

YEAR 22, ISSUE 11

MARCH 12, 2025

ODYSSEY



ORACLE

THE FABRIC OF OUR LIVES

Emily Auerbach, Executive Director/Co-Founder

Kevin Mullen, Director of Adult Education; Photographer

Emily Azad, Program Manager; Photographer

Sarah Lensmire, Assistant Program Manager; Photographer

Katie Arredondo, Odyssey Coordinator; Oracle Assistant

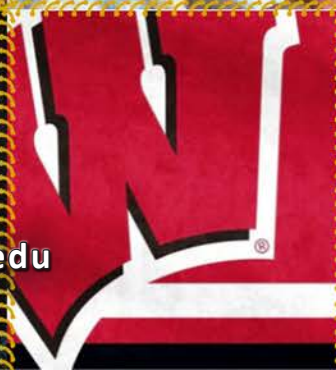
Beth Auerbach, Oracle Designer

Thanks to Megan Wiertzema and Eliza Tool for typing assistance.

emily.auerbach@wisc.edu/608-712-6321

www.odyssey.wisc.edu

With
Thing



THE FABRIC OF OUR LIVES



I have a t-shirt that was my stepdad's. He was my stepdad from when

I was one until he died when I was 17, overdosing on – I believe—some form of fentanyl. The t-shirt is a faded fabric with the Punisher logo in red on the front. It's cracked and weathered from all its spins in the wash. I cling to this shirt because of – still to this day – the confusion I feel about his passing.



He was a quite insane person, throwing his desk down the stairs because I accidentally leaned on it too hard, causing a screw to come out, throwing because he was angry with my mom. Many more scenarios and one might dismiss any glimmer of happy memories and move on, but my biological father was in jail for the majority of my childhood, so Ralph was who I had. He introduced me to some of my – to this day – favorite movies (Scream, The Fast Boys, Monster Squad) and music (Pearl Jam and Nine Inch Nails) and a movie I watched for the first time with him and a movie he loved so much. He put on a decal of the logo on the back window of his pickup truck – it was the Punisher. Though it was painful, Ralph Fanletta was my father, not the man I have taken a name from. **(Brianna Espanol)**

Instead, I made my son a ravel-stitched throw blanket that I hope he keeps to pass along when he is older and told to save the sentiment I had to my childhood blanket because I've thrown out all of his. I wanted to make sure that there was love behind the blanket for this reason. I chose the softest material and spent over \$100 to make it when I could have just bought a blanket that was made already. **(Daija Pigram)**



I was gifted a blanket as a baby, a pink knitted throw blanket with a Bible script stitched in white tee border. I see myself as a kid in pictures carrying it around indoors and outside through dirt. It lasted with me for 20 years. I gifted it to

my niece mainly because of its color since I don't have my own daughter to pass it on to.





I had my first child, Alanna, when I was 20 years old. I had my daughter at a time when I wasn't necessarily ready to be a parent or prepared. I had recently come out of a group home in Milwaukee, WI, days before I turned 19. Having only been home a few short months, I found out I was pregnant. I was on probation. I worked a third shift job at Walmart and had an unhealthy relationship with the father. Not the best circumstances to welcome a new child into the world.

Although my mother wasn't exactly excited with my life choices, she took me to Jo-Ann fabric store and asked me to pick out what I wanted for a baby blanket. I wasn't aware of the gender of my child yet, so I chose a soft print with brown teddy bears all over and a light beige ribbon for the edges. My mother hand-sewed it and added a personalized label as well. This was my daughter's first baby blanket. I ended up saving hers along with the other three baby blankets from my mother. These were some of the last things my mother was able to sew due to arthritis.

My daughter had her first daughter, Aaliyah Rose, three years ago, and I passed the blanket to my daughter, who wrapped little Aaliyah in it, a blanket sewn together with love and used through her mother's childhood. This blanket has so many memories attached to it, now continuing through another little girl. **(Vanessa Martinez)**



I really love my UW blanket that we were gifted for the holidays. I've always loved fuzzy soft blankets since I was a kid. I sometimes still cuddle up with my daughters' blankets lol. This blanket brings me peace and comfort for so many different things. I feel secure when I lie with this blanket; the peace that hovers over my body and mind is such a good feeling. After a long day of work and school or just dealing with life, knowing this blanket is waiting for me on my bed makes the night a lot better. **(Tiana Richmond-Lee)**





There are too many fabrics for me to choose from. Seeing as I have to choose, I would have to

say I love my daughter's first dress she wore as an infant. It was so adorable. Too many times, I looked back at her dress hanging in the closet in awe that I had a baby girl. I still remember dressing her up that day and looking at her little toes and little fingers. God gave me one of my biggest blessings. From that day on, I vowed to keep her dresses, and this fabric is just one of many. **(Tiffany Brenston)**



was able to marry my best friend will always be one of the top two most special days in my life. When I think about my wedding dress, I think of everyone clapping and yelling "AWHHHHHHHH SO BEAUTIFUL" when I came down the stairs entering the ceremony. When my husband saw me, I remember him just mouthing the words "wow... wow so beautiful," and I remember there being so much laughter and happy tears, not to mention the Jumping reception that we had. We had so many friends and family that attended from different states and cities, and there were so many smiles floating around the place. So many people were dancing



A piece of fabric that means a lot to me would be my wedding dress. I

say my wedding dress because I searched for dresses for weeks before

I decided on the one I picked. My dress was simplistic and timeless to me. The wedding dress is a strapless off the shoulder dress that has lace on the top and a jeweled belt that sparkled around my waist. The bottom portion of the dress was a light tulle fabric that was flowy and fluffy, and the back was like a corset that has to be pulled to tighten.

My dress is special to me because I have never felt as beautiful as I did the day that I got married. I felt like a princess! The fact that I

and wishing us the best. It truly was a day I'll never forget. **(Ladella Wilson)**





My parents have always been well-known socialites and they dressed the part. I grew up watching them get ready for events. I felt like I was watching royalty get ready for a ball. They would wrap their bodies in the finest furs and jewels. After getting dressed, they would spray the most tantalizing fragrances.

Every time I walked into their closet to grab a certain jacket, I would brush my hands against the jackets. The soft texture was forever engraved in my fingertips. I would bury my face in my parents' furs and inhale for what seems like forever. The scent of their furs was permanently etched in my brain.

Now, when I'm in a fur store, I find myself rubbing my hands against the fur and smelling them, looking for my parents' scent. I like to watch the colors change because when you rub a fur a certain way, depending on what kind of animal, the color will shift. I like to touch every piece of soft hair watching the colors change from brown to red, even turning black in certain spots. If I ever need to feel at home or find myself missing my parents, I find comfort in the feeling and scent of a beautiful fur. It's more comforting than a warm fire with a weighted blanket. Fur is my place of peace. **(Adrienne Farrow)**



The fabric I'm going to be talking about is my daughter's little white dress from when she was nine months old. The dress is crinkled, the color reminds me of a lightly toasted marshmallow, and it has a gold heart right on top of the dress.

My mother made it a tradition to keep some of our clothes, pieces of hair, and even our baby teeth, so I'm trying to keep it going. Even with my OCD and wanting to organize and get rid of things every other month, I've still been able to keep some of my kids' clothes for this long. My daughter was able to wear my newborn winter coat and that was truly amazing to me, so I'm trying to do the same.

(Mariya Lucas)





Have you ever had a piece of clothing so near and dear to your heart?

A piece of clothing so important to you, you can't help but to shed a tear or smile from ear to ear when you glance at it, almost like it makes you warm and fuzzy or cold and sad inside? Then you put it on and for some reason everything comes rolling in and your mind gets buried with a thousand thoughts, good and bad?



peace and joy is truly amazing. Sitting with my kids and explaining the piece of fabric is also something that I enjoy doing, and I am truly thankful for these moments. Thank you, Mom, for everything and especially for your Moo Moo. We love and miss you, lady. **(Corrie Thomas)**



This fabric I chose is my daughter's first blanket, gifted to us by my grandma. It reminds me of becoming a mother. Ja'siyah was my first child, and feeling it and seeing it still around makes me full of emotions. It's a very soft powder pink with her name stitched in it at the bottom

Well, I have a piece of clothing kind of like that. I've had it for sixteen years now and I wouldn't know what to do if I lost it and or something happened to it. Long black and cotton, a little beat but special, there are small ruffles on the sleeves, not a big ruffle and not the ones where it's so tight you feel your arms are suffocating. I hate that this sleeve has a nice little lace ruffle-like detail and on the front medium bubble matte shiny pink letters that say WILD THING.

corner with light and dark pink string.

When we first got it, it was very soft and fluffy. It's been 10.5 years now, and the material isn't as soft and bright anymore. It also makes me feel responsible because I've kept a hold of it all this time, and it shows how much it means to me. Every kid of mine was given an engraved blanket by my grandma, so it's become a tradition. I still have everyone's blanket and make sure they still sleep with them. **(Janessa Weichmann)**

She would prance around in this Moo Moo all day if she could. I remember she was a cigarette smoker, and I decided to creep up behind her and scare her. I scared her so bad she dropped her cigarette and it burned a hole straight through her favorite Moo Moo. Boy oh boy, you bet I was in trouble. Run, Coco, why would you do that? Hide, and maybe she'll think it was Torrie or Tarin. Don't think about it, don't look at her, that's all I could think about as I hopped and ran to the back of my bunk bed under the covers trying not to snicker as she ran towards me.

This Moo Moo is important to me not only because it was my mom's but because it is a piece of fabric I will cherish for the rest of my life. Being able to have a piece of fabric that can bring me so much





This fabric of my life belonged to my beloved dog Mimi. She is long gone and I pray she is happy. She is

either having a beautiful life in Torrieon, Mexico, or in God's grace. Mimi was my yellow, orange, amber brown, and blond nine-year-old Pomeranian mix. Her eyes looked like the center of a Shiva eye seashell. Her eyes seemed to carry songs of the desert since her eyes had a bluish circle around the iris to mimic our Milky Way appearance across the Arizona skies. She was a petite dog with a white tail as plush as a dandelion's mane. Her coat from above looked like the sand dunes in the Sahara Desert. Each layer of her coat flowed like a beautiful brown wave down a waterfall. I remember her every day and have shed countless prayers for her safety and happiness.

This collar, a few pictures, and her memory are all that is left of her in my life. The tan pigment infused with gray fuzz marks from the lack of care it's gotten, the red vertical lines fading away, like a rose's pigment when death comes to whisper its sweetly bitter song to it, and the clear white horizontal line cutting through the fabric are reminders to hold on tight to the precious moments and unconditional love our fellow fur friends show us. This collar represents the



one and only most tender, trustworthy, and loyal soul that life graced me with. It's a reminder that once something or someone is gone, no matter how hard you cry, or pray, or repent time will remain relentless and unforgiving.

Life will either be given to you or taken, so I have to remember to remain graceful and grateful.

(Angelica Alvarez Valenciano)



A fabric I have that means a lot to me is a hat that my brother left at my house. He's gone now, and I know I gave him a hat before he passed away because he loved his hats. Especially when he didn't have his hair done, he loved his hats. When my other brother passed away before him, he would get his hat customized.

(Quanna Caffey)





A piece of fabric that brings me joy is my son's (my first child's) favorite baby blanket from when he was a newborn. I knew it was his favorite because he didn't let it go until he started daycare around two years old. My son was born

at 36 weeks only weighing four pounds, so this particular blanket was wrapped around him very well keeping him snuggled and warm. I used this blanket to swaddle him a lot because it wasn't too big or bulky. Afterwards, I would always call him my burrito baby. It was fuzzy and navy blue, which always made me think of a cold, winter starry night, although it says "adventure begins" all over it.

This particular blanket makes me think of the transition I made into motherhood, which has been the biggest transition of my life thus far. This actually makes the saying "adventure begins" fit perfectly. This blanket always smelled like a fresh newborn or the Johnson and Johnson baby lotion, which always made me feel nostalgic. I plan to keep this blanket as long as possible so that I can remind my son when he is an adult of the wonderful



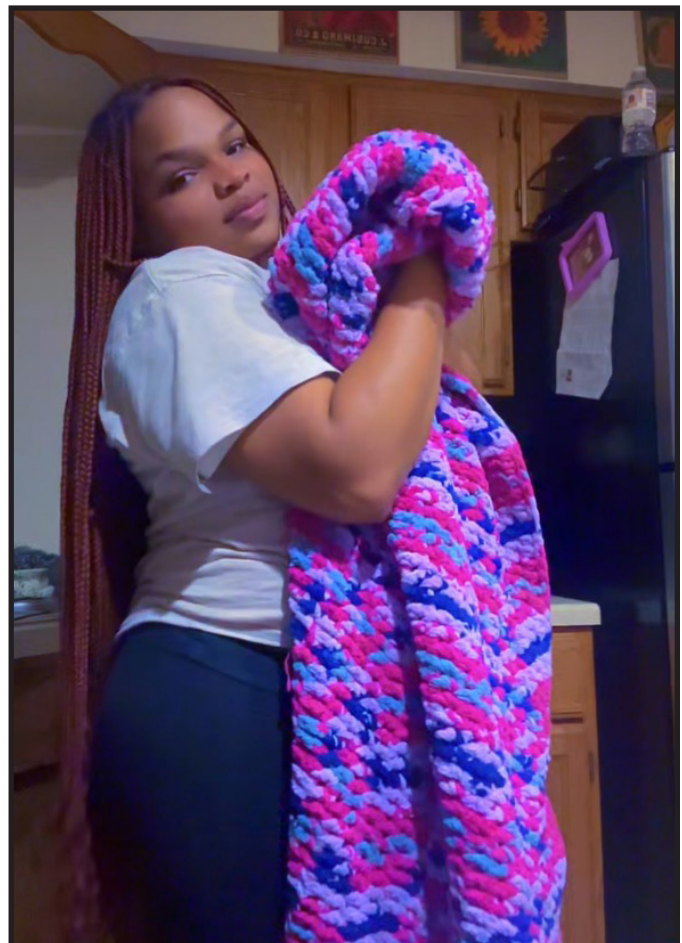
memories that it brings—taking my tiny baby boy home from the NICU right before Christmas in 2018. **(Ashli Smith)**



My favorite article of clothing/fabric is a blanket. My grandma asked me to choose which yarn to use. The options were a skinny black, white, and gray. One was green and purple. The other was fuzzy, thick, pink and purple. That's

the one I chose. She made it for me, and it's so imperfect and perfect at the same time. It's not a perfect square or rectangle. It's kind of a trapezoid. I love to put it in the dryer and wrap up in it. I like to do it in her bed because it smells like her. She made blankets for a lot of the family. She also made me a scarf and slippers.

I sleep with the blanket every day. I don't let it touch the floor, and I hate to see other people using it. I'm so defensive about it. **(Lailaini Reed)**





When I stop and think about a meaningful fabric, there seems to be one item that keeps coming to mind-

and the crazy part is it doesn't even belong to me. The item that i keep thinking of is this blanket that my grandma and cousin Kaylin sewed together from Kaylin's old soccer jerseys, from elementary school through college. From the blistering hot summer tryouts to the frigid "Ice Age" tournaments held annually in late November, there is no short supply in memories when looking at this blanket.



But I think the real reason I have this appreciation for a blanket that isn't even mine is because on a deep level it symbolized who my grandma was as a person. Instead of buying you some fancy new blanket at the store, she was going to roll up her sleeves and bust out her sewing materials. Instead of spending time with you in front of a TV, she was going to think of something you would remember forever. She had this true knack for taking the seemingly miniscule tasks and weaving them into significance into the fabric of our lives. Being the youngest of 25 grandchildren, I wasn't able to truly notice and appreciate this until I got a bit older, but now when i look back I can't help but see how she did it in almost every aspect of her life. We love and miss you, Grandma!! <3 **(Dillon Dahlk)**



I want to cloak myself today. I throw my serape over my head, and the gentle fabric moving across my face reminds me that the hand-woven fibers came from Ecuador to absorb my essence. I wear extra layers and carry my serape

when I meet my loved ones for an adventure in the cold. My spirit ignites to offer warmth at the

spark of a shiver. The serape is a symbol; its colors carry a message, and the purpose is rooted by our ancestors. Living in a world where indigenous history is being erased, wearing my serape is an act of rewriting our story. **(Mickey Mestiza)**





One day when I was little my mom took me to the thrift store. I swear it felt

like walking into the most retro antique shop ever. I was wandering around the clothes section not really looking for anything when I spotted the cutest jacket I'd ever seen. It was my style: grey with zippers and complex features. The only problem was it was too big. Regardless of that, I grabbed it off the rack and begged my mom for it. It took some convincing, but she bought me the too big jacket I loved so much. I just remember thinking I'll be able to fit in it one day. Now today I still have that jacket, and I fit in it perfectly. I still love it the same way I did that day. **(Aaniyah Jefferson)**



stubborn, but he's the funniest person I know.

Since I always took the bunny everywhere, the bunny is very worn out now; it's still soft and hasn't lost any stuffing. I think one of the eyeballs is missing, though. The pink bow is from our first dog after my favorite boy, Kane. But her name was Sophie and she passed away very young unfortunately, so I stole her pink hair clip from my sister and hooked it on the tie of the bunny because it holds so many memories for me.

I love my grandpa so much, and I hope he is doing so well. I'm still trying to convince him to move to Wisconsin, but he says he wants

to pass away where he's always been at, Montana. **(Kyianna Baker)**



My favorite fabric I still own is my bunny that my grandpa got me when I was younger. I was about five years old. I was in kindergarten at the time and I needed to have two eye surgeries. Obviously, my mom told my family members, and

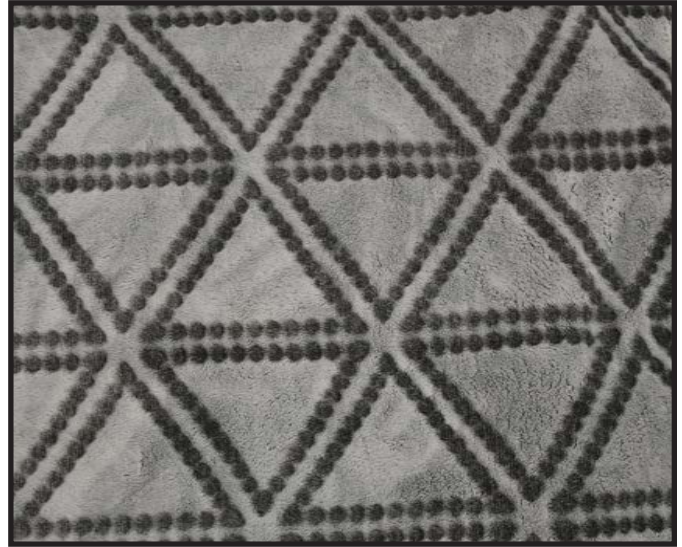
my grandpa Kirk sent me this bunny. I carried this bunny with me everywhere I went from then on.

As far as I know and from what he tells me, I am my grandpa's favorite grandchild—he fought in Vietnam and doesn't like being told or helped by a woman, but I'm the only person he says "I love you" to. Right now, my grandpa is getting really old and losing his memory slowly, so the fact that he somewhat still knows who I am is so fantastic. He lives in Helena, Montana, and I've only met him one time during my adult life. He always knows how to make me smile when we talk on the phone; he cracks old people jokes. He is very old and

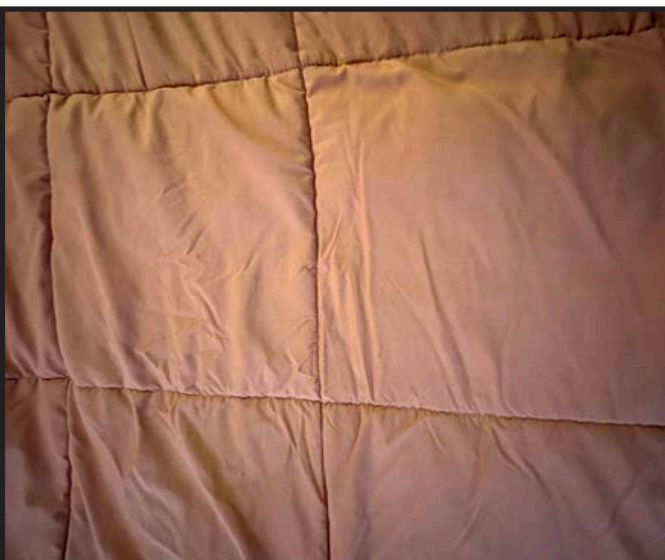




My favorite fabric is a fuzzy blanket that my Granny gave me. It is light grey with dark grey diamonds on one side, soft and warm against my skin. This blanket has been with me through so much—it has kept me warm on the coldest of drives, wrapped around me like a shield against the chill. It comforted me when I was sick in bed, too weak to get up, offering a warmth that felt like a hug from Granny herself. At night, it has been my safe place, something familiar to hold onto when the world felt overwhelming. In my hardest moments—when my anxiety was so strong I could barely think—this blanket grounded me. Its softness, its warmth, and the love it represents have made it more than just a blanket. It is comfort, security, and a reminder that I am never alone. **(Abby Wilson)**



I can't sleep without my blanket. If I fall asleep without my blanket, I toss and turn and start to feel really cold. I hate being cold. I believe my blanket gives me a strong, warm sense of security. For example, my blanket that gives me the most comfort now is a king-size burnt orange color polyester material classic style thin comforter brought it as a seven-piece set. It's very lightweight and breathable so I don't get too hot. It's very soft on my skin and keeps me warm. That is why this is my favorite blanket. **(Val Mosley)**



My grandmother used to make quilts, and she made everyone in the family one of their own. What's so special about our quilts is that she made them from a lot of love. Every stitch meant something from her past--pain and pleasure, childhood, passing on the stories she used to tell us. The cocoa was amazing, and just the love that was in my grannie's house. She used to yell at me about dragging my quilt on the floor and tell me to wash it with care.

There's a picture of one of her old quilts – kind of discolored but still in good condition. I will always cherish my grandmother's quilt and the loving memories. **(Sable Wright)**

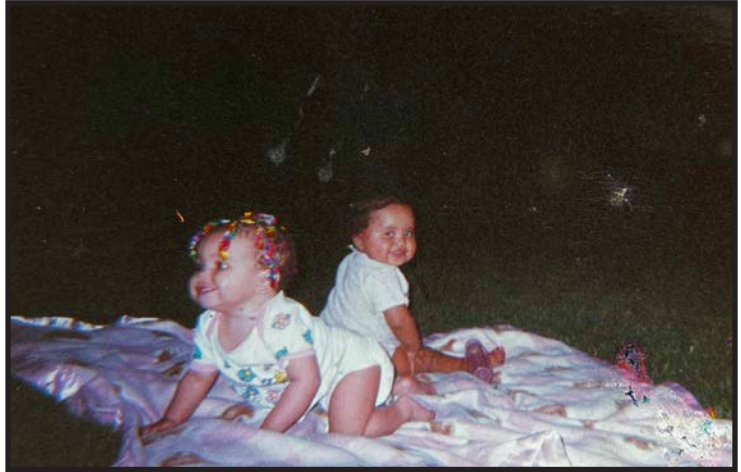


A blanket that cannot be purchased in stores. Made with love by the hands of my grandma in 1999.

A two-toned pink checkered design with umber brown toned embroidered teddy bears accompanied by a baby pink satin trim.

A blanket that holds more stories than a library, yet has no words on it. A blanket I still refer to as my blanké (or blankey if you will) though I'm 25.

The picture attached is of me and my beautiful cousin Khariyhana at a family gathering on my blanké. **(Alexus McClain)**



A scarf that was gifted to me for Christmas by women in the Shawl Ministry is considered a deep memento. Now this isn't just any scarf, no: this three shades of blue cotton knitted scarf has the wonderful feel of silk. It lays

warmly around my brown neck and adds an exquisite style of elegance when worn. Since it was made with love for the UW Odyssey students, it will always be synonymous with the Odyssey Project of Class 2025. It's my go-to scarf, surprisingly, more than my favorite Chicago Bears scarf.

Interestingly enough, this scarf is woven with my favorite color – blue—, so of course it blends well with most of my outfits. Unaware that knitted scarves could work so well against the winter elements, I was shocked and very pleased that my blue cotton silk-like scarf does just that, and I am grateful for it. **(Tim Comer)**



The fabric that I picked comes from no other than the Odyssey Program. On one of the coldest days in December, we received Christmas baskets and we had a choice to pick out a scarf [knitted by women in the Shawl Ministry as gifts for our class]. I grabbed a gold, grayish knitted scarf. I wrapped the scarf around my neck. Instantly, my ears, shoulders, and neck felt a warmth that I didn't receive earlier. When I left my place, the scarf ensured me that my day just got better. The fabric was soft and well knitted, plus much appreciated. **(Jamal Jackson)**





I no longer have any fabrics that I can say that I find memorable, but the first blanket of my oldest daughter, Destiny, was everything to me. I crocheted this blanket with

the purest and deepest love in my heart for my baby girl. I picked out the most vibrant yarn to create this blanket just for my baby with the softest pastel blue and pink. The pink was gentle like the first blush of a spring bloom, and the blue was a shade of a quiet sky before dawn and stitched with tiny patterns of stars. The fabric felt so crisp, yet soft and bumpy with the smell of Dreft baby laundry detergent carrying the faintest baby power scent. The weight of it is light but significant, like the gentle pressure of a mother's embrace. This blanket held a piece of innocence, a relic of unconditional love. I made sure this fabric told the story of a mother's love, a child's innocence, and the beauty of that relationship. **(Gloria Knight)**



It was perfectly folded in the back of his closet, not used. When I pulled it out, I thought it would smell like wood or bugs because the house is made out of wood and I would never be surprised to see a bug in spots like that in the house, but it smelled brand new like it had never been touched, worn, or even washed. Due to my grandma having stage 5 Alzheimer's disease, she can't remember where the blanket came from. There are so many nice details and threading throughout the blanket in shapes like circles and triangles. It reminds me of something from back in the day that I've seen before, but I can't quite say where I've seen it. The theme reminds me of a McDonald's theme. **(Crystal Lee)**



On January 27th, 2025, my grandfather Don passed away. He's been a part of my life for 15 years, maybe a little longer, and I couldn't count on one or even 10

hands how much he's done for us. In this process we are going through his things because the house will be getting knocked down and sold. During this, we were able to keep all of his memories, and I found the perfect quilt that was made well before I was born. I'm not sure by who or where it came from, but it's beautiful. It looks like multiple different clothing pieces with different colors and patterns throughout. It is huge and heavy and has the perfect square shape with no rips or stains.



"Aye bro, we outside. You ready?"
"Yeah man, let me grab my things and I'll be right out!"

This is how a night of beer guzzling, rhythmic pushing and shoving, and financial choices budgeted over a folding table of overpriced band merchandise. "Alright, P, K, W check! (phone, keys, wallet) "Dang! Gotta grab the earplugs, because these dudes are heavy!" Throwing my dingy old battle vest over my shoulders, shoving my concert provisions in the breast pocket, I headed out the front door.

"Hey man, nice vest!" "Oh, that vest is cool. Did you make it yourself?" "Duuuude! that Melvins patch is old as hell. I remember that show; were you there?" These are just a few compliments garnered by my battle vest as we wait in line. What is a "Battle Vest"? I believe the term was coined during and after the events of the Vietnam War, where soldiers would cut their sleeves off their uniforms to combat the tropical climate. Urban Dictionary will tell you that it is a sleeveless jacket or denim vest adorned with patches representing their interest or a particular sub-culture.

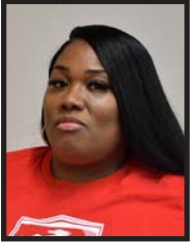


What makes my vest so special to me? Where do I start? I remember at a thrift store pulling a denim shirt that was once a piece of a Canadian Tuxedo. I liked this shirt because it was slightly longer than normal, resembling the Yanki of my favorite manga Great Teacher Onizuka. After hacking off the sleeves and fraying the edges of my cut, to really give it that distressed look, the next step was picking a back patch. I sacrificed the decal from my favorite band shirt. I sewed a cracked and faded Dir En Grey shirt I got from their first show on their first US tour several years ago. Deciding to dedicate half of my vest to metal bands and the other half to punk music, I already had an assortment of patches I've gathered over time from going to shows and surviving the mosh pits. I've even gone as far as to make patches for bands. I only had enough money for the ticket, beer, and fresh pack of smokes. Some I've collected from raiding the 5 for 5 buckets at Waterloo Records, my favorite record store back home. After ironing, stitching, and pinning my patches down, I realized I have a lot of negative space on my vest. I then had the brilliant idea to harvest the metal spikes and studs from old Hot Topic belts that no longer served their purpose, but as an alt black kid, I just couldn't throw them away. Laying all my studs and spikes by hand was the final step in assembling my Battle Vest.

It's been 14 years since I've been wearing it to shows. Now it stinks--a stench that only I can appreciate. I'll never wash it. I've dumped a box of baking soda in a trash bag, tossed my vest in, and tumbled it around as if it were a heavy metal

chinchilla. I've also emptied a few cans of scented Febreze all over it to mask the funk of stuffing raw nugs in my pockets from back-alley bud dealers. I don't want to wash away the memories. Stained with beer and blood from bar fights when I was a scrappy 20 something year old. There are holes from cigarette burns and a musk that comes from chain smoking with other fans as we discuss just how sick that last set was. Streaked from wiping sweat from my face and bile from my mouth. Reminding me of the times where generous bros with bottomless bar tabs called my bluff to drink them under the table. There are puke stains from others who couldn't make it out of the pit before blowing their nine-dollar craft beer all over the venue. The spikes and studs have started to rust from collected sweat from packed venues. Rusted from standing in the rain waiting for autographs. The older patches are starting to fade from eons of exposure, while the newer ones are bright and vibrant.

I love my crusty old vest. I've been arrested wearing it. I wore it when Cecilia was born. When she was younger, she would put it on and pretend to be on stage rocking out. Now she's a pre-teen and it's now known as Dad's stinky show vest. Little does she know; I plan on being buried in that vest. Until that time comes, I will continue to wear it to every show. Collecting dirt as I travel the country to see my favorite bands. Rearranging patches to make room for new ones. I pray I never have to retire it, but I am excited to start a new one. Statistically I have 42 more years for that. (Dan Thomas)



One clothing item I still have is my mother's silk scarf. It's blue with orange and white patterns. The scarf is a very beautiful piece of my mother's fashion sense and style. From her days in the beauty industry, modeling and traveling, my mother loved to dress and often in high fashion designer brands. (As my grandmother would say, "she dressed to kill.") My mother wore all the trending designers she could. But she also had her own sense of fashion and would always put pieces together that would look like she was getting ready to walk in a runway show or getting ready to do a photo shoot or something, when she was only going to run errands or to do something frivolous.

On days when she would dress down or was having "a bad hair day," she would wear a silk scarf on her head. Most times she would wear the scarf with jeans, a tee, heels, and a designer bag or other designer accessories. "Smelling like a million bucks," she always looked so pretty to me with her silk scarf on. It was something to me about the way she wore it on her head. I often imitate my mother's style, and when I'm going out somewhere and I wear my silk scarf on my head, I always think of my mother and how she looks when she wears hers. For me, it's a fashion statement piece and a direct memory of my mother and her style. **(Gela Docks)**



The head scarf that I have may look like a regular dingy head scarf, but there is a lot of sentimental value in that hair scarf. My favorite cousin out of all the multiple hundred that I have was brutally murdered in 2009 by her coward of a boyfriend. When she was killed, she had my scarf that I told her not to take out of the house right there with her on her head. I have not washed this scarf since. I miss my cousin every day and the bond that we shared. I haven't found anyone else to fill that void. I feel this is the closest thing that I will ever have to her in life again. **(Eleanor Ceaser)**



"Fataro" is a traditional 'Mandinka' wear that's usually earned. The prestige that comes with earning this fabric in the Mandinka cultural settings is huge. Having to be in possession of it places one in a position of respect and adoration amongst peers.

I came to earn mine after my traditional initiation into manhood. This signifies that one had gone through the test of bravery, honesty, compassion, and tolerance amongst the Mandinkas.

Until then, whenever I look at it, I become so emotional because of the thoughts that'll come to play in my head that amongst my people, I'm held in high regard; that is a feeling I can't put in words, for it is emotionally overrunning. **(Alfusainey Manjang)**

