As soon as I could express my thoughts and emotions about the world in which I lived, I did so through writing. I carried my love of writing into college, where I pursued a degree in English and trained as a writer of fiction. The stories I vvrite are really rooted in the places I have lived and people I have met, so part of my writing process has always be,en to spend a lot of time just listening and looking at how people are with each other, how they move through a space, how they show emotion. This way of engaging vvith my surroundings eventually develop. into a tangible skill in interviewing and observing in research settings. I say flUs to think when considering how vve can or shouki do vvork, it's import. to look at who we are as vvhole people who odst in the world within different types of families and as members of a variety of conununities. For me, the places and the people among whom I live have been the greatest influence on the vvork I do.

I didn't think much about higher education as a political and social concept until I was one year into a six-year P. program. At first, I vvas going to do a race and ethnic studies doctoral study heavily based in literature that drew from my background in English and had with no conununity-bas. component beyond the types of literature I was going to study. But as I got busy with the everyday life of graduate school, I started to experience both subtle and at times blatant inequities vvithin the university environment. For instance, I observed a space where an overwhelming number of the administrative assist.. were black women and almost all the department leadership were white (and largely men). This was despite the presence of multiple "diversity'. offices and programs at the university. My eventual research study emerged out of my questions about how racism sustains itself on an institutional level, and how one could more effectively challenge ans status quo.

For the doctoral study, I decided to do a case study of a majority-minority university through the lens of how it develops its diversity goals and programs. I vvanted to know how universities and colleges define what racial and etimic "equality" means, the *effects* these defmitions have on how diversity programs are implemented at that institution, and in tum how the racial and etimic culture of the university develops. This is also where my background in storytelling came in. As I read odsting works from the field, I noted that not much attention vvas paid to the social processes of storytelling, discussion, argument, and negotiation that vvent into creafmg diversity at the university. I felt these stories were important because when people find it very hard to t. about race and ethnicity, or even say the word *race,* they often tell stories to convey their experiences and meanings. For example, people on committees for hiring new faculty often talked around the issue of race and ethnicity by discussing whether the candidate had "merit" or whether they would be "hired for diversity." Studying and re-telling these stories of racial and ethnic diversity allowed me to use my experience studying literature and writing stories to create a more community-based approach to examining race, ethnicity, and racism in higher education.