

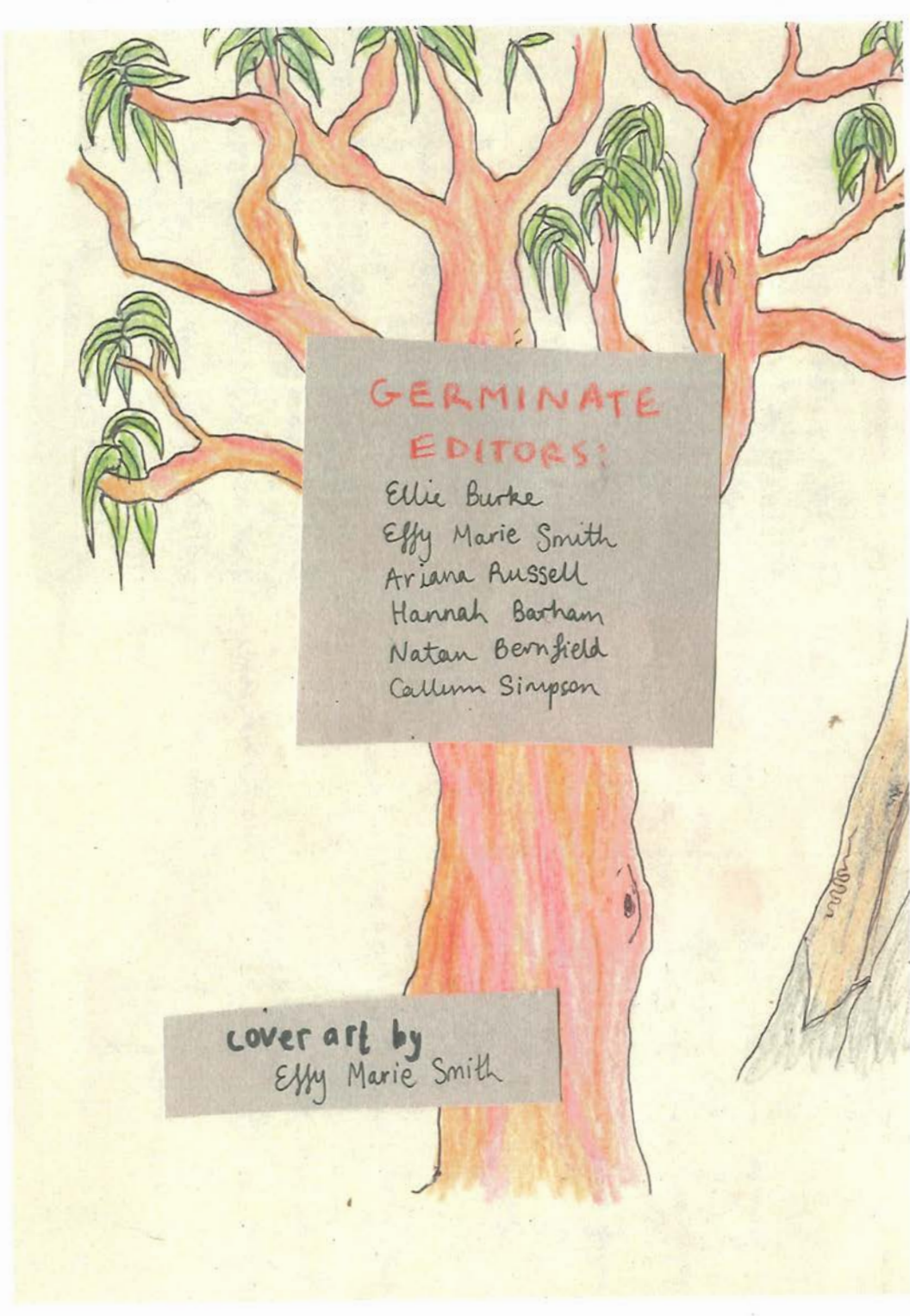
BEET THE
SYSTEM!

GERMINATE



WINTER

2018



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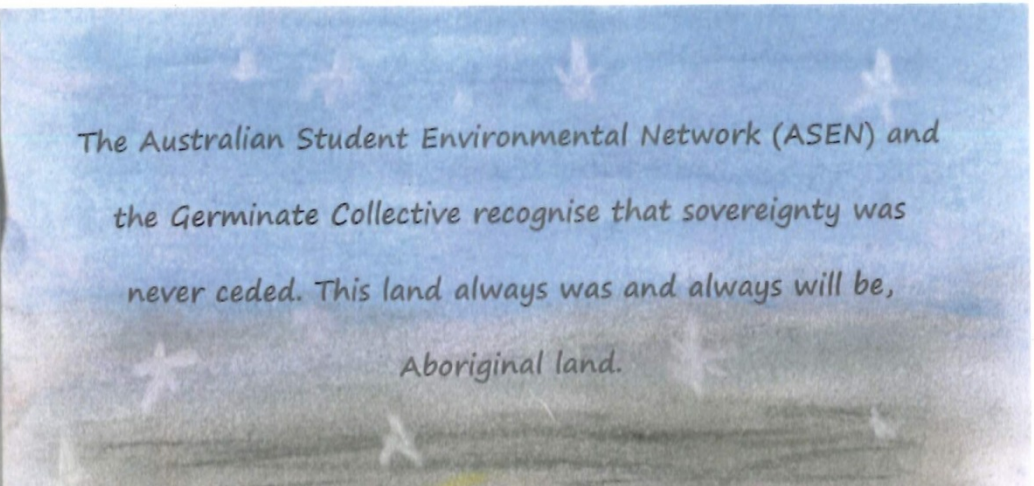
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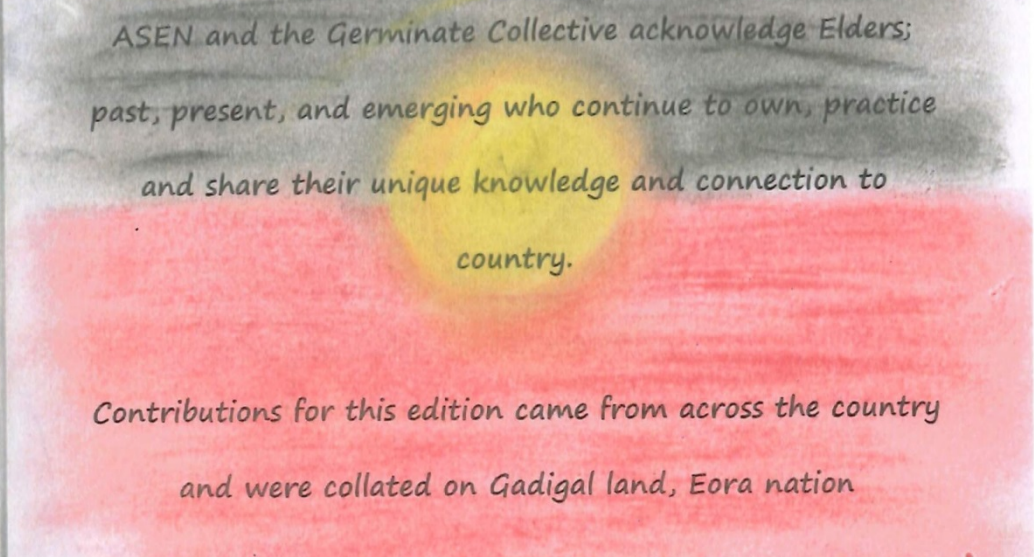
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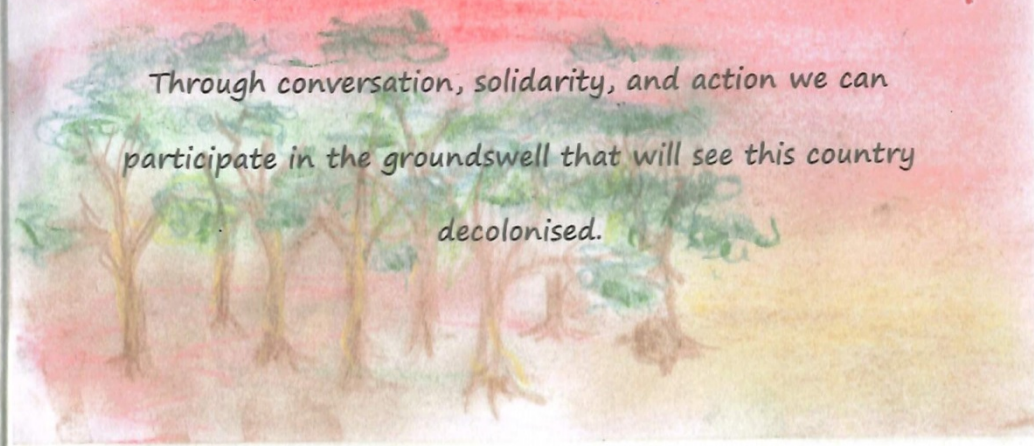


The Australian Student Environmental Network (ASEN) and
the Germinate Collective recognise that sovereignty was
never ceded. This land always was and always will be,
Aboriginal land.



ASEN and the Germinate Collective acknowledge Elders;
past, present, and emerging who continue to own, practice
and share their unique knowledge and connection to
country.

Contributions for this edition came from across the country
and were collated on Gadigal land, Eora nation



Through conversation, solidarity, and action we can
participate in the groundswell that will see this country
decolonised.



National convenor mid-year report-back

from Anisa, Ruby & Lily;

The year began with a stellar Training Camp on Dharawal country which celebrated 20 years of ASEN. Many great people took on ASEN organising roles and after Training Camp finished we got stuck into the usual stuff.

Students joined and rallied with indigenous people and thousands of others all across so-called Australia to put pressure on the celebrations of January 26th.

All state networks except WA and NT continue to thrive, with lots of house-parties, road trips to support regional communities, and the usual activist stuff.

The most notable direction we've taken this year was to be part of establishing #DisarmUnis, a campaign to highlight complicit support universities have towards the military.

Huge shout-out to the Meanjin crew for supporting First Nations people at the Stolenwealth Games protests highlighting the problematic aspects of ongoing colonisation.

The weeks leading up to Students of Sustainability had been hectic, particularly with troubles getting a university or tafe to host at, showing how incredibly corporate our educational institutions have become.

Fortunately we managed to get a venue by a hair and the SoS conference went ahead! It was as, always, a transformative for many! People found a community they hadn't known of before and were exposed to discussions they hadn't, and the post-SoS roadtrip out to the central highlands and east gippsland forest went really well.

We hope the next six months will be empowering and engaging as we continue the fight for environmental justice.

Love you! <3

What is Germinate?

Germinate is a zine produced by the Australian Student Environment Network. Zines (short for magazine or fanzine) are self-published publications with historical ties to radical politics, feminism, punk music and activism. Most cities around Australia have zine cultures which centre around zine stores or 'distros' and fairs where communities of 'zinesters' often operate a swapping/gift economy. Zines are something that anyone with access to paper, writing materials and a photocopier can create to express themselves or share knowledge.

Germinate's of the past can be found online through the Asen website, or in activist zine libraries across the country. Articles often revolve around the campaigns, actions and conversations of the people of ASEN. It is hoped that through disseminating this zine, ideas around environmental and social justice will spread and germinate within the minds of people around so-called Australia.

To get involved with the Germinate collective, email germinate@asen.org.au. We are always looking for people who want to build skills in writing, creating art, editing and working collectively with others.

What is ASEN?

The Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN) is, in broad terms, an attempt to network together young people across so-called Australia who are concerned with and active in fighting environmental and social justice issues.

We come together twice a year at ASEN Training camp in January and Student of Sustainability (SoS) conference in July. At these gatherings we learn and share skills and stories, and build friendships. At its least and best that's what ASEN is - relationships of support between people trying to make the world more just.

ASEN has a non-hierarchical structure of convenors who gather in web-based meetings every now and then. There are state convenors who organise state meetings too, where we discuss goings on in our respective cities, plan fundraisers or bushwalks, hold potluck dinners or just generally check in with each other. There are also collectives and working groups for organising, planning, or creating things like this zine.

Everyone is welcome to be part of ASEN. Whilst many of us are students at universities, you do not have to be at university to be a student. ASEN is about creating spaces that are different to conventional spaces - ones without oppression, where everyone is treated equally, and where we can work towards fixing past wrongs.



CITIZEN SCIENCE AS ACTIVISM

A call to action

By Amelie Vanderstock and Natalie Berry

Both live on Eora land

It's easy to fall into the trap of seeing science as purely academic and activism as unrelated. The science we learn at University is often highly theoretical and dominated by knowledgeable 'experts'. Somehow it is seen as impartial, and beyond application to the real world it stems from. But, what of the people who's lives the science actually affects? Where does the *citizen* go to get information? And, if scientific research and methodologies are so inaccessible to ordinary people, how can we keep those doing the research accountable?

'Citizen science' is science conducted by 'non-scientists', aka 'citizens'. It exists on a spectrum from collecting 'big data' for an expert-led research project, to a community of non-scientists defining and executing their own projects. By itself, citizen science is not an inherently radical practice. But, when highlighting and valuing the power of local experiences and fortifying these with 'numbers', citizen science can play a role in environmental justice. When science is done with community and led by community, this is a form of activism.

Let's look at Maules Creek, bordered by the Leard State Forest in rural North-West NSW, where farmers are concerned with elevated coal dust and noise from the open cut coal mines within a few kilometres of their crops and homes. Whitehaven (the mining company) self-monitors dust and noise pollution which (supposedly) rarely exceeds national pollution standards. However, to locals, the heavy haze that hangs over the mine each morning, and the thick layer of dust that they scrub off their letterboxes tells a different story.

When it's the mining company that is in control of information on pollution, locals don't have access to the science to back up their observations. This means they have no recourse to challenge the industries that are undermining their community, with no way to appeal to the experts.

So 'citizens' take research into their own hands.

Since 2016, students have joined these local farmers through the Leard Forest Research Node to create and maintain a community air quality monitoring network. Using basic glassware familiar to anyone who's made cider at home, these 'citizen scientists' measured the quantity of dust at different distances from the Maules Creek mine each month. Now, when the mining company, Whitehaven, attempts to assure residents that air quality levels on the frontline of open cut coal mines are "better than Randwick in Sydney", long term data for community, collected by community, is there to challenge these claims. With a sustained and collaborative effort to monitor dust levels in the area, we now have data with which we can communicate the issues locals feel in a language that even the mining companies cannot argue with. Meanwhile, other students of The University of Sydney have done some 'data mining' of their own. Third year Mathematics student, Margot used her passion for Excel spreadsheets to find that over 25% of the air pollution data reported by Whitehaven coal in 2016 was 'invalid' or 'negative'. To put that in context, try to imagine what a negative number of dust particles in the air might look like. Having trouble? We did too. Probably because there is no such thing as negative dust. That's to say that most of the data they reported was actually impossible. But without a passionate student to dive into the mess of inaccessible spreadsheets, no one would ever know!

Now that's some worthy procrastination from your Maths assignment. Or... is it a worthy topic *for* your Maths assignment? Furthermore, many of us will be considering Honours, Masters and PhD topics in the future. Why not spend those years critically engaging with research that is both relevant and *actually* useful to real life communities?

Being at university should be equally about developing critical thinking skills as it is about getting that degree. To engage with communities and know when to call out the 'experts' in industry and government is to be critically engaged citizens.

Science can be used to silence. And it can be used to empower. Many students are in a unique position with the freedom to choose our research projects. Why not choose to work with communities who have research questions and needs of their own? Done well, this kind of citizen science *is* activism.

Not sure where to begin?

For more info you can email leardforestresearchnode@gmail.com or check them out on Facebook to learn more! You can also keep up to date with Asen ventures, many of which involve citizen science.

This article was originally published in *Honi Soit*, the weekly student newspaper of the University of Sydney, Australia, reprinted with permission of author.

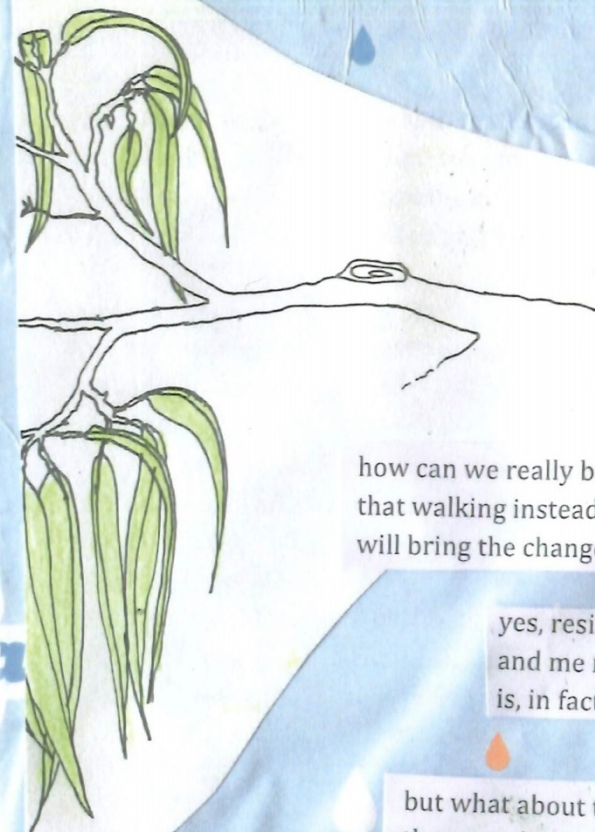
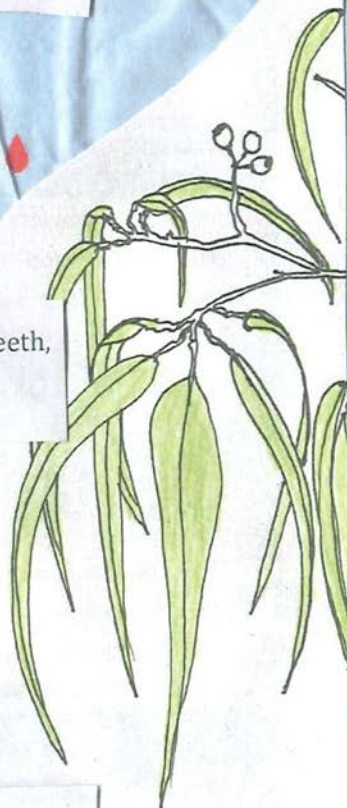
A poem about environment and resistance:

By Sahibajot Kaur

It now makes sense to me,
Why it didn't make sense before,
to advocate things like
turning the lights out,
not leaving the tap running while you brush your teeth,
recycling your pizza box after you eat,
and joining organisation like Greenpeace.

were these little things
really going to make a difference?
well, everyone knows that
every little bit counts -
and it all adds up, to amount
to the bigger picture.

but when that bigger picture
is something that is dictated
by a director and a cameraman out of our reach -
when it is painted by a painter we can't even see -
when we're part of a system we can't possibly leave -
when we're forced to be something we don't want to be -
when our actions are nothing in the face of monopoly -



how can we really believe
that walking instead of driving
will bring the change that we really need?

yes, resistance starts with us -
and me refusing a plastic bag
is, in fact, a political act.

but what about the bigger decisions?
the ones that govern
where we live,
what we eat,
how we consume
and what we aspire to?

the search is overwhelming,
because it's a search for the truth.

Art by Ellie

INDIGESTION

Sometimes you get a tummy ache. Sometimes you eat a biscuit after petting a dog. Sometimes sweat forms around your midriff because those people are difficult to talk to. Because the music is too loud, and the lights are beating down. Because you've forced yourself into a **moment of involuntary learning.**

Discomfort is productive, and we know this, because the more we seek it out, the more we become. We seek the butterflies, the frisson, the fear of confluence, of collectivity, of a loss of individual control. We love to feel weird. Weirdness has its own secret sensorium, its own little smoke-filled backroom in our consciousness, crowded with aberrations. The door to it is always left ajar because we know we'll be going back in there sooner rather than later, even if it smells a little funky. We love to rummage through and find an object buried in the corner of that room, despite the dust and dirt and mildew. We turn the old object over in our hands, finding strange new lumps and bumps and polyps and protrusions. **Weirdness is oncogenic.** It is the production of unexpected growths in unexpected places.

Closed systems are boring. Nothing ever happens in them and also they don't exist. But usually we're forced to consider ourselves as closed systems. Zipped up sacs of capital, we're the charge of checkboxes. But there are always **externalities**. We all pollute and are polluted in one way or another. And it sucks, and we hate ourselves for it! We feel sick for it! We die because of it! In more ways than one!

But we can also learn to live and work with pollution, with discomfort, with stomach pain in a way that isn't deluded nor defeatist about our impact as members of irreducible, ineffably complex ecosystems. Donna

Haraway calls this "**staying with the trouble**". It's living with exhaust, with grease and gristle, with cockroaches and crickets and cockatoos, with paralysis and injustice. It's the assurance of a very particular type of multispecies futurity: a future made from the wildest distortions, the weirdest kinships, the staunchest refusals. Some of us already live there, but we're all polytemporal; sometimes our blind spots leave our retinæ stretched back into the 1950s or 1990s. Sometimes yesterday's news, or some reality TV show rerun, makes of us noisy, glitchy, digital trash, our limbs stretched across spacetime. My advice is to give up your solitude and come back to the closest thing we'll ever have to objective reality: collectivity. Multitude.

Be fully present in this weird, sad, twisted, beautiful moment in particular. Be here, be weird, be vulnerable, be together. Last night's dinner might come back to haunt you, and it's ok. See the indigestion through. Make something new.

Mark Bosch lives on Cabrogal land of the Dharug nation and is an arts student at the University of Sydney

Are we okay?

I think we're not doing 'R U OK' Day properly. 'R U OK?' Day seems to pass by every year with barely any noticeable changes to our society. We've been too trained to think as individuals and see others as individuals who, unless they are in an obvious crisis, we expect them to help themselves and resolve any mental problems they have. Improving the health and well-being starts with ourselves, but it doesn't end there.

Think we need an 'are we okay?' day. Is the government okay? are local communities okay? is global humanity okay? Let's reduce suicide rates, anti-social behaviour, behaviour associated with mental health issues, and the harmful ways we treat those most vulnerable. Let's increase funding for medical services, health services, public housing and many more things like that. Let's improve the attitudes we have towards others, and think collectively to improve the overall strength of community and society.

-Cam



BRANDALISM

The 2015 Climate Change Conference, COP21, was held in Paris. In preparation for the conference, to ensure events ran smoothly as politicians gathered from all over the world, Paris government banned public gatherings. This was part of a state of emergency declared in response to the November terrorist attacks, but effectively postponed Parisian citizens right to free speech about an issue that will affect every single one of us and is not being managed effectively by politicians: climate change.

In response, activists from all over Europe gathered and brainstormed creative ways to spread their message in public space. They come up with a huge range of actions - it's worth looking up 'climate games' - from filling a street with empty shoes on the day of a planned protest march, to a huge series of artworks that filled advertising spaces with a slightly different message to the usual ads...



Compiled by Ellie, shamelessly plagiarism from google images, put together to make us laugh a little

POETRY AS ACTIVISM

By Ellie Burke

*hands reaching out
fists raising up
banners unfurling
megaphones booming
and we are canoes blocking coal ships
we are the radiance of solar villages
... and we are spreading the word*

Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner 'Dear Matafele Peinam'

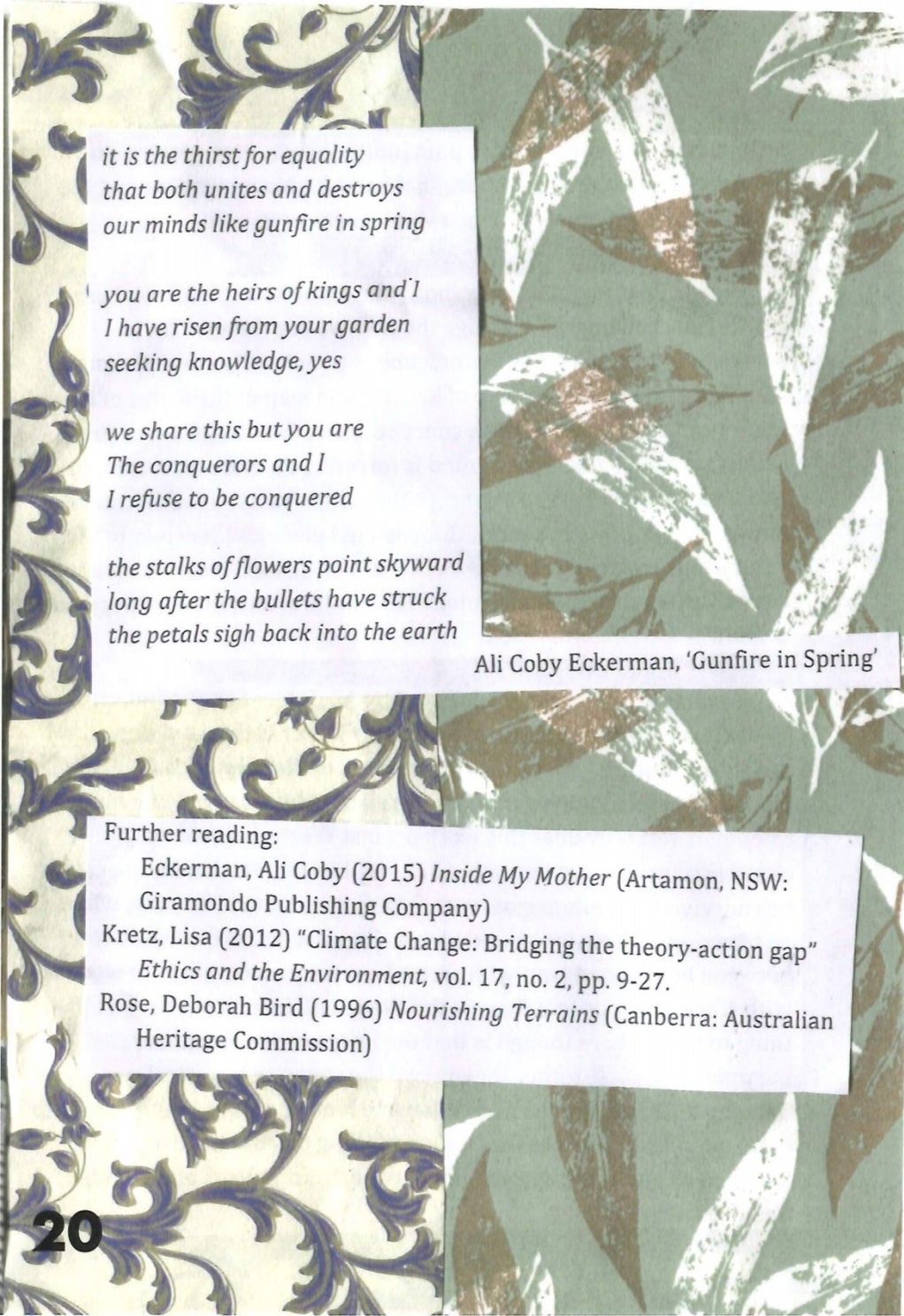
Emotional engagement with an issue motivates people to act on it. An emotional connection to an entity provokes moral responsibility towards it, and thus be a way to bridge the 'theory-action gap' identified by climate change researchers. Poetry was used as a powerful call to environmental action at the 2014 UN Climate Summit by Marshall Island poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner. The haunting words of her poem "Dear Matafele Peinam" made a lasting impression. Jetnil-Kijiner speaks to a global community, imploring action. The links she makes to environmental activism is obvious in the above quote especially, but pointedly reliant on emotion.

People have long realised that in order to act, you need people to be emotionally motivated. Science proclaiming that a 4 degree temperature rise is inevitable is definitely scary, but only because of the emotional stories we have already heard about sea level rising, freak heat waves and storms, and so on. To act, people need to *feel*. Poetry was a tactic used by Aboriginal rights campaigning in the 1960s, for example Oodgeroo Noonuccal (aka Kath Walker) published the first book of Aboriginal Australian poetry titled *We are Going* in 1964, and was an invaluable part of the 1967 referendum campaign. Her public life and

friendships - such as with the poet Judith Wright - are emblematic of an intersection between the Aboriginal Land Rights movement and the Environmental (conservationist) movement of the time.

Not only is poetry emotionally motivating, but its experimental use of words can challenge and change the way we see things. This is particularly true of poetry by Indigenous peoples. To quote Deborah Bird Rose, 'the poem is a map of locale and a map of the states of being.' Poetry can convey Indigenous conceptions of Country in a way prose cannot, as with a poem your mind is forced to do more abstract work, and thus be able to grasp a concept that is abstract to most Western minds: that Country is a multi-dimensional giver and receiver of life. Poetry thus can help break down the human-nature binary on which capitalism, environmental exploitation, and western thought in general is built.

As an example, the poem "Tjukurrpa" by Ali Cobby Eckermann uses family ties to describe links to land in 'my father is the sand dune/that rock is my mother.' The matter-of-factness of these lines challenges the (usually Western) notion that family relationships can only be human-to-human. Not only does this work against Western dualistic constructions of those terms but also implies that the landscape cannot be conceived of, or damaged, without emotion and spirituality, which is an idea useful to environmentalism. Eckermann blurs the distinction between human and land with metaphors such as 'baskets are woven with story' and 'our footsteps in the sand/ will turn to rock soon.' The thing to realise here though is that the lines are not imaginary metaphors as such, rather they reveal the complex historical and ongoing links Indigenous people have to land and time. Poetry can help bend our western brains into understanding there is no distinction between us and the environment, between us and land, and thus no defence to exploiting it.



it is the thirst for equality
that both unites and destroys
our minds like gunfire in spring

you are the heirs of kings and I
I have risen from your garden
seeking knowledge, yes

we share this but you are
The conquerors and I
I refuse to be conquered

the stalks of flowers point skyward
long after the bullets have struck
the petals sigh back into the earth

Ali Coby Eckerman, 'Gunfire in Spring'

Further reading:

Eckerman, Ali Coby (2015) *Inside My Mother* (Artamon, NSW: Giramondo Publishing Company)

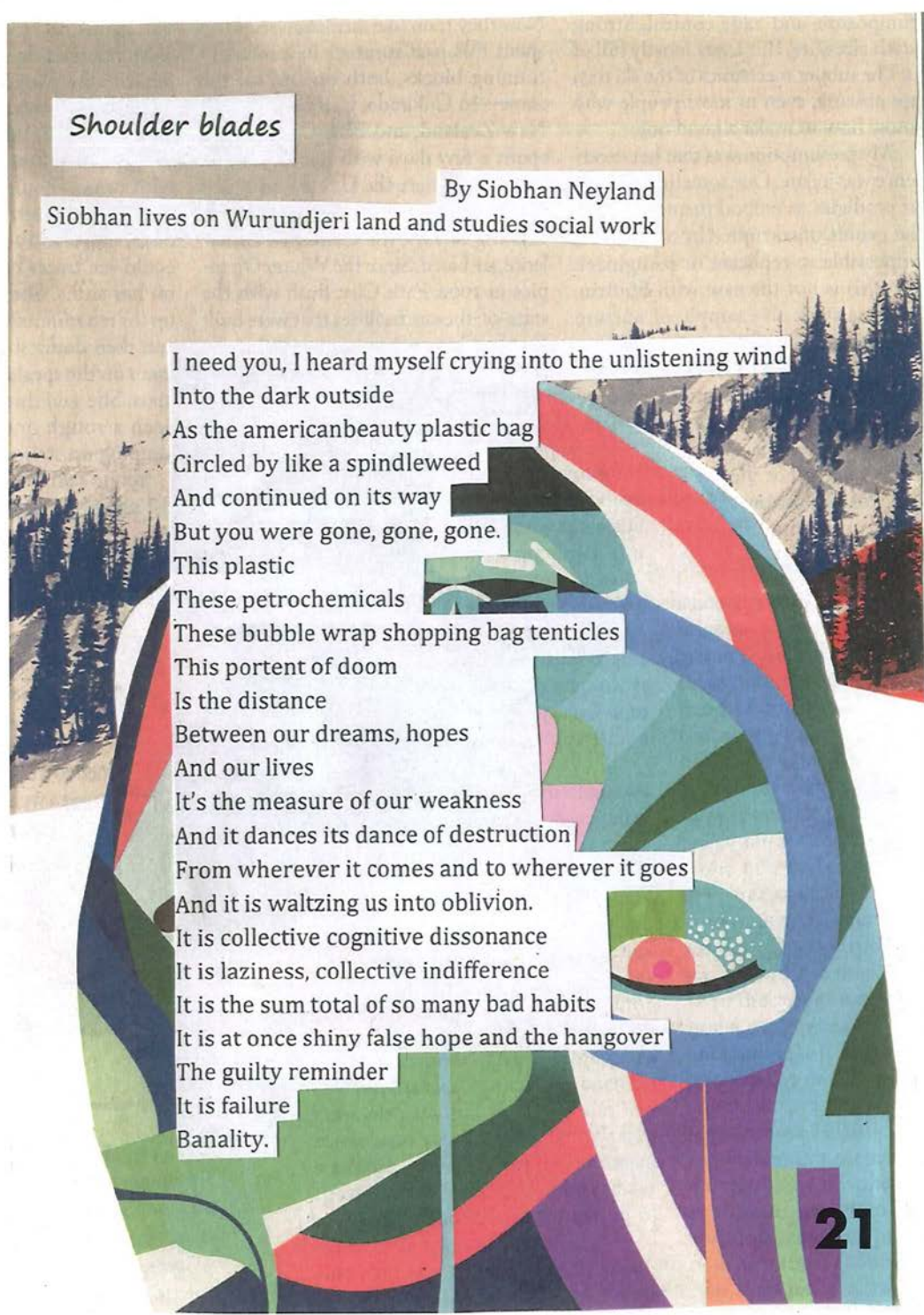
Kretz, Lisa (2012) "Climate Change: Bridging the theory-action gap" *Ethics and the Environment*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 9-27.

Rose, Deborah Bird (1996) *Nourishing Terrains* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission)

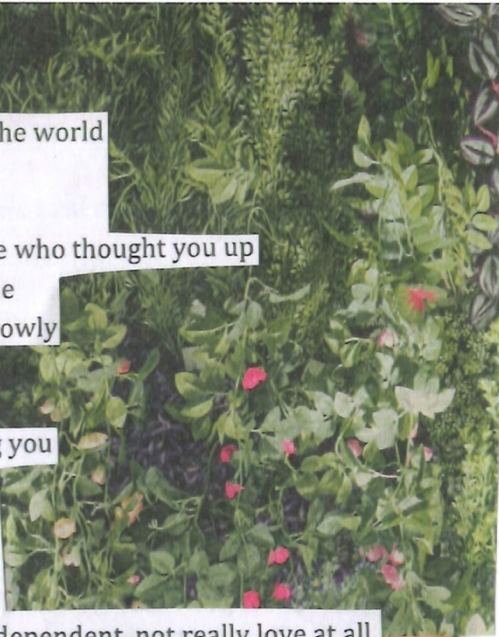
Shoulder blades

By Siobhan Neyland

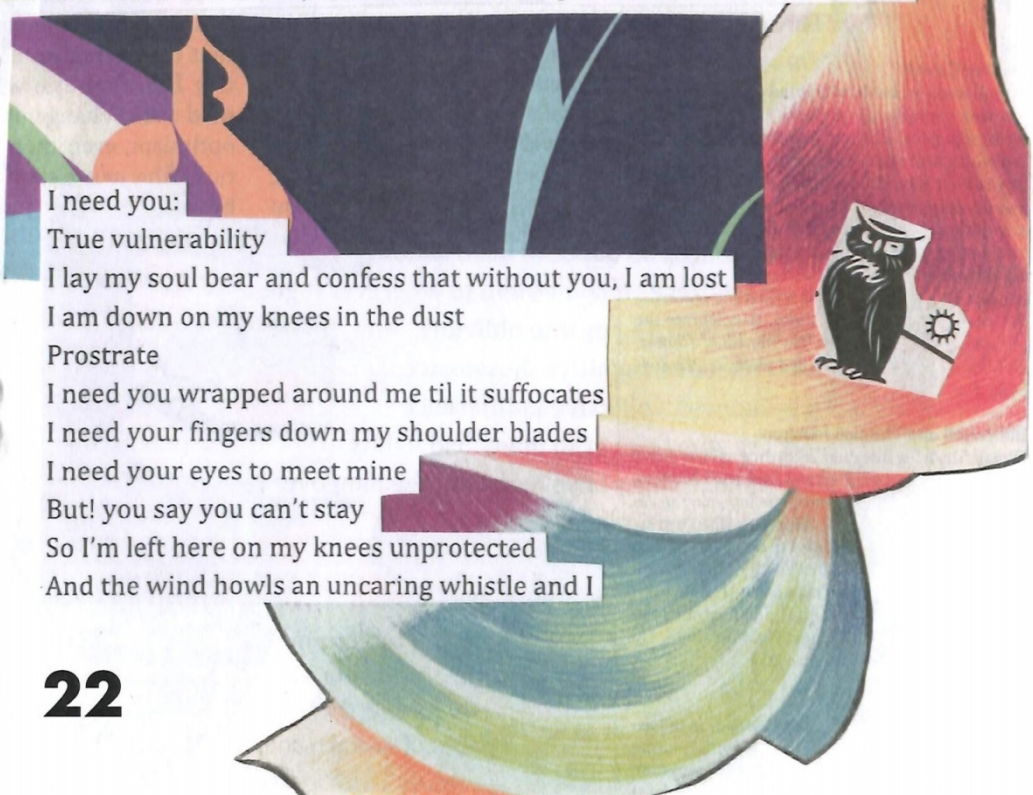
Siobhan lives on Wurundjeri land and studies social work



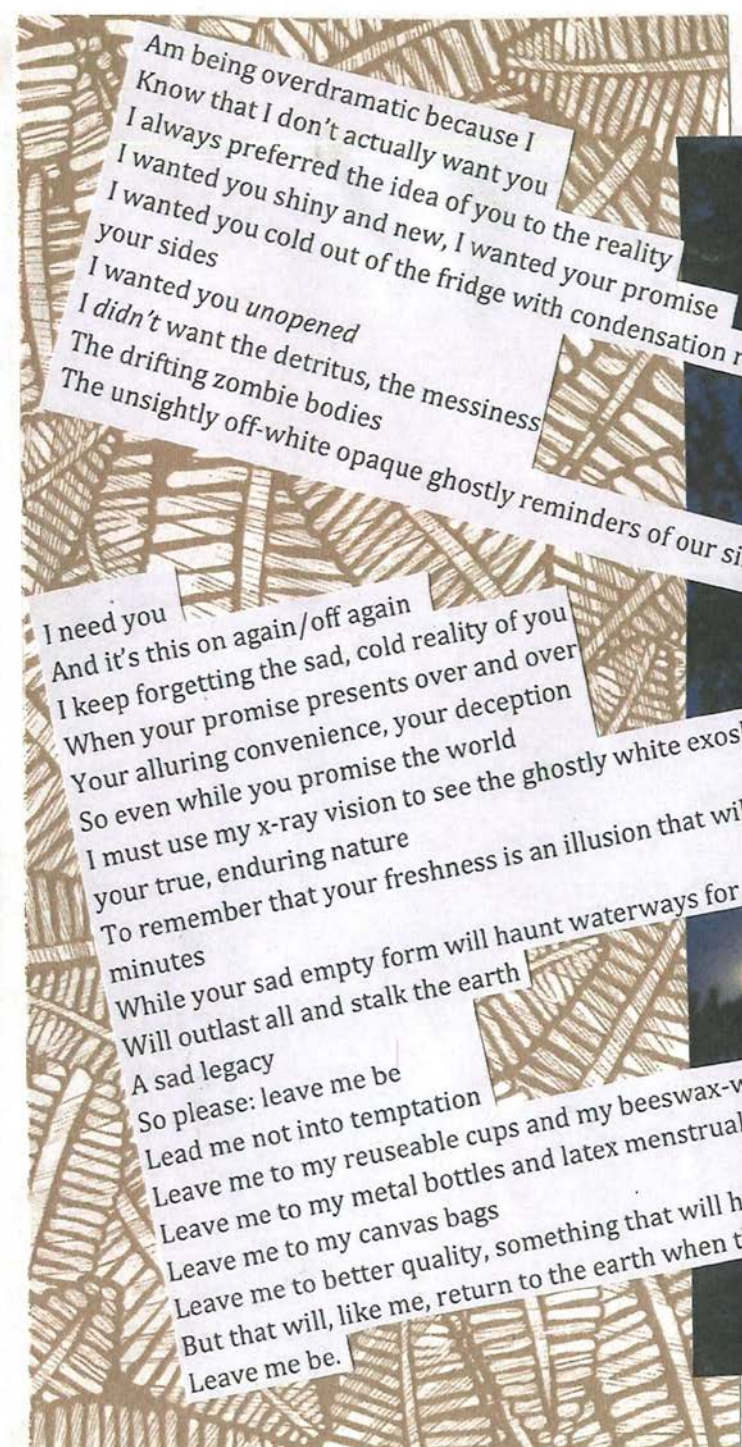
I need you, I heard myself crying into the unlistening wind
Into the dark outside
As the americanbeauty plastic bag
Circled by like a spindleweed
And continued on its way
But you were gone, gone, gone.
This plastic
These petrochemicals
These bubble wrap shopping bag tentacles
This portent of doom
Is the distance
Between our dreams, hopes
And our lives
It's the measure of our weakness
And it dances its dance of destruction
From wherever it comes and to wherever it goes
And it is waltzing us into oblivion.
It is collective cognitive dissonance
It is laziness, collective indifference
It is the sum total of so many bad habits
It is at once shiny false hope and the hangover
The guilty reminder
It is failure
Banality.



I need you
 You are the only impenetrable layer
 The only thing I can truly rely on
 The only thing that can protect me from the world
 Everything else disintegrates
 I know you will be there in the end
 More permanent than any of those people who thought you up
 Who accidentally made you indispensable
 Who got us all addicted to what kills us slowly
 Yes, plastic bag, you will outlast us all.
 And as much as you sicken me
 In my imagination of sea creatures eating you
 I still somehow fall back into you
 Into your waiting arms
 I need you to enclose and surround me
 Yes, like bubble wrap
 Like a love that is bad, addicted, toxic, codependent, not really love at all.

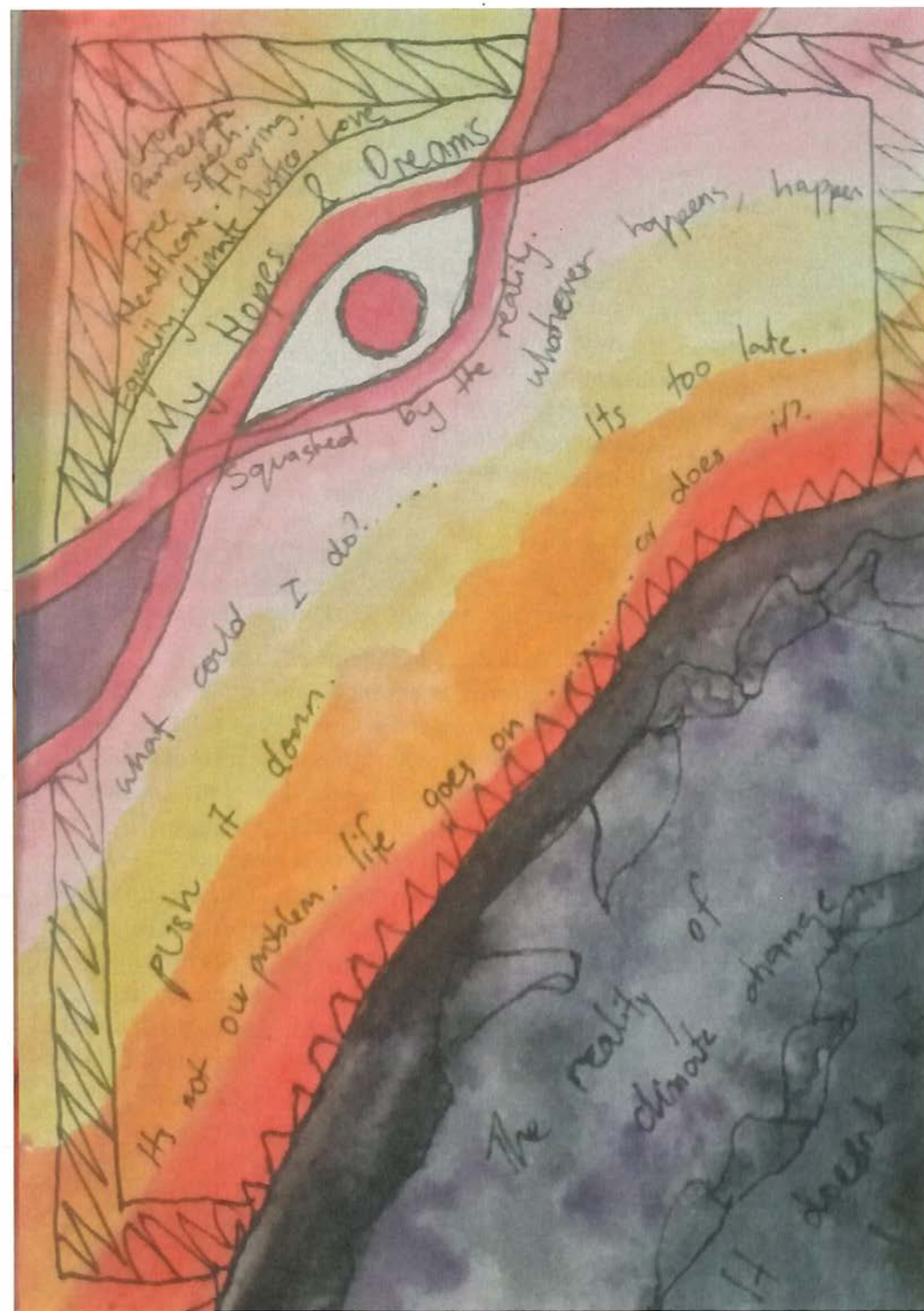
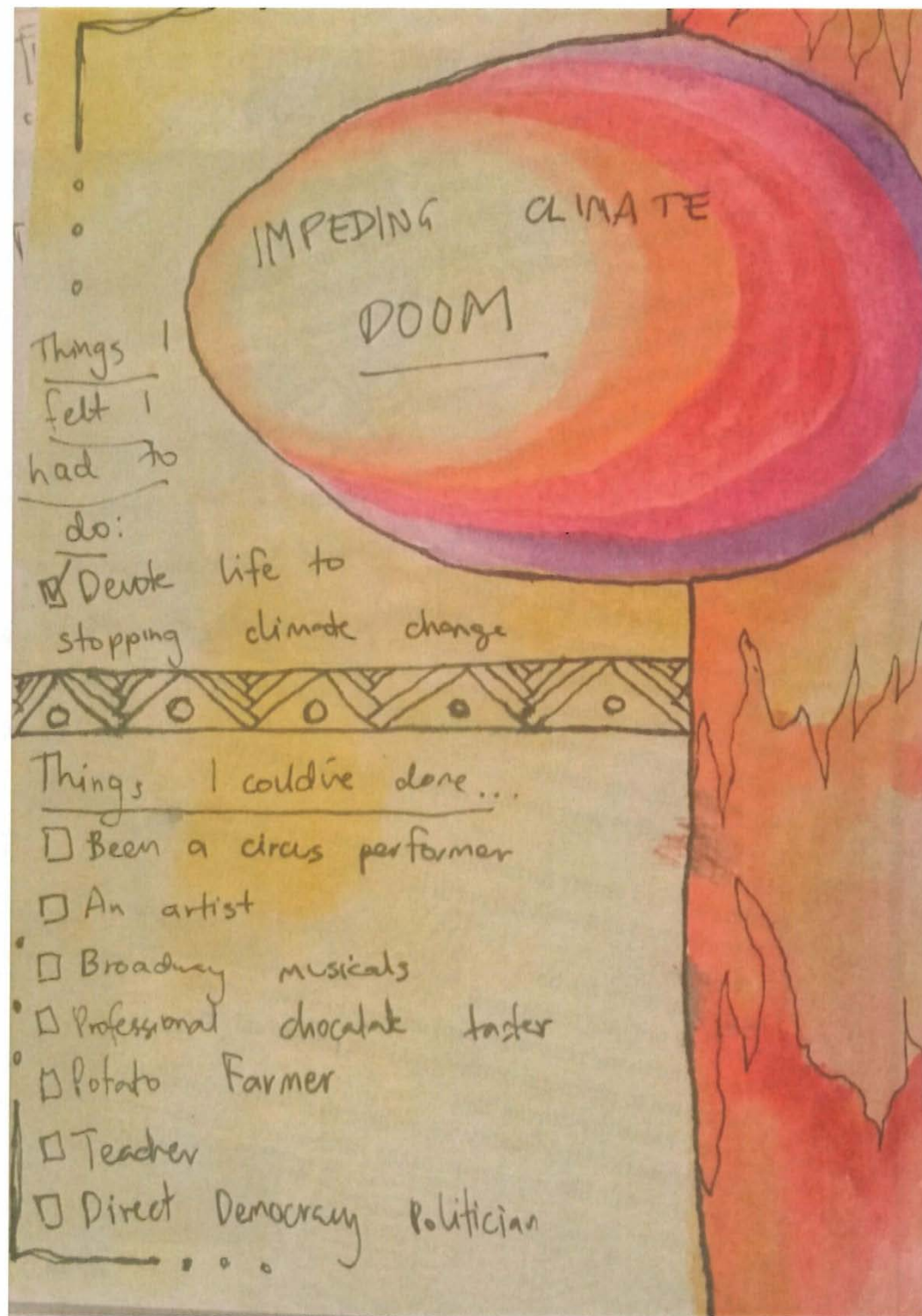


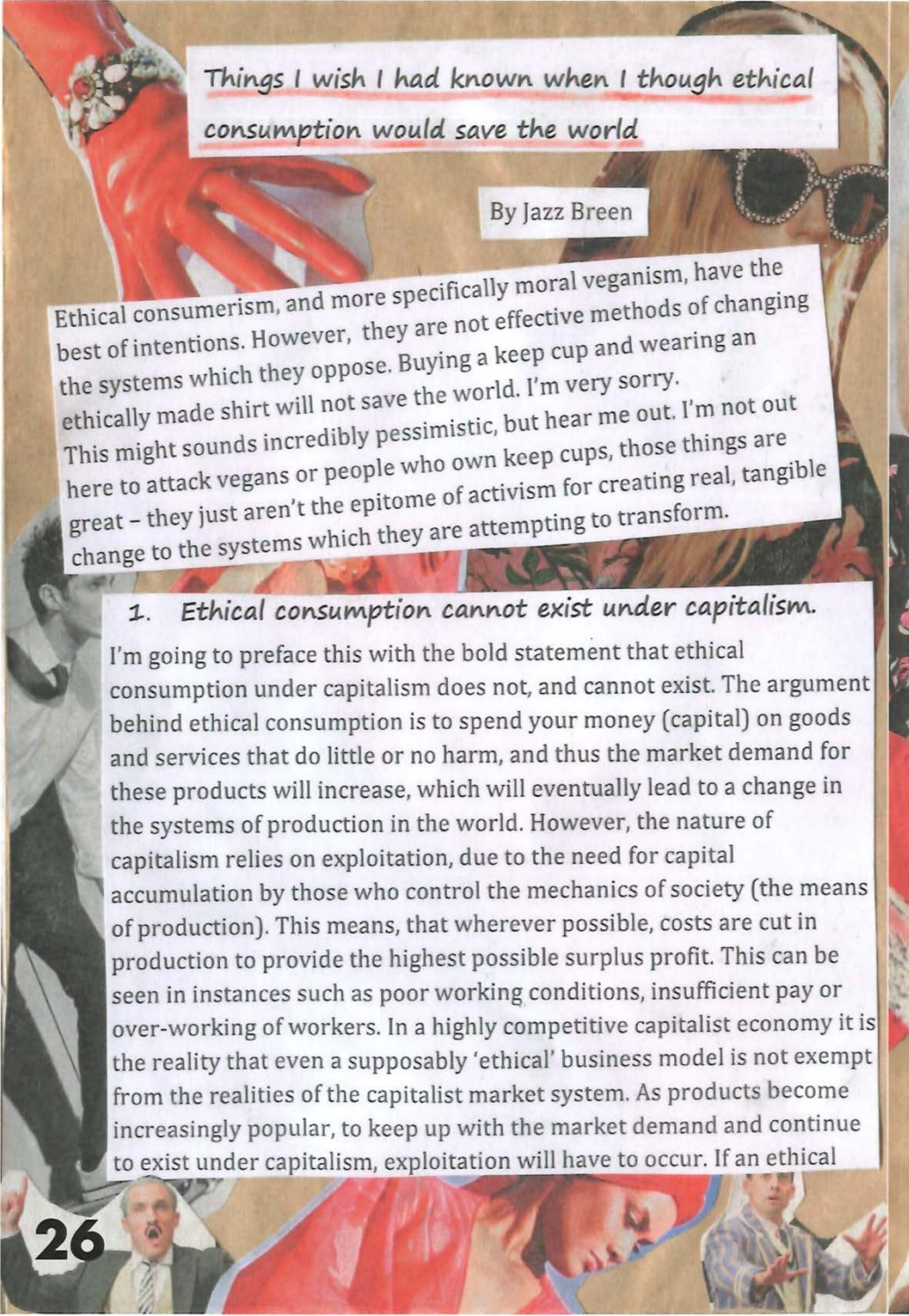
I need you:
 True vulnerability
 I lay my soul bare and confess that without you, I am lost
 I am down on my knees in the dust
 Prostrate
 I need you wrapped around me til it suffocates
 I need your fingers down my shoulder blades
 I need your eyes to meet mine
 But! you say you can't stay
 So I'm left here on my knees unprotected
 And the wind howls an uncaring whistle and I



Am being overdramatic because I
 Know that I don't actually want you
 I always preferred the idea of you to the reality
 I wanted you shiny and new, I wanted your promise
 I wanted you cold out of the fridge with condensation running down
 your sides
 I wanted you *unopened*
 I didn't want the detritus, the messiness
 The drifting zombie bodies
 The unsightly off-white opaque ghostly reminders of our sins.

I need you
 And it's this on again/off again
 I keep forgetting the sad, cold reality of you
 When your promise presents over and over
 Your alluring convenience, your deception
 So even while you promise the world
 I must use my x-ray vision to see the ghostly white exoskeleton that is
 your true, enduring nature
 To remember that your freshness is an illusion that will only last
 minutes
 While your sad empty form will haunt waterways for millennia
 Will outlast all and stalk the earth
 A sad legacy
 So please: leave me be
 Lead me not into temptation
 Leave me to my reusable cups and my beeswax-wraps
 Leave me to my metal bottles and latex menstrual cups
 Leave me to my canvas bags
 Leave me to better quality, something that will hold its form
 But that will, like me, return to the earth when the time comes
 Leave me be.





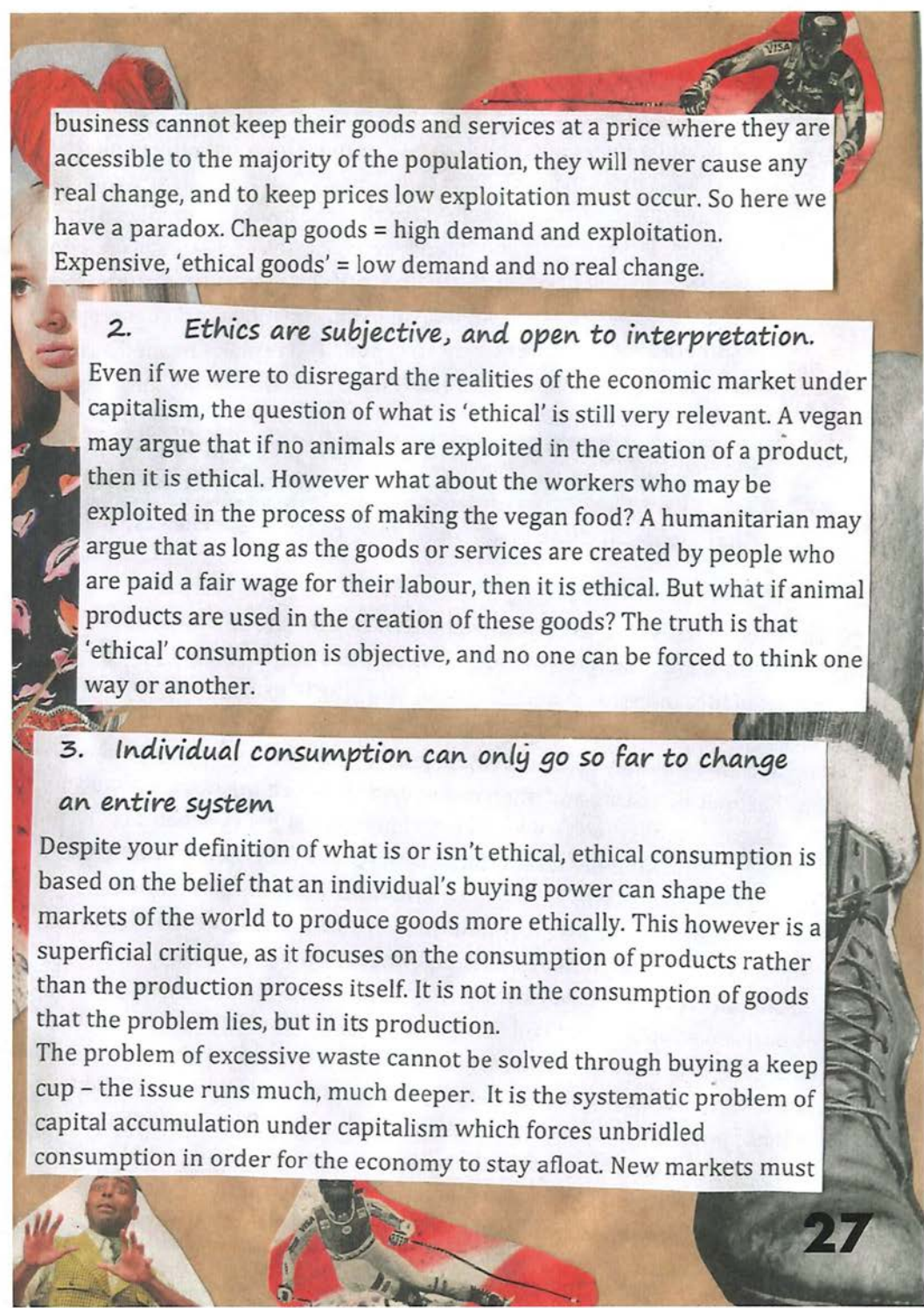
Things I wish I had known when I thought ethical consumption would save the world

By Jazz Breen

Ethical consumerism, and more specifically moral veganism, have the best of intentions. However, they are not effective methods of changing the systems which they oppose. Buying a keep cup and wearing an ethically made shirt will not save the world. I'm very sorry. This might sound incredibly pessimistic, but hear me out. I'm not out here to attack vegans or people who own keep cups, those things are great – they just aren't the epitome of activism for creating real, tangible change to the systems which they are attempting to transform.

1. Ethical consumption cannot exist under capitalism.

I'm going to preface this with the bold statement that ethical consumption under capitalism does not, and cannot exist. The argument behind ethical consumption is to spend your money (capital) on goods and services that do little or no harm, and thus the market demand for these products will increase, which will eventually lead to a change in the systems of production in the world. However, the nature of capitalism relies on exploitation, due to the need for capital accumulation by those who control the mechanics of society (the means of production). This means, that wherever possible, costs are cut in production to provide the highest possible surplus profit. This can be seen in instances such as poor working conditions, insufficient pay or over-working of workers. In a highly competitive capitalist economy it is the reality that even a supposedly 'ethical' business model is not exempt from the realities of the capitalist market system. As products become increasingly popular, to keep up with the market demand and continue to exist under capitalism, exploitation will have to occur. If an ethical



business cannot keep their goods and services at a price where they are accessible to the majority of the population, they will never cause any real change, and to keep prices low exploitation must occur. So here we have a paradox. Cheap goods = high demand and exploitation. Expensive, 'ethical goods' = low demand and no real change.

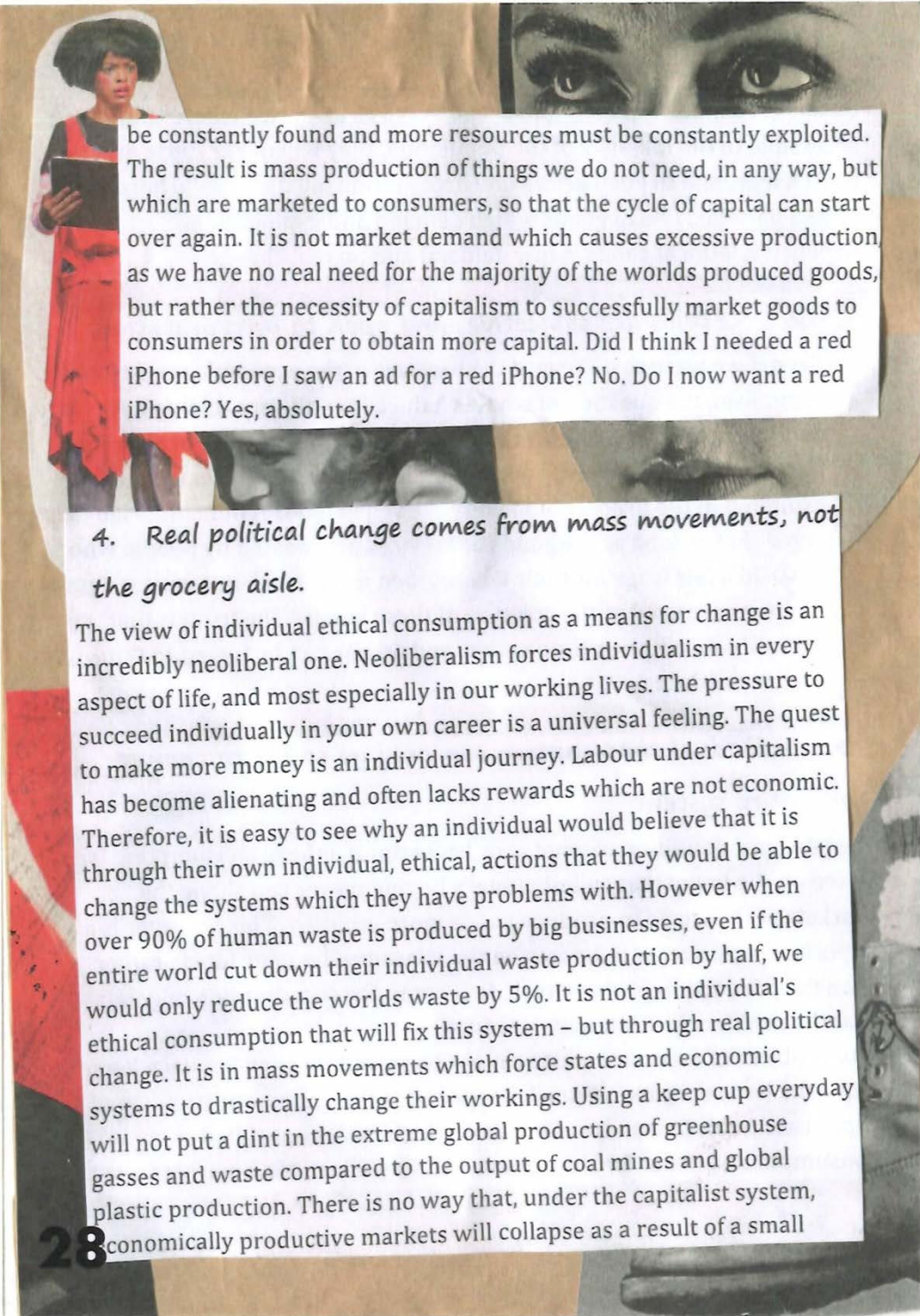
2. Ethics are subjective, and open to interpretation.

Even if we were to disregard the realities of the economic market under capitalism, the question of what is 'ethical' is still very relevant. A vegan may argue that if no animals are exploited in the creation of a product, then it is ethical. However what about the workers who may be exploited in the process of making the vegan food? A humanitarian may argue that as long as the goods or services are created by people who are paid a fair wage for their labour, then it is ethical. But what if animal products are used in the creation of these goods? The truth is that 'ethical' consumption is objective, and no one can be forced to think one way or another.

3. Individual consumption can only go so far to change an entire system

Despite your definition of what is or isn't ethical, ethical consumption is based on the belief that an individual's buying power can shape the markets of the world to produce goods more ethically. This however is a superficial critique, as it focuses on the consumption of products rather than the production process itself. It is not in the consumption of goods that the problem lies, but in its production.

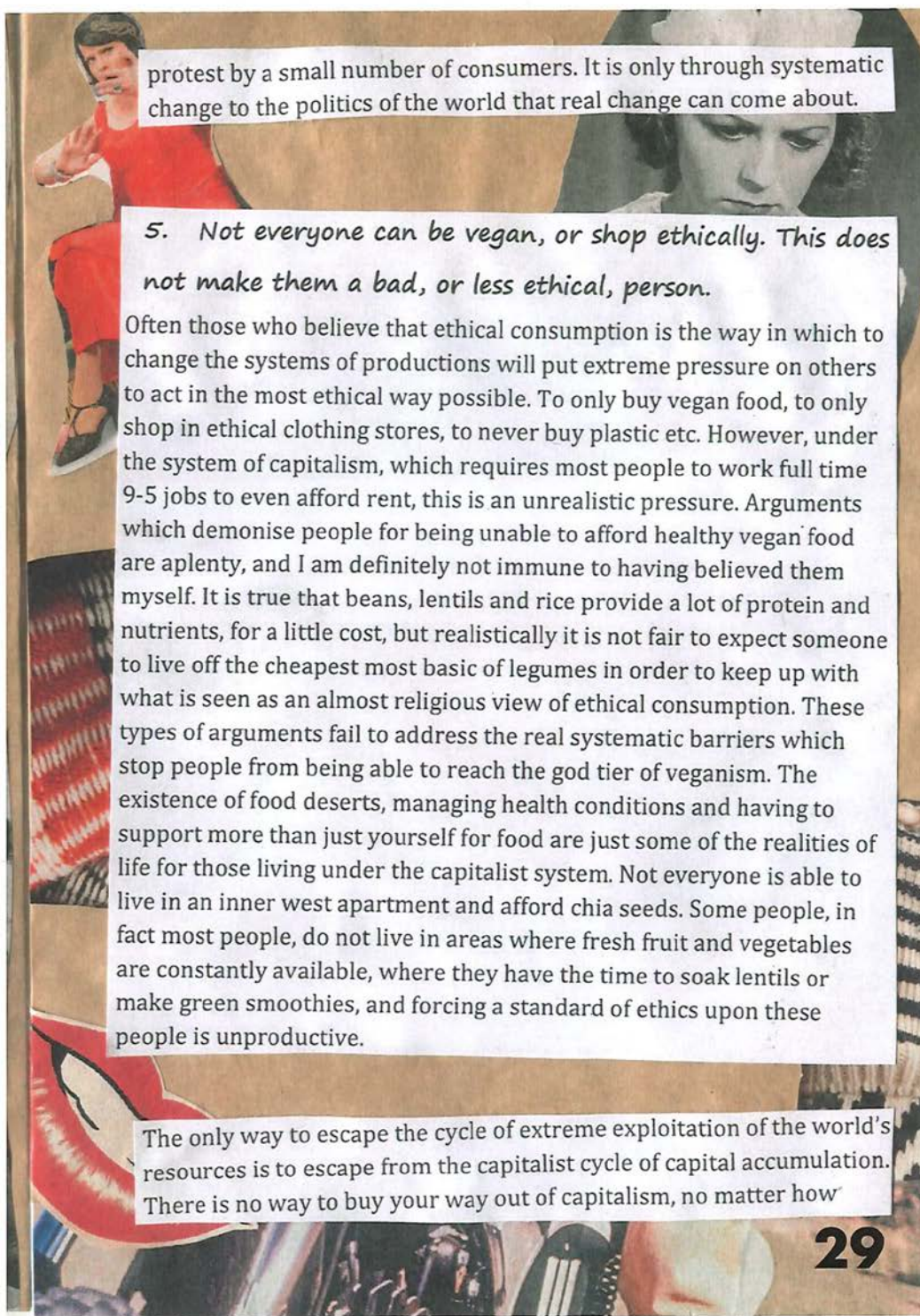
The problem of excessive waste cannot be solved through buying a keep cup – the issue runs much, much deeper. It is the systematic problem of capital accumulation under capitalism which forces unbridled consumption in order for the economy to stay afloat. New markets must



be constantly found and more resources must be constantly exploited. The result is mass production of things we do not need, in any way, but which are marketed to consumers, so that the cycle of capital can start over again. It is not market demand which causes excessive production as we have no real need for the majority of the worlds produced goods, but rather the necessity of capitalism to successfully market goods to consumers in order to obtain more capital. Did I think I needed a red iPhone before I saw an ad for a red iPhone? No. Do I now want a red iPhone? Yes, absolutely.

4. Real political change comes from mass movements, not the grocery aisle.

The view of individual ethical consumption as a means for change is an incredibly neoliberal one. Neoliberalism forces individualism in every aspect of life, and most especially in our working lives. The pressure to succeed individually in your own career is a universal feeling. The quest to make more money is an individual journey. Labour under capitalism has become alienating and often lacks rewards which are not economic. Therefore, it is easy to see why an individual would believe that it is through their own individual, ethical, actions that they would be able to change the systems which they have problems with. However when over 90% of human waste is produced by big businesses, even if the entire world cut down their individual waste production by half, we would only reduce the worlds waste by 5%. It is not an individual's ethical consumption that will fix this system – but through real political change. It is in mass movements which force states and economic systems to drastically change their workings. Using a keep cup everyday will not put a dint in the extreme global production of greenhouse gasses and waste compared to the output of coal mines and global plastic production. There is no way that, under the capitalist system, economically productive markets will collapse as a result of a small




protest by a small number of consumers. It is only through systematic change to the politics of the world that real change can come about.

5. Not everyone can be vegan, or shop ethically. This does not make them a bad, or less ethical, person.

Often those who believe that ethical consumption is the way in which to change the systems of productions will put extreme pressure on others to act in the most ethical way possible. To only buy vegan food, to only shop in ethical clothing stores, to never buy plastic etc. However, under the system of capitalism, which requires most people to work full time 9-5 jobs to even afford rent, this is an unrealistic pressure. Arguments which demonise people for being unable to afford healthy vegan food are aplenty, and I am definitely not immune to having believed them myself. It is true that beans, lentils and rice provide a lot of protein and nutrients, for a little cost, but realistically it is not fair to expect someone to live off the cheapest most basic of legumes in order to keep up with what is seen as an almost religious view of ethical consumption. These types of arguments fail to address the real systematic barriers which stop people from being able to reach the god tier of veganism. The existence of food deserts, managing health conditions and having to support more than just yourself for food are just some of the realities of life for those living under the capitalist system. Not everyone is able to live in an inner west apartment and afford chia seeds. Some people, in fact most people, do not live in areas where fresh fruit and vegetables are constantly available, where they have the time to soak lentils or make green smoothies, and forcing a standard of ethics upon these people is unproductive.

The only way to escape the cycle of extreme exploitation of the world's resources is to escape from the capitalist cycle of capital accumulation. There is no way to buy your way out of capitalism, no matter how



So, my advice to past me, who was a very passionate vegan, intent on changing the world through one vegan convert at a time - channel that passion into learning more about the systems of exploitation and oppression which exist because of capitalism, and start acting on changing them. Or destroying them, whatever works.

ethically you source your clothes, how often you use your keep cup or how many of your friends you get to go vegan - the economic system of capitalism is not going to change. And while it exists there is no way to escape the exploitation which is necessary for its existence.

Jazz lives on Eora land

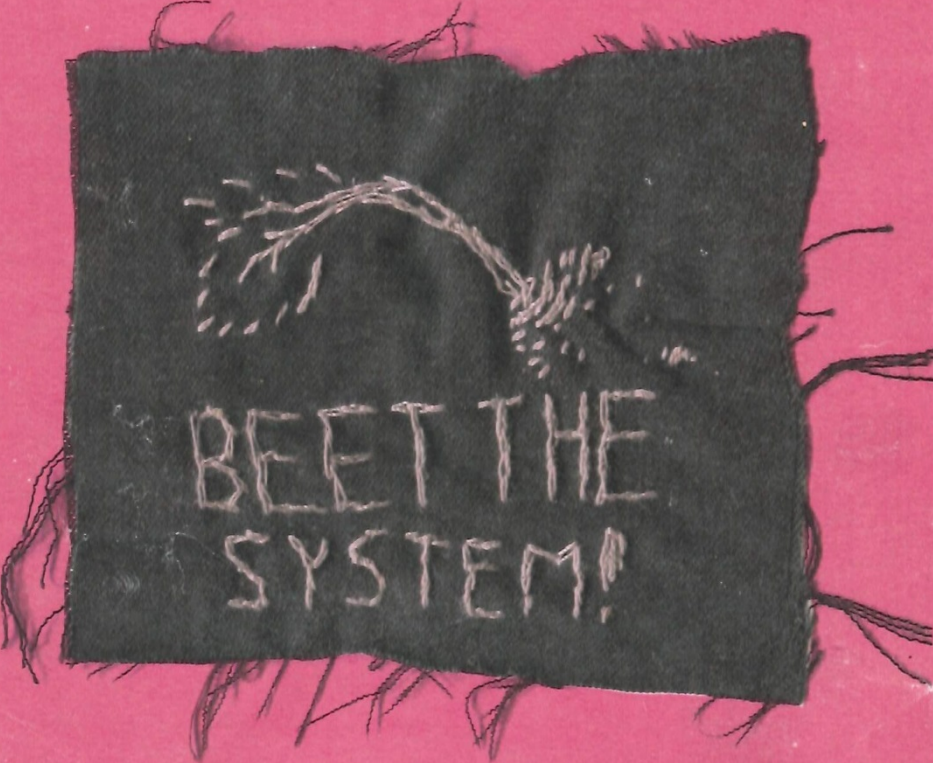
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a guest in this world,
i'm just staying the night.

but while being a guest,
i can surely do my best —
with each and every breath,
and every chance I get —
to fight; to never rest;
to do what is right.

a lot can be done
in just a single night.

NOTES



BEE THE
SYSTEM!