

5-1-2020

SECTION INTRO: Puzzles

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Recommended Citation

Guyton, Sydney; Baquero, Stephanie; and Gilfus, Tyler (2020) "SECTION INTRO: Puzzles," *Intertext*. Vol. 28 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://surface.syr.edu/intertext/vol28/iss1/17>

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PUZZLES



It would be an understatement to say that family is complicated. The bond between mothers, fathers, and their children do not always come as naturally as we would like them to. Sometimes we take their presence for granted. Other times, their absence—like missing puzzle pieces—makes us question who we are. When there are open spaces in our lives, we go to great lengths to fill them and create a family that we may call our own. Though we often think of family as those who are related to us by blood, it is much more than that. A family can be comprised of any group of people regardless of blood relation: parents with adopted children, step-parents and step-children, a tightly-knit group of friends, and so on. The authors in this section grapple with these challenges,

highlighting how our identities are shaped by those closest to us. Whether our family puzzle is made up of pieces cut from the same cloth, or filled with shapes different than our own, it is we who choose which pieces to honor and cherish.

In “What Liam Knows,” Sarah Alessandrini interviews two parents about their adoption process, recounting the experience of raising their adopted son, Liam. The two white immigrant parents are quickly given a new perspective on racial discrimination, as a result of raising a Black child. This captivating story opens our eyes to the challenges and discussions that come with being a multiracial family.

In “The Wrath of Motherhood,” Taylor Parks reflects on her mother’s battle with

multiple sclerosis and how her family has coped with her mother’s deteriorating health. This emotional piece highlights one young woman’s appreciation for her mother and the strength she’s shown. As the only parent present in her life, Parks raises a question that we all find ourselves asking: *What do the people we love the most teach us about ourselves?*

Isabella León encourages us to think about the sacrifices made by family members to provide better opportunities for their children. In “Educated,” León contrasts the life of a privileged girl’s college experience with the lives of her two hardworking immigrant parents, recounting the struggles they endured to support her. León stresses how easily we can forget where we came from, and how important it is to remember.

Last but not least, Lily Mullan writes about her journey towards reclaiming the eye color she inherited from her estranged father. “Eyes of His, Eyes of Mine” is a thought-provoking piece that emphasizes the symbolic power of physical characteristics passed down to us, and how they can serve as a roadblock on our path of self-discovery.

We hope that these stories allow you to reflect on the people in your life who you consider to be a part of your family. Now more than ever, people are searching for a place to belong. We hope that you find the people that will stand by you through anything. No matter what pieces make up your puzzle, the word “family” is yours to define.

—Sydney Guyton, Stephanie Baquero, and Tyler Gilfus

Layout by Tyler Gilfus. Puzzle graphics by Tyler Gilfus from photos on the pages that follow.