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Claire Oxford Culture Quilt

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Cultural Quilt

Claire Oxford
Lexington, VA
Upper-Middle Class
Female
Caucasian (White)

1. How would you describe your home community and how has that affected you?

My home community has changed multiple times throughout my life. My dad works in manufacturing, which is an area of work that has moved our family around several times. I was born in Lexington, Virginia then moved to Terre Haute, Indiana from ages 1 to 5. These early years, from what I remember, were very suburban; my family and I lived in the suburbs of Terre Haute, often went out to eat at chain restaurants, and went to me and brother's sports games (I played tee-ball and he played baseball). We moved back to Lexington when I was going into first grade and we stayed there until the summer before I began ninth grade. Lexington is a rural college town of about 6,000 people in the Shenandoah Valley. My mom was a professor at Washington & Lee University and my dad commuted an hour to a plant in Covington. This time period was crucial in my development; I made some of my closest friends throughout those years, had the privilege of taking advantage of a strong, tight-knit public school system, and felt a deep appreciation for the natural surroundings of the Blue Ridge Mountains. When the recession hit in 2008 my dad lost his job and spent the year trying to find a position that could keep us in Lexington while he worked odd jobs. We moved to Toledo, Ohio the summer before my ninth grade, and settled into a suburb with a small, rigorous public high school. While I found it difficult to connect with this new community the way I had with my previous one, I was also intensely privileged to be able to have access to an excellent high school education that pushed me academically in a way I had never been before. Finally, my family moved again two summers ago to Worcester, Massachusetts. The dynamic nature of my home community has at

times created feelings of dislocation in my life, but have also helped me adapt to new places and value my family's support.

2. What's the most important thing you've gained or learned from your parents growing up?

Two things that my parents have taught me are the value of a hard work ethic and how to foster a loving family dynamic based on shared responsibilities and notions of gender equality. Both of my parents pour a ton of energy into their respective work (sometimes I think my dad should ease up a bit for his mental and physical health) and I've consistently found myself modeling that behavior as well. Especially as I've grown older, I've also come to appreciate the companionship, love and respect that I observe in my parent's dynamic on the whole; they seem to be each other's confidantes and closest friends, even though of course they also bicker and disagree from time to time.

3. What is something that you have learned about yourself while we've been doing this project?

While doing this project, I've been reminded how much I enjoy working with children and how different and perceptive their vantage point is on the world. When Columbia Elementary School's principal told us that "the students are always watching" he was absolutely right; I've noticed how the students comment on little things that I do or say, and how they pick up on aspects of my appearance. It's made me be extraordinarily thoughtful about my behavior during our lessons, and has also taught me how important positive older role models or mentors can be, especially in the lives of young children during such formative years.

4. What values or characteristics are most important to you?

I value being open and curious with others. Through these qualities, it makes it easier to learn more about others, be adaptable in different communities, and foster meaningful relationships.

5. What do you like most about yourself/ what's your best quality?

One of my favorite characteristics about myself is my ability to make others laugh and feel comfortable in conversation. I'm a very extroverted person, and having funny or personal conversations with others throughout my day always gives me a boost and helps fuel my generally optimistic and energetic approach to situations and relationships.

6. What are some of your most important rituals and why?

One of my most important rituals is exercising on a routine basis. Exercise gives me a breather in my busy, full routine and helps me manage stress and keep things in perspective. My body is very important to me, and taking care of it through activities like exercise (i.e. jogging, playing Ultimate Frisbee, and dancing) keeps me more emotionally and mentally healthy as well.