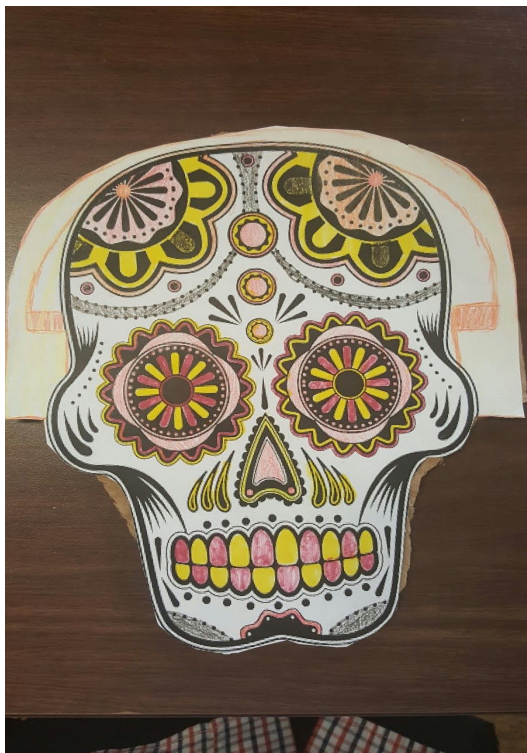


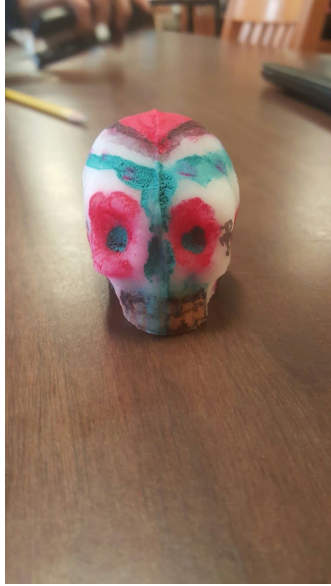
The person who passed away was Audréy Joy Thomas, a loved sister, mother, caretaker, provider, and most of all friend. To me, she was my grandmother and doubled as my babysitter until her death in 2005. She's responsible for my demeanor and many of my hobbies and morals because she was the person I saw outside of my immediate family for the first five years of my life. She taught me important things like respect and patience, and lifesaving things like looking both ways before you cross the street (one of her gifts to me was a gameboy, and I was little so I'd often walk places without paying attention. Now I'm a master at walking without looking.) Outside of the melancholy, empty vibe her death emitted I also gained maturity. Since I was 5 at the time I didn't understand what death meant or why it made people sad. All I knew about death until the day after her funeral was what I saw: her body laying there lifeless. Honestly, I just thought she was sleeping. But when I realized that she wasn't coming back I completely lost it. Over the course of the next three days I was just crying and sleeping, I didn't do much else. As I was starting to accept her death and move on I started making a lot of pieces of art centered around my grandma: poems, stories, even drawings, despite the fact I refuse to draw people. Her death made me realize that things are temporary, and you should celebrate and appreciate them while they lasted. Of course I decided to do this through art, but move on to other topics as well. My artistic expression is something that still resides with me today and it's probably because of her unfortunate death.

I decorated my sugar skull in remembrance of my grandmother because she brought out a lot of my greatest attributes in her life and death. So it's only right that I acknowledge her for that. Since my grandmother meant so much to me and other members of our family I decorated my skull with lots of symbolism. I'll start with the front of the skull and move to the back, so first off is the teeth. I tried to paint them orange because my grandmother had a huge sweettooth. She loved cake, pie, and cookies: my mother likes to joke that the reason for this is because the meal food would last longer if everyone was full from snacking. The color around her eyes are blue with pink for the pupils because she was always sincere and caring, people like to say her eyes always showed it. The top of her head has a heart as a symbol for love because she always had the best interests of her loved ones on her mind. There's a blue headband around the skull's head which is supposed to symbolize her life's events, each pink dot is supposed to be symbolic of an important event in her life, I would have drawn actual images but I didn't have enough space or calm to not start crying as a remembered past events. Underneath the band are the Cherokee symbols for children, symbolizing her ancestry as a Native American and her children/grandchildren whose lives she was always a part of. The cheeks are red with black inside them because that's how she died: she had some type of disease in her facial skin that appeared as a dark patch on her right cheek. The doctors thought this was cancer but they weren't sure in all honesty, they treated her for cancer and the medicine made her even sicker, eventually killing her. She loved dancing and music so I planned on making origami headphones for the skull to wear but I couldn't do them justice so I just added them to my drawn skull. She was very pleasant and had a great sense of humor so I painted a small Comedy Central logo in

the center of the back of the skull. Moving on to the very back we have the Cherokee symbol for mother to show the years of love and hard work she had behind her and how she mentored our entire family to where we are now with her last years and words. I colored in my drawn skull with the intention of having a mismatch pattern because of how she made many mistakes in her time, but she wouldn't let them ruin the beauty of life. No matter how fatal the error, she always made it work out for the best.

Día de los Muertos has showed me that death should not be something to reject. Rather it's a natural process that reminds us of how temporary everything is, including life. But instead of seeing death as the end we should strive to make the best of the time we have and remember what we lost and how that affected us. It's not fair that when someone dies we act as if they never existed, they become figuratively dead to us as if they never mattered. We need to embrace the celebration of death as a reminder of our life's works. If we try to move on before we acknowledge we create a situation where we gained nothing from the death of our loved ones, which shouldn't be the case.







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Yo soy Andre Thomas, estudiante de segundo año en preparatoria. Audrey Doris Smith-Thomas fue mi abuela y más importante, una de la mejor amigas y cuidadoras yo alguna vez tuve. Hoy, yo aún recuerdo su amor y guía cuando estoy atascado. Mi abuela fue originalmente de Pottstown, Pennsylvania. Ella se mudó a Filadelfia como mil novecientos setenta y uno. Cuando ella llegó, ella fue una maestra y luego una trabajadora de justicia criminal. Un perfecto digna para ella, por que ella fue ingeniosa, supo gente, y fue apasionada para la verdad. Yo pude siempre fui ella para sabiduría, y ayudar con mis problemas. Cuando algo surgir ella siguió paciente y ella nunca dejó incompleta trabajo.

Yo soy solo aquí como el André ustedes ven por que de mi abuela. De mi presencia en Filadelfia, a mis muchos pasiones y quieros, yo debo ella para todo. Estoy aún muy triste como su muerte. La no debería ocurrió en esa forma, ella mereció mejor . Yo aún lloro hoy cuando yo recordó que ella fue a mi. Pero yo camino con mi cabeza de alta por que sabo que es su quiere para mi.