

A Cross-Cultural Publication

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North Hennepin  
Community College

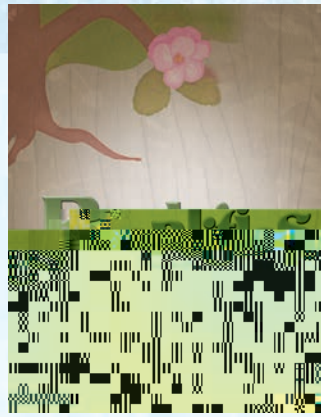
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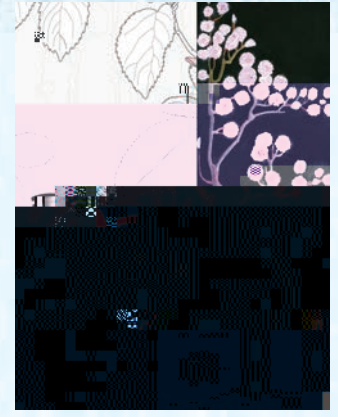
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## Realities

*For the community of writers of realities*

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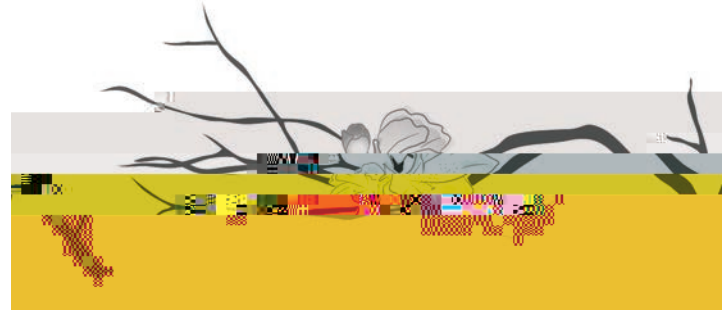
For Submission Instructions and Guidelines, please visit:  
[www.nhcc.edu/realities](http://www.nhcc.edu/realities)

Realities is dedicated to all people who have had the courage to cross over their boundaries, thereby enriching their lives by seeing how other lives are lived.

*For the community of writers*  
To preserve the authenticity and character of the writings, they have been minimally edited.

*Original Publication Cover art painted by Leny Emmerzael-Wendel, Cover and Publication design by Jennifer Caudill*

# Table of Contents



Introduction .....ii  
 Introduction .....iii

## Gain an

Line of Death *Martin Zorn*.....1  
 My Experience as a Liberian Refugee in Sierra Leone  
*Habakkuk T. Polahn*.....3  
 Remembering When War Hit My Community  
*Nyumah Garley*.....4  
 The Death of My Backbone Twin  
*Kaliah D. Duckworth*.....5  
 Abolitionist: In Process *Sarah Valentine*.....7

## in

One Chance, One Opportunity *Shelly Kaunzner* ...10  
 Prevailing over Fear of Failing *Ben Fleischfresser* .....12

## a ia

Making a Dream Come True *Adilet Takyrbashev* ....13  
 The Difference between Good Neighbors and Aloof  
 Neighbors *Michelle Fick*.....15  
 The Luce Line Trail *Anita Forrest*.....17  
 The Memory of My Grandparents' House  
*Mohammed Hussein* .....20

## n a an n in

Envy for Crows *Austin Fisher* .....21  
 Identities: Holland vs. America *Eva Sistermans*.....23  
 My Gentlemen *Vicki Richardson* .....25  
 Listening to Nature's Whisper *Lensa Tucho*.....27

## G in inn a

Accepting the Cold *Welton Mah* .....29  
 NoMi: The Life on the North Side *Chloe Rosten* ....30  
 Of Beasts, Crystals, and Birches *Anna Banker* .....32  
 Pilgrimage for Peace *Aaron Schwab* .....34

## G in a

Soul Vacation *Ashley Tray*.....38  
 A Piece of my Childhood *Mariah Wilcox*.....40  
 The Making of Wellman Ranch *Tylee Wellman* .....42  
 Old Rusty *Dusti Boyce*.....44

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his Line of Death. In 1973, Gaddafi claimed the whole Gulf of Sidra belonged to the Libyans. However, this was not the case, and he was about to find out. My buddies and I went back to shop to find out we had to prep our best two birds for a Harpoon missile and Rockeye bombs. So we headed up to do our wire checks on the aircraft and just then general quarters sounded: "Danger was possible at any time." The captain spoke on the radio again, and under orders from President Ronald Reagan we were to blow up two missile corvettes heading to our location.

This conflict just got real for the first time. We started the harpoon checks on aircraft 501; this was usually our best bird for a harpoon. As we worked on the test, the system didn't work. I started tracing the wire system to see if anything basic jumped out at me; I couldn't see anything. We did some basic conductivity tests and they were checking fine. What was wrong? Just then it clicked – the armament control panel had to be bad. I ran down to another bird to steal one out for aircraft 501. When out on the water, we often had to borrow parts from another plane.

The chief then called me. He said that bird needed to be checked and loaded in an hour. I had to tell him it would be close; I didn't have the wire system up yet. We started working on the plane, and then general quarters went off again; missiles had just been shot at us but fell short. A panic started to set into some of the crew. I saw men a lot older than me crying, thinking they were about to die. All I could think about was getting my bird ready for when it was needed. We put the new armament control panel in and it worked. So we put one Harpoon on one side and Rockeye cluster bombs on the other side. Orders came down: the two Libyan missile boats wouldn't turn around, so my bird would launch at 0500. The plane was launched and had orders to sink the little missile boats. I was due to end my shift, but I stayed in the shop for news about what was happening. At about 0700, my squadron shot the first harpoon

missile in history in a conflict, and it worked perfectly. The Libyan corvette was sunk, and thirty-five sailors not much different from me were dead. Gaddafi withdrew the line of death after that, and we flew normal flight operations from then on.

Over the years, I have listened to all the debates about who should be allowed to fight and where. I have come up with this conclusion: be careful what you wish for – someday you might have to actually take a life. I have been indirectly responsible for the deaths of thirty-five sailors. A year doesn't go by that I wonder how many families I have affected. So in my four years of service I do know this: most people couldn't look down the barrel of a gun and pull the trigger, let alone load weapons of destruction.

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*No biography submitted.*



er ence as a ber an  
ef gee n erra eone

Habakkuk T. Polahn

hat I vividly remember about the camp was that, despite the unfavorable living conditions that existed in the camp, the conditions did not pull people apart; instead, people were so willing to assist each other at all times, be it financial or moral assistance. On many occasions, refugees in the camp collected money to help out other dwellers who could not afford their medical bill. The camp leadership also had a team of elders that were responsible to settle disputes amongst refugees in the camp.

**You could die at any  
time because you are  
not provided the  
amount of care you  
need to live.**

After we spent two years in the camp, we learned that the crisis in Liberia had ended. We left the Waterloo Camp for Liberia.

What I realize about living as a refugee is that your life is at risk. You could die at any time because you are not provided the amount of care you need to live, for instance, shelter, health, education. More needs to be done in order to care for refugees around the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

*and his parents originated from Liberia, Lofa County. He lived in the capital city of Liberia, Monrovia, and has travelled to two West African countries, namely, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. Presently he resides in the United States of America. He speaks Kissi, the language of one of the 16 tribes of Liberia, and English, which is the general language spoken in Liberia. He has spent two semesters at North Hennepin Community College and is pursuing a career in Business Computer Systems and Management. He loves listening to music, making friends, and playing soccer.*



## Nyumah Garley

It was a Sunday morning. We were inside the house eating, and we heard someone saying, "Everybody come outside!" We came outside and saw a lot of men with masks on their faces, carrying guns. They told everyone to sit on the ground and started asking us whether we were keeping any soldiers in the house. We told them no and they started shooting all around us. They went from house to house and brought everybody outside. One of them said, "We are going to kill you people if you do not tell us the truth!"

I remember when they took a man and said he was a soldier. One of them asked him to walk three feet away from him and then shot him in his head. He said, "This is just an example! Everyone here is going to die!" People started running for their lives and they started shooting and killing. After the armed men left, there were dead bodies lying all over the place. People were looking for their children, family members, and loved ones and could not find them. As a result, many people fled the community in fear of being killed.

I remember people leaving the community and going to other African countries to live as refugees. Some came back to look for their loved ones, but they were never found. The community never became the same after it was hit by tho[never

## Kaliah D. Duckworth

My brother, my backbone twin, Amiere A. Duckworth Sr., came into this world September 5, 1987. Born to our parents Billy J. Duckworth Sr. and VerLisa Brown, in Joliet, Illinois, we shared 14 brothers and a sister, and we had a relationship that was inseparable. We loved to do everything together, and whenever we got together we shared a memorable moment. We were always together and people always assumed that we were twins because we looked so much alike only he was lighter than me. The day I was so not looking for came so quickly and unexpectedly. I got out of SmarJesse class about 2:55 p.m. on April 16, 2012, and I went straight to the Campus Center. I sat at one of the computers, so I didn't have to take my laptop out my book bag. I began to do my homework, as usual, and then I received a phone call about 3:05 p.m. from one of my relatives in Joliet, IL.

Jerisha says, "Key you may want to sit down!" I thought to myself, damn my twin back in jail, what the fuck?! I replied back with, "I am J, what the matter is?" she

I replied with, "NO! My brother just passed away, literally." At this point I couldn't feel my fingers; my body began to feel numb.

How am I going to tell mom and dad? What am I going to say? Man I don't want to do this, but I have to. After I called each one of them, I still couldn't believe those words were coming out of my mouth. I couldn't move forward; all I wanted to know was why and how.

That night I couldn't sleep well. I woke up in the middle of the night crying uncontrollably; all I could taste was sweat and tears. All that day and the next few days I couldn't eat, think, function normally, or even gather my thoughts. I kept telling myself I have to see my brother; I have to see my brother to make sure he is okay.

I made it. I can now breathe a little easier because I made it to Joliet, Illinois. "I see him." I'm so excited to see my backbone twin. I began to cry again; it's really true. My little brother Amiere is really not breathing anymore. I began to feel his body, rub his hair, and kiss his lips and face. I continuously told him I love and miss him so much.

I was forced to eat. My family kept reminding me how important it was to eat and not get myself sick. I had to gain some kind of control back so that I could eat and not harm myself in the process. Amiere wasn't the only person in the car. There was another male and two female passengers. The boy suffered major injuries and one of the girls suffered minor injuries, but Amiere was the only one who passed away.

Since April 16, 2012 my life hasn't been the same. This event that has occurred in my life has drastically changed me. My perspective on everything has changed. Amiere was more than a brother to me. He was my best friend and supporter. He was a great father to his four precious children (the last child hasn't been born yet). Every day I go through the notion of missing him and wishing to see him again. I can't get that image out of my head of him lying on the table looking peaceful.

I am still in shock to this day. It has been almost five months, and the memory is still as fresh as if it happened yesterday. I wish there was something to do to help clear the memory. I can't leave him; I

## **My suffering is trying to get the best of me, and I'm trying my hardest to prove the devil wrong.**

can't let him down, so I have to continue to succeed like he knows I am capable of doing. My suffering is trying to get the best of me, and I'm trying my hardest to prove the devil wrong.

My family and I are still suffering great pain from this. Amiere was only 24 and still had so much life to live. He left so many memories behind. All my life it's always been Amiere and I against the world. Now that Amiere is home with the Lord, I feel like I have nothing or no one else. He was always there for me no matter what. He supported everything I did and never talked down to me.

Every day I want to hear his voice. On April 16, 2012 he called me about 6:45 and asked me what I was doing. I told him, "I'm still lying in bed about to get up and get ready for school." He replied with, "Moc, get up and have a great day at school and be safe; I love you and I will call you later when I think you are out of class." I replied with, "I will, and I love you always and forever and may you keep your head up and have a productive day." That was the last time I heard his voice.

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*No biography submitted.*





she asks something really theological and I can't find the words this late at night to answer in a way that stays true to what I believe but in a way that she can relate to? What if I never get to speak to her again and she leaves with the wrong impression of me, my team, or God?

The pressure I'm feeling quickly turns to sadness when she asks, "Sarah, how do I get out of this? Where can I go? Where is a safe place for me and my children? I don't want to do this anymore. I know the men that sell drugs on the street have a place to go. Some church takes them in and makes their life better so they don't have to work the same street as us anymore. They find real life. Where can I go? I want to get out of this life." The despair in her eyes is a sharp stab to my gut that I can't avoid. My heart aches for her, knowing that there is no place for what she's looking for, at least not in Iquitos. I tell her I don't know, but I could ask around and hopefully I will see her next week.

On my way home, I question God's motives again. I ask him why He would have put this burden on my heart years ago, when still now I'm getting small tastes of what it's like to work with these kinds of women, but I can't actually help them, just talk with them. Why would He let me go through the frustration of not being able to help when this woman is begging to get out of her situation; when He knows that this is what causes me the deepest form of grief? Why did she bring this to me of all people? It's like she knew that my dream is to create exactly what she asked for: a safe home for women to get off the street and out of prostitution and sex trafficking. How could God break my heart like this, knowing that I would have to tell her there is no place in Iquitos for her to seek help?

Just like He has through all these years of striving to get where I want to be in life, that fiercely gentle voice responds again. *The reason you're here right now is to see the intensity of the need. My heart for these women here in the Amazon is even more broken than your heart for them. You needed to experience this so you could understand how desperately they need the ministry that you will start. Here. In Iquitos. You needed the motivation to keep you going through the next steps of getting your ministry started. Now that you fully understand their situation, you won't give up until you can be back here to provide the care that they require. This next season of your life is going to be difficult, but you'll get through it because you know the faces of the women you will take in. They don't have a place in Iquitos to turn to for help. Not yet. It's time now to start the next step of your journey, with Me, to save these women.*

Now I'm back home, in my second semester of school. Living paycheck to paycheck and studying for tests is not exactly what I had in mind to prepare me for the ministry I want to start. But I know that I am supposed to be where I am now, and it might take me a few years to get back to those women I know are looking for a way out. These women need professional help, not just someone with a compassionate heart to try and solve their problems. My

Shelly Kaunzner

It was that time again; time for me to see what requirements I had yet to fulfill for my Liberal Arts degree, and register for classes. Let's see... two areas I am missing are Global Perspective and Ethical/Civic Responsibility. There is an Interdisciplinary





## Ben Fleischfresser

esides a better paying career, have you ever thought about the benefits that college can provide? I hadn't either – until I enrolled in college. After orientation, they explained the multiple career paths we can choose from: doctor, lawyer, contractor, or even a music producer. That piqued my interest as to what other benefits going to college could provide. Could I learn more about myself? Will it help me get over some of my fears, such as public speaking? These

# *making a dream Come True*

Adilet Takyrbashev

My story began in 2008. At that time, I was fourteen years old and had finished my 8th year of school in Kyrgyzstan when my parents told me that I would have to move to United States to study there. I was happy and excited to move. I told all of my friends about it and most of them were envious. It was not like I was moving to nearby Russia or other neighboring countries; I was moving to the United States, the country that everyone wanted to see. So my parents bought me an airplane ticket, and I was ready to go. It took me almost 24 hours to get here. When I was flying over the Atlantic Ocean, I looked down through the window, and all I saw was water. That's when I told myself, my life will change forever.

## **When the plane landed, I had a feeling that I was somewhere**

When the plane landed, I had a feeling that I was somewhere else, not on this planet. Everything was so different: the diversity of people, fancy cars, highways, McDonald's. I thought I was dreaming. I had to go to school in two weeks, but before I went to school, I had to take an exam in order for the school staff to see how well I could speak English. There were five levels. My score was the lowest. I had to take the first level of English.

My first impression of school was indescribable. In Kyrgyzstan, we didn't have lockers, computer labs, TV's, or projectors in the classroom. Everything was new for me. I liked school. Everyone was kind to me: no bullies, no crimes, no fighting, no drugs, no cigarettes, and no alcohol in school. That was weird for me because in Kyrgyzstan the schools are like mini versions of prisons. Students fight a lot, smoke in the restrooms, drink in the classrooms – it's something else. So, I told my friends about what an American school looks like, but they didn't believe me. They thought I was lying. Then I got involved in two sports: soccer and wrestling. I didn't think of my family and friends back in Kyrgyzstan; my thoughts were about America.

Two years later, I started thinking about my family and friends. I missed them. I wanted to go back to Kyrgyzstan and see them again, but I couldn't. Then, after my third year of being here, I just had to go back. I was tired of American life. I wanted to spend my time exactly how I did back in Kyrgyzstan. I wanted to be me again. Finally, I had a chance to go back to Kyrgyzstan for the summer. When I saw my friends and my neighborhood, I was shocked. I got so used to the American environment, I just forgot how I lived as I did before. It took me weeks to adapt to my old environment. My friends had grown and some of them were involved in criminal activities. Everything seemed to be so different. After a year of living in Kyrgyzstan, I missed the U.S. a little bit, but still I wanted to live in Kyrgyzstan.

Now, I am 19 years old, I go to college, I pay my bills, I have responsibilities to take care of. My life changed completely. Some of my friends who are 20-25 years old don't work. They take their parent's money, and that's how they live. By comparing their lives with mine, I realize that God gave me a chance to be different from my friends. That everything happens for a reason, and I have everything to become a successful person in life. I take this opportunity as a gift, and I will do everything to make my dreams come true.

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*No biography submitted.*



Michelle Fick

Growing up, I had the best childhood because I lived in the countryside; the only traffic in sight was the traffic of birds, bees, and dragonflies. Not a Yosemite, but the location had the same tranquility Burroughs described – what was his description – and I loved the place with all of my heart. I did not know all of the sounds that the nature that lived there was telling me, but after finding a



## Anita Forrest

Every child at some point makes the magical discovery of that one special place where they escape the reality of parents, teachers, and, perhaps most importantly, nosy brothers and sisters. For some, this may have been a tree house or a backyard fort. For me and my friends, it was the Luce Line Trail. This was no ordinary trail.

into an eerie, deafening silence, broken only by the rustling of the wind and an occasional “crack” of a branch underfoot. If the branch was large enough, it might even echo like gunfire. On particularly hot summer days, the electric song of a distant cicada might serenade





## Mohammed Hussein

My childhood life was full of memories and happiness. One of the most beautiful memories of all time was when I visited my grandparents' old house for summer break from school. My grandparents' old house was built in an isolated small sheep farm of Bale Eteyo, Ethiopia. It is about 12 miles away from Gassara city, in the northern part of a cold valley between the Sandbo river valley fa[QsR[QeRjZ[Bm 6W]Icf[Wg



With a loud honk from behind me, however, I realized that I had to keep driving. Nobody is allowed to go back to instinct. Not in a world that is full of the accomplishments of man. With a sigh, I put my foot to the gas and watched the puff of smoke coming up from the exhaust pipe of the car in front of me. "Maybe that's why we don't think about our mark on nature", I thought, "we're just envious of it."

\*\*\*\*\*

*Fi r has grown up in a house full of animals (human and non-human) and loves to be outside. His family also loves animals and has been known to capture and study everything from snakes to bees. As a kid he spent numerous hours playing imaginary games in the woods and has tried to bring this*



## Eva Sistermans

During a speech, the Dutch princess Máxima, born in Argentina and married to the Dutch Crown prince, said that she "had not been able to find the true

and no home is without licorice in all different kinds of sorts and sizes. Holland is, well... the country where we do a lot more crazy stuff than I mentioned here.

Considering all the things I just listed, and a lot more things I did not list, we can definitely speak about a Dutch culture. But does a Dutch identity also exist? I do think so. The first thing I noticed when I came here is that Dutch people are more sober than Americans. Dutch people think first before they do something, and then act. We call that, "watching the cat climb out of the tree," which means that we first watch how everything works before we do something ourselves. Americans, on the other hand, tend more to throw themselves into the unknown. For example, if I would ask an American if he wants to go bungee jumping (okay, maybe not bungee jumping but something less extreme) with me he would probably say, "yes" and be enthusiastic about it. A Hollander would think about the pros and cons first, maybe ask some other people what they would do, and then make a decision.

Besides being sober, I also think that Dutch people are more likely to make compromises. We live with a lot of different people from different cultures on a small piece of land so we have to work together in order to make that work. One can find that "give-and-take" mentality everywhere. When people have a problem, they will talk with each other until they find a solution that works for all of them. One can also find that mentality in politics. We have a lot of small political parties. Right now, there are eleven of them in the parliament. And they have to work together in order to get a majority of seats. In the United States, there are a lot of different people from different cultures living together as well, but they are living together in an enormous country. More space means less chance on disagreements, so maybe people are just not that used to making compromises. And in politics, Republicans and Democrats are constantly fighting each other, not willing to make any compromises at all.

Another typically Dutch thing is that Dutch people are more tight-lipped than Americans are. Americans talk about everything with everyone, they talk about the amount of money they make with a complete stranger on the bus, they discuss their love life with the mailman, and they use the problems they have with family and friends as the perfect topic during a lunch with colleagues. Dutch people talk about the weather, a new kitchen, or their pets – safe topics. The more intimate topics are saved for family and friends. But when you reach politics or social problems, these habits turn the other way around. A real Hollander has an opinion about everything, even if he has no knowledge at all about the topic, and shares this opinion with everyone. And they do not avoid a discussion when someone else does not agree with them. Americans, on the other

hand, do not share their views on these topics with everyone, because they are afraid to insult someone or hurt their feelings.

The last thing that I have marked as typically Dutch is the Dutch immediacy. Dutch people can be direct. When a Hollander does not like something, he will tell you. Most of the time Hollanders do not mean to hurt someone's feelings, but Dutch people do not always think about the impact their words can have. I think they are just trying to be honest, but it can seem impolite to someone else. I did not even think about it this way until I came here and noticed how polite and nice Americans are to each other. When they notice something that they do not like about a person, they will try to find something they do like about that same person and compliment them on that. They always find something to compliment someone on – a haircut, their baby, a pair of boots, or even their bike helmet. Dutch people only give compliments to people they know.

Considering all the characteristics of "the real Hollander" I just gave, I hope that I have made it clear that I do believe that something like a Dutch identity exists. The Dutch identity is sober, it is an identity of giving and taking, it is about not scattering your problems all over the place, except when these problems are about politics, and it is about being direct and reserved at the same time. But above all, the Dutch identity is something that I miss and value when it is not there anymore. I would have never thought about the Dutch identity in the way I just did had I not moved to the United States. People do not realize the personality of their country until they cannot find it anymore, until they end up in a different environment that has its own habits and customs. And like I said before, the fact that I am used to the Dutch personality does not make me completely different, because we are all human beings. Neither does it make one image better than another. But that does not mean that the identity of a country does not exist, and that its citizens cannot value the character of their country.

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*i + m* parents are both Dutch and she was born in The Netherlands, also known as Holland. Eva grew up in her hometown Nijmegen, but when she was fourteen years old, she moved to Leiden. She lived there until she was eighteen. After graduating from high school, she decided to come to the United States for one year to get to know another culture and to improve her English. She is attending North Hennepin Community College and trying to receive the Academic English Language Proficiency Certificate (AELPC) in English for Speakers of Other Languages. Eva is fluent in Dutch and English and has had French and Latin for six years and German and Old Greek for two years.

# *gentlemen*

Vicki Richardson

here is an old saying, "you can't tell a book by its cover," and I'm here to tell you how this old saying is absolute truth to me. Do you think there is a perfect place for a six year old child, with an insatiable imagination, to grow up in? Well, in my opinion there is a place; and, it is located in Highland Park, Saint Paul, where green rolling hills and deep ravines simply call to you. If you happen to own a shining silver bike like I did, you can travel for miles while the black asphalt accommodates your swerving in and around the oncoming traffic.

## **To me, they were such gentlemen. They made me feel safe and special.**

One early, sunny, Saturday morning, I left the house and, jumping on my bike, headed off for a new adventure. As I felt the wind blowing through my new butch haircut, I felt strangely empowered as though something great was about to happen to me. Suddenly, I heard laughter and singing coming from the ravine just below me. I jumped off my bike, looked over the edge of the ravine and yelled, "hey, who's making all that noise?" My heart was pounding and my curiosity was exploding. "Come on down here and ask that question," replied a deep voice. I was half way down the hill when I screamed, "coming!"

Looking up I saw five shaggy-haired, bearded grandpa's staring at me. I walked over to them sticking out my right hand for an introductory shake and said, "Morning, my name is Vicki." They laughed out loud and shared their names with me. "Have some breakfast with us?" they asked; "ok, I said," and they handed me a huge silver plate with bacon, potatoes, and eggs that covered the entire plate. We all started talking about classical music, which I loved, and Chevy cars, which I knew nothing about, and families, which I knew all about. Stories of grandchildren, wives, brothers, and military wars...and loneliness started just pouring out of these guys as I listened intently. One of the grandpas looked up into the sky while he was talking, and I think I saw a tear fall down his cheek. I walked over to him and put my arm around him as far as it could go. I wanted him to feel good like I did when my grandma

would put her arm around me. I think it worked because he smiled down at me. These were five great guys that I was fortunate enough to have breakfast with that day. To me, they were such gentlemen. They made me feel safe and special.

Quite suddenly, I knew it was time to go. I stood up and said, "I really have to go now, and clean my room; it is Saturday you know." They stood up, too, and hugged

*listening to nature's whisper*

Lensa Tucho

It was such an attractive place to sit because it invited you to a view you had not already experienced. There, you don't see a comfy sofa to sit on; however, you do not feel any discomfort by sitting there. A natural green grass is where you lay as you lift up your spirit with the presence of a serene, silent, and beautiful environment that gives you an awesome feeling. This silent place speaks to you with a soft voice you can hear clearly, opens your eyes to the splendor of nature that puts its memory in your mind and knocks on your heart's door to present you with a pleasant flower. Once nature wins your heart, you start conversing with it. Even if it has no loud voice and you physically don't speak out to it, it understands you and you understand it. You reveal your thoughts and whisper your dreams to its ears, and it gives you hope and encouragement to fulfill your dream.

**For me, this is where I contact nature and nothing can compare to this extraordinary place; it always wins my soul.**

For me, this is where I contact nature and nothing can compare to this extraordinary place; it always wins my soul. This place is located in front of my home, in the same compound in my high school called Bethel Evangelical Secondary School (BESS.) I consider this place as a core point of my memory and as a base and foundation of my life because it reminds me of my high school life that involved valuing of one's education, commitment to one's friendships, and love and respect to one's own family. Sometimes I sat at that place with my friends and family members, and we chatted with each other about education, about different programs in our high school, and about life in general. But most of the time I sat there alone and enjoyed life. Beside her beauty there is special thing I want to reveal about this place. I used to sit there at evening time during the sunset. While a cool air drifted, shaking juniper and eucalyptus trees over me, I smelled the fresh air and stared at a rounded, orange color sun shining with her dim light above hills and tall trees. As she added extra magnificence on where I was, I observed special beauty in her body. The beauty of



unoccupied land I did not know before, and I started to dream to have that beauty. As I appreciated the beauty of the land, I continued to hope to have its invisible, imagined, and extraordinary things in a future life. I dreamt of beautiful places that I was in, a land of freedom I have never seen before. I dreamt of living on United States ground. I showed this place my heart's desire and my future life goals I want to accomplish, and I saw hope and accomplishment in this place, giving me a feeling of seeing my dream come true one day. The place encourages me, saying, "your dream will come true." As I pay attention to its whisper, I promised to come again at that same place and again say, "I will see my dream come true and, as soon as I am shaped for my purpose, I will be back and help my society and my country, I promise." This place has kept its promise and I saw it again in a new land, a new land I was dreaming of for a long time. I saw it on the soil of the United States. My first day in America was an amazing day; I felt born again. I don't recognize whether she followed me or I followed her, but we saw each other from the distance, and I thanked the place I knew so well. Now, every time I remember our original place I associate my dream with my beloved place. So I motivate myself to work hard to fulfill what I have promised myself, so that I will come again to that fountain.

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*ገገገ was born in a small town called Dembi Dollo, Oromia. She has been in the United States since February 27, 2012. Spring 2013 was her second semester at North Hennepin Community College, where she is majoring in pre-nursing. She lives in Columbia Heights, likes playing basketball, reading, and writing fiction. She is Christian and serves Lord Jesus and his people in a worship team of Ebenezer Oromo church. What she values in life is people. Though she misses her old friends, she appreciates her life in America.*



## Chloe Rosten

North Minneapolis is known for gangs, guns, violence, and drugs. Some think NoMi, short for North Minneapolis, is a “ghetto” or scary. For 21 years, I’ve lived through the hardships and phases of North Minneapolis. Growing up in NoMi as a white female made it difficult to fit in. Cracker and Oreo are just some of the names I’ve been called growing up as a minority in a black neighborhood. For my entire life, I grew up with an unbreakable bond to my family, learning to stick up for myself and knowing right versus wrong. Through struggles of life and my father’s alcoholism, I became who I am today.

There stood the white house with the green trim on the corner sitting on top of a brown grassy hill with a large green tree covering the large picture window to the living room looking east. As I walked across the hard solid ground, approaching a Springer Spaniel/Black Lab, grass starts to fade on the hill as you see the line of dirt

that is like a barrier between the dog and the grass and

in the middle, being the wannabe trying to fit in, ignoring the insults of being called Cracker daily. I sat there on the cushioned seat of mom's Taurus, just fighting the urge and remembering the need to stick up for myself – to be myself.

Sitting in her hot pink and lime green room, I stared at the walls, ignoring the smell of burning food, the yelling match between my parents and the sirens in the background. I walked down the 15 stairs that separated me from the yelling, just to smell the aroma of brandy on his breath, never wondering what they were yelling about

anymore. I stood out in the darkness – the white house across the street with people sitting, partying, drinking, and drug dealing their lives away. Kids were running around screaming, playing, throwing fits, and wanting to open presents. As I turned to go back into the loud screaming house, I hit the floor as I heard, “bang, bang, bang.” I heard the screaming of despair, smelled the gunshot residue and revenge in the air.

No sixteen year old should have to get a restraining order.

As I sit watching the small television multi-tasking and doing school-work, a ring fills the empty house. I pick up the white cordless phone, I immediately hear yelling coming from a black woman wanting her money as if she were there. This has never been a surprise, but before hanging up on this rude woman, I tell her not to swear at me, yet, when she does it again, my finger presses the button that mutes her voice and the sound of people in the background. A few minutes later, a POUND, POUND, POUND bangs on the door of my house. I answer it with my Springer Spaniel/Black Lab at my side. She starts to speak nicely to me until I tell her that my dad is not here. Then, she starts bitching to me about her “mother fucking car” and how she wants it back. Being a sixteen year old, white female facing a black woman who brought four or five of her thug wannabes to intimidate my dad isn't an easy thing. As I call 9-1-1, one of her thug wannabes dares to put his face up to the screen door just to find my Springer Spaniel/ Black Lab barking nonstop. She yells that she is “a Christian lady” and if she knows anything, “God wants the truth!” As I stand there, I yell back that my Dad isn't here, calling her a crazy

ass bitch as she threatens to kick my ass, her thug wannabes telling me to watch my language, and I say, “Why? What are you gonna do about it?!” As the screaming continues, I ask how she knows my dad. After telling me that her friend recommended him to her, I let her know that her friend must not like her then! The black-and-white finally show up as she continues bitching at me for things my dad does. She harasses me until I had to get a restraining order to keep her away from me.

Life as a North Side Resident was never easy but you learn to accept and embrace your life. Family, friends, and life's struggles are what make you who you are. Growing up in North Minneapolis with an overprotective mom and siblings made me realize that I need to be



The other, a lean, wolf-like and old dog, continued cautiously forward. Much like the dog in Jack London's, *To Build a Fire* the older dog was compelled by instinct and wisdom to navigate his way carefully along the ice, while the younger dog was merely dragged by naivety and curiosity to seek out thrills. Had the short, stout and young dog been set upon an Alaskan tundra, she would not have survived. I took the two dogs and tied their leashes together, as I assumed that the younger one would then be obligated to rely on the instinct of the bigger, stronger and wiser dog. Perhaps she learned something.

From the falls, we took a trail that followed the river, above its banks on a hillside, to the lake. The hike was icy, hilly and tiring. Along this trail, there was a birch tree that I am familiar with, having hiked past it many a time. This birch was wide and branching – a perfect climbing tree. Terry Tempest Williams in *The Erotic Landscape* describes experiences with nature by contrasting interactions with the landscape as being either pornographic or erotic. The difference between these is watching versus experiencing. She states, "but the world we frequently surrender to defies our participation and seduces

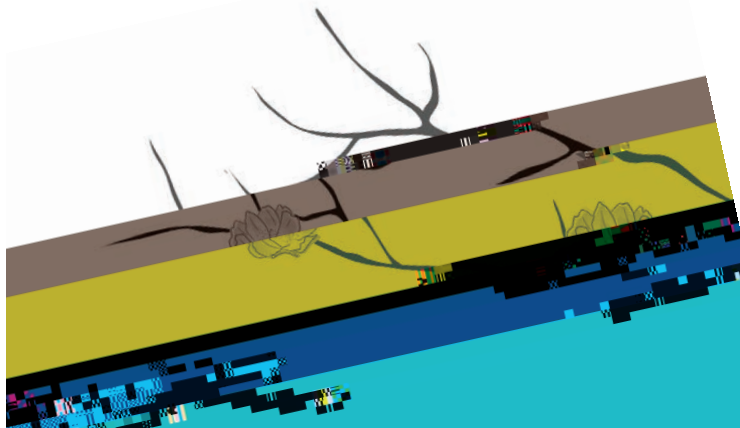
## My body was engaged to keep from falling, but my spirit was also engaged through this connection to the natural world.

us into believing that our only place in nature is a spectator, onlooker. A society of individuals who only observe a landscape from behind the lens of a camera or the window of an automobile without entering in is perhaps no different from the person who obtains sexual gratification from looking at sexual actions or organs of others."

With this passage in my memory, I decided to experience this tree. I used my hands for grabbing, my eyes for seeking, my legs for pushing, my ears for anticipating cracks or crashes, my arms for hauling, my feet for stepping. Once at a satisfactory height, I nestled into the trunk and dangled my limbs from the branch I was straddling. As Williams describes, being in a tree in such a way is like "really be[ing] held." From the top of this birch tree, I could see the entire valley in which the frozen river was winding. Two opposing sides of it had met and crashed, like tectonic plates under our world's surface, resulting in a spine of ice mountains, running through the center of the river. I could also see trails from animals crossing over the snow. One particular trail perplexed me as it was crossing the river when suddenly, the trail turned at a ninety degree angle, towards the center of the river where it then looped and turned until coming out on the other bank. I could see the frozen mammoth falls in the distance. Like Sylvia in *A White Heron*, who also sat at the top of a tree and saw the ocean, I saw something similar, Lake Superior, and thought, "truly it was a vast and awesome world!" My body was engaged, compensating for sways and twitches and to keep from falling, but my spirit was also engaged through this connection to the natural world. Terry Tempest Williams states, "we can choose to photograph a tree or we can sit in its arms where we are participating in wild nature, even our own."

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*r has attended North Hennepin Community College for three years and is now transferring to Minneapolis Community and Technical College to pursue a degree in nursing. She lived in Beijing, China, for nine years as an expatriot, but now enjoys all that Minneapolis has to offer including biking, drinking coffee, and walking her dogs. Her goals for this year are to go camping every possible weekend, go canoeing at Voyageurs National Park, and learn how to hate the long Minnesotan winters less.*





view is astonishing, and the shopping districts bustling, nightlife thriving, and tourist stops aplenty. If this were a quest for simple fun, the journey would stop here.

bothered to read, but right on the coast you can find a few well cut paths in between some natural shrubbery that only gets a few feet over head. The greenery is filled with a few pastel pink and white

This is where I push. My travel mates will usually ask “how far north do you want to go?” This is where I give my destination that I’ve had in mind this whole time, Grand Marais. This usually sparks a big debate, but one that I usually win. A small mental celebration later, the car ride picks up, and things go from a rush-rush morning into one of my favorite drives in the world, US Highway 61. The highway offering the labeled scenic route is exactly that. The feelings of getting away from it all are now setting in full-fledged as the state completes its change from suburb to city on the lake to driving the rocky wooden coast. The statue of Paul Bunyan in Two Harbors, the delightful hikes and paths of Gooseberry Falls, and small shoreline towns all have a soothing effect on my mind. At this point I don’t know if it is the feeling of being away, or the ability to steal glances of the coast that are making me feel more relaxed, but it doesn’t matter. The hours have passed, and the constitution of whoever is with me has not changed my excitement for my destination.

Then the arrival – a few more curves around the green coast and the small town appears. The outskirts lined with budget hotels and antique stores, while driving into the small downtown has a welcoming feel. The familiar landmarks, of Sven and Ole’s Pizza (a probable dinner stop), Blue Heron Inn, log cabin sporting goods store (the name escapes me, but I can picture the building perfectly – a log cabin exterior of several foot thick brown wood for two floors, all shaved to triangles at the points where they extend past each layer), and a 1950’s style drug store. Those will all be stops, but what I’ve been waiting for is just a few hundred feet out of downtown.

I usually park in front of the log cabin sporting goods store; it is right on the lake and by a pleasant town square. The square has a few benches with tourists overlooking the lake, the seagulls pestering for any kind of food their greedy beaks can take from them, but I walk right up to the rocky beach. The beaches around Lake Superior all feature a wide array of pink, purple, and reddish stones. The closer you are to the lake, usually the smaller the stones get. Each step on the rocks your feet sink into the stones an inch or two, not enough to trip you up, but enough to make the walk a little more taxing. I follow the beach around the fancier hotels and past the coast guard post and have made it. The light house trail is in front of me.

The trail somehow seems restricted to me. It is right by the coast guard post, and has various signs dictating policy that I have never

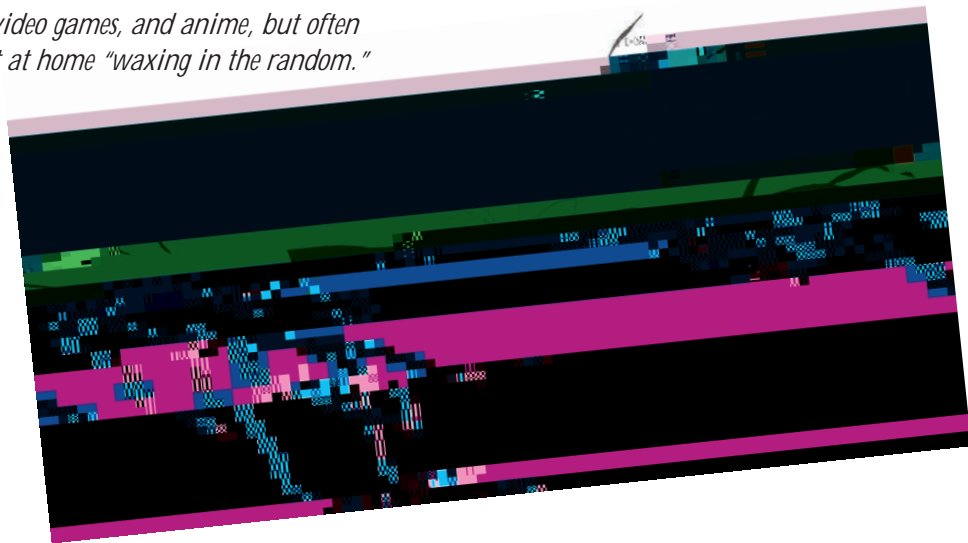


bottom and smaller ones on top. I make my wish for whatever earthly desire I can think of and the journey ends. I have found my peace for now.

My sense of peace and the road to it, may explain why I am a generally stressed person. There are so few times I get to visit my most peaceful spot since it is so far from home. Perhaps that's why I can occasionally be found at the mall, trying to buy myself a relaxing distraction that can attempt being a replacement for true peace, but everyone who does the same thing keeping all those stores in business know the end result. A few minutes is no substitute for the real thing, there are no short cuts on a journey to peace. Sometimes you have to find some companions and just go. Peace is where you find it, and I'll find mine up north.

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*Aaron has been an almost lifelong resident of Maple Grove, minus a few years hanging out in St. Cloud. He is new to North Hennepin Community College, and it is the first time in a decade he has attended any educational institution. Aaron has many interests like cooking, video games, and anime, but often says that he finds himself best at home "waxing in the random."*





Ashley Tray

yanl-

Scorching hot rocks host a headquarters for rattlesnakes, so the adrenaline rush begins. As we stagger down a mountain of rubble and through a mass of thorns, perspiration begins burning our eyes just as we tiptoe into the icy water. A congestive effort takes place as we attempt to tie our tubes together, allowing for the smallest rubber donut to be in the center acting as host to our miniature igloo cooler. Observing the once clear blue sky, we insert ourselves into our floating devices and set sail into our small town heaven.

Almost immediately, we are surrounded by copper ridges 30 feet high, housing hundreds of undisturbed birds' nests. We do our best to navigate into our preferred sections of aqua, paddling our way into the rapids until we reach a slow moving swimming hole. There we gently roll out of our tubes and bobble in the water, cooling ourselves from the heat. The clouds have darkened even further, and the rain drops start to dribble. Back in our tubes, it is an exhilarating feeling being in the water while it rains: toes, finger-tips, and hair wave, feeling in the refreshing liquid. The amazement ends abruptly with an angry boom and flash of light, startling enough to tip us out

we entered into a new land. A beautiful, hidden treasure: nature carved steps and spiraling rock formations 15 feet tall. My eyes pirating an image straight out of a fantasy book, I hardly notice the clouds have parted and blue skies returned to greet us.

Knee length grass tickles our feet; we keep putting one foot in front of the other for what feels like forever until we see the vehicle in our near future. Trudging our final steps, we approach the black Grand Prix that hours ago was our departing monument. Legs and ankle relieved, the car doors open to greet us; like a fire-breathing dragon heat bellows out. Hands blindly grab for sundresses and towels; draped in our summer apparel we cautiously take seats on the hot leather. The car effortlessly fires up, and without a thought we roll

of our tubes. We frantically swim to the shore. Laughter bellows; this is a typical experience for us two. Some would call us the "bad luck twins," but to us it is just another adventure to tell. Re-enacting our beginning, we plop into our tubes, open a chilled beer, and wait out the storm. Enjoying our stationary stance, until the cooler's insides become vacant, we come to the conclusion the storm isn't going to pass anytime soon; we surrender to Gaea.

Slow moving at best, I was thankful for the alcohol which took the edge of pain off my ankle as we begin to climb. Molly has no problem laughing at my injury and asks if I'm going to need a handicap sticker for my car when this is over. I laugh, and tell her she's going to need a new floating partner.

Sensitivity had never been a priority, sarcasm being our primary language. Huffing and puffing, we make light of our less than perfect circumstance until we recall the rumors we had heard about the lone cougar roaming the area. Hustling as though the wild beast were nipping at our heels, fear quickly subsides  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way to the top;

## Mariah Wilcox

Have you ever had a place that made you feel safer than anywhere else, a place where you spent hours of the day dreaming about what you could do with your life, a place where you will always call home in your heart? I have. It was a big wooden barn with a green roof, two huge doors on each end with diamond shaped windows in them. It was my safe haven.

I spent endless days in that barn, brushing down my horses, taking a nap on the floor of the tack room, hiding from a rain shower, or escaping the brisk heat of the day. Many of my childhood memories consist of that big ol' barn. Nothing more than a stinky, dusty place to some; to me, it was my sanctuary.

The floor was just dirt. If you didn't wet it down part way through the day, it was hard to breathe in there. You could taste the dry dust on your tongue. I'd wet it down just for the smell of the wet dirt; it made me feel right at home. There were two barn stalls inside. This is where my good barrel horse spent his nights. The stall doors were made with cedar half way up and bars across the top. When the cedar got damp, it would fill the barn with its sweet aroma. In the early morning when the air could still send a chill down your spine, I'd walk to the barn to feed the horses, opening up those big sliding doors, letting the sunlight in. If you stood just right, that little gleam of sunlight would catch the side of your face, warming you up just enough to get the morning chores done.

After the chores were all done, I'd curl up for a cozy little nap in the horse blankets on the tack room floor. My loyal cow dog by my side beneath a saddle rack, hoping my mom wouldn't catch us. The tack room was brighter than the rest of the barn. It

sweet horse sweat. You could almost taste the sweet molasses grain when you walked in. In the back of the tack room was the fridge where we kept all the vet supplies for the horses. I hated that smell; it always reminded me that something bad could happen.

When spring would first hit at the beginning of March, the horses would start to shed their long winter hair. Each day for about a week we'd bring two horses in at a time and brush them down. The barn floor didn't even look like a floor then. It would look as if we had just sheared a sheep. Piles of horse hair floating around in the warm breeze. We'd be spitting hair out of our mouths, wiping it off our clothes and face. It would get everywhere; at times it would even make you sneeze. The horses loved it, brushing felt so good to them.

At the end of the day when the horses were all rode and the chores all done, it was our turn to play. In the corner of the barn my dad built a barn swing that would keep us occupied for hours. A torturous

swing – no matter how hard you tried to swing back and forth it would go side to side, causing us to hit the wall. We didn't care; we all would let out a roar of laughter, bringing happy tears to our eyes. Sometimes we'd twist each other up in it till it wouldn't twist anymore; then we'd let go, sending each other spiraling out of control. You'd go on the ride of your life, and it would be over in three minutes tops.

On weekends the barn was the party place. On summer nights, we'd all get together and build a fire outside of those big doors and barbeque with steaks, hotdogs, hamburgers, and mom's famous potato salad. Adults would be reaching for a beer, and we'd be reaching for an ice cold Dr. Pepper. My dad would grab his guitar and sing some good George Strait tunes that everyone loved. Sometimes we would sit and listen to stories the adults all shared with each other.

A lot has change in my life since that big ol' barn, but it will forever hold a special place in my heart; that's a piece of my childhood that will never be forgotten. I couldn't think of a better way to spend a night when you're a young child; those nights are what we lived for – hanging out with the people we love most, enjoying childhood the best way possible. Just living for that moment, nothing else mattered.

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*, Ari, Rio is a 21 year old college student attending Blackfeet Community College, a proud auntie, a loving sister, and rodeo cowgirl. Rodeo is a huge part of her life; it's been something she has always done with her family. "Rodeo to us is like our getaway from reality." When times are tough and life just seems to be flying by, rodeo is the one thing she has to keep her pushing forward – not only to become a better competitor but also to better her future. Rodeo and the crazy P Rodeo U\_T*



# *The Making of Wellman Ranch*

Tylee Wellman

Most people around here know my family because of the family ranch. Most people think that it was started by a man of the name Robert (Bob) Wellman. Most people think that because of him, my family is where they are now. Most people are wrong. We wouldn't have what we do if it wasn't for my great grandmother, Ramona Wellman, who is a strong Blackfeet woman; she was the one who had the idea to start a ranch. She was the one who went to the bank and got the loan. She was one who worked and stuck it out for the long run.

**She had nowhere to go with her  
six kids and no money. But this old lady  
had some tricks up her sleeve.**

My grandma is a sweet little old lady now; just by looking at her, you wouldn't be able to see all the struggles and obstacles she went through to get to where she is at now. At a young age, she fell in love with a "white man;" he was sweet and gentle, not a mean bone in his body. She married him, but after they were married, something changed. She doesn't really talk about it, her life with him, other than the good memories. My great grandfather, Bob Wellman, would beat her up on a daily basis and cheat on her on a regular basis.

She had nowhere to go with her six kids and no money. But this old lady had some tricks up her sleeve. She once told me a story of how my grandpa would take off to the bar and leave her home with the kids. She said she would catch a ride up to the bar and take the sparkplugs out of the car. She said, "Old Bob Wellman could go to the bar and drink, but he wasn't going to cheat on me in my own car." The next day she would catch a ride again, plug in the sparkplugs and drive home. "Then he smarted up and would carry the sparkplugs with him in the bar, so then I had to start airing down all the tires." My "gram" could always find the humor in anything and she sure was a crazy woman...she still is a crazy woman.

Family is close in my family – very close – and in Blackfeet tradition the oldest grandkid is usually raised by their grandparents. Well, that was my grandma and her older brother. So she knew more of her family than most of the siblings. When her uncles saw that she was in trouble and needed help, they told her to go to the bank and get a loan so she could buy some cows. As collateral, she could use their herd of horses and start making money to provide for her family because her no-good drunk husband wouldn't. My grandmother did what she was told and started the cow business. After seeing what my grandma had done, Bob saw what could be and kind of took over. It was going good for a while: her children were almost grown and her sons were old enough to go out on their own and do work.

They had made a living and were doing well, but being who he was, my grandfather was still cheating. He soon after left, and I'm not too sure, but took some stuff with him. He was a conniving man who liked to put things that weren't true in children's heads. A big fight came about in my family. It's not very well talked about and no one will say anything. But I have an idea of what happened. My great grandfather tricked my grandpa Terry and told him lies about his family that made him turn against his siblings. They then emptied the bank accounts that were worked for so long. My family was broke. With nothing to their name but a few cows and tractors,

everyone had to pitch in and help save the family ranch. The eldest sons, my uncle Rob (who I look up to and have the utmost respect for) stepped up and helped overcome this dilemma. Without these two, who knows where my family would be. Now my family has one of the biggest Indian-owned farm and ranch in Montana.

I am so very thankful for the strongest woman there is and also for the most determined man in the world. Who knows where I would be without the love and support of these two special people.

Now all of their hard work has paid off: from the long, cold, trying nights of calving; to the long, boring days of farming and everything in between. As I'm typing this paper they both are in Cancun, Mexico, bathing in the sun and sitting by the ocean enjoying themselves. They deserve it for what they have done.

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*..... m<sub>n</sub> is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe. She*



Dusti Boyce

Gazing out my kitchen window, I see multiple broken-down vehicles parked at the bottom of the hill, each sitting there idly in the drifting snow banks and

and heater once remained, making the interior a hollow skeleton. Above the dash, connected to the ceiling, visors are bandaged together with silver duct tape, similar to your typical "Rez Car."

Several decorations accompany the pickup, such as a small drum hanging from the rear-view mirror, an eight ball on the stick shift, and a sticker that says, "fear this" attached to the windshield. On the ceiling reads my mother's and father's names, "Marlene and Dave" in engraved lettering. I can't help but smile each time I see those markings, visualizing the genuine love my mother and father once shared all so long ago. They are like the signature markings that credit the sentimental beauty of the pickup.

When people think of treasure, they imagine gold coins, sparkling rubies, or a princess's long lost crown. However, things in our lives can be so special to us they become our own personal treasures, items given to us by loved ones and those belonging to the deceased we cherish and miss. It is obvious that my father's 1966 International has seen many things throughout its lifetime, not only by all of its battle wounds, but by the odometer that reads 739,772 miles. With all of its imperfections, the truck means the world to me. It strongly connects me to my father as I visualize and question the memories created behind that large narrow steering wheel. The truck may look like pile of junk parked below my house, but it is a sentimental treasure hidden amongst others less important.

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