

RED DIRT PEDAGOGY: AN ARTS-BASED INVESTIGATION INTO A CURRICULUM OF
FAMILY AND WHITE SUPREMACY

By

Hannah Franklin Grisham

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education—Doctor of Philosophy

2021

ABSTRACT

RED DIRT PEDAGOGY: AN ARTS-BASED INVESTIGATION INTO A CURRICULUM OF FAMILY AND WHITE SUPREMACY

By

Hannah Franklin Grisham

This arts-based dissertation explores the stories and silences of the Winston branch of my family in order to consider how families reproduce ideologies, with the focus of this study being white supremacy and to lesser extents capitalism and patriarchy. In social studies education, is one way not only to learn about each of us, but to demystify history from a story that happened to some people, to having consequences that impacted our ancestors (Mokuria, et al., 2020). The Winstons, my father's mother's father's family, were some of the first white people to settle-colonize what is now Alabama, USA and, in that process, they enslaved unknown numbers of people in order to first gain and then consolidate wealth. This project began from my desire to learn about my family, the atrocities they committed in the name of wealth and white supremacy, and the people they enslaved. Framed by Sleeter's critical family history (2008, 2016, 2020) and Althusser's contention that families are ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) and thereby reproduce the conditions of a society, my historical investigation uses two arts-based methodologies—research-creation and evocative autoethnography—to create both processes and products that I analyze throughout my dissertation. Therefore there are two foci of this dissertation:

1. What my enslaver ancestors did and how their ideologies of white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy have passed down to me and
2. How arts-based methodologies can allow one to confront internalized oppressive ideologies.

As part of this dissertation I created two pieces of art: the *Red Dirt Series* and *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*. *Red Dirt Series*, composed of three pieces of mixed-media visual art discussed in Chapter 4, was created as I learned more about Alabama and my family's history. During this process, I conceptualized red dirt as a metaphor for white supremacy in the Southern United States. Finally, I put my work in conversation with Dean's (2018) argument for considering oneself a comrade in struggles for justice.

Chapter 5 focuses on *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, a disconnected quilt. In this chapter, I explore the historiography of white, enslaving women in the U.S. South, thereby confronting myths about who my female ancestors were. Following my grandmother Wray, 5x great grandmother Keziah, and untold numbers of women throughout history, I stitch my thoughts. By using found words, found fabric, and found handwriting, *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* expands the ideas of comradeship and red dirt as a metaphor for white supremacy that I articulated in Chapter 4.

Therefore, Chapters 4 and 5 respond to the research foci by blending historical research with arts-based investigation and sense-making. Though I expected to be confronted by my internalized white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy before starting this research, I did not anticipate that in the process I would come to terms with my internalized ableism I have learned during graduate school about my own brain difference. In this way, this dissertation has been an unforeseen freeing experience.

Copyright by
HANNAH FRANKLIN GRISHAM
2021

This dissertation is dedicated to:

Ned, and
Sandy, and
Charles, and
Tom, and
Sam, and
Grace, and
Pharrah, and
Miah, and
Hager, and
Sarah, and
Doll, and
Milly, and
David, and
Leah, and
Dick, and
Saul, and
Jack, and
Jane, and
Bradly, and
Isaac, and
Tamer, and
Cate, and
Primus, and
Pompey, and
Pegg, and
Tamer, and
Abraham, and
Judy, and
Aggy, and
Tamer, and
Pegg, and
Moll, and
Ben, and
Hannah, and

119 unnamed people, and
the remaining unknown people the Winston family enslaved. And
the Cherokee, Muskogee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw peoples murdered in
what is now known as Alabama.

Though I cannot undo the past wrongs, may this dissertation begin, to use Tillet's (2012) term, a
mnemonic restitution to those my ancestors harmed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to first thank the people who met me first: my parents, Mike and Clare Grisham. I will never be able to thank them enough for the support, nurture, care, and unconditional love they have always given me. I am lucky/blessed (depending on one's point of view) to be their daughter and to have them as parents. As I age, that statement becomes increasingly true.

Equally important is my brother, Max. I am also lucky/blessed to have such a cool, kind, and thoughtful not-so-little brother. Thank you for not killing me when we lived together during my year away from MSU, even though I am very messy and you are very not.

Not to brag, but we are a tight unit, only becoming more so as time goes on. Even though Max and I are grown, we really enjoy spending time together both the two and all four of us. To be sure, the three of them have not always agreed with the choices I've made in my life (though they eventually come around to them,) yet they have always encouraged me to make my own path, to follow where my heart and mind take me. For example, when I was accepted to MSU, they were thrilled for me. When I took a year off on the verge of quitting the program, they provided emotional support, urging me to take the time I needed for myself. When I decided to return, they cheered me to the finish line. I worried about telling them about my research, but there was no need. I do not have the words to describe how much I love them.

Another early and continuing support system are my extended immediate family: Aunt Lila and Uncle John Howard; (Great) Aunt Betty, Uncle Joe (may they rest in peace) and Cousin Susan Evans. Thank ya'll for coming for coming to every band concert, violin recital, graduations, and all the other important milestones that comprised my (and Max's) adolescence. Cousin Susan, a true artist, would always help us with our school projects—I don't know how

many dioramas we made over the years. She also came up with the idea to mix the red dirt with glue for the art that became *Red Dirt Series*. Aunt Betty and Uncle Joe were surrogate grandparents for Max and I, a role that cannot be overstated in its importance to us. When Aunt Lila and Uncle John moved to the River, it helped sooth the tragedy that lead to it: our Uncle Bill's (Daddy and Lila's older brother, may he rest in peace) passing.

Our extended family have also encouraged me and loved me. There are a lot of them, and though I cannot thank them all by name, please know that I love and am thankful for each and every one of you.

I am also thankful for all of my incredible, brilliant, and wonderful friends. Not to sound like an Oscars Award Winner, but there really are too many people to name. I would like to shout-out some that have made this dissertation and journey to Ph.D. not only bearable, but joyful.

To the high school crew et. al.—Laura Mould Miles, Clara Gregory Bailey, Becky Snyder Hannon, Elise Ottenfield, Leslie Austin, Will Nafe, Ryan Hodgin, Dr(!) Ashley Stewart, Emily Nafe, Patrick Redmond Hannon, Dr(!) Eric Porth, and Kari Treasure—thank you for keeping me laughing and grounded. Sometimes I cannot believe that we have been friends for 10-20 years and we still like hanging out with each other. “We are the best...” well, you know the rest.

To Dr(!) Sarah Augusta MacCracken, thank you for always loving me, being the first at Kenyon to know how ridiculous I truly am, not sharing all my embarrassing stories from the past 13 years to strangers even though you want to, and celebrating dissertating/doctoring together (not to mention your wedding, I mean hellloooooo). Roommates first, frenemies second, best friends always.

To Austin Campbell, words cannot express how much I love you. I can't believe we had to move all the way to Greece to meet. Despite the difficulties of that year (and some for both of us since), it will always be worth it. Thank you for being your amazing, wonderful self.

To the Tafties—Anna Childs, Margaret Rodgers, and Emily Wolfe—and all my other Kenyon friends—Abby Comstock-Gay Gunar, Andrew Francis Oates, Bryn Stole, Hannah Withers (still waiting on *Free Willie*, no pressure), Jared Ruari, Jonah Auteri, Mary Jeanne Harwood, Nandi Plunkett, among others—who have loved, supported, and cheered for me for over a decade. I love all ya'll.

To Drs. Peter Rutkoff and William B. Scott, thank each of you for being my advisors at Kenyon. Thank you for so many things: seeing something in me worth advising, comforting me while I cried in your office (Will), finding quilting teachers and studio space for my arts-based research (Peter), letting Emily and I tag along with ya'll and all the teachers to South Carolina, helping me think about what the future might hold, writing untold numbers of reference letters to help make it happen, and imparting your individual and joint wisdom. Who knew I would be researching and making art about Alabama history all these years later? It is incredibly indebted to what I learned from and with each of you, as am I.

Thank you too all the friends and colleagues I made while in the CITE program from Fall 2015-Summer 2021. I am so lucky to have entered MSU with an incredible, brilliant cohort of people. I would not have made it through these last years without your support, joy, and brilliance. Thank you for pushing me to be a better, stronger scholar and person.

Thank you to (my) Team Social Studies—Adam Schmitt, Allie Whitford, Brittany Jones, Erin Bronstein, Ji Soo Lee, Kyle Chong, Molly Barrett, Peter Nelson, and Scott Durham. Ya'll are amazing people and I have learned so much from each of you during our time in grad school.

A special thanks to Adam, my forever mentor for being, well, my forever mentor. You were the first person I met when I moved to East Lansing and was so nervous, wondering what I had gotten myself into. Thank you for helping me feel calm, knowing that I wasn't alone, and continuing to be my friend all these years later. On that note, thank you, Bethany Schmitt, for introducing me to the magical world of K-Dramas! I love our trips to Seoul so much, and they have been a much needed bright spot during dissertation writing. I'm excited to continue them! Thank you to Scott for being on my practicum committee, a project that became chapter 4 of this dissertation, and for all of your insights in that project. This dissertation is much stronger because of you.

To the Homesteaders—Dr(!)s Katie Schenkle, Tashal Brown, and Vivek Vellanki—thank ya'll for being amazing humans. So many memories! So many photo shoots! From spending Easters together, to hanging out/working together all over EL, to just being together, having ya'll as friends is one of the best things that ever happened to me. Tashal, the Olympic-themed birthday party we planned is still one of the best parties East Lansing has ever seen. I just need anyone who ever read this dissertation to know that lol.

To Katie, my first friend at MSU, how lucky I am that you not only said yes to hanging out, but even planned our first friend date. I know you only like sappy sentiments in songs, so I guess it is a good thing we listened to so many of them on our road trip to move you to California.

To Vivek, my unicorn believer, my ride or die. Thank you for getting all fired up on my behalf when things go wrong, and being equally excited for me when they go right. Thank you for taking my dad on shopping trips, understanding how many art supplies I need, and just being the best.

To Max Monroy-Miller, thank you for being such a close friend to me in such a short time. I wonder what kind of mischief and genius you would have reached in the years since you died. I wonder what you would think about my work, if I am doing right by you. I hope so. Thank you for sharing your light and life with all of us. Your thoughts still glow within all of us who knew you. I can still hear your laugh, always when I least expect it. Rest in Power, my dear friend. I miss you and I love you.

To Dr(!) Cierra Best-friend Presberry, thank you for listening to me talk out ideas even when I'm not sure where they are going. Thank you for always understanding when I don't want to do a-n-y-t-h-i-n-g. Thanks for letting me meet your folks, meeting mine, and letting me hang out with Tommy. Excited for more family adventures in the future!

To Dr(!) Courtney Mauldin, I am so happy that we both went on MSU College of Education's Fellowship to Cuba! It has always been such a comfort to have a fellow Southerner in the program, to know what I mean without me having to explain. I have always learned a lot with and from you. You are such a brilliant scholar and friend, and I look forward to (hopefully) being able to hang out soon now that we each finished our dissertations!

To Darshana Devarajan, I am so glad that you made it to Michigan and have not died from the cold yet. Your radiance and kindness always glow bright, as does your sarcasm and wit. How lucky I am that we are ride or die friends, basically neighbors, and enjoy cultural adventures like art museums and county fairs. Girl, I couldn't have made it through this pandemic (so far) without you.

To Christa Robinson, thank you for appreciating fashion even more than I do! Thank you for finding and sharing beauty in your life. Thank you for listening to me when I'm fired up and helping me get through grading with Lizzo.

To Brittany Brewer, thank you for coming to MSU and being my mentee! You bring joy and kindness to everything that you do, and I am so lucky you came to EL in the middle of a pandemic.

To Amit Sharma and Manasi Mishra, thank you for keeping our MSU family together, being wonderful people, and always bringing cake to celebrations!

To the Dinglebots—Lindsay McHolme and Angelo Moreno—I could not have made it through the past year and a half without ya’ll. With ya’ll, I continually found joy during a time I thought was hopeless. Lindsay, thank you for buying a fire-pit for us so we always had a safe place to hang, asking deeply insightful questions of everyone, being funny as hell, and exuding kindness and love in everything that you do. Also, thanks for introducing Angelo and I. Angelo, thank you for patiently listening to me think-aloud this dissertation even when I got really in my head, helping me with my to-do list, and being even more excited than I am when I complete a milestone. I truly feel like we are partners in every sense of the word (except, you know, the capitalist kind). I love you the most.

To the Backyardigans—the Dinglebots, Bri Markoff, Candace Moore, and Mingzhu Deng. I am so thankful to Bri and Candace for coming to Lansing despite it being the middle of a pandemic and classes being online. Bri, thank you for co-stewarding with me, and helping me stay energized about all of the things. Ya’ll are all beautiful star-shines of people.

For the dissertation itself, I am deeply indebted to my committee members. Each of them has helped me become a scholar not only with this project, but those leading up to them during my entire time at MSU. They have cheered me on, believed in me, and I am so grateful for all of their help.

To Dr. Karenanna Creps, thank you so much for coming onto this project, for believing it was worthwhile, and pushing it forward. It has always been a joy to work with you since our first foray into critical geography back in 2017. You bring so much grace and beauty wherever you are, and I am lucky to call you a friend.

To Dr. Alyssa Dunn, thank you for taking this project on and believing in it despite the million directions you are constantly being pulled in, compounded by the pandemic. Thank you for helping me see what is often right under my nose when it comes to my whiteness (and other privileges) in kind and caring ways. Thank you, also, for believing in it and in me, especially over the years when I have not.

To Dr. Avner Segall, thank you for being my temporary, temporary advisor and (for lack of a better term) my Michigan Jewish Mother. Thank you always asking thoughtful questions. Thank you also for the care you have shown me over the years. For listening to me when Max died, when I was struggling with the program, and supporting me taking a year off. I could not have done so without your help.

To Dr. Lynn Fendler, thank you, in short, for being you. Thank you for encouraging me to do all the things I have felt like I need to do: take a year off, do an arts-based dissertation, and to have fun while learning and being in this world! The last cannot be overstated. You are a treasure and Michigan's loss is Oregon's gain.

Finally, to Dr. Anne-Lise Halvorsen, thank you for taking me on as your student and then not giving up on me. Thank you for believing that everyone with a Ph.D. in education does not need to have been a teacher. Thank you for (still) advocating for me. Thank you for teaching me that self-care is just as much about being kind as it is about creating boundaries. Thank you for calling and checking in on me during my year off, an action that helped me stay connected to the

program and, eventually, return. Thank you for following me on this dissertation even though it is unlike any you had been with before. Thank you for being fun, for giving great advice, and being one of the most caring faculty members in our program not just for me, but for all Ph.D. students in CITE. We are all so lucky to have you in our lives and in our corners, me most of all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Overview	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Terminology.....	14
Literature Review	14
Alabama and Southern U.S. History	14
Southern U.S. artists grappling with white supremacy.....	19
“Feminine” arts	21
Theoretical Frameworks	23
Critical Family History.....	24
Institutional State Apparatuses	26
Critical Whiteness.....	28
Notes Critical Whiteness and Terminology.....	30
Cultural critique of white people (they) v. self-implication (we)	31
“Enslavers” v. “planters”, “masters,” and “mistresses”	33
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	37
The Possibilities of Arts-Based Research	38
Research-Creation as (Dis)abeling.....	41
Research-Creation as Lived Methodology.....	42
My Process	44
Evocative Autoethnography.....	48
Social Studies and ABR.....	51
Chapter 4: Red Dirt Series.....	53
Cotton	58
“Frontier” Alabama	59
Cotton and Capitalism.....	62
Dirt	63
The Equal Justice Initiative’s Community Remembrance Project.....	63
Red Dirt, Pain Sites, and Personal Responsibility.....	65
Canvas	70
The Power of Red Dirt.....	73
A Note About My Committee.....	75
Brewer’s Alabama.....	77
A Lack of Information, A Mirror to Oneself?	80
Reparations and the Limitations of Acknowledgment	84
Comradeship.....	85
Red Dirt No. 3.....	89
Chapter 5: <i>Red Dirt, White, and Blue</i>	94
White Female Enslavers	102
White Female Enslavers in Southern U.S. Historiography.....	103

Winston Family Quilts.....	109
Notes on a Chain Stitch.....	112
On Finding: Words, Cloth, and Handwriting.....	112
Found Words.....	113
Found Cloth	115
Found Handwriting.....	117
“Found Red Dirt”	118
Found Red Dirt.....	119
Notes on the Title.....	128
Red Dirt, White, and Blue.....	129
From Out of One, Many.....	130
Chapter Conclusion	134
 Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	 136
Implications for Social Studies Education Research.....	139
Implications for Myself.....	141
Limitations	143
Next Steps	144
 REFERENCES.....	 147

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: <i>Winston Genealogical Chart</i> (2' x 2') originally compiled by Rice, M. (1980-85). Modified to highlight my ancestry back to my first known ancestor: Isaac Winston b. 1620. The square farthest from the center is my father's parents. If I were on the chart, I would be on the outer-ring.....	1
Figure 2: <i>Reckon</i> . Digital image created by the author for Critical Whiteness Studies course. January 2018.....	2
Figure 3: <i>Red Dirt No. 0: Jars</i> . Dirt collected from the plantation by the author.....	53
Figure 4: <i>Red Dirt No. 1</i> . Alabama red dirt, acrylic paint, glue, cotton boll on stem. Created and photographed by author.....	54
Figure 5: <i>Red Dirt No. 2</i> . Alabama red dirt, acrylic paint, glue, cotton boll on stem. Created and photographed by author.....	55
Figure 6: <i>Red Dirt No. 3</i> Alabama red dirt, acrylic paint, glue, paper, nails, wood. Created and photographed by author.....	56
Figure 7: Equal Justice Initiative's Soil Collection Project. (collection dates unknown) <i>Lynching in Alabama</i> . Photo taken by the author.....	65
Figure 8: My attempt to fix the cracks in <i>Red Dirt No. 1</i> . Photo taken by author.....	71
Figure 9: <i>Red Dirt, White, and Blue No. 1: Dirt Masque</i> . Fabric, embroidery thread, yarn. Created and photographed by author.....	94
Figure 10: <i>Red Dirt, White, and Blue No. 2: But One</i> . Fabric, embroidery thread, yarn. Created and photographed by author.....	95
Figure 11: <i>Red Cross, the Dorcas S.S. Class, 1917</i> , 82.5 x 76 inches. International Quilt Museum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Image used with permission.....	101
Figure 12: She leaned forward and placed her hands on the warm red dirt of her mother's grave and said happily, "I love you too, Mama."	119
Figure 13: Red dirt wafting up around my mother's newly polished shoes. <i>Welcome home</i>	120
Figure 14: There's not much hope for a red dirt girl Somewhere out there in the great big world	

That's where I'm bound.....	120
Figure 15: Now see, down here, everyone gets stuck in the mud every now and then. Yeah, we're famous for our mud.....	121
Figure 16: : One of these days I'm going to swing my hammer down Away from this red dirt town I'm gonna make a joyful sound.....	121
Figure 17: I could not suppress the thought that this earth had acquired its color from the blood that had dripped down from these trees.	122
Figure 18: But there are three things that can bring [home] all back to me in startling detail: the sight of a red dirt road, the smell of pine needles, and the sound of a blue jay's call.....	122
Figure 19: They knelt and weeded the plot until the rich red earth could be seen.....	123
Figure 20: dirt is filled with the promise of what the earth can give back to you if you work the land plant the seeds pull the weeds.....	123
Figure 21: Red. It's always been red, as long as I can remember.	124
Figure 22: Some days we miss the way the red dirt lifted up and landed against our bare feet.....	124
Figure 23: I have never seen the ocean, but this, too, I can imagine—blue water pouring over red dirt.....	125
Figure 24: Outside the window, the red dirt was mocking me.....	125
Figure 25: red dust wafting, then settling as though it's said all that it needs to say.	126
Figure 26: Red clay exfoliating masque	126
Figure 27: so they were red dirt and pine trees they were fireflies in jelly jars... They were family.....	127

Figure 28: The grassy shoulder opened to reveal a bald patch of dry red clay. The red was a glaring, bleeding wound.	127
Figure 29: Attempted assemblage of <i>Red Dirt, White, and Blue</i>	131

Chapter 1: Introduction

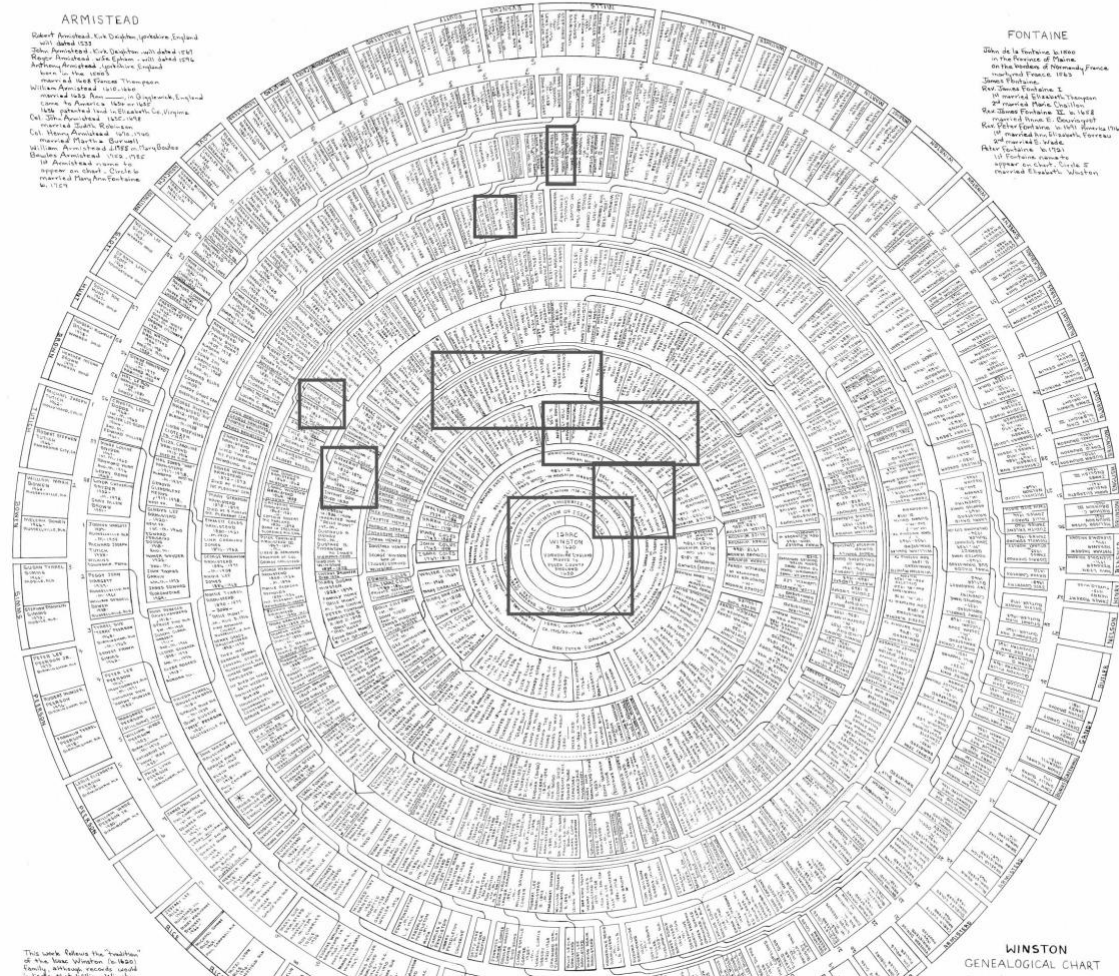


Figure 1: *Winston Genealogical Chart* (2' x 2') originally compiled by Rice, M. (1980-85). Modified to highlight my ancestry back to my first known ancestor: Isaac Winston b. 1620. The square farthest from the center is my father's parents. If I were on the chart, I would be on the outer-ring.

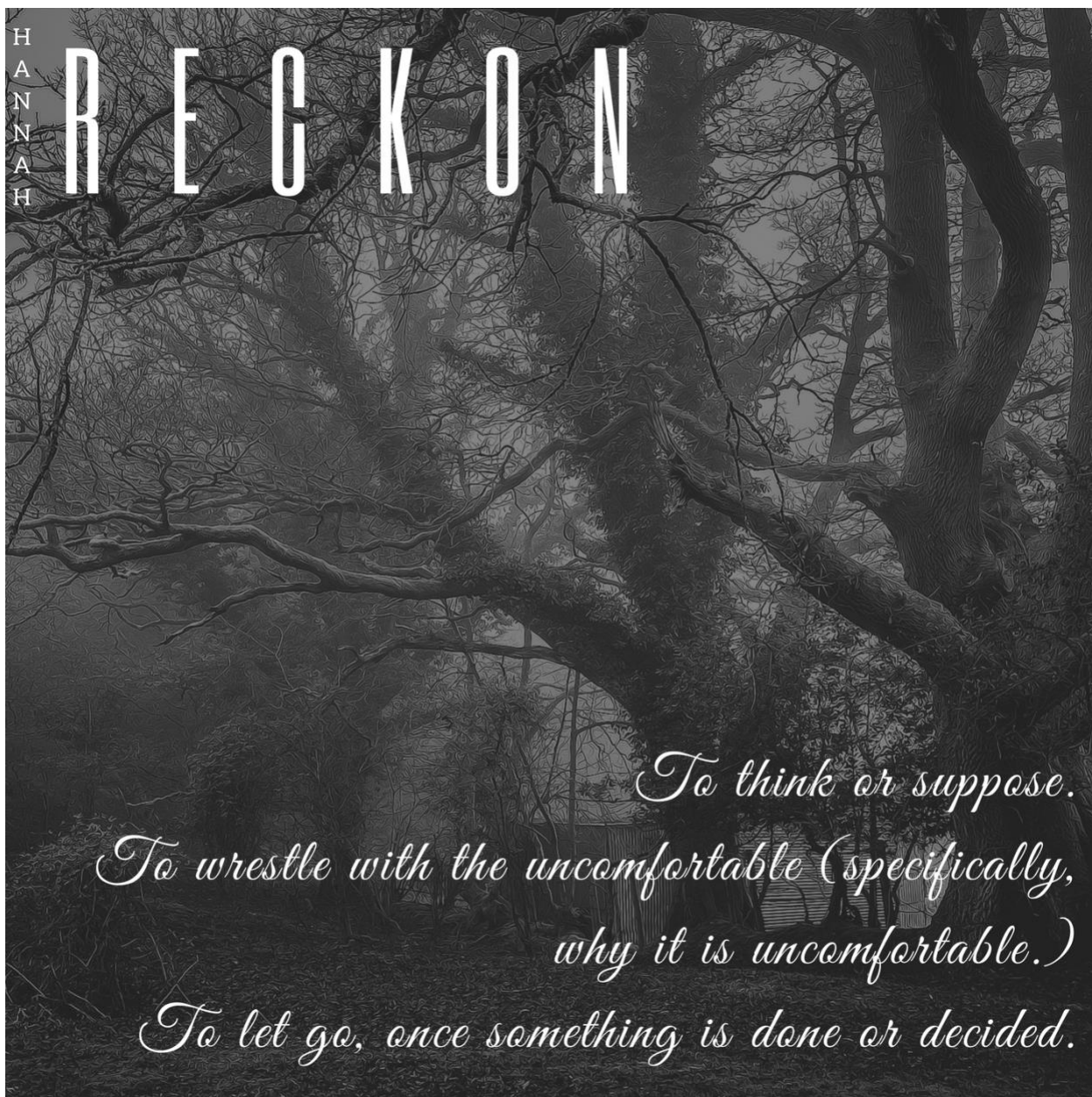


Figure 2: *Reckon*. Digital image created by the author for Critical Whiteness Studies course. January 2018.

June, 2018

My aunt asked me if I was going to the reunion.

“What reunion?”

“Your parents don’t tell you anything,” she fussed. She read me the email. “The Winston Family is very important to the history of our town and indeed, the history of Alabama. Therefore it is very appropriate that we have planned this reunion to be a part of ‘Alabama 200,’” (Parker, personal communication, 2018) the statewide, yearlong bicentennial celebration. The email went on to say that though the events were aimed at descendants of the Winston Family, they were open to the public.

“You like history and are always asking about the family, so I thought you might want to go. Maybe we’ll learn something.”

I was of two minds about going. On one hand, I hesitated. Events like the Winston Family Reunion perpetuate white supremacist, lost cause, neo-confederate narratives. I anticipated that the Reunion would be a space where the attendants patted themselves on the back, look back at their/our history, and took pride in it. They would tell themselves they are somebody because they came from somebody. I also knew that my Confederate cousins, the “unreconstructed” ones to borrow a term from Armistead Maupin (2019), would be present. And while I love them, I knew that their stories would ignore the pain of slavery, focusing instead on the family's past glory. I knew I'd want to argue with them even though confrontation is something I abhor because I knew they would be spreading (dis-)information. Kendi (2019) asserts that when it comes to racism, there is no such thing as neutrality or identifying as “not racist.” Instead, one is either complicit in racism (racist) or confronts the injustice of white

supremacy (anti-racist). As someone who strives to be an antiracist history educator, I often question the histories we are telling and to what purpose. Therefore, I worried that by attending the event I would be condoning white supremacist histories.

On the other hand, my aunt was right. I always want to know about family history; have since I was young. Additionally, I recognized that learning about this branch of my family, which has 400 years of documentation, is a privilege afforded to few, if any, of the enslaved people my ancestors stole.

So, I went.

I was not disappointed. There were probably about 40 of us. Besides my aunt and a first cousin of her and my father's, I did not recognize anyone. Because this was the second of a three-day event, most everyone else had already met. Reunion attendees milled about exchanging greetings and picking up conversations from the day before. The staff of a plantation some of our ancestors owned, now a historic site, answered questions and pointed to copies of the historical documents for sale: family trees in various forms, one of which opens this paper.

Walking in, every face I saw was white. After all, the Winston family had plantations and were antebellum governors in Virginia and Alabama. Knowing the history of the United States, what else could we be? This was why as we began to take our seats, I was amazed to see one

Black¹ man, a man I wanted to talk to but did not know how to. The event was open to the public, but why did he choose to come? I still wonder if he is a relative. It is not as though it was/is uncommon for enslavers to force enslaved women to bear their children (Twitty, 2017).

After an introduction and greeting, the floor opened up so that the audience of loosely related, long-forgotten kin could tell our own histories, the ones we did not all share. The story I remember most was not exactly about the Winston family. An old man, must have been 80 if he was a day, walked to the microphone at the front of the room. He introduced himself and started telling a long, rambling story that I found difficult to follow. It seemed to focus not on his family but was about an enslaved man who stayed on with the family after emancipation; the storyteller's mother nursing the enslaved man as he lay dying years later. I know these details not because I remember, but because I took notes.² What I do remember is that the storyteller used what I thought was the n-word when talking about the formerly enslaved man. My notes indicate how upset I was about his use of this still powerful word and how nobody else seemed to be bothered. Perhaps this was because the other listeners thought, as my aunt did, that the storyteller

¹ I deliberately capitalize terms such as “Black,” “Brown,” “Indigenous,” “Native” and “People of Color” because it is a way to show respect. In the words of Tharps (2015), when Black (or Brown or People of Color) is not capitalized, “my culture is reduced to a color. It seems silly to have to spell it out, that black with a lower case “b” is a color, whereas Black with a capital “B” refers to a group of people whose ancestors were born in Africa, were brought to the United States against their will, spilled their blood, sweat and tears to build this nation into a world power and along the way managed to create glorious works of art, passionate music, scientific discoveries, a marvelous cuisine, and untold literary masterpieces” (para. 2). Additionally, unlike the 7th Edition of the *APA Style Manual* which calls for the capitalization of Black and white, I purposefully do not capitalize white. As Price (2019) beautifully explains:

leaving white in lowercase represents a righting of a long-standing wrong and a demand for dignity and racial equity. Editorial standards may call for consistency in capitalizing both white and Black, but until we address the interactive effects of discrimination and subjugation on the lives of Black people and how they are baked into our policies, practices, and institutions, we cannot embrace equal treatment in our language (para. 12).

Finally, throughout my dissertation and all my writings, I follow the teaching of my mentor during my study abroad in South Africa (2010), Dr. Heidi Grunebaum. She believed that although race is a significant identity marker, it should always be written about as an adjective rather than a noun (i.e. Black people rather than Blacks or, even more cringey, “the Blacks”). In doing so, my hope is to remind us of our shared humanity rather than essentializing people based on one single identity marker.

² Despite this being a public event, I have withheld the speaker’s name since I did not ask if I could include their story.

said “negro” in that old white pronunciation that sounds awfully close to the N-word. So close that I do not feel comfortable typing it. Let's just say it did not sound like “knee-grow.” If the other attendees were like my aunt, they excused the speaker believing he did not know better due to his age. Either way, this man's story confirmed everything I expected from the Winston Family Reunion and we were only 25 minutes in.

This study is not a study of the Winston Family Reunion per se. Yet I open with a story about it for two reasons. First, do we who are critical of history education not often begin with the question “whose stories are being taught?” Time after time, studies of traditional K-12 educational spaces, typically classrooms, show us that history textbooks, the tool understandably relied on by many history teachers (Levstik, 2008) and state standards, textbooks' counterpart, perpetuate narratives that focus on dead white men while ignoring everyone else (Brown & Brown, 2015; Kaomea, 2000; Linter & MacPhee, 2012; Sanchez, 2007), I use narratives throughout this study because, as Webb-Saunders and Donehower (2015) explain, “in academic writing, storytelling is a particular form of resistance, disrupting genre conventions, and calling into question the value of stories as evidence” (p. 1). Considering the patriarchal, settler-colonial, and white supremacist history and present reality of academic research (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013) that this subject of this study attempts to disrupt, I believe the form of this study should follow its function.

Second, looking back, my experience at the Winston Family Reunion planted the seed that germinated into this project. While there, I began to think deeply about what my responsibility is, if any, for righting my ancestors' past wrongs. Wrongs I benefit from due to my whiteness, sure, but in material ways too. For the fact is that if these Winston ancestors of mine

were not slave-owners, I probably would not exist. At first glance, perhaps that seems a hyperbolic, guilt-ridden statement, but think about it. Enslaved people were financially valuable and their stolen labor enriched the people that owned them (Jones-Rodgers, 2019). Without that type of wealth, without a desire to maintain if not enlarge it, my ancestors might have made different choices. They might have met different people at different times, had different children in different places. In other words, as is true for all of us, my existence relies on the chain of people who came before me and upon whose shoulders I stand. The Winston branch of my family would not be who they were without slavery. It follows that neither would I.

Furthermore, this reunion was a moment when I saw (yet again) white supremacist and settler-colonialist history publically enacted and state sponsored in history textbooks and social studies classrooms as has been documented by Loewen (2010) and Calderon (2014) among others. The semester before the reunion, I took Dr. Alyssa Hadley Dunn's Critical Whiteness course in part because, at that time, I began explicitly wrestling with the legacy of enslavement in the U.S. South (Figure 2). Yet what made the reunion different from the countless times I saw Confederate statues venerated in public spaces or my own K-12 social studies experiences is that the reunion is where I first connected my family to the institutionalization of white supremacy and settler-colonization in Alabama society and, equally important, among ourselves. In other words, it was not until I was at the reunion hearing stories about the Winston family that I began to consider what now, years later, seems obvious: the stories my family tells ourselves about our ancestors is a form of curriculum. And, following that line of reasoning, like any curriculum, family stories can and should be analyzed for what they teach both implicitly and explicitly.

Yet it was not until the pandemic that I considered exploring my family stories as a curriculum through art-based research. In the intermittent years between the reunion and March

2020, I struggled to find my place academically, both within my degree of Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education and the field of social studies. Even though I knew my committee would support me in exploring non-traditional academic questions, I could not shake the feeling that in order to be taken seriously I needed to do the same kinds of studies as other people because I felt like my interests did not fit within my degree or field. When the pandemic hit, like many people, I could no longer ignore the parts of myself that did not fit. Or, phrased another way, when so much joy in my life was taken away, I could not force myself to do work I did not enjoy. And what I enjoyed most was making art, particularly needlecraft. Since, by this point, I had already worked on *Red Dirt Series* (discussed in Chapter 2), with my advisor and committee's support I dove in deeper—both artistically and intellectually—which led to this dissertation.

When I started this project in earnest in April of 2020, I was interested in the stories of my Winston family and how those stories might (re)enshrine white supremacist histories already present in K-12 curriculum and public pedagogy. Since then, this dissertation has narrowed to two foci:

1. What my enslaver ancestors did and how their ideologies of white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy are unknowingly part of my life.
2. How arts-based research (ABR) can allow for one to confront internalized oppressive ideologies.

These two foci are examined, often in tandem, throughout this dissertation, but primarily in Chapters 4 and 5. By using the ABR methodologies of research-creation and evocative autoethnography, I have been able to process not only my family history, but also my response to it. In so doing, this dissertation discusses the possibilities of not only considering critical family

histories in social studies education, but also the possibilities of expanding our curriculum to include art as a means of understanding and processing stories of the past.

Taken as a whole, this project uses my family stories to examine larger questions about the curriculum of family, history, whiteness, and place by using ABR (discussed in more depth below). Therefore, this dissertation implicitly explores questions about the legacy of power and one's responsibility in disrupting it. Though examinations of power relations should occur in every subject area, I consider this work to firmly be in the field of social studies. Researching family histories is one way to bridge the divide between the seemingly G-d like history textbook and the lived experiences of “ordinary people” (Brolis, 2018), by which I mean people who lived during a particular time, but are not famous enough to be talked about in history class, textbookq, or in informal educational settings like historical markers (Martel & Hashimoto-Martell, 2013; Mokurai, et al., 2020; Sleeter, 2016). These ordinary people are often who we are descended from. Knowing stories about one’s family can also be foundational to understanding history and, therefore, one’s self (Hatton, 2019). Much like using primary documents, in learning about history through our family stories and genealogical research it is possible for students and all of us to develop a deeper interest and understanding of history (Moruria et al, 2020; Wineburg, 1991). Events are no longer simply a highlight reel or timeline, but lived experiences that impacted our ancestors and therefore ourselves.

Often social studies educational research focuses on teachers, students, and classroom curriculum. These are important studies, to be sure, but the classroom is not the only place where learning, particularly historical learning, takes place. It can take place in public pedagogy and informal education sites such as museums. Additionally, social studies education does not stop after K-12 education or even university. Indeed, it can and arguably should be a lifelong project,

particularly in when it comes to family histories and genealogical research (Rosenzweig, & Thelen, 1998). Explicitly including genealogical research and critical family history into social studies education and social studies education research might allow the field to re-imagine ourselves beyond the marginalization we feel as a result of high-stakes testing (Fitchett et al., 2014; O'Connor, et. al, 2007)

One risk of genealogical research or learning family stories is that we are sometimes met with silences. Connerton (2008) describes one type of forgetting as “prescriptive forgetting” where the individual(s) or family “discard memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one’s current identity and ongoing purposes” (p. 63). To use my Winston family as an example, our stories are silent about the land, lives, and labor this branch of my family stole. Prescriptive forgetting is therefore strategic, subtle, and committed by past generations. Conversely, for people living today, it can be easy to forget or ignore the role ideologies such as white supremacy and capitalism played in the lived experiences of their/our ancestors. We may not think about the generational wealth our ancestors were able to accumulate often at the expense of People of Color, particularly Black people (Coates, 2014). For many white people, family history starts with the first settler-colonials in their family and, often, they are given more attention than their descendants (Bell, 2020; Gardner, 2003). In these uncritical family histories, rarely if ever is anything negative said about their/our ancestors (Gardner, 2003). Taken together, white people’s prescriptive forgetting and uncritical family histories are ways in which “whiteness as property” (Harris, 1993) is maintained by multiple generations of white people simultaneously.

Overview

This dissertation blends traditional genre conventions and ones of my own construction. Chapters 2 and 3 follow a more traditional format. Chapter 2 discusses the literature I am in conversation with, the two theoretical frameworks I use throughout—critical family history (Sleeter, 2016), Institutional State Apparatuses (ISAs, Althusser, 1971/2014), and critical whiteness studies—and concludes with a discussion about some of the terminology I use throughout. Sleeter’s framework of critical family history is, perhaps, the most direct connection to social studies education since it is an increasingly used method to engage students. Althusser’s ISAs expand on critical family history by further considering not only historical privilege of one’s family, but also how that privilege echoes ideologically generations later. The discussion about critical whiteness provides an overview of the field, the reckoning happening internally, as well as how that led me to use phrasing such as “they/we” throughout the paper. In the literature review, I place my work in conversation with other historians, narrative non-fiction writers, and artists. The chapter concludes with a discussion about my deliberate choices to implicate myself in this work when talking about white people and the use of “enslaver” when talking about people, including my ancestors, who have been largely described as “planter,” “master” or “mistress.”

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodologies of this dissertation. First, I put the limitations of written language in conversation about the possibilities of ABR for educational research broadly while paying particular attention to social studies research. Next, I dive into a deeper discussion about one of the two methodologies I use: research-creation (Loveless, 2019). Though research-creation could work just as well for this project as other ABRs, I use it because it seeks to blur lines between different subjects of academia. In thinking with research-creation, I build upon

Loveless's *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* by considering how research-creation dis/ables traditional research paradigms. I argue research-creation allows for methodology to move beyond research into every day of our lives.

Afterwards, I explain my artistic process for *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* (Chapter 5). Finally, I spend time talking about auto-ethnography, my own hesitancy to use it, why I do, and how it blends with research-creation.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I respond to my research foci by examining the two art series I made and the blended historical and archival information informing them. *Red Dirt Series*, the subject of Chapter 4, consists of three primary ingredients: cotton, dirt, canvas. Moving from the outermost portion of each piece (cotton) backward (dirt and then canvas), I discuss not only why I made the artistic choices I did, but also what stories—historical and otherwise—led to those choices in the first place. Afterwards, I discuss these three components together in a section entitled “The Power of Red Dirt.” Chapter 5's *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* is a disconnected quilt created from found words (quotes I came across over the past year), found cloth (meaning I did not purchase new cloth. Instead it was either given to me, something I was going to throw away, or I found it at a yard sale or thrift store), and found handwriting (I asked people to “scribe” the quotes, which I then traced and embroidered onto the cloth). In making and thinking about both art works, I began to consider the possibility of comradeship as an antiracist as well as anticapitalist response to pervasive anti-Blackness in my family and the U.S.'s history.

When I started the work that has become this dissertation, I did so in order to think about what to do with the legacy my enslaver ancestors bestowed upon me in a way that could shed my debt to the people they enslaved like a snakeskin. I do not have an answer for that. I expect I

never will. Instead, it is my hope that this dissertation can begin a larger conversation about how family histories are a form of curricula that can in (re)inscribe ideologies already manifesting in a variety of ways in our society, including U.S. history textbooks. Perhaps, following my model, one day in the future, a Winston family reunion could look and sound different. It is also my hope that this paper provides a precedent for using ABR in research about social studies education and other fields of education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Terminology

In this chapter, I discuss the literature—both written word and visual art—I am in conversation with, the theoretical frameworks I use for this research, as well as the rationale for my terminology of “they/we” and “enslavers.” The former terminology I use as a means to implicate myself not only in this work, but also, in so doing, the larger structures of whiteness and white supremacy which I will always benefit from, not because I want it, but because that is how U.S. society works.

Literature Review

This literature review reflects the difference from a traditional literature review in large part because the literature I am pulling from is not only words, but also visual art. Therefore, in this section, I will first discuss three books that have been invaluable to my work: Tara McPherson’s (2003) *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, Stephanie Jones-Rodgers’s (2019) *They Were her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South*, and Michael W. Twitty’s (2017) *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South*. In the next sub-section, I will highlight the work of two Southern U.S. artists, V. L. Cox and Sonya Clark, whose work influenced the *Red Dirt Series* I discuss in Chapter 4. In the last section, I discuss needlework and textile art, touching on Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*.

Alabama and Southern U.S. History

Many of the books I have consulted thus far concern the history and historiography of the U.S. South, particularly Alabama. I use this literature to place my family and their legacy in the contexts of their times, as the theoretical framework of Critical Family History (Sleeter, 2008, 2016) requires.

Before beginning this study, much of my knowledge of “frontier” Alabama and early statehood (roughly the late 1700s-1820s) was limited to what I learned in my fourth-grade history class. Compared to the vast historiography of the “antebellum” (1820-1860) and during the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865,) “frontier” Alabama life is largely unremarked upon by scholars, educators, and the populace. One result from the dearth of information is that finding scholarly information about this period is proving difficult. Therefore, instead of writing a timeline of Alabama history or rephrasing other histories into my own words, I will spend the rest of this literature review analyzing three texts that have been particularly helpful when reading local histories.

Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers’s (2019) *They Were her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* disrupts the widely-held belief that white plantation-class women, or people (mis)gendered as women³, like my ancestors lived “passive” lives; as though life just happened to them and they were content with that (McPherson, 2003). In some ways, it is understandable logic. We still so rarely see women in textbooks or other places of historical pedagogy. Disenfranchised, if married they forfeited any land rights to their husbands (though Jones-Rodgers shows there were many exceptions to this general rule), and enslaved people made it possible for them to have leisure. For some unreconstructed (often gendered as male) U.S. Southerners, what more could a woman want?

Catherine Clinton’s *The Plantation Mistress* (1982) is one of the first texts to investigate the lives of white enslaving women. She was “frustrated by historians who have ignored the contributions of women to plantation life” (quoted in McPherson, 2003, p. 76). Yet in so doing,

³ Without primary documents, it is impossible to know how my ancestors, or anyone long dead, would self-identify regarding gender and sexual orientation. For this reason, when talking about antebellum ancestors, I follow the examples of Jones-Rogers and other historians in using sex terms such as “woman” and “men” throughout this paper.

Clinton and others historians generally paint a sympathetic picture of white enslaving women. For example, Clinton (1982) asserts that white enslaving women were “the slave of the slaves” because so much of their lives were devoted to the caring and well-being of enslaved people (p. 16). Jones-Rodgers contradicts this and other assertions by exploring how enslaving white women “created freedom for themselves by actively engaging and investing in the economy of slavery and keeping African Americans in captivity” thereby mitigating “some of the harshest elements of the common law regime as it operated in their daily lives” (p. xvii). Here, Jones-Rodgers argues against the belief that white, enslaver women lead “passive” lives. Instead, white enslaver women carved out something like freedom for themselves at the expense of enslaved people. Therefore, Jones-Rodgers demonstrates that contrary to popularly held historiography, the way mistresses treated enslaved people had (almost) everything to do with their financial value. In other words, white enslaving women were calculating business owners whose main focus was turning a profit, not the well-being of their enslaved people. In short, Jones-Rodgers’ monograph disproves the popular historiography (e.g., Clinton, 1982, 1995; Fox-Genovese, 1988; Scott, 1970; Wood, 2004) of white enslaving women in the U.S. South. Furthermore, one could argue that by fully exploring white enslaving women's role in the slave trade, Jones-Rodgers’s work is feminist differently than those in Clinton’s camp because it demonstrates the power these white women had in their own lives rather than falling into the trap of white, antebellum nostalgia.

Additionally, even though Jones-Rodgers’ focus is white, enslaver women, by including the experiences and voices of enslaved people, she decenters the whiteness of her subject more than many previous historians. This might seem contradictory since the subjects of *They Were her Property* are white, enslaving women. Yet like Nell Irvin Painter, another Black, female

historian, Jones-Rodgers recognizes that white enslaver women did not live all by themselves. Most of the people they interacted with daily would have been the people they enslaved. As Painter explains in her introduction to *Southern History Across the Color Line* (2002), for too long historians have perpetuated “segregation’s decree and wrote about the South as though people of different races occupied entirely different spheres” (p. 2). By including not only the experiences of Black, enslaved people but also their own words, Jones-Rodgers not only disrupts the idea of the “passive” white antebellum lady, she pushes her off her proverbial pedestal.

Tara McPherson’s (2003) *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* also confronts the mystique of Southern white femininity, albeit from a cultural studies lens rather than historical. Using cultural and media studies as the grounds for her analysis, McPherson dissects the myriad ways the U.S. South is (re)imagined and communicated to the region as well as the United States as a whole. Though written before *They Were Her Property*, *Reconstructing Dixie* complements it by picking up the examination of white Southerness where Jones-Rodgers ends. McPherson illustrates that the myths of the Belle, the Gentleman, and the South beginning during Reconstruction often perpetuates white supremacist, Lost Cause ideology: an ideology that erases Black people from depictions of the region thereby centering whiteness. Furthermore, this removal of Blackness from history and popular culture representation of the region, she argues, ignores the brutality and pain that maintaining plantations and planter society required and current logic whiteness still requires.

Finally, Michael Twitty’s (2017) *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through the African American Culinary History in the Old South* differs from *They Were Her Property* and *Reconstructing Dixie* in that it is a family and culinary history of the U.S. South.

Some parts of Twitty's family, like mine, first entered the area that became Northern Alabama from Virginia as part of "Alabama Fever" in the early 1800s. Other parts of Twitty's family, unlike mine, were forcibly moved there as enslaved peoples. It is possible that his enslaver ancestors were familiar with my enslaving ancestors. It is also possible that his enslaved ancestors knew the people my ancestors enslaved. Yet these connections are not the only reason for the import of his text in this study. Between similar projects that combine historical, genealogically, and art (his cooking, mine visual) and our shared Jewishness and (adopted in his case) Southernness, *The Cooking Gene* speaks to a lot of my dissertation.

The Cooking Gene began as the *Southern Discomfort Tour* (2012). On the tour, Twitty traveled from plantation to plantation in the U.S. South, doing the work of enslaved people using the technology of the time. For example, at a plantation in Petersburg, Virginia, he chopped cotton, "my American 'Arbeit macht Frei'" (p. 346). At each site, Twitty demonstrated the backbreaking, debilitating, and murderous conditions and work of enslaved peoples while centering their lives and joys. *The Cooking Gene* itself is another place of reclamation: of history and family, of foodways and cooking. Much like what this paper aims to do, Twitty weaves his art (cooking) with history, genealogy, and personal narratives. Twitty's study is a rare blend of criticality and kindness and speaks to both Jones-Rodgers (2019) and McPherson (2003). Like the former, he centers on the lived experiences of enslaved people, as well as telling the lived experiences of their enslavers. In other words, both works humanize enslaved peoples, reconstructing their words, thoughts, and breaths, thereby shining their lives into history and historiography that has largely ignored them. Like the latter, Twitty dissects and disrupts the romanticization of antebellum Southern history by white people, particularly in regards to plantation tourism and "mammy" stereotypes.

Taken together, these three texts confront the legends of Southernness that abounded in my childhood and remain largely intact today. To frame this from a critical family history perspective (discussed in more depth in Chapter 3), Jones-Rodgers, McPherson, and Twitty each expose what I have been told and wanted to believe about enslavers and, in particular, my family. I assumed because I like to think that I am a “good person” that my family would be “good masters,” while never considering, as Jones-Rodgers reminds us, that there is no way to be a “good” person and enslave someone else just as there is no “good” white person so long as white supremacy exists. As detailed later in this paper, these texts illuminate possibilities of how to confront dominant white supremacist histories by showing how they are constructed and why. To be clear, Jones-Rodgers, McPherson, and Twitty are not the only scholars I have read for this project; however, they are the scholars who ground this work the most.

Southern U.S. artists grappling with white supremacy

I am not the first visual artist to conceptualize whiteness or white supremacy in the U.S. South. One such artist is white, Arkansas-based V. L. Cox who finds, collects, and reconfigures objects into new, thought-provoking pieces that juxtapose everyday items with those of hate. Though her most famous work is perhaps the *End Hate Doors* (2015), a series of doors that has traveled all over the United States including in front of the Lincoln Memorial, much of her work uses antique Ku Klux Klan robes and other Klan imagery. For example, *Soiled* (2015) juxtaposes a blood-stained “authentic circa 1919 Klan robe” with a metal sign advertising “white RIT 10c color remover” and a can of Puritan Cleaner brand (Cox, 2017, p. 42). Wrapped in a natural fiber rope, the Klan robe evokes images of lynchings, particularly during “Red Summer.” According to historian Cameron McWhirter (2011), between April and November 1919 was “the worst spate of race riots and lynchings in American history” (p. 13) with at least 25 riots and at

minimum 52 people lynched across the United States. In *Soiled*, Cox alludes not only to this history of violence, but also how racial violence maintains white supremacy both in terms of the power the Klan held/holds as well as the everyday life of white people.

Alternatively, in *Whitewash* (2015), Cox carved a Confederate flag into an antique wooden gate and cut the top into hooded figures with eyes before whitewashing the whole piece. With the addition of wooden boards on the sides held on by rusted barbed wire as well as loose hinges on one side of the gate, the piece “reflects the entrance into the dark world of white supremacy” (Cox, 2017, p. 44). Finally, Cox shone a light at a 45-degree angle to provide ghostly shadows behind the fence as an allusion to the Klan’s “old term [of] ‘Invisible Empire’” (Cox, 2017, p. 44).

Sonya Clark’s *Unraveling* (2015-ongoing) also informs my work. In this performance-based art, Clark invites viewers/participants to work with her to unravel—by hand—a cotton Confederate flag. As she and the participant work together, they talk. Though the piece has been performed multiple times since 2015, the flag is not yet halfway unraveled. In 2016, Clark, who identifies as a Black woman, explained in an interview that:

Racial injustice is something every American contends with, either consciously or unconsciously, and it’s so deeply embedded in the fabric of our nation. . . . The word ‘racism’ is sort of like a trigger word; you know, it can shut people’s ears off, shut people down, bring people’s defense mechanisms up. So I’m less interested in that, and more interested in picking apart and undoing and understanding the fabric of our nation and trying to understand the roots of racial injustice (In Hower, par. 2).

Unraveling is a clear metaphor for the work it takes to unravel white supremacy evident in the U.S. The process of unraveling the flag is slow work, with about half an inch being unraveled in

45-minutes to an hour. It is also intentional work, for it would be much easier to tear the threads and rip the flag apart. Yet doing so would miss the point, for if torn often enough, there would be no fibers to salvage, only shreds of the flag's former self would remain.

While the work of Cox, Clark, and other visual artists of a multitude of races and identities can create visceral and thoughtful reactions to (the history of) white supremacy, Confederate and Klan imagery can enable white people to disengage from their responsibility and complicity in white supremacy. Most white people are loath to have anyone consider them racist and are unwilling or unable to begin the process of reckoning with their complicity in white supremacy (DiAngelo, 2018). The kinds of white people, regardless of where they are from, who see Cox's, Clark's, and other artists' work might recognize how white supremacy works in the world and the U.S. South, but they might not see the imagery as a mirror to themselves. Instead, they may, like me, first associate it with family, friends, or acquaintances who wave the flag proudly. Of course, perhaps the use of Confederate and Klan imagery is not meant to mirror individuals but reflect on society as a whole, a task that is important; however, it is not the focus of this study.

“Feminine” arts

Textile arts, particularly quilts, have been one of the few places U.S. women have historically been able to express themselves artistically, as well as politically (Jefferson, Berman, & Zegart, 2011; May, 2018). Yet unlike “fine” arts such as paintings and sculpture, textile arts are thought of as domestic and feminine therefore they have not been dismissed as “craft” rather than being considered art. And though artists such as Faith Ringgold, Hank Willis Thompson, Bisa Butler, and Judy Chicago, among others have been changing the concept of what is and is not “art” when it comes to quilts and other textile crafts, and though art museums are

increasingly creating exhibits about quilts and recognizing their role in the “Radical Tradition” as named by the Toledo Museum of Art (2020), textile crafts face an uphill battle towards being recognized as art.

The gendered nature of this dismissal cannot be overstated. In *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework* (1980), Judy Chicago talks about her experience learning china painting, her first step towards creating *The Dinner Party* (1975). China is obviously not a textile; however, like other “feminine” art forms, painted china has largely been dismissed by the art world at large. Though the technique of china painting is “exceedingly difficult,” Chicago writes that in apprenticing with china painters in the early 1970s:

it was as if the conflict I had experienced between my drive to be an artist and my conditioning as a woman mirrored a much deeper conflict in most of the[se] women. Although many of them possessed the visual skills to express personal subject matter, they did not take themselves seriously nor did they believe that their experiences were important enough to express. This lack of self-esteem resulted not only in a continual dependence upon preformed patterns and designs, but also in resistance to new ideas and unfamiliar thoughts. (p. 10)

The tension between technique and self-value, between craft and art, between identity as an artist and as a woman lead Chicago to create *The Dinner Party*. Three tables form an equilateral triangle set with 13 place settings on each side, each naming a woman or female figure from pre-history to the then-moment. All 39 settings have a hand-painted china plate and elaborately needle-crafted⁴ runner naming the individual, as well as cutlery and a golden cup. Nine hundred ninety-nine more women are named on the floor, their names twined together like

⁴ While all runners contain some embroidery, some also contain elements of needlepoint, quilt piecing, or beading, hence my use of “needlecraft” as an umbrella term encompassing these different art forms.

the branches of a tree or a stream. *The Dinner Party* recognizes not only the contributions women have made throughout time, but the beauty and potential of multiple “feminine” arts including china painting, embroidery, and other forms of needlework. Though very much a product of its time, *The Dinner Party*, first as a touring exhibition and now permanently housed in the Brooklyn Museum of Art, remains a centerpiece for feminist art not only because it is about women, but also because it showcases a variety of “feminine” art forms that were, at that time, not considered art. In so doing, Chicago and the collection of women who worked with her to create *The Dinner Party*, created space not only for women to be remembered, but also made room for domestic art forms to be understood as art on their terms rather than fitting into the predominantly male understanding of what is/not art (Chicago & Hill, 1980).

Theoretical Frameworks

For this dissertation, I am pulling from three theoretical frameworks: critical family history, Institutional State Apparatuses (ISAs), and critical whiteness studies. Critical family history provides a way to demystify the past as told in textbooks into lived experiences of ourselves and our ancestors that make each of us who we are. Meanwhile, thinking about families as an ISA allows me to use these two frameworks because, when taken together, they provide different ways of exploring family history and stories, specifically thinking about families as complex structures that socialized myself (and all of us) in specific ways.

Before discussing each in detail, I wish to clarify that critical family history and family as an ISA are can be used by anyone, not just people with difficult or uncomfortable family pasts like the Winston family. I could use critical family history and families as ISAs to examine the other side of my father’s family: the white, yeoman farmer Grishams or my German Jewish family or my Spanish by way of Cuba family. I could begin these journeys by thinking about

why no one in my dad's family talks about us being from North Carolina, or why none of my mama's father's family spoke Yiddish (that I know of at least), or why my mama's mama's family identified as white rather than Cubano or Spanish. We could think about power dynamics, how the ideologies of the state were perpetrated by these disparate families even when oppressed by the state. I chose to examine the Winston branch of my family using these two frameworks because they can work for almost anyone.

Critical Family History

It can be difficult to untangle critiquing white supremacy from critiques of one's self and one's family; however, Christine Sleeter's (2008, 2016) framework of critical family history provides a way to rethink family narratives. Many white family historians tend to center genealogical research around their ancestors by decontextualizing them from the historical moments in which they lived (Parham, 2008). In so doing, these researchers absolve their family of possible wrongdoing, thereby making their ancestors into family heroes and "anchoring [the researcher's] personal identity" (Sleeter, 2016, p. 11). Critical family history aims to "challenge family historians to construct their histories in the context of social relationships forged through colonization, racism, and other relations of power" (p. 14). Considering the Winston family's legacy for the state of Alabama as well as myself, critical family history is crucial to examine not only what stories have been told, but also why we remember what we do in the ways we do.

Furthermore, as Sleeter (2008) argues, critical family history has implications for teacher education, as it can push white pre-service teachers to think about how race and ethnicity impact their own lives. Though "life stories are not necessarily transformative or insightful" on their own (p. 115), putting life stories in historical context with critical family history can complicate white people's tendency to "view white ethnicity as cultureless" (p. 117). Critical family history

can be a starting point for white teachers to observe “the trajectory of individual lives in all their integrity along the convoluted path of an ever-shifting racial reality” (Jacobson, 1998).

Therefore, using critical family history can enable white students to identify and examine “historical privilege” (Bell, 2020, p. 42) of their ancestors in ways that consider privilege beyond the economic. Thinking about privilege in this way can disrupt and diffuse the white emotionality of pre-service teachers that Matias (2016) and Leonardo (2009), among others, describe in detail. Considering that the vast majority of pre- and in-service teachers are white, Sleeter argues that critical family history is a tool that can help many of them understand themselves in racial and ethnic contexts, which might enable them to better teach their all students.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of critical family history, at least for this dissertation, is the possibility it holds for helping us trouble the myths of self and family we do not even know we hold. There are implications as to how this might move social studies and teacher education towards justice and abolition as discussed above; however, reframing our scope beyond the classroom leads me to ask what might our society as a whole look like if we all engaged in critical family history. Not only might we be better teachers and researchers, but also we might be better people who are more just and humble in our day-to-day lives. As I discuss in more depth in Chapter 3, Vivek Vellanki (2020) proposes that the methodologies we employ in research are also lifestyle choices. To build on his argument, theoretical frameworks, in particular critical family history, can be the same.

Before I used critical family history, when researching and learning about U.S. history there is a part of me that would stand on this mental refuge I created, a refuge I did not even know I had. Looking back, researching history from a critical family framework has, for me at

least, shrunk my mental island of “but not all _____” and “not me” and “not my family.” I think it is mental refuges like the one I describe that allows some social science scholars to be critical of the people they/we study while not applying the same criticality to ourselves, something I discuss regarding critical whiteness studies in more depth below.

Critical family history can also enable a critical engagement not only with history, but also heritage narratives. Though heritage and history are both constructed stories of the past, I define heritage as including elements of group identity and therefore can often lead to feelings of belonging in addition to the “events” that constitute history (Levy, 2017). As a white person from the Southern U.S., I cannot think about the word heritage without the phrase “not hate” immediately following. It is difficult for me to separate the words, let alone the anti-Blackness and neo-Confederate imagery the entire phrase evokes. Even though I have this association (perhaps many of us do), heritage narratives are not inherently damaging, nor are they all white supremacist. Regardless, critical family history might provide a space to tease apart where our stories promote connection to a group (heritage) as well as the silences in our family’s past.

Institutional State Apparatuses

The focus of social studies education on schools, students, teachers, and assessments is logical when we consider that schools are a primary Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). As Althusser (1971/2014) explains, ISAs perpetuate societal injustice by creating spaces where:

submission to the rules of respect for the established order be reproduced . . . This means, for the workers, reproduction of labour-power's *submission to the dominant ideology* and, for the agents of exploitation and repression, reproduction of *its capacity to handle the dominant ideology* properly, so as to ensure the domination of the dominant class (p. 51, emphasis in original.).

As a post-Marxist, Althusser's focus is unsurprisingly about how ISAs reproduce capitalist systems; however, as scholars such as Roediger (2017) and Kendi (2019) have explained, the institutionalization of white supremacy goes hand in glove with the institutionalization of capitalism in the U.S. In other words, in the U.S., you could not have one without the other. Therefore, if we add "People of Color" to "labour-power," Althusser's conceptualization of ISAs holds in the U.S., as well as his context of Europe.

It might be easy for white people who are not from the Southern U.S. or do not have slaveholding ancestors in their family trees to remove themselves from the implications of this study. After all, as Rosenzweig and Thelen (2000) explain, many people want to know about their family because they want to know about where and who they come from in order to make sense of their lives. Moreover, in their survey of 1,500 people in the U.S., Rosenzweig and Thelen found that history and social studies as taught in K-12 spaces often do not resonate with most people. In other words, many people do not make a family or personal connection to the past, and it is as if the events as depicted by textbooks might as well be a fairy tale, events that happened to unknown people in some faraway land.

Investigating one's family from the theoretical framework of an ISA, as a reproductive mechanism of white supremacy (and settler colonialism, patriarchy, classism, ableism, antisemitism, among others), in addition to the theoretical framework of critical family history, provides the possibility of questioning not only how one's specific family history and historiography fits into larger white supremacist narratives, but also how the stories of our families can be used to justify harm towards People of Color (and/or women and/or dis/abled people and/or Jewish people, among others). This is true for me; this is true for all of us. For how can we challenge how U.S. and Southern history are taught if we do not investigate how we as

individuals are taught about ourselves and our families? What mystiques are we imbued with unknowingly? And to what ends?

Critical Whiteness

As Lipsitz (2006) and other scholars have convincingly argued, even white people who are not descended from slaveholders still benefit from whiteness and are “invested” in perpetuating said whiteness. Many people’s ancestors—for example, Irish, Italian, and Jewish people—were not considered white a century ago. This was the case for my mother’s German Jewish family when they came to the U.S.⁵ Yet, as Brodtkin (1999), Roeddkiger (1991), and others have argued, white-presenting non-WASPS (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) often used anti-Blackness to become whiter in the eyes of American society. It often worked; however, the descendants of these one-day-white immigrants now often focus on the (ongoing in the case of Jews like me) discrimination their/our ancestors face/d, which can obscure how white people alive today benefit from whiteness. This obscuration, as Brodtkin argues, can make it seem that equality is inevitable. After all, the thinking goes, our ancestors made it, why can’t other people? In other words, focusing on the social mobility of their/our ancestors ignores societal and institutional discrimination, thereby normalizing injustice which can lead to white people’s ambivalence about creating a just society today. White supremacy, as discussed in more depth below, is as foundational to their/our lives as the ground they/we walk on, noticeable only when it is not there.

Though I do not discuss my Jewishness in detail in this paper, it absolutely influences my relationship with my whiteness. Antisemitism is real and systemic, yet sometimes it seems like white Jewish people (me included) focus more on disrupting antisemitism rather than examining

⁵ For example, my mother’s father changed his name from Jasper Rappaport to Jack Roberts to assimilate into gentile society.

how we benefit from white supremacy and how we are racist, which can preclude coalition building with other oppressed peoples (Bulkin, et al., 1984). In *White Teacher* (1979), Paley, a white Jewish woman, does not talk about her experiences in the classroom in terms of coalition building, but, in essence, that is what she does. Throughout her story, we see how she becomes increasingly antiracist, partially through her Jewishness and partially through her willingness to reflect on her whiteness. Though she, like me, blends into dominant white society, our Jewishness sets us apart. If she, like me, had not been Jewish, then perhaps she, like me, would not have been able to hear when People of Color talked to her about race and racism. If she/we were not Jewish, then perhaps she/we would have a different relationship to whiteness. This is not to say that Paley reaches the pinnacle of understanding in *White Teacher* because she is white and Jewish. She, I believe, would be the first to tell you she does not. However, there is a unique openness to conversation in order to push herself to be a better person and teacher.

Paley, as well as Bulkin (1984), explore how white Jews (themselves included) weaponize whiteness and sometimes Jewishness as a means to protect themselves. Furthering their arguments, I would add that they/we often focus on how we/I am oppressed rather than an oppressor. Focusing on how we/I am oppressed can stall coalition building as discussed above, it can also lead to unproductive activities such as “oppression Olympics” (Martinez, 1993). Nevertheless, for me, growing up in Alabama where my brother and I were the only Jewish students in our schools, I always felt like I was both in- and outside my community. Being a sixth-generation white Alabamian and a first-generation Jewish Alabamian, these two identities would sometimes conflict. It is difficult to know now exactly what I did, but I believe growing up, I probably leaned more into the white side. I hope now I am starting to lean more into the Jewish side.

Notes Critical Whiteness and Terminology

During the year I have worked on this dissertation, critical whiteness as a framework has felt increasingly constraining, so much so that in earlier drafts of this dissertation I removed my discussion of it, instead focusing on my use of the terminology “they/we” and “enslavers.” Yet this project uses critical whiteness as a framework and I am indebted to the critical whiteness scholars who came before me. For this reason, though I have kept my explanations of the terminology they/we and “enslavers, I returned my earlier discussion of the critical whiteness framework to this text. Nevertheless, it is important to me to address my concerns with a continued-future use of this framework for my own research.

I worry that using a critical whiteness framework is like putting a band-aid on a gash: helpful, but limited in the aid it can give. As I understand critical whiteness, a large if the not central feature of it is to bring attention to the ways structures and individuals (like myself) that embody and perpetuate white supremacy. While this work is needed, important, and ongoing, I am concerned that at a certain point it can become akin to a hamster wheel. In other words, it is common knowledge that the U.S. teaching force is predominantly white and that white people will remain racist as long as we live in racial capitalism. Therefore researching and discussing all the ways white people and structures embody and perpetuate white supremacy might change individuals, but it will not change the system, let alone its reproduction.

Though white people have self-work to do, until the racial capitalist system is dismantled, individual work can only take us so far. This is not to say that white people should put the burden of their learning on People of Color. Instead, a year after George Floyd’s murder, I wonder what if we as social studies education scholars started to act politically in addition to researching how politics are talked about in social studies spaces. I wonder if and how research might help build

power across race, class, gender, and other identities, identities often used to divide rather than unite people, to dismantle racial capitalism. While I believe many critical whiteness scholars are personally interested in such questions, I wonder if the framework of critical whiteness is equipped to address them a question, an idea I explore in more depth in the following sections about terminology.

Cultural critique of white people (they) v. self-implication (we)

Often when white people's ambivalence about white privilege and white supremacy is challenged, they/we exhibit symptoms of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2016). For example, when a white person is confronted with their own racism or the history of settler-colonial white supremacy in the United States they/we often complain they/we are unnecessarily being made to feel guilty (Leonardo, 2009; Matias, 2016; Picower, 2009). Yet they/we have power because they/we benefit from white supremacist society and institutions. After all, we are often unwilling to do the work required to dismantle mechanisms of oppression. I say "mechanisms" here because I want to highlight that I mean both the internal and external. Fear, known and unknown, recognized and unseen, keeps us from dismantling the power we hold. Though this is an individual struggle, it is also a collective one. Phrased another way, one does not need to own slaves nor did one's family need to own slaves for a white person to benefit from white supremacy.

I hope to follow Painter's (2002), Jones-Rodgers's (2019), and McPherson's (2003) examples and move beyond the color line in Southern history. Therefore, instead of actively using critical whiteness as a framework, critical whiteness is present without needing to center whiteness and white supremacy themselves. Towards this aim, I do utilize a few different forms of terminology.

The first is that I say “they/we” throughout this paper because I believe a crucial part of disrupting white supremacy is explicitly acknowledging that I, as a white person, am racist; that despite years of work to become antiracist, I still exhibit white emotionality (Matias, 2016) including white fragility, often unaware I am doing so at the moment.

Sometimes white scholars of race talk as though they have figured out internalized racism, even when they acknowledge that they do not. For instance, throughout *White Fragility* (2016), Robin DiAngelo showcases how white people manifest fragility and racism. She presents example after example of how white people she has worked with have, quite frankly, messed up. She also presents examples of how People of Color have thanked her for when she shuts down racist white people. It is only at the end of the book that she shares an anecdote about how she, too, has felt fragile when confronted with her own racism. To be clear, when I first read *White Fragility* years ago (though after the pandemic it feels like lifetimes), I found it to be a revelation. Yet, the more I have thought about it, the more my opinion has changed. In focusing on others, DiAngelo falls into a trap not uncommon for white scholars of race: they/we position ourselves as an expert by talking about others’ mistakes. Perhaps it is (also?) because, within academic culture, uncertainty is often misconstrued as a weakness. In other words, white critical whiteness scholars often write very critically about other white people but rarely do they/we turn that same criticality on themselves.

I began considering the lack of self-reflection in published works by white scholars of race after reading Berchini’s (2017) article asking for teacher educators to, essentially, be more generous to their white students by not dismissing them when they do or say racist things. While I think it is unfair of Berchini to ask this of Teacher Educators of Color who are being macro- and microaggressed by racist white students daily (Matias, 2016) and therefore need to survive

however they can, as a white woman talking about race like Berchini, I do appreciate her questioning of how we, as white people, talk to our students. Is it fair to call our students out if we are unwilling or unable to look into the same mirror?

Therefore, my use of phrases such as “they/we,” “she/we,” or “they/me” is an attempt to embrace the tensions of white critical whiteness studies rather than ignoring them. To find a third way; a place in between the criticisms of white critical whiteness scholars by simultaneously self-implicating and self-distancing. In other words, my use of the “/” aims to implicate all white people, myself included. I hope that this type of language can become more commonplace whenever a researcher is talking about a community they identify with. Additionally, by increasing self-implication, white scholars of race may begin to push back on the idea held by many white people that if they/we just read more about race and racism they can fix the latter. Though I do not have any data to cite about white people’s belief in books, it was made in so many memes in the wake of *White Fragility* being sold out after George Floyd’s murder and the subsequent uprisings, it feels like common knowledge. That said, I understand the desire because I, too, wish I could read a book and no longer be racist, even though I know that is not how it works. In holding a mirror and including myself in racism with a “/” perhaps it can be a push to help other white people do the same, regardless of their ancestry.

“Enslavers” v. “planters,” “masters,” and “mistresses”

White wealthy people of plantations in the slaveholding South are often in the historical as well as popular literature called “planters” (almost always referring to men), “masters” and “mistresses.” I find it tempting to continue to use this language, these terms of the U.S. antebellum South, for it is the language that is familiar, the language these people used themselves (Jones-Rodgers, 2019). These are the terms I know, that I have used and heard my

whole life. They are the ones found in textbooks and movies; in tourist sites and the popular imagination (McPherson, 2003.) These people are often talked about as a social class, as an “aristocracy” of the antebellum South. Moreover, they thought of themselves as such.

Considering that “planters” collectively modeled their economic and social lives on the landed gentry of Europe, they often equated enslaved people with the peasants and serfs who labored for nobility without freedom of choice (Miller, 2002; Isaac, 2004). In other words, the so-called aristocracy of what became the U.S. South understood their social, economic, and political positions as a sort of “divine right” to rule. Their whiteness and maleness enabled them to do so. Of course, modeling a social hierarchy on the English nobility, a country that the U.S. had won their independence from only decades before the push into what became Alabama, can and perhaps should be understood then as well as now, as diametrically opposed to the “freedom” the U.S. Revolution proclaimed (Miller, 2002). Nevertheless, between 1783 (the end of the U.S. Revolutionary War) and 1861 (the beginning of the U.S. Civil War), the power of the self-appointed aristocracy surged rather than shrank in the U.S. South (Miller, 2002; Isaac, 2004).

Yet terms like “planter,” “master,” or “mistress” focus on the power these people wielded while ignoring the cost. These terms ignore how the people they describe ripped families apart, destroyed people mentally and physically, stole land, committed genocide. The continued use of these terms obscures the violence it took to create and maintain their positions of power.

Moreover, to think of someone as a “master” or “mistress” of a place implies that they, particularly the male masters, ruled without question. Yet we know, or should know, this is not true. We know or should know that many enslaved and Indigenous peoples resisted however they could, whenever they could (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2015; Kendi, 2016; Miles, 2017; Paris, 2017). To call these white people, these ancestors of mine, “masters” and “mistresses” can negate the

lived struggle of Black and Brown people and, therefore, can further dehumanize. And the idea of calling these people “planters” is, honestly, a farce, for the people doing the majority of planting were enslaved people.

Additionally, “planter,” “master,” and “mistress” have allowed white people to ignore not only the violence caused by these people, but to romanticize them. Former plantations and other so-called historic sites where enslaved people lived and were forced to work provide one illustration of this. Many of these places focus on the “master and mistress” of the site often showing their house and portraits while erasing the lived experiences of enslaved people or, if mentioned at all, enslaved people are presented almost like furniture—static, without name or history (Paris, 2017). In so doing, the sites allow for white people to feel, “a white racial melancholia” for the antebellum past (McPherson, 2003) at the expense of (re)traumatizing Black people (Paris, 2017). By talking about planters, masters, and mistresses, white visitors are kept comfortable because they are not required to think about enslaved people or, in other words, what slavery entailed.

Following the frameworks of critical family history and ISAs, I name my ancestors for what they were: enslavers. In order to maintain and increase their wealth and, therefore, their economic and social position, my ancestors and other white people enslaved first Native and then Black people (Kendi, 2016; Miles, 2017). Phrased slightly differently, enslavers (including but not limited to my ancestors) stole the land, labor, and lives of other people—a point that cannot be overstated—for their benefit. Just as it is becoming increasingly common that the term “enslaved people” rather than “slaves” in order to highlight their humanity (Kendi, 2016), I contend that we should also use the word “enslaver” to highlight the inhumanity of the so-called master and mistress. Doing so is a more honest portrayal of who these white people were and

what they did. Without such shifts in the language we use around those with power, how can we honestly reckon with their legacy?

The frameworks of critical family history and ISAs complement each other. They enable a critical investigation not only in one's family but also in thinking about how families reproduce ideologies, oppressive and otherwise. The writers and visual artists discussed here do not necessarily use critical family history, but they demonstrate a myriad of ways to think through not only history, but ourselves and our roles in de-silencing that which white supremacy tries to keep silent. Finally, by examining the language I use, I attempt to further disrupt not only what I have been taught about white enslavers, but the stories and ideologies of my family.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In a more traditional dissertation than this, the methodology, like a literature review and theoretical framework, stand in their own sections and might make an appearance at the end, but rarely in the middle. Like the literature and art I am in conversation with, my methodology—my thinking, creating, and writing—as well as my art and stories, are partially woven into the following chapters in addition to being discussed in depth here. My dissertation, like most dissertations I imagine, is a non-linear project that, due to the nature of writing, appears linear. Yet my art, the “products” of this dissertation, like my thinking, is ever-evolving. Therefore, it is difficult to discuss the art in chapters 4 and 5 if I do not also discuss my thinking, my methodologies, in tandem.

Nevertheless, in this chapter, I discuss the method and methodologies informing my creation of *Red Dirt Series 1* and *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* because they need the time and attention an entire chapter can provide. My two central methodologies—research-creation and evocative autoethnography, forms of arts-based research (ABR) discussed in more depth below—weave together art-making with humanity (history) with social science (social studies and education) research, therefore, not fit cleanly in any one of these three categories. For the remainder of this chapter, I will first consider how the form of written language can limit the types of knowledge we as a field value, and, in so doing, explore possibilities of ABR broadly. Afterwards, I will explain that my use of research-creation stems from its orientation to disrupting power structures, paying particular attention to how research-creation is both a (dis)abling and lived methodology. I will then touch on the artistic practices I developed using research-creation for *Red Dirt Series* (discussed in Chapter 4) and *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* (discussed in Chapter 5). Next, I will address evocative autoethnography, a methodology

that complements my use of research-creation. Finally, I will discuss social studies education and ABR.

The Possibilities of Arts-Based Research

A couple of months ago, I was talking to Karenanna Creps about this chapter. “I don’t know how to explain what I’m doing,” I said, “I feel like I have to translate my art and I don’t know how. I don’t have the language. I don’t know what I am doing.”

Having recently completed an ABR educational research dissertation (hers involving drama, whereas this one is visual arts), Karenanna laughed and understood me. As we talked, she helped me understand that, in Dewey’s words, “each art speaks an idiom that conveys what cannot be said in another language and yet remains the same” (2005, p. 106). Karenanna helped empower me to believe that not only can I center my art, but that I should. By showing my work more than telling, my art and thus myself can communicate in our own ways, our own language. Writing about ABR and study abroad, Wong (2018) writes, “there’s no denying the special status given to language [in reflection practices]. However, our privileging language makes it difficult to consider other possibilities for how intercultural learning might occur” (2018, p. 47). Really, though, Wong’s assertion can be rephrased as a question applicable to education broadly: how does privileging language make it difficult to consider other possibilities for how *any* learning might occur?

Thinking about my experiences in and researching social studies education and my Ph.D. program in curriculum, instruction, and teacher education, the prioritization of written and oral language occurs in these spaces also. In doing so, there is the possibility of silencing students who might engage differently and more deeply through the arts rather than written communication (Eisner, 2002). As I discussed earlier, in social studies education—both in K-12

classrooms and research about them—there is a dearth of information about the possibilities of including the arts. Though not as acute a problem, the same can largely be said for teacher education as well. By prioritizing written and, to a lesser extent, oral language over other forms of communication including but not limited to the visual arts, what are we, as researchers and educators, missing? Who are we excluding? Whose voice is being heard and whose is being silenced? Who is and is not supported in social studies and teacher education classrooms? What, if any, damage is done to students who learn best through other means of communication? Similarly, who benefits from the prioritization of written language over other forms of communication?

In his book, *Cognition and Curriculum Reconsidered* (1994), Eisner theorizes many, varied “forms of representation” or “the devices that humans use to make public conceptions that are privately held. They are the vehicles through which concepts . . . are given public status” (p. 39). By exploring a variety of forms of representation throughout his text, Eisner demonstrates that “particular forms of representation often tend to emphasize particular qualities or utilize a particular sensory system, the kind of meaning that a single form of representation can express is limited” (p. 47). Here, Eisner corroborates my point that by prioritizing one type of knowledge, one type of representation, we limit our possible knowledge. To be clear, valuing one form of representation over others is a problem no matter what that form is. If, for example, every research project in education was like this one rather than the written word, the problem would be the same. Though we would have a vastly different knowledge base than what exists currently, we would be equally as limited.

The prioritization of written communication over other forms of knowledge transference has roots in the Cartesian split of mind over body, male over female, reason over emotion still so

present in educational research that it often goes unnoticed (Fendler, 2013). When we write, most of us sit by ourselves, move very little, focused on the piece at hand sometimes so much so that we forget our bodies or our surroundings. This skill is cultivated at school and reinforced throughout our lives (Carozzi, 2005). ABR, including and research-creation and evocative autoethnography, disrupt the Cartesian hierarchy of knowing and being. Art can allow one to construct understandings in ways that words alone fail to grasp. Art can also allow one to simultaneously process one's learning and emotions, at least, it does for me. Perhaps this is because to make the *Red Dirt Series* and *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, I used my hands, my body in ways that I do not when I am writing. Both pieces required movement. For the *Red Dirt Series*, I smeared mud around with my hands and arms. As I embroidered *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, my arms were in constant motion. In contrast, when I write, I sit in a chair and tap some keys. What I am trying to say is that when making art, many ways of thinking, of being, of feeling all happen at once and *can* all happen at once, which is a very different way to approach learning than how school is generally taught (Dewey, 2005).

For me, the movement, the embodied ways of thinking, my art requires allows me to think deeper than when I am being still. Thinking about social studies education, teacher education, and graduate schools, there is no way I am the only person like this in these spaces. Yet even though statistically I know there must be other people like me, I find myself self-policing and apologizing when I start crafting around strangers because I am worried that they will think I am not paying attention to them. I worry about this most of all with my students, which is why I never bring crafts into classrooms when I'm teaching. I know I am alone in self-policing by not bringing craft or other fidget-style activities into spaces as a learner and a teacher. I wonder how my teaching might change if I did. I also wonder how by deprioritizing

language and allowing movement we might better support teachers and learners in K-12 and teacher education.

Research-Creation as (Dis)abeling

I conceive of research-creation as a (dis)abling methodology for it seeks to disrupt traditional academic research by recognizing non-”normal” minds and bodies (of research) as valuable. Disability studies, the field where (dis)abling methodologies come from, recognizes that (dis)ability has been marginalized by society and the academy differently than race, gender, and other identities. When (dis)ability is discussed, it tends to either be in piteous terms or linked to studies of the abnormal (Davis, 2006; Foucault, 2007). For those of us with (dis)abilities, the implications are that we are abnormal, and thus if we are valued at all, it is due to our abnormality rather than our humanity.

In my experience in Ph.D. education, I have found that the academy is not made for people like me, scholars with invisible disabilities. As a field, we may think about how best to support K-12+ students who have invisible (dis)abilities—which is great and as it should be; however, we do not always extend the same thoughtfulness and care to Ph.D. students. Having talked to many other graduate students with invisible disabilities, the consensus seems to be that professors may be supportive of us and our various needs as individuals, but the academy, the structure itself, is not. As for myself, I’ve taken multiple incompletes in courses, missed deadlines for applications because my depression was so bad that the only time I was not suicidal was when I was sleeping. Though fortunately (by which I really mean through years of difficult work on my part) my depression is not currently that bad, my brain associates writing a traditional, academic paper with the pain of being suicidal making it difficult to write like the academy (and I am speaking in broad brush strokes here) values: both in terms of types of papers

but, more than that, in terms of quantity. My point here in talking about semesters ending, deadlines passing, the pressure of “publish or perish” academic culture is that it is not built for people like me; people who need grace and time for no fault of their own.

Therefore, I frame research-creation as a (dis)abling methodology as a means to reclaim my own humanity within academia, a notoriously ableist space (Davis, 2006). Moreover, I conceive of research-creation as (dis)abling is not only because it disrupts traditional, ableist research paradigms but also because it is, currently, the way I best conduct research.

Research-Creation as Lived Methodology

In his dissertation chapter “Methodology as a Lifestyle Choice,” Vivek Vellanki (2020) invites us to wonder along with him about why researchers are drawn to the methodologies they use in their research. As he is quick to point out, Vellanki is not the first person to question what power structures are perpetuated within educational research by the methodology/ies each researcher chooses (Paris & Winn, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Yet Vellanki pushes these questions further by re-conceptualizing methodology not as separate from but rather central to an individual’s life. He asks:

If the questions at the heart of my research endeavors are not simply: what do I want to study? What do I write about? Where is there a gap in the literature? But also: how do I want to live? How do I want to be in relation to my community? How do I want to spend my waking minutes? What kind of world do we want to imagine and build? It might lead us to ask different questions of ourselves and others and it might radically reshape our research practices (p. 69).

Here, Vellanki is asking us to reconceptualize the relationship between theory and practice. By being a lived methodology, research-creation forces us to embody both simultaneously which changes the conversation and question around each. In so doing, there is a possibility to develop deeper meaning in one's role as a researcher, as well as a person. In our lives, we are in different roles, different relationships at different times depending on what we are doing and who we are with. This might enable us to think with different perspectives at different times, thereby complicating and expanding what we see if we only thought about research when we considered our self in our "researcher role."

Finally, and for me most crucially, research-creation's possibility as a lived methodology gives this work meaning to me that this dissertation would not have otherwise. Considering that I do not want to be an academic, largely though not exclusively because of my (dis)ability, I struggled to find a dissertation topic I cared about enough to complete, especially during a pandemic. It is difficult to find meaning, let alone motivation, to complete work on this scale if you believe its only purpose is to get that paper and get out. Using research-creation has enabled me to re-conceptualize the purpose of my dissertation. Whereas before I (in very simplified terms) thought about a dissertation as finding a problem, analyzing it, and then writing about it, by using research-creation as my central methodology there is also always the implicit question of how do I live the life I want? How can I be a comrade *as much as possible*? Not just today and not just during this project, but always. What skills, what ways of thinking do I need to develop? Though it may not sound like it, these are really big questions to wrestle with, particularly over this last year when so much has happened.

My Process

As an untrained artist, research-creation allows me to explore ideas without becoming mired in technique or staying with one artistic style. In practice, this has meant that much of my research-creation involves learning, developing, and practicing a variety of artistic processes. Since I discuss much of my process for *Red Dirt Series* in Chapter 4, in this section I will detail my method for creating *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*.

Though embroidering is an activity I enjoy and felt comfortable with, using a sewing machine was a different story. For some unknown reason, the idea of using a sewing machine had made me nervous, so much so that I avoided using one, instead preferring to hand sew items. While cathartic, hand sewing takes an incredible amount of time. Therefore, with help from Terry Yunker and Lynn Fendler, I finally got over my fear and learned how to use a sewing machine. Without their help, there is no way I could have completed this project on time.

The embroidery was easily the process that required the most time. Most pieces took between 6-8 hours to complete, sometimes more. I thought I was just a slow embroiderer until I read *Embroidering our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework* (Chicago & Hill, 1980). The entire piece took five years to complete, each embroidered runner ranging from weeks to months. It was such a relief to know that it was not my lack of skill but the process itself that required time. Because it took so long to make each piece, I took my embroidery with me everywhere. At Zoom meetings, I would stitch. Watching T.V. or listening to audiobooks, I would stitch. Talking on the phone, I would stitch. During socially distanced visits with friends and family, I would stitch. On a couple of long car rides, other people would drive and I would stitch. As a result, two things happened. The first is that the cloth got dirty. For this reason, despite all my ironing, on some of the pieces, you can see a white ring where the embroidery hoop was. Secondly,

despite having more quotes and people I wished to ask to scribe, about two months before my dissertation was due, I suspended adding any more quotes to *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*.

Therefore, this piece is currently unfinished and, honestly, may always be. I will discuss the unfinished nature of this project in Chapter 5.

Yet in order to embroider, I first needed to solve how to put each quote onto fabric. In my past experiences with embroidery, I preferred to embroider free-hand, meaning there is no pattern. While I enjoyed the freedom this brought, it also required removing stitches each time I did something I did not like. Therefore, for the sake of time, I knew as soon as I conceptualized what would become *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* that I needed a better method. My first response was to write directly onto the fabric; however, this created unforeseen problems. Using a pencil so as not to damage the fabric, the graphite eventually smudged until it was difficult to discern the text. Additionally, as I learned from working with my daddy, the first scribe whose handwriting I borrowed for *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, some fabrics are more conducive to writing on than others. In that experiment, no matter how we held the fabric, it bunched making it near impossible to write on. With trial and error, we co-created the system I used with all future scribes: writing their chosen text in pencil however they wanted to onto a 7x10 inch page in a notebook of mixed media paper.

From there, I traced his chosen quote onto the fabric, but as I learned from working with the second scribe, my mama, this system would not work. She had used a mechanical pencil and the line was too fine to read once embroidered. Though I eventually asked her to re-write her quote, in trying to embroider her chosen quote, I developed the method I used to transcribe quotes onto fabric. I would trace the scribes' handwriting onto tracing paper which I basted onto the found cloth I was using for the piece. As I embroidered, the needle punched holes into the

paper, thereby further basting it. Once completed, I removed the basting stitches before gently tearing the paper away from the fabric. Because there were so many holes and loops, often tiny pieces of paper would remain stuck. I would gently pry these out, often with a large sewing needle. Yet, despite my best attempts, it would often not be until after dying a piece that all the remaining minute pieces of paper became visible. Working in this way, honing my craft as I write and learn, is akin to Huang's dissertation entitled *Photographic Inquiry as Artistic Educational Research: An Investigation Through Experiential Processes of Photobook Creation* (2019). For both of us, learning how to create our art aids us in our research and graduate goals. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly to both of us, our art-making helps us make sense of ourselves, our whole selves, akin to Vellanki's (2020) goals of rethinking methodology as life.

When I explained this process to one scribe, they suggested I find transfer paper that would allow the scribe to write directly onto the fabric. Though this idea is perhaps a method I will explore in the future, I decided to continue with my above tracing paper method because it allowed me to play with scribed quotes in ways a transfer would not let me. For example, I found a circular piece of cloth whose circumference was already hemmed into a scallop. For this piece, I cut a piece of tracing paper into a circle using a plate. From there, I traced the words of the quote along the edge of the circle, which is not at all how the scribe had written it. I could not have done this if I had not used the tracing paper method I developed.

Before dying, each embroidered piece required ironing, often multiple times. When sewing multiple pieces together, I spent time in front of my sewing machine pinning the pieces in place before running them through. Then more ironing in order to press the seams before repeating the process as needed as well as ironing the backing fabric (used to connect pieces that,

for whatever reason, are better joined onto a separate piece rather than with a seam) and the back of each quilt.

Except for the occasional tie-dyed shirt at summer camp, I had never dyed anything before. Unlike that experience where my job consisted of putting rubber bands around a shirt and squeezing brightly colored liquid onto the fabric, dyeing fabric, particularly with natural dyes, requires much more labor. Towards this end, I first read articles about how to make natural dyes. Funnily enough, many were aimed at K-12 science and art teachers as lesson ideas combining geology and art. I also watched a lot of YouTube videos where people not only dye cloth, but dye cloth with mud, a different process than plant-based dyes (let alone the chemical-based ones you can find in your grocery store.) From this knowledge base, over a week, I experimented with many different dye solutions until I created a recipe I liked. I used mud-based solutions on their own and with different amounts of salt as a dye fixer. I left cloth samples in different solutions for different amounts of time. I rinsed some and left others to dry without rinsing. I documented everything, taking photos and making copious notes, much like I did in K-12 science classes, noting the colors, which cloths took the dye best and worst. I did not like what I found, so I repeated the process using soda ash (sodium carbonate or Na_2CO_3) both as a pre-treatment and in the dye itself. Again, I left the cloth in the solutions for varied amounts of time, documenting what I saw. Eventually, I developed the recipe I use for *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*: I add the embroidered cotton-based cloth to a solution of steaming water and soda ash. I then let the fabric soak in the solution for four hours, rinse the dirt out of the cloth using warm water, before letting it air dry. To be clear, I only dye the quilt tops. To dye the quilt after assembling would mean that the middle layer (traditionally what distinguishes a quilt from a blanket is that quilts have three layers: a top, a middle, and a back. It is this middle layer that determines how thick a quilt

is) might become gross thereby hurting the integrity of the entire piece. As for the back, I am concerned that if I dyed it, the dirt might damage the walls it hangs upon.

Once dry, I quilt the piece using the quilting method of knotting string rather than running stitches. I do so because it is difficult to push a needle and thread through the mud-hardened quilt top and because, in this case, I find the act of tying together the layers of *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* meaningful.

Evocative Autoethnography

In addition to art-making as both a process and product, another data source, for lack of a better term, are stories: stories about myself and my family. Webb-Saunders and Donehower (2015) state that, “in academic writing, storytelling is a particular form of resistance, disrupting genre conventions, and calling into question the value of stories as evidence” (p. 1). In this way, evocative autoethnography, which I consider a form of storytelling, not only can be an art form unto itself and therefore ABR, it also complements the ideas behind research-creation as disrupting traditional understandings of what is and is not “research.”

I resisted describing my research as autoethnographic because I worried that doing so would impose boundaries on my work that this paper, this project, attempts to push against. Specifically, I was concerned that describing my work as autoethnographic would evoke for the reader strict methodological concerns or that the reader would think that my research is too egotistical, too self-focused, and therefore not taken seriously. This fear could be due, at least in part, to an experience during my first semester of graduate school. In an advanced research methods course, a classmate explained his autoethnographic study to a member of the university’s Internal Review Board (IRB) who was visiting our class. The IRB member informed my classmate “that’s not research” and then proceeded to question why my classmate would

even think his study was research. Our professor was out of class that day, and the exchange between the IRB member and my classmate (and later all of us defending our classmate to the IRB member) bordered on an interrogation that none of us was prepared for. Though “that’s not research” became a running joke for the rest of the semester, the exchange between my classmate and the IRB member, I think, shook the whole class. It sent a message to us that our lives as researchers and as people are not worth examining. Instead, we are supposed to be instruments of objectivity that learn about the world around us. Considering that this was my first interaction with IRB and my first semester of my Ph.D. program, the experience was, upon reflection, formative and internalized. The message I learned was that if I want my research to be taken seriously by the educational research community, I should not research myself and thus I should not use autoethnography.

Now, to be clear, autoethnography is an established research field and this man’s belief that it is not research says more about him and his prejudices about “research” than anything else. Nevertheless, I am telling you this story because it fits into a larger narrative I implicitly learned in graduate school that only some studies “count” as research. Considering how early this occurred in my time in graduate school, events like this can be traumatic. In order to create a more inclusive and justice-minded world, I think it is important to talk about events like this in graduate school in an effort to normalize them because I know I am not the only person who has experiences like this. Just because there might be many (all?) of us does not mean it should go unremarked. Relatedly, because I have struggled greatly with being able to “do research” in ways that compliment my brain differences, the beliefs of this IRB man and other people like him send a message that I and my work are not valuable because I am different. As we as a field, not to mention nation, reckon with how to support and promote racial and, to a lesser extent, gender

differences, I share this story in an attempt to further enlarge the conversation to include dis/ability. Nevertheless, as I pursued the research foci that became my dissertation, it became apparent that autoethnography is the most applicable term.

Unintentionally following Bochner and Ellis's (2016) definition of autoethnography, in this project I use both "an ethnographic wide-angle lens, *focusing outward on social and cultural aspects*" as well as "expos[e] a *vulnerable self* that is *moved* by and *may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations*" (p. 65, emphasis in original). Moreover, like narrative inquiry, life history, and other methodologies that are part of the narrative turn in social science research, autoethnography "provides an opportunity to re-examine social research by acknowledge[ing] the complexity of human encounters in the research process and integrating human subjectivity into it" (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 26). Therefore, autoethnography fits within the (dis)abling research-creation paradigm I constructed for, as Bochner and Ellis describe it, autoethnography is "*an abnormal kind of inquiry*" (p. 49, emphasis in original). Considering dis/ability is concerned with the abnormal, autoethnography as Bochner and Ellis conceive of it dovetails with my understanding of research-creation.

I use the term "evocative" autoethnography to distinguish my approach from other forms of autoethnography, specifically "analytical" autoethnography (Anderson, 2006). Analytical autoethnography is concerned with the other: both working with others (rather than only the self) as well as keeping researchers and subjects separate. In other words, when Anderson coined the term analytic autoethnography, he aimed to incorporate traditional social science paradigms into the then narrative-based approach of autoethnography. Moreover, Anderson's assertion that "visibly incorporating subjective experience into ethnographic work . . . can lead to self-absorption . . . autoethnography loses its sociological promise when it devolves into self-

absorption” (2006, p. 385) articulates my fears from my first semester of graduate school in ways that I could not at the time.

In their discussion of life history and narrative research, Goodson and Gill (2011) assert that “human life can be perceived as a process of narrative interpretation” (p. 5) for “life forms the fundamental basis of narrative, and narrative provides order, structure, and direction in life, and helps develop meanings in richer and more integrated ways” (p. 6). For this reason, I understand evocative autoethnography to be more nuanced and honest the type of social science research Anderson calls for because it requires the researcher to be vulnerable rather than (possibly) exploiting other people (Tuhawai Smith, 2012).

Social Studies and ABR

To my knowledge, my dissertation is the first work that explicitly uses ABR, and specifically research-creation, in social studies education research. I wonder why this is the case. This is not to say that research about the arts and social studies education does not exist, for it does; however, the arts are considered in relation to students’ learning, not as a methodology in their own right.

In previous studies, a central question is if and how the arts can help improve K-12 students’ historical and/or critical thinking skills. The results, while promising, seem to be mixed (Bagwell, 2021; Clark & Sears, 2020; Crawford, et. al, 2009; Vitulli & Santoli, 2013). On one hand, Marcy Singer-Gabella (1994) argues that that art offers “unique senses of history” that students are unable to access through text and textbooks alone She continues, “by making these forms essential to the curriculum, we give students access to a broader domain of historical phenomena, and so enable them to construct more complex understandings” of the past that they can better relate to than text alone (p. 139). On the other hand, Yonghee Suh (2013) found that

secondary history teachers who do include visual arts in order to help their students develop historical thinking skills, are not always able to scaffold enough so that their students are able to consider art critically and/or contextually. This indicates that understanding art is not intuitive, particularly when the art in question is being analyzed as a historical artifact. In other words, art can enhance students' understanding of history, but alone it cannot deepen historical thinking skills.

Despite research about art and social studies with K-12 students and teachers, a dearth of research remains about how art can be a tool of analysis in social studies education rather than an item to be analyzed.

Chapter 4: Red Dirt Series



Figure 3: *Red Dirt No. 0: Jars.* Dirt collected from the plantation by the author.



Figure 4: *Red Dirt No. 1*. Alabama red dirt, acrylic paint, glue, cotton boll on stem. Created and photographed by author.



Figure 5: *Red Dirt No. 2*. Alabama red dirt, acrylic paint, glue, cotton boll on stem. Created and photographed by author.



Figure 6: *Red Dirt No. 3*. Alabama red dirt, acrylic paint, glue, paper, nails, wood. Created and photographed by author.

In this and the subsequent chapter, I use research-creation and autoethnography to conceptualize and process them in addition to researching my family. Here, I consider my male family members Anthony Jr. (called such in this paper to distinguish him from his father, Anthony Sr., who I also discuss), and his son Isaac because they were the first male family members in what is now Alabama. Since they arrived in the now-state during the height of what was called “Alabama Fever,” they both financially and politically benefited from the genocide of Cherokee, Muskogee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw peoples. When I began this project, I thought I needed to know their role in this genocide; however, through this work I have come to understand that their role does not matter in the way it does not matter if a coin flips heads or tails. At the end of the day, it is still a coin. Though the genocide of Indigenous peoples in what is now Alabama informs the *Red Dirt Series*, when I made it, I began it because I was thinking about what to do with the legacy I have inherited as the descendant of enslavers. I was not yet considering how my ancestors’ role in the genocide of Indigenous peoples would have been a prerequisite for the expansion of slavery and thus their role as enslavers in the first place. (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2015; Saunt, 2020).

In this chapter, I use the three central elements of the *Red Dirt Series*—cotton, dirt, and canvas—as entry points to examine these ancestors, their role in creating and perpetuating slavery, and my own reckoning between what I knew/know about enslavers and what I want to believe about my ancestors. Through the *Red Dirt Series* (Figures 3 – 6), I conceptualize red dirt as a metaphor for white supremacy in the U.S. South before thinking about allyship, its limitations, and the potential of reframing a desire to be an ally into considering oneself a comrade.

Cotton

Cotton, the once ubiquitous crop Southern crop, is no longer grown as frequently as it once was in the region. There are a variety of reasons for this including cotton depleting minerals in the soil, soil erosion and deforestation caused by farmers looking for new places to plant as fields stopped producing, and an influx of international growers into the market as a result of the U.S. South plantations unable to send their cotton to international markets during the Civil War (Beckert, 2014). Yet even after the Civil War, cotton remained the plant of choice for sharecroppers (mostly though, by no means exclusively, Black people) by landowners (mostly, though by no means exclusively, former enslavers) thereby keeping the former impoverished (Kelly, 1990). Arguably, sharecropping produced a new form of slavery and, as in the antebellum kind, cotton cultivation was a key component of this system.

Though there are still years where fields across Alabama and the South look as though they have been covered in freshly fallen snow, in my lifetime, I have watched as cotton fields are increasingly replaced by soybeans and corn. Yet the imagery of cotton has remained a symbol of the region and, often, of home to the white, deep South. For example, my hometown of Athens uses a cotton boll in its official seal and is probably not the only Southern town to do so. In seeing cotton as a representation of home and community, it becomes easy for white Southerners to ignore how cotton might (also) represent a history of pain and violence. Though a full exploration of the presence and meaning of the cotton boll in U.S. popular culture is beyond the scope of this study; interestingly, like other parts of white Southern U.S. imagery such as the myth of the “belle” that McPherson (2003) examines in detail, it seems that cotton has become a romanticized export to the entire country. You can buy mini-bales at Cracker Barrel, decorative branches at Michaels and Hobby Lobby nationwide. My neighbors in Michigan even have cotton

in a fall-themed wreath hanging on their door. As cotton has become de-regionalized, romanticized, and/or associated with fall (e.g. my neighbor's wreath), the ignorance of white people about the horrific history and legacy surrounding cotton production has grown beyond the South to include the entire U.S. (Beckert, 2014; Saunt, 2020).

While cotton in and of itself is not the problem (it is just a plant after all), the pursuit of it has been. Historians have observed that if the cotton gin had not been developed, the history of Alabama and the entire U.S. would have been completely different (Beckert, 2014). Without the cotton gin, or, more specifically, the profitability of cotton it enabled, it is possible that slavery would not have expanded, let alone as quickly or as violently. It is also possible that white people would not have (settler-)colonized what is now Alabama, murdering millions of Indigenous peoples, stealing land, and conducting other acts of genocide in that process (Beckert, 2014; Dubar-Ortiz, 2015). Another possibility is that my family would be different—I would be different—had they made choices based on recognizing the humanity of others rather than their greed.

“Frontier” Alabama

Before beginning this study, much of my knowledge of “frontier” Alabama and early statehood (roughly late 1700s-1820s) was limited to what I learned in my fourth-grade social studies class. Compared to the Civil War and Civil Rights eras, there is a dearth of information about the time before statehood. One result of this is that the population of the area is discussed primarily if not exclusively within the Black/White binary (Andrews, et al., 2019). Of course, white and Black people were not the first people in what is now Alabama, nor the only. Many peoples, including Cherokee, lived and thrived in the places that are now considered Alabama. Even though the Band of Poarch Creek Indians and other Indigenous people still live in the state,

they are often talked about in past-tense (Dubar-Ortiz, 2015). There is little mention, if any, that the Cherokee, Muskogee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Nations were death marched away from their homes in the now southeastern United States to what is now Oklahoma.

The genocide of Native people by white people is further obscured in Alabama historiography by the use of the word “cede.” For example, in her study of land records for what is now Colbert County, Alabama by the U.S. government, Margaret Mathews Cowart explains that “The United States acquired the land in the fall of 1816 when both the Cherokees and Chickasaws agreed to cede their lands east of Caney Creek” (1985, p. i). On a historical marker in Huntsville, the place where these land sales took place, the state says that Madison County was “made a county in 1808 by order of Governor of Mississippi Territory. Area ceded 1805, 1806 by Cherokees, Chickasaws. This was the first land in Alabama ceded by these great civilized tribes.” The history textbook I used in 4th grade states that, “the Creeks agreed to give up much of their land to the United States” (Dodd et al., 1993, p. 113).

Using “cede” and “give up” rather than a word like “forced” makes it seem like the Cherokee, Muskogee, and Chickasaw people just left the now southeastern United States of their own accord. As though, through some sort of benevolence, they magically, mystically knew white people were just better and the best thing they could do was give the white people their land. After all, this thinking seems to imply, Native people were not using the land, not really, not like a white enslaver could. In short, the prevalence of the word “cede” not only justifies racial capitalism and white people’s greed; it obscures violence white people committed to (re)produce racial capitalism.

Anthony, Isaac, and other family members participated in the land rush called “Alabama Fever” (Browning, 2019). Between 1810 and 1819, white enslavers of Virginia and North and

South Carolina left their homes, as Judge Archibald D. Murphey told the North Carolina Senate, “in quest of that wealth which a rich soil and a commodious navigation never fail to create” (quoted in Browning, 2019, p. 103). At this time, the recent development of cotton mills enabled large-scale processing, and therefore consumption, of cotton. Though many varieties of cotton had been cultivated in Asia, Africa, and the Americas for centuries, it was only when white people began enslaving Black and Brown people on plantations that factory-produced cotton cloth started to become ubiquitous rather than a luxury item first in Europe and then elsewhere (Beckert, 2014). Cotton could only be produced at such a scale by stealing land and stealing labor.

As cotton prices continued to rise, so too did the greed of white people in the newly formed United States. By 1814, once the U.S. Federal government stole the land that is now Alabama through their violent campaign, they sold the land to white people (and presumably only white people) for two dollars an acre.⁶ Many speculators, including family members of mine, bought up hundreds of acres, reselling them at incredibly high markups. For example, Anthony Jr. bought 80 acres for a total of \$160 which he then sold for \$32 an acre (Mell, 1979/2005). At \$2,560 (or \$53,393 in 2021 dollars), Anthony Jr. made a 625% increase on his initial sale and this was not his only one. Based on this and other similar sales, I suspect that Anthony’s wealth grew exponentially, perhaps Isaac’s as well.

After 1814, so many white people moved into the Cherokee, Muskogee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw people’s former land that Alabama gained statehood only five years later. Between

⁶ Or \$41.42 per acre in 2021 dollars. <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1818?amount=2> The only exception to this standard pricing was if more than one person wanted the same piece of land. In these instances, there would be a “right to enter” auction in which prospective buyers would bid for the right to buy the land. Cowart, *Old Land Records of Colbert County, Alabama*. 1985. From my research, it seems that the smallest amount of land someone could buy was 80 acres totally \$162 or \$3,313.56 in 2021 dollars.

1814 and 1819, land prices in what is now Alabama rose so high and speculation became so common that, when British mills started importing cotton from India in 1818 rather than the U.S., land prices crashed, thereby creating the first economic panic in U.S. history (Browning, 2019). It is hard to say how Anthony Jr. fared in the aftermath; though, since he already sold his shares, I imagine he made a fortune.

Cotton and Capitalism

Growing up white, I never had to think about the pain caused by white settler colonials unless I got stuck in traffic on the third Saturday in September due to the Trail of Tears Commemorative Motorcycle Ride. What I remember is not considering the atrocities committed, but annoyance at the ride itself; something we'd have to get around to go somewhere else. Though the Trail of Tears Commemorative Motorcycle Ride goes along the edge of Athens (my hometown), it seems as though part of the Trail of Tears may have gone through downtown and, therefore, past the site where I grew up (National Park Service, 2020). I say "seems" because I only just learned this information in researching this paragraph. If this is the case, it is very possible that the Indigenous peoples forcibly removed walked by the site that, 160-odd years later, I grew up on. Even if they did not walk by that site, some people likely died along roads I drive on every day when I'm home. I had no idea until now because I never had to think about it.

In 2019, my father helped me gather cotton for the *Red Dirt Series* from fields near where my parents live. I initially hesitated because I didn't want to take anyone's livelihood; however, we gathered the cotton long after the fields had been harvested. I initially considered gilding the cotton with gold foil, but I decided to use acrylic paint instead. To use a "brushed gold" finish provided a glittering falsity more fitting than gold leaf. I left the red dirt and twigs entwined in

the cotton fibers as I found them partially to dirty the pure white of the bolls, to show how unclean capitalism, as symbolized by cotton, is.

Dirt

When I first conceived what eventually became *Red Dirt 1 and 2*, I was thinking about red dirt as a stand-in for the South as a whole. However, learning about the Equal Justice Initiative's (EJI) Community Soil Collection Project began my interrogation of what pain red dirt might hold in a specific place; if the pedagogy of red dirt changes depends on the people who touch it.

The Equal Justice Initiative's Community Remembrance Project

Begun by Bryan Stevenson in 1989 in Montgomery to defend and overturn the rulings of wrongly convicted death row prisoners in Alabama, the EJI has since expanded not only in numbers of staff, but also their scope. Though their main focus remains legal defense, they no longer focus exclusively on the cases of death row individuals in Alabama. Since 1989, they have worked on cases ranging from reducing and overturning the incarceration of young people convicted as adults. They have also argued (and won) cases where the party was convicted primarily due to their race, poverty, and/or mental illness. They have also advocated for better prison conditions within Alabama and across the U.S. Not only has their ongoing work freed many incarcerated people, but it has also led to Supreme Court rulings and state and federal laws to protect vulnerable people often wrongly convicted or unjustly sentenced (Stevenson, 2015).

The EJI has gained much attention in recent years due to being spotlighted in the movie *Just Mercy* (2019), which follows the trial of Walter McMillian where Stevenson and the EJI work to free him after being wrongly convicted of a murder he did not commit. The EJI has also gained attention due to its creation of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice (NMPJ)

and The Legacy Museum. Located in Montgomery, Alabama, the Memorial and Museum are two separate structures that, when taken together, speak to what Stevenson (2015) calls the “four institutions in American history that have shaped our approach to race and justice but remain poorly understood: slavery, the “terror era,” Jim Crow, and mass incarceration (p. 299). Though the Museum draws a through-line between epochs, the Memorial focuses on the terror era of racial terror lynching between Reconstruction and WWII. Inside the central structure, metal columns hang down from the ceiling. The name of a county and state are inscribed at the top of each column⁷ followed by the names of people when known,⁸ murdered in racial terror lynchings there. Many of the columns remember Southern people and places, but not all.

As the EJI explains at the entrance of the memorial, the NMPJ is intended to be a starting point for community discussion and healing where racial terror lynchings took place. Often, lynchings have been long remembered in Black communities. While white people often took souvenirs and photographs in the moment (Gonzales-Day, 2006; Simon, 2014), lynchings have since largely been forgotten within the white community. The EJI hopes to facilitate discussions so that the legacy of slavery and racial terror lynchings can be reckoned with by the whole community. As part of this larger mission, the EJI has also created a Community Remembrance Project, which asserts that “it is critical for communities across the country to do the difficult work of unearthing and confronting their own histories of racial injustice, while exploring how that history continues to shape the present” (EJI, 2020, para. 4).

⁷ Some columns represent whole states rather than counties. These states are California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

⁸ In these instances, “Unknown” and murder date is written.



Figure 7: Equal Justice Initiative's Soil Collection Project. (collection dates unknown) *Lynching in Alabama*. Photo taken by the author.

The part of the Community Remembrance Project I first learned about is the Community Soil Collection Project. The Community Soil Collection Project aims to remember racial-terror lynching victims by having local community members collect soil from the site of the lynching. The soil is placed in a jar that is labeled with the victim's name and the location of the lynching (Figure 7). Unlike the larger projects of the Memorial and Museum, the Community Soil Collection Project has resulted sometimes in groups going to collect soil, other times it is individuals (EJI, 2020). In other words, this can be a very personal project—both for the person being remembered and the person or people doing the remembering.

Red Dirt, Pain Sites, and Personal Responsibility

The EJI's use of soil to represent individuals and their lynchings lead me to begin thinking about how pain sites are not only where the death occurred. It could be anywhere enslaved people's labor and lives were stolen in the broadest sense of those terms.

The EJI's multiple projects aimed towards community reconciliation made it seem as though acknowledgment of past violence and wrongs were perhaps an end goal for themselves. Though I disagree with this because (truth and) reconciliation projects have historically put the emotional burden on the victims rather than perpetrators, particularly when there is no (threat of) punitive action towards the latter (Minow, 2000; Rushton, 2006). In terms of racial reconciliation in the U.S., white people often do not understand how slavery, racial terror, and other past injustices impact society today, thereby they can cause further injury to Black and Indigenous People rather than healing individual and community wounds (Walters, 2008).

As I think through and with the *Red Dirt Series*, I see the ubiquity of red dirt across the U.S. South and how the term “red dirt” is often used as shorthand among Southerners to describe the entire region. In literature, music, and histories, red dirt evokes home and family (Harris, 2000; Renkl, 2019; Twitty, 2018; Woodson, 2014). Sometimes Southerners further associate red dirt with feelings of belonging (Twitty, 2018) or strength (Mitchell, 1936/1967), while other times it can symbolize pain and rejection from loved ones (Conley, 2016).

Nevertheless, reading about the EJI's Community Soil Project started me thinking about how before reconciliation (if we even want to use that word) or reparations, perpetrators (or, in my case, the descendent of perpetrators) have to recognize and admit that wrongs were committed in the first place. At the time, I was thinking from a personal frame about the amount of pain my family caused and how I could represent it, how I could acknowledge it. I began to envision a semi-sculptural painting using dirt and cotton—the pieces that became *Red Dirt No, 1 and 2*, discussed in more depth below. Following the Community Soil Project's example, I decided the dirt used for this project needed to be from the place where my family committed traumatic, violent acts. Therefore, I went to the source: one of my family's plantations.

Located deep in rural north-west Alabama and now a state historic site, I had visited the plantation (which I will refrain from naming for reasons that will become clear later) only once before. One winter break in undergrad, my mother, some other family members, and I drove to the Christmas Open House.⁹ That might seem ironic since my mama and I are Jewish, but Christmas events abound in Alabama and we wanted to support my cousin, then the director of the site, who put the open house together. At that time, I did not know my father had spent childhood summers at this plantation house. I did not know we were related to the family honored at the event. I just thought we were there to see some old house and my cousin. It was this cousin who, as we looked over family trees and other documents, informed me that I could trace myself back to the names proudly displayed in front of us by the state of Alabama.

I remember wandering around the house eating ice cream and wondering what it would have been like to live there. I had, like many white Southerners, done my share of plantation tourism. The kind of tours “where architecture and windows and wall-paper are lauded but the bodies who put them up are not” (Twitty, 2017, p. 5). The kind of tours where white people are whisked away by romantic dreams of a genteel life drenched in nostalgia. That day at the family plantation, that was me, sure, and yet it didn’t feel like make-believe anymore. As I stood on the front balcony looking past the cypress trees that shaded the house, I imagined my ancestors looking down from their house, this house, this exact view, on top of this hill surveying the miles of fields in front of them, of me, knowing it was all theirs. And as I stood there it dawned on me that this view could have been mine and I liked it; the power that came from (past) ownership, from land, from the social position the power of plantation ownership would have enabled.

⁹ The plantation is one of 15 historic sites the Alabama Historic Commission, the state’s historic preservation office, owns. Since my initial visit, operation of the plantation has been taken over by the Colbert County Historical Landmarks Foundation, Inc. though the AHC still owns the building and property.

I cannot tell you if in these imaginings I saw any Black faces, though I suspect I did not. What I can tell you is that in the intervening decade, my thoughts and understandings about slavery and my family have changed. I no longer, as much as I can tell, think of the antebellum South with nostalgia. I no longer say I want to have the strength of Scarlett O'Hara tempered with the kindness of Melanie—a quote a friend recently reminded me of. I no longer imagine myself in hoop skirts. I can no longer imagine that way of life without pain, pain my ancestors caused and surely, if I were born in that time, I would have caused too. I no longer mention that place or my slaveholder ancestors with a sense of pride. Knowing what I know now, how could I?

Returning to November 2018, I started my second trip to the plantation in the afternoon. I was not sure about the house's hours of operation and I hoped they closed before my arrival. I did not want to explain why/ask if I could dig up some of their dirt and spirit it away. My brother had fussed at me when I explained the idea to him. He thought it was “ridiculous” and told me that I needed “to stop feeling so G-d damn guilty about slavery. It's over.” When my brother and I talked about this incident a year later, he had no memory of it and apologized for his words. Yet at the time, my thinking went that if my brother was so upset, what would a stranger in a remote part of Alabama do? I felt like I had to be very secretive about collecting the dirt, even though I knew that as a white woman I had very little, if anything, to fear.

Fortunately for me, I did not have to find out as the plantation was closed by the time I arrived. I parked in front of the locked gate, gathered my “tools”—a trowel and two mason jars with lids—and walked around the locked gate blocking the road (there was no fence.) The drive from the road to the house is long, maybe half a mile. I decided to focus my digging closer to the road because that is where the fields are, which means it is probably where most of the enslaved

people would have spent most of their time. Also, I worried if I went closer to the home, I might be seen on the security cameras I assume are on the house. I did not want to be accused of trespassing. Still, being a white woman and a descendant, in retrospect, it seems silly that I felt so nervous.

I dug in two spots, one on each side of the driveway up to the house. The first closer to the fields, the second closer to the house. I then got back in my car and wondered if there was a shortcut to get back on the main road. I drove until I ended up in the parking lot for an AME Baptist church. This took me by surprise. I was as rural as can be and for those of us who grew up in rural spaces in the Deep South, we expect most farmers to be white. As Lizzie Presser (2019) reported in the *New Yorker*, many Black farmers have been dispossessed of their holdings for decades due to institutionalized white supremacy. One of the few counter stories to this are the Bridgeforth family farms located in my home county of Limestone and spotlighted in an article in *The New York Times* by James Estrin (2019). Honestly, I did not expect there to be Black families there. I wondered if they were descendants of enslaved people of the Winston family. If they were, why did they stay?

It took me over a year to open the jars (Figure 3). Finally, when I did open them, I closed them right back up. I did not want the dirt to dry out, but, more importantly, I did not know what to do with it. I knew nothing about how to adhere mud to a canvas. As I engage in my art more directly, these two jars of red dirt have, perhaps perversely, become precious. They are all that I have of that place. Though nothing is stopping me, I feel as though I cannot return to the source. Even if I felt I could, I could never extract all the embodied pain there. At this point, each piece of art I make is an experiment. One I learn from and with, which means that when I start making

them, I do not do so with the intention that they will be “final” or worthy, for lack of a better term, of using the plantation dirt.

Canvas

I painted the backgrounds of *Red Dirt No. 1* and 2 (Figures 4 and 5, respectively) simultaneously because I thought it would be the best use of my time and I would only get messy once. I intended each piece to be a study in order to learn how to apply paint, dirt, and cotton, but I now think of them as complete works in conversation with each other.

The background of the pieces is a mixture of acrylic and fabric paint because I did not know what would stick and these are the paints I am most familiar with. Getting texture with acrylic paint is, for my novice self, difficult to do, which is to say I had no idea how. The first coat looked right texturally, but not color. A second coat, which used a different shade of red, made the colors look like I wanted, but not the canvas. It looked like the walls of a house: dry and flat with none of the texture that an oil paint might bring. So I tried something else: my hands. The swirls my fingers made the canvases looked better: more right, more organic, more “real” than the paint applied via brush. When I painted the background by hand, I did not think about what it meant for my hands to be red. Perhaps the reason it looked right is that, in the process, I implicated myself in the pain and blood my ancestors spilled.

After the paint dried, I smeared a concoction of red dirt taken from where my parents live, water, and glue on to *Red Dirt No. 1*. In prior trials, I learned that red mud alone will not stick to canvas for long after it dries. Or, it could perhaps if you treated the pieces as fragile. I did not want the work to be seen or treated that way, as something to be coddled. I smeared the mud onto the two canvases, waiting to see what happened. As the mud dried and cracked, it pulled the paint with it, leaving some gashes of white where I wanted a uniform red. This was an

unexpected development. My immediate reaction was to “fix it” – to repaint the areas between the cracks (Figure 8). How else was I to showcase my vision, my understanding of my world if I did not fix it?

I regret this decision. I wish I had not doctored the painting at all or, if I had, I wish I had taken photos of when it first dried so you could see what it looked like before, white streams peeking through peaks of mud where there had been red before. I wish you could see what I looked like before, hands covered in red before the figured sins of my ancestors washed away. This is when I learn that I need to take photos of every stage. For if part of this visual arts research-creation is to show in addition to tell, it follows that I should show not only the completed work, but the process it took to get there.



Figure 8: My attempt to fix the cracks in *Red Dirt No. 1*. Photo taken by author.

Anything can be a metaphor. Yet the more I thought about the mud pulling the red away, leaving an unpainted canvas, the more like a metaphor it became. Red dirt pulling, hiding blood, hiding crimes, hiding misdeeds. Soaking those up into and under itself without trying, even when someone else is trying to expose our past. In other words, the pedagogy of whiteness, of red dirt, teaches white people to cover up the past, to hide the truth so that following generations do not know about the choices made in order to perpetuate injustice and to amass wealth.

Thinking about the pedagogy of red dirt allows for an examination of the role of memory in the white U.S. South. As Hamilton (2003) explains, “we as yet know little about how people individually or collectively understand the past in their everyday lives, how the memories of their experiences shape choices for the future” (p. 137). Part of that “understanding” Hamilton speaks of involves what someone knows, or thinks they know, about the past, their family, and themselves. For example, if you do not know your ancestors enslaved people, reparations might seem like a ridiculous notion that does not affect you. Of course, reparations might seem that way regardless of knowledge of your family for, the logic goes, you did not enslave people and thus current structural injustices are neither your fault nor your responsibility. Still, family memories can be powerful for they allow us to think our ancestors must have been kind slaveholders, as if that phrase were not an oxymoron. They allow us to give grace to the people we come from, the people we wish to connect to and change our understanding of the past to match our family memories whether they be real or imagined. Without an examination into what those memories might be, how can we know how they shape our present and future?

Though painted at the same time, I applied the mud to *Red Dirt No. 2* while the mud from *Red Dirt No. 1* dried. For some reason, the mud stuck differently to this piece or maybe I didn't wait as long to see what would happen. Either way, as the mud cracked, I pulled the flakes

off with gusto. Taken together, *Red Dirt No. 1* is a view of what is, of what the strong pull of white supremacy can do. Conversely, *Red Dirt No. 2* is a view of what is possible. With effort and a willingness to get dirty, there is hope that those of us who are implicated by white supremacy might be able to undo some of the damage we inflict. Additionally, *Red Dirt No. 1* and *2* allow for a deeper examination of how entrenched white supremacy is in the U.S.

The Power of Red Dirt

In creating *Red Dirt No. 1* and *2*, I began thinking about red dirt as a metaphor for white supremacy in the U.S. South. Just as we bury our dead underneath the dirt, so too do we bury the unpleasant parts of our history (i.e. the brutality of slavery) thereby making it possible to shine a light on only what we wish to remember (i.e. the myth of the Southern Belle and Gentleman). Thinking forward in time, (red) dirt fertilizes new life, allowing it to grow and spread just as unchecked white supremacy allows hate and racism to do the same. Just as red dirt is foundational to physical structures in the U.S. South, white supremacy is foundational to the political, social, and economic structures that make up the region as well as the United States as a whole (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2015; Kendi, 2016). And just as we only notice the dirt beneath our feet when it gives way (Montgomery, 2007/2012), so too do those of us supported by white supremacy only notice it when the foundation shakes.

As I think with *Red Dirt No. 2*, I conceptualize (red) dirt not only as a visualization of white supremacy, but also as a physical embodiment of the past. While it might seem counterintuitive, I believe that the red dirt metaphor of this project can simultaneously hold many meanings. The ability to contain multitudes is, in fact, what makes research-creation such a powerful methodology and what can make art meaningful in the first place. As beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so is meaning-making. My art about red dirt combined with this academic

project allows for both examined nuance and complexity in ways that either a paper or art might not be able to achieve on its own.

The same ideas of what (red) dirt is: foundational, space for the dead, nutrients for the future all apply to the past as well as white supremacy in the U.S. The past sustains us and covers us in ways we may not even be aware of; ways that James Baldwin (1954/1993) writes of seeing the red dirt of Georgia for the first time:

I could not suppress the thought that this earth had acquired its color from the blood that had dripped down from these trees. My mind was filled with the image of a black man, younger than I, perhaps, or my own age, hanging from a tree, while white men watched him and cut his sex from him with a knife. (p. 106)

Unlike Baldwin, due partially if not wholly to my whiteness and Southerness, I wonder not how much blood the red dirt shows, but how much blood the red dirt hides from white people. In other words, I wonder not if the color of the dirt shows (past) violence but if it obscures it, at least to white people. Blood spilled would have been absorbed by the dirt, soaked in like water, slipping down to where it cannot be seen by those who do not know to look. Using a metaphor of (red) dirt as embodied white supremacy, they/we can think about how the blood of People of Color, like water, not only seeps/ed into the ground but also provides/d nutrients to plants (such as cotton) that grow in red dirt. Violence—in its myriad of forms—committed against Black people and other People of Color is foundational to maintaining white supremacy (Tillet, 2012; Tolnay & Beck, 1995). Moreover, public performances of whiteness, whether they be spectacles of violence such as, but not exclusively, lynching or minstrel shows, provide/d space to (re)configure whiteness; who was/is considered white and who was/is not (Roeddiger, 1991; Smångs, 2017).

I mention Baldwin to highlight the different conversations, different funds of knowledge (or lack thereof) Black and white people bring to the same Southern spaces and places. This is highlighted in the differences we see in cotton, in dirt but are by no means an exhaustive list. Rather they are, perhaps, a place for white people/myself to begin our self-investigation. In creating the *Red Dirt* series, I thought about red dirt as embodying a “possessive investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz, 2006) as well as “whiteness as property” (Harris, 1993). I also think that the metaphor of red dirt can be in conversation with Christina Sharpe's (2016) metaphor of the wake of slavery. I also think of red dirt as an embodiment of the past, which I consider different than history. History is a scholarly tradition, one that “places emphasis on the sociohistorical process” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 2) and uses the distance of time as a means to create intellectual clarity (Phillips, 2011). Yet the past does not contain clarity or understanding or even a single story. It is simply what happened, and no one person can know what that is. By thinking about red dirt as an embodiment of the past, I wonder what do we not see? What do we not know? And what will we never know about what happened before us in time?

A Note About My Committee

For this dissertation, I elected to have an all-white committee. This was a purposeful choice; one I sought much advice about and wrestled with for a long time. Though this dissertation would be much improved from the input from many of the wonderful, brilliant Scholars of Color in at MSU, I did not ask anyone with these identities because doing so felt unethical. I was, and remain, concerned my dissertation and research might open trauma for any Person of Color, particularly Black people. Between the time I wrote and defended my dissertation proposal and now, I did not know where this research would go, and I thought it would be more about enslavement and my family's role in it. Moreover, there is no way to anticipate how trauma

might affect an individual: what might trigger, what might not, and what might be new. Causing trauma is not the purpose of this research.

Now I know that there might be people who will say it is up to the individual Scholar of Color to decide what dissertations they want to be on the committee of. After all, faculty members are adults and, therefore, have the power to say no. But faculty members of Color, particularly women, are asked to do a disproportionate amount of labor (Matias, 2016). Moreover, in this context, saying no to a student, even though the faculty member ostensibly holds more power, can be a form of emotional labor for the faculty member. After all, though faculty are encouraged to be on graduate students' dissertation committees, this labor is not compensated. Finally, I worried that if I had one or two faculty member(s) of Color, particularly Black faculty member(s), they would become a stand in for "the Black voice" or "the Black community." This is an unfair and ridiculous ask.

In short, I am aware that in having an all-white committee, I/we will inevitably miss places where white supremacy shines through in this dissertation. While not what I would like for this work, for the above reasons not asking a Scholar of Color seemed like the more ethical choice. I'm not saying my decision was the right one; however, it is the decision that felt right at the time. And I have talked to my Scholar-Friends of Color about my work throughout my time at MSU's Ph.D. program. I am indebted to all of them, notably Tashal Brown, Courtney Maudlin, Cierra Presberry, Vivek Vellanki. As this project develops beyond a dissertation, it is my plan to ask Scholars of Color to read this paper, call me out as needed, and to financially compensate anyone who does so. Again, paying someone for their emotional and mental labor in pushing me and this project forward is the most ethical solution I can think of, albeit a future one.

Brewer's Alabama

As part of my initial research into antebellum Winston family history, I stumbled upon William Brewer's *Alabama, Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men from 1540-1872* (1872). The book—partially a history of the state, partially character sketches of her “public men ” from the first settler colonialists to the then present—drips with white supremacy and embraces what we would now call Lost Cause ideology. It is difficult to tell if Brewer's is the first codified histories of Alabama; however, it is clear that it is one, if not the most, influential. As I researched Alabama history, I came across references to it again and again indicating that Brewer's history is foundational to how (white) Alabamians think of them/ourselves.

Furthermore, Brewer's *Alabama* demonstrates how quickly the white enslaving class regained power, assuming they lost it at all. When published in 1872, the Civil War ended only seven years prior and Reconstruction would continue for another five, so the fact that Brewer's history glorifies the Confederacy and the men who had so recently been considered traitors by the U.S. federal government, indicates that Neo-Confederate ideology was socially, if not yet politically, viable. Brewer writes glowingly of enslavers and (other) former confederates, presumably with the purpose of demonstrating how worthy these men, and the state of Alabama as a whole, were to regain their enfranchisement. Probably unsurprisingly, Brewer writes about Native people only in terms of hindrance or helpmates to European colonialism, white women if married to a man “of importance” and Black people not at all.

Brewer, and therefore subsequent Alabama historians, talk about my family in glowing terms. They talk about my cousin, John Winston, the first “native born” governor of Alabama. They talk about Edward Pettus, another cousin, now remembered more because of the bridge

named after him in Selma, the bridge where Bloody Sunday occurred and the march from Selma to Montgomery began, than anything he did in his life.¹⁰ They talk too about my direct ancestors, the ones whose blood runs in my veins. For example, my 5x great-grandfather Anthony Jr. is repeatedly described as “a man of marked and elevated character” (Brewer, 1872, p. 530).

There was a time when I would have taken Brewer’s words to heart, taken pride in being descended from such a man as Anthony, Jr., such a family. There is a time when I would have aimed to earn such an honorable description for myself. But reading Brewer now, I wonder how much destruction Anthony Jr., his sons, and his/our ancestors caused for Black and Brown people. I find myself wondering not if they raped women and girls they enslaved, but how many. I wonder who those women and girls were. I wonder how they resisted. I wonder if they raped men and boys realizing as I write that the “proof” white men raped enslaved women is their offspring, so who knows how many enslaved boys and men were also raped. In one breath I wonder how I never thought of enslaved men and boys being raped before and in the next breath realize I have never had to. I wonder if Anthony Jr., his sons, and his/our ancestors sold their own children. I wonder if love existed between these men and the enslaved people they slept with. I wonder if wondering such a thing is a mental dodge on my part or if it might in fact be humanizing since the possibility allows a choice by those women. I wonder how many tears were shed because of Anthony Jr’s actions. I wonder what he taught his white sons about what it meant to have “a strong and elevated character.” I wonder what Anthony Sr. taught Anthony Jr. and his brothers about love, masculinity, and power. I wonder what of those lessons Anthony Jr. taught Isaac and his other sons. I wonder what they taught their daughters. I wonder what, if any, of those lessons made it down to me.

¹⁰ Except, perhaps, being a Confederate general and a grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan.

I wondered all these things, but I didn't write any of them down, these things, not until after I called the plantation in March of 2021 to learn more about how the state historical site discusses enslaved people. When thinking about my family, I would talk to my committee, my friends, my family about this but stop short of naming my male ancestors as racist, sexist, or rapists. I just stopped myself from writing "possibly" in front of racist because I hold the myth of innocence until proven guilty deep inside me, even though I know better. Even though I know countless thousands of Black men were never given such a chance, particularly when a white woman (or a white man on the 'behalf' of a white woman) claimed she had been raped by a Black man in the Southern U.S. (EJI, 2017). We also know that in cases of rape, women and particularly Women of Color, are assumed to be "asking for it" which is perhaps the opposite of innocent before proven guilty. So, why, when we know from a variety of historical sources including letters, diaries, and oral histories that white, enslaver men raped enslaved people am I qualifying my ancestors' role with "possibly?" Only by reading and re-reading, exploring and re-exploring, through art making did I come to see that I was still, unintentionally, protecting these men and therefore myself.

As I discussed earlier, while it might be tempting to excuse Brewer's assertion or Anthony's actions as reflections of their times, I would remind the reader that not all white southerners were pro-slavery in the 1800s. There were and are white southern people who recognize(d) the humanity of Black and Brown people—the abolitionists Angelina and Sarah Grimké are stark reminders of that. The Grimké sisters left their family of South Carolina enslavers and became advocates of abolition and women's rights. Though seen by some in their time as race traitors (Lerner, 2004), to me, their story demonstrates what was possible in their time; that white enslavers made a choice to deny humanity to enslaved people. In other words,

their lives are a counter example to the Southern U.S. and Lost Cause apologists who claim that slavery “was just how it was” as though that absolves white enslavers of wrong doing.

A Lack of Information, A Mirror to Oneself?

In March 2021, when I call the plantation asking to set up a time to go to the archives, the site manager asks me what I’m looking for. When I tell her I am a descendant of the Winstons and I am looking for information about the enslaved people who lived there, she sighs. She tells me she’s sorry, but “there just aren’t any records of them, not really. All we’ve been able to find are the census records, and those I can email you. I don’t want you to drive all the way out here for such little information, especially when it’s all online.” I am disappointed. I’d hoped to find a will, a ledger, a something that might name enslaved people. I had hoped that if I found such a document, I could name those people here. Use this dissertation as a place to remember them and, perhaps, knowing the names of the people enslaved by my family would begin to provide a way to de-center my family and therefore the whiteness of this history, this story. Not completely de-center our whiteness, for that is not the purpose of this dissertation, but move it to the side a little. After all, as Painter (2002) reminds us, Southern U.S. life was not all white or all Black on a plantation, but both. And while it might still be possible to learn their names, or at least some of the names of the people enslaved there, it might take years to do so (May, 2018; Twitty, 2017). Therefore, for now and maybe forever, the people my family enslaved are silenced not only by the prescriptive forgetting in my family’s stories (Connerton, 2008), but also the archives.

The site manager sends me all the information she has: 1840, 1850, and 1860 census records and 1855 state census records with the Winston family names on it. In a scan of an 1855 ledger, I learn that Isaac enslaved 119 people. Such a weight of silence that number holds, it is

like I can feel it. From the 1860 census, I learn that Isaac's real estate wealth is \$100,000 and his "personal estate"—meaning the people he enslaved, cash on hand, livestock, and maybe some furniture—is valued either by him, the census taker, or both at \$300,000. Together that is roughly \$12,765,156 in 2021 dollars (Customer Price Index Inflation Calculator). I always knew enslavers at this scale were incredibly wealthy, but there is something about knowing that Isaac enslaved 119 people and was obscenely wealthy as a result is different than reading a history of the antebellum south or enslavers. I'm not sure yet what that something is, but I feel the weight of it in my chest. As I write, I can see it. It looks like a small cannon ball, the kind you see at forts defending the settler-colonials and Civil War battlefields, maybe about 4 inches across. It is a very clear weight, it is a very clear visual. I don't know if I want it to move or, instead, if I should try to move it. And yet I want to fix this feeling, fix what Isaac did, what many of my ancestors did. At the same time, I know better, I know you can't just fix racism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy. I know that and yet I find my uncertainty of what to do with this knowledge unsettling all the same.

Perhaps, then, it is the lack of documentation, the lack of archives that pushes me to be more honest in this paper. I had hoped to learn at least some of the names of people my family enslaved, I knew I would be lucky to find out anything more. Moreover, with the pandemic, it is difficult to travel to archives. On one hand, going to an archive felt incredibly selfish to go to a place and accidentally, unintentionally spread the virus. If anything had happened, if anyone I shared space had gotten sick because I had been there, I would have felt awful. This project is not worth potentially doing that kind of damage. On the other hand, selfishly, I did not want to spend hours inside a building with strangers. I did not trust that everyone would be safe, that they would wear their masks the whole time. And though I understand that archivists would possibly

be willing to work with me, asking people to scan untold numbers of documents just is not the same as being in the space myself.

Relatedly, I knew that if I wrote about the people my family enslaved, if I could find their names or any information about them, their mention in this dissertation would be a composite and therefore a believable fiction or wondering about their lives (May, 2018; Paris, 2017). This is not to say that we should not name enslaved people or try to imagine their lives. Instead, I mention this to highlight the limitations of the archives. One notable exception to this approach is *Zong!* by Setaey Adamu Boateng as told to M. NourbeSe Philip (2011). In this book-length poem, Philip uses the only transcript from the trial *Gregson vs. Gilbert*. On November 29, 1791, British enslavers murdered over 132 Africans by throwing them overboard during middle passage in order to claim the insurance money taken out on each enslaved person. When Gregson (the *Zong!*'s owner) tried to collect their insurance money from Gilbert (the underwriter), the latter refused to pay. Gregson sued Gilbert and, despite Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoana, and other antislavery activists' efforts, the trial was not about murder, but about if it was legal to sacrifice part of the cargo in order to make it to shore. The jury found for Gregson, thereby creating precedent that murdering enslaved people or, in the language of the case, the jettisoning of "cargo," was legal (Sharpe, 2016). Phillip's *Zong!* is a poetry cycle composed entirely from the words of the *Gregson v. Gilbert* case. By obscuring and revealing the words of the transcript, *Zong!* and naming the murdered, Phillip creates space for different types of memory, of knowledge than euro-centric courts and archives. She also forces space for remembrance of the murdered in a way that acknowledges their humanity, their uniqueness without being a composite.

As for me, I have been spending a lot of time on genealogical websites. I find documents typed out on findagrave.com and websites of family trees people created back when the Internet was new. It is hard to know what is real, but I learn that there are a lot of other Winston family members, just like me, searching for information. In this search, I find an electronic transcription of Isaac Winston's, Anthony Sr.'s father and my 7x great-grandfather, will on Geni, a genealogical website. When I cross-checked the cited source, *The Edward Pleasants Valentine Papers* with the information given on the website, I cannot (yet) find a match. I do not know what to do with this discrepancy if it is one. I do not know if it matters. In the Geni version, as I read, I watch him tear families apart with his pen. At least 34 people's lives were upended because this white man died. Say their names:

one negro man named Ned, bought of John Shelton, also one negro boy named Sandy. . . Charles, a man, Tom, a boy, bought of Piron Janes, a woman, and Sam & Grace & Pharrah her children, Miah, a man, and Hager, a woman, Sarah and Doll her child Milly and David children of Leah, Dick, Saul, Jack and Jane his wife and Bradly her child . . . one negro boy named Isaac . . . Tamer and Cate, two women and Primus a man now in his possession also Pompey, a man . . . one negro girl named Pegg , daughter of Hannah, and a mulatto girl named Tamer daughter of Kate also Abraham, a child of Judy 's . . . one negro woman named Aggy, daughter of Hannah and one negro named Tamer . . . one negro girl named Pegg, a child of Moll. . . one negro boy named Ben . . . one negro woman named Hannah. (Winston, 1760)

Tame, Cate, Primus, and Pompey are "bequeathed" to Anthony Sr. "and his heirs forever."

Isaac's second wife Mary is "given" Hannah "provided she pay unto my son Anthony for the said negro woman fifteen pounds current money within two years after my decease." Meanwhile

Hannah's daughters Aggy and Pegg are given to two of Anthony Sr.'s nephews. Additionally, Isaac "give and bequeath unto" Anthony Sr. six silver spoons. Let me say that again: four or five people were as important to my ancestors as six silver spoons.

The reason I tell you is because if I read a will like this for someone I was not related to, I cannot imagine being surprised about these spoons; for this type of information fits with what I know about enslavers and enslavement. In order for white supremacy to thrive, enslavers monetized and thereby dehumanized the life of Black people. As Aja Raden explains in *Stoned: Jewelry, Obsession, and How Desire Shapes the World* (2015), assessing the value of items over time is nearly impossible. All the more so when the item in question, such as gems or silver, has a perceived rather utilitarian or monetary value. I know I should not be surprised, but spoons are so small and insignificant when compared to a life, even if made out of silver. I think it was this information that helped me start to re-conceptualize my male ancestors as not-so-nice guys.

Again, in some ways, it does not matter if this will I found online is correct or not. To me, the original source's value centers on learning as much as possible about the people enslaved by my ancestors. Who were they? What were their names? Who did they love and care about? What brought them joy? Of course I cannot find out this type of information from a white man's will, but perhaps it is a start? Or perhaps that is wishful thinking.

Reparations and the Limitations of Acknowledgment

I originally entitled this series *Red Dirt Reparations*. The title came from one of my earliest questions in this project: what do reparations look like for me personally? At the time, I thought reparations happen more often with institutions, such as Georgetown, that have acknowledged their debt to enslaved people and their descendants. Yet calculating what institutions owe is a complicated process (King, 2017). This is not to say that individual

reparations are impossible, as Sleeter demonstrated when she “return[ed] what was stolen” to the Ute Indian Tribe (Native News Online Staff, 2017). In my case, like Sleeter, it is not only stolen lives and labor but also Indigenous land.

When I started, I think in the back of my mind I believed that naming myself as a descendent of slaveholders would somehow qualify as a form of reparations. It would mean that I could no longer engage in the type of white fragility that claims “I never owned slaves” and thus are not implicated by white supremacy as discussed above (Matias, 2016; Picower, 2009). As though by acknowledging my ancestry I could wrap myself in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream that “one day on the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood” (1963, p. 4). Change Georgia to Alabama and add “daughters,” well, I thought, it could have been me.

Of course, it is not. “The table of brotherhood” is the sticking point. Recognizing who I come from, what I wish the world was like, how pervasive white supremacy is in my past as well as the country and region's history—it might get me up the hill. But a seat at the table? That is a whole different thing.

Comradeship

I asked my boyfriend Angelo, a self-identified Chicano, what he thought about this chapter thus far. He was making dinner and, after some overall comments he put his spatula down, looked me in the eyes, and said, “You know, it seems like you’re talking about ally-ship without naming it.”

“Really?” I responded, almost taken aback. “huh. That’s not what I was going for.”

“What were you going for? Do you not consider yourself an ally?”

“Not really. I mean, ideally, sure. But I don’t think that’s a position I can claim.”

“Why not?”

“Because I have—we both have—seen white people [and/or men and/or straight and/or cis people and/or . . .] claim to be allies who aren’t. Who are more interested in the street cred, in the title (for lack of a better term) of being an ally without doing any of the work that’s required. It drives me crazy how hypocritical people can be. I know they, and me too, have the best intentions, but that isn’t enough. We know of white people who claim to be allies with the Black Lives Matter movement, but talk over Black people in non-BLM spaces. Men who claim to be a feminist ally but man-splain the concept as soon as they can. I don’t want to be like that. But to answer your question, yes, I hope I am an ally. Of course I do. I cannot tell if I am being an ally or not because I don’t know how I am coming across. Only someone from that community—in this case Black—can make that call.”

“Plus the term “ally” has been criticized for the reasons you say and others.”

“Exactly. So I don’t really want to be one, or, more specifically, claim to be one.”

My aversion to “ally” is not unique and much has been written about its limitations (Dean, 2019; McKenzie, 2013). There are many Scholars of Color who have created and use more accurate terminology. As Alicia Garza, a Black Lives Matter co-founder and activist, explains:

The thing I don’t like about the word ally is that it is so wrought with guilt and shame and grief that it prevents people from doing what they ought to do. . . [whereas] co-conspiracy is about what we do in action, not just in language . . . It is about moving through guilt and shame and recognizing that we did not create none of this stuff. And so what we are taking responsibility for is the power that we hold to transform our conditions (Santana, 2016).

As Garza explains, co-conspirator is a state of action rather than re-action. It is about putting energy building a new world, rather than using said energy only feeling bad about how the world is. Therefore, being a co-conspirator, or a related term such as “abolitionist” or “accomplice,” implies that one will work not only to become more anti-racist in one’s own life, but to re-fashion power structures as well. For my work, I use the term “comrade” rather than “co-conspirator,” though I consider it a synonym to Garza’s definition. I do so not because I disagree with Garza and other Activists/Scholars of Color but because I am interested in placing myself and my work in the larger historical and geographic discussions around comradeship.

Though our first thought upon hearing the term comrade might be a white man in Soviet Russia, in reality, comrade has been used for over a century by people engaged in anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist, and anti-racist political struggles, particularly by Communities of Color in the Global South (Dean, 2019; Prashad, 2019). Therefore my use of comrade is, in part, to be in solidarity with international struggles of People of Color because injustice is not only a U.S. phenomenon, nor are the concepts I am writing about.

I also use the term comrade rather than co-conspirator because there are two historical examples of comradeship related to Alabama. Robin D. G. Kelly’s monograph *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (1990) provides a detailed account of how Alabamians across racial, gender, and class lines worked together to fight for better lives in the 1930s and 40s. These comrades were predominantly, though not exclusively, lead by Black people from around Birmingham. As Russia moved from ally to threat beginning with the end of WWII, comradeship, which was tied to communism, waned. Nevertheless, comradeship became a powerful social, economic, and political force during this time in Alabama, though a largely ignored one in the historiography of the state.

A second example is detailed by Joni Dean in her book *Comrade* (2019) where she discusses the Black Belt Thesis, developed in the late 1920s. The Black Belt of Alabama, named such because of the rich, dark soil, had the highest number of enslaved people in the state and sometimes all enslaving states because so much cotton could be grown there. After emancipation, many Black people continue(d) to live in this area, though it is unclear whether this was/is by choice, a lack of economic opportunities to move, or both. In 2020, the Black Belt remains one of the poorest regions of the entire U.S. (Archibald, 2020). The Black Belt Thesis argued that Black people in the United States were an oppressed nationality deserving the right of self-determination in their homeland: the Black Belt. Developed by Harry Haywood, a Black man from the U.S., the international and U.S. Communist parties backed the thesis. Though the thesis never moved to a reality, in working to achieve it, the U.S. Communist party shifted the conception of comrade to prioritize interracial solidarity/struggle and rather than class struggle/solidarity. It was one of the first times, if not the only, a political party in the U.S. Communist party reckoned with racism from its white members. Even though there was backlash to their antiracist approach by white Southerners, the U.S. Communist Party exemplified what interracial comradeship can look like.

None of this is to say that the desire to be an ally in the truest sense of the term, is wrong. In addition to being a manifestation of guilt or shame as well as an in/re-active response to the world, allyship as it is currently, often performed is a capitalist response to (in)justice and that capitalism is an ideology inherently destructive socially, politically, environmentally, and economically, it is time for something else. Dean's idea of comradeship provides one such avenue. Instead of centering oneself, like ally-ship implicitly requires (i.e. stating "I am an ally") comradeship centers the struggle for justice in all its various forms. In so doing, comrade-ship

inherently centers other people and communities not just one's own. In other words, allyship can be a conceited form of solidarity, as Dean explains, "because allies join together under self-interested terms, they can easily withdraw, drop out, let us down. We can't be sure of their commitment because it hinges on their individual feelings and comfort" (p. 21). Conversely, creating a just world for all people demands considering social relations between people, how one acts towards and with other people. To phrase another way, by asking us to move away from allyship and towards comradeship, Dean asks us not just what our beliefs are, but how we put them into practice not just in moments of extreme emotion such as after the murder of George Floyd, but also daily. What choices are we making in how we live, how we interact with others that can help us create a more just world?

Red Dirt No. 3

In late February/early March of 2020, before the pandemic, I began *Red Dirt No. 3* (Figure 6). For this piece, I blew up the top left quadrant of the *Winston Genealogical Chart* (Rice, 1980-85, Figure 1) that contained my direct lineage (grandparents, great grandparents and so on, all the way back to the center.) I had this quadrant printed in an art quality print at the art printing at MSU.¹¹ I then tacked the paper to a piece of laminate wood I bought at the local Habitat for Humanity ReStore, using tacks I bought there as well.

Though a piece of brand new wood and nails might have looked better and definitely would have been easier to use, I wanted to use recycled products as a means to materially confront the capitalism inherent in my family's story, in this nation's story. My desire to buy recycled materials from places where the profits aid those in need, such as the ReStore, rather than brand new, aims to disrupt capitalism in two ways. First, instead of going to a single owner,

¹¹ Since I made this piece for myself rather than my dissertation, I did not keep notes on details like this.

board of directors, or shareholders, the profits of each ReStore are used by the local Habitat for Humanity (Habitat) to build houses for people who cannot afford housing (Habitat for Humanity, 2021); people, one could argue, hurt directly by the capitalist economic system. Secondly, building supplies, like textiles (discussed more in depth in Chapter 5) are often sold in the U.S. anonymously meaning, in this case, that we as consumers in the capitalist system have no idea about the people who made it possible to have the item in front of us. We do not know the working conditions of the people who make each item and then move the item from its origin to us. Perhaps the conditions are safe and ideal. Perhaps not. As we learned from the brave Amazon workers in Bessemer, Alabama who tried to unionize, even if the working conditions at the site of origin are ideal, the conditions of those who work in between can be brutal. As a preacher said at the March 13, 2021 opening rally of the Black Lives Matter caravan encouraging Amazon workers in Bessemer to vote yes to a union, “what good is fifteen dollars and thirty cents an hour when I’m addicted to Advil and Tylenol because I have headaches and I hate going to work every single day?” (RetailUnion, March 14, 2021). To carry his line of questioning further, what good are benefits if you are constantly worried you will be fired for moving too slow or taking too long to pee? If Amazon, a behemoth of a company that makes trillions of dollars, can ostensibly afford to treat its employees with dignity and respect yet does not, I for one cannot see any reason to assume that other un-unionized companies are any better. Following capitalist logic, they are in competition with Amazon, so why would they be? As for companies that are unionized, again due to the anonymous nature of items, we as consumers are often equally unaware of unionized companies as we are un-unionized one. Therefore, following the notion of Dean’s comradeship, it is difficult to be any kind of comrade when buying brand new things.

At the same time, I do not wish to imply that purchasing items at stores like the ReStore or other charitably minded thrift shops and resale stores is the best or only response to capitalism. Each Habitat affiliate is local and operates independently, and therefore many of the criticisms of Habitat exist on the local level making it difficult to know what one's local Habitat does with ReStore proceeds. For example, each local affiliate has different criteria for those who apply for housing which can sometimes exclude individuals who are below the poverty line and, arguably, need affordable housing the most. Additionally some affiliates have done some incredible wrongdoing. For example, Habitat-NYC bought multiple apartment buildings in 2010 and pushed out the then tenants, some of them into homelessness (Rochabrun, 2016). Personally, as a Jewish woman raised in the Deep Southern U.S., any Christian charitable organization makes me nervous: too many bad memories.

Somewhere—maybe in my schooling or my family or both—I was taught that spending money is like voting. Maybe you were too. I was taught that when you pay a person or store for services or things rendered, it is like you are voting for them. The more you spend, the more votes you are giving them. If they have enough votes they (the person, the company) can survive and eventually thrive. Consequently, the lesson goes, it matters where you spend your money. Following this logic, I would rather “vote” for people hurt by capitalism. I would rather “vote” against capitalists and capitalism. My imperfect solution is to buy my art materials and, honestly, as much of my personal and household items, from thrift and resale stores. In the case of *Red Dirt No. 3* I would rather buy imperfect materials (tarnished tacks, laminate board) and make them work than perfect materials (plywood, nails) that might harm others. You might challenge this position, ask how can I know that I am doing less harm. After all, due to the anonymous nature of materials, my method to acquiring materials might unintentionally harm someone or

some company trying to do good. This is completely valid; however, it does not take into account the environmental impact of purchasing new things. In addition to the human cost I have already described, new items use energy to make and to ship. The farther away from their destination, the more often non-renewal energy required to get them there. Furthermore, shipping often requires packaging, usually in the form of one-time use plastic. Reusing items not only shrinks these impacts, but also keeps the item out of a landfill. I will discuss the environmental cost more in-depth in the next chapter.

Red Dirt No. 3, as well as *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* (discussed in Chapter 5) attempt to materially disrupt capitalism and tangibly demonstrate comradeship. As long as we live in a capitalist society, we are all capitalists. There is no real way to escape unless you went off the grid, and perhaps not even then. Capitalism is inherently destructive (Davis, 1971/2016). And while I as one person cannot change a whole system, in my art as well as my life, I attempt to do the least harm as possible. This is what methodology as a lifestyle choice (Vellanki, 2020) and therefore comradeship can look like.

When I first envisioned *Red Dirt No. 3*, the board and most of *Winston Genealogical Chart* (Rice, 1980-85, Figure 1), would be covered in mud, similar to what can be seen on the bottom. I planned on making only the names of my direct ancestors visible. In our respective circles, I added my name and my brother's, my father's, his brother's and sisters', and their partners.' I wanted to implicate us. I wanted us, our names, to be covered by the legacy of our enslaver ancestors as a type of what Tillet (2012) calls "mnemonic restitution" (p. 137.) She goes describes mnemonic restitution as "a challenge to the purposeful and 'polite' national amnesia around slavery, as well as those practices of racism that uphold the civic estrangement of all blacks, naturalized or native born, that live in the United States" (p. 137). Perhaps, just perhaps,

remembering the role slavery played not only in my ancestors' lives but in my own is a way towards mnemonic restitution. Maybe.

Chapter 5: *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*

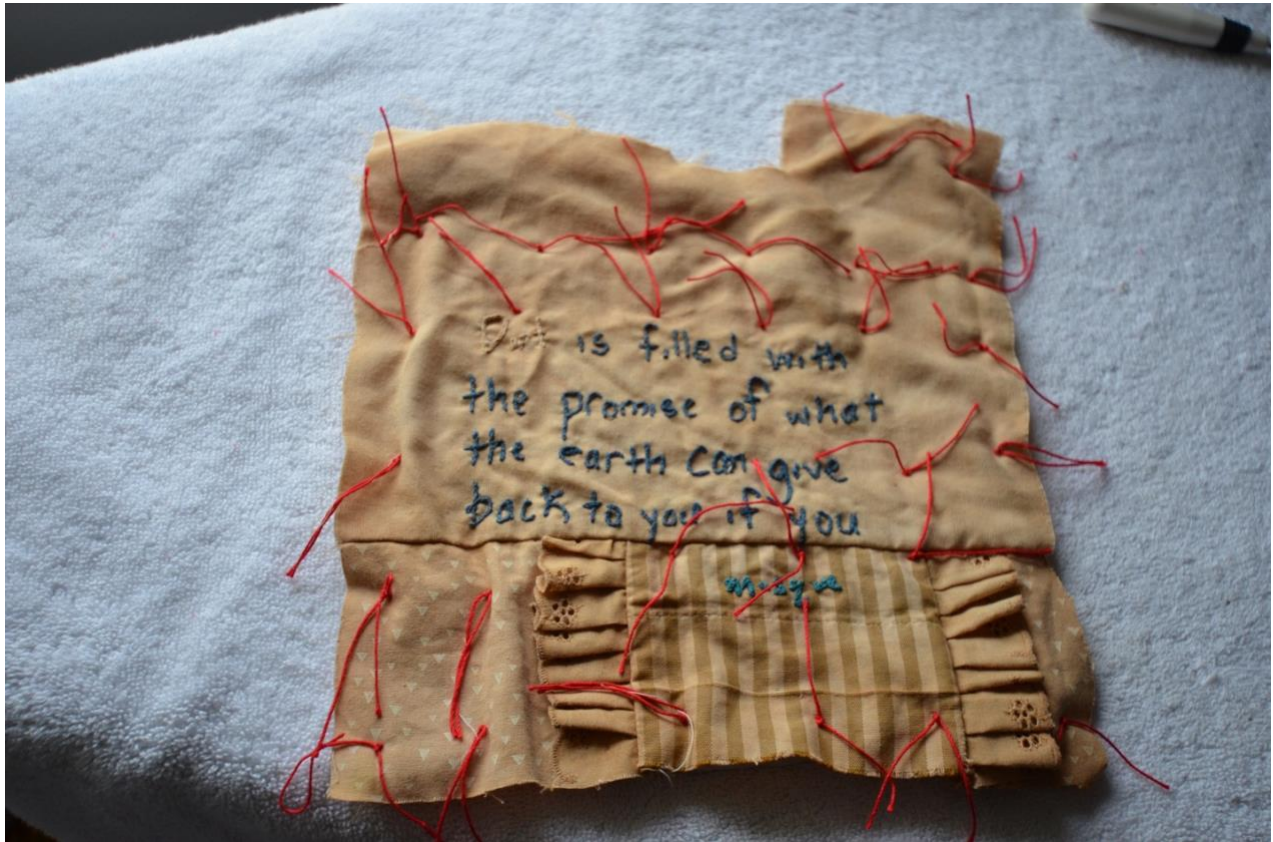


Figure 9: *Red Dirt, White, and Blue No. 1: Dirt Masque*. Fabric, embroidery thread, yarn.
Created and photographed by author.



Figure 10: *Red Dirt, White, and Blue No. 2: But One*. Fabric, embroidery thread, yarn. Created and photographed by author.

When I first began this project in earnest, when I thought it would be an article and before I knew it would be a dissertation, I thought that I would begin each section with an epigraph about red dirt. I knew that I wasn't the only person who thought of red dirt as a synonym, a stand-in for something more: the U.S. South, for home, for pain, for strength, for Alabama. The three I could think of (in no particular order) were (1) when Rhett Butler (Clark Gable) tells Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh) that she gets her strength from the red dirt of Tara in the movie *Gone with the Wind*; (2) when Vinny (Joe Pesci) is told upon his arrival to Alabama that he has mud in his tires in *My Cousin Vinny*, and (3) Emmy Lou Harris's song "Red Dirt Girl."

To be clear, both the movie and book versions of *Gone with the Wind* are incredibly racist and a full accounting of all the ways these texts perpetuate white supremacy is beyond the scope of this paper (please see Loewen, 2007, McPherson, 2003). Perhaps because of this, *Gone with the Wind* was and remains a touchstone in white southern culture. Scarlett's desire to protect and maintain her plantation home Tara drives much of the plot. At the moment I reference above, Scarlett's then-husband Rhett seems to understand that Tara (and thus the red dirt of Tara) is a, if not the, central fixture of her life; that Tara not only provides meaning to her life, but it is also a sanctuary for her, a place to regroup and to regroup herself. The latter is what happens throughout the film: when something bad happens to Scarlett, she goes home.

For Vinny, a just-arrived New Yorker in Alabama, the meaning is slightly different. The (red) Alabama mud is a theme throughout the movie, and seems to thwart him at many turns: it destroys his car, his suit and thereby almost sending him to contempt of court. In so doing, the mud is another reminder of how different he, his fiancée Mona Lisa Vito (played by Marisa Tomei), and the Bill Gambini and Stan Rothenstein (Vinny's younger cousin and his cousin's

friend, played by Ralph Macchio and Mitchell Whitfield respectively) the two men Vinny has been asked to defend from murder charges are from the setting of a small, Alabama town. Vinny eventually wins his case and does so in spectacular fashion in part by adapting enough to the local culture that he can meet the local people where they are.

“Red Dirt Girl,” in contrast, is a ballad about the singer’s childhood friend Lillian. Growing up in a small town in southwest Alabama, the girls share dreams of getting out, making a name for themselves, exploring the world; however, trapped by circumstances surrounding being a poor female, Lillian dies at 27, presumably from alcoholism and depression, dreams unfulfilled.

These three instances of red dirt also say much about my own life. Scarlett in many places is still idealized by white, Southern U.S. men and women. Conversely, *My Cousin Vinny* is a family favorite because it is a film that my parents, particularly my mama, strongly related to. My parents met in New York City and, after they married, Mama moved to Alabama. The struggles of Vinny and Mona Lisa in fitting in with Southern life comedically reflected Mama’s lived experience. Finally, “Red Dirt Girl” always reminds me of a story Daddy once told me about his paternal grandmother. Great-Grandmother Grisham owned a general store in a village called Cairo (pronounced Kay-roh), Alabama. She would go on shopping trips to Birmingham, to Atlanta and that she loved these trips because she loved being in a city. “She always said that her heart sank when she crossed the last bridge back to Cairo.” To me, it sounds like she felt trapped—whether by family, her community, societal expectations of what a woman should do, her store, or some combination I could not say. I don’t know how my great grandmother acquired a general store, why she, a relatively educated woman for the time, remained in Cairo. I wonder what she would have done, what she could have done if she had been born in a time like

mine. I wonder if she would have felt she could perhaps make different choices. I wonder, if she, like Lillian, like countless other women from small southern towns, would have wanted to live a life like mine. A life where I have left (and it feels like I am always leaving) home to follow my dreams, my interests. When I hear “Red Dirt Girl” I always wonder if, in other circumstances, I would have been a Lillian, a Great-Grandmother Grisham.

Thinking about the meaning of red dirt in these three quotes, these three stories, thinking about red dirt as a metaphor for white supremacy in the U.S. South, to me they convey three different things:

1. Red dirt/white supremacy as a place of power and strength.
2. Red dirt/white supremacy as something “outsiders” (read: non-Southern U.S. white people) might be troubled by, but can use and leverage in their own way(s).
3. Red dirt/white supremacy as patriarchal.

I once heard someone talk about how sometimes when something comes up in conversation, like a pink elephant, you start to see pink elephants everywhere. That is how red dirt has been for me. I began and continue to see it everywhere, not only as the ground when I am in Alabama, but in books, in movies, in other places. So, like gathering seashells washed up along the beach, I started to collect quotes. I did not know, at first, what to do with them, but collect them I did. Over time, as red dirt came up in increasingly disparate places (Alabama, Arkansas, Hawai’i, Thailand, Delaware, Georgia) I began to wonder if somewhere in them, I could find a poem. In addition to the obvious theme of red dirt, there just seemed to be some more, deeper meaning. In response, I wrote each quote on a sticky note. Being able to move the words opened up new meanings. I began to see two trends: (1) of wanting to leave the red dirt, of being disgusted by it, in contrast to (2) an appreciation or love for the dirt. These two themes talked to each other, but

there seemed to be something else in the words, something I could not quite place, something hidden. Over time, as the sticky-ness gave way and the notes fell off the wall like autumn leaves, the potential meaning in the project fell off as well.

At the same time, I had been completing research for the *Red Dirt Series* described in Chapter 4. As I read Brewer's *Alabama*, I kept asking myself the same question Brugar, Halvorsen, and Hernandez (2014) ask of social studies textbooks: Where are the women? Reading Jones-Rodger's *They Were Her Property* (2019), I kept asking myself about what we/I know about white enslaver women including my ancestors. Overall, I was wondering about how to make their lives, their experiences, and my relationship with them seen when, for so long, they have been hidden.

Red Dirt, White, and Blue (Figures 9 and 10), combines these two lines of questions: the myriad meanings of red dirt and white, enslaver women. The catalyst for combining these ideas occurred when I visited the Toledo Museum of Art's *Radical Tradition: American Quilts and Social Change* in December of 2020. The exhibit surveyed quilts from the U.S. from the mid-nineteenth century to the present in order "to consider how quilts have been used to voice opinions, raise awareness, and enact social reform in the U.S." (Toledo Museum of Art, 2020). In so doing, the pieces in the exhibition, from Faith Ringgold's *Ben* (1978) a small sculpture to a quilt entitled *Dachau 1945* made from squares of uniforms survivors people were wearing when liberated, challenge traditionally held beliefs that quilts' primary function is to be objects of comfort and, more implicitly, women's traditional role as caregivers rather than protestors.

Not every quilt in the exhibition was made by a woman. In fact, in addition to Bisa Butler's portrait of Frederick Douglass entitled *The Storm, the Whirlwind, and the Earthquake* (2020), I wanted to see a work by Hank Willis Thomas whose quilt was made from

decommissioned prison uniforms. Yet quilt making is very much considered “women’s work” (Jefferson, et al., 2011) and the exhibit highlighted how quilt making is one of the few avenues women have traditionally been able to express themselves not only artistically, but also politically.

Though I do not have the space to write about each quilt, *Red Cross Quilt* (Figure 11) heavily influenced *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*. Made in 1917, *Red Cross Quilt* is a signature quilt, a popular quilt style used primarily as a fundraiser, in this case, to support the Red Cross during World War I. In a fundraising signature quilt, people often contributed money to have their names included on the quilt. Their names would be written and then embroidered. Afterwards, the squares would be pieced together and then the entire piece was quilted before being raffled or auctioned off. While I had seen embroidered quilts, even signature quilts, before and there were many other quilts in the exhibit that used embroidery and words, I spent a lot of time with the *Red Cross Quilt*. Though its design is simple, seeing this quilt is akin to looking at a snapshot of an entire community. So many (presumably) now dead people contributed to this quilt and therefore this cause. Though we do not know their social relationships, on this quilt, they are connected, unified by both geography and cause.

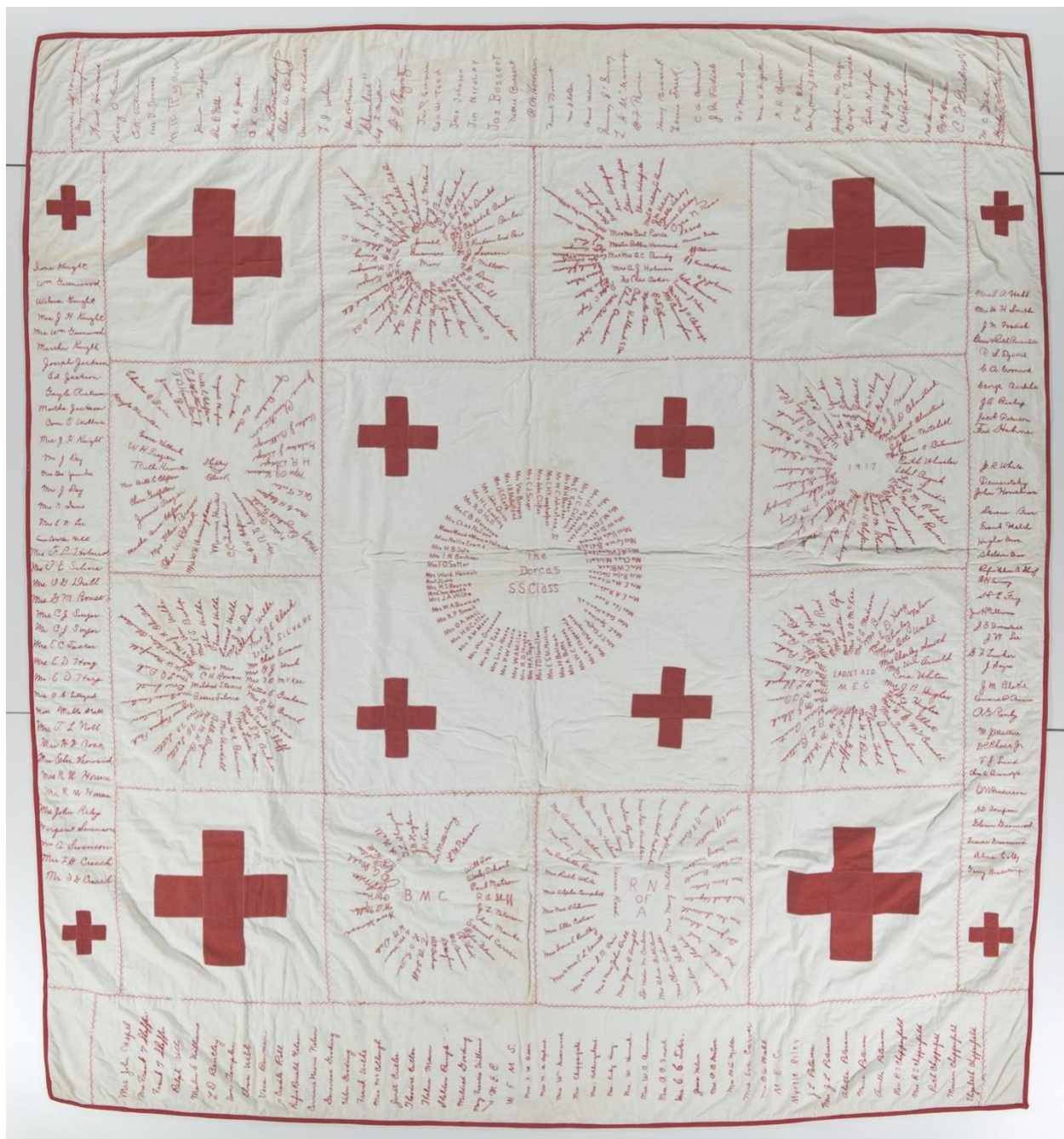


Figure 11: *Red Cross, the Dorcas S.S. Class, 1917*, 82.5 x 76 inches. International Quilt Museum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Image used with permission.

After visiting *Radical Tradition*, I began to envision an embroidered quilt—similar to the *Red Cross Quilt*. By combining traditionally the art forms of embroidery and quilting (traditionally female) with poetry (traditionally male), what has become *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* enables a critical discussion about white, female enslavers through exploring many possible

meanings of red dirt. Therefore, in order to examine *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* in this chapter I will first discuss the historiography of white, female enslavers broadly as well as what I knew and know about my family. I will then build on Chapter 4's discussion of the meaning of red dirt by examining other people's interpretations of it. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by discussing the creation and possible meanings of *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*.

White Female Enslavers

While it might be tempting to excuse Brewer's assertion or Anthony's actions as reflections of their times, I would remind the reader that not all white southerners were pro-slavery in the 1800s. There were and are white southern people who recognize(d) the humanity of Black and Brown people—the abolitionists Angelina and Sarah Grimké are stark reminders of that. The Grimké sisters left their family of South Carolina enslavers and became advocates of abolition and women's rights. Though seen by some in their time as race traitors (Lerner, 2004), to me, their story demonstrates what was possible in their time; that white enslavers chose to deny humanity to enslaved people. In other words, their lives are a counterexample to the Southern U.S. and Lost Cause apologists who claim that slavery “was just how it was” as though that absolves white enslavers of wrongdoing.

I first read Brewer's *Alabama* (1872) intending to learn about my family, but it quickly became apparent that I would only ever learn about half of them. With rare exceptions, the women mentioned by Brewer are always described as “Mrs. _____”, “the sister of the Hon. _____” or “his wife is a daughter of _____.” If a woman is mentioned by her name it is often as “Miss _____ of _____.” In other words, the vast majority of women mentioned in *Alabama* are named by the men they are related to, not in their own right. As a result, women are passing, fleeting objects who are mentioned usually at the end of a biographical sketch. As I read, I

wondered where are my women, my family not only in histories like Brewer's but in family stories as well.

It did not take long to realize that stories about my female antebellum ancestors such as Keziah, my 5x great-grandmother and Anthony's wife, as well as Catherine—my 4x great-grandmother, married to Keziah and Anthony's son Isaac—are hard to find. A year into this project and I know nothing about Catherine. In contrast, it is much easier to find out about their husbands, brothers, sons, and nephews. Not a lot, but decidedly more. In archives, I have found Anthony and Isaac's names, scribed near the names of James Madison—a cousin-in-law—and Andrew Jackson, a family friend.

White Female Enslavers in Southern U.S. Historiography

Clinton's thesis in *The Plantation Mistress* (1982), that white female enslavers were, to use her own words, a "slave of slaves" (p. 16), continues to dominate Southern studies and historiography (McPherson, 2003). Clinton argues that white mistresses had no power legal or otherwise. Moreover, they were responsible for the health and wellbeing not only of their family, but also all the enslaved people on the plantation which, in some cases, numbered into the hundreds. White mistresses were subordinate to their fathers, brothers, and/or other male relatives until they married. Marriage was not a boon, but as many white enslaver women described it, a woman "resigning her liberty" (Clinton, 1982, p. 34.) As Clinton summarizes:

No wonder they [white female enslavers] complained of being themselves enslaved. The plantation mistress found herself trapped within a system over which she had no control, one from which she had no means of escape. Cotton was King, white men ruled, and both white women and slaves served the same master. (p. 35)

Though Clinton writes, “one cannot equate the plight of the plantation mistress with the brutal dehumanization of slaves” (p. 15), as we can see in the quote above, she does just that. Until Jones-Rodgers’s *They Were her Property*, Clinton’s thesis that white enslaving women had no power legally, politically, or in their own lives not only remained unchallenged, it has been built upon by many other historians.

Writing about the inclusion of multiple ethnicities and cultures into social studies curriculum, Banks (1989) explains that the additive approach “can be the first phase in a more radical curriculum reform effort” (p. 17) but done alone, it generally reinforces dominant, white supremacist, and patriarchal interpretations of social studies because it “fails to help students view society from diverse cultural and ethnic perspectives and to understand the how histories and cultures of the nation’s diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious groups are inextricably bound” (p. 18).

While Clinton’s work is foundational to Southern U.S. Studies, it is worth noting that with few exceptions, Southern U.S. history continued the additive approach of Banks’ (1989) model rather than “transforming” historiographic understandings of the power enslaving women possessed and then lead to a “decision making and social action” approach to Southern U.S. women’s history. It is as though instead of rethinking, reframing the discussion to become more inclusive of women, including them in the conversation was enough for historians.

While Clinton’s additive approach (Banks, 1989) to include women in Southern U.S. history might have been groundbreaking at the time, 40 years on, Clinton’s thesis obscures the agency enslaving women possessed in their own lives as well as the power they had over enslaved people. Jones-Rodger’s examination of white “mistresses” is not only more transformational within Banks’ multicultural education model, it is more feminist. She provides

an understanding of Southern U.S. history that explores the agency that enslaving women possessed. And though it was not the same as their white, male counterparts, it was more than Southern U.S. historiography until then believed possible. These white enslaving women used codified white supremacy and capitalism to their advantage, to gain and retain power for themselves and their loved ones. They were, in short, anything but the “slave of slaves” Clinton, Scott, Wood, Bercaw and other “feminist” historians claim them to be. While I believe these historians were doing the best they could at the time, my larger point echoes Jones-Rodger’s, McPherson’s (2003), and other scholars’ call to re-examine white female enslavers with much more critical eyes.

When I read *They Were Her Property* (Jones-Rodgers, 2019), I was appalled by many of the actions of white female planters. Though Jones-Rodgers provides many examples, the murder of Alfred, a 12- or 13-year-old enslaved boy shook me. Partially for the violence Green and Godfry Martin, the planters, committed but more so because of the response of the white women of the Martin household. Jones-Rodgers writes that:

Over the course of three hours, Green and Godfry Martin beat Alfred to death. On at least two occasions, Green Martin straddled Alfred, choked him, and threw him to the floor. Godfry poured water on Alfred to prevent him from fainting. Then, after Green was done, Godfry fetched a saddle, commanded Alfred to kneel on all fours, placed the saddle on his back, and sat on him for “a quarter of an hour.” After doing so, he beat him with a stick, kicked him and threw him on the ground, and finally dragged him about the yard. (p. 8).

We know about this event because although most southern U.S. states allowed enslavers to punish enslaved people as they wished, they did bar punishment with “malice.” Therefore,

“someone in Green Martin’s slaveholding community must have considered his actions abhorrent enough to report him to local authorities” (p. 8). Green Martin was initially convicted of murdering Alfred and sentenced to execution; however, he appealed to the Georgia Supreme Court who reviewed the case.

Jones-Rodgers talks about the case because, during the Georgia Supreme Court’s review, Green’s three daughters (who were also Godfrey’s three sisters) testified as witnesses. All three were aware of the torture as it happened and did not intervene. Jones-Rodgers writes, “we might think that such brutality, which lead to the death of an enslaved boy whom they probably grew up with, might have disturbed the Martin sisters or compelled them to intervene” (p. 9), but this was not the case. Instead, in their testimony it is evident that the violence they witnessed left them nonplussed. Jones-Rodgers further explains:

After years of exposure to such violence, the Martin sisters were apparently immune to it. They sat on their piazza and went about their daily routines, which took them through the yard where their brother and father were torturing Alfred to death. . . The Martin’s sisters’ conduct suggests that this sort of violence was part of their daily lives. And they exhibited a level of indifference to Alfred’s suffering that many slave owners and their employees found necessary in their interactions with and control of enslaved people (p. 10).

It might be tempting here to lean into the idea of “not all enslavers,” in this case, meaning not all enslavers thought the violence exhibited by the Martin men should be condoned. After all someone, presumably a white someone who by the nature of their whiteness possessed the power to be taken seriously, reported the incident and Green Martin was initially found guilty of murdering Alfred. It is not clear from Jones-Rodgers’s account if he was later acquitted or executed, but perhaps that is because it does not matter; nothing changed. Whatever the Georgia

Supreme Court decided in the Green Martin case, enslavement remained a state-sponsored activity. Moreover, what happened to Green Martin could not bring Alfred back nor, presumably, would it change his or his kin folks' treatment of enslaved people. Therefore, the "indifference" Jones-Rodgers talks about is important when thinking about enslavers as a group, women as well as men. Not just the indifference to physical torture, as in Alfred's case, but the various means of control enslaved people—physical, mental, and emotional—committed by enslavers of all genders and ages.

I was shaken by *They Were Her Property* for two reasons. First, the actions exhibited by white women enslavers that Jones-Rodgers details contradicted everything I thought I knew about white women in the antebellum U.S. South, all of which followed Clinton's (1982) thesis. Second, for the first time in my life, I was confronted with the idea the actions of my female ancestors might be as demonic as I knew white enslaving men to be. I wondered how many of the Winston female ancestors were like the Martin sisters; women immune to the violence toward and dehumanization of enslaved people. In other examples from Jones-Rodgers, the white, female enslavers—a role my female Winston ancestors were in—committed physical, emotional, and psychological violence against enslaved people. There is no reason to think my female ancestors would be any different from their peers, but, to be honest, I had never really thought about them before. Unlike the Winston family men, information about the women is, unsurprisingly, much harder to find. Looking at our family tree (Figure 1), the three most inner circles name only the men, as though their progeny magically sprung out of the earth all by themselves. I suspect that when Rice compiled the family tree, she did not have any information about the women because it is highly likely it does not exist anymore if it ever did. I knew no

stories of them and, besides any information Rice included on the *Winston Family Tree* (1980-1985), had no information.

As I thought about my antebellum ancestors Keziah and Catherine, my 6x and 5x time great-grandmothers and Anthony, Jr. and Isaac's wives respectively, I realized that in the absence of family stories about the women of the Winston side of my family, I had created some. In my versions of my family, all the women were like Mrs. O'Hara and Melanie—characters in *Gone with the Wind* (Mitchell, 1936/1967).

Both are known in their communities as being incredibly kind, warm, and gracious. They each go out of their way to attend to the sick and dying, are loved by all, and above reproach. In short, each is the perfect Southern lady. Who wouldn't want to be descended from such noble people?

Perhaps I invented these fictionalized stories from composites I have of my grandmother, Wray Garth Grisham, and her mother Ethel Mae Hightower Garth. I never met either of them, but my grandmother was always described as "kind" and "sweet." My great grandmother's obituary claims she was "one of Athens' most beloved women" and that the church was filled to capacity for her funeral service (*Huntsville Times*, 1955). Since they sound so much like Mrs. O'Hara and Melanie, I think I assumed that all women on my father's side of the family were as kind and warm.

Of course, I should have realized there is no way all the women I am descended from on my father's side could be so saintly. Women, just like all people, are complex individuals and as a group. As I read example after example of horrifying violence white mistresses did to enslaved people, I began to understand that my father's ancestors could easily have been one of these women. And, had I been born 200 years ago, so could I. In other words, femaleness did not

absolve white women from racism or white supremacy, nor does it absolve me. Moreover, I did not know how much I wanted my femaleness to be a shield from the worst implications of white supremacy until there was an earthquake, shaking the red dirt underneath my mental hoop skirt. I had never considered that I could have been a person committing such violence; could have been so immune to it; could have been so dehumanized that another person's pain didn't even register in my daily routine. It is difficult to describe how much this knowledge shook me. And I really do mean shook because this new knowledge was like a physical revelation, like some outside force was shaking me. Whether that shake was to wake me up or to keep me suppressed, I can't say. As I type this paragraph, I keep pausing to move my hands back and forth, gripping something in the air, shaking them in front of me; like getting that last half dollar out of the piggy bank, it's as if I shake long enough I can find the right words to describe how I felt. Perhaps this is what all "difficult knowledge" in the psychoanalytic meaning of the term (Pitt and Britzman, 2003) feels like. It felt violent because in some ways it was. In reading *They Were her Property*, I learned not only what my female ancestors might have been, but also what or who I might have become.

Winston Family Quilts

As I have stated elsewhere, I did not know my grandmothers, but one of the few ways I know my paternal grandmother Wray is through the quilts she left behind. Wray made quilts for many of her nieces and nephews. In one later given to my brother, fanciful embroidery, much like that used on a crazy quilt, and bright red sashing enlivens her bowtie pattern. When I was around 12, another niece of Wray's gave me a quilt she had made for her. This quilt hung over my childhood bed until I moved away as an adult. The quilt consists of 25 squares, each outlined by blue sashing. Within each square, Wray combined embroidery, machine applique, and ink to

create portraits of children from around the world. Looking closely at the quilt, some squares are more detailed than others with colorful chain-stitched embroidery outlining elements of a background, eyes embroidered rather than drawn as in other squares. I imagine that by the time she reached the other squares, Wray was tired of the project and/or generally.

Wray was not the only quilter in the Winston family. In *Revolutionary Soldiers Buried in Alabama*, Annie Mell (published as Mrs. Patrick Hues Mell, 1904) writes of a Keziah's counterpane, a quilt-like piece, made by my 5x and Wray's 3x great grandmother. I include the passage below in its entirety:

The [Winston] family has now in their possession a counterpane made of cotton which Mrs. Keziah Winston raised. She picked the cotton, spun the thread and wove the cloth, and then ornamented it by needlework like a Marseilles counterpane, whilst her husband was in the army. This old heirloom is perfectly preserved, and looks as well as it ever did but, of course, it is not used (Mell, p. 571)

As I read Mell's book, I had so many questions. Did Keziah raise that cotton? Did she really? Following Catherine Clinton's argument in *The Plantation Mistress*, it is possible that Keziah was in the fields with the people she and Winston enslaved. However, following the arguments put forth by more recent historians such as May (2018) and Jones-Rodgers (2019) and my guess is no. Therefore, I speculate that it was cotton raised *for* her, not *by* her. An alternative is that this story of Keziah was created after the fact, a blend, perhaps, of some truth and some embroidered memories. Or, maybe she did all of this, which the family remembered, but not the reason why. Maybe creating a counterpane starting with seed was a kind of parlor trick, a talking point when other white families came calling. Or maybe she was bored and wanted something to do. Maybe at some point she and Anthony Jr. fell on hard times and for her to have an artistic

activity as was expected of her and other white women in her social class (May, 2018), she decided she would make said counterpane.

Yet one of the things that makes Mell's paragraph about Keziah's counterpane interesting is that it is one of the few instances I have found where a woman is included in the historical record for something she (supposedly) did rather than who she married. Moreover, Mell uses Keziah's name, not Anthony's. This differs from Mell herself who published using her title (Mrs.) and husband's name rather than her own. Perhaps Mell did so because that is the only way she could have her research published. Perhaps Mell did so because she thought it was "proper" behavior for a Southern Lady such as herself. Perhaps both or something else. Regardless, reading Mell's words over a century later, Keziah stands out to me as a woman, a human being, in her own right, rather than the appendage of a man. And yet, the only reason for this is because, as of 1904, some of her descendants still had her counterpane. Thus, instead of being written out of the record or later forgotten, a tangible marker remained.

In these two examples, both Wray and Keziah are remembered by their descendants not because they/we knew them, but because they made these needleworks. More than that, by creating art, though they may not have thought of their work that way, Wray and Keziah indirectly wrote themselves into the historical record: first, Keziah in Mell's book, and now both here in my dissertation. In other words, their needlecrafts demonstrate how "feminine" art can subvert the historical erasures of women. Though, unlike Wray and Keziah's works, we may not always know the names of the people who created it, we can always learn a lot about the person, even if they are written out of the historical record (May, 2018).

Notes on a Chain Stitch

A chain stitch is just that: an embroidered chain made out of stitches. I guess you could use it to bind two pieces of cloth, but mostly it is decorative. To make it you poke your needle through the cloth and then back through the same hole you just made. But you don't pull the thread the whole way through. Instead you leave a loop, a loop you push your needle through as you poke through the cloth – in this case tracing a line of a line you already traced once. As you pull your needle through the loop it tightens and gets smaller until it is tight. Then you poke your needle through the little bump, the link in the chain, and repeat. You do this again and again and again until your design appears stitch by stitch, link by link.

The symbolism of the chain could be examined. I could tell you how it is a metaphor, linking me with my past, my ancestors, my people. I could talk about how chains also represent the chains used to keep enslaved people enslaved. I could tell you I use this stitch to represent all these things and unknown and unknowable things and how I am chained by all of it. And all of this is true, but it is also not true. I use a chain stitch because it is my favorite; the repetition, the simplicity of the stitch makes it a marvel for all it can accomplish, all it can name, all it can tell. And yet in using a chain stitch like so many women before me, in some ways I feel like I am linking us together.

On Finding: Words, Cloth, and Handwriting

As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, the words I embroidered on this quilt are not my own. They were initially sung, said, and read by others. In some, red dirt means home (Renkl, 2019; Sudbanthad, 2019), family (Woodson, 2016), or a specific place such as Alabama (Hudson, 2020). In others, red dirt symbolizes lynchings (Baldwin, 1954/1993) or death (Brennert, 2004). Red dirt can be a site of pain (Conley, 2016) or strength (Mitchell, 1936/1967)

or longing (Harris, 2000). Unlike other types of found poetry where one might take a book and mark out words in order to create new meanings on a page, this found poem is comprised of references to red dirt I came across in my life. I started with the three I referred to above, but soon I had a collection of quotes where red dirt is present. Not only did these quotes come from movies and songs, but also books, essays, poems, and phrases I happened to come across while doing other things. Maybe a better way to explain how I collected them is that I did not go looking for quotes about red dirt, they found me. In so doing, they challenged my conception of my metaphors of red dirt and what they might be.

Found Words

As I explained in Chapter 4, when creating the *Red Dirt Series*, I considered red dirt as a metaphor for white supremacy in the Southern United States. I saw it as foundational to society, where we bury or hide our dead thus over time forgetting them and their (mis)deeds, a visualization of murdered Black and Brown people's blood. In all of this, I implicitly understood dirt to be, as Lagerspetz (2018) states, "dirty roughly in the same sense as water is wet" (p. 220). He explains that, "'dirty'—like 'damaged', 'chipped' or 'dented'—implies a shortcoming of some kind. There is an implicit reference to an ideal, unblemished, normal state and to a deviation from that state. The implication is that dirty objects *require* cleaning" (p. 45, emphasis in original). This idea of cleaning, of purifying red dirt appeals to me despite knowing that red dirt, like white supremacy, is beyond my ability to clean. So much so that I, and maybe many if not all of us, wonder if such a task can be done and, perhaps, if we should give up attacking it head-on and find more meaningful ways to disrupt its effects. Personally, days after Derek Chauvin was found guilty, I am thinking about how the abolition of the police better scours red dirt/white supremacy from our lives than the seemingly typical white liberal belief that if we/I

read enough books about whiteness and white supremacy, we/I can fix myself and, thereby the world. I entered into this research project with the latter while the former is more where this project is taking me.

Part of my shifting conceptualization of red dirt is due to the quotes I collected for, taken together, the passages show more diversity in metaphors and meaning than I anticipated. For example, I never considered that Thailand's dirt is red like Alabama's before reading *Bangkok Wakes to Rain* (Sudbanthad, 2019) and, therefore, had not considered the power of red dirt in a transnational context. While each quote, each source, deserves attention, due to the constraints of this paper, I am going to discuss one in more depth: *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson, 2016).

Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming* challenged my metaphor of using red dirt as a symbol of white supremacy or, in other words, all the work I had done to this point. In *Brown Girl Dreaming*, red dirt is talked about in relation to family, home, and love. Unlike my conception of red dirt is foundational and therefore, fixed, for Woodson red dirt is moving. It is "wafting" (p. 18) and "lifting" (p. 114) and is much more like an embrace than anything I ever thought of.

Woodson's words, while beautiful and wonderful, challenged my previous conceptions of red dirt so much that, for a while, I considered removing *Brown Girl Dreaming* from this project altogether. Maybe this was a moment of white fragility, of dismissing or ignoring the experiences and knowledge of People of Color to make myself more comfortable (DiAngelo, 2018). As you can see, I kept them and, interestingly, every single one of them can be found in "Found Red Dirt" (below) meaning that the people I asked to help me in creating *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* were drawn to her words, further challenging my understanding of what red dirt is and can be.

Found Cloth

In her installation *Huellas y Diálogos* (2013), Kaarina Kaikkonen created two separate installations in conversation with each other. In Santiago de Chile, *Huellas* was housed in the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos while *Diálogos* lived at the Museo Nacional Bellas Artes. In both sculptures, the garments were originally worn by unknown people with unknown stories and histories. Due to their location, not only in Chile but specifically at the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, the empty clothes evoke the disappeared in Chile and perhaps other countries in South America and the world.

In 2013, I lived within walking distance of Museo Nacional Bellas Artes and so I spent a lot of time with *Diálogos*. This installation used about 2000 dress shirts and 850 suit jackets to evoke memories. The original wearers of these clothes are gone, their names forgotten or not recorded. Yet when I first saw the exhibit, the clothing sculptures Kaikkonen created felt very alive. In the two almost mirrored sculptures, the shirts and jackets were connected in such a way that together, they looked like two open, two-story rib-cages. From the way the colors of the shirts and jackets were arranged, it seemed that time had been spent organizing them, rather than simply attaching them together as they were gathered or in another random pattern. Perhaps they were, but it was how the shirts' colors were ordered that stopped the rib cages from being mirror images to me at least. While there was much harmony being surrounded by such large sculptures of cloth, the colors created some discord. Looking at pictures, they still do, though I cannot explain why. As I visited the works again and again, I began to wonder about the amount of anonymous clothing in the world and what the environmental impact of so much clothing is, but did not put much more thought into my wonderings than that.

Images of *Huellas y Diálogos* returned to me one day in Alyssa Hadley Dunn's Critical Whiteness course (spring semester, 2018). In that class we talked about whiteness and capitalism in our everyday lives, and, more importantly, what to do about it. Though I do not remember all the details, I do remember sitting with Alyssa and Mary Neville talking about how important it is for our purchases to reflect our values. While not a new idea, what was new to me what Alyssa said about shopping at thrift stores; that they are not only cheaper (and therefore great for a grad student budget), shopping at them rather than buying new is a socially and environmentally sound choice as well. I already loved shopping at thrift stores for clothes, but it was not until talking to Alyssa that I started only shopping at thrift stores, at least, as much as I can for household items as well. Whenever I need new things (e.g. a pan, a dress, a picture frame), I try to find old ones for resale rather than brand new ones.

The clothing industry is currently a linear system that “puts pressure on resources, pollutes the environment, and creates negative societal impacts” according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundations's 2017 report *A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future*. Sponsored by “core partners” H+M, Lenzing, and Nike and created in conjunction with many international fashion companies, the report explains that “the trajectory of the industry points to the potential for catastrophic outcomes” (p. 21) for the environment as well as society. Currently, 97% of clothes are made from “virgin feedstock” and 73% of clothes end up in a landfill or incinerated. Of donated clothes, Cline (2012) reported that most are sold in bulk internationally or discarded. In short, the amount of textiles in the world, particularly in the global north, is extremely wasteful.

Similar to the *Red Dirt Series*, in *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, I attempt to disrupt the capitalist system of consumption by using “found” items, primarily textiles. The cloth I used for

this project I no longer used or needed (for example, a pair of ripped shorts, a sheet, a pillowcase), pieces I acquired at yard sales or thrift stores. Except for the blue embroidery floss, the threads I used both to embroider and quilt the pieces are also found. Finally, apart from the soda ash, I “found” all the tools I used to dye the fabric: the pot to heat the water, the spatula to stir the solution, the trowel to dig the earth, as well as the earth itself.

Found Handwriting

Like the words and cloth, the handwriting is not my own. Instead, it is the handwriting of friends and family, people I can (and did) ask for help and who gave their help to me, to my dissertation willingly. To all of them—the people I know, the people who I only know through their work—I owe my thanks and they all have my love.

I debated for a long time about who to ask. A problem with asking others is that, during a pandemic, it is difficult to meet with people face-to-face, which this approach requires. Therefore, the people who scribed the quotes are a mixture of my closest people, as well as my people who were closest.

I asked people to scribe their quote in pencil onto a 7x10 inch page in a mixed media paper notebook. Spacing and alignment were up to the individual. I chose pencil partially because I did not want to choose a color and there is something about the impermanence of it that appeals to me. If people asked for direction, I asked that they write their letters at least half an inch high so that they could be easily read and embroidered. Once written by the scribe, I then traced the quote in pencil onto tracing paper, basted it onto the fabric, embroidered it, then gently tore out the basting stitches and paper. This would leave the embroidered quote intact on the fabric and in handwriting that is clearly not my own.

Taken together, these found words, found fabric, and found handwriting give voice to myself. Though these words are not my own, in this quilt I arranged them together to tell a story about myself, my relationship with red dirt and red dirt pedagogy as it currently is. Perhaps one day I will take the stitches out, rearrange and add blocks of text as I hear more turns of phrase about red dirt, as I work to become a better comrade. Therefore, it is possible to think of this quilt, like all the art completed for a project, as snapshots helping me work through where I am.

“Found Red Dirt”

“Found Red Dirt” is comprised of the quotes chosen for *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* ordered chronologically from when they were chosen by their scribes. The end of each quote is marked by the inclusion of a footnote citing it. The first two quotes in this poem are ones I chose. I initially planned to write all the quotes on the cloth itself and thus picked these two quotes because of how it worked with the fabric I had on hand.

As I developed the idea to have other people write the found quotes, Figures 14 and 15 were suggestions I made to the scribes, ones they took up enthusiastically. In large part, I made the suggestions because, knowing them very well, I thought the quotes would speak to who they are. Additionally, since they were the first people I asked, I hoped making suggestions would be the best use of their time. Afterwards, I became curious about what people would pick without my interference. I did not ask anyone to explain their choice, though some people did. One chose theirs because it was the shortest. Another person told me after I embroidered the quote he chose that he actually preferred a quote of James Baldwin’s but, since he loaned me the book I found it in, he felt like choosing that one was “cheating.” Other quote pairings make sense to me. For example, many of the scribes garden and the quotes they chose reflect this.

The following poem (Figures 12 – 28) is a mixture of images and text, each caption containing the words scribed and embroidered. In each caption, the text is written as it was published. So, if poetry, I wrote the text in its poetic form. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the last line of the poem was not completed before I needed to return to Michigan. For this reason, the text is included, but since I did not photograph it in Alabama, I did not include a photo in the visual poem.

Found Red Dirt



Figure 12: She leaned forward and placed her hands on the warm red dirt of her mother's grave and said happily, "I love you too, Mama."ⁱ



Figure 13: Red dirt wafting up
around my mother's newly polished shoes.
Welcome homeⁱⁱ



Figure 14: There's not much hope for a red dirt girl
Somewhere out there in the great big world
That's where I'm boundⁱⁱⁱ



Figure 15: Now see, down here, everyone gets stuck in the mud every now and then. Yeah, we're famous for our mud.^{iv}



Figure 16: One of these days
I'm going to swing my hammer down
Away from this red dirt town
I'm gonna make a joyful sound^v



Figure 17: I could not suppress the thought that this earth had acquired its color from the blood that had dripped down from these trees.^{vi}



Figure 18: But there are three things that can bring [home] all back to me in startling detail: the sight of a red dirt road, the smell of pine needles, and the sound of a blue jay's call.^{vii}



Figure 19: They knelt and weeded the plot until the rich red earth could be seen.^{viii}



Figure 20: dirt is filled with the promise of what the earth can give back to you if you work the land plant the seeds pull the weeds^{ix}



Figure 21: Red. It's always been red, as long as I can remember.^x



Figure 22: Some days we miss the way the red dirt lifted up and landed against our bare feet.^{xi}



Figure 23: I have never seen the ocean, but this, too, I can imagine—blue water pouring over red dirt.^{xii}

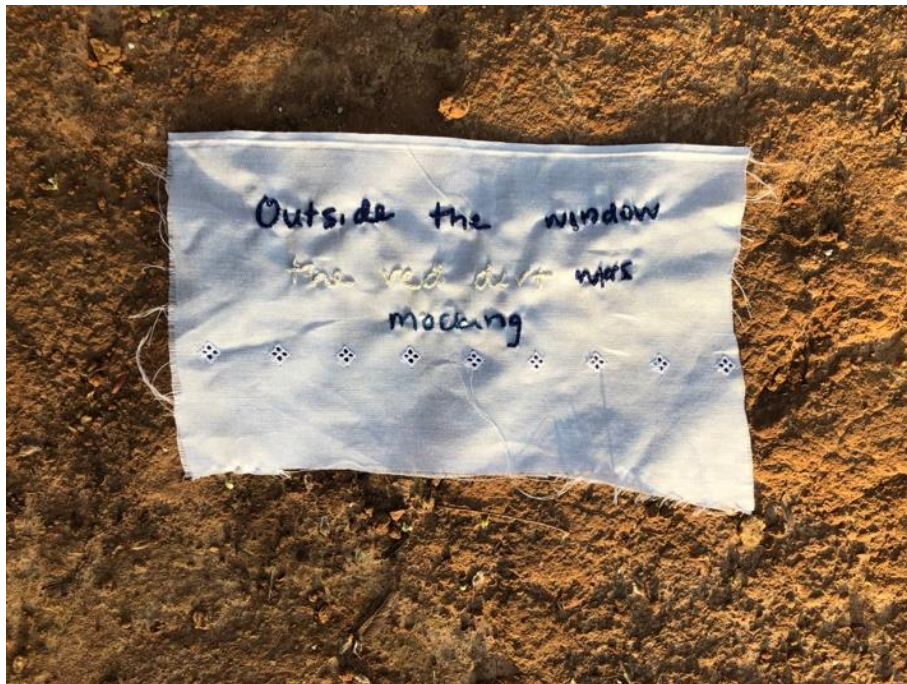


Figure 24: Outside the window, the red dirt was mocking me.^{xiii}



Figure 25: red dust wafting, then settling as though it's said all that it needs to say.^{xiv}



Figure 26: Red clay exfoliating masque^{xv}

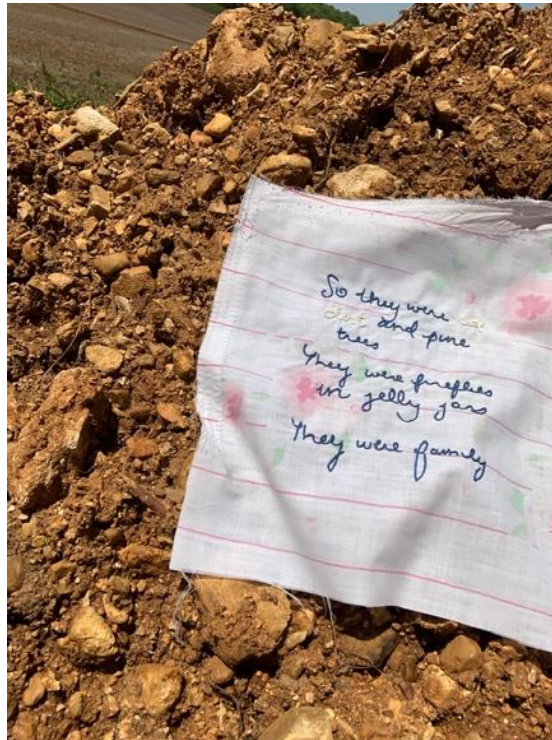


Figure 27: so they were red dirt and pine trees
they were fireflies in jelly jars...
They were family.^{xvi}

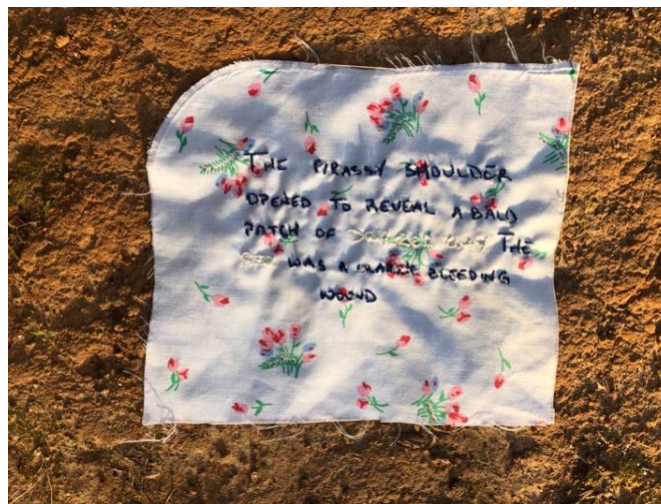


Figure 28: The grassy shoulder opened to reveal a bald patch of dry red clay. The red was a
glaring, bleeding wound.^{xvii}

(Not pictured) This is where you get your strength, the red dirt of Tara.^{xviii}

Notes on the Title

“Found Red Dirt” is one way of reading *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*. The poem is more akin to what the scribes first encountered: a series of quotes about red dirt that contained only the meaning of the words and the meaning the individual ascribed to them. In this way, “Found Red Dirt” privileges written language, but, by juxtaposing the text with images of the embroidered quotes, I hope to further demonstrate how limiting written language can be.

By using found words, found cloth, and found handwriting, *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* takes the ideas I explore in *Red Dirt Series* and expands them by de-centering myself. In other words, *Red Dirt Series* is largely about how I, Hannah Grisham, am working through and with my family history. It is how I am reconceptualizing my family not only as loving relationships, but also as mechanisms that teach me how to reproduce oppressive ideologies (Althusser, 1971/2014). Conversely, in *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, both in written and visual language, I am not the only author. Though I am an integral part of the work as the person who found the texts, the cloth, asked people to scribe, traced their words, embroidered them, and assembled the pieces, at the end of the day, this is a communal work made from the words and actions of my community. The work simultaneously shows many ongoing conversions and relationships both with the authors of the texts comprising “Found Red Dirt” as well as the people who scribed them. In this way, *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* has the potential to show not only my relationship to red dirt/white supremacy and cotton/capitalism but potentially many different people in the U.S. This last idea speaks to the piece’s title which plays on a nickname for the U.S. flag: the Red, White, and Blue. In the next section, I will use the title to further examine my artistic choices as well as explore possible meanings in *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*.

Red Dirt, White, and Blue

When deciding what color to embroider the text, I played with several ideas before landing on blue. I was already thinking about dying the fabric with red dirt and knew the cloth would need to be white. Blue worked to me because, along with red and white, it was one of the colors of the flags of the Confederate States of America as well as the United States of America. As I have discussed earlier, white supremacy and capitalism were/are foundational socially, economically, and politically to both countries. Under the umbrella of blue, there are many different colors and I initially had trouble deciding on just one. Therefore, I used different blues for different sources. In this way, I could give credit to each author on the front of the quilt (citations will be embroidered on the back of the quilt behind each quote in the corresponding color).

As I embroidered, I occasionally mismatched the color to the quotes. Sometimes I changed my mind about a color part of the way through embroidering the piece. Sometimes the first color did not feel right. Sometimes I started with floss that was not from the nationally marketed DNC brand so some of the threads are not an exact match. Sometimes I ran out of the first color or I lost the bobbin and could not find a match. Sometimes the new color would look very close to the first in one light and different in another. But sometimes I just messed up. Once when I was visiting with someone outside at night, I had enough light to make chain stitches but not enough to see that the thread I used was the wrong blue. In another case, I picked a color that I did not remember I had already used for a different source. All the discrepancies, all the mistakes, I kept. Probably unsurprisingly, my initial response was always to rip out the wrongly-colored stitches, but I decided to keep them. All of them. And there are many. I left them as a way to remind myself of my past mistakes and, hopefully, learn from them. This is what I do

when I say a microaggression (or a not-so-microaggression) and realize it the moment after. Being better, messing up less, is a way I try to make amends.

From Out of One, Many

For the final “product” of *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, I planned to assemble the many, varied quotes into one large quilt. I generally thought that I would organize the quotes into something like stanzas, perhaps in a way that spoke to how the red dirt (in the sense of the metaphor, not the literal dirt) repels me, and yet, despite this, I am constantly stuck in its mud. When I first tried to organize my sticky notes, this was the general theme that I found. I anticipated using non-embroidered found cloth between the quotes and to sew them onto a sheet akin to creating a crazy quilt.

Crazy quilts —popular after the U.S. Civil War to the early 1900s—are created by first sewing fabric scraps onto a backing fabric. The borders between scraps are often embroidered in order to hide seams (often exposed so that the fabric lays flat). Crazy quilts are sometimes called scrapbook quilts because they often incorporate scraps of fancy fabrics such as silks (often pieces of the quilter's clothes), embroidered names and initials, and other fabric mementos of the quilter(s). They are incredible works of art; all the more so when the time and care needed to create such a masterpiece is taken into consideration. Personally, while I find crazy quilts fascinating, they are also heartbreaking. Quilts tend to be anonymous creations, a feature that, as noted in Chapter 2, makes them easy to dismiss as art. Crazy quilts are different because names and initials are often included indicating that the embroiderer either wanted to remember someone or be remembered themselves. Today, it is difficult if not impossible to know who the initials stand for, even if a quilt has remained in the family. Additionally, crazy quilts are often

deteriorating due to the chemicals used to create luxury fabrics at that time. The beauty and, arguably, futility of crazy quilts appealed to me for all the above reasons.

Returning to the quotes, when I laid them all out (Figure 29), I could not make any sense of them. They were just random quotes that contained no cohesive meaning. They looked like those inspirational quotes so popular right now, the ones you can buy at home decor stores, so mass-produced that they have become meaningless. By extension, they looked like anything but art.



Figure 29: Attempted assemblage of *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*.

Instead, I kept seeing new things as I laid the words down, phrases I did not need to embroider; words that were unnecessary, distracting. I had anticipated this for some, leaving words out of my initial embroidering, but not all. For example, it struck me that “outside the

window the red dirt was mocking me” (Conley, 2016, p. 326) would have been a stronger statement if I had simplified the text to say “the red dirt was mocking.”

As I continued to look at all the quotes at the same time, words started to flow together. I moved them next to and in conversation with each other. By moving the pieces around, cutting quotes apart, folding so that only the words I needed were exposed, I was able to make deeper meaning of the quotes than either they would have been individually or all combined.

I cannot explain why or how phrases work together in my mind. Perhaps if I were only making art and not also writing a dissertation, I would not feel a need to. I want to know why my brain is doing what it is doing, seeing what it is seeing, making meaning in the ways it does. But because this is visual art and not only written, I can trust myself, my brain and accept the uncertainty that comes with the inability to explain. Returning to a point I made in Chapter 3, words, explanations, are tied in the Cartesian split to rationality, masculinity, and godliness (Zembylas & Fendler, 2007). By allowing *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* to resonate on its own not only am I inverting the Cartesian hierarchy, but I am also releasing control. Simultaneously, using research-creation as a methodology, I can release the need to master my (dis)ability by way of explaining exactly what my brain is doing. I do not know if this “need” is real in the sense that it is an expectation of a research project, one I perceive as a means to hide my (dis)ability in the ableist academy, or both. I raise all of this because in thinking with *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, I am wondering how we are hurting students with brain differences when we ask them to “explain themselves” or “show their work.” Not that we should not ask students and people to do so. Learning how to express oneself is a needed life skill. Instead, I wonder what other possibilities there are then written and oral language to do so. I wonder also what we teach students about themselves when they are unable to do so in the forms of communication we, as a field,

prioritize? Do they feel shame for being different, for not being able to complete the expected task? Do they feel they are lacking somehow? What if we explicitly talked about brain differences not as something we, as teachers, need to accommodate but as a fund of knowledge unto itself?

Upon reflection, in wanting to create one big quilt, I had hoped to find some kind of unity, some kind of peace. But *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* is not that. The words, to me at least, do not work together peaceably. At least not all of them, together, at the same time. Yet my desire for wholeness, I believe, is a manifestation of my desire to master this project. Even though these are not my words, my handwriting, or even my cloth, it is still my art. I feel like a grumpy child when I say this, but that is part of my point. The desire to master ideas, as well as people, is deeply rooted in white supremacy and colonization. Singh (2018) asks us to consider how the language around “mastery” perpetuates colonization in our daily lives. Therefore *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, among other things, explores the tension between wanting to be in control (in this case, a very white emotion, Matias, 2016) and wanting to be antiracist and decolonial.

The splintering of my imagined big quilt into many smaller ones further illuminates the possibilities of comradeship. Each small quilt is its own conversation. While it might seem that, as a result of the quilts' disconnectedness, each disassembled piece is independent of the others. In reality, by their shared quilted form of blue embroidered found words on found cloth and dyed red with dirt, taken together, the individual conversations are connected and form a larger discussion about justice than they could if they were all sewn together. If I sewed all the pieces together, it is as though there is only one conversation. Instead, as we know, many different forms of oppression happen simultaneously, exacerbating each other (Crenshaw, 1989.)

Therefore, a multitude of oppressions need to be addressed simultaneously, otherwise, no progress towards dismantling them can be made (Bulkin et al., 1988).

The disassembledness of *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* point to the power of difference rather than sameness. They point to the need to build solidarity with comrades, people interested, in this case, in working to create a more just world for all people. One of the components of comradeship Dean expounds is the difference between liking people and being in solidarity with them. According to her, we do not have to like people on a one-to-one level to be a comrade. Perhaps we find the other person annoying. Perhaps they say or do things we do not fully agree with. Yet, at the end of the day, our values and goals are similar enough that we can act together to build community. We can live lives that support each other.. Phrased another way, even though we are different people, involved in different conversations/struggles, comrades are interested in seeing what we share across differences in order to redistribute power.

Chapter Conclusion

This work is currently unfinished, the photographs at the beginning of this chapter are just the beginning of assembling all the ideas contained in *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*. Therefore, it is difficult to summarize this chapter when I am still in it, still making it. Relatedly, I believe that as I continue to make this art, the ideas I present in this chapter will further develop.

What I can do is tell you where I am in this snapshot of time. I envision *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* as a disconnected quilt that uses traditionally feminine art forms to explore tensions between mastery and uncertainty, allyship and comradeship, individual and community. By using blue thread to chain stitch found quotes of other authors and creators scribed in many different handwritings onto found cloth, quilting and therefore binding the red mud dyed cloth with red thread, I enlarge my previous conception of red dirt that informed the *Red Dirt*

Series discussed in Chapter 4. By using feminine art forms, in this chapter, I have begun to consider how my female enslaver ancestors reproduced white supremacy rather than being the “passive” women I had always believed them to be, had I ever really stopped to think about them in the first place.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

I've always had a fascination with the needle, the magic power of the needle. The needle is used to repair damage. It's a claim to forgiveness. It is never aggressive, it's not a pin.

— Louise Bourgeois, *Parkett*, Vol. 27.

Looking back at the beginning of this project, I believe what I was really interested in was repair. As if I could just learn about the damage my Winston family caused then I could begin to repair it and thereby, repair myself. I had hoped that by researching about the specifics of their lives, de-abstractifying history by distilling it into specific atrocities committed by my ancestors, I could implicate myself in what Tillet (2012) describes as “mnemonic restitution” or a form of memory justice that “repairs the past and also promises to change our relationship with history itself” (p. 139). As a Black woman, Tillet is interested in how mnemonic restitution might affect Black people’s relationship to legal citizenship, economic equality, and “the even more intangible component of citizenship and civic membership (the right to recognition)” (p. 137). These are ideas that I was and remain interested in albeit from a different perspective. It is my hope that, through my art, this dissertation can be understood as the beginnings of a type of mnemonic justice attempting to repair what is missing not only in national histories (i.e. slavery) but also (my own) family stories.

Following Bourgeois’ quote, in order to repair with a sewing needle, one must first damage the cloth by poking a hole through it. Depending on the needle the hole can be tiny or large, seemingly self-healing or always visible. When sewing, attaching, connecting disparate pieces of cloth, the damage the needle creates is not always taken into account. Scissors or cutters, sure, we know there will be some kind of change. Not so with a needle even though,

when pressed hard enough, it can draw blood. A sewing needle thereby becomes a metaphor for this project: to begin repairing family stories into an accurate understanding of history, I damaged what I thought I knew about who I came from and, thereby, who I am. By creating art that focused on place, history, and family stories, the art-making I undertook—whether it be smearing mud or embroidering cloth—embodied the same duality of repair/destruction I experienced while researching my Winston enslaver family. Thinking about *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, for a white person to become a comrade or co-conspirator, one needs to damage one's comfort in order to work towards dismantling racial capitalist power structures.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to use visual art—both the process of creating as well as the finished pieces—as a medium to (re)envision not only the implicit curriculum of my father's mother's Winston family stories and histories, but also my conception of self. Therefore I would like this dissertation can be an example of what is possible not only through the visual arts for a singular person, but also for others as individuals and the field of social studies.

As I stated earlier, if I explored different branches of my family (my mama's Jewish or Catholic and Spanish families, my father's yeoman farmer family) using the same methodologies and frameworks, this would have been a very different work, but no less valuable. It would still challenge dominant ideologies of what "counts" as research in education, the social sciences, and academia as a whole. Thereby the methodologies and frameworks I use in this study can be used by anyone, not just white people and not just to explore/come to terms with/disrupt our/my internalized racism. There is value for all of us in considering families not only as (hopefully loving) relationships, but also how they teach us to accept and thereby reproduce oppressive ideologies (Althusser, 1971/2014). There is also value in critically engaging with our genealogy,

with learning what our family members did because it can help us better understand who we are and what value, what ideologies we hold in the first place (Paley, 1979; Sleeter, 2016).

Yet, as white people, we/I can read all the books, do all the consciousness-raising, and it will only get each of us so far (though, to be clear, these are activities that need to happen in order to help our thinking expand). Creating art is a way to move through difficult or uncomfortable ideas (hopefully) doing as little harm as possible to others. It can also provide a way for us to think about ourselves; not only what we believe in, but how we want our justice-oriented beliefs to manifest in our day-to-day lives. For example, many of us have seen people who claim that Black Lives Matter or to Believe Women when they/we speak of sexual assault and relationship violence; however, their iterations with Black people or survivors contradict these so-called beliefs. Maybe we are these people. Maybe we have been these people. Maybe, at some unknown point in the future, we will be these people. Honestly, it is probably all three because, again, these are but two examples. While art-making is not a cure-all for the ills of the world and within ourselves, when coupled with critical family history and ISAs it holds an unexplored possibility to individually confront the unknown racist, patriarchal, capitalist, ableist, antisemitic, xenophobic ideologies we all hold among a myriad of others.

Even though the art is unfinished, I want to take some time to provide some initial concluding thoughts. First, I will discuss two branches of implications of this study: social studies and myself. They are perhaps not all of the possible implications of this work; however, I believe they are the most salient based on where this study currently is. Afterwards, I will discuss the limitations of this study (most notably time) before talking about next steps.

Implications for Social Studies Education Research

To me, the value of my research is not that it is (yet another) examination of whiteness by a white person. While necessary, there are plenty of other people who have and continue to do that work. Instead, this historical study examines issues of race, power, identity, and justice-related not only to my family, but also what I have been taught about white enslavers. Though there are white scholars of race who, like me, write and/or create visual art about their family stories, I believe this dissertation adds a unique voice to that conversation as it combines both.

Additionally, in conducting a study that blends ABR with historical research, this work uniquely contributes to the field of social studies education by providing an alternative way to think about research than prioritizing verbal language over other forms of communications.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, this study is, as far as I know, is the first to use ABR within social studies education research. Though there is limited research about the intersection of arts and social studies, ABR is on the edge of a field already marginalized, particularly within the early grades (Fitchett, et al., 2014). But, of course, this is not how it has to be. Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) created space for artists/scholars to exhibit during their 2020 conference. Unfortunately, this conference was moved online because of the pandemic. Nevertheless, it raises the questions about what might happen if at the yearly national conference of the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) did the same. What might we as a community learn or think about that we had not before? Who might be included in such a reconceptualization of our conference that might not be otherwise? Might such a move allow more voices to be heard/included?

ABR might further aid us towards becoming a field, researchers, teachers, and people more oriented towards justice. It has the possibility to dis/able hierarchies of knowledge by

valuing both written-language and non-written language forms of communication (Eisner, 1994; 2002). In doing so, it might also dis/able the ableism of social studies education research and the academy as a whole because it could create space for people whose brains work differently than those who communicate best in written language.

Expanding the field's notion of what is social studies research can allow for social studies educational researchers to reckon with ourselves and our field in a way we have not. The marginalization of social studies has had the adverse effect not only of social studies being taught less, but also social studies researchers/members of CUFA spending a lot of their/our energy explaining why social studies matters. Because much of this conversation happens in academic spaces including articles, I suspect that the people who are involved already agree with each other. I get it—I am also very frustrated with the misinformation, fake news, and prejudices some education policymakers and students bring into classrooms (Journell, 2021; Segall, et. al, 2019). Who in this field is not? Yet the way we have been handling our marginalization is hurting us more than helping. It keeps us from being comrades with other, like-minded educational researchers. As for myself, between using ABR and focusing on a non-traditional social studies curriculum, I have often felt like I have to fight to justify my work as social studies. It is as though by focusing on non-traditional social studies topics and methodologies, I am alienating myself from the field. For example, the calls for CUFA conference proposals almost always focus on K-12 social studies classes and pre- and in-service teachers. While understandable, the focus on traditional social studies spaces is so extreme that it can exclude non-traditional social studies educational research. This past year, I did not apply CUFA conference because I could not figure out how to retrofit my work into the call. Not only is this

emblematic of missed opportunities for the field, on a personal note it is heartbreaking to feel shut out of the space I consider my intellectual home.

We want to and should be more diverse as a field, yet how can we when we are focused on justifying the subject's existence rather than building solidarity across subject areas?

Diversity includes race, gender, and sexual orientation, and it also includes neuro- as well as methodological diversity among others that are not currently on CUFA's radar so far as I can tell. Building solidarity across subject areas, becoming comrades with people in other fields, is how we can maintain our relevancy as a field while simultaneously becoming more inclusive.

Implications for Myself

Perhaps very obviously, throughout this process, I have learned a great deal about my family, their lives as enslavers, and how their ideologies about white supremacy and, to a lesser extent, capitalism and patriarchy, have been passed down to me. I have begun to consider how whiteness limits my life and all its possibilities. Unsurprisingly, I have learned that, in historical research as well as my own life and art, I have much more work to do. And even though I knew that would be a conclusion before I even started, antiracist self-work can always hold value and needs to be done.

An unforeseen outcome is that in using art, specifically needlecraft, I have begun to repair myself in ways I never foresaw. Though I have detailed some of this above, what is unexpected is that my relationship with educational research has changed as has my understanding of self. A year ago, even two months ago, I never would have considered myself an artist, but that is what I have become. I remember being young, maybe five, and answering the question "what do you want to be when you grow up" with "artist." In the intervening years, I thought the idea silly, something I grew out of like a pair of light-up sneakers.

I have been taught to think of a dissertation as a springboard for future selves, future work; to use it and the research done for it as a means to set one up in their future academic work: to publish, to get tenure, to keep teaching. Yet this path is, as I explained in Chapter 3, not for me; therefore, for much of this process, much of grad school, I have thought of a dissertation as a means to graduate, a hoop to jump through, something that would end with my time in graduate school. After all, if I did not want to become an academic, then what is the point of continuing this work once I graduated?

It is only in the last few months of this project that I have begun to see my dissertation, my time in graduate school, and myself differently; to think of this dissertation and degree, not as a terminal point, but setting me up for future work *in my own way*. In a way that does not implicitly compare me to every other Ph.D. student in my program or field and leaves me feeling I'm lacking because of my brain differences.

In short, writing and creating this dissertation, not to mention having a committee that sees its and my value even when I have not, has, quite frankly, been life-changing. Until I began this project as my dissertation, I did not understand how much I had come to internalize the belief that my brain differences made me deficient, that I and my ideas had no value within social studies or educational research. No one ever said anything like this to me. Instead, as is often the case with the internalization of a dominant ideology, difference from the perceived norm (whether it be race, gender, religion, or ability) can lead one to try to be more “normal” (Saltz, 2017). In other words, in using arts-based research (ABR), I have learned to accept my brain differences, but learn to believe, really truly believe, that my thoughts and ways of knowing, learning, and researching are as valid as more traditional forms of research. I have

learned that I am not as alone as I once thought. I have also learned that I am an artist, which is something I never expected to call myself when I began this project.

Limitations

The biggest limitation for this project is, of course, time; the need to graduate outweighing the desire to follow every historical and artistic lead. For example, as I discussed in Chapter 4, there are places where the historical trail, most noticeably about enslaved people, went cold. I could, like many historians, pick up threads later in different places (May, 2018; Twitty, 2017), and I plan to. But for this dissertation, trails end where they end. For now. The same limitation has been forced on my art. Because of this, at times I felt like my art was contrived, there to prove a point as much as create meaning. This latter limitation is explored in the Next Steps section below.

Additionally, when I began this work I wanted to be in conversations with many more Scholars of Color than I currently am. Even though I have read many works by Scholars of Color and tried to be very intentional with my citations, it is only as I look back over my bibliography that, despite all my intentions, I see how many white scholars there are. It is an important reminder that there is always more work to do.

Finally, writing a dissertation is always a hard thing to do. Writing during a pandemic is all the more difficult and everyone who has/is writing a dissertation this year has been affected in different ways. For me, I could not travel and be in Alabama as much as I wished. Fortunately for me, I was able to spend about 5 weeks in Alabama from March - April 2021.

Even though there is a lot one can do online, there is just nothing quite like being in a place. I found that overall I worked harder and with more interest and passion than when I was/am in Michigan. It is hard to explain, but my work just felt more resonant. Being back home

also meant that I could do really interesting and incredible things, like visiting the plantation with my father. And while I do not talk about that experience in the dissertation, moments like that inform it.

Next Steps

In addition to continuing historical research (detailed above), there are two main components of how I envision my art continuing. As I said in Chapter 5, with *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, I plan to continue to collect quotes and scribings, continue piecing together quilt tops, dying them, and quilting them. Another component of this work that I started is that, similar to going to pain sites for the *Red Dirt Series*, at the suggestion of Vivek Vellanki, I started going to pain sites and film myself embroidering there. This is another way *Red Dirt Series* and *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* will be connected conceptually.

Though I have not written about visiting sites in this paper, I have been to two already. The first I visited was the Confederate statue in Huntsville, Alabama in late March 2021. Huntsville is one of only three cities in Alabama that have removed their Confederate statues due to a state law fining any city or county \$25,000 that removes any statue or monument 40 years or older (Gattis, 2020, July 10). Huntsville moved their statue from the courthouse square to the section of Maple Hill graveyard where unknown Confederate soldiers are buried. The second place I embroidered was at the plantation on the front steps, under the balcony I talk about in Chapter 4. Though beyond the scope of this paper to discuss, working on *Red Dirt, White, and Blue* in those spaces opened up new ways of considering the art by connecting it further to geographic locations and my meaning-making.

Second, I plan to make a yet-untitled series that uses red dirt and hoop skirts as a symbol of white women's continued complicity in perpetuating white supremacy. Some white, female

enslavers believed that they shared a status with enslaved women yet, as Fox-Genovese (1988) says, “slave women did not see their mistresses as oppressed sisters” (p. 48). How could they? Yet for white, enslaver women, the belief not only that they were on similar footing with enslaved people or, even more cringe-worthy, a “slave of slaves” (Clinton, 1982, p. 16) echoes within feminism today. Many white women seem to (still) believe that women share some kind of universality of experience simply because they are women (Arvin, et al., 2013; Frankenberg, 1993) which ignores how racism and sexism (among other forms of oppression) uniquely intersect in the lives of Women of Color (Crenshaw, 1989). hooks (1984) reminds us that, “racism abounds in the writings of white feminists, reinforcing white supremacy and negating the possibility that women will bond politically across ethnic and racial boundaries” (p. 3). Though hooks wrote these words almost 40 years ago, they still hold a lot of truth today. Though conceptualized in between the creation of *Red Dirt Series* and *Red Dirt, White, and Blue*, for a variety of reasons this as-yet-untitled piece has been put on hold.

A month before I finished my dissertation, I was talking to Lynn Fendler, telling her I felt like I was doing my dissertation wrong because I was enjoying it. It was emotionally difficult at times, to be sure, but overall really fun. She laughed and reminded me that research doesn’t have to be painful, it is ok, more than ok, for it to bring joy. Though she did not phrase it like this, she further reminded me that there are no medals for slogging through the trenches except, maybe a chip on one’s shoulder proclaiming “I survived” (or maybe that is just what I took away from our conversation.) I feel very fortunate to not only not have developed a chip on my shoulder—they are so heavy!—but to take off the ones I was carrying due to the alienation I felt because of my

brain differences. In short, researching and creating this dissertation is simultaneously not at all what I expected and everything I dreamed.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Althusser, L. (2014/1971) *On the reproduction of capitalism: Ideology and ideological state apparatuses*. (Goshgarian, G. M., Trans.) Verso.
- Anderson, L. (2006). Analytic autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), 373-395. doi:10.1177/0891241605280449
- Archibald, R. (2020, August 25). "Black Belt 2020: What the Black Belt's population loss means for the rest of Alabama." *Al.com*. <https://www.al.com/news/2020/08/black-belt-2020-what-the-black-belts-population-loss-means-for-the-rest-of-alabama.html>
- Arvin, M., Tuck, E., & Morrill, A. (2013) Decolonizing feminism: Challenging connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. *Feminist Formations*. 25(1). 8-34.
- Baldwin, J. (1954/1993) "Nobody knows my name." Morrison, T. (Ed). *Baldwin Collected Essays*. 197-208. The Library of America.
- Banks, J. (1989). Approaches to multicultural curriculum reform. *Trotter Institute Review*. 3(3), 17-19.
- Berchini, C. N. (2017). Critiquing un/critical pedagogies to move toward a pedagogy of responsibility in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 68(5), 463-475.
- Bell, A. (2020). "Reverberating Historical Privilege of a 'Middling' Sort of Settler Family" *Genealogy*. 4(2). 17 pages. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy4020046>
- Beckert, S. (2014) *Empire of cotton: A global history*. Vintage Books.
- Bercaw, N. (2003). *Gendered freedoms: Race, rights, and the politics of household in the Delta, 1861-1875*. University Press of Florida.
- Bochner, A., & Ellis, C. (2016). *Evocative autoethnography: Writing lives and telling stories*. Routledge.
- Brennert, A. (2003). *Moloka'i*. St. Martin's Griffin.
- Brewer, W. (1872). *Alabama, her history, resources, war record, and public men from 1540-1872*. Barrett & Brown, Steam Printers and Book Binders.
- Brown, A. & Brown, K. (2015). The more things change, the more they stay the same: Excavating race and the enduring racisms in U.S. curriculum. *National Society for the Study of Education*, 114(2), 103-130

- Brodkin, K. (1999). *How Jews became white folks and what that says about race in America*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Brolis, M. (2018). *Stories of women in the Middle Ages*. (Myerson, G., Trans.) McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Bulkin, E., Pratt, M., & Smith, B. (1988). *Yours in struggle: Three feminist perspectives on anti-semitism and racism*. Firebrand Books
- Calderon, D. (2014) Speaking back to manifest destinies: a land education-based approach to critical curriculum inquiry. *Environmental Education Research*. 20(4). 24-36.
- Carozzi, M. J. (2005). Talking minds: The scholastic construction of incorporeal discourse. *Body & Society*, 11(2), 25-39.
- Chicago, J & Hill, S. (1980). *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework*. Anchor Books.
- Clark, P. & Sears, A. (2020). *The arts and the teaching of history: Historical f(r)ictions*. Palgrave MacMillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51513-3>
- Cline, E. (2012). *Overdressed: The shockingly high cost of cheap fashion*. Portfolio/Penguin.
- Clinton, C. (1982). *The plantation mistress*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Clinton, C. (1995). *Tara revisited: Women, war, and the plantation legend*. Abbeville Press.
- Coates, T. (2014) "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
- Conley, G. (2016) *Boy erased: A memoir*. Riverhead Books.
- Connerton, P. (2008). Seven types of forgetting. *Memory Studies*. Vol 1(1): 59–71 [DOI: 10.1177/1750698007083889]
- Cowart, M. (1985). *Old Land Records, Colbert Co*.
- Cowart, M. (1979/2005) *Old Land Records, Madison Co*.
- Crawford, B.S., Hicks, D., & Doherty, N. (2009). Worth the WAIT: Engaging social studies students with art in a digital age. *Social Education*, 73(3), 136-139
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139-167.

- Customer Price Index Inflation Calculator (2021, April 13) Use our inflation calculator.
<https://www.in2013dollars.com/>
- Davis, A. (1971/2016) Political prisoners, prisons, and Black liberation. Davis, A. (ed) *If they come in the morning*. . . Voices of resistance. Verso.
- Davis, L. (2006). Introduction. In L. Davis (Ed) *The Disability Studies Reader*. (pp. xv-xviii). Routledge.
- Dean, J. (2019). *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging*. Verso.
- Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as experience*. Penguin.
- DiAngelo, R. (2018) *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.
- Dodd, D., Bower, D., Andress, F., & Ralston, C. (1993). *Alabama: Its history and geography*. Clairmont Press.
- Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2015). *An Indigenous people's history of the United States*. Beacon Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (1994). *Cognition and curriculum reconsidered*. Teachers College Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (2008). *The arts and the creation of mind*. Yale University Press.
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation, A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future, (2017, <http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications>).
- Estrin, J. (2019, Nov. 8). Surviving droughts, tornados and racism: An African-American family has established a farming dynasty in Alabama. The trade war is just the latest challenge. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/06/business/black-family-farmers.html>
- Equal Justice Initiative (2017). *Lynching in America: Confronting the legacy of racial terror*. Montgomery, Alabama: Equal Justice Initiative.
- Equal Justice Initiative. (2020). Community Remembrance Project. <https://eji.org/projects/community-remembrance-project/>
- Fendler, L. (2014). The ethics of materiality: Some insights from non-representational theory. Smeyers & M. Depaepe (Eds.) *Educational research: Material culture and its representation*. pp. 115-132. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Fitchett, P., Heafner, T. & Lambert, R. (2014). Examining elementary social studies marginalization: A multilevel model, *Educational Policy*, 28:1, 40–68.

- Foucault, M. (2007). *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*. United States: Picador.
- Fox-Genovese, E. (1988). *Within the plantation household: Black and white women of the old south*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/michstate-ebooks/detail.action?docID=310251>
- Gabella, M. (1994). The art(s) of historical sense. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. 27(2). 139-163.
- Gardner, E. (2003). Black and white: American genealogy and popular response. *The Midwest Quarterly*, 44(2), 16-44.
- Goodson, I., & Gill, S. R. (2011). *Narrative pedagogy: Life history and learning* (Vol. 386). Peter Lang.
- Gonzales-Day, K. (2006). *Lynching in the west, 1850-1935*. Duke University Press.
- Habitat for Humanity. (2021). Habitat for Humanity ReStore. <https://www.habitat.org/restores>
- Hamilton, P. (2003). Sale of the century?: Memory and historical consciousness in Australia. In Hodgkin, K. and Radstone, S. (Eds). *Contested pasts: The politics of memory*. Pp. 136-152. New York: Routledge
- Hatton, S. (2019) History, Kinship, identity, and technology: Toward answering the question “what is (family) genealogy?” *Genealogy*. doi:10.3390/genealogy3010002
- Harden, K. & Harden-Moore, T. (2019). *Moving from Ally to Accomplice: How Far Are You Willing to Go to Disrupt Racism in the Workplace?* Diverse Seed Education. <https://diverseeducation.com/article/138623/>
- Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as Property. *Harvard Law Review*, 106(8), 1707–1791.
- Harris E. (2000) “Red Dirt Girl.” *Red Dirt Girl*. Grapevine Records.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory from margin to center*. South End Press.
- Huntsville Times. (1955, November 10). Ethel Mae Garth Hightower Obituary. *Huntsville Times*.
- Isaac, R. (2005). *Landon Carter's uneasy kingdom: Revolution and rebellion on a Virginia plantation*. Oxford University Press.

- Jacobson, M. F. (2008). *Roots too: White ethnic revival in post-Civil Rights America*. Harvard University Press.
- Jefferson, D., Berman, A., Zegart, S., Kentucky Quilt Project., & Copyright Collection (Library of Congress). (2011). *Why quilts matter: History, art & politics*. Kentucky Quilt Project.
- Jones-Rogers, S. E. (2019). *They were her property: White women as slave owners in the American South*. Yale University Press.
- Journell, W. (2021). Taking a reasoned stance against misinformation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 102(5), 12–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721721992559>
- Kaomea, J. (2000). A curriculum of aloha?: Colonialism and tourism in Hawai'i's elementary textbooks. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 30(3), 319-344. doi:10.1111/0362-6784.00168
- Kelly, R. (1990). *Hammer and hoe: Alabama communists during the Great Depression*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Kendi, I. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. Nation Books.
- Kendi, I. (2019). *How to be Antiracist*. Penguin Random House.
- King, N. (2017) "Episode 766: Georgetown, Louisiana, part one." *Planet Money*, NPR. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2017/04/21/525058118/episode-766-georgetown-louisiana-part-one>
- Klein, J. & Reichert, J. (1983). *Seeing Red*. New Day Films.
- Lagerspetz, O. (2018). *A Philosophy of Dirt*. Reaktion Books Ltd.
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203880371
- Lerner, G. (2004). *The Grimké sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for women's rights and abolition*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Levstik, L. S. (2008). What happens in social studies classrooms? Research on K-12 social studies practice. In L. S. Levstik & C. A. Tyson (Eds.), *Handbook of research in social studies education* (pp. 50-62). Routledge.
- Levy, S. (2017) How students navigate the construction of heritage narratives. *Theory & Research in Social Education*. 45(2), 157-188, DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2016.1240636
- Linter, T. & MacPhee D. (2012) Selecting history: What elementary educators say about their social studies textbook. In H. Hickman & B. J. Porfilio (Eds.) *The new politics of the textbook: Critical analysis in the core content areas* (pp. 259 – 270) SensePublishers.

- Lipsitz, G. (2006). *The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from identity politics*. Temple University Press.
- Loewen, J. (2007). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. Touchstone Books.
- Loewen, J. (2010) Introduction: Unknown well-known documents. In Loewen, J. & Sebesta, E. *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate reader: The “great truth” about the “Lost Cause.”* Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Longwood Center for the Visual Arts. (2017). *Break Glass: The art of V.L. Cox: A conversation to end hate*. Virginia: Longwood Center for the Visual Arts
- Love, B. (2019). We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom. Beacon Press.
- Loveless, N. (2019) *How to make art at the end of the world: A manifesto for research-creation*. Duke University Press
- Martinez, E. (1993). Beyond Black/white: The racisms of our time. *Social Justice*, 20(1–2), 22–34.
- Maupin, A. (2017). *Logical family: A memoir*. Harpers.
- Matias, C. (2016). *Feeling white: Whiteness, emotionality, and education*. Sense Publishers.
- May, R. (2018). *An American quilt: Unfolding a story of family and slavery*. Pegasus Books.
- McKenzie, M. (2013, September 30) *No more “allies.”* Black Girl Dangerous Blog. <https://www.bgdblog.org/2013/09/no-more-allies/>
- McPherson, T. (2003). *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, gender and nostalgia in the imagined South*. Duke University Press.
- Mell, A. (1904). *Revolutionary Soldiers Buried in Alabama*,
- Meyer, L. (2020) Family history: Fact versus fiction. *Genealogy*. 4(2). 44-58. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy4020044>
- Miller, J. D. (2002). *South by southwest: Planter emigration and identity in the slave south*. University of Virginia Press, in cooperation with the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University.
- Miles, T. (2017). *The dawn of Detroit: A chronicle of slavery and freedom in the city of the straits*. The New Press.

- Minow, M. (2010). XII. The hope for healing: What can truth commissions do? Rothberg, R. & Thompson, D. (Eds). *Truth v. Justice* (pp. 235-260). Princeton University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400832033-fm>
- Mitchell, M. (1936/1967) *Gone with the wind*. Pocket Books.
- Montgomery, D. (2012) *Dirt: The erosion of civilizations*. Berkeley: University of California.
- National Park Service (2020) Trail of Tears. <https://www.nps.gov/trte/index.htm>
- Native News Online Staff (2017, September 27). Professor “returns what was stolen” to the Ute Indian Tribe with a \$250,000 bank transfer. *NativeNewsOnline.Net*.
<https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/professor-returns-stolen-ute-indian-tribe-250000-bank-transfer/>
- Painter, N. (2002). *Southern history across the color line*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Paley, V. G. (1979). *White teacher*. Harvard University Press.
- Parham, A. (2008). Race, memory and family history. *Social Identities*. 14(1), 197-215.
- Paris, D., & Winn, M. T. (Eds.). (2014). *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*. SAGE Publications.
- Paris, R. (2017) *The forgetting tree: A rememory*. Wayne State University Press.
- Philip, M. N. (2008). *Zong! Wesleyan University Press*.
- Phillips, M. S. (2011). Rethinking historical distance: From doctrine to heuristic. *History and Theory*, 50(4), 11-23. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2303.2011.00600.x
- Picower, B. (2009). The unexamined whiteness of teaching: How white teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 197–215.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320902995475>
- Pitt, A. & Britzman, D. (2003) Speculations on qualities of difficult knowledge in teaching and learning: An experiment in psychoanalytic research, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16, 755-776, DOI: 10.1080/09518390310001632135.
- Prashad, V. (2019) *Red star over the Third World*. Pluto Press.
- Presser, L. (2019, July 22). “The dispossessed: Why are so many black families losing their land?” *The New Yorker*. P. 28-35.

- Price, A. (2019). Spell it with a capital “B.” *Medium*. <https://insightcced.medium.com/spell-it-with-a-capital-b-9eab112d759a>
- Private User (2018, May 23) *Captain Anthony Winston*. Geni. <https://www.geni.com/people/Captain-Anthony-Winston/60000000001084837456>
- Raden, A. (2015) *Stoned: Jewelry, obsession, and how desire shapes the world*. Ecco.
- Renkl, M. (2019). *Late migrations: A natural history of love and loss*. Milkweed Editions.
- RetailUnion. (March 14, 2021). “The Black Lives Matter caravan showed us that we are strong in our fight for positive change!” *Youtube.com* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GIT2X_gzPtI&t=75s
- Rochabrun, M. (2016, April 1). How Habitat for Humanity Went to Brooklyn and Poor Families Lost Their Homes. *ProPublica*. <https://www.propublica.org/article/habitat-for-humanity-brooklyn-bedford-stuyvesant-poor-lose-homes>
- Roediger, D. (1991). *Wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class*. Verso.
- Rosenzweig, R., & Thelen, D. P. (1998). *The presence of the past: Popular uses of history in American life*. Columbia University Press.
- Rushton, B. (2006). Truth and reconciliation? The experience of Truth Commissions. *Australian journal of international affairs*. 60. 125-141. DOI: 10.1080/10357710500494614
- Saltz, G. (2017). *The power of different: The link between disorder and genius*. Macmillan.
- Sanchez, T. (2007). The depiction of Native Americans in recent (1991-2004) secondary American history textbooks: How far have we come? *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 40(4), 311-320. doi:10.1080/10665680701493565
- Santana, J. (2016) *Ally or co-conspirator: What it means to act #InSolidarity*. Move to End Violence. <https://movetoendviolence.org/blog/ally-co-conspirator-means-act-insolidarity/>
- Saunt, C. (2020). *Unworthy republic: The dispossession of Native Americans and the road to Indian territory*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Schlosser, L. (2003). Christian privilege: Breaking a sacred taboo. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*. 31(1). 44-51.
- Scott, A. (1970). *The southern lady: From pedestal to politics, 1830-1930*. University of Chicago Press.

- Segall, A., Crocco, M.S., Halvorson, A., Jacobsen, R. (2019). Teaching in the twilight zone of misinformation, disinformation, alternative facts, and fake news. In Journell, W. (Ed.), *Unpacking fake news: An educator's guide to navigating the media with students* (pp. 74–91). Teachers College Press.
- Simon, R. I. (2014). *A pedagogy of witnessing: Curatorial practice and the pursuit of social justice*. State University of New York Press.
- Singh, J. (2018). *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and decolonial entanglements*.
- Sleeter, C. (2008) Critical Family History, Identity, and Historical Memory. *Educational Studies*. 43:2, 114-124, DOI: 10.1080/00131940801944587
- Sleeter, C. (2016). Critical family history: Situating family within contexts of power relationships. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*. 8. 11-23.
- Sharpe, C. (2016) *In the wake: On Blackness and being*. Duke University Press.
- Smångs, M. (2017). *Doing violence, making race*. Taylor & Francis.
- Stevenson, B. (2015). *Just mercy: A story of justice and redemption*. Spiegel & Grau.
- Sudbanthad, P. (2019). *Bangkok wakes to rain*. Riverhead books.
- Suh, Y. (2013). Past looking: Using arts and historical evidence in teaching history. *Social studies research and practice*. 8(1). 135-159.
- Tharps, L. (2014, June 2). I refuse to remain in the lower case. *My American Melting Pot: A Multicultural Lifestyle Blog*. <https://myamericanmeltingpot.com/2014/06/02/i-refuse-to-remain-in-the-lower-case/>
- Tillet, S. (2012). *Sites of slavery: Citizenship and racial democracy in the post-Civil Rights imagination*. Duke University Press.
- Toledo Museum of Art. (November, 2020 – February 2021) *Radical Tradition: American Quilts and Social Change*. Toledo Museum of Art.
- Tolnay, S. E., & Beck, E. M. (1995). *A festival of violence: An analysis of southern lynchings, 1882-1930*. University of Illinois Press.
- Trouillot, M (1995) *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history*. Beacon Press.
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Zed Books.

- Twitty, M. (2017). *The cooking gene: A journey through African American culinary history in the Old South*. Harper Collins Publishers.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, April). *Economy at a glance: Huntsville, Alabama*. https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.al_huntsville_msa.htm
- Vellanki, V. (2020). *Thinking, feeling, and creating with photography: Widening the lens of visual research in education*. (Publication No. 28024154). [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Vitulli, P. & Santoli, S. (2013). Visual arts and social studies: Powerful partners in promoting critical thinking skills. *Social Studies Research and Practice*. 8(1). 117-134
- Walters, R. W. (2008). *The price of racial reconciliation*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Webb-Saunders, S & Donehower, K. (2015). Introduction. In S. Webb-Saunders & K. Donehower (Eds.) *Rereading Appalachia: Literacy, place, and cultural resistance*. The University Press of Kentucky.
- Wong, D. (2018). Intercultural learning may be impossible in education abroad: A lesson from *King Lear*. *Frontiers (Boston, Mass.)*, 30(3), 38-50. <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v30i3.428>
- Wood, K. (2004). *Masterful women: Slaveholding widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Woodson, J. (2016). *Brown Girl Dreaming*. Puffin Books.
- Zembylas, M., & Fendler, L. (2007). Reframing emotion in education through lenses of parrhesia and care of the self. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 26(4), 319-333.

ⁱ Brennert, (2003). *Moloka'i*. p. 347

ⁱⁱ Woodson (2016), *Brown Girl Dreaming*. p. 18

ⁱⁱⁱ Harris (2000) "Red Dirt Girl."

^{iv} Lynn (1992) *My Cousin Vinny*. Harris (2000) "Red Dirt Girl."

^v Harris (2000) "Red Dirt Girl."

^{vi} Baldwin, (1954/1993) "Nobody Knows my Name" in *Baldwin Collected Essays*. p. 198.

^{vii} Renkl, M. (2019). *Late migrations: A natural history of love and loss*. p. 43-44.

^{viii} Brennert, (2003). *Moloka'i*. p. 352.

^{ix} Woodson (2016), *Brown Girl Dreaming*. p. 35.

-
- ^x Elmlad (1987) *All Manner of Riches*. p. 226.
- ^{xi} Woodson (2016), *Brown Girl Dreaming*. p. 114.
- ^{xii} Woodson (2016), *Brown Girl Dreaming*. p. 63.
- ^{xiii} Conley, (2016). *Boy Erased: A Memoir*. p. 326.
- ^{xiv} Woodson (2016), *Brown Girl Dreaming*. p. 107.
- ^{xv} Betta Body Butta (2020). Red Clay Exfoliating Masque. Label.
- ^{xvi} Woodson (2016), *Brown Girl Dreaming*. p. 113.
- ^{xvii} Conley, (2016). *Boy Erased: A Memoir*. p. 326
- ^{xviii} Fleming (1939). *Gone with the Wind*.