The East End: An Exploration of Social Change in a Rural American Community

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Thesis Practicum II

April 26, 2020

All names and identifying characteristics have been changed to protect the anonymity of all informants.

Portions of this draft contain previous writing from these courses: Spirituality, Culture, and Social Justice; Globalization; Social Entrepreneurship; Peacemaking; Cultural Studies; Program Management; Program Evaluation; Community Development; Fieldwork; Thesis Practicum I; and Thesis Practicum II.

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THE THESIS PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

"What kind of heart allows us to preserve communal integrity without demonizing the other?" –Richard Beck

The tenets of globalization that are shaping the world in which we live are bringing us closer together than we have ever been. In the United States, amenity-rich rural communities are experiencing an influx of racially, ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse migrants, resulting in multi-cultural communities and, subsequently, social tension. Understanding social dynamics in newly diversified communities is crucial to navigating oppressive systems of power such as discrimination, marginalization, and segregation. Critical ethnography raises awareness of social disparities, exposes underlying systems of injustice and inequality, illuminates community assets, and identifies potential community leaders, thus creating a robust platform for just and equitable development.

How we work, play, communicate, and relate to one another is an essential factor in creating healthy communities. Of the myriad of changes related to globalization, those influencing our social sphere require special attention as they can result in increased conflict between people and people groups. For communities like those in the East End of Lewis County, Washington, who are experiencing heterogeneity outside their traditional racial, ethnic and class demographics, it is especially important to attend to social dynamics as early as possible, before a social rigidity sets in. Addressing these social tensions requires compassion towards people and ruthlessness towards systems of injustice. Both of these positions necessitate a deep understanding of the issues and how the issues are understood by those experiencing them.

Qualitative research as an approach to development provides a solid foundation to use the knowledge that I have gained to make a practical difference in the real world. Critical

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ethnography has served two important purposes in this quest–one educational and the other relational. The process of ethnography—observation, participation, interviews, and research—has allowed me to engage fully in the context of changing social dynamics in what I will now fondly refer to as the East End. Reflecting upon my own experiences growing up in and returning to the East End, my perceptions are challenged, validated, and integrated with the perceptions of other East Enders to reveal a diverse and dynamic rural community. Graciously sharing their lives and their stories with me, I am honored to learn about the particular context, culture, challenges, assets, and history of this community from the people who live here.

While this knowledge is essential, the most compelling facet of the process of ethnography has been relational. I know the names of the librarians, the small business owners, the school staff, and the regulars who frequent those places and others. I know the names of their children, how their health is, and what is important to them. I also have felt known by them, the power of place and culture fostering a sense of belonging. While the process of ethnography has established a solid foundation of knowledge and relationship building, I intend also to use the product of ethnography to cast a wider vision. As a published book, this ethnography, with its intimate portrayal of a rural community in transition, has the potential to impact readers throughout the nation.

In this thesis, the reader will find a detailed presentation of some of the challenges and opportunities found in an amenity-rich rural community that is experiencing new diversity. The thesis project portion will begin with an account of the qualitative research and include an in-depth discussion of the issue, the context, the culture, and the approach that I have chosen to address these challenges. The thesis project section will be followed by the book proposal, which I have composed in alignment with the submission requirements from InterVarsity Press. This

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section will provide the reader with an account of the book in its entirety. The book proposal will be followed by selections from the book itself, the writing of which will showcase the culture of the East End through historical research, personal experiences, and numerous conversations with the residents living there.

My passion for community, justice and equality, and my love for the people and this place, have motivated me to learn more about my community. As a peacemaker who views social challenges as opportunities, I believe I may have the capacity to lead the people in my community through conflict towards peace. Using critical ethnography as a means of developing a more profound, nuanced, contextual understanding of the East End is important, but using critical ethnography as a means of developing respectful, encouraging, and copowering relationships with community members is essential to further development.

THE RESEARCH

The location of my thesis research has been the east end of Lewis County, focusing on Mossyrock, Washington, but including interviews from people living in Silver Creek, Salkum, Cinebar, Ethel, Morton, Randle, and Onalaska. I chose Mossyrock and the surrounding area for two reasons: it is here that I sense the highest degree of social tension, and it is here that I see the highest capacity for continued population growth and demographic diversity. My selection of the East End is also very personal since I was born and raised here and care deeply about the people in this community. The first eighteen years of my life held for me, the wonder of nature and small-town living as well as the challenges of poverty. Returning after 20 some years spent living elsewhere, I am now processing my cultural upbringing and aligning it with the culture that exists here now. This has led me to wonder how I might use my experiences in the East End, as well as my experiences elsewhere, to support my community as it continues to engage with

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the many changes brought on by our global revolution. My hopes of serving in the community require a reorientation to the community, as seen and understood by those who live here. Qualitative research allows me to reflect upon the culture of this community, examine the socio-cultural transformations that it is undergoing, and explore these issues with other residents living in the East End.

While my heart is for the people of this valley, my mind has never entirely adhered to the cultural norms: I am a tree-hugger amongst loggers, a liberal in conservative country, and a seeker of diversity living with folks who are most comfortable with uniformity. Besides examining my own cultural experiences, it is vital for me to see this community from the perspective of the residents and to understand what it is like for them to live here. Researchers Merriam and Tisdale write, "The overall purpose [of qualitative research] is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (24). Qualitative research is one way in which we can catch a glimpse, and sometimes a panorama, of how those around us view life on this planet.

We often consider the worlds and lives that ethnography examines as quite common; in reality, they hold great power to either advance or impede social justice. Recognizing social disparities between people groups, I also want to identify how the various social groups frame justice and equality. While ethnography examines the culture, critical ethnography "attempts to interpret the culture but also to expose cultural systems that oppress and marginalize certain groups of people" (Merriam and Tisdale 60). Because of my two-fold interest in entering the community as a learner and engaging with themes of social justice, I found qualitative research in the form of critical ethnography to be a reliable method of inquiry with the potential to lead to action. Ethnographer Seth Holmes writes, "Ethnography–with its thick description and nuanced

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analysis–is an especially important methodology for understanding the multi-layered meanings and vertical slices of power that make up social and cultural life, including its inequalities and justifications" (185). Throughout this project, I have come to realize the sheer number of variables that are woven into this thing we call 'community.' Unable to fully encapsulate the intricacies of social and cultural life, ethnography gets us as close as is possible. Towards an endeavor of cultural understanding and positioning for future development, I established a set of questions to guide my research:

1. What are the mindsets of the three social groups: longtime locals, urban migrants, and Hispanic immigrants? What are the mindsets of the Christians in those groups? How does each group view themselves and their place in the community? How do they see one another? Do they feel social tension? What do they think about it?
2. What power structures are fostering these social tensions? What are the foundations of these power structures: Local? National? Global? Human? What impact will revealing these power structures have on the individual and at the community level?
3. How can critical ethnography be leveraged to promote social change and build social capital? Which development practices follow ethnography? How can ethnography and development influence relational dynamics between social groups?

Doing research in a community that I am intimately familiar with requires alternating from the insider, or emic perspective to the outsider, or etic perspective and then back again. This entails being aware of my positionality and incorporating researcher reflexivity into every interaction. One aspect of this involves consideration of the ethical issues that may arise from my research. The topic is a sensitive one–white people don't often engage in discussions of race, class, or segregation. It may be counter-cultural to discuss these matters openly for the Latinx

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people, and the same goes for the longtime residents–even the urban migrants might balk at openly discussing these matters. Being sensitive to cultural norms while attempting to pursue social justice is a tightrope walk that requires a nuanced approach. Typically, I am a bit of a bulldog when it comes to injustice. Still, through my studies, I have developed a more practical approach, one that I am honing through fieldwork, self-reflection, and a more compassionate response.

While defining a research problem is fundamental to scientific inquiry, forming my thesis project in response to perceived social ills initially placed my focus on the problem, rather than on solutions. The intimate connection I have with this community may have also clouded my perceptions—I took this problem of social tension and segregation personally. My memory of this culture was of hardworking, proud, and respectful people who looked out for one another. Returning to this community years later, I found that that sense of neighborliness still existed between longtime residents but was not extended to outsiders. Still respectful, the superficial interactions had an edge to them that clearly defined in and out-group dynamics. These social tensions tainted the sense of community that I longed for, and I felt indignant towards this response by the longtime residents. However, as I began to engage in fieldwork, I found that my problem-focused perceptions were one dimensional, and I began to realize that my indignant response towards longtime residents was an unenlightened one.

Being repeatedly surprised by responses from people that did not fit into the paradigm that I had created for this community was an edifying experience. I began to understand that this culture was much more complicated, intricate, and diverse than I could imagine. While implicit bias is human, as a researcher, awareness of and reflection upon personal biases is critical to sound research. Authors Bonnie Stone Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater write, "Throughout

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the process of conducting your field study, you'll need to continue to ask how who you are affects how you understand yourself and your fieldwork" (115). As I seek justice and a development platform through critical ethnography, I must be mindful not to perpetrate injustices against those I write about. My frustration towards the exclusionary nature I found in my community elicited a bias against my own people before I had even sat down to listen to them and their stories. I am grateful to have realized that writing with an unbalanced, critical air will do nothing to motivate the peacemaking and community development that I hope to see and inspire.

Taking an ethnographic view of my home community has taught me that I am still at the beginning of this journey. Each day reveals a vague impression of the enormity of knowledge that awaits me. I am excited by it, and I am settling into the vastness of it. The study of ethnography, globalization, racism, classism, and development, merging with the experience of fieldwork, is transitioning into a new way of simply being in this community. This thesis project is not just an assignment, or a means to a degree for me. Ultimately, it is a demonstration of my God-given love for my neighbors, a way of living my life in accordance with biblical principles and my God-given vocational calling. The time that I am spending in the field is precious and full of relational and vocational potential. Only time will tell how this thesis project may impact my life and the lives of others. I am hopeful that the enjoyment, challenge, and purpose that it now provides will carry on into the future and that I will one day reach that distant and dreamed of destination—a well-lived vocational life, full of love for others.

THE CONTEXT

The East End boasts many natural amenities, including several lakes and rivers, with hundreds of acres of forested hills. The area is rife with opportunity for camping, boating,

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fishing, snow skiing, hunting, and hiking. Once the territory of the Native American Cowlitz Tribe, the East End was homesteaded by people of European descent in the late 1800s. Many of today's longtime residents are descendants of these early pioneers, and there is a strong sense of pride in this rootedness. Some of the people who live in this valley have known one another for generations, their families have depended on one another in good times and bad, and there is a special bond that exists in this place and between these people. For some longtime residents, unprecedented and rapid changes to the area they consider their home, including a rise in population and a change in demographics, signify a threat to their cultural history and identity. Consequently, some are reticent to welcome outsiders and somewhat exclusionary towards newcomers.

Centrally located halfway between Seattle and Portland, the East End begins just twenty minutes off of the I-5 corridor. This area also hosts the only thoroughfare over the Cascade Mountain Range in the south half of the state. It is also the only rural county left on the I-5 corridor, so it appears that Lewis County will continue to experience growth at an expedient rate as urban sprawl continues to creep towards this area, and amenity seekers leap ahead of the sprawl in search of the rural idyll. There are numerous recreational activities here, including several campgrounds, boat ramps, and agro-tourism opportunities, such as the tulip fields and blueberry farms. The far East End boasts a driving range and golf course as well as a ski resort. Yakima produce, excursions to Mt. Rainier, and the Pacific Crest Trail are just some of the attractions that bring folks through the area. Since the logging industry took a downward turn, recreational activities and agro-tourism, almost entirely supported by the Latinx community members, have helped to keep this area afloat.

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Unfortunately, discrimination, segregation, and exclusion are a sad part of the history of this area. Government and court-sanctioned injustices perpetrated against the Native American Cowlitz Tribe in the mid-1800s and the 1960s (Irwin) and again towards the Japanese railway workers during the 1940s may have founded precedence for discrimination and exclusion. (Perednia). While the intersection of racism and classism has been especially detrimental to people of color, whites are not entirely excluded from these injustices. In her seminal work titled *White Trash:The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*, author Nancy Isenberg writes "British colonists promoted a dual agenda: one involved reducing poverty back in England, and the other called for transporting the idle and unproductive to the New World" (67). This resulted in poor white people being shipped to the states where they were unable to purchase land, were not entitled to have land given to them because they did not own slaves, and subsequently, were either forced into slavery themselves or into less-desirable or unproductive mountainous regions, namely, the Appalachians. Isenberg goes on to say, "Land was the principal source of wealth, and those without any had little chance to escape servitude. It was the stigma of landlessness that would leave its mark on white trash from this day forward" (102). It is easy to hear throughout the narrative of race and class that owning land was, and is, an integral aspect of being human.

Seeking usable land, some of those early American Appalachians migrated to the East End, and their ancestors live here to this day. The historically and culturally influenced 'me-and-mine' mindset that can be seen amongst descendants of those early European settlers–many of whom had come from Appalachia and had themselves experienced class-based prejudice, exclusion, and segregation–can be attributed to the capitalistic politics of the elite. Isenberg writes, "Moved by the need for control, for an unchallenged top tier, the power elite in American

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history has thrived by placating the vulnerable and creating for them a false sense of identification" (210). The hierarchical narrative, laden with white supremacy and a ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps’ mentality that has placed people of color at the bottom with little hope of rising, has also served to keep poor white folks poor and self-blaming.

This history and culture may also lend to the territorial nature of some East Enders who have struggled with the influx of new migrants to the area. In the past 15 years, three gated communities have appeared in the area, and the once natural shorelines now showcase large homes and private docks. The residents living in these prosperous enclaves are primarily retired urban migrants, seeking the natural amenities that this area offers. A very small group of Latinx immigrants, perhaps two dozen, came to this area nearly 50 years ago, initially to work in the tulip fields. Wives and children soon followed, and the population increased significantly in the ensuing years. Most Latinx families live in the mobile home parks on the outskirts of town. Like the longtime residents and the urban migrants, they keep to themselves.

Personal interviews with residents from each of the factions reveal that many are experiencing social tension in the East End. When asked about the Hispanic population, one longtime resident responded, “They don't bother us, and we don't bother them" (Murphy). This was expressed somewhat differently by a Latina resident who said, "We don't exist here; they don't see us—so we are invisible" (Altamirano). When I asked the same question of an urbanite, she replied, "There are Latinos living here?" (Breen). Yes, more than 30% of the population is Hispanic. When asking long-time residents about urban migrants, the responses range from ‘nice people’ to ‘damn yuppies.’ When asking the urban migrants about long-time residents, the responses mimic the same range, from ‘good people’ to more discreet and derogatory insinuations of ‘redneck’ and ‘hillbilly.’ Latinx community members are either too polite or too

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fearful–or perhaps just culturally adherent– to speak honestly of their perceptions of the others. The tensions between these groups have resulted in an unemotional showdown–a disengagement, both with the issues and with one another. Because there is no overt violence, many in this community would, and have said, that they don't see what the problem is.

The majority of urban migrants rarely participate in rural community life. They do not have children in the school, and they do not work in the area, and, like many rural residents, they do their shopping in town. I was surprised to learn from several interviewees that many don't even shop in Centralia or Chehalis where Safeway, Walmart, and Grocery Outlet are the options. Rather, they travel an additional thirty minutes to Olympia where they can shop at Trader Joe's, Costco, and World Market. Of course, Olympia also offers fine dining, entertainment, and other outlets not found in the East End. When asked what social interaction she had with the local people, Sheila Breen, a retired nurse from San Jose, responded that she had none; asked what her social life in the East End looked like Sheila stated:

> We play Canasta on Wednesdays, a different host each week, and our husbands will sometimes get together during that time too. Also, we have monthly HOA [Home Owner's Association] meetings, which are potlucks and which give us the opportunity to be in a larger social setting. We spend time in each other's homes and on each other's boats, and sometimes a few of us will go to Olympia, Portland or Seattle, just to get away–eat out, shop, take in a show or something. (Breen)

While the Latinx people are more integrated into rural life through work and school events, there is still a strong line of demarcation between them and the longtime residents. Except for the school, the Catholic church, and a small restaurant, the Hispanic population—which comprises over 30% of the population—has no other resources. The Latinx people do not

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shop in the three small grocery stores in the East End, preferring to drive the forty-five minutes to Centralia where there is a larger Hispanic community and where there are more resources, and in the Spanish language too.

Racism, prejudice, and discrimination are not always overtly displayed, but, perhaps more insidiously, are a part of the fabric of our everyday lives. The absence of a people group from community life, the lack of general knowledge regarding that group by other groups, and the unawareness or intentional disregard of these circumstances is fodder for conflict that has the potential, especially in these economically and politically charged days, of transforming into something even more dangerous. Further interviews with residents from all three social groups continued to reveal a clear picture of the social segregation prominent in the community.

Jessie Doren, a resident of Randle, shared an experience that demonstrates that racism may contribute to the Latinx people shopping outside of the community. Interestingly, Jessie first made the distinction that her friend was "born in Chicago, so she is a United States citizen," before sharing how her friend was refused service in one of the local grocery stores. Jessie relates that she was waiting in the car when her friend "came back with no ranch dressing and tears in her eyes, and said that the cashier would not take her money because she was Mexican" (Doren). Jessie goes on to say that she feels that this is not an uncommon occurrence, that her friend was not familiar with the area, and that if she had been, she probably never would have even attempted to go into that store. When I asked Jessie why she hadn't offered to go herself, she stated that she is white and doesn't have to think about race issues. Jessie went on to share what she believed to be one reason for social tension between longtime residents and Latinx residents in the East End:

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> I have heard a lot of different people complain about the blueberry fields because they want their kids to be able to get summer jobs, and the blueberry fields are not wanting to hire high school kids. I don't know if this is correct, but I heard they were busing people in from other areas, immigrant workers, to come and work. That the growers prefer the immigrants to the teenagers–the assumption is because it's cheaper to bus in immigrant workers than it is to pay minimum wage to citizens. (Doren)

This, along with beliefs that the Latinx community members are "illegals" and "drug-runners" who are "just living off the government…using up taxes taken from hard-working Americans" (Brooks), has been repeatedly stated as the cause for some of the social tensions in the East End.

The veracity of these beliefs is contested by the complex interrelatedness of immigration, labor, and food systems. Viewing the Latinx people as illegal human beings or as criminals does little to honor the reality that they are most often hard-working, honest, family-oriented people. It also does not recognize that they are an indispensable part of our American food systems. As Holmes writes, "Representations and perceptions lead to associated legal and economic inclusions, exclusions, liberations, and violence (190). If we are to address the systems which keep us separated, we must seek a more profound understanding than that found in superficial reports from the media and politicians.

The challenges in the East End are fraught with bindings of color, class, and insider and outsider status. Dana Landon, a woman in her late 40's from southern Arizona, described her experience as a new business owner in the area:

> It was only regulars, it wasn't welcoming…[strangers] wouldn't get talked to, they'd sit and feel like an outcast, or an outsider, and that's how I felt when I came here. I'm a transplant, I'm not from this area, so I've never been respected. I went through a lot of

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> resistance, a lot of backlash, a lot of people boycotted me. I just never felt welcome, you know, it's like I don't belong here, like I'm not supposed to be here. You can tell. People don't like change, especially with the older crowd, they don't like it…change is hard. (Landon)

Landon has managed to win over most of the locals, though she says there are still a few who won't step foot through her door because they "don't like what she's done to the place," but she also states "I feel more accepted now than I have ever been. I just kept going forward no matter what" (Landon). From all appearances, Landon has integrated well with community members. Though she may always be known as an outsider, her pride in her hometown, as well as in her adopted one, transmits the sense that she is okay with that.

Acutely aware of the social tensions that now exist in the East End, my sensitivity was tempered through an interview with Father Raul that brought a much-needed balance to my own perceptions. A recent transplant from L.A., Father Raul brought fresh urban insight into the new social dynamics in the East End. Only having served in this community for three months, he noted a distinct difference between L.A. and the East End, saying, "The American community doesn't connect with the Latin people in LA. When I came here, I noticed immediately that there is a difference, in a good way, the relationship between American and Latin people. There is a kindness here" (Acevado). Father Raul pressed on to acknowledge the conflict and the segregation but also pointed out that it could be worse:

> At this time, it is very difficult. The people understand that they need to belong to the community, but that it is very difficult to do so. But I think with all the things that could be bad, in this area, it is okay. I told you that maybe there are other things that aren't

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> okay, but that happens in every place. Here it is okay, it is good. We need to work more, but it is okay. (Acevado)

Having only lived in the urban area of Portland, Oregon—where I was enamored with the diversity and the 'live-and-let-live' mentality that seemed to exist there—my experiences of racism in urban areas was fairly limited. Father Raul's perspective was very insightful—perhaps our rural culture holds keys to alleviating social tension and building social capital, such as good manners and respectful interactions, that I had not anticipated.

What is interesting is that Christianity and Catholicism are the dominant religions in the area. So why aren't folks making peace, loving their neighbors, or entering into a ministry of reconciliation? Implementation of participatory community development practices is perhaps still a long way off as there are numerous passages of awareness and acknowledgment that must first be traversed. For my community, the practical steps that Jesus recommends are, as of yet, mostly unpracticed. Hence, the use of critical ethnography as a first step towards development. As social ills such as segregation and marginalization form, these communities must be confronted with the systemic factors that cultivate these types of social disparities and be encouraged to examine their personal role in supporting or perpetuating those systems.

THE CHALLENGE

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people...
Isaiah 10:23

Sometimes it is difficult to imagine how interconnected rural communities are with the rest of the nation and the world. In amenity-rich and accessible areas, economy, technology, and other factors of globalization are shifting both in and out-migration patterns, altering the social and cultural makeup of rural communities. To our detriment, the influences of our human nature

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through history, politics, media, and societal norms are tainting the interactions of both newcomers and old-timers. This section takes a look at some of the factors that may be negatively influencing social dynamics—factors which may call for methods such as critical ethnography.

Two hours distant from metropolitan areas, the digital divide, limited resources, and the rugged terrain of the East End have in the past contributed to the idea that this community is too distant for very many to be interested in settling here. Recent advancements in communication, transportation, and technology, have now made the east end of Lewis County a much more viable option as a place to live. The East End's natural beauty and enticing recreational outlets amplify that viability. Those wishing for a more tranquil life than what the city can provide, and who are not dependent on an income, are seeking refuge in the seemingly idyllic countryside.

Most migration focuses on the rural to urban trend as youth and the working class are often forced to seek education and employment in larger metropolitan areas—a phenomenon sometimes known as 'brain drain.' But there has been a recent trend of urban to rural migration, especially among the retired, or those with means to keep a house in the country. While there are many pull factors for urban migrants, there are also some significant push factors. Density, housing and property costs, traffic and congestion, pollution, taxes, and demographics are all push factors influencing migration from urban to rural areas. According to one researcher, urban whites have migrated to rural areas in part due to "pervasive fears of crime and violence, largely created and fueled by growing socio-economic inequality" (McCarthy). The author goes on to state that urban migrants often seek "effective mechanisms of social control and exclusion" (McCarthy). Indeed, the East End now has two gated communities and one more being developed, where just a decade ago, none existed. In an area of low crime, rather than being

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viewed as necessary for protection, these constructions have locals feeling the effects of an elitist exclusion. Certainly, walled-off and gated neighborhoods have done very little to complement the traditionally established sense of neighborliness in this rural community.

The impact that urban migration has on land use and ecology also feeds into the social tensions in the community. Subdivisions and gated communities are being built on land that was once used for agriculture, forestry, or nature preserves. Lakes and rivers are becoming congested with docks, boats, and jet skis, which pollute the air and water. Mountain trails, once used moderately, are now brimming with hikers enjoying the great outdoors. Our growing and spreading population is resulting in displaced wildlife, changes to biodiversity, and ecological disturbances. While progress and migration may be inevitable, preserving the natural characteristics of amenity-rich areas remains essential. Nature is a gift to be both enjoyed by everyone and safeguarded by all. Those who see the mountains, lakes, rivers, and valleys as foundational to their community and formational to their identity are naturally challenged by outsiders altering the scenery.

While many of those who migrate to rural areas are urbanites and most often retirees, Latinx immigrants who entered the country via ports in urban areas have discovered that there is labor in rural areas and that these spaces make lovely places to raise a family. Per the U.S. Census Bureau, growing ethno-racial diversity in rural areas will be at the leading edge of social and cultural change as the United States moves toward becoming a majority-minority society by 2042 (New Census). According to Daniel Lichter, Cornell University Professor of Sociology and one of the nation's foremost researchers of rurality, the rural Hispanic population grew by 44.6 percent during the 2000 to 2010 period, making this the largest group of minorities to migrate into rural communities (Lichter). He goes on to report that between 2000 and 2010, Hispanic

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immigrants accounted for over 60% of all non-metropolitan growth (Lichter). The population and demographic changes in the East End align with these statistics. For the town of Mossyrock, Washington, the 2000 census recorded 55 persons of Hispanic or Latino origin–the 2010 census recorded 235 persons from the same population–that is an increase of 325% in ten years (CensusViewer). Predominantly comprised of young families, it will be interesting to see the census findings for 2020.

There are many systems of racial injustice woven into the fabric and foundation of our nation: criminal justice, housing, education, employment, health care, and immigration systems all bleed injustice one into the other. For some, that bleeding colors their lives the minute they are born; for others, it is when they first place their foot on American soil. Already viewed as outsiders, relations between Hispanic and longtime residents are aggravated by an increasingly hostile narrative in regards to immigrants. The social ills born from our tragic race and class-based history are intensified when immigrants are labeled as ‘criminals,’ ‘rapists,’ and ‘animals,’ especially by the highest authority in our nation. In newly diversified communities, this hateful rhetoric serves to increase tension and disharmony—the exact opposite of what is needed to create healthy, just communities. In addition, language barriers make relationship building a difficult task. For immigrants with young children, it is often easier to rely on their ability to translate then to learn English as adults—especially in rural communities where there are no English classes or second language support.

Though the same language is spoken, there are also barriers between urban migrants and longtime residents. Race and class-based segregation keep people from getting to know one another. Rural people visit the city primarily for medical care, shopping, or entertainment, while urban people primarily visit the country for recreational outings or to simply pass through onto

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somewhere else. Neither the ruralite nor the urbanite have a clear understanding of what daily life might look like for the other—the relationships are merely transactional, and will not lead to relational transformations. The disconnect between social groups in this community has resulted in each group knowing very little about the other. The tendency to fill in this knowledge gap with stereotypes, media-based depictions, and generational hand-me-downs does nothing to reveal truth; rather, it continues to bind social groups to misinformation resulting in oppressive social systems. The lack of relational interactions in the community keeps social groups ignorant, uncomfortable, and fearful of the Other.

Acting as if social tension isn't an issue, ignoring entire people groups, and standing by while others wrestle with various forms of injustice and inequality have culminated in a cold conflict and resulted in marginalization and segregation in the East End. A cold conflict is one that is often suppressed emotionally and is rarely spoken of, or if acknowledged, the response is typically done in a passive-aggressive manner. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil writes, "Chronic inequality and devaluation of people groups engender a strife that hovers just beneath the surface and we often see it erupt over even the slightest provocation" (35). Suffering under this hushed hostility, I believe that the people in my community have not been able to acknowledge or address this cold conflict, in large part, because they do not know how to do so. It is a challenge that many small towns across the nation are facing as the forces of globalization continue to re-shape rural American relations. For many, this is new territory.

Addressing cold conflicts and social tension in the East End is not just an individual battle, but a collective one, a systemic one. Community members must understand that there are underlying historical, social, cultural, and political forces that promote racism, classism, genderism, disablism, and other forms of inequality and injustice in our communities. The length

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of time that these atrocities have been perpetrated, without recognition or reparation, has lent to an air of insipid normalcy. While I have not witnessed intentional ill will or explicit violence directly between groups, the lack of acknowledgment of this issue, and of one another, is harmful and tears at the very fabric of our community. Conflict resolutionist and author John Paul Lederach writes, "Humiliation – the lived experience of disrespect and exclusion without some form of authentic acknowledgment of the harm or hurt received – leaves deep personal and social scars" (35). I believe that the East End has the capacity to attend to these scars and to desist from further harm. Especially for those called to care for the oppressed and the foreigner, specifically Christians, the level of disengagement and lack of acknowledgment is deeply disturbing but has great potential to be turned around. As critical ethnography enlightens the community to the challenges and opportunities, residents have a choice to make: to engage with the Other in ways that build community and bring prosperity, or to remain disengaged.

All dark things must be brought out into the light, and in that way, we can more clearly see how to address the darkness that binds us. Research and writing is the way in which I intend to shine a light in our community. While many in this community may state that they are comfortable with the segregated status quo, cold conflicts must be addressed as they have the propensity to develop into something much more dangerous. If we do not attend to cold conflicts in our communities, it can lead to dire outcomes. Author Richard Beck analyzes our precognitive repulsions towards those who are Other and the sociological consequences of exclusion. He writes,

> Sociomoral disgust can quickly scale up in intensity and become the engine behind the very worst of human atrocities. During times of social stress or chaos, those persons or populations already associated with disgust properties will provide the community with

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> a location of blame, fear, and paranoia. In short, sociomoral disgust is implicated in the creation of monsters and scapegoats, where outgroup members are demonized and selected for exclusion or elimination. (Beck 138)

We have seen cold conflicts become hot in Rwanda and Cambodia and Bangladesh, and in many other nations, and of course, during the Holocaust. At the time of this writing, the coronavirus pandemic is providing a clear depiction of how in times of stress, chaos, and fear, those who might have only been seen as Other–like Chinese-Americans–are now in very real danger.

The New York Times ran an article revealing numerous incidences of racism against citizens of this country. Yuanyuan Zhu was walking to her gym when a man began assaulting her with racist slurs–when a bus passed, he yelled, "Run them over!" and then he spit on her. Zhu was quoted saying, "That person didn't look strange or angry or anything, you know?" she said of her tormentor. "He just looked like a normal person" (Tavernise). The racist foundation of our nation, the history of anti-Chinese immigration, and the slanderous use of the term "China-virus" and other racist narratives by the highest authorities in our nation have all contributed to the normalization of racism and increased national unrest. For our Chinese-American neighbors, already dealing with the pandemic, they must now also navigate the threat of violence. It is our experience of the Other that must be re-examined if we are to navigate intercultural experiences and relationships successfully.

It is a new day in a globalized world, where both cultural identity and respect for other cultures are of great consequence. Individuals or groups who hold an ethnocentric mindset, the belief that their culture is superior to all others, will experience negative personal, interpersonal, and societal outcomes for doing so. Author Miroslav Volf writes, "It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference" (89).

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At such a time as this, it is imperative that we not add to the destructive words or actions that impede our abilities to connect with and learn from others. Not only do we have much to gain from respectfully viewing other cultures as equal to our own, but we also have a lot to lose by refusing to do so. Author Anne Fadiman writes, "If you can't see that your own culture has its own set of interests, emotions, and biases, how can you expect to deal successfully with your own biases?" (261). It is now critical that we become aware of ethnocentric tendencies and to understand the impact that they have on our lives and on the lives of those around us.

In communities experiencing high rates of change over short periods of time—especially the type of change that threatens security, identity, purpose, and belonging—there is an opportunity for the church to step into the gaps created by these transitions. However, like many rural communities that are experiencing an identity crisis, the church too seems to have lost confidence in its role and place in this world. Author Daniel Groody writes, "If in biblical times Jesus challenged religious leaders for adhering to a narrow understanding of the Sabbath, today He would likely challenge our global society for losing a sense of its role altogether" (264). Newly diversified rural communities provide a wonderful arena for Christians to practice biblically mandated love for others—specifically for the stranger, the sojourner, and the foreigner.

Our homes and our communities are meant to be a place of pleasure, provision, and refuge—a place where we feel welcomed and safe and cared for. As outside forces transform our lives in ways that we don't want them to, it is normal to respond in a protective manner to attempt to safeguard our livelihoods from change. However, in an effort to defend our way of life, we may destroy that which we seek to protect. No longer a place of delight and respite, our response to the Other has created communities of detachment and distrust. Our rural strength has

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always been formed in community, and this is the aspect of our livelihoods that we must hold onto and protect at all cost. This is both the way forward and the way back. Strong communities are the foundation that supports the sense of security and enjoyment that we all want, deserve, and have the power to create in our lives.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The challenges that the East End is currently contending with seem to me like a hand-written invitation to explore this place with these people through critical ethnography. To meet new people and listen to their stories, to search their words and movements for deeper meaning, to take great joy in the listening and being—well, that is not only a description of ethnography, it is also a description of what it is to be an engaged member of a multicultural community. The dynamic approach of critical ethnography provides abundant opportunities, on numerous levels, to engage with people, problems, and solutions. It is a relational, educational, and formational approach as it creates space for ongoing development strategies. In this portion of the thesis, I would like to look at the many opportunities that critical ethnography provides through lenses of peacemaking, participation, lamenting, and storytelling.

In the East End of Lewis County, where historical and political lines between social groups seem to have been firmly drawn, and where cultural attributes may not lend themselves easily to reconciliation, it is imperative that community development begins with a bottom-up approach that recognizes and honors each of the three social groups living here. Critical ethnography asks questions rather than tells, it listens before it speaks, and it values differences of opinion before it seeks to create unity. These characteristics make critical ethnography an especially effective tool for community development in areas experiencing cold conflict. Like

critical ethnography, peacemaking, or conflict resolution, attempts to confront injustice or conflict for the betterment of those involved in it.

Many of the principles of peacemaking are closely linked to principles of critical ethnography—both are journeys, taken with others, in search of truth, justice, and peace. Both pay attention to the historical and contextual, but both are also present-day and future-focused. Both critical ethnography and peacemaking seek to reduce violence and increase justice. They foster personal and collective understanding, growth, and transformation. John Paul Lederach portrays a link between conflict transformation and critical ethnography when he writes of the example that Christ modeled for those who seek to establish peace in their communities. He writes,

> He and his disciples did a mix of walking, noticing what was around them, engaging the problems and issues present in the lives of people, taking note of the seen and the unseen, and [engaging in] constant conversation. Along the way, we sense Jesus himself understanding more fully his own purpose, direction, and meaning of life. (Lederach 53)

Observation, participation and every other interaction in the community provides an opportunity to recognize and honor the humanity, and therefore, the divinity of others. Oh, that I might walk in this Way!

In critical ethnography, it is the researcher that raises awareness and promotes engagement—in conflict transformation, it is the peacemaker who creates peace. Not only has the process of critical ethnography revealed potential peacemakers, but the product of this methodology holds great potential to raise the awareness needed in order for other community members to act upon these opportunities. Author Ernest T. Stringer writes,

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> To the extent that people can participate in the process of exploring the nature and context of the problems that concern them, they have the opportunity to develop immediate and deeply relevant understandings of their situation and to be involved actively in the process of dealing with those problems. (Stringer 28)

Identifying peacemaker citizens through my research in the community and bringing them together through focus groups, or just over a cup of coffee, is another way that I can leverage critical ethnography as peacemaking and community development.

Critical ethnography is only the first step, there are many steps to be taken after that, and they must be taken by many community members, representing all social groups. Barbara Tedlock writes of critical ethnography, "Authors of such works passionately inscribe, translate, and perform their research in order to emotionally engage, educate and move the public to action" (Tedlock). Critical ethnography creates a space for individuals, groups, and entire communities to wrestle with and possibly reframe their views in accordance with what they are learning and in relationship with others in the community. Thought becomes action. Stringer continues,

> As they rigorously explore and reflect on their situation together, they can repudiate social myths, misconceptions, and misrepresentations and formulate more constructive analysis of their situation. By sharing their diverse knowledge, and experience – expert, professional, and lay–[community members] can create solutions to their problems and, in the process, improve the quality of their community life" (Stringer 15).

Critical ethnography depends upon and invites the participation of community members, which in turn creates new spheres of influence for peacemaking and community development.

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While cold conflict often suppresses emotional exploration of an issue, critical ethnography provides a safe space for those suffering under its oppression to begin analyzing the effects of the conflict on their lives and in their communities. It does this directly through the ethnographic interview where themes of healing, self-reflection, issue identification, a sense of purpose, and meaning-making can emerge (Madison 33). Critical ethnography, like peacemaking, creates space to acknowledge, discuss, and lament the injustices that have happened in a community. This is an important step to take towards communal healing and well-being.

Lack of acknowledgment regarding a wrong is fuel for the continued pain and sorrow caused by an offense. We must be brave and face our iniquities, take responsibility for them, and if at all possible, right the wrong that we have done. Authors Katongole and Rice address the importance of lamenting the conflicts that bind us, "Lament slows reconciliation down because it sees the challenge of transformation not from the top but from the margins - indeed from the bottom" (81). Critical ethnography is a method that makes space for voices, especially for those who might erroneously believe themselves to be voiceless. It allows for the issue to be aired and provides a space to examine how people might contribute to a solution. Perhaps foundational to all other development, it also creates a space for those who may want to acknowledge the hurt they have caused and work towards its repair.

Perhaps especially for those who have been marginalized, the presiding conflict and the underlying systemic forces may elicit deepening fatalistic views towards the conflicts that exist in our homes, communities, and nations. Critical ethnography is not only powerful in process and product, but also as a platform for future endeavors. It raises awareness of the issues and sets the stage for other forms of development. It may also provide a smoother entry into more active

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development practices as residents have already been primed to think about their community and the challenges and opportunities that it holds. For this community, I can see participatory rural community development and asset-based community development being viable options to nix social tensions and create capital. For those who feel that the world has spun out of control, or who have fatalistic views, these methods of development provide participation opportunities that can counteract the sense of futility or chaos.

Lastly, I want to look at critical ethnography as storytelling. There is great power in storytelling and great responsibility too. I feel the weight of this power and responsibility as I endeavor to tell the story of a real community. The people in this story are not characters in a novel. They are my neighbors. They are unique, complex, fascinating individuals, and I want to represent them and their views well. I know that I owe a debt of honor to those in my community for sharing their lives with me. Even as I reveal areas of injustice and inequality, I hope that my integrity in truth-telling will be honoring. Rural folks, in general, are often portrayed through stories in ways that do not recognize or honor their intelligence, ingenuity, or strength of character. This too is something that I must guard against. In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's account, "The Danger of a Single Story," she states, "Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower and to humanize" (Adichie). With humility and grace, Adichie tells us stories that highlight the importance of honoring cultural identity by never assuming we know one's story simply because we know where one is from or have repeatedly listened to a single, stigmatizing, story about them.

It is imperative as I strive to tell the story of this community that I weave together the numerous, complex, and sometimes dissident voices of the residents. As earlier stated, this community is far more multifaceted and dynamic than I first imagined, so I am grateful for

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Adichie's wisdom. Her plea about the importance of seeking discernment by listening to many different stories was poignantly expressed in Kimberlé Crenshaw's enlightening and heartbreaking address, "The Urgency of Intersectionality." Crenshaw reveals an untold story of race and gender discrimination that is, atrociously, not a part of our national narrative. By expanding our understanding of the complexity of identity, Crenshaw insists that we look beyond the superficial to recognize that real inclusion insists upon attention to multiple levels of marginalization—something that she calls intersectionality (Crenshaw). Certainly, in the East End, it is critical that I take into account the numerous levels of intersectionality: race, class, ethnicity, gender, geography, ability, and perhaps others, are all important factors in understanding community dynamics and seeking social well-being. This is the beauty of ethnography—the voices of many individuals melding together to tell the collective story of a people and a place.

As a student practitioner of ethnography, hopeful to use writing as a platform from which to lead community development in rural areas, I could not have read any two more formative stories than *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture In Crises*, by J.D. Vance and its counterpart, *Appalachian Reckoning: A Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy*, edited by Anthony Harkins and Meredith McCarroll. Not only did these books influence my process and thoughts concerning writing, but they have also inspired me to join in the much-needed national conversation regarding rural life in America through publication and distribution of my own book. A collection of essays, poems, and photographs performed by various authors and artists, *Appalachian Reckoning* was produced in response to the skewed depiction of white poverty by Vance. I found the personal memoir of Vance's writing to be excellent—it holds weight because it is an honest portrayal of Vance's own experience. But when he takes the liberty

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of writing the 'memoir' for an entire culture, one that he knows little about and thinks poorly of, his words and ideas become like weapons used against those he writes of.

Though I believe that Vance's intention was to motivate others to 'pull themselves up by their bootstraps,' the editors of *Appalachian Reckoning* contend that Vance's writing, combined with uncritical readership, has served to further entrench Appalachians in harmful stereotypes, toxic politics, and continued oppression. "Representation has consequences. How people are represented is how people are treated" (Madison 4). In Vance's own words, "There is nothing lower than the poor stealing from the poor. It's hard enough as it is. We sure as hell don't need to make it even harder on each other" (139). Here, Vance sums up my own fears: will my desire to support others help or harm them? Can I walk the line of truth and love with my writing?

The reading of these two books corresponded with my fieldwork, which was daily revealing areas of personal bias, prejudice, and assumption. Like Vance and many of his readers, I had beliefs about rurality and rural people that just weren't true. Through observations, interviews, and experiences, I began to discover a rurality that I hadn't known existed and which repeatedly revealed and challenged my personal biases. As I engaged with these works and others, I felt a genuine sense of safeguarding as many of the missteps made by Vance would have almost certainly found their way into my own research and writing. Seeing Vance get the smackdown forces me to consider some parallels with the author. Like him, I have sought to transcend poverty and trauma through education and opportunity. Like him, my writing is not only for others but may also be a means of personal processing and healing. And like him, I want to reach out to those who were influential in my upbringing and who may have needs that align with my abilities. Ultimately, I desire to use writing to lead others well, in ways that I believe to be life-giving. To accomplish this, I must not allow my personal experiences and opinions to

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overshadow the lives of those I wish to represent. McCarroll writes, "To more fully understand a place—its real poverty alongside its potential for renovation, its history of fierce activism alongside the stories of extraction and abuse—requires a sort of patchwork panorama, made up of many angles and many points of view" (Harkins). In essence, I must find a way to weave my story into the greater story of this community in ways that honor people and incite them to weave in their own stories.

While *Hillbilly Elegy* served well as a cautionary tale and provided insights into potential pitfalls, *Appalachian Reckoning* revealed to me the importance of critically assessing the lens through which one views the world. When a leader's lens holds both hope and harm, self-reflection, and accountability support from others is essential to any good work that might be done. This, accompanied by a holistic and in-depth approach to research and writing, is paramount if I am to motivate social change in my community. Lastly, the responses of the authors and artists to Vance's work–some gracious, some chiding, and some outright angry–also informed my sense of leadership. I found that I was most moved by the voices of reason, those that were more inclusive and created space for others, even, and perhaps especially, for J.D. Vance. Leading through writing is more than just putting words on paper or getting to the bottom of a social justice issue. Every interaction with others in the community provides an opportunity to connect with someone and to make a difference in their lives, and they in mine.

CONCLUSION

I have written throughout this thesis about globalization-induced transitions in rural American communities, often referring to the disorientating rapidity with which changes have taken place. And yet, in the final weeks of writing this thesis, the coronavirus pandemic has brought the pace of our globalized lives to a grinding halt. Somewhere in the midst of this push

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and pull are people, families, and communities, all dealing with the anxiety of an uncertain future. Critical ethnography is suddenly much less about theory and thesis, and much more about how I might use my newly gained knowledge to respond to the needs of my community.

As revealed by my research, I believe that the East End communities of Lewis County may be in a position to tap into unrealized potential. Observation, participation, and interviews with residents have revealed community assets, cultural strengths, and unseen opportunities. In addition, my research has revealed potential partnerships with other like-minded, or, at the very least, curious residents, who may end up playing a role greater than that of an informant. Community development through research and writing provides an avenue for me to participate in the mandate to care for my neighbors—for the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. Especially in these pandemic days, nearly everyone fits that description, if not physically or financially, then certainly spiritually and emotionally. I can only do my one little bit, but I love that through critical ethnography, I can participate in the care of my community through the collective participation and input of my East End neighbors. I believe that critical ethnography is an important methodology that is key to opening a dialogue about the social tensions that exist in the East End. I believe that if we begin talking about it, we can begin working on it. I am also hopeful that our story, written as a love letter to rural people, and shared through publication, may hold value for other rural communities throughout the nation.

THE BOOK PROPOSAL

THE CONCEPT

Based on observer-participant research and resident interviews carried out in an amenity-rich rural community that is experiencing significant demographic changes, this book explores racism, classism, and culture, as seen through the lens of a Christian resident and researcher. As

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the population of urban, amenity-seeking migrants and Latinx immigrants continues to rise, so too does the social tensions between these three groups. This book is a love letter written to rural people and to those who feel the tension between their faith and their cultural upbringing. The writing is meant to highlight and motivate a Christ-like response in the face of cultural, political, and social change in rural America.

MY PASSION FOR THIS BOOK

I care deeply for the people in this community—they are bound together in my affections by a sense of place that holds considerable sway over my sensibilities. I also care genuinely about social justice and have sought throughout my life to foster positive social change. Therefore, I am enthralled with the idea that this book might provide a platform to share the voices of my community members regarding issues of race, class, and community. That this book might bring about a new understanding and new energy to our community and other communities throughout the nation, that it might help people to navigate their new realities, is a dream that I wish to realize, and an honor beyond my imagination.

BOOK AUDIENCE

My interest is in reaching the people of this community, so the book will be written for the people of the East End of Lewis County. Because of our familiarity with one another, the subjects of my research and writing are almost entirely longtime residents. Still, this book is written for all members of the East End, and I am hopeful to have the work translated into Spanish. Because of the intimate positioning between myself and my community, and because the topic is so relevant for so many, I believe that the interest in this book will also reach a much broader audience. Those living in rural American communities throughout the nation, those

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traversing the dissipating urban-rural divide, and those interested in an intimate portrayal of a small American community in the 21st century will certainly be drawn to this unique book.

BOOK LENGTH

The length of this book will be approximately 200 typewritten, double-spaced pages. The brevity and straightforwardness of this book are important as my intended audience are not typically big readers.

BOOK SCHEDULE

The proposed schedule for publication is March 2022. This date is determined by the amount of time that will be needed for continued research, interviews, transcription, and writing.

BOOK SUMMARY

The Prologue of this ethnography attempts to lay a foundation of understanding for the reader regarding qualitative research, my interest in pursuing critical ethnography, and how I plan to apply ethnography as a form of development in my community.

Chapter I dives right into the history of the East End, providing historical context for readers and establishing an exploratory style that is willing to engage with the issues of social tension through a holistic approach.

Chapter II begins to highlight the current context, taking a look at the community through the perspective of the researcher, highlighting areas of concern and those which will require further probing. Themes of social tension, segregation, racism, classism, and the rural-urban divide will be brought to the forefront.

Chapter III begins to introduce the culture of the three social groups through the perspectives of key informants from the community.

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Chapter IV introduces long-time resident Max Cooper, and the reader is given the opportunity to explore the East End through his eyes. Cooper's story highlights the complexity of rural living and the transformations that are taking place here.

Chapter V begins with a return to the researcher's perspective and slowly integrates with the perspective of Cooper, as well as other community members, to reveal a nuanced depiction of rurality in the East End.

Chapter VI begins to introduce aspects of development, including the potential use of asset-based community development, rural participatory development, and action research as means with which to further engage social justice and community well-being in the East End.

Chapter VII engages community members from a new position, asking them to read the ethnography thus far and provide feedback. This allows for accountability, validity, and reliability to be showcased in the final product and also provides a much richer conversation to be shared.

The Epilogue summarizes the entire East End project and provides suggestions and encouragement for readers to take the next steps in their own lives and communities to engage with difficult topics for the betterment of everyone.

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THE BOOK

PROLOGUE

The questions that we have to ask and to answer about that procession during this moment of transition are so important that they may well change the lives of men and women forever. For we have to ask ourselves, here and now, do we wish to join that procession, or don't we? On what terms shall we join that procession? Above all, where is it leading us…? Let us never cease from thinking–what is this 'civilization' in which we find ourselves?
Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas

The trees come right up to the edge of the road, and the overarching limbs make tunnels that swallow you up as you pass through them. When the trees open back up again, it is upon broad fields still green with grass and spotted with cattle. The vista reveals row upon row of forested hilltops and a bright blue sky filled with sunshine. Whipping through the tree tunnels, I watch in my rearview mirror as the newly dropped leaves, having been sucked into a sudden frenzy by speed and movement, are released again. They drop erratically but gently and settle back in until the next disturbance. It is September, and the colors move and meld throughout the valley in a splendorous display, each new view capturing my admiration.

The closer I get to my destination, the higher my spirits rise. I am returning home to the place which I am from, where my family is, and where I feel a sense of belonging. Moving back to the sticks to care for both my grandmother and mother was a move that I initially resisted. Finally, succumbing to life's circumstances, I find that I am now eager to live in the country once again. As I drive, the land transitions from the familiar to the known–every corner, every pass, ridge, dip, and dale seems to personally welcome me home. Born and raised fourth generation in this valley, this land holds the history of my family and my community, and I revel in the return to this place that is so intimately known.

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Deciding to take a quick detour, I veer off onto Blevins Road. The Jamison place is still there on the corner, but down from the house, I see that the barn roof has collapsed, and the structure is falling in on itself. I wonder if old Jim Jamison is still alive—probably not, he would never allow his barn to fall in like that if he were still around. I adeptly maneuver the mile or two of sharp switchbacks and drop down into the Wapato bottomlands. As I scoot around the last corner, my feet eager to find the hidden trail and my body already anticipating the feel of the cold water, I am suddenly taken aback by a looming structure in the path. Someone has built a huge, deep-red metal shed right in the curve of the last corner. My mind does a little side shuffle from "that doesn't belong there!" to "well, that's progress for ya." As I slowly pass the new structure, the stretch ahead reveals dozens of fine new houses, lined up like a sudden subdivision, all along the once wooded shoreline.

I am shocked. My mind cannot side-shuffle this much change in one turn of the wheel. I slow even further and crane my neck to see each house as I drive by it. The further along I go, the more I look ahead, willing the forest to begin again and searching for the big cedar that marks the beginning of my trailhead. I find that I can no longer orient myself to the land. Searching for a landmark with which to ground myself, I find none left. I cannot say for sure where my path should be, only that it is gone. Finally, I roll to a stop and slowly look to my right—the paved driveway before me could very well be the one beneath which my trail lies. Suddenly, a man rounds the corner of the house, and my heart catches for a second. I take in his dark skin and then notice the pickup truck in the drive, on the side of which is written 'Lopez Landscaping,' he is only a worker and quickly looks away, so I continue to stare.

My eyes follow the drive down to the beautiful house that now blocks my access to the one place in the world where I feel most at home. In the summer, my mother would wake my

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sister and me for early morning swims. The cold air made the water feel warm, and we would enter it in the lingering dark and together watch the dawn rise all around us. As a teen, I escaped as often as possible to sit in one of the crooks of the old viney maple, my feet usually dangling in the water while I looked out over the lake to the blue mountain ridges on the far side. Coming home for visits as an adult, I always made time to hit the trail and reconnect with my little patch of earth and water—just as I had intended to do now. My attention shifts away from my memories and back towards the lake, now blocked by the house. The house has nice lines, modern in the Northwest style, and the front porch is decorated tastefully with rocking chairs and matching tables. Gradually, I realize I am looking at the outline of a man, hands on hips, who is staring at me from the big bay window just behind the chairs. Guiltily, I quickly face forward and hit the gas. I am still eager for home, but no longer filled with excitement.

Though I had witnessed new homes being built over the past twenty years of visits, the experience described above felt like a fist to the gut. A new home here and there had exploded into entire subdivisions being built, or placed, for specific populations. I scouted the area over the next few weeks, my drive-abouts continuing to reveal hamlets of both prosperity and poverty. I discovered gated communities in the mountains and along the lakes and rivers and run-down mobile home parks tucked away in corners or on the outskirts. As I drove through these parks, I saw children peeking through curtains or from behind parked cars, revealing that these neighborhoods were almost exclusively inhabited by Hispanic families. For a community that had recently been homogenous in race with very little distance between classes, the geographic and residential segregation that I was witnessing was astounding.

Growing up here, I couldn't remember any residential distinctions–our neighbors on one side put in a motocross track and on the other sides were families with large, successful farms.

While I could easily recognize distinctions between our clothes, cars, and homes and our neighbors', economic differences didn't seem to translate to social segregation and certainly not to residential. We greeted one another at the grocery store, sat together in the bleachers and visited with one another at neighborhood potlucks. Though residential integration seems to remain on properties already established, it is clear that new residences are now being segregated by race and class. In the twenty years that I have been away, the visual representation of residency in my community had changed. Soon it became apparent that this segregation was not confined to residential or geographic location but was also having a significant social and cultural impact in the community.

Instead of one community, three distinct factions seemed to have formed: long-time residents, urban migrants, and Hispanic immigrants. For an observation assignment, I took note of the gap between Hispanic parents and long-time resident parents at school events. The Hispanic parents waited for their children as a group at the end of the sidewalk while the non-Hispanic parents milled around conversing with one another in front of the school. At games and concerts, the Hispanic parents sat or stood along the sidelines or in the back of the gymnasium while the non-Hispanics sat in the front. The urbanites, mostly retirees without school-age children, were not noticeably visible at these events. I was only able to observe urban migrants on a more individualistic basis while pumping gas or getting coffee. Though some participate in community life by joining clubs or churches, by and large, this segment of the population seemed disconnected from the traditional ways of rural life, which often revolve around the school or other community events. Months of observation revealed that a sense of exclusion, avoidance, or indifference between social groups seemed to have permeated the space where

acknowledgment, acceptance, and greetings once existed. The neighborliness that had been a cultural cornerstone of our rural community seemed to have completely evaporated.

I thought about what I was witnessing a lot. As a student of International Community Development at Northwest University, I was able to choose my focus and quickly turned my attention to changing social dynamics in rural American communities. The research and assignments provided a foundation of knowledge, but each one also prompted a lot more questions. I thought about all of the current and future changes and what they might mean for the people living in this community and in other rural American communities throughout the nation. What was driving these migrations? How were the forces of globalization impacting rural communities? What did advances in technology and information systems have to do with rurality? How would these changes impact what it looked like to find a job and make a livable income in this area? Certainly, I couldn't be the only one with these concerns. So much had changed so quickly. I pictured myself and this community and, in truth, the whole world, as leaves on a highway being sucked into a vortex that was beyond our control. How could we re-orient to our new reality?

I continued to be plagued by such questions. Not just those that might help me understand what was happening, but also those that were more solution-focused. How can rural communities navigate demographics and population changes in ways that honor rural culture? How can our values continue to foster a sense of community? How does a community transition well from homogeneity to diversity? Can a sense of place be formative in creating community cohesion? What is it that pushes us apart, and what is it that draws us together? How can we harness that knowledge to create sustainable well-being for all members of our community? I didn't have the

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answers to any of these questions. All that I knew for sure was that a deeper understanding was needed in order to contend with these concerns for the community.

I began to pursue a more structured form of observation, taking one day a week to visit various locations in the community: the local library, coffee shops, cafes, parks, and bars. Here I would strike up conversations with those around me, mostly longtime residents with only a few urban migrants in the mix. The Hispanic people were almost never present in these places. We would most often just chat genially, but if I ever raised any topic related to race, class, or segregation, it resulted in either a heated response or a quick change of topic. My interests didn't seem to be considered appropriate topics for discussion. This led me to believe that concerns about racism, classism, and segregation were perhaps more prominent in the minds of community members than they might like to let on.

In many ways, I was now an outsider in this community—my education, travel experience, and time spent living in other places made me somewhat suspect amongst the locals while my backwoods ways set me apart from the newer residents. Of course, I knew that building trust with the Hispanic people would take years, and I would most likely never be considered an insider amongst that population. And so, I found myself unfamiliar with the new cultural variances. I was also just guessing at the perspectives of the various community members. Did others feel the social tension that I believed I was seeing? How was it impacting the way that they lived, worked, and played in this community? Was segregation, rural gentrification, or marginalization an issue for them? I didn't know the answers to these questions either.

Finally, in my third semester, I took a course titled Research for Social Change, and all of my questions and clumsy attempts at inquiry found the structure that they needed. Through

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observation, interviews, and interactions, qualitative researchers seek to understand how people make meaning out of the experiences of their lives. Merriam and Tisdell write,

> The result of ethnographic inquiry is cultural description. It is, however, a description of the sort that can emerge only from a lengthy period of intimate study and residence in a given social setting. It calls for the language spoken in that setting, first-hand participation in some of the activities that take place there, and, most critically, a deep reliance on intensive work with a few informants drawn from the setting.[1]

Taking it a step further, I discovered that critical ethnography would enable me to respectfully learn from community members while at the same time addressing social justice issues.

Madison writes, "Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility...and by [this] I mean a compelling sense of duty and commitment based on moral principles of human freedom and well-being."[2] Madison depicts critical ethnography as a form of interpreting culture that also exposes systems of power used to oppress people. I was enthralled. Here was a scientific approach to better understanding what was happening in my community and it seemed to me that it fit the bill pretty well: I lived in a rural setting, I spoke the language, I was conflicted about my own cultural experiences, I was interested in learning about culture from other community members, and I wanted to promote social justice in my community. Critical ethnography would become the way in which I explored what was happening. My findings would be written as my thesis in a book project format, the prologue of which you are now reading.

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[1] Merriam, Sharan B. and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.

[2] Madison, D. Soyini. *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance.* Sage Publications Inc., 2005.

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With that decision made, doubt immediately crept in. Who was I to assume such a position in this community? Born and raised fourth generation in this community, the white culture of rural southwest Washington has influenced the way that I dress, talk, think, and act. The culture is ingrained in my character and identity, so I understand some of this phenomenon from an emic, or insider, perspective. Later, as a young adult, I spent a combined ten years living in Portland, Oregon, and Yuma, Arizona, where my work was in the service industry, and my clientele were most often middle and upper-class urbanites. I learned a lot from the urban subculture, which ultimately broadened my perspective and advanced my education and vocation. Afterward, I spent four years living in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, where I became familiar with the culture of the Mexican people, learned the language, and where my capacity to understand the world from a multicultural perspective was first established. I began to believe that I might be uniquely positioned to engage with many of the members of this community. My personal experiences combined with my academic preparation quieted the voice of doubt, but I had learned from my studies that it wasn't the 'what' that qualifies us, but rather, the 'why.'

Why was I concerned about rural America? Why did I care what impact changing social dynamics had on my community? Why did I want to address these issues with other community members? Finally, I can answer some of my own questions. To begin with, these are my people. I feel a kinship with many who live in this valley. We share the same cultural understanding, and there is a sense of belonging amongst us—some aspect of our individual identities is bound together by having lived together. The changes that rural people are now navigating are culturally challenging. Many of the values that we hold dear are in danger of disappearing as our communities creep towards urbanity. Unfortunately, our fear-laden response often serves further to fracture the well-being and rural culture of this community.

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While I am empathetic to the social challenges faced by longtime residents, I embrace diversity, and I am just as drawn to my new neighbors as to those who have lived here for generations. Why do I feel this way? My love for the people in this community is in response to my Christian faith. In 1 John 4:19, it is written, "We love because He first loved us."[3] Why am I pursuing this line of inquiry, study, and action? Because I love God, and I love my neighbors, all of them. White, black or brown, Catholic, Hindu or Muslim, straight or LGBTQIA, rural or urban, rich or poor—you are my neighbor, and I care about you and your well-being on this earth.

One motivating factor in my research has been the lack of love that I see in the Christian community towards outsiders—exploring cultural and political power structures in light of Biblical mandates is a cornerstone of my research. Throughout my writing, I will examine this dichotomy in part because it is a genuine part of this culture and, in part, because it is something that I think both non-Christians and Christians alike want to understand better. My writing is in no way meant to exclude those of other faiths, including those who have faith in science or philosophy or any other worldview. You are all a welcomed and integral entity in this conversation. I would also like to say that in my attempts to grapple with the salient themes of racism, classism, geography, history, and social change, I will make mistakes. I will probably offend people, though it is unintentional. But I believe that these are issues that must be discussed. While our first attempts at dialogue may be less than perfect, we can learn from our mistakes, and practice using language and ideas that both honors our humanity as well as

[3] *Holy Bible*. King James Version, Oxford UP, 1998.

recognizes our capacity for harming others, intentionally or otherwise. If we cannot move forward from a place of grace, then we cannot move forward at all.

I have taken the opportunity in this prologue to share information about my background and beliefs so that you will have some understanding of where I come from and how I view this world. This will be important as you read my work. Qualitative research utilizes the researcher as the primary instrument of research but understands that the researcher is unable to be completely objective; rather, he or she views the world in accordance with his or her own lived experience. This means that I, like most everyone else on planet Earth, am biased. Merriam and Tisdale write "Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or 'subjectivities,' it is important to identify them and monitor them in relation to the theoretical framework and in light of the researcher's own interests, to make clear how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data."[4] As I endeavor to create a space for the voices of community members, I do so through constant personal reflection and self-bias checking. It is important to me that I honor the people that I write about and show respect for their culture—this desire helps to hold me accountable.

This book is based on observer-participant research and resident interviews carried out in a rural community that, like so many other small towns in America, is experiencing significant demographic changes resulting in social tension. As racial, ethnic, and class diversity continues to increase, understanding social dynamics in newly diversified communities becomes crucial to navigating power structures such as discrimination, marginalization, and balkanization. By exposing these structures and illuminating social constructs, critical ethnography can provide this understanding while creating a platform from which rural voices can be heard, and local action can be taken. It is my intention to use my research and writing to raise awareness, stimulate

[4] Merriam and Tisdale.

dialogue, and motivate social change within my community. Madison writes "The critical ethnographer resists domestication and moves from 'what is' to 'what could be.'"[5] I feel this passion for 'what could be' within me and also within my community.

Rural people are facing new frontiers, just as many before us did, and as many others will continue to do. We are pioneers in a new era. Like our ancestors, we will dream of 'what could be' and back those dreams with perseverance and ingenuity. Regardless of where we come from, where we've been or where we're headed, we are united by our rural address, and we must learn to build community together if we are to successfully navigate the 21st century. As I learn how humans search for meaning, how they mend and darn and weave the fabric of their lives from the scraps and abundance that opportunity and poverty provide, I begin to embody the best of what I see. I want this same thing for my community. I want to write of our collective existence in such a way that it reveals our weaknesses while highlighting our strengths and motivates us to overcome and be victorious in our pursuit of life, liberty, and justice. I want to write a story of the resiliency, ingenuity, and community found amongst a nation of immigrants living together in rural America.

CHAPTER 2

"A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies...A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth."
Martin Luther King, Jr.

As the sun edges past the tallest peak, dusk descends across the valley. Above, the wind touches the treetops, but here below, it makes its presence known by ushering in the scent of evening. Wings outstretched, a bald eagle rides the currents. The not-so-far-off tinkle of Kearney

[5] Madison.

Creek provides a musical backdrop to the random lowing of the cattle. Across the valley lies a strange gash in the scenery where Burnt Ridge has been logged off. The torn earth is a dark rust-red color, an unexpected hue that contrasts with the green all around me. My grandfather saw this ridge cleared twice in his life, so this makes the third harvest in the past 100 years. I like to come out in the evenings to relax and reflect on the day, but tonight my mind is filled with the future, and I cannot shake the weight that those thoughts bring. This valley sure has seen a lot of change, especially, and most rapidly, in the past 20 years. As dusk turns to darkness, my thoughts turn to the community and the tension that I sense here. I think about this land and about who else might have stood where I now stand–were they worried about the future for their families? Did life seem to be moving at a pace far faster than what they were comfortable with? I wonder how the confluence of place, circumstance, and experience must have forged these men and women. How did life in this valley shape the thoughts and behaviors of those who came before us–and who then contributed so much to our own way of being? The cry of the eagle brings me back to the valley. It is nearly dark, and a chill has crept in, so I take my thoughts back inside the house where it is warm.

Only a little over two hundred years ago, another eagle would have seen nothing but acre after acre of old-growth timber, from the peaks of the Cascade Mountain Range right down to the valley floor. The variations of green would have been interrupted only by cliff faces, the blue-green streak of rivers, and the expanse of glistening lakes nestled into the pockets of the earth. From then until now, this land stands as a witness to the history of humankind in this area. First Nation legend tells us that the Cowlitz Tribe has been in this valley since its creation by Hyas Saghalie Tyee, the Great Chief of the Above. In that case, the eagle's view would have revealed small villages, peeking out from the edges of forests all along the shores of the Cowlitz

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River. Like the trees on Burnt Ridge, these villages have been decimated—they no longer exist. Distinct from the hillside, which will be replanted and tended to, the history of injustice in this valley has created a community-wide wound that has nearly been forgotten though it is yet to be healed.

Injustice is so enmeshed in our everyday lives that many hardly recognize its presence amongst us, or if they do, they most often choose to ignore it. Though this is hurtful to many and ultimately unproductive for all, I imagine that there are many reasons why Americans shy away from acknowledging or addressing our history. Perhaps we ignore past injustices because the history of this valley also holds so much to be proud of. The wisdom, strength, honor, and loyalty of the Cowlitz Tribe is well established, both then and now. Their respect for one another, the earth, the elements, and all living things—born from a sense of connection to each of these—demonstrates the high character of the Cowlitz people. The settlers who came to this valley were also people of strength and substance. Determined, resourceful, and resilient, these early pioneers ventured forth, risking everything in the pursuit, and perhaps more aptly, in the creation of the American Dream. Conversely, perhaps we ignore past injustices because self-reflection is too hard–perhaps we are unwilling to acknowledge the systemic racism and classism that plagues our nation, or to take responsibility for our part in it because it is too painful or we are too proud. Whatever the reason, the only way forward is through—we must acknowledge and address the structures of power that foster injustice and inequality if we are to break free from the bondage that they bring.

It is from the roots of character and honor of our ancestors that we must listen and speak a new narrative—one that embraces and celebrates our victories while acknowledging and learning from our tragedies. For better or worse, our thoughts, interactions, and relationships are

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all laced with the history of this place, and all of it—the good, the bad, and the ugly—are there for us to learn from. It is essential that we now grow into a new kind of native, a new kind of pioneer, for we face a new frontier—not one which we travel to but one that is coming to us and is here even now. In pursuit of this necessary evolution, we must look to the past and glean what we can from its many offerings. Gird yourself, set aside your defenses, and take courage—learning about our history provides many opportunities.

It was during the first few months of research that I discovered the somewhat hidden, or at least, the unmentioned history of this area. Though we learned about native culture and made models of longhouses and totem poles in school, we were never taught about the history of First Nation people who had lived in *this* community. The injustices that happened against the native people were generalized for us—they happened ‘a long time ago’ and ‘over there’ where ‘others’ were responsible and where ‘we’ became the victims. I was shocked to learn through my own research that territorial and cultural injustices had taken place in our backyards, on the very land that we now called 'ours.' How could a course about native culture, taught in what was once native territory, not mention the presence–and the near disappearance—of the native people who had lived in this area for centuries? While providing the big picture, this educational skimming left us largely untethered to the injustices whose roots now choke us out. To take it further, why haven’t my parents and grandparents spoken of this history? Why wasn't it spoken of amongst community members?

In addition to research on native people, I also began to research those who immigrated to this area. I found that many settlers of European descent had migrated from the Appalachian hills—because of their poverty, they had been unable to garner land for farming in the east and

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were drawn by the Homestead Act of 1862.[6] I discovered the history of the Chinese and the Japanese who served to build up this community through the economic advancement of railways and mills before being forcefully removed from the area. And I learned of how the Mexican people kept American families fed during World War II by stepping into agricultural production after American men left to serve in the war. As my research broadened, historical, cultural, political, and geographic elements began to show themselves as implicitly linked to the current social tensions in my community. Like dust particles in a fine stream of sunlight, from the reading rose nearly invisible lines of connection between the lives of those who lived here then and the lives of those who live here now. As I poured over the accounts from long ago, those lines of connection began to solidify and spread out.

I remembered a book I had read called *Heart Mountain*, in which author Gretel Ehrlich tells the story of a rural community in Wyoming where Japanese Americans were held in a relocation camp during World War II. Her exploration of the social and political dissidence between Japanese Americans and European Americans hearkens back to the earliest of interactions between people groups and the impact of history on our daily lives. Ehrlich writes,

> History is not truth versus falsehoods, but a mixture of both, a mélange of tendencies, reactions, dreams, errors, and power plays. What's important is what we make of it; its moral use. Perhaps history should show us not how to control the world, but how to enlarge, deepen, and discipline ourselves.[7]

I echo this sentiment wholeheartedly. Perhaps, if we are willing to connect with our history in a way that enlightens our actions, it may also serve to prepare us for a future that we cannot yet

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[6] Isenberg, Nancy. *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. Penguin Books, 2016.

[7] Ehrlich, Gretel. *Heart Mountain*. Penguin Books, 1988.

even imagine. Like our forefathers before us, we are entering into a brave new world—one laden with potential and opportunity—and one which beckons us to set aside all that would distract us from living meaningful and just lives.

The structural racism and classism that was implemented in the foundation of our nation have had a grievous impact on all aspects of American life. While some have certainly benefited and others been badly victimized, we must recognize the damage done to the collective soul of our nation by the mentality of white supremacy. This requires that we look past the individual to the greater forces at work in our lives. History is one arena from which we can gain this wisdom. It is critical for Americans to personally connect with history in such a way that it gets past all the barriers of unbelief, guilt, victimhood, defensiveness, and pride. While the history of Lewis County and Washington State mirrors that of the nation in many ways, it is important for me, and I believe for the people of this community, to engage intimately with our community history. Taking a raw, honest look at what has happened in our community can help us to understand what is happening here now. It will provide guidance for how we want to respond and how we want to shape our future.

Accounts from First Nation people regarding the first years of interaction with white settlers were passed down through storytelling, dance, and song and are most often considered 'legend' by those with a more western way of seeing the world. While science suggests that First Nation Americans were of Euroasian descent and crossed to the continent on once present land bridges,[8] the bulk of the information available on early native history comes from written reports from explorers and settlers. Though I wondered what a non-native could understand about the

[8] Moreno-Moyer, J.V. et al. "Terminal Pliestocene Alaskan Genome Reveals First Founding Population of Native Americans." *Nature,* 203–207 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1038/nature25173. Accessed 10 January 2020.

history of the native people when written from the perspective of white settlers, I took what I could and did so with a dose of salt. Then I chose to share most of the following narrative from an essay written by Judy Irwin, an honorary member of the Cowlitz Tribe, titled "The Dispossessed," which is found on the official Cowlitz Indian Tribe website.

The Cowlitz Tribe had command of the entirety of southwest Washington; their land stretched from Mount Rainier in the north to the Columbia River in the south, Mount Adams in the east to the Willapa Hills in the west and was largely centered around the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers. The Cowlitz people lived off of the land, catching fish, hunting game, picking berries, and raising horses. They were considered an upper-class tribe, healthy and wealthy, and with a deeply rooted sense of identity. The earliest documentation of tribe interaction with European settlers was in 1811 when the Pacific Fur Company came by canoe from Astoria up the mouths of the Columbia and then up the Cowlitz. They did not get far before encountering a party of 20 canoes filled with warriors, the men of the Cowlitz Tribe intent on battle with the neighboring Chinook.[9] We can only imagine what the presence of white men, never before seen, might have meant to the natives. While that day's battle was averted, another battle began to form–only this one would be for justice, equality and liberty and would touch the lives not only of First Nations People but of every immigrant to this country and every child born here.

Chief Schanewa of the Cowlitz Tribe was the kingpin of the Cowlitz corridor. He controlled all fur trade amongst the various tribes and the trappers and hunters that worked for the Pacific Fur Company, the North West Company, or the Hudson Bay Company. The few years of relative peace and production soon took a turn when in 1829, an American ship brought

[9] Irwin, Judith. “The Dispossessed: Cowlitz Indians in the Cowlitz Corridor.” *Cowlitz Indian Tribe*.https://www.cowlitz.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23:thedispossessed&catid=38&Itemid=178. Accessed 12 May 2019.

sickness and death to the Cowlitz Tribe. The numbers are inconsistent, some accounts say three-fourths, and others say seven-eights of the population was wiped out by the illness.[10] By all accounts, many Cowlitz Tribe members died from the 'grey' or 'intermittent' fever, leaving an approximate population of only 500 people. Of those, many left the area, intermarrying with other tribes and seeking a new life away from the desolation that had once been their home. The settlers, with more advanced immune systems, fared much better.

As Euro-American families began to follow their men, looking to settle in the amenity-rich valley, tensions between the remaining natives and immigrants began to rise. The newcomers asked Congress to establish a territorial government, and soon treaties were used to segregate and remove native tribes from land desired by European immigrants. In 1848 a treaty was written by Governor Isaac Stevens that guaranteed the Cowlitz Tribe a reservation on their own land. The Cowlitz signed the treaty in 1852, but the U.S. government never ratified it.[11] In 1855, Stevens designed another treaty that would remove all rights of the Cowlitz Tribe to the land where they had lived, worked, played, and buried their dead for centuries. The treaty would remove the Cowlitz and place them on the coastal reservation of the Quinault Tribe, who were known enemies of the Cowlitz. The Cowlitz Tribe never signed the treaty.[12] Months later, war broke out between several native tribes and the whites. Chief Atwin Stockam, the son of Chief Shanewa, made a pact to remain peaceful and to assist the white settlers rather than join the waring Yakima and Klickitat Tribes, in exchange for a reservation of their own land. Under Indian agent Simon Plamondon, 300 Cowlitz people were placed in a detention camp on the

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[10] Cowlitz Indian Tribe. “Home Page-History.” https://www.cowlitz.org/23-the-dispossessed.html. Accessed 2 February 2020.

[11] Irwin, Judith.

[12] Cowlitz Indian Tribe.

Cowlitz Prairie, where they worked building roads, bridges, and other structures, transporting materials and scouting for the settlers.[13] When the war ended, the pact was forgotten, and though the Cowlitz Tribe fulfilled their end of the bargain, the U.S. government did not honor the agreement.

The European immigrants, victors of the Indian Wars, assumed that all native land now belonged to the U.S. government and could be acquired for personal use. One settler wrote: "[At] the successful culmination of the Indian Wars...the question of land titles was settled in this area and the government was recognized as legally owning the land."[14] This was not recognized by the Cowlitz Tribe, who rightfully owned the land, having never signed a treaty that was ratified and never having been overtaken by the U.S. government. Before he died in 1912, Cowlitz Chief Atwin Stockham, at over 100 years old, summed it up to a settler friend: "Long ago all this land belonged to Indians–salmon in the chuck [river], mowich [deer] and moollok [elk] in the hills. Then white men come. Atwin their friend. Now all this land belong to white man."[15] Before Chief Atwin died, he began the process of attaining compensation and recognition by the U.S. government. His descendants would continue to fight for these rights for the next 150 years. The new sense of ownership on behalf of the settlers also brought a shift in attitude. Many natives were pushed by settlers to give up their native culture and adopt Euro-American ways of life. Irwin writes, "In the decades following the war, the Cowlitz were pressured by settlers to be monogamous in their marriages; to forego using sweat houses and flattening their newborns' heads; and to quit relying on medicine men, going on spirit quests, holding pow-wows and speaking their own language." Many of the Cowlitz Tribe acquiesced to this pressure,

[13] Irwin, Judith.
[14] Irwin, Judith.
[15] Irwin, Judith.

abandoning some of their cultural practices and adjusting to a life lived alongside others. Having had their land stolen and the general settler mentality being one of antagonism toward Indians, most of the Cowlitz tribe assimilated as rapidly as they could into the surrounding settler community. Then, as now, when cultures clash, there is the danger of an assimilation which does not value diversity. As war, famine, and globalization increase the migration of people groups, it is vital that we honor the cultures of others—diversity being a crucial and powerful key to success and well-being in the 21st century. Alternatively, the loss of a culture is a loss for all humanity.

The history of those who first immigrated to this area is an equally essential aspect of understanding how to navigate the social dynamics in which we now find ourselves. Even before the Europeans, it was the Spanish coming up the coast from New Spain, which is now present-day Mexico, who first discovered the Pacific Northwest. In 1774, two years before the U.S. Declaration of Independence was signed, Spanish Captain Juan Perez laid claim to the land now known as Washington State. Though there was some discrepancy of the claim because Perez never set foot on the land, the claim was legally established because natives from the Haida Tribe had paddled their canoes out to Perez's ship, which was anchored just offshore, and traded with the Spaniards. Two silver spoons in possession of the Haida Tribe established the Canadian border as it is today, rather than at the Columbia River, as later claimed by Captain Cook and the English explorers.[16] While the instructions that the Spanish Viceroy gave Perez were to treat the native people with honor and respect and to avoid conflicts, the intention of the expedition was to claim the land, and Perez did so. An interesting aspect of this Spanish expedition, and those

[16] Spanish Exploration: Juan Perez Expedition of 1774 -- First European Discovery and Exploration of Washington State Coast and Nueva Galicia (the Pacific Northwest)." www.historylink.org/File/5677. Accessed 2 November 2019.

that followed, was that the majority of the ships' crew and passengers were not Spanish–coming from the conquered territory of New Spain, the majority were Mexican.

At the behest of the Spanish, the first non-native settlements in Washington territory were established in the 1790s by Mexican pioneers at Vancouver Island and Nunez Gaoan, known today as Neah Bay.[17] This marks the beginning of the legacy of Latinx people in the Pacific Northwest. Eventually, conflicts in Europe and Latin America forced Spain to forsake its claim, and in 1819, they signed the Adams-Onis Treaty, relinquishing their claim of the Washington territory to the United States.[18] Under the U.S. government and alongside other immigrants, the Mexican pioneers proved instrumental in developing the early economy by establishing the transportation systems that miners and trappers needed to exchange wares and instituting the Mexican mule-packing system which was used until the 1870s when the Northern Pacific Railroad was completed. Unlike the European settlers, the Mexican families did not follow the Mexican men who were working in the area, so the population did not rise during the nineteenth century.

On the tail of the Indian Wars, the first 'alien' land law of the Washington territory was implemented by the U.S. government in 1864. It was designed to encourage the in-migration of European settlers to displace First Nations people. It worked—the 1860s saw the population double from 11,000 to 23,000 while native tribes were forced from their lands and onto reservations.[19] This was a very formative time for our nation. Elite white settlers, those who owned fur or mining or railroad companies, wanted cheap labor to expand profits and found that

[17] Spanish Exploration.
[18] Spanish Exploration.
[19] Spanish Exploration.

immigrants of color could be exploited to work for less than their white counterparts. These companies, and the elite white men running them, did not take into account the social, cultural, and spiritual ramifications of their prejudice and greed—their focus was on progress and profit. This mindset resulted in racial tension between the lower class immigrants and entwined two evils, racism and classism, as twin birthmarks upon our new nation.

Beginning in the 1850s, the Washington territory saw a significant influx of Chinese immigrants. This soon led to anti-Chinese sentiment by white settlers and ultimately resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.[20] Discriminatory practices and laws were put in place against Chinese American citizens–the most noteworthy being that they were not allowed to vote, own land, or intermarry. Mob violence broke out against the Chinese, and many were forced to leave the state or the country. Much like the treaties used with the First Nation people, new alien land laws, prohibiting the purchase of land by non-eligible citizens, were created to disenfranchise non-white immigrants. With the loss of the Chinese American workforce, the doors opened for others to fill the gap. From 1890 to 1924, many rural Japanese, forced from their land by the transitions of their government, came to the Pacific Northwest in search of a new home and livelihood.[21] While there is scant evidence of Chinese Americans in east Lewis County, the presence of the Japanese Americans is documented by other settlers in the area. One local woman wrote: "A Japanese man, George Ohata, called "George the Jap" had the contract to furnish men for the green chain, usually Japanese. These people had their own cookhouse and homes...this was known as 'Jap Town.'"[22] As with the Chinese, anti-Japanese sentiment, as

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[20] Ficken, Robert E. *Washington Territory*. Washington State University Press, 2002.

[21] Ficken, Robert E.

[22] Hamilton, Alberta Berg. "A History of Onalaska." *History and Favorite Recipes of Onalaskans*. Locally published by Onalaska Community Association, 1975.

evidenced in part by the above account of segregation and the common use of racial slurs, was prevalent in Lewis County and throughout the nation.

The Immigration Act of 1924 virtually stopped all immigration from Japan and Asia. Then, following the December 7, 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan, over 120,000 Japanese-Americans across the nation would have their rights as U.S. citizens stripped and be placed in internment camps. On June 2, 1942, eighty-six Japanese-Americans were removed from their homes in Lewis County and forced onto a train in Chehalis, Washington.[23] The train was headed for a maximum security internment camp in Tula Lake, California, where these families would spend the next four years living in near inhumane conditions. An article in the local paper stated it this way: "On June 1, 1942, they were there. By June 2, they were not."[24] Besides the obvious impact that this had upon the Japanese Americans, we must also consider what impact it had on the remaining community. How did events like this shape the beliefs of the people who experienced them? What did they tell their children about what had happened?

World War II brought many changes to Lewis County. What was left of the Cowlitz Tribe had become widely scattered, and the Chinese and Japanese had been forcibly removed, which left only the European settlers. These immigrants were primarily of British, Scottish, Irish, and German descent. Many had come from North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee—they were Appalachian people and were drawn, in part, to the geography of the land. Woodrow Clevinger, a migrant from Appalachia, wrote,

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[23] Perednia, Graham. "Interned Japanese-Americans Honored at Lewis County Museum." *The Chronicle.* www.chronline.com/news/interned-japanese-americans-honored-at-lewis-county-museum/article_523243da-4ade-11e7-96d5-57fa50f4e960.html. Accessed 12 February 2019.

[24] Perednia, Graham.

> The basis of cultural transfer lies in the similarity of conditions of the Cascade foothills and the Appalachian mountains. Many people escaping the pressure of population on inadequate resources of the Appalachian Mountains found the Cascade hills an ideal habitat in the West. As a rule, the immigrants from the southern mountains did not seek opportunity in the lowlands and cities. The highlander was more of a frontiersman, like Daniel Boone. Therefore he found a very congenial habitat in the narrow valleys of the western Cascade slope which earlier pioneers of the Puget Sound did not desire.[25]

Now a nearly homogenous community racially, the settlers worked in the forests and mills, logging, producing lumber, and settling down into the rhythm of rural life. Of course, with the advent of the war, many settlers became soldiers, abandoning the farms and forests to fight for the free world.

While those who remained in the states, many of them women, worked hard to support the war effort, the nation was still recovering from the Great Depression, and times were very tough. From 1942 to 1964, the U.S. government contracted Mexican and Chicano (Mexican-American) migrant workers to address the agricultural production needs of the nation. The Bracero Program in Washington State centered primarily in the Yakima Valley from 1942 to 1946, and it was during this time that the Latinx established a strong presence in the state.[26] While the Bracero Program recognized the need and accepted the help of migrant farmworkers to feed the nation, this did not endear the Hispanic people to the Euro-Americans.

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[25] Clevinger, Woodrow R, "The Appalachian Mountaineers in the Upper Cowlitz Basin." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Apr.1938. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40486282?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. Accessed 10 January 2020.

[26] Latino History of Washington State." *Latino History of Washington State.* www.historylink.org/File/7901. Accessed 22 August 2019.

Like the Native, Chinese, and Japanese Americans, they too experienced prejudice and discrimination.

Much like my hunt for documentation of the natives and immigrants of color, I could find very little information on the migration of the Hispanic people into Lewis County. Tito Martinez, who migrated from Michoacan, Mexico to Port Angeles, Washington in 1977, and who had been living in Lewis County since 1990, stated, "I don't know when the first Mexicans came to Mossyrock...maybe in the '80s. They came over the pass from Yakima. They came to work in the fields and farms and to raise their families."[27] Another resident of the area, Bob Dwyer, stated that "The Mexicans have been here at least since 1985...I only know that because it was the year I worked in the berries, and I was surprised to find Mexicans working there. I guess they must have lived in the area, but I never saw them until I went to work in the fields, and then, there they were."[28] Mr. Dwyer's account highlights the invisibility that many residents, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic, have commented on in regards to the Latinx in east Lewis County.

Understanding the history of this community–celebrating the victories and triumphs and grappling with the rage and grief–is not separate from understanding the future of this community. The two are interwoven, the lines that rise from our stories not only connect us to one another but are intricately entwined in our identity and hold our collective purpose. A willingness to listen and learn from those who have gone before us can provide a deeper, more meaningful future for all of us. But it is not possible to intelligently or truthfully speak of democracy or future well-being without acknowledging the issues of race, class, and gender that prohibit many Americans from pursuing a life of liberty and happiness. History enables us to

[27] Martinez, Tito. Personal Interview. 10 January 2019.

[28] Dwyer, Bob. Personal Interview. 10 March 2019.

address these social and political issues with insights forged from lives lived—and yet, if we are not intentional about self-reflection and collaborative action, we risk allowing history to repeat itself. In the east end of Lewis County, as in many other rural communities throughout the nation, there is an opportunity to learn from our history and to actively pursue a just and equitable community. As natives, immigrants, refugees, and pioneers, we are people of strength, resilience, ingenuity, and courage—now is the time to capitalize on these characteristics and to rectify and overcome a history meant to motivate us.

CHAPTER 5

I break the silence of the morning with the slamming of the back door. The gritty back and forth swish of the cat door, the side to side sway of the metal blinds on the glass, and the tinkle of the tiny chimes which hang on the window frame, all jump to life with the slam and then taper off till it is silent again. The cold morning air makes me gasp, it is invigorating. I take a look around–everything has been touched by frost, making the morning hazy with white when it ought to be green. It's lovely, but my mind goes to the patch of morels that I've been waiting to harvest—I hope this late frost hasn't harmed them. I slip on my rubber boots, stiff with the cold, and head out to take care of my chores.

The first rays of sunlight are just beginning to break through the trees. As I near the barn, I hear inquisitive and hopeful little clucks from the coop. Sliding the door back, Flo is out first, as always, followed in random order by Norma, Nancy, Irene, and Gina. After feeding, watering and gathering, I head back to the house, drop off the fresh eggs, and make my way down the drive. Hopping the ditch on the other side, I walk as the crow flies across the field towards old man Cooper's place. The mud sucks the boots off my heels as I traverse the lowlands. Returning

to higher ground, I scuff them through the frosty grass, which is not nearly as effective s wet grass at cleaning the mud off. Up ahead, I can see the front porch light shining through the spread of trees that envelopes Cooper's property. I jump another ditch onto the drive and the sound of the gravel beneath my boots sets Jasper to howling. I am still a good ways off when he breaks through the trees, recognizes me, ceases barking, and begins tail wagging. He halts at the property line, wiggling with barely restrained excitement, but mindful not to cross the established border. I give him a good rub down in appreciation of his patience and obedience and then follow him towards the trailer.

I pass numerous no trespassing signs including one that says 'Forget the Dog–Beware the Owner!' and another that ominously states 'If you are found round here at night, you'll be found round here in the morning.' There must be twenty vehicles, all in various states of disrepair, littered throughout the property, tucked under trees, and butted up against outbuildings. There is also fencing and construction material, piles of chopped wood covered with tarps, farming equipment, and a plethora of other useful items. Sometimes I use Coop as my first stop hardware shop–even if he doesn't have it, he can probably make it. Rounding the corner I come in view of the trailer and there is a sudden flurry of movement as feral cats scatter. The American flag, proudly displayed on a thirty-foot pole, wavers in the breeze as I walk below it. Smoke rises from the chimney. I follow Jasper around the '51 Ford and the four wheeler, through stacks of who knows what, and rap out on the back door "Shave and a haircut…two bits!" before turning the door handle and walking in.

I am welcomed by a rush of warmth, tinged with the smell of coffee, cigarettes, wood smoke and dog. Cooper is squatting on the foot stool in front of the wood stove, tossing another

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log in. "Morning!"[29] he hollers from the other side of the room. "Morning! It's a frosty one out there—I'm glad you got a fire going," I say, as I slip off my boots and toss my jacket on the chest freezer that doubles as a coat closet. He says "Coffee's hot," and I head for the kitchen where I first thoroughly wash my hands before reaching for the percolator. As I come back into the main room, Cooper has taken a seat at the far end of the table and I take the one opposite him, a distance of at least six feet. On the table is a tray of tobacco and a rolling machine and he proceeds to stuff a thin sheet of paper.

I've been coming by to check on Max Cooper ever since his wife Mary died near three years ago. Now, with the corona virus pandemic, I take care of all of his shopping and banking and he stays home. "What doing?" Cooper asks, reaching to crack the window open. Puffing in, he lights the cigarette and blows out a cloud of blue-gray smoke. "Oh, you know, just out and about…thought I'd spend the morning harassing ya." His head in my lap, I scratch Jasper's ears, as he looks up at me with his big brown eyes and what appears to be deep admiration. "Thought I might head to town a little later…you got your shopping list ready?" He harumphs in response. Recently having lost his eyesight, and thus his ability to drive, and now with the coronavirus threatening his life, Cooper isn't happy about having someone else do his shopping, but at his age and with his lungs, neither can he risk being out in public. He says, "I gotta poke around and see what I need…what time ya going?" "Oh, probably round 2 or 3, but there's no real rush. I'm gonna take Ma so she can get out of the house, you can come and just stay in the car with her if'n ya want to." He takes a long drag and says, "Be good to get the stink blowed off." I give him a smirk and say, "I couldn't agree more." We sit in silence for a few minutes. Cooper is good at

[29] Cooper, Maxwell. Personal Formal and Informal Interviews. September 2019-April 2020.

just sitting in the silence; I have picked this habit up from him, and thoroughly enjoy it. He finishes his cigarette and crushes the butt in an overflowing ash tray. Rising, he lumbers towards the back of the house, the floor creaking as he goes.

The room I sit in is an add-on to a single wide trailer. It is definitely a bachelor pad, although it looked the same when Mary was here. Now that I really look around, I can see that the two of them were ahead of one of the most popular fashion trends amongst rural people: the room is a perfect blend of hot pink and camouflage. There are numerous skulls, antlers and pelts displayed on the walls and one large buck is mounted near the back door. Hanging from some of the antlers is a string of pink heart lights. On the other side of the room, a hot pink frame holds the names "Max" and "Mary" and written below is the meaning of those names. I remember when they got that done at the Southwest Washington Fair. Cooper would laugh to know that his house décor was trending—Mary would have loved it. From where I sit I can see six guns. There are three rifles leaned into corners, one mounted on the wall and a six-shot revolver hanging from its holster near the door. I'm pretty sure they are all loaded. Cooper only had to pull that revolver on me one time, from then on, if I was going to show up after dark, I always called first.

Even though I grew up with guns, or perhaps because I did, I always feel a level of anxiety being around them. One time, my father was sitting in his recliner, cleaning his gun while watching the local news. When a commercial came on and the volume increased–one of his pet peeves–he slammed one in the chamber, lifted the rifle to his shoulder and shot our TV. Another time, Dad and I were headed outside when the 12 gauge he was carrying accidently discharged and put a two foot hole in our back porch roof. Nerve-wracking, yes, but nothing compares to Cory Carson, who folks said "wasn't quite right in the head," leveling a loaded 30-

06 at my chest on the middle school playground. I'll never forget looking down the barrel of that gun knowing that the kid on the other end just might be off enough to pull the trigger. His cousin, just as terrified as I was, gently and persistently called him off and he eventually lowered the gun, lamely saying "I was just playing." None of us ever mentioned it again. A year later, Cory was killed working in the woods with his uncles, crushed to death by a rogue log.

These experiences, along with the gun related deaths of two family members and two close friends, have made me a bit nervous around guns. The mass shootings throughout the nation have convinced me that we need gun law reform. Cooper though, is a diehard NRA member and we have had several conversations about our differing viewpoints. For Coop, guns mean security, food on the table, and enjoyment—before he lost his eyesight, he had built his own shooting range and practiced almost every day. Once, when I asked him why the antlers were important to him he replied "memories." For Cooper, guns and hunting are important because of the relationships that he has with others who enjoy the same things.

Cooper comes back into the room, done rummaging for whatever he was after, and takes his place at the end of the table. He begins rolling another cigarette as Jasper trades me out and flops down beside him on the dingy carpet. "I thought I had that bottle of homemade ointment. I was going to give it to your mother for her shoulder, but I can't find it nowheres." Both in their 70s, both hurting and both blind, Mom and Coop have found some common ground in these last few years and are often trading remedies for their various aches and pains. "It'll turn up" I say, beginning to make some space on the crowded table, "Any chance I could talk you into another interview today?" Coop lifts his eyes from the rolling and gives me a look. It has been well established between us that he thinks higher education is nothing but a bunch of 'liberal horseshit.' I keep clearing the table, because I know that he enjoys our interviews, and sure

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enough, he finally says, “Well, I don’t know what more I could tell you…” which is my cue to break out the recorder.

The sunlight is now streaming through the windows and Cooper reaches out for his hat, his eyes sensitive to the brightness in the room. The hat is dark brown felt, the style probably has a name but I don’t know what it is—I would describe it as part farmer, part cowboy, and part biker. Coop is a good-looking man. This morning, as every other morning, he is dressed in worn bib overalls and a navy undershirt. A shabby blue and black plaid jacket hangs on the chair behind him and his work boots slouch on the floor, next to my rubber ones. Coop’s most notable feature is his chest-long red and silver beard. Full and flowing, the red seems woven with strands of gold, copper, and bronze and all of it is edged with silver. It makes him seem almost otherworldly, or at the very least, regal. When the weather turns a bit warmer he will shave it all off, then let it grow when it turns cold again. “Well,” he says, “what do you want to know?” I place the recorder in front of him and hit the red button.

“I want to know about some of the changes you’ve seen in the community over time,” I say, “How far back can you remember?” Cooper takes a deep breath, runs his hand over the back of his neck and down around his beard. “Well…” he says, “I don’t remember much about the community when I was a kid, then I left to go to Alaska. I guess I came back home in the winter of ’89, round about my dad’s birthday.” He goes on to say that things had changed some, that there were people here that he didn’t know and whose names he had never heard, but that Onalaska hadn’t really changed that much. “When I got back I just went about my business. I had to make a home for myself, for my girlfriend and her kid. I had to find gainful employment…” Cooper found work as a mechanic for a time, then, like most men in this area, he fell to logging. “I tried it when I was seventeen or eighteen, it was too rough for me, I didn’t

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have the proper clothes or equipment, it was winter, and I was living in my car. I swore right then that I'd never log again, but that didn't happen. I had to do it again when I was fifty."

I asked him about other opportunities or work industry but he just shook his head. "There was the dam," he said, "Tacoma Power. Lying bastards. They promised all them folks that they had stole that property from, that there would be year-long access all around them lakes…free recreation…and all that turned out to be horseshit. They stole their properties for pennies on the dollar. Now, they're trying to run a fish hatchery and they ain't got a clue how to do it. They ruined fishing on the river. It went from combat fishing to no fishing. They killed 'em all off…the dams. They couldn't do what they were naturally made to do, they couldn't spawn." Many people in this area, especially the old timers, share Coopers sentiments in regards to Tacoma Power. In fact, the dam project was stilted for many years by residents in the area concerned that First Nations villages and other small towns would be destroyed, and that the dams would be detrimental to salmon and steelhead runs. A History Link article informs us that "Opposition to the new dams from anglers and from the State Game Department delayed Mayfield Dam until 1963, and Mossyrock Dam until 1968."[30] But eventually, the needs of the city won out and the dams were put in– altering lifestyles, demolishing fishing, forcing folks out of their homes and burying their communities under water.

Cooper goes on, "Took their way of life right out of 'em. Things weren't the same for a long time. Then the logging industry took a shit too. All the guys that were loggers had to retrain to do something else. You know, they became box boys at the grocery store because they had to work. A lot of 'em had to go back to school to learn to do a trade." There was a sadness in

[30] Wilma, David. "Tacoma Public Utilities." https://www.historylink.org/File/5025. Accessed 1 May 2020.

Cooper's voice as he described the men and the hard decisions they had to make in order to care for their families. "People are tired of being walked on, their rights taken, their way of life taken, by our wonderful government. Idiots…educated idiots." I then asked what impact these type of industry changes had on the community. "It makes you mad. Just like…well it used to be, you could work on any old car or something cuz it was simple. Then all of a sudden, everything become computerized. You had to go back to school to learn how to work on a friggin' car because it had a computer in it. That's why I had to go to logging, because I didn't know enough about computers to make a way of life."

His voice shakes a little on the last words, the timbre resonating with loss, and the room goes quiet. After a moment, he suddenly stands, his chair nearly tipping backwards, and exclaims, "I feel like it'd be a good day to go fishing! There's a full moon coming…what say ye?" I reach out and stop the recorder, there's nothing for me to say but, "Well, get her packed up then!" Jasper is already at the back door, wiggling and whining, as I slip my boots and jacket back on. Outside, Cooper grabs his tackle box and pole from the shed and asks me to grab a handful of worms from the box he keeps them in. That's the worst part about taking Cooper fishing, he likes to use worms and can't see to thread them onto the hook, so I have to do it for him. We stop by my place so I can tell Ma where I'm headed and also to grab my purse. It's 8 am, and I hope we aren't too far behind the bite. Climbing into Coop's old Chevy, Jasper in between us, I turn her over, throw her into drive and we're off to Swafford Pond.

The drive over is gorgeous. It feels wonderful to be out of the house. St. Helen's and Rainier are both white and even the lower ridges show a skiff of snow on them. The evergreens serve as a lush backdrop to the bare trees, their bark glowing with a spring-green colored lichen. Soon they will leaf out and the effect will be lost to the landscape until next year. Both Cooper

and I have buoyed and are in fine spirits. The roads are empty—it feels like they belong to us and though it is still pretty chilly, we roll down our windows and reach out into the fresh air. We need snacks so when we get to Mossyrock, I mask up and grab a set of disposable gloves out of my purse before going inside. Believe it or not, this mini-mart has pretty good biscuits and gravy. I grab two orders, along with some beef jerky and a couple bottles of water. Back at the car, I disinfect everything before handing it to Cooper. He says excitedly, "You got biscuits and gravy…dang it if they don't make 'em pretty good here" as he grabs the plastic spork and digs in.

When we get to Swafford, it's empty, not a car in sight, which isn't that unusual but as we creep down the rutted drive, bright pink notices are posted saying that fishing is closed statewide. "Now how they gonna do that when people are out of work and need to eat?" Coop asks in exasperation, "It's not like fisherman all gather together and fish the same hole! The whole purpose of fishing *is* social distancing!" He shakes his head and lights another cigarette. As I turn the Chevy around I quietly start saying "Pop. Pop. Pop pop pop pop!" Cooper replies, "Not a bad idea…" "Glenoma?" I ask. "Let's go to Taidnapam," he says, and we are off on our next adventure. Again, the drive is gorgeous, and getting out in the sticks wonderful, perhaps especially for Jasper. After an hour of searching and only finding the already harvested stumps of morel mushrooms, we give up the ghost and head back home. No fish. No mushrooms.

I return to the questions I had hoped to ask earlier, feeling Coop out to see if he wants to continue. I ask if he has seen change amongst the kind of people who live here and he responds. "All the old timers are dead and their kids are grown up and their kids' kids too. I don't recognize the names no more. People married outsiders I guess, or people from out of town. Maybe brought 'em here. I'll tell ya, the Californians should stay in California…they screwed

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that state up and we don't need 'em up here. I just got no use for 'em. They're not my kind of people." I let his passion die for a moment before trying to discover the reason for his dislike of Californians. "Poor people around here can't afford a place, the Californians come up and $300,000 ain't shit to them…they buy property and fence it all up and gate it off…anti-social bunch of jackasses. Arrogant." I ask if he has ever met or spoke to anyone from California and he replies in the negative, stating that he doesn't want to either.

We are passing back through Mossyrock when I ask about the Hispanic people. He starts with "I don't know what to tell you about them other than the blueberry and tulip fields seem to be the main culprit of importing illegals, or maybe they're not [illegal], I'm not sure, but there's a whole bunch of them there. I don't see 'em in the stores or nothing, I see 'em in the fields, working. They're hard workers. And for the most part I think they're pretty honest because I lost my billfold down at Swafford one time and a feller called me up and told me he found it. It had like $50 bucks in it. It was a little Mexican feller and he didn't speak any English, but his boy did. I told 'em to take the fifty but he said "No, no, we don't want any money." I told 'em it was worth the money that's in the billfold to me, just for you to make this call, but they didn't want the money. So when I went to pick up the wallet I bought 'em a thank you card and put some money in it and give it to 'em. They were Mexican. Really nice people and honest as the day is long. And I got a nephew who is Mexican…hard-working, honest, good people. Everybody gotta work for a living, they're not out stealing, they're just good old boys. Most of 'em just speak Spanish and that used to piss me off. When I'd see 'em in the bars and whatnot…if you're gonna hang out in my area, speak English. If you can't, buy your beer and take it home." I see a glimpse of something I want to grab onto and ask, "You said 'used to,' it doesn't make you mad anymore?" Quick as a whip, Cooper says "I don't go to the bars no more."

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We drive on, but soon he says, “There’s lots of people around that don’t want the Mexicans here. They say they’re taking the jobs away from the white boy but the white boy is so frickin’ lazy he don’t want the job anyway. There was a lot of thieving going on when I lived down in Onalaska. I thought for a long time it was those Mexicans, lived down in that yeller house, so I went out all night just watching the streets, but no—by 4am those people were gone, headed up into the woods to work.” Coopers deep appreciation for hard work is a cultural standard in this area, especially amongst the older generations who have known little else and whose very lives are intricately bound to their livelihoods.

We ride on in silence, Cooper has given me a lot to think about. I see things so differently than he does, but today I felt as if I got to see a bit of the world through his eyes. Cooper has had a lifetime of loss. Loss of work, loss of purpose, loss of wife, loss of eyesight. He is currently in a real bad position and may lose his home and the land that he has worked on most of his life. Into this fray comes wave after wave of unforeseen change. Advances in technology, population and demographic changes, and pandemics—each contributing to a sense of loss and out-of-control-ness. He sees newcomers as a threat to his future and he holds urban migrants in low esteem. Unwilling to engage with this group of people, he may never understand that he has been bound by stereotypes and prejudices. His appreciation for hard work and the relational experiences he has had with Latinx has transformed his opinion some—even a few years back you would not have heard him complimenting the Latinx as hard working and honest—simply because he hadn’t had any personal experience with them. This gives me hope. I believe that relational experiences with the Other can be one of the most powerful tools to break through the lies that bind us, and to learn to enjoy those who think and act differently than we do.

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APPENDIX

These photos were taken by me in the East End communities and are portrayed here with permission from the subjects. They are uncaptioned, the images saying more than I ever could.

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WE NEED GOD GUNS
GOLD GRUB
YOU CAN KEEP YOUR CHANGE
MR USURPER

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