RISING FROM THE ASHES

BLOOM & GLOW: HOW GARDENING NURTURES MENTAL HEALTH

THE SOUTH IS NOT A LOST CAUSE

AN HONEST LOOK AT WHY WE NEED EACH OTHER

Visions

VOLUME XVI

2024 EDITION

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Thank you so much for picking up the 16th edition of Visions! Our theme this year is revival from the ashes, a concept all of us Phoenix are familiar with. Over this past academic year, Visions has undergone a full upcycle, and has completely revived from the ashes of Covid. Within our revival of Visions, we have developed a new theme statement that newly defines sustainability to encompass more than just environmental issues, but also topics of culture and community.

Our vision is to take care of our social and natural environment, to inspire optimism by bringing comfort and community to Elon, amplifying voices through conversation and culture. There are so many different kinds of sustainability in the current world we live in. This year, we have acquired and written a range of pieces that all encapsulate what we now consider to be sustainable. We appreciate your support and we hope that you continue to support us next year as well!

"THE BEST WAY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE IS TO CREATE IT."
PETER DRUCKER

L + M

CO-EDITORS

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Photography by Sabrina Tuton-Filson '19


NABILITY

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Bloom & Glow: How Gardening Nurtures Mental Health

Photography by Kaitlin Welch ‘19

By: Myka Thomas ‘27

Have you ever gone to the garden and felt anxious or stressed, but afterward felt more relieved? Most recently, that's what I've wondered after I go gardening. Gardening is an outlet for me and something I at least try to do every week. But lately, I've noticed that after my gardening sessions, I feel better coming out than going in. I've also noticed that gardening is becoming more popular again. In today's fast-paced and often stressful world, many people are turning to plants and gardening to improve their mental health.

It's important to understand one's mental health and be aware of it because your mental health is essential throughout your everyday life. It can affect your day positively or negatively, no matter how good or bad you believe your mentality is. Mental health issues are something that everyone struggles with, no matter how severe they are. Being aware of what your mental health is and having relievers, for when your mental health gets too much, is a strength that one can have.

So join me on this journey of exploring how plants and gardening can have a positive impact on mental well-being and getting tips on how to incorporate them into your daily life.

Why Garden?

Now the question that a lot of people ask is: why garden? What are the benefits and why do people do it anyway? As explained by Janelle R. Edwards, a UHC doctoral research fellow at Drexel University, “Research suggests that greenspace [land with natural vegetation or a built environment] is associated with higher levels of social cohesion and physical activity and better self-rated health.” Greenspaces may also have psychological restorative properties. Stress reduction therapy states that environmental experience can reduce stress by invoking positive emotions and blocking out negative ones. Gardening is also a good mindful practice, which is a good way to reduce anxiety and improve your mood.

“Natural environments provide interest, offer opportunities to escape from daily hassles or worries, and provide a contrast to overstimulating urban environments that are less restorative.”Claims Dr. Claire McCartan, PhD, Senior Researcher at Regional Trauma Network, Northern Health & Social Care Trust. “Typically, outdoor space is used for physical activity and the mental health benefits of exercise have been well documented. Even low levels of physical activity have the potential to improve cardiovascular health, increase bone and muscle strength, improve sleep, and generate feelings of wellbeing.” Being in the environment creates situations that allow you to establish more social networks and increase social capital, which contributes to community engagement and well-being, McCartan points out.

Real Studies

While research is limited, there is a lot of relevant and new research about greenspaces impacting mental health every day. More importantly, is a 2023 research study called “Associations of greenspace use and proximity with self-reported physical and mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic” led by Janelle Edwards, Jeromy Gotschall, Jane Clougherty and Leah Schinasi.

In this study, they gave a questionnaire to the metropolitan Philadelphia region during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey contained “structured questions on sociodemographics, greenspace use frequency, perceived walking distance to the nearest greenspace, and reasons for not using greenspaces.” Edward et al. proceed to assert “Participants were also asked about a lot of various things related to mental health, [like any mood changes and stress levels in the last 30 days], physical health and financial situation.”

This study found that there's an association between mental health and gardening over the pandemic. Participants who reported using green spaces at a lower rate had a 33 percent lower risk of reporting worse mental health compared to those who reported using green spaces at a higher rate, who had a 22 percent lower risk during the pandemic.

Photography by Soula Kosti ‘18

Photography by Kaitlin Welch ‘19

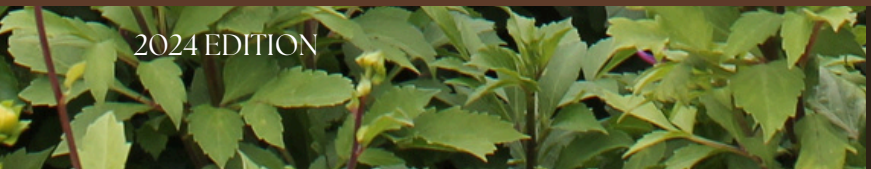
They also compared the use of greenhouse spaces with stress. Participants who reported using greenspaces less frequently during the pandemic had a 31 percent lower risk of reporting higher perceived stress compared to those who reported greater frequency of use and had a 28 percent lower risk.

Following the research, Edward et al. point out that people who used a garden space during the COVID-19 pandemic were “associated with better mental and physical health outcomes." As Edward et al. conclude this research, they want to emphasize why the research is important: “[it] implies that greenspace interventions should be designed in such a way to ensure that they are accessible and attractive, ensuring that adults are given the time to use greenspaces, particularly during crisis situations, as a physical and mental health promotion tool.”

Tips for every day use

One way to easily incorporate gardening into your daily routine is to start small. Start by choosing low-maintenance plants. Such as aloe vera, snake plants and peace lilies if you want to do this indoors. If you want to do this outdoors, consider using Ajuga, Caladium and Oakleaf Hydrangea. Another tip is to set aside time to take care of your plants, whether that be every day or every other day. This could be early in the morning, after breakfast, or in the afternoon, before dinner. By creating this schedule, you will most likely stick to it and enjoy the effects of gardening regularly. Remember that this doesn't have to feel like a mandatory obligation; it is a therapeutic and rewarding hobby that can help reduce stress and improve mental well-being. So grab your gardening gloves and get started on creating your own little slice of paradise!

PEOPLE WHO USED A GARDEN SPACE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WERE “ASSOCIATED WITH BETTER MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH OUTCOMES."



Billy Giblin and the Impact of School Gardens

By: Grace Rasmussen ‘26

Photography by Bronwyn Mulvany ‘27

I have had the opportunity to talk to 6th-grade social studies teacher and school garden coordinator, Billy Giblin, about his experience with school gardening. Giblin has been teaching for 20 years now, and his passion for school gardening began around seven years ago when he needed a change in his teaching. He noticed that his students were frustrated with school and conventional teaching methods, and it was hard to motivate them. Searching for options, Giblin found school gardens. The idea of having a school garden seemed new and exciting, so Giblin took a leap of faith and started the project.

I asked Giblin what advice he would give to other in-service or preservice teachers thinking about incorporating gardens into their schools. He said that while you have to be willing to jump into the project and the unknown, baby steps are necessary to test your limits and gauge the community’s response to the incorporation of a school garden. Giblin told me in our interview that he “took a chance,” and it is important to be flexible with your initial plans. He started with only a greenhouse and lots of grant writing. As I am learning more about school gardens myself, I have found that one of the main barriers for many schools is access to funding and resources, and grants are one option.

In the garden, learning is constant for both Giblin and his students. Giblin assured me that he did not know much about gardens or gardening going into this project; however, it created a setting of trust and community to learn alongside his students. There is curriculum everywhere, which can be seen through the activities Giblin’s students complete. They usually gather in a circle before entering the garden, which serves as a space where students can ground themselves and prepare for working in the garden by establishing goals. From there, they have several options: nature sensory walks, garden work, or outdoor stations. Giblin believes in student choice.

He allows students to stay away from the garden and work elsewhere because most times they will decide to join in when they are ready. Giblin aims to facilitate learning with a project-based approach in which students can actively engage with the materials and tools that are provided to them. Ultimately, Giblin wants the garden to be an inclusive space where all students can learn and thrive.

There are always setbacks, Giblin explained. There are some factors that you cannot change, such as weather and climate change. It is easy to get into the trap of "feeling behind" because there is always work to be done with the garden. It is hard to manage uncontrollable factors with getting the work done all while managing your own time as a teacher and managing your students' time.

However, the positives outweigh the negatives for Giblin. These factors are simply part of the work, and it pays off to be able to see students in a different light when they work in the garden.

Giblin's ultimate goal is for the garden to become a farm, looking to places like Durham's Hub Farm for inspiration. He would love to see more public school access to gardens and more use of outdoor classes overall. Now, Giblin is pursuing these goals at Elon University in our master's program. He is currently working on a research project with Heidi Hollingsworth examining school gardens. I am looking forward to learning more about his findings when the study is complete, and we wish him the best of luck with his work.

Photography by Bronwyn Mulvany '27

Photography by Matt Palmer - Unsplash

Climate Change Policy Development: A Multiple Streams Analysis of The Inflation Reduction Act 2022

By: Morgan McGlynn
Mentored by: Dr. Aaron Sparks

Abstract

Climate change has been on the national agenda since the late 1970s, yet until recently, little progress had been made because of the dominance of the fossil fuel industry within the policy subsystem. In this paper, we draw on Multiple Streams Analysis using process tracing methods to examine why significant climate policy was able to pass in 2022 when previous attempts had all failed. We examine two key case studies, the failure of Waxman-Markey and the success of the Inflation Reduction Act. In 2010 some climate organizations were hesitant about cap and trade as a policy mechanism to address climate change and failed to stimulate advocacy in their grassroots. Since then, climate groups have rallied around an alternative policy approach, which involves investing in clean technology. Activists built significant power within the Democratic party, evident in climate policy remaining prominent on the policy agenda at the beginning of Biden's presidency. Moreover, media outlets have improved their coverage of extreme weather events by tying them to climate change. In short, the political dynamics changed with climate activists building a base of power within the Democratic Party, motivating citizens to elect Democratic leaders capable of passing climate legislation and keeping climate high on the policy agenda.

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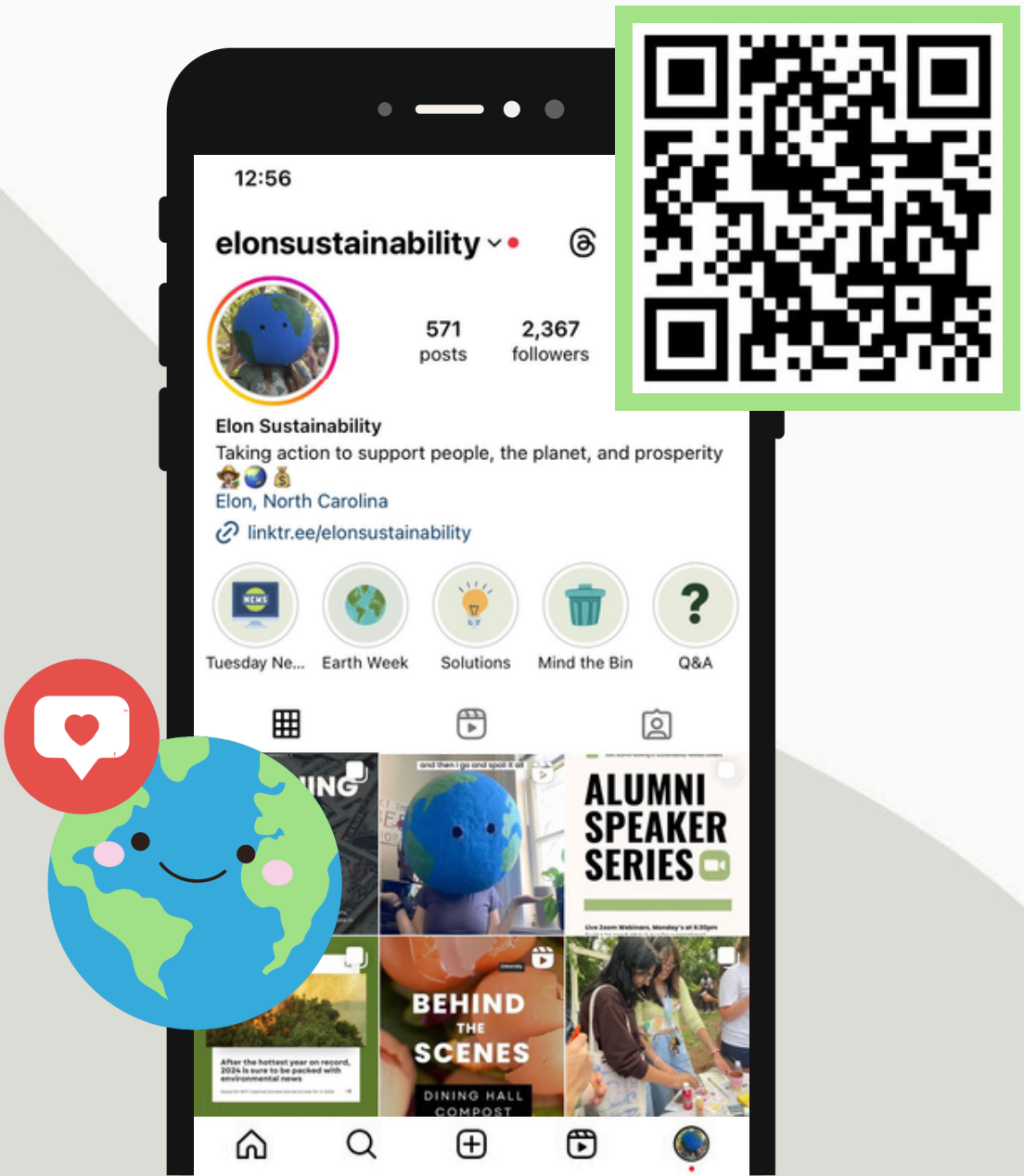


CULT


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CULTURE CONTENTS

The South is Not a Lost Cause

By: Maya Spencer ‘27

Photography by Kenny Eliason - Unsplash

"The South is not a lost cause." I've had that sticker in an online shopping cart for about two years now, ever since I saw the embroidered patch version on a TikTok from an artist I can't remember now but who still had a profound impact on the way I see my home. These dear southern roots of mine run deep – far deeper than whatever I can make out from 1865 and after, no thanks to the half-assed organizational skills of the slave owners who probably, indeed, gave me my English last name. There are several generations of other mixed-race Spencers (and others) before me that prove that at the end of the day, life prevails — even in misery, even in injustice, but especially in love.

We were here, and so, however romantic the notion may be, the world was a little less divided than those Fathers of America may have wanted it to be, less divided than we imagine the South is now.

In the eyes of seemingly everyone who lives outside of it, the South is the poor, hateful, undereducated, and unrefined black sheep of America. It's too country, too provincial, and too entrenched in its identity that it cannot see all the ways it's so far behind the rest of the US. It's a phenomenon that's difficult to represent in statistics but prevalent in the lives of Southern writers, specifically students of higher education.

Student news articles from universities like Appalachian State and Notre Dame detail experiences of ostracization and the all too familiar confusion from other students about our Southern Culture, the way we speak, and how surprisingly smart we are.
Ben Martin, the author of that Notre Dame article, sent out a poll to Non-Southern Notre Dame students to use one word to define the South. The possibilities were endless, but somehow, a majority of the responses focused on the social or political aspects of the region, notably using the words "white," "conservative," and "racist."

Sure, there were a few opinions that underscored the "misunderstood" nature of the South, but the vast majority centered their opinions solely on the stereotypical Southern composition. No responses had an overwhelmingly positive connotation. While the casual nature of this polling and writing doesn't support any statistical standing, it highlights a sentiment shared by most Southerners about our perceived place in comparison with the rest of America. And Notre Dame isn't unlike our Elon University, where the majority of our students (67%) hail from outside of the South, and a significant chunk come from the Northeast. Despite the many years of distance between the Civil War and now, the friction between the former Confederate states and the northern states has continued to reverberate in unavoidable ways, like the snowballing effects of Reconstruction into redlining or the Great Migration. It's also seeped into our interpersonal relationships in microaggressions played off as jokes and debates that feel like condemnations. Even when talking to a friend from New Hampshire about this essay, a certain preconception about Southerners being lazy or disinterested in progressive action creates a misconception. "It's just all the politics," he says. "People need to get up and do something, fucking start putting the time into making change." He looks at me as if we're on the same page. We're not.

The South has become a kind of scapegoat for what is really the common experience of rural America with issues pertaining to poverty and discrimination. When it comes to these problems, like any other region, local governments and organizations continue to get the community together to be heard. Was it not here in North Carolina that sit-in protests were born, just down the road in Greensboro? Was it not Warren County's protests against the Ward Transformer Company that sparked the Environmental Justice movement as we know it today? And even on a smaller scale, my alma mater, Enloe High School, hosts an annual Charity Ball raising $100,000+ each year for different organizations within the Triangle. People here have long been putting in the work to make a difference in this country.

Soul, country, and American gospel music all hail from the South. These genres are dripping with polemics and calls for justice and have indeed been used for that very purpose in the form of protest songs throughout the history of America, but especially in the late 50s through the 70s. Nina Simone, Sam Cooke, and Phil Ochs are all names that will grace any top-something list of protest songs from this period. Even without a specific movement to tie any one song to, these genres were born out of southern pride and anguish, from the bones of spirituals and banjos and ballads and histories of America that date back all the way to the colonies. It's the music of America, the music of change. Melanie DeMore is a protest singer whose life work is to research and reignite that tradition of artistic expression.

Photography by Mark Pecar - Unsplash

On this music, she says: All of those kinds of things people would make, again, songs as medicine. What are the stories that they're telling us that feed us and keep us on the road and help us to understand that no matter what, that we are free. That's the thing that's so great about those songs and spiritual songs. And again, the sorrow songs and the jubilee songs, the songs that express the sorrow and the pain that we were going through, that we are going through. These songs are not just songs that meant something way back then."

All this is to say that the South has always been vocal and dedicated to change, as evidenced by this one mode of expression, an art nevertheless tied to all the movements and politically focused conversations that have been taking place in the South. So why does this part of Southern culture still seem to escape our perceived identity? Unsurprisingly, our country's misunderstanding of racism plays a factor. In an effort to seem "not racist," people have a tendency to continuously point out obvious discrimination, condemn it, and then refuse to let anything overshadow that horrible, terrible thing America has done, so we, the people this thing was done to, will know just how horrible and terrible our non-racist peers think that horrible, terrible thing we endured was. So when people hear about the Civil Rights movement, they see a Racist South, not an incredibly diverse and empowered sector of America.

Alternatively, if a movement made by Black Americans, like what happened in Warren County, isn't specifically about racism alone (too messy for them), it's forgotten that this group of people from this place even led it in the first place. Black figures who aren't remembered for their Blackness alone are often forgotten in the Grand March of America. But their impact is nevertheless present.

Unlike Fukuyama's idea of a demand for dignity in which "societies divide themselves into smaller and smaller groups by their particular 'lived experience' of victimization," the South's plea is that we are not done the disrespect of being victimized. Helplessness is simply not in our spirit. Historically marginalized communities in America, like the Indigenous population and Black Americans, have occupied the South and been integral to its growth since the creation of the colonies. Cities like Greensboro, Memphis, and New Orleans, with major black populations, are also major cultural and economic epicenters in the US. These places have value. The reputation of the South's rurality has lent itself to a heap of classism despite the steady drip of new people into the South in recent years. The US census will testify that its Southern cities are leading population growth in the US, and while small towns everywhere else are experiencing population decline, our little Southern towns continue to grow.

We must do away with the modern resentment and judgment of the South, which is as prevalent in the conservative mindset of the North as it is viscous in liberal and leftist culture. I brought up my lineage in the first part of this essay to make clear that the long history of the South is not digestible nor pleasant, but neither is it wholly divided. These communities did not live peacefully, and the white man who turned the lush vegetation and land of the South into agriculturally significant mass graves will not be given the dignity of some imagined memory of happy coexistence. But, these entangled communities shape a narrative not just of inequality, injustice, and disillusionment but also of the ferocity of those who fought and keep fighting to overcome it. The South is the story of some people who could somehow love each other despite generations of humiliation and oppression. It's the unlikely story of my father befriending the KKK members who owned the barber shop on his street and the incredibly likely story of the existence of a vast population of color and multiracial origins, even with the fist of white supremacy trying their best to squash us out. James Baldwin said, "I am not a war between America," and the South isn't either. Its turmoil is the making of America– America's greatest sins and greatest saviors.

Photography by Josh Hild - Unsplash

Colonial Mentality, Political Attitudes, and Ethnic Identity Among Puerto Ricans Living on the Island

By: Alanis Camacho-Narváez
Mentored By: Dr. Buck (Department of Psychology)

Abstract

Colonialism is when a country and its people are subjugated by another country. This process has historically had adverse economic, cultural, and political impacts on colonized peoples, as well as harmful psychological consequences through the internalization of systemic oppression (i.e., colonial mentality, CM). Studies have demonstrated negative effects of colonial mentality on mental health and ethnic identity development; however, this work has primarily relied on diaspora populations and focused on well-being, stress, and perceptions of discrimination. This study expands upon the existing work in two important ways: first by studying CM within a colonized country (Puerto Rico) and second by examining how CM relates to social and political attitudes which can perpetuate colonial systems. Because of the relation between CM and negative ingroup attitudes, we hypothesized that CM would be negatively correlated with perceptions of the government's effectiveness, beliefs about one's own political efficacy, voting behavior, and ethnic identity. We also hypothesized that individuals higher in CM would be less likely to desire Puerto Rican independence.

This study used a mix of in-person and online data collection to recruit Puerto Ricans living on the island to participate in a survey that included measures of government efficacy, internal and external political efficacy, attitudes about Puerto Rico's political status, voting behavior, colonial mentality, and ethnic identity. Results showed that CM was negatively correlated with ethnic identity and internal and external political efficacy. However, counter to our hypothesis, CM and government efficacy were positively correlated, suggesting that people with higher CM think more positively of the government's abilities, but less positively about their own ability to participate in politics and effect political change. The negative relationship between CM and government efficacy might be a way of justifying and maintaining the existing colonial systems. Additionally, individuals with higher CM were both less likely to vote and to favor Puerto Rican independence. Though correlational, one interpretation of these results is that CM may influence Puerto Ricans' attitudes and behaviors in ways that impact the political environment in Puerto Rico and halt decolonizing efforts on the island.

To My Fellow Americans

An Essay on American Exceptionalism

By: Lola Moore ‘27

Photography by Amber Moore

Dear My Fellow Americans,

We’re conditioned to think that the US is the best country in the world and that we’re better than everyone else just for being American. At least, that’s the way it is in the South. The Pledge of Allegiance, the abundance of American flags, you’d all be speaking German if it wasn’t for us. For me, I go back and forth between loving America and resenting it. The US is a complicated place to care about, because those inside it either hate it or love it, and most of those outside it feel the same. As someone who is American but sometimes isn’t really, after living overseas for most of my conscious life, I can see both sides. And, like most important issues, I can never decide where I truly stand.

I’ve decided to divide this essay into two parts: the Pros and the Cons– the why it is and why it isn’t Exceptional.

The Cons

Whenever I come back to the US each summer, I’m a little bit disillusioned, and slightly annoyed. Here, I’m not American anymore– I’m barely making the cultural cut. I come back as the interested observer to find people arguing about things that, to me, seem frivolous. I find people deeply loathing this country for its people, its government, its celebrities, or whatever else. I hate to use the argument that they don’t know how privileged they are, because I know that one person's hardships shouldn’t downplay another’s. But people are angry about corrupt politicians when Edgar Lungu sent Hakainde Hichilema’s entire administration to prison during the last election year in Zambia. They’re angry about bias in the news when people in Thailand don’t even have free speech to talk about their king. You’re angry about equality in sports when kids in Kenya are making their soccer balls out of litter. I’m not saying that we shouldn’t be angry about these things, but there’s something to be said about gaining perspective.

Photography by Lola Moore

Photography by Lola Moore

Another thing that disappoints me is how we tend to put ourselves in a bell jar. The US is so big that the average American doesn't really need to look outside of it in their everyday life. On vacations, we go to the beach, and we have plenty of those here. Or the mountains, and we have plenty of those here. Or a lake, and we have plenty of those, too. We don't need to speak another language because you can go pretty far in almost any direction only needing English. I find that some Americans tend to look at other continents as though they're phantasmagorical locations from a television show. When I tell people that I lived in Africa, they ask whether or not lions roam the streets. To be fair, they don't know any better, and some aspects of living overseas can seem far-fetched, like the barbed wire around the walls surrounding my house, or the bars on my windows.

But I do find myself wishing that I could pick up a handful of people and drop them in the Baulini slums of Lusaka, just to see what they make of it. This bell jar also makes us rather ignorant about the cultural norms of the rest of the world. Like the difference between 'football' and 'soccer', or the differences in the ways foreign government works, or even the way that public transportation is used across nations in Europe. These slight cultural differences are extremely significant in our perceptions of other locations. The book How Soccer Explains the World by Franklin Foer uses soccer as a universal guiding metaphor for certain complex situations around the world in order to explain them. I really like the concept of using one unanimously acknowledged topic in order to explain very nuanced tensions and ideas in different cultures. For example, using soccer, Foer discusses the gang wars in Serbia.

He discusses the divisions between teams and how those influences have amplified cultural divisions, to the point where players of each side are at serious risk of violence, not to mention their fans (Foer).

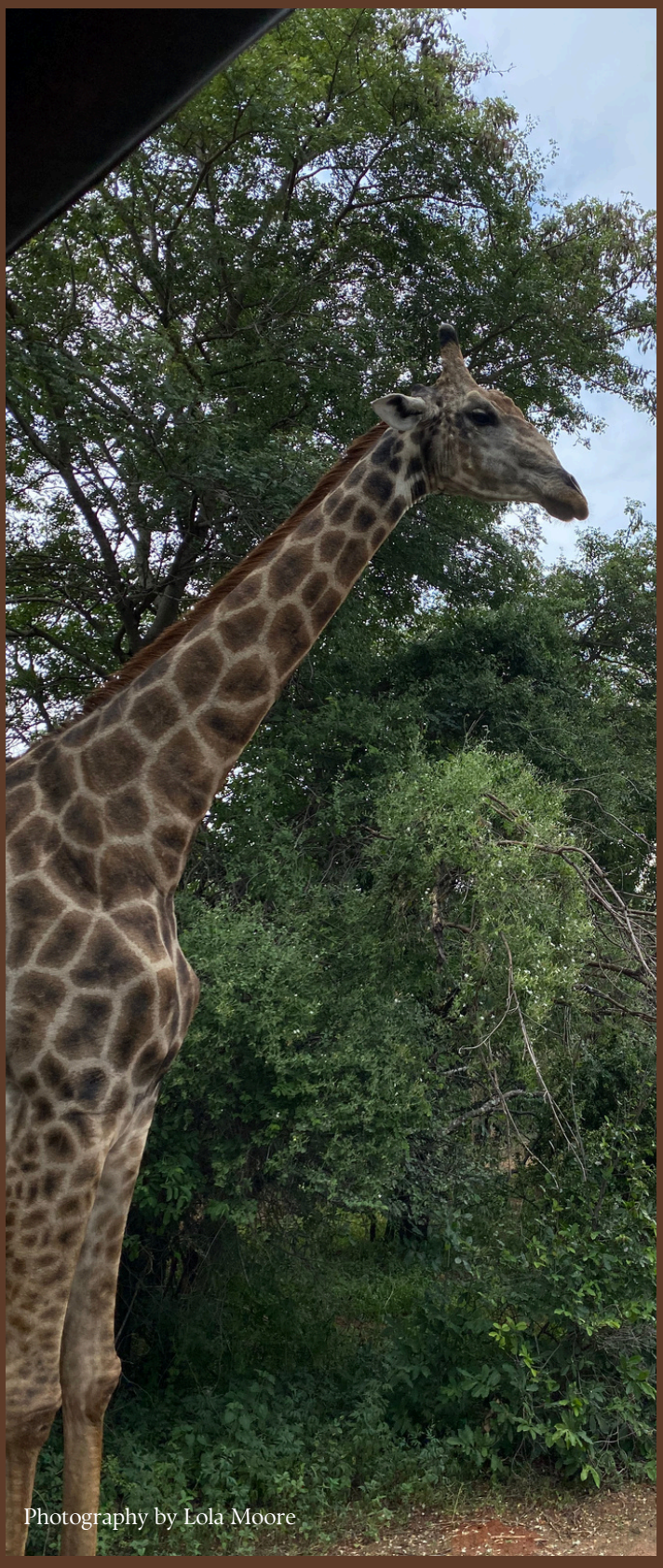
Photography by Amber Moore

This division in sports can also be used as an allegory for current cultural divisions in the US that make it such a miserable place to have a conversation about sensitive ideas.

The Pros (What I Would Tell My European Freinds if They Ever Let Me Argue the Pros)

Whenever I come back to the US each summer, I'm a little bit amazed and slightly transfixed by my surroundings. I forget how much I miss the pine trees and the Blue Ridge Mountains. There's something to be said about African sunsets over a savannah, or the view of Robben Island from Table Mountain, but there's nothing like looking out onto the Blue Ridge Mountains and being able to think: I came from here.

It's not the fault of most Americans that forty percent of us have never left the country (Lane). One thing I hear overseas quite frequently is that Americans are uncultured and untravelled, but I find that unfair. While it may be true for some, Europeans, for example, tend to not understand how large the United States is. If you live in Berlin, you can leave for Prague after lunch and get there before dinner. Comparatively, each state acts, in a way, like its own country. Like in the European Union, we use the same currency, we don't need passports to cross borders, and there are similar laws and regulations across state lines. The United States features different dialects and colloquialisms in the way that Europe changes languages. The American South is wildly different from the Northeast, as is the Southwest from the Northwest. We take a look at a value like 40% and think that a grand ton of people have never left this country, but when you think of different states the way I do, then we're a lot better traveled than it seems. For another thing, the US is wildly far away from the majority of countries. North America consists of only three countries, the other two of which are not totally different from the US itself.



Photography by Lola Moore

Geographically speaking, it is hugely more expensive and a much greater feat for us to travel to completely different cultures than it is for a European, situated in the center of the map.

In watching the documentary "Pelada", one thing that I appreciated was that Luke Boughen and Gwendolyn Oxenham, the filmmakers, visited rural areas all over the world. They visit South America, as well as the Middle East and Africa, make an effort to connect with the people there, and understand their backgrounds. My favorite part of the film was their visit to Kenya, a place where I used to live, and seeing their view of Nairobi from the lens of someone experiencing it for the first time. I also loved the way they interviewed several of the players from different teams, getting their stories, and understanding why they play football and why it's so important in their lives. This depth of understanding can be lacking at times for many Americans, so Luke and Gwendolyn's efforts to truly connect with each subject they interviewed through their filmmaking connected to me. My wish for every American is that they can garnish the same passion for soccer that Luke and Gwendolyn have and that it can be used to connect with people outside the US.

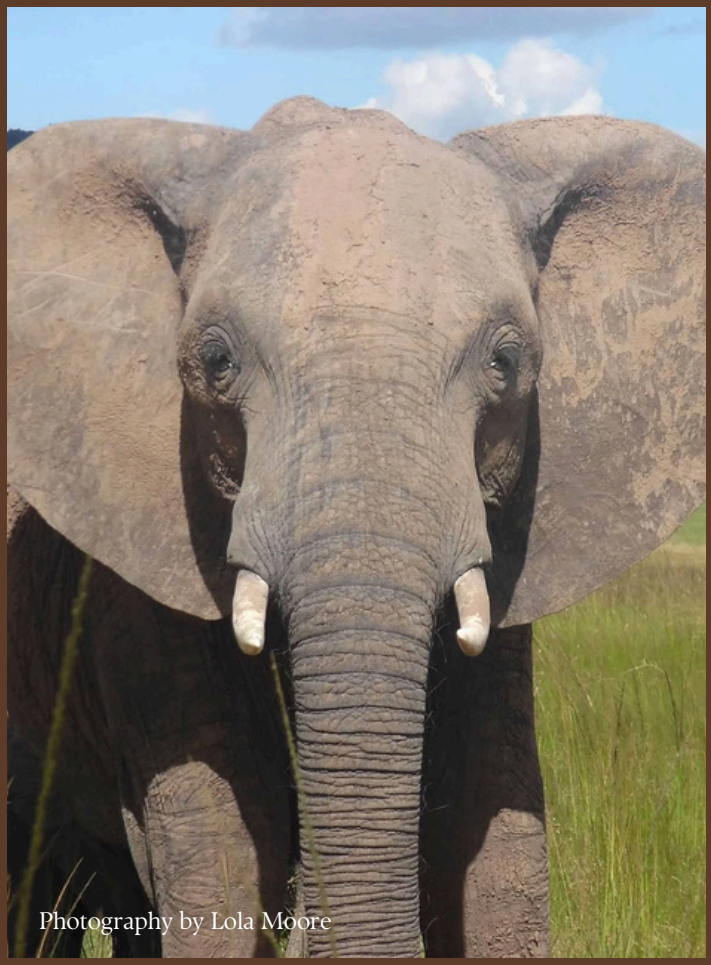
My least favorite thing to hear from Americans is the following sentence: "I hate it here, the US is the worst place in the world." In our tragically divided country, I've found a pattern emerging that you must be of the mindset that we're The Best, or that we're The Worst. Both have their reasonings: Our replacement rate is modeled for other countries in their birth rate policies, our economy is arguably textbook ideal, though our schools are nowhere near the best, and what is considered 'American food' is questionable at best. Quite often, however, the The Best mindset can be attributed to patriotism. I used to know a Swede so patriotic that he almost never took off the yellow and blue football jersey– so that cannot possibly be exclusive to us.

Photography by Lola Moore

It's also nice to hear some patriotism when you're overseas. The Worst mindset is what bothers me, and honestly, this could be attributed to my own patriotism. But the assertion that we have the worst of everything is just ignorant. And I generally find that people of this mindset tend to be the sort that never leave the country.

This kind of cynicism is addressed in Hans Rosling's book "Factfullness", in which he sets forth ten 'rules of thumb' that help to guide your thinking by putting it in perspective and looking at the facts before forming opinions. My favorite of these rules is number five: Size. In summation, Rosling asserts in this chapter that when faced with information, one should "always look for comparisons" in order to see things in perspective.

Photography by Amber Moore



Photography by Lola Moore

Further, he writes that when comparing between different-sized groups, one should "look for rates per person when comparing between countries or regions," which I think is important to consider when comparing the US to other places (Rosling, 143). Rosling uses the topic of carbon emissions to exemplify this, emphasizing the importance of quantifying emissions per person rather than by total national emissions. Doing otherwise would be comparable to "claiming that obesity was worse in China than in the United States because the total bodyweight of the Chinese population was higher than that of the US population" (141). So I believe that perspective is important, as is looking at those around us rather than just looking inward for criticism.

Whatever people say, I will always love the United States, and it will always be home to me. So take some pride, my fellow Americans. We're a little bit better than you think.

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UNITY

COMMUNITY CONTENTS

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An Honest Look at Why We Need Each Other

By: Lola Moore '27

Recently, I watched the 2010 Karen Nakamura documentary "Bethel: Community and Schizophrenia in Northern Japan" with the Anthropology and Sociology club here at Elon. It's a shorter film, running at only 41 minutes, and tells the story of Bethel, an organization in Urakawa that runs group homes and a working environment for those living with schizophrenia in Japan.

In Japan, 2.6 million people are registered with psychiatric disabilities, with 345,000 of those people institutionalized. In these institutions, as testified to in this film, they were merely isolated, medicated, and released to a world unkind to them. When those people are released, they often find it difficult to adjust, and face discrimination and mistreatment due to their illness. In 1984, the Bethel House Organization was founded to assist these individuals and give them a supportive community.

In the film, we get to meet a handful of people who are either members of Bethel or employees. Hearing their stories and the way that they've been helped by the organization is truly heartwarming, but the main focus of the film is the community built and the relationships between members.

Photography by Natalie Pedigo - Unsplash

Photography by James Baldwin - Unsplash

One of my favorite aspects of the film is that it seems as though Nakamura built relationships with her documentary subjects while filming. Her voice is featured behind the camera while asking questions and joking with those being interviewed, which maintains the personal and intimate relationship between the viewer and the subject throughout the film.

But not all of these relationships are beautiful landscapes of mutual betterment. The film shows a rather painful scene of an older woman in Bethel reprimanding a younger woman in a support group setting and, with her beratement, becoming rather harsh. Watching this, I found myself confused as to why Nakamura even included the exchange if her goals for the film were to convey the community among members.

However, this scene led to a discussion on how best the members can support and communicate with each other. Still, though, the younger woman left the room crying. It seems like it must have been a difficult decision to make as a documentarian close to the subject being portrayed- deciding to show what benefits the group at the expense of showing the woman's pain. And it makes me wonder how the Bethel members responded to the film once it had been finished.

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about hope – the hope for change, hope for the future, hoping for everything to work itself out. And I wonder what it would be like to feel like there is no hope in the world, tortured by voices in your head or constantly overwhelmed by the notion that you aren't even worthy of going outside. Here at Elon, there are so many opportunities to connect with others and build that kind of esoteric community. I hope that anyone out there who needs to hear it knows that there are always places here to find people to rely on. Despite their conflicts, Bethel has given people hope by pulling them together, and I trust that with hope, comes peace.

The Anomaly

A SHORT STORY

By: Lily Hudson ‘27

Clocking into work is the best part of my day. It may sound sad, but the Hub is the most fascinating place on this floating rock.

No, we aren’t on Earth-that-was. We depleted her resources long before my grandparents were born. I live on Ellosill, a terraformed moon nestled at the edge of the Andromeda galaxy. As the first successful space colony, our moon’s sole design is to be livable. We have no natural beauty, unlike the underground waterfalls of Fibres or the floating rainforests of Cardea. There’s not much I can do except delve into my work.

I design and develop spacecraft parts, ironic for someone who has never left Ellosill. I am proud to say I am good at what I do: no one else in my field has quite the same hunger to innovate. From a young age, my curiosity has always been stronger than my caution.

When my parents lost me at a market as a child, I took it upon myself to climb into an empty vendor booth. I accidentally activated the holographic controls and sent the stall spinning towards unsuspecting shoppers, much to the distress of my parents. Luckily, nobody was hurt, but I underwent quite the scolding nonetheless. My father says I have an adventurous spirit; my mother says I’m an adrenaline junkie.

One evening, as I sat at my usual table in the Hub sipping on synthetic coffee, a holographic display in the corner of the room flickered to life, projecting a translucent image of a celestial map. The Hub didn’t typically use this feature, and it intrigued the few of us present. A soft hum filled the air as a robotic voice emanated from the projection. "Attention, inhabitants of Ellosill," it began,

the words appearing in the universal language of the Andromeda galaxy. "We have identified a temporal anomaly within the vicinity of this moon, emitting peculiar energy signatures.”

The Hub buzzed with whispers and gasps of surprise. Temporal anomalies were the stuff of science fiction, rarer than alien encounters. A mixture of curiosity and apprehension danced upon the faces of my fellow colonists, an abrupt departure from our mundane existence.

The holographic projection continued, "A scientific expedition is forming to investigate this anomaly. Report to your supervisors for further details.” The room erupted in chatter. I knew immediately that this was my chance to break free from my monotonous routine and embark on an adventure.

In the days leading up to our departure, the Hub transformed into a bustling center of activity. The typical attitudes of my fellow Ellosillians were replaced by the stern expressions of determined explorers. My teammates shared my anticipation and anxiety of leaving Ellosill for the first time. Staying focused was difficult in the cavernous hangar bay as it echoed with the hum of automated loading systems packing equipment. I would like to say I was attentive for all of our training, but my mind kept wandering to what was in store for me on this adventure.

And just like that, launch day was here. As the spaceship's engines roared to life, propelling the expedition beyond the boundaries of Ellosill, I couldn't help but glance back one last time. The terraformed moon, with its barren landscapes and simple brutalist infrastructure, had always seemed a lonely place. But now, as I watched Ellosill from the vantage point of the spacecraft's window, something remarkable shifted. The pale, silvery glow of the moon, framed by the inky darkness of space, revealed a subtle beauty. The scattered settlements and artificial lights on the surface seemed to shimmer like constellations forming negative space with the stark landscapes, something I couldn't begin to appreciate back on Ellosill.

The view faded out as we ventured closer to the temporal anomaly. I had barely begun to process what I had seen before when space transformed into a tapestry of shimmering colors and fractured dimensions. The outer edges were a swirl of electric blues and deep violets, like a psychedelic whirlpool. Within its depths, ethereal tendrils of energy extended, weaving through what I could only suspect was the fabric of time and space itself, like spectral threads connecting distant realms. As we crossed the threshold, the laws of physics that hold human reality together seemed to blur. Life itself fractured into a kaleidoscope of iridescent hues, and the spaceship, once a sturdy vessel of steel and technology, felt fragile and transient against the breathtaking spectacle of the anomaly's cosmic ballet. We had breached the boundary of the universe itself, stepping into a realm where the rules of existence are rewritten with every passing moment.

And yet, I could find a sense of peace in the chaos. I was snapped out of my awe, however, as alarms blared and warning lights made sparkles in my vision. System malfunction screens flashed in every part of the control room. My heart raced, panic welling in my stomach as I watched the thoroughly tested and once-stable controls falter.

For a brief, heart-pounding moment, I grappled with the overwhelming fear of impending disaster. I was not ready to die. With a deep breath, I steeled myself, my trembling hands finding their way to the emergency panel. My training and instincts took over as I assessed the situation and began to reroute systems and override malfunctions. Our only option was to turn around: our technology was inadequate here. Faced with the dire need to restore engine power, I swiftly hotwired the ship. Ignoring the sparks and flickering screens, I bypassed damaged circuits and successfully reignited the engine. The spacecraft roared back to life, propelling us out of the anomaly.

Our crew returned to Ellosill, shaken. The once-sterile moon had been transformed in our absence, not by terraforming or artificial means, but by the newfound appreciation I carried in my heart. Ellosill now held a beauty I had never allowed myself to notice before.

Simultaneously, I itched to leave again to see what other secrets the universe had in store. The anomaly showed me beauty beyond words, and I am desperate to return. My mission is to design a ship that can withstand it so I may discover the truth behind its mystery, So, every day I clock into work.

Photography by Danny Howe - Unsplash

What Music Means to Me

By: Kiley Sherlock ‘27

In the weeks since J-Term, I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on what music means to me. For those who are unfamiliar with Elon lingo, “J-Term” is the name for our winter term in which students take one course throughout January. I was enrolled in “Woodstock, Hippies, and Other Enduring Legacies: The Music of the 1960s and 1970s.” Throughout the class, we dove into the work of numerous artists spanning a variety of genres, as well as the cultural context surrounding the music. Along with gaining more knowledge on the music of this time than I had ever anticipated, I left my J-Term course with a question: what does music mean to me? To find an answer, I started by asking my friends what music means to them. Some consider music to be an escape from reality, an opportunity to step back and reflect on their emotions.

For others, music is an outlet for expression, allowing them to make their voice heard. However, there was one common theme in each of their answers: the ability to build relationships with others through music. Whether they played an instrument or simply loved to listen, each one of them could recall creating connections with others through a shared love of music. I found this to be particularly interesting, and to better understand it, I contacted the professor whose class set me on this path.

Professor Jim Roberts joined the Elon faculty in 2007. His extensive career in music grew from a love for percussion, and he cites this passion as always being a part of him, recounting stories of himself as a toddler, “beating on pots and pans- anything I could find.”

Professor Roberts and I met via Zoom to discuss in more detail some themes from the J-Term course. A key topic that we discussed was the association of memory with a song, particularly the ability to hear a song and instantly go back to a specific moment.

For Professor Roberts, Halloween is inextricably connected to The Who’s “Quadrophenia”. For me, the association of a song with a particular time in your life strengthens the connections you build with others through music as it adds another level of emotion to the experience. As the conversation continued, I became increasingly interested in the relationship between music and culture.

Photography by Kevin Laminto - Unsplash

For reference, culture in this context can be defined as "the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group," provided by Oxford Languages. We discussed how music is bound to culture, specifically in the context of the music of the 1960s and the 1970s as it related to the social movements of the time, a key topic of interest in the Woodstock J-Term course. Professor Roberts expressed his opinion that, for many artists, the cultural context of the day evoked a feeling of freedom as artists began to realize that their voice meant something, a sentiment shared by those who embraced their songs. This freedom extended as artists embraced creativity, discovering new ways to think for themselves as they transformed music, breaking boundaries to bring forth the next best thing.

Music has been rooted in culture since its very development, acting in many ways as a community experience. Without a cultural perspective, music would lose a vital aspect of itself.

I think that the cultural aspects of music are exactly why we use music to connect with others, learning about ourselves as we embrace a new perspective. Humans are incredibly creative, finding new ways to connect as we follow the journey of self-expression. To me, that's exactly what music is about. Music is expressive, providing an outlet to escape from reality. Music is an invitation to feel deeply, learning about yourself from a perspective you may not have found elsewhere. Above all, music is a connector, uniting us with those who came before and establishing a legacy for future generations to enjoy. I don't know where my life would be without music, and by understanding how music has shaped my life, my love for it has only grown.

MEDIA

Photography by Myka Thomas ‘27


PICKS

2024 MEDIA PICKS

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Photography by Caroline Halso ‘27

Photographer

By: Caroline Halso ‘27

You told me you brought your
camera
on your family’s annual hunting
trip.

Maybe it’s the writer in me, but I
think there’s something so
poetic about that;

they’re taking shots while you’re
shooting things in an entirely
different way.

They’re angling their weapons
while you’re angling your
camera, trying to figure out all
the best
frames.

You capture life in a snap shot,
immortalized forever; they end it

Photography by Lola Moore ‘27

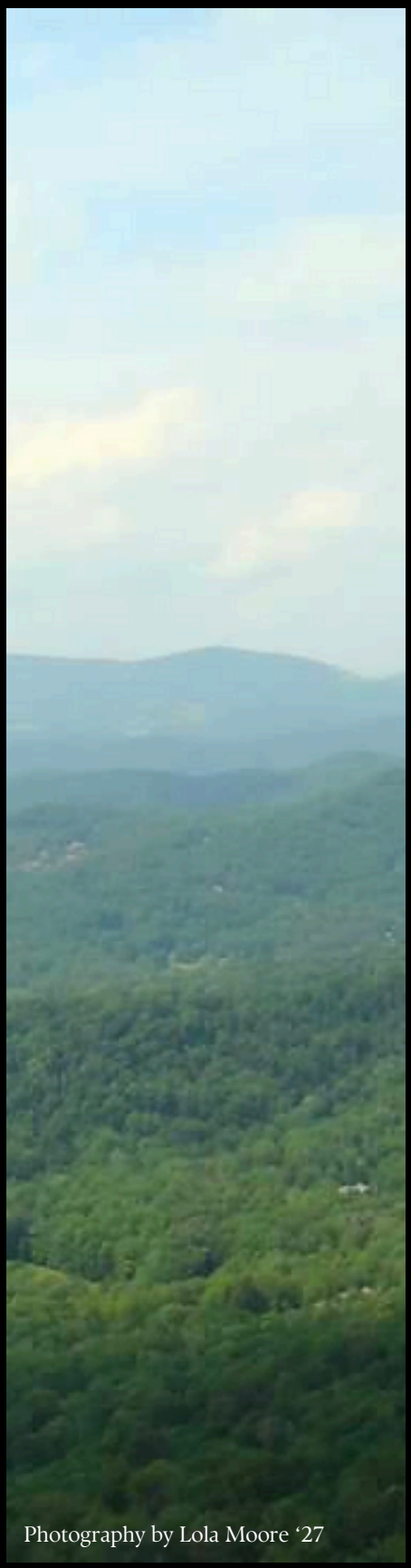
Photography by Myka Thomas ‘27

Photography by Lola Moore ‘27

Photography by Kaitlin Welch ‘19

Photography by Myka Thomas ‘27

Photography by Sabrina Tuton-Filson ‘19



Photography by Lola Moore ‘27

Higher Altitude
By: Lola Moore ‘27

I think the mountains
Put me to sleep
Because they belong
Only in dreams.
And they know it.

So far from
These mountains
That I know so dearly,
That I picture when I close my eyes.

I wish that there
Was some way to keep them
In my pocket and under my skin
So that I can feel the ridges on my arms.

The feeling rushing through my blood
Stepping out to breathe the air full of water–
If only I was closer,
For jumping into this abyss
Would be like waking up from the dead.

MEET OUR TEAM

visions@elon.edu
visionselon
visionselon.wixsite.com/visions

LOLA MOORE

Hi! I'm a Creative Writing and Literature major in the class of 2027. I am a North Carolina native, but have lived in Kenya, Thailand, and Zambia, which is where I graduated high school. My current favorite book is Midnight is the Darkest Hour by Ashley Winstead.

MYKA THOMAS

Hey! My name is Myka Thomas and I am the co-editor of Visions magazine. I'm majoring in astrophysics with a minor in computer science in the class of 2027. I'm from Baltimore, MD, and I love watching movies, and TV shows, and hanging out with friends. My current favorite movie is "Deadpool and Wolverine" directed by Shawn Levy.

KILEY SHERLOCK

Hi! My name is Kiley Sherlock and I'm a double major in Environmental Studies and Policy Studies in the Class of 2027! I'm from Louisville, KY, and I love to spend my time outdoors or seeking out fun adventures with my friends. I love music and my favorite song is "American Pie" by Don McLean.

CO-EDITORS

Lola Moore
Myka Thomas

OFFICE ASSISTANT

Kiley Sherlock

FACULTY CONSULTANT

Scott Morrison

CREDITS

Visions

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(noun) Elon's student-run sustainability journal. Its mission is to provide an opportunity for students to publish their works that deal with issues in environmental studies. Visions publishes a variety of Elon student and alumni works, including research articles, creative writing, poetry, media reviews, photography, and more. All submissions are reviewed by a team of student editors before publication. The ultimate goal of Visions is to raise awareness of environmental issues as well as prompt conversations about sustainability on this campus.

Contributing To Visions

Visions seeks compelling and well-written research articles, creative writing, poetry, media reviews, photography, and more. Research articles can be grounded in scholarly literature, and creative pieces must be original works.

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