

Credentials and Qualifications

By Mykal White

Just for a moment, try to imagine a world where every parent must be screened by their child on the day of their 5th birthday. Think of the angst each of us might feel as we go through each day changing diapers, potty training, teaching them to walk and talk, showing them right from wrong - all the while knowing the moment looms ahead of us. The day when we must explain to our child who we are, and some of the things we've experienced in life that we feel qualify us to raise them to be the best people they can be.

If my daughter Brysse had the opportunity to interview me as a parental candidate, then that initial conversation might go something like this:

“Hi Mykal. I'm sure you can appreciate the importance of having this meeting. Seeing as you will have such a tremendous influence on my life, the type of relationships I will form, the work ethic that will be instilled in me, and the standards to which I'll hold myself, I'm looking to find out more about You and what you bring to the table. What makes you believe you are qualified for the position of raising me to be a respectable member of society? Is there a Mission Statement I can review? Certainly, I'll need a list of references and a proven track record. A credit check will be mandatory to give me an idea of the financial stability you offer...”

But that's not the way it happens. Thank goodness.

(Just writing those words nearly caused me to break out in hives. I'm serious.)

Nobody is given a say in choosing the people who will raise and shape them. Just as we cannot pre-select the type of child we might prefer to raise. The only advantage our children really have in the deal is the fact that it was our choice to bring them here. Because of that, my obligation to Brysse goes far beyond the basics of food, clothing and shelter. At some point, it will be important to provide her with a greater understanding of the makings of me as a person. To better understand me, my how and why, is to better understand herself. Like I said ... at some point. Today, she is only 8 years old.

Every life has a story. But our stories don't begin with our child's life. Children don't emerge as blank pages in their own book, but as pages added to a book already thick with content. They are built in our legacy and in the experiences that came before them.

We know our children will grow eventually. We expect it. But as you look at their little faces today, adulthood will easily seem a trillion miles away from who they are right now. As adults, they will know life, beyond the insulation of their childhood.

A world without parental blocks or covered eyes. As adults, they will understand a fuller spectrum of life's realities. The gap that tends to exist between many adults and their grown children often comes down to the reality vs the expectation. Although we were parents, we were also human - fallible and imperfect. In order for our children to have a greater understanding of the foundation we give them, we should consider providing some connection between them and us. We should create for them, a chance to distinguish the differences between the world, as we see it and the one they will come to recognize for themselves. Again, to understand thy parents is to understand thyself.

This is not about secrets. Put any random 1000 people in the same room and each would find others with similar stories, trials, and pain. This is about the distinctly human elements that made us who we are. Its all the things that make us real. No Parent is perfect because no person is. We are just people - with histories and fears and unfinished business - placed in this position of somehow making our children better and stronger than the materials from which we, ourselves, are made. And there are just so many things the title "Mommy" or "Daddy" doesn't take into full consideration. What's simple to understand, but hard to digest, is that our kids already possess the ability to see right through us even if they don't understand what it is they see. Oftentimes, and silently, they spot the contradictions between our word and our actions. They are aware of the space that lives between the Superhero Cape and the Kryptonite that smolders quietly behind the "S" emblazoned on our shirts.

We are not perfect and they know it (even if they don't acknowledge it). We can't possibly have the answers to everything and they know it. And ... we don't always know what's best for them. How could we?

Everything in its time. For me, its a load off my mind knowing I have a healthy way to open up parts of my life to my daughter through a process where she must first be permitted the life experiences necessary to appreciate the truths I choose to share. I realize that everybody has a story. The childhood that our kids are in the midst of Today will become the very accounts they'll recall later as adults; and as parent and child, our stories are more tightly woven than we could ever imagine. There is a common thread in the space between what was created for us and what we go on to create for our kids. It's this intricate "stitching" that allows our experiences to be intertwined, yet also remain so remarkably unique, and so much a part of who they are.

Thankfully, on the day my daughter turned 5, my parental candidacy wasn't up for review. There were no discussions regarding my qualifications or areas of weakness. No tests to take. No inquiries launched into my background. The state of my finances never came under fire. The entire day went by without a single mention of any of my personal references - which is pretty unbelievable, considering that the perspective she gains, will be through the lens of my own regard.

And so ... while we may be fortunate enough to live in a world where child-parent screening does not exist - we happen, also, to live in a world where many of us know more about the history of the companies we work for than we do about the people that were the very first mirror we ever looked into.

We are who we are. I've come to deeply appreciate the process of parenting simply through remembering that we are given to our children as blindly as they are given to us. I

wanted to create an opportunity to share with Brysse the story that would ultimately lead to her. The prologue of her life was written in the book of my own story and in the DNA of who she is and the woman she'll become.

In knowing my story, she's reminded that nobody is born a parent. Having a baby doesn't reset our lives back at zero. We don't get to start again from scratch. Only then, will she truly be able to grasp the changes she's inspired in me. And only then can she really understand what she has added to my life.

It's pretty crazy when you really think about it. Regardless of the

people we were, and the life we knew before our children, we are still trusted with their beginning. We get the chance to start right from wherever we are ... and we're given enough space to see what we can make of it.

All things considered, I'd say the Universe is incredibly fair.