

## **Savannah Scott: 2020 Research Award Entry Essay**

Nationalism. Imperialism. Culture assimilation. Detribalization. Within the eyes of a first-year student, this level of terminology is intimidating as the words carry so much weight, complexity, and meaning. They represent raw authentic history dating centuries before my time. They represent revolutionary leaders, movements and rebellions that molded ideas into the world we live in today. Despite of the initial intimidation of research and technological terms, I was able to extensively indulge into my research with the proper resources, tools, and guidance. Initially, I approached my research through an exclusively historical and political standpoint. I intended to solely explore the influence of imperial European powers on Kenyan nationalism. Using the Hollins Library One Search engine, I discovered additional articles related to my topic but narrated within the lens of female sexual liberation. This led me to discover the sociocultural influence of the practice of clitoridectomies in Kenyan nationalism and imperialism. Using One Search allowed me to discover an entirely new focus on my research, broaden my standpoint to be inclusive of sociocultural perspectives, and allowed me to incorporate my personal passions into my research. However, incorporating my personal passions and opinions into a controversial topic led to many challenges.

Challenges concerning the methods I used to analyze and interpret the information within the sources. These challenges were to learn how to disassociate my personal opinions on the topic and analyze sources through a non-bias perspective. Through guidance, I learned how to display the correlations between the prosperity of Kenyan tribes and the practice of clitoridectomies without subjecting my personal beliefs into my research. After gathering sources for my new topic through non-bias reviews, I began evaluating my sources based upon their status as primary or secondary sources. I evaluated primary sources as insightful narratives and utilized them to develop a storyline through a firsthand perspective. I evaluated secondary sources as critical analyses of the primary sources and utilized the information to support my thesis and body paragraphs. Differentiating the uses between primary and secondary sources allowed me to use a multifaceted approach towards my research and provide my readers with diverse aspects on my topic. Research is not a linear process with definitive outcomes and expectations; it is a journey of growth full of obstacles and setbacks. Looking back on my research journey, I wish I took full advantage of resources available at partnering colleges and regularly visited the QR Writing Center. However, I plan to use this knowledge as an opportunity to grow and a building block for future research projects.