

Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities

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Celebrating Writers and Writing in Our Communities: An Anthology of the Winning Entries of the Redwood Writing Contest 2020

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Celebrating Writers and Writing in Our Communities



An Anthology of the Winning Entries of the Redwood Writing Contest 2020

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About this Anthology

Celebrating Writers and Writing in Our Communities is an anthology that includes the award-winning works of students in grades 3rd through 12th in Humboldt County and the surrounding area. The journal is available in digital format at digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/ and as a printed, bound copy through Amazon.com.

The annual writing contest is co-sponsored by the Redwood Council of Teachers of English, an affiliate of the California Association of Teachers of English, and the Redwood Writing Project.

This anthology is published annually at the conclusion of the annual Redwood Writing Contest to showcase its award-winning entries. Any student in the local area can submit one piece for each category to be judged.

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Stayin' Safe

By Jaren Powell

If they're outside your circle, stay six feet apart.
If they're outside your circle, six feet is very smart.

Stay inside, unless to get food
Spreading germs is very rude!

If they're outside your circle, stay six feet apart.
If they're outside your circle, six feet is very smart.

Stay inside unless to pick up meds.
Getting well quickly, and resting in our beds.

If they're outside your circle, stay six feet apart.
If they're outside your circle, six feet is very smart.

Stay inside, unless for exercise and fresh air.
Explore our rivers and our forests, they don't compare.

If they're outside your circle, stay six feet apart.
If they're outside your circle, six feet is very smart.

Untitled

By Ashley Worrell

Times like these can be rough
But we have to stay virtually together
To be tough
Washing our hands, and donating our cans
I'd rather be at school doing stuff

Elders and grandparents are still there
At home rocking in their La-Z-Boy chair
But now we have to treat them with even more care
And now everyone is cutting their own hair!

At the end of the tunnel there is a light
If everyone keeps going
The light will shine very bright
So people please stick with it
And give it all your might!

Reactions

By Isabella Ryan

Angry, sad, scared.

Missing friends, helping as much as we can.

These are all different reactions that people are having to one thing.

Frightened, being thankful for the people that care.

Some people ignoring, some people not caring,
and some are trying to make the best of it.

People are trying their hardest to help us, while others are not.

Covid-19 is a pandemic which we are surviving,

and though it seems that the world just might be ending,

We stay with the ones we love.

Brothers mad, sisters sad, parents are frightened like everything is over.

After it all, we will end up together,

and though we can't be together now we will be soon when it's all over.

We like to sing and play together but for now we can't.

Walking in the Mist

By Julian Rogers

walking in
the mist
the foggy riverside
following
the salmon
to the
mouth to
the ocean pools
where
graceful sea
anemones and
starfish
come in many
shapes and sizes

A Two String Ballad

By Chloe Haines and Dalia Schroeder

Cello

Violin

I play the low notes

I play the high notes

We harmonize

I play bass clef

I play treble

We support each other

A strong bass line, that I sing

A strong melody, that

I sing

Serenades the listener

Without you,

Without you,

My song is incomplete.

Remember Walking in the Forest

By Frankie Ruiz

Remember walking in the forest as you see
a deer eating grass and drinking water by the river.

Remember the sound of the woodpecker
knocking on the tan oak, its beautiful red,
white, and black body flying from tree to tree.
Remember gathering the long, brown hazel sticks,
when you peel them,
they turn white.

Remember the tall Redwoods in the forest
the branches waving in the air,
the dark brown otter swimming
across the river with her children.

Remember the drum beating
it starts to sound similar to your heart beat.

Roads Twist in 12 Parts

By Alder Mitchell

1. There are 70 miles
Just about
Between Eureka, CA
And Gasquet Mountain
369,600 feet
4,435,200 severed thumbs
Between land and tower
2 hours
With the winding roads
The roads wind
Like a cat
Laying on its back
2. Every time
I go to Gasquet Mountain
My insides drag
Like they are
Gripping the asphalt behind me
We don't like the mountain
They say
It is made of lies
And pain
I reply

I must go
Neither of us
Know why
3. My Grandfather
Hides a MAGA hat
Under his bed
My Grandmother
Is more sneaky about
Her racism
She is not sneaky
About her homophobia
4. I have a brother
Named Harvey
My grandmother
Calls him
Granddaughter
He does not go to Gasquet
Anymore
5. I am out
As bisexual
To my grandmother and grandfather
6. A female praying mantis
Will kill the male
Once mating is done
7. Opposites attract
Is a rumor
8. Gasquet
Is a closer walking distance

To another state
Then it is to
A place I feel safe
9. Summer temperature highs
In Gasquet
Are 101° Fahrenheit
That's not why I'm sweating
10. I have my own room
On Gasquet Mountain
It has a door lock
And a window
That latches
I don't feel lucky
Stuck
I feel guilty
I was supposed
To be the good one
My grandmother will yell at my Dad
Say it's his fault
He shouldn't have
Raised us like people
But like pets
Like dogs
That he should have
Stomped out the gay
That she saw this coming
That his sister did better
That his sister is better

That I'm the problem

That I'm a freak

Freak

Dipshit

Brat

Faggot

12. Water

Foams across jagged rock

The sea crashes

Against a crooked smile

I watch the ocean roar

And feel an ache

Of déjà vu

Stuck in the Dark

By Naomi Harrison

I've felt the darkness before
But not like this
I'm alone, I'm void, I'm numb
I can't feel the cold I've been in anymore
And my tears are sinking into the ground.

I lie alone in this still black place
I don't know why.
There is pain of a different sort
That I've ever experienced.
At least in this life.

There is no warm to this nothingness
No heat or light or joy
All there is is
Black
Cold
Nothing

There's a void where my heart where used to be
And it's sucking me in
A black hole of my own design.
I try to claw at my chest, but -
I can't move.

I'm stuck in this pit of evil
I'm stuck with the voices in my head
I'm stuck with the realization that I have failed
I've lost everything.
Everything.

A ray of light bursts through my memory-
Someone opens the door.
A friend I've never thought
Could be there for me.
They embrace me.

Could the words they're whispering be true?
Am I worth anything?
Am I more than just a shadow on the ground?
Am I alive and... possible?
Am I loved?

Are there people out there who think of me
And don't cringe?
Are there people who love me for who I am?
No
It can't be.

I'm such a terrible person.
I shouldn't exist.
But they don't think so.
My amazing friend who whispers words of comfort.
They... love... me

NO
IT CAN'T BE TRUE
I'M UNLOVABLE
I'M A HORRIBLE TERRIBLE CREATURE
And yet...

They say they are there for me.
They say they love me.
Are they lying, just to watch me suffer?
They know I hate this
Are they against me?

I don't know what to think
I can't think
This pain
This suffering
This wave that pulls me under

But my friend dives under with me
And holds my hand
And pulls me towards the shore
Tentatively, I follow.
They're all there

Everyone I know so well
The faces I've lied to
But one face stands out
My
Friend

Maybe they don't all hate me
My friend tells me so softly
Is she with the darkness?
No
She practically bursts with light

She is my savior
My hero
My friend
She loves me for who I am
She doesn't judge

So I climb up the stairs
Swim to the surface
Claw my way up from the pits
My friend lights a candle to dispel the dark
Us in the dark

She shines with a light unconceivable
She understands
She is with me.
I love her too.
I tell her that.

So together we open the curtains
To reveal the light of day
It shines on me
I am one with the light
The darkness inside melts away

It coils down there, waiting to strike
Waiting for its next victim
I won't let it take me
I WILL FIGHT!
I am strong and brave

I am no longer stuck in the dark.

A Man Who Had a Dream

By Cayleb Ilani Riley

There was a man who had helped the world
He had a dream
A dream to make a voice
For all people of race
To have equals
Among this place
He was a king
The Martin King
He helped not only men and women of color
But also taught us the ways of respecting a fellow life lover
He is remembered for what he did for us
So we give him thanks for his perseverance
He had helped this nation to become what it is
He created a fellowship
That was for all to join
To be one as a nation
He was respected all around
But people of power wanted to keep their ground
He was shot down
He was attacked
He was thrown
He was bat

But in the end he gave a speech
And he said
“I have a dream”
But if we all did that
Think
What would that do

Untitled

By Mira McDavitt

Dear Mind And Body,

The Heat is encapsulating her like a fever, it burns in her chest,
she can't take the glory of the
flame within her. Though she was the one that ignited the fire.

Sincerely,

Your Anger

Dear Heart,

Her tears eliminate everything.

Like the sputtering of water onto a bed of moss

Clearing a pathway for a stream

Without tears there is nothing

No letting go of what once encapsulated her

No calming summer day after the sudden storm

Longing for the feeling of laying under the stars after nights of
dancing in the moonlight

Without the water which consumes the eyes there is only a
blank paper and a pen with no ink
So she embraces the world's gift of letting go tear after
tear.

Sincerely,

Your Sadness

Dear Soul,

Her smile is like a symphony
When she grins the instruments sync
The journey to this forbidden land exhausts her
But the vision of the sun's sweet rays reminds her
These rays once had plots of burning her down
Now only one piece of her is left at risk of flames
The hate she no longer carries for herself

Sincerely,

Self Love, Your Happiness, And Growth

Untitled

By Finnegan Thurlo

Many people in holes
Their culture stripped bare
The genocide unfolds
Acknowledge it was there

Constantinople
resistant to their end
Now that it's Istanbul
To whom will it offend

To all of those
Forced out of their land
Your story won't die
Although it's hanging by a strand

While we live for happiness
While we live to be free
This genocide must be seen
By humans like you and me

Hierarchy of power
Silence large crowds
But if you don't say anything
I will be more loud

Untitled

By Leah Nelson

We are Generation Z

We are growing up in the wrong place at the wrong time

Hearing the phrase “stop acting like a child” and “don’t worry,
the grown ups are talking”

Feeling the condescending stares on the back of our heads

As we walk away from a fight we will never win

Made to act like adults, but treated like children

We are Generation Z

Our lives are built on the backs of our ancestors

But our future is built upon borrowed time

A faulty foundation that is ready to collapse

Shaken by the oil companies that are putting their carbon into
our lungs

Stealing our planet from underneath our feet

And taking the air from within our lives

We are Generation Z

Our parents were right

We ARE TOO YOUNG

Too young to fight a never ending battle against the
generations before us

Those who reaped where they did not sow
And took what was not theirs
They pillaged and raped the land
Taking away the wisdom of our ancestors
They are stealing our future
And destroying our past

We are generation Z
And we must fight for our every breath
We will come together and take back our future
Because that is our responsibility
We are the future
We
Are Generation Z

Helpless

By Cicely Jones

Who do you call when the police are the criminals?

Who do you call when the police choke to death an innocent black man pleading for his life in broad daylight?

Who do you call when they shoot and kill a 12 year old black boy because they felt threatened by his toy gun?

Who do you call when they break into the house you're sleeping in, unannounced, murder your girlfriend, and then charge you with assault because you dared to be a black man who tried to defend yourself against the strange men shooting at you in the dark?

Who do you call when they shoot a black man sitting on his apartment building's front steps 19 times because they thought his wallet was a gun?

Who do you call when people of color are being disproportionately and brutally murdered by the very police officers meant to protect them?

This is why people kneel.

This is why people protest.

This is why people riot.

Floyd. Rice. Taylor. Walker. Diallo. And so many more.

Who do you call when the police are the criminals?

Those We Remember, Those We Forget

By Anna Bernstein

When they look around and see the suffering of others,
more often than not, people say nothing.
More often than not, they keep their heads down.
More often than not,
they will not be inconvenienced by the misfortunes of others.
They will do nothing, say nothing.
They fear conflict.
They fear difficulty.
They bury their conscience.
They swallow their voice.
They sew their mouths shut.
And as times goes on, as the voice remains buried,
the voice begins to die,

festering in the depths of the soul.

Suffering, crying to be released, it begs to be heard.

To speak.

It wants to sing out against evil and injustice.

It wants to speak up for righteousness and equality.

Writhing and thrashing it struggles against the rot that creeps into its flesh.

But the mouth of its host is sealed shut,

impenetrable, steadfast, unwavering,

like iron bars that line a cell, or a cage.

The host is too afraid to let the voice be free.

And the voice cannot escape.

The voice is trapped in its cage.

And silently it sobs as the dark and the rot of disuse envelopes it.

It cannot be free.

It cannot sing.

It cannot be heard.

The names of these people are unknown to us,

forgotten in the infinite expanse of our history.

Those who say nothing, who stand by,

who swallow their voices,

cause no change,

make no difference,

leave no mark.

They do not better our world.

It is the name of the person who faces their fears,

for their reputation,

for their safety,

for their lives.

That is remembered.

The person who uses their voice.

Who opens their mouth to let their voice sing out

against what is wrong,

against injustice,

against the evil of this world.

Who is extraordinary.

The voice of this person thrives.

It dances through the air

filling the heads of the people,

filling the voids of hate,

filling the world with the power

of what is right.

Of what is good.

Of change.

This voice is not stuck,

is not caged,

is not dying.

For its host has not buried it,

has not hidden it away.

Has not caged their voice.

Has not confined it to the darkest, dankest, depths of their soul.

This host has opened the gates,

and released their beautiful, thriving voice:

strong,

flourishing,

radiant,

from the power of use.

This person, their name, their voice,

is remembered,

is cherished,

is respected.

They better our world.

When we speak out,

when we face our fears,

when we release our beautiful, pure voices

that sing out for justice

for respect,

for equality,

we become a greater being.

We become a beacon

of goodness,

of righteousness,

of strength.

Our voice reaches out,

intertwining with others voices,

creating a glorious, golden, unignorable force

that envelopes the world,

that changes the world,

that brings goodness to the world.

And we are remembered.

Back to School

By Brayden Bermers

There have been a lot of discussions lately about whether or not kids should return to school in the fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In my opinion we should go back to school in the fall. My main reasons for going back are kids generally learn better at school, it's better for our overall health to be around friends and other people. Finally, kids don't seem to be getting COVID-19 as severely as adults.

Cutten Elementary School students are very lucky in that they are all able to check out a Chromebook to help with their schoolwork if needed. Most other schools in this area don't have that luxury. In many cases if a family doesn't have a computer or tablet, their child won't be able to access their work online or meet with their classes or teachers. I also feel that kids learn a lot more in class with teachers available to help and teach them. If a child has both parents working, they aren't going to have much academic support when doing their schoolwork. Kids with lower academic skills might need more help than what can be provided at home. For example, Cutten School has extra help such as T.I.P, Learning Lab, Reading Intervention and Math Intervention when at school.

Another reason why kids should return to school in the fall is because social interaction and a normal schedule is good

for our brains and overall health. When we are at school, we are following a normal schedule and interacting with our friends while learning. Since we have been social distancing, it is very obvious how important it is for kids to get to hang out with other kids. I know on days where I actually see a friend, even from a distance, it puts me in a much better mood. When kids are at school it is easier for them to just focus on their schoolwork.

Last but not least, according to NewsELA's article, 'Officials say coronavirus targets elderly and ill, children mostly unaffected', kids don't seem to be getting COVID 19 as often or severely as the rest of the population. It has also been reported that it seems kids aren't spreading COVID-19 to each other as easily as adults do. In a very recent study on USA Today titled, 'The CDC says coronavirus does not spread easily on surfaces or objects,' it is suggested that it is very unlikely to get COVID-19 from a contaminated surface. All of these examples would mean that kids wouldn't be infecting other kids at school very often and there would be no danger of going back to school.

For all of these reasons why kids should return to school in the fall, I hope I have convinced you that they should. Personally, I know I want to go back to school so I can see my friends, have more academic success, and not have to worry about getting COVID-19 or giving it to someone else. All in all, I hope we go back to school in the fall.

Why We Need to Speak Up, and Make Our Voices Heard

By Gemma Caruso

We all have voices. Whether we choose to use them or not is our decision. But we need to use our voices. Our voices have power. When we speak, we communicate. We communicate ideas, thoughts, hopes, feelings. We have, as the carriers of powerful voices, an obligation to use them for the people and creatures that can't speak for themselves.

If you were silent, and didn't speak up as someone got bullied, then you are just as guilty as the bully. You had the chance to stop the bully, to get help for the person, but by staying silent, you are saying that it is okay, that it is alright.

If you watched someone steal someone's car, their wallet, their purse, and stayed silent, and didn't tell them that someone was taking their car, their wallet, their purse, then you helped the thief get away.

Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, my mom started limiting our exposure early. She pulled us out of school on Friday, and tried to get us Independent Study Contracts. Three days after she pulled us from school, the school was closed. She called all my friends' parents, and told them about the steps that needed to be taken. She told everyone that they should

isolate their families, stop seeing their older relatives, etc. She started making us spray rubbing alcohol on our hands, and, instead of going to a feis* that was in Seattle, and that she and my twin sister had driven for 12 hours to attend, she turned around and went home. Some of my friends later told me that, since Mom had pulled us out, their parents would have pulled them out as well, if school hadn't closed the following Monday. My mom spoke up, and now other people are listening to what the government is saying more closely, because Mom showed them that COVID-19 was not to be trifled with, and appropriate cautions must be taken.

When people speak up, change happens. If you noticed trash covered the beach next to the school, and spoke up, talked to the principal, your teacher, your friends, family, peers, anyone you met, then eventually people will listen. They have to listen. It's like a stone tossed in a clear, still, pond. The ripples get larger. If you talked to ten people, and each of those people told five people in passing, that, "A little kid at the school by the beach wants to clean up the beach," then 50 more people would know. If each of those people told two more people, then 250 people would have been reached, just by you talking to ten. What you say ripples out through the world.

"Rome wasn't built in a day." Change comes slowly. You can talk, and people can laugh at you, tell you that, "You're just a kid, what do you know?" But, someday someone will listen. You don't have to get up on a stage, or on TV in order to get your message across. As long as you keep throwing stones in the pond, your message will still get out.

“Only idiots listen with their eyes. If people don’t hear your words, shout them. If they silence you, then write your message with fire. Demanding respect is never easy, but if something you live is at stake, then I’d say it’s worth the price.**”

If you are saying what you really believe, then people need to hear. If you love the whale, and want to help protect it, don’t just keep your knowledge to yourself, tell people. Explain why you love the whales, and how people can help. Inspire people to make a difference. But if you stay quiet, silent, and let everyone else talk, and never say anything, never speak up for those who can’t speak for themselves, then you might as well go and hunt those whales yourself, for all the good you will do.

The whale can’t speak for himself, so speak for the whale, for the animals who don’t speak in the tongue we understand. Speak, for the people who are downtrodden, and kept in a place where they cannot be heard, are not allowed to be heard. Let people know what is happening, and why it must be stopped.

If no one knows, no one can change anything. Since you can talk, you can shout, you can write your words across the world, you have to say something for those who cannot speak up for themselves. You have an obligation to the world. You have the power to change things. Use it!

* feis-an Irish Dancing Competition

** The Land of Stories, Worlds Collide, by Chris Colfer

Works Cited

Colfer, Chris. The Land of Stories, Worlds Collide. New York, New York: Hachette Book Group, Inc, July 2017.

Deforestation

By Chloe Bailey

Could you imagine a place where 137 species of life forms are driven into extinction every day? Sadly, there are many forests that are being destroyed to benefit humans and their wallets. By clearing out forest, wildlife is affected, natural resources are becoming limited and a negative long term result is appearing. Although deforestation may benefit humans at the moment, the long term effects to the environment will be greater than imagined and should not be ignored.

It is shocking to think of the number of species that are being torn from their habitat, injured or even killed due to deforestation. Logging contributes to the extinction of wildlife and other organisms, because many cannot survive in a different environment. In fact, worldwildlife.org says “Many tree kangaroo species are incredibly rare and most are decreasing in number. They face habitat loss through deforestation.” (worldwildlife.org) These living creatures are losing their homes and being forced to either adapt to new living conditions or die. As their environment decreases, their food supply becomes scarce, making it harder for them to survive. By removing parts of the forest, we must acknowledge that there may be consequences that can never be reversed.

While trees are being reduced drastically, natural resources are too. When deforestation takes place, carbon dioxide in the air increases because the trees are not there to help filter it, which in turn decreases oxygen production. Once trees are removed there is an increase in soil erosion after the first rain, because the trees were there to help hold the soil into the ground. Some cities experience drought, because they rely on the natural resources from the rainforest for their drinking supplies. According to Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, “More than half of the Amazon’s water supply is held in its plants, so when these trees are burned, the water is lost. Deforestation can also often lead to soil erosion, resulting in poor water quality and the inability for citizens to stay healthy.” (blogs.nelson.wisc.edu) People believe that deforestation is helpful because it makes room for homes and it increases supplies like lumber. “From an economic perspective, deforestation is also a process for obtaining valuable goods from the forest.” (blogs.nelson.wisc.edu) Although an increase in wood is helpful, more resources are being lost for every tree that is cut down. By causing many natural resources to decline, deforestation affects more than just its specific site, but it's also causing cities to become desperate for supplies.

While logging companies are only focused on cutting trees to make a profit, they may forget about the long term effects. Without trees there is nothing to help control excess water from rain and soil becoming soaked which can lead to flooding. Global temperatures are impacted by tree removal, because more sunlight reaches the forest floor and less is retained which

can cause severe changes in temperature. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations states, “Most people assume that global warming is caused by burning oil and gas. But in fact between 25 and 30 percent of the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere each year is caused by deforestation.” (Fao.org) Many people may not be aware that certain medicines may be lost due to deforestation. There are medicines that can be created from trees and plants that exist only in specific regions that are being torn down. By ignoring the long term effects, there may be huge regrets and struggles that could unexpectedly appear.

As a result, deforestation may not always be a crucial issue, but people need to be informed of its pros and cons. Deforestation causes many issues including the extinction of species, increase in carbon to the atmosphere, and the long term effects such as global warming. Deforestation is depleting our wildlife, natural resources, and causing many horrible long term effects. People may think that they are benefiting from deforestation, but the negatives outweigh the positives. If people knew that an area the size of 20 football fields is lost every 20 minutes, they may rethink their actions and realize the amount of animals and resources that are being destroyed in such little time. By having knowledge, people can work together to overcome and help solve the obstacles that revolve around deforestation.

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Speak Up!

By Lillian Afridi

Anyone can be considered an activist, but most people choose to silence their opinions, allowing others to speak up. Barack Obama once said, “A change is brought about because ordinary people do extraordinary things.” Using your voice to speak out against injustices helps better the world. Young adults like Emma Gonzales, Malala Yousafzai, and Greta Thunberg are speaking up and starting to change things around the world.

On February 14, 2018, the Parkland School shooting occurred, inspiring students like Emma Gonzales, a Parkland shooting survivor, to speak up for gun control. At one of Emma’s biggest speeches, she called “B.S” on some politicians and their claims of safety. Emma Gonzales is also one of the co-founders of Never Again MSD, a student-led gun control committee whose mission is to inform people about gun violence. Emma is standing up for what she believes in and will not stop until appropriate gun control laws are enforced.

Malala Yousafzai is speaking out for girls’ and women’s education around the world. In 2007, the Taliban began controlling Swat Valley and girls were banned from attending school. Two years later, Malala started a blog and wrote about how women and girls had a right to learn, using the name Gul

Makai. She continued to speak out as change was arriving in Pakistan. On October 9, 2012, Malala was shot three times, but she survived! Malala is the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner and continues to speak for girls' education.

Since 2018, Greta Thunberg has been taking action to stop climate change. Greta started promoting climate awareness in 2018 when she entered a climate change writing competition and won. A few months later she vowed to protest until the Swedish government would meet the carbon emissions target made in 2015. Greta began missing classes every Friday to protest, and soon she became well known. Last year, Greta took the whole year off from school to protest about climate change. Greta is such an influence, and although she has been ridiculed, she perseveres.

Change is on the rise all around the world. People have been standing up for what they believe, and things are starting to happen. Young activists are using their experiences and pasts to speak up and better the world. Emma Gonzales, Malala Yousafzai, and Greta Thunberg are all advocating for a better world where we will see peace, equality, and a healthy planet.

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Farewell to Manzanar Final Essay

By Natalie Lehman

Did you know that 59.6% of all hate crimes are based on race and ethnicity? Of that percentage, 53.6% of the offenders are caucasion Justice.gov states. It is important to teach this generation of students about racial prejudice in history and the Holocaust in particular, because there are current examples of both racism and genocide taking place around the world today. Future generations should also be taught about racial prejudice because we, as a world, do not want future generations to make the same mistakes.

Racism is a problem in the U.S. Everywhere you look there are signs of racism in people's words, posters, news, movies, etc. Many of these racist items aren't always non-violent. On October 27, 2018, Robert Bowers opened fire in a Pittsburgh synagogue. He was armed with multiple weapons including three handguns and an AR-15. That Saturday morning during worship eleven people were killed. This isn't the first time things like this have happened, but why isn't anyone doing anything about it?

Not all racism is that violent. Some don't even know they are the ones putting racist ideas into the world. Micro-aggression is a common way people add racism to the world, and some do so subconsciously. An example of this is when

someone says, “I don’t see you as black.” This is a racist comment coming from a place of privilege where the speaker could possibly be dismissing the person’s personality or experiences and is only seeing the color of their skin. This is a racist comment because it is following the stereotypical patterns of people’s behavior based off of their race. Unfortunately for some, this is so wired into their brains they have no idea how they are being racist. This is one of the reasons it is important to teach this generation and younger ones about racial prejudice in current events.

In addition to individuals carrying out racist attacks, entire governments are targeting groups of people based on religion. In China right now there are millions of Muslim people in “education and location centers”. I think, personally, they are exactly like internment camps. In 1942 many people were forced into camps called internment camps entirely because of their race or religion. This to me sounds a little too familiar. Many people from around the world would agree with me.

In a CNN interview with a young girl around the age of 18, she explains, “When I viewed the document, I learned that my younger sister was in a detention center for the last few years, I couldn’t eat or sleep for several days. I never imagined my younger sister would be in prison” (“China’s Xinjiang Records Revealed”). Her sister was put in this detention center for being Muslim and breaking a country-wide law. This law limits Xinjiang families to having only three children, and her sister had four children. Around five years ago, China

experienced terrorist attacks, mostly from people who followed the Muslim religion. China's president, Xi Jinping "gave very specific instructions in speeches after China was targeted" (Will Ripley, CNN;video) The Chinese government is forcing people out of their homes without any say and putting them in internment camps. China will put out videos of propaganda to make it seem like everyone is having a good time. However, the few who were not put in these camps or have escaped tell a different story. Everyone at one point thought that it was China's government against the people, which is a hard battle to fight. That is, until a Chinese government worker released 400 documents that proved horrible prison-like conditions were real and not just rumors. Some families when reading documents listing detainees hadn't known a family member was in the camps. This shows that there is no contact at all, and some people are even being taken away from their homes so quickly that they aren't able to tell their family members. One reason that is used a lot to support why we should put racial prejudice learning in our curriculum is because we, the people, do not want another repeat of the Holocaust or something worse to happen anywhere in the world. That in mind, it is happening right now. Why aren't people taking this as a sign to put it in the curriculum? This is another reason why we should add racial prejudice and current events into our curriculum.

The worst case scenario is when a government gets to the point where they will carry out genocide. Currently in southeast Bangladesh, thousands of Rohingya Muslims are being forced out of their homes by the Myanmar army. On August 15, 2017,

many Rohingya Muslims were being violently forced to flee. Some were raped, many were killed, and entire villages were burned to the ground. The survivors were put in a panic state without food, water, nor shelter. Most of them escaped to Bangladesh. In an interview from World Concern, a young girl named

Jahira tells her story. “Since I lost my parents I haven’t been happy. If the soul of my parents is missing, I keep thinking ‘why am I not dead?’” (“Answering the Cries of Rohingya Refugees”) Jahira had to watch her village be burned in front of her, her brother pulled away by the army, and her mother and father shot in front of her. Jahira herself was then pulled away along with three other girls. These types of horrible stories aren’t uncommon for lots of people. If we teach these signs in current events, it can prevent future generations from making the same mistakes that happen now or have happened in the past.

It is important to teach racial prejudice in current events in school because there are many signs of early genocide and racism in the world. We do not want future generations making the same mistakes that past generations made. The start of genocide signs is shootings or passive aggressive racism, and then it leads up to an entire government hating a race or religion. The worst case scenario is when the government actually takes action to kill or force out certain races and religions. If we do not teach about racial prejudice in schools, then how are students supposed to learn about the horrible things that happened in the past? Everyone says “history

repeats itself,” but in most cases that isn’t a good thing. If we were to teach racial prejudice in school, it could help history not repeat the bad things in history. These reasons are why I think we should teach racial prejudice in schools and modern curriculum.

Community and Responsibility During the Coronavirus

By Rosemary Mende

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word “responsibility” as, “the quality or state of being responsible: such as, moral, legal, or mental accountability, and reliability and trustworthiness.” Responsibility is a key component of a successful community. It acts as the oil in a machine, always keeping the happenings in the community running properly and helping every part to do its job smoothly. A community without responsibility would be dysfunctional and overall, a mess in both a literal and emotional sense. Take the world’s current situation for example, eradicating the coronavirus would be much easier and effective if everyone did their part and practiced responsibility by obeying laws and guidelines put in place to keep them safe. Of course, we are only human and perfection, though desirable, is hardly realistic. That is why every community in the world that strives to be successful should be responsible and put in their equal share of effort to solve global issues like the coronavirus.

The coronavirus is a very hot topic right now. Appearing in Wuhan, China in the later days of 2019, the coronavirus has become a global pandemic spreading to countries all over the

world (Li, Meng-Yuan, et al.). Many countries, if not all, have sets of guidelines and laws in place that are meant to slow the spread of the virus. In America, such laws usually require the individuals of that community to shelter-in-place or stay six feet apart from other people in public places while also wearing masks ("How to Protect Yourself and Others"). Though restrictive and far from the norm, these laws and guidelines are meant to protect the people, but in turn they also require that the people practice responsibility and submit to the laws no matter how uncomfortable they are. Most people do respect these laws by staying home and practicing the proper safety measures, but some may feel that these laws are too restrictive and intrude on their rights and as a result, arrange protests against the local and state governments.

Coronavirus protests are a perfect example of irresponsible actions in a community. Many counties in the United States have experienced protests and ignorance to the laws and restrictions laid down by the government in an effort to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. Protesters have gathered in large crowds without masks in an effort to regain their rights and a sense of normalcy. The protestors gathered at beaches and other public places without regarding the social-distancing guidelines. According to the New York City Governor, Andrew Cuomo, not wearing a mask in public is "disrespectful" to others, this is understandable because people who don't wear a mask are being both disrespectful and irresponsible and are endangering everyone else in their community even if other people are wearing masks (qtd. in

Holcombe). It is understandable that people are acting this way because they are scared of permanently losing their “normal” lives and as a result are lashing out at the government and harming their communities instead of being rational.

The perfect solution to eradicating this global issue would involve people being responsible and working together to keep their community alive and thriving. They could donate to their local businesses, make masks for their local hospital workers and homeless population, check in on their neighbors and elderly, and above all, stay home (“Helping and Getting Help”). These actions could help relieve tension in the community by giving people a purpose, brighten someone’s day, and save lives. People shouldn’t give up their sanity and rationality just because they are afraid. Being at home all day is mentally distressing, so people should instead channel their worries and fears into responsibility for their community. Whether it is something simple and sweet like writing a hope-filled quote on your fence, or something brave and inspirational like going out into your community and donating masks, we can all make responsible choices at a safe distance that help our community.

Overall, we are in a time filled with tension and negativity and instead of focusing on those negative, hopeless thoughts we should be taking responsibility for helping our communities survive and thrive. If everyone does their part and makes responsible choices then the result may be something that saves the world from a lot of heartache and death. We can all make a difference right now, even though we are stuck inside. Our communities need our help in order to survive the

coronavirus and we have the resources to save them. As long as we make responsible and safe choices we can expect a hopeful and good result in our communities and in turn we will have a happier world. Any major changes will only happen if people all around the world take responsibility for their communities and work together to overcome the coronavirus as well as other global issues.

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The Dichotomy of Obligation and Choice

By Nathaniel Le

Every action you take is a choice. There is a motive behind every act that was, will be, and is made by you to accomplish a purpose. One such motivation is obligation and the belief that one must take an action to fulfill it. From paying mortgages to following your friend up on a promise made with them, life is full of obligations that bind us, but do these obligations actually exist? In the novel *Of Mice and Men*, written by John Steinbeck, the story follows Lennie Smalls and George Milton as they labor on a new ranch with an ensemble of other workers and cast while also dealing with Lennie's main problem: his mental disability. Lennie's disability forces George to care for him as his actions cause trouble, but to say that it obligates him is wrong. Obligation does not exist since every action that is taken is by choice, not duty or commitment. It is contradictory to free will; everything is a choice.

The definition of obligation states: an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound, but this conflicts with human nature. Freedom of choice is fundamental to being human, with many wars being fought over the constriction of such a right. It guarantees that no matter what

external parties are present, one always has the autonomy to choose between different options. Obligation, therefore, is a violation of this as it binds a person to choose only one option. In *Of Mice and Men*, George is often frustrated with Lenny's antics, belittling him and stating, ". . . if I was alone I could live so easy . . . You crazy son-of-a-bitch. You keep me in hot water all the time" (Steinbeck Pg 11). Yet, George still continues on with Lennie, not out of obligation to him, but because he values him over his own self interest. Obligation has no merit because everyone always has a choice whether to do something or not.

An argument against this logic presents itself in the existence of an obligation within choices; one that has a person obligated to choose the best outcome. Although novel, such an idea is easily debunked by the definition: an act or course of action to which a person is bound. By leaving a person the choice to choose an option, whether it be the best or not, one cannot be bound to an act or course of action. Obligation simply cannot coincide with free will. In the novel *Of Mice and Men*, George listens to a conversation passed around by the other workers in the bunkhouse concerning Candy's dog and if he should be shot. In the end, Candy resigns, but he states later, after talking with Lennie and George, "I oughtta of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't oughtta of let no stranger shoot my dog" (Steinbeck Pg 61). Within these series of events, we clearly see how one could perceive Candy as having an obligation to be the one to shoot his dog, but as he had chosen not to: to forego his 'duty', there could not have been an obligation to begin with.

If not an obligation, then what is the feeling that one has to choose one option over another? Quite simply, it is the emotion of want. Fundamental as human motive, it is the reason that we ‘do’ anything. From instinctual desires including the want to live or sleep, social needs like the need for attention and esteem, or personal wants such as land or the happiness of another, want drives every decision we make. The novel *Of Mice and Men* features a myriad of situations brought upon by the desires and wants of the workers manifested into their choices. In the last scene, George is tasked with choosing between two options: let the others kill him for killing Curley’s wife, or shoot Lennie himself. Steinbeck writes, “And George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie’s head. The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger” (Steinbeck Pg 106). George chose to kill Lennie himself, but he did so not out of any obligation, but because he wanted to do so. He felt tied to Lennie, just as Candy did to his dog, in a way that mattered to him and not the others. No obligatory goal was achieved in doing so; just the fulfillment of what George wanted for Lennie. It’s through this we see that obligation does not exist but is instead a misnomer for the want that fuels choosing.

There are, however, consequences to every choice. When obligated, a person cannot suffer any consequence for their actions as they themselves are not in power of their own decisions or desires, but we already know that to be false. Every decision taken by you is an extension of freedom, but it is also

by this freedom of choice that you are held responsible for your actions. In *Of Mice and Men*, a character named Curley is unfairly beating Lennie when Steinbeck writes, “Curley's fist was swinging when Lennie reached for it. The next minute Curley was flopping like a fish on a thread, and his closed fist was lost in Lennie’s big hand” (Steinbeck Pg 63). This quote exemplifies consequences as the decision Curley chose was a poor one resulting in a severe punishment. Not just this, but every other choice that anybody makes in *Of Mice and Men* is the main cause of consequences that soon followed: Lennie grabbing a woman’s dress leading to a manhunt, George not abandoning Lennie, Candy allowing Carlson to shoot his dog, etc. Each choice has consequences, good or bad, that impacts what happens in the plot as well as the character themselves. Under obligation, one’s actions are excused, but since there is no such thing as a choice that has no consequence, the basis of free will and choice, there must not be such a thing called obligation.

This lack of obligation does not entail for humanity a dissolute society in which people are constantly breaking promises and contracts under the excuse of, “I have no obligation to follow them,” but something more subjective. The lack of obligation within the world is not a terrible thing that will lead to ruin, but is instead a neutral platform by which people are grown through the actions they take on their own. In a blog written by Gregory Sadler, a holder of a PhD in philosophy from Southern Illinois University, he defines prohairesis as a rational desire within oneself, but then writes

how Epictetus stated what prohairesis is, saying, "By the time he is done with it, it signifies the very core of the person - the self, if you like," (Sadler). By Epictetus' definition of prohairesis, one's choices affect the core, and a person's core dictates the choices of a person. In this cycle, one grows as a person in a minute, slow process. It is a person's will and choices that paint whether they are good or bad, not how well they follow an obligation.

We humans live by free choice. It is in our nature to do so; to decide for ourselves, to choose based on what we want. Obligation is an inherent contradiction to this, being unable to exist if free choice is absolute. It cannot exist because of the nature of humanity to be free with their choice, the inability of it to drive choices, and the nature of every action to have a consequence. *Of Mice and Men* tells of how choices affect you and the people around you. It is a story of choosing what one should do out of their own desire to be with one another, not an obligation. More than this, it tells of choosing to see the invisible. Choosing to talk with the other. Choosing to accept the outsider. Choose to live for others, do not be obligated to it.

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Humboldt County and COVID-19: How the Community has Contributed

By Hannah Uutela

Do you need ideas on how you can safely help your community and those in need during the COVID-19 Pandemic? The COVID-19 Pandemic has hit Humboldt County, California with 53 confirmed cases (Lost Coast Outpost). For our small, tight community this has shocked and scared locals, but this has also inspired others to take action. Volunteer organizations have made their way through Humboldt, providing their services to healthcare workers, first-responders, and those in need. Other community members and local businesses have also sacrificed their goods and services to help others in Humboldt. Many different organizations and businesses have provided their help and services to the Humboldt County community in many different ways during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Feed the E.R. is a volunteer organization that developed during the pandemic, and works to provide food to emergency room workers. Eureka City Council members worked through Feed the E.R. to bring lunch to emergency room workers at St. Joseph Hospital in Eureka (Lost Coast Outpost). Eureka's mayor, Susan Seaman participated in Feed the E.R., and wanted

to show her appreciation towards the local emergency room and healthcare workers. “Everyone has a role to play in this event, whether it’s the person who stays home like they’re supposed to, to the people who work at the grocery stores. But, ultimately, it’s a big deal because it’s life and death and this is where the real difference is made. Thank you for coming in when it’s hardest and protecting all of us,” said Seaman. Feed the E.R. has also visited other Humboldt County local hospitals including Redwood Memorial, and Mad River Hospital. Feed the E.R. was developed after the shelter-in-place was issued, and the idea was sparked through Eureka local Betsy Totten (Times Standard). “Our families look forward to our weekly night out to dinner together and one of our favorite little local restaurants, so we thought we should do the same,” explained Totten. Feed the E.R.’s purpose is not only to help healthcare workers, but also to support local restaurants during the pandemic. Feed the E.R. has provided great services to our local businesses and healthcare workers, as well as inspire council members and other locals to join in on helping out the community.

Although many local businesses have had to close their doors to the public, owners still discovered ways to help those who are still working essentially for our community’s safety. Bubbles, a natural health and beauty store in Arcata, has been producing and giving away their hand sanitizer to first-responders and locals in the community. The owner of Bubbles, Carla Hayes, began donating hand sanitizer as soon as she saw the impact of the virus on bigger cities, such as Seattle and New

York City (Lost Coast Outpost). “I was watching the news and was seeing what was happening and thought I’m gonna start making it in bulk so our first responders and delivery people don’t have that problem,” said Hayes. Bubbles has donated to Humboldt CHP, local volunteer fire departments, the Arcata Police Department, local hospitals, post offices, and many other places (Lost Coast Outpost). The members of S.T.I.L. in Eureka have also taken action by producing and donating about 75 gallons of hand sanitizer for the community (Lost Coast Outpost). “On Monday we had a line backed up into Broadway,” said Jason Whitcom of S.T.I.L. Whitcom also explained how other local businesses have contributed to S.T.I.L.’s donations, such as Lithia Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram Fiat of Eureka, who donated 8 gallons of isopropyl alcohol to S.T.I.L. (Lost Coast Outpost). Local businesses such as Bubbles and S.T.I.L. have come together, and sacrificed their supplies to help out the other community members and raise awareness for first-responders and essential workers; despite having their businesses temporarily closed due to the pandemic.

Many non-profit organizations and local businesses have provided their help towards healthcare workers, first-responders, essential workers, and community members by donating goods and providing food and supplies. Feed the E.R., a non-profit organization developed by Eureka local Betsy Totten, has brought food from local restaurants for emergency room healthcare workers to St. Joseph, Redwood Memorial, and Mad River Hospitals in Humboldt County, California. Not only does this organization provide food for healthcare workers,

they also support local restaurants during the pandemic. Other local businesses, such as Bubbles in Arcata, and S.T.I.L. in Eureka have used their supplies to produce and donate gallons of hand sanitizer to first-responders and community members in need. The actions taken by these organizations and businesses can inspire other Humboldt County community members to help out the people in need during this pandemic in a safe, healthy manner. It can also remind us that our local healthcare and essential workers are risking their lives every day to make our community healthy, and that it is important to show our gratitude and give back.

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A Growing Crisis with Food Banks

By Annamarie Farmer

In 1967, the first food bank was established in the United States of America in Phoenix, Arizona called St. Mary's Food Bank. Since then, there has been an increasing expansion of over 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries. However, the recent outbreak of COVID-19 has led food banks and pantries to struggle and even temporarily shut down. The growing crisis continues to affect our everyday lives, but even more so for people who have lost their jobs or were already in a state of poverty (Dzhanova). In this essay, we will be exploring COVID-19 and how it has affected unemployed people, how food banks are adapting, and how people and food banks Humboldt County are supporting their community.

COVID-19 is an extreme pandemic and has been closely monitored by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They have been consistently updating the COVID-19 page with facts that can help people understand what is happening in their area. According to the CDC, California is one of the states with the highest count of reported cases of COVID-19. It closely ranks with Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Michigan. The CDC also stated that the first-reported case was in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China during November of 2019, and it was announced as a pandemic on March 11 of 2020.

Only a couple days later, on March 19 of 2020, California Governor, Gavin Newsom, ordered, “all individuals living in the State of California to stay at home or at their place of residence,” helping to prevent the spread of the deadly virus. COVID-19 has prevented many people from seeing each other, or even coming into close contact with other people, this has caused many people to be let off of their jobs all around the world. Due to rising unemployment rates, there have been more families seeking the support of local food distribution centers (Dzhanova). Economists at Fed’s St. Louis district predict a staggering total of employment reductions at 47 million, this includes people who work at food banks and other agencies that help provide for those in need. Food banks are currently struggling with the loss of employees and volunteer help while also trying to continue feeding millions of people.

Many food banks have applied new protocols in order to maintain a safe and steady supply of food, but most suspect a rise in people seeking a safe food supply. Many also worry that they do not know how long they will be able to respond due to the lack of money and resources. Even Jean Shafiroff, philanthropist and a board member of the New York City Mission Society, states, “There’s never enough money.” Almost one out of every three food pantries have closed all throughout the United States due to the unexpected loss of resources (Dzhanova). Natalie Caples, chief operations officer at the Central California Food Bank, said, “Our agencies have reported increases that range anywhere between 40% and 100% increase in individuals accessing emergency food service,” and, “We are

really pushing our operations to the max right now. Every truck is going out full, essentially overweight.” It doesn’t help that the elderly community tends to volunteer more, but are now stuck at home because they are more susceptible to COVID-19 (“Volunteering and Health for Aging Populations”).

In Humboldt County, schools are doing excellent jobs in making sure that their students stay fed. Bus drivers go out every day to their stops and drop off meals for the students and the students can also get or give schoolwork to the drivers to turn in. Unfortunately, not everyone has the privilege of getting meals dropped off. In fact, families with very young children, seniors, and others who are vulnerable to COVID-19 are requiring more support than ever. Thankfully, Food for People in Eureka, California, has been trying their best to make food accessible to everyone possible. They have been making those extra steps to keep their workers, volunteers, and clients safe by pre-packing food bags, creating new drive through areas wherever possible, and expanding the space they use so that everyone can practice “social distancing” (“Humboldt County Food Bank Struggles to Meet Needs”). Food for People first opened their doors in 1979 and were extremely small, doing their best to help emergency food situations, since then they have grown. They envision a safe and supporting community where everyone has access to healthy and nutritious food and are dedicated to help create a stronger and more beautiful Humboldt County. They have multiple programs throughout Humboldt County and are still expanding, most of the programs are in bigger cities with surrounding smaller towns

that have tinier resources. The cities like Fortuna, Orrick, Eureka, Arcata, Loleta, and more include 3 or more of the following resources; Child Nutrition Programs, Senior and Homebound Programs, Free Produce Market Distributions, or Mobile Produce Pantry Distributions (“Food for People”).

In conclusion, the recent outbreak of a deadly virus is strongly affecting many people who were food insecure before, while also shoving more people into that state. (“World Hunger Day 2019”) Food banks in California help support more than two million individuals in need, but now there are more seeking for help (“California Association of Food Banks”). COVID-19 is shutting down businesses all over the world and families need to find new ways to stay afloat. Everyone is feeling the wrath of the new virus, everyone is struggling in different ways, and everyone needs to stick together as a community in this time of crisis.

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Contradictory Theories on Divine Infinity

By Sydira Shapiro

To define the infinite would be to limit-even in thought-the unlimited.

-Mortimer J. Adler

Besides God nothing can be infinite.

-Tomas Aquinas

By God I understand Being absolutely infinite, that is to say, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.

-Spinoza

Understanding infinity has been a serious challenge for humanity since the beginning of time. An overwhelming majority of people believe that the concept of infinity can never be fully grasped by the human mind. Many people around the globe would associate the concept of infinity with a spiritual belief. Divinity means many different things to different people. The way one views divinity is molded by one's spiritual and religious background. Infinity connected to the divine leaves a lot for the human mind to ponder. Many great philosophers, such as Spinoza and Plato, have tried to define and describe the characteristics of a divine infinity. Because of the vastness of

the topic, as well as people's intrenchment in their perspectives, a consensus has proven impossible to reach. God and infinity both share the complexity of being incomprehensible to the human mind. The study of this topic has produced many different perspectives and theories. Due to the complexity of this topic, the question, "Is God infinite?" can never be satisfactorily answered for all people, resulting in varying theories but no consensus.

Pantheism and Mystical Neoplatonism are both belief systems that acknowledge God as an infinite being. There are many famous philosophers such as Spinoza and Plato that align themselves with this way of perceiving the divine. Pantheism, in its most basic definition is, "... the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God, or else negatively as the rejection of any view that considers God as distinct from the universe" (Mander). This belief that everything that exists is part of God gives the divine the property of infinity. Of course, using the word, "God," introduces many more challenges because God is understood so differently by so many different people. Some individuals with contrasting beliefs, such as theists, often take offence at the pantheistic belief that God embodies all, saying that it is not right to call the universe "God" and that pantheism is a euphemism for atheism (Mander). The idea that God is "all" strays from the belief that God is a "being," which makes pantheism unfavorable for individuals that follow religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Spinoza created his pantheistic belief system called Spinozism. In his book, *Ethics*,

Spinoza defines God as, "...substance consisting of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence" (Spinoza, 355). Although vague, this definition of God is in alignment with the pantheistic faith that there is no limit to what God is, and everything that is, is God. Spinoza's intention behind his definition of God is made clear when he later states in Prop 15 that, "Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can either be or be conceived without God" (360). Spinoza and his followers base their theory on divine infinity on the premise that one substance cannot create a different substance (358). Specifically, Spinoza asserts, "Each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself" (358). Using Spinoza's logic, if one believes in God, there is no question God is the substance that created all other attributes of himself, from himself, making all things connected by God.

Theism is the belief that God is limitless while rejecting the belief that God is in everything. Theism is the most common belief system in America because it is associated with the most practiced religions such as Christianity and Judaism. Theists believe that God is an infinite being, "...God is absolutely unlimited" (Oaks, 251). Theists believe that there is no limit to God's power and ability but that God is not in everything. The counter argument to this belief would be that God is a being, which puts limits on his existence, therefore, rendering him not infinite. Theists respond to this claim by saying that no one pretends to understand God, so if his infinity does not make sense to us, it is only natural (Cowen). Eli Cowen is a Hasidic rabbi local to Humboldt County who

previously resided in Brooklyn, New York, the cultural epicenter for Hasidic Judaism. He shared a story from the Old Testament that is an example of how one cannot truly understand God's will. There are dimensions in the Old Testament that give directions for the building of the inner sanctum, which is a place where one is so close to God that only rabbis can enter. The dimensions are not mathematically correct. There is a missing square foot. The exact dimensions are described in 1 Kings 7:23-26 and Chronicles 4:2-5 (Cowen). Humans cannot comprehend this as anything other than a miscalculation, but God does not make mistakes. For theists, this story is an example of what God does that is beyond their understanding. Using this logic, "theists insist that the domain of natural being does exist in its own right..." whether we understand it or not (Oaks, 252). Therefore, if God was taken out of the picture, matter would still exist because it exists in its own right. It is hard for the logical human mind to reconcile the idea that God is infinite, yet something can exist outside of God. Theists have faith that even though an infinite being is contradictory in itself, God transcends the logical plain of thought, and possesses properties that cannot be understood by the human mind.

Theists' rejection of the theory that God is everything while still asserting that God is infinite is questioned by many. It is difficult to determine the validity of theists' argument from a logical standpoint because they base their belief in faith. In his book, *The Monist*, Helger stated that there is enough philosophical evidence to make theists' claim sound (252). A

sound claim means that there is enough information backing the claim that it can be made and taken seriously. It does not in any way mean that there is enough evidence to prove the claim. Any evidence gathered for theist's claim that God is separate from the universe is subjective. One would have to have beliefs that align with theism in order to take stock in evidence that supports it. It is a leap of faith that is not based in logic. The belief that finite things exist in their own right is proof that God is not in everything. If one does not believe that finite things exist in their own right, then the evidence means nothing to that person. This inability to factually prove God's infiniteness is the reason that this question can never be satisfactorily answered for all people.

Thomas Aquinas blends both perspectives on divine infinity by splitting infinity into two categories: the absolute infinite and the relative or potential infinite. Absolute infinity is reserved for God and is aligned with Spinoza's belief. To be absolutely infinite is, "...the perfection of existence considered absolutely" (Tomarchio). Relative or potential infinity is attributed to matter and quantities. This view maintains the belief that God is "absolutely infinite," while allowing for another type of infinite existence outside of God as "...things other than God can be relatively infinite, but not absolutely infinite" (Adler, 363). Aquinas marries pantheism and theism by stating that God is absolutely infinite and is not composed of any other substance but himself, as well as stating that everything created from God can still have its own infinite properties (Tomarchio). Aquinas asserts that these relative

infinities are similar to the theistic views earlier discussed by showing that his relative infinities are, "... not only relative but negative, for it connotes 'something imperfect.' It signifies indeterminacy or lack of perfection in being" (Adler). The marriage of these two philosophies combines such significant aspects of the varying perspectives from both faiths, that most members of both pantheism and theism are unable to accept this theory. Beliefs based on a combination of faith and logic prove to be extremely difficult to change.

Divine infinity is a topic that has been debated for thousands of years with no consensus ever reached. Theories on divine infinity were created using arguments based in the vastly different perspectives of both logic and faith. A topic which is based on both faith and logic creates too much of a divide for any consensus to be reached. In addition, theories that include aspects of both theism and pantheism become less attractive because there is little desire from any side to compromise on its faith. Different branches of faith have slightly different views on divine infinity, but for the most part, they all fall under the umbrella theories of pantheism and theism. The fact that God is infinite is not argued. What is debated is what God's infinity means. Is God identical to the infinite cosmos? Or is God an infinite being with no limits? These questions will be pondered by future generations as new theories are developed and as more people chase an understanding of the divine.

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Untitled

By Dante Landry

During quarantine I have been going on a lot of walks. I had a social distancing water balloon fight with my friend Ryan, and I got to go on a bike ride with my friend Rilee. I may even be getting a new dog soon and I got a new house, so my shelter in place has been going pretty well.

On Mother's Day I had a nice brunch with my Mom, my mom's boyfriend, and my grandparents. For brunch we had a frittata, fruit salad, and then we got a strawberry shortcake. After brunch we took a three mile bike ride down to a little river spot and we were building tall towers with rocks and it was really fun. After the fun, we got back on our bikes and rode three miles back to my grandparents' house. When we got there we went back to my mom's and played some board games. For dinner, we ordered food from the Sea grill. I got fish and chips, my mom got seafood manicotti, and my mom's boyfriend got a lobster.

The community has changed, because my mom has started to work from home and I have been doing school from home. When I'm bored I usually go hang out with Ryan, but now I can't so I have to figure out how to entertain myself. I usually just play with my little indoor basketball hoop, go outside to ride my bike, or play real basketball. I am getting a

new house but I couldn't go look at the inside because now only two people are allowed in at a time and you have to be eighteen to write your signature to go in the house.

To not get the coronavirus, I have been very careful by always washing my hands with warm water and soap. I also have been staying 6 ft away from all people and wiping boxes, packages, etc. with Clorox wipes every time I get something new. Shelter in place has been somewhat helpful to me because I have been learning new responsibilities like what I could do to help slow down the spread of the coronavirus, but it also has been sad because I haven't seen my dad very often. I am going to spend the whole day with him on Saturday so I am very excited.

To protect the community, I have been social distancing and washing my hands with warm water and soap. When I go to Target, it is not very crowded and there are only two people allowed in an aisle at one time. It is also kind of scary because everyone is wearing a mask and someone in the store could have the coronavirus. I have also been taking on new chores like helping put away groceries and wiping down remotes, door handles, and light switches with Clorox wipes. As you can see, my shelter in place has been going pretty well but hopefully it will be over soon so I can see my friends and have sleepovers.

The Trash Collectors

By Logan Pollard

Hi! My name is Logan, and I want to tell you a story. Have you ever noticed how much trash gets on the sides of the streets, sidewalks, and front yards? Well, I was on an evening walk with my mom and dog when we saw a group of people (two women and a little girl) walking on the opposite side of the street. What made us notice them was the fact that they were carrying pickers and trash bags! They were saying something about trying the sides of the streets.

“Trash is everywhere now!” exclaimed one of the women, picking up a plastic bag and placing it in the trash bag that she was carrying. They were picking up trash! I considered yelling “Thanks!” at them for being so responsible for cleaning up after other people.

“Look at what I found!” yelled one of the women. She had uncovered a plastic plate in a pile of dead leaves. She placed it in the trash bag that she was carrying.

“Thanks!” shouted my mom. The group looked up, smiled and waved. I hope that you can be as responsible as them and help clean up our beautiful planet for yourself, your family, your friends, your community, and the rest of the world!

The Organic Matter Squad

By Gemma Caruso

Good morning! My name is Lima Bean! I know, my name sounds funny, but it really is my name! I guess my parents thought they were being funny and clever. Anyhow, I am a 12 year old girl in the Big Apple. Right now, we're in a bit of a crisis. You see, I live in New York City! New York is the epicenter of the coronavirus, which is an awful virus that is killing many people. I love sewing, and since people need masks, I was going to help my community by making masks. Sounds easy, right?

However, thanks to the Coronavirus, people aren't allowed to go out of their houses, which makes it pretty hard to get supplies, as we can't leave the house to go shopping. So, I sent out emails to my friends and family.

Hi, friends!

I am trying to make 200 masks to aid the people in the community. However, I don't have enough fabric. If you have some fabric or elastics to share, please let me know, so I can arrange a way to pick it up! Please, only clean fabric. Thank you all so much for aiding my efforts! The masks will be donated to the Emergency Room staff, to protect them.

- Lima Bean

Well, my email worked like a charm. Soon fabric donations were pouring in. I live in an apartment building, and a girl from school lives straight down the hall. Annie Trunch. She has always looked down on me, because I tend to stand out in a crowd by being a focused, quiet girl, and because of my name. Really, there are only so many jokes you can make!

She saw Mom carrying in the fabric that people had left in the apartment's basement. They had dated the delivery, and Mom only grabbed the fabric that had been sitting for five days. She did this to quarantine everything so we would be keeping ourselves, and our friends safe.

And what do you know! Nosy Nancy (aka Annie), rings me up and asks, "Yuck Bean, why do you have, like, so much, like, fabric?"

"Well, Annie," I calmly replied, trying to let her comment roll off my back, "I am going to make masks to help out with the coronavirus. My goal is to make 200 masks."

"Oh, 200? Is that, like, all? *I* am making 300, which is, like, more than, like *you*."

Now, you can see how she is. She just *has* to be better than *everybody* else. "Well, Annie, that is great! That will really make a great difference! I am really glad that you are trying to help out, and frankly, a little surprised. I thought you would be more interested in binge-watching TV shows. But that is great!"

"Oh, I'm not doing it to help out," Annie smarmily replied. "I am doing it to win The Golden Child Award. You know, like, the one where the most sweet, helpful, child gets a

1,000 dollar prize! And, like, I could, like, really use the money to buy a new phone. Mine is a YEAR OLD!”

“That’s great, Annie. Well, I had better be off. Got lots to do!” And I hung up so I could call the one person who I could depend on to help, my true friend, Karat Titian.

Now, Titian is a synonym for orange, and if you say Karat’s name, it sounds like the vegetable. People are always calling her Carrot Orange, and calling us the DIRT Club. Get it? So we turned it around, and now are *The Organic Matter Squad*, an elite group for kids who have food names to support and help each other through the ups and downs of school.

I call her, and she is raring to go.

“So, Lima, how do we do this?”

“I was thinking, why don’t we call up all our friends on a video call, and ask them what they think? Then, can we all come to your house, and spend a week there? I know we have shelter in place, but we would all be there for a week, which would be okay. And you have two sewing machines, and a really big house, so we would all fit.”

“Let me check. Yep, Mor, says it’s a-okay! Ten minutes, right?”

“Yes, see you then!” Mor is Swedish for mother, and Karat is Swedish. Ten minutes later, I am IM’ing with Karat, Oni On, Ginger Snapp, Brie Ost (Ost is cheese in Swedish) and the only male of the group, Ägg Benedict. You can see why we were all teased. We are different ages, from 10-12, but we are loyal, and cooperative. Our conversation went like this:

GoldenKarat: See, we should totally do this!

Ginger: yeah! we really should do something to help!

LimaB: We could hang out, and help out!

ÄB: Our moms could coordinate it.

BriBri: Should we invite Annie Trunch?

ÄB: Why?

BriBri: She lives down the hall.

GoldenKarat: NO! All she does is tease us!

Onii: I say.....yes.

Ginger: WHY! She calls me cookie, and lima, she calls you yuck bean, and you bri, she calls stinky cheese, and she calls karat karat orange, and oni onion or oinky!! And Ägg, SHE CALLS YOU COOKED EGGS! how are you okay with this? We don't call her trunchbull for nothing

LimaB: She is doing her own mask project, going for the Golden Child. She wants to make 300 masks.

BriBri: What do you think, Ägg? You've been quiet?

ÄB: Let's vote. All in favor type yes.

LimaB: Yes

ÄB: Yes

GoldenKarat: Yes

BriBri: Yes

Ginger: NO!

Oni: No.

ÄB: Looks like she is in. BriBri, you invite her.

BriBri: Ok. Next weekend?

LimaB: Yep. See you then!

LimaB has signed off

And that is where the conversation was when I left it. Later, Brie called me to say Annie had accepted. On the appointed day, Mom drove me to Karat's house, which was a sprawling mansion. We wore masks, of course. I ran inside with the supplies. Everyone was there. Ginger was frostily ignoring Annie, who was filing her nails. Shy Oni stayed by Karat, who when seeing me, rushed to give me a hug. Ägg and Bri were in a corner, reading. Karat led us into the room she had set up for us.

"L, you're in charge," said Karat.

"Okay. We will do an assembly line. Oni, you and Karat will be cutting out the fabric and elastic. The patterns are in the blue bag. Ginger, you and I will be sewing in the elastic. Ägg, you will iron them, and give them to Bri, who will do the outside. Annie, you will pack them into the boxes Ginger brought, and count how many we have. Got it? GO!"

We worked for two hours, then had a pizza dinner, with lots and lots of laughter. After, we spread our sleeping bags and watched *The Phantom of the Opera*. We ignored Annie's comment about how it was for babies. The next morning, Mor fixed breakfast. She showed us around the kitchen, telling us, "For the next three days, you will all fix your own breakfast, *ja*?" "Ja, Mori," we said in chorus, all except Annie, who was silent. We jumped on the food, and gobbled it all up. Afterward, we made masks until lunchtime, which was sandwiches, prepared by Mor. We worked well into the afternoon, when we flew out of the house into Karat's backyard. We spent our time playing before dinner, ate, and went straight to sleep. In the morning, we repeated. There was, of course, chit-chat, but we were more

careful around Annie, who was ignoring us, until, on the fifth day she said, “300 masks.”

“Wait, what? I thought we were only making 200,” Oni said dubiously.

“Yeah, well, it wasn’t MY fault! I was, like, just counting, when we reached 200, but you all were, like, still going, so I kept on, like, going,” Annie snarled, ever on the defensive.

“Whatever! We did more than we intended to! That’s great!” exclaimed Ägg.

We all danced around in celebration, shouting loud enough to wake the dead, or Karat’s baby sister, Cherry. After that we cleaned up, and watched movies and hung out until bed. Man, we were tired. In the morning, we read, sewed using the scraps, or played board games. That was a quiet, restful day. Our moms picked us up bright and early the next morning. I stored the masks in the basement for a week, while I made a plan to drop them off at the hospital three days after the week had passed. Annie called, and in her vengeful, cutting, voice, said, “I have, like, 300 masks, made all by me! Ha ha ha! My mom spent the week cutting the fabric, and today I, like, sewed them! Ha!” And she hung up.

When I went down to the basement the next day, the boxes were gone. In their place were boxes full of garbage! I called Mr. Hamson, and asked him if he knew anything. He apologized, and said, “I told li’l miss Annie to put her rubbish box there. I guess the rubbish man took yours by mistake.”

“NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! We worked so hard, Oni, and Karat, and Bri, and Ägg, and Ginger

and Annie. Annie! ANNIE! Thanks Mr. H! Gotta go!” And I hung up faster than you can say lollipop. Annie had taken the masks, and put rubbish in its place! How to get our masks back?

I talked to the squad, and we came up with a plan. We entered ourselves in the Golden Child competition. We showed pictures of our team working. And we wrote an amazing, stunning essay, that in part went;

Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

Our project was a team effort. While the Golden Child is a one person award, we would like to apply as a team, because we work best when we work together..... We spent a week on this project..... This project was initiated by a belief in the fact that we are a community, and a team. Each team member is responsible for helping each other up when we fall, and right now many members have fallen to the coronavirus. We made masks to protect those who are working on the front lines to lift people up, and to inspire others to make a difference. Loyalty to the team. And because of loyalty, we will not tell you who took the masks to use for their own benefit in the competition, although the newspapers have already discovered who. We have a responsibility, and we will do our best to support each other as a strong community does. Please consider us for the grant, and no matter what, please stay the strong members of our team that you are.

Sincerely,
The Organic Matter Squad
Oni On, Karat Titian, Brie Ost,
Ginger Snapp, Ägg Benedict, and Lima Bean
(We call ourselves The Organic Matter Squad
because of our food names.)

Well, the paper came out the next day, with the heading,
Tarnished Child.

Tarnished Child Award

A young girl by
the name of
Annie Trunch
was reported by
an anonymous
source, of
cheating to win
the coveted
Golden Child
Award. She has
been
disqualified.....

Well, we won the Golden Child Award, and are using the grant to send DIY mask kits to families who are isolated, and premade masks to people in shelters, or homeless. The mayor was really impressed, and decided that she would use parts of our speech in hers. So, for now, everything's A-Okay. We may

not have the most normal names, but we have something more powerful—a team. Hey, a team, A-Team! You know that show about the A-Team, with MURdock, Hannibal, B.A., and Faceman? Well, we may not be Veterans from Vietnam, but we are a team. We are a unit within a team. The team being our community, and our unit being us, The Organic Matter Squad. As a team, we pull together, and help each other up. As a team, we are responsible for each other. Wow! I just said something really *deep*. Although I still like **D👁️ It F👁️r the D👁️ughnuts** better. I mean, think of it! The perfect motivation, (who doesn't like doughnuts?) the perfect T-Shirt design, the perfect—sorry, I got a *little* off track. But anyway, things worked out. We haven't gotten the coronavirus completely under control, but hey! Nobody's perfect. And we are humans! We *will* get through this as a team. Teamwork makes the dreamwork! A team makes everything possible..... Oops. That was a moral. I dislike it when it is a perfectly good story, and BOOM a moral comes and RUINS it! Oh well. Some things can't be helped. Anyway, best of luck to you all!

The End of *this* Adventure!

Please note: In this story the characters do leave their houses a few times. This is not meant to encourage leaving your home, and should not be taken as such. Please obey the shelter in place, and do not follow the examples of these characters, except, in making masks, which is a noble and worthy endeavor.

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Friday the 13th

By Malia Andersen

I have been hearing horror stories about Friday the 13th ever since I can remember. Of course, I didn't believe them, until it happened to me. I was disappointed, because it was the day of the middle school dance in McKinleyville, and my parents weren't letting me go. I had promised to drive some of my friends there, so I had to break the news to them that they would have to find a different ride. Thankfully, I still had an inkling of hope that I could at least go to Coffee Break after school.

Unfortunately for my friends, my teacher broke the news that the dance was canceled anyways. We were sad, but still happy about Coffee Break. At lunch, I followed my friend Emily outside. As soon as we walked out the door, Emily spilled her entire bag of microwave popcorn! Just a second afterwards, I tripped over a stump and almost fell on my face. I just thought it was a trace of bad luck. Little did I know, it was just the beginning of a day that turned my whole life upside down.

It was also my friend Landon's 12th birthday. I promised to buy him a biscotti at Coffee Break as his birthday present. In the middle of lunch, my friend Layla pulled me into the middle room. All the girls in my class were making birthday cards for Landon. As soon as I was done with my card, Layla sent me and

my friend David outside to distract Landon. David insisted on performing our tap dance for him. Finally, I caved in. We performed the dance for Landon and my friend Lorenzo. After that, we sang a rendition of Let it Go from Frozen. Since Lorenzo and Landon were getting quite bored, we decided to switch tactics. We started picking up random rocks and giving Landon “Birthday rocks.” He was really confused and overwhelmed. He was also very skeptical of why he was not allowed in the middle room. When lunch ended, he walked into the middle room to see his entire desk covered with birthday cards. We had convinced some of the boys in our class to make him cards too. His jaw dropped, and his face turned bright red. He had no clue where to put all those cards. Hopefully it was worth it, because I am definitely not embarrassing myself by doing a tap dance in front of the whole school again.

I tried to make it through all my boring classes without crying. Like every Friday, I was trying to make it to the end of the day, and Coffee Break.

At the end of the day, my teacher came into our classroom to give us more bad news. It was definitely not the worst news I would be hearing that day though. My teacher, Patti told us that none of us would be going to Coffee Break. We had to stay in afterschool, and our parents would come and get us. All my dreams about buying Landon a biscotti were flushed down the drain. I was in afterschool with my friends, Zander and Layla. Every single time our after school teacher, Sarah made us do something we didn’t want to do, Zander and I would tell her

what we would be doing at Coffee Break at that exact moment. One time, as Zander got up to use the stapler, we said, “At this moment I would be getting a milkshake and a biscotti.”

Sarah got quite fed up with us. Obviously, she did not want to hear that we thought after school was boring. Honestly, I don’t mind after school, just on Fridays I really look forward to going to Coffee Break. My parents only let me go on Fridays. Finally, my mom picked me up from school, and we drove home. I almost cried when I got home, it had been such a terrible day. We had tacos for dinner. Since I didn’t get to actually go to the dance, I decided to reenact it in the back room of my house. I started it about ten minutes later than the actual dance starts. First, I watched one episode of one of my favorite shows, Greenhouse Academy.

I went into the room, and closed the door to block out any noise my parents and my brother were to make. I turned on my Taylor Swift Cd, Lover, that my Aunt Sarah had gotten me for Christmas, and began to dance around the room like I would at the actual dance. About halfway through the second song, I texted my ex. At the beginning of the fourth song, I got a response. I spent about two hours of the reenactment talking to him. I had been in an argument with him, so we made up. That was the highlight of the day.

Later that night, at about 10:30, my family turned on the news. We heard some very disturbing news. The whole world would be put in quarantine. Which means my school was canceled, and I had to do online learning. I didn’t think it would be that hard. I had friends who were homeschooled, and

I also had read lots of books about people who were homeschooled. Oh boy, was I wrong. Every day, I get frustrated by my homework. School was so much easier when I had a teacher's help. I miss my friends more and more each day. Facetiming and texting them is definitely not the same as actual contact. But that's a different story. This is the story of my Friday the 13th. And it's not over yet!

Why Beaver's Tail is Flat: Why Change Can be Good

By Corrina Ellison

Poopsock, who lived with his father in his dam, was supposed to be collecting sticks for the dam but he didn't want to. He shouldn't have to do his dad's work; it's his dam after all. Poopsock sat there, ignoring the fact that his dad will probably yell at him if he is not doing anything. Poopsock got up unenthusiastically and left the dam. While walking, he found a patch of sticks where a tree must have fallen down; he gathered the small sticks and bark. When he reached the dam, he saw his dad standing there, glaring at him. Poopsock put the sticks down and wondered if his dad would yell at him, his dad made a small beaver growl, very unthreatening, but he knew what it meant: his dad was angry.

"You're such a disappointment! You can't even collect a few strong sticks." His dad angrily took the sticks and snapped them in half, scattering pieces of wood and bark around them. "These are weak! What have I told you about collecting sticks from fallen trees. The tree fell for a reason, it's clearly not strong enough!"

"Sorry, I forgot..."

His dad cut him off, "You always forget! You're so useless!"

His dad angrily snapped his sharp teeth at Poopsock's face; Poopsock backed up, surprised. His dad screamed, "Get out, you stupid, worthless, disappointment of a son!"

"But, I don't have anywhere else to go...! I won't have a home!"

His dad turned away from Poopsock. "Then find one!" His dad walked off, his back turned away from Poopsock. Poopsock waited; he waited for his dad to turn around and say he was sorry, that he could stay, but nothing happened. He waited and waited. It was starting to turn dark, so Poopsock decided he needed to find a place to stay. As he started off towards the forest, he looked back at his home. Since he was a baby, he lived there. He didn't go anywhere else, and he mostly stayed at home; how was he supposed to live by himself?

Poopsock turned away angrily, "He is a horrible person. If I ever see him again, I will..!" he wasn't sure what he would do. All he knew was that he never wanted to see him again.

It took Poopsock about a week of walking to find a nice river spot: it wasn't too deep; it wasn't too wide; and it was calm enough that it wouldn't sweep away his dam. It was a perfect place for him to live. The travel was rough, it was cold, wet, and dangerous. The most dangerous thing he encountered was a sharp stick that poked him, he was very scared and ran away in fear. Somehow he lived.

Poopsock walked around next to the riverbed where he had decided to build his dam. He started chewing away at the bark and small branches at the bottom of a tree. Then he hunted around for twigs, stones, leaves, branches, grasses,

uprooted plants, or anything else he managed to find that could strengthen his new dam. He made sure to only gather the strongest and the biggest branches so the dam would be strong. He grumbled, his legs, teeth, and claws were sore. It was dark and he hoped the dam would hold for now.

Further down the river, the water level was lower. The hippos, who could normally swim in the water, could only dip their toes in. The hippos were overheating and their skin was cracked and dry from the sun. They decided to send their friend, Elmo the elephant, since all the hippos were too shy to check what was blocking the water. As Elmo traveled up the river a few miles, he noticed a few floating sticks in the water. He continued walking up the river and found Poopsock's dam. The beavers and the hippos promised they would never build dams on this river. Elmo angrily stomped over to the dam, ready to confront the beaver who had built it. She tapped the dam lightly with her tusk. A confused grumble came from inside the dam, Poopsock had just woken up and was not very happy.

"What do you want?" Poopsock asked, annoyed.

"What do I want?! You're the one that decided to build a dam right here! Don't you even care what's happening to the hippos?"

Poopsock looked confused. "I didn't know that there were hippos down there..., but I don't care; this is my home, and this is where I live now, so leave!" Poopsock yelled.

Elmo shook her head, "You don't care?"

Poopsock turned away, "I don't care."

Elmo walked out of the river sadly. Elmo wanted to help the hippos, but he didn't want to kick anyone out of his home. Then he would be just as bad as Poopsock. He couldn't break the dam; Poopsock would have to do it willingly.

It had been a few weeks since Poopsock built his dam. The water on the blocked-up river was getting shallower and shallower, warming up as well. Mud, leaves, and small pieces of bark floated around the water. The hippos were not going to survive long like this; they needed Poopsock to break his dam, or the hippos were going to have to go. One of the hippos, Harry, had sent Elmo back to confront Poopsock. They needed that dam gone! When Elmo arrived, Poopsock was away gathering small sticks and bark, so Elmo had to wait. While Elmo was waiting for Poopsock to return, a thought ran through his head, "What if the hippos had to leave? What if Poopsock did not agree to break his dam?" Elmo's thoughts were interrupted by Poopsock's voice.

"You again."

Elmo turned, "The hippos are going to die! You need to break your dam! Any longer than this, and the hippos are going to have to leave."

Poopsock shrugged. "Why should I care? The hippos aren't my problem. They can figure it out."

Elmo was getting agitated. "Why don't you understand that you're taking the hippos' home away! Do you even know how far away the next river is?!" Elmo stomped her feet "You're so selfish! Have you ever even cared for anyone but yourself?!" Elmo ran at Poopsock.

Poopsock's eyes widened. He was too distracted to run. "Did I ever think of anyone but myself?" Poopsock thought, watching Elmo run at him. Deciding to book it, he ran towards the dam but felt the slam of weight on his tail. Poopsock squeaked, "Get off!"

"The hippos are leaving! Hope you have fun all alone!" Elmo ran off, stomping her way back to the hippos.

Poopsock screamed in pain. He looked at his tail. It was flat! "Ok." he felt a surge of pain in his tail and screamed. He looked over where Elmo disappeared.

Elmo sulked, he was sad that he wasn't able to convince Poopsock to move his dam, but also because he had hurt Poopsock. How was he going to convince him to move when he had hurt him like that? He felt very guilty and disappointed in himself. He looked up as he felt a raindrop fall on top of his head. He stopped, the hippos were going to have to move, and he couldn't do anything about it.

As he reached the hippos home, he sighed. All the hippos were looking up at him; all wondering if they were going to have to leave. He walked over to Harry. "Gather everyone who wants to leave."

Harry nodded and gathered all of the hippos who wanted to go, forming a small group. Some who had decided to stay said goodbye; the rest followed Elmo and Harry. Elmo led the group up the river, passing Poopsock's dam. Elmo felt terrible about what he had done to his tail, passing the dam quickly. He led the hippos farther up the river, bringing them to a shallow swamp where they spend the night since it was getting darker.

Elmo heard the small murmur of the other hippos, some saying they should've just stayed. He even heard that some just wanted to get rid of Poopsock and his dam.

Meanwhile, Poopsock watched the hippos leave, feeling guilty. Wasn't he just as bad as his father, maybe even worse? He felt angry. Everything would've been easier if his dad had never kicked him out. He had kicked the hippos out, and he felt terrible about it. Even if he said he didn't care, he knew deep down inside he could've easily remade his dam further down the river. Why did he have to be so selfish?

He went to bed that night feeling terrible. He hoped he would wake up to Elmo asking him to break his dam. He knew what his answer would be. He would say yes, that the hippos could stay. Everything would be great, and Poopsock wouldn't feel so terrible about what he had done to them.

Poopsock walked for days trying to find them. He wasn't sure if he would ever find them, or if he would even find his way home. Well, his old home. He had already broken the dam and freed the water. He was hoping he could get the water up to the normal level before he returned with the hippos. He was hoping he could bring them back. He wasn't sure if they would even follow him back, but he had to find them. He was not used to his flattened tail, but he was working on it. When he would walk in the water his tail would slap the surface, reminding him of what Elmo had done to him. He was mildly annoyed, but he agreed, he deserved it. He had been mean. He had kicked the Hippos out of their home, just as his dad had done to him. While walking, Poopsock noticed a familiar river, with a

familiar dam. He froze, he never wanted to see his dad again. He was not expecting to ever be near his father again. He tried to avoid the dam, moving around it so his dad couldn't spot him.

Unfortunately, the next thing he heard was. "Poopsock, is that you?"

He got nervous, "Nope.... Who's Poopsock? Never heard of him. I don't know who you're talking about. Not me!"

Unsure, his dad responded with, "Ok, get moving, then." He continued with his tasks.

Poopsock continued on his journey to find the hippos. He left his old dam feeling good. His dad was mean, and he was glad his dad couldn't even recognize him anymore. He walked for about three more days, each day feeling longer than the last. He was cold, sleepy, and his feet hurt. His newly changed tail was proving to be very annoying when he walked, although when swimming it was very helpful. It was almost like a paddle, swiftly guiding him through the water. While walking, it dragged on the ground, getting caught on things every once in a while. He knew he would be spending more time in the water now that his tail was like this. He walked on, reaching a big river spot. The water was still shallow, but it was better than it was before Poopsock broke the dam. He could tell it was definitely a downgrade from the previous water stop before Poopsock built his dam.

He heard an elephant noise similar to that of a trumpet. Was it Elmo? He looked over -- it was! He swam over making a beaver chattering sound. He watched Elmo turn.

“Why are you here, Poopsock? I thought you hated me for destroying your tail.”

“Whatever, it’s fine, I deserved that. I broke the dam. You guys should come back. I’m sorry I kicked you out. I feel terrible.”

Elmo glanced to the hippos, “I’ll talk to Harry.”

Two weeks passed. Poopsock, Elmo, and the hippos were living peacefully together. The hippos would protect Poopsock, and in return, Poopsock would build his dam farther down the river, letting the water rise and improve the water whole the hippos were originally living in before Poopsock arrived....

THE END

A Butterfly in a Tree

By Chloe Bailey

My name is Julia Butterfly Hill. While growing up as a child to a traveling minister, I had the opportunity to grow as a free spirit. Little did I know that a car accident at the age of 22 would change me forever. After healing from the accident I saw how life was precious and that I needed a purpose and a new direction. I decided to go on a roadtrip with some friends which led me to the Lost Coast in Humboldt County, California. I was a 23 year old on a spiritual quest that felt connected when I first laid eyes on the redwood forest and breathed in the crisp Fall air. I could feel that this was my calling to protect these ancient redwoods. I met Luna, a 1000 year-old giant redwood tree that lived on a ridge overlooking the redwood coast, after joining the movement to stop the cutting of redwoods. Luna and I fought Pacific Lumber to save her and others from getting chopped down. This would lead me into a life changing experience that would test me in ways I could never imagine.

Tree-sitting was a last resort after all other attempts failed. On December 9, 1997 I volunteered to live in Luna for three weeks to a month. As I climbed up her barefoot, branch by branch, I was starting to get to know who Luna was. Her tree needles were different from the bottom to the top and water trickled down her like tears. Once I got to the main platform I

took it all in. I never realized how far 200 feet was from the ground. Seeing all the clear cuts made me devastated which added more fuel to my fire. I could hear trees being cut, a sound like a scream and then silence. My living space was made up of two simple platforms. The main platform was 6x8 feet and the food and supply platform was 4x8 feet. With little space and extreme winds, I knew I had to be cautious because one wrong move and I could be dead.

After a few weeks, my strength was tested between the weather and the Pacific Lumber loggers. The weather was brutal with freezing, stormy nights with the wind continuously blowing tested me both mentally and physically. At one point I had frostbite on my toes, which later healed, but was extremely painful at the time. The loggers saw me as a tree-hugging, granola eating, hairy hippie that was slowing their job down. At one point, I sent down a picture of myself from a few months prior to show them that I was “normal” looking and not just a dirty extremist. They tried everything to get me down from Luna. I was called nasty names and they threatened that when and if I came down they would beat me up for making them work in bad weather. They would blow bugles and air horns all night long and even tried to cut off my food supply from other activists by guarding the bottom of Luna. One of the worst days was when Pacific Lumber sent a helicopter to hover over Luna causing her to sway violently. As I held on, I could feel my heart pounding. “You’d better come down,” advised a logger passing by the tree. “You coming down?” “Nope,” I answered, trying not to show how scared I was. “Staying up here, my friend.” They

yelled back at me saying, “Then you’d better get ready for a bad hair day!” As I wrapped my legs and arms around Luna, I felt scared and strong at the same time. I was ready to face my enemy and knew I wasn’t going to be destroyed during what felt like to be the world’s scariest roller-coast, but luckily the fog caused them to retreat. It took me a while to calm down and to soak in what happened. “Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!” I repeated over and over and over again once I was safe.

Months had passed and I realized that people were talking about me, good and bad. One early morning I received a phone call from a radio station screaming, “You better run! You better run! We’re cutting you out!” After my heart stopped pounding, I realized people were thinking I was a joke. On the other hand, I had other activists bring me food and supplies with the feeling of encouragement that pushed me to keep going and that let me know I was not alone. Just knowing that they hadn’t forgotten me gave me the confidence I needed. Radio stations started calling me for interviews and I became a public spokesperson. I had not expected this when I first climbed Luna, but I knew I could use it to my advantage. At the 7 month mark of living in Luna, I felt I had to take action and not just sit. I started to negotiate with Pacific Lumber for a resolution. Unfortunately, these talks eventually came to a halt. Pacific Lumber was having legal issues and I was put on hold.

I had been with Luna for over a year and was still trying to save her. Living with Luna was my normal now. Pacific Lumber had regained their license and were back to cause harm. One day they posted an eviction notice on Luna and I felt the

pressure that I needed to make a move again. The CEO of Pacific Lumber agreed to meet with me in April. After debating back and forth on ideas, we agreed that Pacific Lumber could take what they had already cut and in return we would get Luna and a 200 foot buffer of what remained around her. A deal was made, so I thought.

I found out a month and half later our deal was going through changes and getting all the loopholes covered. Lawyers and Congressmen were getting involved, I knew another round of negotiating was inevitable. My team representatives and Pacific Lumber met again to find a resolution where both parties felt that they had won. After waiting months for Pacific Lumber to sign the agreement, they kept postponing and refused to sign. I found out they were worried about what I was going to say after I left Luna. I thought to myself, “If they were worried about what I was going to say to the press, they should have protected the area as quickly as possible.” I was worried and tired of stalling activists from wanting to stage demonstrations during the negotiations. I thought to myself, “Though these would have helped spread the word, I felt that any demonstration would have been a breach of what I believed to be mutual good faith.”

Being with Luna I had learned how to hear the world, listen to my inner voice, stand up for what I believed in and not back down. I was preparing for another winter when I was shocked to hear that negotiations had resumed with new representatives. I was able to hold a press conference to speak my truth, tell my side and set some things straight. With my

side being told and the pressure from the Senator pointing out their unreasonable demands, Pacific Lumber was ready to do the right thing. On December 18, 1999 I received the news, my fight with Luna was over. The Luna Preservation Agreement was created. I was overwhelmed with emotions and cried. WE did it as a team! I felt that I was leaving my best friend, but I knew she was safe. On day 738, December 23, 1999, I descended from Luna with tears knowing that Luna would always be there for me and I would be there for her.

Starting Basketball

By Miriam Guerrero

This story is based on my own experience. It's about how I used determination to overcome injustice. Even though it wasn't my voice it was my actions that made a difference. Basketball really showed me how to use this skill and to never give up.

One of my favorite sports is basketball. I started when I was in fourth grade because the fifth grade team needed players for their basketball team. I only started playing basketball because my friend, Clara, talked me into it.

“ You should sign up for basketball, it's a really fun sport.” said Clara

“ I don't know.” I answered with a shrug.

Clara talked about basketball all day long. She was explaining every single detail to me . It actually sounded very interesting and caught my attention.

Finally I made a decision and said, “OK, I guess it won't hurt to try it.” So I signed up.

I was very confused when I went to my first practice. I learned a lot just from watching. During the drills I never got to try them. I just gotta watch how to do them. I wasn't really fair because I learn better if I do things. I was very nervous for my first game, but what I didn't know was that I wasn't going to get

to play. I was very disappointed I really wanted to play. I worked really hard during our practices. In our second game I got to play for 30 seconds at the end of the game. WOW! So exciting right? It was like that the whole season. I didn't like sitting on the bench but the words were stuck in my head, "You should sign up for basketball, it's a really fun sport." Thank you Clara, I was going to sign up for basketball again.

In fifth grade I actually remembered all the rules of basketball. We still had our couch from last year. I thought that maybe I didn't try my best and I had to do more to get to play this year. Even Though I put a lot of effort into all my practices in our first few games I didn't get to play. In our fourth or fifth game I got to play for a whole minute in the last quarter. During the whole season I only got to play for one or two minutes in the last quarter. I was about done.

Next year, in sixth grade, sign ups were going around the class and I skipped them. I wasn't going to play basketball that year. At the end of the day I saw Clara running towards me with some papers in her hands. I didn't have to think for a really long time to know why she had that in her hands.

Clara stretched her hand with the signups and asked, "Were you in class when signups came around?"

"Yes." I said

"You're not signing up for basketball?" Clara was a little confused.

"No." I said quietly

"Why."

"I'm done with basketball, I never get to play for more

than one or two minutes even though I never miss a practice, I have to drive all the way to Redway and Blue Lake to just sit there and watch, I get home really late to take a shower and do homework, and next day I wake up early in the morning to prepare my basketball stuff for a practice or a game but never get to participate.” We looked at each other, then I asked her, “Would you sign up for basketball if you were me?”

“I know that you feel disappointed, but I see that each year you are getting better at it, I would sign up for basketball if I were you.” I didn’t know quite what to say.

“Do you really think I’m getting better at basketball?” I said with a surprise

“Everybody thinks you are.” I didn’t say anything else, but I took the signup forms.

When I went to our first practice of the season I noticed that we had the same coach from the last two years. For the first time ever I got to be in a press drill. He let me play in all positions to see which one was the best for me. He finally said I was going to be a down low person. I wasn’t too excited about that because I knew that the girls that play that position are usually really tall. I was really small compared to all the girls that play there. That whole season I got to play at least for one or two quarters. I was getting better so when signups went around in seventh grade I signed up.

We had new coaches that year. I was nervous and happy at the same time because I could prove to them that I could be a starter or I wouldn’t get to play because they wanted to see more. I didn’t know what was going to happen, but I had to try

my best to get what I wanted. We started to do some drills and then did a scrimmage.

“Practice is over please wait to the side for a minute.” said the coach. I was wondering why.

“ Good job everyone, I got all of your positions written down. Please listen for your name and remember it so you know who to watch if you're going in for someone.” said the coach.

I was listening to my name. I was wondering if I would be playing something different. Then I heard, “Miriam, down low.” I was okay with that. I already knew how to play that position. I would easily know what I was going to do.

We were the home team in our first game of the season. We were stretching in the cafeteria. A few minutes later our coach walked in.

“ Can I have everybody's attention please.” We all looked forward and listened, “Everybody did great during practice, but if I call out your name you are going to start today, we will see if we need to make some changes later.” I listen carefully even though I never was a starter. I heard four names that weren't mine, I thought I was going to sit.

Suddenly, I hear the first name, “Miriam.” My first reaction was to look at Clara. I think that her first reaction was to look at me too because we were staring at each other with a great surprise in our faces. I felt so nervous and happy at the same time. We were going against a team that had huge girls and I had to guard them.

“Okay, time to warm up.” said coach

While we were warming up I scanned the other players and they were all so tall. The only small person was their point guard. I wasn't going to guard her. Warmup time was over and we had to go to our benches. We listened to our coaches' tips and he also told us the number of the girl we were going to guard. I got Number 24. She was really tall, but I had to do my job. When the game started, our team won the jump ball and scored. I had to go back. The girl followed me to my spot and guarded me. She was pushing me and hitting me with her elbow, but still I got the rebound and gave it to Clara, our point guard. During the first half I won most of the rebounds. Now I understood why our coach wanted me there. We went to the cafeteria for our halftime break.

When we went out to play again I was going to guard number 24 again. This time she looked pretty angry, but I was going to do what I did during the first half of the game. The ball went out and it was the other team's ball now. I quickly went to guard number 24 .

She looked down with the dirtiest look I have ever seen, "I know you can't guard me, you are too small and weak to ground me."

I wasn't upset because I knew that she was the one getting mad. So I jumped up and intercepted the pass and dribbled the ball to the other side and scored. We won that game. I am very proud of myself. I had never played for a whole game before it was awesome.

The next day Clara came up to us, "We have a tournament this weekend!" she exclaimed.

“Really?” We all said.

“Ya, it's the Fortuna tournament.” Clara answered with excitement.

“ We always get second place.” I said with a little disappointment.

“ Let's just work hard and stay positive.”

We were getting ready for our first game in the cafeteria. Everybody was nervous, even Clara. Then we did our regular warmups on the court. I knew it was going to be a tough game because we played that team before and the scores were tight. We went to our bench for instructions. During the first few minutes of the game both teams hadn't scored that many points, but during the second quarter the other team started scoring more points than our team.

The first half was tough. We were down by twenty points. Usually when you are down by fifteen to twenty points it's hard to catch up. We were disappointed, but we still had a whole second half to tie or win. We worked hard and at the end of the game we won by four points. It was tough but we did it. We had to play another game later that night. That game was tough, but we also won that game. We were going to the championship game!

It was Saturday night and we were getting ready for the championship game. We took a peek to see who we were going to play. Redwood Prep was one of the hardest teams we've played. We stretched and warmed up. It was game time. When the first half was over I was really tired. I was guarding a really tall girl as usual, but that girl was really good at rebounding.

We were down by two points. I was tired, but I wasn't going to give up. I got most of the rebounds and scored many points. Redwood Prep scored right after we did. It was like that until the end of the third quarter. When the fourth quarter started both teams couldn't score until the last few minutes of the game. It was our ball and one of my teammates, Sienna, went up for a layup and got fouled. She got the two points and made her free throw. We went back on defense, then Clara stole the ball and got fouled. She missed one of them and made the other one. There was 30 seconds on the clock so the only thing we had to do was to play defense and hold the ball if we steal it. I heard the buzzer and I knew that it was all over.

The game was over. We won by six points, everybody was happy and cheering. We couldn't believe it, we won first place! We went to the award ceremony and sat there together. We were called up to get our trophy and medal. We took a picture and sat down for the all-tourney.

We were listening to the person calling out the all-tourney names, "From Ferndale number 11, Miriam Guerrero." I thought maybe it was someone else but it wasn't. It was me. I got up and my team and the people from Ferndale were cheering for me. Then they called the MVP. He continued, "Also from Ferndale numbers 2 and 5 Clara and Reagan." They came and stood next to me. We said good job to each other, then we went to the side and took a picture. I couldn't believe I got the all-tourney.

That was my first all-tourney. Clara was right, basketball is a really fun sport. I signed up for basketball this year as an 8th

grader. I got all-tourney twice this year. I learned that all actions can make a difference. Basketball taught me how to use determination to overcome injustice. I try to use that on something new or something I want to accomplish.

A Boy and His Tree

By Cecilia Stowell

Chapter 1

I am a Tree.

I am a maple tree. Every year people come and drain me of my syrup. Do you know how this happens? They stick a metal spout into my thick dark brown bark. Then the golden brown colored syrup comes dripping out into a big bucket. When people do this it drains my energy because my syrup gives me the energy I need. When people take my syrup, my leaves turn from a lush green in the spring; to different shades of yellows, oranges, and reds; then later in the season burgundy; then my leaves all fall off and I go to sleep for the winter.

There are two particular people that come to me every single year to take my syrup, a father and his son, the boy is named Bill, and his father is called Joe. My leaves are already orange, and I don't want to go to sleep yet, so I am going to tell Bill and Joe to not take my syrup but, trees aren't supposed to talk to humans but I did I yelled, "Hey, stop that!"

Bill and Joe both jumped and yelled, "who said that?"

"Me, I said that!"

"You, the tree?!?" exclaimed Bill doubtfully.

"Yes! Me, the tree!" I shouted "I have something to tell

you. I don't want you to take my syrup because, when you take my syrup it drains my energy. My syrup helps me live because it keeps my leaves lush and green. Just like how your blood keeps you alive. My syrup keeps me alive. You see my leaves there? They are already orange!" I cried out.

"Is this why trees lose their leaves?" Bill asked.

"Yes it is!" pronounced the tree.

"Whoa! I never thought of that," Bill said in wonder.

"Let's go tell Grandpa what happened and see if he knows anything," Joe said

As they walked away Bill said to his dad "I don't want to take the tree's syrup! I don't want the tree to die; I want it to come back with the same strength that it had in the spring."

"Ok Bill, we don't have to get the syrup," his dad said in a reassuring voice.

Chapter 2, Bill and Joe

Bill and Joe left and went to see Joe's Grampa Bill's Great Grampa. He asked them how they thought leaves change color. He replied, "It's because when it gets colder out the leaves fall and die because it's too cold for them to stay alive." But Grandpa had a suspicion the tree had talked to them because the tree and talked to his dad and him when he was a child. So he had told them a fake story, which everybody believes, because first he wanted them to figure out the rest of what the tree is going to teach them.

Bill thought Grandpa didn't know about the tree so, they went back to the tree and told what Grandpa said then the tree said, "That's what people who trees haven't talked to trees think because trees aren't supposed to talk to people." Afterwards they went back to Grampa and told him what the tree said and how the tree and talked to them. After that Grandpa suggested they all go visit the tree, so he could see for himself.

So they all went back to the tree. The tree saw Grandpa and said, "I know you!" in a wilting voice, "I spoke to you when you were a boy, the tree continued.

"Yes you did," said, Grandpa.

"I want to stay alive longer," the tree begged.

Bill jumped to say, "How can we help!?"

"You can put fertilizer on my roots to see if that helps, also can you wait until I go to sleep for the winter to take my syrup?" the tree said as it gasped for air. Then Bill ran off to get the fertilizer.

Bill arrived back at the tree with the fertilizer. He poured it all over the roots of the tree. He hoped it would work, but there was no use. Most of the leaves had already fallen to the ground. Bill stood there upset with his eyes starting to water while he watched the last of the trees leaves float down on the cold dry ground in front of him. His dad patted his back and said, "Everything is at one point in its life happy, lush. Or alive and then sometimes things are sad, sleepy, or gray, but remember your tree will be back in the spring," his father told Bill in a calm sincere tone.

“Your right Dad,” Bill said, a little peppier.

“Let’s go bud you have school tomorrow.”

Chapter 3, Realization

The next morning Bill got up to go to school and looked out the window of his bedroom, noticing all the trees asleep for the winter on the way to school, on the bus, he noticed all the trees asleep for the winter everywhere he went, there were no trees that were still alive.

Later that day, in school, he was on a nature walk for science and noticed all the trees that were alive. They weren’t like maple trees though; they were taller and had needles instead of leaves. They were even green. When he got back into the classroom, he asked his teacher what all those trees were.

She said, “Those are called pine trees. They....” and Bill ran off. He ran to the library to use a computer to research if you can get maple syrup from pine trees. The Internet said mainly the syrup we eat comes from maple trees, not pine trees, because the syrup in pine trees tastes bitter. Bill realized that Pine Trees don’t lose their needles because people don’t get maple syrup from them. He ran home to tell his dad what he had learned.

When he told his dad said, “That makes sense! Why don’t you go tell your grandfather” Then, Bill ran to go tell his Grampa.

Chapter 4,

Look what I found out!

When he got to his grandpa's house, he went to the door, while he was eating lunch. He told his grandpa his discovery and his grandpa said, "I discovered the tree too when I was your age."

"What do you mean?"

Bill said "What I mean is I discovered the same thing when I was a kid. So did Gamma."

"I didn't know that" Bill responded in wonder.

After he was done visiting with his grandpa. He wanted to see if the tree was still alive by any miracle. He went past the house, down the hill and into the woods. He saw the tree and ran to give him a hug. He felt the branches of the tree wrapping around his back, he felt comforted. He pulled away and said happily, "You're still here!"

"Yes," the tree said, exasperated.

"I found out why you lose your leaves and pine trees don't"

"Why?" the tree asked.

"It's because people don't get syrup out of those trees."

"Ok," and that was the last word the tree said until spring.

Later after Bill got home that night, his dad asked, "Is there anything you learned from the adventure of the past two days?"

"I learned about the pine trees and how they don't lose their leaves. I also learned that everything has its cycle and

sometimes things are happy. And sometimes things are sad,” explained Bill

“Good, I am glad you learned something.”

After Joe put Bill to sleep, he fell asleep dreaming about next spring. How he was going to help people learn about the tree and not take the syrup too early. The next morning Bill and Joe and Grandpa went down to the tree and got syrup now that the tree was asleep for the winter. Then they went back to the house and had some pancakes with syrup from the tree and talked about how they were going to help the tree stay alive longer in the Spring.

A Nearby Future

By Nevada Gomes

I'm gently awoken by the sound of my beeping alarm. I take a nice, long yawn and look at my watch. Its hologram screen is telling me that the time is 8:00am, I swipe left to check the weather. There is a 20% chance of acid rain and it will reach 100° today. *Great.* I sit up on my bed and grab for my glasses on the nightstand. I walk towards the sliding glass door in the center of my studio, that leads to the back yard. I pull back the curtains to see beautiful green mountains and blue skies with white clouds. There are trees everywhere, people tanning on the white sandy beaches and swimming in the clear water. *Yeah, let's turn this fake stuff off.* Once I tap on the glass, a screen that says exit display appears in the middle of the right glass pane, I proceed to tap on that. *I feel like it's more depressing constantly looking at what my surroundings once were, than what they are now.* What my morning is greeted with now, is high sea levels, a gray polluted sky, and the seven palm trees in my neighborhood. *At least it's my reality.* "Show me today's news," I say out loud as I start to walk over to my tv stand, grab my water bottle, and walk over to my couch. In the left hand corner of my glasses a woman dressed in a gray pantsuit and black shirt stands behind a screen. "In today's news, grain crops have shown failure after multiple attempts.

Oxygen levels are showing a new critical low, it is government advice to not go outside without your oxygen mask.” I look down at my water bottle and open the pill organizer on the handle. *Ah my delicious breakfast, morning pills.* The three pills consist of enough vitamins to supplement vegetables, fruits, and fish oil. “Do not go outside without your oxygen mask, please be safe.” I dump all three of the pills into my cupped hand, and I take them all at once. While I pour some water in my mouth, I continue to listen to the news. “BREAKING NEWS! Today is a day that will go down in history, the last coral reef that has been preserved until now, has died. This makes it official. Your children and the future generations to come will never see marine life.” This makes me choke on the water that was once in my mouth. I turn off the news, and walk over to my desk. After taking a deep sigh, I sit down and open my journal. I put the date in the right hand corner, July 12, 2050, and continue to write.

Dear Oceans and Lands of the World,

I'm sorry that the human race as a community has failed to protect the wonderful gifts you gave us. By polluting your airs, we caused the death of 6 million people a year. In addition to your dirty skies, the warm weather caused by global warming also speeds up the chemical reactions that produce even more pollution. I'm sorry that we have filled your water with microplastics, which have made their way to our food, air, and drinking water. The different toxic and carcinogenic chemicals that they are made of, have not only made their way inside humans, but they have also filled the stomachs and suffocated

your beautiful marine life as well. I'm sorry that we have decimated your underwater forests that were once overflowing with a variety of plants and animals, some of which held potential cures for countless diseases. You gave us so much, the only planet in our solar system that was filled with all types of life, yet we took it for granted and wasted it. Our ecosystems have been sacrificed for a very limited amount of people to make imaginary wealth. Ecosystems that once provided people and animals with breathable air, drinkable water, bountiful seas, and fertile soil. The world is no longer this beautiful planet of life. We neglected your cries for help, and now we have to deal with the consequences. We took advantage of your gifts, and didn't realize what we had until it was gone. If I could go back in time and send a message to everyone in the world, I would. I would tell them how now is the time to stand up, make your voice heard, and take action. I would tell them it is our responsibility to protect Mother Nature, and we could redirect our course for the future, to save it. If only I could go back in time. If only we realized that we needed to make change, before it was too late. I'm sorry that we failed you.

Thank You, Mami

By Jocelyn Osorio-Alvarado

It's day 43 of quarantine in Humboldt County, and all I can think about is trust. Trust that this will be over soon, trust in all that are affected will recover, and trust that life will soon go back to "normal." When shelter in place began for the first few weeks I thought, "Wow spring break came early! Now I'll have a few weeks of relaxation." I honestly regret saying that. This new "lifestyle" has made me question my sanity. I have tried to keep calm and pray this will have a positive end result, but it's difficult to be optimistic when I have a close family member as a frontline worker. Monica Alvarado-Osorio, RNC-OB, my amazing mother. This past month and a half has been difficult for my family. Our anxiety has been higher than ever, especially knowing my mom is around this virus when she sets foot in her workspace. Each day brings a new challenge and we've done nothing but pull through together. I remember asking my mom one day after work, "Do you think this will be over soon?" I looked at her sweaty, red face covered in marks from the N95 mask as she responded with, "I don't know... We have a long road ahead of us."

My mom is an OB nurse at Redwood Memorial Hospital, and has been for about 10 years now. She is 34 years old, an

excellent daughter, wife, mother, and healthcare professional. She's dealt with numerous medical issues and emergencies, but never something like COVID-19. I sat down with my hardworking mother one evening and discussed her new "normal" at work. She began by telling me her internal and external struggles. "Internally, it's hard to adjust to all new changes. New protocols and procedures have been developed, and previous ones have been adjusted. It's difficult to change things that you've been doing for the last few years. An example would be remembering each step when performing a task. It was also hard to adjust the changes in equipment and PPE (personal protective equipment) as well as take more precautions and save as much PPE as possible so we can save our resources. I've had to learn to don (put on) clean PPE and doff (take off) and dispose of dirty/contaminated PPE properly. There's different PPE depending on whether the patient is a PUI (person under investigation) or COVID positive. Externally speaking, our department has made tremendous changes. We are now a closed unit. We have to screen everyone that comes in by asking about their health status and other questions before they are allowed to enter our unit. Only one support person can be present for a birth, and if you're not in labor, or just an outpatient, you can't have anyone in the room with you. We have to assess symptoms daily on in-patients and support persons. We have a room set aside for isolation purposes, specifically for anyone in labor and is a PUI or positive for COVID-19. It's equipped with isolation equipment and isolation carts outside with the

proper PPE for caregivers. We limit the amount of staff on our unit, a lot of elective procedures have been canceled. We are all required to wear N95 masks, face shields, gowns, shoe covers, and hair masks for every delivery (vaginal and c-section) because studies have shown that many pregnant women are asymptomatic, which can lead to a positive diagnosis of coronavirus, thus symptoms can become present after delivery. We have to wear masks outside of the delivery as well at all times. There is only one entrance into the hospital, and we are required to get screened for coronavirus before our shift. The masks become extremely hot after a few hours of use, and your face gets itchy and sweaty. It's hard to breathe under these masks and are hardly able to see anything. Many community members are complaining about wearing masks for a grocery run for a few hours and will never understand how easy they have it."

After discussing her feelings, my mom began to talk about what the future will look like from now on. "These next few weeks we will be swabbing all patients for COVID-19. We will have strict protocols on what to do with a baby if mom has been infected or exposed. They can choose to keep the baby with them, or if the baby will be separated from them." I then asked her what fears she has/or has had during this pandemic. "I have an enormous amount of fears, not only for our community, but for my family. My main fear at work would be the spread of the virus, and having a Humboldt outbreak just like New York, Italy, or even China. I fear that we won't have enough beds for our patients, that if we start to get seriously ill

patients, we will eventually start losing people to this virus in our county. I fear that we will run out of PPE and start re-wearing contaminated ones or wearing the same PPE all day, in order to save some for the next shift. If I get infected, that would be my overall biggest fear. What if I bring it home to my family? What if I vector COVID-19 and I leave my family without a mother, daughter, sister, or wife?" Her telling me that hurt my heart.

Before ending the interview, I wanted to end on a positive note. I asked my mom what her hopes were for the next few months. "My hopes for the coming months is that we continue to social distance to help decrease the spread, that we master our new protocols or come up with new ones to improve our practice at the hospital, that we develop a vaccine to protect not only the community, but the nation as well. My job is extra hard right now as a charge nurse because I have to make sure all policies and procedures are being followed and that things run smoothly. I make a lot of decisions and deal with a lot of unhappy and stressful patients. I want our patients to know that even though things are very scary and uncertain, we are still there to support them during one of their biggest moments in life, the birth of a new baby." My mom ended our conversation by thanking the community. "I want to thank them for honoring the SIP and social distancing. It helps us keep our numbers down so that we don't reach the level of the surge. I hope we establish a good plan for the next wave of COVID and that we have more PPE ready for when that happens."

Coming from the daughter of a nurse, I want to thank all frontline workers across the globe. Without your time and dedication, this pandemic would be wildfire. Although you're all going through this difficult time with stress and tears, know that you're all incredibly strong and will pull through together to stop COVID-19. Your work certainly does not go unnoticed and your communities are here to root you on till the end of this pandemic, and beyond. Never have I been more thankful to have a close family member as a healthcare provider. Even though she's not directly working in the ER, she's just as important and just as prone to exposure. On behalf of myself, our family, and community, Thank you, Mami.