

SLIM CHANCES

Our history is more than just important. Going to school is important. Getting a job is important. But your history is who you are. It is your existence. It's the reason you are here -- not just where you are at the moment of reading this, but the reason you are alive at all.

life, and they have lived in Georgia for a large portion of their lives.

The chance that they all moved to Georgia in the first place wasn't very high; the effort and circumstances that went into moving here and being subject to an entire new language and culture were challenging enough, let alone

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That's why, as of recent, I've been finding more value in the story of how I came to be, which goes back for as long as humanity, but for the sake of simplicity I'll tell as far as the stories my relatives have told me.

My story starts with a poor, orphaned boy in Uruguay, raised by his grandmother in a poverty-riddled part of South America. This was my grandfather. Neither of his parents wanted him, and they both had terrible problems with alcohol and drugs. He overcame his circumstances and met my *abuela*, who herself came from the landlocked country of Paraguay. They married and ended up having six kids, one of whom was my father, born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He and his family moved to America in search of an opportunity and a better

during childhood. My father, the eldest sibling, was often responsible for caring for his other siblings while his parents toiled at work to support their children.

The hardships didn't end outside the house. At school, my father was bullied for knowing very little English, and when he did slowly learn it, his heavy accent was the object of endless scrutiny. He also peaked around 6'6" in high school, making it nearly impossible to blend in.

My mother and father met on a Falcons chatroom sharing their misery over the Falcons' Super Bowl loss in 1999. The fact that I wouldn't exist if the Falcons hadn't lost that Super Bowl sounds absurd when spoken out loud, but it's an irreplaceable part of my history

that makes it all the stranger that I got to watch them lose again, 17 years after their first loss.

My parents divorced when I was a kid. My father remarried in 2014 and now I have a new chapter of both my life and my history. The history of my new family resonates with me as much as that of my biological family. Their stories are the stories of how they came to be a part of my life, and therefore they are my history.

My stepmother's family grew up in the small town of Evergreen, Alabama. Not many people lived there. My step-grandfather was married and had two daughters, one of whom was my stepmom. They grew up isolated from the rest of the world, where stigmas festered and news spread quickly. When my stepmom was told by her father that he was gay, the first thing

er sister to Atlanta, and my stepmom was left in Evergreen to be raised by her grandparents so she could finish high school. She was picked on often, as the news spread quickly throughout the small town. Meanwhile, in Atlanta, by some improbable chance, her mom and sister met my father's family. My father met my stepmom at his brother's wedding, where his brother married my stepmom's older sister.

My step-grandfather is an amazing person. While he lived in Evergreen, he had to figure out who he was, going to therapy sessions and talking with people to come to his conclusion. He currently works as a psychologist, helping people with their problems. He found his way to give back to the world after being as courageous as he was, and it has helped me at times to remember that my history is one of people

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she asked him was if that meant he was going to die. She was still a young girl, and she had an innocent concern that she was going to lose her father because of who he was. The way she was raised, to be gay was not a facet of who you were, like having blue eyes or being tall; gay meant infected. It meant different. It was incredibly difficult for him to be in such a position that his own daughter thought of him as different, as in danger.

Her mother split up and moved with her old-

er sister to Atlanta, and my stepmom was left in Evergreen to be raised by her grandparents so she could finish high school. She was picked on often, as the news spread quickly throughout the small town. Meanwhile, in Atlanta, by some improbable chance, her mom and sister met my father's family. My father met my stepmom at his brother's wedding, where his brother married my stepmom's older sister.

My history is who I am. It's more than just important. It's the past of those who came before me, and eventually it will become the past of those who are here after I am gone. I don't want to ever forget that.

 Luis Garcia, junior