

ABSTRACT

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The assumption that undergirds this thesis is the idea that in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the roots and intersectional nature of violence, in order to help end it, we must first understand the roots and intersectional nature of the violence that we ourselves have experienced. As Ingrid Washinawatok El-Issa (“Flying Eagle Woman”), a feminist who worked tirelessly to promote Indigenous people’s culture and rights, explained, “If we seek to embark on the elusive search for peace, we must first unlock the silence of our peoples, and other peoples like us.” To achieve a deeper understanding of my own situated experiences, as a pansexual white cis-gendered male feminist and survivor of childhood abuse and housing instability, I engaged in a proposal of journaling, research, and interviewing family members. This led to an epistolary autoethnography, with letters to three different family members, a pair of strangers, and the world at large. Autoethnography, a qualitative research method that combines elements of ethnography and autobiography, permits researchers to reflect critically on their subjective and embodied experience of events, while also understanding those subjective experiences in the context of objective, other-focused narratives of the same events. It requires research along a continuum of self and beyond, and often invokes a transformative form of cognition, grounded in re/reading, re/viewing and re/understanding, which in turn enables understanding of phenomena at a deeper level of consciousness. In the case of this thesis, the autoethnography facilitated an awareness and new understanding of what it means to be a researcher—an awareness that has both altered and affirmed my way of seeing and being in the world.