

# Redwood Roots

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## Reflections from the Redwood Roots Staff

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# Reflections from the Redwood Roots Staff

As we were putting together the second edition of this magazine, we wanted to acknowledge what a challenging year this has been. With the health impacts and isolation individuals are experiencing through COVID-19, the distress and displacement due to wildfires throughout the state, compounded with the systemic violence and discrimination enabled systematically; we are all living through an intense time of change right now. We at Redwood Roots believe in the importance of creating a direct, diverse, and transparent platform to share stories while promoting lasting change. This magazine is important to us and we are grateful to you for choosing to engage with it. The following passages are from each of us, the individuals behind the Redwood Roots magazine, sharing our personal reflections on this time, to you, our readers.


In trying to write about how the pandemic has affected me since the first issue of Redwood Roots was released last spring, I found myself at a loss for words. I wanted so badly to write something profound, something that would capture the essence of everything we are collectively experiencing. After a number of tries and a whole lot of staring at the screen, I decided to instead share a quote with you. During a virtual sustainability conference that I recently attended, one of the guest speakers, New Jersey Senator Cory Booker, said, "You may not change the world but you may change somebody and that's what matters...How are you rising to the challenge to be an agent of love in our society?"

~ Shannon Berge, CCBL Administrative Support Coordinator

Stories can heal, through both giving and receiving. It takes strength for someone to share what they have been through. In turn, it takes empathy to truly listen. The exchanging of stories is one of the deepest and most healing experiences I believe we can undergo. With respect to each individual's personal experience, in honoring their words and desires for what they hope to share, it is my wish that through this publication I will be able to assist in cultivating greater understanding, healing and change. As a member of the Redwood Roots, staff my goal is to aid in creating a safe space for others to share their stories.

~ Kyra Skylark, Redwood Roots Student Assistant





I am a first generation queer, Latinx, college student studying English Writing Practices and Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with an emphasis in Ethnic Studies. When the pandemic began shortly after spring break I knew this was going to be more than a couple weeks of quarantine; here we are seven months later taking courses online and taking each day a day at a time.

In these last months we have seen national and local actions encouraging individuals to further acknowledge the violence against All Black Lives. I began to connect with people again, socially distanced of course, and their stories came to life for me. This was possible because of the overwhelming support from grassroots organizations and clubs on campus that showed up to address the disparities in marginalized communities, be it Justice for Josiah, Justice for Indigenous Peoples, Black Lives Matter, and movements to Defund/Abolish Police and ICE. Recent actions have sparked conversations critically reflecting on how important community coalitions, student based learning and community based learning are, to both the people in our local communities and countywide demographics.

Marrion Wright Edelman said, “we pay our debt of living with the services we provide for one another.” I believe that we must give credit to those who have applied the knowledge of their educational background to sow seeds of growth into their immediate community. As a member of the Redwood Roots staff I want to apply my background to write and recognize the HSU students, faculty, staff and community members efforts towards dismantling the harmful practices in our immediate community, while sowing my own seeds of service and progress.

~ Mireille Roman, Redwood Roots Student Assistant

Radical love and compassion. These are words that have been on my mind lately. Right now, in the contemporary United States and across the globe, the human story is one of isolation, fear, sickness and suffering. My hope is that the work of this magazine can contribute to a story of love, collaboration and community. From my perspective the most powerful of human creations, both transformational and oppressive, are stories.

It is important to note that a story of love is not one that ignores suffering. On the contrary, stories of love look at suffering directly, acknowledge the reality of its presence and love anyway. Love participates within the world of suffering.

The stories of Redwood Roots act as an anchor, depicting love and community within a whirlwind of chaos. They tell us that even in the most difficult of times, there are still people working together and caring for one another.

~ Aaron Laughlin, HSU Press Managing Editor

I am in my fourth year at HSU, and my major is Political Science of Environment and Sustainability. I believe that a mutually beneficial relationship between Humboldt State University and the community of Humboldt County is very valuable and needs to be shared with others. Being from Arcata, that's why I love this magazine, it allows us to share the stories that would otherwise go unseen by a larger crowd.

~ Kai Cooper, Redwood Roots Student Assistant

Knowing how varied and dynamic the cross-pollination between the HSU campus and the local community is, it is my sincere honor and delight to be a part of the team producing the Redwood Roots Digital Magazine. With Redwood Roots, we finally have a platform for sharing many heart-warming and enlightening stories that come from community-engaged practices.

Particularly in these times of sheltering-in-place, this digital platform has the ability to reach many with an uplifting and overall theme around making our troubled world a better place, while providing exciting educational experiences for all involved.

With an overall goal to improve our personal and communal circumstances, Redwood Roots is a place to address how HSU students, faculty, staff and community organizations collaborate together and address difficult community issues. The magazine allows for individuals to share what they have learned. It also provides recognition for the many stellar community partners that have mentored HSU students. We thank all of the players involved with the Center for Community Based Learning and aligned with Redwood Roots' purpose: students, faculty, staff, community organizations, and community partners; we are grateful for your inspirational efforts, and look forward to many more years of collaboration together.

~ Stacy Becker, CCBL Community Partner Coordinator

2020 has been the year of appreciation for me. Appreciation of a dog walk or a cat in the lap. Appreciation of a job. Appreciation of a roof over head. Appreciation of fresh water and clean air. Appreciation of good health. Appreciation of the people in your life. Appreciation of love, community, and connection. Appreciation of all the good things people do, big and small, to make this world a better place to live for everyone.

~ Kyle Morgan, HSU Scholarly Communications & Digital Scholarship Librarian


In *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens wrote, "That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day."

This pandemic and all that has come with it has been full of one "memorable day" after another. There have been many thorns: the loss of physical contact with loved ones, my two daughters' missing connections to friends and teachers, the existential dread of a pandemic and endless political division, fear for my parents' health, and the worst... the realization that so many are facing harder times than ours and our family's privilege has never been more evident.

But the things that get our family through this time, the links of gold and flowers also make so many of these crazy days memorable. Our first garden, our first farm fresh egg, a few minutes of math or social studies with our kids, family games and movie nights, a new recipe, a heartfelt phone call from my boss and friend, brief moments with friends and family. These moments, these links, mean more in this time than they ever have. Our life, our family and friendships are forever changed for the better from this time we have spent, and endured, together. My hopes and prayers are that somehow, our communities and our nation can reach deep together, and find a new sense of what matters in being there for one another. Hope is contagious, and we need so much more of it, to bring out the gold and the flowers for one another.

~ Loren Collins, Faculty Support Coordinator for Service Learning





From my view, much of what community entails is sharing stories and creating connections with one another. The work that Redwood Roots does to share stories of connection, belonging, collaboration and friendship are stories that I believe need to be shared. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have seen such beautiful and inspiring examples of community building and organizing happening behind the screens at HSU and within the local community. I feel grateful for the compassionate actions of so many to support, welcome and care for one another during these times.

During this time of the Coronavirus pandemic, severe systemic racial violence toward BIPOC communities and the disproportional displacement and loss from severe fires across the Western U.S., I recognize my privilege in feeling a general sense of safety as a white, cis-gender women who is well-educated, with a place to live and a job I love. One of my biggest challenges of late has been the lack of in-person interaction I have had with my grandparents.

My grandparents are cornerstones from which my sense of community stems; they are a source of light, support and inspiration in my life. So it is to you, Grandma, Nana, and Grandpa, who I dedicate the work that I have contributed to this magazine. Thank you for all of your love and support that has led me to this point in my life. I am honored to be your granddaughter.

~ Kelly Fortner, CCBL Student Support Coordinator

I vividly remember when it was becoming obvious that the pandemic was indeed a big deal and that campus was likely going to close. My first thoughts were the safety of our team, making sure that people were able to stay home and be protected. When campus shut down, at first I revelled in working from home and spending time with my dog, grateful I was able to work from home. Feeling solidarity with the entire world and thinking about how this was a wonderful opportunity for humanity to “reset,” and really think about how we wanted to live and what our impact on the planet should be. I had hope. Hope that humans would rethink how we live and reframe our priorities. I had hope that we were all in this together and therefore, we would stop this virus from spreading and many lives would be saved.

The intervening months have defined 2020 as a truly extraordinary year, both positively and negatively. It is unbelievable how much happens everyday. It is hard to maintain hope when so many people are struggling and so is the planet. So, how do we get through it?

We come together. We work together. We support each other, whether near or far. We get creative and reimagine new ways of doing things. We re-evaluate what we do and how we do it. We make a difference wherever, and whenever, we can.

Redwood Roots magazine tells these stories...stories of how people reimaged how to teach, learn, participate in service, and how to support each other. Thank you for your creativity, your passion and dedication to make a positive difference in communities across our state.

~ Kathy Thornhill, CCBL Director