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My choice of research was not only very personal and important, but it was also historical resistance rooted in indigenous spirituality against systemic violence. During my fall 2016 semester, I felt that it was no accident I was taking a class on spiritual activism while the Standing Rock movement was taking place in North Dakota. The Standing Rock tribe banded with indigenous tribes across the globe, standing in solidarity against big oil companies. What I noticed about Standing Rock was that it was not just a movement of indigenous peoples, but of alliances with non-native people as well. Although the Dakota Access Pipeline had been making its plans to construct this pipeline, I saw that the Standing Rock movement was reaching its pinnacle as I was also taking Spiritual Activism.

I knew then that I had to document Standing Rock's spiritual activism in resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline. Dr. Costa's Spiritual Activism course provided me with a plethora of material by spiritual activist scholars. Scholarly women like Gloria Anzaldúa, AnaLouise Keating, Winona LaDuke, and Layli Maparyan provided me with definitions and research that allowed me to expand upon how Standing Rock practiced spiritual essentialism. After developing a stronger foundation for my topic, I used the analytical articles and journals on the Hollins Library database. Along with that, I found Lee Irwin's "Themes in Native American Spirituality" at the library, which became an essential part of my research, particularly when I needed to explain Native American spirituality from the perspective of a native person. Besides using materials from the library, I also depended on media from Instagram and YouTube, because Standing Rock was happening as I was writing my paper. I followed indigenous people who were at the encampment. I also depended upon journalists and reporters who documented the songs, dances, and prayers practiced at Standing Rock, which were never, if ever, reported on national media.

After gathering all the information I needed, I received help from Luke Vilelle about how to organize my paper. He recommended that I grab a book and pull relevant information from it and write it on a notecard. Then I could organize each quote I pulled into an outline. This helped me immensely, and I found that I could write my essay with ease. As I wrote my paper, I found that I needed to inform the reader about big oil companies, as this was a large part of what Standing Rock resisted. After seeing that my reader could have an understanding of the history of big oil companies uprooting indigenous peoples and the environment, I then decided to write about the spiritual activism practiced at Standing Rock. I ended my essay with a poem, as this research was, and still is, personal to me. The poem is important because it is my tribute to Standing Rock and a bridge of love towards the Bismark police in North Dakota. In that way, I gave an offering to fuel the prayers at Standing Rock.