

The Noisy Water Review

Whatcom Community College



2025

The Noisy Water Review



A Whatcom Community College showcase of student works, including nonfiction, poetry, fiction, and visual artwork of all kinds.

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Introduction

Welcome to the *Noisy Water Review*, Whatcom Community College's anthology of student work including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and various forms of artwork!

This small annual publication is an opportunity to celebrate the hard work that WCC students have done throughout the year – diligence that doesn't always see outward recognition. We hope we can make students feel seen in all their many talents and interests.

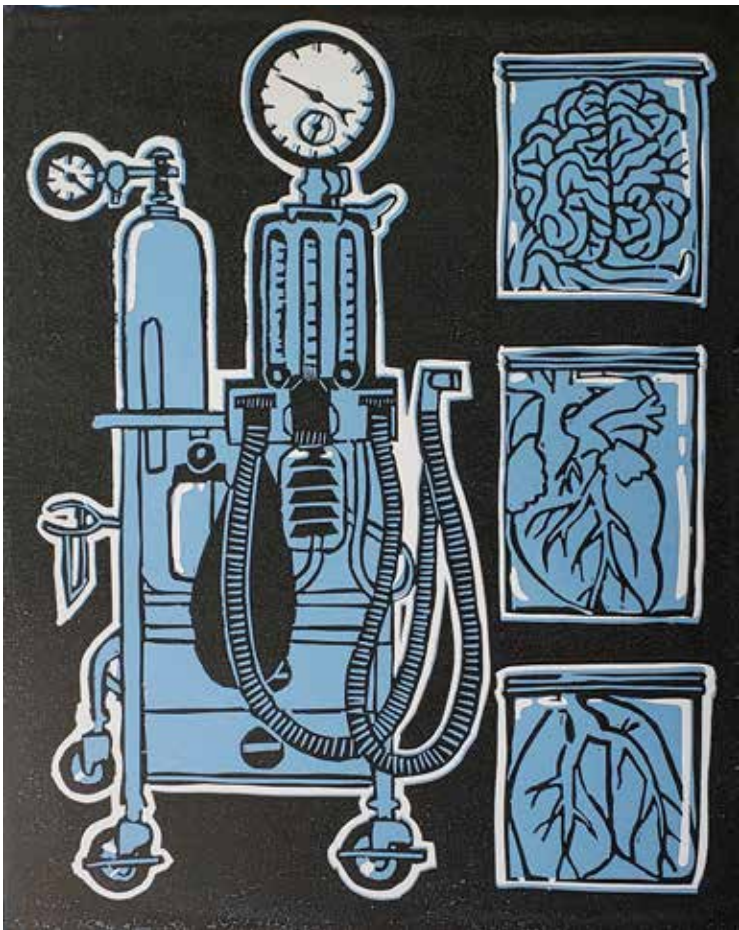
This year, we had the added privilege of working with Dr. Andrea Romero and the Latine Studies program to add a new section – *Cajitas*! While I will let Ava's introduction on page four fill you in on the meaning and history of cajitas, I will mention here that cajita means "little boxes." And each little box that was submitted to the *NWR* for this new section has a depth of cultural and linguistic meaning that I found fascinating as I read through them. Some cajitas are multi-lingual; some are creative collages; some are collections of memories; some represent connections to family; some are the tools that help us survive. I love seeing the variation, and further realizing what an amazingly diverse college we have.

That diversity continues to be one of WCC's strengths. You will see it in the cajitas, and you will see it in the open submissions. We are also a college with students of talent and energy! I am always excited to work with you and see you extend that talent and energy into this world that needs you so much. Thank you for sharing your work, everyone!

I also have to put in a little plug to the Horizon journalism crew, who every year seeks out the funding for this publication, helps get out the word about submissions, and helps put it together. Thank you for all your work, and may that work continue well into the future.

Joanna Kenyon
English and Journalism
NWR Project Manager





Anesthesia and Specimen Jars

by Cider Wells

linocut print, created in Justin Martin's Printmaking



by Ava Leona



by Ava Fry

Cajitas

Cajita is defined as a “small box,” but to us it is much more.

The Cajita Project has been introduced through the Latine Studies program by Dr. Andrea Romero in an effort to connect students to their backgrounds and encourage them to embrace where they came from.

The idea for cajita projects originated from the practice of Mexican migrants carrying important items, such as family heirlooms, across literal and symbolic borders in the mid- to late- 20th century and from Professor Pulido's "the cajita project." These sentimental items helped them feel safe and close to home when navigating new places.

Students were given the option of creating a collage or box filled with things that are important to them. Some students choose to include family photos or heirlooms, while some may choose to display their favorite childhood stuffed animal.

The point of this story-telling tool is to encourage students to shape their own curriculum and give them the chance to choose their own path. Students can be as creative or traditional as they want. The Latine Studies program has a goal of making students feel heard and encouraged to share their stories, and Dr Romero wants the classroom to act as an extended family for students. This philosophy sparked the creation of this project and the result has been a beautiful display of students' stories.

Introduction by Ava Fry





by Diana Avila

Mami's San Judas Necklace

A radiant relic close to her chest.
An emblem of faith she'll always wear.
In her necklace, miracles align.

Tete's Polaroid

New York frozen in black and white,
the city's pulse, a foreign thrill—

Plush from my favorite band

A gentle balm, holding my heart in a daydream.
My little escape— memories rushing back

My headphones

Comfort in sound when peace won't come,
They carry me through the noise alone.



by Xylia Cary

The objects I picked for my cajita represent events that have shaped me into who I am as a person today. A young woman who is learning and growing, becoming confident in her identity. They have considerable meaning to me and shed light on my journey through life.

One. I chose a medal from a gymnastics meet, the first gold medal I won. My parents put me in gymnastics when I was quite young, and though I no longer practice, my love for exercise and movement comes from the nine years I spent flipping through the air with my sister and peers. I was always a timid kid, and the competition was good for my self-esteem and confidence. Without gymnastics, I would not be the same person I am now.

Two. Gardening gloves. My mother planted her love for the Earth within me, and it has grown as I have. I spent many of my young years in her garden, learning how to grow food and about the benefits of eating from the earth. Now, I try to

spend some time outside each day, no matter how short. The dirt connects me to my past and the world around me.

Three. A Buddhist statue. While my family is not Buddhist, my dad practices meditation and mindfulness, pulling many of his beliefs from Buddhism. Growing up, he had me meditate with him on a regular basis, and though I wasn't particularly good at it, he taught me much about being aware of my surroundings and becoming welcoming to my many racing thoughts. He gifted me the statue when I was a young girl, and I have carried it with me as a reminder of who I come from and what he has taught me.

Four. An anxiety stone. This stone was a gift from my mother. Throughout my life, I have struggled with anxiety and depression, as well as being a very existential person. My questions about the world have caused me much distress, trying to find meaning in this brief life of mine. This stone brings me back to earth when I am particularly struggling, holding a place for my thumb to sit when needed. The smooth, cold dip in the surface of the stone cocoons my finger, bringing me back to the present.

Five. My favorite book. *The Cruel Prince* reflects who I am. I have poured over the pages again and again, living in a make-believe world that is mine alone. My love for fantasy is displayed on the pages, as well as many components of my being. The story follows a fierce young woman, making her way in a world she doesn't belong to. She gives me courage to navigate the unknown with pride and belonging.

These five objects have contributed substantially to my personality and being. They have become pieces of me, and reflect hints of my background, family and the young years of my life. Through these objects, you get a glimpse into my life and soul.



Super Mario Bros

by Izzy Linhares

Player one: Mario

"Hurry up if you want to play
Sit down, be silent and stay
I get to be Mario,
And you are Yoshi because you are slow
Watch what I do and follow along
I could do this all day long"

Player two: Yoshi

'I am so glad I can play
You say sit down, okay
I wanted to be Mario
If you think I'm slow then I'll put on a show
I will sit over her shoulder to play along
I wish I could always tag along...'



by Aidan Sweet

For my Cajita, I chose to put everything in my old camera bag. I have many fond memories of lugging it around Portland, OR for the perfect shot. Inside, I have 6 items: My Camera, earbuds, hat, bike seat, tillamook cheese, and legos. As long as I can remember I've loved photography and videography. It has shaped a lot of my life and is what I want to do for a career. Another thing I love is music, represented by the earbuds in my cajita, I couldn't live without them. My hat is in there because I have always worn a hat, it's a part of who I am. Growing up I enjoyed mountain biking and building legos in my freetime, so I put my bike seat and some legos in there. Finally, Tillamook cheese! I grew up eating Tillamook cheese and going to the Tillamook Creamery to try all their cheeses and icecreams. It's always been a large part of my diet. All of these items define who I am. In a way the camera bag shows my life.



by *Bunyod Kodirov*

Instead of using a box for my “Cajita,” I chose an Uzbek national fabric called *atlas* for background, along with items that hold great personal meaning to me — not only symbolically, but also as literal parts of my life. I felt this choice beautifully illustrates who I am as a person: someone who was born in Central Asia, yet deeply influenced by many different countries and cultures.

When people ask me which nationality I feel closest to mentally, I find it difficult to answer. Although I was born into an Uzbek family, I grew up speaking Russian, which inevitably shaped my way of thinking — one that differs significantly from traditional Uzbek perspectives.

At the age of 16, I went to South Korea as an exchange

student, and since then, I've lived there for 15 years. Once again, I found myself in a new environment, surrounded by a completely different mindset, which profoundly transformed me as a person.

I will try to describe the items that are dear to me in three different languages: Russian, Korean, and Uzbek.

Футбольные бутсы - Soccer Cleats. (Russian)

Мои футбольные бутсы. Мы называем этот вид спорта футбол, но здесь, в Америке, говорят *soccer*. Я играю в футбол с семи лет, если не ошибаюсь. Было время, когда я даже думал, что это станет моей карьерой и я стану профессиональным спортсменом. Но выбор пал совсем на иную сферу. Несмотря на это, я всегда продолжал играть — я состоял в разных командах и во время учёбы, и во время работы. Футбол стал для меня чем-то вроде хобби, где я могу хорошо провести время с друзьями и при этом с пользой для своего здоровья.

Олимпийский Мишка - Olympic Misha. (Russian)

Для меня статуэтка мишки является символом ушедшей советской эпохи. Хотя я и родился во времена СССР, этой страны уже не существовало в моём осознанном возрасте. Тем не менее, я считаю, что она оказала огромное культурное влияние на весь узбекский народ. Сама статуэтка была талисманом Олимпийских игр в Москве в 1980 году. Мои родители вспоминают те времена с теплотой и ностальгией — это была пора их молодости. Я нашёл её на барахолке и захотел сохранить как культурную часть самого себя.

Наушники - Headset. (Russian)

Следующее, что я выбрал — это мои наушники. Я часто использую их для видеоигр. Видеоигры, так же как и футбол, занимают огромную часть в моей жизни. В детстве я играл на разных консолях со своим братом и двоюродными братьями. Со временем многие игры перешли на онлайн-платформы, и некоторые люди, которых я встретил в онлайн-играх, стали моими друзьями в реальной жизни. Я не думаю, что с возрастом перестану играть в видеоигры — наоборот. После тяжёлого дня это отличное занятие для расслабления и проведения времени с друзьями. Тем более, с каждым годом качество графики в играх улучшается, и появляются всё новые и новые жанры на любой вкус и цвет.

김치 - Kimchi. (Korean)

김치는 단순히 한국의 전통 음식 중 하나가 아니라, 아마도 가장 유명한 음식입니다. 아마 김치에 대해 들어보지 못했거나 먹어본 적 없는 사람을 찾기는 힘들 것입니다.

저는 처음에는 김치의 맛을 이해하기가 어려웠습니다. 너무 맵게 느껴졌기 때문입니다. 하지만 한국에 온 지 몇 달 지나지 않아 김치를 사랑하게 되었습니다. 이제 김치는 제가 가장 좋아하는 음식 중 하나라서 한국 요리를 상징하는 존재가 되었습니다.

한국을 떠난 지 벌써 4년 정도 되었는데, 사람들이 한국에서 그리운 것이 무엇이냐고 물어보면 엄청나게 많은 것들 나열할 수 있겠지만, 제일 먼저 떠오르는 것이 바로 한국 음식입니다. 집에는 항상 김치가 있고, 한국 음식도 자주 요리합니다. 곧 직접 김치를 담글 계획도 있습니다.

Uy o'simliklari - House Plants. (Uzbek)

Uy o'simliklari - bu mening qiziqishlarimdan biri va ularga g'amxo'rlik qilish menga juda yoqadi. Ayniqsa, suratdagi o'simlik, uning ko'rinishi menga yoqadi-ya, shuningdek, u, ehtimol, mening tirishqoqligimni aks ettiradi. Bu turdagi o'simlikni shahrimizda topish qiyin edi, lekin men uni Kanadada topdim. Uni sotib olib uyimga olib kelmoqchi bo'lganimda, chegara bo'ylab ushlab qolishdi va uni yo'q qilishlarini aytishdi. Shunda men yana bir bor borib, uni deklaratsiya qilmasdan chegaradan o'tkazib kelishga majbur bo'ldim. Uyimda 20 dan ortiq uy o'simliklari bor, men va xotinim ularga g'amxo'rlik qilishni yaxshi ko'ramiz. Ba'zida, agar juda yoqsa, yangilarini sotib olamiz va do'stlarimizga ulashamiz. Agar do'stingizga original sovg'a topa olmasangiz, bu ajoyib variant bo'ladi.



by Ava Leona

Sentimental value radiates from this generic shoe box. From painting my favorite flower with friends, to cherished memories on film, and by having a keep's sake drawing made by a special little girl that deepened my love for being an 'Ate', while subtly filling the void of not having a little sibling of my own. Each eternal "memento" has shaped my theory of mind, some with harsher lessons than others. A keepsake from my Papa stands out, as does the Selena portrait my friend made for me. One night I time was rambling on and on to my friend about Selena Quintanilla's upbringing and how much adoration I feel for her as an artist but most importantly her music. From one beloved portrait to every token of appreciation I carry throughout my ongoing years, each fond memory has allowed me to truly understand the meaning of "to be seen is to be heard."



by Bella Black

by Ava Fry

I have been many things in my life. I have dulled myself down, played myself up. I've been quiet and I've been loud. Just like everyone else I have tried so desperately to conform and be accepted. But it seemed no matter what I did, someone would be disappointed or unimpressed or unphased by me and my presence. I'd hear people say I am weird, and I'd hear people say I'm basic. The things I like are too strange or too girly. I dress differently, I dress the same as everyone else.

I used to be a very scared girl. Scared of others thoughts, and scared of my own thoughts. Now, I, just like everyone else, am still scared. The important part of being scared is letting it move through you. I feel fear, fear of rejection, fear of others, fear of my own self awareness, I feel it in my head and my feet and my hands and I let it do what it pleases. And then I let it go.

Being yourself is not as easy as "not caring what others think" or "being confident". It's more like a slow journey of understanding that if you don't express yourself in every corner of your world, life is very dull and unfulfilling. Why not do things and buy things and experience things that fulfill you?

I was recently diagnosed with ADHD which I feel explains a lot of aspects of my personality. Bright colors and fun things give me dopamine that my brain sometimes lacks. I talk fast, think fast, write fast, and move fast. These are things that I have come to love about myself. I spent so much time taking it to heart when others called me "weird" or "quirky" or "spacy". I know now that it is because of a chemical difference in my brain. I wish nothing more than to go back and tell my younger self that I am not weird. I am wonderful and colorful and fun and happy and inspiring and successful and creative and passionate. I care about and see lots of things that others do not. I love lights and colors. I enjoy wearing creative outfits and doing my makeup and nails. I love stars and rainbows and flowers! For all of these reasons, I am me, and I love myself.



by Nicole Navarro

Growing up, we didn't move a lot, my mom didn't like change so we tended to stay in one spot for as long as we could before we had to move. When it was time, we usually had a garage sale and got rid of almost everything and kept what we could. We were fortunate to have furniture and some toys and nothing more, my mother's side had very few family heirlooms, if any, and my dad's side, well I didn't know. I craved my family's history, but I didn't get many answers, some pictures and an occasional oral story. When I got older and moved out on my own, I realized that for me to see the world and find out who I am, I needed to move and see other perspectives of the world. So, I moved to Portland Oregon, Oakland California, Albuquerque New Mexico and now Bellingham Washington. Each move I condensed more and more items into my cajita, getting rid of what I didn't need and keeping my most sacred items. I wish I could say my cajita was an old heirloom recipe box passed on from many generations but it's a recipe box from Target. I found my cajita one day walking around the aisles of Target, I knew I needed this beautiful cajita because one day I would like to

pass on my old recipes, recipes I wished were passed down to me. Why a recipe box, you might ask, well the best stories are told when food is being prepared. Family heirlooms begin somewhere, and I want my niece and cousins to know that we have a beautiful family history to honor and celebrate. So, for now, I include my treasured items, items that mean the world to me and need to be safely secured in my moves to make sure they make it to the next destination.





Mi Cajita: De Caídas a Coronas

by Alessandro Rangel

Mi cajita has seven objects que representan quién soy, de dónde vengo, y hacia dónde voy. Cada uno cuenta una parte profunda de mi historia, una historia llena de lucha, disciplina, sanación, y crecimiento personal.

Camisa de mi equipo

El primer objeto que elegí es una camisa de mi equipo de fútbol universitario. During one of the hardest times in my life, when I was battling drug addiction, falling behind in school, en relaciones, y en la vida misma, soccer saved me and helped me gain control of my life. Even though this is my 2nd year redshirting due to injuries and financial hardships La disciplina, la estructura diaria y el compromiso que el fútbol me exigía me ayudaron a salir adelante, especialmente en high school no se suponía que me iba a graduar, Pero gracias al enfoque que el deporte me dio terminé la prepa contra todo pronóstico.

Después de eso, continué mi educación en el colegio

comunitario, donde obtuve un GPA de 3.9 y también comencé a trabajar como tutor. Being able to support students, especially those who struggled like I once did has been one of the most rewarding parts of my journey. Ahora estoy en camino de transferirme a una universidad de cuatro años. Esta camisa representa mi resiliencia, mi orgullo, y el sueño que estoy construyendo con mis propias manos.

Planner

El segundo objeto es un planificador. A veces la gente dice que soy “demasiado estricto” conmigo mismo pero yo sé que la disciplina fue la que me salvó. I am passionate about financial literacy, planning, and routine porque aprendí que si yo no controlo mi tiempo y mi dinero, el mundo lo hará por mí. Aunque a veces pienso demasiado sé que mi dedicación al orden es mi manera de proteger mis sueños y asegurar mi futuro

Certificado de MHFA

El tercer objeto en mi cajita es mi certificado en Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). This certificate represents more than just healing as for me it shows that I didn't only work through my own pain, but that ahora tengo el conocimiento para apoyar a otros. Después de todo lo que viví, entendí que el dolor no desaparece cuando se ignora, necesita ser escuchado, validado, y acompañado.

Este certificado también marca el primer paso en mi carrera. I plan to become a research psychologist, combining mental health with policy and political science. Quiero usar mi experiencia y educación para trabajar en reformas reales especialmente en temas de inmigración, desarrollo psicológico, y acceso a salud mental en comunidades marginadas.

En el futuro, también quiero ser consejero de salud mental, alguien que pueda guiar a otros en su proceso de sanación así como otros me ayudaron a mí. Este certificado es solo el comienzo, una señal de lo lejos que he llegado y el propósito que ahora me impulsa hacia adelante.

Dulce de las Posadas

El cuarto objeto que incluí es un dulce que recibí durante las Posadas que celebrábamos en México cuando era niño. Every December, around my birthday, viajábamos a nuestro país donde todo el pueblo se reunía la gente iba a misa, y las calles se llenaban de luces, música y el aroma de comida casera.

Aunque nunca fui muy religioso, las Posadas siempre me hicieron sentir un profundo sentido de pertenencia. Como alguien que ha batallado con su identidad, esos momentos me daban consuelo, como si fuera parte de algo más grande, una cultura, una tradición, y una familia que siempre me recibía con los brazos abiertos.

Con el tiempo, I realized that even if I don't follow a specific religion, I still believe in God. I started to see religion not just as un conjunto de reglas but as one of the many ways that God brings people closer to Him through other religions, through family, through celebration y momentos compartidos como estos. I also believe that God gives us values and morales not to control us but to guide us toward compassion, respeto, and understanding. For me, las Posadas have always been about connection with my roots, with my community, and with something higher than myself

Tenedor (meal gatherings)

También guardo un tenedor como símbolo de nuestros convivios familiares en Seattle y en el área de King County. En mi familia, we don't need a birthday, holiday, or big celebration to come together A veces nos reunimos el día después de un evento especial, o simplemente en un fin de semana cualquiera pero siempre nos hacemos presentes. Even though everyone has their own busy lives working, taking care of the kids and school we still make time to sit down, share a meal, and just talk. Estas comidas son mucho más que solo comida; son nuestro espacio para ponernos al día, reírnos, desahogarnos, y recordarnos que no estamos solos. En esos momentos pequeños y sin planear un plato compartido, una plática casual, una cocina llena de ruido el lazo familiar se mantiene vivo. This fork represents that

bond cómo incluso algo tan sencillo como una comida puede mantenernos unidos y recordarnos que no importa qué tan lejos nos lleve la vida, siempre buscamos tiempo para juntarnos .

Shirt (Fashion): Camisa Favorita (Moda)

Mi sexto objeto es una camisa favorita que representa algo muy personal e importante en mi vida, la manera en que expreso mi autoestima. Growing up, batallé mucho con mi identidad. No siempre me sentía cómodo en mi propia piel y había momentos en los que de verdad me sentía fuera de lugar como si no supiera quién era ni cómo quería que el mundo me viera. Nunca fui bueno para vestirme bien, combinar colores, armar outfits, todo eso me confundía y sentía que simplemente no era para mí. Veía que otros ya tenían su estilo o sabían quiénes eran y yo apenas estaba empezando a entenderme.

Pero con el tiempo, eso empezó a cambiar y poco a poco me di cuenta de que la ropa podía ser más que solo algo que te pones podía ser una forma de expresarme o de descubrir quién estoy llegando a ser. Vestirme dejó de sentirse como una presión y empezó a sentirse como una oportunidad. I wasn't trying to impress anyone, solo intentaba encontrarme a mí mismo. Escoger qué ponerme se volvió un acto pequeño pero importante de cuidado personal, especialmente en tiempos donde todo lo demás en mi vida se sentía fuera de control. Todavía no soy un experto, he mejorado. Ya tengo un estilo que se siente honesto algo que sí se siente como yo. When I feel good in what I wear, I feel comfortable. Con confianza, con orgullo, y con respeto hacia mi cuerpo, el mismo cuerpo que ha pasado por adicción, estrés, trauma, y que aún sigue en pie hoy. Esta camisa no es solo una prenda. Es un recordatorio de dónde empecé, cuánto he crecido y las maneras silenciosas en las que he aprendido a valorarme y quererme.

Mi cajita isn't just a collection of memories, it's a reflection of my growth, my purpose, and the life I'm building with intention. Every object reminds me that I've come a long way and I'm just getting started.



by Presley Contreras

Dentro de esta caja hay cinco objetos diferentes que he elegido, cada uno de los cuales representa una versión de mí mismo durante los últimos doce años. Estos objetos me han motivado a convertirme en la persona que soy hoy.

Legos de coches,

Los legos eran un interés especial y entretenido para mí. “Legos son para niños, Presley”, decía mi madre mexicana, yo respondía con un “No me importa eso, me gusta a mí”. Cada vez que tenía la oportunidad de elegir un juguete, siempre iba directamente a la “sección de niños” para elegir un juego de Lego dentro de mi presupuesto. Había algo en la emoción de agitar la caja y tomarme mi tiempo para construir el set que me llenó de alegría. A veces me tomaba una hora, otras veces un día entero, pero no me importaba si tenía la paz y la tranquilidad para terminarlo. Para mí, nada más importaba en ese momento que construir y agregar el conjunto completo a mi colección. Los legos me enseñaron a trabajar duro por lo que quiero y a ser independiente.

La guerita,

La fotografía de mi mejor amiga de la infancia, La Guerita, ocupa un lugar especial en mi corazón. No solo era importante para mí, sino también para mi familia. Mis padres nunca se interesaron mucho por ninguno de mis otros amigos, asumiendo que todos eran iguales. Pero cuando se la presenté a mi madre, la perspectiva de mi madre cambió al instante. “Esa sí me gusta para que sea tu amiga, Presley. Ella siempre va a ser tu amiga. No, la falles,” decía mi mamá. Sus palabras se quedaron conmigo, como si supiera lo rara y significativa que era esta amistad.

Hice de todo con ella, desde unirme a clubes como la fotografía, las matemáticas, la tecnología y el arte hasta apoyarnos mutuamente en los altibajos del crecimiento. Un recuerdo central que se destaca es cuando fue a Disney land con su familia, un lugar que casi todos los niños sueñan con visitar. Su familia tenía la tradición de visitarla todos los años para sus vacaciones. En uno de esos viajes, volvió con un regalo de Navidad para mí: una pequeña bolsa de Winnie the Pooh y un Collar de Minnie Mouse con la letra P de mi nombre. Me di cuenta de que estaba ayudando a cumplir un sueño que ambos compartíamos de que un día visitaríamos Disneyland con ella. Nuestra amistad de diez años me enseñó el valor de la pertenencia, la conexión y el propósito.

Pelota de tenis,

“El tenis es un deporte de gringos, no para una latina”. Esas palabras han permanecido conmigo desde que cogí una raqueta por primera vez hace dos años. En la cultura hispana, el fútbol es el deporte que todos esperan que juegues, pero para mí, era el tenis. El fútbol siempre se sintió como un ambiente tóxico, demasiado centrado en la competencia y la lucha por las posiciones. El tenis, aunque seguía siendo competitivo, se sentía diferente. Me ofreció algo más, algo con lo que podía conectarme a un nivel más profundo. Lo que me encantaba del tenis era la sensación de conexión que tenía con el deporte y con mis compañeros de equipo. Es una comunidad diversa donde fui bienvenido y apoyado desde el primer día. El tenis me ha enseñado lecciones

invaluables sobre paciencia, resiliencia y celebración de las pequeñas victorias en el camino. La pelota de tenis en mi caja simboliza el comienzo de este nuevo viaje, y sé que no será la última.

Tarjeta de papel,

Siempre me ha gustado coleccionar cartas y obras de arte de otras personas, y uno de los artículos más significativos de mi colección es una tarjeta de mi cuarto año en la escuela primaria. Siempre me ha gustado coleccionar cartas y obras de arte de otras personas, y uno de los artículos más significativos de mi colección es una tarjeta de mi cuarto año en la escuela primaria. Ese año sigue siendo uno de los últimos momentos verdaderamente felices de mi infancia. Sobresalía en la escuela, formaba nuevas amistades y me involucraba más en actividades extracurriculares. La tarjeta, con mi nombre escrito en la parte superior, estaba llena de mensajes sinceros de mis compañeros de clase, algunos que conocía desde hacía años, otros que eran nuevos ese año. Sus amables palabras me hicieron darme cuenta del impacto que tuve en sus vidas, al igual que ellas en la mía. Con el tiempo, esta tarjeta se ha convertido en un recuerdo preciado, que me recuerda las conexiones que hice y las lecciones que aprendí mientras me preparaba para la transición a la escuela intermedia.

Hermanos menores,

Son muy observadores; Prácticamente pueden decir lo que está pasando y por lo que estás pasando con solo mirarte a la cara. Gael y Luna llegaron a mi vida en el momento en que más los necesitaba. Gael, el mayor, y Luna, tres años menor, tienen un vínculo estrecho y siempre se cuidan el uno al otro, algo que realmente admiro. A través de Gael, Luna y yo somos frecuentemente malinterpretados. Gael, Yo y Luna son malinterpretados muy a menudo, pero hay una diferencia. Gael, debido al autismo, una condición que no todos entienden, yo porque soy la segunda mayor, y Luna, a pesar de tener un vocabulario excelente para su edad, lucha por ser la más joven.

Hace tres años, estaba pasando por un momento

difícil. Me senté en mi habitación con lágrimas en los ojos, reflexionando sobre mi situación e insegura de cómo seguir adelante o sanar. Gael y Luna entraron y se sentaron a mi lado, uno a mi derecha y el otro a mi izquierda, con ambas cabezas en mi regazo. Pasó un minuto, se pusieron de pie, me secaron las lágrimas mientras nuestros ojos se conectaban con fuerza y Gael decía: “está bien, ¿está bien?” como mencioné que Gael es autista, así que escuchar eso de él despertó algo dentro de mí porque sabía que había tomado algo de él para asegurarme que todo iba a estar bien. Era exactamente lo que necesitaba escuchar.



by Max Starks



by Apollo MacNevin

I chose to use my old trumpet case to hold my items for my cajita. I chose to use the trumpet case because it reminds me of the small kindnesses that can be found in community. The trumpet I play was given to me by my eighth-grade band teacher after someone had given it to him with the request that it be given to one of his students who would appreciate it. And I was that student! I think about that often and am always so grateful to be at the receiving end of that kindness.

The top left of the case is my pocket trumpet, a gift from my parents for Christmas that I chose instead of my normally sized trumpet for convenience in size for this project. The pocket trumpet represents/reminds me of the wonderful gift of being forced into band by my parents in sixth grade has been. Being in the band really allowed me to grow in confidence in ways I'm not sure I would have been able to do without it. Band has allowed me to meet so many amazing people I certainly wouldn't have talked to if we had not been in the same program for so many years together. I've had such great teachers that make performing less nerve-wracking and more what I think it should be fun.

To the right of my trumpet, I have two books. The book

on the left is a sketchbook that I have been doodling in since the fifth grade. Different from my normal sketchbooks, I visit this sketchbook every few months to make a new drawing and reflect on the ways in which I have changed or how I will in the future not only my art style but also the things I write, I will typically write small notes to future me to answer along side my current feelings. To the right of my sketchbook is book titled "Gallaudet Survival Guide to Signing" with no specified author. This book is just a dictionary, but I put it in my case because I am learning ASL (ASL 3 at my high school), and it is a skill and language that I want to continue to learn about as I go into college. I'm not sure if it's a skill that I would like to make a career out of but at the very least I want to continue to learn.

Continuing to the right is my cross-stitch travel box. Inside of *that* box are some projects that I am currently working on, some sewing needles, and a pair of fabric scissors. Cross-stitching is a hobby that I often find myself in a love/hate relationship with. It's a hobby that I love because the result always makes me very proud; that I spent so much time working on one thing to see it come to an end is very rewarding. But on the other hand, I am an impatient person that has a hard time focusing on one activity if I take a break for longer than 3 hours to do something else. One project I spent 10 hours hunched over a pair of pants as I cross-stitched a design onto the pant leg but another project, I started in august of last year still sits unfinished below my scissors in the photo. It's a hobby that really highlights some of my weaknesses when it comes to delayed gratification but that just shows me what to focus on in myself.

Now, above the cross-stitch kit, in the top right corner is one of my dad's old T-shirt's that he stopped wearing when I was below age 10 but held onto. At some point he ended up giving me the T-shirt and I wore it as a night shirt for a good 7 years due to the fact that I was practically swimming in it before I really realized what was on the shirt. It's a Doctor Who shirt, a show that at the time I only knew about because my parents watched it when I was a kid. Around 2 years ago I started watching Doctor Who from the ninth doctor out

of curiosity and was not prepared for the slight obsession that would overtake me over the course of a few weeks. At this point that T-shirt is one of my prized possessions. In my opinion, there is a distinct lack of good Doctor Who clothing merchandise, so I think myself very lucky to have been given this T-shirt.



by Kevin Brice



by Ruth Skelton

My objects for my cajita are inside of a wooden box, which holds deep personal significance. To me, the box represents a piece of my childhood at a time when my family and I lived in the woods. We relied on firewood as our sole source of heat, and every summer, we spent our Sundays chopping and collecting firewood in preparation for the colder seasons. Although I dreaded the hard labor (and probably still would to this day), I grew greatly as a person in the way of responsibility and developing a hard-working mentality. Because of that experience, I've become a hard worker, and I now enjoy activities or work that pushes me and makes me feel accomplished.

Tying to the last paragraph, the goat in my box represents the animals that I had when my family and I lived on the farm. We had goats, sheep, chicken, ducks, geese, fish, dogs, cats, and a llama. These animals also taught me about responsibility and taking care of others, even when I didn't feel like it. Even though we may sometimes not feel like doing something, we are reliable for accomplishing

that thing, whether we want to or not. It is definitely tough at times, but I am so grateful for being able to own these animals when I was growing up.

A piano is one of the items in my box. It is a significant part of my life, and it has shaped me so much as I've developed as a person. I spend hours every day playing the piano except on the weekends. It has brought a lot of happiness and fulfillment into my life, though it has also brought hardships and stress along with it. I have also learned so much about discipline and patience from piano. Over the years, I've been a part of many more musical programs and events than before, and I've met so many amazing and kind people because of it, and I've learned to come out of my shell more, too. Overall, I don't think I would be here where I am today without piano, and I'm so lucky to have the privilege to play it.

The headphones also correlate with the previous paragraph. Listening to music has also been a big part of my life. Listening to music has helped me get through tough times in my life. At the end of my long days, just sitting down and listening to it helps me wind down. I also enjoy listening to music when I am sad, angry, or happy. No matter the occasion, music has always been there for me to escape something in my life.

The Hot Wheels car represents my yearning for freedom, excitement, and adrenaline, and my love for cars and driving. Ever since I got my license, I've loved driving so much, and I look forward to it every day that I plan to leave the house. Driving brings me so much joy and sometimes adrenaline. When I drive on the backroads of my old home or places like Chuckanut Drive, there's such a thrill. I of course do drive responsibly, but I will pretend that I'm in rally from time to time. Driving is an important part of my life, but I've also had to turn to it during times of distress. Over the last few months, my mom has changed character, and can sometimes be toxic, which is something I never want to be around. Thus, I have made myself as busy as possible so that I may stay out of the house and can drive to the places that give me consolation.

The blue stone in my box represents a yearly family tradition that we have mostly kept for years. The tradition is to go to the Scottish Highland Games. I received this stone one of the first times we went. You can't really see it in the photo, but the stone has my name engraved lightly onto its surface in fancy Scottish type writing. The man who engraved it for me did it right in front of me, and I still remember how shocked I was at the time when he made the writing look so good. My mom and her family started the tradition of going to the Scottish Highland Games because her younger sisters participated in the dancing competitions, and after a couple times of competing and going to the Games, it turned into a tradition. It has always been nice to go to the Scottish Highland Games. It is a great cultural experience, and we will never get sick of going.

The porous rock, seashell, and sand dollar represent my family's religious holiday, the Feast of Tabernacles (another name for it is Sukkot). This holiday entails a week of celebrating and fellowshiping with others that commemorates the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness and the harvest season. In the Bible, this holiday is celebrated by building and dwelling in temporary shelters called sukkahs. In modern times, many people who observe the Feast of Tabernacles travel across the world and stay in houses, cabins, hotels, etc., and come together every one of those seven days for church. We spent one of the years that we were celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles on the Oregon coast, which is where I found the rock, seashell, and sand dollar. We have celebrated this holiday every year since I was a child, and I have met some of my best friends there. Commemorating the Feast of Tabernacles has also strengthened my faith in my beliefs, so it has been a very influential part of my life.





Minha Cajita

by Dahlia Michener

“Pois ela era uma rosa

As outras eram manjeriçã” Jorge Ben Jor, 1969

“Cause she was a rose

And the others were basil”

My culture is one that I’ve found through bits and pieces. Minha cajita represents these pieces of me and of other people that combine to make up my identity. The lyric at the top is of a Jorge Ben song titled “Que Pena”. I’m certain 60s-70s Brazilian music is the most romantic of all time and I feel very lucky to understand some Portuguese as well as some Spanish. Growing up I heard plenty of Spanish phrases in my home, but picked up more vocabulary via my friends. These friends would give me pulparindos, which came to be my favorite candy. The guitar capo is there in lieu of my actual guitar. Brazilian jazz is my musical passion and bossa rhythms are so fun to play. The nail file is there to communicate my nervous habits and how I try to curb

them. If I keep my nails perfectly rounded, I won't mess with them. Fretting and picking my guitar makes smooth nails tricky. The yarn needle communicates that I like to conserve rather than consume. I try to apply this in all areas of life, but especially with clothing. Clothing communicates a lot about who you are, so to discard clothing is a big deal to me. The silver hoop earrings are my favorite style of earring to wear. I love hoops because every time I see them on someone else, I think they look absolutely perfect for that person. Lastly, I have a bottle of one of my favorite perfumes, "Jasmine Rice" by d. grayi. I am constantly drawn to all things jasmine. The beautiful ambery florals remind me of my mom.



by Ethan Rowe



by Tucker Nash

For my Cajita box, I chose items that represent my favorite childhood memories. My first soccer trophy and an autographed card remind me of the excitement of my first professional soccer game. When I moved from Seattle to Bellingham in fourth grade, I struggled to make friends but soccer helped me connect with teammates and form lifelong bonds.

I also included an official league baseball that I caught at my first MLB game, a moment I'll never forget. It reminds me of when my brother and I used to play catch in the apartment parking lot until the streetlights turned on, signaling it was time for dinner.

My stuffed rhino, my favorite childhood toy reflects my lifelong love for animals. It also makes me laugh thinking about the time we almost missed our flight because I threw it onto the airport lights, got it stuck and refused to leave without it.

Two meaningful photos are also in my box. One captures me and my brother winning a life sized tiger at a carnival my favorite childhood memory. We still have the tiger to this day. The other, taken at the Space Needle, represents my

time growing up in Seattle and the years I spent commuting between Seattle and Bellingham since my parents were divorced and shared custody.

Finally, I included my first pair of ski goggles, symbolizing my growing passion for skiing. They remind me of the trips my brother, dad, and I took to Mt. Baker, where my dad taught me the ropes of the sport.

Each of these items holds a special place in my life, representing the experiences that have shaped me into who I am today.



by Micah Petrich



by Brandon Kiernan

I made my Cajitas box in honor of my late grandpa Lawrence E. Molina. I have only had two instances of contact with my grandpa. Once in person when I was an infant and from what I could possibly recollect he was a somewhat passive individual for the most part after all the impressive stories my mom had told me about how much of a detached and broken person he was like after the Vietnam war, and how he unfortunately had many demons that he couldn't seem to fully get rid of.

The last time was when I was around 10 years old, my mom was talking to him over the Phone, she had asked me if I wanted to talk to him and it was pretty interesting for me for a multitude of reasons. It was the first and last time I was able to hold a conversation with him, the other was I didn't know he was paralyzed from the neck down by this time so he must have had some nurse to hold the phone up to his ear just to be able to talk with my mom and I, it was a very short and genuine conversation I held with him but it was a nice moment the two of us shared nonetheless.

I kind of wish now thinking back, of having at least some form of contact with him but sadly life has other plans, but I figured I would honor him with The Cajitas Box which consists of the collective pieces of his life as a navy seal and a

photographer for the navy. The big black and white picture is of my great grandparents Ramone and Guadalupe “Lupe” Molina. The smaller lightly yellow photo is of him while he was stationed in Vietnam where he would serve as a member of the Frogmen also known as underwater demolition team 11.

The Swiss army knife must have served its uses as my grandpa saw fit, as it was a lot dirtier before. The wolf watch was something my grandpa must have gotten post-Vietnam maybe it was symbolic to him as he could have viewed himself as a lone wolf after the war and I wouldn’t doubt that. The amount of pain and mental torment he must have endured alone, especially after being sprayed with agent orange which would lead to him becoming paralyzed from the neck down in his late 70s. Lastly a letter he wrote to me in 2009 on my 7th birthday, but my mom held onto it until my 13th Birthday.

Below are the contents of the letter.

To brandon k. (B'DAY)

2009

I can’t tell you any sure way to happiness
 I only know that you gotta go out and find it for yourself
 You can’t lean on the success of your
 parents ... that’s their success
 And don’t be held back by their failures
 It makes no difference what they did,
 or didn’t do. You just have to stand on your own
 two feet. The whole world belongs to you ... as
 much as to the next person, so don’t give
 it up. And try not to be scared of
 people not liking you. You just try
 liking them. And keep your faith in Jesus
 Christ, and he will freely give you his
 Blessings of abundance ... I know that
 To be absolute fact, kid! Fall, get up,

And don't repeat those things which Caused you to fall the first time. I'll

Now give you a gift; practice forgiveness
Until it becomes who you are. Don't be
Held back by unforgiveness, grudges or
By your ego ... they are killers of who you
might have become. Guard yourself that
you don't practice hate, spite or meanness in
your life and you'll turn out alright.

- Lawernce E. Molina 11/13/46 – 8/16/22



by Joseph Balderas-Vega



by Priya Dhaliwal

PUNJABI

ਜਦੋਂ ਮੈਂ ਇਸ ਬਕਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਵੇਖਦਾ ਹਾਂ, ਇਹ ਸਰਿਫ਼ ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਦਾ ਸੰਗ੍ਰਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ-ਇਹ ਮੇਰੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਟੁਕੜੇ, ਯਾਦਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਉਹ ਲੋਕ ਹਨ ਜਨ੍ਹਿੰਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਆਕਾਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ। ਹਰੇਕ ਵਸਤੂ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਅਰਥ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ, ਇੱਕ ਕਹਾਣੀ ਜੋ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਕੌਣ ਹਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਕੀਸ ਦੀ ਕਦਰ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ। ਸੋਨੇ ਦਾ ਕੰਗਣ ਸਰਿਫ਼ ਗਹਣਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਹੈ; ਇਹ ਪਿਆਰ ਅਤੇ ਪਰੰਪਰਾ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਕ ਹੈ। ਮੇਰੀ ਦਾਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਮੰਮੀ ਨੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਮੇਰੇ 16ਵੇਂ ਜਨਮ ਦਿਨ ਲਈ ਦਿੱਤਾ, ਜੋ ਮੇਰੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਇੱਕ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਮੀਲ ਪੱਥਰ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਅਸਲ ਸੋਨਾ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਜੋ ਚੀਜ਼ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਖਾਸ ਬਣਾਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਕੀਮਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ-ਇਹ ਤੱਥ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਦੋ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਆਈ ਹੈ ਜਨ੍ਹਿੰਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੈਂ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਹਾਂ। ਜਦੋਂ ਵੀ ਮੈਂ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਪਹਿਨਦਾ ਹਾਂ, ਮੈਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਮਹਸੂਸ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਜਿਥੇ ਵੀ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਪਿਆਰ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਥ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਟੁਕੜਾ ਆਪਣੇ ਨਾਲ ਰੱਖਦਾ ਹਾਂ। ਫਰਿ ਮੇਰੀ ਚੇਲਸੀ ਐੱਫ. ਸੀ. ਟੋਪੀ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਸਰਿਫ਼ ਫੁੱਟਬਾਲ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ-ਇਹ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਮੇਰੇ ਰਸਿਤੇ ਬਾਰੇ ਹੈ। ਉਹ ਲੰਡਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਸੀ, ਅਤੇ ਸੁਰੂ ਤੋਂ ਹੀ, ਉਸਨੇ ਇਹ ਸੁਨਸ਼ਿਚਿਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਰਾ ਅਤੇ ਮੇਰੀਆਂ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਲੰਡਨ ਫੁੱਟਬਾਲ ਟੀਮਾਂ ਹੋਣ। ਚੇਲਸੀਆ ਮੇਰਾ ਬਣ ਗਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਖੇਡ ਲਈ ਮੇਰਾ ਪਿਆਰ ਵਧਿਆ। ਇਹ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਉਸ ਨਾਲ ਮੈਚ ਦੇਖਣ,

ਮੈਚਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਬਹਸਿ ਕਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਜਸਿ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਫੁਟਬਾਲ ਸਾਡੇ ਲਈ ਸਰਿਫ਼ ਇੱਕ ਖੇਡ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਡੀ ਚੀਜ਼ ਬਣ ਗਈ, ਦੀ ਯਾਦ ਦਵਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਇੱਕ ਬੰਧਨ, ਇੱਕ ਪਰੰਪਰਾ, ਇੱਕ ਸਾਂਝਾ ਜਨੂੰਨ ਬਣ ਗਿਆ ਜੋ ਅਜੇ ਵੀ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਜੋੜਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਮੇਰੇ ਦੋਸਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਫੋਟੋ ਬਹੁਤ ਮਾਇਨੇ ਰੱਖਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਉਂਕਿ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਜੀਵਿਗੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਨਰਿੰਤਰ ਅਤੇ ਕੀਮਤੀ ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਵੱਚਿ ਇੱਕ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵੱਚਿ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਦੋਸਤੀਆਂ ਉਦੋਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਜਦੋਂ ਮੈਂ ਚਾਰ ਸਾਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਸੀ, ਲਗਭਗ ਉਸੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਜਦੋਂ ਮੈਂ ਫੁਟਬਾਲ ਖੇਡਣਾ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕੀਤਾ ਸੀ, ਜਾਂ ਇੱਥੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਕਿ ਕੀ ਕੀਡਰਗਾਰਟਨ ਵੱਚਿ ਵੀ। ਇਹ ਲੋਕ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੱਡੇ ਹੋਏ ਹਨ, ਮੈਨੂੰ ਜੀਵਿਗੀ ਦੇ ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਪੜਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਚਿ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਉਸ ਤਸਵੀਰ ਵੱਚਿ ਹਰ ਵਾਕਿਤੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਲਈ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਦਵਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਕੀਨਾ ਖੁਸ਼ਕਸਿਮਤ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਕੋਲ ਅਜਹਿ ਲੋਕ ਹਨ ਜੋ ਸੱਚਮੁੱਚ ਮੇਰੀ ਪਰਵਾਹ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਮੈਂ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਬੁਰਸਾਂ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਪੈਕ ਵੀ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਕੀਤਾ। ਮੇਰੀ ਚਮੜੀ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਲਈ ਇੱਕ ਸੰਘਰਸ਼ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਕਾਰਨ ਆਤਮਵਸ਼ਿਵਾਸ ਮਹਸੂਸ ਕਰਨ ਵੱਚਿ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਆਈ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਮੇਰੀਆਂ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਪਲਕਾਂ, ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਮਸਕਰਾ ਪਹਿਨਣਾ, ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਕੁਝ ਛੋਟਾ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਫਰਕ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਬਾਰੇ ਕਵਿੰ ਮਹਸੂਸ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ। ਜਦੋਂ ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਪਲਕਾਂ ਪਾਉਂਦੀ ਹਾਂ, ਤਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਥੋੜਾ ਹੋਰ ਇਕੱਠਾ ਮਹਸੂਸ ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ, ਅਤੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਹੁਲਾਰਾ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਤੇ ਫਰਿ ਕਾਰਡ ਹਨ। ਮੈਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਾਰਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਰੱਖਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਕਉਂਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੋਲ ਅਜਹਿ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਹਨ ਜੋ ਕੁਝ ਅਰਥ ਰੱਖਦੇ ਹਨ। ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨਪਸੰਦ ਵੱਚਿ ਇੱਕ ਇੱਕ ਛੋਟੇ ਮੁੰਡੇ ਦਾ ਹੈ ਜਸਿ ਨੂੰ ਮੈਂ ਪਛਿਲੀ ਬਸੰਤ ਵੱਚਿ ਸਖਿਲਾਈ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਸੀ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਲਖਿਆ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਕੀਨੀ ਮਦਦ ਕੀਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਉਹ ਕੀਨਿ ਸੁਕਰਗੁਜ਼ਾਰ ਸਨ। ਉਸ ਦੀ ਲਖਿਤ ਨੂੰ ਵੇਖ ਕੇ, ਇਹ ਜਾਣ ਕੇ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਲਈ ਕੁਝ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਮਾਂ ਕੱਢਿਆ, ਮੈਨੂੰ ਅਹਸਾਸ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਉੱਤੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਪਿਆ। ਉਸ ਨੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਇੱਕ ਸਟਾਰਬਕਸ ਗਰਫਿਟ ਕਾਰਡ ਵੀ ਦਿੱਤਾ, ਜੋ ਕੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਮੀਠਾ ਅਤੇ ਅਚਾਨਕ ਸੀ। ਕੋਚਿੰਗ ਸਰਿਫ਼ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਫੁਟਬਾਲ ਸਖਿਉਣ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ-ਇਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਤਸ਼ਾਹਿਤ ਕਰਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਖਿਾਈ ਦੇਣ ਦਾ ਅਹਸਾਸ ਕਰਵਾਉਣ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਤਮਵਸ਼ਿਵਾਸ ਦੇਣ ਬਾਰੇ ਸੀ। ਇਹ ਕਾਰਡ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਦਵਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਦੂਜਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨਾ ਕਉਂ ਪਸੰਦ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਬਾਕਸ ਪਿਆਰ, ਪਰੰਪਰਾ, ਜਨੂੰਨ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਸਾ ਦੇ ਪਲ ਰੱਖਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਬੱਧ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਕੀ ਆਇਆ ਹਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੇ

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਹੈ। ਹਰ ਚੀਜ਼ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਦੀ ਯਾਦ ਦਵਾਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਅੱਜ ਜੋ ਹਾਂ ਉਹ ਕਉਂ ਹਾਂ, ਅਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਭਵਿੱਖ ਵੱਚਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਬੰਧਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਨਾਲ ਕਉਂ ਰੱਖਦਾ ਹਾਂ।

ENGLISH

When I look at this box, it's not just a collection of things—it's pieces of my life, memories, and the people who have shaped me. Each item has a meaning, a story that connects to who I am and what I value.

The gold bracelet is more than just jewelry; it's a symbol of love and tradition. My grandma and mom gave it to me for my 16th birthday, marking an important milestone in my life. It's real gold, but what makes it special isn't its value—it's the fact that it came from two of the strongest women I know. Every time I wear it, I feel connected to them, like I'm carrying a piece of their love and wisdom with me wherever I go.

Then there's my Chelsea FC hat. It's not just about soccer—it's about my relationship with my dad. He was born in London, and from the start, he made sure my brother and I had our own London soccer teams. Chelsea became mine, and from that, my love for the sport grew. It reminds me of watching games with him, debating over matches, and the way soccer became something bigger than just a game for us. It became a bond, a tradition, a shared passion that still connects us.

The photo of my friends means a lot because friendships have been one of the most constant and valuable things in my life. Many of these friendships go back to when I was four, around the same time I started playing soccer, or even to kindergarten. These people have grown up with me, seen me through different phases of life, and stayed by my side. Every person in that picture is important to me, and looking at it reminds me how lucky I am to have people who genuinely care about me.

I also included a pack of eyelash brushes. My skin has always been a struggle for me, and I've had a hard time feeling confident because of it. But doing my eyelashes, especially

wearing mascara, has always helped. It's something small, but it makes a difference in how I feel about myself. When I do my lashes, I feel a little more put together, a little more like myself, and it gives me a boost when I need it.

And then there are the cards. I keep all of them because they hold words that mean something. One of my favorites is from a little boy I coached last spring. He wrote about how much I helped him and how grateful he was. Seeing his handwriting, knowing that he took the time to make something for me, made me realize the impact I had on him. He even got me a Starbucks gift card, which was so sweet and unexpected. Coaching wasn't just about teaching kids soccer—it was about encouraging them, making them feel seen, and giving them confidence. That card reminds me of why I love helping others.

This box holds moments of love, tradition, passion, and appreciation. It's a reflection of where I come from and the people who have shaped me. Each item is a reminder of why I am who I am today, and why I carry these connections with me into the future.



by Sandra Fisk



by Oleksandra Moroz

ENGLISH

For my project I chose a box from a cat mug I was gifted as my cajita box. There are seven different objects in it that hold a sentimental value and remind me how far I've come, and how many wonderful people I've met. Sticky cat notes are just a cover up.

Hello Kitty plush keychain:

My mom bought this keychain for me when we went to Pike Place Market in Seattle. It was a memorable day for me because we got to visit different interesting places there and spend time together. We don't get to spend time together like that often but I'm grateful for whenever we can and cherish those times very dearly.

The Moon necklace:

I've had this moon necklace since 5th or 6th grade. My best friend at the time made it for me and it meant the world to me. We were friends back when I went to middle school in Ukraine. She truly understood me like nobody else did,

unfortunately we eventually grew up, changed and stopped being friends. I kept this necklace the whole time and even brought it with me to the U.S. when we moved here.

Rose Quartz and Amethyst:

I've always loved rose quartz and amethyst stones but those specific ones I got on a family trip in Leavenworth. Leavenworth is a beautiful village with a Bavarian style. We went there during summer and had an amazing time. The restaurants and cafes there were delicious, and the souvenir stores were charming. My mom always had to hurry me out the stores because of how much time I spent there. I'm hoping to go there again during wintertime. My aunt told us that the lights and the Christmas atmosphere there is incredible.

Clay Bear and Cat Figurine:

I combined these two into one paragraph because they're both associated with one person. That person is my mentor from Lynden High School. It was the first school I attended here after we moved. It was hard to get used to everything at first but to my surprise Lynden High School introduced me to a lot of great people and got me doing things I'd never saw myself doing.

During the first semester of my junior year, I joined the Be The One mentorship program to find someone I could talk to due to the hard time I've been having at school at the time.

Conveniently, a person working at school was interested in becoming my mentor and so we began meeting every week. She is an extremely cool person and a mentor, and we got along better than I'd imagined. She planned a lot of interesting activities for us and one of them was making something out of clay. I made this bear and a goose that I left at her office.

The black Egyptian cat figurine was her gift to me, she got it on a trip with her family as a souvenir for me. I was touched by the fact that not only she thought about bringing something for me but also that she remembered how much I love cats when picking it out.

Turtle Figurine:

It was a Christmas gift from one of my friends at Lynden High School. It's a 3D printed little turtle that he made in one of his classes. I absolutely love little figurines, and this one wasn't an exception. I didn't keep in touch with him which I regret about to this day because he's a wonderful person, and I hope he's doing great.

A Letter:

This is the letter I received from my biology/chemistry teacher at LHS. When I took biology at LHS, I found it hard due to a lot of reasons even outside of class itself. Despite the hard time I was having in that class, I still passed it and ended up taking chemistry next year. I was a little worried about struggling in this class as well but after I received that letter from my teacher, I felt more determined and motivated.

Українська

Для мого проекту я обрала коробку з під кружки з котом, яку мені подарували, для моєї cajita коробки. Я поклала туди сім предметів які мають сентиментальну цінність та

нагадують мені який путь я пройшла та скільки чудових людей зустріла.

Плюшевий брелок Хелло Кітті: Моя мама купила мені цей брелок коли ми їздили до Pike Place Market у Сіетлі. Це був пам'ятний для мене день тому що ми відвідали різні цікаві там місця та провели час разом. Ми не часто можемо так провести час разом, але я дуже вдячна за те коли у нас виходить це зробити та завжди дуже ціную ці моменти.

Намисто з місяцем: Я маю це намисто з п'ятого чи шостого класу. Моя тоді найкраща подруга зробила його для мене і це багато для мене значило. Ми були друзями коли я ходила у середню школу в Україні. Вона розуміла мене як ніхто інший, але на жаль ми вирісли, змінилися та перестали спілкуватися. Я зберігала це намисто увесь цей

час та навіть взяла його з собою коли ми переїжджали до Америки.

Рожевий кварц та Аметист: Я завжди любила каміння рожевого кварцу та аметисту, але саме ці я купила на сімейній подорожі в Leavenworth. Leavenworth це гарне містечко з баварським стилем. Ми були там влітку і чудово провели час. Їжа у ресторанах та кафе була неймовірно смачною та сувенірні магазини були чарівними. Моїй мамі завжди довелося поспішати мене з магазину через те скільки багато часу я там проводила. Я сподіваюся поїхати туди ще раз взимку. Моя тітка розказувала нам як там гарно взимку під час Різдва.

Глиняний ведмедик та фігурка кішки: Я об'єднала ці два предмети в один параграф тому що вони оба пов'язані з однією людиною. Ця людина була моїм наставником в старшій школі Ліндену. Це була перша школа яку я відвідувала після того як ми переїхали сюди. На початку, мені було важко звикати до усього, але на моє здивування Lynden High School познайомила мене з багато чудових людей та змусила мене робити речі які я ніколи не уявляла що буду робити. На початку першого семестру мого одинадцятого класу, я приєдналася до програми наставництва Be The One, щоб знайти когось з ким бия могла поговорити через труднощі які у мене були в той час. І тоді людина яка працювала в школі зацікавилася у тому щоб стати моїм наставником, так ми і почали зустрічатися раз на тиждень. Вона неймовірно крута людина та наставник, та ми ладнали набагато краще ніж я собі уявляла. Вона планувала для нас багато цікавих заходів для нас та один з них був зліпити щось з глини. Я зробила цього ведмедика та гуса, якого залишила в її офісі.

Чорна Єгипетська фігурка кішки це її подарунок мені, вона привезла цю фігурку з поїздки з її сім'єю як сувенір для мене. Мене це зворушило через факт того що вона подумала про те щоб привезти мені щось і також що вона загадала як

сильно я люблю котів коли обирала мені подарунок.

Фігурка черепахи: Це був подарунок на Різдво від одного з моїх друзів в старшій школі Ліндену. Це маленька черепашка надрукована на 3D-принтері, яку він зробив в його класі. Я дуже люблю маленькі фігурки і ця не стала винятком. Я не підтримувала з ним зв'язок, про що шкодую донині тому що він чудова людина і я сподіваюся у нього все добре.

Лист: Це лист який я отримала від моєї вчительки біології/хімії в LHS. Коли я відвідувала клас біології в LHS, мені було важко через багато різних причин навіть які не стосувалися саме класу. Але незважаючи на труднощі, я все одно пройшла його та взяла клас хімії на наступний рік. Я трохи переживала що мені буде важко і в цьому класі теж, але після того як я отримала цього листа від моєї вчительки, я почувала себе більш рішучою на мотивовану.



by Kaz Bryan



Null

by Marley Krumpak
drawing

Open Submissions



The Dance Beyond the Veil

by Temesgan Neguse

I awoke—not with a jolt, but with a whisper—in a room bathed in white, so pale it swallowed the edges of the walls. It felt no larger than the bedroom I knew as a kid, and yet it stretched with a hollowness that made it infinite. There was nothing. No door. No ceiling. No light source. Only me... and a single black dot on the wall, no bigger than a fly.

Where am I? Who am I? And why does this place hum with a strange familiarity, like remembering a dream you never had?

The silence wasn't silence at all—it was dense, oppressive. It swallowed my thoughts whole. I tried to rise, but the air itself seemed to push me down. Gravity had become a cruel joke, tenfold stronger. I clawed my way to all fours, palms flat on the cold, seamless floor. That was when I noticed it—the black dot was growing.

It didn't expand. It approached.

The dot stretched, pulled itself forward, unfolding like ink in water until it became the silhouette of a woman. Cloaked in flowing black that dragged behind her like smoke, she moved without a sound. Her hood obscured her face, revealing only the curve of her jaw and lips so dark they seemed to drink in the light. She stood impossibly tall—elegant, familiar.

I had seen her before. Not in this life, maybe not in any life. But I *knew* her, in the way you know the chill before a storm, or the stillness before sleep.

Before I could speak—before I could *think*—she was already in front of me. She looked down with a smirk that wasn't quite joy, and wasn't quite pity. Then, she extended a hand.

“Would you care to dance?” she asked, her voice a breeze through dead leaves.

As her fingers neared mine, the crushing gravity lifted like fog burned off by morning. I rose with ease, as if remembering how to move. My hand found her waist. Her arms draped

over my shoulders. And in that colorless void, we danced. Slowly. Eternally.

“Do you know where you are?” she asked. “No,” I whispered.

“Do you know who you are?” Again, I shook my head. “No.”

She didn’t respond, but her silence was an answer. Her presence calmed me. She was a stranger, but I felt safer in her arms than I had in my entire remembered life.

Then—abruptly—she stopped. Her fingers unclasped mine, and instead, she pulled me into an embrace. The kind of hug that says goodbye without saying it.

Her voice, barely audible, brushed against my ear. “You are not meant to be here,” she murmured.

Then she was gone. Turning with impossible grace, she drifted back into the direction she had come, the shadows of her cloak swallowing her path. I tried to follow, but the heaviness returned, anchoring me in place. My legs gave out.

I lay down once more, eyes fluttering closed as the room dissolved around me. My body faded into the floor, into the quiet, into something beyond flesh and bone.

I never saw her again.

But I know—when the time is right—we’ll dance once more.



Brave People

by Gabrielle Teigrob

Sometimes brave people
Shake inside
When the step in front of their
heroic feet is drowning
in pure, blackest darkness
Sometimes brave people are just as scared
as you and I

Sometimes brilliant people
can't find the key
the right word, elusive words
the formula they can't see
Sometimes, brilliant people feel inferior
To the minds that they compare to

And sometimes
humans
are so brave and brilliant
That it glows above the winter
the what if, the jackal, the rain
And when the other brave and brilliant people see it
They stretch up
Defiantly
a little taller



Purple Haze – Jimi Hendrix

by Melissa Clark

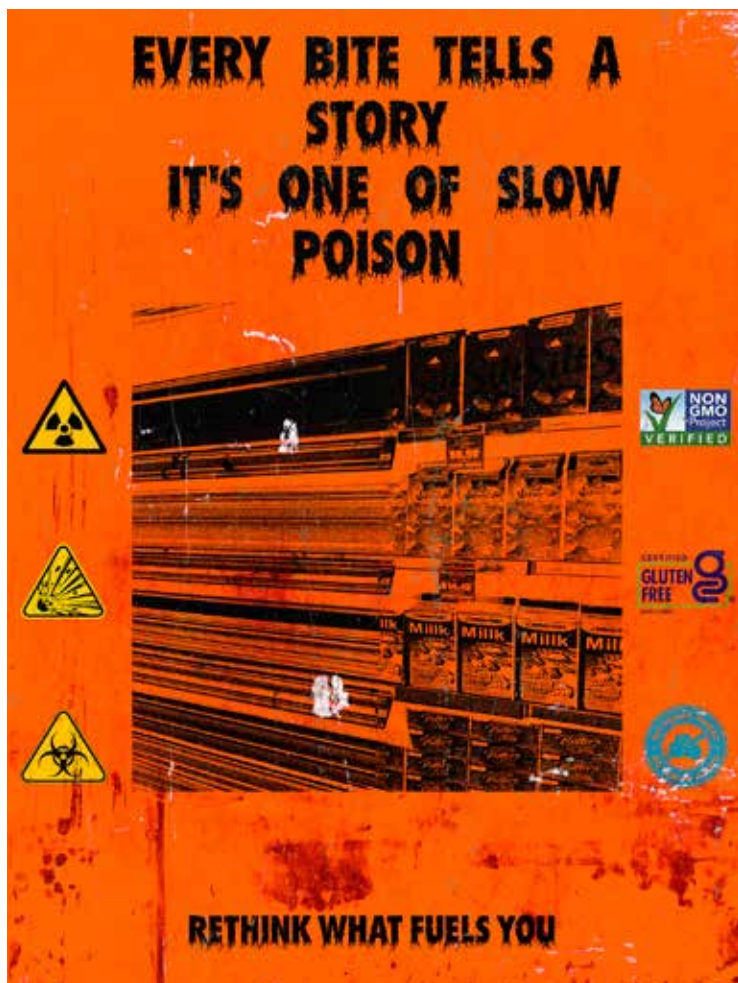
oil pastel



In My Head

by Mason Namminga

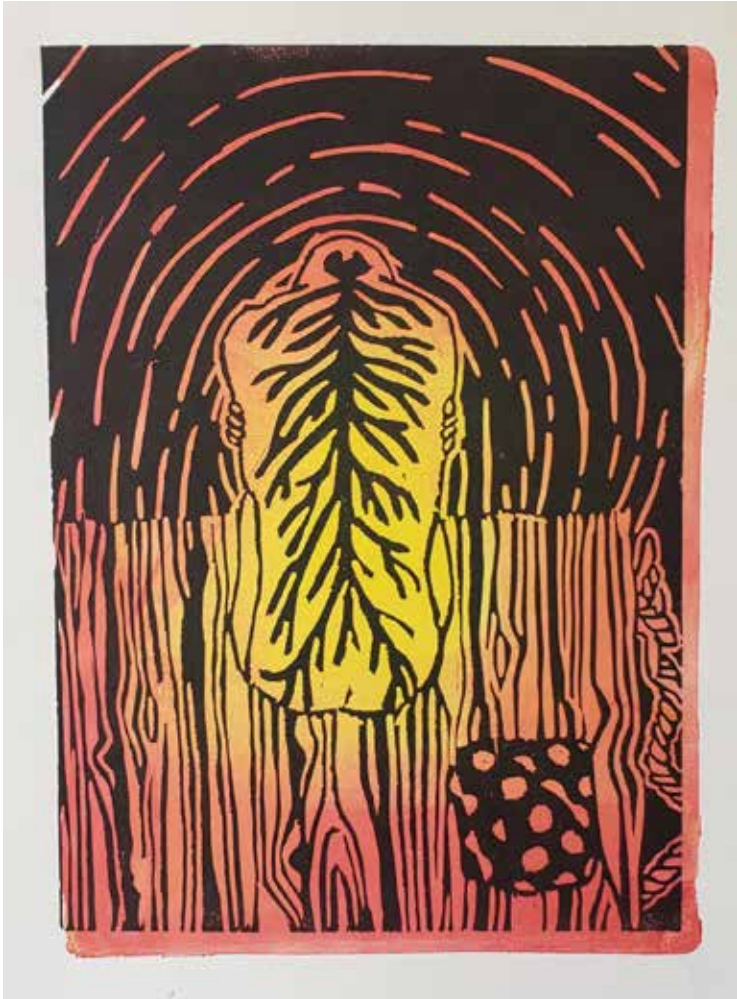
graphic art, created in Andrea Heimer's Visual Communications



Fuel

by Ian Wright

digital art, created for Kevin Baier and Andera Heimer's classes



Dock

by Cider Wells

linocut print, created in Justin Martin's Printmaking

Life In Shadows

by Annette Townsend

Flying, held high in my brother's arms
Momentarily captured on the wall

Large pulls small and I imagine adventure
Watching our shadows slide across the grass

Star studded expanse, trees' black
Moonlight shadow frames

Spinning spokes, rotating pedals
Flit across the sun warmed concrete

A million hot, sparkling sunlight reflections
In the sail's shadow it's cooler

Multiple crescent moons twinkle
Eclipse shadow on the ground

Past is but a shadow that eventually fades
Yet without how do we measure our days

Leaving a Love Behind

by Stuart Tjoelker

Essay created for Katherine Burn's English 101

I walk down the hall of the basement in the Heiner Center. It's a Friday afternoon, and I'm heading to my first meeting of the Philosophy Club. It seems like an odd meeting place, and yet strangely fitting: stick all the deep thinkers in a cave where they can discuss their abstractions on ethics without bothering anyone. But something catches my attention. A couple months before, my wife and I had met with my advisor on the floor above, and a hint of an organ melody had floated around my ears. And now, as I pass classrooms full of piano keyboards, my suspicions are confirmed: This is the Music Department. My heart aches, just a little bit.

Friends and acquaintances ask me, in years past, why I wasn't attending college, and I always answer that there are only two things that I want to study: music and philosophy. I then talk about my dreams of becoming a composer, how I someday want to fuse the beautiful harmonies and technical skill of classical orchestral composition with the textures and drive of modern electronic music. I talk about the projects that are on my mind. And then I say the words that I have said many times before: "But studying music at college will never pay for itself. I just need to learn it on my own."

So I do the set up. I build my computer specifically to be a music production machine. I invest in composition programs, instrument collections, and a digital audio workstation. During the pandemic, I take a month-long online class and learn the basics of music production. I buy an external audio processor to help the latency issues with my keyboard; I buy studio-grade open-back headphones to give me full stereo playback. I work through piano theory books. I spend spare time on an ear training app and start hearing chord progressions everywhere. I listen to music constantly, and I jot down dozens upon dozens of ideas and snippets of melody.

But there was a problem. I could never stick with it.

Every time inspiration would strike, I would work on

it, and I would start something beautiful. But it would pass. I would lose the motivation, and then I would let it slide. I spent two years telling myself and the people I'm close to that I was going to finish one particular, very promising piece. But it never happened. It was rare for me to even open it up and listen to it.

~

Peter met the resurrected Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. It had been a deeply disappointing night of fishing, but Jesus told him to drop his nets on the other side of the boat. And there were so many fish that the nets began to break.

~

One day, several months before my discovery in the Heiner Center, I find myself in the breakroom at work, sitting down with someone that I had never talked to before. I knew his face, but we had never worked together, and I'm not a very social person. But I do happen to know that today is this young man's last day at work, and that he has just graduated with a degree in accounting. And we talk, only for a few minutes.

Weeks pass, and I can't get the excitement of that conversation out of my gut. The idea of accounting has taken hold of my imagination.

I talk it over with my wife. We run numbers (as an accountant would do). We research. Only a few weeks later I am enrolling at my local community college. It feels so sudden, and through the process I worry that I'm jumping into this without properly thinking it through. But that isn't true.

Author Stephen Johnson discusses the origins of creative ideas in his TEDTalk "Where Good Ideas Come From." In it he explains that people "like to condense their stories of innovation down to shorter time frames. So they want to tell the story of the eureka moment. They want to say 'There I was, I was standing there, and I had it all, suddenly, clear in my head.' But, in fact, if you go back and look at the historical record, it turns out that a lot of important ideas have very

long incubation periods. I call this the ‘slow hunch’” (Johnson 9:16). And my journey into accounting was, very clearly, a slow hunch.

One of my coworkers asks me what my plans are for my Friday evening. “Well, I need to run a financial analysis.” “A what?” “A financial analysis. It’s where I track all of our expenses and income and compare it to our budget; just keeping an eye on where we’re at.” “Oh. And how often do you do that?” “Once a week. But I do sometimes miss one.”

Years ago, my brother insists to me that there is no way that I can move out on my own with just a part-time job, that I’ll be moving back in with my parents before the year is out. A couple years later, as we discuss how it went, his tune is different: “Holy fuck, you’re good at saving money.”

I eventually find myself working at the Costco tire shop. I hate cars, and don’t like loud noises, and I don’t care for physical labor. I’m certainly not passionate about tires. But I still like the work, because I’m good at remembering rules and procedures, and I’m good at asking questions. I eventually focus in on the sales desk, and I learn there how much I like to be able to help people when they are completely at a loss for what to do. I love to be an expert. I start to learn the esoteric rules of weird transactions; and now, with years and experience under my belt, I am correcting my supervisors, because I know exactly how the office wants it done.

Opportunity arises for me to learn that job from the office’s side. And as I spend hours there entering amounts, verifying transactions, and investigating irregularities, I find that time passes faster than it ever did mounting tires. My shop buddies joke about how I’m meant for an office job, with a hint of jibing in their tone. And we all know it’s true.

And so I am here, to study accounting. People tell me that it is the most stereotypically mundane, soul-deadening job that modern life has to offer. It is certainly a far cry from the dreams of glory and grandeur that I had built up for myself and my music. But I see a future in it. I see a work that I can be skilled at – a work that I can love.

Sometimes you have to leave a dream behind to grow. It hurts, but it must be done. And it is still worthwhile.

Essayist and novelist Anne Lamott, in her essay “Shitty First Drafts,” speaks of not letting the fear of a bad beginning hold us back: “Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere. Start by getting something – anything – down on paper” (Lamott 2). This is not only true of writing, but of life. I had a dream. But the reality is that it just didn’t work out how I thought it might. That experience, even if I call it failure, is not a bad thing. But if I let it define me – “I am a composer who never actually composes” – that is bad. It is time to move on, to embrace a new identity, a new step in the journey. So, “I am an accountant, and I help people.”

I love music. I will always love music. And I will probably always love making music – at least, the idea of it. I’ve gotten melodies stuck in my head, and then realized several hours later that it was one that I had made – and that is one of the most rewarding, satisfying feelings I can think of. I still dream of making people feel through my music, of creating that same feeling that I get when I listen to the pieces that I love most.

But there are other dreams, other loves. I love the joy in my wife’s eyes as she tells me about the chickens and goats she wants to have someday, and about all the kinds of tomato seeds she wants to buy. We talk about how we want to homeschool our future children, and how we want to be present parents. We play board games, and we plan out making our own. We talk about businesses that would make our community a better place, about books we want to write. We dream about loving our work, not dreading it.

We attach ourselves and our identities to one version of the future. But that isn’t always the future that is best for us. We change, or we were never who we thought we were to begin with. Moving on can feel like betrayal. But staying with a dream that isn’t truly yours – whether it is a dream that was placed upon you, or whether you truly thought that that was what you were meant to do – that is, even more, a betrayal of yourself. I was wrong about who I was, about who I am. I am still an artist, a dreamer, an idealist. But I am not a composer. It doesn’t fit – not yet. And I cannot let that dream hold me

back from all the rest.

And so, I must look my dream of music in the eyes
and say, "I'm sorry. I need to move on. I'll try to come back
someday. Wait for me, if you can."

~

I walk past classrooms full of keyboards, and I smile, wistfully.
And I keep walking.

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2025



In The Wisteria

by Alida Humphrey
digital drawing



Bellingham Bay Shipwreck

by Vi Wendy Sokolowsky
photograph



I Love You
by Vi Wendy Sokolovsky
photograph



Feline triptych
by Ian Wright
digital art, created for Kevin Baier and Andera Heimer's classes

Sisters

by Kinsey Brewer

Poem created for Joanna Kenyon's Creative Writing

Old, cream-colored barn doors
Double doors,
like at the front of a mansion
ruled by chickens and cows
One side has a crack underneath the inky window,
a window the perfect twin to the neighboring door's

In front of the double doors
are two girls
Sisters, one might presume,
by the way they stand
back-to-back,
the oldest dressed in her
navy blue graduation gown
(missing the cap)

The sisters' cheeks hurt
from holding a smile
"How many pictures will we have to take?"
Discomfort distracts them
from an eminent goodbye

And the smell! They wonder
why they must pose
in front of the barn
Manure and musty fur
permeate their nostrils,
and they try not to sneeze

After too long
(too soon)
the camera lets off
its final click
The sisters relax out of their pose
and miss each other's presence already.

the calm before.

by Cassaundra Clark

Poem created for Joanna Kenyon's Creative Writing

Stillness settles the air, a deceptive quiet,
the space holds its breath.
From a corner deep and low: a grumble.
Development begins now.

A dark cloud quickly gathers, swelling
with silent, unseen strength.
Pressure builds behind small, bright eyes,
dimming the room's light.

Then wind's arrival; a rising wail commencing.
escalating. to a violent howl. Not
a gentle sweep of air, but a blast, fierce,
shaking the sturdy door frame.

Followed by FLASH! A sudden, blinding burst,
daring. and quick.
Impish giggles echo—unbridled, unruly, unhinged—
we've reached maturity.

The sharp CRACK of thunder, lightning,
succeeded by a squall soaked in chagrin.
Toys, catapulted across the floor, like
hail hammering hard; no safe place here.

Chaos consumes the air, sanity crumbles,
Mom holds her breath.
She finds a corner deep and low: *hide*.
Dissipation stage: commence.

The thunder's roared, and
 the lightning has flashed...*crashed*...to bed.
 Swift was its birth and short was its life span—
 but great. was its destruction.

Lights—torn down and trampled—like the
 downed power lines from high winds.
 Each once-pristine area: collateral damage. like
 the cars and trucks from falling trees.

Marker decorates the walls like
 some kind of signature—left
 by the lightning's wild, unchecked hand. She
 dips her cloth in the storm's resulting puddles.
 and starts scrubbing.

Sitting silent in an elusive peace, serenity, so far from here—
 for tho the thunder's died away and the rain
 is but a drizzle,
 soon the sleeping storm will wake
 with senses sharp.

Relaxing air is replaced with rumbles, her rest is finally over.
 No time to take or hold her breath, Mom's
 feet find the floor, headed for the room. She reaches
 for her heart, feeling full of thanks for
 the fire in her fearless child.

The Dreamer

by Lola Jenz

Essay created for Andrea Romero's English 101

“Stop that incessant daydreaming!” (Ryan, 2010, p. 10). I’m sure many people have wanted to scream this or something similar when they see the seemingly vacant look in my eyes as I stare off into the distance. However, there’s more going on between my ears than people realize. I’m not a romantic. I don’t fancy myself a hero, as does Don Quixote in the book of the same name, though I am prone to bouts of daydreams similar to those experienced by Walter Mitty in the short story by James Thurber. These daydreams can occasionally interfere with daily life, but for the most part, they are harmless. I have a vivid imagination and a sense of creativity that are extremely useful for my countless art projects and will hopefully serve me well as I plan to major in industrial design. My mind works differently from others, but the same can be said for every single one of the more than eight billion people on planet Earth. Is this diversity of thought really such a bad thing? Can imagination be harnessed instead of ridiculed?

~ ~ ~ ¹

Mirror, signal, headcheck. I merged from the right lane into the middle of Meridian, then repeated the process so I would have access to the left turn lane in a few blocks. I let my mind drift to the coastal temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest, recalling the time my family hiked up to Eagle Bluff, the highest point on Cypress Island in the San Juans.

I survey the majestic scene before me. The perfectly clear sky allows me to see for miles in all directions. I inhale the clean air, which carries the faintest whiff of salt spray. The Puget Sound, dotted with hundreds of emerald islands,

¹ The three squiggly lines are used by the author Pam Muñoz Ryan in her book *The Dreamer* to denote the passage of time or to separate sections of text. I have used them in the same way for my essay.

glitters below me with the almost blinding late morning light. The boats look like various sizes of insects going about their business. A salmon jumps in a flash of silver.

I step forward on the rocky outcropping to peer down at the nearly seven hundred foot drop to the water below. I back up a few steps, then run straight forward and launch myself off the edge of the cliff into the empty space beyond. I am falling. Before I hit the jagged slope that makes up this side of the island, I unfurl my massive wings and glide away from the treacherous rocks, leaving the buzzing bees and singing birds and endlessly blathering people behind. I am flying. I am free.

“What are you doing? Are you going to turn?” My dad’s tense voice from the passenger seat jolted me back to reality.

“I’m getting in the turn lane right now,” I said, flicking the blinker and swerving left before stopping at the red light.

“What would you have done if you missed the turn? You wouldn’t make it to class on time. What would you do then? You can’t miss classes in college.”

“I...”

“What were you thinking? You can’t be in outer space while you’re driving. You need to focus on the road if you want to get your license.”

“Okay,” I sighed.

Exasperated at my inattentiveness, my dad turned his head to face the road and directed me the rest of the way to school.

~ ~ ~

I sat fidgeting in my seat as the teacher droned on and on about rules, requirements, expectations, guidelines, and suggestions. Her voice took on a soporific quality.

I climb up towards the denim-blue sky, using a thermal to lift me steadily so I don’t have to flap. I slice through a flock of screeching seagulls, scattering them in a flurry of gray and white feathers. My own feathers rustle slightly. My long ponytail streams out behind me, whipping in the wind. As the last of the Washington and Canadian coastlines

disappear behind me, the islands give way to the vast expanse of the Pacific, reaching past the curve of the horizon. Further up, I pass a lone bald eagle who looks at me quizzically as if to say, "what sort of bird are you?" I respond with a laugh and rise higher.

The air is frigid at this impressive altitude, but the hot summer sun beats down relentlessly on my outstretched wings as I soar up, up, up toward the edge of space, reveling in the freedom, the solitude, the distance from everyday life so far below. When the sun looms huge in the sky and the air is too thin to continue, I stop and flip to face downward, giving in to gravity. I fold my wings close to my body and dive. I plummet headfirst back toward the earth. Faster, faster, faster! My eyes water and my shrieks are lost in the howling wind. One mile, two, three. Finally, well after reaching terminal velocity and only a few dozen feet above the undulating sea, I snap my wings out, stopping my descent at a breakneck speed. I skim the water, barely touching the crests of the waves with the tips of my fingers. Cool, salty droplets spray up, wetting my sun-warmed face and windswept hair. I extend my tongue and catch a few, savoring the pure taste.

"...I want you to discuss this in your table groups."

As the voices of the more talkative in the classroom grew to steady murmur, I sat and looked on silently, absorbing the opinions of those around me but not offering any of my own.

~ ~ ~

Once the basket of tennis balls was empty, the group of a dozen teenagers dispersed across the courts to collect the fuzzy yellow-green Easter eggs. Hoppers, tubes, and racquets were employed as the vessels of transport. We all returned and gathered in a semicircle around the coach. He proceeded to explain every last rule of Divide and Conquer for those of us who were not familiar with the game. I figured I could play based on past experience, so I tuned him out.

I am gliding further out to sea when a white plume rising from the water catches my eye. I see another spout,

then another, then another. A mountainous gray form splits the waves, rising up towards the heavens, then falling back into the watery depths with a deafening crash and a small tsunami. I circle high above the pod, watching as the whales take turns breaching. Once they move on, I wheel around and head back east, riding the thermals to gain altitude. A single sailboat bobs toward land, looking like a toy in a bathtub, lit by the golden glow of the setting sun. I fly through a cotton-candy pink cloud, closing my eyes and emerging a few seconds later cold and clammy.

I soak in the last warmth of daylight before the sun drops below the horizon in a fiery blaze of pink and orange, then the sky turns a deep blue-purple as the last rays disappear, and finally fades to black with stars scattered like tiny diamonds on velvet. The air turns crisp. My breath comes out in puffs of steam that are ripped away by the wind.

"Lola, can you tell us which way to rotate?" asked the coach after he had finished his spiel. Shit, I was caught. Should I risk answering incorrectly and looking like an idiot or should I admit to my inattention with a simple "I don't know?"

"Um...that way?" I waved my hand in a vague circular motion, feeling my face heating up with embarrassment. The coach was not impressed.

"Let me clarify. After each game is over, who goes where?"

I thought about it for a moment, then my body flooded with relief. I knew this! The rotation stayed the same every time we played this game.

"Oh. The baseline player goes to the net, the net player goes out, and the next person in line feeds the ball."

He nodded and split us into two teams of six, pitting us against each other in a series of short games to decide who was the best.

~ ~ ~

After dinner, I stepped into the shower, drawing the curtain to create a chamber of privacy. I closed my eyes, letting the warm water wash away the dirt, sweat, and worries of the day.

I rise up through the darkness until I am even higher than I had been before, so high I can barely breathe, so high I could reach up and touch the full moon or pluck the stars from their perches and put them in a jar. Again, I tuck in my wings and plunge downward, hurtling through the inky dark toward the calm water that shines with silvery moonlight. Down, down, down, faster, faster, faster, one mile, two, three, four, five, stopping only inches from the sea, my shoes skimming the surface before I can pull myself fully horizontal.

I coast between the glittering sky and its ethereal reflection before passing over an unadulterated swath of forest and alighting on the top of a towering evergreen. I scamper further down the trunk to find a sturdy branch. When I find two thick branches that form a fork, I settle there for the night. Bats flit around me, emitting high-pitched squeaks and snatching flying insects from the air. I fold my enormous wings and watch them vanish into my back. My jacket protects me from the cool night air as I drift off into a dreamless sleep, listening to the waves lapping at the shore and the distant clanging of a marker buoy.

~ ~ ~

Am I a dreamer or am I just absentminded? It depends on how you look at it. I realize that daydreams can be harmful if they show up like an uninvited guest at an inopportune time or interfere with daily life. However, I believe that, if properly cultivated, they can also lead to celebrated pieces of literature, priceless works of art, and innovative inventions.

Many great writers and artists are referred to in more complimentary terms than “absentminded” because they are considered by the majority to be successful, such as Pablo Neruda—the inspiration for the book I pulled quotes from—as well as many others: Shakespeare, Homer, Michelangelo, Picasso, da Vinci, and so forth. Leonardo da Vinci even designed mechanical wings for humans based on his own ideation. Were they absentminded? Or were they simply retreating from the banality of reality to the illumination of

imagination?

“Why should they think as we think?” (Ryan, 2010, p. 68). Why should I think as others think? Can it be okay for everyone to think differently? After all, there are more than eight billion unique minds out there. If we set aside our constant quarrels and put our collective heads together, what might we accomplish?

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a sonorous silence

by Chai Warrior

A meandering leaf drifts slowly
closer to the ground below.
A songbird sings its hymn
to a cerulean sky.
A butterfly is reborn from its shell, with
vibrant hues of the natural world.
A baby boar lies on the forest floor in
a serene stupor, surrounded by
its mother's warmth.
An aphid enjoys
its morning meal, bathed in the orange light of
an early sun.

It's the fourteenth day of
the seventh month.
To the tidal majesty of
the forest, it should be naught but
the day after the last. Another
setting sun, and rising moon, just as it has always been.

But the forest stops this time.

The bird sings
a sonorous silence.
The baby boar
lies sleepless
The butterfly meets
the coarse dirt in
a violent matrimony.
A discordant quiet clings desperately to
the forest's last breath.



Admiration Alley

by Isabella Prince

photograph



Japanese Railway Conductor
by Isabella Prince
Photograph



Wolf Moon
by Vi Wendy Sokolovsky
Photograph



Hunter's Portrait

by Melissa Clark

watercolor and colored pencil

Origin Story

by Josie Smith

Short story created for James Spach's Environmental Literature

Many of us find ourselves gazing into the endless sky, a sea of stars blinking back, and wonder; how has this vast, wild, and everchanging world come to be? Why are we here? Despite our pleas, the stars remain quiet, unwavering in their willingness to keep their knowledge to themselves. Though, I know what knowledge they have kept...

The universe is alive. As it breathes in and out, it contracts and expands, constantly pushing out further and further. It dictates what is and what is not and can as easily erect a galaxy as it can destroy one. Sameness has never been favored by this great beast; thus, change is inevitable. Before the Earth, the universe was displeased with its image. There was something missing, though, this being was unsure of what this something was. With a viscous and desperate force, this deity spawned forth a child, for a new mind full of wonder and ambition would be necessary to find what was missing.

The deity that came forth was not like its creator, with all of its vastness and emptiness. This creature was confined to a body; a mass of pulsing energy and clashing elements, swirling and swishing through the coolness of space. Instead of being empty and hollow, she was full of life; a warmth that was waiting to be released. So, with a sense of purpose, she set out across the universe searching for her purpose. After eons of wandering, she had grown tired and weary. Without a second thought, she stopped and allowed herself to simply float where she was. Her gaze drifted across the scene before her; a galactic seam appeared to have torn, milky light from distant stars seeping from its edges. Perhaps this was not a mere place to rest, but a place for her creation to begin.

Looking around, she spotted 7 planets orbiting a nearby star, each one holding a unique beauty in the blazing light. The orb furthest from the star bore a color so deep blue that one could confuse it for a planet completely devoured by a cavernous ocean. The next was blue, but icy in nature, and not nearly as colorful. Another adorned an icy halo that dazzled

and danced in the light. One was much larger than the rest, a large eye peering out from the orb of swirling gases that had separated into consecutive creamy brown stripes. Then came a smaller planet; one that looked as if it had rusted after years of neglect. Next, she eyed a fiery planet that burned with a raging passion. Finally, closest to the star sat a tiny planet that was quite drab and grey; a mere rock compared to the others.

Something about this solar system felt right. Looking to the galactic seam, she reached out and drew from within it a mound of stardust. Considering the pile of dust, she explained, "You will become my children, and you will bring life to this universe". Wanting a source of inspiration, she looked to the stars, the patterns that she could discern among them, to come up with the design for her children. She began to shape a small bit of the dust into a creature that stood on 4 hooved legs, a mane of hair flowing down the curve of its neck. However, when she placed this creature on the deep blue planet, it froze and shattered. She tried again with a winged creature on the fiery planet, but it burst into flames before it even got close to the planet. She tried each and every planet, but none seemed to satisfy the needs of her children. It seemed she needed to create her own planet to cradle her kin.

Breathing in deep, she harnessed the elements she believed would be right for her spawn. Breathing out, the elements combined and took the form of an orb to match the 7 other planets. She placed it between the second and fourth planet from the star, believing the temperature would be mild enough to sustain the life she felt within her. Wanting to imitate the true blue of the first planet she had seen while also needing an element that would help sustain her people, she mixed within her a concoction of just two elements to create the crystalline flowy liquid we now call water. As it hit the earth, it flowed to the lowest parts of the land and filled up the majority of the surface. Satisfied with the contrast of blue against the earth, she decided to start bringing life to her creation.

Starting with simple life first, she used her stardust to form trees and shrubs; grasses and moss; kelp and algae. She found that these life forms took shape immediately, and,

when she breathed life into them, they grew and transformed into living things. She reasoned that she must form creatures that would be nourished by these plants so that they would not grow to cover the whole planet, and thus created those creatures that feed on green life; grasshoppers, deer, cows, rabbits, plankton, and other herbivores were made. Then, she formed those that would nourish themselves on these creatures, so that not all the green life would be eaten away; wolves, otters, hawks, spiders, fish, snakes, and other meat-eating animals came into being. Some she created with the power to eat both the flesh of plants and animals, like bears, rats, crows, and chimps, so that they could survive through hardships.

Finally, she created spindly creatures that would walk on just two legs but would have the mental ability to shape the world. Though she was quite wary of this, our creator longed for the universe to have an inkling of unconstrained freeness. She willed that these creatures would be wise with their mental power; that they would recognize that each creature is dependent on another, that they needed each other. She wanted to see her kin do good, and to continue bringing life to the universe. It was only after these creatures had been made that she realized how small and weak she had become. Pouring her very being into this planet and the creatures that inhabited it meant that she was mere moments from being nothing, though she knew she would live through the creation of this planet.

With her final breath, she poured the last of her life, her love, into the very core of her planet. "I wish only the best for my children of the stars. I love you," she cried, shedding a single tear as she became nothing but the Earth, for she was Earth, the daughter of the universe. This tear grew and compacted, spinning around the Earth to create the moon who orbits the Earth as if watching over us. We are children of the Earth and of the universe. We bring life to this planet and the starry beyond, and like Earth, we must one day die. Each of us carries a life force given to us by our mother Earth, so it is only natural that each life force must be reclaimed when our time is up. For it is life that feeds the Earth, and the Earth that feeds life.

The bus driver drove right by

by Annette Townsend

The only thought about school
On that fine spring day
Was loathing

Dragons and ducks
Cats and castles
Paraded across the cerulean sky
Like ice cream concoctions

Birds flitted, sang, danced
Collecting twigs and grass
Scooped dabs of mud
From drying puddles

Knobby kneed calves
Butted their noses against breakfast
Skipped across the pasture
An unschooled gang of hoodlums

Kitty, that harbinger of mouse death
Nurtured a squirming litter
Tucked away safely
In a corner of the barn

Tiny peeping frogs
Sang nightly choruses
Then found watery nurseries
For their young

The ditch in front of our house
Flowed slowly

Holding water long enough
To hatch translucent clusters

Two planks bridged the ditch
Beside the three by four foot bus stop
Something flitted amongst the
Long grass drifting in the slow current

I lay down on the bridge
To get a better look
Transfixed by the temporary aquatic world

Hidden by unmowed
Roadside grasses and flowers
The bus driver drove right by



When it's the end of the world

by Matthew Waschke

I'll forgive you
Even when the sea turns into stars
And the cosmic mist flows like fog towards the sky
And the ocean takes us
It lets us sail towards the edge of the world

Thank you,
I'll still remember the good times we had
Doing times of trouble and triumph
We'd laugh, we'd cry, we'd survive
We'd always have each other,
I still remember
Don't forget please, I beg for you not to forget
The stars flicker as we approach the edge

There's no more time, even when we tried to rebuild
It's the end of the world,
Our truths collapsed under the weight of forever
Time after time but I'll still smile
Knowing I met you, I remember our moments
The one where we were honest
even when the skies turn into rain and the light dims
Onto oblivion

THIS IS A PART OF MY IDENTITY AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE IT WITH YOU:

An Essay about Food

by Filip Szymaszek

Essay created for Katherine Burn's English 201

Communication with others is something that humans and most life on earth have done since the dawn of time. Over the course of history our communication has evolved. We have gone from rudimentary languages and drawings, to hundreds of intricate languages, countless art styles, and have approached a time where communicating with someone from the other side of the world is as simple as sending an online message. There is however one form of communication that often goes unnoticed, but is perhaps more universal than any previously mentioned, and easily crosses all potential cultural and language barriers, sharing a meal with someone.

Regional cuisine is an understated pinnacle of cultural identity, understanding the importance of it will result in a much deeper comprehension of a culture. Going a step further and learning about the most utilized ingredients, historical impacts to a cuisine such as trade, colonization, or war, and food eaten during times of celebration communicates to the rest of the world how a community interacts with its surroundings. Although bleak, a prime example of this is how cuisine evolves during times of severe financial struggle, such as the great depression in the US or the communist era in the former Soviet block countries. In both of these examples, several now beloved classics were invented purely out of necessity. Limited ingredients, money, or often both result in a creative resilience that highlights a culture's best characteristics during times of struggle.

Another example of civilizations interacting with their surroundings in terms of cuisine is how one simple ingredient can result in a community's ability to thrive. A classic case of this is the use of corn and the process of nixtamalization to create masa within Central America during the Mayan era, "Nixtamalization is a pre-Hispanic traditional practice of preparing maize (harvested dried corn)

that originated in Mesoamerica...Nixtamalization is used to make soft fragrant masa (corn dough that's used to prepare culturally significant foods like tortillas and tamales). Masa is responsible for nourishing entire civilizations, including the Aztec and Mayan, and continues to be the bedrock of many Latin American diets" (thekitchn.com). Thanks to one simple ingredient several large and significant civilizations were able to not just survive, but also thrive through creating art and building structures that still amaze today. Without corn, the history of the region would be drastically different, most likely it would not even be recognizable.

The process of creating a dish with the ingredients that are available around you, and then sharing the dish with the community around you is a process of self-expression and serves as a window into your background and upbringing that allows others to connect with you and understand you better. I remember walking through a lush jungle in search of a remote beach in Costa Rica and being stunned by the beauty of my surroundings but also starting to worry that I might have veered off the path I was supposed to be taking. I turned a corner and ran into a familiar sight, a construction crew working on a new beachside luxury hotel. With my map on my phone failing me, I decided to instead ask for help from the construction crew, the problem was my Spanish. It is mediocre on a good day and the construction workers spoke very little English and somehow even less Polish. After saying the name of the beach repeatedly and attempting to motion me searching for it, little progress was made. To be completely honest though, I was rather distracted when attempting to communicate due to the incredible scents I was smelling from the improvised grill the construction crew was using for lunch.

I must have been quite obvious because without hesitation a plate of freshly grilled meat, rice and beans was handed to me. I tried to motion that, it was not necessary however the plate was politely, but firmly placed into my hands by the man carefully grilling the meat. During our meal a broken English/Spanish conversation took place where we bonded over our love for grilled meats, swimming in beaches, and Puerto Rican pop sensation Bad Bunny.

While sitting and eating lunch with people that I have almost zero surface level connection to, I was able to gain an understanding of their culture that no history book, conversation, or tour guide could offer.

Learning from experiences such as the one I had in Costa Rica is a form of deep critical thinking, one that is seriously under utilized and with the emergence of so many alternate ways to gain knowledge, one that is unfortunately dying off. I find that it is extremely common for people to follow step by step guides when travelling, or even worse, stay in all-inclusive resorts where they do not interact with any local people, eat the same food they eat at home with the exception of a “regional” margarita. Doing almost everything they can to make their vacation as similar to their home environment as possible. However, it is undeniably critical to explore a cultures food when traveling, the immersion that you get when tasting the food that feeds the region is one that is not available through simply seeing the sights and common attractions.

In her essay *I Stand Here Writing* Nancy Sommers comes to the realization “If I could teach my students one lesson about writing it would be to see themselves as sources, as places from which ideas originate... all that they have read and experience dictionaries of their lives-circulating through them” (Sommers 425). Although there is value in doing advanced research about where you are going and attempting to be as prepared as possible when traveling, the experience, knowledge, and community you get from diving into a culture and doing something as simple as sharing a meal with someone is unmatched. When I ate lunch with my new friends, I was obviously ecstatic, but it took me quite some time to realize by sharing a meal, I was able to gain an understanding of the place that I was a tourist in. I did not realize it at the time, but I was adding extremely valuable information to myself as a source, all through the power of the simple act of sharing a meal with about a dozen strangers.

This concept is not just applicable when exploring the world in search of new experiences, it is also extremely valuable even when one returns to their home and their own kitchen. As a graduate of culinary school and years of

experience in restaurants, I have a natural inclination to host small dinner parties for my friends and I. With the notoriously noisy lives that we live of constant phone notifications, short-form media that can take our attention hostage for hours, and seemingly by the minute updates about unfortunate news happening on the other side of the world, it is also critical to value communal dining in familiar settings with familiar people. These gatherings are a tradition that my friends and I have grown to love. It is at these meals that I also notice the value of sharing a meal with someone. At these dinners there is a somewhat enforced no phone policy which allows us to be present in the moment and reconnect with people that we cherish and appreciate. Even though at a surface level we are communicating verbally no different than we do every day, the food on the table is what brought us together in that moment and lets us communicate in a more nuanced way than we normally do.

Why does all of this matter? Why is it necessary for us to realize the importance of the communication that occurs over a shared meal? I find that the communication that happens through sharing a meal with anyone, whether it be a close group of friends or strangers in the Costa Rican jungle is an excellent example of “vertical consciousness” a term coined by Sven Birkertz in his essay *The Owl Has Flown*. Birkertz thinks of vertical thinking or consciousness as the process of deep analysis of a piece of information such as a book rather than the quick skimming or articles and magazines that is common today. In the essay he writes, “we are experiencing in our times a loss of depth—a loss, that is, of the very paradigm of depth... Except, of course, when our systems break down and we hurry to the therapist’s office. Then, trying to construct significant narratives that include and explain us, we reach back into that older lexicon (Birkertz). Birkertz argues that with the modernization and streamlining of communication we have indeed lost our ability and the space to think on a deep critical and analytical level such as the one that ancient philosophers were on. That because of how our world has changed over the past centuries, the only place that one can feel safe to even begin to have these types of thoughts is in the comfort and privacy of their

therapist's office. While several good points are brought up in this argument, and I do agree that the analytical thought process that Birkertz is reminiscing over is becoming harder and harder to come by, there is one place where this type of thinking does still thrive. One place where all outside aspects of the world can be muted in the moment. The thing about this place is that it can be just about anywhere. It can be on your lunch break with your coworker, it can be a date with your significant other in an exclusive restaurant. It can even be my own apartment when I host one of my dinner parties, or on the barely formed foundation of a soon to be 4 star hotel with 12 strangers.

Food is a foundational need without which we literally cannot live. There is no life on earth without organisms consuming other organisms to nourish themselves to live another day. There is more to it though, food is love, food is community, food is identity. Each and every culture on earth has a dish that they are most proud of and would love to share with the rest of the world. A dish that tells everyone in a booming tone, "THIS IS A PART OF MY IDENTITY AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE IT WITH YOU." A nonverbal odyssey that communicates cultural identity to the rest of the world in a way that words simply cannot. And the conversations that happen while sharing a meal are an invaluable complimentary benefit that further prove the power that food has within our society. In this way, food transcends its basic purpose of sustenance, becoming a powerful tool for connection, expression, and shared understanding across cultures.

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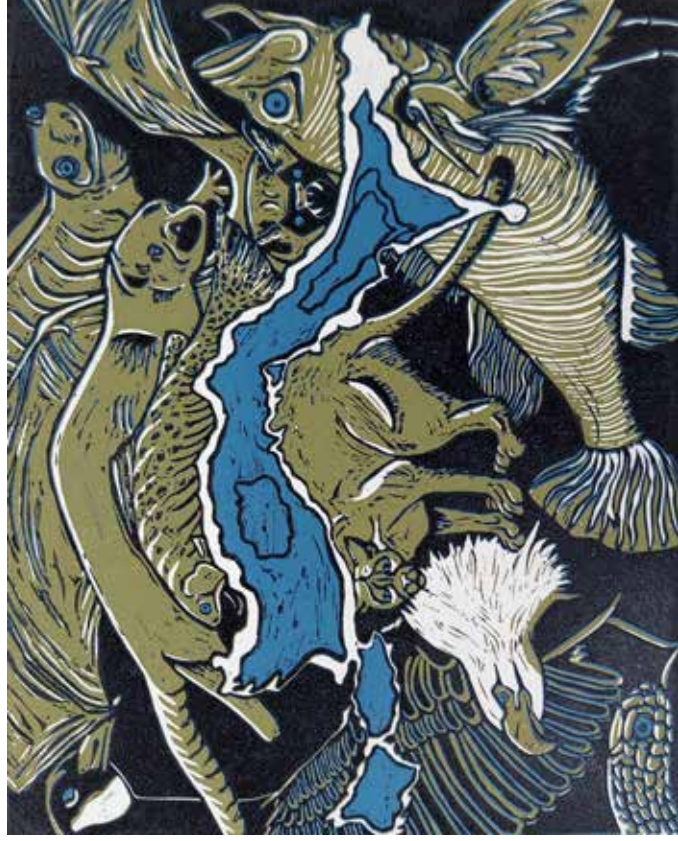
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Visions

by Marley Krumpak
drawing



Lake Whatcom

by Josie Smith

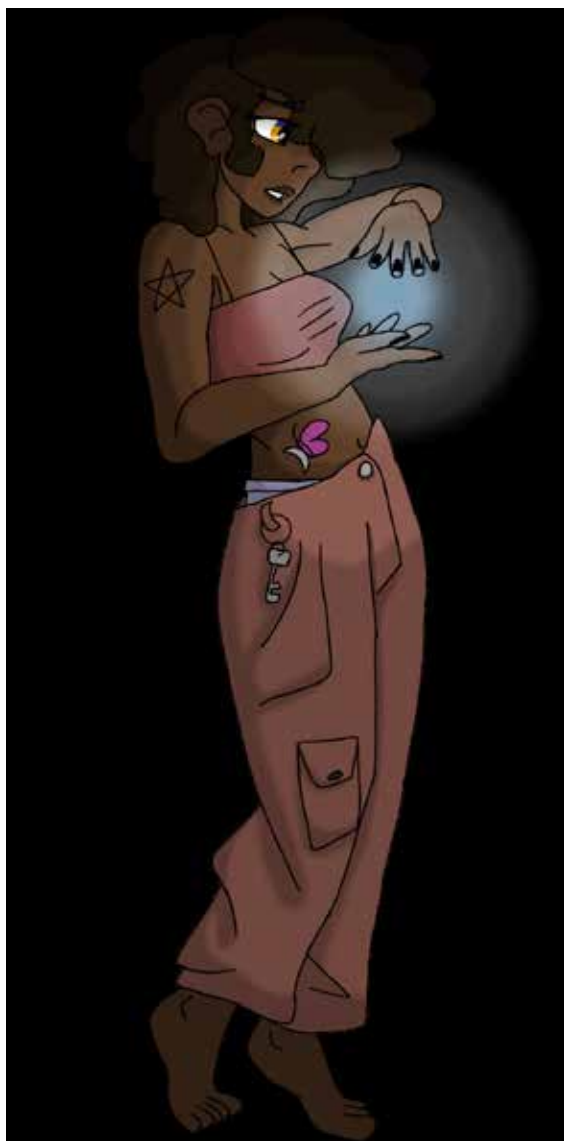
linocut print, created in Justin Martin's Printmaking



Poster Series - Alone At The Prom

by Ian Wright

digital art, created for Kevin Baier and Andera Heimer's classes



Untitled

by Saoirse Townsend
digital drawing



Self Portrait

by Scott O. Green

digital photo collage

created for Andrea Heimer's Intro to Visual Communications

The Tower of Babel

by Stuart Tjoelker

Essay created for Katherine Burn's English 101

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech... And they said, "Come, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men built. And the LORD said, "Behold, the people are one and they have all one language, and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be withheld from them which they have imagined to do. Come, let Us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off building the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel [that is, Confusion]." Genesis 11:1, 4-9a

I am going to tell you a story. It has four main characters, none of whom ever met any of the others. We just read the prologue, and starting there, this story arches over thousands and thousands of years, and spans the globe. It's a story about community, and identity, and heritage; about learning, about tragedy and loss, and about love – both the nature of it, and the action. It's a poignant story, and troubling -- painful. But there's also a lot of hope in its pages, a lot of insight into how we as Christians can better serve the people around us. It's a story that we are intimately intertwined with, but many of us are not all that aware of.

We begin at the end.

Eleven years ago, in 2014, a brief documentary came out called *Marie's Dictionary*, by GoProject Films. It's a touching video, introducing a little old Native American lady, named Marie, as you might guess, who has made a troubling realization: She is the last native speaker of the language of her people, the Wukchumni. She sets about trying to preserve her heritage by creating a dictionary of all of the Wukchumni words that she remembers from her childhood, and recording the folk tales and myths that she grew up on. She has a moment (one of many, I would guess) where she reflects

on her efforts: "See, I'm uncertain about my language and who wants to keep it alive. Just a few. No one seems to want to learn. It's sad. It just seems weird that I am the last one. And, uh, I don't know it just... It'll just be gone one of these days, maybe; I don't know." She kind of half-laughs, with an air of pensive wistfulness. "It might go on or not" (*Marie's Dictionary*, 00:06:39-00:07:15). Like I said, it's a touching story, and makes us think about the power of language, and the tragedy of losing it forever. At least broadly speaking, the death of a language is the death of a culture, a way of thinking, a way of life.

Sadly, Wukchumni, Marie's language, is not the only one facing this possible future. According to Ethnologue.com, a site dedicated to documenting languages, there are more than 7000 languages across the globe; and, of those, "roughly 44%... are now endangered, often with fewer than 1000 users" (Ethnologue.com). The creators of *Marie's Dictionary* report that "In the United States more than 130 Native American languages are endangered. Several are on the verge of extinction with only a handful of fluent speakers remaining" (*Marie's Dictionary*, 00:00:15). There are, of course, many reasons that this is becoming the case, reasons that are not pleasant to consider. Because the reality is that language loss and extinction has largely *not* been some accidental byproduct of history. It was frequently -- almost always, I would say -- deliberate, an intentional plan to try and bring native populations into the Western world.

Some of the most egregious examples of this plan are actually pretty recent -- concerningly recent. (It's interesting how something being recent makes it worse, isn't it? When something happened in the far past, it's easy to put up a wall, and say, "Well that would never happen today." Can't do that so easily when it's just fifty-odd years ago.) I'm referring to the boarding school movement. Basically, for those who are unfamiliar, this was a program where the children of native populations, mostly in the Americas, but really across the world -- it happened too with the native tribes in the north parts of Scandinavia -- their children were forcibly removed from their families, and placed in boarding schools, far away from their communities, and taught to be Western. Basically. These young kids were taught manual labor, like farm work, sewing, washing, and all kinds of the basic skills of the western, civilized world. They weren't allowed to use their first languages, or their given names, or worship as they were raised. Because they were being trained to leave all of that behind them, to assimilate into society.

And there were a lot of really horrible things happening at these boarding schools. The UN released a report in 2009 on the subject, and paging through it is sobering. "These schools were administered as inexpensively as possible. Children were given inadequate food and medical care, and conditions were overcrowded in these schools... Native children in South Dakota schools were often fed only one sandwich for a whole day. As a result, children routinely died in mass numbers of starvation and disease. Other children died from common medical ailments because of medical neglect" (United Nations 5). "Many survivors report being sexually abused by multiple perpetrators in these schools. However, boarding school officials refused to investigate, even when teachers were publicly accused by their students. In 1987, the FBI found that one teacher at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) who administered a Hopi day school in Arizona, had sexually abused over 142 boys, but the school's principal had never investigated any allegations of abuse" (United Nations 6). And even more morbidly, "In one boarding school, the skeletal remains of babies were discovered in the walls after the school was torn down" (United Nations 7). Okay? Brutal, barbaric things were happening at these schools.

And what really gets me is that a lot of these places were run by churches, by Christians, frequently for the express purpose of attempting to Christianize the students. Whether in the U.S., in Canada, in New Zealand and Australia, in South America, in Africa -- across the world, Christian denominations and missionary societies were involved in these schools, and many have been implicated in the legal ramifications that have been involved in trying to set things right.

Now, it's very easy to say, "Well, obviously those were horrible, horrible things, and that should never have happened," and just kind of leave it at that -- to simply focus on the wrongness of the atrocities, and then give the underlying ideology a pass. Cause like, is it actually that bad to give kids the skills they need to survive in the modern age? There is a deeper, more subtle point. And I believe that the thoughts that underly these schools are actually very, very un-Christian.

Captain R. H. Pratt founded the first off-reservation boarding school, called Carlisle Indian Industrial School, in 1879. 13 years later, in 1892, as the idea was beginning to gain momentum, he gave a speech at the National Conference of Charities and Correction;

it ended up being considered pretty significant, historically. Now, he did say some good things: He spoke out against the nation's history of forced removals and massacres of Native Americans; he argued that they are equals of whites, and should be given equal opportunities; he advocated for increased commerce and contact between westerners and natives. But this speech is best known for one particular line: "A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man" (Pratt 4).

His solution to the so-called "Indian Problem" had this deeper, darker undertone. He basically argued that, while Indians themselves are equals, their life on reservations was keeping them from their full potential in the American economy and society at large. Listen to the verbose conclusion of his speech: "When we cease to teach the Indian that he is less than a man; when we recognize fully that he is capable in all respects as we are, and that he only needs the opportunities and privileges which we possess to enable him to assert his humanity and manhood; when we act consistently towards him in accordance with that recognition; when we cease to fetter him to conditions which keep him in bondage, surrounded by retrogressive influences; when we allow him the freedom of association and the developing influences of social contact, then the Indian will quickly demonstrate that he can be truly civilized, and he himself will solve the question of what to do with the Indian" (Pratt 16-17).

It sounds so noble, so freeing, when it's put like that. But do you see the problem here? Those "retrogressive influences" and "fetters" that he is referring to? That's tribal culture. He is starting with the assumption that Native American culture and life is sub-par; they should be immersed in *our* culture, because it's so much better; and if they resist, if this isn't something that they want – then force is justified, right? There's a whole lot to absorb there, so let me say that again. The entire premise of his thought is that white, Western culture -- civilization, as he calls it -- inherently has value, and other cultures do not. Which isn't really a thought that I, personally, am willing to accept without any challenge.

Captain Pratt was a Christian – nominally, at least. He at least gives a head nod to the "supremacy of the Bible principle of the

brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God” (Pratt 8). He did, however, have pretty harsh words for the missionaries of the time: “The missionary goes to the Indian; he learns the language; he associates with him; he makes the Indian feel he is friendly, and has great desire to help him; he even teaches the Indian English. But the fruits of his labor, by all the examples that I know, have been to strengthen and encourage him to remain separate and apart from the rest of us” (Pratt 12). He actually blames missionaries, at least in part, for Natives’ remaining on reservations and not integrating into American society. He goes on: “[Any Natives] who care to get out into the nation, and learn from actual experience what it is to be civilized, what is the full length and breadth and height and depth of our civilization, must stay and help the missionary. The operation of this has been disastrous to any individual escape from the tribe, has vastly and unnecessarily prolonged the solution of the question, and has needlessly cost the charitable people of this country large sums of money, to say nothing of the added cost to the government, the delay in accomplishing their civilization, and their destruction caused by such delay” (Pratt 13).

I think these words make clear that Pratt had no actual interest in the salvation of his students. He cared about furthering Western culture, very specifically. And one of the most informative contrasts that we can make to understand that difference is to look at someone whose name I hope you find more familiar: James Hudson Taylor, the third character in our narrative. For those of you who are not familiar with him, he is one of the heroes of Christian evangelism, a British missionary best known for founding the China Inland Mission in 1865, right about when Pratt was beginning to develop his idea of Native American re-education. Now, those of you who know some history might recognize that period as a pretty tense time to be in China. There were wars, colonial tensions, uprisings, and all kinds of suspicion and abuse. Through all that, he worked for the evangelism and salvation of the Chinese people. G. Wright Doyle, writing for the Global China Center, summarizes his methods well: “J. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission (CIM)... are well known for their adoption of Chinese dress, in contrast to most foreign missionaries at the time and afterwards. What may not be as well known is the connection between wearing Chinese-style clothing and other aspects of Taylor’s unusual approach to conducting foreign missionary work in China, namely, eating

Chinese food with Chinese implements; living among the Chinese in Chinese housing; the high standards which he and the CIM set for acquisition of the languages of those whom they intended to reach; care to observe local customs and etiquette; his own study of traditional Chinese culture, including elements of Chinese science; and refusing protection from British consular authorities and the military power at their disposal” (Doyle).

Taylor went to *great* lengths to show his respect for Chinese culture, and in a long letter written to new CIM recruits in 1867, he explains his thoughts and motivations. “I am not peculiar in holding the opinion that the foreign dress and carriage of missionaries – to a certain extent affected by some of their converts and pupils – the foreign appearance of the chapels, and indeed, the foreign air given to everything connected with religion, have very largely hindered the rapid dissemination of the truth among the Chinese. But why need such a foreign aspect be given to Christianity? The word of God does not require it; nor I conceive would reason justify it. It is not their denationalization but their Christianization that we seek. We wish to see Christian [Chinese] – true Christians, but withal true Chinese in every sense of the word. We wish to see churches and Christian Chinese presided over by pastors and officers of their own countrymen, worshipping the true God in the land of their fathers, in the costume of their fathers, in their own tongue wherein they were born, and in edifices of a thoroughly Chinese style of architecture. If we really desire to see the Chinese such as we have described, let us as far as possible set before them a correct example: let us in everything un sinful become Chinese, that by all things we may save some” (Taylor, reported by Doyle).

How would things have been different if someone like Taylor had come and ministered to Marie’s people, instead of Pratt? Is there any chance at all that Wukchumni would be a language clinging to the last vestiges of life?

So, of course we must ask, does the Bible actually say about anything about this whole subject of language and culture, and its role in faith? If you look for it, I think you’ll find that its teaching is quite clear. In Revelation, chapter 14, verse 6: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred, and tongue and people.” Revelation 7:9 has very similar language: “After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no

man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb." Matthew 28:19, the Great Commission, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Never – never! -- is a word said about "turn them into Europeans." Or Americans, or anything else. God never intended us to go to any culture or people and try to turn them into us. It does not say that "God so loved western European culture, that He sent His only begotten son." He loved the world. Search the Bible – see what you find.

Furthermore -- if you're paying attention, you might have noticed -- the church didn't start out white, or European. It was Jewish. And in the book of Acts and the letters of Paul, we actually see a whole drama play out on this exact issue. Because some of the early Christians, largely those coming from Pharisaical backgrounds, were pretty convinced that gentile converts (that's us, largely) really needed to go through the whole process of becoming Jewish before we could become Christian. And at every step, the Bible is clear: no, we are not Jews. We are not bound by their dietary laws; we are not bound to their ceremonial laws; we are not bound by *any* of the Mosaic Law. We are grafted in, by the grace of God; and now, "There is neither Jew nor Greek... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Within the church, God gives place for difference, for individual strengths and callings. He makes clear that we all have our own intended roles, our own strengths and focuses; He says in 1st Corinthians 12:20-21, "But now there are many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, 'I have no need of thee'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" We must be gracious with each other, even when we do not understand each other.

Even more profoundly, consider the fact at the heart of the Gospel: the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, who is the last of the figures of this story we are following. When God came down to earth to save us, to show us the way to back to Himself, how did He do so? He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:8). He descended, to our level. He is *God*, Yahweh, I Am – "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," saith the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8) -- but He still spoke in the language He was born into. Is

that not profound? How much more should we speak in a language, in a culture, in a form of thought that can be understood by those we serve?

Now, obviously, there are limits to this principle. Not everything in a culture is morally good or neutral – there are some things, in every culture, that must bend to the clear will of God when someone becomes a Christian. This was a situation that Taylor had to navigate himself; there was a controversy among the Christian missionary population later on in his ministry regarding the acceptability of ancestor worship among Chinese converts. Clearly, that was a pretty central feature of Chinese culture at the time, but it also was not compatible with the teaching of Scripture – we worship God alone.

However, I think it is important to reflect on the truth that Western culture is not in perfect alignment with God's will either. No human society is. This is not about one culture or society being better than another. We here in the West need to be on the watch for many forms of worldliness, and there are many easy examples to call to mind. Whether we think about our society's view of marriage, or wealth, or focus on achievement and advancement, there is no reason for us to equate Christian values with Western culture.

And there is another question that must be answered as well. Many, both within and without the faith, seem to believe that evangelism is, necessarily, an imposition. That the entire goal is to take our point of view and force it onto the people around us, regardless of their feelings on the subject. And is it important to understand that that is not what true evangelism is. Unfortunately, there are many vocal people -- the type who can frequently be found waving signs that mention something about hell -- who seem to believe that those signs are, somehow, the height of evangelism. As you might gather, I have little regard for such methods; and, while it is a very slippery slope to start making proclamations about other people's walks with Christ, it seems apparent to me that such people, despite their seeming passion, have missed deeply important points about the nature of the Gospel. Remember, "and such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11) -- we are where we are only because of the grace of Christ, and so our message must always be one of compassion and love. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink," Jesus says in John 7:37. His message is not imposition; it is an invitation, a call to those who thirst.

So then, armed with that survey of what God has (or has not)

said about having a favorite culture and language, and the true tone of evangelism, one has to ask where the justification for boarding schools, language extinction, and the broader feeling about needing to bring converts into our culture, not just our faith, is coming from. And I would argue, it really doesn't come from anywhere in the Bible. Instead, it comes from alliances with governments in this world.

Ever since its infancy in Israel, Christianity has had a very complicated history with government. We know the stories of early persecution from the Jews and the Romans; but really, the more historically impactful moment came a few hundred years later, when Constantine became emperor and advanced Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. And then in 380 AD, Theodosius I officially declared Christianity the state religion with the Edict of Milan. Ever since then, the desires of the state and of the church have been in this centuries-long dance, vacillating between close enmeshment and hostile tension. There have been many marriages of convenience between the two, and frequently the aims of the government have subverted the aims of the church, allowed by church leaders that, it seems, did not have the spine to stand up for what was right. And so, you have boarding schools, and the intentional extinction of entire languages, entire cultures, ostensibly carried out by Christians, who apparently were not guided in any way by the clear teachings of Christ.

And here we reach our point, our climax, at the very beginning of this story: The Tower of Babel. Humanity is starting to repopulate the earth after the Flood, and God has commanded them to multiply and fill the earth. But they don't want to do that. They have made a goal for themselves – a great city, with a tower that reaches into heaven. It's open debate exactly what they meant by that -- how literal or metaphorical their goals actually were -- but regardless, they were on a mission, a grand purpose, driven by arrogance. "We will make a name for ourselves." They wanted to amass glory, and power. And God has never looked kindly upon that kind of attitude. Remember, "Soli Deo Gloria," – it really encapsulates that – "to God alone be the glory."

But God knows that the only way that this is possible for them is their ability to communicate with each other. "The people are one and they have all one language." And so, he takes that away from them. In effect, he tells them "I am not impressed by your arrogance

and your grandiose dreams – remember that everything you are is dependent on me. Everything you can accomplish is because I allow it, and I do not allow this.”

God took the stained-glass window of human language, and shattered it, in His perfect will. We are disunified. We do not speak the same language, wear the same clothes, think the same thoughts. And ever since then, those who seek earthly power have tried to undo that. They want uniformity in their domain; a people who can communicate with efficiency can be brought together to accomplish all of those grandiose plans that they cling to. So governments have always sought to standardize, to erase the beauty of the individual and the community, and subserviate them to the state. To bring everyone to a single language. A single way of living.

But God calls us to a world where we glorify Him in all of the languages of this earth. Where we glory in the great multitude of varieties of speech that He has made. Where we mourn for every tongue that is lost, whether to time or to the oppression of men, because that is a shard of that beautiful stained-glass window that He made that is gone, forever. God does not call us to strive for a world where there is only one culture. He calls us to strive for a world of many cultures, many peoples, unified by faith and love. He wants us to be able to look into the eyes of someone, born on the other side of this globe, who does not speak our language, who does not wear our clothes, who does not think our thoughts or dream our strange western dreams, and say, “My brother in Christ.”

When we hear Marie’s story, we “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15) and remember that her story is partly our story too. There is compassion to extend, and wrongs to right. But realize -- I lied, back when I said that Marie’s story was the end of the story. Because this is not the end. There is a future from here, a better path to be charted as we, both as Christ-followers and as fellow humans, make our way into our future.

It is hard to not see our culture, our way of life, as the one right way. It is easy to look abroad and see all of the flaws, all of the disfunctions. It is easy to blame all that is wrong with the world on those who do not think like us, whether that be politically, or economically, or artistically, or in any other way. But God calls us to humility, to “not regard ourselves as better than we ought” (Romans 12:3) He intends for us to see the wrong within our own hearts, and to be gracious with those around us. (Matthew 7:3-5) And despite

already hearing it from Taylor, it is still worthwhile to hear the full words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22: “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain those who are under the law; to those who are outside the law, as outside the law... that I might gain those who are outside the law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

So, when you see someone in need, whether earthly or spiritual, go to them, and speak their language. Do not try to turn them into a reflection of yourself; see in them the image of God.

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"I think I have a lot to say"

by Matthew Waschke

"Tripping falling diving deeper,
Who are we anymore?
I keep asking this repeat question
And yet no answer comes'
I wrote down awhile ago
Finding it's way in to my poems again again
I wonder what it has to say
Where this line leads
Where the path will stray
I think I have a lot to say

When we broke
I was shattered to pieces
And then I rebuilt myself once again
Went to school, found a place for myself
I remember the times from before
We'd stay up late chatting
About the shit going irl
Politics, venting, stuff like that
Don't you remember back then?
Wasn't looking to be impressed
Wasn't looking to be flattered
Wasn't looking to be cool
I'll rebuild once again,
Precipice of a new life

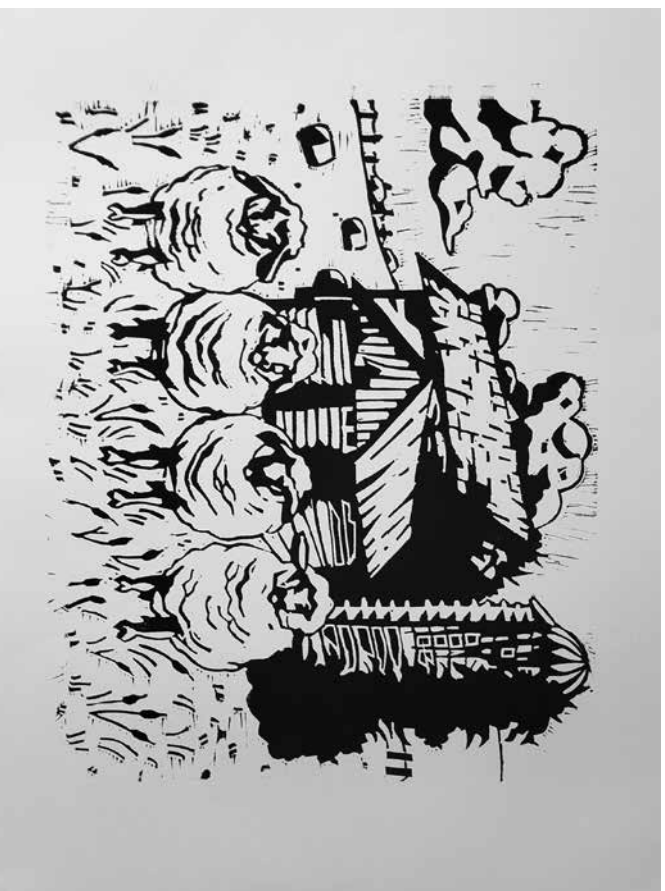
Can't stop now
I refuse to slow down
Like an explosion
It won't stop
Let me burn up

I can do this by myself

Let the disappointment flow,
In moderation though
As I feel the bitterness trying to fight me
Into my bones, into my core
But I won't let the anger win not this time
Not again, never again.

I hold my head up high
In the flow of my life
Nothing holding me back now
No, can't slow me down
My brain is so loud
But it can't stop me
I'll glow too, can't stop me now

Sea of stars above
Milky streams of faded stars
I worried there was no light for the weak
And yet here I am feeling, bathing in the glow
Fragrance of time gone by, smells like honeydew
Do-ra-me-fa-so-la-ti-do



Family Photo

by Cider Wells

Linocut print, created in Justin Martin's Printmaking



Kawagoe Float Festival

by Isabella Prince
photograph

Becoming Aware

by Kayla Velasco

Anchored by the agony I've come accustomed too,
Descending trials of tears,
Sorrows too deep to weep,
Left lost
Brokenhearted,
A shattered shell,
To dwell in the arms of confinement,
Confinement and corruption,
Confining and constraining my communities,
Cultivating calamity
Yet held coward in conclaves,
Reframed minds and capabilities,
Programmed by power,
Passive aggressive politics,
Media minds, measuring the success of others,
Deterring discernment,
Left lost

Leaving kindness a minority,
Community no longer a priority,
Trading depth with surface,
Sanctioned by shame,
"Depth, guarded as a secret."¹

Becoming Knowledgeable
Knowledge is key,
Keys to the kingdom of,
Kindness,
Kinship & Keen
Kept hidden and buried,

¹ Sven Birkerts, "The Owl Has Flown"

Buried in knowledge,
 Knowledge that buried their burdens,
 Burdens that weight upon us,
 Imparting upon us,
 Morale and principles
 Bereaved, to the loss and lack of
 We become captivated by curiosity,
 Carrying, “curious capacity, always to be looking for luck.”²
 Left with, “a radical loss of certainty.”³

Becoming the Change
 Implementing the inevitable,
 The inevitable change
 Changing perspective,
 Viewing vibrant virtues,
 Changing obstacles to opportunities,
 Moving courageously and confidently,
 Held in high regard, with your head held high
 Persuading the power of perspective,
 Redefining the heap of hate,
 To heal our will,
 Power

Power to change,
 Pain to prosperity,
 Pain to purpose,
 Pain to perseverance,
 Protect the power from ego,
 Ego that destroys and distorts,
 Become complacent with your power because,
 “The most extraordinary aspects of your being, were on loan to
 you.”⁴

² Nancy Sommers, “I Stand Here Writing”

³ Nancy Sommers, “I Stand Here Writing”

⁴ Elizabeth Gilbert, “Your Exclusive Creative Genuis”

Chelsea has invited you to connect!

by Nicole Navarro

“Umm... it’s an alert from GeneTeam. It says I have a genetic match” (Rico 14). It was August 13, 2020, and I just received an email from 23andme that they had received my sample, it would take two to three weeks for my results. I was so excited, my whole life I wanted to know about the other side, the side I knew in my heart where I truly got my curly hair from.

The last time I saw my dad was in a Mervyn’s, some of you may be too young to remember, but it was a department store that had the same vibe as a Macy’s or JCPenney’s. My sister and I did not want to go into the changing room with my mom, so we decided to stay outside in the stale air. We sat down on the classic waiting room chairs, laminate wood frame with a little fabric cushion for the back and the seat. I just sat there swinging my legs because they didn’t touch the ground. I couldn’t have been more than four years old, when all a sudden I heard “there’s my baby girl” and I got a big kiss on the top of my head.

I looked up and saw him, but it didn’t take any time at all for my sister to react; she grabbed my hand and off we went inside the dressing room to my mom. “Alex is here” she told my mom; all I did was watch how fast my mom got dressed to know she wasn’t happy. It ended with me crying, my dad screaming at my mom because I wouldn’t look at him and a security escort to our car.

My mom doesn’t like talking about my dad, I don’t think she’s truly processed the trauma from that time period, so I grew up with little information about him. I had a few pictures to go from, he had dark black curly hair, his skin tone was a bit darker than mine, he was Panamanian, he had a broad nose and a little gap in between his two front teeth. Juanita is my middle name, and I knew that his mom’s name was Juana and that he loved his mom so much and fought with my mom about passing it on.

Growing up with my mom, who is Italian and Greek, was different to say the least. She never acknowledged that I would get shades darker in the summer than her and her side of the family. She would always say that I got my curls from my grandma, who was religious about getting perms. And that our Greek side is where my genes come from, which on one side is true. But she never made me feel comfortable in my own skin as a Latina, not by her own admission, she just didn't understand.

I went on about my life, trying to understand who I was as a person way into my thirties. I tried to find him; I wanted answers, and I was sure as hell was not getting any from my mom. I stalked the internet and found nothing, why was his name so dang common. I looked into ancestry and 23andme but I wasn't sure how I felt about a company owning my DNA. When all of a sudden, my husband's mom was cleaning out her mom's house, happened upon a 23andme box that she sent her, and she never used it. I couldn't pass up that chance.

What if I find him? What if he doesn't want to be found? What if he's moved on with his life and doesn't want me in it? Why did you leave me? What if your life took a turn for the worse, do I want to know?

You know mom told me I got my curls from grandma and not you. I got results back August 22nd, 2020, and just as I suspected, nothing, no matches. One small bandage that would help me mend a bleeding wound was that even though my mother would never acknowledge me being Latina, here it was, I was indeed Latina. That curly hair, those deep brown eyes, and the way my skin glowed in the summer months meant that no DNA test would ever need to tell me what my blood already knew.

I kept getting emails from 23andme, you have 19 relatives, 31 relatives throughout the coming months. Why does anyone want to know who their 53rd cousin removed is?

Until one day, July 27th, 2021, to be exact. Chelsea wants to connect with you. You could tell right away that it was a different email from 23andme, her name was bold, and in the center, she was more than just a 4th cousin removed.

What do I do, do I click it? Don't get your hopes up, Nicole, this could be spam. I login and click invite, what this means is you have the chance to email them first. What do I say? "Hi, my name's Nicole, by chance is your dad related to Alex Navarro?" now what, wait, I guess.

Everything in this story is based on my lived experience, some areas have faded from my mind and may have been embellished but to the best of my knowledge it is all true. Every smell, email, and every last detail even to the night at Mervyn's is still burned in my brain. It's funny how stories work, ever since I was a young child, I have craved stories. I wanted to know everything but mostly I wanted stories about my family even if they were a little embellished. At least I could pass them on to the future generation, so their memory will never die.

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2024

Finis



Open Submission Contributor Bios

Alida Humphrey is set to begin WCC's Visual Communications program in the fall. She currently lives in northern Bellingham where she and her cat draw inspiration from daily views of Mt Baker and Bellingham's protected wetlands.

Annette Townsend is a lifelong resident of Whatcom County. The landscapes of the Pacific Northwest influence and inform her creative work.

Chai Warrior is a young Running Start student in his senior year of high school. He enjoys myths from around the world, and takes much inspiration from them when writing.

Cider Wells is a first-year student at WCC from Seattle. They are studying visual art and psychology, after receiving their transfer degree, they will attend WWU and find their path to become an art therapist.

Filip Szymaszek is a Business major looking to transfer into University of Nevada Reno after finishing his transfer degree at Whatcom Community College. As a culinary school graduate and a travel enthusiast Filip loves exploring foods from around the world and experiencing culture through a culinary lense.

Gabrielle Teigrob hopes to pursue a life of ministry, using what she was given to help others in a small way. She plans to pursue this through Equine Assisted Therapy, and any way God plans to use her. She wants to see the light of the world continue to grow until it outshines the darkness.

Josie Smith is a 19-year-old finishing her Associate in Arts and Sciences degree at WCC. She grew up drawing, painting, and swimming in Lake Whatcom every summer. She loves acrylic painting, bleach painting, and spending time with her friends, her family, and her dog.

Kayla Velasco is a criminal justice major on her 1st year at WCC. She enjoys music, nature and the arts. After earning her AA, she will join the military to further career in law enforcement while pursuing writing and the arts alongside!

Kinsey Brewer is a Running Start student in her first year at WCC. She enjoys writing outdoors (especially on sunny days) and likes to create poems based on the natural world she sees around her.

Lola Jentz is a full-time Running Start student who very much prefers college over high school. She hopes to study Industrial Design after graduating in 2026. She is constantly reading, playing tennis, creating art, and collecting all sorts of random things. Her sea glass collection currently weighs more than 20 pounds.

Mason Namminga is a first-year Business major at Whatcom Community College. After earning his transfer degree, he plans to attend a four-year institution to pursue a degree in Business Administration with a focus in marketing, graphic design, and advertising. Art 185 was his first experience with Adobe Creative tools, and he looks forward to continuing his creative journey.

Marley Krumpak uses art as an outlet, giving her work stories and meaning. She finds that storytelling is important, and hopes to have her stories seen and heard throughout her life.

Matthew Waschke is a 23-year-old writer from Bellingham Washington. They are currently on their third year at Whatcom, with the current plan of becoming an English teacher. Matt strives to write poetry with an optimistic twinge based on their own troubles in life, hoping to inspire others to see the light even when it feels dark.

Melissa Clark was originally from Texas, who moved to Washington a year before highschool graduation. Major is undecided, but she hopes to involve the artistic techniques she has learned over the years, and the beautiful colors and nature she comes across. If potential commissions come her way, she is available!

Saoirse Townsend is a graduating high school and WCC student. After graduating, she plans to take a gap year before transferring to a university to study Psychology. On the side, she enjoys creating digital art of various characters.

Scott O. Green is a Visual Communications student graduating after the summer quarter. He's been making art of different kinds for most of his life, and after a 20 year break from college, decided to go back. With more tools and knowledge to create, Scott hopes to find professional work as well as continue to work on his own comics and poster art.

Stuart Tjoelker is on his second quarter at WCC, working towards his Associate in Business transfer degree. He was homeschooled and has spent the last eight years in the workforce. He enjoys strategy games, music, and deep conversations, especially with his wife of almost four years, Spencer. After graduating, he plans to attend Western Washington University and study accounting.

Vi Wendy Sokolovsky is a photographer, musician, and general creative schemer from Chicago, Illinois. Her focus is macro photography, and finding the extraordinary in ordinary experiences. Her cat, Bertram, is her muse. She is currently studying to pursue architecture.



Contributors

Open Submissions

Alida Humphrey
Annette Townsend
Cassaundra Clark
Chai Warrior
Cider Wells
Filip Szymaszek
Gabrielle Teigrob
Ian Wright
Isabella Prince
Josie Smith
Kayla Velasco
Kinsey Brewer
Lola Jenz
Marley Krumpak
Mason Namminga
Matthew Waschke
Melissa Clark
Nicole Navarro
Saoirse Townsend
Scott O. Green
Stuart Tjoelker
Temesgan Neguse
Vi Wendy Sokolovsky

Cajitas

Aidan Sweet
Alessandro Rangel
Apollo MacNevin
Ava Fry
Ava Leona
Bella Black
Brandon Kiernan
Bunyod Kodirov
Dahlia Michener
Diana Avila
Ethan Roe
Izzy Linhares
Joseph Balderas
Kevin Brice
Maya Gonzalez
Max Starks
Micah Petrich
Nicole Navarro
Oleksandra Moroz
Presley Contreras
Priya Dhaliwal
Ruth Skelton
Sandra Fisk
Tucker Nash
Xylia Cary