

Kimberley Jones: Crots Paper Process Memo

Of all the papers that I have written in this class, my Crots paper is the closest to my heart because it takes me back to my roots (yes, that is a slight hit at Whitney Houston.) I was told to write about my identity, and I have always associated my South African heritage and culture as a huge part of who I am, but have run into conflict with merging that with my now American identity as well. Writing about my identity as a White African American was a perfect outlet for me to release all of the built up angst I've been living with for the past 12 years about other peoples' inability to understand my racial and cultural identity, as well as a good opportunity for me to force myself to sit down and think about how important it is for me to keep my South African culture present and active in my life. The writing process for me began with laying on my bed looking through every picture I could find of my life in and trip back to South Africa. As I looked through these pictures, I wrote down significant memories that stood out in my mind as helpful to the topic of defining my South African identity. I started out with about thirty stories I could have told. I typed out about ten of those stories, and from there thought of stories of my life in the U.S. that were relevant to the topic. I called a few people and asked if they had any ideas, and was actually reminded by an ex boyfriend of an incident that I wrote about in the paper.

The revision process entailed cutting out stories – lots of them. There were so many good memories I had that I wanted to share all of them, to help the reader live my life through my paper, to feel the tension between my cultures, and finally to feel the resolution of a melded identity.

Writing my crots paper helped me think through and resolve some inner conflicts, and I feel that my writing shows that. If I could do anything differently, I would have used more voices and given a better variety of stories. On the whole, for my first paper of the semester I am pleased with the outcome of this paper.

Kimberley Jones

Joshua Burnett

ENC1145-15

20 October 2011

Crots Draft 1

I peeked over Emily “Mashaba”’s shoulder into the pot of carrots boiling on the stove. It was a stretch to see. I clung tightly to her back for security, even though there was a big piece of fabric wrapped around her body keeping me tightly in place. Although I could clearly see what was cooking, I went through our usual routine.

“What’s for supper?” It was almost a squeak.

“Food.” The usual answer.

“Will I like it?”

“You’ll eat it.”

We had to go through this every day or else the world wouldn’t be right. I wouldn’t be her “toto” (an abbreviation of the Swahili word for baby), and she wouldn’t be my Mashaba. Mashaba. The live in maid who had been raising me since my mom went back to work earlier that year. It was 1997.

“Kimberley Laura! Hoekom het jy jou viul skottelgoed in die kombuis? Gaan was dit!”

“.....Jammer.....”

My mind was blank. Entirely empty. My grandma was scolding me for leaving dirty dishes in the kitchen without washing them. I had nothing to say. I couldn't find the right words.

“Ek sal nou....” ‘I will now.’ That’s all my mind could find. Where was the Afrikaans? It hadn’t been that long since I’d used it!! Three months at the MOST! Mom and Cam and I just spoke English around the house so that all of the friends coming through wouldn’t feel out of place. Now that Gramby was here, we had to speak Afrikaans. I ran to my mom and told her what just happened in the kitchen. She started spitting out words for me to regurgitate the Afrikaans to.

“Dog.”

“Hont.”

“Bed.”

“Kamer.”

“Mom, not easy words! Real words! Words like I won’t do it again! Words I need to have a real conversation! Words I need to really speak Afrikaans! REAL WORDS!!”

I cried.

“I don’t know Curtis. Your mom taught me this way so I’m pretty sure it’s gonna be good.”

“Kim, don put the neckbones in wid it. Let em soak and cook and then

throw em all together for a little before you eat it. Don't want the flavors mixin up."

"Curtis. Call your mama and ask her what she thinks."

"You call an aks what she thank."

"Just call her please."

"Hey Ma. Kim cookin some greens and she wan know. Do you put the neckbone in wit the greens to cook or do you put em in lata."

"Damn. Aight I will, bye Ma."

"Kim. You black. Put the neckbone in and my mama said hey."

"Cute in the face! Slim in the waist! Thick in the thighs! Now watch me riiiide. Do da thick girl, do da thick girl.' SoJo sangin bout you Kim!"

"Jamal, that's my girl. Back up." Brandon was getting frustrated with Jamal's constant passes at me.

Jamal Gwinn was standing with most of our basketball team hollerin at me from across the courtyard. "Brittany needs to get him together," my friend Kantesha mumbled to me under her breath.

"I don't date white girls, no need to worry bout me intruding B."

"I don't either, but she's black bodied so it don't matter. And she real cute AND smart. AND unlike YOUR girl, I can pull her hair without pulling tracks out!" Brittany was notorious for having outrageous amounts of badly done tracks or lace-fronts in her hair.

An eruption of "ohhhhhh's" burst from the clump of basketball players.

Clutching me tightly to his chest, Brandon whispered in my ear.

“I love you regardless of your race. You’re black anyways.”

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ENC1145-15

11 September 2011

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“I don’t date white girls, no need to worry bout me intruding B.”

“I don’t either, but she’s black bodied so it don’t matter. And she real cute AND smart. AND unlike YOUR girl, I can pull her hair without pulling tracks out!” Brittany was notorious for having outrageous amounts of badly done tracks or lace-fronts in her hair.

An eruption of “ohhhhhh’s” burst from the clump of basketball players. Clutching me tightly to his chest, Brandon whispered in my ear.

“I love you regardless of your race. You’re black anyways.”

The smoky smell of the braai is infiltrating my nostrils and reaching the

bottom of my already warm heart. My feet are wet from playing in the sprinklers with my brother and cousins. Mud is splattered up my legs but I'm not worried because mom will soak me in a warm bath later tonight and ask me about what mischief got me this dirty. My entire family on my mom's side is here. My grandma and grandpa. My grandpa's two brothers and their families. My grandma's five brothers and one sister, and their families. In total, there are about fifty of us. Nearly everyone is bopping their heads to a Rolf Harris CD blaring from the stoop. I know every word of it. Some are in the pool, mostly the women. My great uncle Martin stands next to the pool contemplating getting in until his wife Peggy pulls him by the leg into the pool and the choice is no longer his. The men are gathered near the braai talking about cricket and rugby and work. My great uncles know better than to tell my grandpa how to cook the boerewors, he is the king of braaing. Any food my grandpa touches instantly tastes perfect, with no exceptions. Sometimes I wonder why he makes my grandma cook supper since he's so good at it. My mom says that's the way they think it's supposed to be. The man works and then woman takes care of the house. Plus, my grandma is very proud of everything she does. She's floating around now, making sure all of her guests are happy and well fed and all have drinks. Grace and beauty seem to radiate from her whole being as she glides around the garden, lovingly patting my back each time she passes. I hope to be just like her some day. For a moment, time stands still and I am so happy just to watch my family. I try to engrain this feeling of a loving family surrounding me into my mind and heart. All at once I am overcome with joy and sadness. I'll never experience this again.

I watched a man get shot.

Johannesburg is the second highest crime rated city in the world.

I watched the bullet enter his back.

You don't leave your double dead bolted doors if it's not broad daylight,
and even then - never alone.

I watched him fall to the ground.

You always have your Taurus or .22 or Nighthawk as your best friend.

I watched his head hit the concrete.

You do, however, make friends as close as family.

The blood collected around him.

The culture is the richest of any of the world. Never an uncultured moment.

People looked at his lifeless body in, and kept walking.

You see the most beautiful children and eat the most delicious food.

Some ran. Others stood and looked. Most just kept walking.

There is no color like African sky blue.

I watched a man die.

They said I lived in the best place on earth?

He will never live again.

I lived in the best place on earth.

“Teacher, why does SHE talk funny?”

Tyler Sarsfield's fat finger pointed precisely in my direction. It was the fifth day of

first grade, and I was still the only person in the class who hadn't made any friends. No matter how many times the wonderful Ms. Talley tried to explain to the class that sometimes people from other places speak differently and that it wasn't anything bad, no one wanted to be my friend. She tried to persuade the kids to make friends with me, but with no avail. I'd spent every recess this week sitting alone on a bench watching the other kids play tag, and every lunch time alone at the end of the table. Every day since school started I'd gone home and cried. It continued this way the entire school year of first grade. No one wanted to be friends with the girl who talked funny. I spent a majority of the summer before second grade watching TV. Partly because I didn't have any friends to play with, and partly because I would listen closely and repeat the words the American actors pronounced differently than I did to force myself to lose my accent. "Ranch." "Bath." "Garage." "Tomato." "Orange." "Button." "You're welcome." I cried a lot still. My mom ordered a case of Jelly Tots (my favorite candy) from a South African supplier to try to comfort me, and made a lot of custard and koeksisters for dessert snacks in my lunchbox. The kids just made fun of me some more. Second grade rolled around and it didn't seem anything had changed. Then I met Ericka Ingram. I can clearly remember our first conversation.

"Are you from England? My aunt's from England and you talk just like her."

"No, I'm from South Africa."

"If you're from Africa, why aren't you black?"

"Well, white people live there too."

"Oh, okay."

And so was the beginning of countless questions as to if it was possible for my skin to be this color if I really am African, and so was the beginning of the a lifelong friendship.

Dear God,

Thank you so much that I live in the United States.

Lord, thank you for bringing me to Florida State.

Thank you for letting me live the American Dream.

Dear God, you took me out of a country that is falling to ruins, a place of danger and destruction, and brought me to a land of safety.

God, you've brought me to a place with so many opportunities. Just the fact that I have the chance to go to college is amazing, especially since it's pretty much free.

Please be with the families the have been affected by the 9/11 tragedy. Bless them and comfort them please God.

This might be crazy, but thank you that the Seminoles are winning this game and that the band sounds so great right now.

Thank you that I'm at this football game having so much fun, not living in South Africa.

Amen.

Tears streamed down my face as the Marching Chiefs played America the Beautiful. Despite the fact that it was 85 degrees and I was in direct sun, chill bumps ran down my spine and spread over my whole body.

Kimberley Jones

Joshua Burnett

ENC1145-15

27 September 2011

On the FCAT, I Bubbled My Race As 'Other.'

Wintertime, 1997 - Johannesburg, South Africa.

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May, 2001 - Mango, Florida.

"Kimberley Laura! Hoekom het jy jou viul skottelgoed in die kombuis? Gaan was dit!"

".....Jammer....."

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“Mom, not easy words! Real words! Words like I won’t do it again!
Words I need to have a real conversation! Words I need to really speak Afrikaans!
REAL WORDS!!”

I cried.

July, 2011 – Tampa, Florida.

“I don’t know Curtis. Your mom taught me this way so I’m pretty sure it’s gonna be good.”

“Kim, don put the neckbones in wid it. Let em soak and cook and then throw em all together for a little before you eat it. Don’t want the flavors mixin up.”

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“Damn. Aight I will, bye Ma.”

“Kim. You black. Put the neckbone in and my mama said hey.”

“No Curtis, I’m African.”

*January, 1998 – Port Elizabeth, South
Africa.*

The smoky smell of the braai is infiltrating my nostrils and reaching the bottom of my already warm heart. My feet are wet from playing in the sprinklers with my brother and cousins. Mud is splattered up my legs but I’m not worried because mom will soak me in a warm bath later tonight and ask me about what mischief got me this dirty. My entire family on my mom’s side is here. My grandma and grandpa. My grandpa’s two brothers and their families. My grandma’s five brothers and one sister, and their families. In total, there are about fifty of us. Nearly everyone is bopping their heads to a Rolf Harris CD blaring from the stoop. I know every word of it. Some are in the pool, mostly the women. My great uncle Martin stands next to the pool contemplating getting in until his wife peggy pulls him by the leg into the pool and the choice is no longer his. The men are gathered near the braai

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November, 2009 – Tampa, Florida.

“Cute in the face! Slim in the waist! Thick in the thighs! Now watch me riiiide. Do da thick girl, do da thick girl.’ SoJo sangin bout you Kim!”

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An eruption of “ohhhhhh’s” burst from the clump of basketball players. Clutching me tightly to his chest, Brandon whispered in my ear.

“I love you regardless of your race. You’re black anyways.”
“African, Brandon.”

August, 2011 – Tallahassee, Florida. Reflection on 1998 - Johannesburg, South Africa.

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They said I lived in the best place on earth?

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*August 23, 1998 – Riverview,
Florida.*

“Teacher, why does SHE talk funny?”

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September 10, 2011 – Tallahassee, Florida. FSU Football Game.

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For a moment I thought that the part of my heart I'd left in the cold Cape Town waters when we'd visited in January had just returned to my body, but when I checked, the hole was still there. At that moment that I realized: I don't have to choose one country to give my heart to. My blood runs as deeply blue as the African sky, as warm as the sun in the bush on my face. My cheeks are as rosy as the American flag, my spirit as free as the rights I walk with. This is what it feels like to be an African American.