

February 26, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

I grew up in and live in Pasadena. From the age of two and a half years, Pasadena has been a nourishing place for my growth and spirit. The San Gabriel Mountains have been and continue to be a place of discovery and refuge for me. The native plants provide medicine, shade, food. I drink tea made from white sage leaves and wild buckwheat when I have a cold and immediately begin to feel stronger and better.

I began volunteering at the Hahamongna Cooperative Nursery a few months ago and as I planted native white sage, coastal sagebrush and wild buckwheat, I felt a connection to the land as I had never felt before. As I placed my hand on the soil, I felt the heartbeat of Mother Earth. As I placed the small plants into the earth, after softly patting the roots to awaken them, I felt that I was giving back to the Earth. For the first time, after being uprooted from my birthland of Vietnam due to war, I felt I was truly home here in Pasadena. So, I am here tonight because I believe in preserving and protecting our native environment and ecosystem and ensuring a future for my children and their children on this precious land. Our native plants give to us in abundance; we can truly learn from them. They can transform us and remind us what it truly means to be human on this earth. How to co-exist.

When I planted my first acorn tree in the Hahamongna Watershed Park, as I lifted a blanket of earth over the roots of the one foot tall tree, I knew that I was giving a gift of shade, food, joy to generations of plants, animals, and humans that would come after me.

When I am in the Hahamongna Watershed Park, I take a deep breath and take in the fragrance of the native plants around me, and I know that the plants belong here and I belong here. The Hahamongna Cooperative Nursery and the work they do makes me feel that we are working towards healing our land, the ecosystem, all the living things that depend on native plants. We need the plants that are endemic to this region and they need us to protect them and to help them thrive. The Hahamongna Cooperative Nursery, under the guidance and leadership of Nick, is a vital resource to the community. At the Hahamongna Nursery, we learn about the plants and trees around us. We learn about our Earth-home. We watch seeds sprout and grow. We become stewards of the Earth.

The other day, Nick showed us native wild sunflowers that had sprouted from seeds that volunteers had planted. I looked into the small pots of plants and saw them, two green wings ready to take flight.

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