A photograph of a group of hikers on a vast, snow-covered mountain slope. In the background, there are dark, jagged mountain peaks under a clear blue sky. The hikers are wearing winter gear, including backpacks and hats. The scene is desolate and cold.

In Western Iceland, a
group of just over 100
people are hiking up a
volcano. The wind is
cold and icy, the trek
arduous.

Some of them are
weeping.

All of them are somber.

It is a funeral procession. The Ok glacier, pronounced dead by glaciologist Oddur Sigurosson in 2014, is honored with a memorial service by these climate-conscious climbers. Poems are read, pictures are taken, promises are made, tears are shed. A plaque is installed on a rock that should be buried under ice. It reads:

A letter to the future

Ok is the first Icelandic glacier to
lose its status as a glacier.

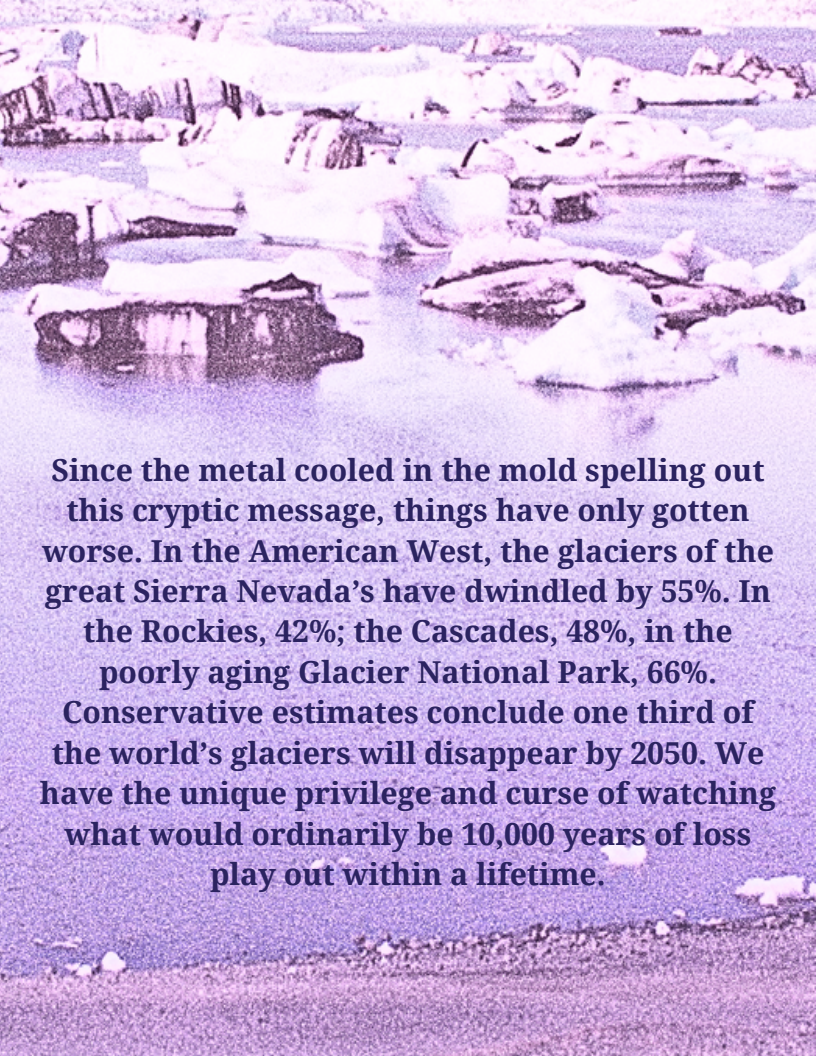
In the next 200 years all our glaciers
are expected to follow the same path.

This monument is to acknowledge
that we know what is happening and
what needs to be done.

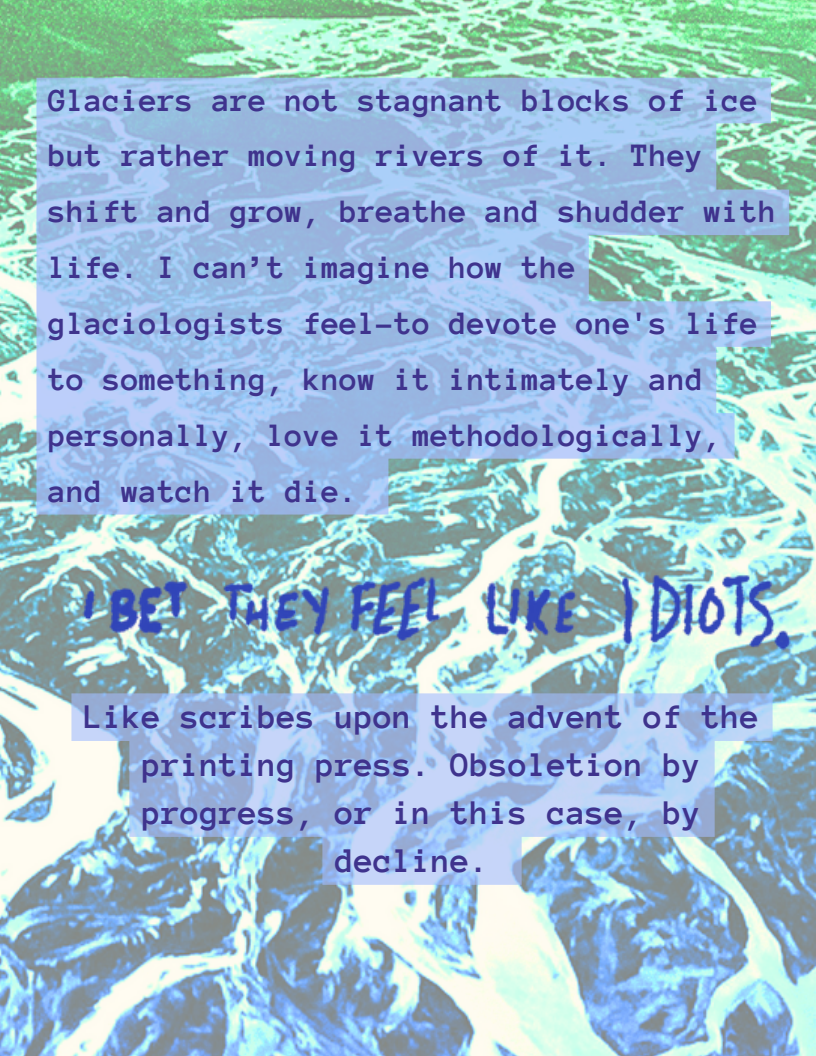
Only you know if we did it.

August 2019

415ppm CO₂



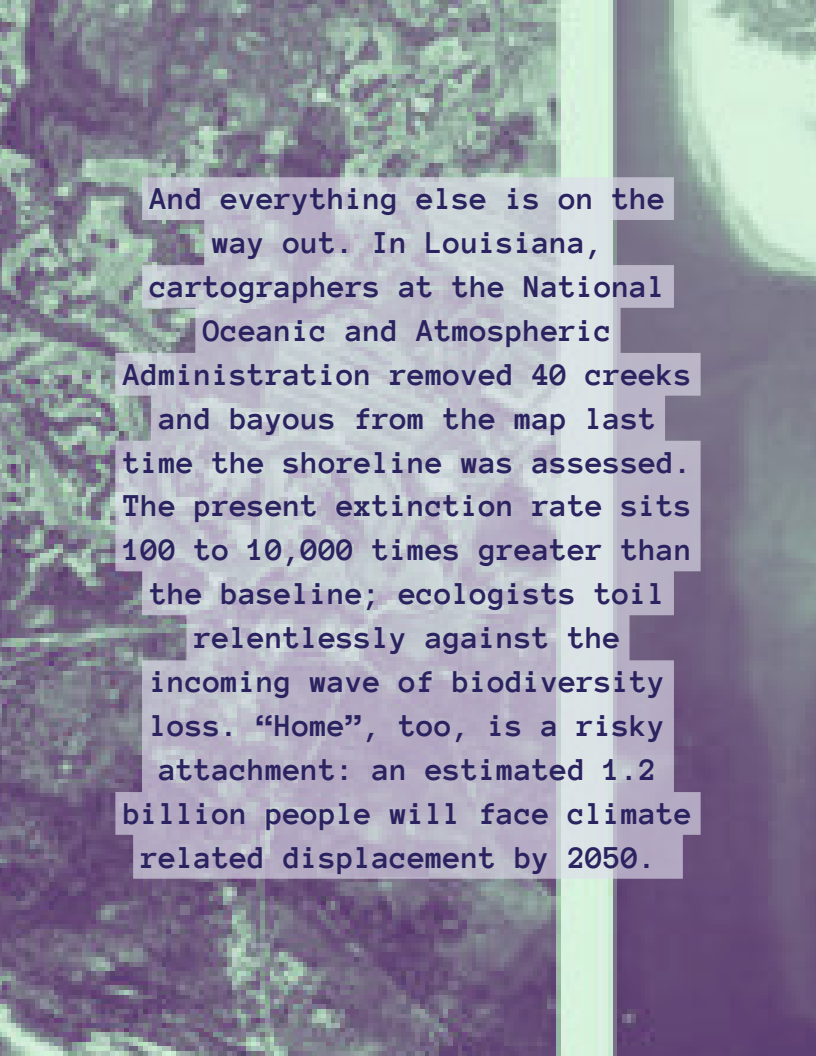
Since the metal cooled in the mold spelling out this cryptic message, things have only gotten worse. In the American West, the glaciers of the great Sierra Nevada's have dwindled by 55%. In the Rockies, 42%; the Cascades, 48%, in the poorly aging Glacier National Park, 66%. Conservative estimates conclude one third of the world's glaciers will disappear by 2050. We have the unique privilege and curse of watching what would ordinarily be 10,000 years of loss play out within a lifetime.



Glaciers are not stagnant blocks of ice but rather moving rivers of it. They shift and grow, breathe and shudder with life. I can't imagine how the glaciologists feel—to devote one's life to something, know it intimately and personally, love it methodologically, and watch it die.

I BET THEY FEEL LIKE IDIOTS.

Like scribes upon the advent of the printing press. Obsolescence by progress, or in this case, by decline.

An aerial photograph of a wetland landscape, likely a delta or marsh area. A prominent, winding waterway or canal cuts through the land, which is covered in dense, green vegetation. The waterway starts from the top left and curves towards the bottom right. The surrounding land is a mix of dark green and brownish-green, indicating different types of vegetation or perhaps some areas of erosion or dryness. The overall scene is a complex, organic pattern of land and water.

And everything else is on the way out. In Louisiana, cartographers at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration removed 40 creeks and bayous from the map last time the shoreline was assessed. The present extinction rate sits 100 to 10,000 times greater than the baseline; ecologists toil relentlessly against the incoming wave of biodiversity loss. “Home”, too, is a risky attachment: an estimated 1.2 billion people will face climate related displacement by 2050.

I AM JEALOUS
OF GEOLOGISTS.

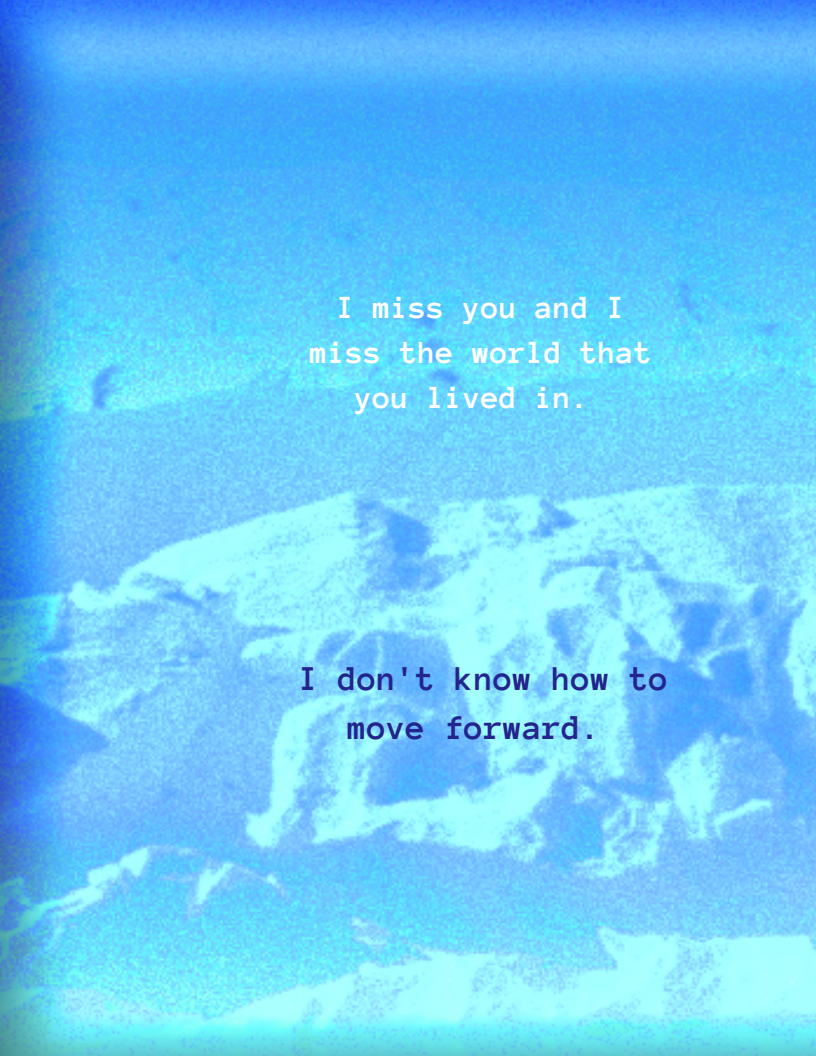
Devotees to mountains and trenches, everything around them formed 5 million years ago and will be around for the next 100. To cut into the Earth and not see graves or fossils but simply history; to know something that exists so slowly and dependably that it can't hurt you; to love something that moves but never dies.



BUT I AM NOT A
GEOLOGIST, OR A ROCK.




SO ALL I FEEL
IS LOSS.



I miss you and I
miss the world that
you lived in.

I don't know how to
move forward.

A black and white photograph of a jagged, snow-covered mountain peak. The mountain's surface is heavily textured with snowdrifts and deep crevasses. The sky above is a uniform, light gray, suggesting an overcast day. The overall mood is one of isolation and the harshness of a high-altitude environment.

Forward is the only way
we can go.