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RED STATE RE-CLAIMED: THE TRANSRHETORICAL RECOVERY OF
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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To my mother and father,
Connie Mae Vann Jackson and James Lee Jackson,
and to all their mothers and fathers.
Thank you for setting me on this path, in this place,
and for making me strong to walk it.

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation argues for critical attention to local rhetorics and characterizes Oklahoma as a unique site for understanding their impact on student writers and writing instruction. Despite rhetorical suppression from dominant historical narratives, Oklahoma has a unique racial history that offers regional insight into how local activist rhetorics cross cultural boundaries and yield cooperative alliances between distinct cultural groups. The theoretical concept that I develop to articulate this phenomenon is “transrhetorical analysis.” This concept has wide applicability. “Transrhetorical” characterizes the movement of rhetorics across multiple location categories – historical, spatial, temporal, cultural, local, regional, national, global, as well as across disciplines.

Transrhetorical analysis provides a means of charting cultural literacy activism and activist rhetorical practices, particularly as they surface in local rhetorics that traffic cultural resistance across cultural locations. Ideas, issues, and events engage multiple groups and locations in the collective construction of meaning in the continuation of cultural knowledge. I believe student writing and writing instruction benefits from analyzing local activist networks.

Rhetorics, both as messages and the vehicle for messages, necessarily change as a result of local cooperation and contestation, yielding generative and cumulative adaptations, co-optations, and applications. I first analyze 30 undergraduate student interviews I conducted at the University of Oklahoma to establish a gap exists between students’ identities and their local historical

knowledge, a gap that, based on theory in the field of Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy and my own interpretation, necessarily impacts their writing and use of rhetoric in local spaces. Students I interviewed, even those who identified as activists themselves, were largely unaware of local activist histories and as a result expressed rhetorical alienation from local spaces and audiences. I also analyze 30 activist interviews in each of my chapters to arrive at local and transrhetorical definitions of activism and resistance particular to Oklahoma. My chosen activist sites, located in Cherokee, Kiowa, African-Native, and African-American communities across Oklahoma, promote distinct cultures endemic to Oklahoma's sociological, historical, and rhetorical landscapes. My project analyzes activist rhetorical strategies operating at these confluences of local cultural and rhetorical history. Both historical and present-day activists operating at these sites articulate the shared aims of cultural literacy and social justice for their communities, and operate within long-standing rhetorical legacies of cultural literacy activism. I argue understanding their work through a transrhetorical lens addresses the gap arising from student interviews at the same time it sustains and strengthens cultural literacy efforts, especially at sites of rhetorical suppression, silence, and erasure. My work encourages writing and rhetoric faculty to include local rhetorical sites in their curricula to better prepare students to address and persuade audiences, both local and beyond, regarding issues in their own communities.

OKLAHOMA: RHETORICAL RECOVERY AND WRITING INSTRUCTION

AN ARGUMENT FOR LOCAL RHETORICS

The landscape of Oklahoma demands a deep, patient love, one that abides despite long bouts of struggle and hardship. The greatest portion of terrain in the state evokes a stillness that challenges the desire for more, at least according to characterizations such as “fly-over country” and “no man’s land.” Today I sit at Turtle Rock Farm, near Billings, OK, off of Interstate 35 north of Perry, OK. I am surrounded by short-grass prairie, illuminated by a bright winter sun that moves low across the southern sky. Dotted with scrub brush and stubby cedar trees, the silence is broken only by the sounds of flocking Canadian geese, hunting red-tailed hawks, and meandering cows braced against the cutting northern wind. Outside the strawbale eco-hermitage that shelters me, oil wells steadily pump the rich resources from the ground. From this distance they look like rocking horses, gentle and reliable reminders of my childhood here. Yet they tie the geography of this place to greater systems of capital and industry elsewhere, systems marked by political and environmental conflict, systems that have supported my family for generations. Beyond the pump-jacks, I-35 moves constant traffic northward and southward, through the limitless prairie of light, so easy to disregard in the rush toward somewhere else. The slow-sloping horizons of the prairie, the seamless blue sky, the muted colors and hard textures of the soil and vegetation, create an unending backdrop of surface simplicity that obscures Oklahoma’s deeper

complexities. It can be a challenging aesthetic to appreciate.

For my dissertation project, I have tasked myself with an investigation into the meanings of this place, and how those meanings shape the political landscape and rhetorical lives of the state's residents, focusing in particular on the state's students and activists. I want to determine how, in a global era that increasingly renders Oklahoma and other locations in the pragmatic terms of resource extraction, human capital, and material consumption, Oklahomans might better connect their own places and needs to broader patterns of economic and social development, human and political movement. How do the cultural and political histories that collide and collude in this place affect the rhetorical practices of the people who have navigated such a landscape in search of personal and community advancement? In what ways has this geography – physical, cultural, and political - shaped their lives and their efforts?

These are difficult, elusive questions to answer, despite their significance to the daily lived experience of the state's people, many of whom struggle with the far more pressing, practical matters of supporting themselves and their families. Yet these are the people for whom I hope my work most matters. The challenge of this project has been to make my inquiry and argument meaningful to them. Across almost twenty years of teaching writing in Oklahoma, most of my students are from here and, even if they are not, they represent communities in Oklahoma facing complex challenges as globalization patterns increase across these spaces. At the same time, these students

navigate rich historical inscriptions of politics and culture in Oklahoma, regardless of whether or not they are aware of them. If writing instruction aims, at least in part, to prepare student writers for real-world rhetorical exchange, then place matters to their training. I want them to understand the rhetorical legacies they inherit as they manage the local material realities of their lives. I want them to have a working historical consciousness that foregrounds and informs their rhetorical agency. I want them to be as prepared to engage local audiences as they are national and global audiences.

To begin my inquiry, I begin with a transrhetorical investigation into a pattern of counter-inscription that begins with rhetorical efforts against white settlement, land allotment, and statehood in two distinct Native American communities – the Cherokee and the Kiowa. My second chapter traces out patterns of cultural activism and resistance that connect the efforts of the Keetoowah Society in the late 1890's and early 1900's to Cherokee cultural literacy activists working in Cherokee communities today. My third chapter likewise observes rhetorical strategies persisting across generations of Kiowa rhetorical activists, looking closely across Kiowa resistance occurring in the Jerome Commission negotiation transcripts and the *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* case in the U.S. Supreme Court. The Cherokee were the last of the five tribes removed to Oklahoma to sign an allotment agreement, and the Kiowa never came to an uncontested allotment agreement with the United States. My fourth chapter looks closely at African-American and African Native communities living in the Muskogee Creek Nation before and after statehood, and

transrhetorical examples of cultural activism and resistance emanating from both rural and urban Black communities in Oklahoma today. The goal of showcasing multiple inquiry sites is to understand how cultural activism and resistance moves, changes, and adapts in and across distinct locations.

The final chapter of this project seeks to better understand Oklahoma not just as a network of culturally distinct sites, but also as a landscape in which these distinct cultures interact in both collaboration and competition. In order to do so, I focus on the Green Corn Rebellion, a largely suppressed 1917 armed anti-draft rebellion, as a transrhetorical site of resistance. European American, African-American, and Native American tenant farmers and sharecroppers organized an effort to intervene in World War I and stop the draft. This site provides the opportunity to understand poverty, class, and labor as issues that function transrhetorically by crossing cultural boundaries. I also argue that the cross-cultural alliance constructed around these issues and ultimately culminating in the Green Corn Rebellion can be understood as the primary motivation for subsequent rhetorical suppression of resistant discourse concerning these issues in Oklahoma. I explore the public humiliation, arrest, and subsequent suppression of rebellion participants and the rhetorical traces left by them. I also examine the ways in which these tactics of suppression continue to operate in Oklahoma today by interviewing activists working a variety of related topics today. While these Oklahoma activists ultimately provide evidence that suggests historical suppression did not entirely succeed, they also offer strategies and tactics for activists

elsewhere who struggle against rhetorical suppression.

Likewise, I hope to suggest these patterns bear consideration for possible applications to writing instruction. As I have argued elsewhere in publications related to this project, location matters to rhetorical education. Students rhetorically engage their locations on a daily basis, navigating public and political discourses, crossing historic cultural boundaries in their own communities. Rhetoric and writing are social actions that ask students to critically participate in the production of space, to network with other actors and audiences, and to shape opinions. Place enacts visual and rhetorical habits that students benefit from understanding as they negotiate discursive territories in their own social landscape. Transrhetorical awareness allows them to understand place differently, in terms of multiple sites and voices, and enables them to see connections between people and places, issues and communities. As one location among literally millions, Oklahoma offers a complex terrain for investigation into place and how rhetoric functions in the social construction of place. Dominant rhetorics as well as marginalized activist rhetorics expose patterns worth studying. They reveal local rhetorical practices that students can identify, analyze, and speak to from their own experiences. While my project rhetorically investigates multiple historical and cultural sites of activism in Oklahoma, I hope to also raise questions regarding the place of local rhetorics in writing instruction.

SPACE PRODUCTION, CULTURAL LITERACY, AND LOCAL RHETORICS

The argument I propose here depends upon the assumption that both

writing and production of space are embodied acts, most immediately in the material sense. Writing and space production as physical acts require human bodies for labor and consumption. Nedra Reynolds in *Geographies of Writing* (2004) argues that Henri LeFebvre's¹ "use of the body is an important one for rhetoric and rhetorical theory" particularly in "how space cannot be studied in material ways without accounting for physical bodies" (16). I am interested in how writing and rhetoric, as embodied acts, construct spaces, and how bodies thereby experience and perpetuate rhetorics of place. Students bring place into the writing classroom via their identities and rhetorical productions. When students engage texts about place and produce them, they participate in the production of place as well, codifying landscapes and articulating local perspectives that inhabit them. They put their rhetorical agency to work in their own lives and communities. This exploration of the convergences between teaching, location, and activism grounds my project in Oklahoma.

Newly emergent discourse around critical regionalism guides this exploration as well. For compositionist, rhetorician, and critical regionalist Jenny Rice, who acknowledges her own activist interests in the classroom, encouraging public rethinking of "changes happening in our everyday spaces" also changes how "citizens" approach these topics in the world. She puts it succinctly:

As a teacher of rhetoric and writing, I also have another unique advantage. I can encourage students to be different kinds of subjects – not ones who disconnect from their local spaces, but ones who relate differently to the world around them. (6)

She adds, citing community literacy scholar Elenore Long, that "rhetoricians

are called to serve as activists” insofar as they seek “to improve the quality of public deliberations” (Rice 7). For compositionists using rhetorical pedagogy, Rice’s argument, like Reynolds’, creates a continuous loop between rhetoric, activism, place, and teaching writing. Into this circle, I add cultural identity, particularly as it connects to place, and as a topic that has long mattered to rhetoric studies regarding both pedagogy and practice.

Intersections between literacy and cultural identity have lineage in composition and rhetoric scholarship, influenced in large part by Paulo Freire’s formative text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), considered foundational to critical pedagogy theory. He argues not only that literacy program content must acknowledge location, for him particularly in rural, agrarian Brazil, but that literacy workers must also realize that program participants’ views of the world “manifest variously in their actions” and “reflect their situation in the world” (96). For rural farm workers, whose identities were marked by poverty, illiteracy, and exploitation, generative terms related to their daily experience worked far more efficiently as pedagogical tools for literacy than standardized primers. In an interview, Ira Shor, who worked closely with Freire, explained that Freire employed a methodology similar to photovoice². Literacy workers in his rural Brazilian literacy program gave cameras to participants and asked them to take pictures of their daily lives. These pictures would then be used during program sessions to generate terms that could be studied more explicitly as participants learned to read and write them (Shor). Both the images and the terms often reflected cultural values in addition to

local situations, and they engaged program participants in developing content for their own study that reflected their daily lives. Thirty years after the first publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire asserts in “Cultural Identification and Education” that “the identity of the subjects [of education] has to do with the fundamental issues of the curriculum, as much with what is hidden as what is explicit and, obviously, with questions of teaching and learning” (69). For Freire, place and identity were culturally congruent, and liberatory literacy curriculum had to acknowledge both.

Rhetoric and writing, like literacy work, are embodied acts that take place within situations defined by local exigencies and contingencies, regardless of whether or not this is acknowledged in the composition classroom to the extent Freire might argue it should be. Local situations within which students write and rhetoricize occur also within larger regional, national, and global networks. Composition and rhetoric scholars, along with scholars throughout the humanities continue to identify and explore these networks, most recently while situating discussions of hegemony, finances, social construction, culture, and identity within a discourse of globalization and transnationalism. In *Writing Histories of Rhetoric* (1994), a collection that anticipates the then-approaching new millennium and responds in many ways to the new era of global capitalism, James Berlin establishes a need for “revisionary histories” that “situate rhetorics within their unique economic, social, political, and cultural conditions” insofar as rhetorics “are constructed at the intersection of discourse and power, at the points at which economic,

social, and political battles are waged in public discourse” (117). Likewise, it seems reasonable to assert that composition and rhetoric curricula should address in equal measure local intersections occurring around issues of national and global relevance, particularly if activism, as Berlin’s call suggests, remains a goal of rhetoric.

Putting local rhetorics, both present and historical, into conversation with national and global rhetorics makes the macro- and micro-meanings more relevant to student experiences, by bringing critical attention to movements across spatial and temporal borders. Through observation and articulation of the movement of meaning across space and time, a process I characterize as *transrhetorical*, students build both rhetorical and historical consciousness. This critical consciousness, called “conscientização” by Freire, remains the central goal of the critical pedagogy functioning in the heart of activist rhetorics. By incorporating *transrhetorical analysis* into writing classrooms through the inclusion of local cultural and political rhetorics alongside national and global rhetorics, writing teachers whose pedagogy and curricula incorporate local activist rhetorics can encourage student writing that engages student identity and experience while also engaging local issues and audiences.

TRANSRHETORICAL ANALYSIS/AWARENESS AND PLACE-BASED COMPOSITION

While my project seeks to encourage local rhetorical inquiry, it also characterizes local spaces as inherently and even unexpectedly complex. Based on many social constructions of Oklahoma, for instance as the Dust Bowl, the

state as a place becomes fixed and unchanging. Local spaces can be ignored by scholarship because they are so often understood as mundane or flat. Social constructions of local space often render it familiar, normalized, and transparent, thereby discouraging critical inquiry. By focusing on Oklahoma, I attempt to intervene in such constructions, complicating assumptions regarding the value of local inquiry more broadly. The cultural sites into which I inquire represent a diverse collection of local spaces without representation in dominant social constructions of Oklahoma. Across these distinct locations, rhetorics related to both local topics and national issues move, both historically and contemporaneously, across various cultural spaces that comprise Oklahoma. Danny Meyer and Keith Woodward argue that “contemporary notions of the local are shot through with extra-local ideas, products, and people,” with “boundaries at best a porous sieve” (103). Individual rhetorical locations engage multiple other locations as public discourse continues around topics and issues of local, regional, and national interest. “Place-based pedagogies, concerned with being ‘agents of change’ in the university and its neighborhood,” need an “expansive framework for thinking through how such spaces are constructed and what our role might be in altering or reinforcing the forces of power that shoot through them” (Meyer and Woodward 103). The local, they suggest, does not exist alone but rather as a site situated among many.

Transrhetorical inquiry, for this reason, looks for networks of rhetorical locations rather than one, and defines one location in terms of many. The

intellectual goal of *transrhetorical analysis* can be understood as the ability to observe *transrhetorical movement* across perceived spatial and temporal borders in order to arrive at *transrhetorical awareness*. Any site across which ideas move can be understood as a *transrhetorical site*, where meaning encounters meaning, concepts change, and rhetorics adapt for multiple audiences. Transrhetorical analysis encourages scholars to study and articulate this movement. Though the term “transrhetorical” has recently been used by Native Literature and Women’s Studies scholar Elizabeth Wilkinson (2013),³ I use it differently here. Wilkinson uses the term to denote a rhetor’s movement and adaptation across “cultural and gendered boundaries of rhetoric” (3). I use transrhetorical to characterize the movement of rhetorics themselves, often by individuals acting as rhetorical agents, across multiple location categories – historical, spatial, temporal, cultural, local, regional, national, global, as well as across disciplines.

I am interested in *transrhetoricity* as a means of charting cultural and ideological movements and rhetorical practices, particularly as they surface in local rhetorics that traffic ideologies across regional cultural locations. Oklahoma, as a collection of physical, cultural, and rhetorical locations comprising local networks, also participates in broader extralocal networks across which meanings and values travel. Transrhetorical analysis investigates relationships occurring between multiple sites of meaning-making, particularly where they link locations and meanings across difference. Ideas, issues, and events engage multiple groups and locations in the collective

construction of meaning. Rhetorics, both as messages and the vehicle for messages, necessarily change as a result of these transactions, yielding generative and cumulative adaptations, co-optations, and applications. Like Wilkinson, I argue that transrhetorical awareness results in greater rhetorical agency – only I am concerned with how transrhetorical movement might inform local rhetorics and regionalist texts and their use in the composition classroom.

Movement, as a theoretical concept, has become a trope in transnational discourse occurring in global studies. Native studies scholars like Wilkinson bring to their scholarship critical awareness informed by cultural sensibility of the value of locally oriented community literacy and advocacy. Native literature scholar Chadwick Allen, who acknowledges the limitations of global comparisons of indigenous communities across the globe, provides an artful grammatical examination of the prefix *trans-* in his introduction to *Trans-Indigenous Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* (2012). He argues ultimately for its use:

Many Indigenous intellectuals, inside and outside the dominant academy, are understandably wary of global comparative frameworks for Indigenous studies – literary, cultural, or otherwise – when there is so much work still to be done within specific, distinct traditions and communities. [...] The local, having finally won a place at the academic table, becomes engulfed (once again) in the name of the global. (Allen xiii)

Unlike prepositions *across* and *and*, Allen hopes *trans-* can communicate the “complex, contingent asymmetry and the potential risks of unequal encounters” while it creates “the potential of change” (xiv – xv). Unlike *across*

and *and*, and even the prefix *cross-*, all of which depend on constructions of two, *trans-* suggests greater numbers and complex networks. Invoked as “the next *post-*,” *trans-* connotes for Native studies scholars a broadening global awareness and allows critique of global frameworks through local orientations as well (xiv). Throughout the text, Allen prefers juxtaposition to comparison; whereas comparison denotes “united together” and “equal,” juxtaposition combines “close together” with “to place” (xvii – xviii). Juxtaposition, unlike imposition, establishes space between locations, and allows ideas and concepts to move between them rather than being imposed upon them. *Trans-*, as a prefix newly useful in an era of global studies in terms from trans-lingual to trans-national to trans-sexual, privileges difference, movement, and change, while emphasizing place/s and context/s.

Historians, sociologists, and political scientists have long used movement to describe complex, wide ranging networks, comprised of local, national, and global locations, aligned for common activist goals. Historian James R. Green uses the term “movement history” “to describe all kinds of writing about social protest” (2). Movement historians, a classification easily applicable to historians of rhetoric including James Berlin, “have gained credibility in their profession by correcting an imbalance in U.S. history that was created by an overwhelming emphasis on elites” (Green 2). Green acknowledges wisely that movement history depends upon the recounted experiences and oral histories of activists working inside of movements, both independently and organizationally. Movement history, according to Green,

“incorporate[s] various sorts of historically conscious work by movement activists, the trained and untrained, [...] people in political motion” (3). Green’s movement history, as he presents it in *Taking History to Heart* (2000), focuses on local instantiations of the labor movement in the 20th century in the northeastern and southern United States⁴. Understanding movement history for Green depends upon deep inquiry into both single locations and networks of single locations. Movement history seeks to understand how activists in act in concert with activists in multiple other locations and across time as well.

Green’s larger argument in *Taking History to Heart* forwards his position that history can be used to revive and build social movements. For Green, telling “movement stories” publically serves not only to preserve history, but to sustain historical movements and intervene in historical narratives that negate, silence, or marginalize activists and communities, their stories, and the movements they create. Activist narratives combined with rhetorical scholarship and transrhetorical inquiry yield complex data toward understanding how rhetoric and writing work for broader movement goals in local contexts. Activist scholars who teach writing, as Jenny Rice suggests, can make use of activist narratives as local rhetorics in the classroom to the end of engaging students in transrhetorical analysis that enriches student understanding of broader movements. Local rhetorical archives and current local rhetorical practices at local activist sites provide content for transrhetorical inquiry.

TRANSRHETORICAL INQUIRY AS SOCIAL ACTION IN COMPOSITION

CLASSROOMS

Certainly arguments against activist pedagogies exist, and determining the extent to which writing teachers should engage activist rhetorics, especially within particular local spheres, requires dialogue. Composition curriculum to varying degrees typically engages sites of rhetorical activism, often framed broadly by national- and global-level discourse around topics of controversy. The analysis modeled in writing classrooms often displaces local discussion of broad-based issues, privileging instead national or global sites of rhetorical production. This creates a fundamental gap in rhetorical education. Kristie Fleckenstein asserts in *Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom* (2010) that social action cannot take place without place (20). She “sees social action functioning on three intersecting planes,” which she classifies as direct, structural, and cultural (Fleckenstein 5). Her definition follows.

Direct, in which I see individuals seek to change the conditions of their personal lives; structural, in which individuals, alone or in conjunction with others, seek to change institutions that support, explicitly or implicitly, unjust social conditions; and cultural, in which individuals, again alone or in conjunction with others, seek to alter the systemic threads by which a culture organizes itself [...]. Each level is reciprocally linked to the others. (Fleckenstein 5)

As she exhibits in this passage, throughout her text she relies on “symbiotic knot” as a metaphor for social action. In each instance, a symbiotic knot is constructed of three interlinking loops that comprise one continual loop, a visual representation of her argument inspired by critical geographer Edward Soja’s trialectics. While social action occurs on the three intersecting planes

she describes above, it is also comprised of three parts: visual habit, rhetorical habit, and place. Social action moves from each loop, through each loop, to each loop.

In so far as these three components mutually construct social action, likewise one component cannot be omitted without disabling social action (Fleckenstein 20). I argue of the three, place receives the least amount of attention in current writing instruction. Moves toward incorporating visual rhetoric into composition curriculum began well over a decade ago as composition and rhetoric scholars developed models and language for visual rhetorical inquiry. Rhetorical habits provide the centerpiece of any first-year writing curriculum informed by rhetorical theory. Place, however, typically gets marginalized in composition classrooms, as I have argued elsewhere,⁵ subordinated to standardized texts from readers published by multinational textbook publishing firms that privilege authors empowered in nationally occurring dialogues around broadly framed concerns, such as healthcare and race relations. These dialogues do not invoke place but rather appeal to wide audiences across multiple locations through rhetorical *displacement*. National discourse in this scenario marginalizes local discourse around these same issues, and thereby disrupts students' abilities to apply composition curriculum to their communities and lives. This, as Fleckenstein suggests, ruptures the symbiosis required for social action.

Maintaining this symbiosis in the writing classroom requires attending to all three of its component parts. Visual habits of place, which Fleckenstein

defines as “a system of perception” that becomes “an ingrained response to stimuli” through “repeated interaction with a culture’s imagistic artifacts” can become obstacles to rhetorical practice and social action if not disrupted (21). Visual habit “organizes reality into particular patterns, leading us to discern some images and not others, to relate those images to each other and ourselves, and to link those images to language in a uniform dynamic” (Fleckenstein 21). She acknowledges the role history plays in the construction of visual habit, stating that visual habits are “cultivated in bodies through time and across time” (25). Primarily through images, media, cultural objects, urban and rural landscapes, and so on, individuals learn ways of seeing encoded with cultural values, histories, and hegemonies. Engaging, examining, and critiquing local visual habits, or ways of seeing their own spaces, encourages students to develop newer, more critical perception that allows them to see the need for change as well as possibilities for change. Rhetorical habits of place, then, provide the mechanism through which change occurs in Fleckenstein’s social action pedagogy.

Although equal to visual habit and rhetorical habit in Fleckenstein’s symbiotic knot, place takes on a certain primacy by providing a material context for the other two nodes. Neither vision nor rhetoric “exist nor function in a vacuum;” “rather both are enacted contextually and interpreted locally” (35). The extent to which composition curriculum *displaces* course readings and inquiry topics reinforces a false dichotomy between writing practice and the world, most immediately by erasing the local context. In participating in

nationalized and globalized dialogues about economics, human rights issues, culture and identity among other topics, students imagine and write for national and global audiences. While this exercise offers valuable practice, it also reinforces the marginalization of valuable local perspectives, and alienates students from local rhetorical exigencies, praxes, and audiences. The distance created between students and local contexts in this model also keeps them from application of writing curriculum to their own lived experiences and daily lives, a pedagogical move Freire regarded as alienating. For Fleckenstein, this distance impedes their facility with understanding, investigating, and developing visual and rhetorical habits, both of which “require bodies *as* places and bodies *in* places to exist” (35). Place, then, “the third thread in the symbiotic knot” as Fleckenstein constructs it, “provides venues for social action as well as venues within which visual and rhetorical habits are developed” (35). Place provides a concrete context outside of images and texts to observe visual and rhetorical phenomenon as it occurs on location, as it relates to local histories and cultures and impacts present communities and lives.

Fleckenstein’s symbiotic knot instantiates the very movement between sites and across networks I argue transrhetorical analysis helps scholars and students identify. The transit of meaning between visual habit, rhetorical habit, and place resembles the movement I observe throughout my project between multiple temporal and spatial locations. In moving across the axis of time, connecting history to the present, rhetoric – whether visual, textual, or oral - can adapt, preserve, and/or suppress and erase meaning. Likewise, moving

across the axis of space, rhetoric mobilizes meaning between and through physical locations imbued with geographies, histories, and cultures, all of which shape the reception and construction of meaning as well as the continued production and mobility of rhetoric. In transrhetorical analysis, locations of inquiry emerge where these two axes – the time axis and space axis – intersect. While the time axis moves linearly across the western temporal construction of then and now, past and present, the space axis connects the multiplicity of places that comprise our local and global communities. This basic transrhetorical grid supplies the essential theoretical structure to support emergent networks of meaning. The movement of meaning and rhetoric across these networks depends on social action.

ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY, “RUPTURE,” AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA IN OKLAHOMA

Actor-network theory recognizes the limitless complexity of mapping locations in relation to one another. Bruno Latour, in his February 2010 keynote address for the International Seminar on Network Theory: Network Multidimensionality in the Digital Age, entitled “Networks, Societies, Spheres: Reflections of an Actor-network Theorist,” defines network in this way: “In its simplest but also in its deepest sense, the notion of network is of use whenever action is to be redistributed” (2). Likewise, Fleckenstein recognizes the complexity of place in saying “any single location consists of a web of interlocking places, both material and ideological,” and that “the first place that must exist for any hope of (or need for) social action is the body itself” (35).

Though Latour speaks of objects rather than bodies, he asserts nonetheless that what seem to be singular entities are in fact connected to other “other swarms of entities that seem to have been there all along but were not visible before and that appear in retrospect necessary for its sustenance” (2). For this network to become visible, Latour suggests a rupture must occur that allows its perception. For him, the rupture could be “a strike, an accident, a catastrophe” (Latour 2). For Fleckenstein the key to a perception of place as “a web of interlocking places” is antinomy. Antinomy, understood in its Greek origin to mean roughly *against lawfulness*, “engages a network of associations – order, disorder, invention, and transformation” and “juggles the ongoing tensions between contradictory images and words,” and “juxtaposes fragments of images and words so that they can both create an order [...] and retain the power to disrupt that order” (Fleckenstein 116 – 117). Transrhetorical analysis then, particularly through foregrounding place as mutually constructive, also recognizes rupture and antinomy as available means of fostering critical perception of local rhetorical spaces.

Applying rupture and antinomy to local rhetorics in Oklahoma requires tracing the network through sites characterized by trauma. Rupture, as Latour constructs it, engages locations of social unrest, discord, and resistance. Strikes, accidents, and catastrophes, the examples Latour uses in his speech, impact communities just as trauma impacts individuals. Oklahoma’s history, like the human history in which it takes part, contains multiple sites of collective trauma. The removal of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Mvskoke

Creek, and Seminole peoples from their southeastern homelands to “Indian Territory” in the 1830’s serves as an originary trauma in Oklahoma’s historical narrative, with Oklahoma’s remaining 34 federally recognized Native nations being removed to or contained in Oklahoma in the periods just before and after the Civil War through 1892. Yale University Professor of Sociology Jeffrey C. Alexander asserts in the opening chapter of *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1). The removal to Oklahoma, referred to in local public discourse as the Trail of Tears, an English adaptation of the Cherokee “nvnahi dunadlohilv’i” (the path they did cry), continues to be recognized as historically significant to Oklahoma. The injustice and trauma the removal inflicted on Native people is to some extent acknowledged in mainstream local public discourse, though minimally. However, just as in Latour’s construction, rupture as a theoretical lens makes other networked sites clear, many of which are also characterized by historical trauma.

Transrhetorical analysis makes visible the ways in which historical trauma moves between distinct cultural and historical sites and reveals a pattern of cultural interactions and shared histories. Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Mvskoge Creek, and Seminole peoples owned slaves who were removed to Oklahoma along with their owners. Though Tiya Miles, Professor

of American Culture at the University of Michigan, details the differences between the experiences of Native-owned and European-American owned slaves, slavery was in all cases culturally traumatic. The Civil War in Oklahoma created cultural trauma for Native peoples as all of the five tribes were divided along Union and Confederate alliances. While historical narratives typically emphasize their Confederate alliances, many Native men, women, and children as well as escaping slaves left Indian Territory during the terror, starvation, and confusion of the Civil War for Kansas. Likewise, many Native, African American, and Native-African men fought for the Union in the First, Second, and Third Indian Home Guards as well. The Battle of Honey Springs, fought along Elk Creek in Mvskoke Creek Territory (outside of present-day Rentiesville), was the first integrated Civil War battle, with Natives, future Freedmen, and European Americans fighting both alongside and against each other. Those Natives and future Freedmen fighting for the North united transculturally for autonomy and freedom. Sovereignty and abolition were causes that united them transrhetorically in these cases, and also brought them shared trauma, even with those against which they were warring.

Allotment and statehood, though celebrated by Oklahoma's dominant historical narrative, also brought trauma to Oklahoma's Native peoples, which by 1890 included a far richer and culturally diverse assembly of Native nations. The Cherokee were the last nation in Oklahoma to capitulate officially to the Dawes Commission and the enrollment and allotment process, signing an agreement on April 9, 1900 (Kidwell). The Kiowas never officially capitulated

on their own accord, but the Supreme Court decision in *Lone Wolf vs. Hitchcock* forced allotment upon them despite claims of fraudulency against the Dawes Commission (Clark). As Native American Studies scholar and historian Blue Clark describes it in the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma*, “shortly afterward, more than fifty thousand settlers flooded into the region for the ‘surplus’ lands, inundating the one thousand Kiowa who resided there.” It is not difficult to imagine the swift and permanent change settlement enacted in Indian Territory, which had by now been divided into Indian and Oklahoma Territories in preparation for statehood. For Neil J. Smelser, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of California Berkeley, cultural trauma exhibits “traumatic cultural damage (i.e., destruction of or threat to cultural values, outlooks, norms, or, for that matter, the culture as a whole)” (38). Though largely unarticulated as such in dominant local historical narratives, layered on top of the removal and containments of Oklahoma’s Native peoples including Freedmen, and the division and devastation of the Civil War, federal enrollment, allotment, and statehood became additional sites of trauma now endemic to Oklahoma history and culture.

It is not surprising then that sites of ideological violence occurring at “colonial intersections” are often erased from more idealistic constructions of history that circulate in dominant discourse. For this reason, two scholars working in historiography, Dominick La Capra and Cathy Caruth, argue for attention to the intersections of history and trauma. The violence that oftentimes occurs at sites of resistance - in Oklahoma history and elsewhere -

still circulates as trauma culturally, according to their analysis. LaCapra claims “trauma and its symptomatic aftermath pose particularly acute problems for historical representation and understanding” (ix). In many cases, historiography reinscribes trauma even as it obscures traumatic historical events. Caruth explains this traumatic reinscription arises from Freud’s characterization of trauma in that “it is not locatable in the simple violent or original event [...] but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature [...] returns to haunt [survivors] later on” (4). The repetition behavior exhibited by individual victims of trauma functions also at scenes of historic trauma, where original traumatic events such as the violent suppression of resistance inscribe social patterns of discursive behavior. For this reason, scholars of place-based rhetorics working from history have the potential for producing “empathetic unsettlement and the discursive inscription of that unsettlement” at the sites informed by historical trauma (LaCapra xi). This unsettlement allows for the articulation of trauma as a means of both correcting its erasure from historic narratives and addressing its impact upon the construction of place, peoples, and identity.

For cultural trauma theorists, however, equating cultural trauma with individual psychological trauma, while helpful, also creates troublesome consequences for social actors, whom Alexander identifies as “carrier groups,” and for rhetoric and composition scholars (11). For him, “events do not in and of themselves, create collective trauma. [...] Trauma is a socially mediated attribution [that can be] made in real time, as the event unfolds; it may also be

made before the event occurs as an adumbration, or after the event has concluded, as a post-hoc reconstruction” (Alexander 8). Alexander asserts, “Events are one thing, representations of events quite another” (8). Collective trauma does not stem from “a group experiencing pain,” but rather from that “acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity, which can only happen – and this is central to my argument – when social “actors ‘decide’ to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go” (Alexander 10). Cultural trauma, in short, is in part culturally constructed, not simply automatic as a response to events that are inherently traumatic as psychological theory suggests. An agent or agents, or “carrier group[/s],” must first make such “a claim to fundamental injury, and exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about the horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution” (Alexander 11). An example would be the ways in which removed tribes represent the removal within their own cultural discourses and to other audiences. The claim of cultural trauma, then, becomes agentic, and carrier groups, whom I call cultural activists, must persuade the wider audience “that they, too, have become traumatized by an experience of an event” (Alexander 12). Collective trauma possesses a strong rhetorical component and, in Oklahoma, a strong transrhetorical component as well.

Insofar as the local historical traumas I discuss above, below, and

throughout my dissertation engage multiple cultural sites and subjectivities, they also serve as sites for the negotiation of collective recovery. If, as Alexander suggests, “identity involves cultural reference,” cultural trauma impacts identity. The extent to which local historical traumas go unclaimed reflects not just repression, as individual psychology suggests, but more broadly suppression. Claiming cultural trauma therefore “can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to a collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes ideal and material consequences” (Alexander 22). Only then will “the collective identity be significantly revised” after “a searching re-remembering of the collective past, for memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self” (Alexander 2). Alexander, as a sociologist, believes this process creates social compassion that “[allows] wider publics to participate in the pain of others” and create “new forms of social incorporation” (24). In treating sites of trauma in Oklahoma history, my project aims to contribute to recovery – recovery that would also allow for increasing cooperation across communities and cultures engaged in social action.

Responding to Jacqueline Royster’s call in her 1997 keynote address to the Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference for the construction of “codes of cross-cultural conduct,” Krista Ratcliffe argues for the practice of “rhetorical listening” as a trope for “interpretive invention” (1). Ratcliffe maintains that sites of cross-cultural interaction and exchange provide the antidote for “the U.S. culture’s dearth of discursive possibilities either for articulating

intersecting identification [...] or promoting cross-cultural dialogues” (3). In claiming collective trauma, cultural activists also claim collectivity, which can be the harder claim for wider publics to accept, especially when cultural identity largely mirrors dominant historical narratives that universalize the historical experience of dominant groups. Recovery enables the revision of historical narratives that otherwise silence trauma and collective efforts to redress historical grievances.

Such a clarion call for the recognition of cultural trauma and collective action to redress it must be made deliberately by those Smelser identifies as “cultural carriers – cultural specialists such as priests, politicians, intellectuals, journalists, moral entrepreneurs, and leaders of social movements” (38). Contestation, he warns, characterizes the process, as invested groups and members of the wider public dispute historical accuracy, historical interpretation, and historical affect (Smelser 38). Engaging the wider public in claims of cultural trauma requires rhetorical efficacy and transrhetorical awareness. Royster, in “History in the Spaces Left,” co-written with Jean C. Williams (1999), calls for increased attention to the “social, political, and cultural consequences” of historical discourse, particularly as it occurs in writing history, in their case the history of African American writing instruction (563). The writing of history, they argue, in turn impacts the construction of rhetorical space. As Royster explains:

our ‘official’ national narratives have excluded from metaphors of universality groups that have been systematically suppressed by sociopolitical constructions of power. Inside these narratives, such groups are typically unacknowledged and rendered invisible, or

positioned as non-universal or 'other' or inscribed in ways that circumscribe and often misrepresent them. (580)

In Royster and William's formulation, nationalist U.S. narratives assume transcultural collectivities do not exist, nor do historic traumatic events enacted upon marginalized groups. For these scholars, academics, teachers, and public intellectuals retain a social responsibility to seek out and highlight counter-narratives. In so far as students in writing classrooms identify with dominant local historical narratives that reflect nationalistic values, they lack the locally nuanced rhetorical awareness that would enable them to address local audiences, or participate in the rhetorical construction of collectivity. As long as cultural trauma goes unclaimed, dominant cultural narratives and hegemonic networks go unruptured, and collectivity remains visually and rhetorically obstructed.

ACTIVIST RHETORICS, CULTURAL LITERACY, AND RHETORICAL SUPPRESSION

Histories of rhetorical instruction written by scholars in the field have increasingly turned to archival documents related to what Susan L. Kates calls "activist education" (xi). For Kates, activist education is "rhetorical study that pursues the relationship between language and identity, makes civic issues a theme in the classroom, and emphasizes the responsibility of community service as part of the writing and speaking curriculum" (xi). Activist education occurs in marginalized contexts and among marginalized peoples. Kates, for instance, examines rhetorical instructions at small institutions for women, African-Americans, and the working class. "Pedagogical features" of activist

education includes “a desire to integrate language identity into the curriculum; politicized writing and speaking assignments;” and an “emphasis on [...] social responsibility” (Kates 1 – 2). For Kates, then, “activist rhetorics” refers to activist rhetorical instruction.

Similarly, Jessica Enoch defines rhetorical education as “any educational program that develops in students a communal and civic identity and articulates from them the rhetorical strategies, language practices, and bodily and social behaviors that make possible their participation” (8). “Dominant discourses of rhetorical education,” she explains, “[do] not advocate political agency or full civic participation for the marginalized” (Enoch 8). “Alternative forms of rhetorical education,” however, “[are] steeped in their students’ languages, cultural practices, and histories and [...] addressed the asymmetrical power relations [...] students face” (Enoch 8). These alternative forms ask students to “consider how their culture-based histories, languages, and rhetorical practices might change the world in which they lived,” thus highlighting rhetorical agency and local impact.

For my purposes, “activist rhetorics,” while certainly a tool for the classroom, encompasses rhetoric produced by local activists as well. Local activist rhetorics enable (and sometimes disable) discussion of issues in local contexts. I do believe incorporating local activist rhetorics into scholarship and writing classrooms aligns with the goals of “activist rhetorical education” as Kates defines it, particularly in marginalized local spaces. Local activist rhetorics provide meaningful rhetorical and cultural models for students to

analyze and critique, while also tying both analysis of issues and rhetorical analysis of arguments to the students' lived spaces. It draws student attention to local rhetorical practices and cultural knowledge surrounding them, and allows them to observe them both as social action. Local activist rhetorics give students discursive access to issues while also engaging their own places and identities. Writing in response to local activists rhetorics enacts student participation on a local, and much more experiential, level.

In Oklahoma, local activist rhetorics have an additional value: they supply marginalized voices and discourses that subvert the dominant historical narratives that otherwise silence them. When activist rhetoric represents multiple communities and cultural perspectives engaged by an issue, they reveal transrhetorical movement of ideas across distinct local and extra-local sites, thus bringing the sites themselves into sharper focus as well. Examining local activist rhetorics therefore increases local cultural literacy by allowing students to better perceive the complexities of local spaces, and their own relationships to locations, local histories, and local discourses. It acts against the suppression of marginalized perspectives as it enacts transrhetorical awareness. This emergent knowledge imparted by inquiry into local activist rhetorics enhances student rhetorical agency in local and extralocal contexts, and subverts the silencing mechanisms of rhetorical suppression.

Rhetorical suppression, aimed in many cases at silencing activist rhetorics, remains under-theorized. While Cheryl Glenn and others have explored rhetorical silence, silencing tactics that obscure or erase marginalized

rhetorics and histories need further analysis. Shame, for instance, is a silencing tactic, as is public humiliation, rhetorical violence, and actual violence in some cases. Rhetorically, suppression – like trauma – functions historically and culturally, inhabiting social constructs and discourses across time. Any rhetoric produced with the goal of suppressing individuals, groups, or locations, aims ultimately to silence. False representation, censorship, criminalization, alienation, discipline, and punishment – as rhetorically suppressive strategies – include rhetorical appeals to morality and assume moral judgment against the suppressed. Shaming, for instance, implies a moral judgment and can rely on the logics of religion, patriotism, racism, sexism, ableism, classism among others for legitimacy. Shame is also, however, an embodied experience that produces affective results and impacts rhetorical behavior. Silencing through shame works because rhetorical agents work to avoid experiencing shame. In general, the suppressed enact silence to avoid perceived disciplinary threats.

The historic and present-day strategies local activists develop in response to rhetorical suppression reveal methods of resisting, adapting, securing, and persisting – so that ideas, communities, belief systems, and cultural practices continue. Suppression is not synonymous with, nor does it result ultimately in the destruction of the suppressed. When local activist rhetorics persist, even in the midst of rhetorical silence, rhetorical suppression ultimately fails. Analyzing local activist rhetorics, particularly suppressed local activist rhetorics, subverts rhetorical suppression. They disrupt suppressive

constructions of spaces and peoples with dynamic representations of difference. Student writers exposed to these local models gain greater critical awareness of place as well as rhetorical strategies operating in place. These models prepare them for participation in their own communities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Working from the theoretical framework I describe here, my project treats Oklahoma as a case study for the invention and application of transrhetorical analysis as a tool for rhetorical scholarship, composition pedagogy, and social action. In my methodology, I provide a model that I hope others can use to build upon my work in their own locations and classrooms. During the first phase of my research, during the academic year 2013 – 2014 while on dissertation fellowship, I investigated local and national archives for rhetorical traces of resistance in Oklahoma history stemming from activists and evidenced in events largely erased from dominant local historical narratives. I generally refer to these traces as suppressed rhetorics for two reasons. First, historical patterns surrounding these rhetorics of resistance in Oklahoma history suggest their silencing resulted from public hegemonic rhetorical practices of misrepresentation, intimidation, humiliation, and in some cases violence. Finding archival traces of rhetorically suppressed history, or suppressed rhetorical history, is by its nature challenging archival research. For this reason, Jackie Royster's term "traces," which she developed to characterize archival materials she found in her research on African-American women rhetors and literacy workers (2000), functions aptly to describe scant

or obscure archival remnants of what appear to be significant historical actors and occurrences.

My archival research began with scholarship treating particular organizations, events, and individuals relevant to my investigation sites. My primary sites include Cherokee resistance to cultural genocide, settlement, and assimilation; Kiowa resistance to the U.S. military, federal censor of key ceremonies, and land allotment; African-American construction of community as resistance to Jim Crow during Reconstruction, Oklahoma statehood, and progressive-era racism; and general local economic struggle, statewide socialist party politics, and organized labor resistance, insofar as they foster the transrhetorical resistance that unite disparate cultural groups against conscription during World War I. In each instance, according to my own research, the methods of rhetorical resistance and rhetorical suppression vary but nevertheless result in historical silencing and marginalization of events, rhetorics, and resistant actors involved in them. My interest resides in parsing out the transrhetorical movement of resistance rhetorics between the sites I examine, looking closely at how resistance looks in distinct cultural sites, with actors within them facing shared issues such as allotment and statehood, industrialization and labor, and the racial and economic hegemony these phenomena simultaneously construct.

I am fortunate that I am not the first scholar to attempt a recovery of suppressed history in Oklahoma, and so I can rely on archival work and analysis accomplished by previous generations of local activist scholars, such

as Charles Bush, Angie Debo, Howard Meredith, Nigel Sellars, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, John Womack, Jr., and Davis D. Joyce. Collections in the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Center, the Sequoyah National Research Center, and the Oklahoma State University Library have provided numerous examples of suppression from newspaper archives, personal accounts, court documents, campaign materials, and propaganda, and other such traces. I am also fortunate to have access to the personal archive of C.S. Lewis, which currently belongs to his daughter Wilma Lewis Jaffe of Oakland, California. C.S. Lewis was an organizer for the Socialist Party of Oklahoma from 1904 to roughly 1925. I have organized these texts according to the historical and cultural activist sites listed above and to which they correlate. The organization of my investigation sites and the archival materials I have collected also reflects my chapter divisions.

The second phase of my research has been by far the most challenging portion of my project in part because of the time commitment involved, and in terms of building my academic skills. The qualitative portion of my research includes 60 interviews divided into two sets. I conducted the first set of interviews with 30 undergraduate students on the University of Oklahoma campus and the second set of 30 interviews with activists located variously across Oklahoma and working within the historical and cultural sites I investigate in my chapters. As with any human subject research, I obtained the approval and oversight of the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board (#3455) in August 2013. In my I.R.B. application I describe my project

as an ethno-historic investigation that uses qualitative methodology and rhetorical analysis to explore literacy activism in Oklahoma. In the fall of 2013, I recruited student participants via a campus mass mail communication. The email explains that “the purpose of this study is to establish a connection between activism in Oklahoma’s past to activism in Oklahoma’s present, despite suppression of political resistance early in the state’s history. For part of my study, I am interested in what students educated in Oklahoma know about Oklahoma history, and what they think about the state.” One hundred and fifteen students who had been educated at least since middle school in Oklahoma responded to my recruitment email. In order to select the students I would interview, I asked them each to tell me what schools and towns they were in when they attended elementary school, middle school, and high school. From here I was able to select a geographically representative sample, which also allowed for some degree of cultural representation.⁶ Over the course of four weeks in October 2013, I collected 29 interviews in my campus office. Students signed informed consent forms allowing me to record the interviews and publish their words. In September 2014, I conducted my 30th student interview with a former student I recruited who is featured in the last chapter. I collected approximately 50 hours of student interviews.

The second data set consists of 30 interviews with Oklahoma activists. To date, I have interviewed 30 activists working in Oklahoma or on Oklahoma issues. Again, these activists’ locations correspond with the cultural sites I am historically investigating – Kiowa, Cherokee, African-American, and Working-

Class European Americans. These activists include former Kiowa Tribal Chairman J.T. Goombi, radical historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Cherokee artist and publisher America Meredith, and John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation Executive Director Jocelyn Payne. My questions ask them to define activism and resistance, and then discuss their work in relation to these operating definitions. The basic question set for activist interviews can be found in Appendix A.

I have collected approximately 60 hours of interviews with Oklahoma activists across multiple historical, cultural, and geographical locations. In identifying activists, I look for individuals working rhetorically in their communities to affect positive social change. In most cases, their work can be understood as cultural literacy work, and for my purposes here this qualifies as activism. Throughout my dissertation, I use the activist interviews anecdotally and structurally. In addition to the time involved in locating, contacting, and interviewing the students and activists, the process of transcription has taken an enormous amount of time that I did not properly appreciate at the outset of this process. For me, transcribing has included applying for funding to pay someone to do most of the student interview transcription work.

Once transcribed, I read through each of the student interviews compiling in short-form answers for each of my ten questions (See Appendix B). During this same reading and compilation process, I also identified potential passages for coding during the next phase of my research. I used Johnny Saldaña's *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2013), which

provided models for dramaturgical and narrative coding that I combined for my own purposes. Dramaturgical coding treats “naturalistic observations and interview narratives as ‘social drama’ in its broadest sense,” and “perceive[s]” life as “performance” so that “interview transcripts become monologue, soliloquy, and dialogue” (Saldaña 123). Using dramaturgical coding, I coded objectives, conflicts, tactics, attitudes, and emotions that arose during the student interviews. Because personal and historic narrative comprised so much of the students’ answers, I used elements of narrative coding as well. According to Saldaña, “narrative coding applies the conventions of (primarily) literary elements and analysis to qualitative texts most often in the form of stories” (131). Combining narrative coding with dramaturgical coding allowed me to code for motifs, subtexts, flashbacks, and transitions, and time frames as well.

Using this methodology, I coded 13 passages I selected according to content from 13 different students. The codes that I used in this process are listed in Appendix C. Once the coding was complete, I compiled the codes first by code according to student, and also by code according to question in order to observe the patterns that arose from them. I use these patterns to argue the exigency of my project primarily in the coming sections, but also anecdotally throughout my project where relevant. I want to emphasize that this has been an entirely new venture for me. I am trained solidly in textual analysis and production. I have been fortunate to find mentors in qualitative methodologies outside of the Department of English to guide me, including anthropologists,

linguists, social workers, and educational researchers, all of whom work within Oklahoma communities. Dr. David Moxley, OU Zarrow College of Social Work, Dr. Joy Pendley, OU Applied Researcher, and Taylor Smith, Graduate Student, Department of Anthropology, have been particularly helpful.

Among many significant patterns that arise from my data sets so far, one in particular bears mentioning now. Across both interview sets, activism and activist identity is a vexed topic for interviewees, so vexed in fact it becomes difficult to theorize. When asked if they identified as activists (Question 12), 11 students answered yes, 15 students answered no, and four students expressed ambivalence or uncertainty. Of the 15 students who answered no, five nonetheless expressed activist subjectivities and discussed participation in social action projects, but did not identify as activists. Across the activist interviews, many interviewees did not self-identify as activists, despite the fact that I had identified them as such. In many cases this was because their definitions of activism were not consistent with their work as literacy activists, but instead more informed by the activism foregrounded in sites such as the Occupy and Idle No More movements. Activism at these sites includes tactics of protest, civil disobedience, and human blockading, strategies most of the activists I interviewed had never employed. Those interviewees that did identify as activists usually defined activism in less politically charged terms such working for positive social change, working for and within community, and advancing cultural ways and knowledge. These collected answers indicate at the very least that activist identity in Oklahoma is a nebulous subjectivity to

claim.

OKLAHOMA, IDENTITY, STUDENTS AND ACTIVISM

Throughout a lifetime living here, I have heard expressed, too many times, the lack of esteem others have for Oklahoma. It seems almost ingrained in people to dislike it here. They commonly cite the blandness of the landscape, the conservatism of the politics, the ignorance of the population, and the poverty of culture. Oklahoma is a place people leave in search of greener pastures, literal and figurative. People who stay here are thus often marked by resignation, possibly stubborn resilience, and certainly not resistance. At best, they are stubborn and crude, pioneers in a desperate sense, scraping what they can from the soil rather than moving on. Visual habits and rhetorical habits, as Fleckenstein defines them, inscribe negative assumptions and stereotypes on Oklahoma that operate across decades and generations. My concern at the outset of my research was the extent to which my own experiences, values, and beliefs about my home impact the argument I make for local rhetorics. Anecdotal evidence from my own life, especially regarding my home, seemed to provide a limited exigency for my research at best. The questions I asked my students, though fairly basic, elicited a pattern of answers that to some extent confirm my own experiences while at the same time confounding and troubling my expectations.

The students' answers to question six, "If you were to pick five words to describe Oklahoma, what would they be?" provides a useful example of such a pattern. Across the interviews, I collected 150 student-generated descriptors

of Oklahoma. After compiling these words, I coded them looking for patterns and themes. Guided by grounded theory which, as Kathy Charmaz explains, “emphasizes understanding rather than explanation” and “rests on the theorist’s interpretation of the studied phenomenon,” I looked first for a basic pattern of positive, negative, and neutral descriptors (126). I thought I would find a pattern that helped me to identify the students’ basic characterization of Oklahoma and subsequent attitudes toward the state. However, of those 150 words, 32 (21.3%) had positive connotations while 29 (19.3%) had negative connotations - not exactly a tie but also not a definitive majority in either case. 96 (64%) descriptors were neutral. Typical positive descriptors include “friendly,” “resilient,” “grand,” “beautiful,” “home,” “proud,” “relaxed,” “strong,” “determined,” and “loyal.” Typical negative descriptors include “judgmental,” “segregated,” “poor,” “ignorant,” “biased,” “boring,” “racist,” “sexist,” “unwanted,” and “misunderstood.” To me, what this suggests is these students experience a resounding ambivalence toward Oklahoma, marked by a lack of critical understanding of place. In many of the interviews, students expressed awareness of whether they were picking positive and negative words as well, and many of them deliberated aloud, ultimately choosing to be positive out of self-awareness and a perceived need to characterize Oklahoma positively.

Of the 96 neutral words, 38 (40.8%) were clearly ideologically conservative terms, such as “conservative,” “religious,” “Christian,” “traditional,” “stable,” “country,” “Bible Belt,” and “rural.” I chose to mark these as neutral terms to avoid my own political bias, but students in most cases

perceived them as negative descriptors. These answers correlate with their answers to Question #11, "How do you think outsiders see Oklahoma?" I did not ask students for a particular number of examples in this case, and collected a total of 111 answers across the interviews, with most students giving multiple examples of what they perceive to be common outsider perceptions of Oklahoma. In coding these answers, I did not find a single positively connotated term. 47 (42.3%) answers were negative and 64 (57.6%) were neutral. Of the neutral answers, 19 (17.1%) indicated ideologically conservative perceptions of Oklahoma with 16 out of 30 students interviewed providing such answers. However the negative examples of outsider perspectives students generated include stereotypes often associated with conservative political values. Students gave such examples as "backwards," "culturally inexperienced," "redneck," "anti-education," and "behind the times." As one student, Cody Phillips, a journalism major, put it, "we don't have good publicity." Carly Houghtling, a Religious Studies junior originally from Talala, Oklahoma, remarked in answering this question, "Jon Stewart said Oklahoma is so red no one even has blue eyes here." She believes outsiders see Oklahoma as being "really, really conservative," which for Carly, who identifies as a progressive liberal and expressed an activist identity, means being marked as a cultural anomaly and feeling alienated from her home (Houghtling).

Carly described for me in detail a national essay contest she won as a high student. The topic was the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which as she explains "guarantees the rights of children to have enough food to

get their schoolwork done and have enough time and resources to play and not have to enter the workforce” (Houghtling). Carly explained to me that she was told by contest officials that she won the contest not exactly because she’s from Oklahoma, but because Oklahoma is one of the most active opponents to the Convention. She told me, “They were shocked to see somebody from Oklahoma would actually support their movement. Part of the reason that I won the essay contest is because I am an ideological minority” (Houghtling). Carly accepts the outside construction of Oklahoma that makes her the ideological minority in this case.

Not coincidentally, Carly plans to leave home after graduation for some place that is “a little bit more liberal just generally” (Houghtling). This pattern arose across the interviews of students who identified as activists.

Interestingly, Carly’s sense of her own subjectivity, as a marginalized progressive voice in Oklahoma, becomes more concrete and real for her as she discusses outsider characterizations of her home. Stereotypes such as the red-state construction Jon Stewart’s joke and the United Nations essay contest committee invokes are naturalized and unquestionable for students like Carly. Over and over again in my interviews, politically progressive students accepted these constructions, and the visual and rhetorical habits inherent to them, even as these constructions alienate and erase the students’ own political subjectivities. Media examples such as Stewart’s not only reinforce longstanding social constructions, they also shrink the space for articulating difference and within which to imagine Oklahoma in different terms. I want my

project to be such a space, within which to expand and explore new ways to re-frame this place and its people and create a transrhetorical space for social action. My goal is to counter-inscribe – to write against the governing assumptions about Oklahoma, especially as they construct powerful rhetorical hegemonies and limit activist discourse and identities.

OKLAHOMA'S HISTORICAL/RHETORICAL LANDSCAPE

This project begins on an “Oklahoma Centennial Farm,” the George Bellmon farm just northwest of Red Rock, Oklahoma, town population 283. As a recognized member of the Oklahoma Centennial Farm project, this land has stayed in the Bellmon family for over one hundred years. Across three generations the Bellmons have managed a farm and cattle ranching operation here. Henry Bellmon, the son of George, oversaw these operations until his death in 2009 at the age of 88 years. Henry was also an Oklahoma politician, elected as Oklahoma’s first Republican governor in 1963. He served also as United States Senator from 1969 – 1981 and again as Governor from 1987 until 1991. In 1989 during his second term as Governor, Henry Bellmon created the Oklahoma Centennial Farm & Ranch Program as part of the centennial celebration of the 1889 Land Run that “officially” opened the Indian and Oklahoma Territories to white settlement.

Today the Bellmon farm and ranch continues under the direction of Henry Bellmon’s daughters, Pat Bellmon Hoerth and Ann McFerron, who have also added a new dimension to the work being done on this land and to the rhetoric surrounding the farm and ranch industry in Oklahoma. Honoring the

name their father gave to the ranch that describes the white geological formations of calcified prehistoric oceanic mud dotting the red clay landscape, the Bellmon sisters have dubbed their project Turtle Rock Farm, and under its auspices offer educational programming, ecumenical workshops, and spiritual retreats based in environmental awareness and sustainability. The writing phase of this project began in the Sallie McFague Strawbale Hermitage, a one-room cottage made from straw covered with cob composed from the soil and clay on which it is built. Literally surrounded by the Oklahoma earth within its walls, I began writing in a local landscape inscribed with both an historic narrative of Oklahoma's conservative political history and a nascent interpretation of Oklahoma's suppressed identity and leftist political history. As these narratives intersect at Turtle Rock Farm, I seek to understand how they interact rhetorically to open a space within which to understand Oklahoma differently.

The work of the Bellmon daughters rhetorically mirrors and continues, though largely unintentionally, the goals of a program conceived during their father's first term as Oklahoma Governor (1963 – 1967). Governor Bellmon's Press Secretary, Robert L. Haught, proposed the development of an "Okie Promotion Program," a public campaign to rewrite the term "Okie" with positive meaning, primarily as a means to attract industry to the state and bolster civic pride (Logsdon). Though archival evidence suggests "Okie" was used as early as 1905, according to the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma* it was used first as a neutral abbreviation to denote regional identity, just as "Arkie" for

Arkansas and "Tex" for Texas (Logsdon). Most accounts credit Ben Reddick, a journalist with the Paso Robles (CA) Press with popularizing the usage of the term which denotes "migrant agricultural worker; *especially*: one from Oklahoma in the 1930s" ("Okie"). Reddick used the word "Oakies" as the caption for a migrant camp photo featuring a car with an Oklahoma license tag, and thus coined a new connotation, one associated with poverty, instability, and despair.

Simultaneously, and transrhetorically, the term became derogatory as well. In the midst of the Great Depression, migrant farm workers from Oklahoma and elsewhere became increasingly unwelcome in California. As a testament to local attitudes, a 1937 law, Section 2615 of the Welfare and Institutions Code of California – referred to in public discourse as "the Anti-Okie Law" – made it a misdemeanor to "bring or assist in bringing" an "indigent person" who was not a resident of the state into California ("Edwards v. California"). The law was enforced for five years, and it took a decision by the United States Supreme Court to repeal the Anti-Okie Law as unconstitutional. In his treatment and analysis of "Okie" culture in central California, James N. Gregory traces the use of the law "as 1939 drew to a close" and claims district attorneys in counties with large numbers of migrants exercised it "to prosecute individual Southwesterners who helped relatives enter the state" (98). As Gregory's argument makes clear, "Okie" became a referent for anyone from what he describes alternatively as the Southwest and the Western South – composed of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri. Thus the "Okie"

stereotype became a regional stereotype that ultimately functioned transrhetorically as a class stereotype, particularly associated with poor whites.

The 1939 publication of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* circulated the term "Okie" to a national audience, embedded in a narrative of extreme poverty and persecution set within the national crisis of the Great Depression. The reactions of prominent Oklahomans suggest the book hit a nerve with local audiences, prompting Oklahoma U.S. Senator Lyle Boren's congressional speech against Steinbeck and his book. The situation was exacerbated by a 1940 visit to Oklahoma City from a congressional investigation committee, headed by California U.S. Representative John H. Tolan, to examine "the interstate migration of destitute citizens" (Dewitt 304). Oral accounts and local legend suggest *The Grapes of Wrath* was banned in most if not all public libraries in the state. According to Cara A. Finnegan in *Picturing Poverty*, the book was also banned in many of the California counties where its fictional action took place (1). It is likely the California bannings took place for different reasons. In California, the book's suppression seems tied to hiding local sites of injustice. Its censorship in Oklahoma, on the other hand, connects to a deeply seated sense of insult and a desire, on behalf of the state's leadership, at least, for Oklahoma and its people to be viewed differently than Steinbeck's characters allowed.

Responses to the *Grapes of Wrath* across time continued to suggest a contradictory pattern. By 1957, Steinbeck was invited by the Director of the

Oklahoma Semi-Centennial Commission to attend official celebration events in Oklahoma City. That same year, Oklahoma Governor Raymond Gary named John Steinbeck an official “Oklahoma Booster,” the only non-Oklahoman on the list. Archival evidence suggests to Dewitt that these public efforts to make peace with Steinbeck were part of a larger effort to use the Semi-Centennial events as a means to make Oklahoma more attractive to industry. In order to do so, semi-centennial planners clearly saw a need to address the lasting rhetorical impact of Steinbeck’s Pulitzer-prize winning book. In 1966, 27 years after *The Grapes of Wrath* was published, Emory University Professor of Sociology Bennie Dewhitt conducted research at 149 Oklahoma libraries that suggests, however, “that reactions of Oklahoma readers to *The Grapes of Wrath* have been neither as negative nor as widespread as might be suspected from an examination of the book's treatment in the Oklahoma press,” and “there seems to have been a general curiosity about the novel and subsequent acceptance of it” (305). My student interviews suggest the book continues to be included only sporadically in Oklahoma English curriculum, mostly at the high school level. Thirteen of the 30 students I interviewed had read it, but none expressed enthusiasm for it. As student Laura Wilcox put it, “it just doesn’t necessarily cast us as prime real estate.” Laura sees this pattern in Oklahoma history more broadly, which she finds “always a bit disappointing” (Wilcox). If given the option, Laura would refocus the dominant historical narrative “on things that weren’t quite so agricultural, or so cowboys and Indians,” all of which for her in this case was negative and problematic, and

part and parcel of an inaccurate representation of the state (Wilcox). It also suggests a confluence of stereotypes – there were no cowboys or Indians in *The Grapes of Wrath*. What is clear is Laura identifies with none of the subjectivities these stereotypes construct.

The “Okie Promotion Program” suggests that in the mid-1960’s, nearly a decade later, Steinbeck’s book, the term “Okie,” and the negative connotations they associated with Oklahoma and Oklahomans had not yet been sufficiently neutralized. According to the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma*, the program was officially launched on May 6, 1968 – not coincidentally the 28th anniversary of *The Grapes of Wrath* release (Hanneman). It included multitudes of memorabilia emblazoned with the program logo, including lapel pins, drinking glasses, and desk sets, clocks, as well as program sponsored honorary titles and public contests. The logo was the word “Okie,” written in gold in all-caps featuring a drop of water in the “O” and a tree in the “I,” which Hanneman points out “suggests a land of water and forests, a direct contrast to the barren land portrayed by Steinbeck.” Governor Bartlett published promotional speeches and pamphlets which constantly coined new meanings for the acronym O.K.I.E., such as “Oklahoma, Key to Intelligence and Enterprise,” “Oklahoma, Key to Industrial Expansion,” “Oklahoma, Key to Individual Enthusiasm,” and “Oklahoma, Key to International Energy” (Hanneman). In their positivity, each of these acronyms suggests the negative impact Oklahoma leaders believed “Okie” had enacted in areas such as economic development, public morale, and local identity. As part of the program, Governor Bartlett

even attempted to get the meaning of “Okie” changed in both the Webster’s and American Heritage dictionaries, and was successful in getting the definition at least modified in both. Perhaps the best proof Hanneman provides of the investment made in reinscribing Oklahoma via the “Okie Promotion Program” is that between 1967 and 1971, \$250,000 a year was spent on the campaign, for a total of one and a quarter million dollars allocated by the legislature from the state’s budget.

Okie, as a term and a concept, persists in local usage – no doubt informed by efforts such as this and also complicated by them. In an article entitled “The Lingering Shadow,” Jennifer Collins examines the evolution of the term Okie in the post-depression era, extending her analysis into the present. In the 1970’s she observes an “additional transformation” in its meaning being used in national discourse. She states, “The moniker that had evolved from favorite nickname, to nasty slur, to political slogan was modified yet again, as some Oklahomans began to associate the word with many of its citizens’ more conservative political leanings” (Collins 94). It is little wonder that the rhetoric of the Okie Promotion Program was imbued with conservative ideology, as the program began under the first-elected Republican governor and aimed in part to attract industrial development. However Collins attributes the term’s morphology to a more pedestrian cause, specifically the release of Merle Haggard’s song “Okie from Muskogee” (94). In her analysis, the lyrics construct “a synonym for someone who was put off by draft protests and other aspects of the social revolution” and “lament[ed] the changing face of American youth

throughout the nation, while insisting that Okies still respected both their flag and their college dean” (94-95). In a national display of patriotism, Haggard sang the song at a March 1973 White House dinner “to President and Mrs. Nixon while an American flag was raised behind him” (Collins 95). Haggard’s performance makes visually concrete the emerging conservative connotation “Okie” has since come to connote as well as the extent to which this usage would circulate in public discourse nationally.

OKIE AS WHITENESS, POVERTY AS TRANSRHETORICAL

Despite the attention paid to counter-inscribing Okie in both public policy and local historical analyses, little articulation has been given to a trope I see operating in the word’s meaning and usage, namely whiteness. An

Encyclopedia of Oklahoma entry acknowledges

‘Okie’ was never, or at least rarely used, about African American migrants during the Great Depression. Most migrant agricultural workers, or ‘Okies,’ were white and traveled westward from the Midwestern drought and cotton-growing states. Most African American migrants in the 1930s came from southern cotton-growing states and migrated northward seeking nonagricultural work in Chicago, Detroit, and other industrial cities. (Logsdon)

Gregory notes that during the period of white migration to the West from the South and Southwest, “three million blacks [...] joined the outflow” and headed to the North and Midwest primarily, thus missing inclusion in the “Okie” stereotype. Certainly the state’s Native Americans and their various tribal cultures are absent in the construction as well, despite their primary historical and enduring cultural and political presence in Oklahoma.

The students I interviewed, 27 of whom were from Oklahoma and three

of whom moved here at a very young age, create a demographic sampling that bears discussion. I chose to select students based on their locations and schools and decided against selecting students based on racial identity, so that the racial representation my sample achieved would correlate with geographical location. Of the 30 students, 25 (83%) identified as European American, four (13%) identified as African American, and 12 (40%) identified as Native American, one as Mexican American, and one as Syrian American. To further complicate these categories, two (50%) of the four African-American students also identified as Native American and 10 (83%) of the 12 Native American students identified also as European American. Only three of these 12 Native American students foregrounded Native American as their primary ethnic identity category, with most selecting “white” or “Caucasian” first, and none of these three also identified as African American. I point this out because I believe it reflects a significant pattern that shows the relevance of Oklahoma history and discursive patterns concerning race to Oklahoma student identity. With only three students claiming Native identity as their primary ethnicity, and only four students claiming African-American as their primary identity, and all 23 of the remaining students claiming “white” or “Caucasian,” it seems worthwhile to press upon whiteness as an identity construct in Oklahoma⁷. The exigency compounds when many of these students, both white and black, hesitated to claim their Native descendency as part of their ethnic identity. In several instances, students with Native descendency believed they had no right to claim it, a rhetorical habit that I believe is the bi-product of both assimilation

policy and the tri-racial history in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's "white" people were in reality quite diverse, which is not to say that they were not privileged. It is to say, however, that in most cases their cultural identities were multiple and complex when they were "not-yet-white" (Wiegman 123). Robyn Wiegman, Professor of Literature and Women's Studies at Duke University, argues critical race theorists who assert the construct of whiteness, particularly its hegemonic power, "arises from its appropriation of the universal" – where "the universal is devoid of the particular" – "have failed to interpret the tension between particularity and universality" (117). Oklahoma, like all locations, is in many ways a particular historical case. Oklahoma was settled by European Americans from the South, Midwest, and Northeast, many of who were newly immigrated to the United States, roughly during the 1880's to 1900. During this era, whites from multiple pre-white cultural and ethnic backgrounds – German, Czechoslovakian, Irish, Italian, Polish among others – began life in the newly "opened" territories that were formerly federally promised to and still inhabited by multiple Native nations. Additionally, prior to the Civil War, several tribes in the territory, particularly those that were removed from the South, practiced slave owning. As a result, there was a significant population of African American and African-Native Americans in Oklahoma prior to white settlement. After the Civil War, emancipated slaves emigrated to Oklahoma, attracted by the absence of Jim Crow laws in the "unorganized territories."

Whiteness, then, as a universal construct, is a central and particular

trope in the “Okie” construction to the extent that it erases difference from Oklahoma’s cultural and discursive landscape, just as it erases sites of shared experience. Well before the time the 1930’s migration westward began, Oklahoma had become an exceptional site of cultural interaction and exchange. As groups settled communities and addressed their needs and concerns, their efforts coalesced into what rhetoric scholar Krista Ratcliffe identifies as “code[s] of cross-cultural conduct,” a rhetorical space within which discourse absorbs and adapts multiple cultural practices, including communication practices, to the needs of those communicating so that the goal of constructing mutual meaning can be met (17). At the same time, through both conflict and cooperation, families and communities were merging. Today, most “white” people with several generations of family history in Oklahoma can claim non-white heritage, though the extent to which they do so – and when and where they do so – differs widely. As in the 1930’s migration, categories of whiteness, such as cultural and ethnic diversity among “whites,” and certainly categories beyond whiteness rarely become visible. “Okie,” as both a visual habit and rhetorical habit, erases these categories of difference and commonality in Oklahoma.

TRI-RACIAL HISTORY AND TRANSRHETORICAL TRAUMA

Transrhetorical analysis becomes useful in discerning and articulating the rhetorical impact of this erasure on the multiple groups affected by it. Melanie Benson Taylor, in her book *Reconstructing the Native South: American Indian Literature and the Lost Cause* (2011), theorizes a triracial U.S. South

where Native Americans, African Americans, and European Americans have “far more in common than geographical proximity. She argues:

It is not difficult to recognize the myriad ways that both groups are haunted by their own private, separate histories of sweeping loss and crippling nostalgia, but we have yet to investigate the moments when the experience, rhetoric, and effects of such histories converge in explicit and startling ways. (Taylor 1)

“Taken together,” Taylor explores the “new configurations” and “quite possibly, new hope” they provide (2). Oklahoma, located geographically on the southern Great Plains at the western edge of the Ozark Mountains and Ouachita National Forest, attests to the triracial history Taylor constructs. She traces “Lost Cause rhetorics” within three distinct racialized communities in order to observe how these rhetorics move between them and unite them, effectively enacting what I call transrhetorical analysis, similar to what I hope to accomplish in Oklahoma.

The lack of investigation into transrhetorical phenomenon across cultural sites perpetuates a problematic identity confusion for many students I interviewed. While “Okie” operates as a legacy in their rhetorical environment, most of the students, especially students of color, read it as a white subjectivity. Even though the term denotes someone from Oklahoma, the African-American and Native American students I interviewed did not identify easily with it. The same can be said about their identification with Oklahoma history more broadly, especially as the dominant narrative gets expressed via school curriculum and local public media. One student, Taylor Marrow, complained that his formal Oklahoma history education “left out a lot of different ethnic groups – zero Latinos, zero African-American” and only a “kind” version of

Native American history. The more valuable education about Oklahoma history came informally to Taylor, through family (Marrow). Taylor revealed during our discussion that his grandfather is Edward Melvin Porter, who was the first African-American elected to the Oklahoma State Senate in 1964. Porter previously served as President of the Oklahoma City chapter of the NAACP during sit-ins and boycotts organized by Clara Luper and others (O'Dell). Quincella Ivy, another student participant, identifies as both African-American and Muscogee Creek. She recalled during her interview the Land Run re-enactment at her elementary school in Del City, saying "I remember thinking it wasn't for me, that it wasn't my people who were getting land" (Ivy). In reality, settlers included African-American land claimants. Like dominant U.S. historical narratives, many of the events and individuals foregrounded in dominant historical narratives of Oklahoma perpetuate tropes of whiteness, replacing the rich, complex, shared histories of historically marginalized groups with which students identify.

More than one Native American student I interviewed expressed an ambivalence toward their tribal identities, characterized by an almost painful hesitancy to claim their descendancy, even when they had the required proof for citizenship with a Native nation. Josiah Irwin, when I asked him how he identified ethnically, answered, "Culturally, I identify as Native American, but I'm white." Born in Tahlequah at the Indian Health Services Hospital and raised in Muskogee, Josiah is a member of the Muskogee Creek Nation. Growing up an Okie from Muskogee, Josiah never experienced a Land Run re-enactment, and a

Cherokee man taught his Oklahoma history class in high school (Irwin). Josiah's knowledge of Oklahoma history, which included Native resistance history learned in this high school Oklahoma history class, was by far one of the most extensive I encountered in my interviews. He also identified definitively as an activist, working most recently against the use of Native mascots by national sports league teams (Irwin). Yet Josiah explained late in his interview that "one of the hardest things is I am Muskogee Creek, I have my C.D.I.B.⁸, but at the same time, [...] being white it's kind of hard for me to, you know, get into that culture" (Irwin). He continued,

I'm studying about it [and] I'm trying my best because I really want to go into law eventually and be a lawyer for my Nation. [...] So I'm trying to contact people in my tribe to talk to them, you know, about [...] how I want to participate, but at the same time I don't go to the grounds [...] because I don't know where they're at. I don't know anything about those sort of things. It can be hard because I feel like I am going through, like, a cultural identity crisis. (Irwin)

For me, students like Josiah who express anxiety around claiming Native descendency exhibit what might be thought of as an assimilation syndrome. The intended products of federal assimilation policy as articulated in the Dawes Act that opened Indian Territory for allotment, these students believe they can no longer legitimately claim their cultural identity, because it has been subsumed by whiteness both culturally and rhetorically.

WHITENESS, REGIONAL RHETORIC, AND CRITICAL REGIONALISM

A perfect example of this phenomenon can be seen in the famous Dorothea Lange photograph "Migrant Mother" that continues to circulate as a symbol of the migration and those who experienced it. Gregory identifies

Lange's husband, "Agricultural economist Paul Taylor," as "responsible for initially calling attention to what became known as the Dust Bowl migration" in a 1935 article published in *Survey Graphic* (81). After many years of covering the economic and labor struggles of "California's farm labor force," Taylor "discovered the empathetic value of white skin," and found a larger audience for his coverage of "old-stock white American families [...] joining Mexicans and Asians in the fields" (Gregory 81). As both the drought and the Depression continued, and migrant numbers increased, "the press called them Dust Bowl refugees" – despite the wide region outside the actual Dust Bowl from which the migrants originated and the widely varying reasons for which they migrated. The increasingly desperate situation was made into "a spectacle rich in drama and pathos" based on "themes dear to the nation's heritage – westward migration, the search for opportunity, the dignity of the American farmer – presenting themselves in ironic and disturbing ways" (Gregory xiv). Lange and Taylor went on to publish *American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* in 1939, still considered an early masterpiece of the documentary genre. Lange took all of the photographs that appear in *American Exodus* while employed by the Farm Security Administration (originally called the Resettlement Administration) from 1935 - 1939.

The "Migrant Mother" image, which Lange captured in March 1936 and which remains one of her most widely recognized images, has been the subject of critical attention for many years. Cara A. Finnegan points out "the narratives circulating in and around" the Farm Security Administration photographs

expose “forces that should be taken into account” in the production of Great Depression-era “rhetorics of poverty” (3). She questions the characterizations of migrants and the migrant experience in the FSA photographs, arguing whereas the images fix the “myth of the migrant,” migration was far more fluid. She calls for “renewed historical contextualization and nuanced rhetorical analysis” of these images to find narratives which vex, challenge, and subvert the myth (7). Finnegan asserts the “Migrant Mother” image “is undoubtedly the single most famous product” of the FSA photographs, “and, easily, of the whole era” (98). Robert Hariman and John Lucaites in *No Caption Needed* (2007) claim, “the image remains one of the most requested items in the photography collection” (55). According to Finnegan, Hariman and Lucaites argue the photograph’s “incessant circulation across time makes it difficult to ‘locate’ its reality in any historical context” (101). On the other hand, Hariman and Lucaites state “for subsequent generations” for whom poverty no longer poses such immediate and pervasive threat, the image provides a “localized sense of fear” that contains poverty “within a specific time, place, and class” (59). For Oklahoma, however, and likely California, the image does take place within local material reality insofar as it reflects geographies with which both states, and people in both states, identify. If, as Hariman and Lucaites observe, “the icon seems to have become a template for images of want,” surely this visual interpretation reverberates within the Oklahoma narrative (61). The “Migrant Mother” never would have been in the pea-pickers’ camp where Lange captured her image had life not been so miserable back home.

Documentary photography, particularly during the 1930's, receives on-going critique for the lack of ethical consideration given to photographic subjects. In Chris Carter's analysis of Jacob Riis's photographic methodology, "Writing with Light: Jacob Riis's Ambivalent Exposures" (2008), a photographer's access to her subjects, her relationship with them in the photographic moment, transcends space and time to provides the image's audiences with access as well. For Carter, "the intensification of the visual moment [gives] the viewers a sense of risk-free access, whereby they [...] temporarily share a space with the poor" (122). Lange's behavior in the "Pea-Pickers Camp" outside of Nipoma, California, where she took six photographs – all of the "migrant mother," her children, and their camp, exemplifies the methodological concerns present in recent criticism. Geoffrey Dunn chronicles Lange's missteps in a 2002 article for the San Luis Obispo magazine *New Times*. According to the migrant mother's children, Lange did not ask permission to take the pictures. She did not ask the mother's name or place of origin, "nor how she arrived at [the] desolate campsite in Nipomo" (Dunn). In a 1970 Associated Press story, Florence Owens Thompson made her identity known for the first time and articulated a long list of grievances against Lange for the impact the "Migrant Mother" image had on her life. Thompson also reveals that Lange promised she wouldn't sell the pictures, but within days of taking it published the image in the *San Francisco News*. Though Lange's career and the migrants in the Nipomo camp benefitted from the image – bureaucrats "quickly rushed 20,000 pounds of food supplies" there after receiving the image – the

photograph never brought Thompson or her family relief (Dunn). Stopped in the camp only temporarily for a car repair, they had moved on to another camp by the time the food arrived.

Among the many misrepresentations of Thompson and other migrants the iconic image perpetuates, none is more troubling than the misrepresentation of whiteness. According to her children, Florence Owens Thompson was born “Florence Leona Christie on September 1, 1903, in the Indian Territory of the Cherokee Nation, to which both of her parents claimed blood rights,” and she was raised “on a small family farm [...] outside Tahlequah, Oklahoma,” the Cherokee Nation’s capital (Dunn). Her son Troy Owens and her daughters Katherine McIntosh and Norma Rydlewski, “both of whom appear with their mother in the classic Lange photograph,” claim, likely incorrectly, that Ms. Thompson was a full-blood (Dunn). However, the extent to which the “Migrant Mother” was read through a lens of whiteness illustrates the power of the whiteness trope as it circulated in representations of migrant farm workers, particularly Okies. Gregory argues that it was in fact both their whiteness and their desperation that made the migrants so compelling in the public imagination. “Unlike most westward movements of earlier eras,” which Gregory claims were “dominated by the [white] middling classes” and motivated by “perceived attractions” of the coast and “the desire [...] for an ambitious new start,” “this one seemed to be comprised mostly of poor people” “motivated [...] by the push of desperate conditions back home” (10). As another example of misrepresentation, Florence Owens Thompson and her

family had actually moved to California eleven years before Lange took her photograph, well before the Dust Bowl and the migrations began.

As it participates in the Okie stereotype, Lange's photograph effectively silences the diverse material realities and the rich transrhetorical practices Oklahoma's history provides, just as Dust Bowl era regional representations of the landscape and its peoples erase the state's rich and diverse resources and population. As Ratcliffe warns, "words-as-tropes emerge and function differently over time and place [...] unless we trace these histories, we may function under the misimpression that these categories are timeless and universal instead of historically situated, multiple, and fluid" (9). With popular usage of the word Okie persisting in the present – on graphic tees, bumper stickers, and local product labels – examining who and what this iconic term leaves out is critical. Not doing so enacts and enforces inaccurate and limited assumptions about Oklahoma, its people, and their transformative potential. Ignoring the peoples and histories Okie constructions supplant insures their ongoing erasure in public discourse, a problem of severe consequence for rhetorical agency, democratic dialogue, and political discourse where these communities must represent themselves. Representation affords marginalized groups the possibility of social transformation. Without equal representation, marginalized groups in Oklahoma, as elsewhere, face discursive challenges in effectively rhetoricizing audiences both in Oklahoma and beyond.

The critical awareness required for social action, by which I mean positive social change enacted through public democratic means, demands a

close attention to political and cultural landscapes of local spaces and the regions they comprise. As it arises from Appalachian Studies, Douglas Reichert Powell asserts the term “Critical Regionalism” to indicate conscious connection-making between politics, culture, and landscape that aims at the intentional construction of new, revelatory models of understanding a particular place within the broader region and even larger global network. He argues,

It is by looking at those features of a place that seem, at least superficially, to be the permanent stable markers of its identity that we can begin to see the dynamic, evolving, and rhetorical qualities that create and sustain what has often been taken (reductively) to be an ineffable or ethereal, sensory property: the ‘sense of place.’ [...] in these kinds of critical judgments, assumptions are made, or affirmed and perpetuated, about which kind of people from what kinds of places should be allowed to participate in the production of knowledge, the production of beauty, of cultural value; of public discourse, opinion, and sentiment. (Powell 14)

Examining our assumptions about places and their inhabitants, even those that we cherish, generates a productive space for creating active models for rhetorically navigating local material realities and understanding local culture. Examining social constructions of place also provides a means of understanding the full impact of those constructions on the lives of people who live there.

For Powell and other critical regionalists, the new regional models that arise from such examinations impact both the righting of social wrongs and the writing of local histories. He believes that in order to address the effects of “injustice, of uneven development, of racism, of classism, of sexism, and heterosexism,” we – which includes “progressive intellectuals and educators” –

must reclaim the supposedly tranquil or quiescent [...] spaces of regional culture as vital spaces of cultural strife” (Powell 21). While Powell’s model of Critical Regionalism could be more culturally inclusive, it does encourage the sustained, close analysis of particular places alongside and against popular constructions of them which oftentimes are predominantly white. It asks for cultural production, particularly writing about place, to occur within a critical awareness that such production inscribes long-lasting definitions that continue to impact places – and the people who live in them – across both time and space.

When I asked about writing assignments that required them to write about Oklahoma, only one of the 30 students I interviewed remember writing about Oklahoma in an English class prior to college. Two students recalled writing about Oklahoma in college writing courses, but only one of these two stated there was an explicit focus on Oklahoma stated in the assignment objectives. Most of the students reported writing about Oklahoma in Oklahoma history, political science, or life science courses. Likewise when I asked them about reading Oklahoma writers, most students did not recall reading local authors within the context of a college writing class. Ten students remembered reading S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* in middle school or early high school and two students read Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man* in high school. Only one of the thirty students reported reading a persuasive piece of non-fiction by an Oklahoma writer. This student, Tiffany Cochran, read a speech by Wilma Mankiller as a high school student in Tahlequah. Six students reported reading

Oklahoma authors in college courses other than writing classrooms.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE FARM

Pat Bellmon Hoerth of Turtle Rock Farm provides a textual example of the extent to which written representations of place, and critical investigations into place, inscribe meaning and experience into the lives of residents and continue to impact their material realities across generations. Though she now lives full time on the Bellmon ranch where she manages the Turtle Rock Farm Center for Sustainability, Spirituality, and Healing, Pat returned to the family land after more than a decade of living and working as a journalist in Washington, D.C. Her homecoming was not easy. In an essay entitled, “The Passing of Grit: Observations of a Farm Girl, Now Spectator on the Land” (1993), she clearly struggles with her identity as an Oklahoman hesitant to inherit the family farm from her parents and grandparents – as well as the rural Oklahoma culture inherent in the inheritance. She exhibits a struggle to conscious awareness that her life, including how she chooses to live it – particularly on the family land, counter-inscribes decades of family history even as she writes her essay. “Although I have returned to the farm, with my generation the family farming chain most surely will be broken. I admit this only with great reluctance. Although I have known I would not farm, it is only with this writing that I can accept that fact” (Bellmon 187). She wrestles with her relationship to the land and Oklahoma throughout the essay, moving from appreciation for it, to concern for it, to distrust of the land and farming culture. As she reenters farm life and her farming community, she compares happy

childhood memories of growing up on the farm to her perceptions as a returning daughter who had lived a good portion of her life elsewhere, only to conclude that the farm as she had imagined it was “a mirage, a deception” (Bellmon 195). Her hopes of bringing new ideas and energy into the community of farmers around whom she had grown up dissolved in a storm of censoring and ostracism, stemming from what Pat perceives as resentment toward her for leaving the community in the first place – much in the same way Oklahomans who stayed during the dust bowl exodus bear a grudge against those who left.

For Pat Bellmon Hoerth, in the twenty years that have passed since the publication of her essay, her relationship with the family farm has continued to change as she has adapted to her then newly emergent understanding of herself in relationship to the land. Still she remains committed the critical reflexivity she exhibits here:

Until we realize what the reality of life on the farm was and is and what it was not and is not, we cannot accept what the farm has done – good and bad – to us individually and as a culture. And until we accept that reality, we cannot go about the healthy and happy task of making it what we want it to be. It is no wonder we have avoided it so long, for it is a wrenching exercise. (Bellmon 187)

Her work at Turtle Rock Farm can be read as a manifestation of the intellectual work she has done to situate herself and her cultural production both within and against representations and realities of rural Oklahoma. Despite the ongoing challenges intrinsic to counterinscription, Pat and her sister Ann have created a space on their family’s ranch for alternative land practices, environmental literacy programs, spiritual training and retreat, and holistic

health services, all the while building a community of supporters and participants across Oklahoma and beyond. In so doing, they write against assumptions of place, even their own.

In this same way, my project aims to write against assumptions as well. In particular, I hope to challenge assumptions of whiteness and conservatism that continue to impact local political discourse, and thereby material realities, for people the Okie stereotype marginalizes or erases entirely. In addition to the poor whites both represented and misrepresented by the term, I explore examples of diverse communities in Oklahoma completely silenced by it. I am interested in understanding the impact of this erasure on these communities, and the extent to which local history and archival collections record – or do not record - their rhetorical experiences, especially as they advocate publicly for their own interests. I am even more interested, however, in the rhetorical agency members of marginalized communities have exhibited as they write back to power and represent themselves in public discourse. What efforts have these communities made, both historically and in the present, to counterinscribe patterns of erasure, silencing, and suppression? How do their efforts create a rhetorical legacy of counterinscription across diverse communities in Oklahoma? How might local marginalized communities put this transrhetorical legacy to work in cultural production and political discourse for their own mutual benefit? How might these models inform writing instruction in the composition classroom?

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TOGETHER, WE RISE: RESISTANCE AND COMMUNITY IN CHEROKEE COUNTRY

CRITICAL REGIONALISM AND NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES IN OKLAHOMA

The northeastern portion of Oklahoma, historically Cherokee Country, occupies the farthest western region of the Ozark Mountains. Thinking of this region in this way links it geographically to the Appalachian Mountain range, and connects this corner of the state to a complex network of cross-cultural intersections – exchanges and exploitation – all deeply embedded in United States history. Critical Regionalism, as a set of emergent theory arising in relationship to Appalachian Studies as articulated by Douglas Reichert Powell, promotes “scholarship about incidents in regional culture and the artifacts that are generated around them,” and revises and reconfigures region as an idea (19). As such, through geographies, cultures, histories, and texts, Critical Regionalism engages this area of Oklahoma as a generative, networked location among many. Critical regionalist scholarship for Douglas Powell “is the very act of forging, through cultural criticism, the broader cultural, political, historical, and geographical connections around a particular text, image, or artifact of local cultural conflict” and collaboration (Powell 19). I hope to connect my work in this chapter on Cherokee cultural resistance rhetoric to Critical Regionalism, even as I see it as already connected. While my argument in this project stems in part from Powell’s, and therefore from Appalachian Studies itself, so do the subtle hills and valleys, oaks and pine trees, streams and rivers of eastern Oklahoma originate in part in Appalachia - as do the

Cherokee people. These elements comprise the network of layers and localities of this chapter's project.

Oklahoma appears in Powell's text in significant and telling ways that highlight the complex historical, cultural, and rhetorical connections Oklahoma has to Appalachia and Critical Regionalist discourse. In his fourth chapter, "We Only Have Words Against: Towards a Critical Regionalist Literature," Powell uses John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* as an example of critical regionalist text in order to model critical regionalist inquiry. Powell points to the "mythological-but-rhetorical understanding of Appalachia" operating in Steinbeck's characterization of the Joad family (156); he claims, the "plight of Appalachian workers and families in labor struggles underpins Steinbeck's depiction of his Okies – Appalachia people are the Okies' forebears and at times their comrades-in-arms" (Powell 156). Powell provides a focused analysis on "the only incident in the novel in which collective resistance to oppression is both attempted and achieved," when the migrant workers "in the government camp nonviolently eject agitators from their dance" (156). He features an "anecdote" told in the camp circle that relays a story from labor struggles in Akron, OH, as told by Black Hat, a Native American character, to those migrant workers gathered there. Powell finds it significant that Steinbeck chooses an Indigenous person to represent the fight of "mountain men" – "another of the novel's links between varied historical struggles" (156). He asserts, "History has brought together the tools and the victims of conquest in a shared struggle of class and culture" (Powell 157). Steinbeck's Native American narrator, Black

Hat, indicates to Powell the author's radical awareness of history's simultaneous, syncretic, and varied effects on the multiple cultures that compose it. He thus links Native American cultures, experiences, and histories to those of Okies generally depicted as poor whites, and through them to Appalachian culture itself.

This chapter utilizes my understanding of cultural literacy activism, which I develop shortly, to trace transrhetorical patterns of resistance at both historical and present-day activist sites, in Cherokee Country. First, I situate Cherokee Country, formerly Cherokee Territory. Because I am Cherokee, I spend time accounting for my own narrative, looking to Native American scholars in Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy Studies for models for understanding how narrative – or story – contributes to Native Studies scholarship and the C/R/L field more broadly. Using the work of Malea Powell (Miami/Shawnee) and Ellen Cushman (Cherokee), I look particularly at how narrative relates to place and the construction of Native cultures and identities, again applying their scholarship to my own family's history, in order to understand the central Cherokee cultural concept of kinship and community. I then connect this evolving Native Studies theoretical frame to the theories introduced in the first chapter, in order to clarify relationships between whiteness, rhetorical listening, and Cherokee cultural logics. From here, I move into Cherokee cultural landscapes through an analysis of Cherokee history, paying close attention to emergent cultural rhetorics of trauma and resistance alongside hegemonic rhetorical patterns of suppression.

Because I aim ultimately to complicate apparent rhetorical patterns of suppression, silence, and erasure, by providing resistant evidence of Cherokee rhetorical continuance and activist legacies, I use the idea of Cherokee “cultural persistence,” a term arising from Albert Wahrhaftig’s ethnographic study of the Cherokee, conducted from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies. I foreground this concept as he develops it alongside Ellen Cushman’s recent scholarship where she characterizes Sequoyah’s invention of the Cherokee syllabary as “perserverance.” Through synthesizing these two, I construct a model for understanding Cherokee literacy as cultural resistance. I then follow this pattern of cultural literacy activism through the Keetoowah Society under Redbird Smith’s leadership, from the mid 1890’s through the early 1900’s. During this time the Keetoowah’s efforts were aimed at resisting allotment, acculturation, and assimilation primarily by recovering Cherokee ceremonial practices and tradition.

I analyze the Keetoowah Society as a cultural and rhetorical effort aimed at the production and persistence of Cherokee cultural knowledge. In addition to being locally active, Redbird Smith visited Washington, D.C. and testified to congressional committees on a regular basis. In doing so, he created a written trace to follow. Finally, I put archival documents produced by Redbird Smith and the Keetoowah Society into conversation with present-day Cherokee cultural literacy activists to highlight transrhetorical patterns operating across both sites of investigation. By using transrhetorical analysis to follow Cherokee cultural activists’ rhetorical strategies across over a century of colonial contact,

I establish my argument that Cherokee resistance persists, both culturally and rhetorically, despite its seeming suppression in dominant Oklahoma and U.S. historical narratives. Ultimately, I offer this as a means of complicating Oklahoma's political identity and subverting the state's white social construction and the rhetorical suppression inherent in it.

Despite the depth of Powell's critical regionalist analysis while noting Steinbeck's *Black Hat*, he peculiarly omits any real inclusion or examination of Native American experience in the Appalachian region. With his sincere and thorough focus on unearthing layers of culture and history, this is a strange and noticeable elision, particularly from the perspective of Native American Studies. It occurs even despite the fact that his childhood neighborhood on the edge of Eastern Tennessee State University in Johnson City, where he grew up the child of an academic father, was located on the edge of the Cherokee National Forest, named so in honor of the former occupants of the region. This gap becomes all the more problematic as it continues throughout his book. Speaking of his neighborhood, he explains while "in the mid-sixties [it] was known locally by the nickname of Scholar Holler – a hybridized turn of phrase that locates academic work and workers in the local landscape," he explains in a parenthetical aside "(The subdivision is more formally known by the name of Seminole Woods, and all its streets are named for native [sic] tribes of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida)" (D. Powell 210). Native nations that occupied Tennessee – particularly the Cherokee – are oddly not included among the street names, and Powell only remarks "like most of the residents, the street

names were brought in from elsewhere” (D. Powell 210). He does not, however, acknowledge the simultaneous displacement and regional erasure of indigenous Native nations in this portion of Tennessee⁹.

I do not wish to sharply accuse Powell, particularly because his work offers valuable cultural analysis and a critical model I use here. However, I use this example of silence in his discussion to illustrate a theoretical gap in critical regionalist discourse more broadly, one that unfortunately echoes the suppression of Native cultures writ large. While Douglas Powell’s acknowledgment of Native history and experience merits some credit, it also reinforces historic silences of Native cultures in our regional cultures and in our discipline. Rhetorical suppression, because it operates deeply in social constructions and lived experiences, often without our awareness, creates critical blindspots in any reading of a cultural rhetorical landscape. This reinforces the need for transrhetorical analysis that seeks to understand cultural rhetorics as they operate simultaneously within a given landscape¹⁰. Transrhetorical analysis, when coupled with Critical Regionalism, seeks to open up the silences created by rhetorical suppression by foregrounding marginalized perspectives and voices within complex cultural landscapes.

CULTURAL LITERACY ACTIVISM AS RHETORICAL RESISTANCE TO SILENCE

In this chapter, I examine how cultural literacy activism operates within a critical regionalist frame to understand how rhetorical silence operates historically to erase indigenous cultures, histories, and movements. I imagine cultural literacy, particularly in Native American contexts, as a critical counter-

colonialist tool by which people use cultural knowledge for rhetorical power, to gain discursive and social equality. For my argument, cultural literacy might be better understood as *critical cultural literacy*, insofar as it builds cultural awareness, identity, programs, and locations into critical literacy pedagogy. Cultural literacy also requires, based on Freire's model, cultural literacy workers, or activists who do the work of sponsoring and enacting cultural literacy. I understand people who foster and advance cultural knowledge, particularly within colonial contexts, as activists working to resist the rhetorical and epistemological impacts of dominant culture. This work can include language literacy, such as the teaching of speaking, reading, and writing skills. Sequoyah provides an historical example of such work and at the same time places literacy within a Cherokee context, moving "literacy as resistance" into a Cherokee cultural site. The syllabary he developed continues to animate Cherokee cultural literacy efforts across the century and a half that has passed since his invention.

More broadly, however, professors, artists, scholars, teachers, and community members who seek cultural knowledge and share it with others with the goal of forwarding culture into the future qualify – for my purposes here and in following chapters – as activists. In marginalized contexts, I see this work as resistant in so far as it moves against cultural erasure and rhetorical suppression. Most often, I will refer to them as cultural literacy activists because the resistant work these activists do links together historic events and cultural groups, and then connects them across time and locations

as well, providing a critical regionalist network. My work in this chapter also participates in critical regionalism by filling in critical cultural information that characterizes Oklahoma as a transrhetorical location comprised of multiple cultures and races. I believe adding transrhetorical analysis to the tools of critical regionalist inquiry enhances the latter's ability to address plural cultural sites existing in any region, which by extension is also a resistant move that intervenes at a site of silence. In so doing, this chapter attempts to subvert whiteness that marks popular as well as scholarly constructions of Oklahoma by attending to Cherokee Country as a transrhetorical cultural location and site of suppressed resistance.

While it is not my primary aim in this chapter to connect Cherokee cultural literacy activism to Appalachian Studies, I do think my analysis broadens Douglas Powell's application of Critical Regionalism to include the indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, texts, and rhetorics that populate the landscapes he seeks to connect. More recently, Jenny Rice finds the exigency of Critical Regionalism in the "need to cultivate public subjects who are capable of imagining themselves as situated within many complex networks," which in addition to the "home-work nexus" she lists as "regional, national, and global networks" (163). I seek to add cultural networks to this list. Further, Rice argues, all of these networks in which individuals operate are "situated within transhistorical and transspatial networks of place," to which I would add transcultural and transrhetorical networks as well (Rice 163). As agents positioned within these networks, individuals make "choices {that} have effects

on future times and places that do not only parallel our own lives” (Rice 163). As actors within these networks participating in spatial production, Rice believes we must develop “an ability to imagine the incongruent and asymmetrical networks within which our agency is lodged” (Rice 163). In Oklahoma, just as across the United States, Mexico, the Pacific Islands, Puerto Rico, Central and South America, Canada, and around the world, indigenous peoples and cultures comprise critical intersections within historical, political, and economic networks for which critical regionalists must account.

These networks are not often enough accounted for in western history narratives, or are otherwise represented as wholly historic and disappeared. In this way, rhetorical suppression operates to obscure them, misrepresent them, and silence them entirely. Indigenous cultural literacy activism, both historically and currently, speaks to indigenous experiences of injustice at the same time it seeks justice. Cultural literacy activism works rhetorically against suppression and creates sites of resistant production, where cultural and rhetorical transactions occur. Transrhetorical analysis provides a mechanism for understanding how this activism, as a concept and rhetorical practice, moves across networks of history and space, culture and experience, both inside and outside of Native communities operating within these larger networks. The Cherokee cultural focus in this chapter highlights Cherokee networks as they engage other sites and networks, to discover how activism operates rhetorically within and between them toward the goal of cultural persistence.

As both Rice and Powell recognize, Critical Regionalism – especially one that includes marginalized and diverse cultures – offers potential new ways of framing, understanding, and strategizing activist rhetorics. As “a strategy of cultural critique, critical regionalism can [...] link individual moments of cultural struggle to larger patterns of history, politics, and culture, by understanding how they are linked [...] through relationships of power” (D. Powell 20 – 21). By clarifying the role of region and regional networks, activists and educators can better identify local access points for interventions in injustice. “To understand the full effects of the impact of injustice,” Powell argues, “of uneven development, of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism, progressive intellectuals and educators must reclaim the supposedly tranquil or quiescent [...] spaces of regional culture as vital spaces of cultural strife” (21). He continues, “to do this means developing critical strategies capable of recognizing conflict and struggle in forms and actions unique to specific landscapes” (D. Powell 21). Uncritical, nostalgic social constructions of regions erase “crucial struggles” occurring within them (D. Powell 21). For Rice, region provides “an interface that publics use in order to negotiate conditions of life that could or should be otherwise” (212). Critical Regionalism scholarship supports activist efforts aimed at social justice by revealing marginalized matrices of history and culture alongside networks of power. As its goal, critical regionalism exposes historic points of agency and resistance. Native resistance, which in my use here can be understood as cultural literacy activism, provides an indigenous angle on regional activist efforts that

broadens and strengthens critical regionalist goals.

For my purposes, cultural literacy activism can be understood as activist work with a social justice orientation. Cultural literacy activists work primarily to promote cultural knowledge such as language, oral tradition, history, the arts, music, ceremonial practices, domestic practices, and cultural geography. Cultural literacy activism can be sponsored to varying degrees by tribal governments, organizations, and institutions. However, it can also occur independently of these official sponsors through the support of communities and volunteers. The goals, practices, and strategies of cultural literacy activists differ according to cultural context, and also depend upon how activists and activist projects are situated within cultural (and critical regional) networks. Broadly, cultural literacy activism aims at the advancement and perpetuation of cultural knowledge.

Within hegemonic societies that privilege dominant cultural values, practices, and control, cultural literacy activism for social justice forwards cultural knowledge suppressed by dominant cultural constructions, such as those articulated about Oklahoma in the previous chapter. Cultural literacy activists may or may not self-identify as activists; many times, because of the local focus of their work, larger activist goals such as decolonization may not be an immediate exigency or even a conscious motivation. Some of the research participants provide examples of people doing the work of cultural literacy without understanding that work as activism. However, for my argument, because the locations I investigate – beginning here with Cherokee Country –

occupy suppressed rhetorical landscapes in Oklahoma's dominant historical narrative, any cultural literacy work on behalf of marginalized cultures subverts that dominant narrative.

PLACE AND IDENTITY AS COUNTER NARRATIVES

The landscapes of northeastern Oklahoma, like activist narratives from Oklahoma, defy expectations of the state, especially as perpetuated by Dust Bowl era images, film footage, and John Steinbeck's portrait of the region. Popularly referred to as Green Country, a moniker promoted particularly by the Oklahoma State Department of Tourism since the 1960's, the eighteen counties that comprise this quadrant of the state collectively contain six of the state's 11 ecoregions ("The Ecoregions"). To the east, this area houses multiple lakes, rivers, and streams, trimmed by pine and deciduous forests, and to the west includes the crosstimbers where these forests meet plains and prairies. My own family spent time every summer in this setting, waterskiing on Grand Lake at Sequoyah State Park and floating in rented canoes down the Illinois River outside of Tahlequah. These trips invariably included visits to the Cherokee Heritage Center in Park Hill, OK, where as a little girl I learned to imagine myself as a part of the historical narrative presented there. Tall dark oak trees provide a thick, expansive canopy of the center's grounds, and I have always felt at home walking and wondering beneath and between them. The three remaining columns of the first Cherokee Female Seminary, destroyed by fire in 1887, grace the center's entrance. In my mind as a child, they were ancient relics of a proud past my mother taught me to honor. While in this

landscape I have always only been a visitor, it continues to be for me a distant and cherished home.

My mother has a picture of me standing between my Grandpa Vann and Principal Chief Ross Swimmer, posing together on the Heritage Center grounds during Cherokee National Holidays. It was taken in 1982, when I was seven years old. My grandfather was 82. I remember feeling special – or perhaps, more deeply, feeling culturally recognized – when this picture was taken. I loved my grandpa, and I wanted to be Cherokee like him. He taught me words that he remembered from his own childhood growing up in a home with parents who spoke Cherokee fluently. He grew up on his immediate family's allotments outside of Inola, OK. As the oldest child he was responsible for his younger siblings after his mother died from tuberculosis when he was six, the very year before Oklahoma became a state. In the story he told, passed down now through three generations, Grandpa Vann begged his father, who was afraid he could not raise his children well enough on his own, not to take them to the Cherokee Orphanage in Pryor, OK. My grandpa promised he would help with his sibling's caretaking if they could only stay together. Being together was more important to my grandpa than being well-fed and warm. Working together made being well-fed and warm more likely. He remained committed to his siblings his whole life, and even though he was the oldest, he outlived them. He died in 1994, at the age of 94. Even though he has been gone for 20 years, he is still my closest link to the Cherokee culture and community that animates my research and scholarship.

Like many Cherokee descendants whose blood-quantum has grown low in the decades following statehood, I come from a family that has lost a good deal of cultural knowledge as it has adapted to a rapidly changing social landscape, the sociocultural product of federally enforced assimilation policy beginning with the allotment of Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territories. My grandfather spoke our language with his parents when he was a child, but I only learned a few words when I was young. I, like many others with generations of family history in this state, am an embodiment of Oklahoma history, a product of diverse peoples encountering each other in both cooperation and in conflict. Like many people of Native descent in the state, cultural heritage for me is a matter of recovery and perseverance. Both personally and rhetorically, these processes require me to learn as much as I can and pass it on. Culturally, I am required to act with reciprocity so that what I learn, I must also share with others who can benefit from it, a value and literacy practice that historically helped the Cherokee to persist. In this way, I understand cultural literacy activism as resistance to the accumulated impact of assimilation across generations of Oklahomans, including my family.

I must acknowledge my own narrative and how it informs my activist identity and scholarship because it factors so centrally in my project, motivating the inquiry process and framing my perspective. Attending to the personal narratives of Oklahoma activists I have interviewed has made me more aware of my own. Often, dominant historical narratives and social constructions erase more nuanced stories, rendering them silent or

unimportant to the cultural landscape. In this way, personal narratives that connect place and identity operate as counter-narratives, opening up discourse and history through providing micro-perspectives that complicate the broad, monolithic view. Across almost two centuries that include invasion and warfare, colonial settlement and co-existence, forced removal and relocation, Supreme Court decisions and broken treaties, land allotment and statehood, my Cherokee family has done well and maintained a cultural connection and Native identity, and we have also struggled in order to do so. I am the first doctoral candidate my family has produced. I am thankful for the opportunity to do this work because I know it results from the hard work, diligence, and struggle of others before me – their sacrifices and losses as well. My mother’s family walked here under force of the federal government. What they left behind and what they found here, I can never fully know. I must try, however, to honor what they have built here.

STORY, IDENTITY, AND NATIVE STUDIES

Scholarship in Native Studies broadly and in Composition/Rhetoric/Literacy Studies as well places a noticeable emphasis on Native identity, particularly regarding the cultural positionality of academic authors. In Keith Gilyard’s collection *Race, Rhetoric, and Composition* (1999), Malea Powell’s (Eastern Miami/Shawnee) “Blood and Scholarship: One Mixed-Blood’s Story” opens the text. Her first sentence acknowledges her grandfather’s example as a storyteller, and throughout the first paragraph she positions herself first as Native American and then as a Native Studies scholar

through a personal narrative recounting an experience in an undergraduate “ethnic and minority women writers” course (1). For Powell, the impetus which prompted her to “confess that [she] was Indian” came from uninformed and essentialist comments made by other students in class, who understood Native culture as “disappeared long ago” and “stockpiled in the Smithsonian,” and who characterized “contemporary Indians [as] merely sad remnants of a people whose time had passed” (1 – 2). She adroitly weaves articulation of her mixed-blood identity and methodology with robust protest against the colonialist practice of “un-seeing Indian peoples, nations, and civilizations,” a process which permits “Euro-American town life, commerce, roads, railroads, churches, stores, and schools” and “construct[s] the Academy and its scholarly practices” (M. Powell “Blood” 3). Her opening narrative and personal positioning allow Powell to create an intimacy with her topic and her reader. This intimacy through narrative that foregrounds identity subverts the material distance and scientific objectivity she observes in the western academic model she aims to resist as a Native Studies Scholar.

Story, particularly personal narrative in this case, offers Native American scholars like Powell a cultural means of resisting the values and requirements of western academic discourse, particularly where they silence Native cultures. It operates also as a critical tool for identity construction. Almost a decade after Powell’s essay, Ellen Cushman (Cherokee) offers insight into the distinct issues Native American scholars face in terms of establishing identity and thereby legitimacy in academic circles, particularly with other

scholars of color. In a December 2008 *College Composition and Communication* article entitled “Toward a Rhetoric of Self-Representation: Identity Politics in Indian Country and Rhetoric and Composition,” Cushman claims, “Native scholars take considerable risks in composing identities – they can face censure from their communities and other scholars of color, perhaps even charges of identity fraud if their self-representations are not persuasive” (“Toward” 322). Thus the risks in claiming Native identity in academic circles, particularly for mixed bloods, merit considerable rhetorical negotiation for Native scholars and their allies.

Cushman offers a well-developed heuristic for clarifying these concerns. She distinguishes self-identification, “a claim about one’s identity that needs no other evidence,” from self-representation, or “an identity claim that includes evidence of identity markers valued by multiple audiences” (“Toward” 323). This evidence substantiates both “being in and doing for a community,” thus simultaneously enacting Ratcliffe’s notion of “accountability logic” and the Cherokee cultural value of reciprocity (Cushman “Toward” 327). Native scholars, as Cushman asserts, bear identities that are legally enacted and mitigated by federal power through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Certificate Degree of Indian Blood. However, Native scholars also depend on Native communities, not just Native national governments, to recognize, accept, and support their identity claims. Beyond the legal burden of proof provided by tribal citizenship and I.D. cards, Native scholars compose identities as Native people do – through kinship relations and practices.

Like these Native scholars in the field, I see narrative in terms of both resistance and identity construction. That said, my own Native identity and Cherokee cultural positionality bears discussion insofar as these factors mediate my exposure to and interpretation of Cherokee cultural literacy activism in this chapter as well as with the larger arguments about Oklahoma's political identity and applications for transrhetorical analysis I forward in various cultural contexts throughout my project. As Powell and Cushman have shown, personal narrative provides the best means of self-representation. I inherit Cherokee blood through my mother, who in turn inherits it from her father – my Grandpa Vann. Vann is a common and recognized name in Cherokee country, and also a contested name in Cherokee history. James Vann was a notorious plantation owner in northern Georgia. His plantation, the subject of Tiya Miles' impressive ethnographic investigation, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (2010), was the site of complex cultural contact, contest, and exchange between white Moravian missionaries, African, African-American and African-Cherokee slaves, and Cherokees spanning the blood quantum spectrum¹¹. According to genealogical research, my family as far as we know is only remotely related to the plantation-owning Vanns, and that link is still tenuous.

My Great-Great Grandfather was named Archibald Vann. Using my mother's help, my cousin, Terri Buscher of Claremore, OK, has conducted solid research into his history. According to her best knowledge, Arch Vann was born in 1810. Information provided by the 1835 census locates him as living in

Lumpkin County, GA, at the time of removal, near the Etowah River, closest to Tensawatee Town. There were five people living in his household, three males, two over 18 years of age and one under, and two females, one over 16 and one under. They owned no slaves¹². In Arch Vann's Drennan Rolls application, my Great-Grandfather Joe Vann is listed as born in 1859 in the Saline District, Cherokee Nation, the very year the Keetoowah Society organized and two years prior to the Cherokee Nation's entrance into the Civil War. These days challenged the Cherokee, as the issue of slavery divided them just as it divided the U.S. My Great Grandfather Joe's Dawes Roll application is dated October 25, 1900, eight months after my grandfather, Clement Neeley Vann, was born – Joe's first child at the age of 41. My Great Grandmother Lizzie Chambers was only 19 at the time. My Great Grandfather Joe spoke, wrote, and read Cherokee fluently; we know this because of letters he wrote to and received from relatives. As far as we know, Great Grandpa Joe¹³ could speak only limited English, and could not read or write it. His Dawes application is signed with an X-mark.

Great Grandpa Joe passed away in a small, modest home on his allotment near Inola, OK, on August 9, 1932 – three years before my mother was born. His obituary, published days later on the first page of the *Claremore Progress* newspaper, describes him as “a quiet, unobtrusive man” who “had many excellent qualities and was held in highest esteem by those who knew him best.” The only person alive in my family today who remembers him is my Aunt Dorothy Marie Vann Rhoten. The first born of my mother's generation, in

1922, she grew up with her Grandpa Joe nearby. She remembers him warmly and tells stories about him. She remembers him burning salt on the porch for protection from bad medicine when omens would appear. She also remembers him laughing, like my own grandfather, through his teeth.

One story of hers in particular characterizes both him and his humor as well as the material conditions my family faced during those years. Aunt Dorothy, who tells the story with laughter herself, recounts the memory in relation to a family tragedy. When she was around six years old, the small home they were all living in on my grandfather's allotment land burned down, destroying everything they owned. Days before, my aunt had sold a little white kitten to her Grandpa Joe. She remembers him bargaining with her in partial English, teasing her gently about the kitten's worth and enjoying their play. He finally bought the kitten from her for a nickel, but of course left it with her for safe-keeping. When the house burned, the family stood around the embers in shock at their loss, wondering darkly at what they would do. Out of the rubble that kitten came crawling slow and steady, meowing loudly in protest, only slightly singed but black with soot. Picking the kitten up, my Great Grandpa Joe laughed and laughed at the small cat's stubborn and miraculous survival, inserting humor in the midst of sorrow by laughing at the good investment he had made.

In this story and others, told to me many times by my aunt, I hear signifiers of Cherokee culture, experience and history. These narratives help me to understand myself as a Cherokee, my relationship to Cherokee culture

and history, while also helping me to understand Oklahoma more broadly as a space of value to research in the field. In Malea Powell's 2012 Chair's Address at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, she advances story, such as this one arising from my own family, as "a marker of this space we now inhabit" (M. Powell "Stories" 388). This story, in presenting information about a tremendous loss experienced by my family, also demonstrates a rich familiarity with resilience by which my Cherokee family – across multiple generations – has persisted through tremendous loss. Their resilience serves as a marker for Oklahoma's identity as well as my own. More literally, through their practice of persistence as perpetuated by this story, my family has written me into being and created the space within which I can now do this academic work to understand cultural literacy activism in Oklahoma.

CHEROKEE STORIES OF RESISTANCE, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURAL LITERACY

Cherokee culture and history is marked by persistence and rhetorical resilience, made all the more profound by the rhetorical suppression experienced repeatedly by Cherokees across history. My family's story is not unique, and the activists interviewed for this chapter bring a broader collection of familial and lived experiences to bear on Cherokee cultural literacy activism and activist rhetorical strategies. The activists I selected to interview are all activists I have observed operating within Cherokee communities or encountered through networks associated with my own cultural literacy efforts. I became interested in Joseph Erb's work many years ago, through

newspaper articles in the *Cherokee Phoenix* and other media outlets. His work in animating the Cherokee creation story in the Cherokee language was the first of its kind. His later work for the Cherokee Nation developing the Cherokee language for digital interfaces gained international attention. Recently, Joseph organized and lead the first two “Remember the Removal” bike rides, a now annual trip from Georgia through Tennessee to Tahlequah for young Cherokees. Since January 2016, Joseph now holds a position as Assistant Professor of English in the Digital Storytelling Program at University of Missouri – Columbia.

I first met America Meredith and Ryan Mackey via the Kiowa Clemente Course and the Meredith Indigenous Humanities Center, which I detail in the next chapter. America’s father, Howard Meredith (Cherokee) organized these courses with the help of the Oklahoma Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities Clemente Course grant. Ryan was one of Dr. Meredith’s first students in the Cherokee Clemente Course. The three have long been good friends with each other. It bears mentioning that Joseph and America are both also visual artists known primarily for painting. America trained at the San Francisco Art Institute. Joseph went to school for sculpture at the University of Pennsylvania where he also learned animation technology. The literacy activist narratives they contribute here constellate a network of stories connected to my own, of mixed-blood Cherokees who grew up away from Cherokee cultural centers, who maintained cultural identities and connections, and who work as cultural literacy activists while also recovering

cultural literacy for themselves.

These stories centered on cultural perceptions of and experiences with activism and resistance, bridge the Cherokee present to the Cherokee past. The values, strategies, and goals arising from their interviews mirror those emerging from Cherokee history more broadly, particularly from historic sites of activism and resistance (such as the Redbird Smith movement discussed later). For Malea Powell, stories – such as the activists share, those passed down through my own family, or those narratives accessible via archival documents – produce rhetorical space. As she explains in her address:

By ‘space,’ I mean a place that has been practiced into being through the acts of storied making, where the past is brought into conscious conversation with the present and where – through the practices of making – a future can be imagined. Spaces, then, are made recursively through specific material practices rooted in specific land bases, through the cultural practices linked to that place, and through the accompanying theoretical practices that arise from that place – like imagining community “away” from but related to that space. (M. Powell “Stories” 388)

While I compose away from the landscape of Cherokee Country, my family’s allotments and my aunt’s childhood stories, and those Cherokee cultural literacy activists whose work I investigate, in writing about them I imagine myself and Oklahoma in relation to that landscape and those Cherokee narratives and communities that construct and inhabit it, and to other Cherokee cultural literacy activists whose work helps me and others to learn and recover Cherokee culture. Imagining space and place in this way, helps me to enact relationships and regional networks in my writing that have long existed in Oklahoma and that I also inhabit.

In addition to establishing a genealogical and geographical relationship to the Cherokee Nation and the Cherokee land base, an additional critical step toward building Cherokee identity requires me to be in relationship with the Cherokee community. In her further explication of “self-representation,” Ellen Cushman emphasizes certain “kinds and types of evidence [...] allow audiences of Native peoples to better judge the authenticity and legitimacy of the [identity] claims made” (339). She goes on to describe what she sees as a difference between “tribal identification” and “national identification.” For her, “national’ mean[s] the institutional, governmental, and legal structures that sovereign Native American states use to interface with the federal and state governments and to define, serve, and govern their citizens” (Cushman “Toward” 339). “Tribal,” she claims, involves “the cultural traditions, languages, medicines, clans, and sacred artifacts that are the legacies of the People” (Cushman “Toward” 339). Though national identification, which depends on official citizenship status, “is one way tribes enact their sovereignty,” citizenship status alone does not address more nuanced issues of cultural status. A critical “limitation” of national identity claims is that enrollment does not in any way guarantee that a person has maintained cultural and linguistic practices and historical knowledge that are important to tribal traditions” (Cushman “Toward” 341). Within many Native cultures, but particularly (in this case) Cherokee culture, “claiming an identity as a Native scholar comes with duties to do for and with communities” (Cushman “Toward” 344). A Native scholar’s identity, then, depends on far more than the

ability to flash a national identification card. Rather, it also requires a sustained commitment to culture and community, one that fosters good relationships with tribal members and institutions.

Cherokee behavior, language, and religion are knowledge sets in which I have limited literacy, gained in part from organic exposure among family and friends and in part from intentional pursuit, personal development, and cultural recovery¹⁴. While, like Cushman, I was to some extent “raised with the stories, the belief systems, the practices and dispositions some would recognize as Cherokee,” nonetheless there remains for me a vast amount of cultural knowledge to learn, or recover. I cannot claim residence within the Cherokee landbase, but for reasons beyond my control, even at this time. An individual’s location at birth and through childhood, undeniably critical for early immersion and sustained involvement in Cherokee culture, clearly lies beyond the realm of self-determination. Still, this points to the critical roles place and placement play in sustaining cultural sovereignty and individual Cherokee identity, and it increases the personal and cultural exigency of Cherokee cultural literacy.

While I have only within the last several years begun to build the relational foundation that I hope increase opportunities to work with the Cherokee Nation and Cherokee communities in the future, I have worked with other tribal nations in Oklahoma, particularly the Chickasaw and Kiowa, for which my geographical location in Central Oklahoma is more convenient¹⁵. Cushman points out that “doing for the community allows for Native scholars who are outlanders, who live in urban centers, and who do for other tribes to

show evidence of their identity claims” (“Toward” 349). By working with and for tribes with whom they are not affiliated, Native scholars in this position still perform “acts [that] are part of this larger ethic of kinship” and “enact this ethic of service by doing the good work of kinship with and for other Native peoples” (Cushman “Toward” 349). For instance, the cultural literacy work I facilitate in the Kiowa Clemente Course, which I detail in the next chapter, serves to affirm my Native identity even though I am Cherokee. Kinship moves across cultural boundaries, and thus becomes a transrhetorical concept itself, binding Native peoples and communities together in regional, national, and international networks.

Towards my own argument for transrhetorical analysis, even as an Oklahoman, my “outlander” positionality – in respect to both the Cherokee and Kiowa communities, as well as the African-American and African-Native communities my research treats – affords the advantage of observing ideas and meaning-making across the imagined cultural boundaries settler colonialism and nation-state nationalism constructs. Cultural Studies scholars, inspired and initiated to a large degree by Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), understand liminal spaces between perceived boundaries as generative zones for cross-cultural exchange and synthesis. Native Studies scholars read the spaces between cultures through the lens of kinship, as Cushman models. Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), in his chapter in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (2008), connects kinship with physicality, thereby acknowledging the inevitable logic of geographical

placement: “The recognition of some sort of relationship between and among peoples – the ever-contextual contours of kinship – returns us to the physical realm of the participatory” (“Go” 151). Cultural “continuity,” as he continues, “fueled by the decolonization imperative,” depends upon “the People [who] are responsible for its survival through attention to their kinship rights and responsibilities” (Justice “Go” 152). In this same volume, Tol Foster (Muscogee Creek) offers “relational regionalism” as a means of acknowledging both kinship and geographical placement as twin frames within which to understand cultural exchange and sovereignty “in a way that privileges the local and the tribal” (268). He theorizes, “it is within the regional frame that we most effectively witness the *interzones* where different constituencies collide and, as a result, renegotiate their communal cultural frames” (Foster 272). Local cultures and their interactions provide the content and the devices necessary to examine and comprehend broader transrhetorical landscapes while also maintaining cultural and tribal sovereignty, as well as regional difference.

A WORD ABOUT WHITENESS – IN OKLAHOMA AND THE WRITING CLASSROOM

In order to be transparent about my own cultural identity and location, I must also make it clear that in addition to Cherokee, I am also Scots-Irish and French on my mother’s side, as well as Irish, Welsh, and German on my father’s side. To put it in better perspective, my maternal grandfather’s maternal and paternal families are the only ancestors I have who were removed to Indian

Territory. My maternal grandmother's family – the Johnsons – moved to Greer County in far southwestern Oklahoma a few years after statehood to a tiny farm community near Willow, Oklahoma. From there, they moved to the Inola area in Rogers County, formerly Cherokee Territory, where my maternal grandmother's father became a merchant. My maternal grandparents met here. My father's family, however, came from West Virginia, close to Fairmont in northeastern Marion County. My father's family, who are largely German, Welsh, and Irish, came to Oklahoma from West Virginia and Pennsylvania in the decade after statehood for work in the oilfield. Prior to moving, the Joneses and the Jacksons lived close to each other in an area called Flat Run or Galladin, WV. Many of the men, particularly the Joneses, came to Oklahoma via Titusville, Pennsylvania, to work in the oil field in the late 1910's. My father's parents met in West Virginia, but moved to Oklahoma in the 1930's to work for my grandmother's family. They worked on rigs, mainly as roustabouts, but later generations were able to start small oil field operations of their own. My own identity connects these diverse cultural locations across space and time, and positions me to understand Oklahoma as a complex network of movement from other places that matter in the state's construction as well as my own.

My Cherokee-ness and my non-Cherokee-ness are a matter of historical and material fact. In their *Rhetoric Review* article, "The Matter of Whiteness: Or, Why Whiteness Studies is Important to Rhetoric and Composition Studies," Tammie M. Kennedy, Joyce Irene Middleton, and Krista Ratcliffe believe

the term *matter* [...] signifies in three distinct ways: First, it signifies that bodies matter (everyone's body has value); second, it signifies that

bodies are composed of matter (bodies are material entities); and third, it signifies that the matters associated with bodies emerge via cultural socialization (bodies are marked, or coded, by socially constructed cultural categories such as gender, race, class, age, nationality, etc.). (359 – 360)

They reduce this explanation further into “the value of bodies, the materiality of bodies, and the troping of bodies” (Kennedy et al. 360). For these scholars, the idea of race “is predicated on a double fallacy: (1) that multiple races exist and (2) that race is grounded in biology” (Kennedy et al. 363). “The logic of critical race studies,” they continue, “posits race as a U.S. trope, or cultural category that names a cultural location” (Kennedy et al. 365). While race has been debunked as pseudoscience through genetic science such as the human genome project, race “remains steeped in very real material consequences for U.S. culture and for individual peoples’ lives” (Kennedy et al. 365). For my Cherokee family, for instance, these consequences included the loss of capital, and for my non-Cherokee family the opportunity to build it.

As Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe point out, critically studying race permits students to uncover its social construction and disrupt injustices in order to promote social justice (364). Whiteness Studies, then, as part of Critical Race Studies, allows scholars “to study whiteness (1) as a racial category that marks some peoples’ bodies and (2) as a cultural code that socializes all peoples’ bodies” (Kennedy, et al. 365). Within the context of assimilation, allotment, and statehood, encroaching whiteness socialized my Cherokee family’s bodies, and slowly came to mark their descendants bodies as well¹⁶. In my own life, I understand this phenomenon to be my own personal

experience of the social, cultural, and racial consequences of colonialism – specifically the federal allotment and assimilation policies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries designed to “kill the Indian, but spare the man.” Because race, a colonial construct, is not always visible¹⁷, and because whiteness marks mixed bodies and socializes all bodies, appearance does not always signify or distinguish the racializing subject from the racialized object (Kennedy et al. 366). For me, for instance, in order to make visible my own Cherokee identity while also treating Cherokee rhetorics around cultural literacy activism, I must constantly deconstruct whiteness historically and rhetorically. This includes whiteness as it emerges in my own identity and behavior in Cherokee and non-Cherokee spaces.

However, I am certainly not alone. Oklahoma identity is largely – if not exclusively in many instances – socially constructed as white. Sooner, for instance, the University of Oklahoma’s mascot and a regional cultural icon, represents white settlers who claimed land prior to official land runs, simultaneously breaking federal treaties and stealing Native land. After each OU touchdown during home games, a prairie schooner symbolically races onto the field so its settler occupants can throw down their historical stake. Transrhetorical analysis assumes such constructions, though transrhetorical themselves insofar as they repeat rhetorically across history, erase Oklahoma’s various “other” histories and cultures. These local tropes erased “other” histories and cultures from student identities as well. While students such as many of those I interviewed at the beginning of my project sometimes

acknowledge Native descendency, many lack the cultural literacy to fully claim it. This is true both for Native students who “look white” and those who “look black.” Rhetorical suppression of cultures, then, impacts individual identity construction by usurping the individual agency to confidently answer questions of cultural identity.

Exposing students here and elsewhere to texts, writers, and local rhetorics that confound constructions of whiteness inherent in local identity mirrors back to them their own contested identifications and opens a space for critical dialogue. As a pedagogical move, it aligns with recent discussions in the field of Composition/Rhetoric/Literacy. In June 2002, Jennifer Siebel Trainor published “Critical Pedagogy’s ‘Other’: Constructions of Whiteness in Education for Social Change” in *College Composition and Communication*. Her argument confronts tensions between Critical Whiteness Studies and Critical Pedagogy¹⁸, specifically by contrasting Paulo Freire’s call “to respect, even love, students” with the recent scholarly pattern of identifying, lamenting, and attacking “the student who resists or rejects critical perspectives, or who openly expresses racism or sexism in the classroom” (Trainor 631). The struggle in the classroom remains “the critical difficulty of that antiracist [white] subject whose self-consciousness and willful self-production can only reconfirm a universalist narcissistic white logic” (Wiegman qtd. in Trainor 633). For compositionists, simply exposing students and audiences to texts produced by non-white rhetors, writers, and scholars, or to Whiteness Studies scholarship, will not suffice. As Ellen Cushman posits, “when whiteness is discussed

without attention to the ways it is foregrounded against the backdrop of other races, it risks reifying the very social positions it seeks to expose and challenge” (“Toward” 325). In the effort to awaken critical awareness and promote cross-cultural discourses and alliances through writing instruction, white logic must be disrupted. Texts positioned in proximity to student location and lived experience, as Freire argues, provide an expedient tool for resistant intervention.

THIS LAND, RESISTANCE, AND CHEROKEE HISTORY

In “This Land,” the opening chapter to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz’s latest contribution to radicalizing and indigenizing American history, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* (2014), the Oklahoma-born historian and international indigenous rights activist invokes Woody Guthrie’s alternative national anthem “This Land is Your Land.” She writes, “Under the crust of that portion of Earth called the United States of America – ‘from California ... [sic] to the Gulf Stream waters’ – are interred the bones, villages, fields, and sacred objects of American Indians” (Dunbar-Ortiz 1). Beacon Press published her book as part of a larger comprehensive series, *ReVisioning American History*¹⁹, which the cover notes describe as “consist[ing] of accessibly written books by notable scholars that reconstruct and reinterpret U.S. history from diverse perspectives.” Just as Dunbar-Ortiz’s text – grounded in Oklahoma folk rhetoric and radical history – connects Native histories to the American national narrative, it also connects these discourses to geographic and cultural terrain of eastern Oklahoma where Woody Guthrie’s hometown of Okemah sits inside

of what was designated previously as Mvskoke Creek lands. From the Indian Removal Era until statehood, all of eastern Oklahoma was Indian Territory, a vast collection of communal lands held in tenure by distinct and sovereign tribal nations and established through treaties with the United States.

The Cherokee Nation held the farthest northeastern portion of the state, bordered by the Creek Nation to the southwest and the Choctaw Nation to the far south. Each of these sovereign nations, along with the Seminole and Chickasaw Nations, removed from the southeastern portions of the United States, beginning in 1830²⁰. The language of the Indian Removal Act, which states “tribes or nations of Indians [...] may choose to exchange the lands where they now reside” for territory in the west, denotes a degree of agency that permitted indigenous nations to elect to remove voluntarily (412). For the Cherokee Nation, however, removal occurred on sharply contested terms, the resonances of which continue to reverberate in Cherokee culture. Prior to European settler colonialism, the Cherokees held “hunting grounds that extended into Kentucky” and “villages and agricultural fields in the valleys of upcountry South Carolina, western North Carolina, east Tennessee, north Georgia, and northeastern Alabama” (Purdue and Green xiii). By the time of removal, due to white encroachment, their land base occupied only the southern portion of mid-central Tennessee, and smaller portions of northeastern Alabama and northwestern Georgia.

The Cherokee “agreement” to remove, the Treaty of New Echota, was signed in 1835 by an unauthorized group of representatives who believed

agreeing to remove was a better – or rather the only - option to forced removal. Chief John Ross and the Cherokee General Council, however, never approved the document. The resulting political turmoil within the Cherokee Nation created tension and hostilities as damaging as the ensuing rupture between the people and their indigenous land base. The conflict between the Treaty Party and the Ross Party, essentially those who supported voluntary removal and those who resisted removal entirely, continued to erupt in struggle at various points in Cherokee history, oftentimes in violent disputes. For instance, former Cherokee Phoenix Editor Elias Boudinot, along with Major Ridge and his son John Ridge, were famously murdered by members of the Treaty Party shortly after they removed themselves and their families to the new territory. On the eve of the Civil War in Indian Territory decades later, these same divisions again appeared, this time between Chief John Ross who preferred allying with the north and Stand Watie, Elias Boudinot's older sibling, who pushed for allegiance with the Confederacy. Cultural and political divisions emerged between those Cherokees and Cherokee leaders who supported slavery and the South and those who supported abolition and the North. These divisions reinscribed other long-standing differences, particularly regarding racial and cultural identity, that continued well after the Civil War.

Joshua B. Nelson, in his recent monograph *Progressive Traditions: Identity in Cherokee Literature and Culture*, attempts to disrupt long-standing cultural binaries such as mixed-blood/full-blood, traditional/assimilated, progressive/conservative, Christian/ Indian, etc. as they arise from the

Cherokee's embroiled political history. Many scholars in the fields of literature, history, and anthropology, have characterized the "Treaty Party" as mixed-blood, progressive elites who traded Cherokee land and culture for power. However, other scholars, including Nelson, have pointed out as well that Chief John Ross – leader of the Ross Party and staunch traditionalist committed to resisting removal - was a mixed-blood elite.

Historical nuances such as this serve for Nelson to confound the static characterizations inherent in the unreconciled dichotomies inherent in the Cherokee cultural binaries he investigates. He admits, "The Treaty of New Echota agreed to Cherokee removal to Indian Territory, and as a precursor to the Trail of Tears left an indelible mark of assimilationist and elitist status on the minority faction signers. [...] these men have come to epitomize the mixed-blood elite as a self-interested, protocapitalist cadre" (Nelson 152). Examining the document's signatures, however, "what we once thought clear starts to get muddy" (Nelson 151 – 152). Nelson elaborates:

Though many accounted among the elite like John and Major Ridge were slaveholders, Boudinot urged abolition, and at least six signers owned no slaves. Though many were low-blood-quantum mixed-bloods like William Rogers and Andrew Ross (John Ross's brother), others like Boudinot were of relatively high Cherokee blood quantum, and still others, like Major Ridge, Cae-te-hee, and Tah-yeske, were full bloods. (Nelson 152)

Problematizing the binary further, Chief John Ross and leader of the Ross Party, and who ceaselessly resisted removal through political and congressional efforts, is referred to in historical accounts as culturally traditional (rather than as an assimilationist). However, Ross himself was of low blood quantum. The

cultural positionality of these leaders is complex, as are the cultural logics within which they are situated. They represent the multiplicity of experiences and perspectives operating in Cherokee cultural and historical networks, and the need for focused local analysis to understand them.

SITUATING CHEROKEE ACTIVISTS ACROSS TRANSRHETORICAL NETWORKS

Likewise, Cherokee activists interviewed for this chapter represent cultural and historical multiplicity as well. Each of them live and work at intersections of identity, family and descendency, regional and national histories, and Cherokee culture. In examining their understandings of activism, as well as their activist experiences and rhetorical practices, transrhetorical patterns appear. Cherokee cultural logics become enumerated through connections between the activists and Cherokee and U.S. history, how they acknowledge these connections and understand them. Through friendship and familial relationships, kinship becomes a conduit between the activists as well, uniting them in a network of Cherokees working for cultural literacy in various capacities and roles inside and outside of the seven counties that comprise the Cherokee land base in Oklahoma. Their activism transrhetorically extends Cherokee culture from the spaces where they work and into networked spaces where it circulates.

Durbin Fielding and Charles Foster for instance are full-bloods (or 4/4ths blood quantum); Joseph Erb, Ryan Mackey, and America Meredith are mixed-bloods. This positions them in distinct historical and identity positions that for my purposes here will all be acknowledged as Cherokee. Durbin is the

elder of the group in age, and also in his relationship to Joseph Erb, Ryan Mackey, and America Meredith, who have all studied with Durbin Fielding. Joseph and Ryan have both worked closely with Durbin to gain fluency in the Cherokee Language. Charles Foster and Durbin are related by marriage. Across the networks engaged by their cultural activism, placing them squarely in either category – traditional or progressive – becomes an impossibility. Rather, all of them move between and across. Joshua Nelson succinctly defines these categories as “those who press to assimilate into the mainstream United States” and “those who maintain Indian traditions” (3). At this point in Cherokee history, this binary provides little aid in understanding Cherokee culture or cultural literacy activism. In order to understand these activists’ rhetorical practices, transrhetorical analysis places them and their work in complex regional, historical, and cultural contexts across which they have moved and are moving, rather than isolating them inside one category or another.

Ultimately, transrhetorical analysis seeks to subvert the categorization implicit in the binaries Nelson disrupts. Transrhetorical analysis encourages tracing movement, exchange, adaptation, and strategies across locations by foregrounding rhetoric as the vehicle for ideas as they move across, within, and beyond networks and categories. Transrhetorical analysis assumes that Cherokee cultural activism, as comprised of acts that traffic Cherokee cultural knowledge, values, and practices between and beyond various Cherokee locations, moves between these locations in part because of rhetoric.

Transrhetorical analysis enables us to see these movements, and to defy the limits of categories such as those Nelson inspects. The work of Nelson and other Cherokee scholars such as Daniel Health Justice indicates that Cherokee culture has long understood rhetoric and relationship through the lens of kinship, a concept which implies movement across networks. Justice argues,

Indigenous nationhood is more than simple political independence or the exercise of a distinctive cultural identity; it is also an understanding of a common social interdependence within the community, the tribal web of kinship rights *and* responsibilities that link People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships. (24)

He continues, “tribal nationhood is [...] distinguished from state-focused nationalism by its central focus on peoplehood, the relational system that keeps the people in balance with one another, with other peoples and realities, and with the world” (Justice 24). In this way, Transrhetorical awareness as a concept proceeds not only from my rhetorical training and scholarship but also from my own Cherokee subjectivity²¹, in fact, as a Cherokee way to understand experiences and perspectives.

Via kinship, concepts of unity, balance, and community well-being emerge from recent scholarship and Cherokee activist sites as key Cherokee values, even as the Cherokee worldview acknowledges the complex relationalities that comprise Cherokee culture. Justice cites Jace Weaver (Cherokee), who in turn cites William McLoughlin, to explain “Kituwaha spirit” (Justice 24; Weaver 37; McLoughlin xv). According to Weaver, McLoughlin originally defines Kituwaha spirit as the Cherokees’ sense of “loyalty to each other, concern for spiritual power in their way of life, and their insistence upon

the importance of tribal unity and harmony” (37). From here Weaver extrapolates, there exists a “linkage of land and people within the concept of community, reflecting the spatial orientation of Native peoples,” and “Native religious traditions reflect and reinforce this collectivity and remain a primary factor of social integration in Native community” (38). “The survival of Native religions,” he continues, like Cherokee culture, depends “on the willingness of community members to participate in their ongoing realization” (Weaver 38). This continuation depends not on text, as the Christian religion depends on the *Holy Bible*, but rather on the persistent acts and practiced beliefs of the community.

Despite the differences marking the various subject positionalities that comprise Cherokee communities as well as the activists I interviewed, the commitment to unity and balance remain. Justice traces another useful heuristic he credits to anthropologist Robert K. Thomas (Cherokee) whose 1953 dissertation, “The Origin and Development of the RedBird Smith Movement,” cited later in the chapter at length, chronicles the origins of the Keetowah Society and Nighthawk Keetowah movements. Although spelled differently than Weaver’s usage, both Keetowah organizations connect through both their names and their missions to the “Kituwa spirit” Weaver highlights. The “peoplehood matrix” that Thomas first explicates “is composed of four interdependent elements: language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and place/territory” (Justice 25). Justice asserts, “No element is distinct; they exist only in relationship with one another” (25). While far more secular in its

intent, Critical Regionalism invokes a similarly constructed collage of reference points in joining peoples, histories, cultures, and places. While the goal of both matrices is to draw attention to the components that compose them, both also privilege the interdependence of these elements. Therefore difference, rather than presenting an obstacle, instead invites opportunity for advancing unity and harmony.

THE TRAIL OF TEARS, TRAUMA RECOVERY, AND TRANSRHETORICAL ANALYSIS

As represented across the Cherokee activists I interviewed for this chapter and the activist narratives they contributed to my research, subject positionality within Cherokee culture begins with cultural and historical forces dating prior to the Cherokee removal in May 1838. Contact with non-Natives began early for Cherokee communities spread throughout the Cherokee Nation. Robert K. Thomas and Kenneth Fink argue “the American frontier butted up against the Cherokee territory before it reached the other four tribes” so that “social and cultural processes” related to colonization “began earlier than in the rest” (1). They outline three points of evidence for this claim: 1.) the frontier warfare in which the Cherokee engaged between 1776 and 1794 was earlier and “more intensive” than in other tribes; 2.) the Cherokee experienced “social disorganization” and “population dislocation” earlier than other tribes as a result of this warfare; and 3.) “certain acculturative influences such as intermarriage and the taking over of white technology began earlier and in a more intensive manner” (Thomas and Fink 1 – 2). In this era and into the early

18th century, historian Tiya Miles identifies “unbridled violence set in motion by U.S. expansion and colonialism, a time of desperate accommodation to Euro-American cultural dictates, an epoch of expanding slavery in Indian nations and the southern states, and a period of layered and entangled culpability for both black and Indian suffering” (17). Complicating Cherokee cultural logic with competing white logic, European-American expansion also changed Cherokee cultural landscapes and genealogies in the south, which has led in some cases to “a widely held public perception” beginning in the nineteenth century “that Cherokees were more advanced, and hence less authentically Indian, than other native [sic] people” (Miles 20). Miles also enumerates the resistance many Cherokee scholars have articulated in response to this narrow construction.

In addition to pre-Removal history, the experience of removal itself varied for Cherokees. Some of the Cherokee, generally referred to as the “Old Settlers,” removed themselves voluntarily prior to 1838. While their experience was far from unproblematic, they had a different removal experience than those who came after. Those who resisted removal to the end faced a forced, violent journey away from their homes and to the west. According to Theda Purdue and Michael D. Green, authors of *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (Penguin 2007), “President Jackson proclaimed [the Treaty of New Echota] ratified on May 23, 1836, thereby setting the date of removal at May 23, 1838” (113). Approaching the date of removal, “General Winfield Scott assumed command of the seven thousand soldiers, militia, and

volunteers who had assembled to evict the Cherokee people” (Purdue and Green 123). On May 10 he issued a proclamation ordering the Cherokee people to start vacating their homeland within the month” and “began to build thirty-one forts near Cherokee towns” (Purdue and Green 123). Scott’s army forcibly removed from their homes and fields the Cherokees who remained after the May 23 1838 deadline passed. Families and communities spanning multiple generations were imprisoned in Scott’s forts under inhumane and unsanitary conditions. Other families were separated in the removal. Children and elders were left behind in some cases.

My own family’s losses were significant. According to the 1835 census, taken three years before removal, my great-great grandfather Vann lost 10 acres in cultivation and two houses (likely one dwelling and one other building on the property). The Vanns were arrested and taken from their home on September 28th, 1838, and taken to Rattlesnake Springs, where they were detained for almost a month. They walked with the sixth Ross detachment, also known as the “Old Fields” detachment. They started walking on October 20th, 1838, and arrived on February 23rd, 1839²². My great-great-great grandfather, George Owens, the father of Susie Owens who became Arch Vann’s second wife, lost 40 acres in cultivation and 12 houses (including dwellings and other buildings). A four-part series, located by my cousin Terri Buscher and written by author Leslie Thomas, entitled “Cherokees in Gilmore County, Georgia” lists George Owens of Taccoa as among those who voted with Ross in 1820 against ceding any more land to the United States. Another archival

article entitled “Through Mountain Mist – Ft. Chastain,” also located by my cousin Terri, claims Indian Agent Benjamin Chastain seized George Owens’ property for his own after my relatives were arrested and removed from it.

In much of American discourse and rhetoric dealing with the “Trail of Tears,” the Cherokee have come to represent the trauma of removal and permanent dislocation. Purdue and Green claim, “No one could look at the history of the Treaty of New Echota and conclude that it was honestly and fairly made” (114). Although the Cherokee were not the first and certainly not the last indigenous nation to be relocated, Purdue and Green acknowledge the extent to which Cherokees have been fully identified with the events of removal, almost to the exclusion of other Native peoples who endured it as well. More pointedly, the Cherokee Nation has come to singularly represent removal via “Trail of Tears” rhetoric in U.S. historical narratives, to the exclusion of other Native removal narratives. For Purdue and Green, this rhetorical association exists for clear reasons. First, “the debate over removal policy that occurred in the press, various public settings, and Congress focused on the Cherokees,” in part due to Cherokee rhetors, writers, politicians, and activists fighting against it over the course of two decades (xiv). Secondly, “Cherokee leaders during the removal crisis of the 1820s and 1830s were uniquely well-educated and extraordinarily articulate in both spoken and written English” and “produced a trove of documents that dwarfs the records of other Native nations” (Purdue and Green xiv). “Their policy,” Purdue and Green suggest, “was to make certain that no one could forget them” by

intentionally creating a voluminous written trace (xiv). The rhetorical consequence of these factors has been a consistent projection of Indian removal history on a singular indigenous nation that in fact shares this history with scores of others.

While the Cherokee Nation shares the removal experience with multiple Native nations, the public inscription of trauma on the Cherokees through the national historical imagination raises questions regarding what cultural sociologist and trauma theorist Jeffrey Alexander sees as “the gap between event and representation” (11). For him, the gap is much less about the passage of time and space, and much more about the collective rhetorical and emotional space wherein those who have been traumatized act in agentic, constructive ways to claim and process their experiences. He claims “collectivities do not make decisions as such; rather it is agents who do,” a statement which intended to inscribe agency onto the traumatized rather than depriving them of it (Alexander 11). “For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity,” he continues, “social crises must become cultural crises” through agentic rhetorical production (Alexander 10). As he puts it simply, “Events are one thing, representations of these events are quite another,” as many traumatic events occur beyond control, whereas representation of events is controlled (10). Cultural trauma, which Alexander ultimately argues is culturally constructed, begins “with a claim to some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional,

institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstruction” (11). This, for Alexander, comprises the complete trauma process, which is not simply the traumatic experience itself but also the articulation of and response to that experience, which can be a transrhetorical process occurring across multiple generations. The rhetorical agency inherent in this process marks the narratives Cherokee cultural literacy activists provided in the interviews I conducted with them.

Agency and recovery depend in many ways upon one another. In the context of trauma, cultural and rhetorical recovery mimic psychological recovery insofar as require individual and collective agency in the recovery process. Recovery can mean finding and restoring what was lost in the traumatic experience; it also means continuance, resilience, and determination. For social psychologist James Pennebaker, narrative production factors greatly into psychological recovery. Pennebaker’s research focus has for many years been the role and function of writing in the psychological healing process. As he explains in *Emotion, Disclosure, and Health* (2002) and more recently in *Expressive Writing: Words That Heal* (2014), writing can be more effective in trauma recovery than talking. For Pennebaker, the production of recovery narrative directly facilitates the neurological changes necessary to construct the lived narrative of recovery.

Through producing texts focused on recovery, individuals and groups “are able to organize, structure, and ultimately assimilate both their emotional experiences and the events that may have provoked them” (Pennebaker 5).

The rhetorical agency inherent in producing personal and cultural narratives of recovery, particularly in the traumatic context of settler colonialism (removal, allotment, statehood, and the related legislative attempts to control and reduce Cherokee sovereignty) produces Cherokee recovery – rhetorical, cultural and otherwise. Likewise rhetorical agency aimed at critical cultural literacy efforts resists and limits the trauma of colonization and its impact on Cherokee culture at the same time it reinscribes resistance in Cherokee cultural history and works against rhetorical suppression operating within trauma.

CHEROKEE CULTURAL PERSISTENCE AS ADAPTATION, AGENCY, & LITERACY

Key anthropological and ethnographic studies over the course of the last several generations of Cherokee scholarship have contributed to understanding cultural characteristics inherent to recovery. As a term used by Alfred Wahrhaftig in his 1975 dissertation for the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, *In the Aftermath of Civilization: The Persistence of Cherokee Indians*, “cultural persistence” acknowledges the Cherokee cultural practices and values operating within Cherokee rhetorical agency²³. In many ways Wahrhaftig’s project is a rhetorical one, as he observes persistence as cultural value at work in the Cherokee community. He defines cultural persistence as a characteristic of “some human beings” with “a demonstrated ability to continue to believe they are who they think they are and to maintain an unfragmented community,” particularly in the midst of threats to community identity such as the trauma of dislocation (Wahrhaftig 2). Wahrhaftig traces the concept of persistence through a review of

anthropological literature and arrives at contemporary dialogue around cultural persistence with a clearly rhetorical and resistant reading of the term:

Current discussions of cultural persistence – taken as the persistence of meanings around which a people is unified – occur in association with studies of behavior of constituencies in new states and studies of plural societies in general. Both involve not only the articulation of culturally differing populations, but also concrete situations in which identity becomes sharply focused and has been maintained. (6)

Wahrhaftig draws a distinction between Clifford Geertz and Frederik Barth claiming Geertz “emphasize[s] the content of identity” whereas Barth “emphasize[s] the maintenance of boundaries” (6). He adds Edward Spicer’s understanding of “persistent identity systems” as innately “processual and ideational,” rather than stagnant or fixed, as evident in peoples experiencing generations of “existence in contrasting environments” where they “maintain and even strengthen identity” (Wahrhaftig 10). Cultural identity for Spicer, as Wahrhaftig explicates, “starts by identifying a people in terms of the meanings, not political relations, that join them;” thus Spicer’s focus on “a people” rather than “a nation” (10). This distinction replicates those made by Daniel Heath Justice between peoplehood and nationhood amongst the Cherokee.

Critical to Wahrhaftig’s assertion of Cherokee cultural persistence comes the notion that “distinctive historic experience” and “inner meanings” of a persistent people may “be unsensed by other groups in the same plural society,” particularly within the context of acculturation and assimilation (10). Across peoples identified by these anthropologists as culturally persistent, Wahrhaftig adds, “it is in the process of opposing efforts by the controllers of a state apparatus to assimilate them that these peoples develop systems of

identity that maintain their persistence” (10). In fact, it is opposition to trauma, as well as resistance to oppression and assimilation, that creates the rhetorical space within which persistent groups determine which symbols of identity become meaningful. Resistance and persistence co-evolve in Warhaftig’s view, often beneath and within apparent silence.

Wahrhaftig believes certain historical and cultural prerequisites serve as positive indicators for persistence. While “members of a society must maintain as inviolate the meanings that do most to bind them together,” in order to persist in a cultural identity that “transcends interaction,” they must also have “long traditions of interaction across cultural boundaries” (Wahrhaftig 14). Persistent peoples “ought therefore to bring adaptive experiences to bear on coping with a contrasting cultural environment” (Wahrhaftig 14). Examining the distinct social and discursive systems of persistent peoples in their own historical contexts enables scholars to “see identity as a system of meanings that both emerges from and supports a people’s continuing adaptation” (Wahrhaftig 13 & 19). Through historical experiences of peoples, the transrhetorical movement of ideas across cultural boundaries enables persistence insofar as it allows certain cultural meanings to remain in circulation even as they adapt. In this way, cultures maintain the rhetorical agency to construct identity and meaning in the midst of cultural transactions. Persistent identity and adaptation are paradoxical, but co-generative characteristics for Warhaftig. Cherokees, he believed, provide a particularly good model of this phenomenon.

Wahrhaftig's second chapter, "The Cherokee Scene," provides a located entrance into cultural persistence via a rich (and arguably presciently critical regionalist) description written through the lens of anthropology in 1975²⁴. He begins his thick description of the Cherokee scene with a formidable statement: "Among all the tribes of American Indians, none has so distinguished a reputation for accomplishment as the Cherokees" (Wahrhaftig 20). He cites the Cherokees' simultaneously rich and historical rhetorical production as evidence for his claim. He lists their "autonomous and self-sufficient republic," that remained a sovereign Indian nation, "often surpass[ing] their white neighbors" (Wahrhaftig 20). He adds their "accomplishment of plantation agriculture, animal domestication, crafts, and trade," all of which added to their economic prosperity," while also continuing traditional subsistence practices such as "hunting, foraging, and gardening" (Wahrhaftig 20). To these he joins the creation of the Cherokee syllabary and the rise of literacy in the Cherokee language, "a written constitution and code of laws, a bicameral legislature, a national supreme court, a national police force, a national book press, and a newspaper with international circulation" – all developed across the 1820's and 1830's in the context of the Removal Era (Wahrhaftig 20). Wahrhaftig conjoins Cherokee culture and rhetorical agency to Cherokee sovereignty and literate production both before and after removal – all of which he characterizes as persistence. By the end of the Civil War, he claims Cherokees "were near universal literacy in their own language" and their English literacy "exceeded that of whites in states bordering the Cherokee Nation" (Wahrhaftig

20). Wahrhaftig locates Cherokees not just in terms of landscape, culture, and history, but also in terms of literacy.

Literacy in the Cherokee Nation became possible because of Sequoyah's invention of the Cherokee syllabary, which he likely developed in the 1810's. Scholars have characterized Sequoyah's remarkable contribution in many ways. Robert K. Thomas (Cherokee), a close colleague to Wahrhaftig, believes the invention was an adaptation of the written English language Sequoyah saw circulating in the changing world around him (Thomas 46 – 47). While observing the way in which written language operates, Sequoyah likely found the motivation to develop the Cherokee written language. However, his observation of written English cannot be separated from the context of colonial settlement and white intrusion he observed across his lifetime, having been born prior to the American Revolution. Ellen Cushman, in her recent book *The Cherokee Syllabary: Writing the Peoples' Perseverance* (OU Press 2011), states, "Sequoyah grew up near the British Fort Loudon not far from the Little Tennessee River" (26). Based on archival evidence in *The Wannenauhi Manuscript*, edited by John Kilpatrick and housed in the Smithsonian, Cushman surmises that "as a teenager Sequoyah apparently had no skills in speaking English, let alone reading or writing it" (*Writing* 27). He "grew up in a time of increasing land cessions to whites, deeper encroachment of settlers and missionaries in Cherokee territory, and a rapidly shifting economy" (Cushman *Writing* 28). Evidence proves he knew how to sign his English name, George Guess, both on his silverwork and on an 1816 treaty with Andrew Jackson to

cede Cherokee lands in Tennessee – a literate skill Cushman believes Sequoyah saw as a necessity. For Warhaftig, who worked in Cherokee language programs, Sequoyah’s invention serves as both proof of and a tool for cultural persistence.

LITERACY AND RESISTANCE AS CHEROKEE CULTURAL LOGICS

Positioned as he was, Sequoyah would have observed the rhetorical affordances of written language as evidenced in colonial encounters occurring around him. Written English allowed communication across great distances; it operated as memory and record; it united people into powerful entities and alliances. It was present and material in ways oral communication could not be. It was a tool used to both establish sovereignty and disrupt sovereignty. Sequoyah likely understood, the utility of written language in countering colonial dominance as well. In this way, as far as Sequoyah’s invention intervenes in the process of political subjugation and cultural oppression, the syllabary operates as a clear instance of literacy providing critical power as a rhetorical and resistant tool insofar as it creates space for cultural persistence. Cushman explains, “Between 1810 and 1820 Sequoyah lived in Wills Valley,” located in Alabama between the Old Settlers who had already moved west to Arkansas and those Cherokees who remained in Tennessee (28). In many ways, the reasons for his choice to live in isolation during the development of the syllabary remains a mystery²⁵.

For my purposes, however, I am interested in the ways in which Sequoyah’s choice to isolate himself and the emerging Cherokee written

language system imbues the syllabary with rhetorical agency, resistance, and cultural persistence. Further, how do the syllabary's rhetorical characteristics, or what Wahrhaftig might call inner meanings, contribute to the legacy of the syllabary across Cherokee history into the present, and continue in the work of Cherokee cultural literacy activists today? Wahrhaftig's dissertation, often referenced in current Cherokee scholarship, provides an example of Sequoyah's rhetorical legacy as well. His observations of Cherokee cultural persistence occurred within the context of his extended time working with the Cherokee for the Carnegie Corporation Cross-Cultural Education Project of the University of Chicago under anthropologist Sol Tax²⁶. Wahrhaftig worked and studied with Robert K. Thomas, a Cherokee anthropologist whose work on the Redbird Smith movement is cited later in this chapter. Their work embedded them with Cherokee community language classes in various Cherokee locations, utilizing the syllabary and again invoking Sequoyah's legacy. Wahrhaftig's ethnographic research on cultural persistence in the Cherokee Nation is well-situated among kinship networks and upholds the principle of reciprocity to community so inherent to the Cherokee culture, all within the context of literacy work. His work becomes a good and useful lens with which to understand cultural persistence as rhetorical resistance in the Cherokee Nation from September 1963 through 1975 – the later years during which the younger activists interviewed for this chapter were born.

Wahrhaftig's tenure in the Cherokee Nation also aligns with complex political and historical events contemporary to this period. In 1971, the

Cherokees elected W.W. Keeler as Principal Chief – the first since 1903 when the Cherokees’ government was abolished in the statehood process. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975 provided pivotal legislation that promoted tribal sovereignty. The result was a rich opportunity for Wahrhaftig to embed in a relatively stable population, develop sustained relationships, and observe cultural patterns, inner meanings, and strategies. As he explicates, “Of 72 identifiable Cherokee settlements in eastern Oklahoma, 48 are old and stable,” many of which “bear the names of noted towns in the Old Country” (Wahrhaftig 28). He also cites “the emergence of new named, cohesive Cherokee settlements, often within or on the outskirts of small towns” (Wahrhaftig 28). He concludes that “the basic framework of Cherokee settlement is intact and adaptive,” and “the Cherokees have maintained their population at strength and have preserved the core settlements from which their nation was built” even “as an ethnic minority submerged within a culturally complex region” (Wahrhaftig 29). It is clear that Wahrhaftig is building a case for cultural persistence among the Cherokee, which he bases in part on the strength of Cherokee communities and families within them.

Wahrhaftig does not fail to point out, however, that continuing change in the region results “in an increasingly disadvantaged position” for the Cherokee (29). “Small farms have been consolidated in large ranches, often owned by Texans,” he explains, and “new lakes built [by] the Army Core of Engineers Arkansas River Flood Control Project [attract] vacationers, retired city folk,

weekenders from nearby cities, and an expanded population of small town businessmen to service them” (Wahrhaftig 29). He references what was at the time a recent rhetorical campaign: “Of late, eastern Oklahoma has taken to calling itself ‘Green Country’” and therefore “a change of image has been undertaken by 21 counties that were formerly part of the Indian Nations” (Wahrhaftig 29). He points out this effort was “backed by the Phillips Petroleum Company” that hired “an employee to ‘serve virtually full time’ as executive vice president of Green Country, Inc., [and] this new appellation, so enthusiastically internalized by small town chambers of commerce, represents an adroit bit of identity managing” (Wahrhaftig 29). Wahrhaftig invokes concern for “a new future for the region” in which a “paradise of woods, lakes, bass” supplants the ecological wilderness of the Ozark forests. Interestingly, he observes the rhetorical silencing and erasure operating in the Green Country campaign, noting “this image submerges the old realities” those in power presume to correct: “Indians, lawlessness, failed farms, poverty, cultural and economic backwash” (Wahrhaftig 29). This suppressive tactic and the stereotypes it assumes become transparent in the passage, biased, limited, and inaccurate to a wide degree, especially given Wahrhaftig’s own lens of cultural persistence. Wahrhaftig’s study, because of its focus on persistence, provides a corrective for assumptions of loss, failure, and tragedy as projected upon Cherokee people, precisely because it foregrounds Cherokee cultural assets.

Wahrhaftig also identifies his own work as a counter-narrative by articulating the oppositional narrative his argument subverts. As he details: Among Oklahomans, the loss of Cherokee land and resources are dismissed as events that occurred in the past, beyond the sphere of

responsibility of people living today and therefore beyond rectification. Local whites do everything within their power to prevent Cherokees from “dwelling on past history,” for it is only by forgetting (or ignoring) the past that Oklahoma white people can justify the present. To review history, whites insist, would only perpetuate old grudges. Attempts to do so are redefined as exhortations to “preach hate of the white man.” But for Cherokees to ignore their history obligingly would be suicidal. (Wahrhaftig 32)

Wahrhaftig performs a succinct rhetorical analysis of arguments against a transrhetorical treatment of history that would include an open discussion of land and resources, cultural contact, and injustice. First, he identifies a denial of accountability inherent in the claim that history lies beyond present-day responsibility or address. Secondly, by reading arguments related to Cherokee history as “dwelling” on the past, local whites place the full responsibility for resolution on Cherokees seeking justice. In other words, in order to make matters just, Cherokees are expected to relinquish all claims. Finally, attempts to silence Cherokees by reframing their claims as social agitation that perpetuates racial tensions utterly erases the actual source of these tensions. Reframing Cherokee arguments for justice as racism denies the racism of whites seeking to control the discourse. The last sentence acknowledges both a rhetorical and cultural reality: silencing Cherokee history and claims for justice also silences Cherokee culture.

RESISTANCE, THE KEETOOWAH SOCIETY, & THE REDBIRD SMITH MOVEMENT

Because Wahrhaftig’s study occurs contemporaneously to his involvement with the Carnegie Cross-Cultural Education Project of the University of Chicago which puts him in close contact with Robert K. Thomas²⁷,

whose scholarship has been equally critical to my own project. Thomas was a Cherokee descendant and the graduate student Tax assigned “to help run the project,” whereas Wahrhaftig “was in charge of gathering social and demographic data along with several Cherokee colleagues” (Cushman *Writing* 173). Thomas’s 1953 Master’s thesis, “The Origin and Development of the Redbird Smith Movement,” serves as the best source on this historic site of resistance and persistence even over sixty years later. Thomas describes the Redbird Smith movement as a “nativistic revival spearheaded by Redbird Smith” during the period of allotment and attributes the movement’s prime motivation to the “social disintegration” experienced by the Cherokees as a result of allotment (111 & 76). Redbird Smith, other leaders such as Dekinny Waters and Wolf Coon, and their followers sought to resist the loss of Cherokee cultural ways (118). In the year 1896, when “the Dawes Commission authorized a census of the Cherokee Nation,” these leaders begin their efforts to resist the cultural impact of allotment (Thomas 118). Thomas, a Cherokee cultural literacy worker himself, carefully situates this emerging movement in the context of Cherokee cultural literacy and historic resistance.

Sequoyah’s invention of the Cherokee syllabary and the subsequent and rapid spread of Cherokee literacy²⁸ serves as an early site of resistance in the cultural timeline Thomas constructs. Thomas claims, “all over the Cherokee Nation, people were teaching each other the new syllabary,” which consisted of 84 characters, “and classes were conducted by people who had gone miles to learn the system and bring it back to their communities” (84). Sequoyah’s

writing system enabled the development of print blocks of syllabary characters and the critical deployment of a national printing press, which began publishing the *Cherokee Phoenix* in 1827. This in turn enabled the Cherokee national government “to inform people on most issues both internal and those connected with the U.S. government” in their own language, a crucial ability during an era of encroaching white settlement and impending removal (Thomas 47). The syllabary and the press allowed for the printing and publication of Cherokee law and the Bible in Cherokee. Additionally, the new writing system enabled the recording of traditional knowledge, preserving it beyond individual memory and oral transmission. Cherokee religious leaders “began writing down their medicine in the syllabary and keeping books filled with medicine prayers” (Thomas 47). Sequoyah’s invention, as Cushman asserts Sequoyah intended, provided a means for rhetorical resistance, and contributed to the pattern Wahrhaftig labels as cultural persistence.

In the timeline Thomas constructs across sites of Cherokee cultural and rhetorical resistance, he includes the organization of the Keetoowah Society in 1859. Thomas characterizes the society as “organized factionalism” that united the full-bloods and marked “the culmination of years of hostility toward the mixed-bloods” (61). As the Civil War approached, those tensions surfaced in debates between allying the Cherokee Nation with the emerging Union or Confederate forces. In the political binary born from these tensions, slave-owning wealthy mixed bloods sought alliance with the South while full-blood loyalists, who were increasingly anti-slavery, sought abolition with the North.

Patrick Neal Minges argues the Keetoowah Society “helped frame an ideal of a Cherokee identity rooted in traditional culture as opposed to the developing ideology of ‘race’” motivating the secession question in the South (7). Redbird Smith’s father, Pig Smith²⁹, played a strong role in the Keetoowah Society’s early formation. During the Civil War, Thomas also explains “Pig Smith went to Kansas³⁰ with Opothle Yahola [sic], the leader of the full-blood Creeks. He was prominent in the Inter-tribal Councils held before the Civil War and had great influence among the Plains Indians” (Thomas 112). This description characterizes Pig Smith as a transrhetorical agent, moving across and within boundaries both inside and outside of the Cherokee Nation.

Importantly, Thomas also characterizes Pig Smith as “a man who knew a great deal of medicine, especially for war,” giving an account of his participation in the Civil War even as an old man. Thomas quotes John Smith (son of Redbird) in relaying a story where Keetoowah medicine men prayed about the future of the Keetoowahs and foresaw Pig Smith’s son becoming a leader (112). Because Pig Smith knew he would not live to raise his son Redbird, who was born in 1850 when Pig was already an older man, “He looked for a man to teach his son the ways of the Keetoowahs and guide him spiritually” (John Smith qtd. in Thomas 112). Creek Sam, “a Notchee Indian [sic],” became Redbird’s caregiver, teacher, and adviser (Thomas 112). Creek Sam was born prior to removal and remembered the experience. He was Natchez, but lived in a Creek community within the Cherokee Nation. He was considered a culture keeper and a great seer. Because of the close relationship

they developed, “Redbird Smith grew up well-schooled in the old Cherokee lore” (Thomas 113). Thomas characterizes Redbird Smith as “a mild-mannered, friendly man” who “gave a good straight talk,” both important rhetorical characteristics of leaders in Cherokee culture (113 – 114). In 1888, the Cherokees received what Thomas calls “the first inkling” of “the coming allotment” (116). In 1889, the Keetoowah Society passed an amendment articulating the religious role of the organization, likely in response to increasing tensions. (Thomas 114). The Keetoowah Society amendment served to remind members of the organization’s commitment to Cherokee ceremonial traditionalism as the best way to confront political and cultural struggle.

Redbird Smith began to rise rapidly in the Keetoowah leadership at this same time. He became Head Captain of the Illinois District and also served as a Cherokee Council member (Thomas 115). In January 1894, the Dawes Commission made its first trip to Indian Territory and “from this time on [...] spent some part of the year negotiating with the Cherokee government” attempting to resolve the allotment decision in “some type of agreement satisfactory” to both governments (Thomas 117). Because of consistent resistance and refusal to allot on the part of the Cherokees, no agreement was adopted. Of the five tribes, the Cherokee Nation was the very last to “make an agreement” with the United States regarding allotment, in part because of the resistance enabled by the Redbird Smith movement, and only after the passage of the Curtis Act in 1898³¹ (Thomas 143). Likely around 1896, the Keetoowah Society leaders called Redbird Smith to a meeting where they “appointed [him]

to ‘get back what the Keetoowahs had lost’” (Thomas 119). For these leaders, the loss of cultural knowledge, ceremonial knowledge in particular, was the source of the Cherokee’s struggle, and recovering that knowledge played a vital role in resolving the current crisis³². Unity and balance, both very important inner meanings of the Cherokee culture, were at stake as Redbird Smith stepped into leadership. He remained a leader of the Keetoowah Society until his death in November 1918. In Cherokee communities, his name continues to evoke respect, and many of the ceremonial grounds he established during his leadership continue to flourish.

TRANSRHETORICAL PATTERNS OF SUPPRESSED RHETORICAL RESISTANCE

The Keetoowah Society, under Redbird Smith’s guidance, maintained many cultural practices in keeping with its goal of cultural persistence in the context of allotment, the abolition of tribal government, and statehood. Smith, always aware of himself as a representative of the Keetoowah Society, maintained a strong stance against allotment on the grounds that it would destroy Cherokee culture. Through lobbying efforts in Washington D.C., newspaper coverage across Oklahoma, and statements to congressional committees, the Keetoowahs continued the rhetorical legacy long established in Cherokee culture, of using literacy to promote and protect Cherokee cultural interests. More importantly, however, and despite the obvious rejection and subsequent silencing of their public rhetorical efforts, the Keetoowah Society reestablished Cherokee ceremonial practices deeply imbued with Cherokee epistemology and cosmology. They also utilized Cherokee language literacy to

record ceremonial knowledge and establish society protocol around the maintenance of that knowledge. While it is clear these ceremonies were intended to strengthen the Cherokees' relationship to the Creator and to protect Cherokee sovereignty, the Keetoowahs simultaneously instituted critical cultural literacy practices to maintain and build Cherokee community within a surround of suppressive force. Rhetorically, their practices and strategies perform cultural persistence, one among many Cherokee values and beliefs that surface across multiple archival traces spanning several decades.

Though this history occurred over one hundred years ago, the same pattern of inner meanings emerges from the activist interviews I conducted for this chapter. Because each of these activists works for critical cultural literacy within a network of other activists, community members, agencies, and institutions, their invocation of Cherokee values operates transrhetorically across the axis of time to enact Keetoowah legacies and enable Cherokee cultural persistence. Even before Redbird Smith's involvement in the Keetoowah Society in the mid 1890's, and well before the Keetoowah Society was officially established in 1859, Keetoowah principles inhabited Cherokee culture. In an English version of the "Constitution and Bylaws of the Original Kee-too-wah Society 1859," presented by Sam and John R. Smith (Redbird's sons) to Jas. S. Buchanan, a field worker for the Indian-Pioneer History project of the Federal Writers' Project, the authors make clear the connection between the Keetoowah Society and ancient Cherokee culture:

... we will make no mistake in recognizing all these things our forefathers, who lived in the East, the seven Keedoowah medicine men,

west to the high peak, prayed and fasted seven days and nights, asking the Great Spirit to give information as to what the future of the Cherokee Indians was to be. On the seventh night, the Great Spirit told them, "You shall be Keedoowahs." This will be respected by the Keedoowahs. We shall not surrender to anyone, and no one can take Keedoowah away from us. [...] This shall be God's law, and it shall be taught to our people at meetings for coming generations so they will never forget it. (4)

In articulating their intent to spread cultural knowledge, the writers of the Keetoowah Constitution express the value of cultural literacy. Cherokee culture persists as long as Cherokees know it. Creating access to that knowledge is a crucial component of sharing it, for both the Keetoowahs in the late 19th and early 20th century and for Cherokee cultural activists today.

Strengthening community, a second but no less important value among Cherokee activists, factors heavily in cultural literacy efforts across Cherokee history. Each of the activists, as the following analysis shows, tied their work to Cherokee communities – personally, symbolically, and literally in all cases. In defining activism, each activist in his or her own way emphasized the value of the collective over the individual. In this way, the collective truly occupies the core of Cherokee cultural values, and Cherokee cultural literacy activism seeks to engage and support Cherokee communities above all else. This same pattern can be seen in Redbird Smith's testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Affairs in the Indian Territory. The Committee's hearings were held between November 1906 and January 1907, just a few months prior to Oklahoma statehood. His testimony ends with a clear statement:

I can't stand and breathe and live if I take this allotment. Under the allotment rules I would see all around me – I see now all around me [...] – people who are ready to grab from under us my living and my home.

[...] The Indian can't live on allotments. (Smith 99 – 100)

While a quick read makes Redbird Smith's concerns about encroachment obvious, a closer read reveals his concern about the threat to community and sovereignty. As individual landowners, Cherokees could not protect either because both community and sovereignty are already compromised under such a system. For Smith, community and culture are inseparable.

Cherokee cultural literacy activists practice these values at the same time they perform key rhetorical strategies in working toward their goals. Among these tactics, silence becomes refigured as intentional withdrawal as well as a desire to maintain balance among and with the community rather than stand out. These behaviors, which could easily be misread as the result of suppression, ultimately arise from a cultural mandate to uphold and respect balance, unity, and connection with community members. Because community remains a strong cultural asset for Cherokees, as Ryan Mackey (quoted by America Meredith) explains, "The social is the ceremonial" (Meredith 9). Any rhetorical practice that disrupts social well-being in the community risks the rejection of the rhetor. As Ryan Mackey explains in his own interview, activism – whether or not it is intentional activism – comes with risk in Cherokee communities.

As far as possible, and as Redbird Smith's historical example models, Cherokee cultural literacy activism must be aligned with community welfare and harmony, as must Cherokee activist rhetorics. While this value does not preclude "going against the grain" in order to do what an activist believes is

right, it nevertheless animates activist rhetorics with a particular ethos. As Ryan Mackey explains from his own perspective, Cherokee cultural activism does not seek to “correct the system,” but rather “build community” (4). Likewise, activists do not aim to “create resistance,” but instead “do what we believe is right” (Mackey 5). Because Cherokee activism takes place within distinct cultural and epistemological frameworks, all cultural literacy work must account for the values of balance and community. This work must also acknowledge the activist’s responsibility to Cherokee People, and to the communities through which they are networked – past and present.

In order to trace Cherokee activist rhetorical practice across history and cultural borders, in the following section I attempt to put archival texts produced by Redbird Smith and the Keetoowah Society in conversation with the activist interviews I conducted. Though building community, respecting balance and unity, and commitment to cultural persistence certainly function as central themes and values, across these sites of analysis they become clearer through multiple articulations from various perspectives. Other themes emerge as well, such as rhetorical risk, sovereignty, place, the sacred, and the relationship between cultural and personal integrity. Through analyzing and comparing them, I hope to reveal a clear pattern of rhetorical agency in addition to cultural persistence.

The rhetorical legacy that surfaces speaks to our field’s understanding of two critical issues, cultural literacy and silence, and ways in which they intersect. In addition to looking at the ways in which Cherokee cultural literacy activism contributes to cultural persistence by upholding and enacting Cherokee values, my examination will also include an attempt to understand silence in Cherokee cultural rhetoric as an agentive tool, rather than merely a reaction to rhetorical suppression or the product of rhetorical erasure. As Sequoyah isolated himself from colonial contexts in order to invent the

Cherokee syllabary, Redbird Smith, the Keetoowah Society, and the activists I interviewed relate sovereignty to cultural autonomy in addition to a political autonomy. Sovereignty must be practiced, if not first practiced, at the cultural level. Cherokee cultural literacy activism must be understood, therefore, on its own terms – apart from political activist tropes operating in society more broadly. I hope my analysis serves this end.

CULTURAL LITERACY ACTIVISM AND RHETORICAL RISK

The earliest accounts of the Keetoowah Society in Indian Territory newspapers position the organization in both positive and negative ways. Not surprisingly, papers in Cherokee Territory consistently represent the organization more positively, in some cases defending the Keetoowahs against negative attacks. Largely misunderstood to ever-increasing and encroaching non-Native settlers, Native American resistance to allotment and statehood became sensationalized as threats of violence and disorder that appealed to racist fears. These rhetorical tactics were used to negate, obscure, and distort Keetoowah arguments against allotment. Territory newspapers, invested in the allotment and statehood process, were largely responsible for spreading these misrepresentations and falsehoods.

A July 17, 1897, article in *The Claremore Progress*³³ addresses directly the wrongful accusations against the Keetoowah. The article states, “Many erroneous opinions are now and have for many years been entertained by those not familiar with Indian affairs, the idea being largely prevalent that the Keetoowah Society is an organization similar in character to the Mafia. This

idea is far from correct” (“The Keetoowahs” 2). The account includes information about the Keetoowah’s political influence inside of the Cherokee Nation, linking them with the National Party and crediting them for their positive influence. The article ends by returning to the accusations and attacks against the Keetoowah. “Many crimes,” the unnamed writer explains, “have often been committed and credited to the Keetoowah by those who did not favor it, and by those who, from ignorance, misunderstood its aim” (“The Keetoowah” 2). The author (unnamed) insists that no crimes have been committed “with the cognizance or by the command and permission of its officers” (“The Keetoowah” 2). The article clearly indicates the extent to which false assumptions about the Keetoowah circulate and exhibits a felt exigency to correct them.

Another article from November 1903 in *The Cordell Weekly Beacon* demonstrates the extent to which fear and misunderstanding of the Keetoowah Society dominated newspaper accounts far outside of Cherokee Country³⁴. This account foments tensions between Keetoowah Society members themselves and a faction called the “Nighthawk Keetoowahs” which favored continued organized resistance to allotment as the federal use of force increased against resisters. Under the headline, “FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES,” the article claims Keetoowah discontent has “caused several prominent men [...] to live in fear of assassination” (3). The article connects supposed threats of violence between competing Keetoowah factions to historical tensions between the Treaty Party and the Ross Party after removal.³⁵ Another 1903 article in *The Oklahoma State*

Capital published outside of Cherokee Country in Guthrie, OK, provides an historical account of the formation of the Keetoowahs and connects the Keetoowah Society to revenge and violence throughout Cherokee history even prior to removal (“The Keetoowah Society Organized” 16). It becomes clear from these newspaper accounts that violence and disorder projected upon the Keetoowah Society obscures the cultural and rhetorical resistance actually practiced by the society. These articles also represent the Keetoowahs as fallen a “once powerful” status among Cherokees, with continual “defection from its ranks” (“The Keetoowah Society Organized” 16; “Fear” 3). While negative representations of violence continue, the accounts also cast the Keetoowah Society as increasingly marginalized and ineffective, marked by increasing tensions between members and lack of cohesion. The suppressive rhetorical tactics present in these accounts collectively obfuscate, silence, erase, and undermine Keetoowah objectives. In this context, any public display or performance of Keetoowah values, whether or not intentionally resistant, risked the suppression of Keetoowah rhetorical and cultural goals.

Contemporary cultural literacy activists express an inherited sense of risk associated with their work for cultural persistence, particularly as that work becomes public outside of Cherokee cultural boundaries.. These risks include evoking suppressive rhetorical responses from both inside and outside the Cherokee community. Durbin Feeling, whose work on the Cherokee-English Dictionary (first published in 1975) continues to be a critical reference for Cherokee language learners, discussed being warned by others as a young

man not to pursue the work. “I was told a few times, more than once, that I shouldn’t be doing that as a young person, teaching,” out of fear he would corrupt the language and the sacred spaces where language is used – “Medicine. Things like that” (Feeling 9). By working with the language and language learners, Durbin risked the disapproval of those who felt as though he was taking on an inappropriate role for a young Cherokee person and making the language vulnerable to exploitation, particularly by non-Cherokees. People told him, “I wouldn’t teach anything like that to the white people because they’re taking everything from us” (Feeling 10). Durbin disagrees with this belief, saying, “I think it’d be an honor for people to learn it,” and implying that anyone who learns the language helps to perpetuate it (Feeling 10). For him, activism is “being actively involved in the perpetuation of the language [...] doing all you can [...] working hard at it to teach as many people as want to learn” (Feeling 1). By confronting community fears of co-optation and subsequent silencing, Durbin aligns his cultural literacy work with a willingness to risk potential misuse in order for the language to persist within and beyond Cherokee communities.

Ryan Mackey, who has studied extensively with Durbin, believes “activist” can be used as “a negative label” when people are perceived as “going against the stream” (2). Ryan does not self-identify as an activist, which for him is “somebody who goes out of their way to right wrongs [...] and tries to cause positive social change” (Mackey 1). He does, however, believe he fits under this definition unintentionally, and that others acknowledge him as an

activist regardless of his own lack of self-identification. Ryan's leadership in reviving the dormant Squirrel Ridge ceremonial ground in the Kenwood, OK, contributed to building (or re-building) community, but it also provoked criticism from those who believed he was acting inappropriately for his age and status within the tribe. Being labeled or regarded as an activist, therefore, is not necessarily positive for Ryan, who understands activist can be a label applied to people who the Cherokee community perceives to be acting outside of traditional values and practices.

"Around here," he explains, referring to Cherokee Country, "the value is to fit in and not draw attention to yourself" (Mackey 2). Ryan, who is also a Cherokee language instructor for Northeastern State University and for the Cherokee Nation, uses etymology to explain Cherokee epistemology. "We have this word 'tohi' [which is] interpreted as health, wellness, peace, [...] so there's this value of placidity that seems to be one of our core teachings. And to go against the grain is certainly not 'tohi,'" even, according to Ryan, when an individual aims to do what he or she believes is right for the community (Mackey 3). For Ryan, "doing what is right" means "provid[ing] a home for people who had left grounds for various reasons and want a new start" to learn and practice cultural and ceremonial traditions inside of a Cherokee community (Mackey 5). As a Cherokee of mixed descent, Ryan grew up outside of culture and ceremony, and his personal experience of recovering cultural knowledge motivates his work to create access for other outsiders. This work, however, brings him "into conflict with the people that have control of it, [...]"

the guardians of it,” even though his goal remains “to just integrate myself and fit in the best I can to push [culture] on to the future” (Mackey 15). “Just by doing that, I was bucking the system,” he explains³⁶ (Mackey 15). His subsequent avoidance of the label “activist” reflects his desire to uphold harmony within community.

America Meredith, a widely recognized and accomplished painter and editor and publisher of *First American Art* magazine, likewise believes the word activist is rhetorically “defective” (5). “That word’s kind of loaded,” she claims; “It makes you think of like a teenager fighting a policeman” (Meredith 5). Like Ryan, America believes the word activist can be easily used to misrepresent an individual or collective effort. However, she more readily identifies as activist than he does, perhaps because she lives outside of Oklahoma where potential risks are minimized. As she defines it, activism means “deliberately working for positive social change and social justice” (Meredith 5). In cultural terms, she explains, “I see any kind of strengthening or expression of Cherokee culture as a way of fighting American hegemony. I think Native people are, you know, are a threat to the United States because we know for a fact that we can live a different way, that society can be different” (Meredith 5).

While she acknowledges that activism can often be practiced as resistance, she believes this approach practiced more broadly in U.S. society than in Cherokee culture remains reactionary and “gives them” – meaning the hegemony – “all the power” as a result (Meredith 6). This is evidenced by America’s quick characterization of “activism” as almost amateurish and

ineffective. Reactionary rhetoric – such as the teenager fighting a cop - makes Cherokee cultural literacy activism vulnerable to rhetorical attack, suppression, and erasure. As an alternative approach, as America explains, “we absolutely have to get our own grounding. [...] We have to base [our work] on our own traditions. We have to be grounded. We have to create. We have to build our own communities” (Meredith 7). These tactics avoid the rhetorical traps invited by mere reaction, and at the same time help Cherokee activists to maintain rhetorical control of cultural literacy work, including how it is defined and framed. “It’s better to fight for something than against something,” America summarizes (Meredith 7). Her cultural assumption here aligns nicely with Ryan Mackey’s desire to go with the grain rather than against it.

In avoiding reactionary strategies, Cherokee cultural activists many times mentioned utilizing the practice of rhetorical withdrawal, a method similar to deploying agentive silence. Like Sequoyah during his invention process, activists discussed withdrawing from participation in spaces where conflict arises or could potentially arise. Charles Foster, OU Cherokee Language Instructor, language translator for the Cherokee Historical Society, and former community language instructor for the Cherokee Nation Adult Education Program, characterizes this rhetorical strategy as “passive resistance.” It maintains balance and harmony while also allowing for dissenting positions. Those who practice rhetorical withdrawal “won’t say nothing, they just won’t ever do it. They’ll just walk away or whatever” (Foster 13). Essentially, they refrain from participating in or acknowledging what they

are resisting. In many cases, this is how Cherokee communities censor offending members or ideas, or how community members express disagreement with the group. Charles connects this to the Keetoowah Society, pointing out that “in order to resist, they created a secret society” that enabled them to practice culture in their own rhetorical and ceremonial spaces without interference or intrusion (Foster 15). By withdrawing from encroaching white culture to practice their own, Charles believes Cherokees were expressing dissent in culturally appropriate ways that allow for resistance while also upholding balance, harmony, and unity.

Redbird Smith and the Keetoowahs provide an example for present-day activists committed to cultural persistence through cultural literacy, as well as a model for handling rhetorical risks. Ryan explains:

What [Redbird Smith] did over a hundred years ago was re-integrate our ceremonies into the way of life for our traditional people and there were as many as 25 – 30 different ceremonial grounds that were renewed in that process. That was certainly on purpose. It wasn't something that was going on before he and his contemporaries worked together to bring it back. [...] We had lost things, but they weren't so far gone that they weren't able to go around and interview elders and basically do their own version of ethnology to revive the traditions that they saw were valuable. And Redbird Smith and his contemporaries did that, and it was on purpose, and it was certainly against the stream. (Mackey 9)

However, as Ryan continues, because the Keetoowahs were “living in such a contentious time³⁷, a time of such conflict and social upheaval,” they had limited options. He states, “There was no way for them to turn without going against the grain. So they had to find what path would provide the most clarity, the most stability” (Mackey 9). As Cherokee traditionalists, ceremonial practice

and cultural literacy were their best options for achieving stability – tohi – and thereby resisting allotment. “I don’t think they chose to become activists, but when you are living in a socially turbulent time, any group of people that has a concerted effort to move in any direction could be seen as activist,” even those individuals who simply want to continue practicing their culture (Mackey 8). Across almost 120 years, this rhetorical risk of misrepresentation and suppression remains the same for Cherokees working for cultural literacy. Thus, silencing tactics used historically both inside and outside of Cherokee culture continue to transrhetorically shape the rhetorical awareness, strategies, and practices of Cherokee activists.

RECIPROCITY AND COMMUNITY AS TRANSRHETORICAL VALUES

As Ryan’s account suggests, Redbird Smith and the Keetoowah Society’s most important rhetorical strategy in combating assimilation policy and its impact on Cherokee culture centered on reviving and re-establishing ceremonial traditionalism. This meant reclaiming physical as well as rhetorical space for ceremonial practices within the Cherokee Nation, even in the midst of settler encroachment. Thomas explains this first ground built by the Keetoowahs near Redbird’s home encouraged other communities to build grounds as well. “Soon after this Fire was started,” he claims, “Fires in communities all over the Cherokee Nation sprang up. [...] after a couple of years, twenty-two Fires were built all over the Nation” (Thomas 163). Because Cherokee ceremonial grounds depend upon community participation and principles of reciprocity, a Cherokee concept generally referred to as “gadugi,”

the work of ceremony requires the help and service of many Cherokees committed to each other and to cultural persistence as one and the same goal.

As Ryan points out repeatedly, Redbird Smith did not act alone, and when he did act, he acted as a representative of a community rather than a leader. This cultural value of being in service to the community surfaces rhetorically in society documents. The Keetoowah Constitution and Bylaws invokes the principles of community in the first paragraph of its preamble. In reference to “our forefathers,” those Cherokees who practiced Keetoowah traditions well prior to removal, the constitution makes clear: “That shall be respected the love they had for one another. They met as one at their fire. They smoked the Pipe of Peace to help one another. [...] We shall never give up Keedoowah [sic] until all of us join hands and fall to the ground. And if anything arises to destroy Keedoowah, we shall all flock together to head it off with all our power” (“Constitution” 2 – 3). Throughout this passage and the beginning pages of the document, the centrality of community arises. For the Keetoowahs, community connects not only those Cherokees practicing ceremonialism at various grounds throughout Cherokee territory; it also transrhetorically connects present Keetoowahs with the practitioners of the past³⁸.

At the time of Redbird Smith’s testimony to the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Affairs in the Indian Territory in late 1906, full-blood representatives from each of the tribes testified as well. Smith, in his appeal to the committee to honor the original treaties “between the Government of the

United States and the Indians,” references “the full-bloods” as a collective spanning Indian Territory nations, each with representatives present at the hearing (97). Speaking in Cherokee and with the help of an interpreter, Redbird Smith explains: “We made that treaty and agreement with the great father that we love at Washington, and he guaranteed with us when that treaty was made that it would remain as long as the grass grows, trees grow, water runs, and the sun rises and shines” (97). The allotment process had by this time run its course and many full-bloods, including Redbird Smith, had been forced to accept allotments without their consent³⁹. Smith then explains his own experience with resisting the Dawes Commission along with others, being arrested and “taken together to the Muskogee jail for standing up for our rights,” and being forced to enroll against his will (Smith 98). In Smith’s testimony, the Keetoowah’s integrity in resisting allotment brings into relief the federal government’s utter lack of integrity in breaking treaty. Smith also rhetorically exhibits his understanding of collective power and plenary processes in his statement to the committee. Repeatedly Smith asserts his position as a representative of a larger community, articulating “the conditions and wishes of the Indians who are not here, but who are living back home” (98). In Indian Territory, he asserts, “there is [sic] about 24,000 Indians that are in sympathy with me in this thing” (Smith 99). Smith presents a petition, a symbol of the collective he represents, along with an eagle feather “to show [the committee] the respect we have [...] for our treaty” (Smith 99). Transrhetorical resistance, community, and cultural persistence emerge as

indivisible throughout Smith's testimony – particularly as he speaks on behalf of non-Cherokee tribal peoples.

The Cherokee activists I interviewed each acknowledge ways in which building community can include working outside of Cherokee culture and landscapes. Joseph Erb, Cherokee artist and language technologist for the Cherokee Nation, believes being Cherokee depends upon “the connection between you and other people and what you do with them and what you build with them” (14). Joseph's family comes from Black Gum Mountain, very close to where the Redbird Smith ceremonial ground continues. In addition to working for over a decade with the Cherokee Nation, Erb has also worked with other tribes as well, particularly the Muskogee Creek Nation, to create digital animations of traditional stories. Now he works with University of Missouri students. “The individuality of modern America is really against some of the cultural norms of Cherokee culture because we are supposed to take care of each other,” Joseph explains (Erb 10). He continues, “you take care of your weak, you take care of your poor, you take care of that so that your society's stronger” (Erb 10). Earlier in the interview, Joseph explains his grandfather's example, which inscribed this cultural ethic of community in him during his childhood. Though his grandfather was “a poor man that lived on Social Security,” “he'd help people with what little he had,” regardless of whether they were Cherokee or not (Erb 8). While Joseph sees this “philosophy of living” as Cherokee, he also believes it has historically influenced the culture of northeastern Oklahoma as well, becoming not just a “Cherokee thing,” but more

broadly a “poor rural Oklahoma thing” (Erb 8). His observations suggest that despite the pressures of allotment and the threat of cultural erasure, Cherokee values related to building community persist, even so far as influencing Oklahoma culture more broadly.

Certainly the reciprocity between ceremonial grounds that Cherokees enact by helping one another extends to people beyond the community grounds. Many of the traditions first enacted at the Keetoowah Society’s first ceremonial grounds on Black Gum Mountain were borrowed, according to Robert K. Thomas, from Notchee and Creek grounds. Many Cherokees had long been participants in Creek and Notchee ceremonialism, and certainly Redbird Smith would have learned Muscogee Creek ceremonial ways from Creek Sam, the teacher in whose care Redbird Smith’s father entrusted him. Even today, Cherokee and Creek grounds members participate at each other’s grounds. Across Cherokee and Creek country, ceremonial dances take place on various weekends all year, most actively in the summer months. These events require many hands to do the domestic, practical, and ceremonial work involved. However, in addition to the work of preparing the fire and the medicine, the grounds and the arbors, the family camps and the food, there is also the work of dancing. The dancing begins after dark and continues until sunrise. In order to continue the ceremony all night, singers and shell shakers from various grounds participate in prayer around the fire. It is not unusual to see Muscogee Creek and other nations represented at Cherokee grounds, and vice versa. While each ground has unique practices and material characteristics,

community operates transrhetorically in these Cherokee ceremonial spaces across tribal borders, as it has for over one hundred years, to sustain traditional practices and strengthen multiple cultures. In this way, these cultures continue to practice resistance to allotment, acculturation, and assimilation by practicing community instead.

“CHOOSING TO BE CHEROKEE” – AGENCY AND ADAPTATION

For Redbird Smith and cultural activists today, ceremonialism creates rhetorical space for the expression of cultural identity. Ryan Mackey claims in settler colonial contexts, “we have to choose to be Cherokee and choose to do Cherokee things. [...] The vast majority of Cherokees are no longer receiving their cultural identity by accident” (7). In choosing to practice Cherokee culture, to “be Cherokee on purpose,” Cherokee cultural literacy activists establish rhetorical and cultural sovereignty (Mackey 7). Ryan does not suggest Cherokee culture does not and should not change, only that Cherokees should be the agents of that change, choosing how, when, and why to adapt rather than face “change that we didn’t choose” (Mackey 7). He believes this agentive act, this rhetorical choice, is “in and of itself a form of activism” simply because it is active, rather than passive. At the same time, it enacts Cherokee culture rather than engaging U.S. cultural hegemony in re-active ways. Choosing to be Cherokee activates agency rather than relinquishing it, by positioning Cherokees to be in control of their language and culture.

Rhetorical agency can also be seen in Cherokee adaptation and use of technologies to protect Cherokee cultural interests. Joseph Erb believes

technology “is part of our cultural tradition as Cherokees, to take technology and make it our own” (10). He references Sequoyah’s development of the written language, Elias Boudinot’s work with the Cherokee Nation press and the *Cherokee Phoenix*, and Will Rogers’ use of the mass media including his syndicated newspaper columns, popular film, and radio shows as examples (Erb 10). Joseph’s MFA thesis project, “The Beginning They Told,” was the first long animation of a traditional story created by a Native American artist in a Native language (Erb 3). Thanks to work largely credited to Joseph and Roy Boney, Jr., and the staff of the Language Technology office of the Cherokee Nation, Cherokee was the first native language available on both Apple and PC operating systems. Cherokee speakers fluent in the syllabary enjoy the ability to type text in Cherokee thanks to their efforts. For Joseph, this work was certainly activism, but beyond that it was just being Cherokee. “I always wanted to re-contextualize culture in whatever technology that came out,” and in this way as he continues, “I’m resisting every aspect of media that’s coming out there” by making it Cherokee and utilizing it for Cherokee culture (Erb 10 & 11). He contends, the “next advanced [...] technology [...] that changes the world and the way people communicate” will also result in “Cherokees going to bug that company again,” saying “we want to be on that” (Erb 13). The use of technology for culture is an expression of culture in these cases, and extends both Cherokee cultural literacy and rhetorical agency through intentional adaptation.

Yet, choosing to be Cherokee in the face of change arises in Redbird

Smith's testimony, in his agentive refusal to adapt as he encounters increasing rhetorical suppression from the Senate committee. The chairman of the committee, in response to Smith's presentation of the eagle feather and the petition and his articulation of his desire to uphold the former treaty, threatens Smith with the loss of his property and landlessness if he does not acquiesce to allotment (Smith 99). Smith responds with the following: "As I show you our condition and wishes, I say that I never will change; before our God, I won't. [...] I can't stand and breathe and live if I take this allotment. To take and put the Indians on the land in severalty would be just the same as burying them, for they could not live" (99). Thus, while Smith has the choice to change, given his commitment to cultural persistence, he chooses not to participate in allotment which he sees as threatening to that end. Many might see his resistance as futile, particularly because the testimony of the full-bloods before the Senate committee did not reverse allotment, re-establish tribal governments, or stop statehood from happening. However, in choosing to be Cherokee, his subsequent refusal to participate in allotment itself enacts Cherokee rhetorical strategies and lends to their persistence, as well as to the persistence of Cherokee culture more broadly.

The Keetoowah's legacy continues to animate Cherokee cultural activists and model cultural persistence in colonial contexts. Joseph Erb sums up the Keetoowah legacy most succinctly while also acknowledging the risk of rhetorical silencing all the activists face:

It's scary to do this work. [...] I think it's scary to your spirit. You spend all that time and energy thinking about this. Working. Knowing the

chances of success are always limited. Can the Cherokee language come back? Can the culture come back? If you're betting, bet no. Your money's safer. But that's not why someone's an activist. That's not why somebody tries. [...] I mean, our task is daunting, but it is our task. (4 & 11)

The question always present for these activists in the colonial contexts in which they operate is for Joseph, "What if it doesn't work?" (Erb 11). Given the ways in which the dominant historical narrative constructs Cherokee experience as erased, Cherokee resistance as failed, and Cherokee language and culture as dying, his fear seems based in the social reality of cultural hegemony. Yet still, these activists, like Redbird Smith and the Keetoowahs, continue amidst threatened and real loss, making the agentive and sometimes adaptive choice to pursue and perpetuate cultural knowledge despite rhetorical suppression that limits them. Their rhetorical resistance contributes to Cherokee cultural persistence, and their commitment to cultural literacy empowers the Cherokee people and communities persisting outside of hegemony's cultural and rhetorical reach.

CHEROKEE CULTURAL LITERACY AND OKLAHOMA AS AN ACTIVIST SITE

The question remains: what does Cherokee cultural literacy activism have to do with rhetorical resistance in Oklahoma more broadly? How do the patterns arising from a critical regionalist analysis that honors indigenous cultures and rhetorics counter dominant discursive patterns of whiteness and poverty, removal and assimilation? How can social and political constructions of Oklahoma include Cherokee culture? For Charles Foster, Oklahoma is a context with which he feels familiar, and cultural activism requires this

familiarity. He believes “you do what you can wherever you’re placed” (Foster 19). Place operates for him as an intellectual orientation that encompasses local spatial, cultural, and rhetorical literacies. He explains, “I think it’s where you are and where you’re placed, and you just do it. [...] wherever you are you begin to get acclimated to your surrounds. You know where things are, where you think you can make a difference too. [Being in Oklahoma is] good in that sense” (Foster 19). He places a value on local literacy, but especially as it relates to aiding the goals of Cherokee cultural persistence. “If you look at it from that standpoint,” one grounded deeply in Cherokee Country, “trying to keep language, some parts of our culture alive is an act of resistance” (Foster 14). He also understands resistance as part of Cherokee culture itself: “it’s become part of our culture from the time Europeans stepped on and began to encroach upon us, you know, that resistance has become part of our culture” (Foster 14). Including Cherokee culture in characterizations of Oklahoma transports these values – local literacies and cultural resistance – into transrhetorical critical regionalist constructions of the state.

Beyond this, Cherokee activist rhetorical strategies practiced across history lend themselves to understanding resistance through multiple cultural lenses that complicate dominant rhetorical representations. For Cherokees, cultural resistance has historically involved the mitigation of risk with both Cherokee and non-Cherokee audiences, and the maintenance of community unity and balance remains its goal. This model provides insights for all activists in Oklahoma interested in building transrhetorical alliances around

social justice issues by collaborating with other activists across cultural boundaries. Cherokee cultural logics, for example as present in the archival documents and field interviews with cultural literacy activists discussed here, enables audiences in the broader regional network to better understand Oklahoma as a transrhetorical landscape. Cherokee tactics of withdrawal and agentive silence, particularly as they relate to maintaining community well-being and cultural persistence, provide a powerfully subversive re-reading of the suppressive silences in Oklahoma's historical narrative. This suggests that sponsoring cultural literacy activism in marginalized communities can be a rhetorically resistant tactic in the context of colonialism. Culture, as contained in Cherokee language, ceremonies, stories, and activist rhetorics, is a stabilizing force practiced primarily in relationship with community members but also through kinship networks with non-community members. To support the practice and service of Cherokee culture in a setting of cultural and rhetorical suppression is an act of resistance and persistence. These insights speak to activists working to build communities and alliances between them within different cultural locations throughout Oklahoma and the region.

In addition to broadening rhetorical constructions of Oklahoma and adding to the local discursive tactics for activism and resistance, Cherokee cultural logics inform the personal narratives and rhetorical practices of Oklahomans like myself, whose individual and familial histories and identities connect with Cherokee and other indigenous histories. This allows writers and activists alike to better place their treatment of social justice issues within the

contexts where they write and act. As the goals of critical regionalism, critical pedagogy, and cultural literacy align, transrhetorical analysis provides rhetoricians an opportunity to clarify how concepts and terms signify differently in various locations. Transrhetorical strategies permit not only a close rhetorical examination and comparison of ideas and issues in different contexts, but also foster the application of this analysis to communicative acts occurring across and within these multiple contexts. Transrhetorical awareness helps activists and students to better position themselves and their arguments for collaboration with the diverse audiences that comprise their locations, rather than reading them through the lens of white universalism. Issues social justice advocates typically address such as racism, sexism, and classism would be better understood by local audiences if articulated not in terms of hegemonic monoliths, but as transrhetorical phenomena experienced differently by diverse groups sharing complex discursive spaces.

Cherokee rhetorics of resistance, as they occur at sites of cultural literacy activism, add to our understanding of the power and centrality of community, particularly as those communities confront oppressive force, rhetorical suppression, and historical erasure. They also help us to understand how cultural literacy can protect and strengthen community identity and practices. They foreground withdrawal and persistence as rhetorical tactics that enable the subversion of silence and the possibility of community continuance. Oklahoma activists struggling against dominant constructions of the state and the resultant discursive limitations can utilize these strategies to

create rhetorical space for their work. Cultural literacy can be used to connect social justice projects to historical legacies of resistance in Oklahoma that animate activist work occurring within critical regionalist networks today. Cultural literacy that strengthens individual communities can also bind communities together across cultural difference, so that activist efforts on their collective behalf become transrhetorical collaborations.

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TOUCHING THE PEN: KIOWA CULTURE AND RESISTANCE

COLONIAL CONTEXT, CULTURAL RESISTANCE, & THE KIOWA CLEMENTE COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES

Driving to Anadarko from Norman, Oklahoma, is a 52-mile journey slightly south and to the west. For the last eight years I have driven to and from Anadarko once a week as the Instructor of Record for the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities. In addition to being a graduate student at OU, I am an adjunct faculty member in the Indian Studies program at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Oklahoma's publicly funded liberal arts college, which offers the course for three hours of 2000-level Indian Studies credit (INST 2883). From the University of Oklahoma campus, I take OK Highway 9 to I-35, travel on the interstate slightly south and across the Canadian River, and then exit back onto Highway 9 westbound to Highway 62 towards Blanchard. People coming and going from the Chickasaw Nation's Riverwind Casino and Hotel, Love's truck stop, and McDonald's congest these exits and entrances. The land on which the Chickasaw casino is built, now Chickasaw land, was originally home to the Caddo, Wichita, and southwestern plains tribes – primarily the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache, along with the Cheyenne and Arapaho. The Chickasaws, along with the Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole peoples, were transplanted to this region in the 1830's after the Indian Removal Act, which created Indian Territory. Spreading from the Texas panhandle and western Oklahoma to southeastern Colorado and western Kansas, they utilized the immense bison population and range for their horse

herds (Kracht “Kiowa”). Now the landscape is split by I-35 heading south to Dallas and north to Wichita. A renewal in development has recently occurred in the area, led largely by the construction of the Riverwind Casino. Travel stops, fast food chains, banks, small businesses, and parking lots now occupy the mixed grasslands along the intersection of the interstate and state highway.

This geographic intersection can be read in multiple ways. As a transrhetorical site, it showcases the movement of capital and goods among and between Native and non-Native nations, driven by other state and national entities and interests. It would be easy to characterize it as a site of colonization turned global capitalism, except for remarkable representations of Native agency, signified by the Chickasaw’s Riverwind Casino. The casino is part of a comprehensive tribal business development plan. Profits fund cultural and educational programs and offices and provide forward-thinking healthcare and services to Chickasaw citizens. The cultural persistence evidenced by the Chickasaw’s economic presence on the landscape counterinscribes the erasure of Native peoples from dominant Oklahoma historical narratives.

As a rhetorical pattern manifesting in sites of continuing colonial contact, tropes of both victimization and agency arising from competing social constructions of indigenous peoples have become the site of increasing contestation in Native Studies scholarship. As early as Phillip Deloria’s (Dakota) analysis of what he described as the public “simulation,” or stereotype, of indigenous peoples – and simply termed “indian” (with an

intentional lower case “i”), scholars have wrestled with establishing Indian agency in the tumultuous space created by colonialism, its literacies and institutions. The cultural hierarchies colonialism inscribes on the historically indigenous cultural landscape of the Americas – particularly in Oklahoma – obscure a complex network of multiple Native histories, cultures, and languages. Surrounded and suppressed in this colonial context, vibrant, rhetorically active Native communities persist in their cultural ways. The Riverwind Casino, as a site of economic exchange, is a site of the transfer of values and connected communities, a transrhetorical location of blended peoples and practices.

At the same time, Native American Studies scholarship exhibits an increasing participation in growing discursive trends around globalization. The “transit of empire,” as Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) articulates it, impacts cultures and economies of indigenous peoples across the globe; these same patterns emerge theoretically in academic discourse. Byrd associates *transit* with “movement, security, and rational explanation,” arguing the word also implies “fluidity, noise, and instability” (xv). Interstate 35 serves as a major international transit pipeline for people and goods, extending south from Laredo, Texas, all the way north to Deluth, Minnesota. It connects the Mexican border to the Canadian border and occupies the same route as the Trans-Texas Corridor, also known as the NAFTA Superhighway (McNichol). Byrd asserts, “What it means to be in transit, then, is to be in motion, to exist liminally in the ungrievable spaces of suspicion and unintelligibility. To be in transit is to be

made to move” (xv). Colonialism and capitalism, while it is hard to say which comes first, force people to move for survival. The construction of I-35 began in Oklahoma in 1953, prior to the creation of the interstate system, with the 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act, a fact that suggests the state’s critical location in the post-World War II development of the Cold War economy. The Kiowa and other neighboring Plains tribes have remained anchored in the region while the cultural and economic landscape around them changes.

Tranrhetorical analysis investigates these transitions.

Prior to the allotment and settlement periods, the General Land Office of the U.S. established cartographical markers to serve as guides for further establishing one-mile section lines across Oklahoma and Indian Territories – now the grid of country roads with which anyone who has driven in rural Oklahoma is familiar. The “Indian Meridian” split Oklahoma into eastern and western halves and the “Indian Base” divided the territories into northern and southern sections. Today, I-35 runs north and south following essentially the same trajectory through the landscape, roughly dividing the “Southern Plains” tribal lands on the western side of the state from the “Southeastern Woodland” tribal lands on the eastern side. The geographic inscription made by the creation of the Indian Meridian repeats itself in the interstate. More significantly, the meridian and base lines divided Indian and Oklahoma Territories into four convenient quadrants, and provided the cartographic mechanism for the allotment of Indian lands previously protected by treaty and held in communal tenure.

Bonnie Lynn-Sherow, Kansas State University assistant professor of history, examines the environmental and ethnic history of western Oklahoma in *Red Earth: Race and Agriculture in Oklahoma Territory* (2004). She claims the “contemporary landscape” in western Oklahoma “reflects the resource choices made by one group of settlers in 1889” and “simultaneously obscures the historical presence of others” (Lynn-Sherow 2);

the dramatic changes in the territory’s ecological and social landscape cannot be found in sweeping generalizations about development or progress. The transformation of Oklahoma Territory was instead a protracted struggle, as one people’s relationship to the red earth came to dominate the landscape, banishing all others to the far edges of historical memory. (Lynn-Sherow 3)

Lynn-Sherow discusses the survey grid established by the Indian Meridian and Base lines, and claims it “created a new landscape; points and right angles that adhered to the rigid columns and corners of the range and township lines” (27). Development “followed the logic of the survey rather than the topography of the land,” which had long been central to Kiowa cultural identity (Lynn-Sherow 27-28). Old roads and passages were “subsumed” by “private property beneath a new system of straight roads and ninety-degree angles,” and those older trails that remained “became the foundation of railroad lines and the modern highway system” (Lynn-Sherow 28). At the same time new inscriptions on the landscape reinscribed the old, movement across them changed and increased.

To understand this movement of people, goods, and capital, as well as the movement of ideas and issues related to each, analysis must be able to observe the complex and dynamic process of rhetorical exchange and

adaptation. To this end, transrhetorical analysis is a *slow* process, and in this sense it is a countermove against the speed at which rhetorical action, like global transit, occurs. It participates in “slow scholarship,” defined recently by feminist scholars as a practice of “resistance strategies” “to slow down and claim time” and “foreground collaborative, collective, and communal ways forward” (Mountz et al. 2). By shining light on the multiple communities local/global transit engages, transrhetorical analysis allows us to understand meaning-making from a variety of angles. It brings into focus cultures and rhetorics previously unclear. By slowing down inquiry in order to notice and engage different perspectives, rhetorical exchanges between cultures emerge into view. Ideas, locations, and cultures blend into less transparent rhetorical networks, across which they move and change. Ultimately rhetoric *is* about moving ideas from point A to point B, even when B can be multiplied exponentially across variously and distinctly located rhetorical spaces. Individuals and collectives share ideas and arguments arising from their own cultural logics so that others consider it, shape it, and apply it in their own contexts.

All rhetorical positions are valuable in transrhetorical inquiry, and understanding them *is* the rhetorical exigency in persuasive projects and social movements. Transrhetorical analysis invites scholars and students to focus on the rhetorical movement of ideas around them, precisely so they can then move them. In order to do so, we must increasingly acknowledge complex cultural and rhetorical situations and prepare to understand them. Transrhetorical

analysis moves against the inevitable boundary blurring and material erasures produced by the speed and complexity with which rhetorical action occurs. Its intervention generates the conditions within which to observe ideas, discourse, and concepts as rhetorical movement that adapts, resists, and enacts social discourses between and among distinct locations. The more we think in terms of movement of not just people and resources but also the ideas, cultures, and discourses they carry with them, the better we can claim rhetorical agency in its midst.

Transrhetorical strategies promote broader conceptions of participation, enabled through localized inquiry. In inquiring deeply into point A, other points inevitably come into view. No rhetorical location exists without relationship to others. The locations to which I travel in this chapter, both geographically and culturally, position me as both the moved and the mover. With the goal of better theorizing transrhetorical analysis as a concept, my research requires me to travel between, across, and within cultural spaces in order to observe this movement. I also cross physical landscapes, theoretical landscapes, and mythological landscapes. For me, the geographical landscape operates as a storyscape, enabling me to understand relationships between history, culture, and movement in real time. As a rhetorical and cultural studies scholar and writing teacher, I move ideas and issues across these spaces, both consciously and unconsciously, and these spaces shape me even as I contribute to shaping them. Understanding the rhetorical impact of these relationships and the kinds of changes they enact in Oklahoma across the

cultural landscape is the goal of transrhetorical analysis.

Throughout this chapter, I use critical regionalist framing and story to foreground the geographies of history, rhetoric, and resistance within which the Kiowa Clemente Class is situated as a site of cultural literacy activism. I attempt to slow down and inquire into a local landscape with which I am familiar, in order to understand it critically as a cosmopolitan space with competing cultural logics in play. In traveling from Norman to Anadarko, I move between the academy and a Kiowa community language and culture class. I am guided by Native Studies, C/R/L theory, and Kiowa cultural literacy activists in understanding the terrain across (and between) these locations. I trek between the past and the present in order to observe patterns of resistance that have continued across time. I scout rhetorical traces of the Kiowa resistance to allotment via the Jerome Commission talks in the 1890s and the *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* Supreme Court case in the early 1900s. I then use interviews with activists connected in various ways to the Kiowa Clemente Course as temporally located rhetorical sites in order to connect the past to the present transrhetorically. The underlying goal of this chapter, as with the others, is to subvert flat constructions of Oklahoma by traversing the state's cultural and rhetorical contours, and to access spaces of cultural resistance that counter reductive hegemonic narratives that misrepresent places and peoples. In such examples, rather than rhetorically occupying the status of victim, Native cultural literacy activists – as seen in this chapter and Chapter two – assert themselves as rhetorical agents. The Kiowa activists I interview for this

chapter, all of whom participate in the Kiowa Clemente Course that brings me weekly to Anadarko, practice rhetorical agency and resistance in their work for Kiowa cultural literacy inside and outside of the Kiowa community.

INDIGENOUS HUMANITIES AND TRANSRHETORICAL CURRICULUM

Like the Riverwind Casino intersection in some ways, the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities, across nearly 15 years since the class began, intersects distinct cultures, interests, and institutions. It began in conjunction with the Clemente Course in the Humanities Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Developed by Earl Shorris in conjunction with Bard College, the Clemente Course model rests on beliefs Shorris articulated in his 1997 book *Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities*, that exposure to the humanities enstills “the poor and the unschooled” with the power to reflect and think critically rather than react to forces that oppress them (Vitello). According to *clementecourse.org*, “the aim of the course [model] is to bring the clarity and beauty of the humanities to people who have been deprived of these riches through economic, social, or political forces” (*The Clemente*). Shorris piloted the first course in the Roberto Clemente Family Guidance Center in Manhattan’s East Village in 1995. In its early iterations, the curriculum consisted of canonical readings from multiple Western humanities disciplines such as logic, history, literature, art, and philosophy. Shorris’ *New York Times* obituary mentions, “[the Clemente Course model] earned [him] the National Humanities Medal, presented to him in 2000 by President Bill Clinton” (Vitello). Shorris passed away in May 2012 at the age

of 75, with Clemente Courses being offered on five continents in locations as variant as the Yucatan and Darfur. Anadarko, Oklahoma, is one of these locations. In 2014, the Clemente Course in the Humanities programs won a National Humanities Medal from the National Endowments for the Humanities.

The Kiowa Clemente Course development began in 1998 under Dr. Howard Meredith⁴⁰ (Cherokee), Professor of Indian Studies at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha. A small group of Kiowa students, led by Jay Goombi and including Jackie Yellowhair, along with Kiowa elders Alecia Keahbone Gonzales, Bob Cannon, Richie Tartsah, and J.T. Goombi, developed the curriculum by adding Kiowa cultural content, community interests, and pedagogical practices to the Clemente Course model. Shorris includes a description of their process in the last chapter of *Riches for the Poor*, entitled “Other Countries, Other Cultures” (248 – 249). Jay Goombi, now a Kiowa writer and activist, consulted tribal elders for input into the course format and content. Multiple conversations between U.S.A.O. students and these elders resulted in a unique community-driven curriculum, one that incorporates transrhetorical inquiry while it also resists the original Clemente Course model.

Instead of focusing solely on disseminating the western humanities canon for the purposes of helping community members transcend poverty and oppression, the Kiowa Clemente Course took a comparative humanities approach by studying western texts side-by-side with Kiowa texts – law and status, oral tradition, song, and history. Instead of turning to western texts for

“clarity and beauty” as the original Clemente Course curriculum models, the Kiowa elders wanted these texts to be studied for other reasons. As Jay Goombi, also one of the activists interviewed for this chapter, explained to me early on in my involvement with the course, the elders saw the inclusion of western texts as a means to understand “white ways” through texts that revealed white perspectives. They wanted to understand white cultural logics, not to better adopt them, but to better subvert them when they were at odds with Kiowa values and practices. Likewise, the elders wanted each class to include a beginning and closing prayer, a shared meal, and a Kiowa language lesson. Each of these original components of the class privileges Kiowa cultural practices over western educational practice, and the class still includes them. The course was originally entitled “YEE P’AY GYAH MAW TAME AIM” which means in Kiowa “two ways of knowing.”

The Kiowa Clemente Course project received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities via the Oklahoma Humanities Council, and the first Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities was held in fall 2000. In the midst of drastic budget cuts, U.S.A.O. continues to offer the course for free college credit to students not already enrolled at the university⁴¹. In the course catalog, the course is a 2000-level Indian Studies course. Team-taught by U.S.A.O. Liberal Arts faculty and Kiowa elders, the early course syllabi paired western and Kiowa texts around themes such as journeying, heroism, family, property, individual rights, nationalism, patriotism, and faith, among others. Faculty presented on assigned readings from the Western canon, such as

sections of Homer's *Odyssey* and Plato's *Republic*. Alecia Keahbone Gonzales⁴² (Kiowa/Apache), using her own beginning Kiowa language textbook *THAUM KHOIYE TDOEN GYAH* (U.S.A.O. Press, 2001), taught the language along with certain traditional stories and songs that she includes in her book as both cultural content and pedagogical tools. Kiowas have always learned language through stories and songs. Atwater Onco led discussions on the Kiowa warrior societies, war songs, and military history. Though neither Atwater nor Alecia are with the course any longer, all of these aspects of the course curriculum continue today – *except for the western canon*.

Like other Clemente Courses, the Kiowa course runs for a full academic year, which provides the Kiowa elders the time to incorporate the yearly cycle of traditional stories. This cycle begins with the story of “Purity and the Son of the Sun,” which Alecia includes as the first story in her book. It tells the story of an AH DAY MAHTAUN, or special girl, who was lured away from her camp by a heavenly being. Together they bore a son, but she longed to return home to the Kiowa. She invents a way to descend from heaven and attempts to sneak away with the boy while her husband is away hunting. This story tells the origin of ZIE DAY TAHLEE, or split boy, a Kiowa spiritual hero and protector. This story, deeply sacred and powerful in Kiowa culture, has also been silenced in the community. While this silence has protected the story, it also contributes to its gradual loss. Alecia, in order to include the story in her book, sought permission from male elders. In including the story, she resisted the cultural taboo and faced criticism in order for the knowledge the story provides to

persist. Even today, many of our Kiowa students and participants hear the story for the first time in our class. In this way, the class's resistance to suppression, enacted through building critical cultural literacy in the community, works beyond theory in the lives of Kiowas.

KIOWA CULTURAL LITERACY ACTIVISTS

My methodology for this chapter applies in a specific location of inquiry the methodology I have used for this project more broadly. Essentially I use archival texts produced at sites of historic Kiowa cultural activism, both of which I characterize as suppressed, to transrhetorically contextualize the cultural literacy activism I observe in the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities. Cultural activism, in my definition as discussed in Chapter 2, includes any work intended to promote, strengthen, advance, or share cultural knowledge and ways, which makes it also a type of literacy activism. Kiowa cultural literacy activism continues transrhetorically across time, even as colonialism reshapes the Kiowa landscape. In addition to describing the course curriculum and using archival texts to characterize the cultural literacy activism occurring in the class, I also utilize interviews from several course participants whom I identify as activists, or more specifically cultural literacy activists who are Kiowa.

I use these interviews as case studies to understand Kiowa cultural literacy activism from a Kiowa perspective and to identify rhetorical strategies and patterns these historic and contemporary activists use to subvert cultural and rhetorical suppression. I characterize these texts and sites as suppressed

primarily in response to their lack of inclusion in dominant narratives of state history, but also because of strategies of suppression that arise from the texts and sites themselves. For this chapter, I have interviewed three men and two women, ages 29 – 82, all of whom participate in the class. Their interviews reveal how these individuals practice Kiowa cultural literacy activism in other areas of their lives outside of class as well.

Each of the cultural literacy activists I interviewed offer insight into activist rhetorics in the Kiowa community of Anadarko. The narratives they share of their own experiences working for the good of Kiowas in their tribal communities, and for the benefit of Kiowa culture more broadly, contribute valuable data toward theorizing Kiowa rhetorical agency and strategies, and speak to other cultural literacy activist projects in the region and beyond.

Joseph Titus Goombi, known as J.T., comes weekly to the class and serves as a sort of emcee, pastor, and political leader. A 76-year-old tribal elder, J.T. has had a long political career in the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, formerly serving as Chairman of the Kiowa Business Committee, the Kiowa government's highest elected office. He also served as Vice-President of the National Congress of American Indians and on President Bill Clinton's transition team. In his retirement, he writes near weekly editorial columns in the *Anadarko Daily News*, responding to current events and tribal conflicts in the Kiowa community, and hosts an intermittent radio program available in podcasts. The Kiowa Clemente Class is frequently a venue for his political oratory, especially in the last several years of turmoil in the tribal government. His

basic message to his Kiowa audience is to stay informed, get involved, and take action in tribal affairs.

Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune, the language and cultural teacher for the course, is J.T.'s sister in the Kiowa familial structure; in the western familial structure, they are cousins. She is the daughter of Charley White Horse (TSAIN TH'IYE DAY) and granddaughter of Chief Dohausan II (TDOE HAW SAHN, or Little Bluff). Dorothy became involved in the course during the 2011 spring semester and holds the position of "Grandmother" or "Auntie" to the students in the course. She was born in 1922, when her father Whitehorse was in his sixties. He was a young man at the time of allotment, and inherited his name from an uncle who was a warrior and camp leader. Likewise, Dorothy has inherited a long cultural memory and a fierce commitment to Kiowa culture from her dad. She actively participates in the Kiowa War Mothers Society and the Kiowa Black Leggings. At 82 years old, she knows all the Kiowa families, their lineages and their histories, and she works regularly with the Oklahoma Historical Society to translate documents and songs, name and explain the provenance of cultural objects, and record oral history. In class, she often shares with student stories of their relatives, and helps them identify people in family photographs. Her cultural knowledge provides much of the course content and discussion. Dorothy is also eminently entertaining, quick-witted, and energetic. In concert with J.T., their continual good humor creates levity in the class atmosphere, marked by Kiowa ways and words, which helps students feel comfortable, engaged, and eager to return each week.

Jay Goombi is 53 years old, and J.T. Goombi's eldest son. As an Indian Studies major at U.S.A.O., Jay helped start the Kiowa Clemente Course under the direction of Dr. Howard Meredith. Jay still remains involved in the class, and is a mentor to me. In my first several years of working with the Kiowa class, which was also my first opportunity to teach a Native Studies course, Jay helped me understand the goals of the course and my position as co-teacher with Ms. Gonzales. Jay considers the course his most significant activist achievement to date, and he expresses pride in pointing out the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities is the longest running community cultural class in the area. Of all of the Kiowas I interviewed, Jay most clearly identifies as an activist and views his work as activism. For him, "disseminating information as we go along" in the Kiowa community, about Kiowa language, culture, and history, is a Kiowa cultural act that continues the historic resistance the Kiowa displayed in confrontations with the U.S. military and in opposition to federal policy (Jay Goombi 7). Jay sees the class at the center of a series of concentric circles, like a stone that was dropped in a pond: "We're altering the situation. We won't see the end of the ripples ever" (10). While the changes the course enacts through promoting Kiowa cultural literacy primarily occur in Anadarko and the surrounding Kiowa communities, Jay reminds me often of the course's impact on the Clemente program more broadly and in tribal humanities courses in indigenous communities across Oklahoma, the U.S., and in Mexico⁴³.

Dane Poolaw teaches Kiowa language courses at the University of

Oklahoma. He comes to the Kiowa Clemente Course as often as he can. He transcribes class dialogue on his projected computer screen, collecting Kiowa words and phrases as they arise aurally from conversation for the class to see as text. He has worked tirelessly to learn the Kiowa written language and shares his abilities with many Kiowa language learners. Dane, 29 years old, began learning the Kiowa language as a child in his family, where he was also exposed to the Delaware and Choctaw languages. He recalls his parents showing him Kiowa words on flashcards when he was around seven or eight years old (Poolaw 3). Both of his parents were enrolled at that time in Kiowa language courses at OU. He also remembers attending community language classes from time to time as a child, but he first formally studied Kiowa under Alecia Keahbone Gonzales⁴⁴, who taught Kiowa language classes at Anadarko High School (Poolaw 3). Dane also works closely with Cricket Connywerdy⁴⁵ to maintain a community language class for Kiowas living in Norman. In addition to organizing the Norman community language class with Dane, Cricket works closely with Kiowa children whose families live in Norman. Together with other Kiowa parents, she puts together an informal after-school program to encourage Kiowa children to use the language and practice culture in everyday life. In 2014, her Kiowa boys group won their age category at the Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair held at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History in Norman⁴⁶.

As both the Instructor (and, frankly, student) and a participant researcher in the Kiowa Humanities Course, I am interested in observing the

participants in the class as cultural literacy activists and rhetorical agents committed to learning and teaching Kiowa language and culture inside and outside the classroom, as well as inside and outside of Kiowa spaces. In this way, they become transrhetorical agents, shaping, and adapting culture and concepts in multiple sites. In so doing, they not only become critical cultural literacy sponsors themselves, they also resist cultural suppression. In analyzing their interviews, I attempt first to discern their rhetorical strategies, which can be a challenge across cultural difference. Then, I work to understand them as *Kiowa rhetorical strategies*, extended and adapted from historical sites of Kiowa resistance and activist rhetorics. These strategies work transrhetorically across locations. First, they operate across time. They bridge current Kiowa cultural activist practices with historic practices, across the several generations these activists represent. This positions present-day activists as part of a rhetorical continuance of cultural resistance. This persistent pattern rhetorically counters suppressive tropes of defeat and victimhood often applied to Native peoples in mainstream historical accounts of military and political subjugation, particular southern plains tribes. Transrhetorical intersections with historically distanced activist sites position class participants as rhetorical agents who operate inside a living culture – rather than a silenced, erased, disappeared, or dead one. The activists I interview inherit the rhetorical legacy produced by Kiowas resisting allotment over a century before, and they perpetuate that legacy. Kiowa culture continues to be impacted by colonial settlement, and Kiowa cultural resistance

continues to defy it.

Kiowa rhetorical strategies operate transrhetorically insofar as they move cultural literacy from inside the classroom space to the Kiowa community more broadly, and then beyond to non-Kiowa spaces. Class participants share knowledge gained in class discussions and discoveries with relatives, friends, and co-workers, just as they do in encounters with settler colonialist legacies as they arise in class discussion and in their daily lives. Their strategies exemplify cultural and rhetorical adaptations that subvert suppressive rhetorical tactics. Kiowa rhetorical strategies shape our broader understanding of activist rhetorics, as they extend inclusivity and social justice for marginalized voices. Kiowa rhetorical strategies used in cultural activist projects in the Kiowa community in Oklahoma transrhetorically educate and empower cultural activists in other communities and regions.

“UNASSIGNED LANDS” AND (UN)SETTLING OKLAHOMA’S CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Once past the Riverwind Casino on my weekly journey to Anadarko each Thursday of the academic year, I travel due west on Oklahoma Highway 9 to the Oklahoma Highway 62 exit toward Blanchard and Chickasha, which moves me further south. Across these miles, the Oklahoma landscape changes rapidly to the trained eye, in nuances of texture, color, and flora. Hills roll in all directions as the road curves, winding gently through them. The tall prairie grasses of the northern and eastern portions of the state become the short prairie grasses of the southern and western portions, creating a mixed swath of

varieties. The eastern Oklahoma woodlands slowly morph into trace patches of black jack and post oaks that become more sparse the further west I travel past Chickasha. Prairie cedars become more prevalent instead. Tall, expansive cottonwood trees stand along the creeks and streams of the Canadian and Washita Rivers as they run through the fertile farm land along the highway. Drilling and fracking rigs go up and come down, in keeping with the economy of the energy industry and the extraction of resources from this landscape.

Blanchard and Chickasha, the first two towns I pass through on the way, are both settlement towns built prior to Oklahoma statehood as railroad companies made their way through the Indian and Oklahoma Territories. Blanchard, established in 1906, exhibits the characteristics of a small town recently renewed by the boom in Oklahoma's oil and gas industry. Several new businesses occupy the buildings around Main Street through downtown and the Highway 62 intersection. Chickasha was founded in 1892, the same year the Jerome Commission came to obtain the agreement to allot Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache lands, contemporaneous with the "arrival of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific railway" (Jeffries). The railroad industry had a clear economic interest and role in the opening and development of these lands and all of Indian Territory for the transport of goods and people – and capital. 1892 marked only three years after the "Unassigned Lands" were opened in the 1889 land run, and five years since the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887. Remaining indicators of these historic, contested, and chaotic settlement activities by now are so naturalized on this landscape that they go unnoticed by

anyone without a keen sense of local history or cultural memory.

Settlement began in the Anadarko area slowly, beginning with the 1862 Homestead Act that allowed a settler to claim 160 acres of public land and receive title to it after five years of living on it and improving it. According to the 1887 “Map of the Oklahoma Country in the Indian Territory,” created in the same year as the Dawes Act, the so-called Unassigned Lands encompassed a two-million acre tract of land at the heart of what is now Oklahoma state, stretching north from the Canadian River and the Chickasaw land boundary, to the southern boundary of the Cherokee Outlet in the top portion of the state. The eastern boundary was the border between the Indian and Oklahoma Territories, running through Iowa, Potawatomi, and Kickapoo tribal lands, and the western boundary cut through Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Wichita tribal lands (“Map”). Bob Blackburn, executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, claims “the first popular usage [...] of ‘Unassigned Lands’ started in 1879 when mixed-blood Cherokee Elias C. Boudinot, son of the famous editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, published an article in the *Chicago Times* describing lands in the central part of the Indian Territory that could, and in his opinion, should be settled by white people.” Blackburn points out the boundaries of the Unassigned Lands were federally created in a “series of treaties with Indian tribes.” These treaties cross several generations of history and multiple cultural contexts to arrive at the goal of non-Native settlement and development.

The border on the north was the Cherokee Outlet, created in the Treaty

of New Echota in 1836 and opened in the territories' fourth and largest land run in 1893 (Turner). To the south of the "Unassigned Lands" was the Chickasaw Nation, established in 1837. To the west was the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation, established in 1867. To the east were the reservations of the Potawatomi (1867), Shawnee (1867), Sac and Fox (1867), Pawnee (1881), and Iowa (1883). Altogether, the Unassigned Lands covered 1,887,796.47 acres, or approximately 2,950 square miles ("Map"). Throughout the 1890's, which began with the 1889 land run of the "Unassigned Lands," the ongoing federal legislative conversion of tribal lands to public lands invited an increasing population of settlers to what is now the western region of Oklahoma state. Kiowa tribal lands, which with the 1867 Medicine Lodge Treaty became also Comanche and Apache tribal lands, were the last to be opened as surplus lands in 1901 and 1906 auctions (Kracht "Kiowa-Comanche-Apache"). The 1901 land auction took place a year before Blanchard, OK, was founded, and the 1906 auction only one year prior to statehood. The delay was almost entirely due to the Kiowa's persistent resistance to settlement and allotment, particularly Lone Wolf's case – *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*.

TRANS-INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGY, ALLOCENTRIC PERCEPTION, AND RHETORICAL LISTENING

From Chickasha, the road to Anadarko straightens out considerably and proceeds due west through Verden to Anadarko. Of the entire drive, the stretch between Chickasha and Anadarko appeals to me most. Just west of Chickasha, the landscape opens up to farm and ranch land, some of which is

leased from Kiowa landowners who still hold title to their familial allotments. The green of winter wheat and soybeans against the deep red contours of the clay create a vibrant contrast to the rolling hills of the uncultivated short grasslands approaching Chickasha. The Verden bluffs, which loom gently above the east end of the town, where Grady County and Caddo County meet, visually signify the eastern geographic entrance into the Kiowa cultural landscape. These are the colors and shapes present in Kiowa stories, history, and culture, at the farthest northern contours of the Wichita Mountains. Mount Scott, the highest peak in the Wichitas, sits approximately 40 miles southwest of Anadarko, close to Ft. Sill. This landscape inhabits Kiowa cultural rhetoric, oral traditions, stories, and histories, just as these texts inhabit the landscape. I generally begin my journey there in the late afternoon, driving southwest and west into the setting sun the entire way. In the winter months, I arrive near dusk. The textures, shapes, and shadows of the land emerge in the soft, warm, low-lying light.

The Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities has been held in several different locations in Anadarko over the last several years, most recently at the Bureau of Indian Affairs Adult Education Office on Central Avenue. As an outsider, while I am seeking to understand the transrhetorical relationships within the course and its cultural context, I am only newly literate and just beginning to gain sight of them. For me, the course provides an opportunity for deep, sustained inquiry into an indigenous culture and community that is not my own. Kristie Fleckenstein labels such inquiry as “allocentric perception,”

insofar as it creates a “profound interest,” “complete openness and receptivity,” and “direct encounter” with the object of study (27). In many instances, the visual and rhetorical habits I bring to the landscape and the class prove insufficient to understanding Kiowa cultural perspectives and practices. In order to learn new habits, I practice listening and observing classroom discussions closely rather than asserting myself and directing them. The class is in this regard student-centered, but more than this, it is elder-centered. My involvement with the course has allowed me access to the Kiowa community, precisely because the goal of the class from its inception has always been to serve the Kiowa community. Because I am not Kiowa, the class teaches me more about Kiowa culture than I could hope to teach it.

My role as the Instructor is to facilitate cultural dialogue that encourages cultural literacy. Over the course of eight years, driving to Anadarko once a week during the academic year to spend three hours of class time every Thursday evening immersed in Kiowa culture and space, I have learned how to watch and listen in ways particularly valuable in Kiowa contexts. These skills, which the class has helped me to develop, operate at the heart of the research methodology I employ in this project, even beyond this chapter. The broader goal of my research is to recover suppressed Oklahoma rhetorics of resistance and cultural activism, via cultural literacy activists, and to characterize them as counter-rhetorics that subvert both suppressive rhetorics and suppressive rhetorical tactics. Because I investigate suppressed rhetorics in highly distinct cultural contexts marked by clear differences from

my own – particularly in the university, I must employ rhetorical listening. This skill proves valuable in Kiowa contexts, where values and beliefs reside in language and rhetorical practice, spatial behaviors, and cultural codes.

For Ratcliffe, rhetorical listening is action that enables “cross-cultural conduct,” an activity required for dialogue and exchange around critical social justice issues (1). Though I am of Native descent, I am not Kiowa. As a researcher using ethnographic methodologies to unsettle settler colonialist histories and recover suppressed cultural rhetorics of resistance, I have an ethical obligation to maintain “a stance of openness [...] in relation to any person, text, or culture,” particularly as someone identified as white in Kiowa contexts (Ratcliffe 2-3). I have been critically aware, from the beginning of my work with the class, that I cross multiple boundaries in order to participate. Geographically, culturally, and personally, I was a stranger to Kiowa Country when I began. The Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities, to the extent that I have been able to achieve such openness and practice such rhetorical listening, informs not only my research, but also my identity as a Native scholar and my understanding of ethnographic methodologies and scholarship in Native contexts. Over the past nine years, I have learned a lot by listening.

As an Indian Studies instructor for an accredited college-level Kiowa humanities course and the participant researcher in a Native community, I must acknowledge my pedagogical obligation to disrupt discursive models (both in the course and in my research) that reinscribe settler colonialism in the Kiowa community. Unfortunately, this is also to admit that I cannot

completely recognize my own biases at work in my recovery and interpretation of Kiowa texts and rhetorics. In his introduction to *Transindigenous:*

Methodologies for Global Native Literary Study, Chadwick Allen develops

“methodologies for the productive interpretation of a continually expanding body of contemporary literatures that place Indigenous histories and politics, cultures and worldviews, and multiple realities at their vital center” (xvi).

Allen sees value in adding to the archive of Native literature and, for him, the terms *recovery* and *interpretation* operate both as separate concepts and as a “yoked set” (xvii). As he explains,

All acts of literary recovery – the recognition, selection, and classification of texts as appropriate for the archive so that they can be presented for formal analysis – involve multiple (prior and simultaneous) acts of interpretation. Similarly, all acts of literary interpretation – explanation through extratextual resources, elucidation through textual analysis, assessment of significance through context or theory, evaluation through aesthetic systems, cultural valence, or political efficacy – involve (prior and simultaneous) recoveries (recognitions, selections, classifications) and, indeed, recoverings (when familiar texts are seen anew). (Allen xvii)

A researcher enacting the methodologies Allen outlines here also makes rhetorical choices, beginning with the very recognition of a text *as a text*. For instance, when I choose to read the Kiowa landscape as a text, I am making a rhetorical choice that shapes my project and reflects the emergent Kiowa cultural literacy I have gained in the course, particularly as a non-Kiowa. Allen argues these choices a researcher makes in the course of studying Native texts indicate not only that researcher’s position but also his or her commitment to the Native community in which the text resides. While this has long been a tenet of Native Studies research methodologies via nationalist theory and a

growing transnational commitment to decolonization across disciplines and tribal contexts, the critical awareness it requires of researchers in indigenous communities continues to be discussed, newly applied, and better understood in Native Studies theory.

Though I do have earlier memories and experiences in Anadarko, my personal connection to this landscape is primarily limited to the experiences I have had teaching the Kiowa Clemente Course since fall 2007. When I was a child and teenager, my family made a few memorable trips to Anadarko. We visited Indian City, USA, an interactive cultural museum of the Southwestern Plains Tribes, and attended the annual American Indian Exposition, an event that began as the All-Indian Fair in 1924. I remember coming here a few times to ride horses at a stable on the road to Indian City. My Great Aunt Jesse Marie Vann worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Anadarko, and a few of the older people in the Anadarko community still remember her and tell me stories about her. Even though I am Cherokee, an entirely distinct culture located in a vastly different area of the state, Anadarko played and continues to play a personal and cultural role in shaping my sense of Indian Country.

This sets me apart from the students who attend the Kiowa Humanities class. Many of them nearing or past retirement age grew up in and around Anadarko in the smaller surrounding Kiowa communities such as Carnegie, Ft. Cobb, Mountain View, and Hobart – and a good number of them have lived their lives here. When they identify as Kiowa, their ties to this geography are embodied and implicit in ways I am only beginning to understand, even after 9

years of driving back and forth for class. Even those students in the class who moved away for jobs, or were born far outside the area to parents who moved away, understand their connection to this landscape through cultural identity, family history, and oral tradition. This feeling of connection is often the reason these students have returned, even after long parts of their lives lived elsewhere. It also motivates their attendance in class.

The general sense of place for which they return, however, falls short of the deep cultural literacy regarding the landscape known by older generations of Kiowas. In his 2008 text *Kiowa Ethnogeography*, Dr. William Meadows⁴⁷, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Missouri State University, claims most maps of the Kiowa landbase “show only a few of the best-known geographic locales of importance to the Kiowa, such as Medicine Lodge River, Rainy Mountain, and Saddle Mountain” (1). As he observes, “these sites are unknown to most people outside southwestern Oklahoma, and even when local non-Indians are aware of the sites they often do not know the Kiowa’s relationship to them” (Meadows 1). With the elders’ help and guidance, Meadows compiled a comprehensive collection of significant sites and place names in the Kiowa cultural landscape as well as details about what makes these sites and places significant.

For Meadows, Native cultural landscapes materialize from the native tendency “to view cultural resources as being bound together in broad categories based on functional interdependency and proximity” (64). In other words, land forms a cultural topography of sites central to native identification,

beliefs, practices, and history. Networked sites functioning in this cultural topography operate for Meadows as topoi around which he structures his text. Meadows classifies these sites into five categories: “holy landscapes, storyscapes, regional landscapes, ecoscapes, and landmarks” (64). Place thus becomes something far more than a physical location “where things happen;” place becomes instead an agent “that makes things happen” (Meadows 21). Certainly for the Kiowa prior to the Settlement period, and still for Kiowa living in the area today, though less so, the landscape through which I drive on my way to Anadarko, Oklahoma, is far more dimensional materially, culturally, and rhetorically than it appears to me.

Regarding Fleckenstein’s concept of “visual habits of place,” my visual interpretation of the Kiowa landscape is not informed by a lifetime of continual personal and cultural experience. Ironically, this positionality is also true to a lesser degree for many of the Kiowa students in the Kiowa Humanities Class. As Meadows concludes, “this body of knowledge” regarding the Kiowa cultural landscape “is quickly disappearing in the Kiowa community,” a problem he hopes his years of work with Kiowa elders helps to remedy (1). The exigency his book addresses, which can be read as a type of literacy crisis, resonates in many ways with the goals of the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities. His study of Kiowa cultural sites can be read as cultural literacy work, insofar as the Kiowa culture depends on the Kiowa knowing their cultural landscape, where their history and families and stories converge⁴⁸.

THE JEROME COMMISSION, KIOWA RHETORIC, AND CULTURAL RESISTANCE

The Kiowa were the last of all tribal peoples living in Oklahoma to officially resign themselves to allotment, and the only tribe that never reached an uncontested voluntary agreement with the United States government. Their resistance persists even to this day, as Kiowa culture, even over 100 years after allotment, remains a high priority for many Kiowas. “Culture,” according to Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune, “is what makes us Kiowa. We have to keep it going as best we can” (DeLaune 4). For her, without Kiowa culture, there can be no Kiowas. Cultural literacy activism, for Dorothy, counters cultural erasure and loss, both literally and rhetorically. The *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* case serves as a site of inquiry where Lone Wolf, the namesake of the last Kiowa war chief, acted as a rhetorical agent in a case against Secretary of the Interior Ethan Allen Hitchcock. Lone Wolf’s primary rhetorical motivation, according to patterns in scholarship and across Kiowa history, rested on the Kiowa cultural practice of resistance. According to Dr. Blue Clark in *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock: Treaty Rights and Indian Law at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (U of Nebraska 1994), Lone Wolf’s case, with the support of several tribal leaders, disputed the validity of Kiowa signatures collected in favor of allotment by the Jerome Commission during council talks held with the Kiowas from September 28 through October 11, 1892. The contest over the allotment agreement and collected signatures developed and eventually erupted during this series of meetings, chaired by David H. Jerome⁴⁹, between the Kiowa tribe and the Jerome Commission. From the beginning, the Kiowa headsmen – most of whom only spoke Kiowa – clearly state the Kiowas’ anti-allotment position holding

they would not sell Kiowa land, which for them was a cultural landscape. This was the position Lone Wolf maintained through the end of his court battle, which concluded in 1903, that the Kiowas never had and never would agree to allotment. Lone Wolf originally spoke to this end during the September 26th council meeting, the first day of the talks. Blue Clark notes [Lone Wolf] explained

that the tribes were striving to change their old way of life, and they had made “rapid progress.” He requested that the Commission not “push” the Indians, though. “Should [the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches] be forced to take allotments it means sudden downfall for the three tribes.” Because of that fact, all the tribes had decided “not to sell the country,” and Lone Wolf repeated the phrasing with each tribal name for emphasis, underscoring his statement that they did not want to sell. Noting that the allotment policy would “be disastrous,” he again asked that the government not “force” the Indians into anything they did not readily consent to do. (41 – 42)

Here, Lone Wolf clearly points out the cultural impact of “rapid progress” on the Kiowa people, particularly because progress required the Kiowa to adapt to new values and practices - rapidly. In this passage, his unwillingness to agree to allotment comes entirely from his concern that cultural change meant subjugation and erasure. Throughout the council, according to Clark’s account, prominent Kiowa men such as I SAYN OIYE DAY (A Lot of Smoke) and AHDL TOHN AYDL (Big Head) spoke against the proposed agreement to allot, citing the resultant poverty of other tribes who had allotted previously, and the aridity of the land making it unfit for farming and ranching among their reasons (Clark 42 – 43). Their counterarguments displayed a thorough familiarity with the arguments of the commissioners. Throughout the council transcriptions, however, the Commissioners ignore the arguments, as well as

the reasonable compromises the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache leaders suggest, and push for an allotment agreement by hastily collecting signatures in the Kiowa community, the validity of which soon fell under question.

The transrhetorical scene created by the Jerome Commission councils is a culturally complex one. Because the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache had lived and migrated together for several generations, the headmen likely understood each other's languages well⁵⁰. However, the Kiowa language would have also been translated into English by Army interpreter Joshua Givens⁵¹. While Givens was Kiowa, and clearly a transrhetorical agent, he was also under the employ of the U.S. military and tasked with collecting signatures outside of council meetings. The transcriptions, as potentially compromised as they are, provide a chance to consider the transrhetorical movement of arguments and the cultural perspectives they advance as concerns allotment, progress, and development⁵².

Stumbling Bear, SATE AIM KIAH, the only Kiowa present at the Jerome Commission Council talks who was present at Medicine Lodge treaty talk in 1867, speaks first on behalf of the Kiowas. This reflects the place of respect he held among the Kiowa. He articulates in his opening remarks, "We have got to live under this [Medicine Lodge] treaty for another five years," and it "would be better if the Great Father at Washington would send a commission down here four years from now" (U.S. Senate 13). For Stumbling Bear, the Medicine Lodge treaty is inviolable, and he clearly sees the government's commission and allotment as a violation of their agreement. In his first remarks to the council,

he states:

They made us touch the pen, but before doing that we told the Great Father above that we were telling the truth; that we were to live on this reservation for thirty years, and now before thirty years expire the Great Father sends a commission to talk to the people; that I cannot understand. (U.S. Senate 14)

He ends these opening comments to the Commissioners, as the first headman to represent the Kiowa and the only man present who was also present at Medicine Lodge, by saying “We are not desirous of selling our country now, but maybe in four years” (U.S. Senate 14). By these first words, he makes the Kiowa position clear. As the council meetings continue across days and weeks, it becomes clear the Kiowas remain the most resistant to the agreement, as they maintain Stumbling Bear’s position.

Big Tree (AH DAW TDAY), who speaks immediately after Stumbling Bear, uses story to express this position to the Commissioners, but his opening points establish his rhetorical agency in the council talks and bear analysis. He comments first on the Commissioners’ talks made the day before, and expresses explicitly he understands the government’s offer. This insistence on having understood the terms of the agreement becomes increasingly critical throughout the talks, as the Commissioners continually attribute the Kiowa’s resistance to a lack of understanding the federal government’s offer⁵³. This perceived “lack of understanding” becomes a rhetorical means of eliding and silencing the Kiowa’s arguments throughout the council talks. Indeed the agreement offered to the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache, was far superior to offers made to neighboring tribes such as the Cheyenne and Arapaho. The

Kiowas persisted and maintained, however, the Medicine Lodge Treaty had not yet expired and they were not interested in selling their lands.

As Big Tree points out, the Kiowa were not told in advance the commission was coming, although doubtless they were aware of the commission's talks with neighboring tribes. Once the commission arrived and located the council talks at Ft. Sill, on military property, the rhetorical context immediately becomes coercive and unequal. The Kiowas "were told" to attend the talks, as Big Tree reveals, meaning they were not invited or given the choice not to participate ("U.S. Senate 14). Big Tree's opening comments indicate his rhetorical awareness and rhetorical agency, but he uses story to continue his argument.

If I was in your place, I would have good feelings for these Indians. Whenever these Indians travel they generally look for good places to cross; they do not drive over the hills and banks, but they look for good places, good crossings. They do not care to jump across a big gap. These Indians that are sitting before you have only one horse; it is very large and very fat; it is a working horse; [...] when we want to haul wood, we use him; when we have to move something that is heavy, we have to use him; and now you come and take this horse away from us; it is very hard for us to give this horse up. We hope that you will not force us to give him up. (U.S. Senate 14)

Horses, or rather the number of horses a headman owns, reflect wealth and status in Kiowa culture at this time. Big Tree was a war chief who led previous attacks against Ft. Sill in 1870, in the early years of the fort's construction. He understands horses as power in the context of his own culture, as well as in the context of the Kiowa's resistance to the U.S. military. However, in the context of the council talks, he understands them also as property: "If I were to come to your house and your place and attempt to buy something you prize very highly,

you would probably laugh at me and tell me you were not anxious to sell it. So I tell you, I am not anxious to sell this useful horse” (U.S. Senate 14). For Big Tree, the land belongs to the Kiowa, and they have the power to sell or not to sell. While they know they must “cross” to continue traveling, the Commissioners’ offer is not the “good crossing” they desire.

Signature numbers announced by Commissioner Jerome continue to increase as the days pass. Clark observes on October 7, a little over a week after the council meetings began, “Jerome reported that he had obtained 193 out of 450 required signatures” (45). On October 11th, only four days later, Jerome announced a total of 342 signatures⁵⁴ (Clark 45). Given the opposition to the proposed allotment agreement displayed in council meetings, these numbers were immediately contested by the Kiowas in accusations against the commission of unfair influence, deceit, and undue pressure to sign in favor of the agreement (Clark 45). The controversy centered on Kiowa interpreter, Joshua Givens, employed by the U.S. Army. The Kiowas “discovered that Givens sat at the entrance of troop quarters lying, pressuring, and threatening Indian soldiers into signing the petition ‘until he gained a mark;’ and when a soldier refused to sign, Givens made his mark for him anyway” (Clark 46). Givens, the son of the well-respected Kiowa warrior SATE AHN GYAH (Sitting Bear – also known as Satank), became such an object of scorn “a guard had to be posted to protect him” (Clark 46). The cultural disruption and chaos resulting from the allotment process can be seen in this situation, as Givens’ actions – even as the son of the highly regarded and long-resistant Kiowa warrior– seem decidedly

counter to the position of the Kiowa leaders⁵⁵.

In response, the Kiowa headmen use rhetorical strategy to shift the dynamics of the meetings and protect other Kiowa from being tricked into signing falsified documents. Up until this point, the council meetings had been held at Ft. Sill near present-day Lawton, OK, over 40 miles from the Anadarko Indian agency. As a result, representation from the multiple Kiowa camps and communities was not equal. Additionally, the rhetorical space created for the talks by holding them on the Ft. Sill military base, only strengthened the negotiating power of the commission. Kiowas had previously been detained in the stockades at Ft. Sill, even though the land the base occupies originally belonged to them. In and around Anadarko, the Kiowa were well-established, and moving the council meetings there would allow many more to attend and participate in decision making. Additionally, moving the meetings outside of the military context and into a community context gave Kiowas more rhetorical power in the negotiations. Beginning on October 6, the headmen present at the Ft. Sill talks began insisting that other Kiowas, who had not been attending council talks, be included in the discussion. They withheld their agreement and further attendance of the talks until the situation was remedied. The commissioners reconvened the council meetings in Anadarko as a result. In the meantime, Kiowa opposition to the Jerome Commission increased as the reported signatures increased.

Clark observes “the proceedings in Anadarko rapidly grew confused, turned to turmoil, and finally degenerated into outright fraud” (46). On

October 14, Kiowa spokesperson AH PEE TOHN (Wooden Lance) repeated the Kiowa's position they would not "depart from Medicine Lodge Treaty terms" for the allotment agreement (Clark 47). Jerome, refusing to acknowledge the rhetorical agency of the Kiowas or the legitimacy of their arguments, responded by closing the day's council and issuing "beef and other food to the Indians so they would feel better the next day," discounting their dissent by blaming it on their mood rather than on good reason (Clark 47). The Kiowas, after all, owned the land and the commission wanted to buy it, which put the Kiowa in the more powerful negotiating position. Their resultant resistance controlled the rhetorical situation throughout the length of the talks.

According to Clark, tensions finally exploded the following day as Kiowa leaders contested not only the signatures but also Givens' compromised work as interpreter for the Commission. Commissioner Jerome, forced in the chaos to "drop any pretense of negotiating with equals," reminded his Kiowa audience, "Congress has determined to open this country," referring to the Dawes Act of 1887, and essentially admitted the pretense of choice from the beginning had been false (Clark 47). Kiowa leaders, including Lone Wolf, were by this time convinced they signed the document under Givens' false representation, and "demanded that their names be stricken from the agreement;" Jerome "threatened the Indian leaders with jail and dismissed them. Only a few Comanches and even fewer Kiowas remained. U.S. troops moved quickly into closer position" (Clark 47). Commissioner Jerome had requested their presence in Anadarko due to the volatility of the talks, which

ended with the U.S. Army threatening violence once again.

Amidst the chaos, the commissioners declared the agreement complete with the number of signatures necessary and promptly left the Anadarko area on October 17 before the headmen could verify them. According to Clark, the Jerome agreement with the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches “ultimately contained only counterfeit signatures” – all of which were X-marks – and “even with alterations to it, the Jerome Agreement was between 21 and 91 signatures short of the needed three-fourths, depending on whether age 18 or age 21 was the cutoff for adult status” (Clark 48). Those signatures continued to be contested throughout the following decade and into the first several years of the new century as the contested agreement passed into law, preparing the way for settlement and Oklahoma statehood.

LONEWOLF V. HITCHCOCK AS A HISTORICAL SITE OF SUPPRESSION & TRANSRHETORICAL ACTIVISM

Through continual effort by Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache leaders and organized opposition among their allies, including Friends of the Indian and ethnologist James Mooney, congressional ratification of the falsified agreement was successfully impeded for several years. However, the Fort Hall Agreement of June 6, 1900 “passed the legislation allotting the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache reserve and opening the surplus land to allotment” regardless of the contested signatures (Clark 54). In so doing, according to Clark, the United States claimed 3, 014, 933 acres of Native land, paying 93 cents per acre, significantly less than the \$1.50 cents per acre requested during the talks

(Clark 54-55). Allotments were drawn from mid-1900 through early 1901. During that same spring, Lone Wolf and his nephew, Delos Knowles Lone Wolf, traveled to Washington, D.C. where they met with former U.S. Senator and attorney William Springer. Springer agreed to take their case, and “sent Delos back to the reservation [...] to bolster Lone Wolf’s suit” (Clark 58). Eventually, several Comanche claimants were added to the suit, and the Indian Rights Association lent support.

The transrhetorical nature of this inquiry site, like the Jerome Commission meetings, invites further investigation. Lone Wolf continues to assert rhetorical agency across cultural lines, only this time in the political context of Washington, D.C. In moving his arguments through the U.S. Congress and the Supreme Court, he transfers Kiowa rhetorical practices and translates Kiowa cultural exigencies to new audiences representing multiple interests. In this new context, Lone Wolf’s arguments move Kiowa resistance into the geographical and political heart of U.S. hegemony. The Kiowa certainly were not the only Native nation with representatives and lobbyists in Washington, D.C. during this time. The Progressive Era commitment to cleaning up corruption in government certainly created some receptivity to Lone Wolf’s charges of falsification and illegality. Beyond creating a complex network of political connections for support in the process, Lone Wolf also navigated an alien bureaucracy in order to advance Kiowa interests and protect Kiowa culture.

Blue Clark argues Lone Wolf’s initiative to begin legal action was an

extension of his role as headman of his band, a role which Clark claims required “acting independently” first and then gaining support from others based on his actions (59). This Kiowa cultural practice illustrates the rhetorical agency inherent to male leadership roles – even seen in J.T. Goombi’s role in the Kiowa Clemente Course. Clark explains, “Lone Wolf was a headman of his band, and as a leader of opponents of government plans on the reserve, he took appropriate action to continue the struggle for his lands and tribal ways” (59). Lone Wolf’s efforts, which I characterize as cultural resistance, involved numerous literate and transrhetorical acts. These include working with local attorneys “to investigate agents and agency affairs, [...] to supervise annuity payments, to arrange pasture leases, [and to] hold off white encroachments and thefts of Indian property” (Clark 59). These discursive actions across distinct cultural boundaries required transrhetorical awareness for the transmission of ideas.

In utilizing the rhetorical agency granted to a Kiowa headman, Lone Wolf moved Kiowa cultural values into western hegemonic spaces in order to protect those values. Protection was the ultimate responsibility of a Kiowa leader. At the same time, his rhetorical action can be understood as resistance insofar as he persisted in fighting against allotment, arguing throughout his case that the agreement claimed by the Jerome Commission was falsified and illegal. For Lone Wolf, these resistant acts likely extended the military resistance he learned under Chief Lone Wolf’s leadership prior to the Kiowa’s military subjugation in the Red River War in 1874, well after the 1867 Treaty of

Medicine Lodge⁵⁶. In inheriting Chief Lone Wolf's name, Lone Wolf the Younger also inherited the cultural obligation to continue militant resistance efforts on behalf of the Kiowa, even as these efforts became largely rhetorical after Kiowa military subjugation. This transrhetorical extension of Kiowa resistance across generations, via Lone Wolf's name and cultural example, negates the notion that Kiowa resistance was suppressed despite the corrupt actions of the U.S. government.

Lone Wolf's persistence, however, did not ultimately stop allotment and settlement for the Kiowa people. Through the 1903 *Lonewolf v. Hitchcock* decision, the United States established as precedent the congressional plenary power to void treaties with sovereign nations without the consent of those nations. The decision that allowed the U.S. to void treaty and falsify agreements with the Kiowa likewise enabled them to do so elsewhere. Justice Edward White wrote the majority opinion, and argued that tribal nations depend on the U.S. government for protection, and that protection grants the U.S. government power over tribal nations in return. Lone Wolf's arguments as presented by his attorney no doubt reflected the opinions he presented to the Jerome Commission. Blue Clark notes that other than the Supreme Court Justice's decisions, no other documents associated with the court proceedings survive. His own thorough research indicates these papers were likely destroyed, inadvertently or not, when attorney William Springer's office was emptied after his death. Considering the importance of this case in regard to Native law, this significant archival loss contributes to the silencing of Kiowa

resistance in the rhetorical record.

“VOTING WITH THEIR FEET”

When I began teaching the Kiowa course for U.S.A.O. in fall 2007, I took on the role of the “western” faculty for the course. Funding for the course had diminished in the seven years since the course began, and curriculum that had originally been developed and taught by several full-time U.S.A.O. faculty from various disciplines was now being planned and taught by one adjunct with a background in American literature who had spent the majority of her young career teaching composition. I co-taught with Ms. Gonzales, or Auntie Al as her nephew Jay Goombi and many of her students called her, who was the only Kiowa elder still regularly working for the course⁵⁷. By the time I became involved seven years after the course began, community interest in the course had declined considerably. For the first two years I taught the course, class enrollment and retention were dismal⁵⁸.

Each week I came to class prepared to present and discuss assigned texts from the western canon, and each week I struggled to get students to critically engage with the material, in part because they were just not reading it. Without their investment in the western content, I found it difficult and awkward to draw out connections and disconnections between western thought and Kiowa culture, especially when I did not know Kiowa culture. Increasingly I began to believe the low attendance and apathy was a result of the western content the Clemente Course model advanced. Worse yet, as the co-instructor hired to teach the western texts used in the class, I held an

unfortunate rhetorical position. In essence, by bringing these western texts into Kiowa cultural space, I was reiterating colonialist tactics embedded in historical literacy work in the Kiowa area. The students were simply not interested in the western texts. They were there for the Kiowa language lessons and cultural content Alecia provided.

My growing discomfort with the course's western content crystalized one evening during my third year of involvement with the class. Alecia was out sick with a serious respiratory infection and I was left to hold that night's class alone. We were discussing Locke's definition of property in his *Second Treatise on Government*, a selection which had long been a part of the course curriculum because, I assume, of its potential to open cross-cultural dialogue on concepts of property and ownership. I decided to model an open critique of Locke and ask students to follow my lead by bringing their own Kiowa perspectives and experiences to bear on that evening's reading. This was not a new tactic, of course, but without Alecia there, I felt freer to take the lead.

That night, as the class began, I found myself once again speaking to a handful of silent students, few of whom had actually read the text. With no other good choice, I outlined the text's main points on the board to begin and then proceeded to challenge the values underscoring the text's supportive and primary arguments. After ten minutes of this and no student buy-in, I escalated my critique to the point of frustration, exacerbating the point I was trying to make – that the author of the text operated wholly from Eurocentric values and showed a blind disregard for peoples living outside the western cultural model.

I asked leading questions, practically begging for the students to apply themselves, their experiences, their family histories, and their cultural knowledge to the textual analysis. I thought for sure they could only agree. To prompt them, I asked questions like, “What would a Kiowa critique of this text look like?” Given my own cultural positionality, these were questions I could not answer. Finally, after what seemed like an hour of listening to myself talk, punctuated by long periods of awkward silence, an older student who was sitting against the wall spoke up. His question was simple, and absolutely directed at me: “Why are we even reading these texts in this class?”

I was stunned and fairly intimidated, but I tried to stay dialogic with him, which meant answering his question. I remember saying something like, “That’s a good question. All I know is that the elders who were consulted when this course was designed thought it was a good idea to study western texts.” While this was true, I also hoped selfishly this answer would display my deference to the elders whose concept I was trying to uphold. As I feared, his question rhetorically positioned me to answer not only for the course design, with which I had to this point very little input, but for the entire western educational system itself. The student disregarded my invocation of the elders: “We know these stories already,” he said, referring to Locke. “We’ve read them our whole lives. That’s all we get in school around here.” His irritation was obvious. “What we need to study are our own ways.”

His argument gave me the student feedback I needed to convince my Kiowa colleagues and the U.S.A.O. Office of Academic Affairs that the curricular

model and course content needed an update. If we were to continue to attract students and serve the Kiowa community, the class had to become an exclusively Kiowa humanities class. The abysmal attendance and class participation enacted what J.T. explains as the Kiowa practice of “voting with their feet.” J.T. tells the story of a camp leader who wakes up to find his camp disassembled, and his followers gone as a result of his poor leadership. The followers did not throw him out or replace him, they simply packed up and left him⁵⁹. As Daniel Cole points out in a recent article in *College Composition and Communication*,

Any time one examines Western and Native rhetorics side by side, or uses reference points from the western rhetorical tradition in the course of analyzing Native writing and rhetoric, one risks suggesting to a greater or lesser degree that Native rhetorics are subordinate to western rhetoric, or that they are best understood in relation to western rhetoric (which also amounts to subordination). (126)

Kiowas have historically practiced democracy by physically abandoning leaders, and they tend also to practice cultural critique by telling stories. Investing their attention in western treatises and analytical models took time away from Kiowa perspectives, and the community lost interest in the course as a result⁶⁰. We decided to drop the western portion of the curriculum completely⁶¹.

COURSE CONTENT, KIOWA CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY PEDAGOGY

Now, five years later, with the course completely focused on Kiowa

language and culture, our weekly attendance averages between 10 and 20 people⁶². For the last several semesters, each weekly class meeting has followed a similar structure, and over the course of 16 weeks we prioritize deep inquiry into the topics that emerge from student interest and discussion, and the group's perceived need to learn or practice a particular set of cultural knowledge. Our course texts range the spectrum of modalities. They include books produced by several ethnographers, the earliest of which, Jane Richardson Hank's *Kiowa Law and Status*, was published in 1935. We use archival sound recordings dated from the 1930s through the 1990s that include songs from a wide range of Kiowa genres, from ceremonial songs belonging to specific Kiowa societies, to child-rearing songs, to Kiowa Christian hymns. We also use archival texts and images, many of which have been brought to class by students from their own family collections. For instance, in class we read aloud from the papers of Morris Doyeto, the grandfather of one of our students, who was educated outside of the Kiowa community and completed seminary in Chicago. Doyeto's explications of Kiowa religious and ceremonial history are not only rich in cultural information, but they also provide an opportunity to observe and discuss the influence of western education on Kiowa expression and rhetorical strategies. Together, these various texts provide infinite entries into Kiowa culture and language.

Each class begins at 6:00 p.m. with a short oration from J.T. Goombi. Though generally spontaneous, J.T.'s rhetorical strategies do not tend to deviate. He begins with a humorous welcome, most often noting that we are

not starting on time as arrivals continue to enter the room. His standing joke is that the last one in gets to give the prayer for the meal. He usually includes some discussion of current events in the Kiowa community. These can include recent illnesses or deaths, sport scores, and the latest developments in tribal politics. Once he finishes, he asks a student, usually a male if possible, to give the prayer. These prayers begin with “DAW KXEE,” the Kiowa word for God, and invariably ask for guidance for the class instructors and for help with learning and sharing Kiowa cultural knowledge. The meal that follows is a potluck provided by the students, primarily the women. In keeping with Kiowa tradition, the men always eat first.

After about 30 minutes of eating and socializing, Dorothy begins with the language lesson. By using Alecia Keahbone Gonzales’s beginning Kiowa language book, we can easily connect language lessons to cultural lessons. Alecia organized the language lessons in the book around Kiowa songs and stories. The language lessons generally last an hour to 90 minutes, and include many stories seemingly told spontaneously and associatively by Dorothy, J.T., and the students. If we are fortunate, Dane Poolaw attends class and transcribes Kiowa words and phrases on his projected laptop. Otherwise, that is my job. Hearing and seeing the words and practicing the language reminds those present of events and people in the past. Stories arise during the language lesson as they would in conversation. After the break, I introduce the texts we will examine for the rest of the evening. We might listen to songs, and then transcribe and translate them with Dorothy’s help; we take turns reading

aloud from an ethnographic interview or archival text; or we view projected archival photographs to identify people, ceremonial objects, and cultural locations.

Each of these texts and activities elicits memories, stories, questions, and discussions, and provides the vehicle for Kiowa cultural literacy and practice. Students strengthen their abilities to listen closely to the Kiowa language, to write it down as they hear it, and learn how the language operates in the context of culture. Additionally, they identify gaps in Kiowa cultural knowledge and invent ways to fill those gaps as a way of serving the broader community. For instance, Dorothy recently shared her concern that Kiowa hymns were being sung at inappropriate times because very few people understand the words they are singing. This inspired the project between Dorothy and Cricket Connywerdy to identify the hymns according to categories, such as “thanksgiving,” “asking for help,” “testimonial,” and “funeral.” One student, Martha Addison, typed the lyrics in Kiowa, and Cricket labeled and arranged them by category. Class participants not only share the cultural knowledge and texts they learn and study with each other and the Kiowa community, but they produce knowledge and text for the Kiowa community as well.

It is easy to liken the course’s curricular shift from a comparative humanities model to a culturally focused model to nationalist/tribalist scholarship in Native Literary Studies. Womack, Warrior, and Weaver’s nationalist heuristic for Native literary critique can also be applied to Native

cultural literacy and rhetoric pedagogy. To begin, Native literacy and literacy projects must be developed by tribal peoples and inscribed with their own cultural literacy models. To take the western humanities model of the Clemente Course and first make it comparative by adding Kiowa humanities, and then to remove the western content entirely, is to *counterinscribe* not only the curriculum but a popular and publically heralded educational theory and international literacy project. In between these rhetorical spaces of a particular classroom and national discourse on public education, the Kiowa Clemente Course in the Humanities has also changed the local community.

As students become more involved with selecting course content and directing class discussion, they also circulate that content and discussion beyond the classroom. They take home course materials and notes, sound recordings and oral transcripts, and photocopies of ethnographic texts on the Kiowa. Likewise, they bring old pictures of family members, entire photographic collections, newspaper articles, Kiowa language texts, and familial/cultural objects to share with each other and discuss. It is not unusual for us to utilize one of these sources in class and prompt one of the students to recall cultural knowledge he or she had forgotten. The class functions not perfectly, but certainly from a model of resistant reclamation of tribal culture by tribal people. It privileges cultural sovereignty and serves the Kiowa community, and increasingly depends upon the community as well⁶³. The students raise the rest of the funds through benefit powwows and holiday projects to pay for equipment, copies, and supplies. While the limited level of

support the class receives from the university creates obstacles, it also provides the opportunity for the students and the community to be the course's primary sponsors.

Native rhetorical scholars have built arguments for the kind of rhetorical sovereignty seen operating in the class model. Rhetorical sovereignty is a term coined first by Scott Lyons (Leech Lake Ojibwe) in his essay "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" (2000). He insists, as does Malea Powell, that despite being systematically dominated by the United States, native resistance has never ceased. Rhetorical survivance, a term Powell develops in her essay "Blood and Scholarship: One Mixed Blood's Story" (1999). Powell uses Vizenor's term "survivance" to mean "survival plus resistance," and she uses it to contest "the 'rules' of scholarly discourse" as frontier rhetoric (2). Both scholars identify writing, the writing classroom, and the western academy as sites of both colonial oppression and resistance. Lyons specifically cites boarding schools and treaties as two examples of the lasting link for Native Americans between text-based literacy and cultural struggle.

In an excellent passage, Powell also illustrates this point further: "Scholars are set forth on the fringes of 'the known' in order to stake out and define a piece of 'unoccupied' scholarly territory that, through our skill at explicating and analyzing, will become our own scholarly homestead" (Powell 3). Through extended metaphor, she transposes the logic of frontier settlement, such as that seen in the opening of the Unassigned Lands, onto

western academic practice. To the extent the western historical narrative elides Native historical narratives, frontier rhetoric troubles Powell further. Where Lyons insists “discourses of resistance and renewal have never ceased in Indian country” (453), both scholars argue, as Powell puts it, that Native scholarship must “open up space for existing stories that might run counter to the imperial desires of traditional scholarship, stories that have been silenced by its hegemonic drone” (4). For Native rhetoric and composition scholars, Kiowa stories counter western narratives and resist frontier rhetorics.

A text by famed Kiowa author and progenitor of the “Native American Renaissance” N. Scott Momaday captures through story a Kiowa perspective on rhetorical sovereignty. “The Arrowmaker,” published in *Man Made of Words* (1997), features, according to Momaday, “perhaps the first story [he] was told” (9). He identifies it as a warrior story with a meta-narrative “about story” itself, and thus identifies it as both a cultural object that communicates certain values of the Kiowa culture and as a critical heuristic for understanding the power of language⁶⁴. Momaday originally published the “The Arrowmaker” in a 1967, limited press edition called *The Journey of Tai-me*, which is now widely regarded as the basis from which the author developed *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, first published in 1969. Both publications include the Kiowa oral tradition collection Momaday transcribed with the help of his father, artist Alfred Momaday, who translated the stories from the Kiowa language. In *The Man Made of Words*, Momaday tells the story as follows.

If an arrow is well made, it will have tooth marks upon it. That is how you know. The Kiowas made fine arrows and straightened them in their

teeth. Then they drew them to the bow to see that they were straight.

Once there was a man and his wife. They were alone at night in their tepee. By the light of a fire the man was making arrows. After a while he caught sight of something. There was a small opening in the tepee where two hides had been sewn together. Someone was there on the outside, looking in. The man went on with his work, but he said to his wife, "Someone is standing outside. Do not be afraid. Let us talk easily, as of ordinary things." He took up an arrow and straightened it in his teeth; then, as it was right for him to do, he drew it to the bow and took aim, first in this direction and then in that. And all the while he was talking, as if to his wife. But this is how he spoke: "I know that you are there on the outside, for I can feel your eyes upon me. If you are Kiowa, you will understand what I am saying, and you will speak your name." But there was no answer, and the man went on in the same way, pointing the arrow all around. At last his aim fell upon the place where his enemy stood, and he let go of the string. The arrow went straight to the enemy's heart. (9 -12)

Though "The Arrowmaker" has been included in three separate publications, Momaday provides a critique of the story only in *The Man Made of Words* (1997), 30 years after he originally published the story in *The Journey of Taimé*. He states early in the essay, "I have lived with the story of the arrowmaker for many years, and I am sure that I do not yet understand it in all of its consequent meanings" (Momaday 10). He uses the arrowmaker's use of language to save his own life as an explication of the nature and role of oral tradition. If not for the continual telling of a story, it is "always [...] but one generation removed from extinction" (Momaday 10). Like the arrowmaker, the story itself is vulnerable, as is the Kiowa language, insofar as it is always on the edge of being unknown. The Kiowa story asserts the power of the known, in this case Kiowa language and warrior craftsmanship, against the unknown.

The oral tradition functions rhetorically as resistance to this threat.

"The Arrowmaker," for Momaday, "is both an example and a definition of

literature” (11). For him, it is “a story about story” that does the work literature should do (Momaday 11). It is an agent of language and culture, active in an expansive Kiowa Universe that has always been comprised more by the unknown than the known. Momaday acknowledges “there is a kind of resistance in it, as in a riddle,” that compels the audience to consider the story’s meaning. Beyond the resistance Momaday identifies here as a storytelling device, it suggests the power of story as an act of cultural resistance, of both rhetorical sovereignty and survivance. The listeners must decide the meaning for themselves. “For the storyteller,” just as “for the arrowmaker,” “language does indeed represent the only chance for survival” (Momaday 12). In a very real sense, Kiowa language, oral tradition, and culture – as they have continued across time despite the suppressive tactics of settlement, allotment, and frontier rhetoric – provide both the possibility and method of rhetorical resistance.

KIOWA STORIES AS DIALOGIC NARRATIVES & RESISTANCE RHETORIC

Throughout my interviews with cultural literacy activists involved in this class, I observed the use of narrative as a means of making meaning. Julie Cruikshank argues that while “storytelling may be a universal human activity,” “the concepts communicated in stories depend on close attention to local metaphor and local narrative conventions” (4). Her argument aligns with critical regionalist objectives while also expanding them to include Native perspectives. She believes “local voices from North American indigenous communities” “contribute to our understanding of historiography” by revealing

how these communities compose history (Cruikshank 6). While stories “have their roots in ancient narrative,” “their telling emerges at the intersections of power and ideas where larger forces impinge directly on local experience;” they “become translation devices to explain new experiences that do not seem to have cultural roots” and “to achieve consistency between old values and changing circumstances” (Cruikshank 21 – 22). Each of the individuals I interviewed showed a tendency to explain his or her own activism in the context of stories⁶⁵. They told stories from their own lives, from their families, and from the Kiowa community. Transrhetorically, they connected these local cultural examples of activism to social constructions of activism circulating broadly, or rather they connected to broader social constructions of activism *through* local cultural examples.

Kiowa storytelling exhibits key features that can seem disruptive to anyone unfamiliar with Kiowa culture. Many times in the first few years of my involvement with the Kiowa Clemente class, I struggled to understand why a particular story was being told at a particular time. I could see no clear connection between the story being told and the moment and topic at hand, which made it difficult to understand the story in the context of the conversation. Stories that came up in class conversation seemed to me more like tangents at best, or diversion tactics at worst. Gus Palmer, Jr., OU Associate Professor of Anthropology, teaches Kiowa language and culture on the University of Oklahoma main campus. He focused his dissertation on Kiowa storytelling, the basis of his book *Telling Stories the Kiowa Way* (2003). In his

book, he elaborates on his methodology and experience with Kiowa storytellers during his research project. After citing several ethnographic examples, he states, “Kiwos tell stories in the midst of ordinary conversation without warning. These stories occur so unexpectedly that it is sometimes hard to know where a story begins or ends, it is so much a part of everyday conversation” (Palmer 109). Story is so naturalized in Kiowa conversation, according to Palmer, it can become difficult to discern whether the stories are true or not, especially to the degree the stories include “dreamlike,” “fantastic,” or “magical” details (109). While the stories told in class certainly have included these characteristics, the stories told by the cultural activists I interviewed did so to a lesser extent than Palmer observes here.

While storytelling requires extended attention on one speaker, the ultimate rhetorical goal of such narratives, according to Palmer, is dialogue. For Kiowas, a story is successful to the extent that it engages the listener in meaning making. If a listener asks J.T. Goombi what a story means, he will likely ask the listener to explain it instead. He wants the listener to participate in a mutual construction. Palmer notes, “There are stories that open and remain open so the listener is able to interact with the storyteller by adding comments, asides, stories, interpretations, or other responses or remarks that make the story grow” (109). In this way, storytelling is a collaborative, dialogic process and participatory narrative. To the extent that storytelling is remembering, it is also historiography. As the cultural literacy activists I interviewed told me their stories, they understood the process as collaborative

and mutually agentive. Together, even within the contextual confines of academic research, we were making a story and constructing an historic legacy of Kiowa activism, a task I could not complete without them. As I listened to their stories about cultural literacy activism from their own memories and experiences, we worked together to understand what these stories say about Kiowa activism and Kiowa activist rhetorics.

In my interview with J.T. Goombi, narrative – in this case stories told primarily in the first-person – immediately emerged in his answers to my questions as a primary means of not only of relaying personal information about activist experiences, but also as a vehicle for conveying concepts. For instance, in response to my second prompt, “describe your work as an activist,” J.T.’s response was exactly as follows:

I, uh, ...involved in wherever. You know, uh, I grew up in a small town and at the time it was very racial. Some of those undertones are still here. And, uh, I had a coach, athletic coach, that was also the principal and he said if I wanted to play on the baseball team I had to catch. I didn't mind catching. I could do that. But I was a good pitcher. And he said the superintendent's son was gonna be the pitcher, so if I wanted to play, I had to catch. I did it, but I didn't like it. My folks were not very financially able to take care of a lot of the things that we needed. My dad was an activist, if you call it, and he caught the Superintendent skimming the lunch program, which Indian lunches were supposed to be paid for and were paid for by the government. He'd caught the superintendent with his hand in the till and it had been several years of that. That school board, instead of prosecuting, gave him the authority or the option to resign and so he left. So that kind of put me in a different category because of my dad's activism. (1)

In describing his work as an activist, J.T. tells me a story of his own experience with racial prejudice and disempowerment on the school baseball team, that he then connects immediately to his father exposing the school superintendent

embezzling money from Native students via the government lunch program. The story does not end here, although he pauses to give me time to think and ask for his father's name – Adolphus Goombi.

J.T. continues the story by extending it to his maternal grandfather, Tennyson Berry. At the age of seven years old, Tennyson “was put in the corral at Ft. Sill with his parents and grandfather, and, uh, was kept there” (J.T. Goombi 2). In answering a prompt to describe his activist work, rather than explicate his long list of political achievements, J.T. chooses to tell stories about his father and grandfather, stories that deeply contextualize his own activism in a familial narrative concerning the activism of these Kiowa men from whose examples he learned.

As Gus Palmer observed in his study, storytelling requires active listening on the part of the audience. At several instances throughout this early portion of his interview, J.T. entreats me to listen. In the first instance, he does so through the words of his grandfather: “And he used to tell me sometimes, he'd say, ‘Now listen to everything that I say because everything I tell you has some meaning,’ to which J.T. adds, “Now I tell my kids that. Grandkids” (2). Later in the story, near its end, J.T. addresses me directly: “Now listen to this” (3). At this point, his story focuses clearly on how the government “came and took a people who could sustain themselves” and “made [them] dependent,” via military action and assimilation policies. He recounts historical instances where Kiowa families in the process of assimilation during the contested allotment period, were given livestock, without being taught how to maintain a

herd. Many of these families simply killed and ate these animals in order to survive in the short-term, because this had been their cultural practice with bison. By annihilating the bison herds and providing rations and livestock instead, J.T. believes the government trained the formally independent and self-sufficient Kiowa to be dependent on government beneficence. He laughs, “They gave us allotments of our own land,” and “out of the goodness of their heart, they gave us a piece of land over here that was ours” (J.T. Goombi 3). Finally, his narrative ends with self-admonition and admittance that he should have listened to his grandfather more closely. This functions rhetorically, in the early minutes of the nearly two-hour interview and the close of his first narrative response, as a final reminder to me to listen closely.

Stories such as this one example from J.T. occurred frequently in response to my interview questions and prompts across all five interviews. Meaning becomes more fluid without explicit exposition, and what meaning arises depends entirely on the context in which the story gets told. Julie Cruikshank explains oral traditions “have social histories, and they acquire meanings in the situations in which they emerge, in situations where they are used, and in interactions between narrators and listeners” (21). His story, in response to my question about activism, expresses the cultural value he places on listening and remembering and passing knowledge on, and at the same time includes what he expects from me as part of this rhetorical situation. J.T.’s story retells Kiowa history and cultural experiences and makes it clear J.T. sees a connection between this history, his family, and activism in the Kiowa

community. “Oral tradition,” as Cruikshank’s investigation reminds readers, “permits continuous revision of history by actively reinterpreting events and then incorporating such interpretations into the next generation of narrative” (7). By citing examples of his father’s and grandfather’s extensive activism during his childhood and young adult years, and connecting their activism to Kiowa history, J.T. shapes the rhetorical situation we share and prepares me, as a listener, to better understand his perspective on the topics I ask him to discuss.

“ACTIVISM” AND “RESISTANCE” IN THE KIOWA COMMUNITY

Across the interviews I conducted with J.T. Goombi, Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune, Jay Goombi, Dane Poolaw, and Cricket Connywerdy, common characteristics emerged that reveal a rhetorical pattern. I identified six characteristics that include the use of story or personal narrative, reference to familial legacies, expressions of cultural pride, and practicing risk and persistence. By identifying them, I do not want to fix them into immovable categories in an inflexible heuristic. I attempt instead to understand the way in which these characteristics shape and move meaning within and outside of a Kiowa context, particularly related to Kiowa cultural literacy activism. These categories operate transrhetorically, particularly as I construct them as a participant-observer, because they arise from conversations centered on “activism” and “resistance,” terms and practices that operate differently inside and outside of the Kiowa community.

To be sure, none of the people I interviewed, with the exception of Jay

Goombi, self-identified as activists prior to their interviews. Insofar as I observed them acting on behalf of the Kiowa culture in the historical context of suppression, I identified them as cultural literacy activists myself. To account for this, my first two interview questions asked interviewees to define activism, and then to discuss their work in relation to this definition. Four of the five cultural activists I interviewed were comfortable from the outset with understanding themselves as activists in their own terms. Dane Poolaw, however, made it clear he did not think of himself as an activist, which he understood as someone who seeks attention and power; yet later in his interview, after discussion and reflection, he agreed his work “to promote the culture, the language, and history to our own people, and trying to find ways to do that” qualifies as activism as he practices it⁶⁶ (Poolaw 2). To the contrary of this example, for the Kiowas I interviewed, activism is largely a quiet endeavor, away from the general public’s eye, occurring primarily within the Kiowa community for the Kiowa community.

For J.T. Goombi, the oldest Kiowa man I interviewed and certainly the most overtly politically active of the interviewees, activism means “standing up for something that’s good. Supporting something that’s good. Defending what’s good” (J.T. Goombi 1). Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune, both a Kiowa traditionalist and a life-long Roman Catholic, defines activism in terms of pathos and positioning: “It’s, I just have pity, I have sympathy, for anybody any place that is the underdog” (1). Jay Goombi, who considers the Kiowa Clemente Class his greatest activist success, explains activism as “trying to fix what’s

wrong. Trying to create the tools. Trying to develop the mechanisms, you know,” for cultural progress (2). Dane Poolaw defines activism via the militant examples of A.I.M. and the Black Panthers, and does not think of himself as an activist in these terms. He thinks of activists as “spokespeople,” and stated “that’s who I don’t really care to be” (Poolaw 1). Dane expressed a preference for working to promote culture without this kind of attention, an approach generally shared by all interviewees. Cricket Connywerdy, mother of three, Kiowa singer, dancer, and storyteller, Norman community Kiowa class organizer, and prime mover in the successful effort to land run celebrations in Norman Public Schools, states:

some people might think of [activism] as people that are loud and get out there, but I think that people can be quietly doing their own thing, which is different from the majority. I think activism is you have your own set of beliefs that are different from the majority and you actively pursue things you would do for those beliefs. (1)

For Cricket, practicing Kiowa culture in her family and community, simply being Kiowa, qualifies as activism in a colonial context. It requires commitment, work, time, and sacrifice, and only occasionally operates in broader public venues.

As for resistance, their definitions varied more broadly. For J.T, in the context of his definition of activism, resistance means “to resist anything that [...] has a detrimental effect on me and my family, and those down the line” (J.T. Goombi 8). J.T. believes, for instance, that Lone Wolf was enacting resistance in *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*, not because he expected to change anything given the context (8). Rather, Lone Wolf “just wanted the truth known,” through creating

a written trace of the Kiowa contestation of the Jerome Commission signatures (J.T. Goombi 8). If anything, Lone Wolf enacted resistance by forcing the matter into legal records, and making the Medicine Lodge treaty violations, fraudulent allotment agreement, and Kiowa contestation publically known through a permanent record.

In contrast, Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune defines resistance in terms of silence and subversion. However, instead of providing a literal definition when I ask her to define resistance, she tells a story about her father's role in preserving the Ohoma War Dance Society, one of three remaining Kiowa military societies. After the criminalization and suppression of ceremonial dances, Whitehorse continued the dances in secret by holding them at night. Dorothy tells me, "They never quit dancing. Danced in secret. All through my homeplace. I'll show you someday where it's at," making a connection between story and the Kiowa cultural landscape she remembers (DeLaune 13). She points out that the Ohoma have a "resistance song" that Kiowas know by that name. She translates the words into English:

... it says, "Don't quit dancing, because you enjoy it. Even if we go to jail, we are going to keep dancing.' And those are the Kiowa words. Yeah. DAW BAH TOHN PAHN BAH. It says "Let's go on and go to jail, okay?" To me, that's where I get it. From my dad, I guess. He defied them. I am so proud when they make that announcement. It's in the history books of the Kiowas. (DeLaune 13)

In both her story and the song, resistance means practicing culture despite suppression.

As Jay Goombi points out, resistance "doesn't necessarily mean pushing back because sometimes you have to yield a little bit," especially when "there's

just so much stacked against you that in order to survive, you've got to give a little" (8). He is clear, however, in explaining what cannot be yielded in these situations: "Resistance is not giving up your goal or giving up what you want. [...] It doesn't necessarily mean hold your ground. Instead, you hold on to what makes you who you are. You never give that up" (Jay Goombi 8). Dane Poolaw defines resistance as "not doing what someone else is telling you to do, or making you do. Going against something you think you're forced to do or might be forced to do" (9). As a Kiowa language teacher, he sees himself resisting English, which is his first language, by thinking in Kiowa: "I think I am trying to resist English in my head sometimes" (Poolaw 9). He also sees himself resisting English in his translation work. He believes most translations of Kiowa into English disregard Kiowa language structure in order to make what is being expressed sound correct in English. He explains, "I don't want to make the English translation pretty and take away from the Kiowa" (Poolaw 10). Language, for Dane, deeply connects to Kiowa cultural identity, and preferencing Kiowa over English in these cases allows him to simultaneously forward the language, the culture, and his identity as a Kiowa. Jay's definition can be seen operating in Dane's example. Kiowa resistance, "hold[ing] on to what makes you what you are," necessarily includes cultural literacy for both of these activists.

Resistance, however, is not the right word to describe this phenomenon in all cases. Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune and Jay Goombi were the only interviewees who expressed a practiced, familiar sense of the word as it applies

to their cultural literacy work and Kiowa identities. Cricket Connywerdy, who works closely with Dane in the Norman community class, does not “necessarily call it resistance or revitalization or that kind of stuff,” for her, “it’s just being who you are” (9). Cricket thinks of resistance as “sticking your feet in the ground” and refusing to be pushed or pulled. She states, “I don’t feel like I’m resisting anything. I’m just continuing and giving me and hopefully my family a sense of self-worth in who they are and where they come from” (Connywerdy 9). Cricket believes this is “not necessarily resisting” but rather “also doing this,” meaning living in mainstream American culture and also incorporating Kiowa cultural practices into daily life (Connywerdy 10). She acknowledges “also doing this” adds work that requires time and money, and sustaining cultural practices in family life creates challenges, especially for working class people⁶⁷.

Despite differences, each of these definitions of resistance offered by interviewees honor Kiowa experience, practice, and cultural identity. Together they illustrate the close relationship between cultural literacy work in the Kiowa community and Kiowa cultural identity. Practicing and promoting cultural knowledge in a colonial context is resistance, because it moves against the suppression of cultural knowledge enacted by colonization. Beyond the definitions of activism and resistance these interviews provide, common rhetorical strategies and tropes arise from our discussions that I believe construct and characterize activism as it operates in the Kiowa community. In identifying the strategies and tropes I see operating in the interviews, I hope to

begin the process of better enabling the study of how they operate. Critically understanding them strengthens Kiowa cultural literacy activists and their efforts in their communities and as Kiowa agents beyond those communities.

FAMILIAL LEGACIES AND CULTURAL MEMORY

As J.T.'s example exhibits, networks between family history, cultural memory, and activist experiences surfaced in the interviews on many occasions, usually in the context of story. These relationships⁶⁸ among the interviewees allowed me to learn different perspectives on historical and familial experiences, as well as cultural events and locations. In addition to relationships by blood, in the case of Dorothy and Cricket Connywerdy, land connects families as well. Dorothy's father Charley Whitehorse's allotment was next to Cricket's grandmother Cindy Keahbone's allotment. The secret nighttime dances Whitehorse held to preserve Kiowa culture during federal prohibition occurred on the Keahbone's land. The connections between families, land, and culture create a complex structure across which cultural memory and knowledge move in the interviews. This same network emerges during whole group discussions in the Kiowa Clemente Course. Many times participants are related to someone else in the class or to someone in the course content itself. The subsequent multiple perspectives on people, events, and places enriches the cultural literacy of participants. In sharing what they know with each other, everyone gains a broader and more critical understanding of a particular text or inquiry site. Likewise, one interviewee's perspective on a person, event, or place informs another's, so that a single

complex narrative of Kiowa activism arises transrhetorically from multiple narratives.

A map develops across the interviews that charts the way in which activism operates as a cultural and familial legacy in the Kiowa community. Adolphus Goombi, J.T.'s father and Jay's grandfather, surfaces in both of their interviews. J.T.'s story about Adolphus exposing the superintendent establishes his father's history of activism even as a young man. Early in his interview, Jay credits his own activism to an early experience with his grandfather Adolphus as well:

When I was younger, and a teenager, and a lot healthier, my grandma used to send me with my grandpa to his [Kiowa Business Committee] meetings as a kind of bodyguard to keep people from trying to beat him up. [...] There were two or three of us she would always send to those meetings, you know. (Jay Goombi 1)

Jay's story adds information to his own activist narrative at the same time it adds to Adolphus Goombi's activist narrative. Jay's early experiences protecting his grandfather illuminate his own current activist work. Just as with the ripples in a pond he cites in his definition of activism, Jay believes "just being there" at his grandfather's meetings "altered the situation" for his grandfather (10). Across Jay's and his father's interviews, three generations of activism arise beginning with Adolphus, and suggest a persistent Kiowa familial legacy deeply entwined with tribal history, culture, and experience.

The family history Dane Poolaw cites in his interview differs from the others in that his grandparents are both still living, and still influence his own cultural literacy and his activist work. Dane's grandfather, Robert "Corky"

Poolaw, Sr., a former Marine, participates in the Kiowa Black Leggings and the Kiowa Gourd Clan, two of the historic Kiowa military societies. Dane explains, “He’s kind of the one that gave me [...], as a male, the strictest teaching” particularly regarding “how to act around people” according to Kiowa cultural standards (Poolaw 5). Though Corky, who was both Kiowa and Delaware, did not speak Kiowa, because “he didn’t quite get the luxury of two parents who both spoke the same Native language,” Dane explains “he encouraged a lot of history” and “a little bit of politics and being able to look at what’s going on around me, around the world” (Poolaw 5). Hearing multiple Native languages spoken in his family and surrounding community, Dane remembers his older relatives expressing a desire for the younger family members “to learn a little bit more Kiowa” (Poolaw 6). He now recognizes his work as recovery.

The pressure to assimilate deeply influenced “people back in the day, my great grandparents’ generation,” who “wanted to speak English” in order to survive, “and that kind of carried all the way over into my parents’ generation” which to Dane’s knowledge includes very few fluent speakers (Poolaw 7). He explains, “That’s why we’ve got what we have today where nobody in the younger generations is completely fluent in it” (Poolaw 7). Dane connects this generational loss of fluency to the early twentieth-century suppression of Kiowa dances and ceremonies; he believes “at the same time they outlawed dances, they outlawed ceremonies, and for people to hold on to [language and culture], they had to go into secret” (Poolaw 7). Dane credits the suppression of Kiowa culture with causing the Kiowa to be “very particular” about where

and when they practiced Kiowa language and culture (Poolaw 7). While Dane's grandfather Corky set an example of conduct and taught him the value of historical and cultural consciousness, Dane's work to gain fluency in Kiowa recovers the loss of the language in his grandfather's and subsequent generations.

Despite the impact of cultural suppression in the Kiowa community, Dane believes "Kiowa people are lucky that we're still willing to share even after all that" (Poolaw 7). He observes the same transrhetorical pattern in his activist work that emerges in the interviews: "We still have a lot of stuff to go off of, and a lot of information from a lot of reliable sources, and if you get so many versions of the same story, then you can piece together and see, you know, see closer to what really happened" (Poolaw 7). For Dane, this means gathering Kiowa language, stories, and perspectives from people outside of his family as well. He explains, "I like to look at the variations between different families, and if I go with different families besides my own, go see what the other families are saying about this particular event or history or song, then it's easier to piece together" (Poolaw 7-8). Dane credits the examples of Alecia Keahbone Gonzales, his first formal Kiowa teacher at Anadarko High School and later at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, as his first example of openly sharing Kiowa cultural knowledge, despite criticism from the Kiowa community (Poolaw 6).

More recently, he looks to "AH THAN Dorothy," his great grandmother. In his description of her, it becomes clear her example sets a vital cultural

standard for Dane:

She's willing to share a lot of things that I think some other Kiowa people may be too scared to talk about. The younger generation needs to know this stuff, and I think she definitely really, really gets that. How is it supposed to be passed on if we don't share it? [...] I just kind of look to her to see what's okay and what's not okay because she does come from an older type upbringing that's closer to the real old Kiowa upbringing. (Poolaw 6 – 7)

Dorothy thus provides Dane with a familial example of cultural literacy activism that resists the legacy of cultural suppression in the Kiowa community. Their relationship also connects his work with the Kiowa language classes at OU and in the Norman community to her work inside and outside of the Kiowa Clemente Course. Through such familial and cultural ties such as this, a network of Kiowa cultural literacy activists emerges.

RISK, PERSISTANCE, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune, who was raised in the same generation as J.T, uses a story to answer the question, "How would you define activism?" She tells a story of an incident that occurred early in her life at Riverside Indian Boarding School, located north just outside of Anadarko, where Dorothy attended through high school. She explains,

Activism is, I guess, we all have a little bit of that in us. I grew up with it. I grew up with my first memories of taking up for a little child when we were eating. We were used to eating with our own people, and then to have to adapt to another way, and some of the children didn't even quite know how to even use utensils right. And sitting there trying to teach them, and I was only six years old myself. But, at least I knew how to use a spoon, but, you know, trying to teach them and I resented the people who were so harsh on some of them to hurry up and learn. (DeLaune 1)

As she tells this story she chuckles, mainly at her own unruly behavior even at

the age of six. Beneath her laughter, however, is a tone of seriousness, in a story that connects her activism to her life as a Kiowa girl in the late 1930s, just over thirty years after the official settlement of the area.

In this story, her role as both a protector and cultural mediator operates inside an instance of teaching another Kiowa child, under the duress of social pressure and ridicule, to use a spoon to eat. She admits to feeling resentment toward authority inside the colonial context of the school. Unlike today, when the majority of Riverside's faculty and staff is Native American, in the era when Dorothy attended the faculty and staff were primarily white. She concludes her story by saying, "And I guess that's when it started" (DeLaune 1). For Dorothy, like the other interviewees, these values can be traced to examples in her family. She attributes them primarily to "her three fine brothers," Roland, Mack, and Lyndreth Whitehorse, in addition to her mother and father.

She acknowledges, however, that she was less "polite" than them in some ways: "I guess I was the, not the black sheep. I was the one that was different. I wanted to be different. I wanted to learn things. I wanted to go places. To the point that I've even gone to jail through my adult life thinking I was doing right for our tribe" (DeLaune 1). Throughout her interview, she references with deep pride the Kiowa warrior tradition⁶⁹. Her father Charley Whitehorse received his name from Chief Whitehorse, his uncle and Dorothy's great uncle, who fought for older warriors Guipago (KHOO EE PBAH GAW, or Lone Wolf the Elder), Santanta (SATE TH'IYE DAY, or White Bear), and Satank (SATE AHN GYAH, or Sitting Bear). While Kiowa women traditionally respect

and honor Kiowa warriors, Dorothy looks to their examples in her activism as well.

When I asked her if these warriors inspire her activism, Dorothy responds with a story about her father Whitehorse. It describes her father's response to the loss of his son, Dorothy's brother Lyndreth, on the shores of Normandy in World War II.

Every morning, like I told you, how dad grabbed the drum when we heard Lyndreth got killed. Every morning of my life as a child, I would hear him with his hand drum. [...] he'd be up way before daylight and it was just a ritual for all of us. [...] Daddy would get his hand drum and he'd sing SATE AHN GYAH's [or Sitting Bear's Death Song] every morning. And then he'd say a few side words and then we'd hear him praying. And it was always facing the east. He says, it says "SATE AHN GYAH EE DAW GYAH AIN TDOE HADLE." He saved us a song and I will sing... "GYAH DAW TDAW. GYAH DAW KHOON TDAW." And it says, I'll sing it and I'll sing it forever because he saved it for me. And he sang that. And we were no descendent of [SATE AHN GYAH]. I just learned to admire him because daddy did⁷⁰. (DeLaune 8)

SATE AHN GYAH was a member of the KHOIYE SEHN GAW, the ten bravest and most elite warriors of the Kiowa tribe. Charley Whitehorse sang this song to commemorate his own son's bravery in battle.

SATE AHN GYAH's death, commemorated in the song Dorothy's father sang on their porch every morning, bears telling not only because Dorothy includes it in her interview, but also for the example of cultural resistance it sets for her and other Kiowas. SATE AHN GYAH's arrest was ordered by General Sherman after his involvement in a wagon train raid in Texas in May 1871. He was held at Ft. Sill until Sherman ordered a trial for SATE AHN GYAH, SATE TH'IYE DAY (White Bear), and Big Tree, both of whom were also involved in the raid. Held at Fort Richardson in Jacksboro, Texas, it would be the first

time Native American war leaders were tried in U.S. Court. SATE AHN GYAH, however, refused to comply. Dorothy tells the story:

The real Kiowas, that's the way I was told, you say when you have medicine, you say "DAW DAW." He had medicine and he told, he said, "I'm not going alive." Some of the Kiowas used to say he ingested a knife. [...] These three were going to prison in [Ft. Marion, St. Augustine, FL.]. Course they rode off with SATE THIYE DAY and Big Tree. SATE AHN GYAH said he wasn't going past where that creek was. Yeah. And they said the soldiers were laughing at him. "That old man can't do nothing." And all of a sudden he appeared with a knife. He broke himself out of the handcuffs and he got two of them before they filled him with bullet holes, and yet he lived long enough to lean against that tree, singing that song. (DeLaune 9)

The spot where SATE AHN GYAH died singing against "that tree" is commemorated with a stone marker on the Ft. Sill Army base. The risk SATE AHN GYAH took to die in Kiowa Country, rather than live out his life in prison at Ft. Marion, speaks to the persistent resistance in Kiowa cultural identity.

SUBVERTING SUPPRESSION AND RESISTING SILENCE

The rhetorical patterns and legacy of resistance that grows out of these interviews speaks to the transrhetorical connections between present Kiowa cultural literacy activism and historic sites of resistance. Archival documents such as transcriptions of Jerome Commission meetings between the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache suggest not only a complex rhetorical situation but also Native rhetorical agency. During these "councils," which occurred late September through October 1892, the government agents collected the very signatures Lone Wolf and others contested in the supreme court case almost ten years later. In his recent book *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Lyons analyzes the "x-mark," an inscription commonly signed by native individuals on

various colonial legal agreements, as a rhetorical heuristic. He characterizes the “x-mark” as “a sign of consent in a context of coercion; it is the agreement one makes when there seems to be little choice in the matter. To the extent that little choice isn’t quite the same thing as no choice, it signifies Indian agency” (Lyons 1). Thus, even a mark as seemingly significant of resignation as an x-mark on a colonial legal document also asserts continued presence and active engagement with colonial, capitalist forces and the various cultural crises created by them.

In the case of Lone Wolf, J.T. Goombi does not believe “he really thought it was going to change anything;” rather “he just wanted the truth known” (8). Resistance in this case for Lone Wolf meant creating a long chain of documents to establish a clear record of Kiowa dissent and resistance. J.T. believes Lone Wolf wanted it known the Kiowas never consented to allotment under federal terms. To J.T., Lone Wolf recognized the power of written text in creating this record despite being unable to read and write English himself. In a real sense, Lone Wolf acted against rhetorical suppression and silencing by forcing the government to write a decision that openly inscribed the illegality of the Kiowa allotment agreement in the public archive and legal record. Suppressive and silencing rhetorics did not occur without the knowledge and intervention of Kiowas or their expressed resistance.

The rhetorical patterns that emerge in the final days of the council talks provide valuable insight into rhetorical strategies inherent to Kiowa cultural literacy activism today. In Anadarko, Kiowas who did not have the

opportunity to attend the talks at Ft. Sill listened to the agreement offered by the Commissioners and participated in the council talks. AH PEE TOHN (Wooden Lance) speaks first, saying “Great Spirit, listen to me talk” (U.S. Senate 43). In entreating DAW KXEE, God, to listen, BAY HADLE, he asks also for the Commissioners to listen: “Guide my words so that may reach the proper authorities. [...] What I have to say, father in heaven, write that in a book above, let it be the same talk written in this book the commissioners have” (U.S. Senate 43). He repeats the Kiowa’s commitment to the Medicine Lodge Treaty and their willingness to negotiate a new agreement in four years when that treaty expires. He announces to those assembled, in an assertion of agency over the proceedings, “I will ask those that are with me on the Medicine Lodge road to stand up” (U.S. Senate 44). The transcription notes read “(Most of the Indians, Kiowas, stand up)” (U.S. Senate 44). With these numbers displayed, AH PEE TOHN continues, “We have voted against the contract” (U.S. Senate 44). The Commissioners, however, refuse to acknowledge their position, as they have throughout the talks.

On October 17, the final day of the council talks, Big Tree establishes control of the dialogue immediately after Commissioner Jerome’s opening comments where he claims, “The commission did not come to force anybody to sign the paper,” a direct contradiction to his comments about congressional power the day before. Big Tree asserts, “All of [us] have understood the purpose of the Commissioners’ visit. It is not right that the Commissioners should have the floor all the time; we want to say something” (U.S. Senate 53).

He points out the Commissioners' refusal to listen, even as Commissioner Jerome continues to assert his position that the Kiowas do not understand the terms. Big Tree responds again, "I understand all that you have said to the Indians. I listened and listened time and again until the words go through the other ear, and still you talk and talk and talk. Now you sit down and let us talk a little while" (U.S. Senate 53). When Jerome continues, Big Tree repeats, "My ears are stuffed with the words of the commission" (U.S. Senate 53). AH PEE TOHN, in a final comment before the council talks erupt into chaos, asks the pointed question: "When the President of the United States sent you here did he instruct you to talk to these Indians about the sale of the surplus lands alone and the allotment business, and did he tell you also, outside of the general council, to get signers in a dishonest way?" (U.S. Senate 54). At this point, Jerome tells the Kiowas to go home and "do not come back here" (U.S. Senate 54). He calls the army in to Anadarko from Ft. Sill to maintain order. With 456 contested signatures in hand, the Commission left the area quickly thereafter.

Yet, despite the rhetorical suppression of Kiowa dissent operating during the Jerome Commission talks, Kiowa resistance never stopped. Kiowas adapted resistant rhetorical tactics and continued cultural practices as a means of subverting the silencing. Lone Wolf almost immediately traveled to Washington, D.C., to represent the Kiowa's disavowal of the agreement and unwillingness to compromise to an even more powerful audience. He built a transrhetorical network of allies to continue the fight against negotiations and successfully delayed the passage of the bill to allot Kiowa lands for over ten

years, well exceeding the expiration of the Medicine Lodge treaty in 1897. Lone Wolf ultimately succeeded, as J.T. points out, in creating a written record of Kiowa resistance to allotment, and today the Kiowa have the distinction of being the only tribe in Oklahoma never to consent to allotment. From these facts, a rhetorical legacy that subverts silencing and suppression emerges from Kiowa history and culture to contest dominant historical narratives concerning the settlement of Indian and Oklahoma Territories. This legacy provides Kiowa activists today with a rich set of rhetorical tactics and strategies to employ in their own work, and from which to derive cultural connections and inspiration.

BAY THAW HADLE, BAY PAY TDAY

J.T. Goombi writes letters to the editor of the *Anadarko Daily News* at least several times a month, and sometimes several times a week. Recently his letters have argued for the disbandment of what he believes to be an illegal Kiowa tribal government that refuses to leave office despite being recalled by an overwhelming majority of Kiowa voters (J.T. Goombi “Kiowa”). He begins his letter of January 15, 2015, with the imperatives, “KHOIYE GOO, BAY THAW HADLE! BAY PAY THAY!” – meaning “Kiowa people, Listen! Don’t give up!” (J.T. Goombi “Kiowa”). Far from simply being a way to gather the audience’s attention, these phrases characterize the basic patterns of rhetorical resistance arising from sites of cultural activism in the Kiowa community. They require rhetorical listening across cultural logics that function to ensure participation and dialogue. The patterns that emerge from these cultural logics persist across time and space, shaping and adapting Oklahoma’s historical narrative,

cultural and political identity in the present moment. They speak back to colonialism and global hegemony in a vivid local context that connects this landscape to the broader region. The examples Kiowa rhetorical strategies provide thus speak to contexts outside of the Kiowa community, to activists working for cultural literacy in other spaces. They provide a transrhetorical opening for critical regionalist studies seeking to include complex cultural perspectives emerging from shared geographies. In order to collaborate with other cultural sites with which activists network and benefit from shared knowledge across cultural logics, we must, as J.T. Goombi insists, *listen to one another*.

Last week at the beginning of the Kiowa Clemente Class, J.T. opened the evening with an oration on the need for cultural knowledge and community participation. He spoke, as he does every week, from his heart. He references his age and Dorothy's age and calls to the younger people in the class for action. "We are losing our ways," he says assuredly. "We used to have good ways. That's what we study here." He pauses for a moment in a silent room, and says, "If you listen, that's what you get here." He wants the students to understand the exigency of sustaining cultural knowledge at the same time that he provides a rhetorical model for doing so. Cultural literacy, the ability to use cultural knowledge for power, requires engagement. He wants students to use the cultural knowledge they gain in the class for the benefit of the tribe. Sharing cultural knowledge is the means of sustaining culture, and learning it deeply is a critical key.

After eating, we discuss the night's topic, the Kiowa Black Leggings Society from a mix of angles – Kiowa language, text, archival photographs, and song. Using Alecia's textbook, Dorothy slowly goes through the Kiowa words for other tribes as Dane also transcribes them in notes projected on the wall. The words serve as generative terms, similar to the method Paulo Freire used in his literacy classes in rural Brazil. Each word prompts memories of related words for Dorothy and other elders present, which Dane also lists. These words express historic connections between the Kiowa and other indigenous peoples, and also remind her of names and events from that history. At the same time the class learns language, they also learn the Kiowa culture it inhabits and constructs, and how both inform the lived landscape around the Anadarko area.

The class then turns to an ethnographic text, *Kiowa Military Societies*, another book co-written by anthropologist William Meadows and several prominent Kiowa elders. We take turns reading aloud from multiple paragraphs, skimming an overview of the known origins and earliest recorded accounts of the Black Leggings. Students discuss the origins of Black Leggings regalia and ceremonial objects – the black legs, the red capes, the furred crook, and the tipi – using Meadows' collected accounts and archival photographs as prompts. The final section we read details the ceremonial dances of the Black Leggings. Twice a year the Black Leggings hold dances at the powwow arena at Indian City in Anadarko. In October, they hold a two-day dance honoring Kiowa veterans. While the public is invited to attend, only Black Leggings

members and their closest female relatives can dance.

The Black Leggings members perform the “Turn Around Dance,” or TS’AHT KOIYE GYAH, toward the close of the event on the second day. The class turns its attention to Meadows treatment of this particular dance, known also as the “Reverse Dance,” or the “Encounter the Enemy Dance.” According the Meadows, as we read on, “the dance represents a series of retreats and counterattacks” and “contains multiple layers of spirit and meaning” (99). The dance originates from “a battle in Texas in the 1830s in which some Black Leggings members were outnumbered” (Meadows 99). Through a detailed description, Meadows maps out the dance’s choreography, patterns, and meanings, pointing out “the expression of [warrior] spirit permeates the entire encampment as it culminates” (101 – 102). During the first portion of the dance, lines of men proceeding clockwise and counterclockwise around the arena meet each other. When the two lines meet, the members “raise their lances, shoot off their guns, give war whoops, and reverse their direction” (Meadows 100). The pace of the singing, and the guns, and the drum increases as the dance continues, the two lines becoming more indistinct as the dance begins to represent the chaos of battle. As Meadows explains, “the dance cannot end until a combat veteran stops the drum by placing his lance across it, after which he must then recite a personal war deed or combat experience” (101). That story, a first person narrative of facing the enemy, along with the veteran telling the story, occupy the entire arena’s attention. Until the story ends, everyone present listens.

Likewise, in our class, students listen as well. The discussion begins to connect J.T.'s call for action and cultural commitment to the bravery and persistence represented by these dances and the war stories told by the Black Leggings members. The rhetorical model constructed across them honors the values inherent in Kiowa warrior societies, including the protection of Kiowa communities at all costs. The cultural knowledge inscribed in these dances contributes to Kiowa continuance, as does the study and discussion of them in our class. We decide to end class with a song, one of J.T.'s favorites. We use a recording of the Kiowa Cultural Class in Carnegie, OK, from December 1977 to follow along. The words of the song are as follows:

AHM AIM GAW K'AWN DOPE (You these ones no good)

HAH TSO BAW AWN TDAW (However to you will do)

NAW TDOIYE BAH KHOO YAW (And home you all are sitting/laying)

J.T. calls this song the "Challenge Song," and wants us all to learn it, to remember it, and to use it as motivation to act. The song's basic message, like the Black Leggings "Turn Around Dance," encourages Kiowas to resist the forces and peoples that act against them. For our class, the song operates as a kind of anthem, uniting the efforts of students and activists against dominant cultural forces that seek to suppress all others.

Across this chapter, likewise, I have attempted to construct an understanding of Kiowa cultural literacy activism and resistance rhetoric that counterinscribes historic accounts created by those dominant forces. By foregrounding historic and current activists, a transrhetorical connection

across time suggests Kiowa resistance has never been suppressed, but rather has persisted through the deployment and development of Kiowa rhetorical strategies. The patterns present in those strategies call the Kiowa to participate in the construction of their culture through telling stories, honoring family legacies and cultural memories, and persistently facing risk. Sharing cultural knowledge and listening to others play a central role in each of these rhetorical strategies. These practices connect the Kiowa to networks of activists beyond the Kiowa community where they practice and deploy them. Transrhetorical analysis, as I have tried to demonstrate, suggests Kiowa concepts and cultural strategies continue to shape Oklahoma and the region. Kiowa rhetoric speaks to activists engaged in similar resistant projects elsewhere.

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“GEOGRAPHY WAS FATE”: AFRICAN-NATIVE RESISTANCE IN THE PROMISED LAND

DOWN HOME RHETORIC: THE RENTIESVILLE-TULSA/AFRICAN NATIVE NETWORK IN OKLAHOMA

On the corner of John Hope Franklin Avenue and D.C. Minner Boulevard in Rentiesville, Oklahoma, sits the Down Home Blues Club. The club is home to the annual Dusk Til' Dawn Blues Festival, held each Labor Day in the surrounding fields of the historically all-black town. Rentiesville, like the intersection of its streets named after two native sons, provides a rich text of networked histories and cultures. Situated in the Muscogee Creek Nation, it has long been a site of cultural activity on the part of diverse peoples. The Down Home Blues Club, as a rhetorical example of this activity, represents an historical location of African-American and African Native agency. According to Selby Minner, D.C. Minner's widow who continues to run the club and festival, the land on which it sits has been in the Martin-Minner family since Rentiesville's earliest beginnings. After Creek allotment, an African-American man named Dr. Clark Martin bought the land from a Creek woman named Phoebe McIntosh (Minner 2). Dr. Martin emigrated with his Cherokee wife, Anne Martin, from Choccolocco, Alabama, in the late 1800s, well prior to statehood. Because the Cherokee Nation showed less acceptance of racially mixed marriages, they chose to settle in the formerly held lands of the Muscogee Creek Nation, where people and cultural practices were more tolerant. D.C. Minner, Doctor Clark's great-great-grandson, is named after him (Minner 2). This chapter demonstrates in part the rhetorical legacy that runs

between them, as related African-American/African-Native men living at points in time across generations and counter to silence. I also seek to connect them to a larger network of cultural literacy activism in across regional locations.

Oklahoma's African American history connects deeply with Native American history, in ways scholars have only begun to reconcile. Each of the five tribes removed from the southeastern United States in the 1830s – the Cherokees, Muscogee Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles – brought slaves. Slave ownership amongst these nations resulted from colonial contact. While slave ownership was largely concentrated amongst the “mixed bloods,” or racially mixed European Natives, a small percentage of “full bloods” owned slaves as well. Slaves lived with varying degrees of freedom and autonomy across Native cultures and slave-owning families. Professor of History David Chang argues the “trajectory” of slavery among Muskogee Creeks “bore the mark of British and American colonialism” (23). During the process of their colonialization, “blackness became the mark of slavery and nonblackness the mark of freedom” and “race became a constituent part of Creekness” (Chang 22). Before colonialization it had not been. For Chang, race and property entered Creek from European culture as rhetorically conjoined concepts. Intrusive ideas of ownership inherent in colonialism extended to land and people and included the slavery of African, Caribbean, and Indigenous Americans.

At the same time, as Chang notes, “some people of African descent lived as free and full members of Creek towns” prior to removal (23). “Lower

Towns,” or Creek towns (*tvlwas*) situated “on the southern branch” of the Chattahoochee River basin, served as the “center of free black life,” where town leadership included black males (Chang 23). This practice continued after removal in Indian Territory, when Lower and Upper Creeks continued to “maintain separate councils,” and differing ideas on slavery (Chang 34). After the Civil War, Muskogee Creek Freedman began to establish their own locations and towns in Creek Country and had representation on the Creek Council. Additionally, freed slaves from the south migrated to Indian Territory in increasing numbers. They came in search of sanctuary from harsh restrictions including the Jim Crow laws of the reconstruction south. No such laws existed in Indian or Oklahoma Territories. These diasporic groups of African Native and African Americans in Oklahoma represented equally divergent interests, cultural identities, and political allegiances.

What I intend to illustrate in this chapter, namely the rhetorical legacies that cultural activists operating within Oklahoma African-American history inherit, requires acknowledging also, like all the activist sites investigated in these chapters, the roles silence and suppression play. While I begin in Rentiesville, Oklahoma, in an all-black township built on Muscogee Creek land, I archivally trace historical activists situated there across locations to the “Tulsa Race Riot;” then again across time to cultural literacy sites in Tulsa and Rentiesville where activists I interview continue to work today. The temporal and spatial examination I attempt also accounts for the forms of rhetorical suppression and silencing these activists encountered as African Americans

and Natives of African descent in Oklahoma. This includes allotment processes designed to marginalize tribal freedmen and the implementation of Jim Crow legislation immediately after statehood.

Race hatred and violence, seen most vividly and materially in the 1921 Tulsa tragedy, operates rhetorically within procedural policies and laws designed to limit black economic and political freedoms in Oklahoma history post-statehood. In looking closely at a site of historical trauma for black Oklahomans, however, African American rhetorical agency and cultural activism becomes visible in Oklahoma as well. A counter-narrative emerges in my examination, produced by Oklahoma cultural literacy activists working not only at historical sites such as the Tulsa “race riot,” but also at African American cultural literacy sites in Rentiesville and North Tulsa today. The rhetorical patterns of resistance, resilience, and reconciliation that emerge from these activists effectively resist racial and regional suppression and silencing, not only as it has occurred historically in Oklahoma, but also as it continues to occur here today.

These patterns, as with all the rhetorical patterns emerging from Oklahoma activists, exhibit transrhetorical qualities marked by cultural contact, competition, and cooperation. While suppression and silencing emerge from territorial competition, driven in large part by capitalism and the racial hegemony it constructed in Oklahoma, my inquiry privileges cross-cultural cooperation as rhetorical motif. Cultural literacy activism in Oklahoma, local in its character, depends upon the movement of ideas between

groups working toward similar social justice aims. As such, the rhetorical strategies exhibited by these groups, as they surface in archival material and in field interviews with activists, function transrhetorically to unite activists in common objectives. Likewise, suppressive rhetorical strategies present in dominant local rhetorics exact a transrhetorical price across multiple spaces. In this way, the rhetorical legacy left at a site of historical trauma such as the “Tulsa Race Riot” impacts Oklahoma activists beyond these sites. In this way, these activists cannot exist beyond black history in Oklahoma. This regional, rhetorical legacy of racist suppression and cultural resistance continues to shape local activist discourses at various sites and concerning a wide variety of social justice issues. In short, social justice activism in Oklahoma does not operate outside of the state’s black history.

How African American and African Native activists have navigated the trauma of suppression, rhetorically and otherwise, at regional sites discussed here provides a valuable transrhetorical model for activists working across Oklahoma’s cultural and political networks. Transrhetorically, African American cultural literacy activists extend a rhetorical example that informs local activist work broadly. This example serves to rhetorically unite local cultural groups working for positive social change here, particularly in regional and local rhetorical climates marked by pervasive and enduring parallel patterns of suppression which operate transrhetorically to divide these groups. Racist hegemony introduced in allotment period policies and through legislation after statehood culminate in the Tulsa Race Riot as a site of

rhetorical suppression. Local models of cultural literacy activism perform rhetorical resistance by subverting suppressive rhetorics, and provide insight applicable across activist sites for working against transrhetorical silencing.

LOCAL VOICES, LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND CULTURAL LITERACY AS ACTIVISM

In chapters two and three, while the general theoretical frame I established in my first chapter remains, I also use the work of scholars who identify with the local cultural sites I investigate, such as the Down Home Blues Club, the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation in Tulsa, and Reconciliation Park in Tulsa. This allows me to augment my commitment to privilege cultural sovereignty and honor local knowledge and voices. In this chapter, I apply the same pattern, adding to my pre-established theoretical scaffold the work of Dr. John Hope Franklin, considered an intellectual father of African American history in the United States, and a heralded native son of Oklahoma, born and raised in Rentiesville and Tulsa. Also, one of the sites of present-day activism I investigate (in addition to the Down Home Blues Club) is the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation in Tulsa. John Hope Franklin's father, Buck Colbert Franklin, worked as an attorney in the Greenwood District in Tulsa prior to the 1921 "riot." Post-riot, B.C. Franklin also represented hundreds of riot victims in court cases seeking damages. This father and son relationship transrhetorically connects activist sites in Oklahoma, but also informs my project transrhetorically by offering both a theoretical lens (through the scholarship of John Hope Franklin) and a rhetorical inquiry site (the archival traces of Buck Colbert Franklin's activism).

Activist interviews situated in Rentiesville and Tulsa provide theoretical insight as well, when understood through the lens of critical regionalism and transrhetorical analysis. Activists provide narratives derived from lived experience working in the regional spaces shaped by these cultures, their rhetorical legacies, and their activists. Collectively experienced encounters with suppressive rhetorical forces animate the local rhetorical patterns of resistance made visible by them.

Across sites of resistance to rhetorical suppression among Oklahoma African Americans and African Natives, cultural literacy operates as an activist tool intended to address the continuance of local knowledge and promote social change. Where Selby Minner works through the Down Home Blues Club to honor, teach, and inscribe Rentiesville history and culture, she does so with the rhetorical intent of furthering social equality and civil rights. Her commitment to projects such as the Oklahoma Blues Hall of Fame, the Dusk til Dawn Blues Festival, and community blues classes privileges Oklahoma's African American and African Native cultures and the values of community and cooperation historically animating them. These can be understood as the same civic values and rhetorical goals of Rentiesville itself and the Martin-Minner family as well.

Within the field of Composition and Rhetoric, African-American scholar Jackie Royster provides a solid theoretical and analytical model for understanding literacy as sociopolitical action. Royster argues that the challenge for scholars "fashioning a theoretical frame" for marginalized groups

must be met by understanding “literacy in such a way as to consider it not just an autonomous, objectified artifact of education and refinement but also a fundamentally subjective tool, made meaningful within systems of belief” (34). By understanding systems of belief as constructed within regional cultural networks, literacy activists in Oklahoma use cultural literacy as a tool to obtain their own social objectives.

Royster deduces scholars must “come to appreciate the creative and interpretive power of the landscape view of literacy” and “find useful ways to envision literacy in its particulars” (45). In her study of African-American women literacy workers and activists, Royster aims to “underscore the idea that literacy connects profoundly, variously, and inextricably with their lives lived in specific contexts” as she argues for “understanding literacy as emanating from lived experience” (45). As such she sees literacy as a “sociocognitive ability” used by individuals “to gain access to information variously to articulate lives and experiences and also to identify, think through, refine, and solve problems, sometimes complex problems over time” (Royster 45). Like Selby Minner, Royster sees the connections between history, literacy, collective cultural experience, and rhetorical power to affect change. For both women, culture and literacy are synonymous, indivisible, and transrhetorical.

Cultural literacy activists working in African American sites inherit a long legacy of scholarship regarding the writing of African-American history, a rhetorical site of increasing discourse since the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a leading scholar in his field, Rentiesville native John Hope

Franklin contributed volumes of historical scholarship inscribing African-American experience into United States history. His work cannot be overestimated in terms of the transrhetorical connections between cultures it achieves through historical research and writing. His book *From Slavery to Freedom* was first published in 1947, propelling his career not only as an historian, but also making him a front-runner among African American historiographers. This book continues to be updated and used in African-American history courses throughout the United States.

Franklin went on to become a public figure, participating in President Clinton's Initiative on Race and winning the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1995 – the nation's highest civilian honor. After receiving his PhD from Harvard he maintained a lifelong academic career, retiring emeritus from Duke University in 1985. He authored and edited a total of 20 published books during his lifetime, leaving not only a lasting rhetorical legacy within African-American history marked by social activism, but also contributing his voluminous written record toward increasing African-American cultural literacy through the writing of history.

Literacy scholarship acknowledges literacy sponsorship, via the work of Deborah Brandt (1998), who established the connection between literacy programming and those who sponsor it⁷¹. John Hopes Franklin's lived experience must be significant then. John Hope Franklin's early childhood education took place under his mother's watchful eye. Mollie Parker Franklin taught in Rentiesville's all-black school. Later, after moving to Tulsa, John Hope

attended Booker T. Washington high school (segregated) during the reconstruction of the Greenwood District and surrounding black neighborhoods in the years immediately following the “Tulsa Race Riot.” His teachers were well-educated African American role models who according to John Hope set high standards amidst encouragement and support. As a teenager, Franklin witnessed the African-American community resist the suppression and silencing enacted in the riot’s destruction of personal, political, and economic landscapes. By rebuilding Greenwood, they reinscribed themselves. This no doubt influenced his understanding of the writing of African-American history as a sociopolitical act, particularly as it acts against rhetorical erasure.

In his essay, “The New Negro History,” originally published in the *Crisis* (1977) and later reprinted in a 1989 collection entitled *Race and History: Selected Essays 1938 – 1988*, Franklin explains this sense of suppression and silencing. He opens by saying, “In discussing the history of a people, one must distinguish between what has *actually* [sic] happened and what those who have written the history have *said* [sic] has happened” (Franklin “The New” 41). Here Franklin articulates the assumption that those who write history may not fully represent the facts. Within the context of an essay about African American history, his italics indicate a grievous gap between African-American lived experiences and United States history as written by European Americans and former enslavers.

From here, Franklin situates the writing of African-American history,

which began with the work of African-American historians, within the arch of African-American cultural achievement. In so doing, he seeks to bridge the historical gap. Transrhetorically, he uses writing to connect cultures through composing resistant history, or rather historical narratives of African Americans that resist rhetorical suppression. He understands the sociopolitical power of writing. He argues, "The changes that have occurred in the writing of the history of the Negro are as significant and, in some ways, even more dramatic than the very events themselves that the writers have sought to describe" (Franklin 42). This locates their achievement within the discursive environment of suppressive historical discourse produced by white historians. "History, they claimed, clearly demonstrated that Negroes could not survive as free men," he summarizes (Franklin 43). The transrhetorical effect of this argument was to uphold white hegemony and economic power while silencing African American history and movements that contradicted this goal.

The erasure that results from this kind of rhetorical suppression in historical texts impacts audiences across boundaries of race. For the rhetorical suppressers, erasure empowers their rhetoric and ensures their goals. The rhetorically suppressed, however, must deal with the disempowerment silencing seeks to enact. Franklin makes it plain: "The effect of this kind of written history has been not only far-reaching but deadly" (43). For him, the rhetorical suppression not only silences black experiences and voices, but also enables suppression through social, political, and economic tactics as well as lethal violence. History that suppresses African American culture "has

provided the historical justification for the whole complex of mischievous and pernicious laws designed to create and maintain an unbridgeable gulf between Negroes and whites." He continues, "the deadly effects of such propaganda have been spread in all directions, pervading northern communities and even countries abroad," influencing and informing slavery and genocide systems worldwide (Franklin 43). For Franklin, suppressive rhetoric and history produces transrhetorical effects as it crosses lives, nations, and continents. African-American historiography "then, is the literary and intellectual movement that seeks to achieve the same justice in history that is sought in other spheres;" it "gives strength and support to the other efforts that today seek equality and freedom" (Franklin 43). Just as suppression operates transrhetorically, so does resistance.

For culturally marginalized groups, cultural literacy work acknowledges a need for rhetorical inscription for marginalized cultures living amidst rhetorical erasure. Any effort to advance cultural knowledge and local discourses in the presence of dominating rhetorics, especially when they suppress, can be understood as sociopolitical action, as Royster suggests. The cultural literacy activists I interviewed for this chapter provide rich access to understanding these literacy efforts as rhetorical resistance. As in previous chapters, activists here self-identify as activists to varying degrees. All of them, however, work in their own way to further and promote Oklahoma African-American history and culture as means of affecting social change.

In addition to Selby Minner, legendary proprietress of the Down Homes

Blues Club in Rentiesville, I also interview several others. Dr. Jocelyn Payne is a retired professor of education, born and raised in Tulsa, and inaugural executive director of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation in Tulsa. Jef Kos serves as the Board Member and Board Secretary for the J.H.F. Center for Reconciliation in addition to Chairman of the Board for the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame. Mr. Kos oversaw the production of the African-American historical narrative memorialized in bronzed text plaques at the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, discussed in depth later in this chapter. Ms. Roberta Clardy is the owner and founder, managing editor and head staff writer of *North Tulsa Magazine*. The magazine, which in its masthead claims North Tulsa to be “the Center of the Universe,” has been published variously in print and online for almost ten years. Dr. Hannibal Johnson practices law in the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce building and publishes prolifically on Oklahoma’s African-American history. He actively promotes civic education regarding the “Tulsa Race Riot” in all Leadership Tulsa classes. Together these activists span the historical and cultural sites I engage in my investigation, as sites of cultural resistance within African-American Oklahoma history, and also represent cultural literacy work enacted at these sites today.

The work these activists perform can be conceived of as literacy work in multiple ways. Literacy, in its most basic sense, denotes the consumption and production of texts (written language, visuals, audio, physical spaces, etc.). Texts are consumed via reading (also seeing, hearing, experiencing, etc.), and texts are produced via writing (also composing, imaging, constructing,

designing, etc.). The activists I encounter in this chapter implement literacy toward the goals of cultural resistance by both consuming and producing texts. The texts they consume and produce are cultural texts – music, oral history, written history, public monuments, community magazines – circulating local black cultural knowledge within African-American communities in Oklahoma, and also beyond them to non-African-American communities in Oklahoma as well.

Even beyond the boundaries of Oklahoma, through relationships with cultural workers elsewhere addressing similar issues related to African American culture and history, these activists connect Oklahoma to a broader network of resistance. Across this network, cultural knowledge and local histories function transrhetorically to unite their efforts regardless of geographic and racial boundaries in the pursuit of common sociopolitical goals. Their work here writes Oklahoma into African-American history writ large and into African-American activism occurring nationally. As Royster reminds us to understand literacy's inalienable link to lived experience, inscribing Oklahoma in this way makes the work of these individuals explicitly cultural literacy activism. Together they educate Oklahomans representing diverse communities and identities about black Oklahoma.

OKLAHOMA AS THE PROMISED LAND IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL IMAGINATION

Despite rhetorical suppression within dominant historical narratives, Oklahoma has long played an active role in African-American history of in the

United States. Though the state has generally been constructed as white and Native in the national imagination, for African Americans after the Civil War, the Indian and Oklahoma Territories became a geographical metaphor for unparalleled freedom and opportunity. Rhetorically, the twin territories became a transrhetorical trope operating in discourses around individual and racial advancement, particularly in the southern states. David Chang points out, “For African Americans from the southern states, the defeat of Reconstruction, the imposition of Jim Crow, and the denial of voting rights across the South gave particular urgency to the quest for landownership and political self-determination” (150). Because the Muskogee Creek Nation had an historic reputation for greater tolerance of racial difference, many southern black settlers migrated to the Creek Territory.

Current maps indicate that the majority of Oklahoma’s All-Black Towns fall within the geographic boundaries of the Creek Nation. Because of what was at first “small numbers” of migrants, “towns, families, and settlements of Creeks of African descent incorporated these few newcomers without much difficulty” (Chang 151). However, as allotment became an emerging political reality and the 1889 Land Run became imminent, “beginning in the late 1880s [...] tens of thousands of African Americans poured into Oklahoma” (Chang 151). This complicated Oklahoma’s black population with “ethnic differences” between tribal citizens who had lived here for generations and those newly arrived to the landscape (Chang 151). Though these newcomers technically intruded illegally, rhetorically the territories had become a beacon for racial progress

and black migration. Because of African Native history and the context it created in Muskogee Creek Country, most migrants were able to establish themselves without trouble.

At the same time, Oklahoma pervaded African-American discourse in a variety of rhetorical venues during the era of black migration out of the deep south, particularly in the decade and a half prior to statehood. According to scholars Daniel Littlefield and Lonnie Underhill, pioneering black political leaders “did much to promote black immigration to Oklahoma” (345). Edward Preston McCabe, for instance, an African American politician who served as state auditor in Kansas, “advocated a plan of dispossessing whites of political power and organizing colonies of blacks” (Littlefield and Underhill 345). McCabe argued that through amassing a black political majority, African Americans could achieve electoral representation in the territories and enter the union as an All-Black State. “By February 1890,” less than a year after the opening of the “Unassigned Lands,” part of which were historically Muskogee Creek lands, “there were seven black settlements in the Territory” (Littlefield and Underhill 343). Chang observes “the black settlers made their homes especially in areas that became part of Okfuskee and Okmulgee counties, but also in Muskogee, Wagoner, Seminole, and other counties that would make up Oklahoma’s ‘Black Belt’” (152). These counties cross Muskogee Creek, Cherokee, and Seminole land bases.

Booker T. Washington, preeminent black public intellectual and promoter of economic uplift as a means of political progress, visited Oklahoma

in 1905. In his report of his tour, “[Washington] noted that he ‘was pleased to learn that an unusually large number of these black immigrants had become owners of land in the city and in the country’ and that African Americans had prospered especially in the Creek Nation” (Chang 156). Washington’s widely publicized interest in Oklahoma, heralded in African-American newspapers throughout the country, and his endorsement of African-American progress here participates in the larger historic discourse calling African Americans from elsewhere to the region. The fact that Oklahoma’s geography features more historically All-Black Towns by far than any other state in the union remains, however, a little known fact – another indication of rhetorical suppression operating in the state’s social and political construction. Yet, Oklahoma’s predominance in the African-American social and political imagination beginning after the Civil War well through the decades past statehood suggests a significant and persistent counter-narrative that subverts that suppression.

In his essay, “Going to the Territory,” originally published in 1980, Oklahoma native and renowned African-American author Ralph Ellison suggests “once in a while the veil which shrouds the details of our unwritten history is thrown back, and not only do the deserving find belated recognition, but sometimes marvelous interconnection between the past and the present spring to light” (122). Ellison continues, “we possess two basic versions of American history: one which is written and as neatly stylized as ancient myth, and the other unwritten and as chaotic and full of contradictions, changes of

pace, and surprises as life itself" (124). "There's no denying the fact," he insists, "that Americans can be notoriously selective in the exercise of historical memory;" "although repressed from our general knowledge of ourselves, it is always quite active in the shaping of events" (Ellison 124). Ellison acknowledges the ways in which suppressed and silent histories continue regardless to function in the present through actively influencing individual lives and communities, as well as society more broadly. Suppressed history is not the same for Ellison as erased, obliterated, or wholly forgotten history; it "defies our inattention by continuing to grow and have consequences" (126). Suppressed history persists despite its suppression.

For Ellison, location plays a critical role within history, particularly with African American history. African-American experience, in his argument, has been imbued with the politics of location. "As slaves [African Americans] had long been aware that for themselves, as for most of their countrymen, geography was fate" (Ellison 131). He continues, "they observed the transformation of individual fortune made possible by the westward movement along the frontier, but the Mason-Dixon Line had taught them the relationship between geography and freedom" (Ellison 131). Geography "as a symbol of the unknown included not only places, but conditions relating to their racially defined status" (Ellison 131). Within this geography, Oklahoma became a reference point for freedom's greatest possibilities.

Ellison's essay takes its name, as he acknowledges, from a Bessie Smith song through which she gives "voice to this knowledge when she sings 'Goin' to

the Nation, Going to the Terr'tor' " (131). Musicologist Chris Smith points out that this song, entitled "Work House Blues" and recorded by Smith in 1924, references terms used both prior to Oklahoma statehood and even after the "Tulsa Race Riot," operating discursively well over three decades. (85). He argues that Bessie Smith understands the terms "Nation" and "Territory" as references to Oklahoma as refuge "from the post-Reconstruction South, where the workhouse and other penal institutions were used to control and cow African Americans, and white power sought to limit them" (Smith 85). In American Blues music, a genre that was itself newly acknowledged, Oklahoma – which prior to statehood had no Jim Crow - transrhetorically signified for African Americans a location of unparalleled social, political, and economic opportunity. It became, to use another metaphor, the promised land.

Despite the uneven development of the historical record itself, as Ellison acknowledges, African-American migrants indeed responded to this rhetorical trope of Oklahoma, as evidenced in part in blues music. According to his study, Chris Smith concludes "all the early blues [recorded between 1924 – 1941] which mention Oklahoma appear to be performed by singers from outside the state," "and almost invariably refer to going there, and often with positive expectations" (84). These recordings almost certainly replicate songs sung well before they were recorded. Chris Smith points out that by the 1920 census, Oklahoma "had a sizeable African-American minority" – "149,408 of Oklahoma's 2,028,283 population, or 7.4 percent" (83). Clearly, geography and fate entwined in the lives of these individuals, families, and communities, as

Ellison suggests.

Ellison also makes clear, however, “it is important to remember,” particularly regarding human history, “that it is not geography alone which determines the quality of life and culture” (134). Instead, he asserts, “these depend upon the courage and personal culture of the individuals who make their homes in any given locality” (Ellison 134). In this way, Ellison – in turning attention to Oklahoma – turns again and finally to Oklahoman African Americans and African Natives. He constructs them as people pursuing the betterment of themselves, their families, and of their communities. In Oklahoma they did so within a transrhetorical location of complex and co-existing cultures. While “the geographical frontier is gone, [...] the process of cultural integration continues” (Ellison 134). Cultural literacy activists working in African-Native and African-American spaces in this state, despite rhetorical suppression, continue the historical work of their predecessors and forebearers who acted to transrhetorically inscribe Oklahoma as a beacon of progress and cultural cooperation across difference.

RENTIESVILLE AS A SITE OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE

Selby Minner is neither a native Oklahoman nor an African American. She describes herself as “a good American mongrel,” listing French, French Canadian, German, English, Italian, and Irish lineage (1). She lives in the Down Home Blues Club, portions of which are also her home and her art studio. She now shares this space with her boyfriend, Dan “Oklahoma Slim” Ortiz – a Comanche/Latino blues guitarist from Lawton, OK. Selby says she “first saw

this place in 77,” two years before she married legendary blues guitarist D.C. Minner. Selby married D.C. in 1979 and afterwards they toured full-time in their band, “Blues on the Move.” They retired from the road and moved to Rentiesville, into the family home that is now the blues club, in 1988. D.C. and Selby lived there together for thirty years, turning their energy into several local cultural literacy projects: the “Oklahoma Blues Hall of Fame,” “Blues in Schools” and the annual “Dusk Til’ Dawn Blues Festival.” Selby continues these projects and has added community blues classes to her roster since D.C. Minner’s passing in 2008.

Though she does not articulate her work in the discursive terms of literacy scholarship, Selby clearly states her “motivation is to keep this music alive” – “the real thing, not some rock commercialized version of it. The music and the people” (Minner 16). She articulates here the connection between cultural rhetorics, such as the blues culture in Oklahoma, and the people who enact those rhetorics. Having lived for 37 years in one of Oklahoma’s enduring all-black towns, surrounded also by the parallel histories and cultures of the Muskogee Creek Nation, Selby characterizes the music she studies, plays, and teaches as resistance. “When you can turn work that’s designed to just about kill you into a dance, the music that helps you do that is genius” (Minner 16). Here Selby acknowledges the roots of blues music in the African American slavery experience, emphasizing the role the music played in promoting individual, community, and cultural resilience. In sharing this music with audiences in a variety of settings inside and outside the state, Selby herself

understands her own position as a conduit for a rich Oklahoma legacy of African Native and African American experience.

Transrhetorically, across racial lines, Selby Minner weaves her own narrative as a blues artist and cultural literacy worker into D.C. Minner's familial narrative, Oklahoma history, and the African-Native cultural landscape. "Until statehood, black people could still vote here," Selby explains, and they "knew they could survive because it was the same crops" they grew in the South (Minner 2). She couples political representation with economic opportunity as motivating factors for African Americans in towns like Rentiesville. "They wanted to come here and see if they could have a better life for their kids and grandkids," and D.C. Minner's generation inherited their efforts (Minner 2). D.C.'s grandmother, Miss Lurie Martin, arrived in Rentiesville with her grandparents, Dr. Clark and Anne Martin.

In later years, Miss Lurie raised her grandson D.C. on the same property purchased by the Martins, on the same corner where Selby lives now. After Rentiesville's economic decline and Dr. Martin's pharmacy closed and he passed away, Miss Lurie used the building to open a small grocery store called the Cozy Corner that doubled as a "corn whiskey house" where she also sold homemade Choc beer during prohibition (Minner 2). Miss Lurie supported her family this way and managed to outwit the law by befriending local politicians. She held political rallies at the Cozy Corner to help them garner black votes while also registering African-American and African-Native voters. "She was a real social center here," as Selby explains (Minner 2). Miss Lurie created an

atmosphere for community rhetorical agency and fostered transrhetorical alliances for sociopolitical action.

This was the home where D.C., born in 1935, grew up. Selby smiles and says, “[D.C.] remember[ed] when they got electricity, them putting up the poles. The first thing [Miss Lurie] did was buy a jukebox, an Old Wurlitzer. With that fabulous sound” (Minner 3). From that point on, D.C. Minner was hooked on electric music. Selby met D.C. in Berkeley, California, in the early 1970s where they both lived as professional musicians. As an artist, musician, feminist, and civil rights activist since her twenties, she moved to an Oklahoma cultural site she finds comfortable. Selby’s observation of Oklahoma as a site of social justice activism is positive: “In my experience, two people who work hard here together can make a difference” (Minner 17). She continues, “this black community has been extremely good to me,” and Oklahoma blues music and black history have become her life-long causes (17). She herself has become a part of both.

The history of Rentiesville, Oklahoma, includes multiple stories such as the Martin- Minner family’s narrative. The town’s name comes from William Rentie, who founded the town in 1903 and was “a public school teacher and lawyer of mixed Muscogee (Creek) and African American descent, who also served in the Muscogee (Creek) legislature” (*Long* 48). The town was founded on 40 acres, half of which was owned by William Rentie and the other half by Phoebe McIntosh – both Muscogee Creek Freedmen. Historian Hannibal Johnson situates Rentiesville “in northeastern McIntosh County some

seventeen miles southwest of Muskogee on Dirty Creek, west of Rattlesnake Mountain" ("Acres" 132). Despite these stark geographic references, early promoters of the town emphasized the landscape's beauty and utility. In an October 1904 speech, N.A. Robinson, "a Baptist minister and town promoter," claimed "twelve months ago, this beautiful site was nothing more than a common grove" and "today it is a well-organized town" (Johnson "Acres" 132). A 1907 ad in the *Muskogee Cimeter* claims Rentiesville "is the pick of the territory. No town to compare with it that is being promoted by colored people" (Long 48). While early promotion emphasized the land and water resources, soon the town also boasted "a post office, a railway passenger stop, two churches and a school house" (Long 48). In addition to the Martins, one of the many families attracted to the town was the Franklin family.

Attorney Buck Colbert Franklin and his wife Mollie moved to Rentiesville in 1912, five years after statehood, from Ardmore, Oklahoma, where B.C. had been a practicing attorney. He explains in his autobiography that he found practicing law in Ardmore frustrating and demoralizing. Franklin was born in May 1879 in the Chickasaw Nation. His paternal grandfather for whom he was named was the slave of a full-blood Chickasaw family, but had purchased his own freedom, along with his wife's and ten children's, "long before the Civil War" (B.C. Franklin 1). B.C.'s mother, Milley Franklin, "was of one-fourth Choctaw Indian blood, the other three quarters being Negro," and was raised in "the home of her Indian kin" where she spoke Choctaw throughout her childhood. Milley married David Franklin, and together they

raised ten children of their own on a farm and ranch outside of Pauls Valley on land owned by the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations (B.C. Franklin 2). B.C. Franklin first heard of Rentiesville by word of mouth from a man he met by chance in Ardmore. B.C. explains, “he was loud in praise of his town,” continuing:

He said that it had a population of a thousand; that it had a splendid school system in the form of a school built of brick, with seven teachers and an enrollment of perhaps 500 pupils; that it boasted a cotton gin, a sawmill, a large post office, and churches of most faiths;[...] that the town was incorporated, and that its officers were colored, as were the justice of the peace and the constable. [...] In fact the entire community from every direction was composed of colored farmers who owned their farms. He emphasized the fact that the people were like one great loving family. (B.C. Franklin 144)

After one final mistrial in the local courts, aggravated by drunken white jurors, B.C. and Mollie decided to move to Rentiesville sight unseen. A little less than a century later, the main street through town would be named after their son John Hope Franklin, who was born in 1915 and named after his father’s professor of American history at Roger Williams University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Rentiesville persists as one of the thirteen remaining all-black towns in Oklahoma, out of what was originally well over 50 towns. Through the efforts of D.C. and Selby Minner, and other local residents, the town retains much of the original ethos of these towns as “that better place,” Hannibal Johnson writes, “sometimes earthly, sometimes ethereal, [that] gave reason for hope. Beulah Land. Paradise. Shangri-la. Oklahoma seemed to be all of these” (“Acres” xii). B.C. Franklin, having lived his teenage and young adult years in

Indian Territory as statehood approached and passed, admits in his autobiography that the African American situation changed just as rapidly as the developing landscape.

After E.P. McCabe's vigorous movement for recognition as an all-black state failed, white supremacy and racial hegemony became increasingly codified. "In the very first legislature, the freshmen legislators began to introduce and pass a series of hostile and discriminatory laws aimed directly at the Negro," B.C. Franklin explains (145). These laws, the result of southern Democrats vying for political power in the new state, replicated Jim Crow laws in place throughout the segregated South, including laws intended to restrict and limit the black vote. These realities impacted families like the Martins and the Franklins, as well as All-Black Towns like Rentiesville. Despite their continued success and autonomy through the early years of statehood, the impact of increasing racial hegemony and white supremacy ultimately limited their development and contributed to their eventual decline.

RACIAL HEGEMONY AND RHETORICAL SUPPRESSION

The suppressive impact of Oklahoma's early racial politics characterizes the transrhetorical context within which historical and present-day activists operate within and against the rhetorical silence that resulted. As Hannibal Johnson explains, "the specter of Jim Crow would not be the sole cause for concern among Blacks in early twentieth-century Oklahoma" ("Acres" 68). Additionally, "many Black freedmen," who had received allotments, "fell prey to various and pervasive forms of fraud designed to secure record title to their

land” (Johnson “Acres” 68). Initially, the Muscogee Creek Nation met the Dawes Commission with “unified opposition that transcended the very real divisions of race and class in the Creek Nation” and “different factions in the nation all believed that they had economic, political, and cultural interest in defending the commons and the nation” (Chang 85). However, the influx of African-American migrants to black settlements in the Creek Nation created new alliances across distinct ethnic groups.

As Chang explains, “black Creeks felt they were part of a black nation that spanned the political boundaries between Creeks and African Americans,” and they “came to endorse allotment because they felt it would serve the broader racial community,” rather than simply helping the Creek Freedmen (84). Given the national discourse concerning “racial uplift” among African Americans and promoted by leaders such as Booker T. Washington and E.P. McCabe, economic betterment and political equality were rhetorically linked. Because allotment had the potential to create a large land-owning class among blacks, it became something for which black leaders, both Creek and non-Creek, advocated (Chang 91). There were, of course, African Creeks who resisted allotment as well, emphasizing instead that common land tenure “was basic to the nature of their society” (Chang 87). Allotment, in this way, was a greater threat to cultural continuance than removal. For these African Creeks and other cultural conservatives, the connection between land and nationhood should not be severed.

Meanwhile, the discourse around allotment created a rhetorical space

within which racial hegemony was increasingly inscribed. David Chang observes, the “Dawes Commission staff used race as the determinant of enrollment status,” where race had never been codified in Muskogee Creek culture and African Creeks had historically experienced political representation. The rhetorical shift towards race as a signifier of political status “gave vigor to the suspicions of some Creeks that many or even all black Creeks were not Creeks at all” (Chang 95). In addition to federally sponsored allotment policies, local policies such as the Muskogee Creek tribal rolls and the Oklahoma State Constitution (taking shape in territorial committees and drafting conventions) began to reflect these racial and rhetorical shifts as well.

In constructing the Dawes roll, tribal enrollment was presented as a prerequisite for allotment. “By blood” became a newly powerful category, as Chang surmises, “following the Anglo-American principle of hypodescent” whereby “one ‘drop’ of African ‘blood’ established that a person was ‘Negro’” (94). If tribal members wished to receive title to land, they had first to establish tribal membership. These rolls established “racial categorizations far more systematically” than ever before in the Indian Territory (Chang 93). For all African Creeks and African-American Creek Freedmen, for instance, regardless of “white or indigenous ancestry, the Dawes Commission made a policy of registering [...] as Freedmen,” a term that rhetorically obscures actual Native descendancy among African Creeks (94). Instead this policy emphasizes African descent only. Because Freedmen received allotments under federal policy, this did not impact their claim to land in the Creek Nation. It did,

however, impact the protection Freedmen received from the federal government in maintaining their land ownership under federal restrictions. Only those listed as Muscogee Creek “by blood” on the tribal rolls received federal protection under these restrictions. This became significant during the rampant land graft that occurred post-allotment.

Likewise, tribal Freedmen had little access to the territorial courts. As an example of the vulnerability of tribal Freedmen who received allotted land, B.C. Franklin describes a common scheme designed to rob them of their land titles. A land company, which likely did not actually exist, would convey representative ownership of a Freedmen allotment and, unbeknownst to the Freedmen landowner, sell the land to a third party. As he explains, “The third party would appear and claim the land, threatening to sue for possession unless the land was delivered to him at once. The true owner, ignorant and baffled, did not know what to do” (B.C. Franklin 148). Franklin, as an attorney himself, claims the legal fees were impossibly high, and “nine times out of ten the lawyer would exact a fee of one-half interest to try and recover the land, with the freedmen paying all expenses” (148). Even if the land companies did not actually exist or did not show up in court, the third party still claimed to have given money in exchange for the deed. B.C. Franklin explains, “In every such case, the ‘land company’ withdraws the deed as soon as it is filed and recorded, and destroys it” (148). Though land fraud occurred through many other means, this particular example enacts a literal case of rhetorical erasure, whereby suppression itself becomes suppressed in the destruction of

fraudulent deeds that could provide a written trace of illegal activity. Because Freedmen did not have federal restrictions on their allotted lands, “[they] never had legal recourse in the federal courts to protect [their] allotment[s]” (B.C. Franklin 149). This resulted directly from racial categorization introduced during allotment that drew rhetorical boundaries between Natives and non-Natives.

This distinction drawn between Natives and blacks surfaces notably in the Oklahoma State Constitution as well, suggesting a transrhetorical milieu whereby racist hegemony moves across cultural sites and rhetorical locations. For Hannibal Johnson, “on paper, at least, Oklahoma revered its Native Americans” (“Acres” 62). He cites “Article VI, Section 35, of the Oklahoma Constitution,” which offers a visual description of the state seal. Comprised of a five-pointed star surrounded by distinct representations of each of the “Five Civilized Tribes,” the seal fails to represent African Native or African American groups. This erasure through non-representation reflects the political rhetoric of the era in the visual rhetoric of the state seal. The Oklahoma Constitutional Convention effectively barred black participation with no delegates representing African American or African Native peoples. Further, as Johnson observes, “the overwhelming predominance of Democrats among delegates boded ill for Republican-leaning Oklahoma Blacks,” especially as “race baiting had become a central component of the [Oklahoma Democratic] party’s philosophical and rhetorical platform” (“Acres” 62). While the convention did not enact Jim Crow in the constitution, out of fear of losing the endorsement

from President Theodore Roosevelt, it undoubtedly prepared the way rhetorically for the legislature to introduce it into the new state as law. “As enacted,” Johnson summarizes, “the Oklahoma Constitution: 1.) defined “White race” so as to include all persons save those of African descent; 2.) provided for segregated schools in accordance with then-prevalent custom in the Territories; and 3.) empowered the legislature to, in essence, restrict, encumber, and abridge the franchise for Blacks [sic]” (“Acres” 63). White supremacist rhetoric such as this, increasingly codified in tribal, territorial, and finally state policy, put severe limits on the rhetorical space, political agency, and economic opportunities for African Americans and African Natives.

As these realities filtered into black life, rhetorical agency became a matter of adaptation and cultural persistence across communities. Some families in Rentiesville, like the Martin-Minner family, were able to maintain their ownership of allotment lands and use their resources to support themselves across generations. Other families, like the Franklins, left their allotments for all-black towns such as Rentiesville, only to leave them again once black rural townships began to decline in economic and political power, and thus in population and community cohesion as well. In 1912, B.C. Franklin moved his family to Rentiesville from the Ardmore area with two children. Mollie Franklin became a school teacher in the Rentiesville school, and B.C. “practiced law locally as well as in Eufala, the county seat” (J. Franklin “Mirror” 10). B.C. also edited *The Rentiesville News*, and served as both a justice of the peace and the postmaster. John Hope Franklin was born in Rentiesville in 1915

and attended school with his mother even prior to enrolling officially. In many ways, as in every all-black town, opportunities for civic involvement and personal advancement were unparalleled. However, the racial rhetoric embedded in the new state's political code shaped and limited community life as well. In Rentiesville, for instance, factions arose representing various responses to segregationist policy that pitted community members against each other in bitter disputes and deadlock, often along lines of ethnic difference between African American and African Native residents, regarding how to contend with the shifting political climate.

Political alliances between African Americans, African Creeks, and full-bloods became impossible under these new policies as they shaped Oklahoma's rhetorical landscape. B.C. Franklin points out that because, according to the state constitution, full-blood Muscogee Creeks were classed as whites, they were "henceforth and forever more prevented from having business or social contacts with [...] former slave[s] or any other Negro" (186). This imposed racist order disrupted any possibility of economic cooperation in terms of developing black townships. After eight years of personal investment in Rentiesville and an intensive effort to build capital by encouraging investment from landowning Freedmen and friendly full-bloods through the Rentiesville Improvement Company, B.C. Franklin lost hope in the town.

As increasing numbers of landowning Creeks and Creek Freedmen lost their lands and their capital through land graft and fraud, community resources, unity, and stability disappeared as well. B.C. Franklin explains in his

own way the suppressive impact of these changes on his community and his life: "It blotted out and made blank eight years of my life, and it left me prostrate and bleeding, hurting me more than any other failure I'd ever experienced before or since" (B.C. Franklin 187 - 8). B.C. describes this period as erasure during which time black hope, prosperity, and freedom were silenced. The disappointment and loss of his investments forced Franklin to look elsewhere for a better home yet again. In February of 1921, B.C. arrived alone in Tulsa to build a law practice in order to move his family from Rentiesville to a thriving, urban community – Black Wall Street. It was three months before the "Tulsa Race Riot" occurred.

THE GREENWOOD DISTRICT AND RHETORICAL RESISTANCE IN BLACK WALL STREET

Hannibal Johnson, attorney and published historian, offices on Greenwood Avenue, in a building rebuilt in the aftermath of the Tulsa Race Riot. His publication list includes eight titles, most of which address Oklahoma's African-American history, including its all-black towns, the historic Greenwood District, and the Tulsa Race Riot. Although Johnson might not self-identify as a cultural literacy worker or an activist, the texts he produces circulate Oklahoma's black culture through diverse reading audiences. These audiences include children, as his children's book *Up from the Ashes*, about the rebuilding of a decimated black neighborhood, demonstrates. Johnson defines activism as "engagement around some social issue that one perceives to be important" (Personal 1). When I ask him if he considers his work activism, he

explains, “Indirectly, yes; I’m not a boots on the ground kind of activist who’s out there protesting or demonstrating. I’m much more comfortable thinking and provoking intellectually through writing” (Johnson Personal 1).

Activist work, for Johnson, centers around textually inscribing African American and African Native lived experience in Oklahoma. “I think anytime you write about black history,” he admits, “there is a subtle activist element there, in part because black history has been so marginalized” (Johnson Personal 1). He also unknowingly articulates the transrhetorical value of his cultural literacy work. He does so in continuing his explanation of his work as activism: “[...] having written about the history of Black Wall Street and the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot, I end up talking with people really from all over the country who are inspired by that [...] in socio-economic and political ways” (Johnson Personal 1). Johnson’s writing acts as rhetorical resistance as they provide the impetus for social action in Tulsa as well in other locations, even as his writes from a location of historic suppression. It also repeats rhetorical patterns of resistance emanating from Greenwood both prior to and after the race riot.

When B.C. Franklin arrived in Greenwood in February 1921, he found the segregated neighborhood to be a haven for the African-American and African-Native community that built and inhabited it. He made social connections through local black churches while benefiting from the assistance of a number of relatives in the area who provided him with meals and familiar company. As an attorney, he enjoyed access to the city and county courts as

well as the county law library. He worked on a variety of cases for African-American and African-Native clients, in many cases protecting them from allotment-related fraud, but also handling a wide variety of civil and criminal cases.

Franklin quickly became a respected member and central figure of the community. Oklahoma State Representative Don Ross, in his prologue to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission report, claims “attorney Franklin’s account of the settlement of Greenwood, shattered earlier notions of blacks being forced in a section of town” (Ross vi). The division was a result of self-segregation similarly seen in the all-black towns movement prior to statehood. B.C. Franklin became acquainted with community founders O.W. Gurley and J.B. Stratford. Gurley “constructed the first building, a rooming house and later the home of Vernon A.M.E. Church” and “bought 30 or 40 acres, plotted them, and [...] sold them to ‘Negroes Only’” (Ross vi). “Stratford,” who built an outstanding hotel in the district besting all other hotels in the city, “and his friend A.J. Smitherman, publisher of the *Tulsa Star* newspaper, were brave tenacious [sic] advocates on behalf of their race” (Ross vi). These men, for whom the newly arrived Franklin developed deep and long-standing admiration, fought city and county segregationist policy and ordinances in their establishments, in the courts, and in the newspapers.

In terms of transrhetorical analysis, this group of men held distinguished, influential rhetorical positions as leaders and developers of the all-black district. Whereas B.C. Franklin was a new arrival to the community,

O.W. Gurley, J.B. Stratford, and A.J. Smitherman occupied foundational and prominent posts in the Greenwood District. Gurley and Stratford's capital had built Black Wall Street. As urban planners, they funded civic and religious development while invoking a clear demand for black opportunity and civil rights. Smitherman used his status as black newspaper publisher and editor, Representative Ross recounts, to bolster the efforts of these leaders. Additionally, Smitherman had long maintained an ardent rhetorical fight against racism in Oklahoma. Ross describes, "in 1917, the brave and fearless publisher traveled to Dewey, Oklahoma [sic] in the middle of a race riot where a white mob had pulled the accused from the jail, lynched him, and burned the homes and businesses in the black section" (vii). Smitherman's accounts of the event included impassioned appeals for black rights and social justice.

Smitherman's investigation, in fact, "led to the arrest of 36 white men including the mayor," an incredible rhetorical accomplishment in the midst of race hatred and hegemony (Ross vii). Ross indicates Smitherman was similarly involved in situations arising in Beggs, Okmulgee, Haskell, and Muskogee, Oklahoma (vii). Just a few years prior to the Tulsa disaster, Smitherman rhetorically engaged systems of power in resistant ways for the cause of equality. Using writing, Smitherman inscribed and shaped racial events not only for his time, but also for history. The texts he produced impacted the Oklahoma Commission appointed to recover this history over 75 years later. His archival presence, through the many texts he produced, inform African American and African Native experience in Oklahoma and challenge the

suppression intended to silence and erase it. Smitherman's encoding of black lived experience in Oklahoma history, insofar as he relied upon literacy to do so, transrhetorically continues his cultural literacy work and activist legacy even in the present.

Whereas these men were well-established rhetors in the black community, in 1921 B.C. Franklin was a transplant looking to establish roots. He entered a well-established rhetorical space inhabited by well-respected men and fierce black advocates. Newcomer Franklin, who had yet to purchase property or establish a reputation in Tulsa, escaped the public scrutiny and capital loss that befell Gurley, Stratford, and Smitherman as a result of the riot. In the aftermath, these leaders were rhetorically targeted – publicly accused of instigating the riot and threatened with lynching. With their churches, hotels, and newspaper offices utterly annihilated, and the threat of lynching looming, these men had no choice but to flee Tulsa for their lives.

B.C. Franklin, without an established local reputation and comparatively little material loss, remained to continue the rhetorical appeals for social justice. His legal work became resolutely focused on defending riot victims from pernicious city ordinances passed in the days after the event, intended to restrict the community's ability to rebuild. He also represented countless plaintiffs in suits against insurance companies who refused to pay homeowners for their losses. These companies generally claimed the policies did not cover "man-made disaster," a technicality in policy language of which the insured had not been aware. Under these terms, loss due to fire resulting from intentional

arson was not covered. Though Franklin lost the majority of these insurance cases and worked without pay for the most part as well, he did achieve critical legal victories regarding post-riot city ordinances. Likely Franklin would not have been in the position to do so had he suffered the same material loss and post-riot persecution as Stratford and Smitherman. His family and property remained in Rentiesville.

On May 31, 1921, the day the riot began, B.C. Franklin was in the county courtroom. A young black man named Dick Rowland, an orphan from Vinita, Oklahoma, worked “as a bootblack in the Ingersol Recreation Parlor on the northeast corner of Third and Main Streets in Tulsa” (Ford 229). According to an oral history interview with the woman who took Rowland in as a child and raised him, Damie Rowland Ford, Dick Rowland’s explanation of the initial incident, which occurred on May 30th, was vastly different from the accounts of it taking shape on the streets of Tulsa and in the local newspapers. Ford explains, “he had just delivered some shoes upon the third floor of the Drexel building,[...] had used the building’s restroom, and [...] got into Sarah Page’s elevator to go down” (229). Despite public accounts that suggest Dick Rowland and Sarah Page – a young white woman who operated the elevator in the Drexel building – were total strangers, Damie Ford explains they were friends. “She hadn’t gotten the elevator even with the floor,” Ford explains, “so he tripped and stepped on her instep” (229). In anger, Sarah Page began hitting her friend with her purse. Rowland grabbed her arms to stop her abuse. By the time the elevator reached the ground floor lobby, Page’s anger had

increased from being immobilized. As the doors opened, she “screamed, ‘I’ve been assaulted!’,” and a clerk from Renberg’s Clothiers came to her aid and attempted to apprehend Rowland as he ran from the elevator and the building (Ford 229). By the time B.C. Franklin heard murmurs of the incident in the courtroom, rumors and speculation about the potential white response already circulated throughout the town. The growing threat to lynch Rowland was not surprising, given he was accused of assaulting a white woman.

A rhetorical analysis of the events of the “Tulsa Race Riot” as they transpired and the public discourse surrounding it glaringly indicates the power of white racist logic in Oklahoma by the beginning of the 1920s. Rhetorical analysis also makes it clear that the destruction of the Greenwood District hardly resulted from anything properly termed a “race riot.” “Race riot” implies mutual participation in destruction by whites and blacks, which was hardly the case. “Riot” itself implies an element of spontaneous violence, which the evidence suggests the destruction was not. The scale and speed of the attack on Tulsa’s black neighborhood imply a plan was in place to implement total decimation, to erase physically and rhetorically the financial and civic success blacks had achieved.

Research conducted by the Tulsa Race Riot Commission suggests that the event (and prior planning of it) resulted from white racist anger and increased racial tension fomented in part by the Ku Klux Klan, which had organized rapidly in Oklahoma between 1920 and 1921. The narrative of the Tulsa event that emerges through inquiry suggests, of course, the story is more

complicated than “Tulsa Race Riot” suggests. Leading black men, including Smitherman, Stratford, and Franklin, attempted to intervene as the white mob surrounded the courthouse where Dick Rowland was being held (Ellsworth 60 – 62). Black men in the community, under the leadership of Smitherman and Stratford, armed themselves, confronted the angry white men surrounding the jail and threatening to lynch Rowland. They also announced their intention was to prevent such an event (Ellsworth 60 – 62). The rhetorical resistance indicated by their example cannot be underestimated, even despite the fateful outcome that they could not have predicted during the afternoon and early evening of May 31.

While Rowland was never lynched and all charges against him were dropped, by the next evening, the homes, restaurants, barbershops, churches and schools of Greenwood smoldered in ruins. “Tulsa Race Riot,” as an inaccurate referent reflecting the racist rhetoric imbuing and surrounding the event itself, indicates the rhetorical suppression inherent in the actions the white mob took as they left the courthouse on May 31st. Instead of lynching Rowland, they invaded the Greenwood community instead, carrying out systematic arrests, targeting and killing residents, and destroying property throughout the evening, through the night, and into the middle of the afternoon the next day. Their goal was to erase the entire community.

TULSA RACE RIOT AS A TRANSRHETORICAL SITE

To understand the “Tulsa Race Riot” as a transrhetorical inquiry site, it must be situated in terms of critical regional history. The money amassed by

founders Gurley and Stratford reflected the economic opportunity for blacks which stemmed from Native history and culture in the state both before and after the Civil War. Tulsa, originally a Muscogee Creek settlement, included Freedman enclaves. It is reasonable to assume this led to further African American and African Native migration to Tulsa during the years prior to statehood and the decade afterwards. O.W. Gurley, the son of former slaves, emigrated to Indian Territory from Arkansas in 1906 and bought 40 acres of land, very likely from Freedmen allottees in the area. A.J. Smitherman moved to Tulsa in 1913, from Muskogee where he had been working for the *Muskogee Cimeter*, a black newspaper, before starting his own *Muskogee Star*. The opportunities these men encountered here stemmed from Native and African Native cultural and rhetorical legacies of cooperation. The degree of integration and collaboration exhibited between Muscogee Creeks and African Creeks, for instance, shaped the cultural, rhetorical, and political landscape of the region long before Tulsa experienced white settlement. It can be argued, then, that the strength of the Greenwood District, prior to the riot and afterwards – both rhetorically and otherwise, derives in part from early interactions and alliances between blacks and Native peoples historically occurring in the region. This is one way in which the “Tulsa Race Riot,” more specifically the black neighborhood it attempted to permanently destroy, functions transrhetorically.

The connections I attempt to articulate here reflect my growing understanding of transrhetorical analysis as a means of tracking rhetorical

meaning, movements, silences, and adaptations across regional cultural networks. The “Tulsa Race Riot,” as an intentional misnomer, indicates the various rhetorical levels at which the event resonates, and continues to do so. Because the Greenwood District was in itself a cultural network of African-American and African-Native community members representing a spectrum of histories and experiences with the landscape, Tulsa as a location must necessarily signify these relationships if the race riot is to be understood transrhetorically.

Tulsa must also transrhetorically signify the present as well as the past in order for the rhetorical legacies of the event to become visible on the landscape. Examining the “Tulsa Race Riot” lends itself too easily to a stagnant, fixed reading of both the event and Tulsa that empowers the rhetorical suppression it enacts by emphasizing devastation, loss, and racist hegemony. By tracing the African-Native and African-American activist rhetorics through Muskogee Creek Territory (via Rentiesville, the Minner family, Buck Colbert and John Hope Franklin) to Tulsa, the cultural literacy activism of Hannibal Johnson, Dr. Jocelyn Payne, Roberta Clardy, and Jef Kos becomes part of a continuum. The riot no longer remains a terminal historic event. The legacy enacted by cultural literacy workers at related sites today rejects the suppression the white riot enforced and encoded on the landscape, inscribing it instead with resistance, resilience, and reconciliation.

The disaster of May 30 – June 1, 1921, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, may also be understood transrhetorically as a regional site within which to observe the

transfer of white logic and racist rhetoric in the early years of Oklahoma statehood as parallel to African American rhetorics of social and economic advancement. David Chang observes white tropes of race and private property new to Oklahoma supplanted previous tribal tropes of culture and land circulating in Indian Territory. Land ownership as an equal opportunity after allotment created tensions between successful blacks and poor whites. Chang writes, “When both the landed and the landless were white, the unfulfilled promise of white landownership became a problem,” particularly when there were numerous, successful landed blacks (177). Just as with African Americans emigrating to the territories even prior to allotment, “‘Free land’ for whites had served as a powerful unifying narrative” (Chang 177). With high rates of farm tenancy increasing through the 19-teens, many previously hopeful white migrants who sought to own land grew to resent black economic rise. More politically problematic for whites empowered by racist hegemony were the interracial and transrhetorical alliances developing among landless Oklahomans and wage earners around emerging class conflict in the state.

The introduction of second wave Ku Klux Klan organizing via Klan Kleagles (organizers) sent from Texas to Oklahoma in 1920 sparked a rapid increase of police-sanctioned violence in Oklahoma coupled with an increase in ethnic and race hatred (Clark 18). Klan activity impacted multiple groups in Oklahoma as it occurred in communities throughout the state. The “Tulsa Race Riot” occurred in a context rife with transrhetorical activity, as pre-existing racial tensions, building steadily since statehood, proved a fertile field for Klan

propaganda and activity coming from the South. Klan leaders and members did not distinguish between African Native and African American individuals and communities. Interestingly, much Klan violence in Oklahoma previous to the “Tulsa Race Riot” also targeted European ethnic immigrants, particularly labor organizers and unionists. Of the 70 KKK-related incidents Blue Clark collected from Oklahoma newspapers (1921 – 1924), only four were reported as race-related or involving black Oklahomans at all (149-150). Yet, racism and white supremacy remained at the center of the Klan’s rhetorical appeal as threats against African Americans circulated tacitly, particularly in Tulsa where 37 of the 70 incidents occurred (Clark 147). Clark also acknowledges the paucity of historical traces of KKK activity, due in part to infiltrated courts and police departments. Given this rhetorical reality, unreported Klan violence likely includes racial violence.

Key to all such sites of racial conflict animated by white racism, as in the Tulsa disaster itself, rhetorical suppression and rhetorical resistance surface in patterns unique to the local and regional landscapes in which they occur. Tulsa, however, is uniquely positioned among these sites. Because white supremacy came to power comparatively quickly in the developing state, the “Tulsa Race Riot” provides a concentrated historical episode within which to witness a compact narrative that nevertheless rivals in complexity longer historical periods in other regions of the United States. Blue Clark documents the pace at which the Klan organized in Oklahoma and illustrates how the state can be understood as a representative example of Klan power. “After the first

year of recruitment in the state,” the period between 1920 and 1921, “Klan leaders reported there were 20,000 members statewide,” and requests for membership made it unnecessary to send Kleagles to organize in Oklahoma (Clark 69). Varying sources estimate the peak numbers in the state between 150,000 to 207,000 members, “making the Oklahoma Realm one of the strongest in the nation” (Clark 70). The 1921 “Tulsa Race Riot” must be understood, as Clark insists, as Klan activity insofar as the KKK held influence over the white men who participated. This self-evident fact exists alongside the well-known and archivally established cooperation of the Tulsa Police Department, which employed a large number of Klan members. With racial violence and suppression as the clear intent of well-organized white rioters, the physical erasure of Tulsa’s thriving black community must be also understood as a rhetorical attempt to silence black cultural agency and the people who promote it. This makes it a rich site within which to understand racial violence as rhetorical suppression.

Equally important, particularly in terms of the critical regionalist mandate to highlight historical counter-narratives and the activist spaces located within them, is the rhetorical resistance to oppression exhibited by both historical and present-day activists. The transrhetorical connections between them as they are situated in space and time, evidenced in rhetorical patterns emerging across them, generates a counter-narrative that disrupts the historical silence surrounding African American and African Native history in Oklahoma. In addition to inscribing these histories on the state’s narrative,

these activists also provide useful models of understanding cultural literacy work as a means of subverting silence itself. In this way, cultural values imparted through alliances between Native Americans, African Americans, and African Native groups continue to operate in activist sites today, both in Rentiesville and in Tulsa. Counter-narratives inhabit these spaces, constructing the present from the past through the tools and applications of cultural literacy.

CULTURAL LITERACY ACTIVISM AT A TRANSRHETORICAL SITE: THE JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN CENTER FOR RECONCILIATION

Dr. Jocelyn Payne, Director of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation in Tulsa, believes activism “means participating actively, not passively, in matters or issues of importance to one’s self and one’s community” (1). Dr. Payne, who holds a Ph.D. in education, realized later in her life that “an activist element” characterized her entire career (1). Her work with the Center involves the promotion of reconciliation across race through organizing ongoing community dialogues around related social justice issues and topics. She plans the annual “John Hope Franklin Center Symposium on Reconciliation,” which attracts activists and scholars from across the country to Tulsa each year. She also trains Teach for America regional volunteers about the reconciliatory power of local culture and community history in the classroom.

Running throughout these projects is the Center’s commitment “to provide education [to] help transform social divisions into social harmony [...] through bringing people together” (Payne 1). Dr. Payne believes “the shared

learning experience is important to encouraging people to cross bridges of difference” (1). For her, rhetorical success means “chang[ing] the nature of our community,” which is currently marked by “enormous chasms of difference between groups of people” (Payne 2). Dr. Payne grew up in the black community of North Tulsa, a portion of the city still understood and rhetorically constructed as a largely African American community. Her father, a Muskogee Creek Freedman descendant, was a Tulsa Public School administrator, and her mother was the only African-American faculty member at Roberts Beauty Training School. While she does not believe her parents taught her explicitly to be an activist, she thinks rather “they live[d] into the principles that we value[d]” and assumed she would follow their example (Payne 3). While she admits to being eager to leave Oklahoma as a young woman, her work since returning to Oklahoma has taught her increasingly to value her home community.

Building relationships “to” and “within” community factor heavily into the Center’s cultural literacy work. Dr. Payne explains it in saying, part of the work we do is encouraging teachers to know about things so that they can share them with their students. Those things that we seek for them to know about tend to be related to inclusion, to complete histories, tend to be things that will ultimately strengthen democracy as its practiced in this country. (4)

Through working with Teach for America volunteer teachers, some of whom have transitioned into career teachers, the Tulsa’s Center for Reconciliation has a nationwide reach, transrhetorically impacting classrooms in marginalized, low-income communities throughout the country. The Center’s curriculum, designed by Dr. Payne, encourages these teachers to “use a community’s past as

a key to unlocking potential within their students” for “higher achievement” and “higher community engagement” (Payne 5).

Payne acknowledges that this work, this cultural literacy model, aims at encouraging community engagement and cultural activism in students. She paraphrases a quotation from John Hope Franklin, the Center’s namesake: “If you study history, you can’t help but become an activist” (Payne 8). She explains, “The way I read that is if you push yourself to encounter the truth, then you can’t help but want to share it” (Payne 8). For her, community culture and local history enrich individual identities and political commitments. “So often, the truth, or a full truth, is different from what everybody thinks they know,” Payne continues. Once community members become more aware, they are “then in a position of encouraging [others] to know more [and] take their rightful place” (Payne 8). She expresses consistently her message “that reading history and thinking about how things that happened before set up the way, or provided the set up for the way things are now, is really important. You have to think about connecting things.” The Center’s cultural literacy work, then, showcases transrhetorical goals by sponsoring community interaction and cultural exchange and connecting history to the present.

One of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation’s most significant achievements is John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, at 321 N. Detroit Avenue, within the historic boundaries of the Greenwood District. Jef Kos, Board Member and Secretary of the Board of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation, played a pivotal role in the composition of the park’s

text and its rhetorical construction of African-Native and African-American history in Oklahoma. In 2000, the Tulsa Race Riot Commission recommended pursuing restitution through five different means, including building a memorial to the race riot, its victims, and its survivors (Churchwell 2). From the beginning, Kos and the committee responsible for producing the park text articulated a commitment to representing the rich connections between Native American, African Native, and African American history, understanding the suppression (beginning with allotment policies) that sought to divide these groups. Kos describes his work as Chairman of the committee as a reconciliatory process itself, enabled through committee and community dialogue regarding the riot, engaging the various historical positionalities involved, and the co-production of narrative text to be used in the park. The park, in order to practice reconciliation, had to represent all angles. During early meetings, the committee quickly divided along racial, class, and city sectional lines. People on the committee representing different viewpoints and interests struggled to understand one another's perspectives on the riot.

The committee's dialogue quickly turned first to building understanding and trust, and then to generating the park's textual narrative. In this way, composing the text together across cultural categories became a reconciliatory process. Based on historical text written by John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth, the park places the "Tulsa Race Riot" inside of the larger scope of black history in Oklahoma. As Jef Kos explains, in an echo of Royster's call to inquiry into lived experiences, the committee wanted the park to integrate the

full black experience rather than “focusing merely on the incident” (4). In making this rhetorical choice, the committee defied state narratives that suppress not only the riot, but also exclude African-American and African-Native history more broadly. The park text writes against rhetorical silencing and resists suppression. Through the inscription of Oklahoma’s black history, including the race riot and beyond, Reconciliation Park instantiates a rhetorically powerful counter narrative.

RECONCILIATION PARK AS COUNTER NARRATIVE

The park text resists racist rhetorical suppression through both transrhetorical content and the structure of the memorial itself. Dedicated on October 27th, 2010, the park sits close to the southwestern boundary of the Greenwood District. From the entrance to the memorial, the visitor can see an unobstructed view of downtown Tulsa. The southwestern trajectory of this main pathway physically joins the history represented by the sculptures and plaques in the park to the continuing growth and development occurring in heart of the city. From an aerial view, the memorial is divided into two circles, joined by the main pathway from the smaller circle at the entrance to the main circle in the center of the park. Bronze sculptures occupy the centers of both circles.

At the entrance stands a three-sided bronze and white marble sculpture with one human figure on each side. Each of these figures replicates the subjects of archival photographs taken during and after the riot. The figures are labeled “HOSTILITY,” “HUMILIATION,” and “HOPE.” A young white man

wearing a folded cap, smoking a cigarette, and holding a rifle represents hostility. A middle-aged black man in his dress slacks with his hands up represents humiliation. A middle-aged white man, based on an image of Maurice Willows who organized the Red Cross relief after the riot, holds a newborn African-American baby born during the riot to illustrate hope (“Entrance Sculpture”). With his statue leading to the main pathway and facing the main circle, “HOPE” faces the downtown Tulsa skyline and points park visitors to the “Tower of Reconciliation,” the park’s sculptural centerpiece.

The pathway opens up into the main circle and leads visitors past one of four black granite plaques commemorating John Hope Franklin and placed around the perimeters of the park. The plaque reads, “Dr. John Hope Franklin, pioneering historian, world-renowned scholar, and brilliant son of Tulsa, whose family survived the race riot of 1921, who forever changed the way that Americans think of themselves and their past, in honor of his courage, honesty, tenacity, and indomitable spirit” (“John”). Dr. Franklin’s contributions to African American cultural literacy provide the rhetorical foreground for the historical content presented in the park, insofar as his work creates the rhetorical space within which the acknowledgement and commemoration of the riot can occur.

Surrounding the main circle, a knee-high shrub line creates the “Healing Walkway,” dedicated to Buck Colbert Franklin, Dr. Franklin’s father. A half wall at the edge of the main circle bears a quotation from B.C. Franklin that captures his faith in humanity and historic truth: “Lifting as we climb... the eternal

verities shall prevail” (“Healing”). The Healing Walkway, designed as a meditative labyrinth, provides multiple perspectives on the “Tower of Reconciliation” at the center of the main circle as well as the surrounding park and cityscape. As visitors follow its sometimes rhythmic and sometimes sudden turns, the Healing Walkway offers also the opportunity to reflect on history and its connection to the present while inscribing oneself physically and rhetorically into the counter narrative the park constructs. Walking around the memorial becomes for the park visitor an embodied, interactive, reflective experience of the historical landscape.

The “Tower of Reconciliation,” a bronze sculpture created by Ed Dwight and subtitled “Oklahoma – 1541 to the Present,” stands 27 feet high and presents an upward spiral of ten distinct levels wrapping around the tower, each representing chronological stages of African-Native and African-American history in Oklahoma. The spiral is hollow and inwardly lit, so that light shines through reliefs periodically cut into the bronze. Carved into the bronze tower are human figures and objects that create a clear narrative, beginning on the first level with African tribesmen and women walking in a line, playing drums, dancing, and carrying shields until they arrive at a slave ship.

From there, the men and women are depicted in bondage, shackled at their wrists and necks. The second level depicts the Five Civilized Tribes and the Trail of Tears, as Africans, now also African Natives, continue upon their upward journey around the tower. Level three shows the Battle of Honey Springs, the first fully integrated Civil War battle - which took place outside of

Rentiesville, Oklahoma - with armed men confronting each other. The post-Civil War era and emancipation are depicted through black women and men farming their own lands. Level four represents the Land Run of 1889 and statehood with images of black settlers on horseback and in schooners, with the state capital and oil rigs carved into the background.

Halfway up the tower, level five portrays All-Black Towns and influential black leaders, and Langston University. Level six includes the Gurley Hotel, the Stratford Hotel and other landmark buildings and names of the Greenwood District. The riot occupies level seven of the spiral, indicated by a copy of the *Tulsa Star* with the headline "RACE RIOT," armed white men and black men confronting each other, and buildings such as the Mt. Zion church on fire. Level eight continues with black men and women standing in line with their hands up, depicting their systematic arrest and incarceration during and after the riot. Level nine illustrates rebuilding and reconciliation with black men passing off a 2x4 and white men and black men shaking hands. Level 10, the final level, completes the spiral with men and women lifting each other and climbing further upward ("Tower"). Their silhouettes reach into the sky, with the tower's spiral itself becoming their bodies.

In order to "read" the sculpture, visitors must walk around and around the sculpture's spiral, interacting with both the memorial space and the text, and looking increasingly upward at the same time, moving along the tightly laid paving stones of the main circle. Because the sculpture follows chronological time, with the most distant history placed at the bottom of the tower and the

future inscribed at the top, visitors must walk counter-clockwise around it, a direction that suggests counter inscription while at the same time invoking Muskogee Creek ceremonial dances. Reading the sculpture creates the embodied effect felt after walking in multiple circles, and leaves an impression of the circular, continual, and upward-climbing inscription of history the sculpture creates. In moving upward, the sculpture resists the downward force of suppression, rhetorically rising instead of falling in defeat and silence.

Set in the midst of Tulsa's urban landscape with a southwestern view of downtown, Reconciliation Park engages visitors in the inscription of Oklahoma's African Native and African American history, reclaiming the Greenwood District and (re)writing it into the regional landscape and cultural narrative. It resists rhetorical suppression through requiring movement that engages the body in the historical landscape, viewing it from all sides once and for all. History and the landscape merge as visitors move simultaneously through them both, gaining cultural literacy and negotiating transrhetorical connections between place, people, and power. The "Tulsa Race Riot," instead of being foregrounded as singular tragedy fixed in time and unrelated to the present, becomes a living historical site occurring in the long arch of on-going black history in Oklahoma – a narrative marked instead by resistance, resilience, and reconciliation. The "Tower of Reconciliation" fully acknowledges the riot, resisting rhetorical suppression through articulating its historical occurrence. Even more significantly, it resists rhetorical suppression as well by focusing on cultural continuance and triumph rather than

foregrounding the tragedy itself.

TRANSRHETORICAL TEXT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PARK'S HISTORICAL PLAQUES

Along the outside of the main circle facing inwardly, a series of ten bronze plaques containing roughly 1700 words constructs a textual narrative that mirrors the sculptural tower's spiraled story. At the smaller entrance circle, there is an additional plaque, making the total number of historical plaques eleven. All of the plaques showcase text arranged by Scott Ellsworth and based on previous writings of Dr. John Hope Franklin. Of these eleven plaques, the entrance plaque is the only plaque written in the third-person narrative style typical of historical writing. In 263 words, the entrance plaque tells the story of the riot, calling it "the single worst incident of racial violence in American history" ("Entrance Text") It tells the story of Dick Rowland's alleged attack of Sarah Page, sensationalized and racist newspaper editorials calling for white racist violence, and the destruction and deaths which resulted. It explains, "more than 1,256 homes and businesses covering more than thirty square city blocks had been burnt to the ground. Although the human loss has never been successfully determined, unofficial estimates suggest that more than 300 people, both black and white, had been killed during the riot" ("Entrance Text").

The narrative voice used in this plaque demonstrates historical authority while also representing black resistance to white mob violence. It describes how "black Tulsans, many of whom were military veterans, were

equally determined to prevent the lynching” of Dick Rowland, and the “contingent of armed African American men” who confronted the white mob gathering at the courthouse (“Entrance Text”). It constructs a narrative that equally articulates their attempts to defend a community member from white racist violence as well as their defense of the community itself. Thus, the entrance plaque de-emphasizes the humiliation, destruction, and suppression intended by that violence by including accounts of black resistance to it.

The ten text plaques inside the main circle, unlike the entrance plaque, are written in first person, which immediately engages the visitor in what seems rhetorically more similar to interpersonal dialogue. These plaques include historical narratives told in first person alongside oral history interviews with survivors collected by community members. They include diary accounts recorded in the journals of an early English explorer Charles Joseph La Trobe⁷² and Civil War Union Major General James Blunt, who led African-Native, Native-American, and African-American soldiers at the Battle of Honey Springs. Because these first-person narratives represent multiple cultural perspectives on African-Native and African-American history in Oklahoma, the memorial site quickly becomes transrhetorical, as multiple messages synthesize into a coherent, transcultural and transhistorical narrative text.

The first plaque inside the park’s main circle establishes the centuries-old relationship African Natives and African Americans have with the Oklahoma landscape. It also immediately introduces the transrhetorical nature

of their experiences and identities. The opening lines of the plaque read, “We have been here for more than 400 years. We have been called many things. Africans called Natives, citizens of the Five Civilized Tribes, and slaves” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #1”). In listing these names, the narrative claims none over the others, but instead goes on to describe contact with the Spanish, the French, the Osage, the Wichita, the Americans, the Caddo, and the Pawnee. “With Africa in our blood,” the plaque explains, “we built new lives in the land of the blackjack and the tall grass” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #1”). By recognizing cross-cultural connections between multiple groups, the text reclaims the complex networks inherent in black Oklahoman identity and history. The first text plaque in the park’s main circle ends with “We were Oklahomans before there was an Oklahoma,” transrhetorically constructing Oklahoma as a place of cultural exchange and tolerance long before statehood.

Cultural encounters, cooperation, and conflict continue through each of the remaining plaques. The second plaque offers a passage from English Explorer Charles Joseph LaTrobe’s 1836 publication, “A Rambler in North America,” and recounts a “Negro slave girl” who acted as interpreter for him among Native peoples living here who had removed themselves prior to forced removal (“Main Circle Text Plaque #2”). Plaque three claims, “the Trail of Tears was our trail too” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #3”). Plaque four focuses entirely on different instances of regional resistance to the oppression of slavery. The instances include an 1842 slave revolt in Webber Falls in Cherokee Territory, to the 1863 Battle of Honey Springs and the Cherokee Emancipation

Proclamation issued also in 1863, “freeing slaves long before the December 1865 ratification of the 13th Amendment” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #4”). The fourth plaque claims proudly, “when freedom finally came, it came not as a gift. We had freed ourselves,” honoring African Americans and African Natives as cultural agents operating at these sites of resistance.

Plaque five offers Union Major General Blunt’s observations of the African-Native and African-American soldiers who fought the Battle of Honey Springs near present-day Rentiesville, claiming, “their coolness and bravery I have never seen surpassed” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #5). Plaques six and seven list black “buffalo soldiers and cattle punchers, rodeo legends and frontier lawmen” as populating the Plains prior to All-Black Towns and black urban centers such as Greenwood (“Main Circle Text Plaque #6” and “Main Circle Text Plaque #7”). The “Tulsa Race Riot” does not enter the historical narrative constructed by these plaques until plaque eight. Tying the narrative back to the land and life on the Plains, and using a local transrhetorical metaphor meaning impending trouble to those who live here, the plaque begins “But storm clouds were gathering” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #8”). Statehood and Jim Crow changed the landscape for black Oklahomans, and plaque eight connects these changes to growing racial tension that culminated in the 1921 race riot.

Plaque eight, however, also recounts resistance to racial violence on the part of Oklahoma’s African Native and African American people. Again, like the entrance text plaque and the “Tower of Reconciliation,” it highlights the “group

of World War veterans [who] went downtown in order to protect Rowland and prevent the lynching from happening,” an undeniably bold move as they confronted the growing white mob at the courthouse where Dick Rowland was being held (“Main Circle Text Plaque #8”). The plaque also reveals the extent to which local white authorities empowered and enabled white rioters by granting them marshal control of the city streets and lending them guns and ammunition. “We fought back with guns and determination and defended our homes and businesses, families, and churches,” the plaque explains, but in the end “we were simply outnumbered and outgunned” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #8”).

In the midst of the arson and looting perpetrated by white rioters, “the police and National Guard, meanwhile, rather than trying to stop [them], instead arrested us” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #8”). Now homeless, and while “held under armed guard” in Tulsa’s Convention Hall and later at the Tulsa fairgrounds, “our dead were buried in unmarked graves” before their bodies were identified or even counted in the death toll (“Main Circle Text Plaque #8”). The erasure of property and life and the eradication of an entire community finds expression in the plaque’s last sentence: “Greenwood, it seemed, was gone” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #8”). And, yet, as the narrative continues in the remaining plaques around the main circle, black Oklahomans’ resistance to suppression leads to resilience, rebuilding, and reconciliation.

These tropes, emerging from the ashes of Greenwood, arise in the text plaques that remain as transrhetorical signals for justice and redemption

intended to inform and inspire park visitors by instilling the values inherent to resistance, resilience, and reconciliation. Plaque nine features a quotation from Mary E. Jones-Parrish, an African-American journalist whose collection of oral history interviews of survivors, published shortly after the riot in *The Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, continues to circulate the voices and lived experiences of Greenwood residents and riot survivors in public discourse. Her work served as a central source to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission over 75 years later, providing a valuable rhetorical presence amidst frustrating historical silences and archival gaps in their research. The interviews she conducted, transcribed, and compiled can be understood as cultural literacy work insofar as they engrave black lived experience in the historical record, in a climate of rhetorical suppression and denial.

The quotation on plaque nine comes from Jones-Parrish's own account of escaping the violence with her young daughter by fleeing their apartment building, soon to be destroyed by arson, and running for safety despite sheer terror through several blocks of constant gun fire ("Main Circle Text Plaque #9"). The courage displayed in this moment informs the cultural commitment inherent in Jones-Parrish's literacy work recording survivor narratives in the aftermath of the event, and in turn her literacy work and her cultural commitment speaks to the ways black Oklahomans resisted the death and destruction caused by the riot. Her determined spirit of willful resilience provides the transition to the final plaque.

Plaque ten, as the culmination of the historical narrative presented in

written text by the park designers, captures more than any other the rhetorical resistance to suppression enacted by African Native and African American activists in response to the riot. The plaque begins with a simple, clear statement that speaks volumes: “We survived” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #10”). The first several sentences relate the successful legal efforts of black attorneys B.C. Franklin, P.A. Chappell, and I.H. Spears to fight unfair city ordinances issued in the days after the riot and designed to prevent the community from rebuilding. Because of their resistance, instead “brick by brick, block by block, Greenwood rose again” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #10”). In language that defies the suppression exacted in the riot, the narrators explain, “Out of the ashes of intolerance and fires of hatred came new homes and businesses, schools and churches like Mt. Zion and Vernon A.M.E. Out of the horrors of 1921 came renewed struggle and pride, grit and determination” (“Main Circle Text Plaque #10”). The plaque continues, moving to other Oklahoma sites of black rhetorical resistance in the years following the riot:

New decades would bring new struggles. We fought against Jim Crow laws and lynch mobs, all white juries and segregated opportunity. In 1949, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, backed by the NAACP, broke the color line and became the first African American to attend the University of Oklahoma Law School. In 1958, two years before the Greensboro sit-ins, we sat down at segregated lunch counters in Oklahoma City, Enid, and Stillwater. In the years since, we have battled urban renewal and restrictive housing covenants, struggled to save our schools, and fought to gain recognition and reparations for Tulsa’s race riot survivors. (“Main Circle Text Plaque #10”)

Through these continued, rhetorically resistant responses to suppression, black Oklahomans subvert intended silencing through the exertion of rhetorical agency. In the midst of racial hatred and injustice, they write themselves

transrhetorically into Oklahoma's history.

In the final lines of plaque ten, the text joins African Native and African American Oklahomans together with all other Oklahomans in the struggle for freedom and justice. These sentences weave together the lives and histories of the many into a singular narrative of social progress and mutual benefit through claiming the landscape as a space of historic black experience, sacrifice, and triumph.

For this land, this Oklahoma, is our land too. We have built its cities and worked its farms, raised its children, and fought in its wars. On its altars of freedom you will find our blood as well. For hundreds of years beneath its endless skies we have lived and worked, laughed and wept, loved and died. ("Main Circle Text Plaque #10")

Here the text references black labor in both urban and rural contexts, including the labor of black women raising children in their own homes and in the homes of white families, and the honorable contributions of black veterans beginning with the Civil War and World War I and throughout all the conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Black bodies, the site of African Native and African American lived experience, have bled, the text reminds visitors, for their own freedom as well as for the freedom of all people. While plaque ten focuses until near its end on articulating black experience in Oklahoma through the present, the final two lines move to unite the past and the present to the future, and link blacks with non-blacks as history continues. "And as we have climbed, so have you. Now, we must all climb together" ("Main Circle Text Plaque #10"). With these final lines, visitors are asked to acknowledge the historical connections that cross

cultural and racial lines to join them together, and to consider ways to enact these connections transrhetorically for the progress of all. As the historical narrative continues, the text urges we must write it together.

TRANSRHETORICAL ALLIANCES AND CULTURAL LITERACY

At the end of every activist interview I conduct, I ask the interviewee to recommend other activists for me to contact. In addition to Dr. Jocelyn Payne, Selby Minner at the Rentiesville Down Home Blues Club suggested I speak with Ms. Roberta Clardy (Minner 20). Roberta Clardy, a North Tulsa native who like Dr. Payne returned home after many years away, is the founding and managing editor of *North Tulsa Magazine*, published –as Roberta claims proudly – from the best place on Earth (13). Selby and Roberta admire each other’s work, and have been friends for many years. They met when Roberta started the Oklahoma All-Black Towns Association, and they are currently collaborating on an exhibit called “Impact” (Clardy 16 – 17). The project highlights the accomplishments and influence of people from Oklahoma’s all-black towns, tracing out the transrhetorical connections between black Oklahoma and the rest of the world.

Their friendship and activist partnership also demonstrates transrhetorical connections that bridge sites of race, history, and regional rhetorics. While Selby is a European-American transplant from Rhode Island, Roberta cites familial roots in Oklahoma’s African-American and African-Native cultural landscape. Her father was the son of Arkansas sharecroppers who dreamed as a child of living in North Tulsa. Roberta explains, “All his stories

were about getting here. What happened when he came here. The people who are here. He loved North Tulsa. How was I not gonna?" (Clardy 4). Her mother's family descends from the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations and were removed to Indian Territory. They moved from near Durant to North Tulsa in the 1920s and 30s (Clardy 4). Roberta sums up North Tulsa by saying, "At the end of the day, it's just family," indicating the close relationship she feels with her community (Clardy 4). Roberta's *North Tulsa Magazine* makes this relationship apparent.

The primary rhetorical goal of *North Tulsa Magazine*, as Roberta articulates them in her own way, is both resistant and transrhetorical. When I ask her to define activism, she admits she had to look it up, but explains, "The part of it that I feel like I fall into is just the part where you take what you believe and you act on it. What I believe about North Tulsa is that it's the most awesome place in the world" (Clardy 1). North Tulsa, despite the many years that have passed since the riot, remains black Tulsa in the minds of most city residents. Occupying a large section of the city, historically – due primarily to local media representation – North Tulsa has been considered a crime-ridden, gang-invested, drug-saturated area. "When I came back here from New York," Roberta recalls, "I just remember saying, 'Man, we have really bad PR. Someone is not handling our PR in the right way'" (Clardy 1). For her, *North Tulsa Magazine* is about countering the community's negative rhetorical construction by providing a positive alternative.

Roberta highlights community events, civic clubs and organizations,

school sports, student achievement, economic development, local businesses, and residents. While she envisions the magazine as “for North Tulsans” and “about North Tulsa,” she also expresses awareness of the project’s larger national and global reach via the project website. “It’s bringing North Tulsa to the world and bringing the world to North Tulsa,” she says, indicating her desire to initiate new dialogues across both local and broader networks (Clardy 1). Her enthusiasm for and familiarity with her community, coupled with her rhetorical commitment to write against common assumptions about it to multiple audiences, make her a cultural literacy activist working transrhetorically in the context of an historical legacy of suppression.

Given Roberta’s rhetorical tendency to focus on positive stories, her response to an interview question regarding whether or not the magazine ever addresses the “Tulsa Race Riot” reveals a more nuanced, troubled sense of reality for her community. “I don’t know that we knew about it growing up,” she says, then hesitates and corrects herself. “I don’t know that we talked about it. We knew about it. When I just think back, it was in sort of everything. It permeated everything” (Clardy 9). While none of her own family members experienced the riot, Roberta grew up around many adults who did. In recalling a recent conversation with a local politician, she articulates the way in which the legacy of rhetorical suppression operates in silence. The politician asked her about the North Tulsa community, “ ‘Why aren’t people more active? More energetic? More into rebuilding?’ ” to which she answered, “Because people are still afraid” (Clardy 9). She also recounts a conversation with “the

smartest, top-notch students” from the local high schools. She asked them why they did not organize more youth events. They answered, “ ‘We can’t [...] because they say if we do anything they will mess it up.’ ” She observes their inherited sense that, “They’re not allowed to. [...] It will be squashed. Nothing we do is ever gonna... succeed” (Clardy 9).

Roberta believes using *North Tulsa Magazine* to address the race riot helps the community understand this sense of fear and defeat as an ongoing impact of the event. Cultural literacy enables the community to resist the silencing inherent in rhetorical suppression. It opens up a thirdspace for dialogue and recovery. As Roberta talks, she clearly connects her work now with North Tulsa’s future and the youth today who will carry on building the community. “When I see little kids, I’m always calculating. So now I am almost 60. I’ll have to work until almost 90. Do I even have time to help them?” (11). In her interactions and interviews with North Tulsa youth, she always asks them, “ ‘What’s the Tulsa that you want to see?’,” because for Roberta “it’s their vision” and “it’s them” that will continue the climb (11). While her magazine’s content remains focused on positive stories, she reframes the riot as a site of recovery and resilience for which the community can be proud. While the riot instilled trauma and suppression, the rebuilding of Greenwood and the economic and civic development of North Tulsa exemplify the cultural activism the community needs in the midst of ongoing struggle and the legacy of suppression.

Though she heralds North Tulsa’s many assets, Roberta admits the

struggle is real for many community residents. She credits Ta-nehisi Coates recent *Atlantic* article, “The Case for Reparations” (2014), for helping her understand North Tulsa’s lack of power, even with its increasing representation in local and state government bodies. “Every excuse that I heard made no sense” regarding explaining the lack of smaller scale economic development in the community (Clardy 7). “We have over 100 churches,” she remarks, but “We have no grocery store” (Clardy 7). When people cite North Tulsa’s low tax base as a cause, Roberta disagrees, citing American Airlines, the Tulsa International Airport, Bama, and Quiktrip as large contributors and major employers. Coates exposé on red-lining, a common practice beginning in the 1930s with the Federal Housing Administration, reveals a troubling national pattern of discrimination in the mortgage industry that enforced racial segregation and limited home ownership among African Americans.

Roberta believes in addition to housing red-lining, commercial red-lining occurs in North Tulsa as well. “People over the years have tried to buy property, commercial property over the years, and the City, whomever, just would not sell it to them. They tried to build businesses and it will not be allowed here. Not if you’re from the community. [...] The commercial red-lining makes housing red-lining look like Sunday school” (Clardy 7). The obstacles Roberta observes connects the nationwide red-lining practices Coates outlines with the local legacy of suppression stemming from the post-riot ordinances the City of Tulsa attempted to pass, and which B.C. Franklin and other attorneys initially defeated. These ordinances attempted to prohibit

Greenwood's property owners from rebuilding by creating "fire zones" within which no residential or commercial property could be built. Additionally, property ownership has long been a divisive and racially contested trope in Oklahoma and the Muskogee Creek Nation before it. Empty storefronts, empty lots, and abandoned facilities repeat a rhetorical pattern of suppression on the North Tulsa landscape.

Rhetorical resistance legacies, as evidenced both historically and in the lives of present-day activists highlighted in this chapter, continues as well to shape the cultural landscape of North Tulsa. Roberta's magazine asks readers to rethink the negative and limiting social constructions of the community and imagine it instead as "the best place in the world." "North Tulsa is, I just think, it's in wonderful shape," Roberta persists in believing. She sees the community's resilience as its biggest selling point. "There was that period when people were building it, building it, building, and then the race riot. Built it again – then urban renewal. [...] there's both housing and commercial red-lining. And yet people still live here. Still building" (10). For her, this resiliency creates opportunities for her community unmatched anywhere else.

North Tulsa Magazine as Roberta creates it becomes a space for imagining the community North Tulsa can be, despite suppression and as a means of resisting it. Jackie Royster argues "imagination functions as a critical skill in questioning a viewpoint, an experience, an event, [...] and in remaking interpretive frameworks" of history (83). "Establishing a place for critical imagination" means "a commitment to seeing possibility," and Roberta Clardy,

like Selby Minner, Hannibal Johnson, Dr. Jocelyn Payne, and Jef Kos, accomplishes this in Oklahoma through cultural literacy activism (Royster 83). Critical imagination provides “the genesis of authority” in a context of suppressed histories, cultures, and activist rhetorics (Royster 77). Community members gain agency through imagination, and their lived experiences of trauma and resiliency become tools by which they continue to learn and build together. Resistance becomes rhetorical agency.

OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND REGIONAL RESISTANCE

In the context of rhetorical suppression, evidenced throughout African Native and African American experience in Oklahoma, history itself becomes an imaginative act. Cultural literacy activists working within this context must imagine possibilities that counter harsh realities enabled by erasure, silencing, violence, and systemic, enduring racism. Royster points out, “the strategy for inquiry” in suppressive environments “is to access whatever we can, in terms of [...] narrative modes of history-telling, that is, narrative patterns associated with institutional, collective, and personal points of view” (83). By doing so, community members, cultural literacy activists, and scholars enact a transrhetorical project of “engag[ing] in a process of using multidimensional viewpoints as a heuristic for historical reconstruction” (Royster 83). This process accounts for diverse perspectives from various cultural and regional locations and aligns them within “the *long* [sic] view,” shaping them from many narratives into one. “These patterns,” as they emerge across various inquiry sites, “form a cultural landscape, the contextual backdrop against which to

render a meaningful and perhaps even representative story” (Royster 83). Critical imagination that includes transrhetorical tactics honors the historical agency of multiple peoples, particularly those peoples whose narratives have been historically suppressed. Critically imagining their histories and places creates a collaborative thirdspaces for rhetorical resistance and transrhetorical alliances to arise.

In the 2001 “Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921,” Dr. John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth declare, “Today, the Tulsa race riot is anything but unknown” (31). “After years of neglect, stories and articles about the riot have appeared not only in Oklahoma magazines and newspapers,” but in national and international media outlets, a result in large part due to the Commission’s endeavor (Franklin and Ellsworth 31). The “intensive effort” to reconstruct the history of the riot led to the discovery and compilation of archival sources, survivor and eye-witness accounts, and photographic evidence. “None of this,” they add, “could have been possible without the generous assistance of Oklahomans from all walks of life” – “riot survivors and observers, as well as the sons and daughters of policemen, National Guardsmen, and riot participants” (Franklin and Ellsworth 32). “All told, literally hundreds of Oklahomans, of all races, have given their time, their memories, and their expertise to help us all gain a better understanding of this great tragedy” (Franklin and Ellsworth 32). The united effort exhibited in the work of the Commission – across racial, institutional, and political lines – enacts the transrhetorical alliances necessary for critically

imagining a new North Tulsa and a new Oklahoma. “History knows no fences,” as Franklin and Ellsworth express it, and impacts lives across locations of experience within it (32). Collaboration across difference strengthens rhetorical resistance while also subverting social divisions enacted by historical suppression.

Oklahoma’s African-Native and African-American histories provide a valuable location within which to chart the intersections of region and race otherwise undervalued due to the rhetorical suppression that has occurred here. In many ways, the goals of “the new Negro history” John Hope Franklin outlines in his 1977 essay mirror the goals of critical regionalism today, insofar as he seeks “to achieve the same justice in history that is sought in other spheres” (“The New” 47). Full and accurate representation of race and place in historic narratives “gives strength and support to the other efforts that today seek equality and freedom” (Franklin “The New” 47). Franklin’s New Negro History “says to America that its rich heritage is the result of the struggles of all its peoples, playing the roles that conditions and circumstances have permitted them to play” (47). Transrhetorically, African-Native and African-American histories serve all Oklahomans living with their legacies. Marked not just by tragedies such as removal, allotment, and the riot, but also by the resistance, resilience, and reconciliation enacted in response, these histories become “lessons – about not only who we are, but also who we would like to be” (Franklin and Ellsworth 32). These lessons, like the histories from which they emerge, unite Oklahomans working for social justice as they build a better

future for Oklahoma.

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HOME SWEET 'HOMA: RESISTANT RHETORICS, LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND TRANSRHETORICAL ACTIVISM

QUIET ACTIVISM AND RESISTANCE IN SILENCE

Dr. Blue Clark, 68 years old and enrolled Muscogee Creek, spent his childhood summers living with his grandmother outside of Proctor, Oklahoma, in the southeastern portion of the Cherokee Nation. He played on the bridges and banks of the nearby Illinois River. The town of Proctor bears a name prominent in both Muskogee and Cherokee communities, suggesting the transrhetorical relationship, familial ties, and cross-cultural exchange between these distinct indigenous cultures, connections that continue to inform Dr. Clark's scholarship. Throughout his career as a historian and professor, Dr. Clark has worked with Indian Studies programs on various campuses, including Cal State Long Beach and Morningside College in Sioux City, IA, and has also served the National Endowment for the Humanities as a Native American Studies consultant. He currently teaches at Oklahoma City University, where his courses include tribal law and serves as Vice Regent on the Board of the Muscogee Nation Tribal College. As a child, Dr. Clark "assumed that most of the world was Creek," which he describes as "very comfortable." He also expresses familiarity with Cherokee culture as well, describing families in nearby Chewie, Oklahoma, a traditional Cherokee community, as neighbors (1). His 1976 dissertation remains the authoritative source on historical Ku Klux Klan activity in Oklahoma, activity which included violence and threats of violence against Native Americans, African Natives, African Americans, and

European American unionists.

While he agrees his teaching and writing qualify as activism, he sees activism in his own case as “a much quieter approach” than “activism as on the nightly news, burning tires and protesting, being run over by tanks, and by the power in control” (Clark 2). He attributes his quieter activist approach to his grandmother, who raised him as a traditional Creek. Dr. Clark characterizes her as “very quiet,” explaining that she taught him to “keep [his] mouth closed and [his] eyes open in the traditional sense,” to “listen and learn and build from that” (2). Her lessons included teaching him “to see the tribe as a wider community to whom I am distantly related or near-related depending on who they are,” “knowing my clan,” and “being tightly connected to family” (Clark 2). Dr. Clark describes his interaction with the dominate white culture as “living in a second world” where he must “pay homage” to institutions of power (2). By himself, he explains, he thinks about “Indian things in an Indian world, reading about them, writing about them, or dealing with them in some way” (Clark 2). For Dr. Clark, serving the Muscogee Nation, participating in traditional ceremony, and teaching Native history, culture, and law, reflect an internal activist orientation that he believes remains invisible to most people.

The local cultural literacy and quiet activism Dr. Clark exhibits in both his interview and his scholarship models the type of rhetorical resistance that occurs in historically silenced cultural spaces, a model that appears across the cultural sites my project investigates. Cultural literacy activists in Oklahoma, whose work otherwise remains invisible to mainstream society and

unacknowledged by dominant historical narratives, nevertheless resists erasure in multiple ways, constructing a counter-narrative of persistence amidst suppression. In examples such as Dr. Clark's, silence affords resistance in ways sheer volume fails to achieve in Oklahoma. As Cheryl Glenn demonstrates in *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* (2004), "silence can deploy power," and "the purposeful delivery of silence can speak volumes" (155). Moreover, "a rhetoric of silence, as a means of rhetorical delivery, can be empowered action, both resistance and creative" (Glenn 155). Silence "can be a way of taking responsibility all the while refusing to be compliant" and also "refusing to take responsibility all the while appearing to be compliant" (Glenn 155). In suppressed rhetorical contexts such as Oklahoma, visibility and volume can impede activist goals by triggering suppressive responses. Legacies left by historic suppression shape rhetorical spaces within which activists work as well as the audiences activists seek to rhetoricize.

Glenn acknowledges that rhetorical resistance "can take the form of breaking silence," making the invisible visible and exposing systems of power at work in rhetorically suppressive spaces (155). Breaking silence as Glenn calls it, however, can still be a quiet process. Blue Clark's quieter approach to activism becomes for him more a matter of attitude. As he articulates it, "I don't burn tires, [...] but I am an outspoken opponent of mainstream culture as it mistreats tribes. I would hope I'm known as an activist for tribal sovereignty" (3). Dr. Clark describes the dominant discursive environment in Oklahoma as "anti-Indian," an attitude he sees displayed everywhere around

him, in federal and state-level policies, school curricula, public discourse, and private conversations with white colleagues⁷³ (9). Cultural literacy work in these contexts indeed breaks silences as it speaks to historical elisions and educates the public. As a traditional Muskogee Creek, Dr. Clark believes participating in traditional ceremonial ways is the most subversive form of activism he practices, a practice he doubts anybody in the public sphere would ever recognize. In tying subversion to silence in this example, he opens new ways of understanding resistance in Oklahoma. The silence he engages and enacts through his ceremonial participation stems in part from rhetorical suppression, but also resists that suppression through agentive cultural delivery of silence as well. It speaks to the history of Oklahoma and how activists rhetorically negotiate their inherited discursive space.

HISTORICAL SUPPRESSION AND STUDENTS WRITING IN PLACE

The overarching goal of my project has been to establish the idea that, despite suppressive silence, as rhetorical agents in local spaces we are not far removed from history, or from the resistant discourses that write against that history. In writing classrooms, this raises the question of how well we are preparing our students to act rhetorically in their own local environments – their own communities – to enact positive social change. The local rhetorics and rhetorical legacies circulating around students, in which they can act as rhetorical agents only to the degree they are aware of them, connect students to these histories and discourses in immediate ways. Students remain unaware of them to the extent local rhetorics remain naturalized in the

discursive environment. To rhetorically navigate them, students must develop critical awareness of them, which I argue includes transrhetorical awareness.

Literacy activists working for cultural resistance, like student writers, operate within local histories and discourses to effect social change. The rhetorical examples these activists provide model transrhetorical patterns from which students and others can learn local rhetorical tactics. Across cultural boundaries, these activists revise dominant narratives of place, subverting silence and erasure – which I call rhetorical suppression – replacing them with presence and persistence. These same silences and erasures keep students from developing a critical consciousness *of place*, also effectively alienating them from rhetorical power *in place*. Like literacy activists, students confront the historic events from which rhetorical suppression results as they continue to impact the present. As activists continue legacies of resistance that emerged from those events, students can as well. My project suggests in the very least students should have the rhetorical choice.

By highlighting cultural literacy activism in multiple cultural locations, my research constructs a transrhetorical network of resistance. It spreads across local rhetorical spaces, connecting not only local and regional rhetorical sites, but bridging those sites to the writing classroom as well. This network moves ideas of resistance and social action across historic cultural boundaries that mark Oklahoma, and within which cultural literacy activists work, sometimes entirely obscuring the borders that separate them. Cultural literacy activism, linked transrhetorically across the multiple sites I investigate

here, subverts and defies rhetorical legacies of suppression inscribed upon Oklahoma by removal and containment, allotment, and statehood. These events forever changed lives and communities at each cultural site my project treats. The impact of those changes continue over a century later, not fixed in time but expanding across networks of cultures and communities. These on-going changes present continual rhetorical challenges for both activists and students. I argue this suggests the value of local rhetorics in writing classrooms, where students seek to build rhetorical agency in local spaces. This is particularly true in places that have been culturally devalued or marked by suppressed history.

The historic and current activist models represented across sites in Cherokee Country, Kiowa Country, Muskogee Creek Country, and the Greenwood District transrhetorically construct a counternarrative of Oklahoma. I argue this suggests the value of local rhetorics in writing classrooms, where students seek to build rhetorical agency in local spaces. To conclude, I will examine a site of activist resistance and rhetorical suppression within which several of the cultural groups I have examined previously cooperated together. The 1917 Green Corn Rebellion can be understood as a rhetorical turning point in Oklahoma, an historical site of cross-cultural resistance that evoked a powerful suppressive response, visible through newspaper archives, court records, and on-going conservative constructions of the state's political identity. This final investigation provides an opportunity to examine closely the experience of a student writer encountering this historical

site of activism for the first time and to explore the personal connections he made through his own process of researching and writing about it.

As the cases I conclude with show, incorporating local rhetorics creates a transrhetorical space where students can situate themselves and their rhetorical projects in relationship to local discourses. The critical awareness that emerges from this alignment enables them to navigate legacies of suppression and enact rhetorical resistance. By engaging student inquiry into the local rhetorical production of counter-narratives, students encounter difference in their own landscapes. At the same time, they discover activist networks and strategies that unite cultural groups across difference. It allows students to more critically inhabit the spaces within which they practice rhetoric for social change, and to dwell consciously amid rhetorical legacies operating within those spaces.

“Inhabiting” and “dwelling” have long been understood in the study of rhetoric through ethos, articulated most famously by Aristotle as one of three *peisteis* or means of persuasion. Rhetorical scholar J. Michael Hyde (2004) points out that too often ethos is understood as “moral character” or “ethics” (xiii). Hyde seeks instead to explore the “more ‘primordial’” sense of the term as “the way discourse is used to transform space and time into ‘dwelling places’ where people can deliberate about and ‘know together’ some matter of interest” (xiii). For students, dwelling places represent the spaces within which they write and rhetoricize, “the grounds, the abodes or habitats, where a person’s ethics and moral character take shape” (xiii). Likewise, Nedra

Reynolds understands rhetoric as a spatial habit, and for her the critical practice of dwelling creates thirdspaces that connect both private and public spatial practices to place. For Reynolds, “dwelling raises questions about forms of exclusion and segregation, not just in neighborhoods and communities, but also in discourses” (140). “The idea of ‘inhabiting’ discursive spaces [...] – ethos as *haunt*, for example – [...] invites us to revisit the connections between habits and places, between memories and places, between our bodies and the material world,” as she sees it (Reynolds 141). Examining local rhetorics and rhetorical spaces encourages students to encounter differences that challenge their perceptions and increase their rhetorical awareness.

Understanding rhetoric as a spatial practice occurring in place fosters critical transrhetorical awareness and agency. “Learning to dwell,” as Reynolds explains, “doesn’t necessarily mean ‘loving’ a place and settling in happily or for years at a time; it means paying attention to place, not just to the borders that surround it, and building thirdspaces” (142 – 143). Reynolds claims, “recognizing the spatial practices of dwelling are important for encountering discourses of otherness, unfamiliar texts or speech practices, or rhetorical moves that surprise us” (142). In Oklahoma, cultural resistance sites offer new local discourses, unfamiliar texts, and the surprising rhetorical moves that Reynolds seeks through learning to dwell. Oklahoma cultural literacy activists promote, practice, and produce the kinds of thirdspaces Reynolds calls compositionists to study, rhetorical spaces that challenge the silences and erasures enacted by dominant narratives of place.

Reynolds insists, “until we see how *place* affects other social, cultural, and economic differences, the turn to geography becomes just another way to interpret spatial metaphors or just another gesture towards interdisciplinary research” (Reynolds 143). Seeing differences as they *occur in place*, for Reynolds, instantiates *changes in place*. “Those changes can’t happen,” she surmises, “if people won’t cross borders, won’t engage with a new place, or can’t overcome their fear or aversion to a particular location” (Reynolds 143). Students must be encouraged, then, to challenge exclusions, including investigating textual absences, particularly as they relate to their own locations. To this end, my project has challenged the exclusion of local rhetorics in writing instruction. My argument continues to assert that inquiry into local rhetorics better prepares students to act as rhetorical agents in local spaces, counter dominant narratives of place, and create thirdspaces within which social change can occur.

MAKING TRANSRHETORICAL NETWORKS VISIBLE FOR STUDENTS

Throughout the course of my field research, as suppressed networks of cultural resistance activism in Oklahoma appear via interviews and archival research, my conversations with Oklahoma students and cultural literacy activists clarify the close connections between lived experience and silenced histories. In this conclusion chapter, I highlight particular moments in my research process, where student and activist narratives aligned with archival investigations in ways beyond my intellectual expectations or control. To me, these moments of intersection speak to the power and value of transrhetorical

analysis in local spaces. In investigating the past and the present, particularly around sites of cultural literacy and resistance, these narratives emerged to transform my own understanding of the relationships between people and places. My own position as researcher transformed as well, as I found myself confronting the silence and suppression I studied. This includes encounters with gaps in student knowledge of Oklahoma history, Oklahoma writers, and activist legacies inscribed by both. It includes confrontations with silence in the archival record, resulting from suppressed historical information. It also speaks to activist strategies, like Blue Clark's and those in proceeding chapters, how they respond to and deploy silences as well. These encounters led me to also understand my own research as a form of resistance and cultural literacy activism, resonant with both the activists I encountered and with Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy Studies and Native Studies scholarship concerning silence and sociopolitical action. Pedagogically, attending to local silences in my research returned me again to thinking about how writing curricula silences the local as well and how this might be addressed.

Cliff Cox, a student I encountered in the course of my teaching and research on these topics, provides an unexpectedly powerful example of the generative intersections that arise from transrhetorically analyzing suppressed local rhetorics of resistance. I met Cliff in a summer intercession course I designed and taught, entitled "Flaming Lips: the Rhetoric of Red in Oklahoma." Through engaging local rhetorics presented in the course, Cliff discovered a personal, familial connection to a site of suppressed history and rhetorical

suppression in Oklahoma's past. The Green Corn Rebellion, an armed anti-draft and anti-capitalist uprising in 1917, remains unknown to most Oklahomans. Of the students I interviewed, only two expressed any knowledge of the event, and they had encountered it outside of formal learning contexts (Lynch 3; Pena 5). For Cliff Cox, like most students, the Green Corn Rebellion comprised a wholly new site of Oklahoma history and reframed his sense of Oklahoma and of himself as a rhetorical actor within it. The Green Corn Rebellion, as a site of resistance and suppressed history, opened up a new rhetorical space within which Cliff could construct a new narrative. Cliff's personal experience with local rhetorics in the classroom, as I detail later, demonstrates a particularly profound site of personal connection-making through place-based inquiry into suppressed activist histories. It also allows me to discuss the various impacts of local inquiry into silenced rhetorics on the formation of student rhetorical identity within local spaces.

Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy scholars, particularly feminist C/R/L scholars, acknowledge what are often the otherwise unspoken connections between researchers' personal narratives, research agendas, and pedagogical orientations. Many of the scholars from whom I have borrowed extensively for the theoretical framing of this project comprise the list of scholars exploring these connections in the field: Krista Ratcliffe, Kristie Fleckenstein, Nedra Reynolds, Jackie Royster, and Susan Kates, for instance. In *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process* (2010), editors Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan begin the collection of essays with their co-authored

introduction, “The Role of Serendipity, Family Connections, and Cultural Memory in Historical Research” (1). Like silenced histories and suppressed rhetorics, Kirsch and Rohan believe “the connections woven through so many of our scholarly and personal lives [...] remain largely unarticulated” (1). The “fascinating discoveries, unexpected leads, and early hunches” that mark research as a lived process evidence “the role of serendipity, place, and cultural memory in making knowledge” (Kirsch and Rohan 2). Acknowledging lived experience as research makes research a more “meaningful collection process” that helps researchers “better understand their own historically situated experience” (Kirsch and Rohan 2). For Kirsch and Rohan and the scholars represented in their collection, through honoring the connections between historical/personal narratives and research, the research process becomes “an identity-forming, life-changing activity” (2). In my project, the connections that manifest from the process of transrhetorical analysis, such as those that emerged for Cliff, accomplish a similar transformation, particularly around my rhetorical identity as an Oklahoman.

When students investigate and identify with suppressed local rhetorics and the silenced histories within which they occur, a profound shift results. Through encounters with radical history, archival traces, and cross-cultural conduct occurring within them, students actively engage transformative texts that challenge established ways of seeing place. Discursive regimes inscribed by dominant narratives, which include rhetorical and visual habits as Fleckenstein suggests, give way to antinomy. The networks made visible by

antinomy disrupt naturalized perceptions and assumptions, particularly when understood in relationship to place and positionality (Fleckenstein 116 – 117). The Green Corn Rebellion as a site of rhetorical suppression and silenced history, as other sites examined throughout my project, provides an antinomic moment that intervenes in the social construction of Oklahoma. Antinomy “relies on the process of paradox, an element of antinomy particularly important to subversion” (Fleckenstein 118). The rebellion “creates a crisis [...] because it calls into question the specious unity of the status quo” and allows students to imagine the world around them differently (Fleckenstein 118). The contradictions between discoveries of place and dominant discourses about place require students to disrupt old narratives and invent new ones not only about Oklahoma but about themselves.

The rhetorical identities of students transform through increasing awareness and agency developed during local inquiry. Whether they investigate an historic site of rhetorical resistance or a contemporary activist location, they simultaneously discover a local space previously suppressed and subvert the suppression itself. This includes critically questioning local rhetorical suppression and local suppressive powers while at the same time examining in closer proximity to their own lives how rhetorical suppression works. Local inquiry becomes an embodied experience and a lived process of rhetorical resistance. As Nedra Reynolds explains, students gain critical consciousness of how “bodies and places impact upon each other,” that “a body becomes marked with the residue of place,” and “places are also changed by the

presences of bodies” (143). Just as local rhetorical legacies impact student bodies, students can impact those legacies by reclaiming rhetorical space or revising dominant narratives to include resistance. In so doing, students can articulate the thirdspaces within which other rhetorical possibilities exist outside of silence, where rhetorical choices include more than compliance or suppression, and where they can resist dominant narratives by enacting new ones.

The historical narrative of Oklahoma that dominates the student interviews I collected speaks to the silences these students inherit and the suppression that imbues their rhetorical identities and cultural literacies. As my analysis in the introduction chapter indicates, students across the interviews I conducted expressed a surface-level awareness of popular tropes associated with the state’s history – Indians, boomers and sooners, oil, and the dust bowl. Most could articulate a rudimentary understanding of the Trail of Tears and the 1889 Land Run. Surprisingly, 16 of the 30 students interviewed included the Tulsa Race Riot in discussing their knowledge of Oklahoma history, likely in large part due to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission’s mandate to include the event in state history curriculum. Still only one student mentioned knowledge of Oklahoma’s All-Black Towns. Students also without any noticeable degree of variance, identified Oklahoma as politically conservative.

The inscription of political conservatism in Oklahoma ran so deeply in the students’ collective characterization of the state, students who self-identified as liberal or leftist expressed a clear sense of rhetorical

marginalization and discursive alienation. Many interviewees articulated varying degrees of activist consciousness, from volunteering with church and civic organizations, to participating in activist projects and organizations on campus and off, to engaging in political discourse online and elsewhere. Though not all of these students constructed themselves as politically liberal, many did. I find it significant that for those who did, their own accounts of Oklahoma history and their constructions of Oklahoma's political identity entirely erase their own subjective experiences and positionalities as Oklahomans with leftist activist orientations. The interviews suggest the degree to which this self-erasure impacts their effectiveness as writers and rhetorical agents engaged in social action.

Connections between place, social action, and cultural identity predominately appear as unmade and unexplored relationships across the student interviews. Their activist identities and leftist political identities in their own minds developed independently of their residence in Oklahoma. My research suggests such disconnections result in part from silenced local histories and rhetorical suppression, an erasure reinscribed in writing classrooms that marginalize local rhetorics. Asking students to make connections between themselves and the rhetorical landscape becomes itself an act of resistance in this context. Additionally, it prepares them to write for local audiences in local spaces where they could otherwise encounter suppressive responses. The Green Corn Rebellion, as a site of cross-cultural conduct and transrhetorical suppression, offers a place-based historical

entrance into discussions of local activist rhetorics and their immediate and lasting impacts on local discursive space.

THE GREEN CORN REBELLION AS TRANSRHETORICAL SUPPRESSION

Occurring in Oklahoma in 1917, the Green Corn Rebellion represents a site of the most militant leftist resistance in the state's history. It also represents a site of rhetorical suppression. Historians consistently point out across scholarship addressing the rebellion that among its distinctive characteristics, the racial coalition represented among the rebels suggests an unexpected degree of cross-cultural cooperation motivated by class struggle. While the event occurred in an historical context of national tension over U.S. entry into World War I, in Oklahoma anti-war sentiment (which after the Conscription Act of 1916 quickly turned to anti-draft sentiment) could be traced back to a surprisingly strong Socialist Party presence in the state.

Many Socialists across the U.S. backed Woodrow Wilson in the 1916 elections on his promise of keeping the United States out of the European war. Wilson reneged his commitment with U.S. entry into World War I in April 1917. Oklahoma Socialists, previously preoccupied with addressing local economic injustices arising from unfair agricultural and labor practices, saw entry into the war as capitalist-inspired and the draft as class exploitation. Tenant farmers and sharecroppers lived in what was essentially a feudal system, kept in poverty as a result of landowner policies over which they had no influence or control. *Labor History of Oklahoma*, a text compiled and published by the Oklahoma Federal Writers Project, states, "In 1910, 54.8 percent of the farms in

Oklahoma were tenant-operated, and there were 104,000 tenant farmers and sharecroppers” (33). By 1917, many of them had joined the Working Class Union, a branch of the Industrial Workers of the World formed to organize Oklahoma’s agricultural laborers. Seminole, Hughes, and Pontotoc County locals held particular influence and W.C.U. leaders claimed 35,000 members (Sellars 84 – 85). U.S. entry into W.W. I accompanied a rhetorical shift in the national attitude toward socialist and labor activists, as federal policies increasingly framed leftist ideologies as disloyal to the war effort and the American government.

Both Socialism and organized labor had a long history in Oklahoma beginning in the Oklahoma and Indian Territories prior to statehood. Labor unions and the Socialist Party in Oklahoma (and throughout the country) gained strength during the progressive movement in the early part of the 20th century. According to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and John Womack, Jr. in “Oklahoma, 1917: Dreams of Revolution” (2010), a coalition of organized labor emerged as industrial capitalism expanded into the Twin Territories.

Starting in the 1880s, among Knights of Labor in the coal districts, the labor movement grew into a major force in Oklahoma and Indian Territories, and after statehood, consolidated across the state. The railroad brotherhoods on the M-K-T, Missouri-Pacific, Frisco, Santa Fe, Rock Island, Kansas City Southern, and lesser lines, the Machinists, Carpenters, Boilermakers, Steam Engineers, and other trade unions, the United Mine Workers (UMW), and the IWW all had locals there. These unions were not timid about using their power either, in politics or in direct action. The Twin Territories Labor Federation drove Oklahoma’s constitutional convention in 1906-07 into the most pro-labor constitution in the United States. (Womack, Jr. and Dunbar-Ortiz 47)

In November 1907, at the height of the progressive era, when Oklahoma

became the 46th state in the nation, the state constitution was heralded as an embodiment of “the noblest thought and highest ideals of the nation” (Barnard 88). Union advocates and progressive activists such as Kate Barnard and Peter Hanraty introduced 24 labor demands at the Constitutional Convention, most of which were adopted in some form (*Oklahoma* 23 – 29).

As a result, the Oklahoma Constitution addresses various progressive issues such as child labor, compulsory education, homestead exemption (in the case of bankruptcy), and the protection of prisoners, widows, and orphans (Barnard 88). In addition, the constitution includes amendments for safe working conditions and safeguards against retribution for individuals involved in union organizing and activity. Labor Omnia Vincit (which translates as Labor Conquers All) became the state motto. Historically, it had long been a slogan of the U.S. labor movement beginning with the American Federation of Labor, founded in 1886, which incorporated the phrase into its own seal. Upon the phrase’s incorporation into the official seal of Oklahoma, it became the state’s official motto. Now the phrase offers a rhetorical trace of a largely forgotten part of Oklahoma’s leftist history and political identity.

The inclusion of labor safeguards in the state’s constitution resulted also from the rhetorical efforts of members of the Socialist Party of Oklahoma, which grew substantially from 1900 (pre-statehood) to 1917. In 1914, Oklahoma was home to the strongest state organization of the Socialist Party of the United States, with over 12,000 dues-paying members and a little over one hundred Oklahoma socialists holding public office (Zinn 340). Because of the

alliance established with organized labor, the Socialist Labor Party and the Social Democratic Party had locals in Oklahoma Territory as early as 1895 and 1899 respectively (Womack, Jr. and Dunbar-Ortiz 48). After reorganization “into the Socialist Party in 1901, it chartered scores of dues-paying, dues-collecting Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory locals” (Womack, Jr. and Dunbar-Ortiz 48). Organizing tactics included adult education programs rhetorically staged as religious encampments along Oklahoma’s rural creeks and river banks, “public short courses on socialism,” and week-long “revivals for justice” which drew thousands (Womack, Jr. and Dunbar-Ortiz 48). “By statehood, the party had a headquarters in Norman (soon moved to Oklahoma City), a staff of professional organizers, probably 150 locals, and fifteen thousand members” (Womack, Jr. and Dunbar-Ortiz 48). In response to Jim Crow and on-going racist legislation, the Oklahoma Socialist Party “educated white workers and tenants particularly about race, opposing the Democratic Party’s policy of the disenfranchisement of black men, defending their right to vote, and winning black support for Socialist candidates” (Womack, Jr. and Dunbar-Ortiz 48). In the 1912 presidential election, the Oklahoma Socialist Party rallied 16 percent of the total votes cast for Socialist candidate Eugene Debs – the largest per capita percentage in the United States that year.

Amidst all of this leftist electoral activity and progressive activism, the rhetorical climate for leftist political discourse in Oklahoma can be understood as remarkably different then from what it is today. Archival research suggests this change began in the immediate months before and after the Green Corn

Rebellion. From what can be observed in newspaper archives chronicling their activism, Oklahoma's socialist and union activists one hundred years ago operated in a far more politically tolerant discursive environment. For example, in a 1915 article published in *Oklahoma Graphic*, a socialist paper published out of Oklahoma City, one writer claims that "membership of the party now numbers nearly 12,000," that the Socialist votes cast across the state in 1914 numbered 52,963, and that "party activities reach every corner of the state" through the organization of 984 locals (Welday 2). Throughout the first several decades after statehood, even after the first Red Scare of 1919-1920 and the second red scare of the early 1940's, Oklahoma maintained a leftist political element that continued to work for progressive goals.

The rhetorical climate for leftist activity, however, became increasingly intolerant of their activities post-rebellion. The Green Corn Rebellion, erased as it is from Oklahoma's dominant historical narrative, remains a cultural memory that haunts the state's public discourse, limiting the discursive presence of leftist rhetoric. The suppression enacted by local authorities as a response to the rebellion reverberates even in this discursive silence, or rather especially so. While the rebellion's suppression was enacted physically and imposed severe material consequences on the rebels and their families, the rhetorical suppression that accompanied it - as observed in archival traces from across the state - marked a quick and lasting shift in local discourse.

Newspaper accounts reveal a swift rhetorical change in the treatment of Socialists in the state after the 1917 rebellion. Earlier coverage suggests a

more tolerant climate in the state for diverse opinion and respectful public discourse around socialism. An article from the May 21, 1911, edition of *The Oklahoman*, for instance, entitled “Socialist Vote Creates Surprise,” reports that, aided by the Farmers’ Union, the “greatest gains [were] made in the rural districts on [the] east side of [the] state,” formerly Indian Territory (“Socialist” 28). *The Oklahoman*, now widely known as a conservative newspaper, addresses with noticeable neutrality the growth in the Socialist electoral presence in the state. On December 28, 1911, an article in *The Oklahoman* reports on the latest meeting of the Oklahoma State Socialists with the same equanimity. The article states,

The committee on organization reported 130 locals added during the year, the report of the last quarter showing an average of 11 per week. It was explained that this is a natural growth and not the result of propaganda from outside sources. The socialist idea was stated by all speakers to be spreading and it was predicted that the socialist vote at the next election will be greater than ever. (“No” 5)

There is no evidence in these articles, or others like them during these years prior to World War I, of the virulent anti-socialist stance that appears in articles published in 1917, particularly after the Green Corn Rebellion. Likewise, the degree of access leftists had to mainstream media outlets suggests greater tolerance as well. Not coincidentally, the rhetorical shift occurring after the rebellion coincides also with the early beginnings of the first red scare in the United States, influenced in part by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Global politics enacted a transrhetorical pattern across the United States, not just in Oklahoma, of local rhetorical suppression that responded to the perceived growing threat of leftist political ideology.

Immediately prior to and after the Green Corn Rebellion, Oklahoma newspaper archives indicate increasing local rhetorical suppression of socialists, unionists, and their allies. In an August 20, 1917 article entitled “Pauls Valley Has Mob Scare,” the subtitle reads, “Round-up Occurs After Alleged Slacker is Made to Salute Flag” (“Pauls” 6). It gives an account of an attempt by local socialists and unionists to demand the release from jail of fellow activists charged with failure to register for the draft, and the humiliation faced by one man, Charles Neal, who was forced to publicly salute the flag to prove his loyalty to the United States government. The article ends, ironically, “There was nothing to it then – every socialist [sic] looked like the kaiser and a general round-up occurred” (“Pauls” 6). Similarly, the title of an article running on February 15, 1918 – six months after the Green Corn Rebellion - reads, “Alleged Disloyalist Threshed in Street By a City Official” (“Alleged” 3). It goes on to report a fist fight in the streets of Chickasha between City Councilman H.O. Hays and Grady County farmer P.S. Busch, a known socialist: “it was alleged that Busch cursed the American Government and President Wilson” (“Alleged” 3). Due to the allegations against him, Busch was arrested by federal officers and held under a \$10,000 bond on charges of “seditious utterances and disloyalty” (“Alleged” 3). Describing another suppressive act of public humiliation, the article concludes:

Following Busch’s release, a crowd of 100 men escorted him to his buggy, threw his whip away, placed a large American flag in the whip stock, nailed another flag on the back of the buggy seat and pinned a small flag [...] on his coat. He was warned to bring a flag [...] with him on later trips to town. (“Alleged” 3)

These examples are just two among the archives which provide evidence that violence and intimidation of varying degrees occurred across the state, toward socialists, unionists, and pacifists who had been more tolerated before the rebellion. Additionally, the nationalistic fervor, vitriolic hatred, name-calling, and unfounded accusations present in these post-Rebellion newspaper articles testify to the suppressive forces working to silence collective resistance in Oklahoma, once and for all.

COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE AND SUPPRESSIVE FORCE IN OKLAHOMA

Calling the Green Corn Rebellion an act of collective resistance requires explanation, as does the idea of suppressive force that silenced it. Both terms are imbued with transrhetorical qualities that gather together the multiple agents/agencies and cultural sites networked within the Green Corn Rebellion. These networks connect people and groups acting for resistance and those acting for suppression, and connect both movements to broader national rhetorical sites generating public discourse concerning the war and the draft in 1917. Historians working in radical history offer differing views on the amount and the nature of racial cooperation occurring around the Green Corn Rebellion, but they all agree shared political and economic concerns enabled racial cooperation between Native American, African American, and European American rebels. United originally around class concerns related to tenancy farming and sharecropping – exploitive labor practices that impacted agricultural workers across race – farmers organized under the Working Class Union saw the World War II draft as further exploitation. Dunbar-Ortiz and

Womack, Jr. criticize fellow historian Nigel Sellars saying he mistakes Native Americans who participated in the rebellion as “dissident Creeks’ already involved in violent ‘traditionalist’ protests against U.S. appropriation of Creek land” (54). Instead, they claim the Native rebels (at least those who were arrested in the round-up) were Seminole (54). Regardless, archives show draft resistance and anti-war rhetoric occurred throughout the state during early 1917, preceding the rebellion.

Sellars’ “mistake” likely stems from a transrhetorical connection many historians construct between the Green Corn Rebellion in 1917 and the earlier Crazy Snake Uprising, occurring in 1909. The “Crazy Snakes,” so-named in public discourse after the alleged leader of the movement, Chitto Harjo, were a large band of Muskogee Creeks, mostly full-bloods, who organized originally to resist allotment. The earliest archival records of the Snakes’ resistance in the Daniel Littlefield Collection at the Sequoyah National Research Center date to March 1901, several years before statehood, roughly midway through the process of allotment. A series of Office of Indian Affairs letters sent by O.I.A. Commissioner (1897-1904) W.A. Jones to the Secretary of the Interior suggest the political concern raised by the Snakes. The letters concern the prosecution of 70 “Snake Band of Creek Indians” who had been arrested for obstructing the allotment process in the Creek Nation. Citing Angie Debo’s famous book *And Still the Waters Run*, historians Daniel Littlefield and Lonnie Underhill (1978) establish that it was the Creek rejection of the Dawes Commission agreement in a special tribal election that prompted Congress to pass the 1898 Curtis Act. To

avoid similar stalemates with other tribal nations, “this law unilaterally abolished the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations,” making it easier for the federal government to circumvent sovereignty for decades to come (Littlefield and Underhill 308). Though created in response to Creek resistance, the Curtis Act transrhetorically effected suppression across tribal boundaries and beyond Indian Territory.

In fall 1900, the Snake faction gathered at Hickory Ground, an already historic Muskogee Creek ceremonial ground south of Henryetta, Oklahoma, and “elected a principal chief, a second chief, and a two-house legislature,” “reenacted the old laws of the Creek Nation,” and created a “police force to enforce them” – thus defiantly reinstating the national government and resisting the 1898 Curtis Act (Littlefield and Underhill 309). The Snakes then “sent an ultimatum to President William McKinley,” demanding the return of their land and the reinstatement of the 1832 removal treaty (Littlefield and Underhill 309). Littlefield and Underhill explain the Snakes “posted their laws throughout the countryside, confiscated large numbers of allotment certificates,” and employed violence “against Creeks who willing took allotments, employed whites, or rented lands” to non-citizens (309). When Muskogee Creeks ratified a “more acceptable agreement” in a May 1901 special election, the Snakes “continued to resist enrollment and refuse to sign for individual allotments of land” (Littlefield and Underhill 308). In 1901, the 70 members mentioned above were arrested and jailed for assault. Their release depended on their taking individual oaths to “abandon their form of

government and not attempt to take the law into their own hands” and their agreement to “take their allotments and enroll” (Jones 1). The archival evidence suggests all those arrested were released.

In July 1908, several years later and less than a year after statehood, a large number of Creek Freedmen and “other blacks who had migrated to Oklahoma,” mostly men and boys, joined a large number of Harjo’s Snake faction at Hickory Ground,” apparently for their July council meeting (Littlefield and Underhill 310). The presence of a large assembly of full-blood Creeks, known for previous violence in the area, combined with a large number of Freedman and African Americans on the grounds “alarmed the whites in the vicinity” (Littlefield and Underhill 310). The council grounds were protected by armed light-horse policemen – “some of them black” (Littlefield and Underhill 310). After the council meeting ended, the full-bloods and Freedmen returned home, while the “state negroes⁷⁴” remained for unknown reasons (Littlefield and Underhill 311). Some accounts suggest racial tensions in nearby Henryetta left them with no other option for refuge.

Several months later in March 1908, amidst increasing tensions regarding the growing black presense at the ceremonial grounds, a local constable attempted to enter the grounds to search for thieves accused of stealing meat from a local smokehouse. The black occupants barred the constable from entering, and he subsequently returned to Henryetta to form a posse (Littlefield and Underhill 311 – 312). The posse returned to gunfire between the black encampment and a nearby farmhouse owned by whites. The

posse attacked the camp the following morning at daybreak. Many refugees fled, but 42 black men were arrested, including a few Freedmen (Littlefield and Underhill 312). According to Littlefield and Underhill's account, racial tension and violence against both blacks and natives continued for several days following the event, animated by increasingly inaccurate accounts of the event.

Chitto Harjo, who was not present at Hickory Grounds at the time, was blamed for inciting the violence. He had, in fact, just returned from a lobbying trip to Washington, D.C., and was at home preparing to speak to council members at their late-March meeting at the grounds. Chitto Harjo's rhetorical resistance included numerous appeals to the U.S. Congress. Most famously, he addressed a Senate Investigating Committee sent to Indian Territory in 1906. Angie Debo's famous title, *And Still the Waters Run*, comes from Harjo's speech to the committee⁷⁵, during which he recounts the history of agreements between the Muscogee Creek and European settlers, attempting again to intervene on the eve of statehood. Even two years after statehood in 1909, Harjo continued to seek justice through lobbying. An Office of Indian Affairs memo dated February 20, 1909, announces Chitto Harjo's presence, along with Four Mothers Society leader Eufaula Harjo, in Washington, D.C., to "continue their course of opposition to the breaking up of tribal government" (Francis, Jr. 1). The Four Mothers Society was a broader network of resistant cultural traditionalists across the Muscogee Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations. This memo suggests alliances between the two groups as they advocated on behalf of multiple nations. Chitto Harjo likely returned home

with a report of continuing frustration, as the memo also suggests the O.I.A. office attempted “to convince them of the futility of continuing” their effort (Francis, Jr. 1). Two days after the violence and destruction of Hickory Ground, a sheriff and four deputies attacked Harjo’s home where a group of his followers had gathered to escort him to the grounds for the meeting. Two deputies were killed and the sheriff and two others retreated. Before they could return with reinforcement, Harjo fled – never to be seen again in the area. Within days, posse members set fire to Harjo’s home and the Council House at Hickory Grounds, burning both to the ground.

WORLD WAR I, CAPITALISM, AND OKLAHOMA LABOR

Chitto Harjo’s resistance informs not only Muscogee Creek culture, but the network of allies established across cultural boundaries and united in resistance to the threat of erasure allotment and statehood imposed. This network also informs the Green Corn Rebellion less than ten years later. Archival evidence suggests the rebellion engaged farmers across race, a fact that intensified the concern of local authorities – especially given the rhetorical precedent set by the Crazy Snake Uprising eight years earlier. While some historians claim the rebellion got its popular name from the rebels’ plan to eat green corn taken from fields as they marched, Donald Fixico places the event squarely within the Muscogee Creek ceremonial calendar, which includes a yearly Green Corn ceremony.

The ceremony, usually occurring mid-summer, can be traditionally understood as a time of cleansing. Traditional Green Corn practices included

the destruction of material items as a representation of renewal. This symbolism operates transrhetorically in the sabotage enacted by rebels who sought to eradicate capitalism through destruction of property and infrastructure. Because Indian Territory, by this time eastern Oklahoma, had long been a site of cross-cultural exchange between Native peoples, African descendants, and European mixed-bloods, these populations also composed the rebellion – as substantiated by newspaper accounts, arrest and court records. While the rebellion united these farmers transrhetorically across racial boundaries for their own economic interest, at the same time it also united them to larger networks of labor and anti-draft resistance.

Archives suggest anti-draft resistance in Oklahoma began in April 1917 and coincided with resistance throughout the U.S., particularly in eastern cities with a strong organized labor and socialist presence. A 1932 University of Oklahoma masters thesis offers a biased but useful historical analysis and cites multiple statewide newspaper articles crediting the Working Class Union in Oklahoma with a number of anti-draft activities. The Working Class Union was an arm of the International Workers of the World, a radical industrial union that advocated for “one big union” that united workers across the industrial trades. The W.C.U. and the I.W.W. differed in two critical ways. First, the I.W.W. did not organize agricultural workers and the W.C.U. did, almost exclusively. Second, the I.W.W. was committed to non-violent direct action where the W.C.U. was not. Prior to the weeks and days leading up to the rebellion, noted W.C.U. activities in Oklahoma included primarily circulating

anti-draft literature and holding anti-draft meetings (Bush 16). At many of these meetings, organizers such as Henry Munson and Homer Spence spoke to assembled crowds.

Within the context of anti-capitalism and fear of the draft, Munson and Spence morphed the political discontent of Oklahoma's tenant farmers and sharecroppers into a plan for direct action. "The general text of the ultimate plan," Bush claims in his thesis, "seems to have been to assemble at some central point on a given date, force all farmers into their ranks, march to Washington, overthrow the government, and stop the war" (17). Other farmers and laborers would join them as they marched, leaders told them, and "the agitators had promised a force of over four million men for the uprising [...] to not only include the W.C.U., but the I.W.W. and the Railroad Brotherhoods as well" (Bush 17 – 18). Their numbers would make them undefeatable. Historian Nigel Sellars observes that "by the summer of 1917," because of the increase in W.C.U. activity and visibility, "rumors of a radical uprising had spread throughout Oklahoma," causing local law enforcement to organize in preparation (Sellars 77). Bush claims throughout summer and into July, the Oklahoma W.C.U. planners purchased "guns, dynamite, and poison" for the uprising (19). Meanwhile, "sporadic outbreaks" occurred throughout the state, including the dynamiting of the public waterworks at Dewar, Oklahoma, for which nine members of the W.C.U. were arrested and jailed (Bush 20). Eight W.C.U. draft resisters were arrested in Pottawatomie County, and newspapers report "disturbances at Enid, Coalgate, Tishomingo, and other Oklahoma

towns” (Bush 20). In response, the rhetorical climate across the state became rife with vigilantism and violence.

Transrhetorically, this rhetorical pattern in Oklahoma participated in larger repetitions of it across the country. Nigel Sellars argues beginning in 1915, “the Wilson administration planned to suppress” leftist activity, targeting particularly organized labor and Socialism, and “the escalation of war gave the federal government new tools to deal with radicalism” (96). The August 1916 National Defense Act authorized the creation of the Council of Defense, which included the organization of state and county-level councils (Sellars 96). In March 1917, the U.S. Attorney General’s office created the American Protective League, “a volunteer citizens’ organization directed by the Bureau of Investigation,” and charged with guarding against radical sentiment by now represented in public discourse as un-American and harmful to the war cause (Sellars 96). The Espionage Act, passed in June 1917, less than two months before the Green Corn Rebellion, criminalized anti-draft activity as obstructing recruitment and military success. Organized labor and socialist leaders were indicted under the act primarily in eastern cities where the anti-war movement had a strong presence, a tactic which served to create disorder in radical movements. Locally, Oklahoma governor Robert L. Williams issued an order to create a state defense council with county affiliates, an organization that proved central to suppressing labor and socialist activity in Oklahoma. The Council of Defense attracted civic and economic leaders seeking to express national pride by joining its ranks. County Councils of Defense appeared

throughout the state.

At the same time, capitalism and imperialism spread throughout the globe, World War I being only one result. Because of the global context in 1917, Dunbar-Ortiz and Womack, Jr. warn against understanding the Green Corn Rebellion as an isolated rural revolt, marked by the Jeffersonian values and American exceptionalism to which Sellars' analysis attributes it. Focusing instead on the capitalist development amassing global wealth throughout the industrial revolution, Dunbar-Ortiz and Womack, Jr. connect the "high-powered capital that sent railroads from 1870 to 1914" across the United States to those built "all across Eastern Europe, Russia, India, China, Korea, South Africa, South America, Canada, and Mexico" (Dunbar-Ortiz and Sellars 45). These railroads were used to enable commerce, connecting existing mines and creating new opportunities for resource extraction. "It was Wall Street bankers," they remind readers, "J.P. Morgan and J. and W. Seligman & Company, who put the first railroad through Indian Territory on the way to Galveston" (45). Meanwhile, newly forming agribusinesses restructured farming practices and promoted increasing scale. Thus, "all over the world, capital turned peasants, yeomen, and farmers, especially corn, cotton, and wheat farmers in Oklahoma, into renters, tenants, sharecroppers, and hired hands" (Dunbar-Ortiz and Sellars 45). Resistance to capitalism likewise arose around the world in 1917, tying Oklahoma's rebels to a global network of leftist militants acting against increasing injustice and suppression.

While the W.C.U. in Oklahoma had been largely occupied with

generating anti-draft and anti-war sentiment, members' resistance moved, in the summer of 1917, from leafleting and public oratory to direct action. The first confrontations between the rebels and local counterinsurgents happened on August 2nd, along "the Little River bottoms south of Seminole," where officers took fire from a small "party of negroes" and one officer was injured (Bush 22). Accounts of "abandoned crops" and "butchered livestock" spread amid increasing local panic, particularly centered on Seminole, Pontotoc, Pottawatomie, and Hughes counties (Bush 23). Sasakwa, the small town supposedly seated at the center of the activity, "was panic stricken [...] when the telephone and telegraph lines suddenly went out," severed by rebel sabotage (Bush 23). Across newspaper accounts, the rebels burned railroad bridges and trestles, dynamited oil pipelines, and poisoned livestock.

Responding to the alarm of actual destruction, citizens armed themselves and joined posses, some coming from several counties away to help suppress the rebellion. For three days, the struggle continued, and by the third day Bush estimates "nearly one thousand citizens, representing seven Oklahoma counties, under the nominal command of Sheriff Robert E. Duncan of Pontotoc County, made up the purely civilian army" (36). County Councils of Defense contributed counterinsurgents and organizational strategists to the cause. The rebels met not the U.S. Army in the fields, as they had anticipated, but rather fellow Oklahomans ignited by wartime patriotism. The W.C.U.'s use of sabotage and threatened violence increased the rebellion's threat to local and national interests, and ultimately led to a swift and suppressive reaction.

While the Green Corn Rebellion and its suppression seem less surprising given the national and global context of resistance to the war, it nonetheless remains remarkable for the local transrhetorical network of radical activism it reveals in Oklahoma. Historian David Chang connects the Green Corn Rebellion to longstanding racial patterns in Oklahoma, saying “what made the resistance to the draft and the war in east-central Oklahoma so exceptional was the way that class politics underpinned interracial action” – a product of the state’s unusual racial history (186). He points out numerous reports “repeatedly mention the participation of ‘Snake’ Indians,” local rhetorical shorthand for an additional threat posed by the rebellion, that of racial unity (Chang 186). While W.C.U. archives and trial transcripts mention nothing, according to Chang, regarding racial cooperation, this silence can be read to suggest the level of threat such cooperation posed, with neither the W.C.U. or the prosecution seeking to call attention to it. It is critical to fully understanding the interracial, resistant coalition the Green Corn Rebellion constructs not as antiracist but rather as class warfare as it emerged in the specific racial context of Oklahoma (Chang 187). Here, the rebels which included Native American, Native Africans, and African Americans drew upon a legacy of interracial cooperation around resistance that enabled their militant collaboration in 1917. The suppression with which they met as a result, while it erases their rebellion from historical narratives, also silences their unified dissent and the historical cross-cultural alliances that enabled it.

PUBLIC FORGETTING, RHETORICAL INTERVENTION, AND REMEMBERING

In May 2011, Cliff Cox was a student in a University of Oklahoma spring intercession course I taught entitled “Flaming Lips: The Rhetoric of Red and Oklahoma History.” The course was offered, as were all intercession courses, through University College. The course, modeled after an upper-level undergraduate cultural rhetorics course, included four units as charted below (see table 1) and a significantly weighted research and rhetorical analysis assignment.

Table 1

May 2011 UNIV 3000.859 “Flaming Lips: The Rhetoric of Red and Oklahoma History”

COURSE UNITS:

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| Unit I | Flaming Lips, Radical-ness, and Rhetoric |
| Unit II | Indigenous Culture, Representation, and Resistance |
| Unit III | Red Flag to Red State |
| Unit IV | Racial Equality and the Red Scare |

Source: Jackson, Rachel, Course Syllabus, “Flaming Lips: The Rhetoric of Red and Oklahoma History,” May 2011, Web, Table 1.

The course began with a unit that examined the meaning of radicality, particularly in the context of Oklahoma as a rhetorical space. Students closely examined texts produced by the Flaming Lips, including the 2005 documentary *Fearless Freaks* by Oklahoma filmmaker Bradley Beesley and song lyrics from

the 2009 album *At War with the Mystics*. From these texts and through rhetorical analysis of them based on Fleckenstein's ideas of scopic regime, antinomy, and allocentric perception, students developed place-conscious tropes related to radicality. They engaged notions of power and resistance, and situated these within Oklahoma's rhetorical landscape. The second through fourth units applied these radical tropes to specific sites of activism via readings from David Joyce's edited collections "*An Oklahoma I'd Never Seen Before:*" *Alternative Views of Oklahoma History* (1994) and *Alternative Oklahoma: Contrarian Views of the Sooner State* (2007) and other sources gathered from my research. The students encountered the Green Corn Rebellion in Unit III through Womack and Dunbar-Ortiz's article.

Rhetorical suppression and the historical erasures that it affects can be understood as public forgetting. Rhetoric scholar Vivian Bradford (2010) claims, "forgetting, in academic as well as popular usage, [...] signif[ies] a loss, absence, or lack – not simply of memory but of live connections with a tangible past" (5). Forgetting is "the ontological opposite of memory, [...] a hindrance to mature understanding and full experience of a nourishing past" (Bradford 5). For students and activists in Oklahoma, the rhetorical suppression of Oklahoma's radical past informs perceptions of Oklahoma in the present as a rhetorical space that excludes activism by marginalizing activist voices. In his interview, Cliff Cox explains this through the state's conservative public discourse, which he believes causes Oklahomans to be "unwilling to have any kind of conversation about anything" that would suggest or enable deviation

from the norm (Cox 16). “Especially here,” he explains, “it’s just very polarizing on one side because it’s a very a Republican state” and “if you’re a Republican, you’re a conservative and you’re a Christian, and you have to like guns” (Cox 16). For Cliff, this local discursive pattern creates a scopic regime that constructs Oklahoma as a limited and limiting rhetorical space.

Regardless of how an individual truly believes, Cliff explains, “you have to be this way and that’s the way to talk and nobody else in the world is right” (Cox 16). He encounters this rhetorical pattern at work, among his friends, and in his family. For Cliff, who identifies as politically outside of this conservative norm, this requires learning to “ignore some people, instead of trying to argue with them” (16). This rhetorical tactic, while understandable, effectively shuts down dialogue across difference and enacts silence. Rhetorical suppression contributes to Cliff’s self-silencing and depends in part on the perpetual public forgetting of historical resistance, which allows resistance to remain suppressed in cultural memory as well. The rhetorical suppression Cliff describes becomes naturalized in the discursive environment and shapes his rhetorical choices.

Encountering local activist rhetorics of resistance, however, particularly when those rhetorics and histories arise from marginalized communities, allows students to reclaim suppressed activist histories for themselves in the present. As Bradford suggests, “forgetting can be a necessary spur to remembrance, provoking us to recognize the inherent selectivity of normative public memories and imagine anew, with each passing generation, what our

objects of memory should be” (10). In this way, public forgetting does not amount ultimately to loss or absence, but rather an opportunity to enact agency and rewrite historical narratives to reflect a dynamic, evolving, and diverse public. “Collective remembrance,” Bradford continues, “can become so inflexibly doctrinaire in form and content that it amounts to a grossly simplified projection of former event,” which amounts to “forgetting the past in its truer heterogeneity” (10). Rhetorical agency, which includes agency in local rhetorical spaces, means participating in constructing public narratives of the past that inform and empower the present.

Bradford explains, “selves and publics alike require for their healthy functioning the ability to alternately enshrine or redact dimensions of their past,” and thus construct the narratives central to personal and collective identity (11). “Public memory” then becomes “the result of a perpetual rhetorical process with which communities deliberate over how best to interpret the past as a resource for understanding and making decisions in the present” (Bradford 13). Thus both forgetting and remembering become agentive, as individuals and publics engage in such processes. Bradford reminds readers that “forgetting emerges in arguably its most frightful and potentially destructive forms when it operates unnoticed, or is even popularly accepted, as a public memory” (175). Agency occurs when individuals and collectives intervene in otherwise naturalized sites of public forgetting, particularly where such forgetting results from suppressive force.

When suppressive force arises within local histories, place is the most

immediate, if not the only space within which such interventions can occur. Local suppression requires local interventions. When in the course of our class Cliff encountered a family name among the key organizers of the Green Corn Rebellion, he discovered a transrhetorical network between his family's history and Oklahoma's suppressed radical past. Munson, the last name of the a Working Class Union agitator Henry "Rube" Munson generally credited with instigating the rebellion, happened to be the maiden name of Cliff's paternal grandmother. Henry Munson received the maximum sentence, six years in a federal penitentiary and a \$5,000 fine, for "deluding and misleading" Pottawatomie County farmers into joining the Working Class Union⁷⁶ (Bush 61). Cliff's curiosity led him to a conversation with his grandfather (his grandmother had passed away only a few months earlier) during which he confirmed that Cliff's grandmother was indeed Henry Munson's granddaughter, making Cliff the W.C.U. rebel's great great grandson. Cliff's understanding of the silence around the Green Corn Rebellion became both historical and personal. Cliff's grandmother had never spoken of her grandfather.

By inquiring into local historical and rhetorical silences, Cliff intervened in familial silence and rhetorical patterns as well. His investigation led him to a class research project through which he recovered family history and renewed the memory of Henry Munson, not only among his relatives but through his writing to broader audiences. From a box his grandmother kept under her bed for years and through conversations with his grandfather and other distant relatives, Cliff constructed a fuller narrative of Henry Munson's life than

historians had been able to construct. Through hidden family archives and silenced oral histories, Cliff established details about Munson's life prior to his arrest, including his marriage to a Peoria woman named Emma Stoner with whom he had several children. Long-buried family photographs provided never before seen images of Munson. Cliff discovered that after Munson left prison, he separated from his wife and children and spent the rest of his life in and around Miami, Oklahoma, alienated and unpopular, living at the end of his life with one of his sons, and dying in Peoria, Oklahoma, in 1934. "The people in the family didn't speak about him because he was really the black sheep" (Cox 8). "No one wanted him. They didn't appreciate his views on anything" (Cox 8). Cliff also found Munson's forgotten gravesite in a Miami cemetery, "four or five rows away from all the other Munsons" (Cox 8). His marble headstone, while the same style and design from the other family headstones, was turned the opposite direction from the rest of the family's. Even in death, Cliff determined, his great great grandfather was ostracized.

Almost 100 years after the Green Corn Rebellion, Cliff's inquiry into suppressed Oklahoma history provided an opportunity for him and the class to more fully experience learning about the Green Corn Rebellion through the experiences of one of the central rhetorical figures who mobilized the farmers' anti-draft resistance. Cliff added new information he discovered about Henry Munson to *Ancestry.com*, sharing it with relatives and broader audiences interested in the obscure W.C.U. leader. "It's pretty cool to take a class because I was like 'Oh, the Flaming Lips – cool, and after that meeting someone in my

family that I'd never heard of before or knew anything about" (Cox 5). In the process, not only did he connect with family he hadn't known, but he made those connections with suppressed history for his family as well, and shared what he learned with his brother and other close relatives. He understood in new ways the conservative political identity operating so strongly in his own family as one constructed in response to familial suppression. He recontextualized his own identity within transrhetorical activist networks occurring in local and familial spaces. He reclaimed sites of public forgetting as sites of remembering, and through his research and writing added to the class's historical understanding of a suppressed uprising in Oklahoma history. Through speaking to silence, Cliff reactivated discursive networks that inform regional resistance and his historical relationship to it. Within two years of taking the class, Cliff named his first-born son Henry, rhetorically reclaiming an ancestor silenced in both his family and in dominant narratives of state history. In so doing, he and his wife reinscribed their familial narrative with resistance.

RELATIONAL REGIONALISM – HONORING ALLIANCES AND ACKNOWLEDGING TENSIONS

Oklahoma activists inhabit the rhetorical space within which transrhetorical networks operate. Cliff's experience suggests rhetorical legacies created by historical resistance continue in unexpected proximity to our daily lives. They explain rhetorical patterns and spatial behavior within families, communities, and public discourse, and they connect us to multiple cultural, historical, and geographical locations. The alliances and tensions

present in these locations bear critical inquiry, insofar as they influence the rhetorical and transrhetorical locations within which Oklahoma activists and students operate. Without pushing into silenced sites of resistance, these alliances and tensions – as valuable as they are to rhetorical success – remain unseen, unaccounted for, and undervalued.

Neglecting these sites also impacts regional relationships across transrhetorical activist networks that could otherwise unite and engage diverse groups seeking similar solutions for common problems. This means in addition to seeking out sites of cross-cultural collaboration, we must examine the nature of those collaborations, especially as they impact transrhetorical movements at sites of suppression such as the Green Corn Rebellion. Each of the historical and present-day activist sites treated in my project offers opportunities to understand local cross-cultural collaborations, particularly as they inform regional cultural resistance and persistence. Once students and activists understand these sites as part of a local network they inhabit, they can become more effective rhetorical agents within them.

Within these networks, examining tensions – such as racial and cultural tensions - between groups provides an opportunity to address them and move towards reconciliation. Cooperation across border becomes even more critical in a global era as diverse groups experience the ground-level impact of global capital and economic policy. Melanie Benson Taylor, Professor of English and Native American Studies at Dartmouth College, expresses the exigency of building such cooperative alliances in *Reconstructing the Native South*:

American Indian Literature and the Lost Cause (2011). She argues, the connections occurring between racial and cultural groups “point us toward templates for a productive new kind of comparativism and solidarity in the age of globalization” (Taylor 3). She theorizes ways in which “competitive antagonisms and economic anxieties” between groups also “unite them in unexpected and sometimes unsettling ways” within systems of national and global power. Speaking in terms of the regional south, within which Oklahoma can certainly be included, she observes “In the South’s shared spaces of unrecoverable loss and protracted assault from broader national and international forces, a common regional rhetoric of defeat, desire, and recompense emerges” (Taylor 3). This common regional rhetoric, as she calls it, engages dominant historical narratives as well as the marginalized cultures those narratives erase. Rhetorics of loss and defeat embedded in Oklahoma’s construction require resistant transrhetorical analysis, not just to subvert inaccurate and harmful tropes arising from such rhetorics, but also to improve relationships and build rhetorical solidarity between sites intersecting within them.

Like Native culture in the locations examined in this project, Native Studies theorists in addition to Benson remind scholars to be mindful of relationships within and between communities and contexts. Tol Foster (Muscogee Creek), in part influenced by nationalist arguments arising from Native American literary scholarship, suggests “generalized claims,” rather than “theory aris[ing] out of historical events and in response to particular

contexts,” can be “transported too carelessly” and cause “real damage” to communities into which such theory is imported (266). Honoring the Muscogee tradition of cultural and political inclusion, Foster suggests instead what he calls “relational regionalism,” a method of seeing the connections between “the tribal and the regional” that Critical Regionalism has thus far not attended to mapping (270). He argues further that in order to truly carry out the tribally specific research, scholarship must include “multiple perspectives and voices within and [...] voices without as well” (Foster 272). Only by including these multiple perspectives will scholars “effectively witness the *interzones* [sic] where different constituencies collide and, as a result, renegotiate their communal cultural frames,” ultimately celebrating community adaptations within spaces where contact occurs (Foster 273). Likewise, observing relationships within these spaces as well as between them, scholars create the “grounds for critique” appropriate within Native spaces built upon networks of regional communities with which they share those spaces (Foster 279). As previous chapters demonstrate, discussing Native cultures apart from the various other cultures with which Native peoples came into contact renders them racially pure while erasing rich realities.

At the same time, Rhetorical Studies scholars working in public memory also point to relationship and collectivity as key components to remembrance. Edward S. Casey identifies four types of memory in his contribution to *Framing Public Memory* (2004). Social memory, collective memory, and public memory implicate the groups constructing and constructed by memory. Social memory

for Casey enacts “kinship ties, by geographical proximity in neighborhoods, cities, and other regions” and “is shared by those who are *already* [sic] related to each other, whether by family or friendship or civic acquaintance” (22). Thus social memory assumes these relationships exist and relies upon them for co-construction. Whereas Casey argues collective memory shares only the commonality of the content remembered across locations, “social memory derives from a basis in shared experience, shared history or place, or shared project” (23). Unlike public memory, which relies on public dialogue that invokes such memory broadly across national spaces, social memory includes a much more localized network of group identities arising out of families, communities, and regions.

History, constructed from each of these sites of memory, connects people across geographies of space and time in addition to across cultures. In *Traces of a Stream, Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy* scholar Jackie Jones Royster (2000) relies on two words in the Swahili language to construct the relationship between an individual and time. Memory plays a central role in both concepts, and also distinguishes them one from the other. Sasa denotes personal time when an individual lives on the planet and also the time during which that person is remembered by the living. A person moves into zamani time, on the other hand, when he or she is no longer remembered by the living, and “joins the collective or the community of spirits and achieves collective immortality” (Royster 80). Within this “time-space continuum with its sasa and zamani dimensions, there is room to negotiate what constitutes history, or

at the very least to negotiate what constitutes historical consciousness as a precursor for the 'making' of history" (Royster 80). Memory and history, deeply entwined in Royster's cultural heuristic for examining black female literacy workers, become agentive rhetorical tools for cultural reclamation.

The construction of history, especially in marginalized, silenced spaces, allows us to acknowledge what we do not know or remember and look instead to rhetorical evidence of collective experiences, tracing traces as Royster describes it, "to see how else we might still come to historical consciousness and thereby to other renderings of this collective body of lived experiences" (80). Royster argues that African American culture, which retains cultural influences from Africa, operates in "cultural fusions between African, European, and indigenous cultures" and has "actually blended with other cultural traditions," "reach[ing] beyond African American communities" (84). Royster argues the "forged identities and operational styles" likewise contribute to the forging of American identity. They also contribute to the formation of Oklahoman identity as well.

While remembering Native American, African Native, and African American cultural resistance requires confronting white racism, it also provides an opportunity to correct white racism. This corrective becomes increasingly important to acknowledging and utilizing transrhetorical networks that unite diverse communities in Oklahoma toward common goals. Activists in Oklahoma continue to occupy rhetorical spaces marked by silence and segregation, in part a legacy of the suppression enacted at resistant sites of

cross-cultural cooperation. In order to overcome these rhetorical conditions, these activists and spaces must be connected through intentional effort and transrhetorical agency that seeks to unite them in common causes.

In order to build these alliances, tensions must be addressed as well. Social movements depend upon broad alliances that acknowledge and resolve historic and on-going conflict between groups participating in coalition building. While the Green Corn Rebellion and other sites of resistance construct a historical counter-narrative of Oklahoma that provides evidence of interracial cooperation, undoubtedly that cooperation had limits in the racist context of the era. James Green, Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts – Boston and longtime labor activist, writes “countermemories of places in the South shared by blacks and whites,” particularly when they are preserved and shared publicly, defy “conventional wisdom [which holds] southern racism determined the behavior of all black and white workers” (164). At the same time, he acknowledges the existence of racism in interracial encounters even within social movements and argues “the first task is to document its presence” (Green 164). Historic and current examples of “racial border-crossing” for activist goals inevitably include opportunities to critically examine relationships between groups and observe ways to improve those relationships. In Oklahoma, a place historically constructed by diverse peoples and also by hegemonic racist policy, this task seems especially critical to activists and students seeking to engage and build social action networks.

RHETORICAL RECOVERY AND TRANSRHETORICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Many social justice activists in Oklahoma, like students, operate without historical consciousness of their participation in rhetorical legacies left by largely suppressed and silenced resistance efforts. Throughout my project, it has been my contention that a working knowledge of these movements and histories connects activist writers and rhetors not only to these legacies, but also to the rhetorical space within which they act and that these legacies shape. For my chapters I have focused primarily on interviewing activists affiliated with cultural literacy projects, however I also collected interviews with activists working for other causes in the state – including environmental, anti-war, and labor issues. My argument suggests these Oklahoma activists are connected through transrhetorical networks across historical, cultural, racial, and rhetorical borders, to other activists elsewhere across regional and national borders as well. At the same time I have argued for the value local rhetorics of resistance bring to the composition classroom, to students who live, write, and act within local rhetorical networks.

Incorporating local rhetorics into curriculum aids in recovering them to ultimately make social movement history more overtly part of Oklahoma's historical narrative. In his book *Taking History to Heart: The Power of the Past in Building Social Movements* (2000), James Green holds that "movement history [sic] is a term that could be used to describe all kinds of writing about social protest," and "encapsulate[s] the kind of work we do together as teachers and students, writers and readers, speakers and listeners, leaders and supporters"

(3). Thus, Green constructs relationships between multiple actors across histories and locations within the movements he describes. These are the relationships I have sought to establish in my work.

The relationships with Oklahoma many of the activists I interviewed expressed present complex constructions marked by both love of place and intense frustration with local and state-level politics. These activists generally share a clearly articulated sense of the rhetorical challenge of addressing Oklahoma audiences within suppressive discursive space limited by the constraints of “red state” conservatism. For Oklahoma historian and activist Dr. Davis Joyce, the greatest obstacle to activist efforts – that is, the state’s current conservative rhetorical climate – stems from the silenced progressive traditions in Oklahoma’s past. He insists, “Yeah, I’m out of touch with most voting Oklahomans, but I argue they are out of touch with the best parts of Oklahoma’s progressive traditions” (Joyce 5). Editor of two collections on “alternative Oklahoma history” as he calls it (1998 and 2007), his work promotes multiple historical perspectives on Oklahoma history, including women’s history, GLBTQ history, Native history, African-American history, labor history, and environmental history among others. By presenting them together as “alternative history,” he also situates each of these perspectives inside the broader social movement through which these various sites become networked.

In his interview, Dr. Joyce discussed his experiences promoting his book *Alternative Oklahoma: Contrarian Views of the Sooner State* (2007) during

Oklahoma's centennial year – a year marked by celebrations of problematic sites of history heralded in the state's dominant historical narrative. His experience provides an example of the discursive barriers erected by rhetorical legacies of suppression in Oklahoma that reinforce official historical narratives and hegemonic power. At readings and public talks, he encountered more than once “people who were kind of turned off by what they saw as my negative approach to Oklahoma” (Joyce 5). Rhetorically, they perceived promoting Oklahoma counter-narratives as an attack on the state. “I wasn't celebrating the land run, or I wasn't celebrating statehood itself, or whatever,” he explains (Joyce 5). To address their concerns, he continues, “I kept trying to make the point that there are aspects of our past I celebrate, but they tend to be the more left, liberal, progressive, radical, reformist parts that haven't been emphasized adequately” (Joyce 5). In these moments and in his scholarly work generally, he tries to rhetorically reframe the debate. Rather than understanding state history as “either-or” – *either* the official dominant narrative *or* the alternative counter-narrative – Dr. Joyce argues instead for inclusive history, or rather for excluding none of it and putting all the various viewpoints into conversation. His historiographical approach seeks to construct a more accurate narrative through building all perspectives into the whole.

In Oklahoma's discursive environment, the rhetorical effort to open the dialogue around marginalized peoples, histories, and issues often requires (or results in) the rhetorical creation of activist identities, either self-created or socially constructed, which risks invoking a suppressive rhetorical response.

Establishing an activist identity in Oklahoma, as Dr. Joyce's experience suggests, can lead to public critique that ultimately questions an activist's loyalties to the state and continues a rhetorical climate of distrust between activists and public audiences. Bailey Stephenson, an environmental and labor activist, observes this same distrust operating inside and between activist groups as well. For her, a life-long Oklahoma activist, building and sustaining relationships with other activists and other Oklahomans across sites of difference is "totally resistance – pushing back against all the things that society imposes on us" (Stephenson 11). "There's so many pressures from society to perceive different people, to perceive certain people as outsiders. People that are different from us. Pushing back against that, even in small ways, in small steps, is resistance" (Stephenson 11). Bailey has worked with Native activists in the Idle No More movement, particularly in recent direct action efforts by the Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance to block and delay the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline through eastern Oklahoma. However, from her own lived experience, she describes Oklahoma activism as "really isolationist," saying "it's difficult to find ways to strategically organize around multiple different overlapping struggles" (Stephenson 17). To Bailey, this leads to short-term issue organizing rather than creating long-term sustainable models of local activism that grow collective power through coalition and community building (17). Transrhetorically, activists must develop and maintain trust relationships with other activists at the same time they do so with local audiences. For Bailey, this means working across – and ultimately

resisting – boundaries that enforce ideological isolationism and racial segregation.

Both Bailey and her partner Stefan Warner express an awareness of Oklahoma's activist history and radical past and the impact it has on the present. When I ask Stefan about how living in Oklahoma shapes his activist work, he responds, "At this point I realize it's superhistorical" (Warner 6). Stefan has read extensively into Oklahoma's historical counter-narratives, particularly focusing on labor history. In addition to ongoing environmental activism, he currently works with the recently re-organized state chapter of the International Workers of the World. Earlier this spring, through collaborating with I.W.W. locals across the U.S., he and Bailey led a successful social media campaign against the Jimmy John's franchise on Campus Corner in Norman that empowered local workers to make demands regarding workplace related grievances.

Stefan believes the Green Corn Rebellion and the repressive response continues to shape resistance efforts in Oklahoma. "Our movement got decapitated, like almost one hundred years ago", he explains (Warner 6). "It's not surprising that shit's the way it is. There's so much in-fighting on the left [...] that influences everything" (Warner 6). Stefan believes the suppressive rhetorical climate is "directly tied to Oklahoma being a petro state and the politics here being dominated by oil money, and now gas money too" (Warner 6). Stefan and Bailey made headlines in late 2013 when they were arrested on "terrorism hoax" charges for dropping a banner in the atrium of the Devon

Energy Tower in downtown Oklahoma City. Their action was an expression of solidarity with members of the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society, Canadian First Nations activists arrested in October 2013 while successfully blockading shale gas exploration. The banner Bailey and Stefan dropped read, "The odds are never in our favor," a reference to the *Hunger Games: Catching Fire* film which had just been released, a sentiment to which both these Oklahoma activists – if not all Oklahoma activists - can relate.

Stefan and Bailey still face felony charges for their rhetorical resistance that day in the Devon Tower, charges which Freedom of Information Act requests brought by their attorney have revealed to be the result of cooperation between the Oklahoma City Police Department and the U.S. Joint Terrorism Task Force. Like rhetorical resistance, rhetorical suppression operates transrhetorically across networks, in this case in relationships between local and federal law enforcement agencies cooperating to silence environmentalist dissent. Part of the impact of suppression, as both Bailey and Stefan recognize, is the strain it places on friendships and alliances between activists.

Stefan explains that activists, in order to counter suppressive networks, must build strong relationships across cultural and regional locations. "I got into all this, the really big issue stuff, like anti-war stuff, anti-XL pipeline, essentially into not clearly thought-out campaigns with win-able goals, [...] and I just kind of got used to the outcome being inevitable. We were going to get our asses kicked and nothing's hopeful" (Warner 9). In the midst of ongoing

local confrontation and defeat around these issues, Stefan “realized that building relationships and building a movement and new people getting involved and sticking around was part of the point” (Warner 9). Sustaining these relationships, which Stefan’s interview suggests he sees as an increasingly significant part of activist work, changes not only people but creates greater cooperation for social change as well. Working with Native American activists through the Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance and Idle No More confirmed this belief for Stefan. Even if “we’re not going to win this fight,” he explains, “we’re glad we know y’all” (Warner 9). “That’s awesome,” he remarks, “That’s a victory” (Warner 9). Networking with other activists across social boundaries and discursive barriers has become a primary goal. Strengthening and privileging these relationships becomes an act of resistance to isolation and alienation, one that continues to build the larger movement of activists in Oklahoma and beyond.

RECLAIMING PLACE AND WRITING HOME

Within Oklahoma’s activist network, one of the most recognizable faces is that of poet, artist, actor, and activist Richard Ray Whitman. Richard Ray identifies as Yuchi and is cross-enrolled with the Muscogee Creek Nation. He has participated in multiple activist sites in Oklahoma, including with the Society for the Preservation of Indigenous Rights and Indigenous Traditions (S.P.I.R.I.T.), Idle No More, and the Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance. When I ask him to define activism, like Blue Clark, he describes his childhood raised by his grandmother – in “the northern valleys of the Muskogee Creek Nation”

around Gypsy, Oklahoma (Whitman 1). The values his grandmother imparted to him, “fortitude, generosity, sharing, self-sufficiency,” are the values he believes informs his activist work. He remembers laying in bed at night and “hearing pumping jacks,” and as he got older connecting them to the inequities he saw around him, “why we remained poor when the wealth was going on around us” (Whitman 2). These observations sensitized him to justice issues as he continued to grow up, and motivated him to get involved with the National Indian Youth Council and the American Indian Movement. Through these organizations, he connected with indigenous peoples struggling in Central America. He explains, “I remember hearing them say, ‘Our artists, our poets, our writers are always in the forefront with us, and they too are assassinated, imprisoned” (Whitman 3). This observation stayed with Richard, and it helped him to find his place as a writer and artist in the broader movements occurring locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally around him.

Richard’s involvement with the Wounded Knee stand-off in 1973 made him “look back toward Oklahoma” and think of the work to be done in the state, “building bridges for understanding our cultures, sharing information, and healing” (Whitman 5). He attributes his vision for an activist life here to his experiences growing up in rural Creek Country, with poor Natives, blacks, and whites living as neighbors, gathering wild onions and pecans together and dividing the harvest into equal portions (Whitman 5). He calls his childhood experience “a spark, still in there, that has never totally burned out” (Whitman 5). For him, resistance is more than “political confrontations, confrontational

politics, ain't it? It's survival. I think resistance is silent too. It's spirit" (Whitman 5 – 6). Resistance, Richard explains, can be understood like traditional ceremonies, practiced "under the table," hidden from dominant society (Whitman 6). While town was segregated and the children rode in separate buses to segregated schools, "good neighbor policies like sharing" occurred in remote rural areas outside of town where cross-cultural conduct could occur in seclusion (Whitman 5). "Knowing someone else's circumstances" made it possible for people to care for each other, in spite of enforced spatial behaviors and racist power structures, and to encourage and support one another in times of shared struggle (Whitman 5). The values inherent to ceremonial tradition – particularly sharing, honoring cultural ways, and strengthening community – depend upon such relationships.

Community values such as those Richard articulates resonate across the locations I have investigated in my research, bringing activists and issues into transrhetorical relationships with one another through repetitions of rhetorical patterns across perceived lines of difference. Beginning on Turtle Rock Farm, where the Bellmon sisters promote cooperative learning, organic farming, and sustainable living, Oklahoma offers examples of community that resist suppressive rhetorics and dominant spatial practices that separate people from each other and from their own cultural landscapes. Cherokee cultural activists look to ceremonial traditions, recovered with help from Muskogee Creek traditionalists, for models of community balance and right relationships. Sharing in a ceremonial context means working together for the common good

of the community. It includes not only sharing tasks at the ceremonial grounds, but also supporting grounds members and other ceremonial communities through reciprocal participation in ceremonial singing, dancing, and prayer. Community practices arise in Kiowa space, through the sharing of material and cultural resources that supports individual and cultural persistence. Kiowa benefit pow-wows like the ones the Kiowa Clemente Class has organized to raise funds, require days of preparation. Some prepare food for the free dinner – enough meat and potatoes to serve a whole community. Others gather gifts to give away in honor dances and collect donated items and cakes for the raffles. Community operates via the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation, where African-Native and African-American history inhabits a revitalized cultural landscape and building community requires inclusion across difference. In the heart of Greenwood, Reconciliation Park calls Oklahomans to work together for the future. At each of these sites, communities subvert suppression and resist destruction through local cultural rhetorics that enact the ethic of cross-cultural conduct in a surround of force. This prevailing pattern inscribes Oklahoma with a rhetoric of resistance that honors community and cooperation, a counter-narrative that subverts dominant constructions of this place.

When I ask Richard Ray Whitman if he thinks of himself as participating in the legacy of the Green Corn Rebellion, he says, “The only Green Corn Rebellion I participate in is our ceremonial Green Corn,” understanding both as resistance in community. “I think Oklahoma has its hidden history, or probably

consciously edited history. I remember the Green Corn, and of course the ceremonial ways with that. Also with the farmers and the black folk and the people of that time” (Whitman 7). Chitto Harjo’s name comes up at this point in the interview, and I ask Richard if he sees a relationship between his own activism and the Snakes’ resistance. He answers, “Aspirationally, I guess. I see that continuum, yes, I do. Not just in myself, but there’s always been an on-going, even though it went underground” (Whitman 7). Resistance and ceremony share common rhetorical patterns, then. Both employ silence as a means of persistence, and both rely on communities acting in silence, outside of public discourse and dominant culture, to enable ongoing work.

Richard acknowledges working in Oklahoma limits his activism where “you are surrounded by the misinformed,” a group that to him includes all people, “even Indian people” (Whitman 8). He continues, “At the same time, there’s always been an ongoing core, you know, [of] open-minded people [...] who can give you some educated perspectives. I’ve always tried to seek those people out” (Whitman 8). He recalls a friend who warned him against moving back to Oklahoma in the seventies, saying to him, “Brother, how can a thinking man move back to Oklahoma?” (Whitman 8). Richard responds to this now in hindsight, “It’s my home. It’s where I am from. It’s bigger than the uneducated” (Whitman 8). For him, the challenge for Oklahoma activists is to overcome “self-imposed limitations” and “find likeminded people, find commonalities. We all have vested interests, even with all the break downs and obstacles in Oklahoma” (Whitman 8). The goal for Oklahoma activists, then, is the same as

it is for all Oklahomans – to build relationships across difference and resist segregation and alienation.

Through examining the rhetorical archives of individuals engaged in historical resistance in Oklahoma, such relationships begin to emerge – faintly – from silenced sites of cross-cultural cooperation, exposing transrhetorical alliances operating between them. Seeing them requires “establishing a place for critical imagination,” as Jackie Royster suggests, to reconstruct details that otherwise remain suppressed, operating invisibly in silence (83).

Congressional archives, for instance, show the rhetorical efforts of traditionalist leaders across tribes – Redbird Smith, Chitto Harjo, Lone Wolf, for instance – occurring simultaneously during the years prior to statehood.

Across their individual testimonies, a transrhetorical movement becomes visible, but archives actually recording cross-cultural interactions and alliances are unavailable. Nonetheless, like Royster claims, the space exists for “the recovery and reenvisioning of experience,” for critically imagining a place where Native peoples living in Indian Territory worked together to confront tremendous pressure imposed upon their cultures. Likewise, with the Green Corn Rebellion, where arrest records indicate interracial solidarity among the rebels, other archives are still needed to corroborate this counternarrative.

Throughout my research this has been a great frustration and challenge, one that returns me to critical imagination as a necessary rhetorical skill for constructing the thirdspaces where activist communities across difference can grow in Oklahoma. It requires resisting the political alienation and rhetorical

defeat imposed by suppressive silence and rewriting that silence as active and agentive, resistant and redemptive, while at the same time maintaining historical accuracy.

Incorporating local rhetorics of resistance into composition classrooms allows for students to rewrite silence as well. Directing them to engage with issues in their own communities and with local discourse related to those issues allows them to intervene in the silences of their own landscapes, and discover rhetorical activists participating in community dialogue. It allows them to observe local rhetorical strategies and tactics, cultural and historical contexts, values and goals, challenges and achievements. They can engage also with analyzing and understanding local audiences across difference, which in turn supports their own efforts to address local audiences. In the process of doing so, students may discover the like-minds and commonalities that Richard Ray Whitman suggests they seek, and build the relationships Bailey and Stefan are both beginning to prioritize in their activist work. Local rhetorics can support student writers in the local exploration of issues about which they care deeply, and in building relationships with community members and organizations student writing can in turn support and advance.

Engaging local rhetorics and writing about local issues – like resistance as Bailey defines it – celebrates and cherishes life, affirming that the students' own cultures, histories, and places matter to writing instruction. Ultimately, local rhetorics build a relationship between the writing classroom and community that allows the transfer of knowledge between them. They extend

the transrhetorical network to and from the multiple locations already operating in student writing, making them more visible and powerful. They foster student construction of thirdspaces within which student writers reinforce their rhetorical commitments to all the sites from which and to which they write. As Bailey suggests, “love is resistance” (Stephenson 10). For activists and students, loving Oklahoma may be the most resistant act of all. Honoring local rhetorics of resistance emanating from spaces students inhabit, where their relationships to people and landscapes live, better ensures their ability to utilize the rhetorical skills writing instruction imparts for social change.

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APPENDIX A: CHAPTER NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

¹ Nedra Reynolds refers primarily to Henri LeFebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974). LeFebvre (1901 – 91), a French Marxist theorist, identified three types of spaces, which he referred to as the “trialectics of space:” 1.) objective space (spatial practices); 2.) conceived space (spatial representations); and lived space (space of representations). LeFebvre's work influenced Edward Soja's *Thirdspace*, also published in 1974. Soja's theory of thirdspace informs Kristie Fleckenstein's “symbiotic knot,” cited later in this chapter.

² Photovoice combines participant-generated photographs of daily life with participant-generated narratives that inform those photographs. This methodology has a long-history in qualitative research in the social sciences.

³ Though my definition and application of the term developed independently of her, I was excited to find the work of Wilkinson through a colleague, Jason Barrett-Fox. In addition to her dissertation, which I cite here, Wilkinson also contributes a significant and somewhat coincidental chapter to a recent collection, *Women and Rhetoric Between the Wars* (Southern Illinois UP, 2013). Wilkinson's chapter, entitled “Gertrude Bonnin's Transrhetorical Fight for Land Rights,” treats a text written by Bonnin (also know as Zitkala-Sa) that addresses land graft and exploitation of native women and children in Oklahoma. Wilkinson argues that Bonnin exhibits transrhetorical agency as she uses her knowledge of multiple cultural and gendered rhetorical practices in her appeal to white audiences.

⁴ Interestingly, Green's scholarly focus on movement history began with his dissertation at Yale University (1972), titled *Socialism and the Southwestern Class Struggle, 1898-1918: A Study of Radical Movements in Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas*. His work has been critical to many scholars seeking to understand Oklahoma's radical political past.

⁵ Here I am referring to “The People Who Live Here: Localizing Transrhetorical Texts in GI/Oklahoma Classrooms,” published in *Reworking English in Rhetoric and Composition: Global Interrogations, Local Interventions*, edited by Bruce Horner and Karen Kopelson, published by Southern Illinois University Press, 2014.

⁶ The Oklahoma towns represented by students in my study, in no particular order: Tulsa, Midwest City, Sallisaw, Gans, Tecumseh, Shawnee, Tahlequah, Woodward, Fargo, Jenks, Oklahoma City, Muskogee, Harrah, Del City, Morris, Okmulgee, Sapulpa, Alva, Spencer, Checotah, Norman, Wagoner, Washington, Poteau, Ponca City, Guthrie, El Reno, Bethany, Mustang, Enid, Owasso, Bartlesville, Weatherford, Thomas, Ardmore, Gene Autry, Talala, Seminole, Oologah, and Sand Springs.

⁷ As of the 2010 Census, of those who identified as a singular race, 72.2% of the

population were “White,” 7.6% were “Black,” and 8.6% were “American Indian.” 5.9% of the population identified as more than one race; of those, 3.6% identified as “White” and “American Indian” while .7% identified as “White” and “Black.” African/Native Americans were not categorized or measured.

⁸ C.D.I.B. stands for Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood, issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to all enrolled Native Americans.

CHAPTER TWO

⁹ Prior to European settlement and colonization, the Johnson City region D. Powell treats in this passage was part of the Cherokee land base, the homeland given to the Anigiduwa, one of the names we call ourselves, by Unethlanv, the Creator.

¹⁰ It would be interesting to know, for instance, how Powell might account for the lack of Cherokee representation in both his home neighborhood and his critical regionalist exploration of Appalachia, from where - according to both U.S. history and their own stories - the Cherokees originate. In what other ways might Powell observe the rhetorical suppression inherent in this lack of representation operating in Appalachian space and critical regionalist analysis that does not account for parallel cultures co-existing with a region?

¹¹ Vann’s wealth, amassed through the laboring bodies of his slaves, allowed him to invest capital in a nearby tavern and ferry transport. His son, “Rich Joe” Vann, famously removed to the west via steamboat, capable of financing the journey himself. The story of Rich Joe’s death continues to circulate in Cherokee Country. Rich Joe was traveling in his steamboat the *Lucy Walker* (named for his favorite racing horse) from Louisville, Kentucky, to New Orleans. The *Lucy Walker* exploded as a result of Rich Joe’s racing another vessel. Almost all the passengers, including Rich Joe and many slaves, were killed in the explosion.

¹² Curiously, four “quadroons” and one “full-blood” are listed in the household, with quadroon most likely meaning one quarter-blood Cherokee (according to Theda Purdue’s analysis of the term). The full-blood, according to my family’s best guess, is Arch’s first wife, Polly Crittendon. The identity of the others in the household is unclear. According to detachment records included in the John Ross Papers in the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, OK, Arch and Polly had one small child with them on the removal. Once in Indian Territory, Arch married Susie Owens, possibly in 1846; my family is unsure what happened to Polly Crittendon. We do know that Arch and Susie had 16 children in their household, and that Susie was also removed with her family from Gilmore County, GA, near the convergence of Taccoa Creek and Star River, in 1838.

¹³ Joe and his older brother Arch, Jr., made their living together as stonemasons, building stone buildings, chimneys, and cellars in multiple locations throughout the Cherokee Nation. Many still stand.

¹⁴ To illustrate tribal identification further, Cushman relies on categories created by Circe Sturm, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas – Austin, in her widely referenced book *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (2002). As Cushman points out “Chapter 5 of [Sturm’s] book [...] explores ‘five indexical markers of Cherokee identity other than blood ancestry: phenotype, social behavior, language, religious knowledge and participation, community residence and participation’ (110)” (“Toward” 345). Squaring myself within Sturm’s instrument, my cultural positionality becomes far more complex than my genealogy might suggest to non-Native audiences. Phenotypically, for instance, I believe I am generally read as a white woman, though occasionally someone indicates they perceive me as “other,” sometimes as Native American, but rarely Cherokee.

¹⁵ Like my own Cherokee identity, Ellen Cushman’s has largely been a matter of conscious endeavor in early to mid-adulthood, after my Grandpa Vann passed away. Cushman asserts, her “ethics [have always been] pretty centrally Cherokee [...] working with communities to address needs and goals,” a pattern which can be seen throughout her scholarship. She admits, much as I do in the next chapter, this work was being carried out in communities other than her own (“Toward” 346). Though working with non-Native communities is not a problem in and of itself, Cushman eventually and with the mentorship of other Native scholars, recognized her responsibility “to enact a kinship relation with the Cherokee,” “kinship [being] sanctioned in part through reciprocity to the community” (“Toward” 346 & 347). My relationship with the Cherokee Nation and communities therein has been constrained to some extent by growing up and living outside of the tribal districts, which limits my ability to fully develop relationships or enact kinship with tribal communities and members that comprise them.

¹⁶ While I am occasionally read as “looking Indian” and “acting Indian,” I usually assume I am being read as white, both by Native and non-Native people. My Cherokee identity, as it manifests in my physical body and spatial behavior, has been successfully suppressed.

¹⁷ Ellen Cushman describes what she calls “superficial politics” where “too often the primary text of authenticity is the face, especially the skin color of the face” (“Faces” 390). She describes succinctly her own experience of having someone read her face, examining it for signifiers of her Cherokee descendency: “The stare takes measure of lip size and fullness, eye color and shape, nose width and length, then a deep look at the part of the hair line looking for roots (Cushman “Faces” 390). For Cushman, like Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe, the “alternative forms of reading” she urges enable “us to move beyond the quick categorization of race from skin color alone [...] and draw upon tribal, local, and more robust notions of identification” (“Faces” 393).

¹⁸ Trainor notes “unfortunately,” this student “has become a familiar figure in

the literature on critical pedagogy” (Trainor 631). The problem, as she examines it, presents itself in a difficult dichotomy to reconcile. At one end of the spectrum, “whiteness studies positions whiteness as demonized so that the only legitimate white stance is that of a race traitor”; on the other end, “is a portrait of whiteness that foregrounds its innocence by showing how working class whites trade class consciousness for race privilege” (Trainor 633). The first position makes it impossible to clearly figure whiteness into the social justice framework of critical pedagogy, whereas the latter makes it wholly possible (Trainor 633).

¹⁹ The Beacon Press series *ReVisioning American History* commemorates Howard Zinn’s contribution to U.S. history scholarship, insofar as his “peoples’ history” reframes dominant historical narratives through the experiences of marginalized peoples.

²⁰ The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, signed on September 27, 1830 by the Choctaw Nation, was the first removal treaty signed after the passage of the Indian Removal Act in May 1830.

²¹ Because I am Cherokee, anything I contribute to the multiple networks in which I live and work, as a means of bettering them or attempting to better them, is always already Cherokee.

²² According to the Ross detachment papers, Arch and Polly (his first wife) had one child with them on the trail, and it is uncertain whether Polly and the child survived. Nine hundred eighty-three people left on the sixth detachment and only 921 people arrived.

²³ For over ten years from 1963 through 1975, Wahrhaftig “was associated with the Carnegie Project which was studying cross-cultural education through experiments with Cherokee literacy materials,” during which time he also conducted his dissertation research (iv). He admits early on in the forward being “drawn to the one most evident fact about Cherokees: their persistence” (Wahrhaftig ii). He includes his own “realization that there would be no understanding of Cherokees without understanding the meanings underlying their way of life and especially those which cluster around the meaning of Cherokee persistence” (Wahrhaftig iii).

²⁴ Because his study sits deeply in the Cherokee landscape in the communities of Lyons Switch, Cherry Tree, Briggs, and Marble City, OK, he closely examines the living conditions and strategies of members of families comprising them. He acknowledges Jasper Smith (Lyon’s Switch), Sam Doublehead of Cherry Tree, Hiner Doublehead of Cherry Tree, Fines James Smith (presumably of Lyons Switch), Andrew Dreadfulwater (of Briggs), and William Bolin (of Marble City) as sponsors of his research and as cultural informants.

²⁵ Cushman deduces Sequoyah “purposely avoided the influence of English literacy” and chose “not to use it for the Cherokee language,” insisting “the Cherokee writing system would be by, for, and of Cherokees” (*Writing* 37). Cushman disrupts the alphabetic lens through which the syllabary is often understood, or misunderstood. This allows her to attempt a hypothesis

identifying the Cherokee cultural design inherent in the syllabary.

²⁶ Sol Tax developed “action anthropology,” a methodological approach that promoted service to communities as opposed to previous models of observation and non-participation on the part of researchers.

²⁷ After Sol Tax, Wahrhaftig includes Thomas second in his acknowledgements section, saying for fifteen years Thomas “opened” him to “a vast knowledge of his tribe, illuminated by his clinical mind” (v).

²⁸ The unparalleled rate at which literacy advanced in the Cherokee Nation prior to their removal can in part be attributed to the mnemonic design of the syllabary chart originally constructed by Sequoyah and toward the discovery of which Cushman’s analysis aims.

²⁹ Thomas describes him as “a blacksmith by trade, although not mentioned in written Cherokee history, [who] was one of the leaders of the full-bloods throughout his lifetime, especially of the very conservative element” (111).

³⁰ Kansas was allied with the North during the Civil War and was the location of the Indian Home Guard, 1st and 2nd Regiments. The Indian Home Guard was comprised of both Native American and African-Native volunteer Union soldiers, most of whom fled Indian Territory during Confederate occupation. Scholars such as Patrick Neal Mingos and Mark A. Lause have discussed the radical pro-Union participation of many Cherokees during the Civil War, despite the Cherokee Nation’s initial coerced “official” alliance with the Confederacy. Many full-bloods from all of the five tribes deserted the Confederate Army after the Battle of Honey Springs (July 1863), near present-day Rentiesville, OK – the first fully integrated battle in the Civil War. Many Cherokees, both full-bloods and mixed bloods, were abolitionists who connected exploitation of slave labor to white encroachment and exploitation of Native lands.

³¹ The Curtis Act of 1898 effectively dismantled tribal governments, dissolving claims to sovereignty and terminating communal land tenure in Indian Territory.

³² “They felt” as Thomas explains, “that the calamities which were befalling the Cherokee Nation, such as outlawry, the social disorganization, and the encroachments of the white man were the fault of the full-bloods themselves” (119). Somehow, “they had forgotten God’s Rule” and they needed to regain knowledge in order to restore order (Thomas 119).

³³ Claremore, Oklahoma, occupies Cherokee land. Thus, according to the pattern I observe here, *The Claremore Progress* represents a more sympathetic view of the Keetoowah Society. This particular article briefly tells the Keetoowah Society’s history by connecting the formation of the society to Cherokee support for the Union during the Civil War.

³⁴ Cordell is located in western Oklahoma, in what would have in 1903 been Oklahoma Territory.

³⁵ This reference to historical tensions between the Ross and Treaty Parties also invokes the assassinations of Elias Boudinot, Major Ridge, and John Ridge

and connects the Keetoowah to distinct and historic Cherokee practices of justice and retribution, long since officially censored in the Cherokee Nation at the time this article was published.

³⁶ Because of the personal price associated with being perceived by others in this way, Ryan remained hesitant to intentionally identify as an activist throughout his interview.

³⁷ According to Thomas, in 1902 Redbird Smith and the Keetoowahs built “the first Cherokee ceremonial ground [...] about one-fourth of a mile from his house on Black Gum Mountain” (161). This is the same year Chitto Harjo and the Snakes of the Muscogee Creek Nation (discussed in Chapter 4) established their headquarters at Hickory Grounds near Henryetta, OK (Thomas 157).

³⁸ Further, as Robert Thomas’s research reveals, the Keetoowahs also maintained relationships with traditionalists of the other southeastern tribal cultures in Indian Territory. The Keetoowahs, along with traditionalist Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, joined together in the Four Mothers Society (discussed in later chapters) to lobby against allotment and also established intertribal ceremonial grounds during this time. For Cherokees, the concept of ceremonialism and community building extended transrhetorically outside of Cherokee locations and included non-Cherokees. As Smith explains, the efforts of the Four Mothers Society “the four nations sent an application to go before the Government,” which included sending a delegation to Washington, D.C., hiring attorneys, and framing a bill to present to Congress (Smith 99).

³⁹ Smith states to the committee, “the Indians’ land is divided up in severalty and that was done without my agreement or consent, for I never agreed or consented for anyone to make such a treaty and the full-blood Indians never consented to it. I never consented to any agreement to divide up my land, and I don’t want it divided up. I want the old treaty” (Smith 97 – 98).

CHAPTER THREE

⁴⁰ Dr. Howard Meredith (1938 – 2003) is the father of artist and cultural literacy activist America Meredith included in Chapter 2. His dissertation, *The History of the Social Party of Oklahoma* (1970), has been an excellent resource. Among his many publications, *Dancing on Common Ground: Tribal Cultures and Alliances on the Southern Plains* (1995) provides a solid inquiry into intercultural relationships and cross-cultural conduct in indigenous contexts.

⁴¹ As of January 2016, this is no longer the case. Threatened budgets cut in higher education resulting from falling oil prices motivated the decision to stop funding the course. The class still meets each Thursday, regardless.

⁴² Alecia Keahbone Gonzales (1926-2011) held two Master’s Degrees, one in Speech Pathology from the University of Oklahoma, and taught the Kiowa language at U.S.A.O. and Anadarko High School for many years.

⁴³ The conceptual decision the Kiowa Clemente Course planners made to add

an indigenous component to the original western humanities curriculum model exerts broader influence beyond the course itself. In the early years of the course, a close network of affiliated Native humanities courses developed both inside of Oklahoma and beyond. The Cherokee and Chickasaw Clemente courses continue to thrive under the direction of the Cherokee Heritage Center and the Chickasaw Nation respectively. The Yup'iks and Cu'piks continue their classes in Alaska, and the Mayans and Nahuas continue theirs in Mexico as well, though these classes are no longer Clemente-affiliated. These tribal communities, networked via an Indigenous humanities model, worked together in the earlier years of the course, and reconnect periodically to exchange ideas, enjoining a great span of the North American continent and reaching diverse Indigenous communities. Transrhetorically, they unite indigenous peoples across global contexts working in their own communities as cultural literacy activists.

⁴⁴ Alecia was the original language teacher in the Kiowa Clemente Course until her death in 2011, and her book remains the primary course text.

⁴⁵ Kricket, who is also Caddo and Alecia's great niece, currently interns (spring 2015) for the Kiowa Clemente Class as part of the requirements for completion of her Bachelor of Arts degree in the Native American Studies program at the University of Oklahoma. She and Dorothy Whitehorse Delaune are working on a project to thematically categorize Kiowa hymns so that they will continue to be sung at appropriate occasions.

⁴⁶ The Caddo girls group Kricket coaches also won their category at the 2014 Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair.

⁴⁷ Professor Meadows worked closely for many years with Kiowa elders, particularly Parker McKenzie, the famed self-taught linguist who developed the most comprehensive written system for the Kiowa language.

⁴⁸ At the end of each academic year, the class organizes a day-long field trip to significant Kiowa cultural sites. The trip takes place on a Saturday in May, weather permitting. The students meet at the class site and form into a carpool caravan, contributing gas money, snacks, and beverages to the effort. We begin by visiting a sacred medicine bundle. The Kiowas still have the original ten bundles in their possession. The bundles are explained in the ZIE DAY TAHLEE stories, which the class by this time has discussed. After prayer and cedarizing with the bundle keeper, each student makes an offering and has prayer with the bundle. From there, we travel to Longhorn Mountain to collect cedar. Longhorn Mountain has long been a site of fasting and prayer for the Kiowa, and they believe the mountain's cedar is powerful. We spend the middle of the day at the site of the Cutthroat Gap Massacre. In 1838, the Osage decimated a Kiowa camp of women, children, and elders while the younger men were away from camp. The class honors their memory with prayer and offerings. After lunch together in the Wichita Mountains, usually Medicine Park (originally part of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache land base), we end the day at Ft. Sill.

Ft. Sill holds a prominent place in Kiowa history. The class visits Chief's Knoll, a section of the base cemetery where powerful Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache leaders are buried. Kiowa leader SATE-AHN-GYAH, or Sitting Bear, is buried there. He was a member of the KHOIYE SAYN GAW (or Koitsenko), the ten most elite Kiowa warriors. His resistance continued after the 1867 Treaty of Medicine Lodge. We visit the stockades where the Kiowas were after their final military defeat at Palo Duro Canyon in 1874, seven years later. Afterwards, the Kiowa were marched to Ft. Sill and detained for months at a time. At these sites, the class's prayers continue. Through this journey between sites, students construct a transrhetorical awareness of the connections between history and place, between course content and lived experience, between history, and the present. New visual habits, cultural literacy, and rhetorical resistance merge across these site visits. Students synthesize new knowledge with old knowledge as they talk with each other between stops.

At the end of the day, we visit Medicine Bluff. Medicine Creek runs through Ft. Sill to Medicine Park. Here over time the water has cut a deep series of cliffs along the creek. Now part of a park on the military base, the cottonwoods sway overhead and the sun sets to the west, illuminating the rich red contours of the rock wall. This site has long been a place of spiritual renewal for the Kiowa, and the water an important resource. The students find peace and strength there, while also recognizing how the site subverts the colonial context that surrounds it. Most of the students have never been to these sites before, and many have not heard of them at all. In this way our trip counter inscribes the colonial landscape and subverts suppression

⁴⁹ Jerome formerly served as governor of Michigan and a member of the Michigan state legislature and the U.S. Board of Indian Commissioners ("Michigan").

⁵⁰ It is also likely the headmen utilized Southern Plains sign language, a communicative system long a part of discursive practices across affiliated tribes.

⁵¹ It is not clear from the Jerome Commission transcripts if Givens also interpreted for the Comanche and Apache during the talks or if other interpreters were present as well.

⁵² As the talks continue, the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache headmen offer independent compromises, and they deploy distinct metaphors for describing treaty making, both past and present. Nonetheless, they all begin the talks with the same objective in mind – to refuse the allotment agreement.

⁵³ Big Tree explains: "Yesterday the members of the commission made speeches. They told us – explained to us our relations to the Government and about our treaty rights. I understand all that – all that was said to us. We were told that the commission has arrived at Ft. Sill and that we were to come down here and listen to what they had to say. Today the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches are before you. We were placed here

several years ago. Yesterday the commission told us that they were here to trade for our land” (U.S. Senate 14). Big Tree’s comments reveal his awareness of the way in which the commission operates and the rhetorical situation it creates around the discussions regarding the allotment agreement.

⁵⁴ A clause of the 1867 Treaty of Medicine Lodge, in which the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes ceded over two million acres of land, required three-fourths of all males in each tribe to ratify an agreement. That number the Jerome Commission estimated at 450, for reasons that remain unclear.

⁵⁵ Given’s position with the U.S. military gave him privilege and status in a culture other than his own. Given’s European-American wife, for instance, is included on the Kiowa rolls and would thereby receive a Kiowa allotment herself. His self-interest could have influenced his actions.

⁵⁶ Chief Lone Wolf (1820 – 1879) was appointed by Chief Tohaussen (early 1790s to 1866) at his death to be the next – and ultimately last – Principal Chief of the Kiowa. Chief Lone Wolf was one of the few Kiowa men who did not sign the Medicine Lodge treaty. Before Chief Lone Wolf died in 1879, after contracting malaria while imprisoned at Ft. Marion for militant resistance, he “passed his name, his medicine, and his shield to Mamay-day-te, who became Lone Wolf the Younger, because of his bravery in battle” (Clark 30). This was the Lone Wolf present at the Jerome Commission talks and who filed the Supreme Court case.

⁵⁷ Atwater Onco died in 2005 at the age of 83. Dr. Howard Meredith, the Indian Studies professor under whom the course began, passed away in 2003.

⁵⁸ On a few occasions I drove the 52 miles to Anadarko to find no students had shown up for class. This would leave Alecia and me in awkward silence trying to politely discuss the possible causes of their absence, even as we were still getting to know each other and I was still coming to understand the objectives of the course. Kiowa culture, the course model, and Anadarko, Oklahoma, were still almost entirely new to me.

⁵⁹ The Kiowa headmen voted with their feet when they withdrew their attendance from the Jerome Commission talks, forcing the meetings to move to Anadarko and to continue on Kiowa terms. None of the headmen attended the meetings after the commission moved them.

⁶⁰ While the original design of the course may have worked well with multiple elders, faculty, and U.S.A.O. Indian Studies students participating, making sure the course texts worked well together and that the Kiowa content was well-represented, Ms. Gonzales and I no longer had those same resources from which to benefit.

⁶¹ My role in the course changed as a result. Instead of preparing a western humanities lesson each week, I focused solely on helping Alecia prepare and present her own Kiowa language and culture lessons. Increasingly Alecia’s health was a concern, and it helped her to have someone make handouts and copies, write on the whiteboard as needed (which meant learning to write Kiowa), collect attendance, and turn in forms and grades. Course enrollment

and attendance began to grow again, and students began slowly to contribute questions and comments to class discussion as the atmosphere became far more relaxed and culturally engaging. In spring 2011, Alecia became ill enough to miss class for several weeks in a row. J.T., her brother, helped me as best he could with the language lessons and cultural content. By mid-March, Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune was filling in on a regular basis. Alecia Keahbone Gonzales passed on April 22, 2011, at 85 years of age. After many years of commitment to teaching the Kiowa language and serving her community, just as the Kiowa Clemente class was beginning a new life, so did she.

⁶² Not all of these participants are enrolled in the class for college credit. Many come to learn their language, culture, and history, and though their attendance is less regular than the enrolled students, they consistently come to class when they can. Though students can only enroll for a total of six hours of credit over two semesters, many continue to return to class after these two semesters are over.

⁶³ U.S.A.O., which funded the class well after the original N.E.H. and Oklahoma Humanities Council grants ended, could offer little in the way of financial support due to extreme budget cuts even prior to cutting the class completely in January 2016. I was paid a small adjunct salary and both Alecia and Dorothy received small weekly honorariums.

⁶⁴ I first heard the story when Alecia Keahbone Gonzales' son, prize-winning and nationally recognized Kiowa beader Richard Aitson, also Momaday's nephew, presented the story during my first semester teaching the Kiowa Clemente Course. At that time, we were still using the comparative model. The western counterpart I presented on that evening was T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland." That evening's comparative theme, according to the course calendar, is listed as "morality, loss of security, poetic devices, modernism." Never having read or heard the "The Arrowmaker," I walked into class with little idea how the two texts would inform – or not inform – each other.

⁶⁵ I should make it clear that these were not traditional stories from the Kiowa culture, but rather personal stories that utilized narrative to illustrate a nuanced point or metaphor in the context of our discussion about activism.

⁶⁶ To varying degrees, everyone I interviewed in the Kiowa community juxtaposed their definitions of activism against the more familiar image of Native activism, the American Indian Movement.

⁶⁷ Without blame, Cricket expresses understanding for Native families who choose not to practice Kiowa culture or do not participate in cultural programs and events. In most cases, she believes balancing all the demands of daily life in American society makes intentional cultural practice too difficult for many Kiowa families, meaning too expensive and time consuming to sustain.

⁶⁸ Additionally, familial relationships connect the activists I interviewed. J.T. Goombi and Jay Goombi, for instance, are father and son. Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune is Dane Poolaw's great grandmother in the Kiowa familial structure.

⁶⁹ For women in the Kiowa community, speaking up in public forums requires

knowledge of rhetorical conditions, strategies, and rules. This is not to say Kiowa women hold no influence and do not hold leadership positions. Traditionally, however, there are cultural guidelines for when, where, and how women – and men – participate. Dorothy’s admission of her difference acknowledges her awareness of her own priorities. For her, speaking up or acting on behalf of what she believes to be right for individual Kiowas or for the Kiowa community requires risking going against traditional roles for women. Her deep admiration for her brothers and her father reveals this tendency to subvert traditional gender roles as well.

⁷⁰ Dorothy refers here to SATE AHN GYAH’s membership in the K’OIYE TSAIN GAW, commonly referred to as the Koitsenko, the most elite Kiowa warrior society, comprised of the ten bravest warriors in the Kiowa tribe. Chief Tohassen, who was Dorothy’s great grandfather, was leader of the K’OIYE TSAIN GAW. Members of this society wore a long red sash across their chests into battle. They used the sash to stake themselves to the ground, committing themselves to great risk in battle. She explains, “and you couldn’t cut yourself loose unless one of your friends came by and cut you loose” (DeLaune 8). With her story, Dorothy honors her brother Lyndreth, her father, and the bravery of the K’OIYE TSAIN GAW, particularly SATE AHN GYAH.

CHAPTER FOUR

⁷¹ Deborah Brandt’s book *Literacy in American Lives* (2001) traces the role of literacy in the lives of south central Wisconsin residents. Her investigation foregrounds literacy as the skills of reading and writing and studies its impact on individual economic mobility and social action. In her introduction, she argues for “approaches to literacy that more rigorously incorporate the realities of situated dimensions” and treat literacy as a contextualized cultural practice (Brandt 4).

⁷² LaTrobe travelled in 1832 with Washington Irving through this region of the United States.

CHAPTER FIVE

⁷³ It is ironic that even though Oklahoma discourse and policy reflects the anti-Indian sentiment Dr. Clark articulates the state utilizes Native culture and history in tourism campaigns and souvenirs.

⁷⁴ “State negroes” was a term of reference for African Americans who migrated to Indian and Oklahoma Territory prior to statehood.

⁷⁵ In the congressional record, Chitto Harjo addressed “The Select Committee to Investigate Matters Connected with Affairs in Indian Territory” on Friday, November 23, 1906. The committee was convened in Tulsa, Indian Territory.

Harjo (also known by the English name Wilson Jones) presented “a recital of the relations of the Creeks with the Government of the United States from 1861,” which included an inquiry into “what had become of the relations between the Indians and the white people from 1492 down to 1861” (1247). Harjo explains Muscogee Creek history while using first person pronouns to represent himself as the Muscogee Creek Nation. He says the white government promised the Creek people, “I will protect you in all thing and take care of everything about your existence, so you will live in this land that is yours without fear.’ That is what he said, and we agreed upon those terms. He told me that as long as the sun rises it shall last; as long as the waters run it shall last; as long as the grass grows it shall last. That was what it was to be and we agreed upon those terms. [...] We have kept every term of the agreement. The grass is growing, the waters run, the sun shines, the light is with us, and the agreement is with us yet, for the God that is above us all witnessed that agreement” (Harjo 1248). Harjo goes on to recount removal and Muscogee Creek alliance with the Union during the Civil War. He asks repeatedly, with statehood only a year away, for the U.S. government to protect the Muscogee Creek as they promised (1248 – 1254).

⁷⁶ The W.C.U., as a more militant arm of International Workers of the World, saw direct action as necessary while the I.W.W. had pledged nationally not to use sabotage and violence to achieve its goals.

APPENDIX B: ACTIVIST INTERVIEW QUESTION SET

- 1.) Demographics/Background Information:
 - a.) Age _____
 - b.) Gender _____
 - c.) Ethnicity _____
- 2.) Define activism.
- 3.) How long have you been an activist?
- 4.) Describe your work as an activist.
- 5.) What or who influenced you to become an activist?
- 6.) How did you become an activist?
- 7.) What does resistance mean to you?
- 8.) Do you see your activism as resistance? If so, how? If not, why not?
- 9.) Is your activism a part of your cultural identity?
- 10.) How do you identify yourself culturally?
- 11.) What is your primary motivation as an activist?
- 12.) How does your residence in Oklahoma impact your activism?
- 13.) What do you hope your activism achieves?
- 14.) Do you have any success stories related to your activism that you would like to share?
- 15.) What are some of the current challenges you face in your activism?
- 16.) Are there other activists you would recommend for me to talk to?
- 17.) Is there anything else you would like to say?

APPENDIX C: STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.) Demographics/Background Information
 - a.) Age
 - b.) Gender
 - c.) Ethnicity
- 2.) How long have you lived in Oklahoma?
- 3.) What grade or grades were you in when you took Oklahoma history?
- 4.) What school or schools were you attending when you took Oklahoma history?
- 5.) What do you remember from you Oklahoma history course or courses?
- 6.) If you were to pick five words that describe Oklahoma, what would they be?
- 7.) Have you ever been assigned an Oklahoma author to read? If so, who?
- 8.) Have you ever been given an assignment to write about Oklahoma? If so, please describe the assignment?
- 9.) What do you like most about Oklahoma?
- 10.) What do you like least about Oklahoma?
- 11.) How do you think outsiders see Oklahoma?
- 12.) Do you think of yourself as an activist?
- 13.) How do you identify culturally?
- 14.) Is there anything else you would like to say?

APPENDIX D: STUDENT INTERVIEW CODES

Objective – OBJ: goals expressed explicitly or implicitly within the interview. For my purposes, these could be goals of the interviewee expressed in his or her narrative or curricular objectives present (actual or desired) in the historical education portions of the narrative. Adapted from Dramaturgical Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Conflict – CON: tensions, contradictions, and frustrations expressed explicitly or implicitly by the interviewee within his or her narrative. These conflicts range from personal complaints and peevs, to self-contradictions in the narrative, to conflicts studied or identified in Oklahoma history by the interviewee. Adapted from Dramaturgical Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Tactics – TAC: strategies suggested or practiced by the interviewee to resolve or address conflicts. These can be personal, local, national, or global strategies. Adapted from Dramaturgical Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Attitude – ATT: feelings, judgments, or beliefs expressed explicitly or implicitly by the interviewee toward or about the object of discussion. Adapted from Dramaturgical Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Emotion – EMO: feelings expressed explicitly or implicitly by the interviewee in response to the object of discussion. Adapted from Dramaturgical Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Motif – MOT: themes occurring either within the passage or across the passages. Within interviews, I typically mark them if I see them more than once within an interview. Methodologically adapted from Narrative Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Subtexts – SUB: discursive mode being utilized by the interviewee. This code is rarely used and I need to think more thoroughly about how I use it. Adapted from Dramaturgical Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Flashback – FLB: memory of a previous event or experience remembered and expressed by the interviewee in the context of discussion. This code is rarely used and I need to think more thoroughly about how I use it. Adapted from Narrative Coding (Saldaña 2013).

Transition – TRN: change in narrative direction or focus. This code is rarely used and I need to think more thoroughly about how I use it. Adapted from Narrative Coding (Saldaña 2013).

APPENDIX E: STUDENT DESCRIPTORS OF OKLAHOMA

- 1.) flat, friendly, conservative, protestant, resilient
- 2.) religious, judgmental, segregated, poor, probably ignorant
- 3.) agriculture, grand, flat, beautiful, home
- 4.) tradition, historic, native, diverse, proud
- 5.) flat, hard-working, kind, cultural, impoverished
- 6.) farming, Bible Belt, Sooners, country, football
- 7.) open [re: population density], diverse [re: landscape], proud, diverse [re: ethnicities], very Republican
- 8.) conservative, wide, predominantly Christian, relaxed [meaning rural], and moody [re:weather]
- 9.) beautiful, different, intriguing, green, biased
- 10.) inferiority complex, conservative, religions, flat, and resentful
- 11.) caste system, injustice, racial, slow, stifling
- 12.) traditional, home-y, tight-knit, unique, natural (undeveloped)
- 13.) hardworking, independent, set-in-their-ways/traditional, tight-knit/big community, down-to-earth
- 14.) conservative, diverse (culturally & ethnically), traditional, slow-paced
- 15.) football, natives, buffalo, farmers, and horses
- 16.) wind, blue, shape, state, Sooners, home
- 17.) confused, red (political, dirt, natives), improving, growing, healing, reconciliation, hai-ee (hot in Creek)
- 18.) diverse (culturally, geographically, geologically), stable, consistent, agricultural, slow
- 19.) Native Americans, hot (weather), conservative, Bible Belt, methamphetamine

- 20.) OU, Indians, Sun Belt (agricultural), Bible Belt, tornadoes
- 21.) modernizing, progressive, rural/still, amiable, traditional
- 22.) family, home, country, windy, warm (amiable)
- 23.) red, conservative, small, strong-knit, resistant (we actually talked about "resilient" instead – my mistake)
- 24.) frontier, strong, determined, controversial, common bond/united
- 25.) misguided, caring, motivated, misinformed, religious
- 26.) country, boring, friendly, conservative, unpredictable
- 27.) conservative, racist, sexist, uninformed, enclosed/provincial
- 28.) red, proud, spaceful, oil, indian
- 29.) green, red, drastic, loyal, sticklers/stubborn
- 30.) misunderstood, diverse, metropolitan, unwanted, changing