

## **Sample 1**

### **Blog Post**

My item is a CCCP Passport that was given to my mother when she left Latvia to start a new life in New York City in 1991. A small maroon booklet with golden painted Russian letters with communist phrases and a hammer and sickle, this artifact provides a unique perspective of recent history, and is connected to an amazing story. After the Soviet Union collapsed, emigration from places like Latvia increased, however the policies and tension between the USSR and the United States of America led to many conflicts and difficulty integrating into the country as well as investigation into the possibility of immigrants being spies.

In May 1990, the Latvian Supreme Soviet accepted the Declaration of the Restoration of Independence and announced that an interim period was going to take place in order to allow the republic to adjust and prepare for becoming an independent nation (“On This Day - May 3, 1990: Latvia to Declare Independence”, 1990). This, however, presented an opportunity for the people who opposed the declaration. They decided that, if they could push for presidential order in the Baltic States while Latvia was still under Soviet control, a direct order from Moscow could go through. They succeeded after a year of tension, and, in February of 1991, a state of emergency was issued in Latvia. In April, the “Union of Baltic Soldiers” stated that they were going to use arms if it meant the preservation of Soviet power in Latvia. In total, 5 latvians were killed and the capital was occupied by armed troops and tanks, and the radio and television tower was taken offline.

My mother recalls very vivid memories of this time. She remembers seeing drunk 18-20 year olds with guns firing at civilians as though they were “enemies”, laughing and joking. There were bonfires and barricades on every street, and everyone feared that confrontation might occur. In the peak of this tension, armored cars head for the Dome Square in Riga at the Latvian Supreme Soviet Building where a great deal of people prepared to vote for the status of the sovereign state of Latvia. While helicopters approached and tanks moved closer, elected officials decided that they had enough. They ended the interim period and restored the Latvian Republic. 111 voted for this decision, and 13 voted against it (latvianhistory.com). As this was happening, my mother decided to leave. Given the current situation, she had to go through a lot of trouble trying to travel out of the Soviet Union and a newly formed nation. After piles of paperwork were filed, extensive medical examinations, and state approval, she was able to obtain a plane ticket from Moscow to John F. Kennedy International. With only \$80 hidden in her clothes, her passport, a yellow vinyl suitcase, and no knowledge of the English language, she decided to start a new life in the United States of America.

Although she had managed to escape the terrible situation in the USSR and Latvia, her struggle did not end. In the process of emigrating from Eastern Europe, a clerical error was made on her passport. The international language at the time was French, and a few officials mistook her last name, Ose, as “Osse.” For an immigrant from the Soviet Union, customs and immigration officers were extremely harsh due to the conflict between the two powers during the Cold War (Gorokhova, 2015). Because she came from Latvia and she had conflicting information on her soviet passport, she was placed under an intensive investigation as she could have been seen as a spy through the eyes of the country. “It took 14 years of deportation proceedings, switching immigration lawyers 4 times, thousands of dollars, and desperation just to prove that I was the person whose 3 letter last name was accidentally changed by a single letter.”

For all my life, the Latvian side of my heritage has been unknown to me. I never truly understood what it meant to come from the nation with a rich history that no one knew of. After visiting over the

summer, I felt that I finally belonged and more closely understood my identity. In doing this research and investigating the country's history, I learned of the struggles my mother faced as an immigrant and learned about the corruption of the Soviet Union, as well as the courage and resilience of the Latvian people to become an independent nation.

#### Sources

“BBC ON THIS DAY | 3 | 1990: Latvia to Declare Independence.” BBC News, BBC, 3 May 1990, [news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/3/newsid\\_2481000/2481337.stm](https://www.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/3/newsid_2481000/2481337.stm)

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Gorokhova, Elena. “How I Moved to the US from Soviet Russia in 1980: 'Being an Immigrant Means Living with Your Soul Split in Half.'” The Independent, Independent Digital News and Media, 14 Sept. 2015, [www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/how-i-moved-to-the-us-from-soviet-russia-in-1980-being-an-immigrant-means-living-with-your-soul-10500759.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/how-i-moved-to-the-us-from-soviet-russia-in-1980-being-an-immigrant-means-living-with-your-soul-10500759.html).

## **Sample 2**

### **Rainbow Lei**

My “artifact” (I use quotes because it is from relatively recent events) is a rainbow lei -- you know; the cheaply made necklace of flowers strung together popularized by tourists trying to be a part of hawaiian culture. I decided to use it not because of what it is, but because of what it represents which requires me to tell a relatively long story, starting with the fact that my parents are lesbians. In 2006 I was 3, and the George Bush was president and his administration had taken a negative stance against gay families. In particular, the Secretary of Education condemned a popular public tv show for kids (“Postcards from Buster”) because it mentioned, in a story about kids growing up on a maple farm, that they had two moms. My parents, being rightfully upset because of what this meant for our family, decided to get 100 gay families to go to the White House Easter Egg Roll in the hopes that they would get positive media coverage of gay families just being normal families. They chose the Easter Egg Roll because it's always heavily publicized and because the main character on the tv show that was banned was a bunny (get it, bunnies, easter.). The rainbow leis were worn by all the queer families to signify they were queer and make the gay families visible -- but in a fun and positive way. To explain the negative attitudes towards gay families I will explain the themes of my object which are, gay rights leading up to the creation of queer families, and the acceptance of queer families .

First off, the first gay couple to jointly adopt a child was in 1979, and the first sperm bank to serve lesbian couples and single women was created in 1982, so queer families are incredibly new in the US. There are many reasons why it took so long and also some important factors that led to the increase in gay families. The reasons it wasn't able to happen were obvious, it was only made legal to practice sexual conduct between consenting adults of the same sex in all fifty states in 2003. Homosexuality was considered a mental illness until 1973. And parents who had children in a heterosexual relationship and then divorced that partner had to stay closeted and really try to keep their sexuality a secret so they wouldn't lose custody of their kids because it was grounds to deny someone custody if they were gay.

What changed for gay rights was all the civil rights movements, especially the women's and gay civil rights movements, which gave people the opportunity to challenge the idea that homosexuality was a perversion and that gay people couldn't be adequate parents. These social movements reinforced the rights of gay people to be full and equal members of society and that included the right to be a parent and eventually the right to get married. And that's when things started changing for the better for queer families.

Back to my family, and the 2006 white-house easter egg roll, because of everything that happened it was now possible to raise a queer family. But a lot of people (including the bush administration) were still being bigoted idiots, and that meant that there was still a lot of negativity directed at gay families because they weren't "normal" families and homosexuality didn't fit in with their "family values". So after the banning of the show postcards from buster my parents decided that queer families needed positive media coverage to show that they were just normal families hence the whole easter egg and rainbow lei thing. And it worked there was tons of positive media coverage in many prominent newspapers (The New York Times, Huffington Post, The Guardian, The Weekly Standard, being just a few examples) hopefully changing people's minds and helping out the public image of queer families.

\_Powroznik, Karen. "Changing the Family: the Untold History of Gay Parents in the U.S." Changing the Family: the Untold History of Gay Parents in the U.S. | The Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Clayman Institute for Gender Research , 15 Dec. 2015, 12:55 pm , [gender.stanford.edu/news/2015/changing-family-untold-history-gay-parents-us](http://gender.stanford.edu/news/2015/changing-family-untold-history-gay-parents-us).

\_Rudolph, Dana. "LGBT Parenting Timeline." *Washington Blade: Gay News, Politics, LGBT Rights*, 11 Oct. 2012, [www.washingtonblade.com/2012/10/11/milestones-in-lgbt-parenting-history/](http://www.washingtonblade.com/2012/10/11/milestones-in-lgbt-parenting-history/).

\_I also interviewed my parents ( \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ) for a first hand account but I cannot find a citation for that.

### Sample 3

10/16/17

#### Blog Post

In the ancient Hawaiian culture when the kukui nut lei was first made and used was a simpler time. Back then they were more religious and spiritual. For example they used the kukui nut for prayer beads. Back then they were more primitive and weren't part of American society. Back then before the US colonized and made Hawaii a state, they had a monarchy or a king/queen. In these times the kukui nuts were preserved for royalty such as this quote says "The Kukui nut was worn by chiefs and kings known as Ali'i." ([hawaiiikukunutoil.com](http://hawaiiikukunutoil.com)) So Hawaii was a very interesting place with a unique culture before it became a US state, and native culture is still celebrated there today.

In Hawaiian culture the kukui tree and its cuts are important. So important in fact that it became the Hawaii state tree like as this quote says "On **May 1, 1959**, with Joint Resolution No. 3, the 30th Territorial Legislature of Hawai'i approved the kukui, or candlenut tree (*Aleurites moluccana*), as the

official tree of the State of Hawai'i." These trees are very useful to Hawaiian culture and society in so that they provided light and food as long as you cooked it since it is poisonous if eaten raw. Kukui nuts can very easily and "It is also scattered throughout the islands growing wild in state forests and practically anywhere it can drop a seed and get a good root in the ground." Since the Hawaiian weather is mostly the same warm temperature all year round the tree can grow all year round. Hawaii has many farms and this is needed in Hawaii since it is an island and cannot just import everything (Even still a lot of Hawaii's food items are imported so that's why a lot of things are expensive in Hawaii). Hawaii is a very tropical and culturally vast so a lot of tourists come to it every year. A lot of times when tourists come to Hawaii depending on where they are they are given a kukui nut lei and a symbol of gratitude.

In Hawaii the kukui nut played a big role in its traditions and cultures. One example of this in ancient times they thought these nuts were very powerful and had lots of religious meaning since they had oil in them that created fire. They are actually the oldest pray bead in Hawaiian culture. It's a tradition to have either a Kukui nut lei or bracelet at a wedding or just any event. The meaning depends on the event. For example at a wedding people wear them to represent that the light of their souls are going out of body and binding and twisting with each other becoming one as this quote says "The Kukui are given in Kahu Alalani's Ancient Hawaiian Ceremony and the Kukui bracelets are given in an exchange of vows by the couple to be wed. Symbolically, the two lights of two spirits intermingle to become one in a holy union." So in turn the kukui nut lei is very important in Hawaiian culture.

(from <http://www.twinfallsmaui.net/>)

(from [www.netstate.com](http://www.netstate.com))

(from [hawaiianculture.com](http://hawaiianculture.com))

(from <http://hawaiikukuiuntoil.com/>)