

## **“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 sooth 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!