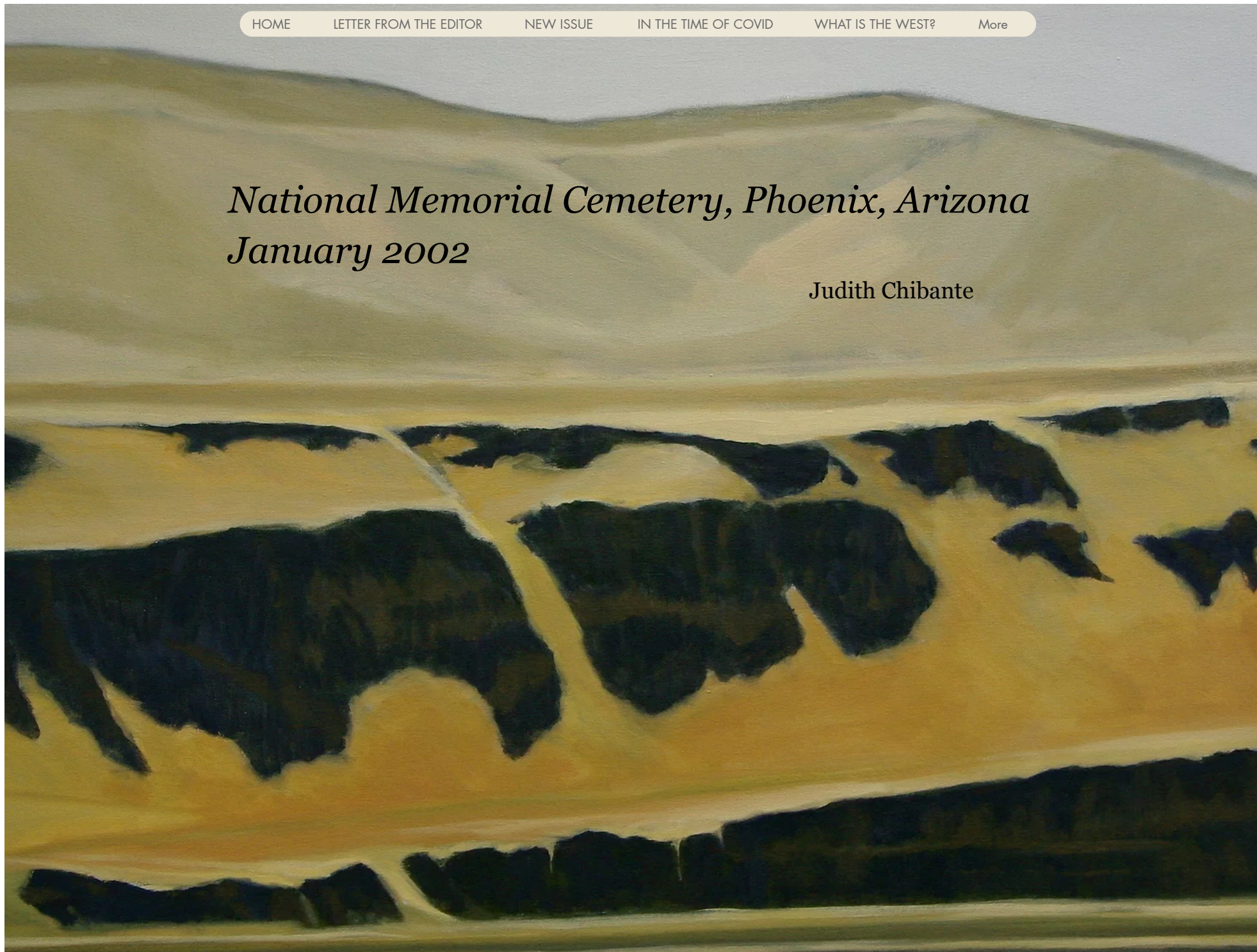


*National Memorial Cemetery, Phoenix, Arizona  
January 2002*

Judith Chibante





Kim Matthews Wheaton  
*Cliffs Along the Columbia*

## National Memorial Cemetery, Phoenix, Arizona January 2002

At graveside, a lone bagpipe  
sings mourning into the desert air.  
I wonder that amazing grace can be found here  
where your coffin lies under a leaden sky. Too late  
I realize I forgot to bring flowers. Somewhere  
it must be common knowledge  
that the divorced bring flowers, still,  
to help bury the once-beloved.  
When the color guard doesn't show--  
so many vets dying every week,  
services overbooked (we learn later)--  
I'm the one who stands, who gives  
an improvised eulogy, words  
that drift over flesh-colored sand,  
into the musk of crushed sage.  
How many leavings were there between us?  
First trust, then spirit, finally, body.  
Yucca and ocotillos stand among the flat markers of dead.  
I feel the barren sun on my face.  
And is that you in the wind,  
haunting even my hair?



Judith Chibante is a native of the San Joaquin Valley of California and lives in Fresno. Her poems have appeared in *Survivors' Review*, *Song of the San Joaquin*, *Tule Review*, and three anthologies of the Ina Coolbrith Circle of the Bay Area. Her first chapbook, *Radio In the Night*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2017. She has taught poetry for seventh-graders and high schoolers, and has edited a volume of poetry for teachers.



