

CHAPTER 3.

TOWARDS RECONCILIATION: COMPOSING RACIAL LITERACY WITH AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

James Chase Sanchez

Middlebury College

Key Terms and Concepts: Racial Literacy, Reconciliation, Essentialism

Around 10:00 a.m. on June 23, 2014, Charles Moore, an elderly White Methodist minister, arrived at the largest parking lot in Grand Saline, TX. Angi McPhearsen and Mallie Munn, two white hair stylists at the local salon, watched him pace back and forth in the nearly empty parking lot for several hours, as he moved intermittently from his car to different areas in the open lot. Eventually, around 5:00 p.m., Moore emerged from his car and placed a large blue tarp and couch cushion on the ground in front of him. He poured gasoline all over his body, got on his knees, looked up to the heavens, and lit himself on fire. Moore succumbed to his injuries less than 24 hours later.

A couple of days passed before the public learned about a note he had left on his car windshield titled “O Grand Saline Repent of Your Racism,” which detailed his experiences of racism growing up in Grand Saline. In this note, he recalled hearing a resident brag about lynching a Black man off a bridge in town and stories of the KKK, and he even described how, as a young man, he had been kicked out of a church in the 1950s for preaching about racial integration. Moore felt that Grand Saline had never moved past its racism and hoped that his death might shine a light upon systemic racial issues in town. He called for the community to repent, and he chose the flame in hopes that Grand Saline could change and become a more multiracial community.

Researchers often find themselves embroiled in events that matter to them, much in the same way we are drawn to tell stories. We often have to think about the ethics in participating in such events. We are responsible for our stories—beholden to them—and must take to telling them with a lens of personal truth. Yet, this can be difficult when our own stories and histories aren’t in the past, when we are still molding them in the present. This issue between history

and story happened to me when I heard about Moore's self-immolation because Grand Saline was not some distant place to me. I grew up there. Grand Saline was my home. And as a Latinx man, Moore's death resonated with me in a way I couldn't articulate, and I knew that I needed to explore what his death meant—and how it affected my relationship to my hometown too.

When I think about Moore's self-immolation, I always refer back to *kairos*. I take *kairos* to mean "the right time and due measure," as taken from Kinneavy's definition in "Kairos Revisited." Yet I'm not thinking of *kairos* in terms of how Moore (in)appropriately appealed to Grand Saline to change its culture. I mean *kairos* in terms of my own personal agency in telling stories about Grand Saline. As a kid, I was never interested in issues of race and oftentimes took part in the implicit and explicit racist discourses that were normalized in town. My interest in race and racism did not develop until my B.A. and M.A. English courses at the University of Texas at Tyler, where I read Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, Langston Hughes, and other authors of color who I never studied in high school but brought me to see race as an important identity factor in many people's lives—even my own.

However, my understanding of race changed drastically in my rhetoric and composition Ph.D. program at Texas Christian University when I took a course in critical race theory and immersed myself in the scholarship of Patricia Williams, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Derrick Bell, and I began understanding racism as epistemic and everyday. In that class, I remember a specific reading, Derrick Bell's "The Law of Racial Standing," and a quote that stuck with me ever since: "But when blacks suggest racism as a major cause of the problem, our views are lost by the force of a society determined to blame black victims" (120). While many readers might take the truth of Bell's assertion for granted, for me, it represented the budding of my racial awareness, when race and racial issues finally started to make sense. It forced me to come to terms with my memories of people redefining racism in my hometown and blaming victims as the problem—such as saying "rap music is what makes Black people violent" or "people who wear sagging pants are 'asking for it.'"

When I read these theorists, I began to critically reflect on my experiences in Grand Saline and the ways I became racialized, which ultimately impacted the way I connected with Moore's death. This occurred in the summer between my second and third year of the program, again connecting back to *kairos*. If Moore would have self-immolated when I was in high school or in my early years of college, I don't think his death would have impacted me as much. I would have brushed him off as "crazy," as many people in Grand Saline did. In fact, Moore's death did not garner the sweeping change he wanted. People dismissed him as "mentally unstable" and tried to erase any memory of his protest by painting

over the burn marks in the parking lot and removing the makeshift memorial to honor his death. The people of Grand Saline refused to have a complex conversation about race. However, his death immediately became a flashpoint for my own research because I saw him empathetically and knew I had to develop a project around his life and death.

Everything occurred in the perfect moment for me, when my research interests and need for a project aligned. In some sense, I believe this illustrates the power of *kairos*, knowing it would be impossible for me to complete my research without Moore's death. Hence, Moore's death became the impetus for my dissertation, *Preaching behind the Fiery Pulpit*, which analyzes the rhetoric of self-immolation globally and the racial public memory of Grand Saline. I also produced a documentary on Moore and Grand Saline, titled *Man on Fire*, which won an International Documentary Association Award in 2017 and became a selection of Independent Lens and aired on PBS on December 17, 2018. The film screened at multiple film festivals and won a few awards. I'll talk more about my documentary and dissertation throughout this chapter because both are central to my racial literacy.

It is important to know that I began to reflect on my own racist upbringing in Grand Saline after Moore's death. I, too, knew most of the stories Moore recited in his letter. Not only that, but his death spoke to me because it unraveled racial memories of my past—moments I hardly remembered but somehow stayed with me, beneath the surface, all of these years. These were stories of me being racialized in Grand Saline because of my Brown skin and stories of me hearing others say racist comments about Black people. (Hell, I actually said these racist things too).

You see, Grand Saline is a town with no Black people. I think a few mixed-raced, Black people live in town now, but historically, when Moore lived there and when I grew up there, no Black people resided in town. When I read Moore's note and saw him describing a lynching that took place in town in the 1940s, I thought of my experience growing up in the 2000s, 60 years after Moore's adolescent years, and hearing similar stories of lynchings and the KKK. I distinctly remember being embarrassed to tell other Texans I was from Grand Saline because of the town's racist reputation. I also remembered my own racialization—how derogatory comments were made about me and my skin and how I brushed them off as jokes. Moore's death reminded me of a past I had forgotten, a painful one I hid from myself, that found its way back to the surface.

"You're my taco roll, son!" My coach yelled at me during football practice one day.

“Get in there and be my taco roll!”

I moved to Grand Saline, Texas, in the fall of 2000 (in seventh grade) after living about 12 miles north of town most of my life, in the small community of Alba. I idolized Grand Saline before moving there because the town was known for its football superiority. Football is the epitome of (toxic) masculinity in Texas, and I desired to be a part of this culture. In the fifth grade, I hit a growth spurt and grew to 5' 10". That same year I began playing pee-wee football for my local team. Football came naturally to me as the biggest kid on the field, and though I enjoyed the advantages of my height in all other sports, I cherished none of them as much as I did football. And Alba, simply put, was terrible at football. I often attended Friday night football games in Alba and saw opposing teams beating them by 50 or 60 points. With my size, height, and ambition, Alba did not seem like the place for me.

However, a few miles south, the football players—and community—played and celebrated football differently. Grand Saline earned a reputation as a small-town football powerhouse, which was solidified in its appearance on MTV's *True Life* in 1999. The episode, “I'm a Football Legend,” chronicles a forthcoming playoff game between Grand Saline and Celina in the 1999 2A playoffs, a game that Grand Saline lost. Nonetheless, the TV show added to the reputation of the town, a reputation already established with multiple major playoff runs in the 1980s and 1990s, headed by legendary coach Carter Elliott. Thus, by the time I went into the 7th grade and started playing for the middle school, I knew I wanted a change, and my family decided to move to Grand Saline so I could play football for a good team.

“Be my taco roll, son!” My coach yelled.

I didn't know the coach too well before he said this, yet he felt comfortable using this term, for the first time, for the entire team to hear. My teammates busted with laughter. I joined with them, providing a pathetic laugh, one obviously not holding the same racist convictions. I didn't want to piss off my coach and ostracize myself from my peers, so I chose to go along with the “game” my coach was playing and the joke my teammates thought was funny. It was one of the first times I remember feeling like I had no agency in defining myself. Though I don't recall being too upset at the time (this incident hardly affected my everyday relationship with my coach and team), over 15 years later, it still sits with me—a lingering pain that hasn't healed. I see it as one of many racial incidents that constructs my racial literacy.

This chapter is an autoethnography exploring my racial upbringing in Grand Saline. As a research method, I employ autoethnography on a meta-level. First,

after more contextual analysis, I will dive into four racial stories that comprise my autoethnography, concluding with a discussion about the ethics of the method—how it is altered due to positionality, how the autoethnographer can work toward reconciliation, and how essentialism becomes a constraint in the autoethnographic process. I discuss these issues at the end because it is important to situate this chapter with my autoethnography first; however, I do want to preface this work by briefly discussing reconciliation and how I view my work as a racial literacy.

I've written about experiences in my hometown over the past few years and have published them in *Inventing Place: Writing Lone Star Rhetorics* (edited by Casey Boyle and Jenny Rice) and in a forthcoming manuscript tentatively titled *Salt of the Earth: Rhetoric, Preservation, and White Supremacy*. But unlike some of my other published work about Grand Saline, this chapter focuses particularly on the idea of reconciliation—and how I try to achieve it. I define reconciliation as a process in which two parties (one who has done wrong and one who has been wronged) attempt to restore some aspect of their relationship by acknowledging such wrongs. When we think about reconciliation, we often imagine major atrocities and their aftermath, such as the formation of the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (TRC) after the end of apartheid South Africa. Erik Doxtader has written extensive critiques of this commission and the idea of reconciliation, stating, “The premise, purpose and value of reconciliation is far more complicated than many critics would lead us to believe. Today, more than ever, it does not suffice to set the idea of reconciliation into the hands of the TRC and then allege that the commission’s shortcomings are proof that reconciliation has turned sour” (9). He continues, “Nation-building is a fragile and ambiguous process. In its midst, reconciliation’s question is whether we are willing to gather and collectively undertake the work of making history” (9). As Doxtader illustrates, the idea of “true” reconciliation is a complex concept, and even when people use the term “reconciliation,” it doesn’t mean that actual reconciliation exists. I employ Doxtader’s argument to illustrate problems embedded within the “formula” of reconciliation. Doxtader finds that the purpose of the TRC was to begin the reconciliation process through having the oppressors acknowledge their wrongs. However, can reconciliation exist when those who have done wrong never ask for forgiveness or acknowledge their wrongs?

The people of Grand Saline have never asked for forgiveness for their historical, racist misdeeds (which is one of the reasons Charles Moore self-immolated), and no one who participated in racism done unto me has ever asked for forgiveness. Arguably, white privilege might be a key factor in why they don’t ask for forgiveness—they don’t see anything wrong in their community. Still,

I am not asking them to begin this process, especially since I was as much of an agent of racism in Grand Saline as anyone else. However, I view my work in this chapter as being a part of a reconciliatory process that does not fit the normal formula discussed above—one where the wronged is going out of the way to achieve some process of reconciliation without the wrongdoer's permission. By discussing my process of reconciliation, I am asking some very important questions: What is the role of autoethnography in the reconciliation process, especially in terms of a racialized researcher talking about racism? Can autoethnography work toward an ethics of reconciliation? Can we—scholars of color—heal our own racial wounds? As I tease through my autoethnography in this chapter, my goal is both to consider how racial literacy forms and also discuss issues around the ethics of the racialized researcher utilizing an autoethnographic method.

Lastly, before I begin my autoethnography, I want to say that the experiences discussed below revolve around my racial literacy. Racial literacy is a “skill and practice in which individuals are able to probe the existence of racism and examine the effects of race and institutionalized systems on their experiences and representation in the US society” (Sealey-Ruiz 386), and I believe performing autoethnography helps us acquire this skill and practice. Ultimately, a racial literacy allows a researcher to show how race and racism became known to them (typically through a narrative), and I view my racial literacy as better understanding what racism looks like in a colorblind society and the role of the researcher in this autoethnographic process. By referring to my autoethnography explicitly as a racial literacy narrative, I am saying that these moments of racial misdeeds eventually came together to influence my understanding of my own race and of racism in America. None of this happened during high school or during my days in Grand Saline, but rather, they took place years later. Still, I can pinpoint these various memories as being moments that explicitly affected my views on race, racism, myself, and my racial identity. None of these particular stories are necessarily more important than another; they are all small slices of a flowering racial literacy. Yet, their power stems from placing them together and making meaning from their connections.

For example, when I was producing *Man on Fire*, I became acutely aware of my racialized past that I never explicitly connected to my upbringing. I thought of race as a problem for other people when I was younger because I was very well-liked (voted homecoming king, for whatever that is worth) and never thought of racial incidents that happened to me as racism. However, making this documentary and reading more about race forced me to think about my own upbringing and memories of being called racist epithets, hearing disparaging things about Black people, and realizing that my entire upbringing was saturated in racial/

racist discourse. In other words, Moore's protest by fire caused a ripple effect in my life, which led me down a journey of racial self-awareness.

The stories of my racial literacy come together for my reconciliation process as well, becoming building blocks for me to see how I recognize and forgive incidents from my past and how I forgive myself too. But my stories also complicate the reconciliation process because of how they can be critiqued. The problem with racial literacy narratives (as with any narrative) is that they only focus on specific moments of time in which something racialized or racist takes place, which means that we might look back at the culture being described in these stories and might essentialize a people and a place as uniquely bigoted because of the narrative. So what moral obligation do we have in telling these stories? After detailing my racial literacy narrative, I will dive into the complexities of autoethnography, essentialism, and reconciliation to try and untangle the issues embedded within this genre.

MY AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

During my sophomore year of high school, I became a member of the varsity football squad. Not many sophomores made the team, so I was excited to join my older brethren. One day early in the season, I was getting dressed for football practice next to my peers on the offensive line, and somehow, I became the subject of conversation. "Sanchez is basically the Brown version of me," one of the linemen said while putting on his shoulder pads. "Yeah, the wetback version of you!" another lineman laughed. Everyone in the vicinity of this "joke" began to laugh, and I laughed too, wanting to be part of the joke. I didn't think—in this moment in time—that this situation was an explicit form of racism. When my teammates joked about my skin color, I didn't feel attacked racially. I vaguely remember feeling something in the pit of my stomach, knowing that these words were inherently wrong. But I didn't think of it as racism. It was much easier to just try and get along with these older players than stick up for myself, and so I never said anything. I went throughout all of my high school experience being called "wetback" from time to time. But to be quite honest, this nickname was not solely mine to keep. Other Mexican-Americans in school were called by this racial epithet as well.

Soon, being the "wetback version" of one of the graduating seniors of the football team evolved into me being referred to as "Wetback," "Sancho," "Sasquatch," or any other Brown epithet that could be conjured by my teammates. Often times when we were in small groups, in football practice, or in other social situations, people referred to me as some derogatory term for Mexican-Americans (and their intentions for doing this, including malice and ignorance, vary).

In other words, people around me were controlling my racial identity in a way that I didn't really notice at the time because I associated more with whiteness and my White mother (I technically only have one quarter Chicana blood). I was being raised by her and that side of the family's whiteness, yet my Brown skin dominated how people perceived my identity.

My racial untangling does not solely lie within the older White males of my high school designating me as different; much of my high school existence relied upon me feeling different from many of my Brown counterparts as well. This is just as important to understanding my hybrid racial experience, though I do note that any ostracization felt from my Brown peers was not like the White racism I experienced. Othering took place, but it was not oppressive; it did not exist as a way for me to feel subjugated from Brown people. When I really reflect on my experiences, I wonder if my high school interactions with "Browner" people could be referred to as some type of self-othering, a way that I often tried to distance myself from my Spanish-speaking brethren because I felt like a fraud if I were to attempt to join their group. One lunch period, I sat at a table with my friends (most of whom were White because whiteness signified popularity) and stared across the abyss of the cafeteria at a different table, one that was full of people with my skin tone but a bit darker. The table was comprised solely of Mexican-American students, and since there were no Black people in Grand Saline and no sizable Asian-American or Native population, the Mexican-American kids at my school were the largest minority group. (*I can still see me disassociating from them in this last sentence.*)

Many of them created their own communities at our school. If one were to take a bird's eye view of the cafeteria, they would see vast whiteness at most tables with a couple of Brown bodies dispersed amongst them, but there would be one or two tables that were solely Brown. I was one of those Brown spots at a White table, looking at people who resembled me more physically across the cafeteria but feeling exponentially more comfortable with my White peers because I spoke their language—literally and figuratively. Most of the people at the Mexican-American table could speak Spanish and did so often, or at least this was my perception in high school. Yet, when I truly reflect on my experiences, I am unsure if I truly remember them mostly speaking Spanish around me or if this was just a fear I projected onto them, a fear of not being Brown enough to be part of their collective.

Nonetheless, in these instances in the cafeteria, I became aware of my race. I looked at the White people who surrounded me and the Brown people across the cafeteria floor. If we were mostly segregated by race, why was I eating with White people? Instead of panicking and questioning my identity, I rationalized it by saying, "No, this isn't a 'racial thing'" (like I see it today). It's about lan-

guage. I didn't speak Spanish. I could not sit with the people who could speak Spanish (though all of these people also spoke English on a daily basis). I rationalized my segregation from my Brown peers with this language fallacy, but as I look back at it now, I see that this was not a reasoning that I created only in this moment; rather, it was racist logic that I built into my identity at a young age.

In my early years, I remember people attempting to disassociate me from my Brownness. "You can't even speak Spanish; you're not Mexican," was a common attack levied against me when telling people about my ethnic descent or explaining that my last name actually was Sanchez. To me, it was Sanchez not Sánchez. This was how my family pronounced it for a few generations, and after talking with my dad and grandfather, Pappa (my grandfather emigrated from Mexico), I learned that when Pappa moved to East Texas, his family systematically and purposely purged Spanish nomenclature and accents from their language practices. In his home, my grandfather was taught that being American meant speaking English, and if he chose to speak Spanish, he would alienate himself. Thus, the erasing of Spanish was an act of passage for him, a way to become American, and when his four children were growing up in East Texas, any use of Spanish disappeared. And, the same for their children. Though my parents were divorced when I was young and I lived mostly with my White mother, I still remember questioning my heritage.

Once I asked my father about speaking Spanish and wondered if we didn't speak it since we were Brown: "We just don't need to," he responded. Speaking Spanish seemed like a survival tactic for some, but we had assimilated so well into American culture that we didn't need this language to fit in any longer. I cringe thinking about this now, but my father's words resonated with me at the time.

I learned about race not only through finding and wrestling with my own identity, but also in how White people talked about other people of color. In high school, discussions of Black people always had either explicit or coded racist connotations similar to the ones said of Brown kids. They were more overtly hateful, though, a product of historical racism and the fact that no Black kids went to Grand Saline. Often times, anti-Black racism came from peers and kids who were ignorant (though some were hateful), but sometimes these ideas were spread from people who should have known better: our elders.

During my junior or senior year of high school, our head coach tried to rally the team after a practice early in the season. We were preparing to play our rivals, Van High School, on Friday night, which added an extra layer of intensity to the practice and preparations. After practice, we were at the end of the field listening to our leader tell us exactly how we should mentally prepare for the game, when something odd happened. "One last thing before Friday night," he stated with a

serious tone. “Don’t try and piss off the Black kids on the other team by jawing at them during the game; they become better athletes when they are pissed off.” Students around the huddle nodded in agreement, and then a student replied, “And they have an extra muscle in the legs!” The coach smiled and repeated, “And they have an extra muscle.”

That was it. The coach moved on to something else, and all of the students taking a knee in front of the coach didn’t react to the situation. I didn’t react either. I remember looking at my peers because I knew something was wrong; I knew this encounter wasn’t right, but we all sat still. I hope, in reflecting on this moment, that there were others like me who wanted to voice their opinion but couldn’t because of the power difference between the coach and us. That’s what pisses me off in the present—not that a dumb kid like me said something racist and had no consequences for their actions; rather, an adult, a 50-year-old man who should have known better, not only felt it was okay to have these bigoted viewpoints but to disseminate them as truth amongst other coaches and 50 or so students. This was a minor interaction, one that I’m unsure if others remember, but I believe it is a synecdoche for many racial interactions in Grand Saline. Students and adults alike could spread bigoted misinformation or disinformation about people of color and have no consequences for their actions. This lack of repercussions further created an environment that said racism was tolerated and accepted and was integral to communal knowledge in town.

We travelled to Van High School on Friday to face our rivals. It was going to be a tough game because they heavily outmatched us in virtually all aspects of football. Van was a division above us, and I was a bit nervous before we ran out for pre-game warm-ups. As we did our stretching at one end of the field, I could hear some of my peers talking about our opponents on the other end of the field. “Look at those n****ers out there stretching like they’re monkeys!” a leader on our team announced loud enough for most of us to hear. I think he was trying to break the ice and help us ease the tension, but he used the same racist logic that our coach used a few days before, a logic that implied that we should dehumanize Black people, especially when we oppose them in sports. I see now how racism worked in my hometown: passed on from generation to generation, from people who are either ignorant because racism is the only truth they have ever been taught or who willingly choose white supremacy.

However, issues with race and racism extend to scarier concerns, mostly because the Ku Klux Klan has a long history of existing in and near Grand Saline (Loewen; Sanchez, “White Supremacy”). As a kid, I remember hearing stories about the Klan convening in the area. My friends and I often travelled to a spot seven miles north of town called Clark’s Ferry. The name comes from an old folklore of a bus flipping and killing a bunch of school children in the area (San-

chez, “Recirculating Our Racism”), and is nothing special: it was just a dried up riverbed in the woods that often attracted kids because it was so far away from town. Yet when we travelled to Clark’s Ferry, we did so because it was supposedly a contemporary meeting spot for the KKK.

One weekend, I travelled to Clark’s Ferry to drink some beer with my friends while “backroad[ing].” Upon arriving at this spot, we got out of the vehicle and began examining the area—as we often did—looking for any clues of the KKK. I ventured to one side of the woods and stumbled across a site that still makes my stomach churn: a disembodied head of a hog was placed upon a cross made out of sticks. I stumbled backwards and yelled at my friends who all ran over to see the disgusting site. “Who would do something like this?” I asked the group. “It was probably just some kids messing around,” one friend responded. “Or it was the KKK,” someone else said. We were split as a group on this issue. “But you don’t have to worry,” one of my friends said looking at me, noticing my unease. “The KKK only kills Blacks around here.”

My friend was obviously implying that as a Brown person I *should* be afraid of the KKK because of my skin color, but I *shouldn’t* be scared in this instance because they “only” kill Black people in this area. I wasn’t afraid because, though I did believe the KKK existed in the area, I never felt threatened by them in any capacity. However, I hated the implication: that Black people should be afraid was “normal.” My friend wasn’t saying that he was upset or ashamed that Black people should be afraid; instead, he just knew from the cultural conversations of the town that they should be fearful. And that was okay to him. I looked at my friend and noticed the inherent whiteness coded into his reaction. The whiteness spread amongst all of my friends at Clark’s Ferry. They did not have to be afraid of racial issues because racism didn’t affect them—they could tell jokes about it, make others afraid by talking about it, and much more, but they never had to be victims.

I felt upset that my peers believed racism against Brown people was not okay but racism against Black people was fine. I also experienced relief knowing that I was one of the “good ones” to these White folk. How was I supposed to respond to this friend who was telling me racism was normal but not towards me? With my mixed emotions, I should have said a lot of things—maybe telling him off or telling him about the perils of racism and racialized violence. I didn’t know any better, though. Instead, I smiled. It was easier to keep harmony when my friends seemed like they would shield me from any real danger.

The racism I discussed in these stories is not always the typical, overt hatred and bigotry that dominates typical discourses of racism. While some of this racism is overt, it is often masked in one way or another. For instance, I was popular in high school. I was mostly a jock and was known for being a class clown. In

typical American discourse, we wouldn't use these descriptors to talk about how the systemic racism in a town othered an individual and taught him about racial biases. In this sense, I am not arguing that my memories are more traumatic than someone else's; quite the opposite is true—I use these stories to indicate the everydayness of systemic racism that can affect anyone perceived as racialized. My autoethnography highlights the epistemic nature of racism in Grand Saline.

For example, let's start with the culture of the locker room—a space I was quite familiar with in high school—and how the hyper-masculinity associated with such a space illustrates the ways marginalizing and othering peoples can become naturalized (even though sports pundits might refer to locker rooms as “unifying” spaces). One of the moments when I felt most othered by my peers was in the locker room when I was a sophomore, playing for the varsity football team. I existed in the background of this space because I was one of only maybe a couple of sophomores playing for the varsity squad, and though I had the size of anyone else on the team, I already felt like an outsider because I was younger than all of my teammates. When they made jokes about my skin color, I had to try to fit in no matter what. It was in my best interest to not be outed as a problem. I learned in these moments that race can be a unifying factor—a unifying one that whiteness can circle around and build community around through telling jokes.

The nicknames I had in high school also taught me that it did not matter how I perceived my own body. To many of my White peers, I was always going to be “different,” and my silence allowed me to “bond” with my teammates. For instance, when I was first called “the wetback version” of my teammate, I was not conflicted; I was happy my peers were joking about me and allowed me to be a part of the group. However, I was conflicted when it came to the nickname itself. Though I did not speak Spanish and did not fit in directly with other Mexican-American students because I identified with my whiteness, my skin color and my last name signified my racial identity. I knew of the wetback caricature and the various racialized stigmas that correspond with this term and on some level knew the rhetorical distance that was being created between my peers and myself—meaning I could be in the in-group (sort of) but always on the edge, in a liminal space. But ultimately, I never said anything about this nickname because I did not want to be the person causing some sort of division in the locker room. I think I rationalized that this racist encounter actually made me fit more into the collective than not having a nickname would.

A racial literacy doesn't always have to be about the individual researcher though. I learned about race through similar experiences that were not directed at me and my Brownness, but that I took part in as a participant or observer. The last two stories in my autoethnography, about the coach and the KKK, showed me as much.

Racial bigotry can build a community simply through the act of othering, and I often took part in this rhetorical community-building process too. My coach could not have uttered such racism and had no consequences for his actions unless he understood that his audience would not only accept his bigotry but would view it as normalized for the community. In this rhetorical encounter, the coach's goal was to incite his players, which could have been accomplished via a plethora of tactics, yet, he chose this overt racism as a type of rally cry itself. By remarking that we should not “jaw” at the Black athletes on the other team, our coach attempted to provide a tactical advantage in the game—one he had to consider a truth. His racist reality was disseminated to all of the players as not only a tactic, but a racist ideology that we should internalize in some capacity. His cultural knowledge became a truth that we all accepted.

His cultural knowledge also shows how racism is perpetuated. Young, impressionable kids can see a coach make comments about race and understand that such comments are acceptable because no one holds the coach responsible for his actions. Students don't say anything. Other coaches don't say anything. This tells them that, under the right circumstances, racism is acceptable. Maybe they can't call people of color racial epithets to their faces, but when they are amongst their peers, or in “safe spaces” like the locker room, they can be bigoted without consequences. Maybe some of these kids grew up like I did and learned the truth about racism later in life. But it is not too far-fetched to imagine if they never left these “safe spaces” where racism is a commodity for humor and knowledge that nothing would ever change. In some sense, this is how communities like Grand Saline never change. They continually circle the same logic, the same systems of oppression, that have existed in the community for over a century.

My racial literacy emphasizes the epistemic nature of racism—how I was taught to be a racist in a racist environment, how others built knowledge about people of color through myths, and how racist logic made me a “good” Mexican. These memories have never dissipated, 15 years later. They are a part of who I once was, and, in response to that, who I am today. My literacy highlights my own understanding of race in high school to illustrate the fact that my story is not unique. Every kid in Grand Saline learned about race through the same systems—the locker room bigotry, the elders joining in the racism or being silent in the face of it, the ways the community tolerates Brown bodies in relation to Black bodies.

While this racial literacy exists as meta-commentary on autoethnography as a research method, I still hope these stories, if ever read by people related to Grand Saline, compel others to speak their own truths. We need more voices that speak to truth to whiteness, to speak truth to racism.

RACE, AUTOETHNOGRAPHY, AND POSITIONALITY

My own autoethnography illustrates some important issues in relation to racial literacies, essentialism, and reconciliation, but I want to take a moment to focus on the act of writing an autoethnography, especially as it comes to positionality. In their text *Critical Autoethnography*, editors Robin M. Boylorn and Mark P. Orbe (both communication scholars), define autoethnography as “both the method and product of researching and writing about personal lived experiences and their relationship to culture” (16-17). These authors label autoethnography as the relationship between the individual author and culture, in which the author writes and describes his or her experiences. In another context, Carolyn S. Ellis and Arthur Bochner define autoethnography as “autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation” (742). Here, they situate autoethnography as a self-reflexive method that unites the personal with the cultural.

Examining these different interpretations of autoethnography together enables us to gain a better sense of it as a research method, but neither of these definitions focus on positionality. For instance, while Boylorn and Orbe want autoethnographers to connect lived experiences to “their relationship to culture,” some questions arise around the definition of culture and the various experiences one might have in relation to a particular dominant (white supremacist) culture. Ellis and Bochner’s definition complicates this matter by relating autoethnography to mediated cultural descriptions, but we still need to complicate positionality because of how it alters the subjective nature of sharing stories and how we interpret them.

The definition of autoethnography that best informs the questions I am asking, however, comes from Heewon Chang’s *Autoethnography as Method*. Chang, an anthropologist, believes autoethnography “should be ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretative orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation” (48). This definition explains autoethnography as a three-prong approach. First, it should situate the individual within the cultural and contextual environments of which they reside (an ethnographic methodological orientation). Second, it should explain and analyze the individual experiences within these contexts (a cultural interpretive orientation). Lastly, it should use the individual author, and their experiences, as the primary subject of inquiry (an autobiographical content orientation). However, I want to complicate Chang’s definition. 1) As an orientation, how do researchers of color position themselves for an ethnography in a mostly White, often racist environment? 2) How do racialized researchers position their cultural interpretation when their culture is vastly differ-

ent than the culture they are analyzing? 3) How does an autobiographical content orientation affect both the method and interpretation?

I'll begin with the ethnographic as methodological orientation paradigm by focusing on two specific texts in rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies, Jennifer Trainor's *Rethinking Racism* and Julie Lindquist's *A Place to Stand*, both of which are ethnographies. Trainor's text focuses on "the causes and origins of white student racism" at "Laurel Canyons High School" (a pseudonym), a school with a 97% White population (3). Most importantly for my research: Trainor is a White researcher who is investigating this racism problem. While Trainor is investigating racial issues in this mostly White high school, I believe her own racial positioning, the whiteness of the skin, helps her in this study. Trainor writes, "Memories of my own racial formation and whiteness ensure that as a researcher at Laurel Canyons, I am not an outsider studying a group of people who appear to me as other. And yet my identity as a researcher and teacher with a commitment to antiracist pedagogies also separates me from the white students" (33). Trainor believes her racial positioning helps her talk with White people about race because it provides her an insider status (though her position as researcher hinders her).

In a similar situation, Lindquist's text looks at the rhetorical practices of a working-class bar in South Chicago, but her positionality is a bit different than Trainor's. Though Lindquist acknowledges the working-class lifestyle she was around as an adolescent, she describes her role in the bar as being an antagonist, saying, "As soon as it became public knowledge that I was a college student and a 'liberal,' I was drawn into performed debates. . . . [which] gave me a way, at least, to find a place among others" (18). Lindquist doesn't define herself as a working-class person doing research in this bar, but her research shows the ways she found a "role" to play to open people up to her ethnographic research. In regards to the positionality of the researcher in this methodological framing, it seems that using an ethnographic lens can become muddied due to positionality, especially for a racialized person studying White racism. But finding one's "role" in the research becomes vital. Therefore, we need to be intentional in framing our research because our roles and identities matter.

Culture can be such a tricky word to define. In his famous text, *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha talks about culture as this:

The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the in-between space that carries the

burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (56)

To Bhabha, the hybridity of culture—or its “Third Space”—is what provides meaning. Most importantly for this, Bhabha focuses on culture as not being a fixed set of beliefs and values but rather a spectrum. And this is what leads into issues surrounding interpreting autoethnography with a cultural lens. My racialized identity as a Chicax man makes my interpretations of a place like Grand Saline much different than how the White person who lives in town might describe the culture. And my own hybrid racial experiences impact these experiences as well. Similar to what Lindquist and Trainor both describe, my specific role as researcher affects my interpretation of culture as well. For the racialized researcher investigating racism, culture must shift to not just be something “other” in relation to their own cultures. Yet, we need to be aware of how our cultural biases might affect the cultures being described in our work, especially when understanding that culture is not a fixed set of values. Thus, we must always indicate how our various values and cultural understandings play into the interpretations of stories, to give readers a better sense of how such work is being interpreted and why it is being interpreted in a certain way.

Lastly, how does the autobiographical content orientation affect both the cultural interpretations and ethnographic methods? In both orientations, positionality is most important, and it often has been upfront in other autoethnographic studies in the field. For instance, in his “A Post(modern)script” from *Bootstraps*, Victor Villanueva describes the various ideological genres that he believes his text fits within, labelling it as postmodern, Foucauldian, and possibly even Derridean. However, when narrowing down the heart of his book, which is largely autoethnographic in nature, Villanueva writes, “The compression of space, time, and motion is the postmodern condition. . . [Yet,] I can only really know and tell about one man of color’s conditions” (142). Though Villanueva’s book is basically an academic literacy narrative, how a poor Puerto Rican boy from New York found success in academia, it is also “an autobiography with political, theoretical, pedagogical consideration. . . . This is the personal made public and the public personalized, not for self-glory nor to point fingers, but to suggest how, maybe, to make the exception the rule” (xviii). Villanueva’s text is similar to my chapter, as both could be described as racial literacy narratives, and the highlight of Villanueva’s argument is how vital positionality is in undertaking such work.

Autoethnography is an important method for people to use to study race and antiracism because it gives the individual researcher agency in describing

themselves and the culture around them. Researchers who take on this methodology need to focus on their positionality, which is not only vital in the content they are providing audiences but also in the methodological framing and cultural interpreting that are a part of the autoethnographic process. Without a proper positional connection in these framings, the researcher might present a well-rounded, polished framing and interpretation of their experiences. In all three facets of the autoethnographic process, clear-cut descriptions of the researcher's positionality is key.

THE PROBLEM WITH ESSENTIALISM

While positionality is important, we also need to reconsider the limitations within this methodology, especially when it comes to ethics and essentialism. At the heart of the methodology, autoethnography provides the individual agency in telling their story, and when it comes to issues of race, it can define racial issues within communities and cultures that might be overlooked or suppressed. However, how should the autoethnographer tackle the issue of telling their story of racism and their hometown without indicting every single person in their community, especially when racism exists on both implicit and explicit levels? Should that even be an ethical concern for the autoethnographer? In other words, should the researcher be concerned in how the characterization of a community affects all the various individuals in said community? Of course, there is no easy answer to this question, but we need to unpack it.

In theoretical terms, essentialism can be defined as the way “some social groups are represented as if they were collectively defined by some inhering, immutable and group-defining ‘essence’” (Hanson-Easey et al. 363). In other words, essentialism is often the way those in power attempt to categorize and define groups through common qualities outside of their inherent social and biological factors. For instance, some White people view Black people as inherently more likely to commit crimes, though, obviously, that is not an immutable trait amongst Black people (Quillian and Pager). Or, for instance, in Grand Saline, we believed all Black people had “extra muscles” that made them better athletes. While often employed to discuss the “essential” qualities of racial groups in critical race theory, others, such as Angela Harris, have demonstrated how essentialism affects other identity groups, such as gender. In her article “Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory,” Harris argues that gender essentialism in feminist legal theory often erases race, and she attempts to subvert it via a multiple consciousness mindset, or stories from the marginalized and silenced (615-16). Over the past few decades, scholars from multiple disciplines have described the problems of essentialism and ways to combat it via anti-es-

sentialist practices, such as multiple consciousness theories, counter-storytelling (Martinez), and other methodologies. Even Lockett's chapter in this book deals with other forms of essentialism surrounding what is or is not "Black Twitter," via linguistic practices and uses of memes.

However, my chapter flips this script, in a way. The problem with writing about racism in Grand Saline isn't that I take a minoritized group and essentialize them based on a certain quality or such. Rather, I take the majority population and characterize their culture and community as inherently racist via my storytelling act. I do this by taking individual racist encounters and talking about the ways they affected me and the ways the silence from my peers and elders also affected me. All of these encounters develop my racial literacy, how I came to know I was Brown in a White town and that race was inherently epistemic. And, by virtue, it presents the people of Grand Saline as racist simply through the act of telling these stories. Thus, an ethical dilemma arises: Where is my responsibility in sharing these stories as a means to discuss my racial literacy but also being weary of how I frame the town?

Of course, it would be easy for me to toss in caveats into all of my stories. I could say, "Not everyone in Grand Saline is racist," "My best friends weren't racist, for sure," "Joe Smith lived in town and said he is not racist, so I want you, reader, to know this." Throughout much of my research on Grand Saline, during my dissertation work and documentary project, I often asked myself questions about essentialism, especially since people often told me I was indicting Grand Saline as racist. These encounters remind me of a recent debate that occurred in Slocum, Texas. For years in Slocum, there were talks of a Black massacre that had occurred at the turn of the century, but there were no historical accounts that illustrated what actually occurred—until historian E.R. Bills wrote a book titled *The 1910 Slocum Massacre* in 2014. Along with the book, Bills applied for a historical marker to be placed in Slocum to remember the dead, whom had been forgotten for over a century. While many in the Black community felt this was justified, some Whites in the area disagreed.

For instance, Jimmy Odom, the White chairman of the Anderson County Historical Commission (where Slocum is located), spoke out against the historical marker saying, "This is a nice, quiet community with a wonderful school system. It would be a shame to mark them as racist from now until the end of time" (qtd. in Madigan). Odom's defense parallels the issues of essentialism in Grand Saline. He argues that by showing these racist misdeeds and attempting to honor the dead, people will only think of Slocum as racist. I believe people in Grand Saline feel the same about my work and would feel the same about my autoethnography: they would say it implies that all people in Grand Saline are racist.

The role of the researcher is to present their truth, even if that truth hurts others. Though I think it is important to note that my truths are solely my own, it would be disingenuous to consistently say, “But not everyone there is racist!” People everywhere are racist. However, I’m not trying to make an essentialist argument about Grand Saline because there are essential, immutable racist tendencies of everyone in town. Rather, I’m trying to say that by recounting my truth through my racial formation, Grand Saline is a microcosm of race in America, and my experiences are not uncommon—these stories are everyone’s stories. The goal of my autoethnography is not to essentialize but to illustrate my racial literacy. If I prefaced my racial stories with such “not all” language, I would be practically erasing my stories of their power—giving people in Grand Saline agency in saying that they were one of the good ones. Again, that wasn’t my upbringing. There were no antiracists acting in town, just people who were explicitly racist and people who were quiet in the face of racism. This is what made Charles Moore’s act so important to me: it was one of the first public acts of antiracism to ever take place in the town and was mostly erased because it was too controversial.

Essentialism is a powerful, rhetorical tool that people often use as a means of oppression. As researchers, we should be more in-tune with the way essentialism appears in our work, especially when it describes marginalized, disenfranchised peoples. In the case of my own research, I bring up essentialism to demonstrate the critiques I often receive about my research, sometimes publicly. A few years ago, a former friend called me a “self-righteous, uninformed, self-serving pseudo-academic,” who defamed Grand Saline solely to promote myself on a Facebook newspaper page. He believed my research about Grand Saline labels the entire culture as racist.

I get that sentiment. I think it is important for researchers to be reflexive when it comes to their work. This is a major component of the autoethnographic process, and it should be a more generative discourse that researchers utilize when discussing communities and peoples. Being reflexive won’t erase all questions about essentialism we might receive from our work, but it can provide us a stronger methodological positioning to stand.

THE PROBLEM WITH RECONCILIATION

How can an autoethnographic lens create a means of reconciliation? As famed historian Timothy Tyson has stated, “If there is to be reconciliation, first there must be truth” (10), so I share these experiences to first position a cultural interpretation of my upbringing in Grand Saline before investigating the reconciliatory aspects of this autoethnographical lens.

For many of the years during college and grad school—after I began my racial studies—I harbored anger towards Grand Saline because I knew that elders in the community were still spreading a racist ideology, and there had to be other students of color who were at the butt of jokes and harassment. Of course, my pain wasn't a constant presence in my daily life; most of the time I wouldn't even notice it unless I was passing through Grand Saline or had a random moment jog my memory. But all of this eventually changed for me. The moments I described above, these memories that once made me cringe or think hateful things towards some friends and community members for being explicitly racist, are not discharged of emotion, but my anger has quelled. This process of (what I call) personal reconciliation did not develop overnight; rather, I believe it was part of a rhetorical process that stemmed from the autoethnographic methods I utilized in writing my dissertation (and, in extension, this chapter) and producing a documentary about my hometown. But what is my role in the reconciliation process, especially as a researcher of color looking for some resolve in a community not asking for it? Do I have agency in claiming racial healing for myself without communal repentance—or even communal acceptance? Where does my own agency lie in not only being a victim of racism but someone who participated in it?

In his foundational text on the rhetoric of reconciliation, “Reconciliation—A Rhetorical Concept/ion,” Erik Doxtader attempts to dissect reconciliation's rhetorical capabilities and limitations. He states, “The reality of reconciliation appears wed to words, the power of logos to turn us from one condition to another and the actions of speech that provoke us to reflect on how we talk and to what ends” (278). In reference to speech, Doxtader argues that the power in reconciliation exists within how words convey meaning and how they have the potential to move an individual from one state (unresolved) to another (resolved). He reiterates his point: “More modest, the claim here is that reconciliation's beginning is an announced call for that speech which tropologically turns justifications for violence toward shared oppositions that contain the potential for communicative understanding. In other words, reconciliation (a) opens a present for speech; (b) performs and advocates the middle voice of an ethos; and (c) constitutes a struggle for recognition” (278). Reconciliation to Doxtader is a window of potential, one that opens access for healing via speech acts, ethos appeals, and recognition. In concluding his article, Doxtader refers to reconciliation as “a working faith in the works of words. . . Reconciliation is a rhetorical memory made, an active re-membling of rhetoric's making, and a remembrance of what rhetoricity might yet make” (284). He envisions the concept of reconciliation living in the hopes that our words can create resolve and a space for healing, and of course, referring to this as a “faith” suggests that all of this resides in a meta-

physical rather than a formulaic space. This is where I envision my own chapter intervening in the rhetorical conception of reconciliation.

To achieve reconciliation, Doxtader argues that his three points must be achieved. However, this definition relies upon those who have done wrong attempting to make right their wrongs. In the case of Grand Saline, many in the community have not considered recognizing the pain they have committed against me and others. My discussions of racism and my autoethnography illustrate my own racial literacy and construction of myself in Grand Saline, but they also exist as a personal reconciliation for myself. In one sense, I view the endeavor of writing my dissertation and producing these words on a screen as having faith, faith that my words matter, that they can produce a resolve for me. In this way, I am not solely following Doxtader's formula, because he describes the process of reconciliation existing around a person/community seeking reconciliation and a person/community who has committed "violence." My autoethnography challenges the ways reconciliation forms, suggesting that reconciliation can develop not solely with two or more actors meeting with the potential for resolve and recognition, but can be a discursive process the researcher can unfold, intentionally or unintentionally. Sometimes reconciliation isn't about time or the process but rather about surviving in the muck and doing the work to overcome one's past. Sometimes reconciliation is about having compassion for ourselves and others, understanding that change occurs due to our proximity and understanding of others. Reconciliation is complex.

I view this chapter as another attempt at reconciliation—not just a personal one—where I come face-to-face with my own racial misdeeds in Grand Saline. My hands are not clean. I did not actively try to stop racism in my hometown when it occurred. I also was a participant in it. I said the n-word when I knew it was an acceptable form of communication. When we played against teams with Black players, I participated in fueling hatred towards them. In full disclosure, I don't think I ever led the racist charge. I never was the one who riled up racism. Or at least I hope that I didn't do any of those things. So this chapter not only attempts to reconcile the racism done unto me but also is the recognition that I have done racism unto others as well. I have vilified people of color who didn't assimilate into the "white habitus"¹ as well as I could. I have done all of the bigoted things that I know I am now against. In some ways, maybe this makes me a hypocrite, but I hope it also demonstrates that people can change as well, because I am not that same kid who grew up in East Texas and wanted to be White. And I write these words so others might be moved to change as well.

1 Eduardo Bonilla-Silva defines this as a "racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters" (104).

So how do I achieve reconciliation? The answer is as vague as the question. Maybe I have achieved reconciliation. Maybe. For people whom I have wronged—perhaps someone reading this chapter—I want you to know that I recognize that I was an ignorant adolescent who did not have the courage to stand up against racism. I even contributed to it. I am willing to discuss these wrongs with anyone who would like to talk because I believe such discourse is what we need to try and better ourselves and our communities.

But I am unsure if reconciliation exists for me as a victim or me as a perpetrator. On some level, I feel as an agent writing this chapter, talking about my history, and being open with myself, I have on some level achieved some degree of resolve within my community. Maybe this doesn't follow the broad terms of reconciliation that Doxtader promotes because my problem is more nuanced, but I do feel at peace. And I remember the first time this actually took place.

When I was filming the documentary, we had multiple shoots in Grand Saline across the fall and winter of 2016-2017. I often interviewed people in Grand Saline about racial issues for the documentary. This project put a target on the film team's back and made for some awkward encounters with residents about issues of race—where people would call me a liar, ask me to leave certain spaces, and would refuse to talk to me. Since I was the interviewer in most situations, I often had to come face-to-face with big questions about race: “What is it like being labelled as racist?” “Do you believe your community is racist?” “Do you remember anything racist happening in town when you were younger?” Many residents in town refused to talk to us because I had a reputation of being a “race baiter” (whatever that means) and thought our project attempted to defame the town. Others participated in the interviews but skirted around issues of race. And while I was glad to acquire terrific footage for the documentary, I found myself asking particular questions (to myself) when conducting interviews. Was I mad at some of these people for the racism they fostered? Was I only antiracist now because it benefited me academically (as some townspeople told me)? I soon realized that taking on the documentary was as much about myself as it was about the town.

I never had an “aha” reconciliation moment when I felt at peace with Grand Saline during filming the documentary because I don't think this process has an end, but a recent moment helped me realize my thoughts had changed. In March 2018, we held a screening of *Man on Fire* in Tyler, TX, 40 miles south of Grand Saline. It was the first public screening of the film (sponsored by the University of Texas Tyler's Honors Program), and we invited everyone who participated in the project and much of Grand Saline to come to the screening. Two hundred or two hundred and fifty people attended, and a few residents from Grand Saline appeared as well. As we took the stage for the Q&A, I felt nervous.

I had spoken about this film in film festivals and academic settings, which felt natural to me. But to engage with local people who might have grown up in Grand Saline and the surrounding area appeared daunting to me. During the Q&A, I explored some of my own upbringing and received a specific question from a former resident of Grand Saline: “Are you still mad?” she asked me from the back of the theatre. I thought about it for a moment, feeling the eyes of the room looking straight at me. There were people in this room that I knew were racists to some degree or another. Even some of my childhood friends who disagree with my takes on our hometown sat in attendance, and their eyes weighed me down. I looked at the woman and replied: “No.”

I don’t remember the full explanation I provided this person, but I remember the feeling that made me confident in my response. After a few years of exploring my home community, my racial upbringing, and Moore’s death, I felt a sense of relief. But I think this relief is twofold: on one hand, I don’t feel angry at these people anymore because I have moved forward with my life, but I also was relieved knowing that I would continually challenge racism and racists in Grand Saline. They could no longer hide beneath the folklore and whispers around town. My documentary and my research would bring them out to the open where maybe they can face processes of reconciliation with others.

I think I never had the “aha” moment because this healing process didn’t form through a single moment but through doing the work. The dissertation and documentary made me face my own fears—my upbringing, other agents of racism, and the community at large—and only through the grueling process of the work—interviewing people who made me uncomfortable and challenging my hometown openly and publicly—did I find a sense of healing. By forcing myself to deal with these issues, I was able to find some relief. Of course, I know this isn’t possible for everyone dealing with these issues, but it does pinpoint something valuable: if we work on our issues by facing them head-on, we can get the reconciliation process started.

The process might not have a fixed end, but that beginning is better than nothing.

CONCLUSION

Autoethnography is a powerful methodological lens, one that makes the personal cultural, interpretive, and subject to critique. Oftentimes, autoethnographies become academic fodder because of the advantages and constraints built into this method: they afford the individual to claim their own truths (which makes people feel they cannot critique said truths) and rely heavily on subjectivity to make claims. In terms of anti-racism, autoethnography provides a space for the

researcher to combat accepted norms and pinpoint realities of racism that might not always be apparent to most audiences. It can be a site of anti-racist power, when used accordingly. Autoethnographies can illustrate the various realities of racism in our personal lives and provide ways to critique normative, institutional structures. My own racial literacy demonstrates this point.

Racial literacies also add to anti-racist research because they inherently demonstrate how the researchers learned that race is a socially constructed phenomenon. My own literacy focuses on the ways I existed within and outside certain categories, becoming Brown in certain situations and relating to whiteness in other ones. And this is where the power of anti-racist methods lies: they can connect the personal with the scholarly and vice versa, drawing clear connections between lived experiences and theoretical or methodical research. We need more scholars doing this work, if only to push the “everydayness” of racism into the forefront of both our research and our lives.

Yet, this power doesn't only exist within making the personal scholarly and the scholarly personal. It can also greatly affect our personal lives through reconciliation. It may not be the formulaic reconciliation that we think of in terms of nations attempting to move past communal atrocities, but personal ones—ones that can help the researcher move past pain and trauma that lingers from their past.

Therefore, the power of autoethnography lies within the ways the research can speak to an audience—sure—but also in how the individual researcher, the one who is speaking their truth, can change due to their own scholarship.

WORKS CITED

- Bell, Derrick. “The Law of Racial Standing.” *Yale Journal of Law and Liberation*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1991, pp. 117-21.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2004.
- Bills, E. R. *The 1910 Slocum Massacre: An Act of Genocide in East Texas*. The History Press, 2014.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.
- Boylorn, Robin M. and Mark P. Orbe, editors. *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life*. Routledge, 2017.
- Chang, Heewon. *Autoethnography as Method*. Routledge, 2008.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1989, no. 1, 1989, pp. 139-67.
- Doxtader, Erik. “Proper Reconciliation Means a Collective Undertaking to Make History.” *Cape Times*, 4 Apr. 2008, p. 9.

- . "Reconciliation—A Rhetorical Concept/ion." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 89, no. 4, 2003, pp. 267-92.
- Ellis, Carolyn, and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, SAGE, 2000, pp. 733-68.
- Hanson-Easey, Scott, et al. "'They're all tribals': Essentialism, Context and the Discursive Representation of Sudanese Refugees." *Discourse & Society*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2014, pp. 362-82.
- Harris, Angela P. "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1990, pp. 581-616.
- "I'm a Football Hero." *True Life*, created by Betsy Forhan, Dave Sirulnick, Jim Fraenkel, and Marshall Eisen, Viacom Media Networks and MTV Studios, 2000.
- Lindquist, Julie. *A Place to Stand: Politics and Persuasion in a Working-Class Bar*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Loewen, James. "Showing Grand Saline in TX. . ." *The Homepage of James W. Loewen*, Accessed 21 Sep. 2018.
- Madigan, Tim. "Texas Marks Racial Slaughter More than a Century Later." *Washington Post*, 16 Jan. 2016.
- Martinez, Aja. *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*. NCTE, 2020.
- Moore, Charles. "O Grand Saline Repent of Your Racism." *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, 2 Jul. 2014.
- Quillian, Lincoln, and Devah Pager. "Black Neighbors, Higher Crime? The Role of Racial Stereotypes in Evaluations of Neighborhood Crime." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 107, no. 3, 2001, pp. 717-67.
- Sanchez, James Chase, producer. *Man on Fire*. Directed by Joel Fendelman, Fendelman Films and New Day Films, 2018.
- . *Preaching behind the Fiery Pulpit: Rhetoric, Public Memory, and Self-Immolation*. 2017. Texas Christian U, Ph.D. dissertation.
- . "Recirculating our Racism: Public Memory, Folklore, and Place in East Texas." *Inventing Place: Writing Lone Star Rhetorics*, edited by Casey Boyle and Jenny Rice, Southern Illinois UP, 2018, pp. 75-87.
- . "Trump, the KKK, and the Versatility of White Supremacy." *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, vol. 8, no. 1/2, 2018, pp. 44-56.
- Sealey-Ruiz, Yolanda. "Building Racial Literacy in First-Year Composition." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2013, pp. 384-98.
- Thompson, Roger. "*Kairos* Revisited: An Interview with James Kinneavy." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2000, pp. 73-88.
- Trainor, Jennifer Seibel. *Rethinking Racism: Emotion, Persuasion, and Literacy in an All-White High School*. Southern Illinois UP, 2008.
- Tyson, Timothy. *Blood Done Sign my Name*. Three Rivers Press, 2005.
- Villanueva, Victor. *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1993.
- Williams, Patricia J. *The Alchemy of Race Rights*. Harvard UP, 1992.