

Samuel Price  
Final Project

For my final project, I wrote five short creative writing pieces that were inspired by some of my favorite hikes that I did during the quarter. My initial goal was to focus these writings on becoming indigenous to a place and spent considerable time after each hike to sit and reflect and write. Some of the pieces were written during the hikes, some were written just after. The writings were then typed up for neatness. The writings include four poems and one piece of prose. Since coming to Stanford and especially in the last year, I've spent a lot of time thinking about my relationship to place and my feelings about home. It's something I've felt conflicted about since leaving for college, I've always felt somewhat disconnected regardless of whether I was home or not. I was quite inspired early in the quarter by the concept of becoming indigenous to a place. This led me to want to spend more time in the areas around Stanford that I've come to love since being here and spend some time reflecting and synthesizing.

I approached these writings with an idea of picking out some detail or feature of each hike that was particularly striking to me and attempting to focus my feelings and writing through that filter, whatever it happened to be. I also tried to tie in these ideas with themes of environmental justice. The first piece *smoke* and fourth piece *hope* were written during a trip to Yosemite in September. I didn't plan the trip well and the wildfires at the time made the air quality in the park abysmal, so I initially thought I was going to have to stay inside all day without being able to explore the park which inspired both poems. In the afternoons, the smoke would be blown out of the valley and the air cleared up quickly. I was able to spend some time hiking in the park and writing a bit more, but the smoke returned the next morning. For the piece *wind*, I hiked at Point Reyes National Seashore and was struck by the intensity of the wind throughout the hike which was constant. *Rain* was written after a visit with a friend in Los Gatos, I went for a hike nearby and it started raining heavily. I love the rain, so I spent some time hiking in it and reflecting on what rain means in a place like California. Finally, for *home*, I went to Big Sur, one of my absolute favorite places I've ever been, and this piece ended up being my favorite by far and the most meaningful to me.

The desired impact of these pieces was to share them with some of my family back home. I think in doing these writings, I was able to reflect a lot on the last few years and I hoped that embracing my artistic side and creating some art detailing my experiences. Through the writings, I hoped to show how I understand the history and my relationship to the land I've lived on for the past few years. I've felt quite disconnected from my family ever since going to college, and there are those in my family who don't care about or really understand climate change or environmental justice. I got a lot out of this project; it forced me to articulate emotions rather than explain data or use other more "technical" skills. This isn't something that I've been able to do very much since being at Stanford and I've not tried to connect with my studies through art. I enjoyed writing these and feel that I understand myself a little more because of the project. I hope that my family will find these writings to be compelling enough to have a conversation about their meanings and what inspired them. I've often struggled to communicate with them when showing them research projects or similar work, especially since they'd often scoff at the mention of climate change. My hope is to connect with my family through my art to engage them in conversation. I hope to inspire my family to perhaps consider their impact and place in world beyond. Inspiring positive behavior at any scale is very rewarding to me but has not been so easy to achieve with my own family. I hope you enjoy these pieces.

# *smoke*

-- september; yosemite valley --

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driving in, it's 5 am  
the sky is dark still  
blanket of smoke pressing down

i can feel it

here in the valley, it fills the air  
a reminder of the burden we all share  
a weight of destruction my own hand wrought

i can feel it

the memory of heat, the feeling of burns  
the smoke in my lungs, the feeling of loss  
the valley ablaze with the fiery greed

i can feel it

the sun appears, over the granite  
through the haze of smoke  
filling the valley with an orange glow

i can see it

it warms my skin and reminds me  
even in the darkness there is beauty  
the sunrise triggers the dawn song

i can hear it

jays scream, kinglets sing  
flitting from branch to branch, spring to spring  
reminding me to listen among the trees

i can hear it

the wind has picked up, has it gotten hotter?  
how is it now that i can see  
even while the forest smolders around me

i can smell it

the smoke lifts from the valley in the afternoon  
i quickly forget everything it taught me  
the smoke is gone but somehow, i can't see

i can forget it

it seems but a distant dream  
picturesque landscapes don't betray  
the damage done, it won't convey

i can forget it

but only for so long  
when i wake up, the smoke has returned  
reminding me of what has been lost

i can feel it

this was once a home to many  
with knowledge of the valley so ancient  
quickly obliterated in the name of conservation

i can't forget it

it weighs on me constantly  
but i carry it willingly as a reminder  
to strive to be as they once were

i can do it

## *wind*

-- november; tomales point --

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perched upon the tip of the world, the peninsula to myself. the smell of salt is intense, the cool ocean air brought with it the breaching humpbacks to the shore. the wind whips off the breakers and grabs at my clothes and hair as it passes as if to remind me that it's still there. i've never been here and yet i feel right, i feel at home.

skies full of hunting raptors and screaming gulls, trails full of elk, waves crashing against the cliffs. i sit for a while longer, breathing deeply, emptying my mind, trying to keep myself in the present moment. the minute i'm no longer there, this place starts to feel a little less like home and a little more like a lost memory.

there's an old dairy farm here, it was open for over a hundred years, all the buildings are still standing, relics. the indigenous communities that lived here were present for much longer, yet their impact is invisible. why are we now obsessed with permanence? why must something of us outlast our physical selves whether it be a legacy or a farm?

what connects us to other across time? the closed nature of the earth system? the wind that i feel right now is the same wind that those dairy farmers felt, the same wind that the Coast Miwok people breathed, the same wind upon which that hawk rises over the cliff. the world connects us. the elements. we are immersed in the same world as everyone else, connected through space if not time, but so many feel the need to leave a mark. a fear of impermanence.

what was that? an oystercatcher, landing on the rocks in front of me he reminds me to breathe, listen, feel. ah, here it is again- that feeling. that calm acceptance of fate, the inflow and outflow of breath, of the wind, of the universe.

as i hike back through the cypress groves, i look to the tops of the trees to watch the leaves wave, wishing me farewell and well wishes. it's all here. i need nothing else, just the wind to feel my ancestors, just the wind to know myself.

## *rain*

-- december; los gatos --

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The rain, a gentle patter on the roof  
A soothing sound, a reminder of truth  
That everything changes, everything grows  
And the rain, it falls, to help it go

The land, dry and thirsty, longing for more  
The rain, a lifeline, a much-needed pour  
It nourishes the earth, revives the plants  
Brings new life, new hope, new chances

The rain, a reminder of the life  
The ups and downs, the highs and lows  
It comes and goes, a natural flow  
A forced to be reckoned with, a force to know

The rain, a blessing without disguise  
A gift from above, a surprise  
It brings renewal, a fresh start  
A chance to heal, to mend the heart

The rain, a symbol of hope  
A promise of things to come, a new scope  
A chance to grow, flourish, and thrive  
To build a better future for which to strive

So let the rain come, let it pour  
Let it wash away the pain, the loss, the hurt  
Embrace the hope it brings, the new beginnings  
And let it nourish our souls, our hearts, our beings

For in the rain, we see a glimmer of light  
A chance to start anew, to set things right  
To create a better world, a brighter tomorrow  
Where love and hope and joy can all follow

So let the rain fall, let it flow  
Let it wash away the doubts and the woe  
And let it bring us hope for a better future,  
Where anything is possible if only we nurture

The seeds of change, the seeds of hope  
And let them grow, until they can cope  
With all the challenges that come our way  
And let the rain be a symbol for our foray

Into a better future, full of love  
Where anything is possible if we rise above  
The doubts and the fears, and embrace the rain  
As a symbol of hope of a future without pain

## *hope*

-- september; yosemite valley --

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from the chains of our modern world, disconnected and blind  
we must open our eyes and hearts, and leave behind  
the ways of the past that led us astray  
it's time to embrace a new way, a brighter day

we can start by learning from those who came before  
the indigenous ones, who lived with so much more  
balance and harmony with the land  
we must strive for their wisdom and understand

we must listen and learn, and follow their lead  
to become indigenous to this place, to fulfill our need  
for connection and belonging, to the earth and the sky  
we must all try

to live in balance, to respect and protect  
the natural world, to not neglect  
it's time to take our place  
as indigenous to this land, with grace

we've become so disconnected from the land  
trapped in concrete jungles, our connection strained  
but in the smoke, we must confront our fate  
the earth is telling us to recalibrate

we can't escape the smoke  
it fills the air  
a reminder that we all must share  
the burden of the climate crisis, a weight on our shoulders  
but a hope we can't ignore any longer, we will come beholders

of a new way of life, one rooted to the earth  
we learn to coexist, live in balance, foster rebirth  
to the ecosystems that sustain us on land and sea  
we must become indigenous to be free

## *home*

-- december; big sur --

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what are you looking for?  
home  
it's not there  
it's not fair

my home is gone.  
burned away  
gone with the smoke  
that burns my lungs  
home

where do you feel it?  
home  
it's not here  
it's not near

my home is gone.  
it's somewhere  
under the interstate  
next to my ancestors' bones  
home

how will you know?  
home  
it's not clear  
it doesn't appear

my home is gone.  
it's all dried up  
droughts and fires rage  
making a desert of a rainforest  
home

where did it go?  
home  
it's not there  
it's not fair

my home is gone.  
but i'm there now



and yet i've never been  
i think i'm finding it  
home

what happened to it?  
home  
it's not okay  
it's gone astray

my home is gone.  
burned away  
and yet, here i stand  
i've found it yet again  
home

why can't you return?  
home  
it's not simple  
it's not so simple

my home is gone.  
underneath the ocean  
and yet, here i stand  
i've found it yet again  
home

what is it?  
home  
it's not a where  
it's not a when

my home is here.  
i carry it with me  
through the pain  
i've finally understood  
home

my home is here.  
i carry it with me  
when i miss my brother  
he's right beside me  
home

my home is here.  
i walk upon it  
when i miss my grandmother

she's right beneath me  
home

my home is here.  
i live within it  
when i listen to the sound  
of birds and wind and the leaves  
home

my home is here.  
i live within it  
when i feel the touch  
of soil beneath me  
home

my home is here.  
i live because of it  
when i nurture it,  
it grows  
home

my home is here.  
i live within it  
when i see the sunset  
on the horizon for the last time i'll know  
that at least i was home