

# WHO AM I?

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VULNERABILITY = POWERABILITY

*A Memoir*

NICHOLAS JORDAN MOORE

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NICHOLAS JORDAN MOORE  
WHO AM I?  
*Vulnerability = Powerability*  
*A Memoir*  
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#### DISCLAIMER

To provide anonymity to the characters in this book, I have used aliases for nearly everyone other than myself. Also, some of the specific cities and places have been changed.  
My recollections and viewpoints should not be considered as evidence or facts.

WHO AM I?

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# Foreword

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**L**ife can be seen as an epic poem. It ebbs and flows, has heroes and villains, and everyone has their own perspective. Although it's nearly impossible to see in the midst of a storm, the villains in our own stories play poetically beautiful roles.

In our own stories, we all want to play the hero, and I'm no different. I wish I could say that I haven't been the villain in other people's stories, but unfortunately, I've done terrible things.

My hope is that my story will help you feel more comfortable in your own skin and bring more love, compassion, and vulnerability into the world. To help achieve this, I've included reflection questions at the end of each chapter. I hope you enjoy it.



*Lay down your armor  
And pick up your heart  
Your dreams are waiting  
As you painfully fall apart  
And when the last piece falls  
And your heart is wide open  
You'll understand it all  
And give thanks for being broken*

# Chapter 1

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## *Violence and Racism*

I was born a white male in September of 1984, in Louisiana, the youngest of three. My brother Eric was six, and my sister Shelly was three. Dad's hard work provided a comfortable lifestyle for our family, and Mom was the sweetest and gentlest person I knew. My siblings and I had perfect childhoods. At least, that's what I thought at the time; I see things a little differently now.

From around age four to seven, I spent the majority of my free time in a skating rink that Dad had purchased in central Texas. Dad worked several years at the phone company as a salesman, saving money so that he could eventually free himself from the daily 9-to-5 grind, and it was a dream come true for my siblings and me. Unfortunately, the fantasy didn't last as long as we'd hoped, and Dad's violent side was around the corner.

After owning the skating rink for a few years, Dad was duped by his old college professor, who claimed he had found the cure for diabetes. They had grown a friendship through boxing together while Dad was in school, and Dad thought he could trust him. With the promise of becoming a millionaire, Dad sold the skating rink, moved our family to Dallas, and persuaded family members from both sides to invest.

Losing our money on a bad investment was one thing, but losing our family members' money had to be incredibly painful. Everyone was pointing fingers at Dad, and it eventually ended up in an ugly lawsuit with Dad's professor spending time in prison.

Dad had grown up in poverty in South Louisiana and had worked hard to provide a comfortable lifestyle for our family. To have it all pulled out from under him by someone he trusted must have been devastating. It certainly affected other aspects of our lives. I know from stories I've been told by Dad, and later Mom, that Dad was capable of violence, but it wasn't until we moved to Dallas that I began to witness Dad's rage first-hand.

My first vivid memory of Dad's anger was when I was seven years old. Up to this point, my childhood was a dreamland full of joy and playfulness; but with the sale of the rink, the fun-loving Willy Wonka vision of Dad began to quickly fade. We were sitting down for an early dinner, and everything was going fine. I'm not sure what my brother said, but whatever it was, it sent Dad on a rampage. His fast, aggressive movement and loud roaring voice sent chills down my spine, and fear to every cell in my body. He came across the table, grabbed my brother by the ear, and literally threw him out of the house. Everybody, except Dad, was crying. Before that instance, I'd never been acquainted with Dad's violent side, and never recognized that one of his own children could become

its victim. After that dinner, I filtered my words and actions around Dad. They say that “fight or flight” is the instinctual response to violence. After that night, I neither fought nor flew. Instead, I prayed I’d never be the one to elicit Dad’s violence.

The next time I witnessed Dad’s anger had to do with road rage. I’m not sure where we were coming home from, but the whole family was in the car as we were driving on the highway in our city. The first thing I recall was that a guy got in front of Dad and gave him the finger. This caused shit to hit the fan. Dad was livid, and Mom pleaded with him to restrain himself.

“Frank, please calm down. The kids are in the car. Please!”

Dad drove recklessly to stay on the guy’s tail. When he exited, Dad closely followed. And when he stopped at the red light— despite Mom’s protests—Dad flew out of the Suburban, leaving his wife and three children in the idling vehicle, and angrily approached the guy’s driver-side door. Dad punched his window as he yelled at him to get out of the car. Irrate with his noncompliance, Dad pounded his fist against the window again and proceeded to kick a dent in the man’s car door. The guy was obviously scared and mercifully chose to stay in his car.

Meanwhile, the situation in our car was tense, and everyone was frightened. Nervously crying, I peered through the windshield with horror, watching Dad make his way back to our car. Mom tried in vain to calm us down and refocus our attention upon anything but the mayhem Dad was causing in the street. When Dad finally climbed back into our car, he was still angry. As we continued our drive home, nobody spoke other than Dad.

*“Son of a bitch is gonna flip me off with my family in the car. He’s lucky I didn’t rip his door off.”*

The aftermath involved a recurring pattern that would continue for the upcoming decades: there was nothing Mom—or anyone—could say that would calm him down or change his mind about what he’d done. He was right, and nobody could tell him otherwise. That night, we sat in silence for the rest of the ride home, afraid of the thought of provoking another outburst.

From an early age, Dad taught my brother and me that physical violence wasn’t simply acceptable but encouraged. Dad felt that violence would arm his sons with abilities of self-protection if or when he couldn’t protect us himself. One of my earliest memories in Dallas was when my cousins, Jerry and Timmy, came to visit for the first time. Jerry and Timmy were our favorite cousins. The two oldest siblings, Jerry and Eric, were a natural two-man team, while Timmy was stuck with me, the youngest of the group.

Timmy and I were upstairs playing by ourselves in the game room. The room featured two couches, a full-size mattress, and a TV. The mattress on the floor served as a wrestling or boxing arena. Dad had bought my brother and me a pair of boxing gloves, and Timmy and I decided to put them to use. Timmy was almost two years older than I was, so we thought we could even the playing field by giving Timmy the left-handed glove as I used the right.

Our “boxing match” wasn’t much of a match at all. He was standing on the mattress, and I would continually run towards him and miss with a haymaker right-hand, and he would knock me down with his left. It turned out that I didn’t have a chance. Rather than simply giving-up after Timmy had

knocked me down a couple times, I defiantly picked myself up and returned to reengage. In the spirit of competition and to warn Timmy of my unnatural resiliency, I proclaimed myself “Kunta Kinte,” the protagonist in Alex Haley’s 1976 novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.

I never understood why Dad—who had been born and raised in segregated pockets of the Deep South—was such a fan of *Roots*. Nevertheless, I was introduced to Kunta Kinte’s epic story at an early age. Of course, I was too young to read a novel, but I remember watching the mini-series on TV, and it left an imprint. I was too young to really grasp the magnitude of the powerful story of slavery in the United States and the impact of white oppression, but I’m thankful for what it taught me as an ignorant seven-year-old kid.

Kunta Kinte had been forcefully taken from his family and tribe, purchased by an American slave owner, and sent on a gruesome trans-Atlantic journey to the United States. Upon landing, he was given a new name and was expected to answer to it. After continually rejecting his new slave name, Kunta was tied up and whipped. The scene in the movie is traumatic and made a lasting impression on me. Every few whips, the slave master would scream, “Your name is Toby. What’s your name?” and he would continually reply, “Kunta... Kunta Kinte.” His name—a symbol of the family roots that had never been severed—was all that remained of the life he had once known, and he would rather have died than give it up.

Even at a young age, this scene left a lasting imprint upon my still-developing brain: our minds are stronger than our bodies. No amount of pain could make him quit on himself, and I took the lesson to heart.

After growing up in a racially divided southern Louisiana in the 1950s, Dad has continued to endorse many of the racist beliefs he had originally learned during his childhood. Similarly, throughout my childhood in Texas, racism was socially accepted. Unfortunately, as a child, I wasn’t a stranger to racist thoughts and racist remarks.

In the middle of my sixth-grade American football season, we played the Oilers, a predominantly black team from a nearby, low-income area. Dad was our head defensive coach. Before the game, Coach Dad previewed our game plan. The Oilers had a “ringleader,” and he was #8. Coach Dad told me that, without #8, their Oilers didn’t stand a chance of beating us. Dad ordered me to tackle #8 on every single play, whether he had the ball or not. I followed orders.

By the time the third quarter came around, #8 came to the sideline, angrily removed his shoulder pads, and threw them on the ground while cursing my number. He eventually returned to the game and played until the final whistle. The game was very close, and we ended up winning 8-0. Towards the end of the game, the Oilers scored a touchdown that was called back by the referees for a penalty. Because the game was so close; because there was a controversial game-changing call; and because this was youth football in the state of Texas, there were a lot of angry parents and kids following the final whistle.

After the game had ended, we lined-up to exchange high fives and customary “good games” with the opposing team. As I approached #8 at the end of the line, he offered me a fist in my stomach instead of the traditional high five. I remember being upset about it and wanting some sort of

retribution. The coaches and parents found out what had happened, and it caused an uproar. The collection of bipartisan parents decided that #8 would issue me an example-setting apology, with both teams watching. At this point, there were hundreds of kids and parents gathering around for this big apology.

As I was walking over to the kid, I had Dad on one shoulder telling me, "I want you to walk right over to him and punch him right in the face." On the other shoulder, I had one of my other coaches tell me, "Nick, don't listen to your dad. Let #8 apologize and everything will be okay." I was a twelve-year-old kid, and I'm not sure which option instilled more fear: punching this kid in the face, as instructed, or disobeying Dad's direct orders.

When I approached #8, he was sitting on the end of the bench, and we were surrounded by on-lookers. He refused to apologize, and after a few moments, Dad grabbed me by the shoulder and said, "Let's get away from these sore losers."

Dad always claimed that he said, "sore losers," but my brother and I always felt it was quite likely that he used the N-word from the response that took place. I was so caught up in everything around me that I didn't hear Dad say anything. The next thing I knew, I was in the middle of a riot and scared shitless. Whatever he said, the comment sparked an eruption from the crowd. A decent-sized white man from the opposing team angrily approached Dad and me.

As the threatening man approached, Dad threw a right punch that instantly left the man unconscious, eliminating any chance that peace and calm would prevail. A very large black man angrily advanced toward Dad. I remember being extremely scared and seeing Dad throw punches at this man. Dad later told me that he had hit this man harder than he hit the first guy, and the man relentlessly powered forward. As I made my way out of the crowd, Dad ended up tripping and falling on his back and kicking upward toward the man. At that point, the fight was somehow split up, and Dad was left with nothing but a torn shirt. The cops were on their way, and the teams were split by about fifty yards.

There was still plenty of anger on the field, and some screaming back and forth began to take place. I was crying and standing with Mom at this point, but Dad was still hot and ready to fight. Whatever was yelled back and forth set off the fireworks again. The large black man began jogging towards Dad, and Dad was fueling the fire. As the man got close, Dad feinted as if he was going to hit him high and then instead dropped low and flipped him over as he tackled him by the legs. Once he had him on the ground, he began pounding until the fight was broken up for the last time. When the police arrived, Dad was arrested for the night, but no charges were filed. The news went citywide, and everyone knew about my "badass" dad. The team considered Dad to be a hero, and it was one of Dad's proudest moments. He was no longer able to coach the team the rest of the season and would instead watch my games from the parking lot through binoculars.

After this all took place, I couldn't have been more proud of Dad. As young boys, we often bragged that "my dad could beat up your dad," but from that point on, there was no doubt about it. No one could take on *my* dad. I still feared him, but I looked up to him and wanted to be just like him.

I didn't want to be afraid of anybody, and I wanted to be the biggest and most badass guy in town, just like he was.

### **Reflection**

By encouraging violence and racism, my dad was trying his best to protect and prepare me for what he saw as the real world. Passing down what he learned from his parents, he felt like he was doing the right thing.

During your childhood, do you remember your parents or guardians trying to instill any negative beliefs about the world?

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