

**BALDWIN  
HILLS  
GREENHOUSE  
PROGRAM**

*Nature Publication*

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Year 3 Intern, 2021

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

Let's start with the obvious question. What is it that makes writing such a compelling — and novel — form of data collection?

Among the foremost reasons is that the act of creation demands an active ear. Poets must “listen convivially,” as the late poet Mary Oliver stated. Oliver herself frequently wrote while on walks through the woods of her native Ohio — often, her scribbles would come mid-step. For the purposes of the human-nature disconnect, this is an activeness that serves as a form of literary preservation. Particularly for individuals mired deep within the urban desert, so to speak, to read these capsules of natural wonder is a way of transmitting that which may have been lost.

More to the point, at least in regards to this project, it is an excellent way by which we can examine human beings' *personal* relationships with nature. Writing is an active act, but it is also a personal one. It is a method of communication with the “wild, silky part of ourselves,” as Oliver describes, or that “meaning that we cannot really understand,” as fellow poet John O'Donohue puts it. This strange, esoteric concept is one that belongs as much to individuals as it does to the natural world. It is found within us, yet it seems to best blossom in the presence of



Photo by Vivian Adler



Photo by Sophia Nicklas



nature, thus serving as a window into that which natural beauty can do for human beings. Because writing tries to “draw alongside this mystery and bring it into existence,” it is for observation purposes ideal.

This act of begatting mystery is tied to writing’s storytelling properties. O’Donohue describes living as an inherently creative act; everyone is involved, after all, in “constructing the world.” If life is a form of story, then, it is natural that by reading this *written* story, we can learn more about the author. We should not confuse this type of writing with biography, however. Identity is far more than mere biography, as O’Donohue and other artists, like the interdisciplinary Bayeté Ross Smith are careful to point out. Smith describes identity as a performance; “all of us,” he says, “are projecting a certain thing about our identity that we want to communicate to other people.” O’Donohue, too, makes a distinction between the story “one tells about themselves” and the story “that is within them,” the latter of which is infinitely more powerful. Writing, as a way of telling this inner story, is far greater than biography, and more useful.

It is for all of these reasons that writing *collections* are also useful. In a laboratory environment, writing samples serve merely as data. Though they are still a useful source of information, they are looked at as *only* a source of information. In the context of a literary magazine, these same writing samples regain their place as stories; poems; conversations. O’Donohue defines a “truly



Photo by Bianca Mayorga

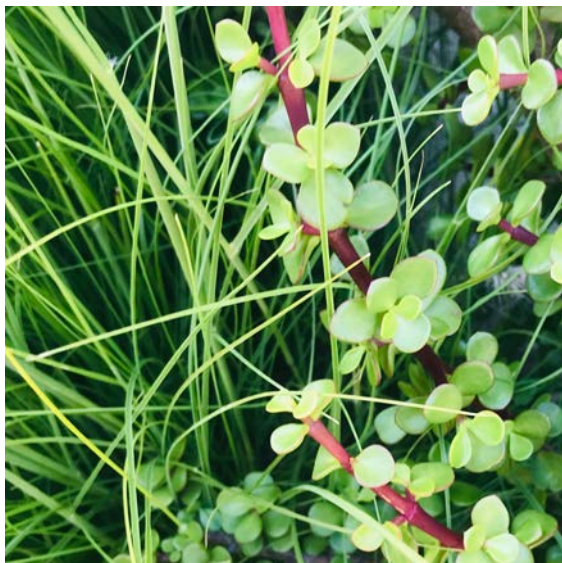


Photo by Abril Sernas

great” conversation as not just “two intersecting monologues,” but something which brings out things in both people that they never knew about themselves before and that stays with them afterwards. By this definition, writing is certainly a wonderful form of conversation, especially when it is read by others.

Who are the subjects of this conversation? The author and the reader, certainly. Put back into the scientific context, the subject and scientist. Also self and self, as has been discussed; self and that great, unquantifiable mystery. For the sake of this particular collection of nature writing, self and *nature*. One other useful thing about framing this exploration into the human-nature relationship as a *conversation*, and not merely a point of scientific inquiry, is that it reclaims that which can often be lost beneath dense scientific jargon and the impersonality that is required by objectivity.

In science, the idea of anthropomorphizing plants and rocks is almost heresy. Yet Robin Wall Kimmerer introduces to the field of botany the idea of a “grammar of animacy.” This type of grammar, she says, is unique in that it treats the natural world and its components not as inanimate objects, but rather living beings; beings that we can interact with. It taps into the same sort of deep attention that we pay as children; in this sense, it is both “innocent” and “worldly and wise.” In many ways, this concept stems from Kimmerer’s own background as a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. In



Photo by Ahmed Rizwan



Photo by Savannah House

indigenous ways of knowing, she says, “we say we know a thing when we know it not only with our physical senses,” but also “our intuitive ways of knowing” — that is, emotional and spiritual knowledge. To converse with nature, therefore, is to gain a richer understanding of it.

There is one final thing that we gain through this literary conversation: the acknowledgement of the importance of sustainability. Wangari Maathai, the renown environmental activist, places sustainability in the context of gratitude. “We don’t usually thank nature for giving us what she does,” Maathai says. In a certain sense, this ungratefulness may stem from our view of nature as an inanimate, rigid thing. The language of “it,” Kimmerer suggests, is “at the root of a worldview that allows us to exploit nature.” When we distance ourselves from nature through the wooden and impersonal nature of science, we lose sight of its intrinsic value. Only when we engage and converse with nature can we be thankful for what we already have, and be polite enough to not ask for any more.

- Brandon Kim

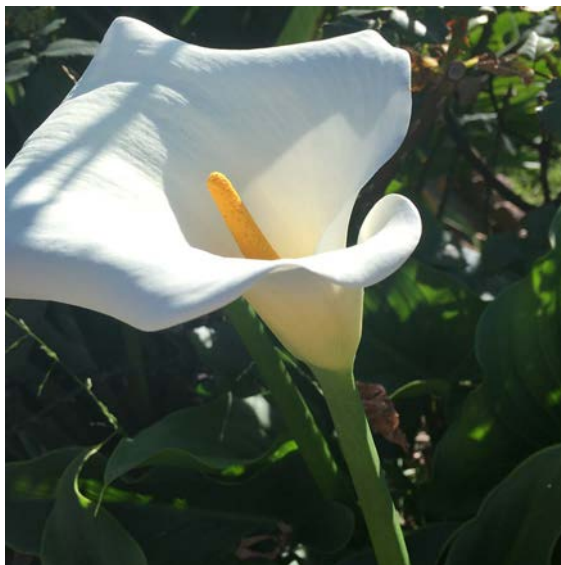


Photo by Sienna Koizumi

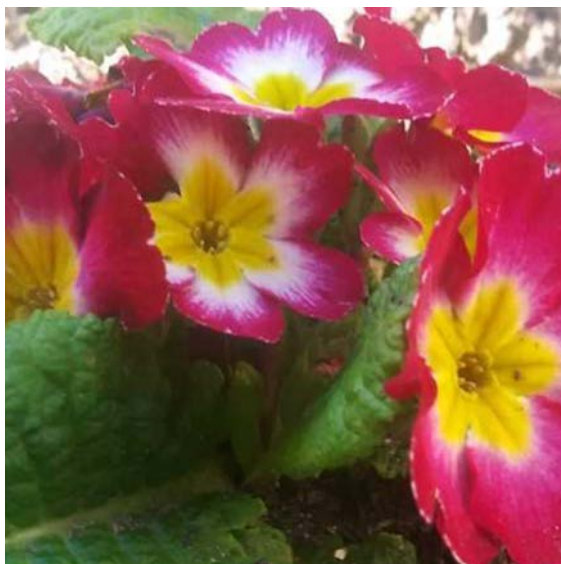


Photo by Vera Fang

# Nature in Six Words

I saw a hawk diving today.

- **Anonymous**

Saw many butterflies and cool birds

- **Anonymous**

Golden Finch sounds like a bomb

- **Anonymous**

Illustration by Akari Johnston



Anna or Allen's? Still can't tell.

- **Anonymous**

Just bros being bird nerds together

- **Anonymous**

Laughed uncontrollably and loved the nature.

- **Savannah House**

Many birds have pops of color

- **Sarah Solis**

This is their home not ours

- **Alex Loza**

Birds in the pretty green trees.

- **Denny Lorenzani**



Cool birds but where're the mushrooms

- **Sienna Koizumi**

Touched a plant then started bleeding

- **Rachel Kandow**

Gulls flying high, past the sky

- **Alex Maya**

Birds rested on a cold morning

- **John Recendez**

Easy breezy beautiful yellow rumped  
warbler

- **Ingrid Carrillo**

The shadows made me feel weird.

- **Ahmad Rizwan**

Sunshine and nature make good  
company

- **Edgar Pedroza**

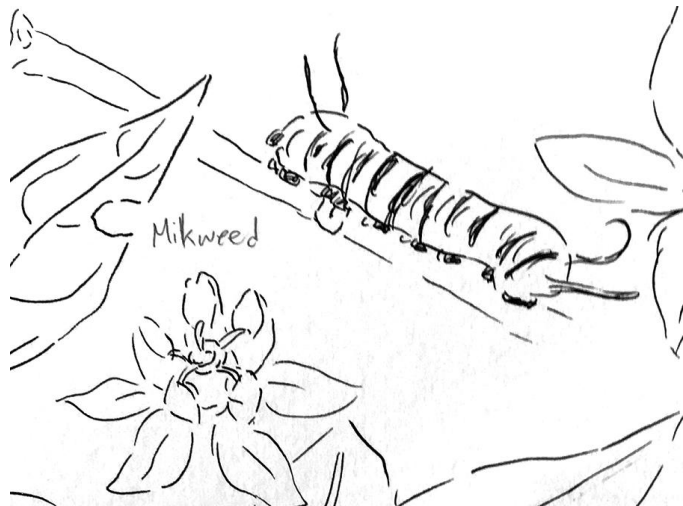
Mourning bird - fat fluffy and cute

- **Sam De Riseis**

This was amazing I am sleepy

- **Anonymous**

Illustration by Akari  
Johnston



# Greenhouse: Why & What Will?

We spend lots of time on habitat restoration because we want to ensure the safety of the different animals now so they can continue to survive in the future to avoid extinctions. I believe in 10 years the park would look much better than it does today. I say this because we would have new technology that could help the native plants grow stronger and healthier.

- **Chelsea Alvarenga**

Habitat is super important because it renews the existing ecosystem and allows the environment to be self-sustainable. In 10 years I think the park will turn into some profitable cultivation system. All our hard work will be plowed over and used as a cash crop.

- **Eva Gibbs Zehnder**



Photo by Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program



Photo by Ahmad Rizwan

I think we spend so much time on habitat restoration because most of Baldwin Hills is covered in invasive species. We need to constantly remove them to allow the native plants to grow. I think Greenhouse will be thriving in 10 years, where most of the hillside will have native plants everywhere.

- **Sierra Chabola**

We spend a lot of time doing habitat restoration because if we don't non native weeds will kill off native plants. In ten years I think Baldwin Hills scenic overlook will likely look the same but it will have way less non native plants. I think in ten years it will also have a lot more different native animal species that will live here.

- **Aaron Rivas**

We spend a lot of time on habitat restoration to learn the names and the information about it and do the job. I think the plants and trees will be stronger, healthier, and bigger in 10 years.

- **Kereelos Tawfik**



Photo by Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program



Photo by Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program

I think we do restoration work to help out our environment and community plants. I think in 10 years we will have more trees and other plants. I think more people will take care of the community more. I personally think it will be colorful and bright with more plants and animals. I also think they will have cameras to take care of the gardens.

- **Tiffany Alvarenga**

We spend a lot of time on habitat restoration to gain knowledge on it and know how to properly handle specific habitats so that they still exist years from now. In 10 years I don't think things will look the same, maybe worse. Many people are luckily taking action and learning about habitat restoration but I don't think there are enough to keep the world looking better in 10 years, perhaps the same. Not sure. Hopefully people can learn more about it in order to realize its importance to protect what we have.

- **Erion Dixon**

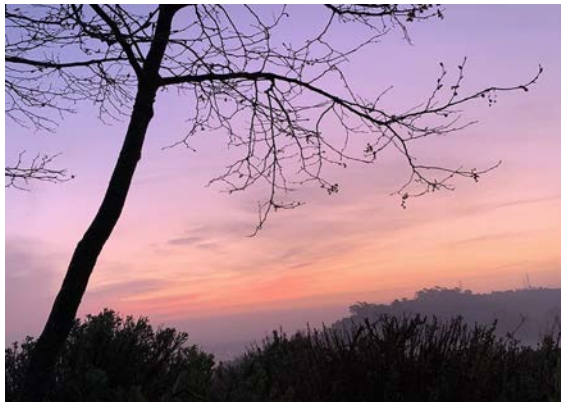


Photo by Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program



Photo by Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program

# Nature as Story, Inspiration

A garden in the back of our apartment.  
My sister tried to raise it but a wasp  
attacked, caterpillar died.

- **James Gaspar Lopez**

I was 8 and I found a lizard stuck on a  
hole and it was a rainy day so I rescued it  
and gave some food and let it free since  
that day I liked lizards and thought they  
were cool.

- **Andy Orlando Morales Aguilar**

In a rainbow garden, a beautiful plum  
colored butterfly flew across the eyes of a  
girl, lifting her spirits up.

- **Nosheen Maung**

I experienced a noticeable difference  
comparing the scenery from the U.S. to  
the scenery in Mexico. One had more  
trees.

- **Bruno De Leon**

Photo by Joseph McCullough

Running through the woods uphill in 30  
degree weather somehow numbs your  
legs and makes you feel everything at  
once

- **Vivien Adler**

On my way to Greenhouse today, I  
found a skull of an animal. It has  
extremely sharp teeth. Maybe fox?

- **Sophia Nicklas**





Word: Tree

Palm trees can easily be found in many deserts. In the Middle East, they provide dates as a food source.

- **Omar Mahfouz**

Word: Sunflower

Sunflowers are my favorite flower. So simple, yet so vital, they carry pollen and give life and love to the animals that surround it. They speak with beauty, open when the sun's out, closes when it leaves. The sunflower is simple yet complex.

- **Kiana Roman**

Word: Mangrove

This makes me think of Florida where there were many mangrove trees growing next to swamps. They usually grow in brackish water which is half fresh half ocean water. This type of water looks a little murky and crocodiles are in it.

- **Vera Fang**



Photo by Natan Euol



Photo by Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program

Word: Stink melon

Stink melon. A foggy haze of green and blue. My eyes grow weary. The rain is pouring. Tap tap tap. The raindrops fall on the wet pavement. I creak open the door. My eyes close. I take a breath of the cool, fresh air. I smell the gravel and raindrops. I am safe, at home, as I sit under the path by a street light. I cannot see beyond the fog. I see rough slope, at the green and blue. My lips move without thought, as I utter a single word. “Stink melon!”

- **John Recendez**



Photo by Nia Yick

Word: Cave

Caves hid the new species of man from the cold, the rain, the sun. Makeshift caves hid Tom Joad's face from the people who were not of his kind. Caves hide the animals that hibernate in the winters. And then, they fade for a while. Until someone passes by and remembers them. Hides in them.

- **Savannah House**



Photo by Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program

Word: Water

Ocean, rivers, pollution, developing countries, biomass burning, environment, sustainability, fossil fuels, Co<sub>2</sub>, global warming, climate change, Greta Thunberg, Sweden, 1<sup>st</sup> world countries, canals, Venice, Amsterdam, warm climate, blue, waves, surfing, culture, swimming, exercise, illegal dumping, exports, new shipping routes, Northern Canada, China, South China Sea, Indonesia, wealth, islands, beaches

- **Joseph McCullough**

Word: Stalactite

I think of spikes poking down from the ceiling, in a cave, and the spikes are frozen. It's cold and damp, but beautiful at the same time. The water drips down from the stalactites, and the drips make noise, almost like music.

- **Isabella Kelly**

Word: Tree

Tree, peaceful, timid, quiet. Moves with nature. Abides by no one. Solitude Embedded with our world. Sturdy, formidable, and perseverance.

- **Daniel Patterson**



Photo by Sienna Koizumi



Photo by Kerelos Tawfik

Word: Rabbit

Rabbits are small cute little animals that like the outdoors. They are usually not bright colors like the rabbits seen in cartoons. Rabbits can be black, brown, or white. They are also soft and fast, and like to be in the outdoors.

- **Abril Sernas**

Word: Cloud

I'm thinking about a red cloud extremely thin and long stretching across the evening sky. Reminds me of what I saw last day at Joshua Tree.

- **Natan Euol**

I was at the park and I was about eight, I saw a bee and it wanted to sting me.

- **Emily Michelle Garcia**

One time I went camping and we had to go and discover some new plants, new animals, and new food.

- **Eduardo Acevedo**

I experienced nature when I was in Joshua Tree. We can hear the wildlife at night howling and hooting.

- **Ayanna Higgins**



Photo by Isabella Garcia



Photo by Brandon Kim

# What Does Nature Feel Like?

We are all at peace  
I ebb, they flow, we all thrive  
Nature and I exist together

- **Jake DeRiseis**

I feel the sun shining.  
Birds are gliding and lizards are  
scattering.  
Content wraps around me now.

- **Nia Yick**

The sun burns my cheeks  
And the smell of fresh dewy soil  
the breeze brushes my hair

- **Isabella Garcia**



Photo by Sasha Holland



Photo by Jake DeRiseis

The night the darkness appears.  
The bugs and insects crawl on you.  
They eat you over time.

- **Kerelos Tawfik**

Being outside makes me feel  
All nice and relaxed. Like being five  
again. Playing with my toys.

- **James Gaspar Lopez**

The sky's blue hugs me  
making my mind expand past the  
vastness  
of our very small world.

- **Vivien Adler**



Outside has always been relieving  
Taking me away to a land beyond  
Explaining what happens, new things

- **Johnathan Roston**

love how peaceful it is  
Nature makes me feel  
relaxed when stressed

- **Bianca Mayorga**

The outdoors is like utopia.  
I tend to feel stress free outside.  
Everything outside is always better.

- **Aaron Rivas**



Photo by Sophia Nicklas



Photo by Savannah House

The wind brings the sun to me  
I watch the view  
from the sun kissed sand  
Stretching from the Hollywood sign to  
the ocean  
I can see the St. Monica Mountains.  
I can breathe.

The word greenhouse brings me joy  
it reminds me I am worth it  
that this beauty  
this toyan, this white sage, these walnut  
saplings  
is worth it.

- **Savannah House**

To me, the feeling that Greenhouse emits is rather odd. Instead of being a surreal sense of peace that gets rid of thought, it's more of an overwhelming temporary boost. When I'm outside, it is a feeling where I can truly be alone with my thoughts. A sense of ability of self-awareness, the ability to feel your thoughts, the feeling of that transcends words. Very odd.

- **Anonymous**

Spending time in nature lets me relax and not necessarily focus on the clock or time passing. I get a sense of groundedness from working with the plants around me. The activities are purposeful and starkly contrast schools' stress and expectations. Nature provides an escape from the hustle of the city, and helps me feel content with all that is. It helps me realize who I am and how much I can grow.

- **Anonymous**



Photo by Axel Maya



Photo by Natan Euol

Spending time outside makes me feel captured inside of nature. It makes me feel like I'm within something that has no boundary. It makes me feel happy at times and neutral. Sometimes I get lost in thought vs. while I'm happy I feel an enthusiastic feeling that I can be free with no repercussions.

- **Anonymous**

Usually when I am out here working, I always reflect about decisions I have made throughout my life. Sometimes I feel sad because I have had a lot of emotionally traumatizing experiences in my life. I also feel like I'm actually making an impact on the environment when working. Nature makes me feel very connected with myself. I hope I'm able to make an even larger impact someday, but this is a start.

- **Anonymous**



Photo by Eva Gibbs Zehnder



Photo by Isabella Garcia

Spending time outside makes me wish I had spent more time outdoors as a child. As much as it was fun reading, I wasn't exactly the most active kid nor the most observant. Speaking of observing, being outside once a week has made me think more about plants and birds around me. After pointing out one of the plants I knew during spring break, my family laughed that I never talked about that kind of things before. Finally, restoration work makes me feel good about myself, because it's more time not wasting my life doing pointless things.

- **Anonymous**

Being outside once a week is calming. It gives me a sense of peace and gives me a break from the "real world" and my school-related responsibilities. It lets me reflect if I want to, or not reflect because I can just focus on the task at hand. It's good because if I've had a bad day this helps because I don't have to think a lot when I'm just weeding, or I get to learn new things that I'm actually interested in. Most of the time, I really enjoy the time I get to spend in nature.

- **Anonymous**



Photo by Kerelos Tawfik



Photo by Abril Sernas

The first feeling that generally washes over me when I arrive at Greenhouse amidst the coastal sage scrub and birds is a sense of peace and calmness. I think this might be because this space acts as an escape from the rushed, unorganized life I usually live, and when I come here surrounded by nature which is raw and beautifully swaying in the wind, it feels natural and peaceful. It also evokes feelings of joy and appreciation, especially because being in nature without technology and with my own thoughts causes me to self-reflect quite frequently. I also feel more aware because the birds and wildlife I see here are constant reminders that other living things exist and share the space I live in too. I mostly however feel relaxed, reflective and at peace with my life because it gives me a choice to declutter my thoughts.

- **Julia Adler**

Most of the time when I come up here it gives me a sense of peace. I instantly feel calm. It's nice to escape the city life for a couple hours. Being up here makes me feel good because it's beautiful. I love seeing the ocean with the sun reflecting off of it and looking at the view of the city with the (sometimes snowy) mountains behind it.

- **Khalilah Ali**



Photo by Ahmad Rizwan



# “After the Rain”

It's a lonely feeling, walking on a barren trail whose footprints have been long washed away. Swept along by the winter rains, the remains of which now lay stagnant and collected into the small puddles to the left and below. Washed away by first disinterest, and now abandonment, in and of the upturned mud and treeless slopes.

Elsewhere, the hills are covered in green – shrubs and bushes and trees and grasses, all vibrant with life after a long drink from the sky. But green I have seen before, though perhaps faded in past months – and so I am disinterested, and move on. In my mind, it matters not the typical scarcity of green or rain in this place- only that I have seen it before.

And so I am standing on a barren hill, looking out onto a landscape much different than the one I have seen oft in this place – a landscape far more mundane than the empty one that I see today.

- Brandon Kim  
(written in 2019)

# “Nature’s Last Stand”

“Nature’s Last Stand!” the sign read.

The sign was a flimsy, scribbled-on cardboard thing, held up by wrinkled hands with its desperate fingers tightly clenched. The hands were the belongings of one Ms. Leonard, a person whom to all the world was a person to be glossed over; ignored. Time had long taken Ms. Leonard’s old (or perhaps young) hands, leaving only desiccated shells in their wake, and with it the entirety of the woman formerly named

And there it went again. Her old name, her old life – robbed, as with so many other things, by the passage of time. Only Ms. Leonard was left. And it was Ms. Leonard who now looked up once more at the long line of customers before her – fifty or so finely dressed men and women, all with sweat dripping down pampered faces and into the starched collars that seemed to be so in vogue these days.

A young man stepped up to the upturned cardboard box that lay before Ms. Leonard – the last of what remained from an Amazon purchase she had made some number of years ago. Resting upon its surface lay an array of tickets – around twenty, she made sure to count – and an old, beaten-down credit card reader. She had used a broken cash register before, but it seemed that no one carried around the green wads of paper anymore.

Ms. Leonard raised her head and gave the man her best smile, replete with broken teeth and worn-down gums. “That’ll be fifty dollars.”

The man looked down at the tickets, plucked one off the box. Examining it, he frowned. “This is supposed to be fifty dollars?”

Ms. Leonard glanced at him, then – for what she felt like was the hundredth time that day – at the massive, over-hanging structure of bent bars and scraps of metal behind her. “World Ecological Fair” said the sign on the top, and “No entry without a ticket” said the guards at the bottom. The entrance consisted of three sets of gigantic double doors and a massively convoluted process, somehow all designed to fit within a structure that was only the Fair’s *second* most well known feature. The first being, of course –

The man sighed and pocketed the ticket anyway. He fished out his phone - iPhone L or whatever they were making these days - opened up the pocket on the back of the case, and pulled out a credit card. He handed it over.

Ms. Leonard put down her sign, took the card, gave it a few vicious swipes through the credit card reader, and handed it back. Again the broken smile, a pleasantry or two, and the man was sent off on his way.

Next customer. Next smile. Next conversation dripping with disdain. Next glance back at the fair. Next ticket. Next credit card. Next placing down of the sign. Next pleasantry. And again.

Routine. It was all she had left in a life where everything faded away in hazy forgetfulness. That, and her last name, and her business, and her – the - Fair.

Ticket. Credit card. Next. Everything was a light haziness again – all Ms. Leonard could do was keep looking between the Fair, her business, and the customer. A thought floated through the haze – what if she went to visit the Fair? – and then floated away again. And then it came back, and away again, and then back, and then again, and then –

She put down the sign. Took the card. Routine was best. It was failure to follow the routine that had caused everything to go wrong. Routine, routine –

And then suddenly she found herself overturning the cardboard box, overturning the

sign – sprinting and tumbling towards the massive gates that had remained closed to her for so long – pushing her way past the throngs of milling customers all in fine suits – running and running as she hadn't before.

An opening – a damp smell, rich and earthy, a mix of petrichor and artemisia and everything from her past, hitting her all at once and at once she forced her way through, wrinkled hands touching everything, from the most common of grasses to the low-hanging branches of the trees above and she laughed and laughed, even as she was dragged back out by the guards and spit at by the crowds and hearing that whisper, somewhere from someone that knew her – what was it? – *you failed, you couldn't stop them, the Fair is all that's left, the Fair is all that's left* –

“Nature's Last Stand!” the sign read.

- Brandon Kim  
(written in 2019)

# “Ode to the Rabbit I Chased Up a Hillside”

The rabbit – vicious.

It cut across sage scrub like

acrostic poem –

*reckless; acrimonious; bombastic;*

*beautiful; inconceivable; triumphant.*

Either I’m a poet or I’m playing

Scrabble. Chasing after adjectives

like rabbit prints. I like to believe the

rabbit never saw me. It cut its own

trail between the brush – pursued

by nothing but twitching tail.

- Brandon Kim

(written in 2020)

# “Life Cycle of a Composite Slate/Plastic/Fiber Cement/etc.”

Rooftops are cobblestones  
buried in earth. A

mellifluous medley; trinity  
of tritons. Red/orange/

purple – echoing residue, sticky  
with fruit juice or tears. I pour

shingles into my mother’s cheap  
china set; silk each rim with saliva.

The bubbling tiles will make  
their own glass harmonium – I

sip the staccato notes. Beethoven’s  
Appassionata drums against the

roof of my mouth – I savor the  
musical Pop Rocks. I plant pebbles

in soil and watch them grow into  
buildings. The plaster echoes red,



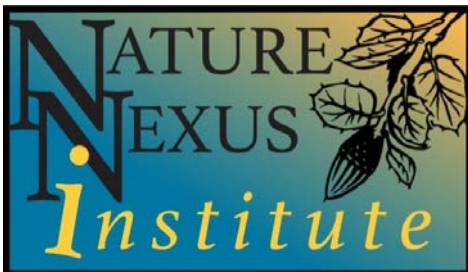
orange, purple: sweet symphony  
bellowed by recycled roof.

Over/again/over/and?  
Something lost inside.

- Brandon Kim  
(written in 2020)

## Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program

Since 2008, the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program has served hundreds of local high school students. This after-school program incorporates environmental science and research, community leadership, hands-on habitat restoration, and art to address local environmental issues. Students have contributed thousands of hours towards habitat restoration and outreach in Baldwin Hills Parklands and the wider watershed. They collaborate with environmental professionals and receive support with the college application process. Program alumni return to serve as mentors and staff members!



**Nature Nexus Institute** is founded on the belief that reciprocity between communities and nature is essential to the survival of both. We seek to provide equitable and intergenerational entry points to cultivating healthy community-nature relationships. To that end, we strive to be a nexus for science, culture, art, and research endeavors that result in a new generation of change-makers and storytellers.