



STAYING AFLOAT

FALL '23

HUEJ

Introduction

The theme for the Fall 2023 edition of *Staying Afloat*, a Harvard Undergraduate Environmental Justice (HUEJ) project, is **How are Things at Home?** With the holidays approaching, we think of our families and our childhoods. What do our homes look like today? How has the landscape changed and how have our stories changed as a result?

Through this Zine, we explore the effects of human-caused climate change on ushering in the Anthropocene, or a proposed ecological epoch shaped by human interactions with the Earth's climate and ecosystems. The submissions we received encompass the beautiful relationship we have with the natural world while reflecting critically on the damage we have done to the very planet that sustains us.

Of course, we would be remiss to ignore the inequitable ways in which the climate has been molded as a result of human activity. While the emissions and lifestyles that have caused many of the most obvious and painful effects of climate change have been concentrated in higher-income countries, the effects of climate change respect no borders. There is no doubt that climate change is impacting every facet of humanity's interaction with the world around us in visible ways from the loss of long and snowy winters to the floods that have marred summers with their human and environmental costs. But it is equally clear that while some countries and communities have the means to protect their members from the most destructive impacts of climate change, others do not.

It is in these submissions that we see only a fraction of what is to be said about the state of our world and its ever-changing climate. The writing and art of this Zine do not define life in the Anthropocene but instead, they are small threads of the larger quilt of life and environmental justice in the 21st century.

Thank you for reading and submitting to the first HUEJ zine, *Staying Afloat*.

Dear Child

By: Rachel Fields '27

Dear child,

Before we begin, I must apologize

They had a lifetime to fix the world and they left you this

If you look past the destruction, I promise, you too, can
experience the hidden beauty of this world

When you walk home from work, do not be sad, for you
walk the path of dinosaurs

As you enter the city, do not sigh, for those buildings are
feats of design

While you contemplate life, do not consider death, for you
are the product of trillions of cells

And when it all becomes too much, come back to me, dear
child, not in death but in life

Enter the forest and reunite with me,

Admire the trees and the wind,

Dance to the tune of sunlight,

Make the choice, dear child, to embrace the beauty of this
world

And when you leave the woods, look for me in your life

I am the flower in the sidewalk, the tree with the greenest
leaves, the rock in your pocket

I am everywhere in this shell of a world, dear child,

And I will guide you, just as I do now

Dear Child

By: Rachel Fields '27

So heed my advice, dear child,
Do not enter the realm of corruption
Collect happiness not power
Find what you love and embrace it

When you are full of experiences and wisdom, then you
must accept your sacred duty
You must teach those who forgot my lessons
Share your story in both words and actions
And then, dear child, you will fulfill your destiny

And I promise you, dear child,
a century later, when you return to me
I will welcome you with open arms
And you will do your part in this cycle of life

Now, dear child, it is time
Do not forget what I have shown you
You must find the beauty in this world
And remember, I will always be waiting for you

**I, Mother Earth, now pronounce you,
dear child, alive**



UNTITLED

By: Honor Pimentel '25

The Forest

By: Dmitry Bilous '27

The bond between him and the forest
Feels unity, strength, and peace.

The feet feel soft upon impact when pressed on a cushioned forest floor made
up of dried pine needles built up over the years.

time stops when stepped on, knowing nature can make this.

The lungs expand with fresh pine air, feeling unbreakable, healthy, and freeing.

Pine trees start green from two feet from the ground,

Revealing the reddish medium-dark brown forest

Because of the high tree line

Being able to see one hundred meters forward

The forest is not dense. That's what makes it feel safe and welcoming.

A trust built from a kind heart sharing its beauty with man

Accepting that we are part of their nature

Harmless we must be, for it welcomes us in.

Pure nothingness I hear except for the large birds, crows, and hawks.

Feeling one with them, we are one with them, they accept me

walking to the edge, passing the tree bark step by step

It is surprisingly bright. It is indeed not a dense forest.

Perfect proportion of trees and space

I come out in the end

I want to cry

I cry

The sight of wild grass, wheat, and wildflowers stretches as if for eternity.

No mountains, roads, or people, some trees, only three

Around there, the birds fly in the distance in front of the setting sun.

The sky is becoming more orange and yellow as time passes.

I sit there, my face full of sun, with no thoughts in my head

Time is still. Nothing matters except for what I see and what I saw

I begin to run

Run through the field, my fingertips touch each blade of grass and flower

Gentle, I don't want to hurt it it's special.

The Forest

By: Dmitry Bilous '27

Man goes back to the city only to dream of going back, He does.
A year later, he daydreams about this moment to see the most beautiful
woman

The Forest.

He walks in

he wants to cry

He cries

The forest is gone

Only a section of the forest is left

He feels he's disobeyed or too weak to protect this beauty

he's angry

He is crying in darkness

Darkness, heat, and fire run through his mind with no peace

he walks through

The crows and hawks are gone, the sun is too bright, and the ground is too
dry.

He runs, he runs with all he has to the fields.

He screams, he cries, he wants to kill whoever did this

his mind dies.

The fields and wild grass and flowers have turned into crops

Miles upon miles of corn

He stomps and rips it apart. He's not gentle, for this is ugly

he looks at this and sees greed and money

It's fake. Does he live in the real world anymore?

He leaves, and he gets through the pain of heartbreak

But he still daydreams about the time when he saw the most beautiful woman
in the world

The Forest.

-Tumans'ka huta, Ukraine.

Another Grain of Sand

By: Kate Downey

When I was younger, we would go down to my grandma's beach and collect sea glass. Her little spit of sand was so small that it would almost completely disappear at high tide, but we had it all to ourselves. And that was all we needed. I could walk the length of it with 12 of my biggest steps, picking up sea glass along the way. When my mom and I went home, we would put our treasures in a jar in my bedroom. Then I would go outside and wash the sand off of my feet.

Over the years, I went to this beach less and less. My friends and I couldn't fit all of our chairs on it. My mom got busy. I got busy. Before I knew it I was off to college, and my grandma had moved to a retirement home. I didn't know when I would stand on that spit of sand again. It wasn't until a few years later that I caught a glimpse of that beach. Now, you can barely see any sand, even at low tide. When the water rushes in, it surges up against the rock wall that protects the lawn. There's no more time to search for sea glass here, and the public beach has been picked clean. The jar in my bedroom will remain half-empty.

I don't know why I thought this beach would always be there. Even as I grew, I knew it was getting smaller. The world was getting warmer and the ocean was rising and the beach was disappearing, piece by piece. With every wave, a new grain of sand slips away from me.

Another Grain of Sand

By: Kate Downey

When I came home from college this year, my entire house had been rearranged. There wasn't a room that had been spared. There were new couches, new paintings, new positions for everything. It made me wonder if I had been paying enough attention. It made me wonder how long I was truly gone for. A grain of sand.

My parents are empty nesters now. *Change is good*, they tell me. Their words echo as I walk through this new house, where the chairs don't make sense and the fridge has no artwork. I head upstairs to my bedroom. I forget where the light switch is for a second.

Another grain of sand.

My bed, at least, is still there. The jar of sea glass is still there. We have a new shower head, but the same empty shampoo bottles are sitting nearby. Maybe one day I'll remember to throw them out. Maybe soon, they'll be the only thing left of the home I grew up in. I get the feeling that this won't be my home for much longer.

Another grain of sand.

Another Grain of Sand

By: Kate Downey

I have to get out of this house. I go to see my best friend, who I've known since the third grade, who I haven't seen in two years. Someone from our high school just died. He was younger than I am. We talk about him, and the others, and all of the things we used to talk about, but I can feel her life turning away from mine. Things are different. We're different.

Another grain of sand.

I drive to my grandma's new house. She seems tired. She used to love to talk — about her old friends, about the ocean, about the generations gone by. But now it takes most of her energy just to stay alive, and she's quiet.

She's waiting to slip away.

Another grain of sand.

I end up on that beach, the one I grew up on. I can now walk the length of it with three of my biggest steps. A wave washes over my feet, then pulls back on the earth around me. *Another grain of sand.* Water rushes up against the new wall. *And another.* My footprints completely disappear. *And another.* My home is slipping away from me, piece by piece. *Another. And another. And another. And another.*

Soon, there won't be anything left to stand on.



Changing Home

by Behruz Mahmudov

Windows closed against the searing heat's blast,
Once lush gardens, now drought-ridden and vast,
Memories of seasons, now a distant reprieve.

Is this the home that we used to believe?

Torrential downpours, now the new norm,
Familiar landscapes reshaped by the storm,
Fragile homes at mercy of floods' cruel spree.

Is this the place we once knew as free?

Streams ran clear, teeming with life's delight,
Now choked by waste, a devastating sight.

The symphony of creatures, a vanishing band,

Is this the home slipping from our hand?



Changing Home

Home, a sanctuary of comfort and repose,
Now a battleground, where uncertainty flows.
The walls that sheltered, now stand exposed,
Is this the home that's slowly closed?

Familiarity fades as climate upheaves,
Our once cozy haven, now a place that grieves,
The pulse of nature altered, rhythms disrupted,
Is this the home where dreams get corrupted?

But within this change, a call rings true,
To mend, to nurture, what we once knew,
To reclaim the essence of what made it grand,
To protect our home, the last stand.

The memories etched, the love's embrace,
Spur us to action, to restore this space.
For what home meant to me, rearranged,
Urges me to change, to ensure it's not estranged.

SUBMIT TO THE ZINE
TINYURL.COM/HUEJZINE

The logo for HUEJ (Harvard Undergraduates for Environmental Justice) is displayed in large, white, bold letters. Each letter contains a specific symbol: the 'H' has a small plant with roots, the 'U' has wavy lines representing water, the 'E' has a torch, and the 'J' has a pair of scales of justice.

HUEJ

Harvard Undergraduates for Environmental Justice
huej.info@gmail.com