

Aaliyah Peralta
Ms. Strassler
Keeping History Alive
22 October 2019

When my parents immigrated from Ecuador to the United States, they left their traditions and culture behind to be modernized by western culture. With that being said, I've never had much of a connection with my own cultures, except for this one instance: when I was around seven years old and my parents bought me my first Pollera. The pollera consisted of a white blouse, multicolored scarf and a beautiful purple skirt with hand embroidered flowers. The pollera is an important part of Ecuadorian culture and tradition. Western culture has led to many cultures and traditions being erased and lost for future generations.

There are only a few places where I can be surrounded by my culture and traditions: in Ecuador and at Ecuadorian parties. I haven't been to Ecuador in a long time, about 5 years now. In Ecuador, many of the women still wear polleras, like my aunts, and have worn them since they were children. I never notice what men wear, but because polleras are so colorful they always catch my eye. My mother told me that she wore a pollera up until she was 19, which is when she immigrated with my father to the United States. After they settled in New York, they would wear t-shirts and pants like any other American. They had the mentality of fitting in, which is why they adapted american traditions like Christmas and Thanksgiving, which are not celebrated in Ecuador. Ecuador uses the American currency of the dollar ever since 2000, and polleras can range from \$200 to a thousand dollars because of the embroidery.

The pollera has been around since around the 1620s and 1630s, according to historian Diego Artega(expreso.ec). "Francisco Pizarro was the Spanish conqueror of Peru... the Spaniards then went on to establish control over the rest of the land of the Incas"(sahistory.org). Other countries were conquered before Ecuador, but they were all interconnected through their Incan roots which is how the pollera got passed down. The women of Cuenca left their robes to wear skirts that would allow them to do their chores with more comfort(expreso.ec). Not only did the polleras serve as an accommodation for work, but it would demonstrate a person's wealth. The more embroidery, the wealthier one was. Nowadays, the embroidery on silk threads and sequin ornaments have been removed(expreso.ec). According to Whitten. E. N (2003), many like myself, many agree that we are forgetting the pollera, not only because of its high prices, but because there are individuals that mock the traditional wear. "For him, a woman in a pollera exemplified someone backward and nonwhite, an unfit parent of preparing her children for urban life"(Whitten, 2003).

Even though my family isn't as traditional as other Ecuadorian people, it is still important to keep something that reminds you of where you came from to not kill a precious culture. My pollera reminds me of women who have a desire to look appealing through their colorful velvet skirts, but that they continue to wear this while they work to prevent a tradition from dying. The polleras old significance was to identify wealth, but it now submerges years of hardship and struggle through a small group of people that are soon to go extinct due to western culture.

Orbegozo, M. (2017). A brief introduction to Peru's Vibrant Polleras. *The Culture Trip*.

Retrieved on 28 October 2019. <https://theculturetrip.com/south-america/peru/articles/a-brief-introduction-to-perus-vibrant-polleras/>

Whitten. E. N. (2003). Millennial Ecuador: Critical Essays Cultural Transformations. *Google*

Books. <https://books.google.com/books?id=j3IpVMgp-LcC&lpg=PA334&ots=jJ0YISD73c&dq=pollera%20ecuador&pg=PA335#v=onepage&q&f=false>

(2012). America, Spanish Conquest. *SAHO*. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/America-Spanish-conquest>

(2015). La Pollera, typical costume of the 'chola cuencana'. *Expreso*. Retrieved on 28 October 2019. <https://www.expreso.ec/actualidad/la-pollera-traje-tipico-de-la-chola-cuencan-bwgr7582669>

(2019). The Pollera "chola cuencana" undergoes changed over time. *El*

Telégrafo. Retrieved on 28 October 2019. <https://www.eltelegrafo.com.ec/noticias/sociedad/6/pollera-chola-cuencana-bayetas-prenda> .