

# Dear Beloved SoulFlower: Letters of Black Joy



Jennifer Joseph,

Research Mentor: Dr. Christal Mischelle Omni, MPH, MLS.



## Background

This project focuses on exploring identity, memory, and relational connections through reflective writing. It uses autoethnography to center the researcher's lived experience alongside mentees' reflections.

- Incorporates womanist and eco-womanist perspectives to interpret personal and communal experiences.
- Combines creative work (love letters) with scholarly research to connect lived experience to theory.
- Aims to understand how writing with love shapes self-awareness and understanding of community.
- Uses autoethnography as a method to make personal experience the focus of analysis.
- Connects lived experiences scholarly research, showing how personal reflection can inform academic understanding.



Dr. Christal Mischelle Omni, MPH, MLS

## Methodology

### Participants

- Researcher as primary participant (autoethnography)
- OMNI cohort mentees engaged in reflection and creative work
- Love letters served as part of the data

### Materials

- Personal and eco-memories
- Emotional and embodied reflections
- Journals, mindful walks, dialogue
- Love letters
- Scholarly published articles connecting lived experience to research

### Procedures

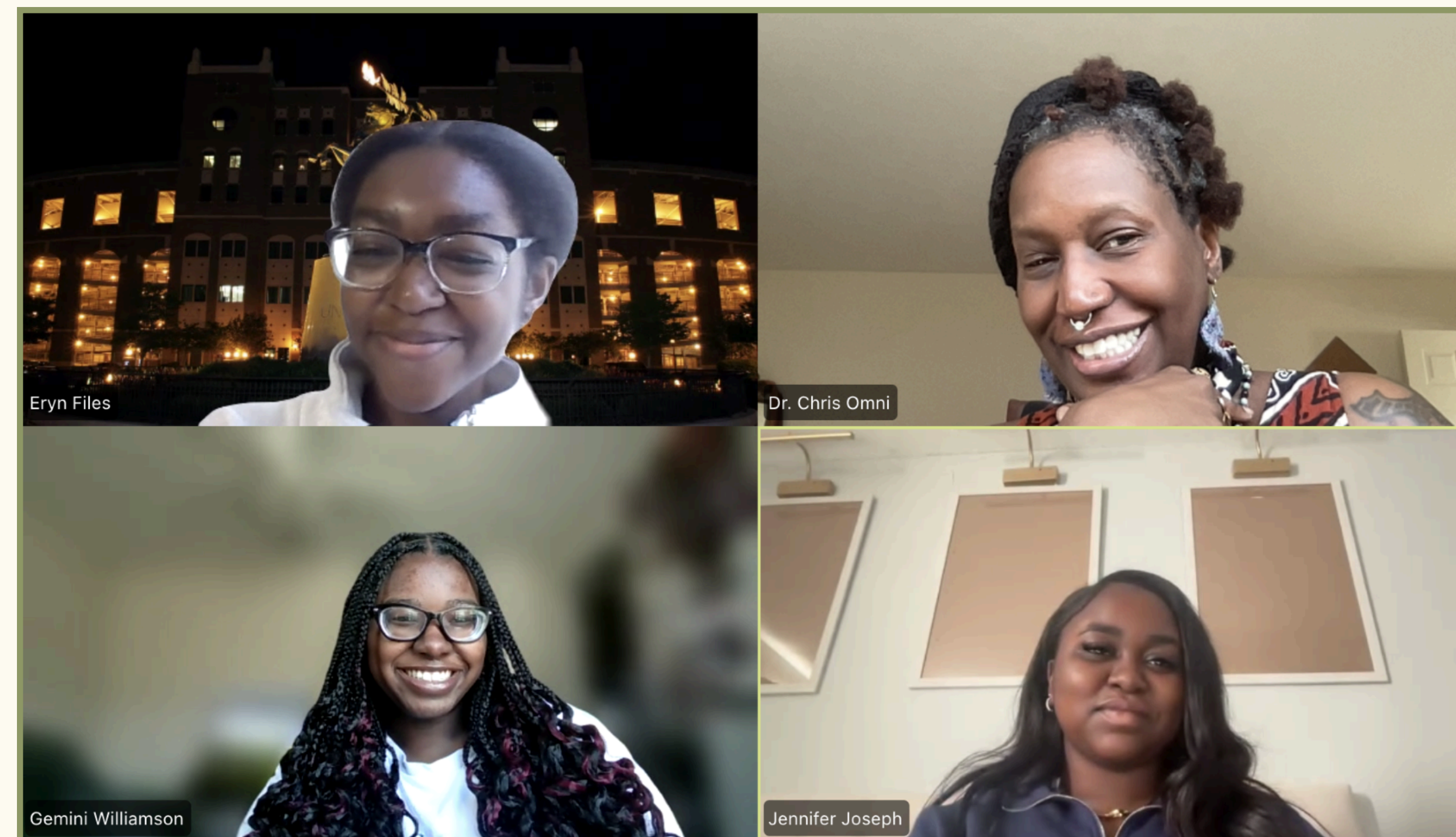
- Followed The Omni Process™ (5-step reflective cycle)
- Engaged with archival and scholarly sources
- Wrote/revised love letters
- Participated in group dialogue (3CQ)

### Data Analysis

- Identified main ideas across reflections, letters, and scholarly sources

## Implications

- Reflective writing deepened understanding of self. and strengthened connection to community, ancestors, and memory.
- Love letter writing strengthened interpersonal relationships between the researcher and mentees, creating a sense of shared understanding and community.
- Letters show how personal experiences shape identity and the importance of our own stories in understanding the world.
- Autoethnography demonstrates that personal experience is a valid source of knowledge, questioning traditional research methods.
- The results show that combining care, creativity, and relationships in research can create knowledge and support healing



## Love Letters

Dear Beloved SoulFlower,

water brings memories, healing, closeness,  
children of the earth arriving in time:  
one here, one coming, one surprise.

I'm their product too.

I wonder when craving a new life  
became survival, then settling.  
past pulls like a current, shaping us even as we  
resist (as noted in Neumann & Rupp, 2016).

unraveling takes time, undoing takes time  
And it starts with me, with us.

- Rise Higher, Fall Softer

Love Letters Written By: Jennifer Joseph and cited published work

Dear Beloved SoulFlower,

the strongest woman we know  
taught us to hold it in for show  
society preys on weakness  
especially of woman colored brown  
we're taught not to frown  
taught not to shout  
or well seem too aggressive  
so we swallow it down  
you're a beloved SoulFlower dear  
rooted and real  
nothing to prove  
just here

- Rise higher, Fall softer

## Reflection

- The study highlights that relationships with ancestors, land, and memory play a key role in creating knowledge.
- Findings support that knowledge is not only received from traditional data but through lived experience, emotion, and creative engagement.
- Writing with love functions as both a research method and a therapeutic practice, combining scholarly inquiry with personal and communal well-being.
- Future research can use this approach with other communities, highlighting holistic and relational ways of knowing.

## References



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