

My National History Day project explores Eritrea's thirty-year struggle for independence and how perseverance and continuous sacrifices helped to shape the nation that emerged in 1993. I chose this topic because Eritrea is part of my personal heritage, yet I realized that I had never studied its history in depth. Growing up, I heard pieces of the story from family and friends, but I wanted to understand the full story: how colonial rule, federation with Ethiopia, and 3 decades of armed resistance led to a reaction from the entire Eritrean nation eventually leading to Eritrea's independence but at a certain cost, which connected directly to this year's theme of Revolution, Reaction and Reform. Although Eritrea fought for decades to secure its independence, its struggle was often overlooked by other nations and continues to be underrecognized today. During the research and outlining stages, I walked in with the absolute understanding that I was not going to leave out any information because I wanted to tell the story accurately, especially since it represents the lives of so many people. I watched videos, read dozens of articles, and proactively scheduled in-person meetings at Harvard University's Hollis Archive with the goal of obtaining new sources that would provide me the best information. I encountered many different perspectives on Eritrea's fight for independence which included sources from EPLF members, such as newspapers and poetry written as well as opposing viewpoints, including a speech by President Richard Nixon supporting Ethiopia, which showed how international politics further isolated Eritrea. When it came time to create a final product, I decided to make a website for my project because it helped me present the beautiful story through multiple forms of media. Eritrea's independence struggle includes many powerful photographs, speeches, maps, and personal statements that are difficult to capture in a traditional paper. Building a website let me combine historical analysis with visual sources so viewers could better understand the different sides of the war. One of the most meaningful parts of my research was conducting an interview

with Berhane Gebrihewet, the Chargé d’Affaires of Eritrea. Speaking to someone who represents the country diplomatically provided valuable insight beyond what any written sources could have given me. The interview helped me better understand Eritrea’s beginnings, especially how the war was won by Eritrea’s priority of “nation building”, including those who would have typically been undermined: in this case, the women and the students. Working on this project independently was both challenging and rewarding. Because I worked alone, I had to manage every part of the project on my own: from researching and organizing all of the sources to designing the website and learning new technological skills. At times it was very difficult not having someone to rely on for immediate feedback or help. However, this independence also made the project more meaningful as I felt a very strong responsibility to respect my country’s history respectfully and accurately.