

ALDO LEOPOLD WRITING CONTEST 2024



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I remember when Covid came, suddenly and unprovoked like a rabid animal. For the next few years, my education relied on the tools of technology - the internet and computers. During this time I found myself with eyes glued to the screen, trying to complete my assignments. Covid was when everyone was at their lowest, when social media subdued our constant boredom, and everyone could find everything they wanted on tiny screens. It was our answer; an escape. As we started to transition ourselves out of fear, we took this part of our lives with us. Our escape became our captivity.

In 2024, devices are still dictating our every move. We rely on these technological gadgets like a child would their mother. Covid changed us. It made us take our beautiful New Mexico landscape for granted. Our phones are powerful tools with the ability to provide us with information about our world through a deeper perspective. Without evolving technology, we would not be able to fully understand what happens in our complex ecosystem. However, in today's world, we find ourselves being detached from the environment, engrossed in screens that limit our appreciation of the outdoors; ruining our relationship with the natural world. There are times when I feel myself being separated from nature through these virtual assistants at our fingertips.

I remember during the pandemic when our power went out, the internet was down, and an almost deafening silence echoed in my house, unbroken and forever. My parents gathered flashlights so we could traverse our house without falling on one of my little toys scattered around. Clicks of flashlights illuminated our house, yet the silence still loomed, and with that silence, the boredom crept back into our minds. My brother became restless like a lost soul who needed direction, or in his case his phone. He began to text his friends. Then, all of a sudden, I found myself with a family of zombies held captive by their phones. I, who did not have any device, went to my backyard. Sitting atop my playground, I began to admire the beauty of the sunset, with the silhouette of great elder trees in the distance. I watched and almost found myself hypnotized by swaths of color blended to be a masterpiece; a masterpiece that was becoming less appreciated. Looking back at my family and then at the watercolor sky, I realized that maybe technology is not always the answer to our problems in an evolving society.

These tools that are at the palm of our hands keep us from enjoying the beauty of our Earth. The best tool we have to connect with nature is ourselves. Our senses give us the ability to tend to the little rock we live on. Yet, we choose to use tools to shape it to our own needs. Climate Change is becoming a reality, and perhaps if we set down our gadgets, we might be entertained by every little animal and structure that makes it so beautiful.