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A Part of My World

Ecuador is one of my favorite countries, the food, the culture, their clothing style when you go to the Campo side of Ecuador. The amount of love and dedication they put into their food is so much different than here in the states, people will sell their cooked food from their windows, and it would be the best Ceviche in town. Everything seems so refreshing over there, the air is better because they still have huge trees and mountains nearby. One of the main reasons I adore Ecuador so much is because I'm from Manta, Ecuador a beautiful Tuna city. Manta, Ecuador reminds me of a beautiful rainbow, once you land all you see is a rainbow billboard saying 'Welcome' with the sun right behind it making it so vibrant. Once my father brought back a beautiful hand sewed toddler shirt made by the locals that live around the mountains, these shirts were similar to the Incas attire that was worn in the Andes (Ecuador.com/dress), that toddler shirt meant so much to me because it was handmade, where it was made (mountains), and because it relates to my ancestors.

Throughout many Ecuadorian regions there are different tribes with familiar color clothing but distinctive styles of them. The women were always the brightest, with their braided hair or loose hair, and the men with a solid color and a fancy headwear, the men wore loose shirts with jackets(ecuador.com/dress). Ecuadorian clothing is very meaningful to me and it's a pleasure to own a piece made by an older lady living in the Galapagos selling handmade shirts for children. It meant more to me because I've always wanted to go to the Galapagos, and I still haven't but just knowing that there are people still hand making clothes to continue the lineage.

Women in certain tribes like The Otavalo Tribe wore black and blue skirts with a white blouse, the men wore fedora on their head, blue ponchos, and a white blouse. This tribe is mostly around the

Northern part of Quito and they're common to see as by passers and you can always tell who they are by their fashion choice. Their bright jewelry represents the significance of their culture, their Tagua Jewelry an Ivory that comes from a nut tree, its durable and useful for more than just jewelry, they used their bright colored jewelry or bright colored dresses/skirts to represent their Indigenous Ethnicity. Today if you go to Ecuador, especially the capitol, Quito, Ecuador you can still see street vendor selling their traditional jewelry because they still feel connected to their Indian identity and like to share it with us, these styles has been around since the Incas era in 1463 (www.ecuador.com/culture)

In the high mountains, in La Sierra, between the south and north of Ecuador there were villagers also wearing white blouse but skirts with bright colors. They wore shawls to carry things, or their babies decorated in their bright fabric. Their skirts were famous for their embroidery, they were decorated with lovely patterns on the edge of the skirts and shirts. This reminded me of my daughter shirt that makes Ecuador so much closer to me, her shirt is a white shirt sewed like the Octavalo Tribe women wore, with an embroidery that has a bright colorful circle with the words stitched "Ecuador ama la Vida" which means Ecuador Love Life. It makes me feel closer to my ancestors when I have a piece of traditional clothing/jewelry.

In the tropical rainforest they still wear the white blouse and tan skirts, but the most that stand out for them is the feather headdresses and their heavy artistic make-up that has a deep meaning. Their make-up tells them apart and who they are it's not just a look, everything has a meaning. Their heavy use of jewelry is a tribal meaning, usually the more you have the more honorable you are (Holly Stark, La Sierra: Exploring Crafts and Culture In Ecuador, <https://hollystarklive.wordpress.com/2016/09/29/la-sierra-exploring-the-highlands-in-ecuador-south-america/>)

I love that every culture has their own thing/design, things may look familiar like a Peruvian Pancho may look familiar to an Ecuadorian Poncho, but the designs and stitches are different, that how tribe were able to tell tribes apart. We follow this till this day because our ancestors didn't go through battles and sacrifices for us to forget where we came from and why its little things like details matter,

even in a stitch. Even though my daughter never wore the shirt I got from Ecuador, I still keep it with me in my closet, and I always show my daughter and talk about how much it meant to me, that I didn't want her to ruin it with baby accidents! Hopefully one day I can pass this on to her so she can keep and have a traditional clothing from Ecuador.

There are so many times I've gotten gifts from my family members who come to New York City, and they bring shirts back that have huge letter saying, "somebody that loves me from Ecuador brought me this shirt" and they're sweet but it wasn't like the shirt I got from my father, that was personal, different, and super adorable because of it's size. People also love to gift jewelry like traditional ones or handmade bracelets, and one time in Ecuador I had the pleasure of making one with my aunt's friend who was a street vendor, and she was known for her famous designs around the town, it was a wonderful experience, and it meant a lot to me that I was able to make a traditional bracelet.

When I first went to the mountains in Ecuador, I saw so many people selling and wearing ponchos, beautifully designed, I saw women making the stitch and carefully choosing a color to match the sunset for their designs. When I asked one of the vendors if she lived near the mountains or in the city, she told me she came all the way from Quito to teach people here how the natives did it because she still had family members who still follow the Octavlo tribe, I was blown away and amazed at the dedication she willing to make to travel 2-3 hours for her wallets, beads, necklaces, and more.

The repetition in history of the same style for different tribes is incredible, they are different in their own ways, but the style behind it is always following the Incas/Aztecs cultural background, and I've always been drawn to it. That's why this shirt means so much to me, even though it's not physically mine and it doesn't fit me, it meant so much that my daughter was able to own one, maybe one day she can pass it on to her child one day. The remarkable thing about these types of shirts is that most of them look unisex, so if you give it to someone it won't matter about their gender. The main reason it was also important to me was because when my dad went to Ecuador in 2017 my dad had an accident and was immediately rushed to the hospital in his hometown, thankfully his family/friends were around him and

got him their quickly and safely he made it out fine and called me and told me that he knew he had to get better asap in order to get this shirt to my daughter because he knew I had a small collection of different clothing styles from diverse cultures. It means more to me than just a fabric, it felt like a guide for my dad to come back and get this item to me.

I love Ecuador and it's amazing designs, and bright skies, warm sandy beaches, and the smell of the delicious foods, nothing makes me happier than going back there and appreciating the lifestyle over there versus here. Here we have it made, over there you're lucky enough if there is a traffic light controlling the streets, or it's just a go as you please just don't crash. I never thought I had something meaningful to me until I did this assignment, it made me appreciate my culture and clothing more and figured out where things come from. Now I know truly everything has a meaning, clothes, jewelry and even certain materials. When I go back to Ecuador or if I go somewhere new, I won't take things for granted I'll look into stuff more now, like why they use certain fabrics, or certain plants to build like hemp!