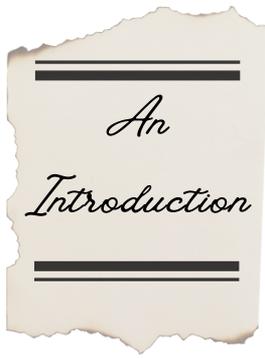


*Peek  
into the Present*

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*American Girls Pod Listener's Zine  
2nd Edition*





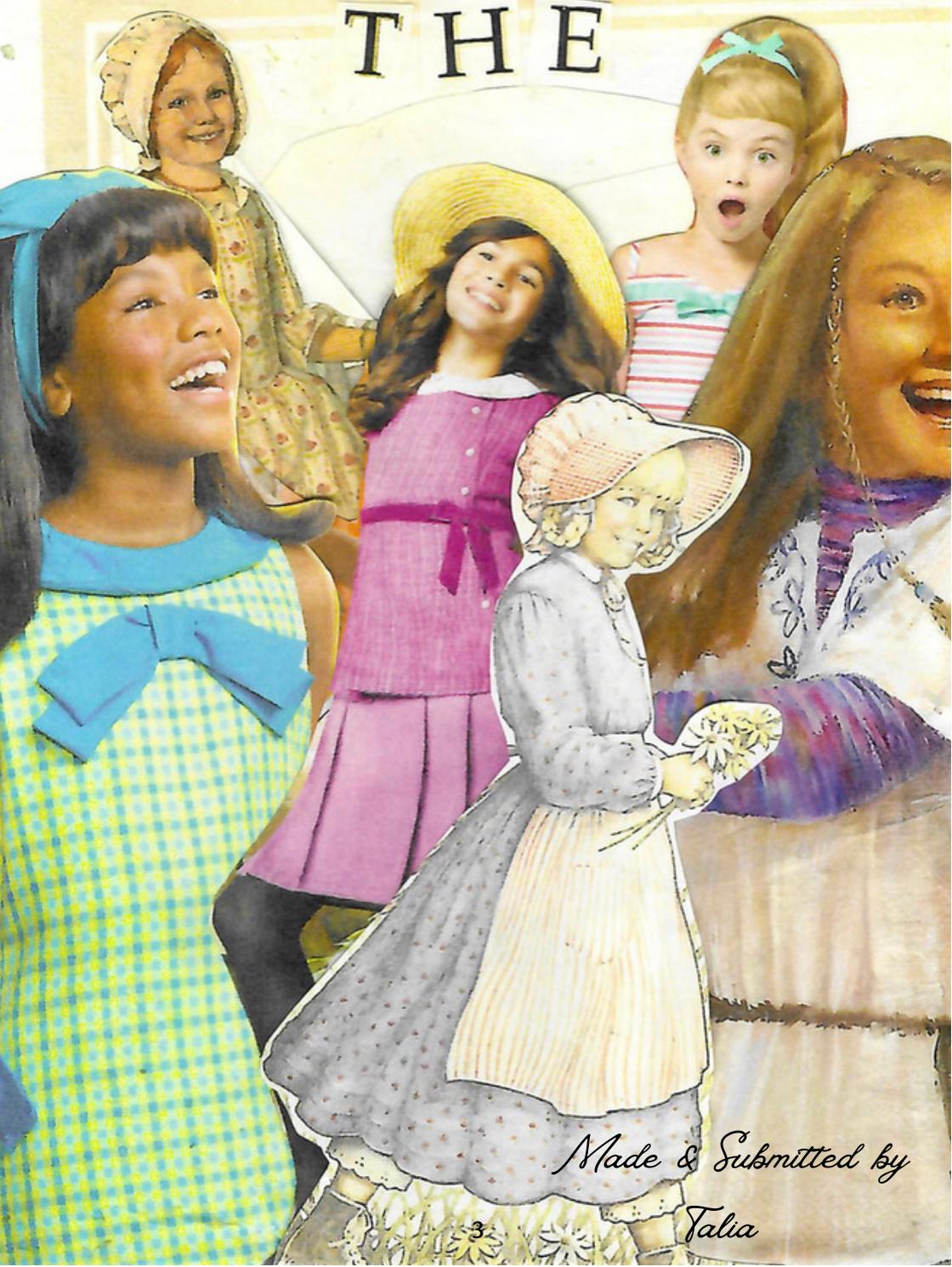
*An  
Introduction*

The intention of the second zine was to create a free, crowdsourced community zine on life, liberty, and what it's like to live right now.

We asked our listeners to send us snapshots of your life, musings on recent events, art, poetry, and whatever else you feel inspired to share. The endgame: crafting our very own Peek into the Present.

Our hope is this serves not only as an outlet, but helps us build a stronger community.

THE



*Made & Submitted by*

*Talia*

From Amanda  
& Her  
Daughter



"My daughter and I (the daughter of Cuban Refugees) are two American Girls about to teach English to another mother/daughter duo who are Afghan refugees. I wonder what Rebecca Rubin would think of us."





*To See  
the Elephants:  
Breastfeeding  
in 2022*

When my daughter was born in 2020, I had no notion that the world as I knew it would shut down for a pandemic eight weeks later. The isolation of mid-winter and new motherhood was made even more acute by locking in, without even the brief comforts of a friend's visit or a restaurant dinner. Two and a half years later I'm on maternity leave again, but with the relative luxuries of vaccines, summertime, and a willingness to seize opportunities that I previously might have allowed to pass me by. My son has just turned two months old, so my husband and I are packing him with us everywhere we go. On a recent family trip to the zoo, I found a perfect spot where I could stop to breastfeed. I urged my husband and daughter to continue on the walking path to see the elephants while I fed the baby—I would catch up with them afterwards.

Breastfeeding in public is new to me this year. There was no public space in 2020; in the five months that I breastfed my daughter, I never once had to negotiate easy-access nursing clothes with a breastfeeding cover and wiggly infant. While the logistics have become commonplace after only a few outings, I still marvel at the novelty of the task. In the spring of 2020, I had wept at the thought that I had no idea when my daughter would ever experience a normal day out and about, let alone the uniquely nurturing experience of nursing a baby as part of a public and private routine. Breastfeeding does not come naturally to me, but knowing what I do now—of friends' struggles to breastfeed, of formula shortages, of the exponentially increasing cost to be alive—more often than not, I send up a prayer of sorts in gratitude for the ability to do it at all.



Living in the suburbs of Washington, DC, our nearest zoo is the Smithsonian's National Zoo. It winds through the middle of Rock Creek Park and is big enough to accommodate thousands of daily visitors. The path to the elephant enclosure winds through a bit of mature trees. I had found a shaded bench on a particular bend where people were less likely to stop on their walk, so I felt I could comfortably take up space here as long as I needed without an audience. My son latched on blessedly quickly even with the cover over his face, and I turned my attention to scrolling social media on my phone so I wouldn't have to make eye contact with any passers-by.

After a few minutes a woman walking with her family told me, "You picked a better spot than I did!"

I looked up at her and said, "The sun?"

"It's brutal," she confirmed.

I laughed in response. It was almost 90 degrees out at noon. A wet patch spread behind me where my sweat seeped into the wooden bench.

She and her family kept walking. For a couple of minutes my baby and I were alone. Occasionally a mosquito bothered us. I swatted the insects away, suddenly alert to the idea that I could not allow my son to be bitten—who knew what kind of diseases the insects might spread to him? I batted two mosquitos away from his legs, which were exposed from beneath the nursing cover.

"I'm saving you," I said out loud.

No one has ever said anything to me about nursing in public. I tend to pick out-of-the-way seats and limit my time doing it, but every time I nurse my baby the thought crosses my mind that I might be upsetting a member of the public. What if someone found the act disgusting, or inappropriate for the venue? What if someone comes up to say something to me about it? I wonder briefly, before doing it anyway.



One week before I went to the zoo, the PUMP Act failed to pass in the U.S. Senate, which would have further protected millions of women's rights to pump and safely store breastmilk at work. How could someone reasonably deny the safe production of food for a baby? How could someone reasonably deny routine breaks for anybody? Store shelves meant for baby formula remain bare as a shortage begun months ago rages on. "Just breastfeed," say many to the women struggling to feed their babies. But when are they meant to do that? The American Academy of Pediatrics has, at the same time, issued an update to their official recommendations, that women should nurse exclusively for a baby's first six months, and then include solids along with continued breastfeeding for the next six months, and then continue breastfeeding alongside a mostly-solids diet for the baby's second year "or beyond." Current hospital policies around the country vary, but in some cases some hospitals may suggest separating a COVID-positive mother from her newborn infant. All of this, too, as the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*... the concurring political and economic activity seems to affect women and mothers so particularly intensely at this moment in time that I do not have the luxury of looking away from it.

But, as my lactation consultant has advised me, my own stress can reduce my milk output. So I also can't engage to the point of emotionality. When breastfeeding, I separate from the crowd, and sometimes from myself, and try to breathe without thought through this life-giving act.

When I had exhausted my Twitter reading during the feeding session, I idly flipped to the camera app on my phone and switched to the rear-facing camera. I looked at the selfie and instantly critiqued my appearance, but I saved the photo anyway. I wanted to document this moment. Just a little while ago I had crouched next to my daughter for ten minutes, watching her interact with sea lions on the other side of a glass wall, happily capturing hi-res photos of her and the animals in picturesque exploration. Perspiring on a park bench, with one hand holding my twelve-pound son to my breast beneath a muslin blanket, felt like the opposite, but it was equally satisfying to me to capture. I did this, it said to me. I will want to have done this, even if I don't think I want it now.

Submitted & Written by Erin

N AMERICAN  
~ BOOK ONE

18 64

American

American

Made & Submitted by  
Talia

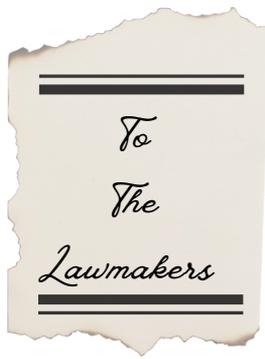


*A Snapshot  
from a  
Protest*



“A snapshot of life lately. My six year old daughter [Violet] attending her first protest with her homemade sign.”

-@\_erfl



You cast your thoughts and prayers  
into the graves of our children.  
Withered as soon as the flowers,  
as soon out of sight and touch.  
My people don't use flowers.

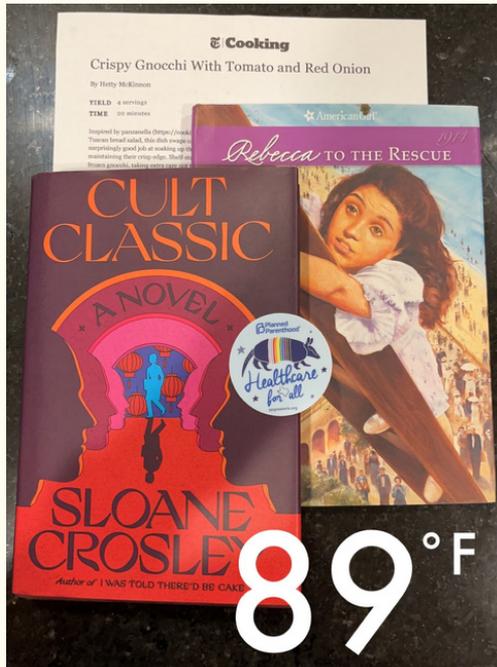
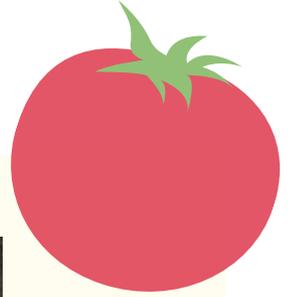
How many parents  
pause each night over beds made empty?

Don't bring your flowers  
to our children's graves.  
Don't bring your speeches.  
Bring the cold, enduring stones of  
covenant.  
Bring laws.  
Pile them up,  
until there are enough.  
They will never be enough.  
Make a marker  
that will endure.

Make of their memories,  
a blessing.  
Not a precedent.  
-May 24, 2022. After Texas.

Submitted by Vera Broekhuysen

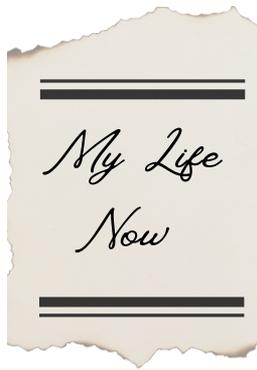
What Life  
Is Like  
Right Now



"What it's like to live right now- it's super hot so reading a ton, not cooking much, and fighting for repro rights"

-Joelle





Your project is compelling to me because years ago I would have been decked out in red, white, and blue eating apple pie and hating anyone who dared to say anything bad about the US. My attitude and the message below is much darker.

I joined the Air Force in 2006 as an officer but like y'all I was in HS during 9/11 and I was very much shaped by what I thought was a duty to serve. I didn't fully understand at the time that coming from a single parent low income family that my only path to college was through committing to the military.

Since the election of DJT, I've had a serious reckoning with what it means to serve and the oath I've taken to support and defend against all enemies foreign and domestic. The oath was always serious to me but that election highlighted that even though I honored it, elected officials did not.

I can't put into words how difficult it is to put on a uniform every day knowing that our rights have been eliminated. It's the nature of the military to have lost friends and to have missed out on holidays, birthdays, weddings etc. I just wonder now what was all that loss for.

Submitted by Christina

# How I Spend My Time



## HOW I SPEND MY TIME



- SLEEPING
- EATING
- SWIMMING
- TRYING TO GET MY BRAIN TO WORK
- ACTUALLY WORKING
- KNITTING WHILE WATCHING MURDER SHE WROTE
- BEING JEALOUS OF MY CAT BECAUSE SHE HAS NO JOB AND NO IDEA WHAT SCOTUS IS

ALH

Alyssa July '22



Cross-Country Move



Submitted by Leslie

# PODCAST



g your v  
ce your l  
You Wi  
ALIZE, ex  
sed by P  
dcraft  
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*Made & Submitted by  
Talia*



*Red  
Flags*

The house was from 1740, and newly ours. My Texan husband, and me, a Jersey girl with roots in the South, were headed to a tiny New England state in the winter of 2019, ready to restore this rust-red, shingled beauty of a former Revolutionary War tavern set on a gentle hill. Armed with matching Carhartt coveralls and a mass of power tools, we dreamed of running a tea room in the main barn, hosting intimate academic conferences, and candlelit holiday parties scented by pine branches, fires glowing in the enormous kitchen hearth against the wide floorboards studded with rose-head nails. To us, hard workers who don't mind sweat and dirt, it was all gloriously possible.

We noticed it as soon as the first phase of renovations were complete and we moved in. The lane that curved around our property was busy – cars and trucks constantly passed, sometimes careening dangerously around the bend. At first, the road noise was comforting. Having moved from a condo across the Key Bridge from Washington, D.C., it made us feel that our new rural community was just as energetic and dynamic. While cleaning up the overgrown herb garden or burning brush, we would wave to passersby excitedly, our rough gloved hands smelling like tangles of rosemary and the sharp green sting of buckthorn. And then, it started.

The first was a pickup truck with a “Don’t Tread on Me” flag, its minacious rattlesnake flapping behind the bed on a pole. It accelerated past us, the driver staring. Another pickup blazed by, trailing a flag with the name of the 45th president, exhaust belching. They’d come when we were painting the outbuildings or clearing choking vines from the copse of blueberry bushes. They’d come when we were inside, eating dinner in the keeping room we painted Calke Green. We could see them from the kitchen, flags whipping against our willows and cherry trees. Others came and parked across the street at the trailhead of the preserved forest that protected our viewshed and local ecosystem – we chose the house because of this. On Sunday walks we’d see trucks tattooed with runic symbols, collections of numbers, stickers with spread eagles. While making soup one night, I screamed. My husband found me gesturing toward the window at a truck hoisting a bed sheet-sized Confederate flag.

They started yelling obscenities when he wasn’t around, when I was alone clearing dead leaves from the budding irises near our fence line. I was writing at my desk when I saw a driver slow down and stick his arm out the window to present his middle finger. Maybe it was because we reported the ATV gangs that tore through the delicate pine forest at all hours of the night to the environmental police, maybe it was because of the Virginia tags on my car. Did they know how we voted? I always wore a baseball hat outside – my mind reeled as I felt pressed in on every side, periphery narrowing, breath shallow.

Months later, we were back in Virginia, panting through surgical masks as we powered boxes into the small apartment rental we’d have for a year until the pandemic subsided and we regrouped. I choose to remember the house now, painted in fresh snow, twilight glowing rose and lavender, the garden never finished.

Submitted by Dr. Cynthia E. Chin

*The New  
Care  
& Keeping  
of You*

FROM "ACNE" - The Care and Keeping of YOU

Your body combines with  
family history  
if you feel alone in time.

While unavoidable,  
break out face daily  
a mild dirt on your fingers,  
the flames, a permanent scar

Some relief-care - helps,  
can irritate  
sensitive skin.

A blackout poem done from a page in the Care and Keeping of You by Sienna.

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# Daily Thoughts

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Climate change. Late stage capitalism. Roe v. Wade. American oligarchs. HGTV. Misguided Boomers bemoaning the declining birthrate. The wage gap. Mitch McConnell. Joe Manchin. Joe Biden. Under eye circles. The cult of fitness. The Handmaid's Tale. The Purge. The Hunger Games. Ukraine. Yemen. Syria. Sudan. Fast fashion made by Uyghur slave labor. Children having children. Critical race theory. YOLO. LMAO. YAK. Spider veins & migraines. Billionaires flying dick rockets. Future humans with fish gills in a Mad Max world. Weighted blankets of nostalgia. Now & Then, Judge Judy. Manah. Muckster Muckabees. Decimation of the honeybees. Rusty social skills and small pockets of joy. Zoom meeting Zombies, client feedback, restless office chairs syndrome. Repressed religious upbringing & the myth of white America. Combat Rock & Brain Stew. Lies we tell ourselves and each other. Parallel paralysis. Midterm elections. Natural selection. Limosine liberals & Nancy Pelosi's wine cave. Uvalde. The gun lobby. Half mast, half assed. Systemic racism, sexism, bootstrapism. Tar evasion, class warfare, the pen is mightier than... (etc.)

Submitted by Grace

*Baby  
Dolls*



Submitted By Meghan

What's it like to be an American Girl  
in this moment?

The Problem - Amanda Shires ft. Jason Isbell

White Man's World - Jason Isbell & the 400 Unit

What've I Done to Help - Jason Isbell & the 400

Gloryland - Old Crow Medicine Show

Cynicism - Nana Grizol

Peace of Mind - Boston

Anxiety - Jason Isbell & the 400 Unit

Stress Dreams - Green Sky Bluegrass

Watch It Fall - Billy Strings

So Afraid - Janelle Monáe

Walk Through Fire - Yola

Save the Country - Laura Nyro

Paradise - John Prine

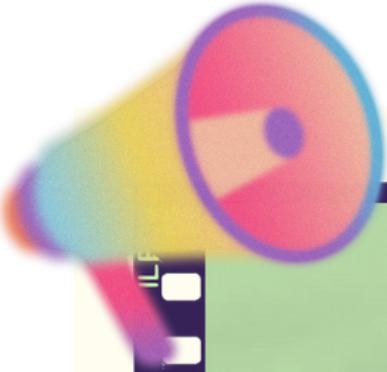
Americans - Janelle Monáe

Something to Love - Jason Isbell & the 400 Unit



Click  
Here!

Julie  
Protests



REFORM  
REVOLT  
REPEAT



Samantha's eyes were wide as good at imagining castles and sailing ships, but she had never imagined cold. "You mean your parents that's awful!"

"Oh, no. It's better here. It really. "The Rylands pay my family

GIRL

Girl®

GIRL

GIRL



As soon as she had been made for the good fairies were sent out for parts of the kingdom be godmothers to the King ordered a golden plate and a silver for each of the good fa- unfortunately—and now how it happened the invitations were a mistake was

# AN AMERICAN GIRL

~ BOOK ONE ~

work of the wicked Queen. "Remember," he said to the other dwarfs, "there is no spell that cannot be broken." Made & Submitted by Talia The other dwarfs stopped crying and looked at Snow hopefully.



We would like to thank all of our listeners for their submissions and for taking the time to share their thoughts with us! We understand that it takes a lot to be vulnerable or share a bit of your life with the world. We are so lucky to have such an incredible community of people around us.