

# Michelle Stencil

HERE ARE 5 ARTIFACTS OF MY CULTURE:



## 1.) ETHNIC IDENTITY

I am a Caucasian American with my family immigrating from Italy, Germany, and England. However, since my immediate family was all born in the States, we more so identify with an American identity.

## 2.) FAMILY

The family that I spend the most time with includes my grandparents from my mom's side, my parents, and my twin sister, Melissa. We see each other at least every other week, sometimes more. We make decisions with each others' advice/approval, and help each other in our individual endeavors.



## 3.) RELIGION

I grew up in a Christian home, but didn't personally pursue my faith until my freshman year of college. In college, I joined the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, which helps college students pursue their faith with a social justice emphasis.

## 4.) EDUCATION

Coming from an upper middle class SES where both parents earned graduate level degrees, education was highly valued and prioritized. My parents and grandparents are/were elementary school teachers and instilled a strong work ethic in my sister and me. They created educational enrichment opportunities at home to supplement school, and supported us through a college preparatory high school and private university, USD.



## 5.) META-COGNITION ABOUT MY CULTURE

In my Junior year of college, I began to engage in conversations about White Privilege and social injustices. I took a class called, "The School to Prison Pipeline," and went on a 6 week Urban immersion program through the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, called, Los Angeles Urban Project (LAUP). LAUP exposed me to the privileges I am granted as a white citizen and challenged me to use my privilege for the benefit of others to create the equitable society Jesus envisioned.

### Analysis

Coming from a family that embraced American culture and patriotism, I was not aware of the privileges that assisted me in the opportunities I was afforded and in my educational attainment. However, being from a Christian family, I was also encouraged to pursue Jesus' life as a model for my own. In college, I learned that Jesus' life centered around making the last first, which includes breaking down barriers posed by race and SES. Jesus calls his followers to use their privilege to bring those on the margins of society in. With this understanding, I joined Teach for America (TFA) after college, which seeks to close the achievement gap and create equitable educational experiences for all students. I know that my students come from different ethnicities, SES levels and perspectives towards education. It is my job to help level the playing field and bring the marginalized in to a culture of academic achievement, utilizing their unique backgrounds, so that they are all on the path towards higher education.

Acknowledging my culture, biases and privileges is essential to this goal.