Carrying It Forward:

Material Culture, Living Memory, and Historical Engagement

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Harvard University
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My great grandmother Rose
mother of Ashley gave her this sack when
she was sold at age 9 in South Carolina.
it held a tattered dress & hankiefl of
pajama's a braid of Rose's hair, & 2
It be filled with my Love always
she never saw her again.
Ashley is my grandmother
Ruth Middleton
1921
My great grandmother Rose
mother of Ashley gave her this sack when
she was sold at age 9 in South Carolina
it held a tattered dress 3 handfuls of
pecans a braid of Roses hair. Told her

It be filled with my Love always

She never saw her again
Ashley is my grandmother
Ruth Middleton
1921
My great grandmother Rose
mother of Ashley gave her this sack when
she was sold at age 9 in South Carolina
it had a tattooed cross 3 handfuls of
jicama a braid of Rose's hair. Told her
I be filled with my Loves always
she never saw her again.
Kissing it my grandmother
Ruth Middleton
1929
ASHLEY’S SACK, BACK

All images of the sack used by permission of Middleton Place Foundation.
Heirlooms, Redefined

Words by Tya Miles and Michelle May-Curry

Families cohere by keeping histories and telling stories — and conveying what the English have called heirlooms. The "loom" in heirloom is not coincidental. This root word retains the old expectation that a familial inheritance will include practical tools, such as looms.

For many Black families, kinship bonds have endured through an enlarged definition of the term heirloom that includes everyday items that have come to serve as carriers of tradition and vessels of inheritance.

Here, ten photographers take up the camera as a loom, weaving stories of kinship and care across generations.
THANK YOU