

myself to do. I will always love her for being so courageous. Our friendship grew again, little by little, and I began to reemerge from isolation. Riot Grrrl was still going strong, and Ann and Andee were organizing a grrrl convention in Omaha. I got involved in the planning and preparation, and in the days before the event we made copious amounts of food and silk-screened enormous piles of thrift store t-shirts with the words "go girl!"

Almost 100 grrrls descended on Omaha that July, from the midwest, the south, both coasts, and Canada. This was not the first Riot Grrrl convention. Olympia, D.C., and even Ohio had sponsored similar gatherings in the previous three years. We organized a concert featuring bands from around the country and arranged workshops on racism, class privilege, self-defense, and women's health. We picketed and escorted patients at an abortion clinic, and my belly, just beginning to swell obviously at four months, became the sign upon which I wrote "Mother for Choice" in black, delighting the other grrrls and disturbing the counter-demonstrators. Downtown Omaha

never saw so many different hair colours. We camped on the Platte River and swam and barbecued tofu and veggies. We sang and talked and traded zines. I made friends and fantasized about keeping them forever, but truly I felt very separate, because of my pregnancy and because of the greater context of my life in which this was happening. Still, knowing what I had to go home to, I wanted it to last forever.

My son Gabriel was born on the morning of December 20, 1994. I left his father for the last time two weeks later and got a protection order. (I wish this were all as simple as it sounds.) In 1996, Gabriel was the only riot boy at the Midwest Girl Fest in Chicago, and the inspiration for my zine *Mamagirl*. By age four, Gabriel had developed a media consciousness able to analyze how toys were being marketed differently to girls and boys in commercials. Now at the more philosophical stage of age six, I overheard him the other day telling a friend, "God is a woman too." I love being his mom, and the unit the two of us make is comfortable and perfect. Andee now has a beautiful three-year-old daughter Emma. Feminist parenting, as old as feminism itself, continues to shape our children.

Becoming a mother and surviving a violent relationship made the limitations of the scope of riot grrrl painfully evident in my life. Its focus on young women left domestic abuse largely out of the forum, although such brutality is not by any means restricted to middle-aged married couples. I knew the percentages of rapists who were convicted and how to poke a stranger's eyes out with my thumbs; I didn't know the classic behaviors of men prone to abuse, or how to jump from a moving car at eight months pregnant to escape a death threat (I figured that out on the spot.) We certainly would have benefited from knowing the signs that a woman is in an unhealthy relationship and what to do about it. I wonder how many other riot grrrls were

suffering in this way, or how many former riot grrrls are suffering now.

Although the riot grrrl movement has largely dissolved, men are still raping, beating, molesting, harassing, and generally mistreating women and girls around the world. Feminist activism is as important now as it ever was, and I doubt that any of my old grrrl-friends have become apolitical. For all of us who have silences that are yet to be broken, the powerful voice of riot grrrl is still resonant. Its assimilation into mainstream culture was, inevitable in spite of the efforts to prevent it, but perhaps the five-year-olds in their "girl power" t-shirts will be the ones to pick up where we left off and include a little of what we left out. In the meantime, I'm still striving for revolution—mom style.

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## ALLANA STUART

bruises bloom like violets  
beneath the translucent layers  
of my skin,  
and my flesh is fiery  
in the hot spaces  
where you pressed your fingers,  
pinching hard  
to keep your grip on me  
like steel bands across my soul.  
how can you still look  
me in the eye  
and tell me I'm beautiful  
when you have made me  
so ugly  
with the black and blue shadows  
of your anger.

*Allana Stuart is a journalism student and hopes to one day create her own magazine.*

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