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# Tenemos que trabajar, no hay otra

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After school from kindergarten to eighth grade was a routine. The child would stand outside in the pick-up line waiting to see an old beat down white truck that looked like it was causing the city's pollution problem all by itself. Inside was even worse—papers scattered all over the place, dust blowing from the vents, paint scattered on the seats, and, most importantly, tools occupying his place to sit. Each time a teacher would open the door for the young man to let him in, his father would make conversation with the teacher, no matter the language barrier. After the small talk with the child's teachers, the small talk between father and son would begin. The first question the father asked his son was about his day, *Como te fue hoy?* Quietly all the son would say is *bien* to every question his father asked him, except it if it was about food. Then the child's Spanish rolled out fluently as if it was he that grew up in Mexico.

From the time the young boy was in pre-k until he entered sixth grade, his father would pick him up and take him to work. Every week it was a different home—from the badly rundown to the beautiful large homes where no expense was spared. *Vas a tener una casa muy grande un dia*, the father would tell his young boy. From those days, the young boy had become determined to have a big house one day in order to meet his father's expectations and make him proud. That was not the only thing the father expected from his baby boy. The father expected his son to get into Harvard and become a business man or a lawyer. Every day when the young boy was at work with his father he would hear his father tell him *Tienes que trabajar duro, no hay otra*. The young boy just nodded his head, as his father continued to talk about how hard work will earn the boy his big house. Each day for years the young boy observed his father in his craft, hammering nails, painting and measuring wood. The young boy could not wait to be like his father, but the father wanted much more for his *niño*.

From the age five to ten the young boy could not wait to go to work with his father knowing that he would be able to be by his father's side and maybe get a quick minute with his father to pass a football. During this time, the father taught his *niño* how to hammer a nail, how to paint, and that the key to all great work is consistency. It was not a surprise for the young boy to see his father covered in dust or paint when he came to pick him up from school. The first time the young boy saw his father like this, he thought something had happened to him and he was freaking out. *Que te paso? Estas bien?* The father cracked a smile, which he still rarely does, and told his son that he was alright, that it was just part of the job. Crazy to think that was ten years ago and the father is still working the same craft—painting and fixing up houses—still waking up in the early hours of the day to go to the job site and coming back after the sun has set. Though the father's routine has stayed the same, his relationship with his once-young son has drifted.

It started from spending every weekday afternoon with one another to not seeing each other for a couple days. For years, this hard working immigrant from Mexico had picked up his youngest son from school every day—taking him to working, putting him to work. He would ignore the fact that his son had just spent a full day at school, ignore the fact that at a certain point the son just did not want to get picked up by his father and would beg to be dropped off en la casa instead. The son ignored the fact that his father had a lot of work to finish, and became selfish. When the father refused to take him home, the son would get angry and not speak to his father. The son changed as he grew older; he no longer looked forward to get picked up by his father, because he knew that would mean sitting in a hot truck trying to do homework.

As the young boy grew older he began to hate the routine. He would rather stay after school to hang out with his friends and work on his jump shot, but now as the young man reflects on his time with his father at his work, the young man knows he learned more valuable lessons spending time with his father than he ever would at daycare. The young man saw his father as another teacher. His father stressed education so much that he would make a simple table for his son out of buckets and a sheet of wood so the son could do his homework. As the son completed his school work the father would continue his hard labor. As the son progressed in grade levels he would try to help his father, just like he used to, but the father would say that this kind of work was not for his son and direct him back to his homework. The father would constantly tell his son to stick to his studies or else the son would be working hard like his father. However, it was by watching his father that the son began to develop his own values of hard work and education.

The father, a man with a third grade education, was the only one of his seven brothers and sisters who did not go to college, because his father, the young man's grandfather, wanted him to work en el rancho with him. The father was able to overcome this obstacle of not having an education to provide for his family through a paint brush, a hammer, and a nail. The father, along with his wife, the young man's mother, worked hard to put all of their children through Catholic school and did not go one day without reminding them that education is everything. The young man understood the value his father and mother placed on education, but after years of observing their relationship, the young man began to feel more and more disconnected from his father.

Since high school the young man has had a tough time wrapping his head around the culture of marriage in Mexico where the husband is the person who holds all the power. He would see his father come back from a hard day at work and get mad at his mother that dinner was not ready. The young man saw fear in his mother's eyes and voice whenever his mother spoke about his father. He wanted to do something, but he did not know what he could do. His mother

should not be treated this way, she should not have to get an okay from his father to go out before his father came home. Even though the young man knows this he does not do anything; instead he decides to ignore it even though he can hear his father yell at his mother from his room. His father's attitude toward his mother was one of the main reasons why the young man moved from San Jose to Los Angeles in order to attend college. This is when the young man began to lose respect for his father, when, growing older, he began to notice how terrible his father treats his mother, the woman his father supposedly loves.

The young man's parents are complete opposites. His father is serious, stubborn, and distant. His mother is sarcastic, understanding, and loving. However, they both share and instilled in their children a respect for hard work and the importance of education. With all this talk about the importance of education, it should not be a surprise that education is what the young man strives to learn more about it. Or is it? I mean, the young man's mother is a pre-school teacher and was even his years ago. Where the young man and his father differ is their definitions of success. His father understands success as having a lot of money, and the young man personally does not agree with that.

Having a Jesuit educational background, thanks to his parents, one would think the son would have social justice values instilled in him. It is not like the son did not give Business a chance, he is studying Economics and will graduate with a BA degree in Economics and Sociology in May of 2015. However, the son cannot imagine sitting at a desk all day with the injustices he knows are currently happening all around him. He likes helping people, just like his father does when he helps others rebuild their houses and gives laborers looking for work a job. The son cares too much about the future of Latinos in this country, especially in the educational sphere, to not be a teacher next year. This hurts his father. The son believes that his father is disappointed in him, because his father spent so much money on his education just for his son to become a teacher and not a businessman or lawyer like he wanted his son to be.

When the son told his father that he was going to be a teacher, the father did not take it well. Que?! Come que vas hacer un profesor? His father tried and tried to change his son's mind, but, similar to his father, the son is stubborn. The son knows his father is not okay with his decision to become a teacher, but it is not going to stop him. The son just wishes that his father could understand and get to know him and his reason for wanting to pursue this career. Father and son have had long talks about this, but the son is following his passions. He knows he is going to be working in a job next year that requires long hours and involves an extensive amount of work and stress, but the son thinks he can do it. Like his father always tells him, "Tienes que trabajar, no hay otra."