“Don’t Tell Me: Ask Me!”
An Engaged Latina Mother’s Voice

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Don’t tell me
what language I must
speak!

Don’t tell me
who I must
be!

Don’t tell me how to
become
a better parent to
my kids!

What will you tell us
next?
Who or what or where
or even in what language
we should worship—if at all?

Don’t tell me!
Ask me, instead!

What language do I
love
my children
in?

What is the color of
my dreams
when I imagine
a future
for my kids?

Which one is our
sweetest
shortest
bedtime story?
Or, is our favorite
road song
always playing on resume?
Who are we?
Who am I? And who my children?
you may ask.
But please stop telling us who it is you would rather see instead of them and me!

Why not ask of us what Latin rhythms reverberate at the bottom of our heartbeat?
What dichos and consejos can we share with you and you with me?

Don't tell us who we are supposed to be!
Ask us who we really are who our parents were and who our children dream of growing up to be!

Let us be ourselves! and together we may grow to know each other listen to each other’s voices and respect each other’s choices!

Love our children for who they are and for who they can and will become –only with our joint work our mutual respect and our dignity!
Don’t tell us who we must be!

Don’t tell me how
to be a parent!
Let me be me!
Be not-you
but me!

Don’t tell me what
language I must speak
at home
or how to soothe my children
with an unfamiliar
lullaby!

The honey in our voices
And the music in
our home language(s)—mind our choices!
hold all the magic
we may need
for them to fall
sound asleep!

Don’t tell me
to become you
Or a better me—and here
con mucho respeto, Gloria,
I paraphrase—
For, me-without-my-language(s)
Is not-me!
It is no-body!
Don’t tell me who to be!

Ask me who I am
and be ready
to respect
our language choices
our rich
distinctive voices
and
our children’s unique selves
and history!