

A Family Tradition

LaKeisha Adams

Course: English 101

Instructor: Birgitta Ramsey

Essay Type: Personal Narrative

Family traditions can be anything passed down through generations. In my family, there is a certain art that is passed on in every generation. I guess I would call it a gift that somehow certain women in my family are born with. It is like the art is really a trait that is in their genes. I think of it as one of the chromosomes on a strand of DNA. My family has five generations of seamstresses. The last few are something that I can definitely speak about. In each generation, one female is born with this gift: the gift of creation and vision, the art of sewing.

My great-grandmother, Grandma Bernice, was a seamstress for years before I was born. She never took any classes on how to sew. She learned to sew by watching her mother and mastering her technique. She had a special room set aside just for her mountains of fabric and her sewing machine. She then gave birth to another seamstress, my grandmother, Carol Elizabeth Arnold (Adams). The lessons she learned about sewing came straight from her mother and grandmother. My grandmother knows every term and every angle of sewing like she knows the back of her own hand. She can make anything without the use of patterns and can master details that are so tiny yet so very important.

At around the age of thirty-one, my mother became pregnant with my little sister, Jada. My mother never in her life showed an interest in sewing until this time. She just did not have the time or patience to sit for hours and sew. It was as if the art of sewing was suddenly flowing from within her. Never learning a single thing about sewing, other than what she had seen my grandmother do, my mother got the idea to buy a sewing machine. Throughout her pregnancy,

my mother made dresses for me and comforter sets for my soon-to-be baby sister. My mother would see a comforter set she liked in the store, find the material, and duplicate it to the last stitch. She was becoming very creative, and she wasn't sure where this desire to sew was coming from, but she embraced it. She felt at peace when she was sewing. After the birth of my sister, my mother abruptly lost all desire to sew and even sold her sewing machine. It was as if sewing had left her body along with the baby. It seemed that maybe she had birthed not just a baby, but also a desire and talent for sewing.

My mother gave birth to what I like to call "a fashion diva" on December 22, 1997. I believe that my unborn sister had fashion running through her veins, and it was showing through my mother while she was pregnant. Now, at the tender age of six, my sister is sitting in front of her very own sewing machine making doll clothes, dress up clothes, and even stylish pillows for herself and our younger sister, Jasmine. "She is a young fashion guru," my mother proudly states. She loves to invent new styles for her dolls and for our younger sister to model. My little sister lives for fashion and enjoys creating new designs. I believe that Jada is our family's new generation seamstress.

This is a tradition that is not really a tradition at all, but a birthright. In our family, the ability to sew is a trait passed on through our bloodline like brown eyes or brown hair. With each generation the passion for sewing is passed on, not by choice but by fate. It's a genetic code that only a selected person gets. I think of this trait as a family heirloom that we should cherish. This art is not an antique or anything tangible, but it is a priceless gift that is given to one special female born in each generation of our family.

Ms. Ramsey's Comments: *This assignment asked the students to write about a tradition or an artifact. With its element of the supernatural it grabbed my attention to the point that I think it would even work as a movie script. It seemed to me that LaKeisha had the perfect story just waiting to be told and she told it very well.*