoyance. "You know, if I let the Hoshida name die on my watch," he might start off, and before he could finish, if he was lucky, someone might change the subject, but more often the room would grow silent. In our family, uncomfortable silences form like pits of quicksand. The more you thrash about, trying to talk your way through the awkward pauses and nods, the more frantic you get, the more desperate