

Editor's Introduction

In this strangest of academic years, our students, instructors, administrators, and staff somehow managed to pull it off. Over two-thirds of the student work represented in this year's *Prized Writing* was produced after instruction moved online. Folks scrambled to adjust; burdens were multiplied, assignments modified, but excellence was expected. And excellence was achieved—as you will see here for yourself.

Welcome to volume 31 of *Prized Writing*.

As this year's cover art poignantly suggests, we may write in isolation—even the anxious isolation of quarantine—but the act of writing itself carries the determined, affirmative power of the communicative act. Kristen Shih (Class of 2020) captures all of this in her original cover art.

Typically, we can only publish around two dozen of the roughly 400 submissions we receive. Each year I'm surprised anew by the diverse range of topics and consistently fine work we have the privilege of considering. Thank you to all the students who took the time to submit their work. Please see our website for details about how to submit for volume 32 (2020-2021): <http://prizedwriting.ucdavis.edu>.

There's one student that I would like to thank above all: my assistant editor Krista Keplinger, whose hard work and sharp wit were especially appreciated as the job proceeded amidst plague, wildfire, and the crankiness of Zoom-induced back pain.

Now in its fourth decade, *Prized Writing* is the interdisciplinary showcase of what UC Davis undergraduates are learning, thinking and *writing* about in classrooms throughout the campus. We continue to be grateful for all of the institutional support provided by Gary May (Chancellor), Mary Croughan (Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor), Cynthia Carter Ching (Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education), and Ari Kelman (Dean, College of Letters and Science).

Thank you to the University Writing Program, in particular Dana Ferris (Program Chair), Darla Tafoya, Anita Rodriguez, Vicki Higby Sweeney, Melissa Lovejoy, Kevin Bryant, and Ron Ottman. Elliott Pollard continues to maintain our website and to provide much appreciated assistance to the editorial staff—many thanks, Elliott!

I also want to thank Tina Pfeiffer of Reprographics for overseeing

the bound book, and Morgan Liu of the UC Davis Bookstore for his flexibility.

To the judges: your patience, adaptability, discernment, and expertise continue to be invaluable. I enjoyed every moment of our collaboration.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Pamela Demory of the University Writing Program. Pam retired after the spring 2020 quarter. She's not the type who would have wanted a big send-off, but the dystopian, socially distanced end to the academic year deprived her colleagues—and certainly myself—of sending her off with the full measure of our appreciation (let alone hugs). She has been a mentor and an inspiration. Certainly, her students these past decades have been so lucky to have her. And even amidst the chaos of adjusting to Zoom, Pam's impact on her students remained remarkable—as evidenced by the *four* essays by her students selected from this academic year. Pam, we dedicate this volume of *Prized Writing* to you.

Greg Miller
Continuing Lecturer, University Writing Program

Honorable Mention

Isabella Bloom, “The Great Unequalizer: Differential Impacts of COVID-19 in Singapore”

Viswanath Chadalpaka, “The Industrialization of Knowledge”

Nina Forest, “China and IMF Foreign Aid in Africa: Which Lender Fosters Greater Growth?”

Lauren Lee, “2,700 Liters of Water”

Sophie Murff, “Do Our Ideas Have a Mind of Their Own?”

Rogelio Ramirez, “The Diet Problem”

Emma Warshaw, “Black Lives Matter According to a Jew”

Troy Williams, “*Cicer arietinum*: Origins of a Prolific Legume”