

Spring 2013 family history english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Carol Lanham Spring 2013 Family History My name is MIHEZAN EKONDE Marie Claude Laura Djeneba; I was born on June 7 of 1991. I am an international student and back in my country Cote d'Ivoire. I was living there with my blood family and some fictive kin: my mother, my little two little sisters, and three cousins. In this essay I will relate my family history through three generations: my grandmother, my mother and me. As main source, I interviewed my grandmother's sister because my grandmother passed away four years ago from natural cause and for the second generation I interviewed my mother herself and I will relate my own history. My grandmother Henriette was born around 1935, according to her birth certificate; it was marked January 1st of 1935. In my country when we don't know the exact date of birth we put January 1st. Her mother was Peuhl an ethnic group from Guinea, the country next door and her father was Baoule. Her parents were living in a village called " Kami" at an hour away of the political capital of the country Yamoussoukro. They died while she was very young, around 7. She then lived with her six brothers and sisters at their father sister's little house. She did not go to school because her aunt was very poor. Around 10, she suffered from guinea worm. After her recovery, her aunt sent her to the political capital Yamoussoukro to live with one of her friends. Grandmother Henriette was taking care of the woman by helping her get dressed, cooking and cleaning. During her teenage years, she started a little business there. She made yogurt, some African juices, and also cooked fried plantains and it became more and more successful. She then transformed this little business into a big one and opened a small restaurant. She could now live on her own so she moved to the economic capital

Abidjan. There she started in the fish industry. She had two employees and one boat. She were selling and shipping those fishes to the women at the markets. When she was about 25 years old she married my grandfather. Because he had four wives, she was in a polygamy marriage. Her husband, my grandfather was about 15 years older than her. My grandmother was the second wife. She had four children with him. My mother was her first child. She was not happy in her marriage but could not say anything. During her thirties, her investments were now profitable because she was in the wood industry. Her little company provided woods for bigger companies. When my grandfather died from lung cancer, she had to care for her four children by herself. She then bought her first house and welcomed a lot of her nephews and nieces who needed to come in the capital to go to school and for better opportunities. She was very strong and courageous. She had a strong belief in God. She started to pray when she moved in the city, and she was very committed at her church. She lost one child, my uncle, and she had fourteen grandsons and three grand grandsons. She had a peaceful old age but she suffered from high blood pressures. Sometimes she was grumpy and did not want to eat sometimes. But she was happier in this period and life was simpler for her according to my grandaunt. On October 2009, my mother was going to France for her vacation, and my grandmother wanted to go to the economic capital Yamoussoukro the same day with my mother's driver. My mother explained to her that he would drive her to see her sisters as she wanted the following day. So my mother went to Paris and my grandmother Henriette to Yamoussoukro. When leaving Abidjan, she packed all her personal belongings like she was never coming back there, and she took a

big picture of her that was placed in her room. One morning at her sister's place at Yamoussoukro, one nephew that was living there came at her room to wake her up and she was next to the bed on her knees, in the position of prayer with a rosary on her hand. He found her dead in this position. My mother came back from France and with her brother and sister they organized a big funeral to honor her. In our country the bigger the funeral, the bigger the importance the person had in our community. Despite the fact that she did not go to school, she became successful in life because she struggled to be someone in life. My mother was born in Abidjan on February 1st of 1963. She had the chance to go to school. She had to walk at least 5 miles every day to go to elementary school. She was quite a stubborn child and did fight a lot with her siblings especially with the children of the other wives of her father, her stepbrothers. She told me that they were around 25 people in the same house. It was a big family. She then moved with her mother after the death of her father. She used the bus with her siblings to go to school and during the summer she visited her aunts at the village. She had a scholarship and went to an elite school outside the city so she lived in dorms during the academic years. At this school, they could only go outside during October breaks, Christmas breaks, and Easter breaks and during summer. She could receive visits during the weekends. She told me that she remembers the "big talk" with her mother when she had her period for the first time. Her mother threatened her and told her not to have sex so she was kind of afraid of boys. Influenced by her mother as her role model, she became interested in leadership associations in her school during her teen age. She was first secretary and then was elected president of the student

government of the girls' school of Bingerville. After graduating from high school, she took a short cut and went to a specialized center in electricity to become an engineer. In our country, the electricity field is a monopoly; she got hired there through the help of her mother's relations. She first started at the utility poles, to fix bulbs and after she upgraded and worked at the customers services. My father and her had an arranged marriage. His aunt was friends with my grandmother, and she talked about him being a young dentist who studied in France which would be good for my mother. Their families had almost the same living style related to the income and the same religious beliefs. My grandmother then agreed and they met and started to date. They did not experience cohabitation like most couples in Cote d'Ivoire. Two years later she got pregnant with me and got married one year after I was born in 1992. In 1993, she had my sister Nelly and from 1996 to 1998 she had to go to Senegal because of her job. My sister and I then went to school there and my father stayed back home but came every semester to visit us. One year after she came back she wanted to end up the marriage but my father begged her to stay for at least the kids. She then had my youngest sister and was still working at the electricity company. They bought a house together in a complex condos dedicated to the workers of the electricity company. They made some changes in the house to make it bigger. It was originally a 3 bedroom house but they rebuilt into 6 bedrooms. She had to take care of the five children of his brother who died in a car accident. She was in charge of the kids because she was the oldest and the most successful among her two other siblings who were in England trying to "find themselves". They were at first all living with us but my father was not

for the option of living in an extended family. He was raised in a nuclear family with only his blood siblings. My mother convinced him but she could not afford all of them since she had to take care of my sisters and me and also focus on her couple. She took three and the others stayed with their mothers but it was not easy to them. Those who stayed with their mothers did not continue school and she was depressed because she was remorseful. She said that she was not happy in the marriage with my father because they had a lot of points of discords. She was experiencing the first divorce step known as the emotional divorce. She finally moved to legal divorce, she filed for divorce in 2010. She won at the court and she obtained the children custody and the house. Through these three generations I was luckier because the family income was higher so I was raised in a more decent place than my mother or my grandmother. I travelled every year overseas in London to see my mother's sister. I was pretty happy but I was always fighting with my little sister because I said that I did not like her because we were treated like we were twins. We had the same dresses, same money, and same room. I didn't felt like I was the oldest. Throughout the years, I became more mature and realized that it was a blessing to be a sister and to know that I am a model for both of them. I once read my sister's journal and that was the turning point of our relationship. When we did bad things like disrespect or not take showers, our parents used to slap us but in our country it was not such a big deal because every kid was beaten. In contrast to my mother, I started to date pretty early at 15 because all my girlfriends were dating too. After that, I had a boyfriend with whom I spent two years; we broke up because he cheated on me. I was very depressed but I didn't

want it to take the best of me. I graduated one year before my supposed graduation in high school. I took my senior exam similar to the GED when I was in 11th grade, I skipped 12th grade. I passed and since it was something very rare the national television interviewed me to ask me how I did handle two years in one. It was a big challenge that I wanted to take and because I also wanted to make my parents proud of me about an achievement. After that I went for two years to an American university in my country and then transferred in Oklahoma in a Catholic university. Since the tuition was high and my parents were getting divorced I came in Dallas. It was a way for me to help them take a break financially because the political instability of my country. It was impacting in my parents' income. I convinced them to bring my sister here so that it would be better for us because she was supposed to go study in France but I didn't want that because I wanted her to be next to me for emotional support. I actually live with her and with my best friend, and my boyfriend is living in Plano. I am pretty satisfied with my living style and my mother and my grandmother are my role models. When I am disappointed I always think about their determination. Across the three generations, what have changed a lot are the education and the place of residency. In fact, my grandmother grew up in a village and did not go to school. My mother was living in the main city of the country and attended school and was an engineer. At a younger age than my mother, I was also living in the main city of the country and attended school. My generation got more opportunities compared to the two oldest generations. I have the privilege to study abroad and I will be the first in my extended family to obtain a bachelor degree thanks to my parents. Consequently, I am an

immigrant. In my family, previous generations have fewer privileges and provide more opportunities for their progenies. Indeed, as the country fact book stated there is 48 percent of literacy rate now and it used to be during the 80's 25 percent. These facts show how my population does not get education properly. Be on this small amount of population who received education is a chance. For my grandmother, life was easier at her old age to manage it since she did not have to handle a lot now and could just rely on her children and her relatives to take care of her. Internal migrations especially rural to urban areas have been more intense in Cote d'Ivoire. People left villages with the promise of higher living standards on the cities. The first cause of internal migration which has always been from north to south is the economic status. Cities are offering more jobs, the country is agricultural-dependent and 75 percent of the export earnings in Abidjan employs by itself 60 percent of the workforce. The main city Abidjan used to count in 1920 1. 000 people then 59, 000 in 1950, 500, 000 people in 1970 and now count 4, 476, 397 people. These trends show how much live in the city is fundamental to have a better chance to get through poverty. Before the 80's, people were pretty satisfied with a low standard living. Throughout the years, economic opportunities have become a lot easier so life goals have changed. I am more ambitious, because my parents can afford it. My grandmother had four children in a period where the fertility rate was 7. 4 children per women. This trend shows that she was not in the average women who had babies at her period of time. She did not have a lot by herself because she was in a polygamy marriage. Her husband had four wives. Some of his wives had 10 children. So having four children was quite

small because it was a competition among the co-spouses, the one who had more children was the most respected. During having a baby was more an obligation for a married woman. In addition, she had her kids at a pretty young age; she had her first kid at around 20 years old. The period where my mother had her children, the fertility rate was 5.2 babies per women (World Trade Press 2010). My mother had also fewer children than the average, she had three children. Despite the trend of the age and sex demographic transition, she did not have boys. Most women at her period had 1.03 males per female at birth. My mother had her first kid at age 28. In my concern, I am 21 years old and I do not have kids and I do not plan to have kids now. My grandmother and my mother got married at early age. As far as I am concerned, delay marriage to make the most of my education is the option I prefer. In this time period, marriage is no more a "must have". We do not have any more to get married to earn the respect of the family. The US census bureau stated: "Delayed age at marriage directly affects completed fertility by reducing the number of years available for childbearing." (Fertility, 2000). This assertion can happen to me but in my opinion, education is the leitmotiv of delaying my prospective marriage. Interviewed by Lindsay Soll, in an article of the University of Florida about delaying marriages, Dr. Berardo, professor of sociology at this university said: "It makes more sense to a lot of women to say, 'wait a minute, I have to do things in a certain order. I think the first thing I have to do is get my education out of the way and get my career started,'" (Soll, 2003) Cohabitation was not experienced by my previous generations. In Cote d'Ivoire, marriage is so much honored that all couples get married without

cohabitating first. Women around mid-20 years old receive pressure from their parents to be settled with someone. So cohabitation was not an option from them. Living in a more liberal country, my point of view about cohabitation differs from my previous generations. I consider cohabitation a safe way to go by when we are in a relationship. The US bureau of census shows that almost 5, 5 million couples were cohabitating. Considered as a "complex" family by the journal of Marriage and Family from the National Council on Family Relations (Brown, Susan L. 1996). On this study the author states on its own terms: < > (Brown, Susan L. 1996). On the abstract of his article about concepts of cohabitation emphasize the facts that cohabitation presents three aspects. It can be < >. (Hixson, L. 2008). In my concern cohabitation is more a transition before get married. Interracial marriage, However arranged marriage has always existed. My mother was in an arranged marriage as well as my grandmother. Looking the percentage of couples who are in arranged marriage this tendency is not surprising. Substantially, 55 percent of marriages in the world are arranged (" Arranged / forced," 2012). My previous generations still encourage this type of marriage. Actually, they want me get into an interracial marriage which I think alienate my freedom. In their book called Family relation, Using the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth Bratter and King emphasize the fact:< > (Bratter & King, 2008)My grandmother did not experience the divorce process. She was not happy but at her time marriage was not about happiness or love. Marriage was more about settlement, achievement. At her time the women's roles in the society was to get married and have babies. The women who didn't achieved these duties were not considered

accomplished. She witnessed the emotional divorce but did not divorce. In fact, it was very difficult to live with the other spouses in the same house. In polygamy society, women don't talk. Despite the fact that she is single now she doesn't fall in the higher tendency to be poor due to the fact that she is a single mother. She works full time. My grandmother did not deal with advanced technologies such as internet she was were only at ease with cars. My mother was in the phase of the technology where Cell phone and internet came. She is getting used to it I deal a lot better with all these than them. In addition, in the US universities are computerized we have online classes which my parents did not have while studying. Advance in medical technologies help to use better contraceptives methods that did not exist during my grandmother period. Politics did change within the three generations. At my grandmother young age, the country was not yet independent and was still under the French colonization. The country took its independence and was focusing on building cities. At my mother young age, the country was also developing and life was not difficult. The country was very peaceful. My cohort experienced political instabilities in the country. During my young age, Cote d'Ivoire suffered from coup d'états, pre and post electoral crisis. Security became now a challenge. Same sex partnerships are still not well accepted in Cote d'Ivoire especially in most catholic families. My previous generations are homophobic contrarily to me don't hate but don't judge. Gays are not well seen and nobody can come out from the closet if its sexual orientation is the " normal" orientation. The article 360 of the Penal Code states that any indecent public behavior is punished :< > . (" Cote d'Ivoire Country," 2013)Within the generations the aspect of our life that did

not change was religion. In fact, we have all three been baptized and are regularly going to church. As larger force Previously, the number of Roman Catholics used to be higher than now. Indeed, the country count now around 30 percent of Catholics and 45 percent of Muslim. As a trend, a lot of families get converted and became Islamic. Politically, mentioned earlier the country suffered from a lot of tensions related to elections. Citizens feel more involve in this domain. When come elections, the excitement about voting is high with an overall participation of 71. 28% according to the United Nations Operations in Cote d'Ivoire. (" Post-election crisis," 2013)Another great aspect that has not changed is the value of the family. Unlike families in America that have changed whether improving or deteriorating. Our family in Africa has not changed. The gender role in the family is still the same the role of my grandmother's husband and my mother husband was the same: provide for the family, help for the hard chores at home, and the women take more care of the children in addition to the fact that both couples work. I plan to do the same with my future husband because this value is already instilled. Additionally, sex has always been a taboo in my family. The family still has a conservative idea about premarital sex. Great conservatives like the Texas government, my parents do not teach safe sex. The only information they provide is abstinence, no premarital sex. About this subject, a research has been done from the University of Maryland by Dr. Khan from the national Survey of Family growth and Dr. London of the National Center for Health Statistics. This research showed that premarital sex increases the chances of divorce. (" Cohabitation vs. marriage," 2013)Finally, this research on my family generations shows me how important time plays a huge role in

our life. Changes across family generations are more noticeable at the geographical level, family income, technology and views about marriage, cohabitation. The factor that is static will be religion and the values instilled.