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420 words

SAYING NO

Saying "no" seemed to be my mother's favorite go-to phrase about all things concerning life: It was *no* to me dating Mexican girls, *no* to Asian girls, and *no* to black girls--basically any that didn't look like my mother got put on the "not in my house" list. It didn't matter how badly I wanted to date one, the only way I could--was in secret. My first wife ended up being a Latin mix, we planned a child as quickly as possible to fend off any possible *no* to our union. My mother really couldn't say much about it once the pee confirmed it.

Marriage was no great thing in our home anyway.

My mother divorced my father while I was still an infant; yet, if she'd have said *no* to him a little sooner, she would never had to have dealt with me. Nor would I have had to learn such suffering under her reign, with words like existential crises an integral part of my vocabulary. If she'd said *no* then, these words (like me) would not exist, and you'd be reading of someone else's *nos*. But, alas, I am here, and these are my *nos*

I even did the stereotypical thing: I perpetuated my mother's shortcomings, making not only many of the same mistakes--but worse ones. We assume--in youth--that the adults just say no, just to say it ... to spite us for being young while they're not; and it's not until we're old ourselves that we realize how much of what we're told is right. The adults weren't out to get us after all, and in the basking of this age-earned enlightenment, we pass it onto our own children--who, question us with as much vigor as we had once done ourselves. Saying no isn't just a parental thing, it's human. We can't be "Yes" men, like Jim Cary once was with Zoe Deshanel; because that only leads to disaster. We have to say no, when a no is required. My mother's reason for saying no, I first thought, was race--but that turned out not to be the case: it was my choice of girl, not her color, that my mother resented. Though, I don't regret one minute about rushing into my first kid, my oldest son is one the best things to exist, and I couldn't imagine a world without him.