

ISSUE 12 | SPRING/SUMMER 2023

# THE CHANGING TIMES

NATURE CONNECTION - CLIMATE ACTIVISM  
CREATIVITY - EDUCATION - CULTURAL CHANGE  
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE - LOCAL FOOD

We Have the  
Right to  
A Clean and Healthful  
Environment!



# FROM THE EDITOR

On a recent sunny day, after a long series of cold, rainy ones, I became frantic, obsessed, with getting new plants.

Has anyone else felt this hysteria?

Suddenly your garden beds, your window sills, your plant stands, look barren and drab.

Possessed, I drove to the plant store buying basil, lupine, oregano, lavender, and mint. While I grabbed my already-started, already-potted plants I stared ruefully (guiltily) at the packets of seeds. A little ashamed, I realized I was not interested in the work it took to plant a seed, the anxious anticipation, the dashed hope should they never sprout.

I wonder what it feels like to be a little seed, in fact a human seed, in the messy dirt pile of Earth 2023. It must feel like the gardener who bought you, and planted you, had never gardened before - and perhaps might even have ignored you, tossed you into the ground and left on your own. But even worse, that gardener might seem to have it against you, throwing glass, plastic, and toxic chemicals into your soil, your roots searching through slimy muck for what was once dirt.

I wonder what it feels like to be 20 years old, in 2023.

I wonder what it feels like to be 16 years old, in 2023.

I wonder what it feels like to be 10 years old, in 2023.

I wonder how it feels to know that the generations before you were the messy gardeners who ruined the soil.

This issue, the Spring/Summer 2023 issue of *The Changing Times*, we present to you what it feels like to be young in 2023. Youth and students from across Montana submitted pieces of prose and poetry for our Youth Writing Content. They shared with us what they think Montana will look like in 2070. And through these pieces, they also shared their fears, their grief, their hope, their dreams, their desire for change.

So we invite you into the hearts and minds of the young people of 2023. May we all listen, and may we have enough time to be better gardeners.

– Meg Smith, Editor

# WHO WE ARE

"The Changing Times" is a biannual publication of Families For A Livable Climate that invites community-wide response to these turbulent and revolutionary times, seeking submissions from people of all ages and backgrounds. In this space, we share stories, express love for the world around us, and offer ways for everyone to get involved in answering the call to change - in ourselves, our families, our communities, and our country. We know this work happens by challenging our systems and leaders; conversing on racial justice, resiliency, grief work, activism, youth empowerment, education, intergenerational support, local living, and traditional knowledge; and connecting with one another through our relationship with nature and the creative arts. While the magazine is based in Missoula, MT we consider "conversations with the peripheries," throughout Montana and beyond to be vital, so anyone is welcome to subscribe and/ or submit.

*Families for a Livable Climate is a project of Social and Environment Entrepreneurs (SEE) a non-profit public charity exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.*

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# HELD VS. MONTANA

## A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Last fall, one morning I told my fellow attorney and friend, CJ, that I was having a hard time concentrating because my son was being deposed that day.

His response: “Oh. My. God.”

That pretty much summed up my feelings on the matter too. To any parent, the thought of their child sitting down and being grilled by an opposing attorney for potentially hours, under oath, as a court reporter takes down every word, is daunting. But for a parent who is also a lawyer it might be especially so. Like most litigators, I've seen depositions deteriorate into vicious acrimony between opposing attorneys. I've called for breaks in a deposition and taken a tearful and shaken client out of the room and consoled, encouraged, and re-oriented them before they had to resume being questioned. At times this role can feel like the corner team tending to an increasingly bloodied and wobbly boxer between rounds of a prizefight. Litigating a case can help right wrongs and achieving a good resolution for a person can be deeply rewarding. But any lawyer also knows that litigation is stressful and has the potential to be cruel and devastatingly disappointing.

So when my son chose to become one of the youth plaintiffs in the case of Held v. State of Montana, which seeks to hold the State of Montana accountable for its fossil fuel promoting, climate change exacerbating policies, I was both proud and deeply concerned about him being subjected to litigation and trial. There has been no doubt about my son's deep concern for this issue from a young age. For over a year, on Fridays at lunch he

stood with a sign at various locations in Missoula protesting society's path on climate change. This was of his own volition, and he did it alone with his mom for weeks until the “climate strikes” eventually grew into large events with sometimes dozens of people. Years down the road, thinking of his deposition (which went fine, by the way) reminded me of that brave kid, standing alone in the rain with his homemade signs.

It is a very uncomfortable feeling to hold a protest sign alone in public, to face the honks of support and occasional jeers of derision without the safety of a group. It's uncomfortable and at times nerve wracking for the brave young people involved in the Held lawsuit to sit for their depositions, answer discovery requests, and eventually, testify at trial this June.

The Held trial will be the first youth climate change trial in United States history. The opportunity and stakes are enormous. One of the hardest things as a parent is knowing when to protect your child, and when to let them take risks from which you cannot fully protect them. And as we support these young people in trial, it's important to remember the personal risk each of them has taken to be there. Although there are many plaintiffs, in deposition and on the witness stand, each of them must, and has chosen to, stand alone in a way few adults and fewer politicians have the will to do. And for that we should all be deeply proud, and as parents, inspired to take our own actions for our children's futures.

– Isaac Kantor

Held v. State of Montana is the first youth-led and the first constitutional climate lawsuit to go to trial in the United States. Sixteen young plaintiffs from across Montana are suing the state government over its role in perpetuating the climate crisis. The plaintiffs argue that, by supporting a fossil fuel-driven energy system, the State of Montana is violating their rights to a clean and healthful environment; to seek safety, health, and happiness; and to individual dignity and equal protection of the law. The trial is scheduled for June 12-23, 2023 at the First Judicial District Court in Helena, Montana. Learn more about the case at [ourchildrenstrust.org/montana](https://ourchildrenstrust.org/montana).

Families for a Livable Climate is proud to support the brave young plaintiffs represented in this case. We also hope these historic events will motivate parents, caregivers, and adults everywhere to join the fight for climate security and a livable future for all.

PHOTO- MICA KANTOR SPEAKING AT CLIMATE ADVOCACY DAY (2023)

ELLIE FONTAINE

# THE QUEEN OF THE FOREST

Once upon a time, there was a girl who lived in a pretty, wet forest. One day, the forest became very hot and dry.

She thought, "I wish I could ask someone why it is hot and dry, not pretty and wet like it used to be."

Now this girl was very selfish. The girl was so selfish she did not try to help the forest or the forest creatures. Soon, a crowd of people came running by.

"Come on!" exclaimed, one woman. "Run! We are not safe!" she exclaimed.

"The forest is on fire so save my home," said the girl, "not yourselves!"

The forest fire passed, without ever touching her or her home. "I must be so kind and good that it spared me and my home," thought the girl.

Soon, a fairy godmother appeared. "Dear girl, you are granted one wish for it is your birthday," she said. "Think of your wish and it will come true."

The girl thought about being the queen of the forest. Suddenly, she was transformed into a pinecone. She asked the fairy, "Why did you make me into a pinecone? I want to be the queen of the forest."

The fairy replied, "The queen of the forest gives seeds to new life. You need to learn about your choices and how they affect others."

The girl who is now a pinecone saw she had been very selfish. She realized how important the forest was to her. The fairy saw she had learned her lesson and turned her back into a girl. Every day, the girl works hard to care for the forest, animals, and share her lessons she learned with others.

# CREATIVE CLIMATE FUTURES

We know that the work of climate action will take young people, and they are the very voices often excluded from these conversations. To work to bring their ideas/fears/hopes/dreams into the conversation, we launched The Changing Times 2023 Youth Writing Contest: "Creative Climate Futures."

Inspired and climate-conscious youth from around the state responded to this prompt:

Share with us your creative climate future.

Imagine it is the year 2070. Using story (think characters, metaphor, fantasy, sci-fi, realism, imagery, etc!) and your imagination, tell us about what your community looks like and how people are responding.

In your piece, please address at least one of the following questions:

How have climate impacts in Montana affected you, your loved ones, your community, your traditions, or your favorite Montana places, plants, or animals?

What are some changes your community has made to help Montana become healthy and livable for all?

How are you helping to reweave the world? What unique skills or gifts are you offering to create a livable community?

We present to you the winners in poetry and prose, ages 10 and under, 11-14, and 15-18.

Read their words, hear their voices, listen to them.

PHOTO | MEG SMITH



SERENA CARLSON

## CLEANING UP

As Cecilia waited for her dad to take his Mancala turn, she thought about how Grandma could see the mountains from this window when she was a girl. Now, the view was just haze and her grandma was in the hospital really sick.

Doctors thought that her grandma was outside too much and breathed in too many of the nearby factory chemicals. Now that her grandma was not in Cecilia's house, there wasn't nearly as much laughing. Cecilia's grandma always had a joke or interesting story to share. Most of the stories were ones about hiking to glaciers and counting mountain goats in Glacier National Park. Now when Cecilia visited Glacier, all the glaciers were melted, and it would be really lucky just to see one goat.

"Hey, where did you go? It is your turn," Cecilia's dad asked.

She moved her stones, but didn't get very many because her mind wasn't on the game. She was distracted by Fritz's sweeping. Fritz did all the chores her grandma talked about doing every day after school when she was a kid.

"Hey dad, I was thinking about Grandma and all her stories. That got me started on the chemicals that possibly got grandma sick. What if all our neighbors used our Fritz robots to do things like pick up trash, fix chemical pipes, and make sure the air around the factories stays clean. I would not mind sweeping if it meant that Grandma can be outside in the fresh air!"

ELLETTE WHITCOMB

## THE POWER OF NATURE

They tell us to never go beyond the fields. Beyond is dead. Filled only with the memories of lives cut short and decisions made by people who would never be satisfied. My friend checked once. He never told me exactly what he saw, but came back with the look of someone who has finally understood the potential of human destruction.

I never needed to check to make sure we were being told the truth, I saw the evidence in the games we played; how we laughed at violence and fought when we disagreed. Even though we are no longer human, we still have the potential to create destruction like the war that wiped out humanity forty years ago. In 2030.

I am the product of two people who were part of the fastest evolution in history. Hundreds of people changed as nuclear power plants worldwide became too unstable following years of dangerous experimentation, wiping out humanity as if it were a glass jar bumped into by a small child tired of being careful. Only the people who were in the right place at the right time were able to survive this carelessness, manifesting an immunity to the radioactivity and becoming creatures with the ability to manipulate the world around them.

From where I coast along air currents I can see Aer Folk like me reinforcing the barriers that protect our growing Montana community from the toxins the

war left behind, almost like our own version of the ozone layer, except it blocks out much higher concentrations of radioactivity. I look away from my people as dawn comes to take my watch over the land and sky and I pull my wings into my body, plummeting towards the ground like the meteors which streak across the sky almost too fast to wish upon. Feeling my aunt's displeased gaze, I slow my descent far before I wish to, touching down lightly, gracefully instead of snapping my wings out at the last second and slamming into the Earth with enough momentum to feel powerful, if only for a moment.

I smile up towards where my aunt glides high up in the sky, watching me, before she returns to resuming the last of her reinforcements.

I stride out of the clearing I've landed in, into the trees, listening to the sounds of people conversing as they leap from branch to branch and walk to the river to bathe. I wrap a breeze around myself, letting it carry me up into the high branches of the ponderosa where I live, surrounded by the tall pines that house the other Aer Folk, their branches strengthened by the Laend Folk with their ability to manipulate plants.

As I climb through the person-sized tree hollow serving as the entryway into my residence, I hear the sounds of animals calling to each other, like a great circus

has set itself up inside the branches forming the two rooms of my home, though I suppose that's not far off from the truth.

Entering the main area of the tree house, I take a deep breath and proceed to help the animals waiting around the room. The injured animals sent to me come from beyond the fields, where the radiation is so intense that toxic chemicals have to be cleared from their respiratory systems. My job is controlling the poisoned air trapped in their lungs and dragging it out, then sending it on a contained breeze beyond the fields where it belongs. Like humans, the animals evolved quickly to the radiation, but also like us, they can't survive in the radiation for long. Nature, like all things, has its limits. It seems the most she was able to give living organisms was a resistance to the radiation and skills to filter the radiation.

As I purge the last animal's lungs, I feel the sun's fiery wrath on my back, announcing his descent over the horizon. I stand from my crouched position next to the hurt mountain lion, stretching my arms up to the sky as if I could grab the ending day and keep it here, refusing to sleep. Instead, I let the day go. Dropping my arms to my sides, I walk into the back room where a bed made of flexible willow branches and spongy moss waits for me. Sleep finds me quickly tonight, the sunset wrapping around me like a mother giving the illusion of safety. It's a

wonderful feeling.

At first, I'm not sure what wakes me, my gaze drifting up towards the stars visible through the woven pine branches above my head. As the world trembles around me, I jolt upright, clambering out of my warm bed and into the deserted front room of my house. Fear quickens my breath and hollows my stomach as I climb through the tree hollow and glide to the ground where children are gathered in a group with the elders, their eyes looking up toward the stars, identical expressions of fear painted across their faces. I follow their gazes to the burning sphere rushing towards us.

In every chaos there is a moment of peace. Of silence. In this moment I feel a sense of awe, of the wish to burn just as bright. Then the meteor hits the Earth, smashing the peace to bits, landing meters away and throwing me into the air. The shock of flying without control leaves me stunned and the impact leaves me just as disoriented as I crash through the branches that once held me up, now talons ripping into my wings and shredding my skin. I can feel my life draining away as I lay on the forest floor. I turn my head to the right and watch as an ant evolves, adapting to the new environment created by the meteorite impact just like humans did decades ago. I smile as Nature decides to favor a new species, and wish them luck.

**In every chaos there is a moment of peace. Of silence. In this moment I feel a sense of awe, of the wish to burn just as bright.**

EMERY EASH

## WASTELAND

My shoes crunch on what is left of the soil as I slowly walk down the dusty, dry path. The yellow, dead grass swishes in the hot wind. Fire season this year will be as bad as ever, and the thick smoke that always comes with it will be worse.

As I come upon a small hill, the hot sun beats down on me. As I make my way up the hill, the dead trees sway in the wind. With the shortage of water lately, they have dropped their leaves and died. Over the hill, the old riverbed lays empty with nothing but rocks.

A rush of sadness fills me as I make my way towards the old river bank. I have many memories here as a child, laughing and swimming in the river. I loved to watch the fish and colorful rocks as I floated with the clear, rushing water. I would splash and play with my friends, family, and dog. It seemed the sun never shone brighter on those days, the happiness never greater. The birds would sing background music to our joy, the mountains in the background. Oh, how I loved this place.

Now, the beautiful, flowing river has dried to nothing but rocks. The birds have left to go somewhere that is better, although no such place exists. Now, the world has been reduced to a dry, wasteland. Trash floats on the hot wind and blows into what is left of the trees.

I cannot stand to stay in this dump, so I trek to my bike. When I get up to my bike, I swing a leg over and start up the cracking asphalt path.

As I ride into town, I look at what used to be the tiny town of Columbia Falls. Big buildings have taken place of what used to be trees and green grass. The air smells thick with exhaust and I find myself breathing hard. Big, corporate businesses have replaced the boutiques and local businesses. Houses are smashed together, with no more room to build. The small town spirit and community has vanished.

When I get to my office building, I put my bike on the rack and walk in the door. Brenda the secretary waves at me while talking frantically on the phone, I smile and head to my office. I sit at my desk and review this week's projects.

Years ago I created Save the Earth, a non-profit organization that is trying to restore the planet as it used to be. Although the planet is not fully restored, we have come a long way. The business is growing and we are making a big stand against the many things destroying our home. We have partnered with schools and businesses around the world to plant trees, pick up trash, and more.

My business is restoring the Earth so that children will be able to enjoy the pleasure of nature, just as I once did.

KEIRA KUJAWA

# CRUMBLING CLIMATE

PHOTO | MEG SMITH

Crushed  
A blackness suffocating the sky  
Choking me  
Never letting  
Go  
A place once called home  
Now a barren landscape  
A drop of water  
Now nothing but a crack in the ground  
When you try so hard  
Get so close  
But so close to the wrong thing  
Too close to fading  
Near destruction  
Previously a thriving forest of life  
Now a factory in the distance  
Why can't we try  
Try to feel the suffering  
The struggles of the workers  
Who have to pick through the trash  
Through the despair  
The Clark Fork River once running high  
Running no more  
Native species fighting for life  
A bull trout  
A grizzly bear  
Once knowing how to survive  
Tossed into the darkness  
The bull trout with no oxygen  
The bear with no food  
A food web so intertwined  
Unraveling like our very existence

Seeley Lake  
Now  
Sealed off  
A world without beauty  
A world without life  
A place once so euphoric  
Now forlorn and gloomy  
A drop of water  
Seeping into the ground  
Giving a chance for life  
Knowing it can make a difference  
Make a change  
A seedling blooming  
Hope returning  
Like the bitterroot flower  
Pushing through the grime  
Reaching toward light  
For the future  
For the climate  
For us

JULIAN MILKUS

# ENVIRONMENTAL MUSINGS

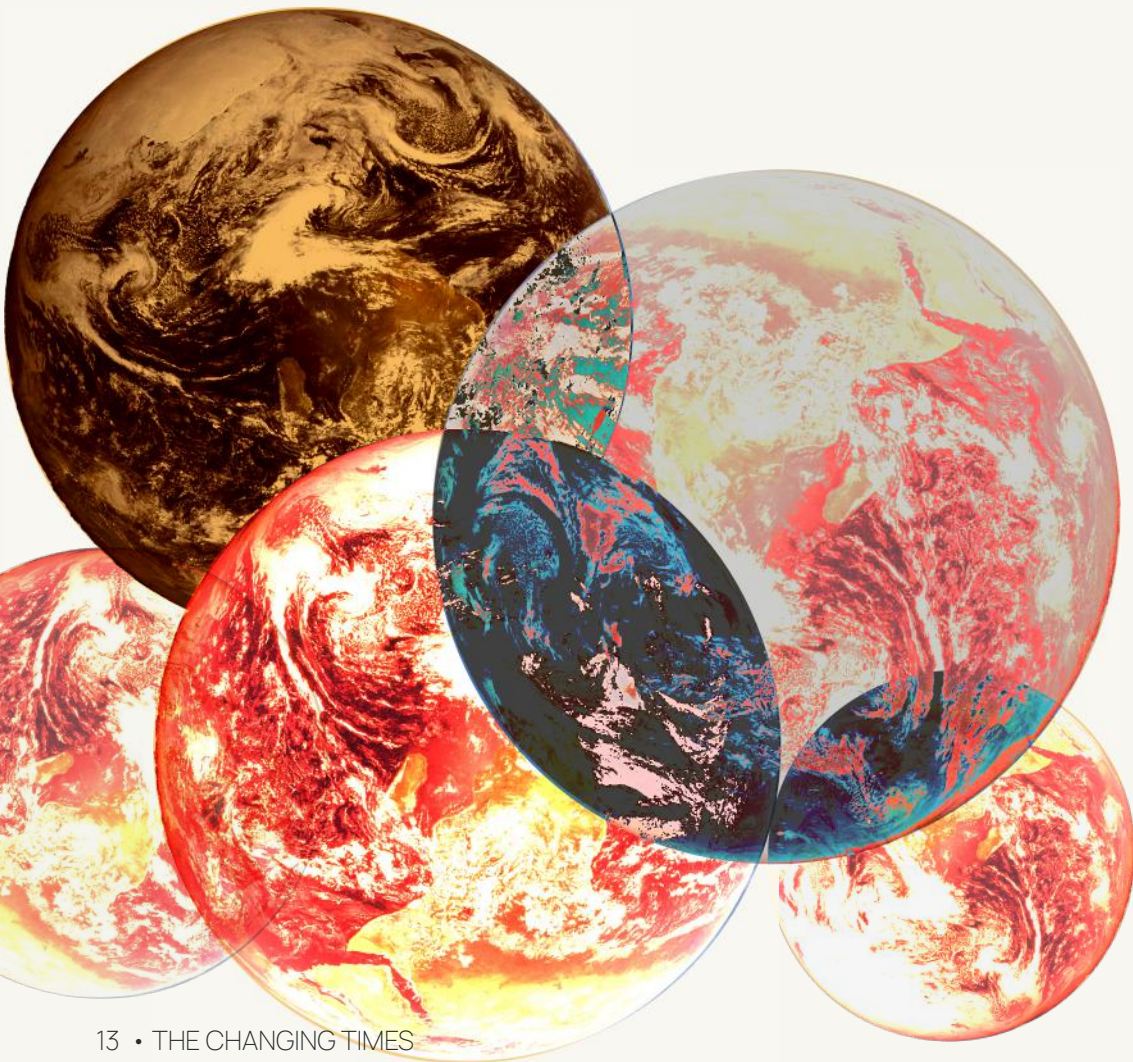
they used to tell us that  
things would be okay  
just give the adults a couple of years to  
figure it out  
it's been forty-seven  
after the world was considered  
a goner  
all the rich people descended  
into bunkers to wait it out  
money made sense back then  
at first  
the population of Missoula  
didn't know what to do  
wondering when it had gone so wrong  
I was at home  
reading a book  
sipping lemonade  
when the world turned upside down  
people's lives had been uprooted  
seemingly overnight  
and the change was slow to appear  
but when it did  
it detonated in an explosion of color  
graffiti started creeping in on the city  
like a giant plant  
mosaics covered the walls  
of what used to be downtown  
now and then  
you would occasionally see an artist  
covering the wall of a broken-down  
building  
with images of the earth and how it used to be

when we cared for the  
environment  
after a couple of months  
the wounded animal that  
was Missoula  
started to recover  
from the shock to its system  
it started as  
little things  
like  
finding bread or milk  
on the doorstep  
then it was  
more fortunate people  
helping those who  
had been impacted directly  
by the metaphorical meteorite  
that had crashed into the earth  
I was a part of  
the green warriors  
before I realized  
that they had been  
scamming the remnants  
of the U.S. government  
after this  
I started to work  
on a little group  
of my own creation  
People Against Pollution  
it was called  
a coalition of ragtag  
individuals that had



seen first-hand the  
disasters the earth gave to us  
  
we roamed around  
looking for remnants  
of the lives of others  
and gave it to the folks  
who stared wide-eyed at  
us like gods who descended  
to the withered earth

the human race is but a blip  
in the history of the earth  
a big one  
but still a minor detail  
  
the world had started out  
as a hunk of rock in space  
they told us  
it is starting to revert back  
to that beginning



WINTERSAGE SANTIO

## THE SUN, THE SKY, THE EARTH & THE MOON

The morning sunlight shines through the blinds, beaming the entire room in warm colors of orange and yellow. I felt the sudden cool breeze as soon as I woke up. My eyes fluttered open from the soft wind blowing away strands of my hair away from my face. The brightness of the room blinded me for a second until I rubbed my eyes and let out a big yawn. I noticed my window was open wide with the curtains pulled away. I don't recall my window being opened last night, unless my *yayá?* was in my room. Every time I'm with my *yayá?*, she'd come into my room in the morning to pull the curtains and open the window to wake me up.

"*xest sk'ek'st!*" a warm and gentle voice spoke.

I turned my head to see her standing by the doorway. A huge smile crosses her face.

"*yayá?!*" I smiled back.

I jumped out of bed to hug her. Her long arms wrap around my body. The sound of her heart reminds me of the beating drums at the powwows I always went to with my parents. I look up to see her dark brown eyes, like the grounds of the Earth, stare into mine. Her gray hair is long, thick and braided like my own.

"Today is a good day to go outside. Your dad is waiting on the porch. First, you go get ready and come down to eat breakfast before you both leave for the

day. Alright, my dear?"

"unex<sup>w</sup>." I nodded.

When I was a young kid, she used to tell me stories about the past. I always wondered what the world was like before. She told me how our people worked together as a community to help the environment by taking action. Raising awareness of the climate crisis, protesting against the system harming the environment, teaching our people our cultural ways, and protecting our lands. It's a long story but after many years of progress, they restored everything. It's difficult to imagine my *yayá?*, a very kind woman, once raised in a polluted world. Yet no matter what happened, she still smiled. Her wrinkles are all the times she smiled in her life. Whenever I am with her, I always feel safe and comfortable. She is like the Sun, providing light in darkness.

After a few minutes of changing, I ran downstairs to the kitchen where a single plate of food was left in the middle of the table. Eggs, bacon and toast with huckleberry jam. The same jam she bought from her old friend who sells fresh huckleberries. During the summer, me and my parents head to the mountains to pick them. My *yayá?* once told me the berries rarely grew when she was my age. Even the animals struggled to survive. The bears were slowly disappearing. Now they grow very well in

the summer, enjoyed by all living beings. It's always been a tradition my people do as part of our culture. I knew she went outside with my dad drinking her usual black coffee. I hear their laughter from where I stand in the kitchen. Eventually, I finished eating and joined them outside.

"You ready? I have everything loaded in the truck. Let's go." My dad said.

Before driving away from the house, my *yayá?* smiled and waved. I waved back as we drove off into the distance, heading towards the mountains. Everywhere is green, bright and fresh. Montana has never been more alive. That's what my *yayá?* always says. I mean, I was born and raised here after all but I wasn't here when the

environment was different. Yet I've never seen anything more beautiful than here at home. Especially the local towns, decorated with meaningful works of art created by our people. As we drove, I looked out the window on my right, observing the fields of grass and colorful flowers, the bright morning sky painted in blue, purple, orange and red. Along with the pine trees we drive by so quickly it's all a blurry sight. Horses and cows scattered in the fields, deers and elk walking in herds. There are some houses we even pass by. Old friends and relatives. Familiar faces. I saw them all sitting on their own porch, drinking coffee, watching the sun rise from the mountains, and listening to the birds singing their beautiful songs. They all seem satisfied. Then I noticed a dark familiar figure flying in the sky.

"What do you see?" My dad asked.

I squinted my eyes to get a better

look.

"An Eagle flying above us." I responded while watching the magnificent bird.

"Must be your *sile?* watching over us."

My *sile?* was a firefighter back then. There were always wildfires in the summer. The fires would spread through the mountains, destroying almost everything it touches, including the plants we use for medicine. The smoke damaged his lungs. Yet my *sile?* died just when the climate was getting better. My

*yayá?* was heartbroken but she still had her son. My family planted trees in honor of my *sile?*, where it's now known to be an eagles

nesting site. Even though my dad never got to know his own dad, he still looks up to him. His spirit is like the sky, endless and free. Something my people look up to and admire.

A few hours passed already. My dad is still playing old, nostalgic powwow songs on the radio. It reminds me of my childhood. Dancing and singing along with my parents. I still have my jingle dress my mom made for me in my closet. His fingers tapped on the steering wheel, matching the rhythm of the drums. He used to be part of a drum group before I was born. My dad was a drummer and my mom was a dancer. It used to be dead empty. These days now, the powwow grounds are surrounded by tall grass and pine trees. We dance with the wind. We sing with the birds. Thinking about those memories made me smile. Suddenly, he stopped the truck. The radio went silent.

**His spirit is like the sky, endless and free. Something my people look up to and admire.**

"Where are we? Are we here already?" I asked.

"Come out and see." He said as he got out of the truck.

I followed along. I felt the same breeze blowing through the forest from earlier this morning. The sounds of the trees flowing from the wind echoes through the mountains. The air felt cooler. One smell of fresh air and pine calmed me. I instantly knew we were way high in the mountains. I wasn't familiar with the surroundings though. Until my dad walked towards the edge of a cliff.

"Look down there."

Carefully walking to the edge of the cliff, standing right beside him, I finally saw what he wanted to show me. The entire place of my home. I can see our house, the neighborhood, the towns, the mountains, the flathead lake, everything I ever knew as home right below me and my dad. In fact, I recall a Polaroid photo my *sile?* took of the same view when he was alive. This must be where he took the photo. I remember the way the entire place looked before. There were barely any colors showing. The sky was blank. Empty towns, empty fields. Black smoke covered the mountains. The photo showed everything slowly dying.

"You know, our people fought so hard to protect our home, our culture. Including your *yayá?* and *sile?*. They did everything they can to provide a future for us, even you. I was taught by my parents and elders. I was taught how to speak Salish, how to hunt, how to bead, how to harvest, how to dance, all the knowledge from our ancestors passed down to me," He stated while observing the wonderful view, "Now your mom and I pass that knowledge to you. We keep ourselves alive by keeping our culture alive. It healed all living things. What you see in front of you, this is your

home, daughter."

My dad is like the mountains. Tall, strong and mighty. Surrounding the people as a protector. We hiked the mountains for a few more hours until the sun was setting. Eventually, we went back to the truck and drove down from the mountains, listening to the same powwow music earlier ago. We arrived in front of the house. I spotted my mom's car in the driveway. Immediately, I ran inside the house. There she stood in the kitchen with my *yayá?*, helping her cook dinner.

"*xest sčlux*", how was the trip?" She questioned.

It's satisfying to hear her kind, quiet tone. Her gentleness puts me in a good mood. I'm thankful to have a mother like her. My mom is like nature herself, nurturing and peaceful. Giving life in her world. I told her everything we did during the day while eating appetizing stew made with warm potatoes and vegetables from the garden, including the savory deer meat. Everything we eat and grow comes from the ground. Fresh, tasteful, savoring. She also made her good frybread with her own soft hands. Her cooking is just as good as my *yayá?*'s. My stomach stretched big like my dad's tummy. We spent the night eating, laughing and talking until we became tired. That night, we all peacefully rested.

The Moon rose from the mountains. Bright like the stars that sparkle the night sky. The birds became silent, the deers hid in the tall grass, and the people slept in their beds. Now the coyotes come out of the shadows, howling and laughing in the middle of the night. I am like the Moon. Bringing light in darkness, roaming freely in the sky, looking after life on Earth. My home.

GUS DARTY

## CHARON

I don't think I'll make it off of the Mother. I feel achier and more tired than ever. But I put on my suit anyway. I'll never get used to walking around in those boots, but I'll never forget what someone looks like when they don't wear their suit outside either. I lock my apartment door.

To the elevator, like always. It takes me to the tunnel that leads towards the workers. Dawson meets me halfway. He's smoking a cigarette. That's a throwback.

"What do ya know?" Dawson lets out a half laugh, half cough. "Terry worked out a deal with those government guys and got us 30 packs of cigarettes. I love that lazy bastard." I give him a smirk. He seems happy he got that, like a dog nipping at my heels. "How'd he do that?" I ask. Dawson looks down. "I wish you wouldn't've asked that." His fat hand raises to the back of his neck and sits there. "He said he'd give 'em that one Springsteen record."

That idiot. I walk forward, but Dawson moves in front of me. "Now before you get all pissy, you're the only one who listened to it."

"So? You can't let me have that one record?" Dawson's a little annoyed, and I'm fuming. "That stuff was like a hundred years old, and grainier than a field of buckwheat." I turn away from him and his stench. "It was mine. You had no right to pawn it off for a couple

cigarettes." Dawson scoffs. "A couple cigarettes? We have 600." I stop him. "You'll smoke those in a week. Judas gave up Jesus for 30 silver pieces." Dawson eye-rolls. "Oh, so Bruce Springsteen was Jesus?" I face him. "He was America." Dawson laughs like your classic coveralled hillbilly. "Man, this is America. I sold a relic for something useful. What's more American than that?" I walk past him.

An hour later, work starts.

The sun burns the dirt on the ground. When you walk, your feet make sizzle noises on the terrain, so I sit up high to survey the work. Today, we have to herd cattle onto a rocket headed for the Father. We never needed to launch space shuttles in Montana. But the Father needs steak. I miss steak. Dawson's crew emerges in their black suits, they look like ants up here. Above-ground buildings over two floors high weren't practical anymore. Skyscrapers, now obstacles, or perches for men like me. The team maneuvers through city streets, and at some point the cattle, crying from the heat, becomes white noise. What is it like up there? The Father was red like Mother is now. Even a couple years ago it was better. They were only shooting out the mega-rich. I still had my buddies, and we had our traditions of smoking, drinking, and thinking that we would never face a

come-down. I guess the horse never thought it would run out of style either. I always wanted to live back in the days of the frontier. Now I think I know what it was like, and I wish I could get out of here. I laugh under my breath, and I fog up my glass. In it, I see myself. "Damn, man, you're getting old."

BOOM.

The rocket shakes for a second. Then, liftoff. A subtle petrichor from the fuel. You can still see it for a while, until it becomes another one of the stars.

~

"I don't know where Terry went."

Dawson and I sit in his office, this just didn't make any sense. Terry Thomas, the cigarette trader, vanished during the cattle herding job. "Alright," I say. "We need to ask your men about this. I'm sure that one of 'em has to know." Charlie King's first.

"I don't know where he went, boss." Charlie's always been a smug prick. I get straight to the point. "I know you like those cigarettes Terry hooked you up with." Charlie nods matter-of-factly. "Well I don't. And I'll take them away if you don't tell me where Terry went." Charlie's smile fades. Now it's my turn. "Now we're getting somewhere," I say proudly. But then Charlie laughs. And his smile widens bigger than mine. He turns to Dawson. "You didn't tell him?" Dawson walks out. Charlie stands up. "We smoked 'em all."

They smoked 600 cigarettes in a day.

Fine. Then no one can have music.

I walk into the lounge where we keep our vinyls. I smash as many 2010's hip-hop records I get my hands on. TA13OO, 1999, Astroworld, broken into black shards. "What the Hell are you doing?" a worker asks. "Where is Terry Thomas?" I yell across the room.

"I don't know," the worker says. I hold Daytona above my head. "Yes. You do." He just walks out.

I kneel on the floor of the lounge, the carpet obscured by layered bits of vinyl. Dawson walks in. "Apparently, Terry snuck onto the rocket. He's headed to

**YOU CAN STILL SEE IT FOR  
A WHILE UNTIL IT  
BECOMES ANOTHER ONE  
OF THE STARS.**

the Father right now. I told you he was lazy." I turn towards him. "How'd he do that?" We both know that this isn't about Terry.

"He snuck on with the cattle. Guess he made it off." Dawson laughs a little. "Does anybody wanna work anymore?" I ask. Dawson sits on the edge of a table. The table teeters like it might fall over, but it prevails. I guess Dawson is a sort of comfort every now and then. I think it's 'cause he knows how to say things I'd be pissed at in a way I can handle. "Why should they?"

I can't answer that.

America lied to me. I'll never make it off of the Mother. We don't have toothbrushes, half our teeth are rotting. We eat our rations. We lay down and take it. There's one thing I took away, though. So all I know is that when those government guys come back, the first thing I'm going to say is:

"We need more vinyls."

ISABELLA CORY

## MARTIAN MAN

The Martian man reached out his hand and brushed the plentiful land  
He wandered to the waters so in awe of their colors he began to gather the sand  
He frolicked in the fields of fruit and feasted like a gourmand  
He tried and took from every nook until it resembled his homeland

The plentiful land now all dried up from rivers polluted with dirt  
All because of the Martian man the sanctuary's now burnt  
For none to see but all to mourn now dead is the planet they deemed reborn  
A distant memory now faded and torn  
The world that drew awe is no longer adorned

The world began to grow again when no footprints disturbed the sand  
A single glove hung from a branch is now all that remains of the Martian man  
And finally, after years go by he lends a helping hand

The glistening waters run wild and all the trunks grow strong  
The universe brought harmony and righted all of its wrongs  
Now all of the birds soar over the land and carry the tune of its song

The animals graze under the sun's gaze  
as it peers through the morning dew-filled haze  
And along with the balance being restored  
The world grows resplendent, more than ever before

DOMINO AUN

## MONTANA 2070

September 12, 2070

No chirps of the birds to wake to, no sun shining through the window, no sight of the mountains surrounding the land. It's black, shallow, haunting. One step out and all air inside is stolen, breathless. Unable to see what's ahead, the fears come back from years past. Asking mommy to keep the light on because all monsters live in the dark. The fear once thought of as childish is awakened inside.

The sight of green leaves held high by branches, mountains standing tall hiding behind white fluffy clouds, and the sounds of cars driving past trying to make it to their next destination.

It doesn't exist, not anymore. The burning waves moved savegly through the living, leaving nothing that once was. The branches left standing hold not leaves but ash, the mountains became myths, and the white fluffy clouds turned to black dense smoke consuming anything in its path.

Sitting in a dark room everyday, waking up each morning hoping something has improved, that someone is doing something to fix what has been ruined. Remembering the day when school was canceled, everyone excited that summer continues. But days turn to weeks and weeks turn to endless waiting. Looking out the window wondering what's left of the place you call home. No internet, no roads, no electricity. We're running low on food, our clothes covered in dirt and ash. The smell of bodys that haven't been washed in days. Locked in the house wishing to go back, back to hating school, back to seeing friends on the street, back to normal. Is this the new normal, is this my future, is this what I have to raise children of my own in?

This isn't normal.

SARAH CAPDEVILLE

## A SPRING REFLECTION

It's late April by the time my dog and I can return to one of my favorite loops up Pattee Canyon in Missoula, old logging roads that are groomed for skate skiing in the winter. Snow is far from absent on the landscape, but patchier now, bulked in cool draws, melted away on open slopes. What's left on the path has been packed down by almost five continuous months of grooming, and I find myself thinking about the density of glaciers.

White may have melted away as the dominant color of the landscape, but we're still far from green—the huckleberry and snowberry brush, kinnikinnick, glacier lilies, lupine, beargrass, paintbrush, and shooting stars that thrive in this open conifer forest in spring and early summer. A sodden carpet of larch needles bunches and dams on the muddy, dripping path, and I stop a couple times to scrape clear some trail drains, a habit from my trail work days.

Admittedly, this is my least favorite time of year—mud season. If it were up to me, we'd go straight from six months of snowy, not-too-subzero winter into a marvelous wildflower spring. These weeks of deep snowpack in some places, buttercups in others, and plenty of mud in between are precarious, and as I clomp straight through the muddy

puddles (also a habit from my trail work days), I worry about the way all this moisture will leave the mountains.

Climate change means wider pendulum swings, more precarious states of balance across ecosystems. This snowpack could melt out slowly, or it could rush downslope the first warm week of May, turning quickly into devastating flooding. Or the snowberry and lupine and paintbrush could grow tall and lush, then dry out by July, turning into tinder for a devastating fire season.

But all that remains to be known. Right now, I'm taking in the chatter of chickadees and juncos, the occasional disgruntled robin, the smell of a long-wintered forest breathing out. The ponderosas and firs have been photosynthesizing all winter, and I imagine the still-bare larches are just as eager for longer days as I am. There is wisdom in their presence as much as there is in SNOTEL and river flow stats. The downy woodpecker trilling from an old pine probably already knows what the beargrass bloom will be like this year. I drag the ends of my hiking poles across another wrinkled dam of yellow needles and watch the gritty water trickle downslope, into the loopy roots of all that dormant greenery, into another season of change.



JODY PASDIGSELV

# Confluentus Adoratio

I live on an active superfund site. Many do. How do I mourn living rivers? I don't know how to read the language written on the overpass, but I know it means "Place with Big Bull Trout". I think of the first Bully I caught; an accident, a hundred miles upstream, my second week in Montana. I felt as if I'd encountered a spirit. I still feel that way. I think about how they're an indicator species. They require clean, cold water without much silt. At the confluence they aren't so big anymore. But they're here now. It's been about fifteen years since the dam was torn down. Sixty-six railcars of poisoned soil per day, for over twenty months. Millions of cubic yards shipped to Opportunity, deposited at the foot of the old smelter; contaminated offering at an altar of industrial gluttony. But the fish outlived Daly, and Rockefeller, and Clark. The water is too warm, too silty, still too contaminated. But they're here now. I don't fish much anymore. I'd rather watch them swim. I can't say they're safe. I can't say that about anything I love. But they're here now. And that must be enough.

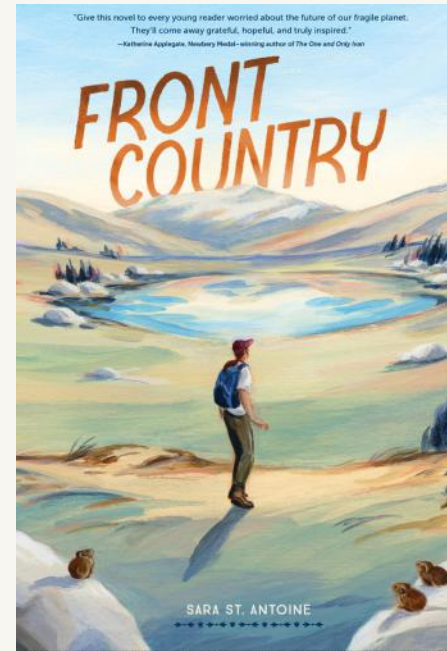
I'm learning to love  
Broken, desecrated lands  
So we both might heal



ANGELA ALLRED

# FRONT COUNTRY

BY SARA ST. ANTOINE



Ginny Shephard is an eighth grader in Lexington, Massachusetts who has everything going for her. She's smart, athletic, and her future is looking bright - until one day her science teacher informs her and the class that global warming is occurring rapidly and the future is bleak for many species. Ever since Ginny learned that her favorite animal, the Pika, will likely go extinct in her lifetime due to the climate crisis she finds herself mired in hopelessness and begins to question if all the things she has focused on really matter when the planet is in such dire straits. She quits tennis, her grades

plummet, and she becomes obsessed with environmental issues. Her parents become very concerned with her behavior and enroll her in a month-long outdoor adventure camp, TrackFinders in Montana. A month in Montana! Ginny is thrilled about the opportunity! She loves nature and is excited at the chance that she might see a pika in real life. However, once Ginny is there, she realizes that this isn't a backpack vacation but an outdoor program to help troubled teens get their 'lives back on track'. Ginny is infuriated, crushed, and clueless why her parents would send her to this camp. To make matters worse she finds herself stranded in the Montana wilderness with five borderline delinquent boys in the program.

Ginny is not alone these days in her feelings about climate change and all we stand to lose. Through Ginny's journey the reader finds comfort and hope and reminds us that expanding our circle of friendship will always make harder times a little easier.

Front Country was a funny, well-written book. It had many hilarious parts and some suspenseful moments. The characters were masterfully crafted! Reading out loud together, our family devoured this book in 3 evenings. It kept everyone, ages 11-40, laughing and captivated with each chapter!

Reserve a copy today from your local library!



WINONA BATEMAN

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

On January 20, a coalition of 17 organizations across Montana convened in Helena, centering climate stories and action at the Capitol's very first Climate Advocacy Day.

The rally drew over 300 attendees from throughout the state, including Billings, Livingston, the Flathead, Butte, Bozeman, and Missoula. Singing songs and welcoming speakers from around the state, we gathered to have a public conversation about climate change in one of our most important public spaces—our state government.

We heard from people leading climate adaptation and resiliency efforts from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Blackfoot tribe, a conservative climate leader, youth, legislative experts, and more.

Attendees, speakers, and coalition members at the rally illustrated the ways

they are experiencing flooding, wildfires, drought, heatwaves, and other climate impacts firsthand. They also spoke to their visions of a better future, where the dignity and worth of all people is recognized and protected; where good jobs and localized, clean energy economies are the norm; where communities are healthy, connected, and safe from extreme weather and pollution.

Gwen Lankford, President/Owner of Sapphire Strategies, Inc. and Climate Smart Missoula board member, remarked, "I feel so hopeful. In our Indigenous pathways there's actually so many answers for the future. In our language there is embedded reciprocity, there's mutual respect for everything, there's a being-ness for everything in our language...I want to invite you into a pathway of reciprocity and one of the simplest ways to do that is expressing gratitude...When you express gratitude it

means that whatever you are grateful for is valuable."

We at Families for a Livable Climate are so grateful to be part of this coalition and the movement for a healthy, safe, equitable, and resilient home for all Montanans. This is the future of climate action in Montana: A massive and diverse coalition response to a worsening crisis that threatens our families, livelihoods, and life ways. A grassroots effort that promotes collaboration toward clean renewable energy, and a thriving future for all.

Although this event did not prevent the introduction of terrible bills at the 2023 Session, it brought Montanans together from across the state to bear witness to climate change in our halls of power. It told the real story behind Montanans shared concern: We must protect our home. We must care for each other. We must honor all the gifts of our world.

Now the work to build a larger movement, and more

power, is underway. For FLC, this means more climate conversations and coalition work, more creative events and education opportunities, including raising awareness among families of all kinds about the benefits and savings of electrifying our homes, and showing up to support our MT youth during the Held vs. Montana trial in June.

Our lives and landscapes are being forever changed by rising temperatures. We don't have to watch in isolation and despair. We can connect in community, and work to reduce impacts by lowering emissions, and change systems that perpetuate injustice. We can't address this crisis alone, but we need everyone to create a thriving future. Join us.



# CONTRIBUTORS

ANGELA ALLREAD has lived in Missoula, MT since 2013. Her family enjoys backpacking, camping, hiking, running, reading and biking to the public library. 2 parents, 4 kids, 1 dog and 8 chickens.

DOMINO AUN, 16, is a sophomore at Hellgate High School. She is originally from New Jersey but moved to Montana 8 years ago. She has big dreams of working in Forensics back in the east coast, but for now she works part time after school and loves dancing in her freetime. She hopes when people read her pieces they understand the work that needs to be done in our community to keep the place we call home safe.

SYDNEY BOLLINGER, 27, (she/her) is a Charleston, S.C. writer. She has an MS in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana and works on the editorial staff of two regional climate magazines: The Changing Times (Western Montana) and Surge: The Lowcountry Climate Magazine (South Carolina Lowcountry). She has written for Charleston City Paper, Slay Away, Film Cred, and others.

SARAH CAPDEVILLE, 30, proudly wore the title of wilderness ranger in three wilderness areas of Western Montana for five seasons, and is currently part of the editorial teams of *The Hopper* and a board member of the Freeflow Foundation. She is an alum of the University of Montana and Chatham University, and her writing has been published in *Orion*, *Fourth Genre*, and others. She is the winner of *River Teeth's* 2022 Literary Nonfiction Book Prize, and her book *Aligning the Glacier's Ghost* is forthcoming from University of New Mexico Press in 2024. She lives in Missoula, Montana, with her partner, retired greyhound, and opinionated tortoiseshell cat, where she navigates chronic illness, goes on many slow hikes, and daydreams about the crosscut saw

SERENA CARLSON, 10, is a fifth grader who likes to search for cool things like mountain goats in Glacier.

ISABELLA CORY, 17, was inspired to write her poem by Ray Bradbury's *There Will Come Soft Rains*.

GUS DARTY, 15, is a freshman at Hellgate High School. He finds his inspiration in film, and aspires to be a director. He enjoys going out with friends, watching movies, and track and field. He is interested in all forms of art, and hopes to make a change in the way people think about modern culture.

EMERY EASH, 13, is a kind and intelligent 7th grader. She loves to bake, draw, and run.

ELLIE FONTAINE is a 9-year-old girl who lives in Missoula. She loves the forest!

KEIRA KUJAWA, 13, is an 8th grader at Sussex School who loves to dance and hang out with friends. She is creative and outgoing and loves to write.

SARAH LUNDQUIST, 27, is an environmental educator, mother, and zero waste enthusiast originally from the

Seattle area. She has a degree in American Sign Language Studies and Psychology from Western Oregon University, where she was a member of the campus sustainability & recycling team. Sarah later completed a stint through a Vermont-based AmeriCorps program at Addison County Solid Waste Management District in Middlebury, Vermont. In 2018, she moved to Missoula to pursue a Master's degree in Environmental Studies at UM. Her graduate work focused primarily on zero waste policies, and included several interesting internships with Home ReSource, Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, and the City of Missoula. Sarah worked as Zero Waste Education Manager at Home ReSource following her graduate studies, and gave birth to her beautiful daughter, Mirabelle, in 2021.

JULIAN MILKUS, 12, is a sixth grader at Sussex School who loves reading, writing, and playing Magic the Gathering. He has three dogs, a leopard gecko, a hedgehog, and two siblings. His favorite books are *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, *Scythe* by Neal Shusterman, and *Starfish* by Lisa Fipps. He believes that climate change deserves our attention.

JODY PASDIGSELV is a poet, essayist, and wilderness enthusiast based out of the Northern Rockies. Find him writing about his beloved mountains in *Unstamatic*, with upcoming work in the Summer edition of *Camas Magazine*, and as a contributor to the *Free Mountain Press* anthology project.

WINTERSAGE SANTIO, 18, is a senior at Two Eagle River School. They are a Two-Spirit Indigenous (Salish, Ute) artist and writer. They enjoy art, writing, reading, listening to music, watching movies and playing video games. They are inspired by their own hobbies and interests to one day become a future film director.

MEG SMITH, 28, is local Montanan with a deep wonder for the more-than-human world. She has a BA in English Literature and Teaching from the University of Montana and an MA in Environmental Humanities from Bath Spa University, Bath, England. When she isn't out finding new trails, she loves to write poetry, cook without recipes, and find new ways to use less.

MEGAN THORNTON, 38, is mother to 3 little humans (Samuel, Willa, Ben). Megan grew up in Butte, lived in Bozeman for a spell, and is now settled for the long haul in the Russell district of Missoula, where she and her husband Orion navigate the bumpy terrain of parenting alongside beloved family, friends, and neighbors (including the deer, squirrels, trees, and birds of the block!).

ELLETTTE WHITCOMB, 14, is a Freshman at Hellgate High School. In her free time she takes fourteen hours of dance classes per week, sings in the Hellgate Choir as well as takes voice lessons, and attempts to read 125 books each year. In the summer, she also enjoys hiking far away from civilization and feeling inspired by waterfalls.

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