

Skipping Stones

A Multicultural Literary Magazine

Vol. 33, no. 2
Sept.- Dec. 2021

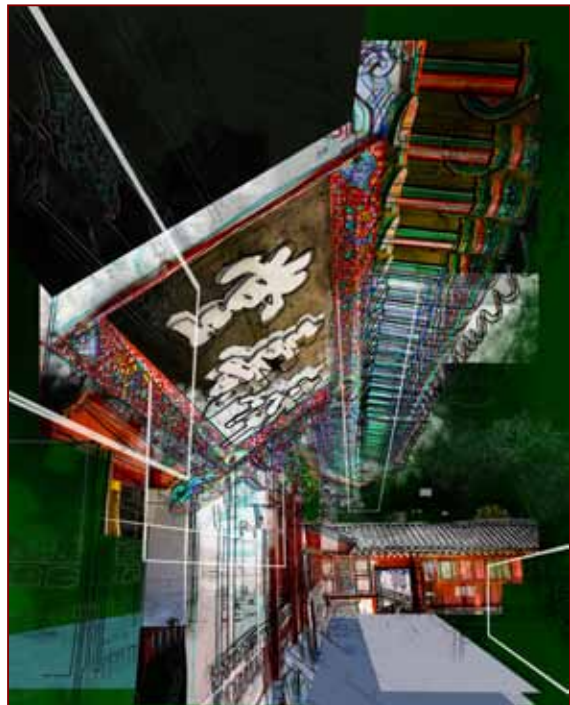
U.S.A: \$7.00
Canada: \$9.00
\$7.00



Green New Deal

Art by Subin Jang, 17, South Korea.

2021 Youth Awards • Book Awards • Haiku Contest



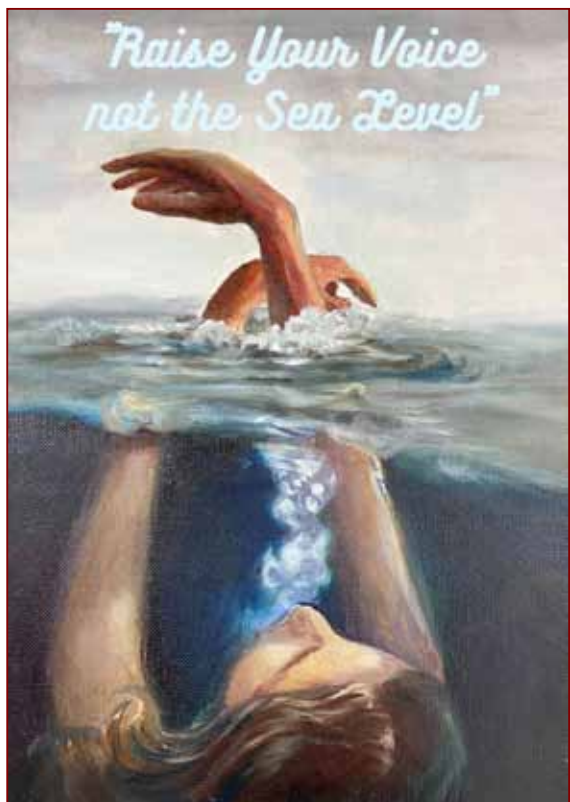
Art by Students of Hgun Sung Jung in Seoul, S. Korea

(clockwise, from top left)

- A Digital Painting by Jihoon Hwang • **Li Jiang** by Youngseo Son • **Nature in Me** by Jiwon Han • **School Life** by Minseob Han • **Home** by Eunah Kim • **Raise Voice** by Yuchan Nam • **Cat Walk** by Yebin Sim, and

On the Front Cover:

“Green New Deal”
by Subin Jang, age 17.



The year 2021 has again seen tumultuous events, with the remnants of a pandemic still visible, further evidence of climate change, and societies still grappling with racism, which often takes subtle forms. Still, there are signs of hope—often from youth. Many of you sent in your poems, writing, photo essays, and art, and as a reviewer of these submissions, I was happy to see the high quality of writing and how easily many of you grasp the issues we face as a society.

Some of you shared stories of how you faced discrimination or were bullied because of your skin color, race, or ethnicity, or how your relatives made grueling journeys from other countries in search of a better life. People who do not face discrimination may think racism is always a very obvious overt act or actions, for example in the form of historical segregation laws or crude racist comments to minorities. However, many of your writings touched upon the less obvious forms racism can take.

Sometimes at school, our circles of friends can be racially-segregated—white students congregating with other white students, black students congregating with other black students, and so on. Some might argue this happens because people feel more comfortable with those who are similar to them—black students may have similar experiences and thus have more in common with other black students, they might argue.

However, this misses a key point. Often, racially-segregated friends groups form because of subconscious biases. Students may subconsciously want to interact with people who look like them, believing that people with a different skin color act differently, and thus don't have much in common with them. No matter what color your skin is, though, this is a form of prejudice/stereotyping—judging others based on skin color or preconceived ideas. Next time you're sitting in the cafeteria, invite others who look different from you to sit with you. You might find you have a lot in common with them. This is one way to bridge racial divisions.

Some submissions also talked about how difficult it was to be raised by immigrant parents because of a clash of cultures where there is one type of culture at home and another type of culture in school or elsewhere. As someone who experienced this myself, I completely agree with how difficult it is to grow up in this kind of environment. Sometimes, we may feel like

our immigrant parents will never be receptive to our concerns, and that the outside world doesn't care that we had a totally different upbringing. As a society, we need to be more understanding of the obstacles that immigrant families and their kids face. Many of these youth have to figure out everything by themselves. They have to learn to navigate school life, college applications, jobs, etc. on their own!

We also received many submissions on climate change. The science behind global warming is clear, and we are continuing to see the devastating effects of a changing climate already! Recently, there have been devastating storms and floods in Europe, China, the U.S. and India. As I write this, countless wildfires are engulfing several million acres of land in Siberia, the Western U.S., Canada, and elsewhere, destroying homes and habitats. There has also been an increase in the number and intensity of severe weather events—windstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. Scientists see a clear link between these events and climate change, and they predict it will continue to get worse in the future. In many places around the world, prolonged dry spells and high temperatures will increase wildfire dangers immensely. This bleak future is avoidable, if we act *now*.

The climate science says we are running out of time to slow the influx of greenhouse gases that is fueling climate change, but there are still ways to slow down the pace of drastic changes to the environment.

Many youth described the beauty of nature and why we should protect it. These concerns about protecting the environment offer hope for the future. If you feel like we should do something about our changing climate, I encourage you to contact your political representatives and community leaders or join a youth-led group, such as the Sunrise Movement, 350.org or Our Children's Trust. Let's work to stop the climate change tide. We are never too young (or too old) to make a difference!

Skipping Stones offers diverse perspectives from youth, and I hope they give you the same sense of hope for the future that they give me. Our generation will inherit these issues of climate change and racial justice. If we approach these issues in the empathetic, logical ways expressed in these pages, I am sure we will move forward with a desirable change.

—S.D.T.

Skipping Stones

Vol. 33, No. 2

Sept. - Dec. 2021

ISSN: 0899-529X

Annual Haiku Contest • Youth Honor Awards • Book Awards

- 2 Art by Students in South Korea
5 Nose • Art by *Claire Sonia Hsu*, age 7, Indonesia
6 The 2021 Asian Celebration Haiku and Tanka Contest
10 **Celebrate America 2021 Creative Writing Contest:**
• Welcome: *Two Syllables, One Powerful Word*
• The Song of America • The Loudest Voice
13 **The 2021 Skipping Stones Book Awards:**
Our Annual Honors List of Multicultural & Nature Books
15 **The 2021 Youth Honor Awards**
16 Making A Difference by *Ryan Park*, age 13, New York



- 17 What Is Your Name? by *Thee Sim Ling*, age 14, Singapore
18 Smashed Buttercup • Petrichor by *Krithika Gopalakrishnan*, 17, Washington
19 Finding My Normal by *Jasreen Randhawa*, age 13, Alberta, Canada
20 Lunar New Year by *Jamie Nguyen*, 15, California
21 I Hear the Cherry Petals Fall by *Catherine Xiong*, 17, British Columbia, Canada
22 Darkened Salvias by *Galiba Anjum*, 16, New York
23 Youth Honor Award Art Entries
24 A Nature Photo Essay by *Aditi Nair*, age 12, Virginia
26 Asian Americans in America by *Ashley Yoon*, age 17, California
27 Change This World by *Emily Tang*, age 12, North Carolina
28 Poems by 4th and 5th Graders at Laurence School, California
29 A Reflection of Shame by *Rashi Lakhotia*, age 16, Florida

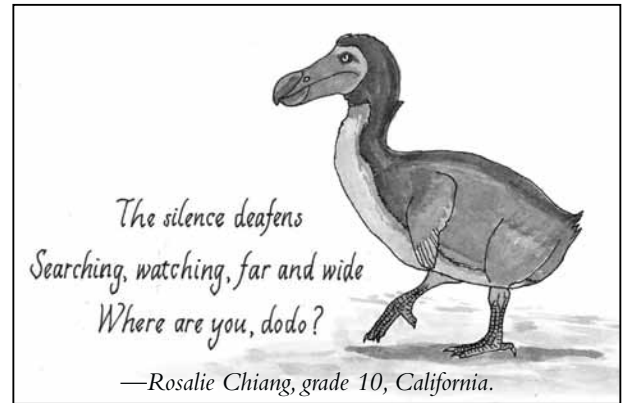
Thank You, Nurses! by *Claire Sonia*

- 30 A Rose in a Field of Sunflowers by *Saanvi Dhupar*, 13, New York • A Waning Pang by *Taeyeon Han*, 16, California
31 Awe • Liminal Space by *Julia Kiaer*, age 17, Oregon
32 Art & Writing by *Liz Duke-Moe*, age 17, Idaho
33 Cosmo Adventure & Spaceship Ride by *Christopher Jozczyk*, 14, Connecticut
34 Wake Up! by *Bella Melardi*, age 16, Canada • Dreams by *Tinklyn Xiang*
35 Noteworthy Haiku Art Entries

Regular Departments

- Cover **"Green New Deal"** by *Subin Jang*, age 17, Seoul, South Korea
3 Guest Editorial by *Shyam Das-Toké*
5 Skipping Stones Stew
9 What's On Your Mind?
36 Back Cover: Dreams 2018, 2020 & 2050 by *Tinklyn Xiang*, 14, Canada

© 2021 by Skipping Stones, Inc. Opinions expressed in these pages reflect views of the contributors, and not necessarily those of Skipping Stones, Inc. Ideas expressed are not professional advice.



In the spirit of ecological sensitivity, we choose to print with soy ink on recycled and recyclable paper with a 30% post-consumer recycled content.



About *Skipping Stones*:

Skipping Stones is a nonprofit children's magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity, and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We explore stewardship of the ecological and social webs that nurture us. We offer a forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds. *Skipping Stones* expands horizons in a playful, creative way. We invite you to send us your creative art and thought-provoking writing.

Skipping Stones (Pub. No. 015-089) is published quarterly by Skipping Stones, Inc., 166 W. 12th Ave., Eugene, Oregon 97401. Postage paid at periodicals rate at Eugene, OR. *Postmaster: Please send address changes to: Skipping Stones, P. O. Box 3939 Eugene, OR 97403-0939.*

Subscriptions: *Institutions: \$35 (call for multiple-copy discount); Individuals: \$25; Airmail: add \$15; Low-income discount: \$10. Single/back issues: \$7 each (\$10 by air).* **You can also read our content online (for free) by visiting our website, www.SkippingStones.org.**

To submit, subscribe or reprint, **contact: *Skipping Stones, Inc.*** P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403 USA; (541) 342-4956; e-mail: editor@SkippingStones.org.

Acknowledgements

Editor/Publisher: Arun Narayan Toké

Associate Editors: Nicole D. Barajas, Daemion Lee

Interns: Mitchell Dennick, Grace Kidd

Reviewers: Shyam Das-Toké, Anusha Bansal

Board of Directors: Paulette Ansari, Esther Celis, Stephen Mallery, Ron Marson, Joachim Schulz, and Arun N. Toké.

Special Thanks to Bidyut Das, contributors, and teachers whose students' work is featured in this issue. Thanks also to the A. & A. Charitable Fund and Richard Haughland Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, Bankoff Blanchet Family Foundation, Oregon Asian American Association, Elnekave Family Fund of Chicago Community Trust, Ruth Koenig, Katacha Diaz, Jon Bush, and Irwin Noparstak for their financial support.

Skipping Stones, Inc. is an educational and charitable organization with a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Donations to *Skipping Stones, Inc.* are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please support our *free (and discounted) subscriptions* for low-income schools, libraries and families with your donations.

Winner of three National Association for Multicultural Education Awards, as well as EdPress Association of America, Writer Magazine, NewsStand Resources, Eugene Ed. Assn., and Parent's Choice Awards.



Nose

Mine's an Eastern European nose,
But it "Could be Greek or Jewish" nose
So tell me, what do you suppose?
Since really any label goes!

Lots of cons and little pros
To a hook nose,
Crook nose,
Bird-beak nose;

It's a never-get-a-boyfriend nose,
Cuz it only looks good when you pose,
And I like the long locks that you chose
Cuz babe, not every hairstyle flows;

It drops from your face down to your toes!
Enough snot to fill a garden hose,
And oh my goodness, when it blows?
Quite a racket undergoes!

[beat]

But up and down, through highs and lows,
Through insecurities and throes,
You realize...you never chose,
How your ratios were juxtaposed.

Who cares or notices or knows?
There is no need to be morose,
So end your woes and strike a pose,
Go love your silly, big, fat nose!

—Aileen Dosev, 16, Minnesota.



Claire Sonia Hsu, age 7, Indonesia and her artwork.

2021 Asian Celebration Haiku & Tanka Contest

Springtime Blossoms

Blossoms paint the trees
Soft petals caress the ground
The wind whistles songs
—Karlina Tolksdorf, age 12, Illinois.

A Rowing Boat

Gliding on a boat
over a mirroring lake
petals plunge on waves

A city yells noise
and birds fly from the tree's arms
to a near mountain

Waves caress the shores
like a kind mother and child
and then we reach land
—Hannah Hufana, age 11, Illinois.

Behind The Mountain

Cotton candy sky
dragon flies to hidden world
behind the mountains

Cherry blossom trees
cradling the temple looking
for the dragon's world

Mountain tears fall slow
as the stiff, cold peak waits for
the dragon to come
—Samrah Musani, age 11, Illinois.

The Painted Sky

The sky glows so bright
Yellow streaks across like paint
As dusk approaches

Towers glow with pride
The city rumbles with joy
People say goodnight

Snow on the giant
The mountain has been asleep
It has awoken
—Vedansh Wadhvani, 13, Illinois.
*These haiku are by students at
Fairview South School, Skokie, IL.*

Asia's Trees

Korean red pine
Majestic against the sky
Surrounding temples

Pink cherry blossoms
Waving to the rising sun
Soft serene stunner

Beautiful ginkgoes
Enduring and resilient
Symbol of China

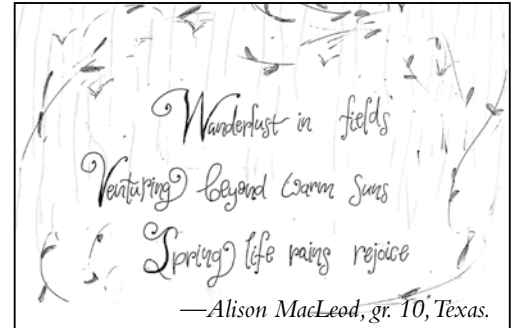
Vietnam's emblem
Bambusa ventricosa
Courageous and brave

Tropical beauty
Bright white fragrant flowers grow
Tectona treasure

Striking and hearty
Yellow flowers bloom in spring
The Philippines' gift

Gray trunks and robust
Borassus flabellifer
Cambodia's tree

Different cultures
Bring lots of hope to the world
Asia grows in spring
—Rachael Park, gr. 4, New Jersey.



On The Edge

In one still moment
The darkness overcame me
Despair all around
A leaf falling in the wind
Letting go, falling...falling...

This poem is about a person who is feeling suicidal and takes their final breath, thinking of him/her as a leaf, falling. I hope to bring a little more attention and awareness to disorders and behaviors like these as they aren't rare, and are real.

—Alyssa Kruse, grade 7, California.

The Art of Silence

No voices are heard
Silence fills this packed, quiet room
But I still hear thoughts
Thoughts filled with deep emotion
Now, this room is deafening.

—Maxx Montenegro, grade 7, California.

Are you willing to
Prick your finger on a thorn
To pick the best rose?

—Mira Fox, Grade 6, Texas.



Boundless

By Alexandra Cochon, grade 11, Georgia

my toes touch the ground
bare, no sole obstructing - soul -
the feeling of the
ants swirling around my feet,
the chirping calling my name

2021 Asian Celebration Haiku & Tanka Contest

Bees

The buzzing of the
bees fill the clear blue sky with
their furry bodies,
devouring the sweet nectar;
carrying dusts of new life.

—Aditi Nair, grade 7, Virginia.

Riverblood

River beats steady
The waves pulsing with life as
Blood courses through me
Thrumming a rhythm one with
The melody of water.

—Raya Ilieva, grade 5, California.

A-toll

A fearsome lagoon
floods a city, spinning taut
a gushing whirlpool.

—Taeyeon Han, gr. 11, California.

My Earth

Towering mountains,
Catch buttery morning rays,
Feather mist rising

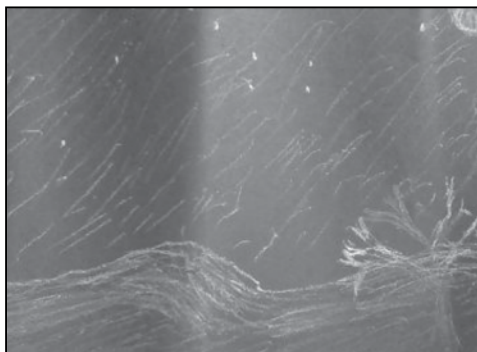
—Kayla Spagnoletti, gr. 7, S. Africa.

Mysterious tree,
dipping your toe in the lake,
stretching from the shore.

—Blake Yustick, grade 8, Ohio.

Oh snow ghostly with frost,
Brilliant, a piece of art,
Icy, beacons winter here.

—Eric Tang, gr. 8, Ohio. See art below.



A frost-bitten ground
The chilling cold of winter
Season of snowmen.

Art & haiku: Joshua Wong, gr. 8, Ohio.

So far I've come, my troubles
are all beneath me. They lap
at my feet, but they will not
pull me in to burn

—Lila Weiner, grade 8, Ohio.

I look out of the window, and see such a
beautiful sight. I see the sunset off in the
distance, reflecting off of the shimmering, blue
ice. I see trees reach up trying to touch the
big, golden sun, but it's just out of reach. I
see houses lining the edges of the could-be
hockey rink. I see the sky fade bluer as it
drifts further and further away from the sun.

But something's hiding
There's a tree blocking my view
Why won't it come out?

—Mike Macek, grade 8, Ohio.



Snow

Puffs of goose feather:
Tumbling swirls, merry-go-rounds.
They're stitching a quilt.

—Xiaoyi Zeng, grade 11, Washington.

Stars

Gas balls like the sun,
at night they roam the sky and
say with light, good day

—Alex Archerman, gr. 4, Massachusetts.

Perspective

Rays from sun and stars
can light up worlds in new ways;
people glance in awe.

—Aditi Nair, grade 7, Virginia.

Tail Fins

Swimming silently
Gliding through the graceful sea
Huge, Majestic whales

—Natalie Deschane, gr. 6, Pennsylvania.

Spring

When spring comes anew
Do leaves ever feel jealous
Of the sweet flowers?

—Maya Yagi Koreth, gr. 8, Massachusetts.

Rainbow Spectrum

Colorful visions
Alas, only illusions
From red to purple.

—Yulia Luchytsyi, grade 2, California.

The rose blooms at night
its thorns captured the moonlight
pearl ruin blesses the roots

—Elizabeth Brown, grade 8, Ohio.

Sinking in the air
As if the night drowns us all
Mists in the dark sky

Art & haiku Katherine Zheng, gr. 8, Ohio.

桜侍 **Sakura (Cherry Blossoms)**

Perfect blossoms float
blown by the gentle spring breeze
Never looking back

Morning Sunshine

Streaming light shines through
blinding in the mountain view
with drops of fresh dew

—Alyssa Huang, grade 6, California.

Fluorescent white moon
Glowing in the dark cold night
High up in the sky

—Brooklynn Brunson, grade 4, Oregon.

The flowers bloomed out
The wind feels cool out today
Hear the birds chirping

—Emilee Russell, grade 4, Oregon.

Ball in the sky
Grass below my feet feels good
The breeze in the wind.

—Amani Martina Favela, gr. 4, Oregon.

A lot of elk move
trotting up mountains slowly
with females and males.

—Jayden Mahendra, grade 4, Oregon.

Wind is rustling.
The kids are laughing.
Flowers are blooming.

—Teagan McGuire, grade 4, Oregon.

Lord of the Skies

A hawk in the sky,
Big beak, silent wings, loud cry,
Like the rain he dives.

—Oliver Reid, age 11, Texas.

The Ultimate Game

Soccer is fast paced
like a car racing away.
The ball is flaming
as it blazes into the net.
Soccer lives inside of me.

—Matteo Montenegro, gr. 7, California.

A Haiku Collage

Faint luminous glow
Watches over our cloaked realms
Guiding us through dreams

“Hello,” I whisper
To my one true acquaintance
The moon whispers back

Without vigilance
I believed in miracles
Veil now lifted

Withdrew into the
Depths of my own confidence
My facade untrue

We call her pretty
But she’s translucently thin
Society’s prey

He’s a lot like snow
Cold and hurts to touch at first
But then starts to melt

She looks up at him
Registers the betrayal
A lone tear slips out

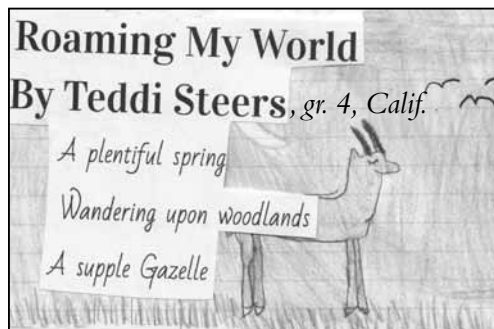
—Grace Xie, grade 10, Oregon.

Insoluble she
From wind and water alike
Earth befriends the sky.
—Alex Santiago, grade 10, California.

Lightning

A slash through the clouds.
My eyes, snapping with shrill sparks,
Electrocuted.

Distant laughter booms.
“Snap her out of rotting trance!”
—Xiaoyi Zeng, grade 11, Washington.



From Laurence School

One Stone

One little stone falls.
It falls into the water, one.
One stone growing wet.

Triggering calmness.
One stone falls, making a say.
One stone makes things big.

Slowly growing, still.
One. The sound making me calm.
Still falling, it's still one.
—Hayden Carroll, grade 4, California.

Starry Night

Let the stars light up the night
In the black sky let them fly
Be free stars, be free
—Sydney Kranitz, grade 4, California.

Volcanoes

Pressure building up,
Bursting lava pouring out,
Melted rock on the ground
—Eden Born, grade 4, California.

Hawaii

Cold shaved ice from Waioli
Surfing and boogie boarding at Turtle Bay
Climbing trees at the Kahala
—Cooper Bronson, grade 4, California.

The Beautiful Blue

Loud waves crash on sand
But waves can be soothing, too
Like a quiet lake.
—Pritam Schievink, grade 4, California.

The Phoenix

Fire burns within
It soars across the velvet sky
Watch it fly watch it fly
—Katie Kolb, grade 4, California.

Where the River Runs

All through the nation
Running river, always flows
Traveling, on the go
—Olivia Hanks, grade 4, California.

A Cup of Caffeine

In the city where dreams are made of,
 busy lines fill the cafe with chatter and bustle
 gathering the people of tomorrow,
 all preoccupied with the American hustle.

The rusty antique jukebox
 softly hums a worn vintage tune
 which makes my head doze off
 but I perk up as I begin
 to get a whiff of traces of the fresh brew.

The rich aroma pours into my nostrils
 as I peer down at floating swirls of cream.
 I take a long sip from the brim of the cup
 and the rush of caffeine starts to wake me up
 as it sends a tangy shock to my taste buds.

I let out a satisfied exhale
 and my eyes study the busy line

filled with the people of tomorrow,
 no matter the blend, size, or diversity
 that took a pause from daily life;
 all were solemnly gathered at the counter
 for an array of elegant flavors
 ranging from Arabica to Kilimanjaro.

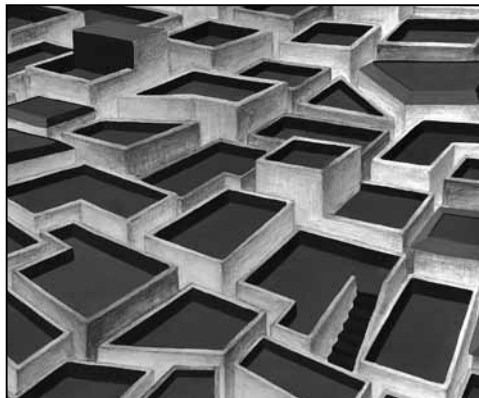
The thing that grounds us
 and keeps us together on our feet—
 what motivates the people of tomorrow to improve—
 all from a cup of caffeine.

—Anzaara Tanjim, 15, Bangladeshi-American, New York.
“Growing up in the city, I was raised in an environment with a lot of cultural diversity and people with the similar interests of increasing the wellbeing of themselves and the city. I wanted to create a poem about a simple experience that many New Yorkers share in their daily lives. Coffee is a very traditional and culturally popular drink in New York and is considered fuel for many hard-working people...”

Computer School

Being a troublemaker
 And sitting in front of a
 Computer for four hours
 Is not compatible
 Throwing wads of
 Crumpled paper at the
 Screen does not ‘cut it’ for me
 Nor does screaming
 Profanities do anything
 To change what is printed
 On the monitor
 My audience is gone
 Time to bee bop in the
 Streets
 With friends I think
 See you later
 Big brick school building
 I will be back when the
 Doors open
 Hop on to avoid detention

—maggie d., African American poet, Washington.
“This poem erupted from a youth’s frustration at not being physically present in a classroom and his hope of school buildings opening the coming school year.”



“Green Pool”
 By Ojoo Choi, 15, S. Korea.

PEACE of Mind

Peace is not islands and vacations
 It's not spending time in different nations,
 It is to have relaxation in your mind
 It is not something you have
 But something you have to find
 Peace comes in loved ones, God,
 and doing the things you like
 It's not being famous
 Or being on stage with a mic
 You have to open the door for it to enter
 You have to find it in your center
 Even if you have anger issues
 Or cry a lot and need tissues
 Or a mental problem like ADHD
 Peace is something you can find and see
 Peace can be in anything you enjoy
 Not from buying the best toy
 It is not depending on others' thoughts
 They may say being on top and not being a flop
 You can have freedom in your heart
 when you are in peace
 Your happiness will increase

—Sherdha Sharma, age 9, Indian Canadian, Canada.

Celebrate America 2021 Creative Writing Contest

We are pleased to present the national winners of the American Immigration Council's 2021 writing contest for fifth graders. Skipping Stones is one of the cosponsors of the contest. Visit: www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org for more information.



First Place Winner Welcome: Two Syllables, One Powerful Word

You stare down at the patio of your new home.
There is a mat lying flat on the cracked concrete floor.
A mat where generations of people
Family and not family
Have stepped their
Muddy
Wet
Snowy
Grassy
Boots and shoes on the one mat that you stare at now.
Yet, somehow, someway,
Your eyes don't pay much attention to the mud
Or the damp straw that lay atop of dark gray rubber
Your eyes pay attention to the word embroidered on the straw.
The two-syllable word.
The seven letter word.
The most important word in the world to you.
Welcome.
And as you step into your new home, you remember.
You remember the walk.
You remember the run.
You remember the crying.
You remember all of it.
Including the border.
A sudden flash of darkness hurls over you
Your thoughts have taken control of your eyes
The stars are shining over your head
Making it look like they can swallow you whole
And bring you back home.
Where you came from.
But then you realize
You are going home
To the USA
To America
To welcoming opportunities
You see your mom
Your dad
Your sister
You see the look on their faces

The sweat
The tears
The desperation and determination to go to your new home
The ground is
Muddy
Wet
Grassy
Bumpy
Your mind plays with you and makes it seem like the grass
monster is chasing you
Your head turns around
No one there
You keep on walking
Your dad tells you only 20 more miles
That is nothing to you
Considering the 2,000 miles you have already walked
And run
Hours pass
But the hours seem like days
How much longer?
How long has it been?
How are we going to make it?
How is this possible?
Is this pointless?
Will they turn us away?
Send us back?
But then
After what seemed like forever
You see the border
You see the soldier
He says
"Welcome home"
And even though you don't understand what he said
You sense that he is welcoming you
Welcoming you to opportunities
To jobs
To schools
To a new home
And with that

(continued on p. 11)

Why I Am Glad America Is a Country of Immigrants

2nd Place Winner The Song of America

The nights that were cold and dreary
were warmed by the sound of music
Notes rang out across the oceans, echoed off mountains,
becoming songs of hope and happiness
For a better life, in a new land,
free to express their song and share their story

On long voyages across oceans, valleys and deserts
people had nothing, but still found a way to create music
Rat-a-tat-tat, trash can becomes a drum,
Chs-chs-chs, dried rice becomes a shaker
And the voice, the power point of the song
Telling the story, spreading the emotion
This, is the song of struggle,
This, is the song of success

In America, they found their lives to be out of tune
Although they were able to share their music
it was difficult to create a song
Many responded with hate
Yet they played on, proving that different was not off-beat

They had completed a measure, but not their song
They had to search for the right notes
Instead of deciding for themselves,
the world decided for them
They would play a series of low notes
before they came to a section of high notes

Some found their rhythm on their own
Some found it with the help of family and friends
Sadly, some never found their rhythm in America
And returned from where they came

Sometimes those rhythms met
Making a beautiful harmony
Creating a song of their own
Later in life they would find their own melody in the world
America, the place where songs of the world meet
To make beautiful harmonies
Together

This is the song of American immigrants
I've heard it
you've heard it
we've all heard it
It is sung every day for all those immigrants who came to
America for a better life
To share their music with another country
To share their culture
If you listen you will hear it
This is my song
This is your song
This is our song
This is the song of America

—Julian Hayward Casis, grade 5, California.

Welcome, *continued from page 10*

Your thoughts bring you back to present day
You stare at the mat one more time
The one word seeps into your soul
Sticks in your mind
Your thoughts say 'Welcome' to you
And you say 'Welcome' back
For it is two syllables
Seven letters
And one powerful word
That means the world to you.

—Kyla O'Halloran, grade 5, Illinois.

Want to Participate in the Next Contest?

The *Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest* begins at the local level, with regional contests run by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) chapters. Coordinators run the contests either in-person or virtually. The 2021 Awards Ceremony took place at AILA's annual conference, which was held as a virtual event this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are interested in finding out how you/your student can enter the 2022 contest, visit: www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org.

Third Place Winner The Loudest Voice

"There will be no amnesty," he vowed.

But we are a country of immigrants others demanded.

Other than Native Americans, we are all immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.

"Mexico will pay for the wall. 100%. They don't know it yet but they're going to pay for the wall," he insisted.

We need a longer table not a higher wall, some shouted.

"Why do we want all these people from trashhole countries coming here?" he said behind closed doors.

Our country is one of opportunity no matter where you come from, our history called out.

We aren't a country that judges people for their skin color or place of birth, but for their character.

"Invasion. Aliens. Killers. Criminals." He constantly repeated.

No, they are...Neighbors. Friends. Family. Soldiers.

"Get the heck out of our country," he screamed.

All are welcome here, the wind whispered.

"These aren't people, these are animals," he said.

They're not animals, they're people.

"Drug dealers, criminals, rapists," he yelled from the stage.

Doctors, lawyers, CEO's, we shouted back.

Fact. Immigration does not increase crime rates in the United States.

"They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime."

They bring children, they're looking for opportunities.

"They have to go."

They have nowhere to go.

"We're going to have a deportation force and we're going to do it humanely."

You separated children from their parents.

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending the best."

People are coming with courage, strength and capability.

"Nobody builds walls better than me, believe me."

You didn't build a wall, you built cages for children.

"They'll steal our jobs."

They create life-saving vaccines.

"If we can save American lives, American jobs and American futures, together we can save America itself."

If you do that, you're keeping new ideas out; you're keeping new ways of doing things out.

"We're going to restore our moral standing in the world and our historic standing as a safe haven for refugees and asylum seekers," he pledged.

This country was founded so others could be free and work for a better life.

Undocumented immigrants are already Americans.

They are dreamers, brought as children for a better future.

They are students in our schools and colleges.

Immigrants are twice as likely to have a doctorate degree. Our economy grows faster with more immigrants and they fill important vacancies in many different occupations.

We are and always will be a nation of immigrants.

President's words matter. Choose wisely.

By Quinn Madison, grade 5, Minnesota.



The 2021 Skipping Stones Honor Awards

This year we recommend 34 outstanding books and three teaching resources as the winners of our **2021 Skipping Stones Honor Awards**. These books promote an understanding of cultures, cultivate cooperation and/or encourage a deeper awareness of nature, ecology, and diversity. They foster respect for multiple viewpoints and closer relationships within human societies. The honored titles offer many ways to explore and understand families, cultures, places, societies and their histories for readers of all ages—from the very young readers to high school seniors and adults.

The reviews can be downloaded from our website, www.SkippingStones.org

Multicultural and International Books

Brick by Brick by Heidi Woodward Sheffield. Penguin Random House. Ages 3-7.

Wanda by Sihle Nontshokweni & Mathabo Tlali, Illustr. Chantelle and Burgen Thorne. Crocodile Books. Ages 3-8.

Aspire! ¡Aspirar! (Spanish/English) by Patty York Raymond; Illustr. Chiara Savarese. Translator: Dr. Isaias Rodriguez. Mascot Books. Ages 5-9.

¡Todos al rodeo!: *A Vaquero Alphabet Book* (Spanish/English) by Dr. Ma. Alma González Pérez. Del Alma Publications. Ages 6-9.

Two Drops of Brown in a Cloud of White by Saumiya Balasubramaniam; Illustr. Eva Campbell. Groundwood Books. Ages 6-10.

A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart by Zetta Elliott; Illustr. Noa Denmon. F.S.G. Ages 5-9.

Nana Akua Goes to School by Tricia Elam Walker and April Harrison. Random House Kids. Ages 6-10.

The ABCs of Black History by Rio Cortez; Illustr. Lauren Semmer. Workman Publishing. Ages 5-99.

21 Cousins by Diane de Anda. Star Bright Books. Ages 5-8.

Disco and Me: An Unexpected Adventure in Quebec / Disco et Moi (French/English) by Katrina Shambarger Linscott. Indie Author Books. Ages 7-12.

111 Trees: How One Village Celebrates the Birth of Every Girl by Rina Singh; Illustr. Marianne Ferrer. Kids Can Press. Ages 6-9.

Seven Golden Rings: A Tale of Music and Math by Rajani LaRocca; Illustr. Archana Sreenivasan. Lee & Low. Ages 7-10.

Story of the Mongolian Tent House by Dashdondog Jamba and Anne Pellowski; Illustr. Beatrice Vidal. Wisdom Tales. Ages 6-10.

Mei Ling in China City/Mei Ling en la Ciudad China (English/Spanish) by Icy Smith; Illustr. Gayle Garner Roski. East West Discovery Press. Ages 8-13.

The International Day of the Girl: Celebrating Girls Around the World by Jessica Dee Humphreys and the Hon. Rona Ambrose; Illustr. Simone Shin. Kids Can Press. Ages 7-10.

Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: 100 Immigrant Women Who Changed the World by Elena Favilli. Rebel Girls. Ages 8-12.

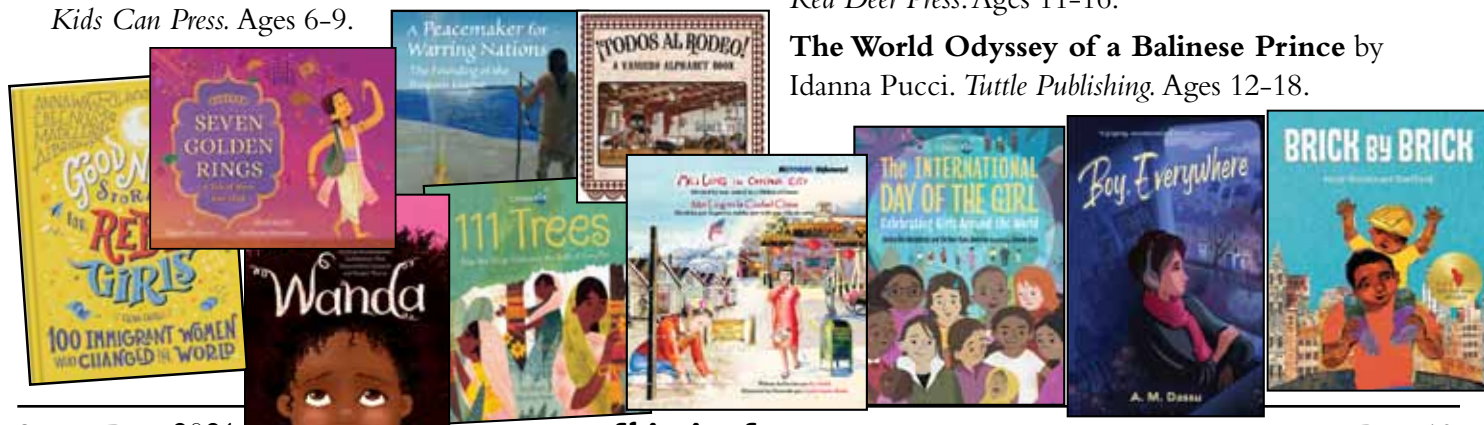
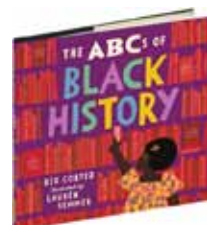
Pop Flies, Robo-Pets, and Other Disasters by Suzanne Kamata. Red Chair Press. Ages 9-14.

The Complete Story of Sadako Sasaki: And the Thousand Paper Cranes by Sue DiCicco and Masahiro Sasaki. Tuttle Publishing. Ages 10-14.

A Peacemaker for Warring Nations: The Founding of the Iroquois League by Joseph Bruchac; Illustr. David K. Fadden. Wisdom Tales. Ages 10-14.

The Other Side, a novel by Heather Camlot. Red Deer Press. Ages 11-16.

The World Odyssey of a Balinese Prince by Idanna Pucci. Tuttle Publishing. Ages 12-18.





Beyond Me by Annie Donwerth-Chikamatsu. *Atheneum/Simon & Schuster*. Ages 9-12.

Boy, Everywhere by A. M. Dassu. *Tu Books*. Ages 9-14.

Global Citizenship: Engage in the Politics of a Changing World by Julie Knutson; Illustr. Traci Van Wagoner. *Nomad Press*. Ages 12-15.

Kid Sterling by Christine Welldon. *Red Deer*. Ages 12-16.

You Call This Democracy? How to Fix our Government and Deliver Power to the People by Elizabeth Rusch. *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*. Ages 12 and up.

Girl Warriors: How 25 Young Activists Are Saving the Earth by Rachel Sarah. *Chicago Review*. Ages 9-12.

The Boreal Forest: A Year in the World's Largest Land Biome by L.E. Carmichael; Illustr. Josée Bisaillon. *Kids Can Press*. Ages 8-12.

A Forest in the City by Andrea Curtis; Illustr. Pierre Pratt. *Groundwood Books*. Ages 8-12.

Climate Change: The Science Behind Melting Glaciers and Warming Oceans by Joshua Sneideman & Erin Twamley; Illustr. Alexis Cornell. *Nomad*. Ages 9-12.

Teaching Resources

Posters for a Green New Deal: 50 Removable Posters to Inspire Change. Illustrated by the artists of Creative Action Network. *Workman Publishing*. Grades 7-12.

Teacher Unions and Social Justice: Organizing for the Schools and Communities Our Students Deserve, edited by Michael Charney, Jesse Hagopian, and Bob Peterson. *Rethinking Schools*.

When the World Feels Like a Scary Place: Essential Conversations for Anxious Parents and Worried Kids, by Abigail Gewirtz, Ph.D. *Workman Publishing*.

For reviews, please visit www.SkippingStones.org.

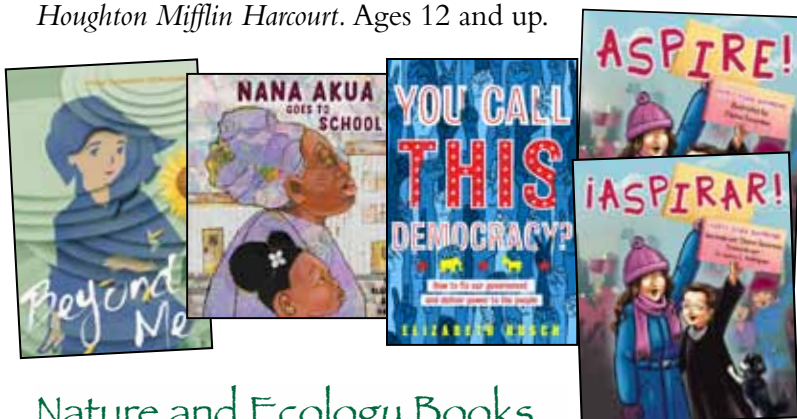
Nature and Ecology Books

Nature Did It First: Engineering Through Biomimicry by Karen Ansberry; Illustr. Jennifer DiRubio. *Dawn Publications/Sourcebooks*. Ages 5-11.

The Belize Trash Monster by Sylvia M. Medina with Lady Dixie Bowen; Illustr. Walter Castillo, Ann Jasperson and Joy Eagle. *Green Kids Club*. Ages 6-10.

Arenas y trinos: Abecedario del río/Sand and Song: The ABCs of the River by Alma Flor Ada & Rosalma Zubizarreta-Ada; Illustr. Gabhor Utomo. *Arte Público Press*. Ages 6-10.

Bringing Back the Wolves: How a Predator Restored an Ecosystem by Jude Isabella; Illustr. Kim Smith. *Kids Can Press*. Ages 8-12.



2021 Skipping Stones Honor Award Winners

★ Poems by **4th and 5th Grade Students of Ms. Milman** at Laurence School, California

★ **Emily Meng**, age 10, Connecticut, and **Emily Tang**, age 12, North Carolina

★ **Aditi Nair**, age 12, Virginia, and **Ryan Park**, age 13, New York

★ **Saanvi Dhupar**, age 13, New York, and **Jasreen Randhawa**, age 13, Alberta, Canada

★ **Christopher Jozczyk**, age 14, Connecticut, and **Thee Sim Ling**, age 14, Singapore

★ **Tinklyn (Jinyuan) Xiang**, 14, British Columbia, Canada, & **Liz Duke-Moe**, 17, Idaho

★ **Jamie Nguyen**, age 15, California, and **Rashi Lakhota**, age 16, Florida

★ **Catherine Xiong**, age 17, British Columbia, Canada, and **Julia Kiaer**, age 17, Oregon

★ **Krithika Gopalakrishnan**, age 17, Washington, and **Ashley Yoon**, age 17, California

★ Artwork (see front cover & p. 2) by **Students of Mr. Hyun Sung Jung** in Seoul, South Korea

Hearty Congratulations to all our winners! We received so many outstanding entries that we ran out of space in this issue for more Noteworthy entries we wanted to include. Please read them on our website. —Editors.

“Being different is neither something to hide nor something to ignore. It’s something to celebrate. Today, I am someone who is proud and more than content with my identity. Yes, sometimes I’m hesitant of being myself, because as always, there’s the fear and unknown of what people will think of me. But that is a part of a journey we all go through—regardless of race, gender, or any other label—so instead of hating it, I’ve decided to embrace it.”

—*Srivaishnavi Kommireddy, 15, Virginia.*

Catherine Xiong, 17, Canada



Youth Ball by Yurim Nam, 16, South Korea

Making A Difference

“We must make a change, and we can make a change. Write to your elected officials. Talk to your family and friends.” The speaker’s voice trembled dramatically and grew quieter as he walked to the front of the stage and made eye contact with a few mesmerized audience members. “This is not something that can happen or that should happen. It must happen, and if it doesn’t, we are dooming future generations that have just as much of a right to life on this beautiful planet as we do.” The speaker’s usually smiling face was now completely serious. “We all need to do our part.”

Ryan sat near the back of the auditorium, watching attentively. He had been looking forward to this speech since his principal’s announcement about it several weeks before. Ryan had actually first heard about this speaker from a favorite climate change news website. He was a college student who had won international recognition by organizing climate change protests throughout New York City. Now he devoted his time to speaking at different schools.

Ryan agreed with all the points that the speaker had made. A couple of years ago, Ryan had started eating much less meat in order to reduce his carbon footprint. Last Christmas, his parents had planned on flying to Florida, but he had convinced them to drive instead. He had even donated some of his summer work money to an online climate change organization.

Part of the reason Ryan cared so much about climate change is that he had lived through Hurricane Sandy when he was a little kid. He and his family had been forced to live with a family member for the duration of the storm. When he came back, he found his house damaged, and he still remembered his parents asking for their friends’ help managing the staggering cost of repairs. He also remembered a scientist on the news explaining that climate change had helped cause this destruction.

Ryan had done more than many of his peers, but he still felt like he was not doing enough. The speaker was literally talking about the end of the world, but Ryan wasn’t sure what else to do. He wished he could be more like the speaker, staging protests and inspiring others to take action, but he imagined that if he walked onto a stage and tried to speak to more than ten people, he would probably faint, his body crashing into the front row. He looked around and realized just how many people there were in the auditorium, and it made him

shudder to think about speaking in front of all of them.

Besides, what could I possibly do? Ryan thought as he walked out of the auditorium several minutes later. His classmates were pouring out of the auditorium looking bored and annoyed. If someone as exciting as the speaker couldn’t inspire them to take action, Ryan had no chance. Discouraged, he made his way into art class. He could tell his teacher, Mr. Lin, was excited about something. His eyes were gleaming behind his shiny black glasses. “I want you all to close your eyes,” he said. “Imagine the thing you care about most in your life. It could be something positive or something negative. Convey this feeling using a medium of your choice.”

Immediately Ryan knew his topic, but he was not sure where to begin. As everyone around him started to work and eventually even began to hand in their drawings and paintings, his frustration turned into envy—but still he didn’t know how to start. Suddenly, he heard the bell ring.

“If you didn’t finish today, finish your piece for homework and turn it in tomorrow,” said Mr. Lin as he rushed to get ready for the next class. Ryan felt both relieved to have more time and overwhelmed as he realized that he still had to finish it that night.

Looking out of his window after school, Ryan saw somber clouds floating slowly over his neighborhood like a dark sea. He thought about the similarity of these clouds to the ones he had seen during Hurricane Sandy. When would the next natural disaster hit New York City? If no one did anything about climate change, what would happen to the world? Almost without thinking, Ryan painted a pitch-black background with a small blue, white and green circle in the middle. Flames surrounded this world, outlined in bright orange strokes that seemed to leap off the canvas. Ryan then covered some of the green with blue so that the remaining continents looked smaller and sadder. The world now looked like a blue, white, and orange marble in the middle of a black ocean. He placed white dots all around the blackness. There are plenty of solar systems and planets in the universe, the painting seemed to say. A potentially infinite number of organisms. What should the universe care about one lonely planet? If the human beings who live there don’t care, who would? Ryan spent the day working, eating dinner at his desk. He rejected the offer to play with his friends and put off his homework until the next morning. As he worked, Ryan felt an =>

What Is Your Name?

“**W**hat is your name?”

A simple question of four words, yet for me, it holds so many memories.

When I type out the three words which represent my being, the inhuman screen rarely gives it an ounce of respect. My name is sometimes accompanied by bright red wavy lines, other times accompanied by dark blue ones, a child's impression of ocean waves hitting the shore. These squiggles do nothing but to act as a source of constant annoyance; is it not a personal insult for someone to assume your name is a misspelling? That you would write “three Sim Ling” or “Thee Sim Lim Square”?

As I seek creative writing opportunities, I interact with many different people from the West. They all come from different nationalities and backgrounds, but if they share one thing in common, it is this: They miraculously butcher my name. Every. Single. Time. I have been called, among others, “Thee”, “Thea”, “Sim,” “Thee Sim” and even “Sing Lim”, but nobody outside Singapore has seemed to hit on the right answer, which is the last two words of my name. I am a writer, not a mathematician, but I hardly need to be good at numbers to know that this defies the laws of probability.

Making A Difference.. *Continued from p. 16*

=> immense depression set in as he watched such a beautiful world destroyed.

“Did you really paint this? What an incredible message!” exclaimed Mr. Lin the next day. Looking around, Ryan realized that the compliment had been directed at him. “Can I hang it in the lobby?” Mr. Lin continued. “The principal wants to add more student art, and I think that this piece would be perfect.” Ryan was so shocked that he almost forgot to nod.

That afternoon, when he walked through the lobby, Ryan saw hundreds of people move past his painting. Most were too preoccupied talking with their friends and getting their phones out, but Ryan saw a few who noticed it.

“Ryan, is this your painting? What's it about?” asked a friend. Ryan smiled and started to explain.

—*Ryan Park, age 13, grade 8, New York.*

Even among Asian Americans, I often need to tell them which is my first name and which is my last. Most of the time, I do not bother.

Even if I do, half of them would eventually forget.

Shakespeare once wrote, “What's in a name?” Indeed, the use of strange words to label each one of us seems bizarre from one point of view. Whatever you call the ruby red flower, a rose is still a rose, is it not? Why must we attach so much importance to our names?

Names have a crucial place in human civilization. They identify us. They distinguish us. They represent our bloodline, history, culture, background and more. Names have evolved to be written, typed and printed across the globe.

The name we have is likely given to us by our family or caregivers, a form of deep personal, familial and historical connections. It may consist of a name we are addressed by, a word that holds deep significance for the people who named us. It may also contain a family name, a name that has been passed down for generations. These often carry meanings related to a family's ancestors, such as their occupation or social status.

Looking at the Anglicised version of my name, it's hard to imagine that there may be any deep story behind the words. But, it has been carefully selected by a Chinese Feng Shui master. “Thee” is my surname, which has no meaning in Mandarin form, but an alternative form of the word is defined as a tailor, or someone who sews clothes. “Sim” is the core of plants (or a mobile phone's “Sim card”, if you must know). “Ling” means “lonely”, but also “intelligent.” Combined together, these all sum up who I am as a person. And every time someone mixes up the words, even accidentally, I feel a little dagger pierce my heart.

People living in the same area and of the same culture are more likely to have similar names from closely-linked origins. But, as our world becomes increasingly interconnected, we are more likely to meet others with vastly different names and naming conventions than ours. We may not be familiar with these norms, leading to misunderstandings, slip-ups and hurt feelings.

Some I have encountered may wonder what is the “big fuss” around ensuring names are properly written and pronounced. It all comes down to respect for oth-

What Is Your Name? *continued*

ers and the appreciation of other cultures and ways of thinking. Practising consideration and sensitivity towards someone else's name is something we should all be doing.

It would be hypocritical of me to mention others' mistakes without stating my own. I have misspelled people's names before, mutilated their names just because I had failed to give them proper respect or, against my better judgment, trusted the computer algorithm. I have also seen names of friends decorated with ugly lines of colour, just because their name is a little out of the ordinary. Whenever I come across this, I have an overwhelming desire to reach out and give the person subject to this naming indignity a hug. I know what this experience is like because I face these incidents, too. I know what it is like to be "misnamed" all too well.

Diversity and globalization is a good thing. But to ensure a welcoming and inclusive world, we would need to change the way we view names, ours as well as those of others. We need to change from relying on the default standard of "first name, last name" and Western spelling to be accepting of names from other cultures. When we create online forms, instead of putting fields for "first name" or "last name," a simple "name" could suffice. We should push for technology companies to recode the way their spell check programmes work, or do without spell check—which would also improve our spelling ability, I must add. If we meet a person with a name structure different from ours, we need to firstly ask for how the person would like to be addressed and how the name is pronounced. Asking about the roots and story behind someone else's name can also be a great conversation starter. When in doubt, using a person's full name would rarely cause offence.

Most importantly, we should never feel ashamed to say our names, or correct someone if they make a mistake. Our names are the essence of our being, the symbols for our souls—why should we choose to let it be misread?

My name is Thee Sim Ling. What is yours?

— *Thee Sim Ling, age 14, Singapore. "I wanted to pen this piece not only to reach out to others who have been similarly misnamed, but to encourage readers to consider about the meanings of their own names and how we can treat others."*

Smashed Buttercup

A dense thicket of trees
Sprinkling confetti-like snow
A whistle in the breeze
Here lies a lonely doe

A restless spirit runs wild and free
Behind the bush she lies in wait
She wishes she could flee
Her fears and worries seal her fate

Pointing the gun
Letting it go
Dead
She didn't know
Why this was done

Why must beautiful things die?
Why must people say goodbye?

Moments don't last forever
The lives of all things end
For death is so clever
It's nature's best friend

Dead doe on broken ground
Gentle wind picks up
No one can hear a sound
A smashed little buttercup
Lost but never found

—*Krithika Gopalakrishnan, 17, Washington. "I have a deep love for writing. As early on as I can remember, I've been a writer. I still have the "books" I hand wrote as a child, running the gamut from far-off fairy lands to shrewd female detectives cracking mystery cases..."*

Petrichor

All but at once, the rain comes down
The precious jewel of nature's beauteous crown
To birds, bees, and trees, the universal need
That brings forth life to the newly sown seeds
The wet, dewy drops that splash against saplings in the ground
A soundtrack of souls, renewed in its pitter-pattering sound
After the deluge, all remains silent but a whistle in the trees
An expression of happiness carried through the breeze
After the downpour, breathe in the fresh replenished air
And never forget what was there

—*Krithika Gopalakrishnan, age 17, Washington.*

Finding My Normal “...but if I embrace my culture I’m called just another immigrant.”

Growing up I was very proud of my background and family. I was confident in my identity. I’d dance around all day doing a traditional Punjabi dance while singing Punjabi songs. I felt like a princess whenever I wore my traditional clothing. I loved my culture and where I came from...until I didn’t.

Around first grade was when I started getting exposed to new environments and new people. I remember an incident in which a boy from my class who looked like me, fought with another boy. The other boy took it too far and said something like “My mom said not to talk to people like you!”

This sentence threw me. This was my first racist encounter. Though the comment wasn’t directed towards me, in a way it was. Feelings of guilt and shame filled my body. This was the first time I felt abnormal. My immediate reaction was to make sure I wasn’t targeted next. Looking back, I understand the mindset I had. The human brain wants to stick to the herd, it helps us survive. I added on to the boy and said, “Boys with earrings are bad!” in an attempt to blend in. I thought I had done a pretty good job and felt almost safe at that moment. I was part of the herd and made sure of it. The boy looked so defeated and upset that my feeling of security faded in a second.

The boy continued, “Who wants my pop tart?”

I, among other kids, raised my hand as an eager six-year-old. The boy pointed towards me and said, “Not you. You have that” gesturing to my *Kara*, an iron bracelet worn by Sikhs.

My mom had taught me that my *Kara* was a symbol of my faith and God’s way of protecting me. To have it used against me broke my heart. I knew exactly how the boy whom I had turned my back against felt. For the rest of first grade, I attempted to hide my *Kara* under my sleeve whenever possible.

While that was my first encounter with racism, it wasn’t my last. I’ve experienced my share of micro aggressions. For instance, my peers and teachers decided my name was too hard to pronounce at one point and my name transitioned from Jasreen (*Juhs—reen*) to being pronounced *Jazz—reen*. Little did they know they changed my name and by default, my identity ever since then. That is the pronunciation I started going by, and still do to this day.

My facial features are either ridiculed or trendy and exotic. Every couple of months, my appearance goes in

and out of style. If I decide to attempt to blend in with Western culture then I’m abandoning my own, but if I embrace my culture I’m called just another immigrant who comes to Western countries knowing nothing about the culture.

I recall I started being embarrassed by my family. They were too Indian in front of my friends. “Why’d my mom have to play Punjabi songs in the car? Why’d my family have to talk in Punjabi around my friends?” I thought to myself.

I stopped eating ethnic food. I stayed out of the sun to not get darker. I wanted to be White. I wanted to be normal and look like my friends who all had blonde hair and eye colours that were considered beautiful. I started hating my culture more and more.

Can you imagine having all these feelings while still being in elementary school? While having no one to confide in? Every time I’d think of going to my mom to discuss this, I’d feel discouraged. She had always taught me to embrace who I am. I didn’t want her to know that I didn’t like who I was.

I still haven’t unlearned my internalized racism—it’s an ongoing journey. Again, I still go by the white-washed pronunciation of my name. It feels like a part of me now, as if I’ve reclaimed it. I realized what helped my self-reflect and accepting myself more was surrounding myself with people who accept me for who I am and relate to my experiences. Having friends that related to my experiences and gave me a support system helped me grow as a person. They helped me celebrate my differences and made me feel normal simultaneously.

We learned from each other and listened to one another. Learning more about the beauty of my culture and having conversations about my culture helped a great deal, too. I found myself being prouder and more connected to my culture than I had ever felt before.

How other people view me is something I cannot change overnight. These racist ideas that are embedded in Western culture will take a long time to be unlearned. But, they can and will be unlearned. I realize how mentally draining and tiring hating yourself and your culture is. I want to see a future where our differences are celebrated. I hope I can contribute to creating a future where immigrant children don’t feel the hate for themselves and their culture that I did, and sometimes still do.

—Jasreen Randhawa, age 13, Alberta, Canada.

Lunar New Year

“Just ten more minutes!”

A dusty sun dips below the horizon, painting the heavens in the watercolors of twilight. The moon—wan but full—overlooks the elongated shadows of the twisting trees that circle the house’s backyard. A squirrel scurries up a trunk to catch a better view of life behind the window, beady eyes blinking at the flood of warm light. Inside, a dinner party is in full swing.

Several families, each with their several children, fill the dining room with jovial noises and aimless chatter. They hadn’t been fully reunited since a year ago, on the last lunar new year. The table is laden with a potluck buffet; everyone brought a delicacy, whether homemade or store-bought. Beef noodle soup steams from an orange pot, and Saran wrap is removed from a brown wok to reveal a rainbow of steamed vegetables and fishcake. Chopsticks poke at dumplings from the dimly lit “Mother Lamb” restaurant everyone loves. Someone is serving their child sauteed water spinach, and spoons ladle out heaping portions of boiled daikon.

There is a children’s table, set to the side, but this tradition has been carried out long enough that its occupants are no longer children. The youngest is ten years old, the eldest fifteen. More used to join them, yet that was before a handful of them left for college or left to join the adults at their table. Teenagers freshly in high school sit in pink plastic chairs. They are too enveloped in catching up with childhood friends and devouring the mouthwatering foods to complain about their seating arrangements. The lively ambiance brings overlapping conversations to a painstakingly loud volume—the booming laughter of drunk fathers echo against the walls—but the room is cozy enough to invite longtime friends to rest heads on shoulders.

Every character in the room is connected—through blood or through relationships so strong they surpass blood. Each family is interwoven with the strings of the other. The hostess is accompanied by her collegiate best friend from thirty years ago, and in turn, her best friend’s daughter was present at the birth of her own. The host’s brother attends with his family; his son is among the three oldest boys, who have been inseparable since their first breaths. The two youngest daughters met before learning their own names. Bonds this strong are what lunar new year celebrations are made for.

Dinner slows to a stop as stomachs burst—there is a race to the bathroom. A neighbor sets off fireworks,

the crackling interrupting the hostess’s daughter as she reveals the pastries she has baked. She smiles in the pure but proud way only a fourteen-year-old can, watching her visitors clamor for the first slice of her roll cake. Gasps of excitement fill the room as slices are distributed, in awe of the fluffy cake and fresh strawberries. Another child comes out of the kitchen. He bears “Beard Papa’s” desserts, a well-loved pastry puff filled with rich cream. Someone else adds boba tea—brewed flavored tea with tapioca pearls—to the mix. Suddenly, everyone has forgotten that they had been full moments before.

The television turns on. The youth and their fathers engage in video games, screaming ensuing at every minor inconvenience. Mothers pull out cell phones, showcasing their children’s photos and boasting of every achievement. The clock ticks, the moon rises, and still, the energy of the house has not dipped. Time always pauses every lunar new year.

When the wee hours of the morning roll in, eyes finally droop. Families pack up their dishes, their offspring beg for “just ten more minutes.” Adults begin passing out red envelopes, causing children to go giddy with excitement. Contrastingly, everyone seems content with leaving now. The sooner they enter their cars, the sooner they can rip the seals of the envelopes and begin counting this year’s earnings. It’s the year of the rat, the most resourceful of the Chinese zodiacs, so surely their greed would be satisfied. Hugs, kisses, promises to “reunite soon” that never get fulfilled; everyone begins sludging out the door, fatigue settling in. Shivers run down spines in the cool winter air. People file into cars. Just like every year, someone has always forgotten something, so the hostess runs out in slippers to return their belongings.

The moon hangs high in the evening sky. A child stares at its vastness too long, their sleepy imagination morphing the atmosphere to a thick velvet blanket. A thick velvet blanket becomes their blanket at home, to the warmth of their bed at home, and every year, the child drifts to sleep dreaming of a party they won’t be able to replicate until next year.

And the cycle continues.

—Jamie Nguyen, 15, has Taiwanese & Vietnamese heritage. She says, “One of my biggest passions is environmental science and by extension, climate change.”

I Hear the Cherry Petals Fall

I didn't intend to make friends.

I will—just let me try and understand them first.

Yesterday, I tried to converse with a pair of girls with matching side braids and tucked in uniforms—sisters, friends, I'm not sure. Their rapid staccato exchanges made the force field around them impenetrable. So, I waited for them to notice me, to give me a chance to show them that I can speak, and that I'm a fun person if you listen.

My presence was acknowledged, but not welcomed. They flipped their braids and joined a group under the foyer where they continued amongst the crowd.

This afternoon, my mother made me walk home, and their laughter roared down the street. I wanted to slow down, wait for them. But I soon realized that they weren't shrieking about the cookie-cutter beige homes, nor the boring pieces of lawn edging onto the sidewalks.

Their stare preyed on me.

It had been a week since we moved to this place. To this place where our yellow skin and straight raven hair wasn't the norm, this place where the neighbours only saw each other when getting the mail from the standard red mailboxes, this place where the sky was a bright shade of blue instead of grey, where the people waved to you on the streets, to this place where no one yet knew what I wanted to say.

I don't even know what I can say, at this point.

The streets of Shanghai were nothing like this. But, I guess it's for the best. That's what I've been told anyways. Were our family and friends, our city, our language, and my way of expression, not good enough?

I kept my pace in front of the girls. The uniform itched my upper thigh and the ironed dress shirt stretched at my chest. The shoes I had from last year pinched my toes. This, I guess, was different too.

There was another family who looked like ours, but they went to the public school on the other side of town. I looked around, trying to take everything in, but the excitement had faded days ago.

Then, I saw the opening.

The metal fence collapsed, and exposed the lush green behind. I slowed down, and as I heard the whippers swell into another burst of piercing laughter, I burst across the street into the woods.

"The streets of Shanghai were nothing like this."

I ducked between the arch of a fallen tree and the yellow caution tape that sputtered around the hogweed treatment.

Despite the thicker, warmer air, I was finally able to breathe.

My feet made soft imprints on the dirt floor as I followed a narrow path, heels no longer aching from the hardness of the platform. Leaves and spikes darted at my face, but it was worth it.

There was a circular opening where the ancient giants caved in, their branches casted a shadow and painted the ground with the afternoon sunspots. A tree stood in the middle, its branches intricate as it supported the pale pink petals of the cherry blossoms.

I sat beneath it, grateful for the extra shade. I pulled out the book we were given in class, Fahrenheit 451, and flipped to the page I had read twice today, but could still not understand—why throw a perfect life away for curiosity, for something better you can't see?

The black and white letters stirred together, and the dialogue melted in my head. Once I'm lost, I'm lost. I was expected to have finished this book by now. The others had.

But, I'm not like them, even if that's where I'm expected to be.

I threw the paperback. It landed paces away, face down.

There was a soft rustle above me and a mumble of a voice. It was too quiet and complex for me to reply.

A pair of tattered white sneakers dropped from above, followed by a girl with frizzy red hair. She and I wore the same uniform, only her's hung loosely around her small torso. She mimicked my throw with her shoes and laughed.

It was a beautiful laugh, full of kindness.

I recited my introduction, but she gestured to the side of her head where a cashew shaped metal protruded on the side of her head.

She didn't need to speak—I understood her.

She shook out her hand, and when I took it, she pulled onto the ground.

I grabbed a branch from the ground and wrote the name my teachers call me, Sage. She looked at it, shook her head, then pointed at me.

contd. on next page

I Hear the Cherry Petals Fall, continued

The memory returned of when I first learned to use the calligraphy brush, painting the strokes of my name, of what makes me who I am. The stick danced as I wrote my name.

She smiled, and nodded.

Later, she retrieved my book and flipped the pages idly. But she must have noticed me staring at her, her beady green eyes, and the constellation-like freckles that ran across her cheek.

She stirred and pointed above to the branches.

I shook my head—the city had everything but trees sturdy enough for you to climb.

The tree rattled as she swung herself on the lowest branch; the petals fell like snow.

I am reminded of my home, again. This time not in longing, but through a nostalgic filter that made this wooden thicket glow.

She waved. *Come.*

I approached the trunk, the bark rough as I found my footing. The tree was taller, the branches were thinner, my hands grabbed onto something, and I felt it slip. My heart pounded, and her arm swung down to catch me before I slid further down.

As I steadied myself within the clouds of cherry blossoms, she made two fists, brought them together and made a circle.

“Together,” I smiled.

—Catherine Xiong, 17, British Columbia, Canada. Catherine adds: “When not found in jam sessions working on my runs on the piano, I can be found doing physics problems and creating some sort of artwork of the dream I had days ago. Writing short stories of mystery and suspense, with a dab of sci-fi, is the best part of my weekends. My submission was inspired by the beach I go to every weekend with my toy poodle, where I gather my thoughts and ideas. It was a scorching day, and to avoid sun, we trekked onto a new path where I was welcomed by the ancient giants of sycamores and pines casting sunspots on the freshly rained dirt ground of early morning. The humidity made me think of my home in China, and I was bombarded with sadness that I couldn’t explain. So, I sat and explored this feeling of being an immigrant child, and how my frustration was able to blossom into gratitude. For my art pieces (Please see pp. 15 & 23), I was exploring the connection between the natural world, the sub-consciousness, as well as how my culture forms my personality and who I am.”

Darkened Salvias

As light is engulfed in gray
the heavy tears of nimbostratus fall
and the loud voice of Zeus echos
a dim yellow glow casts upon the plotted land

As eyes gloss through
what once was rich with color
with tangled thickets of thorns
which surrounded the sweet salvias
who burst with hues of the rainbow

From the Rosemary which sat on the side,
remembering memories of the past.
rich, purple flowers shining in the light
toad green needles and a pungent fragrance
sways throughout the endless void

To the Grandmother Sage off to to the right,
wisdom seeping through its pale blue petals.
and the rounded leaves on its stems
lavender like aroma spreading in the air
while standing tall and looking over all the other flowers

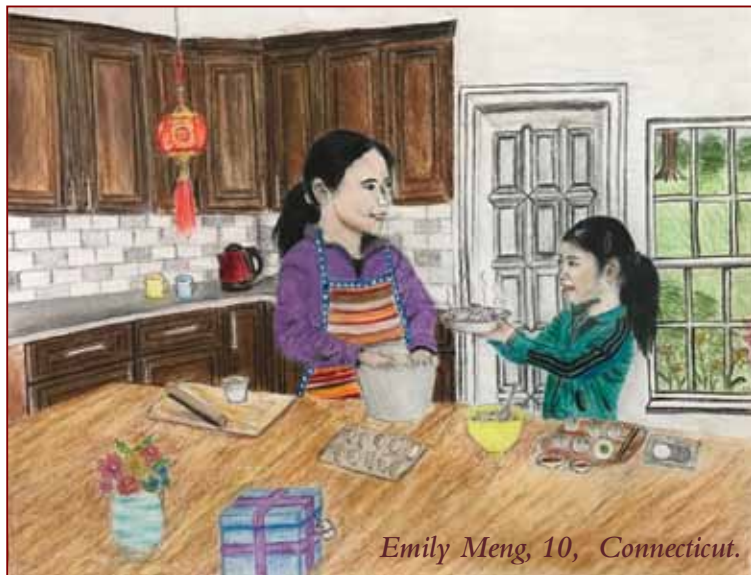
Alas, the darkness makes it hard to tell
which flowers are which
at the end of the day
they are all flowers existing with one another
with different colors, shapes, and smells

At the end of the day
they are all at home
sharing the same rain, in the same garden
each with different roots, but the same soil.

—Galiba Anjum, 16, New York. “I have gotten into writing poetry during the pandemic; writing poetry has been something that I’ve done ever since I was young, but I’ve never realized how much calmer I feel after writing a piece.

“My favorite thing to write about is nature, in particular, I really enjoy writing about water and flowers. I try to replicate the beauty of the natural world within my writing.

“My poem combines both nature appreciation and equality among people as the flowers are in a sense, a representation of how individuals are all different in their own ways, but at the end of the day, we are all human. Although there can be a few different interpretations, what I was trying to convey through the poem is that the garden of salvias was a representation of the human race...”



Emily Meng, 10, Connecticut.



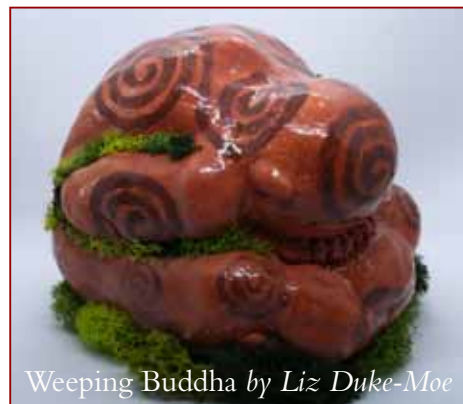
Catherine Xiong, 17, Canada.



Emily Meng, 10, CT.



Emily Meng, 10, CT.



Weeping Buddha by Liz Duke-Moe



"The Colorful Plumper" by Lili Liu, 14, New Jersey.



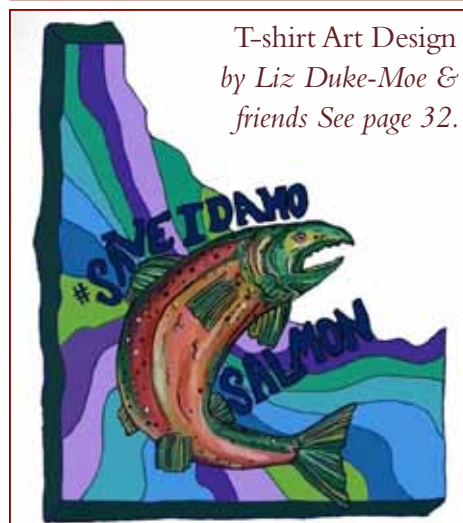
Maggie Liu, 13, New Jersey.



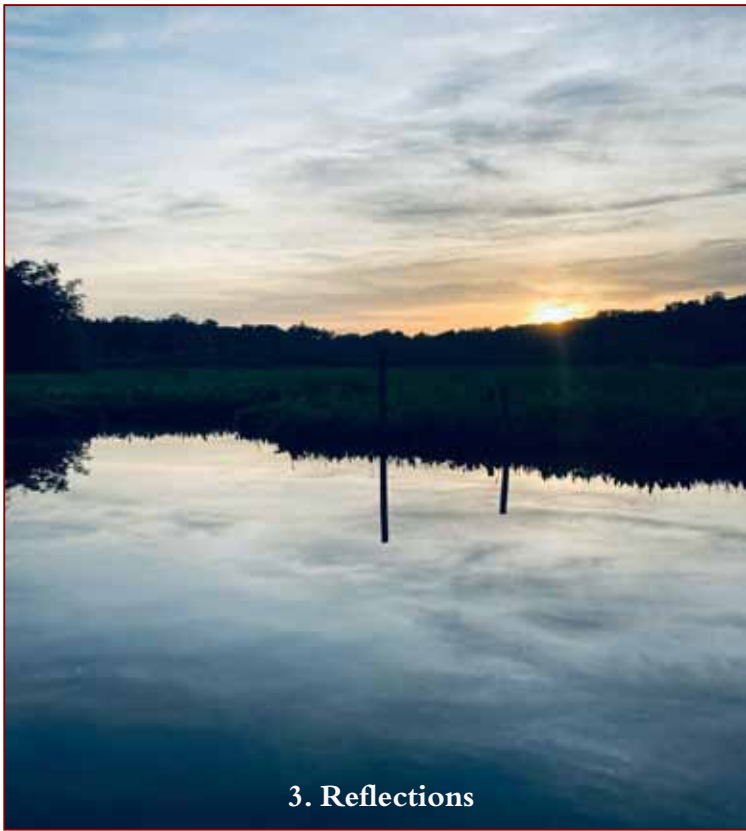
Catherine Xiong, 17, Canada



Earth Sculpture by Liz Duke-Moe.



T-shirt Art Design
by Liz Duke-Moe &
friends See page 32.



3. Reflections



1. Are We The Intruders?



2. Blended



4. The Chances We Take



5. Together We Rise

A Nature Photo Essay by Aditi Nair, age 12, Virginia.

From understanding how nature holds itself together to the beautiful reflections that show us who we are, nature inspires photographers all over the world—including me! I hope my photographs can help youth appreciate the hidden beauties in nature and inspire them to protect it while we can.

1. Are We The Intruders? Animals. Think of a world without them. The fact is that we are continuing to endanger animals—deer and other forest creatures included. Humans continue to destroy forests for selfish interests. Forest animals are more prone to attackers since their natural habitats have become smaller, and humans continue to dwell in these areas. While I was biking on my neighborhood trail, I saw a deer. I see them frequently in our backyard, feeding on our plants and grass. I usually feel a sense of annoyance; our backyard is our property, and we work so hard to keep our plants and grass in good shape. This time, I felt regret. I felt as if I was encroaching on their land. Maybe, I was the intruder after all. The forest was theirs, not ours. Let's face it, humans are the primary habitat destructors, and we continue to strip these precious animals of their homes. We only care about our welfare. If we can discard our selfish interests and live in cooperation with nature, animals will finally be able to harmonize with us. I hope this photo inspires you to help preserve their habitats.

2. Blended. My family and I had just finished picking apples at Carter Mountain in Charlottesville, Virginia. It took us awhile to carry the apples back down the hill. My brother was a little ahead of us since he wasn't holding anything. On the rocky, unpaved path, I thought I saw something move. It was small and camouflaged with its surrounding: a common buckeye butterfly! I carefully knelt and took a picture immediately. I was amazed how perfectly it blended with the surroundings. Typically, they are easily spotted resting with their wings spread out for display. The beautiful, yet delicate, insect made me think about humans wanting to fit in with society. After taking this picture, I also thought about how easily one could have stepped on the butterfly. Even if it seems right to fit in, one should always appreciate one's own beauty and feel that it is okay to stand out. Being different is the new beautiful!

3. Reflections. I look into the mirror every day to get dressed or just to look at myself. Mirrors can show more than what meets the eye. The reflection can be

what one aspires to be or what one thinks of themselves. I took this picture to show just that! In my photograph, the sun sets over the water. The water acts as a mirror, showing us some features we don't usually notice at first glance. In the photograph, the shadows of the poles only appear in the reflection cast on the water. Did you notice the poles on the land? Reflections cast more than just a self-image: They can reflect feelings, emotions, and a clear outline of the person you ought to be. One may want to silence the pain, if any, but mirrors will always cast one's true self. It is essential to face these feelings and replace them with better ones—running away never helps.

4. The Chances We Take. What do you do when you face a serious problem? Do you take a risk and see what happens, or do you play it safe? Taking chances is beneficial to the well-being of a person in one way or the other. Likely, the results may not be what you would expect, but it is always good to learn from your mistakes. While I was walking through Muir Woods (in California), I came across these steps. I couldn't see what was on the other side; even from different angles. I never did go up those steps—a chance I didn't take. Leaving aside these risks can result in regret, and regret leads to low self-esteem. If I had learned something from this experience, it was never to play it safe when you know the risk could have a better outcome!

5. Together We Rise. Hardships come and go. They may be life-changing or just minor everyday roadblocks. Due to the current pandemic, families have been struggling to find jobs, stay healthy, or bring food to the table. Two summers ago, when I visited Muir Woods (in California), I saw many redwood trees. They were the tallest trees I've ever seen! Compared to them, I felt like an ant. Like a family, they have endured many lifetimes of destructive weather and human error. The giant redwoods symbolize togetherness and strength. The ongoing pandemic has affected many families worldwide. We all must stay together. If one has the support from those around, they will be able to face anything!

About Aditi: Recently, Aditi published **True Colors**, a picture book about a peahen that struggles with self-appreciation and love for herself. The book promotes self-confidence in kids. Aditi aspires to become a medical doctor to help those in need.

Asian Americans in America

America is known as the epicenter of the world. Where multiculturalism meets both economic and societal growth. And yet somehow, we are in the middle of a war about justice. Although we've only been moving forward when it comes to rights—women's rights and gay rights—and racism, it seems as though we've simultaneously been moving backwards.

As an Asian American woman, I have experienced life from a different perspective. The perspective of 6% of America. We are the model minority. Time and time again, I've found that our needs and our struggles have been cast aside, and the spotlight is always given to others. When I say this, I am not negating other groups' pain or discrediting the struggles they have faced.

My parents had immigrated to the U.S. when they were younger, following their parents into a country of opportunity. They had to learn English later on in their life, and they decided that it would be better to raise a child here, where I would be able to speak the most universal language. I was born and raised in America until the age of six, where I was then whisked away to Korea and then Singapore. I lived my life being surrounded by others who were more similar to me, in countries where my race was not put before my being, and where I didn't need to worry about my family, my friends or myself being the target of racial hate crimes. I wasn't told that my food looked weird, or that speaking my native language sounded odd, because that was normal there. Of course, nowhere in the universe is a perfectly safe haven, but it was close enough.

We came back to the U.S. at the beginning of 10th grade. I had idolized America then as the perfect place to be, where I could finally be reunited with my relatives and old friends. I saw it as a place of nothing but opportunity and hope. But as soon as I stepped into the halls of my school, I realized that I was different. I couldn't expect to immediately fit into the environment.

Instead of being greeted with smiling faces and hellos, all I received were weird looks and effortless "Hi's." I couldn't remember the last time I had felt ostracized, but the feeling of constant humiliation and separation plagued me throughout the first few months. I tried to make friends and talk to as many people as I could, but they always remained curt and polite, as if I were an intrusion in their day. I had made a few friends, but the only thing we had in common was our Asian heritage,

and even still, they've known each other since kindergarten, whereas I was simply a stranger who had barged into their friend group. I felt lost and hopeless, thus falling into a state of depression.

About six months into my arrival, Covid-19 hit. My misery only doubled. I had to deal with avoiding a pandemic, fit into my surroundings and watch as the headlines focused on the hate crimes that we Asian-Americans had to deal with. I was angry: Angry at myself for not being competent enough to befriend people in a country where I spoke the native language fluently and angry at my parents for bringing me to such a country and raising me to believe that I would be loved here despite what I looked like.

And so, I began to make myself into a more likeable person, one that people in America would like and want to get along with. I started losing my culture and changing my appearance to fit the Eurocentric beauty standards. I left everything behind to try to start afresh, and I found myself floating in an empty shell of myself. I'm still trying to pick up the pieces of myself that I shattered alongside my self-image: It's a daunting task.

The more I try to revert to the person I used to be, the more I feel others pulling back, as if they don't want to be associated with all of me. It was odd though, as I had always considered myself more as an American. Despite my external appearance, when anyone asked me what country I belonged to, I'd say America. But that was when I was in Asia. There, when people would attack my country, I would wholeheartedly defend America. But here, in this country, when people attack Asians, we are met with silence.

Why is it that I'm in a country that I'm supposed to feel a sense of belonging to, yet feel so detached from everyone around me? We advocate for those who are struggling, but only while their struggles are considered valid, and never think of the things that we do that could cause hurt and pain amongst others.

Stereotyping and judgement is just as hurtful as blatant racism in the long run, and we need to learn as a growing nation how to promote equality in a way that is not hurtful to anyone around us. Culture is an important part of our nation, and we need to learn to start nurturing it instead of stomping it down.

—Ashley Yoon, 17, *Korean American, California.*

Change This World

Flowers. Trees. All that's left is garbage. The sweet scent of the roses that mother used to grow was overpowered by the stinky stench of garbage. There are too many landfills now, and they're still getting larger. Not to mention the sweltering heat, that makes the fumes seem much worse. The whole planet is heating up, and all the ice caps are melting at an alarming rate.

There's also many, far too many, skirmishes across the world. People are fighting over cultures, claiming that instead of being in a certain culture, people should quit and join another. Small countries are getting overrun with soldiers.

Someone has to step up and stop this.

As I stroll through the squishy mud, I feel my stomach start to turn. The smell of trash really is getting to me. I'm not sure how much more I can endure. I concentrate on breathing slowly. One, two, three. One, two, three. However, all I can inhale is the smell of trash and rotting food. It's like breathing in skunk spray. The air is also extremely gray and sour in my lungs. The ugly factories spewing out smoke have finally destroyed the air.

I can hardly breathe in this dense mess. I can feel that I'm about to succumb to the darkness that has come up to reach me from the depths below. I wonder what would happen if that happened. Bad or good? Maybe I should figure out...

I open my eyes to see a darkened world. There are small flecks of black in a white, glowing dome. Am I dreaming? Dead? I study the first black splotch and see people arguing. One man tries to convince the other, but the person just shakes his head. I can barely hear them. I strain as hard as I can and catch a few snippets of the speech. The man is trying to tell the other to join a campaign to try to spread world peace. In addition, the man wants to spread the word that all cultures are equal, and should be recognized by everyone. The man being convinced shakes his head and takes out a knife. He threatens the man to get out. Brandishing an extremely sharp knife, he screams at the other person that what he was doing is poppycock and completely insane. He jabs the knife to the exit. The man complies, walking with his head down, like a puppy, to the exit.

I stagger back. Has the world really changed this

much? How have we become such ill, disgusting people?

Yes. We have. Some people are trying to stop it, but their voices are being thrown into an icy black void, with no way of ever coming back.

I examine another screen. It shows a dolphin. Dolphins have become an incredibly endangered species. On the black, inky surface of the splotch, I watch the dolphin get tangled in a large piece of plastic. It desperately thrashes around, trying to get out. Its sleek tail gets stuck in an especially sharp portion of the junk. I choke out a cry as its long tail gets sliced by the plastic. A sea of red surrounds the tail, completely obscuring the area.

It takes all my effort as I pull my head away from the sickening sight. I've seen enough. I'm immersed in the blackness that melts from the milky white dome. I sink into it, grateful for the relief and knowledge. Especially the knowledge.

I wake up suddenly. I'm still lying on the ground, covered in mud, thrashing like a wild animal. I calm myself, taking in deep breaths. Breathing the air. The icky, terrible air.

The stench brings me back to my senses. I'm horrified by how people's voices are silenced, so quickly, and so unfairly. I decided on one thing: I'm going to be their voices now. They won't be silenced, no, not anymore. I'll make sure of it. I'm going to do something, right here, and right now.

So I speak. I speak for the silenced voices, bringing their voices to recognition. I speak for the silence, to bring their voices alive again. Slowly, bit by bit, people hear. Listen. People drink in our thoughts and words, which are pouring out like waves of tsunamis.

Finally, now, I have aged to a grand 90 years old. Our world is changing bit by bit. Famine ends. The world is cooling down. Wars stopping. Others helping, showing kindness. I'm glad to know that our words were heeded. My words. And everyone else's.

Someone had to step up and stop this.

And finally, someone has.

—Emily Tang, 12, North Carolina.

Poems by 4th & 5th Graders at
Laurence School, California

The Questions We Ask

Some people wonder . . .
About our life, where it all started
The answer I give is Earth, that's where we begin

Now most people wonder . . .
Why is the grass no longer lime green
Or the ocean no longer sky blue
Why is the sky gray and hazed, yet not
Sunny and beautiful blue
That's what they wonder

Now my answer is uncertain
Is it because pollution has started almost like a virus
Or is it because we the people are using animals
more than we really need
Or because we are smoking and making fires like
cruel and selfish animals
Why, why is what I now wonder

What if . . .
What if I have lost balance with Earth
What if we have lost balance with Earth
What if it's our problem and our choices that make
The decision and the big change
That's what I want to know

But the big question,
The big change
Can we answer it or will we fail
Will we make it or is this how it's gonna be
From now on?

—Hazel Schaffer, 4th Grade, California.



Perseverance by Maggie Liu, 13, New Jersey.

Mother Nature

Mother Nature, She gives and gives into our unsteady hands
She is determined to try and try
Until her process pays off and soon has a balance with nature
She will give and give, She is the nature
Soon there will be enough light and green
To have stability and world peace
She will rewire the world
She says, "open your eyes and see the progress we are making"
But nobody listens
If we believe She will give automatically
Then we are sorely mistaken
If you do not give to her as She has given to us,
Her gentle waves of light will simmer and rest forevermore
But if we pay her respect and acknowledge her kindness,
She will keep the earth moving
She will provide and give us the nutrients we truly need
If we respect the light She is giving us,
She will truly be there for us
We will no longer live in the darkness
If we hear her gentle whispers,
And watch her gentle sways in the wind
She will provide for us
She will give us what we truly need to survive
As long as we know She is there,
She will forever be there
She is the nature
Find the nature in you

—Katie Kolb, 4th Grade, California.

Words

Words flow from my lips
We stand
Black and white
United
Words flow from my fingertips
Dark and light
Together
All different
United, together
To work on our world until it is
Divine
"I do not see colors"
If we do not see colors,
We will not realize how separated we are by race
And color
We must see color, listen to one another.

—Lyla Hershkovitz, 5th Grade, California.

A Reflection of Shame

If you were to ask me three years ago if I were ashamed of my culture, I would have stared at you, eyes wide and mouth ajar. “Of course not!” I would exclaim, giving the question no further thought. After all, I wasn’t ashamed to talk about my mother country or wear my traditional clothing. I ate *dal chawal* (rice with lentils) without complaint and participated in *poojas* (religious ceremonies). I was Indian and I could never imagine feeling shame because of it.

The word shame has such a negative connotation. It implies that I want to strip away my skin color like a snake shedding its skin and choose to don another hue. It implies that I would want to unlearn my mother tongue or forget the ancestral cooking techniques I learned by sitting at my mother’s side. I could never feel shame about my culture.

But if someone talked about the studious Indian girls at school, I would be quick to mention that I wasn’t friends with that group. If my mother spoke Hindi outside of our home, my response would always come in English. I couldn’t imagine doing *raas* (a type of folk dance) in front of my school friends. I couldn’t imagine sharing my *khichari* (a common Indian lunch) with them. Was this shame? I loved my culture, but I separated myself from it.

I don’t know why I felt this way. Maybe I had built an image of the “perfect American” in my mind—and that perfect American didn’t put coconut oil in their hair. They cared more about school drama than books and were best friends with everyone. Maybe I didn’t want to be defined by my culture. I had seen girls before me labeled as studious Indian girls and nothing more. I didn’t want to be like them, focused on academics with no friends outside of their groups. Maybe, like millions of kids before me, I wanted to fit in. I wanted to be the same as everyone else, and to me that meant choosing when to don my heritage and when to remove it.

There was no moment of reckoning where I realized that having brown skin wasn’t something to be reviled. I’d watch the girls at school, talking about going to the beach to get tanned because they wanted to look darker. I’d hear others discussing the importance of biliteracy and asking their mothers, “*Kya hum Frooti kharid sukhte hai?*” (Can we buy *Frooti*, a popular Indian

“Now, I choose to embrace my culture while maintaining my identity.”

mango drink?) I would see pictures and posts of people visiting Indian restaurants, raving about the benefits of eating turmeric and the incredibly tasty food.

I started to receive the outside approval I desperately craved, but it wasn’t enough for me. I had spent years feeling inadequate; I had to believe in my identity before I could accept approval. The shift occurred when I traveled to India. I struggled to communicate with my cousins, as my stilted, fragmented Hindi couldn’t keep up with their fluency. I couldn’t read the Hindi script. I didn’t remember the religious stories I had grown up on. I felt more American than ever. I was ashamed of it!

When I came back home, I felt a dawning awareness inside of me that my children wouldn’t know the intricacies of the *Ramayana* because I didn’t know it. They wouldn’t speak Hindi because they wouldn’t be able to learn Hindi from the broken phrases I could speak. When I thought about how sad it would be that my children didn’t know our own culture, the only person to blame would be me. My culture and traditions would die with me if I kept this up.

I started to embrace my customs, but I realized I could choose which parts of my culture I would keep. I could embrace traditional *mehndi* but ignore the obsession about looking fairer. I could push myself in school without feeling like just another Indian-girl-stereotype. I was so worried that my culture would define me; I had forgotten that I could choose my identity.

Millions of immigrant children before me have searched for an identity between a Western upbringing and an Eastern heritage. We have all craved approval from outsiders and struggled to fit in. We have all felt shame from our culture and wondered why we couldn’t look like everyone else. Now I choose to embrace my culture while maintaining my identity.

It has taken me three years to admit that I was ashamed of my culture, but now I can stand tall and say that I am Indian and I am American and I don’t need to choose one. I will eat my *roti subzi* with my fingers, and I will wear crop tops. I will achieve good grades and not like a stereotype, and I will hang out with my friends at the mall. I am a mixture of my world and wouldn’t have it any other way.

—Rashi Lakhotia, age 16, Florida.

A Rose in a Field of Sunflowers

What is it like living your whole life wanting to be someone else? It's waking up every day looking in the mirror, hating the way I look. Having to put on a fake smile because "there are bigger problems in the world." It's hiding who I am because I am ashamed to be me. It's having to constantly tell teachers who can't pronounce my name it's fine and letting them butcher it because I'm tired of correcting them. From a young age, I loved my culture. I did *Kathak* dance, which is a type of Indian dance that dates back more than 2,000 years ago. I loved it so much that in kindergarten, I made my mom come to school and bring my *lehenga* (Indian skirt), and I danced for my whole class. I had been so excited to do it that I practiced for hours, making sure it was perfect.

During lunch, a boy came up to me and sat next to me because nobody else would.

He said, "You know everyone thinks you're weird after your dance."

I was so heartbroken. Something I enjoyed so much had become embarrassing. Little did I know this was only the start of those comments.

In second grade, a boy on the bus said, "You're supposed to be Indian. Why are you stupid?" I was so upset that I would beat myself up over grades *in second grade*.

In fifth grade, that same boy told me, "You can't come in my pool because your skin is brown." I was so hurt by this even after he apologized, I still didn't want to go to the party or his pool. Instead, I cried in my room for hours.

In sixth grade, when a boy found out I liked him, he said: "Ew no, she's Indian."

Once again, I went home and cried. If you couldn't tell, there's a common theme of me going home and crying. I hated my skin. I hated everything about myself. I hate the fact that I have to be smart, and I'm not allowed to struggle. I wanted to fit in; I wanted to look like everyone else. I would hide my culture in my shadow. I hate that people get to make fun of me and my culture, yet they whitewash it and use it as their own. I hate that when I got henna on my hand's people called it weird, yet they were allowed to get henna elephant tattoos. Or they make fun of me when

I get back from the temple and have a *bindi*, yet they are allowed to wear jewels on their head for Halloween.

The insults won't stop.

The rude comments aren't going away.

You can't control everyone.

No matter how nice or the kind you are, not everyone is going to like you. You have to learn to be OK with that. You need to stop telling yourself they will like and start telling yourself I'll be fine if they don't. Trust me, you are not alone. I always wanted people to like me. Now I know not everyone will. No matter what clothes I wear or how many times I send the homework, they still won't like me. That's fine with me. I don't care. I am who I am, not who society tells me to be.

I am Saanvi Dhupar.

—Saanvi Dhupar, age 13, New York.

A Waning Pang

Seawater clings to my soles as the voice of life
ripples through the trickling rivulet that leads to the sea—
the sound of the suburban coast reverberates in my cochlea.
A narrow fellow slithers against my ankles, winding
its green-flooded leaves around my foot.
Pacific eelgrass are infatuated with warmth;
they were raised with the motherly touch of sunlight.
That summer, I learned to call ochre sea stars my friends—
I even promised one that I would embroider it
in white velvet against the parchment sky.
The coastal rain felt more like a baptism,
sweeping my vexations under the heart, and
leaving me with a blessedly numb, sort of relief
that mirrors only the tail-like ebbing motion of the sea.
The water trail leaves behind a scent of saccharine and
ignites a mutiny in my aspirational soul.
The billowing periwinkle quilt rediscovered
the horse-beat rhythm that once echoed in my city.
Pampas grass sway to a sprightly dance,
and I strengthen in the gut.

I will finish my eulogy another day.

—Taeyeon Han, age 16, California.

Awe

I sat before the campfire, curled up in a camp chair trying to conserve as much heat as possible. My toes were tucked under my legs, and my hands were hidden in my sweatshirt so as to not freeze off my extremities. Without the use of my hands, I tried to balance my book, *Jane Eyre*, on my knees. The precarious state of the novel was suddenly disrupted by the loudest, thunderous noise. A roar of trees and rocks and land seeming to move. It stirred me from my literary world and beckoned me to turn around, though I couldn't see the source of the noise. Since my parents and I were camping near the base of Mount St. Helens, my immediate thought was "Oh God, it's happening again."

How do you even escape a volcanic eruption? Do you run? Do you hide in the pit toilets? But as I sat in fear, my copy of *Jane Eyre* now fallen to the ground, dangerously close to the fire, my parents seemed rather... unfazed. Interested, surprised, yet not seeming to contemplate their inevitable death as I was currently doing.

But the sound stopped, and it didn't seem to be getting significantly warmer, and the sky wasn't going dark, so my dad and I decided to go explore. We followed the trail we had hiked just hours before and discussed the possible sources of the sound. He laughed off my idea of a volcanic eruption quite quickly but countered it with his own preposterous theory of a troll and started to tell some Norwegian fairy tale. As he reached the end of the story, we came around a bend in the path and both stopped, speechless.

The thing I remember most is the smell. Sweet sap and cedar, exposed to the world for the first time in hundreds of years. It was a huge tree, splintered in half. The fallen trunk had slid down the steep hill, taking down more trees with it. The bright wood stood in graphic contradiction to the dark colors of the deciduous forest. The fate of this monstrous tree lay in the hands of some arbitrary gust of wind, or in the beak of a hungry woodpecker, breaking the last sinew of strength. It felt like I was witnessing a death, yet I was not sorrowful. I realized that this tree, as conscienceless as it was, it was not afraid of death. It knew that one day it would fall, and the moss would start to grow over it, and new shoots would sprout from the cracks that once led to its downfall.

My dad and I didn't say anything until we got back to our campsite. It was too impossible to put into words what we had just experienced. The image of this fallen life amid a peaceful forest has stuck with me so clearly, and yet a question remains unanswered. If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound?

—JK.

Liminal Space

To liminal space,
Our existences are constantly in motion.
We exist not with, but because of this movement.
Were we to stop we would falter, fail, flee.
So we exist within environments that reflect this:
transitory, itinerant, liminal.
We take steps to ground ourselves, naive that the
ground itself is on its own quest for stability.
So I say to these liminal spaces, let me breathe.
Let my mouth open and not be immediately filled
with rushing wind as if my head hung out the car
window, choking on the very thing that guarantees
my survival.
So to these spaces, I also give thanks.
They give me refuge and a certainty, a constant of
change, if nothing else.
I try to take pause here, among the rushing.
It never seems to work though.
The space becomes no longer liminal although my
body seems to stay in movement.
I'm coming to understand what these spaces and
my existence within them mean.
I don't think I could put it into words though.
My mouth would just fill with air.
So I am left to dictate this story corporeally, dance
through the liminal space, dance to the music of
the constant motion, the rushing.
And hope the spaces hear me.

—Julia Kiaer, age 17, Oregon. "I enjoy doing trapeze and acrobatics, water coloring, reading, and just being outside. "Liminal Space" is addressed to those in between moments that seem to stretch forever, when we are everywhere and nowhere. Our lives seem to constantly change, but there is a strange sense of comfort in that. "Awe" is a non-fiction short story about a camping trip. The purpose of the piece is to convey emotion and "awe" without ever saying the word."

Our 33rd Year Special Sale on Back Issues

To celebrate our 33rd year, we are offering 10 back issues for \$33 (or 33 back issues for \$99), including

S & H within the U.S.! To order, e-mail us at
info@skippingstones.org or by snail mail:

P. O. Box 3939, Eugene OR 97403 USA

(E-mail us for extra postage charges for other countries.)

Liz Duke-Moe, age 17, Idaho

I grew up swimming in rivers and camping in the mountains, which continues to greatly influence my constructions. I have a deep appreciation for the wilderness around me and have led three different organizations bent on conservation. I hope to major in biology when I attend college and further my ability to help protect nature. Each of my submissions pulls from an aspect of nature that I deemed deserved special recognition due to the current world's climate.

My chosen media were ceramics, prose, and poetry. For my sculpture, I mixed glazes until their color reflected the red clay of some Idahoan river banks. The clay is a B-Mix white, ideal for sculpting. The statue (see p. 23) shows a **Weeping Buddha**, based on a story about a warrior who accidentally injures his son in battle due to his lust for domination. Once he learns that he has injured his son, he falls to his knees and weeps. The Buddha's position is supposed to bring the heart chakra close to the ground. This placement is sacred and a vulnerable spot for anyone. He is weeping because of advancing climate and environmental issues that are taking hold of our world. Moss is seen creeping from the crevices, to express a feeling to the audience that it comes from inside the weeping Buddha. Signs of moss are synonymous to signs of water and life. This is supposed to show there is still hope for our current conservation efforts.

Earth Sculpture (see p. 23). This ceramic is depicting a cartoon Earth opening its mouth for the audience. Inside the mouth sits a plastic bottle, and bubbling from the top, dark purple glaze is oil. I wanted this piece to be understood by younger audiences and still convey how the climate crisis is rapidly approaching. Over a thousand oil spills occur in U.S. waterways every year, and I want this piece to bring awareness to that frightening statistic. It was created with a white clay and fired with silica gel to give off the look of the shiny surface of water.

Save Idaho Salmon T-shirt design (see p. 23) was created by Youth Salmon Protectors, the youth organization I have been avidly involved with. We have been helping the campaign of "Save the Salmon" put forth by Congressman Mike Simpson's plan to breach the four lower dams on the Snake River. By getting rid of these dams, the salmon will be able to return

home from the ocean and their numbers will not be endangered. We have been working closely with Boise High School and other groups to create T-shirts, inspire youth to write thousands of letters to their representatives, and learn more about this keystone species. We hope to help the Native American tribes that rely heavily on salmon to secure the protection needed to allow flourishing populations of fish. We will continue to work together until the salmon are saved.

An Ode to Cod

*frozen waters, ice picks in gritted hands with dirty teeth.
a silver scale on the bottom of the ocean. the diver unable
to tell which is plastic and which is home. the boat sways,
nets eager to jump. a desperate splash, the first hunt begins.
fishers swing to action, a deadly dance in an ice ocean.
Suksess! eat tonight, warm prinsefisk sits in full stomachs.
thank you Home, you always provide for us. we will always
honor this. for water is deemed the currency of cold warriors.
but another day: same dance. the next day: same dance.
an ice ocean begins to melt. a fish population begins to
decline. there are more terms for critical population
numbers, than successful population numbers. does this
reveal true intentions? Tusen takk, cod. a species credited
for loving nations. for supporting massive fisheries. for
driving myriad economies. for feeding millions. fisheries
meaning people appreciated this fish dead, more than alive.
even the bones of these fish could not rest. could not be
buried by their own forfedre. thank you Home, we took
everything. skinned anything that flopped, that gasped
for Norwegian air. we dance on their graves, my warriors.
the next day: a red scale caught eyes. a new resource?
time to learn dinners made of sockeye salmon.
create critical zones, each lower than the last,
to save our backs. we will steal from different natives
this time! Tusen takk, fishing rod. you've outlived
species. survivor's guilt goes away, son. cod grows
back, son. salmon are plentiful, krigere. sharpen those
ice picks. we did it once before, will we do it once again?*

—Liz Duke-Moe, 17, Norwegian American, Idaho.

*The poem is about cod and the Scandinavian way of life.
The cod are now vulnerable to becoming extinct due to over-
fishing. **Norwegian Words:** Prinsefisk: Dish with cod and
lemon; Suksess: Success; Tusen takk: Many thanks; Forfedre:
Ancestors; Krigere: Warriors; Ha Det: Goodbye.*

Christopher Josczyk, 14, Connecticut

Cosmo Adventure

Glistening stars fill the sky, emerging from the light as darkness slowly drains into the air.

A large crescent replaces the fading sun and the last drops of light are lost,
Moonlight illuminates the silent globe, leaving eerie markings of its existence.

Speckled dots gleam in the atmosphere, an innumerable amount,
All is silent except for the wind and rustling of leaves, mere pawns of darkness.

On land and sea,
Stone and sand,
Emptiness fills the land.

Millions of stars cover earth instantly like a bright blanket.

However, the victory of darkness is short lived and life soon emerges through cracks of darkness' mask,
And once the moon retires from its dark reign.

The sun explodes into the sky, leaving trails of light where its debris are scattered,
The dreary and sparkling cosmos disappear into the sky, fading, knowing that they will have their
redemption the next night.

Returning to a natural and simple blue, the sky simple and exuberant in its light colors,
Effortless as this beauty may come, it is unique and unmatched.

The world will remember you with grace and honor, sun.

Spaceship Ride

"Let's go to the moon!" my brother said with excitement,

"We'll build a spaceship and we'll fly,"

"Up and away so far and high."

So we got to work on the grant advancement,
With huge sheets of metal, iron screws, and bolts.

Our rocket loomed over us, tall and amazing, invisible to the human eye,
Huge engines and maps and a steering system made for the grandest of rockets.

At last, when the job was done and the work was through,
We got into our huge rocket.

We raced into the cosmos, past planets and stars,
Past Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, and Mars,
Past tiny Pluto and gassy Neptune, till we stopped at a sudden darkness,
We looked back at grass earth, surrounded by stars and endless space,
I could tell by the look on his face, my brother knew that our place was tiny,
Incomparable to the rest of the world.

We continued our journey, past nebulae and comets,
Gazing back at earth less and less often.

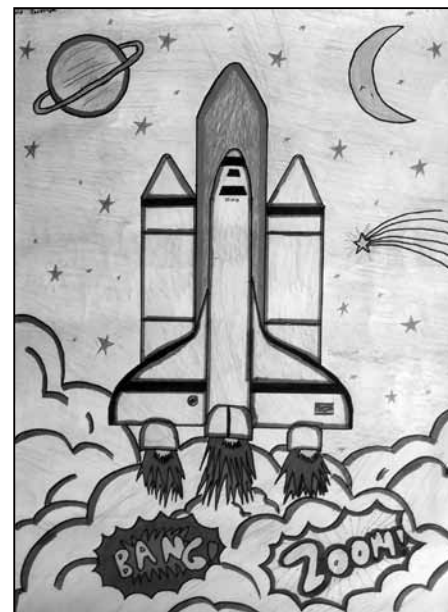
The millions of stars in my sight are blinding, and come together to form one solid bright light,
I shield my eyes from the brightness and can see through squinted eyes.

Suddenly, I am not in my rocket, but in my soft bed where I lay.

I stare up at the ceiling with a calm smile and see cutouts of stars on the ceiling.

I close my eyes and reenter my dream.

—Christopher Josczyk, 14, Connecticut. He adds: "My favorite school subjects are math, science, and Latin, and I enjoy playing soccer, inventing, reading, and riding my bike outside of school. At school, in Jazz Band, I play the keyboard. I am an avid reader. I love drawing and painting as well as writing poems, including participating in Poetry Out Loud."



Wake Up! “Climb out of the shadows. Wake up. Come see the Sun.”

Wake up. The world is crying. Wake up. People are dying. People are being killed like flies. The whole world has become a warzone, and all I’m worried about is getting a boyfriend. The whole world has erupted into chaos and all I can think about is myself. Why don’t I have more friends? Why don’t people like me? Why am I so bad at math? Why is life so boring? Why am I so sad? Well, I’ve woken up for good. I’ve rubbed the fog from my eyes and woken up for good.

I am never going back to sleep. I will feel my pain. I will face my fears and then acknowledge my privilege. I will fight until the world is a safe place for everyone. All lives don’t matter until Black lives do.

“About 1 in every 1,000 black men is expected to die at the hands of police”(Khan, 2019). “That’s better odds of being killed by police than you have of winning a lot of scratch-off lottery games”(Edwards, 2019).

The world is so unfair. History is repeating itself: innocent Muslims are being killed. Human beings locked away in cages like rabid animals. Over 1.5 million Muslims are being held in these horrible camps in China. The humanity on Earth is torn to pieces like paper, shattered like glass, blown away with the wind. Blood blanketing the cool grass, painting the world a scarlet red. I’m trying to keep fighting, but I’m crying.

I am never going back to sleep. Society doesn’t care if you’re hurting, depressed, scared or sick. Society craves money, power, and lust. Sex sells as they say. People displayed like precious gems, their worth based on one single number. Nine percent of the world has an eating disorder. We are constantly being told to hate our bodies. I can’t take it anymore.

There is so much wrong with the world. It’s bewildering, it’s sickening, it’s debilitating. Fire, pills, envy, blood. My heart is a burning flame fighting against the morning rain. Ice, death, greed, lies. My eyes bleeding pools of strength, slowly seeping into the cool grass. Drip, drip, drip.

My head is polluted with a thick smog of lies. The same smog that runs rampant through our skies. I’ve wanted to die. I’ve broken down. I’ve hated myself for so many years. I’ve blamed it on the world. But I’ve learned to feel my pain and face the storm. We have to

keep fighting. We have no other choice. Why do people care about who someone loves? Why are we telling girls their bodies aren’t good enough? Why do people care about the color of someone’s skin?

We have to teach our children empathy. It’s more important than a lot of things we teach in schools. We only have one shot at this little thing called life so why waste it being hateful? Wake up. Climb out of the shadows. Wake up. Come see the sun.

—Bella Melardi, age 16, Italian, Spanish and Welsh, Ontario, Canada. She loves writing, art and 1980s movies.

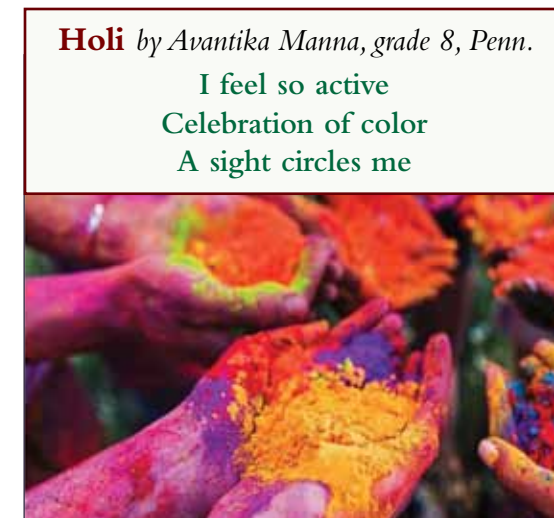
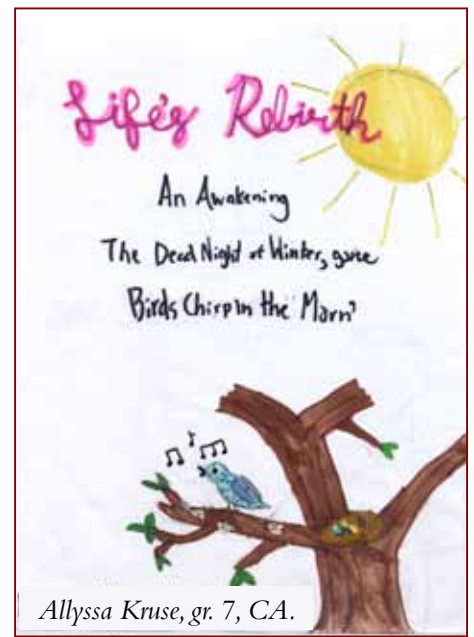
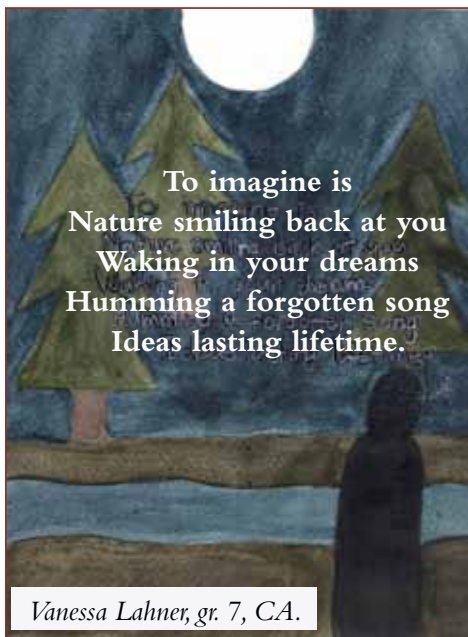
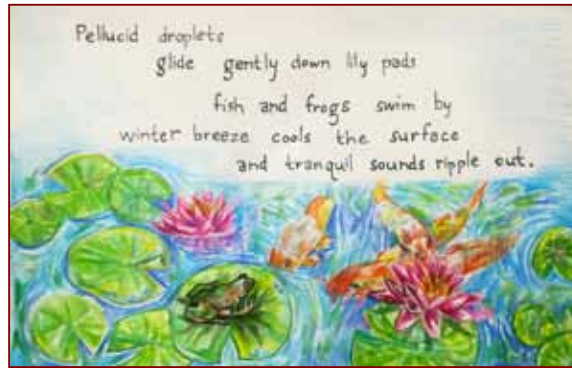
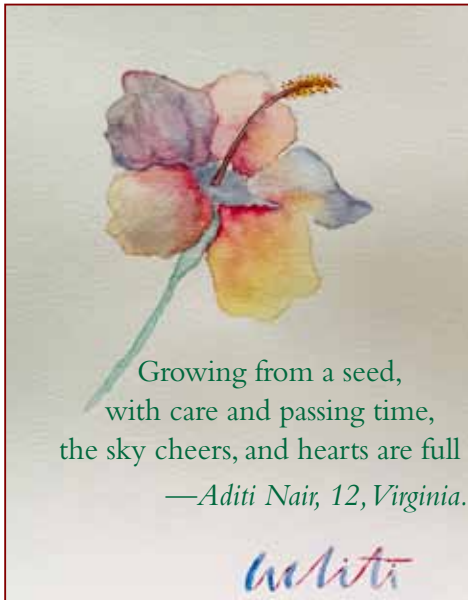
Dreams (back cover) by Tinklyn Xiang, 14, Canada.

Dream 2018. *Acrylic painting:* I completed this drawing in 2018. I’ve always wanted peace in my life. I have been through a lot of failures that made me in to a better person. I have been through bullying, cyber bullying, exclusion, and self-harm. I didn’t like my life at all. The sunset in this painting is peaceful and beautiful, just like how I want my life to be. After I moved to Canada in 4th grade, I stopped playing piano, but I always wanted to continue to play. I really love expressing myself through my paintings and hope for the best.

Dream 2020. *Acrylic.* Due to COVID-19, I struggled throughout February–May 2020. I started skipping school and not handing in my homework. I lost my self on the internet; however, because of the Coronavirus lockdown, I started drawing every day, I completed hundreds of drawings. Even though I was able to draw everyday, the Internet is like a black hole; it kept sucking me back in to it. Soon after, my mom bought me a piano, which not only got me off of social media, but also helped me find my passion in art. I remember during July and August of 2020, my mom would take me to the beach every to watch the ocean waves, and calm me down.

Dream 2050. *Acrylic.* As we are going through the pandemic, when takeout and delivery food is ordered, we are creating more waste. Climate change is happening faster than ever. I show how climate change may not only affect us but also Arctic animals. For us to live on this planet longer, we have to start changing now.

Noteworthy Haiku Art Entries



Alanna G., grade 2, California.

Saanjali Sai Vinay, gr. 2, California.

www.SkippingStones.org

Skipping Stones

P. O. Box 3939

Eugene, Oregon 97403

facebook.com/SkippingStonesMagazine

Twitter: @SkpStns

Dream 2018



Dream 2020



Dream 2050 by Tinklyn (Jinyuan) Xiang, age 14, British Columbia, Canada. (Also see p. 34.)

