

RhetTech

Undergraduate Journal in Writing, Rhetoric, and Technical Communication



VOLUME THREE



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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

This volume of RhetTech began a year ago, with our first call for papers happening in the spring of 2020. The following fall, our new editors' team was established, and we began reviewing and accepting pieces for this volume. During the spring 2021 semester, our team worked diligently to edit and finalize the third volume of RhetTech, which we are incredibly grateful to now be sharing with you.

RhetTech was established in 2017 with the goal of publishing multi-modal work within the disciplines of writing, rhetoric, and technical communication. RhetTech is distributed solely in an online format, allowing a variety of compositions to be published. The RhetTech editorial team for volume three consists of seven-teen undergraduate students. We are extremely proud of this volume and the range of work we were able to include.

Not only did submissions come from universities across the US, they were also edited by students from different disciplines here at James Madison University, including History, Public Policy, Computer Science, English, and Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication.

We have the honor of publishing eleven pieces in this volume of RhetTech. This year's writers hail from five different states, including three authors from right here in the Shenandoah Valley. This year's pieces span a wide range of topics, including health, memoir, diversity and culture, and selections that are apart of a special section "Behind the Pen" wherein authors detail their experiences with literacy and writing in their families and cultures.

In the piece titled "Endometriosis and how it Connects to Larger Issues in Women's Healthcare," Josephine Meloy chronicles the struggles women face accessing healthcare, especially women with endometriosis. Next, Brenna Sermania's "Asexuality: The Unseen Identity" takes a detailed look into the meaning of asexuality, the discrimination that people with this identity face, and what we can all do to better support this community. After that, we have "Mom's Gone, Now What?" where Alexis Gardner shares an honest and vulnerable reflection on the experience and impact that losing her mother had on her life.

We are also pleased to include "Sacrifices Made in the Vietnamese Emigration During the Late 1970s" by Miranda Jae Lam; she recounts the history of Vietnam while sharing her father's harrowing journey of separation, war, and immigration.

Next, in "LHS Cultural Appropriation," Tessa Anderson depicts her former high school's history of involvement in cultural appropriation, and the efforts to address the issue. In a multimodal composition titled "Dance as an Innovative Response to Challenges," Natalie Gardner addresses the history of race relations in America through her passion for dance. Gardner explains that dance can be a resource, a path to healing, a tool for understanding, and a means for building community.

As we mention above, we also have a new feature this year: we are including a special section called "Behind the Pen." We include the work of three authors detailing their experiences with literacy and writing in their families and cultures. "A Tale of Three Tongues," written by Christa Niyeze, follows her experience learning to speak Kirwayandan, French, and English at home and in language classes. Likewise, in her piece "More Than Meets the Eye: Why Context Matters in Literacy Studies" Rachel Hagerman researches the relationship context, language, and literacy. Finally, in "Falling in Love with Writing: Lessons from My Dad," Meghan Long gives a personal account of her journey of becoming a writer and her Dad's influence on her passion.

Although the circumstances in the world around us were constantly changing and, at times, challenging this year, our team's passion and determination for RhetTech has never wavered. We would like to express our gratitude for the work done and support given to us by the RhetTech advisor, Cathryn Molloy, the director of the JMU WRTC department, Michael Smith, and the WRTC technology and media specialist, Kristin Knapp.

Sincerely,
The RhetTech Editorial Board

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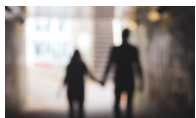
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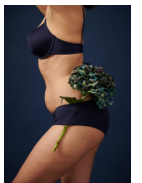
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Natalie Gardner

Dance as an Innovative Response to Challenges

ABSTRACT:

During this unprecedented time, dance is a powerful resource to cope with anxiety, depression, and chronic stress caused by the current circumstances. Dance movement allows people to regain a sense of control over their lives in a time when many factors are out of our control. Dance can allow people to process the socioeconomic and racial injustices still pervasive today. Dance allows us to escape our troubles and heal from the sadness, pain, and anger we are currently experiencing. Dance allows asymmetrical reciprocity through which people can recognize and value differences without bias.

Access Natalie Gardner's piece here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Fw1faoI4iqZgZvxcklMsANip93Yvt9Kg7jkA9kZmu7c/edit>



ABSTRACT:

The aftermath of the Vietnam War forced many families to escape a communist nation, causing many to make heartbreaking sacrifices. I recorded an interview with my father, Tim Lam, in order to have a direct account of his experiences while in Vietnam as well as the journey of escaping Vietnam during the aftershock of the war. Considering my father has long viewed Vietnam as a place he is unable to return to as long as it remains communist, I was interested in what influenced his perspective and mentality. While telling me about the sacrifices and tragic conditions he endured to immigrate to the United States, I was able to understand the harsh conditions created when the communist government took over and propelled Vietnamese citizens to search for ways out. By writing this paper using a qualitative study approach based on an oral history told by my father, I will draw inferences and provide an analysis of the sacrifices made in the Vietnamese emigration during the late 1970s. Along with my father's recollections, I will also include different experiences and perspectives from other refugees in order to provide a broader historical context. The sacrifices and hardships many Vietnamese refugees faced greatly influenced their stance on the current nation of Vietnam and may even cause a sense of resentment toward their homeland.

Keywords: Vietnam War, communist, sacrifices, immigration, emigration, government

Sacrifices Made in the Vietnamese Emigration During the Late 1970s

During the mid to late 1970s, South Vietnam underwent drastic changes in its governmental system as North Vietnam eventually took over South Vietnam, causing the region to become one communist nation. Many Vietnamese citizens viewed the new government as a controlling, dictatorial power stripping away freedoms from the people. Due to the Vietnamese Communist Party's takeover, many sought to find a way out of the country so that they could live out a better future. The new Vietnamese government became the main reason for a majority of Vietnamese immigrants' desire to set a new path towards America. Moreover, the status of being a communist state often prevents Vietnamese people who have settled in America from revisiting Vietnam; the sacrifices that were made to escape a communist government has forced many Vietnamese refugees to still view Vietnam as a place where freedom is suppressed.

The sacrifices my father and his family endured shaped his perspective of Vietnam as what he understands to be an oppressive country. To explore the journey my family underwent in the hopes of escaping Vietnam, I interviewed my father and asked a series of questions focusing on this larger examination: What were the sacrifices you and your family had to make in order to pursue a better future outside of Vietnam?

Today, many historians have forgotten to emphasize post-war experiences following the Vietnam War, and have instead focused solely on the events during the devastating conflict. The struggles and experiences many faced after the Vietnam War is, in my estimation, understated in history books and newspaper articles. This essay will provide a direct account of Vietnamese refugees' experiences and perspectives during the post-war period of the Vietnam War. Vietnamese immigrants made major sacrifices in their escape from Communist Vietnam, often influencing their negative views of the country years after the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

Method

By adapting a structure of oral recollection to develop an oral history surrounding my father's experiences, I hope to gain insight into the significant events that established the foundation of my family history.

Oral history allows different peoples to gain a sense of understanding and knowledge that may help to accelerate different areas of research and collaboration. The topic of Vietnamese emigration includes the experiences of Vietnamese refugees, thus allowing other refugees of different ethnicities and cultures to connect and identify the similarities and differences in each of their journeys. Not only can inferences be drawn across contexts, but this oral history will emphasize the importance of each individual's story-- a significant aspect that many historical books fail to include.

The interviewee for this project is Tim Lam, my 59-year-old father who was born and raised in the small and impoverished city of Tam Ky. Located close to the border of North and South Vietnam, Tam Ky was a place where annual floods struck. Tons of homes were affected, forcing families to prepare and stock nonperishable foods every year before the flood season. Tim currently lives in Rosemead, California with his wife and two daughters, and has lived there ever since he purchased the home in 1988, nine years after immigrating to America in 1979. He has three brothers and six sisters for a total of nine siblings who were all born in Vietnam, but they all currently reside in different areas of Southern California. Before immigrating to the United States, Tim completed elementary school and one year of junior high in Da Nang, Vietnam. He did not complete any additional schooling in America.

Using the recorder application "Otter" on a smartphone, the participant was asked to be interviewed in person on a pre-scheduled date. A list of general questions was created before the interview to ensure the participant had room to speak freely and comfortably about his experiences and stories. The list of general questions acted as a starting point for conversation; however, they were not meant to be the only questions asked. Taking the participant's answers to the general questions asked into account, the interviewer decided which aspects of the participant's experience to focus on. The method of asking broader questions instead of more specific ones prevented the participant from feeling confined to only one answer. The interview took place in the participant's home, making sure he would feel comfortable.

These official methods, though, do not capture our relationship or the intimacy of our home. Let me also say: On October 11, 2020, before the interview was conducted, my father and I just finished watching an NBA

game of Los Angeles Lakers vs. Miami Heat, where his favorite team won. Feeling happy, he and I sat on the living room sofa and I asked his permission for the interview to be recorded. At 7:14 p.m. that night, I started to record and asked him a series of general questions, later leading up to more specific questions that were based on his previous responses. Throughout the interview, we heard loud fireworks in our neighborhood, and my mother sometimes interrupted, causing distractions. I stopped the recording to take a five-minute break and began to resume the interview in a new recording. Near the end of the interview, I went back to fact check some of the information I learned. After concluding the interview, I thanked my father for participating and reviewed the transcript to make sure I hadn't forgotten any questions that needed asking.

Results

One aspect of Vietnam's Communist rule that directly impacted my father was the topic of education. When he was around fourteen to fifteen years old, he attended junior high in Da Nang, Vietnam, where he lived in dormitories that provided room and board at a low cost. When North Vietnam took over South Vietnam and the nation became communist in April 1975, the Vietnamese Communist Party closed the dormitories and structured their own educational system in which they did not provide food or shelter for students:

“Let me explain to you what happened. In 1975 the Communists took over and I didn't have to go to Da Nang anymore. I had to come back to my old town and go to regular junior high and high school. And by the time I go to tenth grade, the Communists, they make us go to school five days a week but three days they make us work. They use the students to work on the farm and build the dens. They use the students to go away from the school and work for the government. They don't pay nothing. You have to bring your own lunch. They say it is mandatory for the students to go work. You have no choice, you don't work, they don't let you go to school. That's their way.”

The Communist government in Vietnam took over the educational system, forcing students to work in farms as a mandatory regulation that granted two days of education a week. My father felt obligated to work, because he did not want to discover what would happen if he resisted and rebelled against the evident wrongdoings of the Communist government. To prevent any consequences or backlash towards his family, he sacrificed his free will during that time and worked in the farms without any complaints. He recognized the injustices that were prevalent in Vietnam and continued to do so as he kept working on the farm:

“I remember sometimes you sit with the group and Communists at that time from North Vietnam have the same classmates as us and they say 'wow you have good food, why don't you share with us'. And I don't feel good, even my own lunch they compare. They get jealous because a lot of poor people have a good take care and have good food and that's why people get jealous. That's why I hate communists. And then after I get back I say 'daddy, mom, I need to go and get out. Even you student have to stress like that. Even they don't treat you, the student, kid good. The student work for free and they treat like slaves. They can do that. And you look at the whole system, it's not right. That's the reason why I want to get out.”



Realizing the many inequalities and injustices evident in the government's rule, my father told his parents that he could not bear being in the country any longer and that he needed to leave. Students were treated as workers and slaves, working without any compensation or food. Furthermore, students were very poor and used food as a way of classifying each other in terms of social class. My father despised this because he knew everyone was poor and there was no need to compare. He knew there was a better place than where he was in, where he could have a better future for his family and himself. Considering students needed to bring their own lunch and necessities in an already poor city, my father witnessed the extent of how people were suffering and divided. Due to his own realization, my father decided to hate communists--to hate the new state that Vietnam was in.

When my father's family decided to emigrate from Vietnam, they created a plan that would ensure the highest level of safety and security for everyone at that time. Although they created a plan that would allow all children and both parents to immigrate to America, unexpected events unraveled and affected my family deeply. My father explains the sacrifices his family made:

“At that time I think everybody wants to come to America, but we don't know what happen. We left the country is the dream comes true or not always stuck us, they catch us in jail or we don't know what happen, the boat can sink and we still have someone left in Vietnam. We divide two group. We have ten children, ten brothers, sisters, with mom and dad, in total twelve. My mom and daddy let seven children go in the first group first. And then mom and daddy have another three children in Vietnam and we left; seven brother and sister go to Hong Kong to the United States. I think around 1978 or 79 at that time. And then the second group stay there for five years,, I go with the seven group. Later, and then my mom passed away.”

Acknowledging their need to immigrate to America, my dad's family devised a plan to split up into groups of two while travelling to the United States to minimize the risk of casualties if something unexpected happened to one group. Being placed in the first group to leave their homeland, my dad left his mother believing he would see her again in America.



Since that was not the case, my dad added to his sense of resentment towards the Communist Party in Vietnam. As the memory of his mother remained, the pain of losing her persists today.

“If my mom came with me in the first group, she probably live longer. But when before I leave Vietnam, I think the boat delay a few days and the schedule change. And my seven group people say ‘Tim, you the youngest one. You have to take the train to go home and tell mom and daddy like the schedule delay a couple day.’ When I come back I see my mom and my daddy. My mom said, ‘Tim, I’m gonna cook you one dinner good for you. I don’t know when I’m going to see you again.’ And she passed away. I didn’t see her. I was younger than you one age. She said, ‘Ah Tim, I’ll cook for you good. Eat a lot, okay? I don’t know when I’m going to see you.’ And I never see her again.”

My father's mother passed away while he was in Hong Kong. With hopes of reuniting one day with his mother, he was broken-hearted when he heard the news. He felt the same raw emotions that he said he felt back then during the interview. He will never forget the time when his mother passed away after she told him “I don't know when I'm going to see you.” My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and father risked their lives to move to a new country where they hoped to build a better future. In my father's estimation, the Vietnamese Communist Party forced them to have no other choice but to risk their safety, livelihood, family and money.

Discussion

My father emphasized how he and his family sacrificed their lives for the possibility of having a better future in the United States. In an attempt to further understand the experiences of my father and other Vietnamese immigrants (Espiritu, 2014; Hunt, 2010; MacLean, 2008), I will draw connections between social structures and how past tragedies have long-lasting impacts.

Government Regulations

After the Communists took over, “soul searching was the order of the day among those closely tied to the Saigon government.

They had lost all—position, honor, country—and many faced uncertain futures either as exiles or as inmates in Vietnam’s ‘reeducation centers’” (Hunt, 2010, p.186). Communist Vietnam was a dictatorial and controlling state, inducing a sense of fear of the unknown among all citizens. My father and his family were worried about what could have happened if they stayed in Vietnam. The Communist Party had the ability to force people into exile or “reeducation centers” if anyone disobeyed their policies or regulations. Therefore, my father strictly obeyed their policy of working in the farms three days a week during school hours in an effort to prevent any unnecessary trouble from the government. While working on the farms, he witnessed a pattern of poverty among Northern Vietnamese workers and Southern Vietnamese workers alike, specifically with the lack of food abundance. MacLean (2008) described Vietnam food shortages:

“Chronic shortages were not unique to Vietnam. Rather, they were the inevitable outcome of a centrally planned economy, as power within the system was based on the hoarding of materials that could be redistributed for other goods and services in the unspecified future.” (p.290)

The Vietnamese Communist Party did not focus on the food shortages of its state or create any social solutions to solve this major problem. Instead, they forced students to work in farms to serve as “slaves,” as my father stated.

The government’s lack of care for the Vietnamese people and the sacrifice of my father’s own independence and freedom in the farms have influenced my father’s work ethic, identity, and politics today. The harsh struggles my father faced with Vietnam in the past has molded him into a hardworking man who prides himself on his work. Today, I see him fixing everything around and inside the house, car, and yard. He helps my extended family with their repairs, too, considering he has developed a strong appreciation and love for the family he has. He does not want to rely on contractors, plumbers, mechanics, or yard workers because he wants to do things for himself. Since he had no government or authorities to help him or his family in Vietnam, he has been programmed to believe that a person can only rely on themselves and not others.

The Vietnam War was unquestionably among the “most brutal and destructive wars between Western imperial powers and the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America;” however, post-war time events are often overlooked by historians and the public (Espiritu, 2014, p. 81).



Due to the communist state of Vietnam, many Vietnamese citizens wanted to escape the injustices committed by the government. Being one of the most tragic and destructive wars in history, historians often examine the war itself instead of its aftermath. For example, the lives of those who stayed in Vietnam after the war are not often examined by historians. Considering the personal stories of Vietnamese refugees who experienced struggles of “chronic shortages” amidst many other daily hardships are different from the “meta-narratives” in historical recollections, and “it is not surprising that little effort has been made to commemorate them in official memory” (MacLean 2008, p. 285). From my father’s recollection, half of his family escaped Vietnam, leaving the other half of his family still settled in Vietnam. When he left his mother in Vietnam, he had high hopes of reuniting with her in the future. However, he did not have that chance as illness came to her first. Since my father and his family went through an unexpected and tragic loss, he and his family members have a great sense of animosity toward going back to Vietnam. The sacrifices that were made during the time of post-war Vietnam are instilled in my father’s mind and prevent him from seeing Vietnam as a place of freedom.

Conclusion

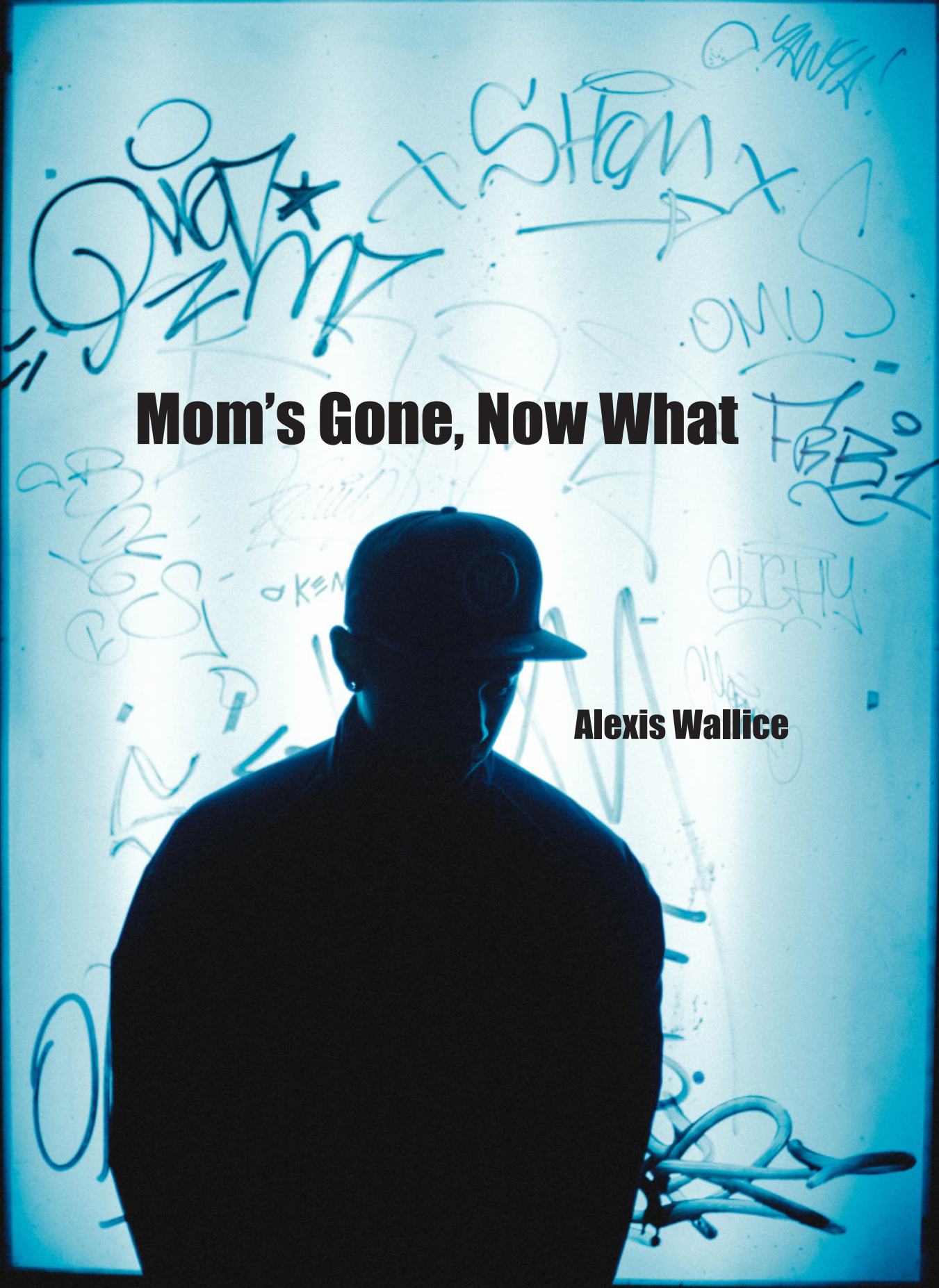
Although Vietnam has improved the treatment of its citizens in recent years, negative post-war affiliations have still remained in the minds of those who have emigrated from Vietnam. Many immigrants who have escaped Communist Vietnam still view the nation to be filled with injustices and inequalities. The harsh experiences and sacrifices that the majority of Vietnamese refugees have made remain to shape and impact their lives today. To investigate this topic further, I may ask other family members of their experiences and sacrifices in immigrating to the United States in order to better understand the larger complexities involved with the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Based on different educational, environmental, or communal experiences in Southern Vietnam, other people may have different or similar perspectives of Vietnam during the late 1970s versus current day. Although my findings are mainly constructed from the perspective of my father, they may be used in and applied to future psychological studies of stress, anger or disenfranchisement in Vietnamese immigrants in the escape of Communist Vietnam during the late 1970s.



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Mom's Gone, Now What

Alexis Wallice

On January 21st, 2006 our mother died. None of us even got to say goodbye. She left three children motherless—well, a child and two young adults. The absurd obituary made it sound like it was completely normal for her to be gone, as if it were to be expected. The damn thing was cut and dry, with no empathy or sympathy; it was as cold as her dead body. Her funeral, though beautiful, was full of so much tension. I know we were all pissed that our aunt, who had degraded and treated my mother like shit when my mother was alive, had the audacity to speak at her funeral and say how much she would “miss her sister.” We all knew that this was a lie, and we all knew that she was just saving face in front of our grandparents.

I will never forget the day she died. It was surreal to the point that I really did not want to believe it. My sister showed up first. She was balling her eyes out, and I just assumed something happened to her then-boyfriend. Then my dad showed up with my brother. I still didn't think that something happened to my mother, but I was fucking wrong. The day she died, a part of my soul died with her. My heart shattered and left an empty hole where she used to be.

People, in general, don't know how to help those grieving. They offer up condolences, but in the end, it never helps. Nothing anyone says will ever help or make you feel better. So instead, you start searching for ways to cope, and sometimes they're going to be the worst coping mechanisms you can have. The sad reality of it all is that the grieving are just looking for that safe place, and that was ripped right out from under us. I was beyond overwhelmed with the abundance of emotions racking my body, mind, and soul. The main emotions that are still there today are anger, despair, and jealousy. I am angry for her being taken away. I feel despair for the hopelessness of not having my mother, and knowing I will never get to see her nor hear her voice ever again. I feel jealous because it is like I was cheated out of having a relationship with my mother, while my brother and sister who are older got to actually have a relationship with her. For years, I have felt these emotions; I still struggle with them 15 years later.

Even though the three of us shared this traumatic event, we each handled it differently and we each handled it alone. Hell, none of us share the memory of finding out that she died, even though we were all told together. At the time, we were only 21, 20, and 13 years old.

My brother acted as if nothing happened, my sister became a bitter and resentful alcoholic, and I became a depressed and angry drug addict. They say that there are five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. My brother is stuck in denial, while my sister and I are stuck in anger and depression. So how does someone accept that their loved one is gone with no chance of seeing or hearing them again? Seriously, how?



My brother went on living his life as if nothing happened. The week after her funeral, he jumped right back into work and went on with life. He never talks about her or what happened, to the point that no one would ever know he lost a parent. A few years later, he got married and had a son. I wonder if his son knows who his grandmother was. Do they talk about her? Hell, do they even show the kid pictures of her? I guess this is his coping mechanism—blocking out a traumatic event, pretending like it never happened, bottling up all his emotions so he doesn't have to acknowledge or deal with it. I can understand the appeal, but in the end, when you bottle too much up, it tends to explode. I'm still waiting to see if my brother is going to explode or not.

My sister started drinking her feelings 'till it got to the point that she didn't want to drink alone. When this happened, she started providing me with alcohol while I was still a minor. She had a tendency to blame everyone else for her problems, causing her own isolation from the rest of the family. Eventually, she stopped drinking, started a family, and now has two kids. She makes sure to let their kids know who their grandmother was with pictures, videos, and stories. Which finally brings us to me. I started by drinking to deal with my issues, which then led to weed. When weed no longer was strong enough to help me forget, I started trying other things like cocaine, acid, ecstasy, prescription painkillers, and self-harm. Basically, I did anything to mask the abundance of emotions I was feeling. I chose to be emotionally numb rather than deal with my emotions, because most days it was too unbearable. It wasn't until I got arrested that I finally got my shit together and started dealing with my emotions. I guess we can say this was my wake-up call, because I was going to be serving at least 6 months in the county jail if I failed even one drug test.

I chose to stay clean because I realized I would never want my mom to see me like that.

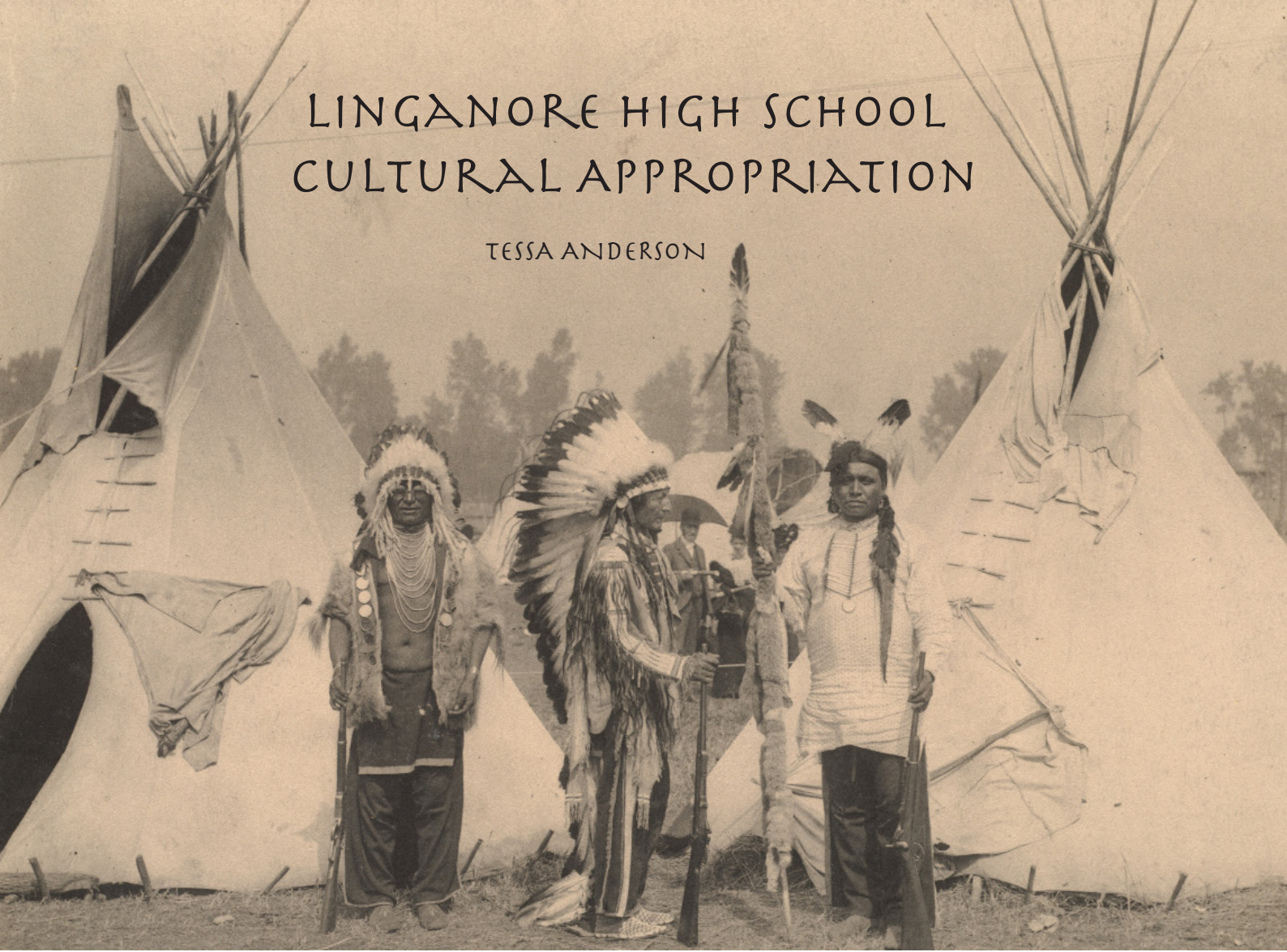
To this day, I have not accepted my mother's death. However, I know she is gone and is not coming back, which makes my anger start all over again. The sad part is, January 21, 2021, will make it 15 years since she died, and she's been gone longer than I even knew her. I still struggle with accepting that.

My brother and sister have moved on with their lives and have started families of their own, whereas I refuse to get close to anyone and prefer to be alone. I wonder if these were the kind of lives she envisioned for her children, or did we go down the paths that were truly meant for us to become the people we are today. Charlene Marie Cordes died on Saturday, January 21, 2006, leaving behind a pretender, an alcoholic, and an addict. None of us have completed the stages of grief simply because grief is an individual's process and is different for every soul.



LINGANORE HIGH SCHOOL CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

TESSA ANDERSON



The Linganore Community

As any student of history knows well, the past has a tendency to repeat itself. As writer and philosopher George Santayana wisely noted, “Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it” (Santayana, 1905, p. 284). There is a personal experience from my own life I would like to offer in support of this idea. In the fall of 2016, a paramount tradition was about to be seized from a highly spirited high school. Situated in northern Maryland, Linganore High School takes pride in its school, especially when it comes to its athletics. Since Linganore’s founding in 1962, the high school has always had an abundance of school spirit. This past fall, it was brought to the attention of the administration that the spirit in which Linganore once indulged is now perceived as shameful due to concerns over cultural appropriation. That is, lack of knowledge the Linganore community has regarding Native American culture has led to this inappropriate mockery of the culture.

Dating back to the 1980s, cultural appropriation at Linganore High School began a trend that would continue until the present day. Linganore High

School’s mascot is the Linganore Lancer, a Native American, and the student body embraces this mascot to the fullest extent. Since the inception of Linganore High School, cheerleaders painted their faces like Indians and wore Indian headdresses in support of their school and mascot. This immense spirit of Linganore led the Student Government Association to begin fundraising efforts in 1985. The extra money from the fundraiser was invested in the purchase of a new mascot uniform referred to as ‘Louie the Lancer’. This costume is culturally inappropriate and is extremely offensive to Native Americans across the country. The purchase of ‘Louie’ was only the beginning of what became an ongoing theme at Linganore High School. The mascot was a giant head, and when worn on the body of a student, resembled a bobble head version of a Native American chief. ‘Louie the Lancer’ was a headliner at football games until 2001, but gradually disappeared thereafter. I questioned Mrs. Larson, Junior Advisor and Class Counselor at Linganore, about Louie, the infamous mascot. When I mentioned the forgotten mascot’s name, she said, “Oh! We still have Louie. He’s upstairs in storage.”

As Louie enjoys a necessary retirement, his beginnings spawned another tradition with similar offenses, which is now causing controversy and bringing unwanted attention and negative news stories to the otherwise nondescript little town.

Following 2001, a new insult sprouted from the ashes of 'Louie the Lancer', and so the Linganore headdress was born. Over time, different Linganore students would wear native headdresses to pep rallies, athletic events, and, of course, football games. The student body began electing a graduating senior to wear the Native American chief headdress at Linganore's athletic events. The chief was supported by a group of seniors who would paint a single letter across their chests in school colors. When the painted seniors then stood in a line facing the student section, the letters would reveal a catchy phrase for that night's game. The "tribe" would usually pick a theme for the game, and the student body would dress accordingly. These themes included: America out, red out, camouflage out, and many others. The role of the "chief" and his mini tribe was to get the audience loud and excited for the game, often by chanting "I believe that we will win" and "first down."

The Banning of the Headdress

For the entirety of my high school career, my friends and I were effectively blind to the offenses taking place. I was so wrapped up in the moment, the school spirit, the excitement of it all, and yes, the fun, that I didn't realize what was truly going on around me or that I was an active participant. It took the arrival of an outsider to enlighten me.

At the start of my senior year, Linganore High School hired a new principal named Nancy Doll. Our new principal brought some new, and frankly, unwanted ideas with her--the most controversial of which was the questioning of the use of the infamous headdress at sporting events. To the student body and to the town, questioning this practice seemed to be the beginning of the end. The thought of not being able to experience the anticipation and excitement of the Friday night football games brought a wave of depression to the seniors and controversy to the town. Everything turned into complete chaos. As seniors, we were particularly distraught at the thought of this tradition, something for which we had eagerly awaited for 3 years, being taken away from us. For every Linganore senior, sitting in the front of the student section at football games and painting up is monumental. Not having a "tribe" for our senior year seemed, at the time, unthinkable and unacceptable to many of us as it was something every

underclassman looked forward to for their graduating year. The "tribe" held many meetings with Mrs. Doll, pleading our case and begging her to allow the seniors to wear the headdress. Eventually, Mrs. Doll conceded and granted permission for my class to wear the headdress, but this would be the last year. She would banish the headdress the following year due, of course, to understandable concerns over cultural appropriation. On August 31, 2018, Principal Nancy Doll announced her decision. The chief headdress worn by the tribe would become an abandoned Linganore tradition like that of the disreputable 'Louie the Lancer'. It was deemed offensive to several students and Native Americans.



At first, I was upset that the headdress tradition was coming to a close. But, the more I looked into cultural appropriation, the more I understood Principal Doll's perspective and why the tradition was wrong. This past fall, the headdress was officially banned from all athletic events. The initial reaction was an outburst of emotions from both sides of the issue. Students took positions both supporting and opposing the use of the headdress. Petitions began circulating, begging for signatures to either eternally ban the headdress or to preserve the ongoing tradition. Alumni, faculty, and even parents held surprisingly strong opinions on the matter and took sides by signing the petitions in support of their positions. According to Fox News, "Petitions from both sides of the issue have each accumulated over 1,500 signatures. The petition to bring the headdress back has gathered over 2,100 signatures, with most coming from community members and alumni" (Fox news, 2017, para. 3). The Linganore community was outraged.

Seniors from the 2018 graduating class have spoken up regarding the ban. When asked about the issue, many say that the headdress was not intended to be offensive. This may be true, but the headdress is culturally inappropriate. Linganore High School has taken the Native American headdress and claimed it as their own. As a body, we may find unity in school

spirit, but the headdress is not a part of our own culture, and its use is offensive to cultures in which the headdress is significant. Borrowing from another culture may be deemed appropriation when it reflects a culture poorly or when a product of the culture is used inappropriately. In Liganore's case, the headdress is deemed cultural appropriation because the sacred Native headdress is being worn by those who don't understand the Native culture or what the headdress truly means to Native Americans.

What really enabled me to come to terms with the situation was gaining knowledge of Native American culture. As a Liganore alumni, I was biased against the suppression of our tradition. Gaining a deeper understanding of Native culture and the sacrality of the headdress, though, gave me a greater appreciation of their perspective of the controversy over the utilization of the headdress.



Native American Culture

In Native American culture, the headdress was designed for and designated to the chief of the tribe. These Native headdresses are a bouquet of feathers. Each of the feathers carries a specific meaning and is a culmination of a body of work, often accumulated through battle, and are held as sacred by Native Americans. Receiving an eagle feather is considered extremely holy. Feathers are hard to come by and are only accumulated through extreme acts of bravery. This concept may be lost on a culture that hands out trophies, ribbons, and awards for mere participation in an event. While feathered headdresses were not worn by every tribe, most used them as a reflection of rank and as a part of many rituals. Adorned with honorable feathers for each act of courage, the Indian headdress holds great merit and is considered a badge of honor. Each individual feather has a spiritual significance; elements from animals such as fur, leather, and feathers are considered elements that possess life. An Indian headdress carries elements from other living beings, and it is believed that the power of these animals will

be transferred to the Great Spirit through those who wear the piece.

When you consider the headdress and what it represents in its authentic contexts, it is important to realize that we are talking about a culture that has been dispossessed and disempowered. Entire Native American cultures have been completely wiped out in what amounts to genocide. These cultures have experienced a history of violence and atrocities against them, by the very people who are now stealing and defaming a sacred piece of their heritage for no better reason than it gives them pleasure. So when Natives see their culture being misrepresented in an unflattering setting, they are, of course, deeply offended.

Juan Boston, vice chairman of the board of directors at the Baltimore American Indian Center, told the Frederick News-Post: "We see feathers as gifts from the Creator. I'm 58, and in my life, I have received one eagle feather. When you see some people wearing one jumping around like a monkey yelling like an idiot, it is disrespectful to our culture. It's like if someone were to wear an Army general's uniform and parade around jumping and yelling making a mockery of it. The outcry would be incredible" (Fox News, 2017, para. 7). Boston's opinion on the matter and similar viewpoints have opened my eyes and helped me to realize how Liganore's lack of knowledge and respect regarding Native American culture has caused us to look past the true meaning of the native headdress. We stole a sacred element from a culture, with absolutely no understanding or regard for its meaning, and tried to assimilate it into our own culture. The Liganore Lancers are not the only ones to be held accountable for cultural appropriation. This issue has been seen worldwide with some greater offenses. The Washington Football Team, for example, was called "The Washington Redskins" for many years until activist work successfully pushed for the team to change its name. Thus, Liganore's decision to eliminate the headdress aligns with other trends toward acknowledging cultural appropriation and attempting to correct these offensive depictions.

Declaring Cultural Appropriation

Throughout history, it has been commonplace for one culture to take aspects from another and adopt them as their own. It may happen unintentionally, even going unrecognized, and it can even be beneficial to take aspects from another culture.



Picasso borrowed from African art and created amazing artwork. People learning about another culture through their art is appropriate, but when is borrowing from another culture deemed appreciation versus appropriation? In *Love, Hate and Culture Wars*, Olufunmilayo B. Arewa, a Professor of Law at UCI, discusses the borrowing from a culture out of admiration: “Explorations in the cultural sphere must be undertaken with attention to context. Some uses of cultural elements can be carried out to denigrate, as was often the case with nineteenth- and twentieth-century minstrelsy. Affinity and love of something that we may not know about can be a motivating force that draws us to observe and try to replicate” (2017, p. 3). Making use of ideas is quite valuable; borrowing from a culture out of respect for their way of life and their traditions is not always a bad thing. But when is borrowing from a culture deemed cultural appropriation?

Cultural appropriation arises when someone takes from a less dominant culture and presents it in an undesirable or offensive manner. Stealing from a culture in an offensive manner comes from a place of ignorance rather than knowledge of the culture. Consent is invaluable. Cultural appropriation relies highly on context. Someone may borrow from a culture for personal gain and

love, like Picasso, but some may also borrow from a culture out of hate, which is when it falls under cultural appropriation. After Olufunmilayo B. Arewa discusses borrowing out of affinity of the culture in, *Love, Hate and Culture Wars*, she then discusses borrowing from a culture out of hate, “The lines between borrowing and appropriation are shifting and may at times be unclear. Appropriation may be evident in varied acts, including demeaning depictions of a culture that typically becomes prominent in the United States yearly at Halloween with blackface and other troubling reminders of past hatred” (2017, p. 7). As it is often unclear where the line is between instances of borrowing from a culture in respectful and informed ways and appropriating, great care must be taken when engaging with other cultures.

Thus, it’s important to acknowledge the access we have to other cultures and how easy it is to borrow from a culture and flaunt it to the world in an unintentionally negative manner. It’s also vital to gain knowledge and familiarity with the contexts of cultural uses and their significance for both insiders and outsiders. If we are to engage in cultural appreciation and avoid the pitfalls of cultural appropriation, great care must be taken.

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Asexuality: The Unseen Identity

Brenna Sermania

Relationships are hard. Shelby, a subject of Anthony Padilla's video on asexuality, knew this but did not yet understand how much harder relationships would be for her. Shelby disclosed to Padilla during an interview that she was a virgin when she met her first boyfriend. Apparently, her boyfriend knew. That does not mean that he liked it. He began manipulating Shelby, telling her there was something wrong with her because she did not want to have sex. Shelby thought she was broken. He said she was being dramatic and that she should just get it over with. It did not matter what she thought. Thankfully, Shelby left the relationship before she was coerced into anything and began looking for an explanation as to why she did not want to have sex. Then she found out about asexuality (12).

The Basics of Asexuality

Asexuality is equally as complex as it is simple. A very basic way to phrase it would be like this: take the way a straight man feels about another man or how a straight woman feels about another woman. This is how asexual people feel towards everyone, regardless of gender. The finer details are much more complicated, but I have found that this is an excellent way to describe asexuality to people first learning about it. There are two factors that make asexuality complicated: romantic attraction/orientation and the asexuality spectrum.

Romantic Orientation

Romantic attraction is defined as “the desire for intimate and emotional relationships” (14) (in this case, intimate does not mean sexual). Romantic attraction has been described as feeling safe to express your emotions to someone, feeling safe to be vulnerable with them (3). For many people, their sexual and romantic orientations match. Other people have adopted the Split Attraction Model where their sexual orientation is separate from their romantic orientation. The Split Attraction Model is not exclusive to asexual people; however, asexuals find it necessary to describe both their sexual and romantic orientation (13). It appears that for every sexual orientation, there is a romantic orientation. For example, biromantic is a romantic attraction to two genders. Other examples are homoromantic, heteroromantic, panromantic, and aromantic (13).

Asexuality Spectrum

The asexuality spectrum, or Ace Umbrella, is also complicated. The Ace Umbrella covers many different types and degrees of asexuality (15). There are three most common subsections of asexuality: demisexual, gray asexual, and asexual (15). The simplest of the three is asexual, which means that one is not sexually

attracted to people. Demisexual is similar to asexual in that demisexuals are not sexually attracted to people until a deep emotional connection is formed (16). Gray asexuals, on the other hand, experience sexual attraction very irregularly, sometimes with years in between occurrences (16). It is also worth mentioning that some asexuals are willing to have sex in order to please or become closer to their partners, and these individuals are referred to as sex-favorable. Others are unwilling to have sex or are disturbed by it, and are referred to as sex-repulsed (12).

Misconceptions About Asexuality

A large problem that asexual people have to deal with is the massive number of assumptions and myths that many people believe are true. Not only do people believe these misconceptions, but some also use them against asexual people to discredit and ignore their sexuality.

“Asexuality is the same as celibacy.”

“Asexuality is a choice.”

Two major misconceptions are that asexuals are celibate and that asexuality is a choice (2). This is equivalent to saying being straight or gay is a decision someone makes. The misconception that asexuality is a choice belittles those who identify on the asexuality spectrum. Another common misconception is that asexuals cannot fall in love (2). This misconception is a result of people confusing or failing to understand the difference between romantic orientation and sexual orientation. Lastly, one of the most damaging and harmful misconceptions about asexuality is that asexual people are simply confused and inexperienced and that they will change their minds once they've had sexual experiences (2). Not only does this viewpoint dismiss asexuality, but it also perpetuates rape culture and corrective rape (10).

Misconceptions aside, there is even more active and voluntary discrimination against those who identify on the asexual spectrum. Many people do not see asexual people as humans because people believe that sexual desire is a fundamental part of human nature (10). Due to this, asexuals face the same discrimination as others in the LGBTQ+ community. That includes bias in multiple settings, verbal and physical abuse, and corrective rape (8).

Looking at Discrimination

One would assume that, since asexuals are not pursuing a sexual relationship, they wouldn't face some of the discrimination that other more visible members of the LGBTQ+ community face. In actuality, asexual people are judged, insulted, and, in some cases, assaulted because of their sexual identity. Heartbreakingly, a marriage can legally be terminated if a perfectly happy and loving couple does not have sex (8). And, as surprising as it seems, couples in which one or both partners are asexual can be denied adoption rights even if they are not a same-sex couple (8). Asexuals can also be denied housing and jobs because of their sexual orientation, much like the rest of the LGBTQ+ community. The asexual community is also subject to mockery for their sexual identity (8).

Discrimination: The Medical Community

All of this is heartwrenching, but there are still worse forms of discrimination that asexuals face. Discrimination by health care professionals is not uncommon. Many professionals believe that asexuality is a mental disorder or a symptom of an illness, mental or physical (9). Others have been prescribed corrective therapies, such as hormone supplements, and instructed “to have sex until [they] like it” (9). Actions like these have caused many members of the asexual community to severely distrust the medical community (9).



Verbal and Sexual Abuse

Possibly the most harmful forms of discrimination towards asexual people are corrective rape and/or the verbal and sexual harassment and assault. Julie Decker was subjected to this fate by a friend of hers. In her statement to HuffPost, she disclosed that her friend knew that she identified as asexual. Even so, he licked her face and said, “I just want to help you” (10). Decker went on to receive comments to her story like “I could turn you sexual, just give me

an hour,” and “you are autistic, you are broken” (6). She has even received rape and death threats such as; “Man, I want this chick to get raped,” “Please die of AIDS. Thanks,” “I’mma rape this bitch one day and show her the joys of orgasm,” “Just kill yourself, please... in a very painful way,” and “asexuals are just people who haven’t been raped hard or often enough” (6). These anonymous comments send a powerful message about what is valued in terms of sex and sexuality.

“I could turn you sexual, just give me an hour.”

I would like to note that I wrote this with no intention of belittling or comparing any group or individual’s hardship. This was written with the intent to bring awareness to the hardships and discrimination that asexual people face every day.



How Can We Help?

This is not a matter of whether asexuality is an orientation or a psychological condition because several studies have declared that asexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation (7). This is about the issues that asexuals face, both inside and outside the LGBTQ+ community. Solutions to many of these issues are complex and are not immediately effective. However, we must strive to fix these problems and make headway towards acceptance and allow asexuals to feel safe and comfortable with their identity.

Visibility

Some of the most important and helpful actions that many are already taking are raising awareness and mak-

ing the asexual community visible. Such efforts make it so people outside the community not only learn about asexuality, but also understand it. However, telling people is not enough. They must be taught and encouraged to be allies (4). If people were to learn more about this sexual orientation, support asexual people themselves, and help spread the word and advocate, it would help erase the misconceptions about asexuality. Activism could also help to shift society’s opinion about the community to a more accepting standpoint(11). One group working on an initiative to improve conceptions of asexuality is the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN). AVEN was created to foster public acceptance and help the asexual community grow. Since its founding in 2001, they have organized numerous outreach events and conferences to inform people about asexuality and facilitate understanding(1).

There are numerous flags that represent all of the various orientations on the Asexual Spectrum. There is an Asexual flag, a Demisexual flag, a gray-asexual flag, as well as many others. Romantic orientations are often represented by a heart that is the color of the flag that corresponds with one’s romantic orientation.

The Medical Community

We also need to alter the education that medical professionals receive to include an understanding of asexuality (9). In truth, medical students are taught very little about gender and sexual minorities. Furthermore, there is very little research on asexuality overall (9). Yes, there are several studies surrounding the psychology of asexuals (7), but in the grand scheme of things, there is not much research about asexuality(9). Asexual aromantic medical student Anna Goshua has stated that “Gaps in education and research are compromising the medical care that asexual people receive. They are deterring us from being honest with our providers or from accessing medical services entirely” (9). If medical practitioners knew more about asexuality, they would be better equipped to help their patients, and their asexual patients would be more likely to trust them.

“It is most effective before you’ve had sexual intercourse.”



Verbal and Sexual Abuse

The issue of corrective rape is the most difficult of the aforementioned issues to resolve. However, I am going to focus on corrective rape and not rape as a whole. This issue extends to the entire LGBTQ+ community, and unfortunately it cannot be resolved in its entirety. Some people believe that sexual orientation is affected by one's environment and not biological factors. As a result, they think that they can change someone's sexual orientation, and in their mind they can "fix" it. This is seldom the case (5). So, if more people are educated about asexuality and how it is a matter of biology, the rate of corrective rape would theoretically decrease. The rate of corrective rape can also be reduced by spreading awareness about the issue itself and advocating for survivors. The same goes for verbal abuse. The more information is commonplace, the less verbal ammunition will be available. We should also discourage people from engaging in verbal abuse. However, matters of violence will likely always exist, and a perfect solution will not.

Review

Asexuality is a broad and complicated sexual orientation. From misconceptions, discrimination, and even sexual assault, those who identify as asexual face complex problems. The solutions to these problems take a lot of work and time. However, words have power, and that power can be used for good. The more that people both within and outside of the asexual community use that power, the less prevalent these problems will be. Fewer people will have to run away from relationships

like Shelby's. Fewer doctors will unknowingly discriminate against asexual patients as Anna's doctor did. Fewer asexuals will be threatened with rape and death as Julie has been. The more we use the power of words, the more the asexual community can come out of the shadows and live their lives just like everyone else.



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A photograph of a woman from the waist down, wearing a dark blue bikini. She is holding a large bouquet of hydrangea flowers against her midsection. The background is a solid dark blue color.

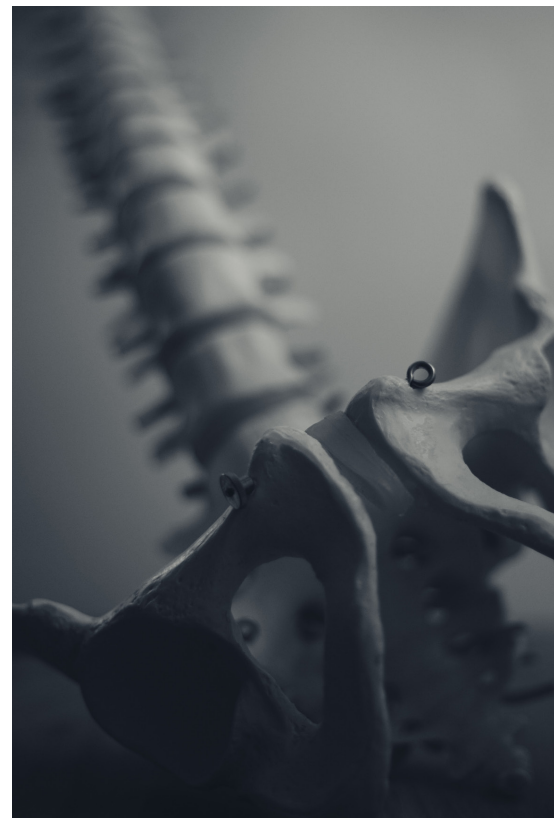
Josephine Meloy

Endometriosis
and how it
Connects to
Larger Issues in
Women's
Healthcare

Women commonly talk about their personal experiences with healthcare. Whether it is with an obstetrician-gynecologist (OB/GYN) or their primary care physician, millions of women have continually struggled to have their symptoms taken seriously (Booth, S. & Booth, S., 2018). This lack of respect from healthcare professionals is especially an issue in the realm of the disease endometriosis, a chronic illness that 176 million people live with. Statistically, one in ten women will develop endometriosis in their lifetime (Endometriosis.org, 2017), and yet most struggle to get the care they need. People with endometriosis deserve affordable, quality treatment options because allowing continued suffering of those with chronic pain is unethical.

What is Endometriosis? How is it Treated?

To begin, it is important to examine exactly what endometriosis is. “Endometriosis is defined as the presence of endometrial glands and stroma outside the endometrial cavity and uterine musculature” (Nardi, Ferrari, & Denny, 2011). To simplify, endometriosis occurs when the tissue that would typically grow inside of the uterus (the endometrium), grows on the outside of it. This is the same tissue that is typically shed during menstruation. Endometriosis symptoms include pain, severe dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation), pelvic pain, deep dyspareunia (pain around the genitals), cyclical or perimenstrual gastrointestinal or urologic symptoms, pain at defecation or micturition, subfertility (a delay in conceiving), abnormal menstrual bleeding, chronic fatigue, and backache (Nardi, Ferrari, & Denny, 2011). These symptoms may seem fairly general, and so to go more in depth, it is important to look at other, more severe medical impacts that endometriosis can have on the body. Pain is a debilitating symptom and decreases quality of life. Other potential side effects of untreated endometriosis include infertility and higher than average links to ovarian cancer, as well as endometriosis-associated adenocarcinoma, another type of cancer (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2019). These symptoms and side effects are nearly impossible to ignore; however, many people with endometriosis fail to get a diagnosis and, thus, are unable to access treatment. A survey of women ages 18-54 reports that the average length of time between the onset of symptoms and official diagnosis is approximately 4.4 years (Soliman, Fuldeore, & Snabes, 2017). This is completely unacceptable and would not be tolerated in many other areas of healthcare, and yet is completely normalized in the case of women’s health--specifically in terms of this disease.



Not all of the blame can be put on the doctors who are treating people with endometriosis, though. The majority of symptoms present are also found in a multitude of other diseases, such as irritable bowel syndrome or pelvic inflammatory disease. It is difficult to achieve a conclusive diagnosis with such common symptoms. However, there are currently multiple ways to diagnose endometriosis conclusively. While a pelvic exam can potentially diagnose endometriosis, it is only effective if the endometriosis lesions have caused a cyst to form. There are three ways to specifically image endometriosis, and those methods are (from least to most diagnostic certainty): ultrasound, MRI, and laparoscopy (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2019). It is abhorrent that there are multiple conclusive tests available for endometriosis, yet it takes years from first consultation for healthcare professionals to decide to administer those tests. Often, women with endometriosis feel ignored by their healthcare professionals. According to a study in 2017, many women with endometriosis feel as if their experiences with healthcare professionals have been “destructive” (Grundström, Alehagen, Kjølhed, et. al., 2017). These experiences should not be so common. If a patient were presenting symptoms of the flu, it would be completely unacceptable to not test that patient for the flu as a diagnosis could lead to proper treatment. It should not be any different for those with endometriosis. Once a diagnosis is rendered for endometriosis, treatments open up.



There are a multitude of treatment options for women living with endometriosis. One of the most accessible treatments, assuming the patient is not trying to get pregnant, is birth control. This works by releasing hormones that control menstruation cycles. If the patient is trying to get pregnant, other hormones may be prescribed. While birth control is a great, accessible option, it is only really effective for cases of endometriosis where the symptoms are not severe (Eisenberg, Britton Chahine, 2019). So, while accessible and affordable, this is not necessarily viable. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' website on endometriosis, the only other medical treatment option is surgery. During this surgery, a doctor will locate and remove any patches of endometriosis found (Eisenberg, Britton Chahine, 2019). There are, however, nonmedical ways to potentially relieve the pain experienced by those with endometriosis, including acupuncture, chiropractic techniques, various herbs and vitamins, and over-the-counter painkillers. Many of these options are discussed in testimonials to relieve pain, yet these options do not offer long lasting relief. That said, treatments such as acupuncture have a long cultural history of being effective, and according to the Mayo clinic, acupuncture is commonly believed to stimulate different nerves to release

natural painkillers (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2020). Clearly, though, surgery is the preferred treatment method if it is available and safe for the patient.

The Financial Burden of Endometriosis

Another compelling reason for accelerated diagnosis of endometriosis is the financial burden that it has upon those living with it. According to an article from the "Sydney Morning Herald," a newspaper based out of Sydney, Australia, endometriosis "exact-ed \$7.4 billion from the Australian economy" in the year 2018 (Aubussen, 2019). This equates to approximately \$4.25 billion in United States Dollars at the 2020 exchange rate of \$0.77 USD to \$1.00 AUD. Additionally, in the same article, there is a testimonial stating that grappling with endometriosis will cost one individual \$20,000 AUD, or \$15,419 USD, on average. When broken down, these expenses may appear to make sense. The costs include surgeons fees, hospital admissions, and consultations, as well as medications and travel expenses in order to receive treatment at all (Aubessen, 2019). That said, this is not a sustainable way to live. In fact, the 2015 poverty line in the United States for a single person under

the age of 65 was \$11,770. For someone living with endometriosis, these treatments, including surgeries, are critical to quality of life. Care, of course, can be denied to those who cannot afford it due to how expensive it is. And while it is possible to apply for medicaid in situations where healthcare is too expensive, it is also possible for requests to be denied, and payments still do need to be made, as it is not free healthcare (Medicaid, getting started, 2017). This is not to say that all healthcare can or should be free in the United States, but that there needs to be a reevaluation of economic versus humanitarian values in regards to necessary healthcare. Treatment expenses are unsustainable for many women living with endometriosis; while surgery is the most expensive treatment alternative, for many it is the best--or even only--option.

Gaslighting in Reproductive Health Settings

In addition to the financial burden, there is also a common theme of gaslighting throughout women's healthcare, especially within reproductive healthcare. Medical gaslighting is when a medical professional convinces a patient that his or her instincts are incorrect. This can involve the level of pain experienced, or even whether or not a past procedure was really performed (Booth, S. & Booth, S, 2018). In an article published by the BBC, it is stated that one woman was told that her pain, which was really from undiagnosed appendicitis, was from "childhood sexual abuse," despite her informing the doctor that had never happened (Billock, J., 2018). When doctors assert reasons for symptoms that do not align with what the patient knows to be true of her body, doctors exert more power over their patients, whether this is intentional or not. Additionally, doctors can make assumptions about women's lifestyles and behaviors that aren't true.



An article published by the New York Times states that one woman (who is also a doctor) went to her primary care physician because she had lost 10 pounds in a concerning amount of time and thought it may be a sign that an old illness was returning. Her doctor dismissed it and told her that he disagreed for a few reasons, including "you've been on a diet," which was something she had not said or implied during the appointment. Once she had him run the tests, it turned out the illness was indeed returning, and she had to begin treatment immediately (Pagán, C. N., 2018). Medical gaslighting, which also includes women being told their symptoms aren't real or are "in their heads," can lead to more doubt of a person's future symptoms, disregard for chronic pain, and an overall lack of accurate diagnosis.

To conclude, people with endometriosis often suffer physical, financial, and even emotional burdens from this disease. Many women know the emotional burdens present with even easily diagnosed conditions. As such, they

can also attest to the struggle of being believed without a medical professional altering their thoughts, words, and feelings. The discussion of accessible healthcare is one that has gone on long enough, as people who cannot access the treatment they need continue to suffer from their illnesses. Due to the unmanageable costs, as well as the daily inhibitors placed upon the body from chronic pain, not to mention the battle for symptoms to even be heard, endometriosis care should be both of a high quality and affordable, as this is not just a women's issue, it is a humanitarian one.

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Falling in Love with Writing: Lessons from my Dad



Meghan Long

ABSTRACT:

As a WRTC major, I never reflected how I got here. Why do I love writing so much? How did I get here, and why have I stayed? Off the top of my head I could point to a lot of things. Maybe it was because I got good grades in English in high school? Maybe it was because one of my favorite movie characters was a writer? Or maybe it's all just much simpler than that. *Falling in love with writing: Lessons from my dad* is an autoethnography and photo story about how I got to the place where I am today. Writing has become such a huge part of my life and the way that I express myself. It comes easy to me, it's something I don't worry about, and as a 20 year old girl that feels great. This story I'm sharing is about inspiration, growth, hard-work, and the importance of role-models in our lives. It's a thoughtful and reflective look back at how my dad contributed to the person I am today.



Access Meghan Long's piece here:

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/si789CrdmIw8s/>

More Than Meets the Eye: Why Context Matters in Literacy Studies



Rachel Hagerman

Language surrounds us. From making a post on social media, to looking up directions to a friend's house, or to sending an email to coworkers, we are regularly engaged in language acts. Tied to this notion of language is the elusive term, "literacy," which is a concept so familiar to our everyday routines and yet often debated in academia. Theorists from the field of literacy studies approach this relationship between language and literacy in varying ways. While many scholars have general agreements about language and literacy, other scholars' ideas clash strongly. After examining scholarly research in this field, I've found—time and time again—that when scholars acknowledge social and cultural contexts in their research, it allows them to better address the relationship between language and literacy. Recognizing these contexts enables scholars to build a better understanding of real-world literacy events. In short, context is a crucial component of any study on literacy.

To begin, it's important to look at the foundations of the field's investigations of both orality and writing: two topics that shine light on the relationship between language and literacy. For example, Geoffrey Sampson is a prominent scholar who addresses both topics in his research on Sumerian script, which is the earliest known writing system. His research traces Sumerian script's transition from a non-phonetic based system—where symbols indicate ideas (also known as semasiographic systems)—to one that uses symbols to visibly represent spoken-language *sounds* (also known as glottographic systems). That is, his work follows the script's progression toward a writing system that represents speech (61). Sampson also explains how Sumerian writing customs evolved based on context. More specifically, he examined how the written script changed based on the tools available to the writers of the time. He also notes how scribes altered the appearance

1 Generally speaking, "literacy" refers to an ability to read and write, but it is important to understand that literacy is much more complex than this simple definition suggests. Especially within the academic community, there are a number of understandings about what the abstract word, "literacy," entails. As Knoblauch explains, even the "labels literate and illiterate almost always imply more than a degree of deficiency or skill. They are, grossly or subtly, sociocultural judgments" (74). In summary, though many define literacy as a competence in reading and writing, it captures a much more complex and nuanced meaning than we can express in a dictionary definition.

2 Here, I refer to scholars of literacy studies, a field that emerged in the 1980s and seeks to understand literacy and literacy events.

3 To demonstrate the difference between these two writing systems, Sampson explains that a semasiographic system would convey the idea of "four sheep" by depicting four "sheep" graphs. Of course, when we speak about four sheep, we don't say the word "sheep" four times. We have an adjective-noun combination to express this. Similarly, in a glottographic script, which represents spoken language, we would see a single graph (or group of graphs) that means "sheep" and a single graph (or group of graphs) that represents "four" (50). Glottographic systems mirror the sounds of spoken language, while semasiography focuses on depicting ideas and is not directly connected to spoken language.

of written symbols over time, making symbols that were “easier to form legibly” to “simplify their labor” (52-53). This suggests that the writing system evolved not randomly, but in order to make writers’ lives easier. To put it concisely, real-world context and orality play an important role in the evolution of writing systems.

Interested in this same topic of orality and literacy, Denise Schmandt-Besserat offers a more radical historical look at the origin of writing. She explains that ancient peoples used tokens to keep track of goods, creating the first code which “paved the way for the invention of writing” (29). This discovery is interesting as it suggests that writing arose out of necessity; ancient people had to create a sort of writing system because they needed to count and tell others how many goods they owned. The invention was born out of a social need. It was not a random act. This phenomenon demonstrates how “symbolic meaning emerges as cultures evolve to a point that such forms of manifesting meaning are needed and valued” (25). In other words, Schmandt-Besserat’s literacy research, just like that of Sampson, teaches us that orality, as well as social and cultural contexts, influence the development of writing over time.

Dennis Baron, another prominent scholar of literacy studies, looks at the relationship between writing and orality differently: he reveals that writing has the ability to influence orality. This provides an alternate but not necessarily conflicting understanding of the orality-writing relationship that Sampson and Schmandt-Besserat identify. Baron explains that “people begin to reject traditional pronunciations in favor of those that reflect a word’s spelling” (76). In this quote, we see that writing has the ability to impact orality. Again, Baron must acknowledge the social and cultural contexts to arrive at this discovery about evolving pronunciations. Between Baron’s research and that of Sampson and Schmandt-Besserat, there are cases for both orality influencing writing as well as writing influencing orality. Thus, there is a clear connection between both types of language, and we see the two impacting each other in various ways.

Challenging this established association between orality and writing, Walter J. Ong argues that literacy and orality are cognitively distinct in his Great Divide Theory—a controversial but often-cited theory in literacy studies.

Ong’s Great Divide Theory explains that, “writing is utterly invaluable and indeed essential for the realization of fuller, interior, human potentials” and there is a significant difference between non-literate (also called “oral”) and literate societies (23).

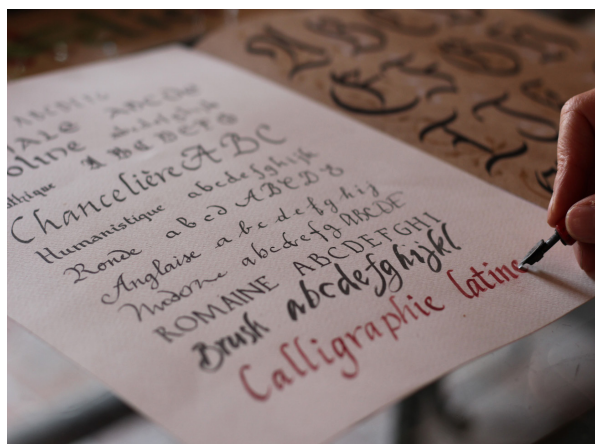
In this view, context is dismissed and there is a noticeable disconnect between orality and writing. He even goes as far to argue that writing is “a time-obviating, context-free mechanism” (31). Not only does this view ignore the relationship between orality and writing, but it also poses some ethical issues, making it a controversial hot topic. Ong’s theories assert that literacy (which he argues is distinct from orality) allows for a higher order of thinking. This posits a “primitive society v. civilized society” dichotomy that views oral cultures as cognitively inferior. Of course, many scholars critique this sort of thinking that belittles entire groups of people. Brian Street, a language professor at King’s College London, argues that Ong’s work does little to address “the rich variety of different cultures that he aggregates together as ‘oral,’” which poses serious logical problems to his overall argument (*Social Literacies* 155). Thus, as his critics would suggest, Ong’s research falls flat because he disregards cultural context.

As seen in these various explorations of orality and writing, the act of acknowledging social and cultural contexts is an essential tool to making discoveries about literacy. More specifically, in these context-rich studies, writing and orality appear to be intimately bound as they directly influence one another. On the other hand, as seen with Ong’s writing, when we dismiss context, we also disregard the complex relationship between language and literacy as established by a number of well-respected scholars, including Sampson, Schmandt-Besserat, and Baron, among others.

Even when looking beyond studies on the orality-writing relationship, we can find several case-specific studies that also indicate the benefits of acknowledging context. For example, Tamara Plakins Thornton analyzed colonial handwriting to reveal that different stylistic hands allowed the reader of the time to “evaluate the social significance of a letter” (65). That is, different types of handwriting styles held specific social meanings. Someone literate in colonial handwriting styles can

take one glance at a letter and understand if it was written by a man or woman, a gentleman or clerk, “simply by noting what hand it had been written in” (65). This sort of literacy is lost to modern readers who lack social understanding about the specific meanings of handwriting styles. In order to better understand the language of colonial letters, Thornton had to acknowledge the cultural context of the time. This new understanding of old letters demonstrates the benefit of taking context into account.

Looking at a community-specific example, Shirley Brice Heath’s ethnographic study of literacy in Trackton relies heavily on social and cultural contexts. Only through observing the contexts in person did Heath uncover how “reading was a social activity” (449) for the Trackton community. After understanding this context, Heath was able to determine that traditional schooling did not properly prepare Trackton residents for the sort of literacy they needed to thrive. Scholar Brian Street explains this sort of context-based discovery in a video interview about his work studying classroom behaviors and language: “if you take a ‘social practices’ view of literacy, you keep seeing things you hadn’t expected.” Again, looking at literacy as a social construct proves necessary in order to better understand the relationship between language and literacy.



Not only can we see that context proves to be a crucial component in these scholars’ many discoveries about literacy, but multiple scholars also argue that context is an important aspect of language itself. For instance, in his proposal to use ethnography to study literacy, John F. Szwed wrote, “definitions of reading and writing, then, must include social context and function (use) as well as the reader and the text of what is being read and written” (423). Because of this, he argues that today’s literacy studies must also address context and that ethnography (which draws attention to contexts) is a proper method to answer modern literacy questions.

Street’s work furthers Szwed’s concept by describing two models of literacy: an autonomous model, which works independent of social context and fosters problematic views of “non-literates,” and an ideological model, which links social and cultural context to literacy practices. He promotes the latter ideological model, explaining that it “opens up a potentially rich field of inquiry into the nature of culture and power, and the relationship of institutions and ideologies of communication” (437). In short, we must adopt an ideological model of literacy that acknowledges context.

Further, many “scholars have raised cautionary voices about transferring one’s own social and cultural realities onto others as if notions of oppression, liberation, and social reform were universal” (Goggin 4). This newer perspective advises modern researchers and theorists to consider literacy as a complex construct rather than assuming a single, universal literacy. This more modern approach to literacy studies is reflected in Ryan P. Shepherd’s dissertation on digital literacy, where he writes, “Literacies—all literacies—are highly complex, social, and dependent on context. They do not make sense and are not useful when divorced from that context” (66). Like Shepherd, multiple scholars argue that recognizing the context of language is crucial to learning about literacy practices.

By exploring different studies on language and literacy, we can see that context is a critical aspect to understand and investigate. Theories that embrace this contextual aspect not only understand language as intimately wed with literacy, but their acknowledgement of context is critical to discovering new elements of real-world literacy events. Meanwhile, theories that ignore this contextual aspect, such as that of Ong, divide language and literacy and thus miss an opportunity for further understandings of literacy. The shortcomings of the context-free view of language prove that we should be intentionally conscious of social and cultural contexts in order to better understand real-world literacy events. So—whether you’re a literacy activist hoping to bring positive change into a community or a literacy scholar striving to push the envelope in your field—ensure that context is at the forefront of your work; it is an essential component of any literacy event.

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Three Stories

Christa Niyenze



A Tale of Three Tongues

“Carrot.” While shining boldly on the board in my kindergarten class, these six letters caught my attention. With little knowledge of what language owns those letters in that syntax, I stared at the word as though it might reveal some hidden secrets. At first, my mind translated the word to “karoti,” which is how I would say it in Kinyarwanda, the native language spoken in Rwanda. I remembered that my mother usually cut carrots on Sundays to put in the meat soup that we only ate once a week. Back then, I was not aware that I could understand three languages—Kinyarwanda, French, and a little bit of English—at the same time. I spoke three languages simultaneously within a conversation as if they were one single language. Due to this overlap, the line between my language development in my three languages is blurry. However, this literacy narrative incorporates my journey of becoming more fluent in Kinyarwanda, French, and especially English after learning how to appreciate individual words. I also incorporate my exploration of whether my coalesced fluencies correlate with my global citizenship identity.

Coalesced Fluencies

Four years ago, I was not fluent in English, although I would have said that I fluently spoke three languages. Although I was taking English classes in every grade, I did not practice it outside of school. We only spoke Kinyarwanda at home, but my older brother would bring us television channels that were only in French. These television channels helped me practice my French, so I was exposed to French both at school and at home. I had spent quality time learning grammar in Kinyarwanda, French, and English, but it was only when I came to study in the United States in August of 2017 that I deeply immersed myself in the English language (which is now officially my second language). By taking an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, I learned the English language in a section of the course specifically designed for international students whose native language was not English. For the first two years in the US, I had to take ESL, where I received constructive feedback on how to write concisely and cohesively, similarly to how Americans write. Thorough English lessons prompted me to be more aware of how I speak and how I choose to articulate my thoughts.

I also utilized some skills that I learned in my ESL class while using French and Kinyarwanda, although grammar and mechanics are different in those languages.

After I began making sense of a whole sentences in English, words started jumping off the page. Words mean a lot because they give life to a sentence. Every word on a page has the ability to state its case through its definition and how it fits into the sentence as a whole. My ESL teacher encouraged me to read an entire sentence and focus on specific words that would help elucidate its meaning. I got so accustomed to this practice that every time I read in French and Kinyarwanda, I focus on individual words that will help me comprehend the whole sentence's meaning. Although I have imprecise memories of when I learned how to speak in my languages, I found myself enjoying spending time appreciating words and sentences.

Speaking three languages has its advantages, but writing never gets easier. When an idea surfaces in my head, it automatically gets translated into the other two languages. However, putting words on paper is more than just having thoughts. It is also about knowing how to articulate those ideas and captivate your readers' attention. Years ago, I was not fond of writing because I was neither exposed to constant composition nor the pleasure of writing. While reading the word "carrot," I comprehended its meaning, but I could not get myself to write those letters down while I sat in that little chair with my arms on my tiny table in kindergarten. For many years, I had allowed myself to believe that writing was not "my thing." My writing improved when I reminded myself that knowing a few languages does not make it easier to write. The struggle to write is what makes me a writer. After learning the power of words, I appreciated my languages even more, which allowed me to cultivate a passion for writing so that I could share written thoughts with my family and comrades.

Studying abroad required me to thoroughly learn English. My English classes taught me "White English," as Asao Inoue would probably say. By my senior year of high school, I had outgrown my ESL classes. Although my English was not perfect, I had made a lot of progress. Yet one of my English teachers suggested that it would be best to go back to ESL classes for more tutoring because I did not meet the requirements to advance. However, I did not get discouraged by the disregard of my effort and progress.

When leaving home, my parents reminded me that I have to learn from Americans, even though I am not one, and I can retain what is essential to me. When I read the introductory chapter of the book, *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom*, written by Asao Inoue, I was reminded of how much the expectations and grading systems in high school did not respect my literacy experience. However, I made the most of it. I knew that when I was grown, I would create expectations that would respect my experiences.

Even though I know three languages, I never thought that it was exceptional to speak them. I took for granted that I was born speaking three languages, as though it was one language. I did not understand my talent until I realized that, in a few seconds, I could understand an idea in three languages. Fluency is not only about the ability to speak, read, and write a language, but also to comprehend and feel the language to its fullest. In my ESL class, I started admiring the English language's complexity, which gave me a newfound appreciation of Kinyarwanda and French, as they are all my favorite languages. Then, I realized how little I knew within each language. Earlier, I thought that my grammar was impeccable and that I could translate anything. I did not understand that some words can only be defined in their native language; I learned each language's power. After this realization, my literacy path became complex, yet straightforward.

Global Citizenship

Fortunately and unfortunately, speaking different languages does not make a person a global citizen. For instance, in Nigeria, there are more than four hundred spoken languages, but a Nigerian who knows five languages is not necessarily a global citizen because of their tongues. On the other hand, someone may be a global citizen without speaking as many languages. Let me use my breaking-down-the-sentence system from ESL to explain what I mean. "Global" means relating to the whole world, and "citizen" refers to a person who is part of a society. Therefore, "global citizen" means a person who is connected to the whole world. Speaking Kinyarwanda, French, and English allows me to communicate with Rwandans and other people who speak French and English.

Alternatively, as Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese philosopher, stated in the “Education for Global Citizenship” lecture, “wisdom, courage, and compassion” are some of the “essential elements of global citizenship.” Speaking three languages has given me wisdom and the ability to express myself in three languages. However, I need more than my languages to be considered a global citizen. Even though one may travel to many different countries on all continents, it does not make them a global citizen. Moreover, learning and respecting another person’s culture and identity does not make a person a global citizen; decent human beings should take these particular actions to respect their fellow human beings not to feel like “saviors” and “global citizens.”



To relate to the whole world is not an easy task. There are billions of people on this planet, so the idea of global citizenship is complex. Consequently, our languages allow us to have thoughts woven with cultures passed on from generation to generation. Knowing only one language is like reading a single story because what you end up with is one set of beliefs and thoughts. However, in learning another language, an individual is equipped with other stories and various kinds of ideas. As one learns many languages spoken around the world, they experience different beliefs and stories that connect them to the world more than a person who only knows one language.

Through speaking three languages, I attained diverse beliefs and thoughts that will assist me in my journey and adventures that will shape me into an authentic global citizen with wisdom, courage, compassion, and many experiences to share. From not understanding the word “carrot” in kindergarten to speaking three languages simultaneously, my literacy experiences have been a part of my identity and my life in general. Knowing more about my languages gives me hope that I can learn more about myself, as well. In the reading, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” by Gloria Anzaldúa, she confidently states that she is her language, which wholeheartedly resonated with me. Superficially, I knew my languages. However, through my ESL classes and reading more stories on diverse literacy narratives, I have come to be fond of my languages, which has significantly improved my language development and contributed to my perception of my global citizenship identity.

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