

## My Dolls

By Monique Evdokiou

Each Christmas morning since I was a child, I would receive a special, beautiful doll from my Great-Great Aunt Dolly. From the very beginning of this tradition as a mere 6 years old, I would look forward to the elegantly wrapped present I would receive in the mail, and wait eagerly until that special moment when I would finally be able to unwrap it. However, these gifts were more than the normal dolls young children would cling onto during their childhood; these dolls held stories of journeys around the world.

Each doll is clothed with traditional wear from their country of origin. Whether it be a bright orange sari from India, a delicately embroidered kimono from Japan, or a Muslim hijab from Jordan, I admired the beauty in each doll with embracing arms for years to come.

Opening my first of these presents, I still remember my eyes being full of wonder. The first doll was from Peru, and she was clothed in a bright and colorful woven skirt, or “pollera.” I was fascinated with the bright colors and intricate patterns I laid my eyes on. As a young girl, I could only begin to understand the meaning behind this doll. Unwrapping each new doll opens my eyes to life around the world, which I was previously very unfamiliar with. My epiphany would continue to expand as I gained further knowledge of a new culture with each coming year. With the arrival of each new doll, my intrigue for the world that surrounds me inspired change within me.

My Aunt Dolly loves to travel and experience the virtues of the world that exploration brings to her life. Her stories of the wonders found within her travels inspired a wanderlust in me for the rest of my life to come, and I longed to to replicate her travels for myself. She helped plant the seed in my mind that unique elements of life that can only be found in explorations of other cultures are not meant to be seen in isolation from one another, but rather to be intertwined within each other and enhance the greatest aspects. As my dolls sit atop my dresser, I am reminded of the exquisiteness in cultural connectedness and the allure created from the alignment of multiple perceptions of beauty.

Out of my small community that I was familiar with as a young child, I was able to expand my vision and reach past myself to the infinitely growing horizons that manifested before my eyes. I learned that beauty is found within the differences of other communities when they support harmony and acceptance between each other. My collection of dolls reminds me that the acceptance of other cultures’ beauty among their differences leads to a more compassionate global community. To me, being a global citizen means to celebrate and marvel at the beauty of other cultures for what they are, and expand our visions of our world past what is familiar. My community of dolls represents how cultures can vastly differ from each other, however, a secret beauty is found in their coexistence.