

# Story of "Eveiopia"



It took place over about 18 months, and certainly was not high on my priority list of things to worry about. One day I began thinking about it while driving, which is probably the only

time I have to sit still for very long uninterrupted. Here is the story of Eveiopia ...

When my daughter was three I bought her a doll from Ethiopia. My daughter named her Eveiopia, which we all thought was a cute and clever name. She is a nice looking ragdoll who used to wear traditional Ethiopian clothing. What was strange was that my daughter would take off Eveiopia's dress and put it on her other dolls.

Once in a while I would sneak into my daughter's room while she was at school and put Eveiopia's dress back on. However, within a few days Eveiopia was out of her dress. Initially, I was upset that my daughter did not seem to play with the doll. It seemed that she was just cast aside. I hoped she would warm to the doll, yet she didn't seem to.

I finally asked her why she didn't like the doll. She said she loved the doll and she was fun to snuggle. I began watching what was going on more closely. It turns out that she did, in fact, like to snuggle Eveiopia. She considers ragdolls more like stuffed animals: something to snuggle. On the other hand, the Ethiopian traditional dress that came with the doll was highly coveted and she was having all of her other dolls take turns wearing it. I asked her about this situation, and she said she loved the Ethiopian traditional dress because it was so pretty and

from Ethiopia just like she is. Her favorite doll, an 18" American Girl-style doll, was the one she put it on most frequently.

I had felt like my daughter should play with the doll as I bought it, but she was only playing with the dress. It had appeared she was rejecting the doll, so I was concerned she wasn't embracing Ethiopian culture. However, I had it all wrong and my feelings about all of this were very backward. **She identified with Ethiopian culture so strongly that she wanted all of her dolls to wear the dress!** This tapped in to a much larger issue.

I have been a big advocate of embracing my daughters Ethiopian-American identity. She is not just Ethiopian and not just American: She is both. I have learned to cook Ethiopian and often integrate American ingredients into traditional Ethiopian food, or use Ethiopian ingredients in my American cooking. It is a fusion; a marriage of cultures. So, she wanted to put that beautiful Ethiopian traditional dress on all of her dolls; she was very much embracing Ethiopian culture.

As I said, my moment of inspiration happened while driving. I had this huge brainstorm: I should create traditional Ethiopian outfits for the dolls that our children already own and love to play with. I contacted AbshiroKids to make it happen. I have spoken with the owner on numerous occasions and knew that she shares my passion for integrating Ethiopian culture into our American lifestyle. I have purchased all of their Ethiopian educational resources for kids and found them to be very useful, as well as detail oriented. I knew that they would be best suited to carry out my vision.

Kim Davis