

# LABY RINTH

COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO • THE WRITERS' PROJECT



ISSUE 7

2018

The Writers' Project and Labyrinth staff would like to extend our sincere thanks to:

*The CSM Honors Project faculty, staff, and students, with special thanks to David Laderman for their continued support of our club and our vision,*

*our magical and inspiring club advisors, Sarah Mangin and Jill Kolongowski,*

*champion of the arts, Rebecca Alex,*

*the always encouraging ASCSM,*

*and*

*the students who submitted their work to be considered for this publication.*

*Keep writing. Keep creating. Keep learning.*



Labyrinth Issue 7  
Copyright © 2018  
Friday Afternoon Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher at the address below.

writersprojectsubmissions@gmail.com

# contents

## on edge

---

- 7 **The Decisive Moment**  
Michael Adachi
- 9 **Refuge from Ruin**  
Robert W. Dixon
- 12 **Almanac**  
Damian Wang
- 14 **And here's Sal...**  
Christine Tomberg
- 19 **Worth Loving**  
Dominique Maneri
- 20 **Freedom from Hate**  
Rubi Erika Salazar Colorado

## all the little live things

---

- 23 **A Space Between**  
Theresa Martin
- 24 **Hot Snow**  
Theresa Martin
- 26 **Ms. Wolf's Miserable Prison Tower**  
Xavier Lacasse
- 31 **A House**  
Sau Vong
- 32 **Fake Monogamy**  
Lily Gentleman
- 34 **Weight**  
Colby Riley

## different shores

---

- 39 **Bending, Breaking**  
James Daniel Bitoy
- 40 **How to Be a Uyghur in China**  
Anonymous
- 42 **Where Are They?**  
Melika Nejad
- 46 **Mangkukulam**  
Veronica Jardeleza
- 49 **1980**  
Irma Ramos Arreaga
- 52 **Creation Story**  
Mei-Mei Chun-Moy



## **Editorial**

Gabriela Topete Eng Goon • Editor-In-Chief

Justin Alley • Managing Editor

Aida Leonardo • Senior Editor

Sitt Paing • Senior Editor

Sara Falaha • Editor

Oscar Yen • Editor

## **Design**

Megan Mai • Creative Director

Peijiang Xie • Illustrator

Ariana Davarpanah • Designer

Maya Riley • Designer

## **Advisors**

Sarah Mangin

Jill Kolongowski

Painting by **Erin Dahl**

# Letter From the Editor

It was early November of last year. *Labyrinth* was awarded first place for Student Print Newsletter at the National Collegiate Honors Council's annual conference. Due to an oversight, none of us were informed. While the ceremony was taking place in Boston, our team was back at College of San Mateo, crammed into our small Honors Lounge, having a passionate discussion about how to make the next issue better. A few weeks after the conference, we received an email with pictures from the ceremony and accidentally found out we had won.

While everyone was upset and disappointed we had missed such an important occasion, I was oddly satisfied. I could not think of a better representation of what *Labyrinth* is and what it does. Our team works behind the scenes to elevate the powerful, unheard voices of students. The writers and artists that we publish create worlds and narratives out of the shadows. It is by exploring the unknown that we find our true voices.

To you, our reader, thank you for your continued support. I hope that these voices of strength, hope, and resilience will inspire you the same way they inspired me.

**Gabriela Topete Eng Goon**  
*Editor in Chief*





# ON EDGE

Photograph by Nafeila Waili

# The Decisive Moment

*By Michael Adachi*

Passenger after passenger, on an empty train,  
a forgotten color, now black and white.  
It waits in stillness to be seen,  
but has no audience. No one in sight.

We watch from behind the dark chamber  
a curious cast of characters;  
their light lingers in our eyes,  
green as Douglas firs.

A one-man cannon,  
he releases his breath like a lopsided weight,  
steadies his hand,  
and has only but to wait.



Illustration by **Peijiang Xie**

*This illustration was created for the poem "Refuge from Ruin" and inspired by the strength and resilience of those affected by the California wildfires.*



# Refuge from Ruin

*By Robert W. Dixon*

“And Fire and Ice Within Me Fight  
Beneath the suffocating night.”

A.E. Housman,  
*A Shropshire Lad*

Before you understand the warmth of warm  
you must know the burn of ice:  
how slow the glacier grinds  
waiting in line for lukewarm soup  
in a center for evacuees;  
avoiding eye contact  
with imagined icy stares,  
burning with hate;  
of undercover ICE  
authorities insinuate  
who deserves to be helped  
- or deported in disgrace.  
In that wall of smoky haze,  
between the wildfire's blaze  
and that tenuous sanctuary,  
they would fail to fatally pierce  
the tender places,  
which cling like smoldering embers  
to memories of a mother's warmth,  
safety, comfort, and reassurance,  
and desperately yearn to reignite  
from a flickering spark  
of unconditional kindness  
in anyone's eyes.

How giving up on one country  
to give hope for your children's future,  
means giving hope to something  
that burns more brightly  
than the darkness and uncertainty  
of discrimination and oppression,  
racism, poverty, hunger,  
and the dehydrated tears  
of yours and your children's  
silent suffering  
as strangers in a strange land.

Only by remembering that vision  
of the Promised Land  
from the summit above  
the Valley of the Moon  
will the firestorms of devastation  
that devoured whole neighborhoods  
begin to dim in your memory  
and rekindle the hope of humanity  
that can shine more brightly  
than vicious voracious flames  
ignited by carelessness,  
downed power lines,  
or an arsonist's incendiary insanity.

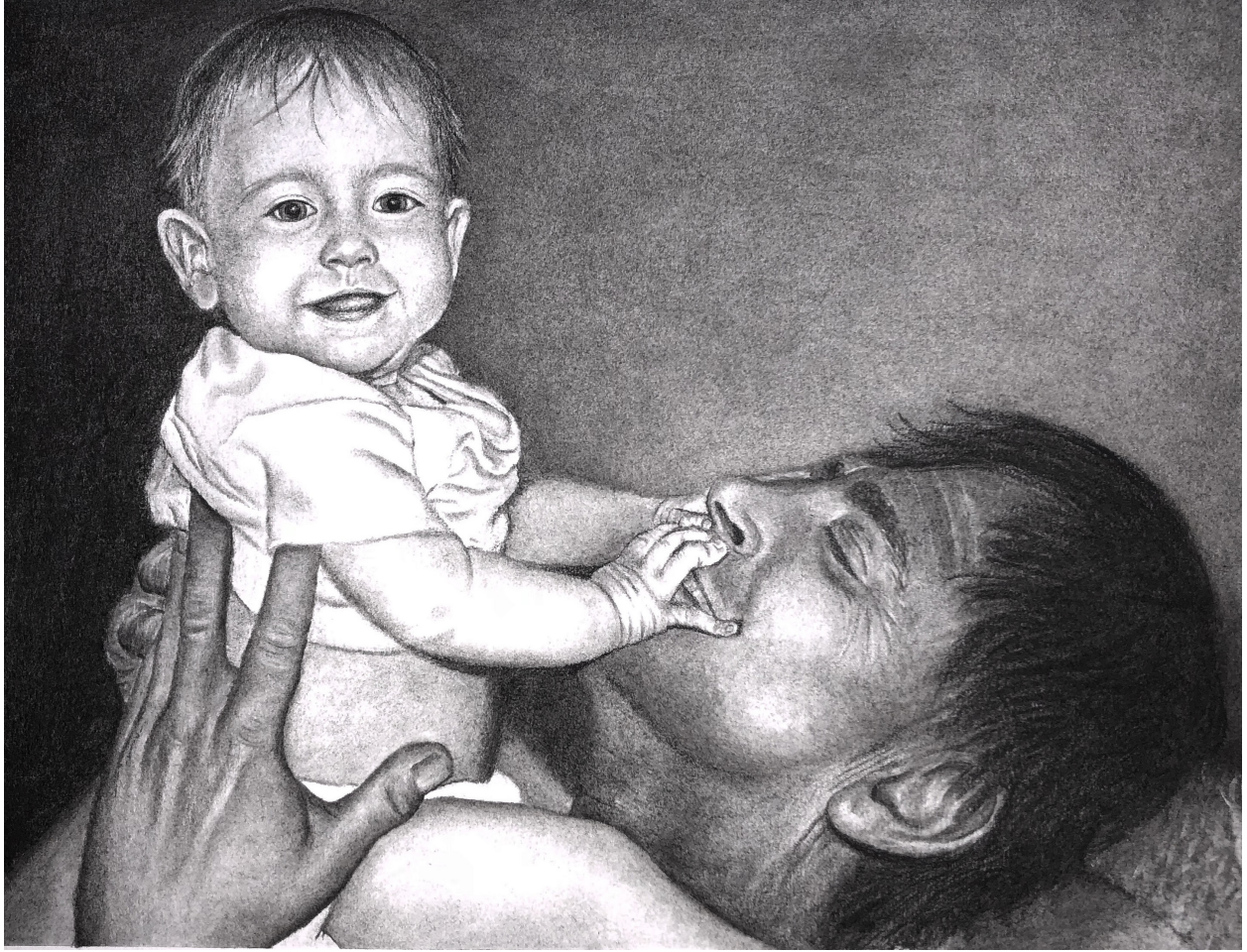
Before you understand the softness of warm,  
you must see the cremated skeletons  
of someone's loved ones  
inhumed in rubble and ash,  
or the charred collar of a family pet  
lying half buried in mud and ice  
after winter rains fall  
and fresh white snows  
have blanketed the landscape  
like a giant gauze  
healing sores.

When the smoke clears, and  
the last grapes have been picked  
and bottled for a lavish banquet's  
epicurean accoutrement,  
you must wait for spring,  
and come first or last  
to work in the Lord's Vineyards  
to find what belongs to you,  
and begin anew somewhere  
in the fragility between  
the iceberg of cold shoulders,

endlessly grinding paths  
beneath the surface,  
and the burdensome bearing of  
inescapable scorching heat  
everywhere and above.

In the calm between either side,  
you look up  
from that lukewarm bowl of soup  
and catch the swollen red eyes  
of a homeless landowner  
who has ostensibly  
lost everything  
but the clothes on their back.

You exchange the tepidness  
of understanding  
that the past is completely gone.  
Then, in the distance of tomorrow,  
through the ashen gray of murky  
tears,  
the future appears  
contained in a glimmer of hope  
you both have equal entitlement to,  
and are willing and eager to share,  
in the resigned, distraught face of loss,  
realizing you need each other  
more than ever before.



Drawing by **Katie Borden**

# Almanac

*By Damian Wang*

“Let me die.”

The lab assistant marks it down on his paper. It probably says something along the lines of, “Subject Xzephyr 3309 proclaims want of death, again.” Exhaustive to everyone involved.

“Let me die. Or let me go, just let me—”

Something unforgiving, thunks into the back of his head and he's forced to cut himself off, gasping towards his chest, mouth agape like the opening of a tunnel as wheezes rip through him. His vision is hazily pointed towards the floor, towards his strapped feet. He hasn't moved them in weeks.

Hearing the weight of authority coming up behind him, that seven-seven-eight heavy in-step, he forces out another dense exhale. It's too easy to feel the control permeating throughout the room and striking every other lab worker, making them duck their eyes towards their clipboards.

“When?”

He quiets his gasping momentarily, breathing harshly through his nose instead.

“When will you learn to shut it? If you can't, it's easy enough for us to help you.”

He doesn't look back up.

“So let us help you.”

✱

Each day it's something new: new ideas, new tests, new experimentation amidst isles of controlled violence, all in the name of science to achieve

progress. For humanity, for anyone who doesn't have to suffer, for those that look to the future with naive hope and practiced ignorance.

Today it's a new discovery.

“You're a god,” they say, as they slice open his arms. 39 cuts each. He counts, eyes trained on the blood seeping away, the wounds closing exactly 8.3 seconds after opening.

“We can do more. Faster. Make him heal faster,” that dark, bouldered voice directs.

He only looks on. He can't look away, anyway. The straps hold his head in place and the wire speculums adhere to his eyelids, preventing his eyes from closing, from resting. With the sedation shots they give him every 2.3 hours on the dot, he can never seem to make his body obey. Only they get to control it.

✱

“You're a god,” they cry, as they turn each tethered machine to maximum capacity. The electricity rattles him so hard, the currents surge so strong, that he can feel his ribs cracking. Feel the dirty dirty snap of each one, feel the sharp sting as fragments penetrate his skin from within, and his skin - burning, burning, scorching from within, beyond any human measure of pain.

He wants to beg them to let him die. But his teeth have broken, keep breaking even as they reform, and all he knows is the infinite space between pain and...something he can never put

a name on.

Two hundred and sixty-five thousand and five hundred and fifty-four minutes. That's how long it's been.

✱

"You're a god," they roar, heavy with jubilation, as 14 pairs of hands hold him down, down. Press him into cold metal and make him feel like a caged animal. Throttle his senses with hurthurthurt, flood his vision with supernovas exploding. He can't breathe he can't see he can't hear all he can is feel this. This hurt and nothing else. Each heal is replaced by another wound. There is no reprise. He wants it to stop. Wants to stop feeling, want to stop being.

The sun never rises here.

✱

"Don't put him under just yet. I want him to feel this next one."

"Yes, sir."

"We're close. I know it. We're so damn close. He's the revolution. This is it."

✱

He's lost track of what day it is. The seconds and minutes that he tallied so close to his heart as some sort of weak, miniscule anchor to the world have long been lost to the artificial lighting of the lab, of 114 pairs of hands holding him down, prodding at him, of voices that praise him for being godly one instance and shout commands the next for more, more, always more, more hurt.

"*I'm a god,*" he manages to form the thought. That opaque voice is telling his cronies to gear up the machines and put him under again and he feels coldhotnothingcoldhot all over.

"*I'm a god and I wish to be human.*"



Photograph by Yueying Wu

# And here's Sal...

*By Christine Tomberg*

Diary Excerpt

June 14, 2011

Dr. Carol has asked to talk to me about Sal, and I figured that she would. I wonder if in her examinations she saw some of the things I did when we were growing up. He is 46 now, and he has managed his symptoms. He presents well. Can she see it? When I was five, I remember him playing in the backyard as I was standing on the kitchen porch watching. I can see him clearly, standing on the grass under a clothesline, left hand perched on the pole of the clothesline and his right hand on his waist, as if in defiance. Then, in the middle of playing, he blurted out, "This is ridiculous!" I didn't know what the word "ridiculous" meant at the time, but I knew my brother was different. Epiphanies always seem to happen in the kitchen. Another time, when I was standing in the kitchen in our home on Mare Island, I saw my brother standing outside the screen door afraid to come into the house to have to explain to my mom what hap-

pened to him. I could see that there was blood on his face from a long scratch on his cheek. The scar is still faintly there today. My mother asked what happened to him, and he said the kids pushed him out the window. He was only six, and I felt so bad for my brother. In alarm, my Mom asked Sal to confirm what he said: "They pushed you out the window?!" He wasn't crying, but it was apparent he was very sad. Mom immediately went to the school, and later, as I got older, I found out that the class bully had indeed pushed him through a low window.

I'm still trying to remember what he was like when I was very young. I remember a time when I was around five years old. Again, I was standing in the kitchen. I watched my brother light a match. Mom was upstairs. I watched my brother hold the match stick until he could not hold it any longer. Then he dropped the match into a trash can. I was watching quietly, and then the fire grew. My brother kept watching too...until finally I thought I had better head up stairs and tell Mom. I told Mom that there was a

fire in the kitchen. She shrieked, "Fire!" and ran down to find my brother still staring in amazement at the fire in the trash can. She was mortified and doused the fire with water. I don't remember what happened after that. I'm pretty sure my brother got yelled at.

I do know that throughout the years my brother hardly had any friends, and he was always getting into clumsy accidents...tripping, chipping his teeth, falling down in sports, getting bitten by dogs. When he was younger he had problems with eye contact. He was constantly daydreaming. He was bullied throughout high school. Kids can be mean. When we were in Norfolk, he seemed to be fine. He had a friend named Kevin, who was just as eccentric as he was, and they got along fine. And then we moved a few times, and I don't recall him having any close friends for the rest of high school. I don't think my parents were equipped to help him, and school somehow let him sleep right through it. He barely finished, and he tried to go to college but couldn't get through.

I have never written this down anywhere...never discussed it. I must have been sixteen or seventeen. It was late at night, and I was lying in bed listening. I could hear my brother agitated in the other room talking to my father. I could make out the frustration in my father's voice. As with many conversations, it was most likely about my brother failing school. And then I heard it, I heard my brother say he wanted to commit suicide. I listened for my father. All he could say was, "Why?" I could tell he

did not know what to do.

Today, my brother still struggles with many things that he doesn't understand about himself. So hopefully Dr. Carol will be able to clue him in on better ways for working in the world. He has been on and off of jobs for the last six years, trying to find where he can focus his strengths. Early in the year he was excited about a contract position on a military base, but after a week of work, he could not catch up with the rest of the team. They had to let him go, and the manager felt so bad about it. He probably knew that my brother had some kind of challenges. He even called him when he got home to find out if he was okay.

Sal has the support of family who understand him, but he still has few friends. I only know one of friend he keeps in touch with, and he met her through a job that he managed to stay in for some time. He was a lab assistant doing janitorial work, autoclaving equipment that involved cleaning loads of beakers and test tubes. I think his friend's name is Donna. My brother once told me that she is estranged from her parents and that she lost a brother to suicide. She seems to understand Sal. She is the only person I hear my brother talk about as a friend.

There's one other thing that stands out to me in my memories of my brother. Late into the wee hours of the night, he would call into a radio show for political discussions. The host would always announce, "And here's Sal from Sacramento. We're listening..." I never actu-

ally heard him, because I was fast asleep by then. I didn't know he was calling in until Dad told me. Dad stayed up late nights listening to the same radio station to get to sleep, and then one time he heard the host introduce Sal. Dad was amazed. Dad said that he sounded like a distinguished professor talking about politics and that he was so proud of Sal in that moment.

My brother is brilliant at remembering all kinds of little details in history that most people would forget...odd facts, trivia, last night's winning Jeopardy question. He saved stacks of newspapers, books, and magazines. When he lived alone, there would be two foot-tall stacks in his apartment. He also saved notes from me from years before. They would be about trivial errands, like when I told him to stack his laundry in the bin. Similarly, he would save bolts in hopes of finding the lost nut.

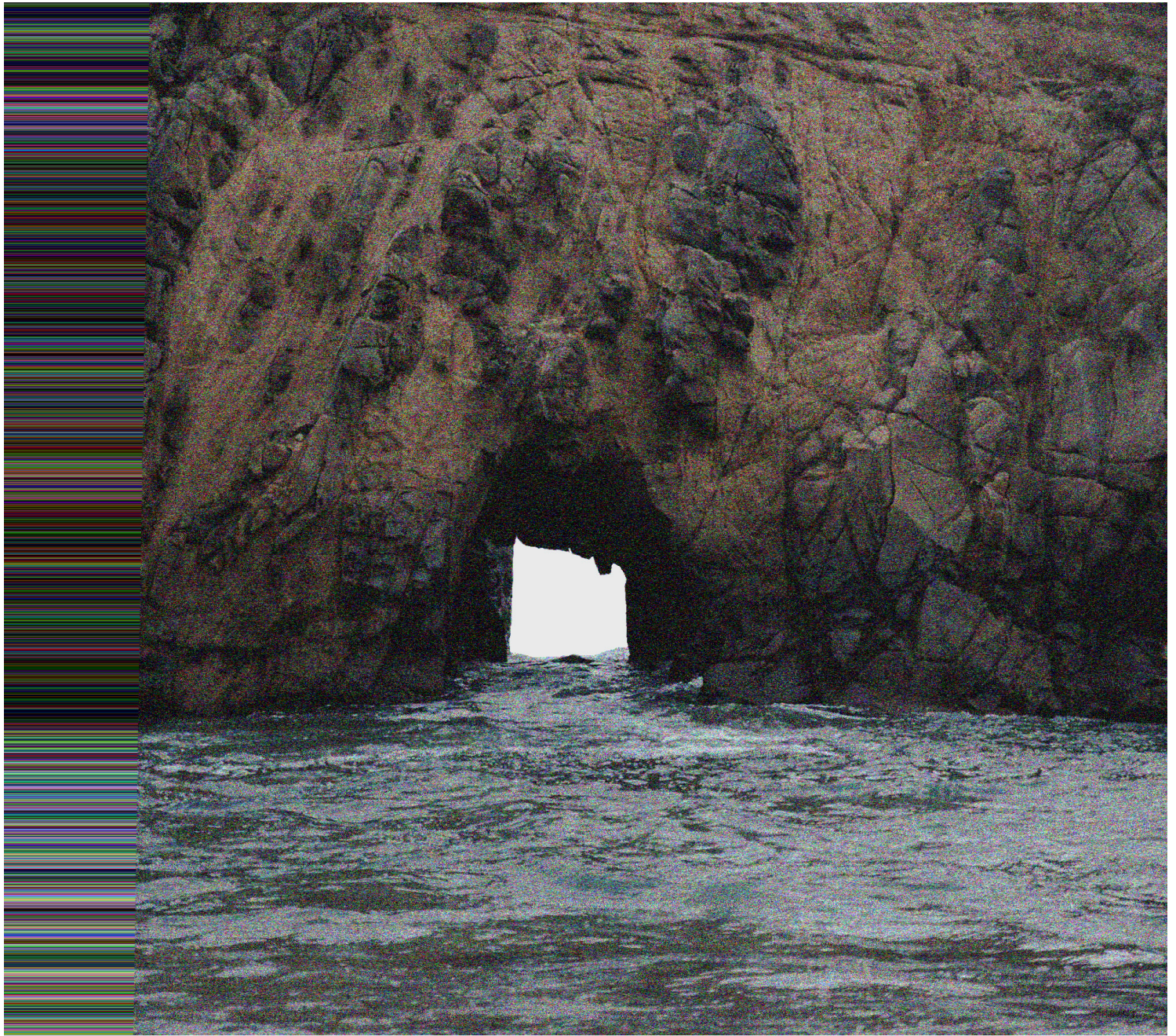
My brother has been a fascination and somewhat of a mystery to me all of my life. I have spent a lifetime trying to figure out how his brain works. He is one of the strongest people I know. He perseveres through challenging times with a sense of humility and humor even when he most feels like giving up. Hopefully, Dr. Carol will shed some new light on his condition, on these quirky attributes and talents that often confine him. I hope she can help Sal learn more about what sets him apart in the world and what could set him free.







Photograph by **Jose Pizarro**



Art by Abigail Nepomuceno

# Worth Loving

*By Dominique Maneri*

They say people can only know you as deeply as they know themselves.

Look for the deep people.

Look for the darkest seas with the mysterious creatures.

Look for the tidal waves and the vast cascading ripples.

Those are the people who will know how to love you,

as long as they've mastered their waves,

skipped rocks across their waters,

and played among the creatures that reside in the deepest waters below.

Those are the ones worth loving.

# Freedom from Hate

*By Rubi Erika Salazar Colorado*

It's hard to let go of this hate  
When this is said to be a free state

It's hard to let go of this hate  
When they want to incarcerate

To regulate and discriminate

It's hard to let go of this hate  
We left our state to emigrate

They say they don't segregate  
They say we overpopulate

What happened to emancipate?  
Instead we deport and separate

It's hard to let go of this hate  
When all they do is alienate

Photograph by Nafeila Waili

It's hard to let go of this hate  
With all these public debates  
That frustrate and humiliate

It's hard to let go of this hate  
When I don't know where to navigate

The immigration conversation in this state  
Is not something to celebrate

It's hard to let go of this hate  
But we must learn to educate  
And eradicate all this hate

Open the gate  
It's time to change our fate  
We must eradicate this hate  
So we can celebrate

Photograph by Nafeila Waili



ALL  
THE

LITTLE

LIVE  
THINGS

# A Space Between

*By Theresa Martin*

Poetry is the morning.  
Is the first bite of cereal,  
Still crunchy, the milk has not  
Written itself into the blank  
Spaces.  
Is bare feet on bare boards  
The thin light before  
Anyone wakes;  
Fills empty air with  
Day words.  
It is not day.  
It is silent word time.  
It is the space between  
Sleep and action;  
It is blank spaces  
Where the bite of outside on your skin  
Should cover the ground with snow  
With whiteness  
Like blank spaces floating  
Down on to everything  
Silencing our busy rat life  
With a stillness we can settle into  
If we know how.

Poetry is thin light  
And bare tongues  
Unuttering lips to  
Still our shaking,  
Our aching-to-be-making  
Hands.  
Poetry is empty mornings  
No one home  
Empty lips  
Bare fingers pressing  
Pressing  
Disappearing, shivering,  
Painfully, in the  
snow.

# Hot Snow

*By Theresa Martin*

There's a screaming  
So quiet you could miss it.  
It lives  
In the corner of her mouth. In  
The distance between streetlights.

Behind car doors,  
It's the hot snow  
Breathed upon the window,  
Forming around sweaty  
Fingertips  
Pressed against the cool glass  
In a splattered pattern  
Like a template for relief,  
A diagram of ecstasy.

In the heavy yellow light  
She tilts her head back  
A crack appears in the window  
Like the shadow of  
A piercing wail





Photograph by **Bipin Bhusal Chhetri**

# Ms. Wolf's Miserable Prison Tower

*By Anonymous*

*Part 1*

*The Light Bulb*

A soft, raspy snoring disturbed the otherwise placid air of Ms. Wolf's tidy home in Washington D.C. Everything was as it should be, as it was every other night, when Ms. Wolf went to sleep. The curtain was closed, letting in only a sliver of moonlight which fell at Ms. Wolf's feet. A red-eye flight buzzed past in the distance as Ms. Wolf peacefully dozed on, her cropped, black hair rustling with the breeze from outside. The corners of her ashen silk sheets also fluttered in the breeze, pulling back far enough at times to reveal her sickly pale, bony body, which trembled slightly with the cold wind when the sheets did so.

The darkness of night was suddenly broken when a warm, pink light flooded the room, spilling every which way, creeping under Ms. Wolf's drawers, bookshelf, and covers, leaving not a single shadow under any of her furniture.

Ms. Wolf sat up slowly, dropped her teddy bear on the bed, and sleepily rubbed her closed eyes with her palms.

Once her eyes had adjusted to the light, she saw a light bulb in the middle of her room gently swinging above her feet. She stared at the newcomer with a mix of fright and disbelief. Searching her memory, she scratched the back of her head, unable to reason how the bulb had found its way into her room. Ms. Wolf looked around, searching for a new light switch. There was none to be found anywhere, none on the wall, and no cord hanging by the bulb.

She leaned closer and carefully scrutinized the rosy glow of the bulb. With a touch of gray at its pinkish center, it was of a color she had not seen before—strikingly beautiful yet jarring all at once. It was fascinating to Ms. Wolf, who had never seen a light bulb produce gray light before.

Enthralled, Ms. Wolf gingerly tapped the hot light, quickly pulling back her hand afterwards. The bulb, which had stopped moving, began peacefully swinging again. She then nudged it once

more, redirecting its sway. The light flickered ruby and back to its original pink. Ms. Wolf blinked a few times, flabbergasted by the bulb's bizarre behavior. Then, instinctively, she tugged the bulb's string. The room returned to the darkness of the night, leaving Ms. Wolf with a childish grin dancing on her lips.

She pulled the string again, bringing the light back on. Then she tugged again. And again. And again. Merrily toying with the bulb, she giggled like a child who'd received a new trinket on Christmas. Scenes from her childhood flashed across her mind, her bright, jocular young self running around her parents' yard, naively enjoying life, joking with her few friends, playing with sticks and other toys.

Ms. Wolf jerked back and shook the memories from her mind. There could be no happiness, no nostalgia in the life she led. It simply could not be allowed. Were she to feel any semblance of gaiety, she could slip down a treacherous path, one where she would gullibly eat up every lie the outside world relentlessly fed her.

A spot on the bulb caught her attention again, and she forgot all about her childhood and whatever remained of anyone else. There appeared to be a tiny crack at the base of the bulb, rooting from where the string was tied. Perplexed, she grabbed the bulb in one swift, abrupt motion, accidentally clutching it too tightly and spreading the crack to the other side.

Ms. Wolf gasped when she realized what she'd done and frantically released the bulb, letting it arc across the room in the way of a pendulum perturbed by shaking ground. Ms. Wolf could see the knot holding the light fixture in place slowly loosening. Her eyes widened in fear as she saw her precious toy slip from its place and crash onto the concrete floor, shattering into piec-

es which flew into every corner of the room. The comforting pink light vanished, leaving Ms. Wolf stranded alone on her bed, surrounded by shadows and broken glass. Only the light shining from her window gave her any vision, so powerful had that source of light been that adjusting her eyes to the darkness now would be next to impossible.

Angrily, she threw the covers aside and climbed down to the floor, bent over on her knees and picked at the sharp, cutting pieces of glass strewn all about. Black, viscous fluid oozed from her long, emaciated fingers, running down her forearm as she raised a piece of broken glass to the pale moonlight. The liquid's warmth on her arm made Ms. Wolf shudder with pleasure, the stinging at her fingertips and knees pushing her further into ecstasy as she crawled on the floor, crushing the glassy remnants. Ms. Wolf's eyes rolled back into her skull, now that she was squirming on the floor, rolling around in the broken shards.

Then she stood up, let out a sigh of delight, and walked toward the window with a jubilant hop in her step. She shoved the curtain aside. Moonlight gushed into the room, unveiling the gory scene that Ms. Wolf had left in her wake.

Ms. Wolf peered out of the window, squinting her eyes as she glared at the bright moon. As she observed the giant crescent in the sky, she thought she saw it morph into a misshapen skull akin to one a child would draw in make-believe pirate scenes. Then, she watched it return to its original form, a half circle with a bite taken out of its core. Except, now something else seemed different about it. It seemed larger than it had been before.

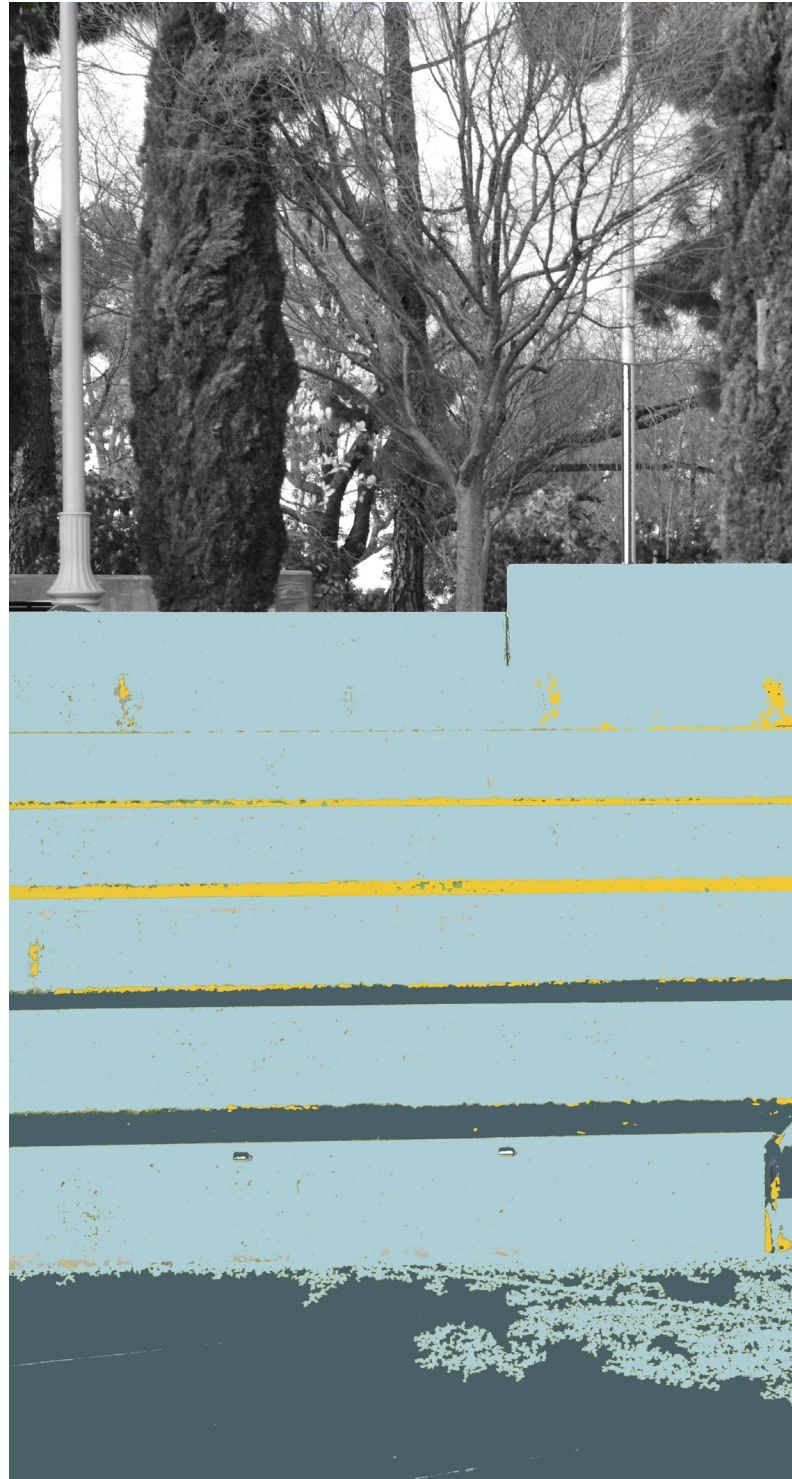
She reached out of her window, clawing a hole through the rusty screen.

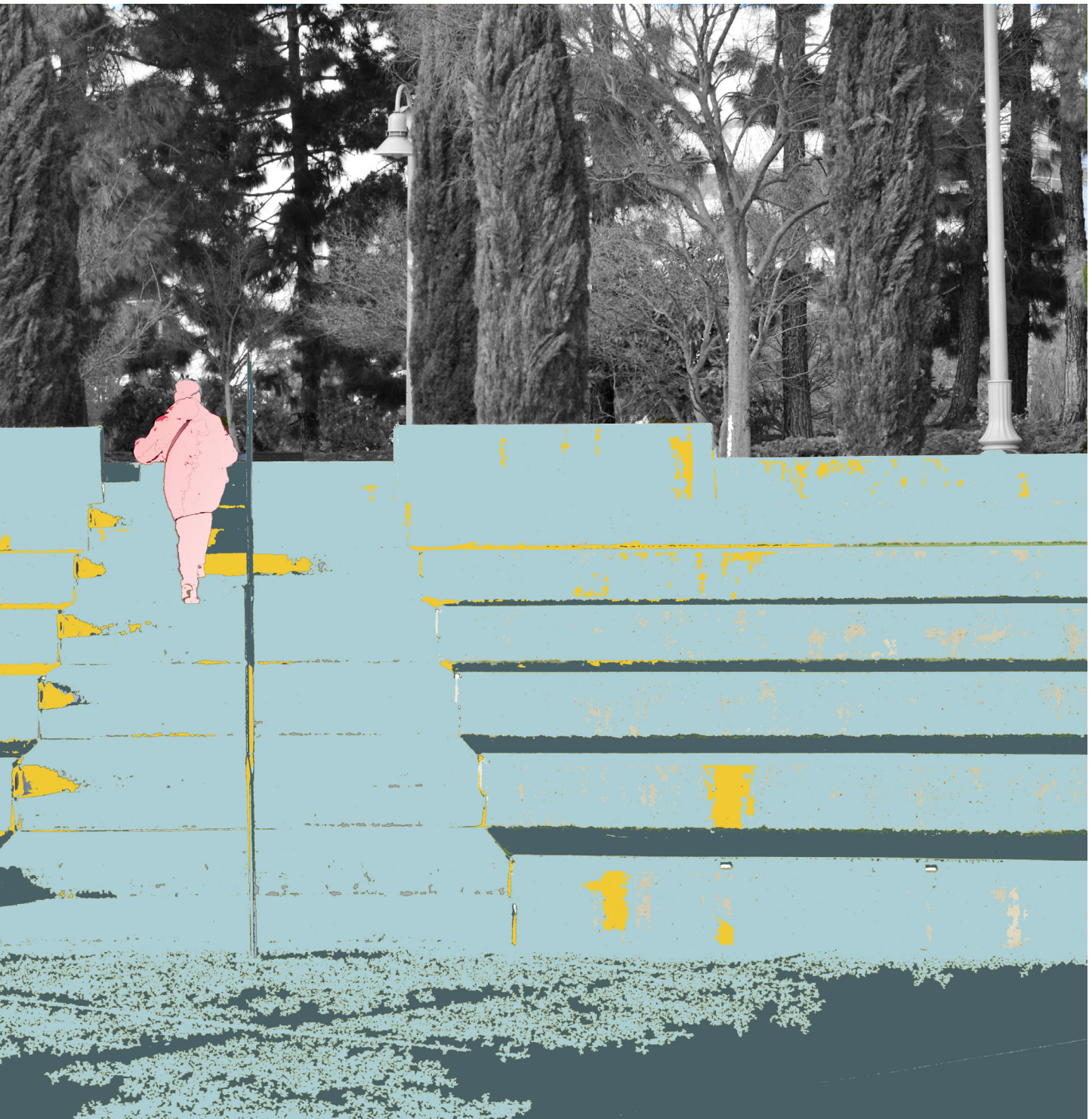
She waved her hand about, fiercely determined to grab hold of the moon. Blood dribbled from the cuts on her fingers and arm and onto the barren grass of her backyard below.

When Ms. Wolf realized that catching the moon was hopeless she fell into sobs. With utter futility she tried once more, but then let her arm hang limp on the windowsill. She let her gaze lazily drift around the room, as she reflected on the emptiness of her actions. Ms. Wolf couldn't seem to keep the events of the night straight. Somehow, it felt as though nothing had happened at all, but an observer could clearly tell that what had been going on in Ms. Wolf's room was not business as usual. Yet, despite the violent scene she found herself in, Ms. Wolf struggled to recall if something of note happened. It seemed as though all recollection of the bizarre pink light bulb had been driven from her mind by some unseen force which controlled her actions.

Ms. Wolf figured that it must be the same as whatever unknown force had created the mess in her room. So, she concluded that she must've slept through something very strange indeed.

Ms. Wolf left the room to grab a broom and a wet rag with which to clean up the chaos. When she returned, she swept up the glass, scrubbed the walls clean of blood, and promptly returned to bed, where she soundly slept for the remainder of the night.





Art by Abigail Nepomuceno



Photograph by Nafeila Waili

# A House

*By Sau Vong*

I'm a house.  
I'm in the middle of nowhere.  
I'm sheltering a family of four.  
I see grasslands,  
and dirt lands around me  
and nothing more.  
I hear the kids inside of me screaming.  
I feel the pain from my side  
when someone from the family is nailing pictures to the wall.  
I know that I'm important to this family.  
I wish that I were bigger and lived in a city.

# Bitter Flesh

*By Lily Gentleman*

I'm a grapefruit unpeeled,  
rind doesn't get softer  
my flesh no sweeter  
not for you.

(you)

tried to find the way to my garden,  
pull me from the Earth,  
extract my roots,

to split me open  
in two  
in(too)

divided  
uneven sections.

skin remains intact  
tender juice drips

my spit finds its way  
into the cuts  
on your fingertips

a familiar sting





Photograph by **Haley Esman**

# Weight

*By Colby Riley*

Harold Burkett's worn cane was fashioned in 1958 by a carpenter in Rochester, New York. The mahogany handle sanded to a smooth matte finish, juttied outward at a right angle instead of curving at the peak. The bottom of the cane was worn so that, when used on the owner's right side, it wobbled slightly under pressure; so much so that Harold questioned whether or not it was worth using. It was dull and lacked the ergonomic accommodations most other canes afforded. To his own consistent annoyance, Mr. Burkett kept the cane because he wholeheartedly believed it carried prestigious valiance and would in fact orate its imaginary lineage to anyone who inquired about it. Under the scrutiny of uninformed eyes, independently the cane appeared curiously bare, unfinished as though the hands that worked so skillfully suddenly became apathetic and aborted their once passionate creative expedition. But, in Harold's arthritic grip, when the sun shone the brightest, a vintage charm and an often-absent sense of reliability overcame the observer. He would always feign modesty, but make no mis-

take, Harold Burkett was proud of this cane.

A rotund lieutenant, known in the service for his aggressive disposition, closely resembled a silverback gorilla. This, in conjunction with the dark coiled hair follicles that constituted his mustache lead his mischievous subordinates to call him "The Monkey." A name only uttered at low decibels that usually preceded hushed, condescending snickers. Even in the crisp, olive green fatigues the slopped-forwardness of his strides exuded something untamed and dangerous. These particular characteristics led him to the military, which rewarded his cold ambitions. What excluded the General from social cliques in his formative education had propelled him through the ranks. His daunting appearance and temper had an infamous reputation. In his youth the General loosely blamed this volatility on his father whom, in actuality, was both an impressively malevolent and gentle man.

Whenever Lieutenant "Monkey" entered a room, speculative whispers and quick glances replaced the

conversational setting. Several stories swirled about, but one in particular always seemed to surface and finish with a definitive chill.

During an excursion in the jungles of Vietnam, the Lieutenant led a team to neutralize a rogue sect, causing considerable trouble to the advancement of Australian allies. En route to the rendezvous point, the company encountered several independent villages. The indigenous peoples didn't stand a chance. By the lieutenant's orders women were beaten then raped; the men were tortured to "extract intelligence," but regardless of practicality, each of them perished with the swift end of a bullet. The children were left wailing and parentless. Distraught, one man in the neighboring village known to peers as Chinh, had heard of the approaching atrocities and prepared a retaliating ambush. They waited patiently and struck at their first opportunity.

The lieutenant let out a jolly howl that exposed his shark teeth which protruded haphazardly from his blackened gums. He had lost two men and suffered a shotgun blast to his lower leg, which made what should be easy travelling laborious. Unsheathing his knife, the Lieutenant looked hungrily at the bonded survivor. Chinh's bloodshot eyes, wet with tears, met his hollow pupils. The remaining company heard terrible screams from the hut; how is it that one man could sound like an entire village?

It was a listless thought and none were inspired enough to seek an answer. No one spoke of what happened that night.

Harold was not particularly interested in history, but the honest past of his prized crutch only recently concerned him. Now, consequently, the ambiguous origins affected the pageantry of his storytelling. After a particularly disjointed story told to the newly weds down the block on Bradley St., Mr. Burkett was unwavering in his pursuit of the truth – one separate from his own fabrications.

Inspecting the cane for any clues that may narrow the search, Harold's grandson Julian took to the Internet to expedite the research process.

"Ohhhh, here it is!" he exclaimed.

Leaning forward closer to the computer screen Harold coolly replied to Julian's enthusiasm with a simple nod. Squinting hard, Harold labored a drawn out sigh, as the text was too small to read. His grandson, seeing him struggle, read it aloud to save him the humbling task of asking for help.

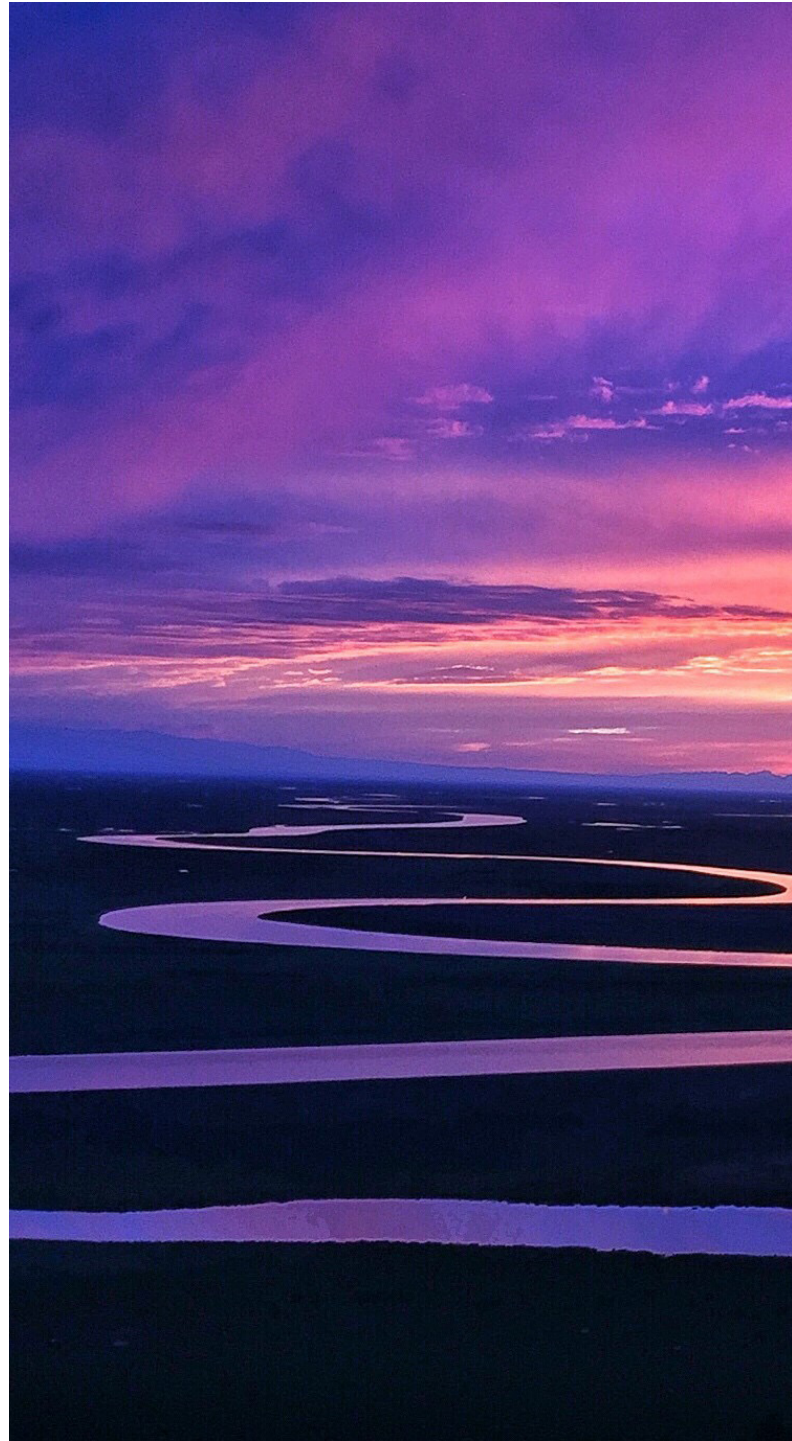
"It says...here, your cane belonged to a disgraced lieutenant known within the Australian military as "The Monkey." Apparently he was responsible for death and exploitation of hundreds of innocents. Human trafficking...torture...rape...He sounds like a super vill-."

"Please stop."

Harold stood stiffly with a slumped head then moved quickly to the front porch to break his paralysis and regain his composure. While his left hand held the door frame, the right despondently stuck to the cane. Harold coughed before glinting a counterfeit smile at his son who swayed rhythmically in the rocking chair.

“Hey Pop! You want to tell me about that cane now?” his son asked spuriously.

The molded wood buckled predictively at his right side. Harold took his palm off the dull, chipped border work and shuddered secretly as he made an advance towards the chair adjacent his grandson. Preparing to sit, Harold Burkett put more weight than usual on the mahogany handle. The same one that was smoothed to a matte finish, the one that jutted out at a right angle and lacked the ergonomic accommodations most other canes afforded; that same handle now shattered completely under the full weight of the aged man.





World Gala People's Choice  
Xinjieng, China  
**Hongyu Zhang**

DIFFERENT

SHORES



Photograph by Nafeila Waili

# Bending, Breaking

*By James Daniel Bitoy*

My tree branch spans from the root of a Filipino mango tree  
disguised as a bamboo shoot nurtured by the  
hands of a single mother  
who fell far from the  
marred mango tree of alcohol-soaked soil.

Beaten, bruised, bent, but broken?  
The bamboo-masked mango branch that I am  
breaks, splinters.  
But the sweet, resilient mango tree that she is  
never breaks.

She may weep, she may mimic  
the marred mango roots.  
But she is love. She is love.  
She is love unbending.

# How to Be a Uyghur in China

*By Anonymous*

If you are a newborn Uyghur\* baby, I highly recommend you learn Mandarin in your mother's womb, because you are not even allowed to cry in the Uyghur tone when doctors hold you from your toes and slap your little ass. Instead of trying to cry in the Uyghur tone, sing a classic Chinese song for the doctors; otherwise they will throw you right into a trash bin.

When you are a child, you better speak in Uyghur as much as you can before you start your educational journey. Once you step into an elementary school, there is no chance in hell for you to use your mother tongue, as everything is in Mandarin. Be extremely cautious when you speak in Uyghur at your school, because the school fines you for speaking in your language and not speaking in Mandarin. If you speak in Uyghur accidentally at your school, good luck to your poor dad because he has to clean your shit up by paying \$3.99 for every

single Uyghur word that comes out of your mouth. When you are back home from school, don't free up your voice too much when you talk to your family in Uyghur. Instead, whisper, because even walls have ears. Don't try to practice your language or not to forget it, because you are going to forget it anyway: that is the reason you are sent to school.

Once you are an adult, as part of a Muslim generation, it is time to start worshipping and trying your best to be close to your creator. But before you declare your religious identity, take a look at what it is written under Chinese law. The government says: be "Chinese" first and then Muslim second! It is impossible to be "Chinese" and then Muslim second, just like it is impossible to be dead first and then alive. When you pray to God, when you keep the Quran in your house, when you educate your kids about Islam, they will stop you, and put you in a jail,



because Chinese people should never do such things. This law is not to make you modern but separates and divides you from your loved ones, because Islam makes you united. Without Islam, it is easy for the government to control 25 million of you and to dry you out of your root. In addition, don't forget that you are not allowed to have a beard or a moustache. If you grow your beard, you will be put in jail because soldiers think that only terrorists have beards.

Don't resist when you receive an invitation from the detention camps where millions of innocent Uyghurs are being detained by the government. The main reason is to "educate" you in the detention camps by separating you from the outside world, so that everything you do to make a living stops, and you dry up financially when you come out of the camps. If you express disagreement about going to the detention camps, you have to go to jail instead. So don't resist.

Marry a Chinese girl. As a Uyghur man, if you marry a Chinese woman, the government will give you a free house and some land for your own, which would never happen if you married a beautiful, big-eyed, hot-lips Uyghur girl.

Speaking of Uyghur girls, oh Uyghur Girl, forget your beautiful traditional clothes, which make you more and more beautiful. You should take them off. If you don't stop wearing them, the government will set police and soldiers with tanks on every block just to help you take off your long, wide and "uncomfortable" traditional dresses and to force you to wear some extremely tight and "comfortable" sexy

shorts and yoga pants.

To all Uyghur: be Chinese. Have cosmetic surgery to look "Chinese." Don't even think about going abroad because you know that the government already took away every Uyghur person's passport. If you do somehow have your passport, don't bother buying a ticket to go abroad, because you won't be able to pass the border check. Wear as little clothing as possible when you go to the border check; that way, it is easy to take off when they ask. Don't get surprised if Chinese officers ask you to go to a private check room and force you to get naked while they are allowing other Chinese people to pass. They will check every single part of your body: mouth, hair, armpit, and even your asshole, because they want to make sure that you, a Uyghur, are not hiding anything in it. They will check you for two hours to find a mistake you made and keep you "safe" in the country instead of letting you go. They will always find a mistake for which to reject you.

By any chance of luck, if you get to pass the border and go to any other countries, the government will always keep an eye on you to make sure that you are not doing anything that could bring harm to yourself or your family.

Therefore, it's better to not be Uyghur at all.

*\*Note: The Uyghur are a forgotten minority ethnic group in China. They live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. They speak their own language, and they have a different culture than the majority Chinese culture.*



Painting by **Dikchhya Palikhe**



Painting by Stevie Kum

# Where Are They?

*By Melika Nejad*

Hey where is baba?  
He's out there working a 9 to 5  
Well over 65  
To make these houses  
Not to live in  
But surely he might die

To save a house we've almost lost  
To make sure that we have a better  
Life

Then where is mama?  
Oh she's in bed watching  
Lifetime  
But screaming on the inside  
Her pains are quiet  
But we can all see why

She prays to the up above  
Begging that

\*دن نامب هدنز نم یاه هچب ات دراد هگن هدنز ار نم افطل ادخ

Okay well where is sister?  
She escaped that 9 to 5  
Only to be told that she  
Is selfish to want a degree  
To learn the world of psychology  
To become a doctor with a PhD

She wants to survive in a world  
That won't let her be alive  
Because we are divided

W-where am I?  
Baby you're in a world of pain  
And I can't tell you why

But maybe this poem  
Can shed some light

\*Translation: God, please keep me alive till my children survive.



World Gala Judge's Choice  
Barcelona, Spain  
**Perla Del Rio**





Photograph by Nafeila Waili

# Mangkukulam

*By Veronica Jardeleza*

There she goes,  
the nasty *mangkukulam*  
passes by my house

Gray hair like storm clouds  
that form on a winter's day,  
Endless wrinkles resemble  
cracks, like the dead branches  
On the sycamore tree,

I wonder what  
she's brewing  
tonight, maybe arsenic  
adobo  
this time—

Frail and so petite,  
She carries her books of spells  
hoping to cast  
a spell over dear *tatay* and *nanay*  
once they are caught in sight,

*Aysusmaryosep!*  
I better get on my knees  
and pray, to which I hope  
I don't get cursed

Make the sign of the cross  
when you see her, *anak*  
for she won't harm you at all  
my mother tells me,

I thank the Lord above  
that she didn't curse me today—  
as I move on to get the things done  
*bago madaling araw*

There she goes,  
the nasty *mangkukulam*  
who passes by my house  
once again

I hid behind the car door,  
my shelter besides  
the roof over my head

*Did she pass by yet?*  
*Is she gone?*  
I ask myself,

*Silence...*

She did not notice me  
today, *hay nako!*

The *mangkukulam* returns  
to her hut, sickly green  
that suited her  
so well, I gave a laugh  
and felt so alive

Can't she use her broom, though?

She did not curse me at all today—  
I never thought to be superstitious  
though now I know through my mother,  
after all those years of ignoring her

The power of prayer works, she says  
as it casts the old witch away.





Drawing by **Katie Borden**

**Translation of Tagalog Words:**

*Mangkukulam:* Witch

*Aysusmaryosep:* A contraction of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

*Anak:* Child

*Bago madaling araw:* Before sunrise

*Hay nako:* Oh my Gosh!

*Tatay:* Father

*Nanay:* Mother

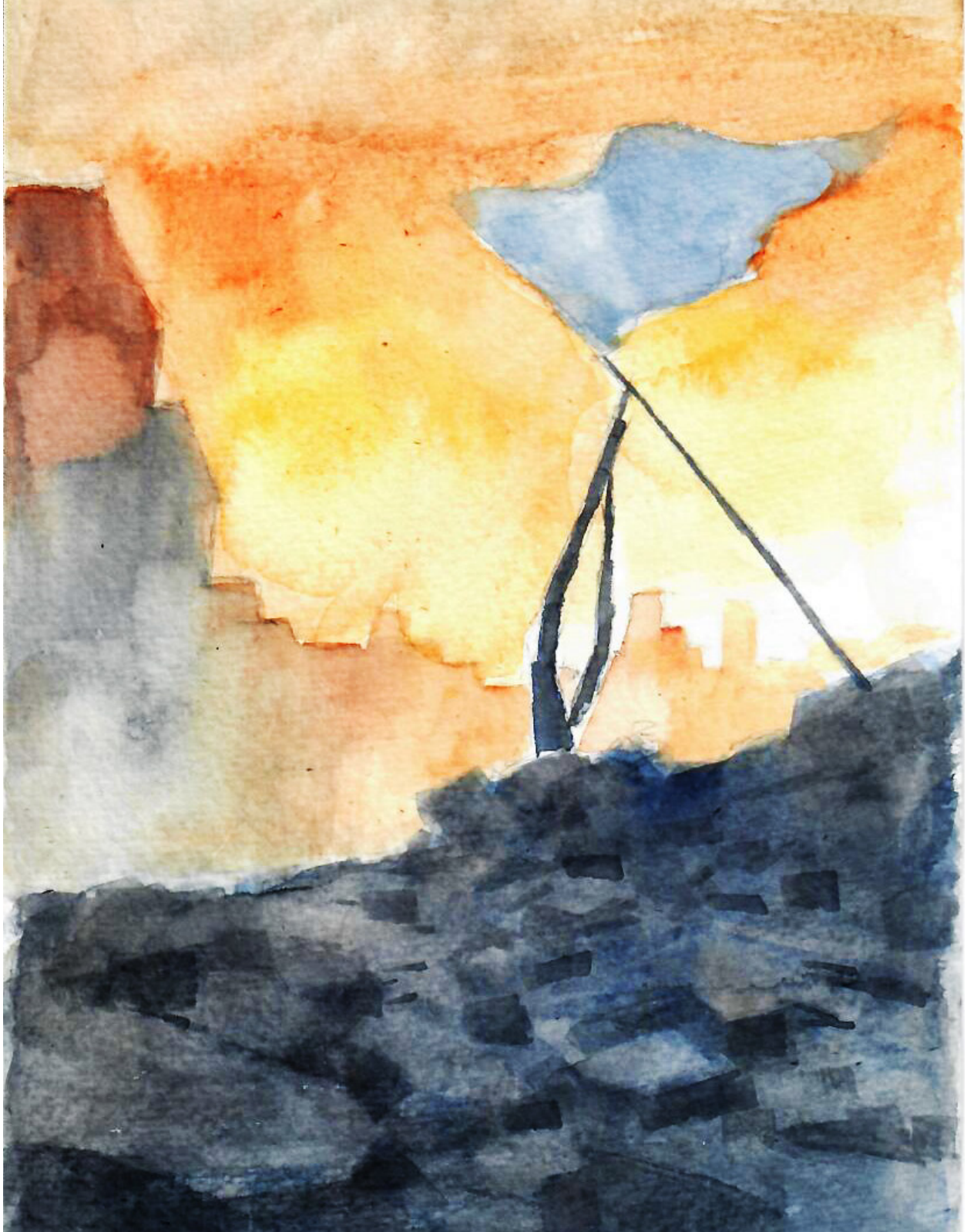


Illustration by Peijiang Xie

# 1980

*By Irma Ramos Arreaga*

I had become accustomed to the brutality of the war  
For the last eight years it had been a part of my everyday  
As it had been for every other individual in El Salvador  
All I could do was pray for an end to the detrimental decay  
For if I spoke my revolutionary thoughts I would be done for

Every night at sun fall the shootings would start  
And every morning I'd wake up to the lifeless bodies  
That had been left behind by the government as a form of art  
Which told that an act of rebellion was at the cost of your body  
Even friends would sell you out in fear of being torn apart

I made sure to be aware of my surroundings at all times  
I wasn't safe from the Guerillas or the government soldiers  
Both fought for "the people" but ignored their own heinous crimes  
The Guerrillas blindsided by the power of their holsters  
Fought to change the Government's unfair paradigm

And all I could do was wait for an end to this brutal war  
But what would be left of my once-beloved home, El Salvador?

# Creation Story

*By Mei-Mei Chun-Moy*

The Menehune are part of Hawaiian mythology and are an important part of the creation story of the island of Kauai. Though some believe the Menehune did not exist, they still influence today's culture, politics, and spiritual institutions. Their impact on society can be seen in the way people embrace the "aloha spirit" by being generous and kind to one another. The values of respect, courtesy, and altruism are on display for tourists and locals every day on the islands.

The Menehune are known as the little dwarf-like people "about two feet in height" who complete momentous amounts of labor overnight on the islands of Hawai'i, particularly Kauai.<sup>1</sup> It is said they are thoughtful and helpful. It is their rule that everything must be fin-

1 Beckwith, Martha W. *Hawaiian Mythology*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1940. p. 330

ished in one night, or it would never be completed; that is where the saying "He po hookahi, a ao ua pau,"—in one night, and by dawn it is finished—comes from.<sup>2</sup> They did not like to be watched though. The Menehunes could only be detected by other Menehunes or those connected to them in some way, but people could always hear them working before they ran off to their homes at sunrise.<sup>3</sup> Many believe that the Menehunes are real people, while others are steadfast in the belief that they are just legends.<sup>4</sup> Either way, they have shaped

2 Thrum, Thos G. *Hawaiian Folk Tales A Collection of Native Legends*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1907. p. 109

3 Montgomery, Charles. *Myths & Legends of Our New Possessions and Protectorate*. Philadelphia & London, J.B. Lippincott Co., 1900. p. 191

4 Suggs, Robert C. "Historical Traditions and Archeology in Polynesia." *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 62, no. 5 (1960): p. 765-766

the way people live in Hawai'i. It is hard to know the truth since Native Hawaiian stories have changed since European contact. The stories were not written down before contact, so there may be some discrepancies between the true oral history passed down through generations of families and what Europeans and historians have written down.<sup>5</sup> I have found that although parts of the stories have changed, the underlying message and values of Hawaiians have remained today.

Culture is extremely important to the Native Hawaiian community and is seen today by the strong support system family and strangers give to one another alike. The implications of the "aloha spirit" impacts the islands. It is expected that everyone helps one another out in time of need and show love to everybody. The story of the 'Alekoko Fishpond comes from Chief Alekoko asking the Menehunes if they would make a fishpond for him, his sister, and his people.<sup>6</sup> This would allow Chief Alekoko's family and friends to easily catch fish and not have to worry about going

hungry. Fishponds were symbols of status and wealth. If a family or community could build one or ask the Menehune to build one for them, it allowed communities to have enough food especially and not have to worry about going hungry. The Menehunes agreed to build the fishpond and began at dusk. By doing Alekoko a favor, the Menehunes illustrate the value of helping everyone and working together for the greater good. The "aloha spirit" is the idea of loving one another and encouraging each other in good and bad times, and the Menehune exemplify these traits. The Menehunes strive to emulate positive characteristics so that people of Hawai'i will follow suit and support one another. In 1973, the 'Alekoko Fishpond was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>7</sup> The fishpond is unlike any other on the island due to its complex structure and meaningfulness to Kauai's history. When the Menehunes decided to give assistance to the chief they knew that they were helping everyone on the island. The object that typifies this is a sign at the fishpond that explains the details of the intricacies of the pond's structure and gives background on the Menehune. Though the pond is over-

---

5 Luomala, Katherine "The Menehune of Polynesia and Other Mythical Little People of Oceania" *Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin*, no 203 (1951)

6 Wichman, Frederick B. *Na Pua Alii O Kauai: Ruling Chiefs of Kauai*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003. p. 10

---

7 Martin, B. Jean. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination: Menehune Fishpond/Alekoko Fishpond*. 1971.

grown and filled with invasive species today, the people of Kauai hold the pond close to their hearts because it is a reminder of community and being kind to one another in all circumstances.

The Menehunes did not have any political connections, but they believed in the values of respect and caring for one another, which is crucial for any group of people living together. This belief can be understood through the story of *The Three Menehune of Ainahou*. The Menehune overhear a brother and a sister talking by the water and the sister starts crying because their grandparents are getting old and cannot fix the family's broken lo'i, taro patch. The Menehune look at each other and one of the Menehune immediately jumps into the water to grab fish for the children. Together the Menehunes fill up the siblings' bag with fish, taking turns jumping into the water. As the brother and sister walk back home, the Menehune secretly follow them and under the cover of darkness repair the lo'i so that the family could have food to eat.<sup>8</sup> This act of hospitality represents the Menehune's commitment to caring for one another and providing for each other out in times of need. Everyone should lend

---

8 "Uncle Charlie" Charles Kauluwehi Maxwell Sr. *The Three Menehune of Ainahou*. <http://www.moolelo.com/menehune.html>

a hand to others when possible and to do so is a sign of a loving society. From personal experience, I know that people are quick to help individuals with issues as small as struggling to hold a bag of groceries to restarting a car on the side of the road. As mentioned in the previous paragraph the "aloha spirit" is everywhere, on all of the islands. It is even written into law. In the Hawaii Revised Statutes (State Law): Section 5-7.5, it states:

"'Aloha Spirit' is the coordination of mind and heart within each person... traits of character that express the charm, warmth and sincerity of Hawaii's people. It was the working philosophy of native Hawaiians and was presented as a gift to the people of Hawaii. "Aloha" is more than a word of greeting or farewell or a salutation. "Aloha" means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. "Aloha" is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. "Aloha" means to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable."<sup>9</sup>

Though it is a law, it is more of a reminder for government officials to treat everyone with respect and selflessness just like their ancestors did. Menehunes are traditionally known for their gen-

---

9 *Aloha Spirit*. University of Hawaii Community Colleges, 2012.

erosity which allows the people of Hawai'i to live peaceful and harmonious lives.<sup>10</sup> Like the examples above, people are mostly happy to stand by and be of assistance when necessary. Being kind never goes out of style and that notion has surpassed time from hundreds of years ago to today's political climate and culture in Hawaii, and it even has ramifications in spiritual institutions.

Spirituality is not specifically expressed in any of the Menehune stories, but it seems there is a place for religion because the Menehune are known for building statuesque heiaus, temples. This could allude to the fact that they believed in a higher power or the dominance of Hawaiian gods since it was important for them to have a place of worship.<sup>11</sup> There might be a strong emphasis on the temples due to Christianity and Europeans that arrived on the islands. Often times European monarchy allowed navigators to sail to new lands under the guise of a religious crusade or expansion. However Native Hawaiians have a very strong belief in their own gods and goddesses so it could be

---

10 Luomala, Katherine. *The Menehune of Polynesia and Other Mythical Little People of Oceania (Facsimile Reprint)*. Honolulu: Coachwhip Publications, 2013. p. 58

11 Beckwith, Martha W. *Hawaiian Mythology*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1940. p. 336

implied that spirituality as a whole is significant to the culture. The heiau of Waikolu is believed to have been built by the Menehune because of the way the rocks have been placed and the similar craftsmanship compared to other temples. The heiau is at the top of a perpendicular cliff with a second inaccessible cliff behind it that reaches hundreds of feet high. No one has been able to reach the top and the way the seashore stones have been delicately placed surprise historians since it is unfathomable how they were perfectly put in their place.<sup>12</sup> Another example of an impressive heiau is Mookiki, near Honoipu, Kohala. The temple was going to be built on a grassy plain, but the stones needed to create the place of worship were over 12 miles away in Pololu Valley. The people of Mookiki were not sure how to transport the necessary materials and decided to formulate a new plan. The Menehune heard about the predicament and made the decision to help the Mookiki people. Overnight the Menehune brought the stones and built the heiau. The Menehune lined up from Honoipu to Pololu Valley and passed the stones to each other. By the time the sun rose in the morning, the job had been com-

---

12 Thrum, Thos G. *Hawaiian Folk Tales A Collection of Native Legends*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1907. p. 117

pleted and the Menehune scurried off home before they were noticed.<sup>13</sup> Since the Menehune took the time to build multiple heiaus including some with extreme diligence they must have believed that having a place of worship was fundamental. Today in Hawai'i there are many churches, temples, and other worship sites. Some were created by Europeans when they arrived as a way to convert Hawaiians and others were already in Hawai'i. Basic religious values like treating others how you want to be treated, are seen in the way Menehunes lived because they served people and tribes constantly with their multitude of skills. Menehune's often acted for the betterment of others, so perhaps religion was not only crucial to them but to the community around them.

Menehune of the island of Kauai may or may not be mythical creatures, but regardless they have influenced society and the society's values. Cultural values like supporting and loving one another in Hawaii is a way of life. The aloha spirit is taken very seriously as it is even written into law as a reminder to everyone, but in particular, government officials to treat everyone with care and respect. Though not everyone

is religious there are signs that help people remember to be polite to others with different opinions. Menehunes are ingrained into Hawai'i forever due to the lasting impact they had on cultural, political, and spiritual institutions.

---

13 Thrum, Thos G. *Hawaiian Folk Tales A Collection of Native Legends*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1907. p. 116-117





*Masdevallia Harryana Atrosanguinea*

Illustration by Wai Yi Tsang



Photograph by Nafeila Waili



# Get Published

Illustrations  
Digital Art  
Photography  
Poetry  
Creative Nonfiction  
Short Stories  
Academic Papers

NEW  
M  
I  
S  
S  
I  
O  
N

Submissions open to all SMCCCD students

<https://labyrinth.submittable.com/submit>

