Hudson Ling

Recognizing the Gravity of California's Drought

As a California native currently living in the Midwest, I constantly receive snarky

comments about growing up in a drought. Midwesterners often make jokes such as, "enjoy your

shower here while you actually have water, Cali boy!" Even though I know my home state is

currently losing a battle with Mother Nature, I find these jokes funny. But often times many

Californians including myself from certain areas don't even recognize that we're in a drought.

Often referred to as the "breadbasket of the world," California continues to suffer the

worst drought in the state's history. But why should other Americans besides Californians be

concerned? When we recognize that California is considered the 5th largest supply of food in the

world, many Americans might worry about the future of the world's agriculture and ecosystem.[1]

Farmers cannot grow crops effectively, and policymakers struggle to cap and distribute

California's scarce water supply. The drought will force industries to close or leave the United

States, destroying opportunities for poorer Californians and exacerbating a growing class divide.

At the root of this issue I see a widening gap between those who actively recognize the

drought's gravity and those who overlook the issue and make little or no effort to change.

Unfortunately, I must admit that for a while I'd identify myself with the latter category of

Californians, but recently I've aimed to monitor my water usage.

I am from Pacific Palisades, California, and its name says it all. It is quite literally an

affluent, mainly Caucasian town encompassed by a palisade of rock adjacent to the Pacific

Ocean. Pacific Palisades boasts rich flora and fauna, which depend on water for life and beauty.

In spite of this, there exist hardly any public awareness or stipulations in the Palisades to support

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[1] "California Agriculture Facts Are Found at Keep California Farming.com." Keep California Farming RSS2. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

the water crisis. People host extravagant, Gatsby-esque pool and water parties, and use hundreds of thousands of gallons of water to maintain their lawns as if there were no drought at all. I see this same behavior in almost every neighboring city in Southern California.
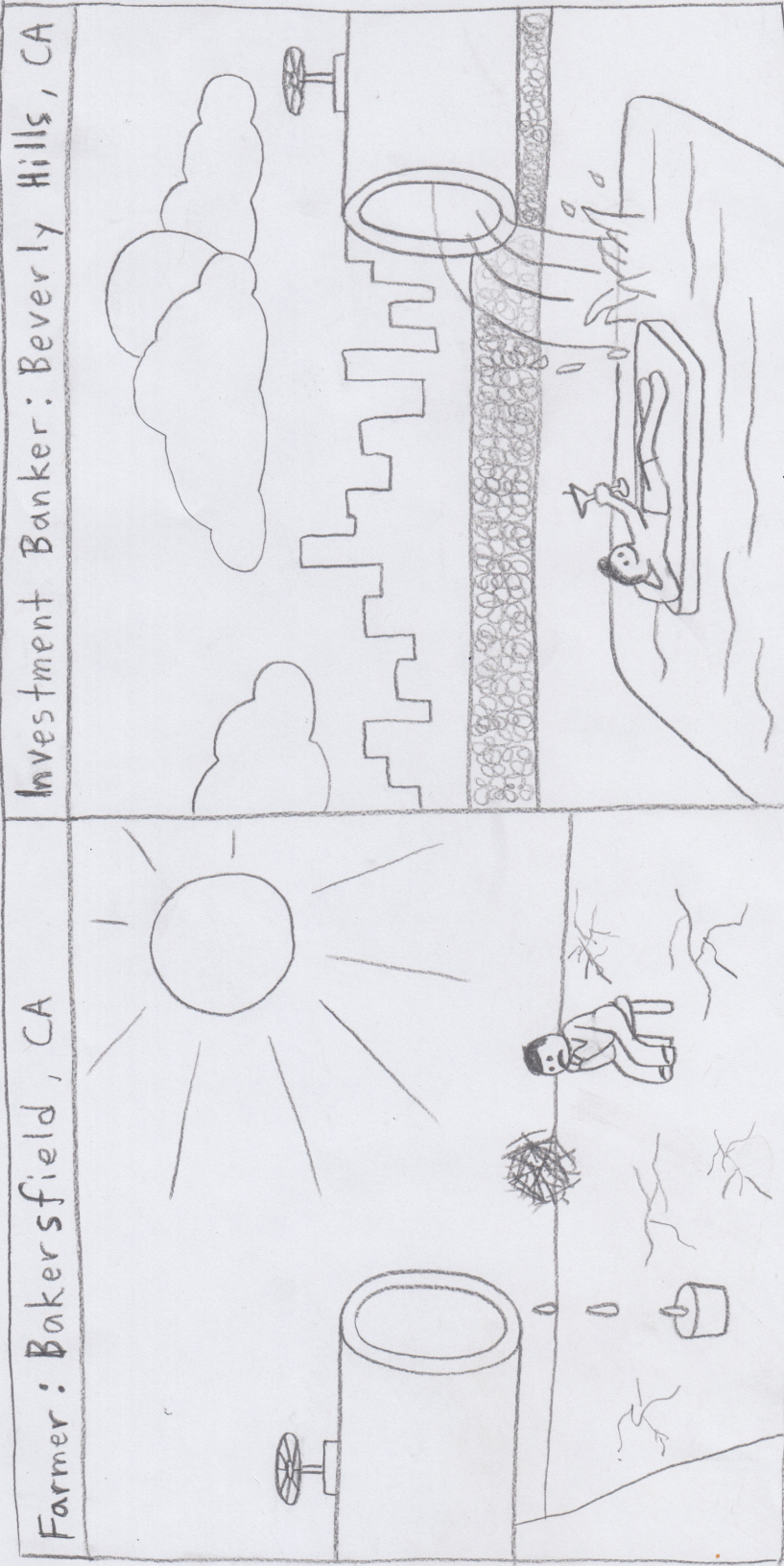
The issue appears only actively combatted in the rural, agricultural parts of California. For example, over the summer I witnessed protests and propaganda about water in Davis, California, a city near a few of the state's most prosperous farms. California is a massive state that produces 80% of America's produce. However, it is important that we recognize that only a small portion of California is dedicated to agriculture, as it contributes less than 4% of all the farms in United States.[2]

The cartoon I've drawn below illustrates the irony that I see on a daily basis, growing up in California during drought's record conditions. It juxtaposes the access to and usage of water among different demographics and socioeconomic classes. The man on the right best depicts people I encounter on a daily basis; in fact, it depicts my friends, family, and even myself at times. All Californians must recognize the brutal reality of the farmer in cartoon.

I don't aim to criticize certain behaviors associated with the drought, but rather I want Californians to become more aware of water's scarcity and its value to our country and world as a whole. Fortunately, although solutions haven't been very successful domestically, engineers and policymakers recently traveled to the deserts of Israel to model their methods and mechanisms to deal with dry climate and drought.[3]. If this progress continues, there may be hope for my home state. But for now, let's make every single drop of water count to save the Golden State that our world's agricultural system depends on.

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[2] "California Farm Facts." California Farm Facts. Web. 23 Mar. 2016.

[3] "Solutions to California Water Crisis Already at Work Abroad." NBC Bay Area. NBCUniversal Media. Web. 25 Mar. 2016.

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POLSCI 101 COMMENTARY
Cartoon Supplement

Farmer: Bakersfield, CA

Investment Banker: Beverly Hills, CA

~ California Water Crisis ~