

Laney Cowan
Artist Statement

In my early life, I grew up in a traditional, white family with no previous exposure to adoption. I grew up with an older brother, my only sibling. I always longed for a sister to share my life with and have someone who could understand me. The term "family" was engraved into my mind as being blood relatives and biological siblings. However, on April 14, 2012, our family grew with the adoption of my 12-year-old sister from Uganda, Esther. Esther not only became my sister that day, but my best friend. My definition of "family" was expanded and was no longer limited to blood-relatives.

Esther and I are so close in age, therefore, it allowed our bond together to grow stronger because we have gone through every season of life with each other. We were in every class together, played every sport together, shared clothes, and told each other our greatest fears and dreams. We had tough times, arguments, and miscommunications like all sisters do. However, each tough phase of life only brought us closer together. I have seen Esther's vibrant personality and joy spread through every one of my family members. Her story has brought my family closer to each other and strengthened our faith.

Esther and I have had many hard conversations about her life in Africa as well as in America, and it gave me insight into the world through her eyes. She has explained to me her internal struggles about leaving Uganda and knowing that the family she has known would not be joining her, but also the excitement she felt about the opportunities in coming to America. Esther said, *"Life is not so easy over there, but I'm grateful I got to experience life in Uganda because it shows me how blessed I have been. Being away from my family has made me a stronger person. I also love the family that I have now and how incredibly close we all are to each other. I have seen God's hand work through my life and my family's. It is such a blessing to have had these opportunities."* In hearing about her struggles, I produced a series of paintings that I hope to represent all that Esther has taught me through my life. Her past experiences and struggles have taught us to love harder, appreciate more, and realize that our paths crossing was one of the greatest blessings my family could've received. I truly appreciate learning about Uganda, the language, the culture and the traditions through my sister. I now have a new perspective of the world, a desire to learn more about others, and to not take anything for granted. Esther has transformed my worldview, and in doing so, she has truly changed my life which is represented in my capstone exhibit.