

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

How I Discovered My Mom Self

Yasmin Dunn · Wednesday, January 9th, 2019

Since my daughter started kindergarten last year I've spent a fair amount of time thinking about what type of school mom I was going to be. You know what I mean, once they hit school age all of a sudden, your motherhood is on display and you have to start mixing with other moms in a way you didn't have to before. For me it was particularly challenging because prior to my daughter Ellie entering kindergarten all of her socializing was built in to family gatherings. We have a big family and through some stroke of luck, three of us were pregnant within two years of each other, so Ellie has grown up with her cousins as well as a few close friends that might as well be family. I never really had to look for mom friends or meet other moms, I'm spoiled I know.

Kindergarten also coincided with a move to an LA suburb. When she started school, I was bombarded with all of the moms. It was like high school all over again, I had a brief amount of time to figure out my group before being ostracized. I didn't know what type of mom I was or where to fit in. So, I decided to try on a few types for size. I tried the Room Mom on and volunteered to be a room parent in kindergarten. Thankfully there was a Lead Room Mom who wasn't me, because I was not so good at all the craftiness required in kindergarten. I taught high school, so I have no idea how to talk to a room full of six-year-olds. Plus, the Room Mom had to go to school and lead activities for Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, the 100th Day of school (when did that become a thing?), Valentine's Day and the end of the year. Way too much. I was relegated to cutting things up for the teacher at home.

I tried to be the Antisocial Mom who just came to school to get her kid and was mysterious. I wear a lot of black and I'm covered in tattoos so that seemed easy. However, it's contrary to my natural personality. I like talking to people, I love education and educators and kids. I tried to be aloof, but just as in high school, I was way too naturally optimistic to be aloof and unfriendly. Plus, it's the suburbs, and you end up seeing everyone at the one Whole Foods anyway.

This year though, because my neighbor is an amazing-do-everything-and-chair-all-the-committees-and-teach-music-for-free-mom, I was asked to be the PTA Mom presiding over a program called "History Alive" which brings actors dressed as historical figures into the class to interact with kids. Sounded easy enough...until I saw the cast of historical figures. It included two women out of 12 people and one person of color, the white people's favorite Indian, Sacagawea. Who of course is only famous because she helped white men. So, I suggested to the White PTA Mom that we you know, change it up a bit. And man was that the wrong thing to say. Apparently, everyone loves History Alive and it has been done that way for so many years they wouldn't dream of changing it. I brought up the point that the actual demographics of the school are 47% Hispanic/Latino and we

could look for historical figures that reflected the population. I mentioned the lack of diversity in the program. A few hours later PTA Mom emailed me back and said guess what? There is some diversity in this program because one of the characters talks about Japanese internment camps. What?

So, I went to the principal. I told her that I was concerned that this was PTA Mom's idea of diversity and I wanted to help keep this wonderful legacy program, but perhaps have it reflect the school population little bit more. She was very uncomfortable as many white people are when forced to talk about race. Anyway, we got through it. I stood my ground and talked her through why this limited representation could be damaging and how I thought it was short changing the kids. She admitted the program needs to be updated and that her staff needs to work harder. Then asked me to send her a list of people I'd like to see represented. I almost pushed back against that because I was annoyed that she was asking me to do the work for her, but I didn't. I came home and ranted and raved then sent the list. I have five more years with her, I'll give her this one.

Because I guess I'm that mom--The Rabble Rouser.

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