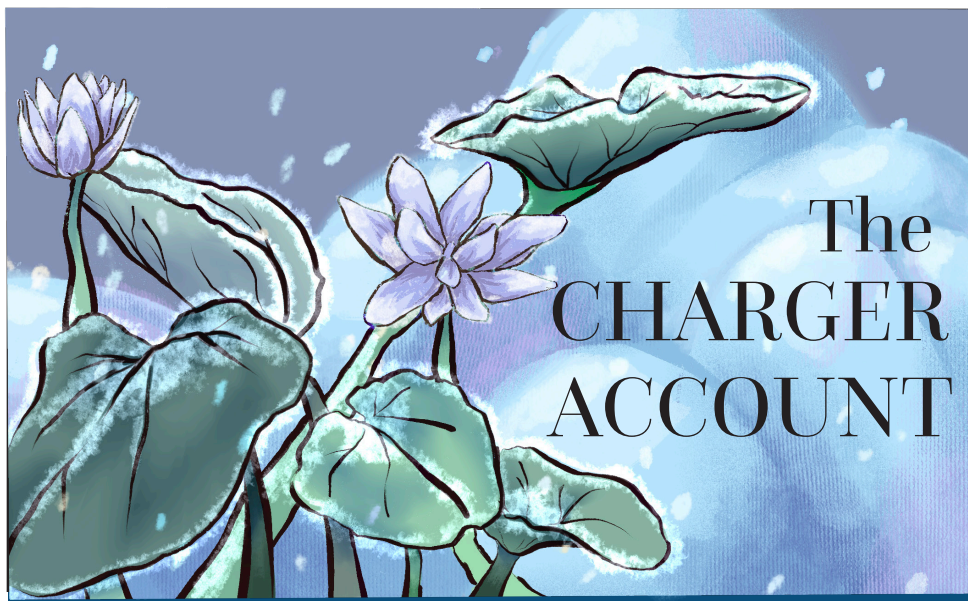

# The CHARGER ACCOUNT

Vol. V No. 3

Thursday, December 14, 2023
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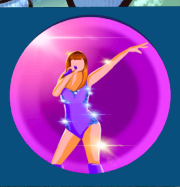

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Magical media's spellbinding allure on page **14**

JANE HONG ART

DESIGN BY LAUREN WILSON

HARRY KANG ART

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# SCHOOL NEWS

DESIGN BY ANTARA GANGWAL

## Sacred Supplies: Spreading holiday spirit

**Amie Ahn and Ariel Lee**

*Staff Writers*

Just in time for the holiday season, the school partnered with Sacred Heart Community Service (SHCS) to host a donation drive, aiming to aid those living in poverty. The drive provided students with the opportunity to give back to the community, fostering joy and holiday spirit.

Founded in 1964, SHCS is a non-profit organization located in San Jose whose mission is to build a poverty-free community. The organization works to uphold the right to sufficient food, clothing, housing, education, health care and personal safety for all. Through community organizing and volunteer programs such as an Urban Gardening project and a racial justice initiative, SHCS provides community members with the opportunities and resources to help those in need. One such opportunity is hosting donation drives with schools in the local community.

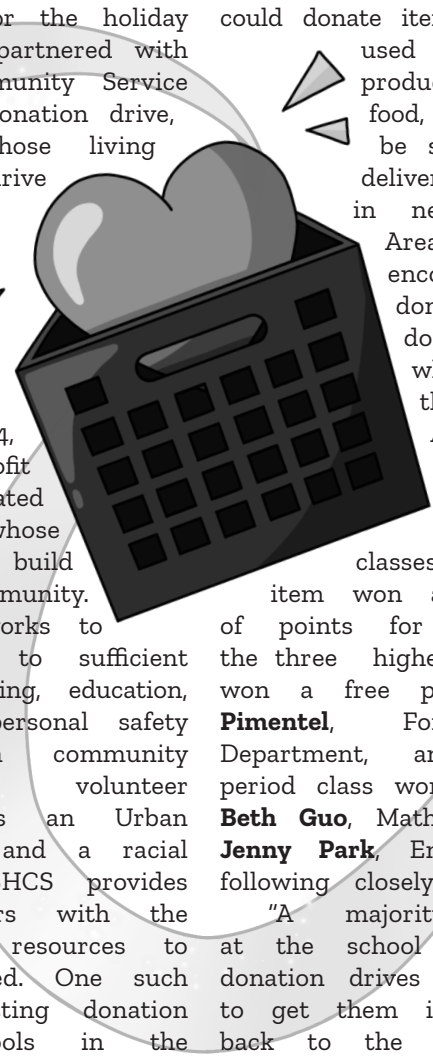
From Nov. 6 to Dec. 1, the school hosted its "Sacred Supplies" donation drive in partnership with SHCS. Students could donate items such as gently used clothing, hygiene products and canned food, which would then be sent to SCHS and delivered to families in need in the Bay Area community. To encourage students to donate, ASB offered donuts to those who donated during the first week. Additionally, this fundraiser was a competition for all second-period classes—each donated item won a certain number of points for the class, and the three highest-scoring classes won a free pizza party. **Heidi Pimentel**, Foreign Language Department, and her second-period class won first place, with **Beth Guo**, Math Department, and **Jenny Park**, English Department, following closely after.

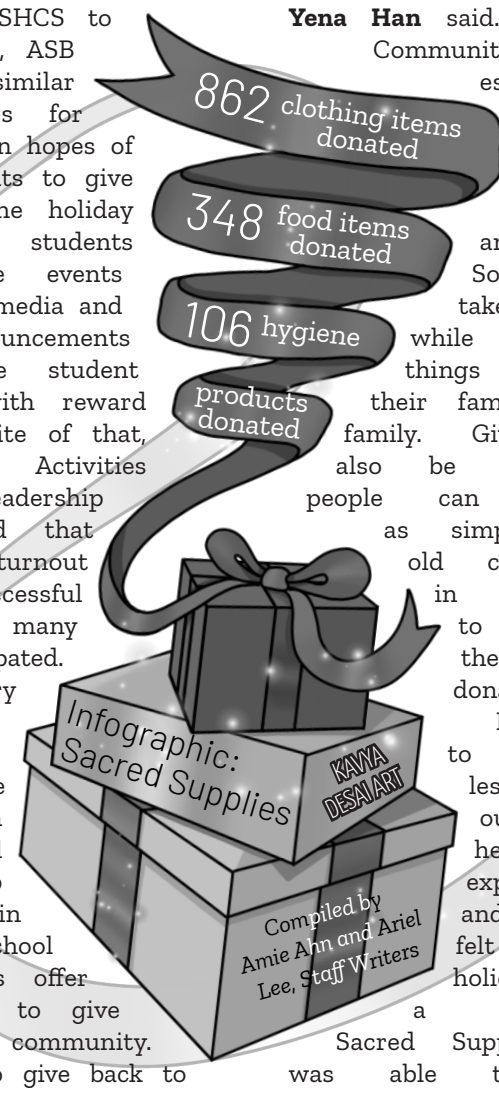
"A majority of students at the school are well-off, so donation drives are a great way to get them involved in giving back to the community. Every single donation counts and has the power to make an impact, as one student can influence another, creating a ripple effect," Guo said.

Although this was only the school's second year in a row working with SHCS to host this drive, ASB has hosted similar donation drives for over 20 years in hopes of teaching students to give back during the holiday season. ASB students promote these events through social media and weekly announcements and encourage student participation with reward systems. In spite of that, **Meg Walsh**, Activities Director and Leadership Advisor, stated that this year's turnout was not as successful because not many students participated.

"It is very important to give back during the holiday season to spread joy and help families in need. Thus, school donation drives offer an easy way to give back to the community. Another way to give back to the community is by volunteering during the holiday season; I always feel happy and grateful when volunteering," Freshman **Yena Han** said.

Community service is especially important during the holiday season, a time of perpetual hope and gift-giving. Some parents may take up volunteering while looking for things to do with their families or extended family. Giving back can also be a small effort; people can do something as simple as donating old clothes that are in good condition to the people in their community or donating food. Providing materials to those who are less fortunate in our community helps everyone experience the joy and love that is felt during the holiday seasons. As a result, through Sacred Supplies, the school was able to spread the seasonal cheer and spread joy this holiday season.






## Dodging the stress of school in dodgeball duels

**Niru Shivakumar**

*Staff Writer*

A lively battle takes place outside of classrooms, taking students' minds off their academic stress: the school's annual dodgeball competition. The school is filled with anticipation as students from all grades come together in the gymnasium, usually used for school sports and physical education, which has been transformed into a competitive arena where strategy, agility and teamwork come together in a vibrant display of energy and excitement.

The dodgeball tournament, a well-established tradition, has been a recurrent and beloved school event. Held in the gymnasium, students eagerly packed the bleachers to witness the exhilarating games unfold. The matches not only held the entire school's attention but also generated a palpable sense of suspense as students speculated on which teams would emerge victorious and advance to the next round. Conveniently scheduled during lunchtime, the matches provided an inclusive opportunity for every student to partake in the excitement.

"A lot of students came to watch their friends and had a lot of fun. Many people participated and wore cool costumes to represent their team. Also, many more kids participated this year than last year, after looking back at the videos," Sophomore **Ashley Vu**, a coordinator of the tournament, said.

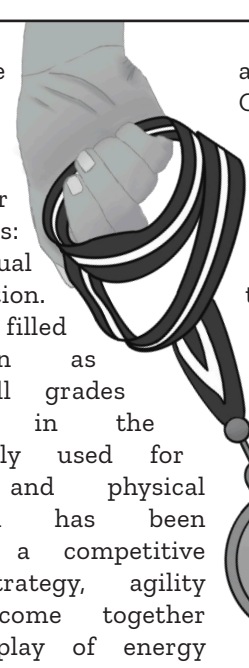
Students had to sign up by submitting a form to ASB, which was first come, first serve, and the teams were made up of five players and one alternate. Each game had three rounds and the team that won the majority of those rounds would advance to the next round. Sophomore **Bella Luu**, an emcee of the tournament, explained that music and emcees were included to ensure the students still had fun, even if they felt that the rules were placing restrictions on them during the game. Emcees also commented on the matches to help the crowd understand what was going on.

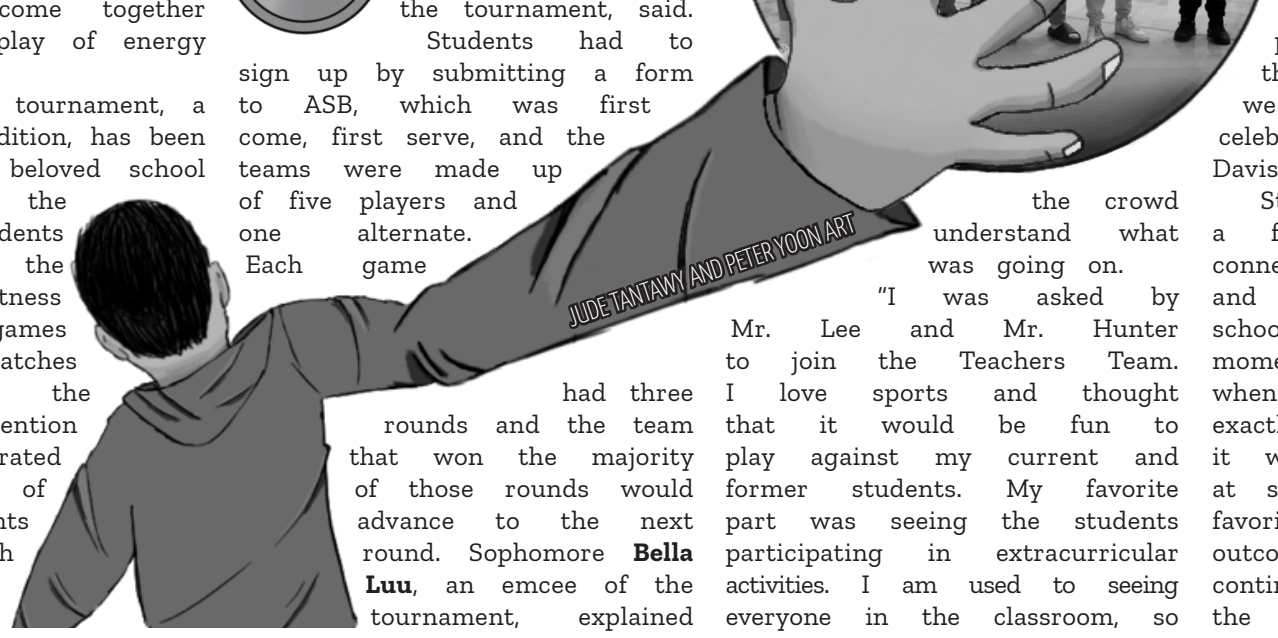
"I was asked by Mr. Lee and Mr. Hunter to join the Teachers Team. I love sports and thought that it would be fun to play against my current and former students. My favorite part was seeing the students participating in extracurricular activities. I am used to seeing everyone in the classroom, so it was fun to see everyone running around having a good time outside of the classroom. My arm was super sore after, but it was a blast," **Jeff Canter**, Social Studies Department, said.

The Ball Busters won the tournament and earned one Polar Pizza for them to share as their prize. Freshman **Kellan Davis** was a part of the victorious team and thought the competition was a memorable experience.

"It felt good to win, and we had a lot of fun beating the older kids and proving them wrong. After the tournament was over, we also had a great time celebrating together as a team," Davis said.

Students found the game a fun and good way to connect with their friends and classmates outside of schoolwork. Although there are moments of disappointment when the game does not go exactly the way one hoped it would, the dodgeball event at school is always a student favorite, and based on its outcome recently, it will be continued for many years into the school's future.






The Ball Busters, made up of Freshmen **David Yaro**, **Kellan Davis**, **Cole Canter**, **Jordan Visperas**, **Rory Windsor** and **Jayden Visperas** (left to right), pose with a banner after their victory.

DESIGN BY GWEN CARROLL

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## DMV permit test driven online

**Vira Patil and Gilina Voon**

*Staff Writers*

In society's quickly evolving technological landscape, many tasks are moving online to improve convenience. The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has followed this pattern by allowing prospective drivers to take the permit knowledge test from the comfort of their own homes.

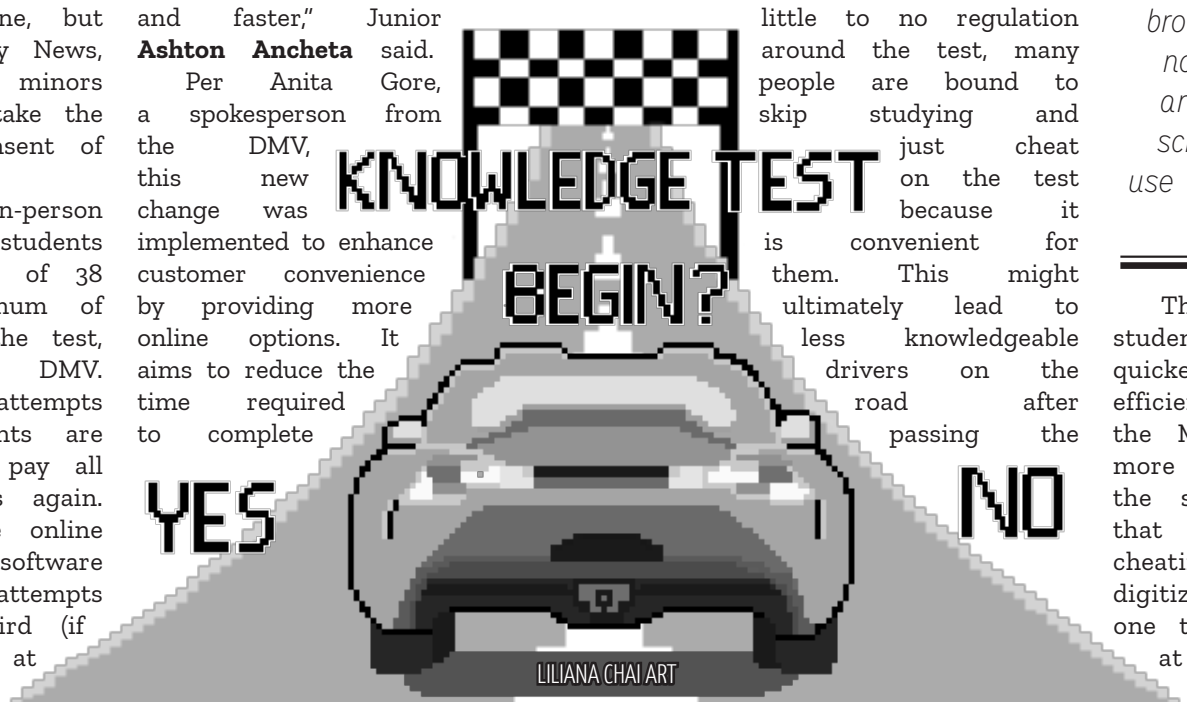
To obtain a permit, individuals are required to take the knowledge test, which assesses student drivers on road signs, traffic laws and the rules of safe driving. For minors, there are 46 questions. There are two methods for taking the test: in person at the DMV office or online. Initially, only adults could take the knowledge test online, but according to The Mercury News, since March 21, 2022, minors have also been able to take the test online with the consent of a parent or guardian.

Previously, the in-person permit tests required students to get at least a score of 38 to pass, with a maximum of three attempts to pass the test, according to California's DMV. However if all three attempts are failed, then applicants are required to reapply and pay all applicable application fees again. On the other hand, the online permit test uses the software MVProctor, where two attempts are allowed and the third (if necessary) must be taken at the DMV Office.

The DMV states that the pass rate for the in-person test is 56% for the first attempt. While 44% fail the test, only 33% of all test-takers fail all three times. Since the online test has not been proctored for very long, the pass/fail rate is unknown.

"An advantage to the online test is one can take it from the comfort of one's home and worry less about nerves. It is easier to schedule because one does not have to make an appointment or wait in line at the DMV. This new testing will definitely increase the number of students trying to get their license since it is much easier and faster," Junior **Ashton Ancheta** said.

Per Anita Gore, a spokesperson from the DMV, this new change was implemented to enhance customer convenience by providing more online options. It aims to reduce the time required to complete transactions at a DMV office. However, it is important to note that taking the test online does not entirely eliminate the need to visit the DMV office. Although the application and test can be done online, individuals must still visit the DMV office after passing to finalize identification paperwork, undergo a vision check and have their photo taken.



LILIANA CHAI ART

Many appreciate the newfound efficiency with which they can take the knowledge test—however, others worry about the possibilities of cheating on the test.

"Online, there are concerns about cheating which may impact the quality of drivers. With little to no regulation around the test, many people are bound to skip studying and just cheat on the test because it is convenient for them. This might ultimately lead to less knowledgeable drivers on the road after passing the exam, which could be dangerous," Senior **Brandon Lee** said.

While it may seem that way, the DMV actually employs a mechanism similar to what Canvas uses during student tests. For instance, the virtual test center can detect if someone switches browsers. Additionally, while the test is not proctored, participants are required to share their screen and keep a webcam on so the DMV can monitor them throughout the duration of the test.

> *"... the virtual test center can detect if someone switches browsers ... while the test is not proctored, participants are required to share their screen the whole time and use a webcam so the DMV can monitor them."*

The online permit test allows students to receive their results quicker, take the test more efficiently and, by the means of the MVProctor software, offer a more flexible schedule for both the students and administrators that also stands strong against cheating attempts. With the digitization of this integral exam, one thing is for sure: the lines at the DMV will be moving a lot faster.

## Misinformation mitigation

**Vira Patil**

*Staff Writer*

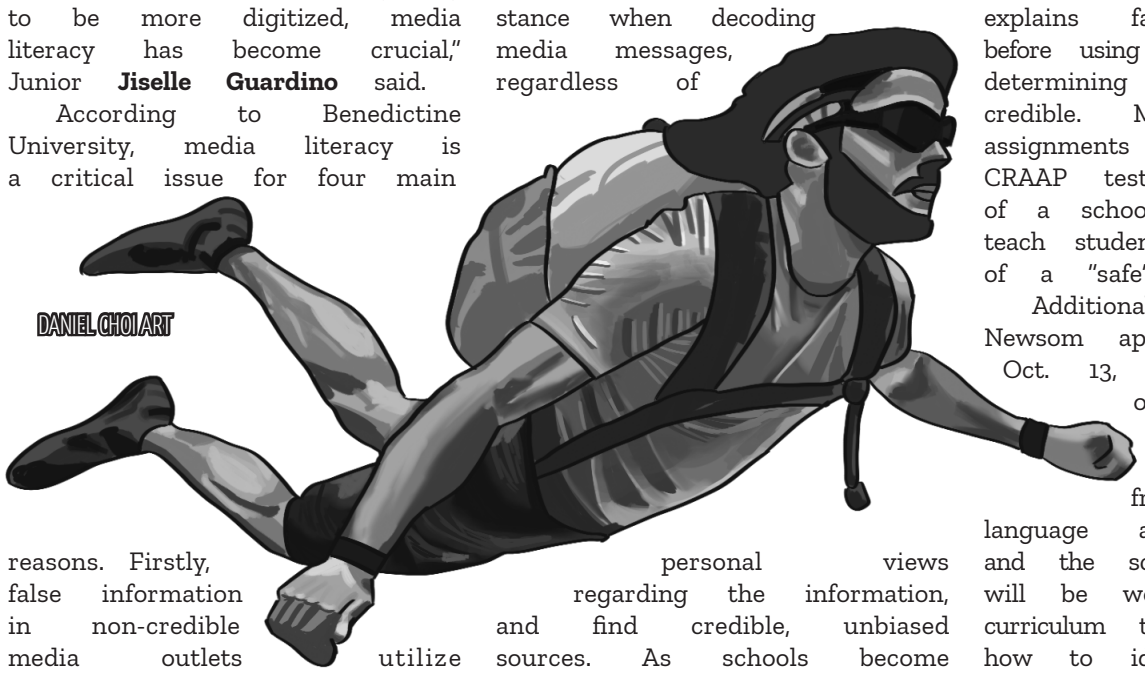
Media literacy—the ability to analyze news presented in mass media and determine its accuracy and credibility—is entering California public schools after the passage of bill AB-787 on Sept. 3 and bill AB-873 on May 11. California's media literacy bills are designed to help students develop skills in understanding and identifying misinformation online in response to increasing worry about false information. Beginning in 2024, all public schools grades K-12 will have media literacy as part of their curriculum in order to teach students to identify untrustworthy sources.

Assemblyman Marc Berman first introduced bill 873 when conducting his 2020 "Common Sense Media" survey, in which he found that students do not know whether their stories are fake or credible on social media and the internet. Due to this revelation, AB 873 was passed in an effort to teach social media literacy in schools by 2025.

Both bills AB-873 and AB-787 have the same aim. However, AB-873 is directed to the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC), which adds this policy to schools' curricula. AB-787 is directed towards the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), which would provide accountability to ensure that this bill is enforced when integrating media literacy into public school curriculums.

"Media literacy is important because by learning how to find credible sources early in life such as in schools, students can apply these teachings to other aspects of their life and later their careers. Additionally, because the world is getting to be more digitized, media literacy has become crucial," Junior **Jiselle Guardino** said.

According to Benedictine University, media literacy is a critical issue for four main reasons. Firstly, false information in non-credible media outlets utilize unethical biases in order to garner a following. Second, fake news can destroy credibility, both of the writer and the reader, therefore leading to a loss of respect and trust. Third, fake news in topics such as medical advice from sources like Mercola.com and NaturalNews.com have exaggerated claims with no proof, which can lead to uneducated, unhealthy decisions. Finally, real news can be beneficial in the long run, whether that be investing in companies or gaining factual information on political candidates.


DANIEL CHOI ART

Media literacy allows students to test websites and develop a more critical stance when decoding media messages, regardless of personal views regarding the information, and find credible, unbiased sources. As schools become more digitized, understanding the sources of information and teaching how to find credible websites, articles, videos and books has become increasingly imperative in schools.

"Learning about media literacy is important because it teaches the difference between credible and noncredible sources. In the freshman and junior classes, during the argumentative essay unit, we discuss factual evidence versus opinions from sources and how to identify proper evidence for argumentative essays," **Jennifer Touchton**, English Department, said.

The CRAAP test, which stands for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose, explains factors to consider before using a source and when determining whether sources are credible. Many teachers use assignments which teach the CRAAP test at the beginning of a school year in order to teach students the characteristics of a "safe" source.

Additionally, Governor Gavin Newsom approved Bill 873 on Oct. 13, requiring the state of California to add media literacy to the curriculum framework for English language arts, math, history and the sciences. These lessons will be woven throughout the curriculum to educate youth on how to identify misinformation when researching. With the use of media bias charts and fact checking—both skills the media literacy bill hopes to include in the curricula of students—schools can ensure critical thinking skills in the younger generation.

# OPINIONS

DESIGN BY JAY LI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*The Charger Account*

*Dec. 14 | Vol. V No. 3*


## Formulaic franchises: The death of indie films

**Joshua Yan**

*Staff Writer*

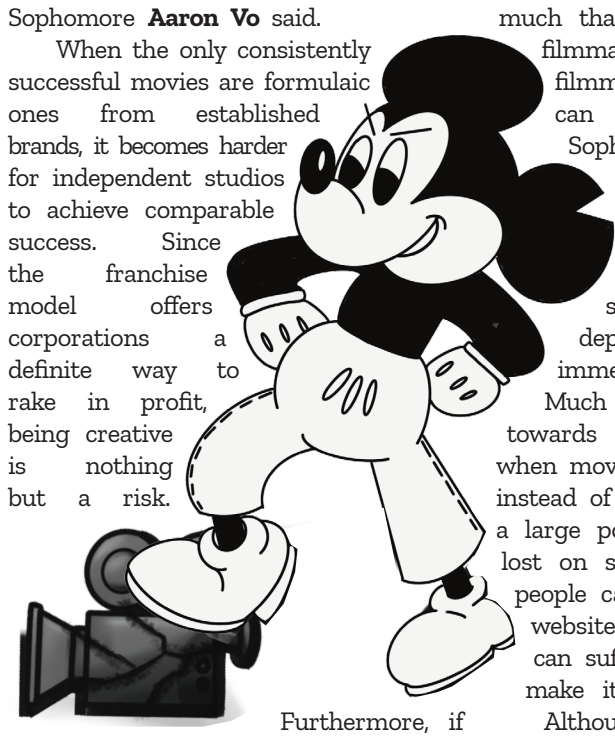
The film industry is dominated by reboots, remakes and franchises like Marvel and Star Wars. However, this model leaves little room for genuine creativity. The presence of big-budget franchises in Hollywood makes it difficult for smaller studios and indie films to find success.

The first film franchise began in the 1930s with Universal Studios' "Classic Monsters" series, which included movies like "Frankenstein," "Dracula" and "Wolf Man." Although modern franchises like Marvel and Star Wars are undoubtedly more successful, these franchises lack the originality and love that older films had.

Large studios, such as Universal and Disney, dominate today's theaters. These studios' large, loyal fanbases allow their films to be of lackluster quality while still performing well in box offices. What follows is that these huge franchises can produce films that both audiences and critics agree are bad but still make copious amounts of money. According to IMDb, the Fast & Furious franchise amassed $7.5 billion despite its average rating of 6.5 stars.

"These franchises will always have viewers because of their recognizability. Since they tend to attract a lot of customers, they will continue on even if their storylines are generic," Sophomore **Aaron Vo** said.

When the only consistently successful movies are formulaic ones from established brands, it becomes harder for independent studios to achieve comparable success. Since the franchise model offers corporations a definite way to rake in profit, being creative is nothing but a risk.

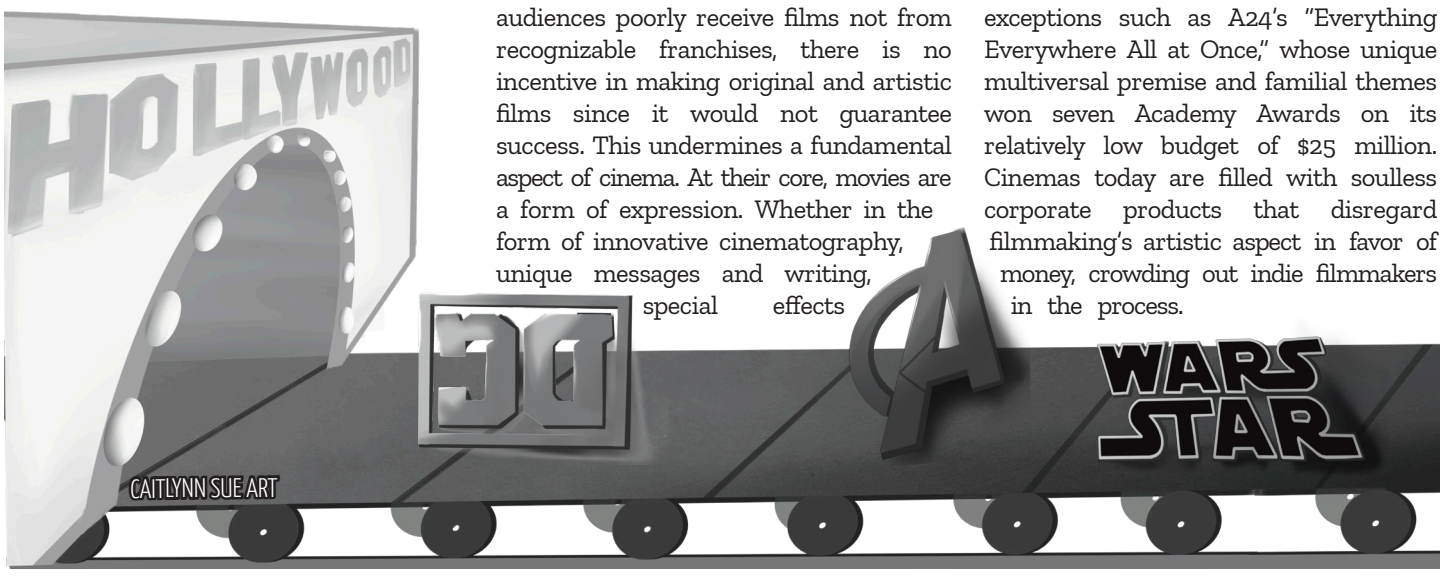


Furthermore, if audiences poorly receive films not from recognizable franchises, there is no incentive in making original and artistic films since it would not guarantee success. This undermines a fundamental aspect of cinema. At their core, movies are a form of expression. Whether in the form of innovative cinematography, unique messages and writing, special effects or acting, producers should be able to present something that embodies their love and commitment to their craft.

"As long as profits are prioritized over artistic expression, there is not much that can be done to preserve filmmaking as an art form. Indie filmmakers and smaller studios can only keep taking risks," Sophomore **Ariel Touretsky** said.

As a result, many indie films are pushed out of their theater showings, instead airing on online streaming platforms, depriving audiences of an immersive theater experience. Much of the visuals accommodated towards a theater setting is lost when movies are forced onto a device instead of the big screen. Additionally, a large portion of movie earnings is lost on streaming platforms because people can simply resort to pirating websites—even the best indie films can suffer financially if they cannot make it into a movie theater.

Although, there are some exceptions such as A24's "Everything Everywhere All at Once," whose unique multiversal premise and familial themes won seven Academy Awards on its relatively low budget of $25 million. Cinemas today are filled with soulless corporate products that disregard filmmaking's artistic aspect in favor of money, crowding out indie filmmakers in the process.




## Revolt through rock

### Rioting and grrrling against oppression

*The Charger Account Editorial Staff*

Amid pulsing snare beats, jarring strums of electric guitar and a turbulent bass line, lead vocalist of punk rock band Bikini Kill Kathleen Hanna belts out a dare to her female audience—starting with an affectionate "Hey girlfriend!"—to unashamedly be themselves.

This first track in Bikini Kill's debut album—"Double Dare Ya"—was revolutionary, but not alone. Formed in 1990, Bikini Kill was a pioneer in the riot grrrl movement, a genre of feminist punk rock that flourished in the 90s. Groups including Lunachicks, Bratmobille, Emily's Sassy Lime and Slant 6 all candidly expressed emotions less socially accepted for women to show.

Headlining issues such as rape, domestic abuse and even the flaws of capitalism through straightforward, explosive lyrics, riot grrrl called on society to confront topics that were considered taboo. As opposed to songs like Jimi Hendrix's "Machine Gun," which more cryptically protests the Vietnam War, the bluntness of riot grrrl lyrics makes their messages difficult to ignore. In a world where societal problems are neglected by those who are not directly impacted by them, direct music may be necessary to achieve social change.

Although the original riot grrrl movement ended in the late 1990s, its relevance persists. For example, Olivia Rodrigo's "GUTS" topped the charts this year because of its authentic portrayal of societal standards for young women. Her 12-second scream in "all-american b*tch" and its hints of alternative rock highlight the enduring spirit of riot grrrl.

Aside from a form of expression, confrontational music has given artists a voice in oppressive environments. As of January, Cambodia has gained notoriety over frequent instances of human rights violations, such as the beating of garment workers by military police and extensive censorship. Cambodian rapper Kea Sokun detailed the suffering of Cambodian citizens in a raw, hard-hitting song titled "Workers Blood." Artists like Sokun are rare, but their impact is monumental. In Thailand, hip hop collective Rap Against Dictatorship (RAD) highlights human rights abuses and social injustices to inspire demonstrations across the country. These artists refuse to let the truth be silenced, and, like riot grrrl, demonstrate the significance of unabashedly voicing opinions.

## November issue corrections

**School News:**
"The CollegeBoard goes digital"
- "our supportive staff" is miswritten as "oursupportive staff"

**Community News:**
"SJPD's new firearm policy: Held at gunpoint"
- Tim Harden's full name is not bolded on his first mention
- "imminent threat" is mispelled as "immenent"

**Opinions:**
"Self expression on the subway"
- "Filmed" is mispelled as "fiilmed" and "conscious" is mispelled as "concious" in Sahana Gopalan's quotebox

**Entertainment:**
"Killers of the Flower Moon"
- "Martin Scorsese" is mispelled as "Scorese"
- "Robert DeNiro" is miswritten as "De Niro"

**Viewpoint:**
"Coffee crisis brews a bitter harvest"
- "Robusta" is not capitalized on its third mention

**Feature: US:**
"The McCarthy malarkey"
- "Democrats of the house" should be capitalized as "House"

DESIGN BY JAY LI

# OPINIONS

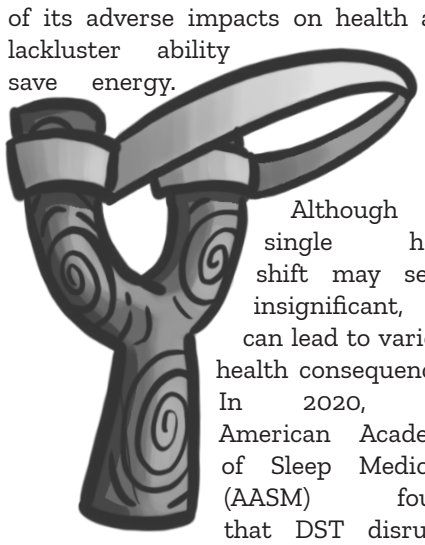
## DST dilemma: Spring forward into darkness

**Ariel Lee and Jaein Park**

*Staff Writers*

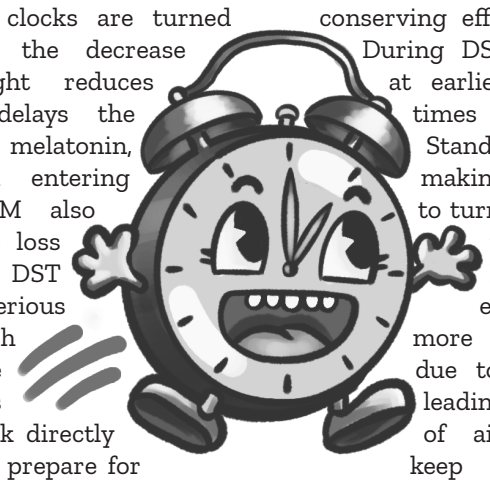
Daylight Savings Time (DST) is the practice of shifting clocks an hour forwards or backwards to enjoy more hours of sunlight and save electricity. Contrary to popular belief, farmers were not the first to come up with the idea; daylight savings was originally suggested by Benjamin Franklin in 1784 and was officially implemented by the U.S. in 1918 as an effort to combat an energy crisis in World War I. DST reduces the use of artificial light, saving energy.

Despite its widespread implementation—about one third of all countries and U.S. states except Arizona and Hawaii follow DST—many wish to end the practice. It is imperative to abandon DST because of its adverse impacts on health and lackluster ability to save energy.

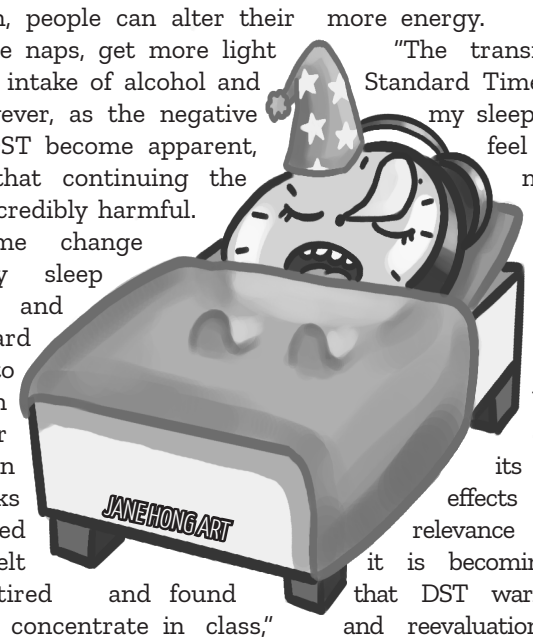


Although a single hour shift may seem insignificant, it can lead to various health consequences. In 2020, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) found that DST disrupts one's circadian rhythm—the body's natural clock which regulates sleep—leading to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke and reduced life expectancies.

Circadian rhythm disruptions also significantly impact the sleep-wake cycle; when the clocks are turned back in March, the decrease in morning light reduces serotonin and delays the production of melatonin, which helps in entering sleep. The AASM also showed the sleep loss associated with DST leads to other serious consequences, such as a 20% increase in car accidents in America a week directly following DST. To prepare for the transition, people can alter their bedtimes, take naps, get more light and curb the intake of alcohol and caffeine. However, as the negative impacts of DST become apparent, it is clear that continuing the practice is incredibly harmful.



"The time change disturbs my sleep schedule and makes it hard for me to focus in school. For example, when our clocks were adjusted in March, I felt incredibly tired and found it difficult to concentrate in class," Sophomore **Mihika Moghe** said.




On the other hand, proponents of DST claim its various benefits include the effective use of natural light energy and economic benefits. However, DST's supposed energy-conserving effects are overblown. During DST, people wake up at earlier and thus colder times compared to the Standard Time schedule, making them more likely to turn on heaters to keep warm. Those who live closer to the equator consume more energy during DST due to the hot weather, leading to increased use of air conditioning to keep cool—consuming more energy.

"The transition from DST to Standard Time forces me to delay my sleep schedule, but I still feel very drowsy in the morning, so I would love it if DST was done away with," Junior **Benjamin Han** said.

With questionable energy-saving benefits, emerging concerns regarding its negative health effects and the diminishing relevance of its original goals, it is becoming increasingly clear that DST warrants reconsideration and reevaluation at the very least. This should prioritize effective and modern contemporary approaches that prioritize both public health and energy conservation.

## Closing the curtains on censorship

**Winston Chu and Caitlynn Sue**

*Staff Writers*

The day before its opening night at Santa Monica College (SMC), students voted to cancel the play "By the River Rivanna" due to controversy over its problematic themes. Written by SMC's playwright-in-residence G. Bruce Smith, "By the River Rivanna" details the experiences of a Black man who struggles to understand his family history.

The play was historically inaccurate and romanticized slavery, portraying a slave owner who believes slavery is evil but never combats it, and a slave who defends his enslaver and sacrifices his freedom for their romance. The SMC Pan-African Association, a leading voice in the opposition, stated that the play "embraces a romantic version of the tragic legacy of slavery."

Students also voiced their complaints about the play being written by a white man and directed by an Asian woman despite covering the Black experience. One student even wrote to the administrators claiming the play "wasn't their story to tell," as reported by the LA Times. However, only allowing authors of a certain group to tell stories of that group suppresses meaningful discussions and restricts literature's diversity. Exploring stories outside of one's experiences can be pivotal in building empathy if done correctly. It is only when authors fail to do careful research and review their work with individuals of the group in question who understand the history and complexities of that community that issues of misrepresentation and insensitivity arise.

After initial criticisms, Smith made multiple script revisions to censor uses of the n-word and certain problematic moments, such as a scene where an enslaved woman says she allowed herself to be raped. However, the day before the play's opening night, administrators demanded students hold a vote on whether their play should be canceled. Although eight of the 12 students voted to continue, the play could not run without a consensus, so it was ultimately canceled.

The cancellation of the play caused further controversy as some saw it as a violation of academic freedom. Per the First Amendment, public institutions should not meddle with students' expressive rights. Instead of suppressing voices, institutions should work with producers and students during the process to ensure historical accuracy and promote a more inclusive and respectful portrayal of diverse narratives.

"We should not censor plays because there could be lessons to be learned. This semester we did not censor anything in 'The Laramie Project' except for the F-slur since it shows the ugly truth about hate crimes," Sophomore and drama student **Varna Mouli** said.

Although he made the effort to get the play reviewed by a Black playwright, Smith's efforts to conduct research for "By the River Rivanna" were lackluster, gathering information online from Reddit discussion boards and movies. If Smith had consulted Black history experts while writing the play, he could have instead created a play that encouraged valuable discussions about the legacy of slavery in America.

"Plays about certain minority groups should be only told by people of that group so their stories are not distorted," Senior **Vrushti Dave** said.

While some plays are unjustly censored, "By the River Rivanna" spreads historically inaccurate ideas that downplay the true experiences of slaves. As an educational institution, SMC had to prevent the spread of misinformation, justifying the cancellation. Thus, it is crucial that schools do not restrict' students' creative rights, but step in if inaccurate information arises.

POLL: Should schools be alllowed to regulate on-campus plays or other creative endeavors?

*Compiled by Eleanor Gil and Joshua Yan*
*Staff Writers*
*101 students polled*

*YES: 51%*
*NO: 49%*

## "Rouge"

**Antara Gangwal**

*School News & Entertainment Editor*

When I read Mona Awad's sophomore novel "Bunny," I was left bewildered yet amazed by its seemingly normal premise that quickly unraveled into a nonsensical climax. So, I knew what to expect when reading "Rouge"—and my predictions were correct: after finishing, I was confused as to what actually happened, but still in awe of the story's emotions and complexity.

"Rouge" unfurls like the petals of the rose on its cover, revealing prickly thorns that illuminate the darkness at the story's core. The novel follows Mirabelle "Belle" Nour, who returns to her hometown of La Jolla, San Diego, after her mother's death. Belle discovers a beauty spa called Rouge nestled within La Jolla's coastal cliffs, one home to tanks of pulsing red jellyfish and bubbly blood-red champagne. As Belle gets caught in the spa's ominous lure, the story begins to resemble a grim fairy tale with Awad's signature eccentric twists: a spirit who takes the form of Tom Cruise, beauty treatments that feed on Belle's trauma, a mysterious skincare-obsessed detective.

The novel's pacing was extremely slow at first, but I could not stop reading after the halfway mark; Awad's prose immersed me in Belle's perspective, unsettlingly chronicling how Rouge's treatments nearly drive her insane. Each word is intentional, forcing the readers to read between the lines to differentiate symbolism from the story's true events.

"Rouge" offers sharp commentary on the beauty industry's sinister depths—yet its critique is not heavy-handed. Rather, the story is so layered that it allows readers to draw their own conclusions, proving more substantial than a surface-level critique. Additionally, the story explores the fraught relationship between Belle and her late mother in a similarly nuanced way. Awad masterfully foils both characters, depicting both the generational trauma yet the unwavering love at the heart of their relationship.

While "Rouge" is only the second novel I have read by Mona Awad, I am already eager to read her others. Amidst the superficial plots plaguing stories today, "Rouge" offers complexity, beautiful prose and utterly human character studies.

"Rouge" (4/5)

worth the read?

+ nuanced commentary
+ well-written relationships
- initially slow pacing

# ENTERTAINMENT

DESIGN BY ANTARA GANGWAL

## "Napoleon"

**Jay Li**

*Opinions Editor*

We all know that one person with a "Napoleon complex": that pathetic, stumpy and unstable man with a fragile ego trying to compensate for their physical shortcomings with overly aggressive behavior. "Napoleon" puts the epitome of those men onto the big screen with a surprisingly comedic humiliation and deconstruction of the life of the famed French emperor.

Instead of emphasizing the French general's military and political achievements, "Napoleon" tells Bonaparte's story through the lens of his relationship with his wife Josephine, replacing the image of an invincible conqueror with that of an uptight manchild. Jabbing at Bonaparte's insecurity and height, "Napoleon" brings an unexpectedly humorous element to interpersonal scenes that had otherwise plain dialogue.

However, by far the most entertaining parts of "Napoleon" are Director Ridley Scott's awe-inspiring recreations of Napoleonic battles; from the iconic cavalry charge at Waterloo to the icy invasion of Austerlitz to the onslaughts of his Egypt campaign, "Napoleon's" grand military set pieces are both massive in scale and viscerally gruesome in detail, making them thrilling to watch.

Yet, much like Bonaparte himself, "Napoleon" is far from perfect: the galloping cavalry charge pace maintained during battle sequences often abruptly slows to a trot when exploring the emperor's personal life with uninteresting dialogue. This creates an inconsistent pace throughout the movie that becomes most evident when the French general's famous conquest of Italy is glossed over in a brief voiceover to make room for political drama—which proves far less engaging. Moreover, because it attempts to cover Bonaparte's three-decade-long military career in a constricting three-hour runtime, the movie's pacing feels incredibly rushed. Those unfamiliar with Bonaparte's history—as I myself was—may find it difficult to follow.

While "Napoleon" remains a visual spectacle thanks to Scott's signature epic battle scenes, the film is held back by its uneven pacing and lackluster dialogue. It ultimately left me disappointed with the narrative but looking forward to Scott's four-hour director's cut, which I hope will allow the story to unfold with the depth it deserves.

**Napoleon (3/5)**

a movie of all time?

+ thrilling battle sequences
+ surprisingly funny
- inconsistent, rushed pacing

## 2023: TAYLOR'S VERSION

**James Li and James Yu**

*Staff Writers*

Arrowhead Stadium roars with exuberant screams and thunderous applause. But the cheers are not for the Kansas City Chiefs—they are for pop superstar Taylor Swift, who is watching from the stands. The fans' deafening roar for Swift captures her dominating influence on popular culture this year, which extended far beyond her best-selling music and stadium-smashing shows into football, academia and society as a whole—and ultimately led to her being named Time Magazine's 2023 Person of the Year.

Hot off of the release of her 10th studio album "Midnights" in 2022, Swift kick started her "Eras Tour" on March 17 in Glendale, Arizona. As Swift's second stadium tour, the ongoing 45-track setlist features songs across all "eras" of Swift's career, from pop smashes "Shake it Off" and "22" to recent hits such as "Karma" and "Bejeweled." Spanning five continents with 52 shows in just the U.S. alone, the tour has brought in massive amounts of revenue. In Pittsburgh, her two concerts accounted for $46 million dollars in spending. In Los Angeles, six shows generated $320 million dollars. Fans' travel and tourism in these cities also led to an influx of money into communities.

"After a tiring 4-day robotics tournament, seeing Taylor Swift at the Eras Tour in Houston, Texas was a memorable experience that rejuvenated my spirits. The Eras Tour will cement Swift as one of the most influential artists of all time," Senior **Leo Chen** said.

Swift also held true to her roots as a singer and songwriter this year, re-recording two of her previous albums: "Speak Now" and "1989." Swift began re-recording her pre-2019 past albums to regain the master rights to her discography from music mega-manager Scooter Braun. The re-recordings have been wild successes; Billboard reports that "Fearless (Taylor's Version)" surpassed its original recording by over a million sales, with over 1.81 million sales since its release. Furthermore, "Red (Taylor's Version)" garnered over 2.86 billion streams since its release, whereas "Red" in the same period received only 476.48 million.

Swift's influence also extends to academia: The University of South Dakota reports that next semester, Law Professor Sean Krammer will teach a new law course based on Swift's music, where students will debate over musical interpretations and compare them to legal interpretation theories. Krammer decided to make the course after witnessing students' positive reaction to Swift's concert; he believes that utilizing concepts that students are already familiar can help them connect with the class's material and apply it to the real world.

> *"The Era's Tour will cement Swift as one of the most influential artists of all time."*

Another surprising influence of the global popstar is on American football. As Country Living explains, Swift began dating Kansas City Chiefs player Travis Kelce over the summer, which led to the amalgamation of two of the largest consumer markets in America—football fans and Swifties. This new demographic's effect was seen quickly, with Vox reporting that NBC's broadcast audience for a game attended by Swift reached a record-high viewership of 29 million—which included an increase of around two million female viewers. Kelce also experienced an increase of almost 400,000 followers to his Instagram account, and Chiefs tickets searches and prices increased significantly.

"Swift and Kelce's relationship seems endearing and Swift looks very happy to be with him. However, many people have been saying that the relationship is for publicity. No matter the intention, their relationship will continue to attract interest and viewership for the NFL as fans rush to see their favorite superstar in attendance cheering on her man," Junior **Drishti Koushik**, who attended the Eras Tour, said.

Swift's far-reaching influence on culture this year has been dubbed by Forbes and many others as the "Taylor Effect": whatever the pop star does, millions of fans will follow. With stars such as Swift able to alter business models and culture, their influence may be the song which leads listeners into society's next "era."

DESIGN BY ELLA POLAK

# LIFESTYLE

## Dashing into tip culture

**Amie Ahn and Lauren Wilson**

*Staff Writer and Investigative Report & Last Word Editor*

"Orders with no tip might take longer to get delivered—are you sure you want to continue?" the screen asks. This message is part of an effort to increase benefits for Doordash's employees. The shift has shed light on the financial well-being of struggling workers and the controversies surrounding tip culture.

Since November, DoorDash has implemented a feature on its app for users in the U.S. and Canada: customers who enter zero tips may receive a pop-up warning, explaining that the drivers—also known as Dashers—will prioritize orders with tips. Additionally, Doordash removed the ability to reduce a tip after placing an order to prevent tip-baiting—where customers give a tip to get their food faster but cancel it after delivery. The revamped features aim to enhance the overall experience for all involved, as Dashers are predicted to be more motivated to fulfill orders when they receive tips, as stated by The Independent News. However, no-tip customers could face longer wait times; those food orders tend to sit longer at restaurants before being transported, negatively impacting customer experience.

DoorDash announced that their goal was successful, with this recent addition resulting in a reduction of no-tip orders. Still, a DoorDash spokesperson claimed that the feature is only in testing and did not specify how much tipping has increased.

"Orders with tips must be prioritized in order to better compensate Dashers beyond the base rate. Dashing is a job that pays minimum wage for the maximum amount of work. Tips are what keeps Dashers going," Sophomore **Tara Brink** said.

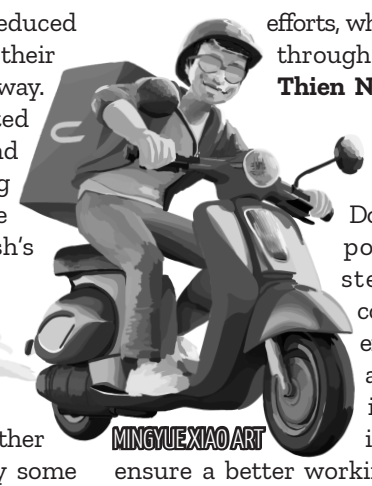
According to Indeed, the average Dasher earns $17.09 an hour in California, with a significant portion coming from tips. Most dashers are only paid a base pay before tips between $2 and $10 per hour.

In 2017, DoorDash faced backlash against a policy where tips from customers were not distributed to Dashers. In response, the company agreed to a fixed amount for the delivery, and tips were used to supplement that fixed pay rather than directly go to the drivers, per the San Francisco Chronicle. The controversy led to a $2.5 million lawsuit settlement in 2019, prompting DoorDash to abandon the criticized policy. The public outcry prompted CEO Tony Xu to bring change, as he realized that the past policy reduced tipping since customers felt that their tips would not help Dashers anyway.

In October, the U.N. faulted DoorDash, along with Amazon and Walmart, for essentially exploiting their workers to poverty. The U.N. asserted that DoorDash's freelance workers occasionally earned less than the federal minimum wage, with their wages limited to "active time" spent on deliveries. Other food delivery companies also pay some workers below the minimum wage; according to Indeed, hourly earnings at Uber Eats vary from around $12.00 to $23.27 per hour for courier drivers. In terms of annual salaries, the average salaries at Uber Eats for delivery drivers spans from about $30,000 to $62,388.

The common courtesy of tipping is often used to accommodate for low-paying service jobs, such as bartending, waitressing and food delivery. Just like DoorDash and its pop-up warning, other services have developed ways to encourage their customers to tip. For instance, many self-order kiosks offer numerous percentage options for tipping, which encourages customers to tip larger amounts. For DoorDash, the new policy prioritizing tips promotes fair compensation, but the reliance on these tips underscores the economic challenges faced by the workers.

"Currently, poverty and inflation are vital problems in America, and many adults struggle to meet their basic necessities. DoorDash and other minimum wage service workers deserve to be treated with respect for their efforts, which can be shown through tipping," Junior **Thien Nguyen** said.




While many believe that the updates to DoorDash's tipping policy are a good step towards fair compensation for employees, others argue that there is still room for improvement to ensure a better working environment. By addressing issues related to minimum pay assurance and refining payment structures, DoorDash and several other large corporations could contribute to creating a more equitable and supportive working environment for employees.

## Injecting ideals: Lowered vaccination rates

**James Li**

*Staff Writer*

As COVID-19 swept through the United States, it shut down businesses and sent individuals into lockdowns, leading to many wondering when things would change. However, through hard work and hours of dedication, life was brought back to normal in part by the fruitful efforts of researchers who created vaccines to combat the deadly virus. Yet these vaccines were met with an outburst of skepticism and denial regarding their validity. This trend has continued out of the pandemic, with many schools across the nation reporting that vaccination rates among school children have fallen lower than pre-pandemic levels.

School districts typically require several vaccinations for elementary schoolers before beginning their year, which include the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis vaccines (DTaP).

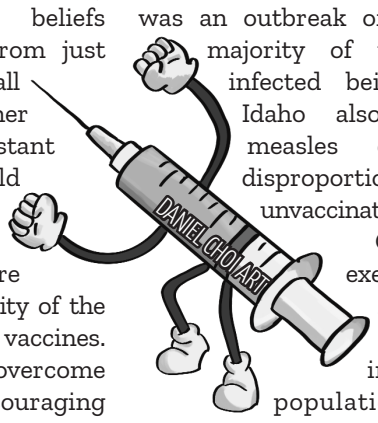
Families may apply for vaccine exemptions for religious or medical reasons. Medical reasons for vaccine exemptions could be that the individual is allergic to the vaccine components or that the vaccination could be harmful to the individual's health due to other circumstances. To get an exemption, the parents must get a signed statement from a medical doctor stating that they do not recommend immunization for their patient. For non-medical vaccination exemptions, parents need only submit a request.

"The government should have the ability to veto vaccine exemptions, as vaccination is an integral part of keeping communities safe, and insufficient vaccination can lead to outbreaks of many diseases," Junior **Ryan Jin** said.

The decline in vaccination rates across the country could be due to the stigma and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 vaccines. Conspiracies spanned from relatively benign ones about reducing the effectiveness of an individual's immune system to more drastic ones stating that vaccines implanted devices meant to control the minds of their recipients. These stigmas regarding the dangers of the vaccine were readily spread across the internet, leading to these beliefs spreading from just the COVID-19 vaccines to all vaccines as a whole. Another reason could be that the constant dialogue on vaccines could lead to vaccine hesitancy. By undermining the credibility of vaccines, these groups were able to undermine the credibility of the government which supported vaccines.

"The government can overcome vaccine hesitancy by encouraging vaccination, whether through advertisement campaigns or engaging with under-vaccinated communities to bolster vaccination rates," Senior **Elaine Ju** said.

The CDC states that when the number of vaccine exemptions within a community exceeds 5%, it can lead to an increased risk of outbreaks within that community. Vaccines help protect the community through the concept of "community immunity," wherein the disease has a lower chance of spreading even if one person gets infected because all other individuals are well protected from the disease due to the vaccine. Vaccines require 95% vaccination rates to provide adequate immunity levels for the communities they are for. However, with vaccine rates dropping below this 95%, and closer to 93%, outbreaks are beginning to be more common. In 2022, there was an outbreak of measles, with a majority of the 85 students infected being unvaccinated. Idaho also experienced a measles outbreak, which disproportionately affected the unvaccinated population.




Cases like these exemplify the need for a greater push for vaccination in the American population, and the necessity of combating vaccine hesitancy in communities. As vaccination rates continue to drop, the threat of a dangerous viral resurgence looms.

## Hunan Mifen Lawrence

**Anna Yue**

*Staff Writer*

Mifen, or rice noodles, is a traditional Chinese delicacy tracing back to the Qin Dynasty. On a chilly Sunday evening, I decided to visit Hunan Mifen Lawrence, a rice noodle restaurant in Sunnyvale, upon a family friend's recommendation. Its original Chinese name is Xiao Xiang Niu Gu Mi Fen, which translates to "tasty beef ribs and rice noodles," and their signature dish is the Special Rice Noodles with Beef Bone.

The interior of the store was brightly lit with cool-toned lights, offering a clean and straightforward vibe to the room. After submitting my order with the QR code, my food was brought within two minutes.

I ordered the Rice Noodles with Braised Beef Sirloin & Tomato. The noodles were generously served in a steaming hot bowl of beef bone broth topped with Chinese pickled mustard, while the tomato and braised beef sauce was brought in a separate bowl. Additionally, the services were relatively independent; water refills and toppings were all self-serve.

The noodles themselves are soft yet chewy, and the beef sirloin was cooked perfectly–soft but not mushy. The tomato sauce was also great, adding the organic sweet and sour taste to the rich broth. I preferred dipping the noodles into the sauce for a more intense sweet and sour flavor of the tomatoes, although pouring the sauce into the noodles and soup was delicious as well.

A reminder for ordering is to watch out for the spice level of each specific bowl. The store's signature dish, Special Rice Noodles with Beef Bone, is soaked in chili oil and labeled "super spicy," which is no joke.

I also ordered the Rose Ice Jelly with Glutinous Rice Cake, which I strongly recommend. The faint flavor of rose honey was pleasant but not overwhelming, while the almond, hawthorn and cranberry toppings added additional texture and flavor. However, some of their desserts looked and tasted factory-made. Overall, I had a pleasant experience at this restaurant with the quick wait time and enjoyable food. The independent service style might not be a hit for everyone, but I found the lack of platitudes and social pressure pleasant. I would be willing to go back to try out new dishes, and the Rose Ice Jelly will always be on my order.

### Hunan Mifen Lawrence (4/5)

how fan-taste-ic was it?

+ short wait-time
+ independent service
- mediocre serving sizes

DESIGN BY HARRY KANG

# Magical media's spellbinding allure

**Adrian Tomaszewski**

*Staff Writer*

An enticing activity that appeals to our innate sense of curiosity surrounding the mysterious, magic has lasted for generations in almost every form of media. From its humble beginnings in witchcraft and alchemy—the practice of magical metallurgy, often in hopes of turning lead into gold—to modern magical fantasy movies with elaborate special effects, magic in media has changed drastically throughout the centuries. Despite originally being shunned in many cultures, magic has persisted and has only gotten more popular as the modes through which it presents itself have multiplied.

Beliefs of magic largely began as a result of the human desire to explain how each of the world's cogs builds the machine of existence. Many phenomena that were unexplainable at the time, such as lightning or the northern lights, were simply chalked up to being magical in some way. These beliefs then made their way into pagan religions and societal superstitions. However, as monotheistic religions gradually replaced pagan beliefs throughout much of Afro-Eurasia, belief in these supernatural forces became stigmatized because the belief in an omnipotent God often explained the phenomena magic once did.

Still, these pagan practices of magic often blended with religion, creating certain superstitions or fears of magic in communities. This is how many modern superstitions—like the bad luck charms of black cats or broken mirrors—got their start. In fact, the bad luck of a black cat crossing a road originates from Ancient Greek mythology, and the seven years of bad luck from breaking a mirror relates to the Roman belief of life renewing every seven years. Medieval Europeans especially feared magic through witchcraft; many people believed that certain rebellious women secretly controlled society by casting spells, despite it being denounced by the Church.

The creation of the printing press led to the first examples of magic in media through tales such as those of the Three Witches in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" or Prospero in Shakespeare's "Tempest." In both stories, magic is painted in a negative light, with the Three Witches causing Macbeth's demise and Prospero ultimately deciding to renounce magic. German tales of Hansel and Gretel and those describing Doctor Faustus similarly featured witches or some sort of alchemy.

As the Industrial Revolution kicked into full gear and early cinema was invented at the turn of the 19th century, magic in media entered its golden age. For the first time since antiquity, magic was celebrated and not vehemently opposed by society. This manifested in the first "moving picture" magic: a flip book. David Devant, the premier British magician at the time, partnered with the Alhambra Theatre in London to create a 200-page long flip book in which he pulled a rabbit out of a hat. Over time, magic entered silent films and, eventually, regular films.

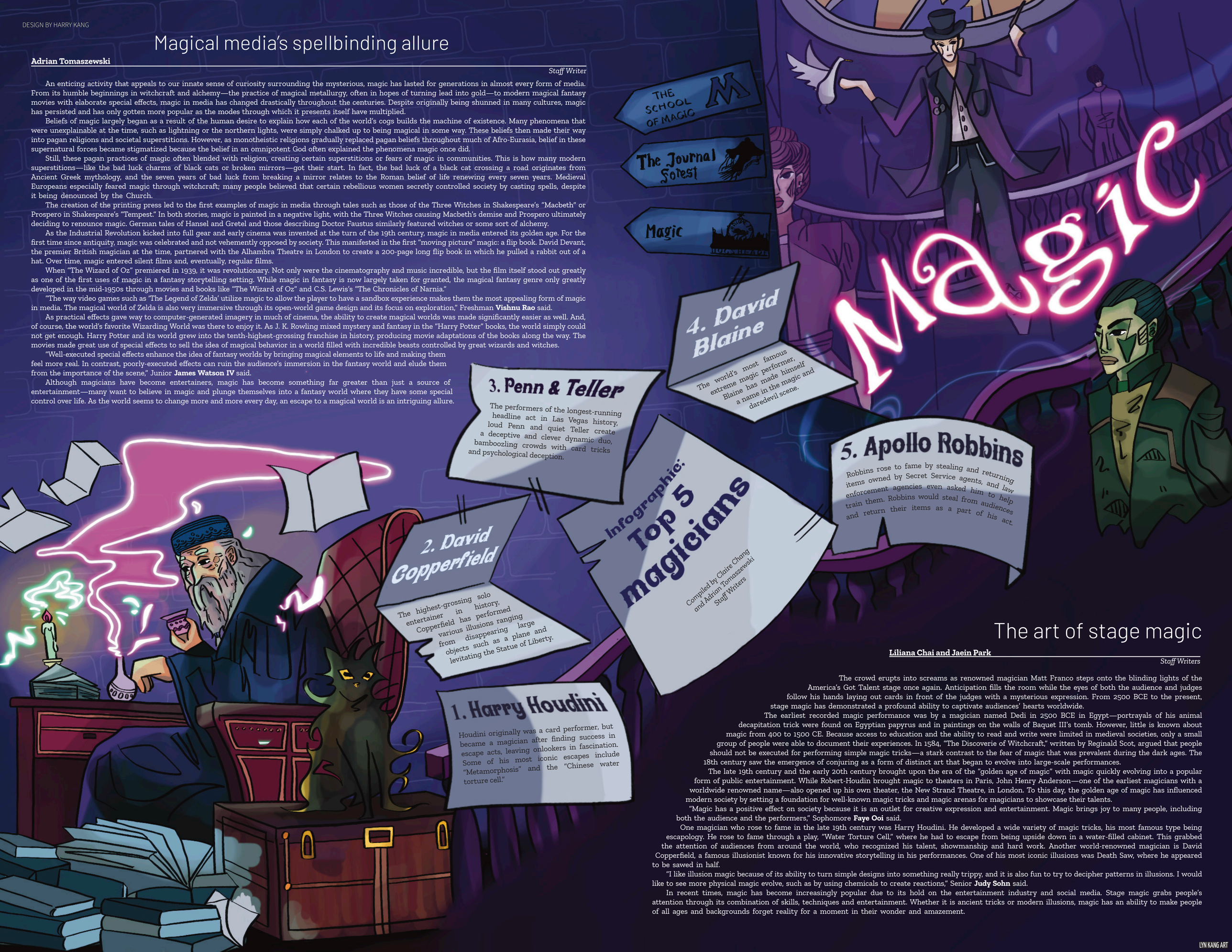
When "The Wizard of Oz" premiered in 1939, it was revolutionary. Not only were the cinematography and music incredible, but the film itself stood out greatly as one of the first uses of magic in a fantasy storytelling setting. While magic in fantasy is now largely taken for granted, the magical fantasy genre only greatly developed in the mid-1950s through movies and books like "The Wizard of Oz" and C.S. Lewis's "The Chronicles of Narnia."

"The way video games such as 'The Legend of Zelda' utilize magic to allow the player to have a sandbox experience makes them the most appealing form of magic in media. The magical world of Zelda is also very immersive through its open-world game design and its focus on exploration," Freshman **Vishnu Rao** said.

As practical effects gave way to computer-generated imagery in much of cinema, the ability to create magical worlds was made significantly easier as well. And, of course, the world's favorite Wizarding World was there to enjoy it. As J. K. Rowling mixed mystery and fantasy in the "Harry Potter" books, the world simply could not get enough. Harry Potter and its world grew into the tenth-highest-grossing franchise in history, producing movie adaptations of the books along the way. The movies made great use of special effects to sell the idea of magical behavior in a world filled with incredible beasts controlled by great wizards and witches.

"Well-executed special effects enhance the idea of fantasy worlds by bringing magical elements to life and making them feel more real. In contrast, poorly-executed effects can ruin the audience's immersion in the fantasy world and elude them from the importance of the scene," Junior **James Watson IV** said.

Although magicians have become entertainers, magic has become something far greater than just a source of entertainment—many want to believe in magic and plunge themselves into a fantasy world where they have some special control over life. As the world seems to change more and more every day, an escape to a magical world is an intriguing allure.




# The art of stage magic

**Liliana Chai and Jaein Park**

*Staff Writers*

The crowd erupts into screams as renowned magician Matt Franco steps onto the blinding lights of the America's Got Talent stage once again. Anticipation fills the room while the eyes of both the audience and judges follow his hands laying out cards in front of the judges with a mysterious expression. From 2500 BCE to the present, stage magic has demonstrated a profound ability to captivate audiences' hearts worldwide.

The earliest recorded magic performance was by a magician named Dedi in 2500 BCE in Egypt—portrayals of his animal decapitation trick were found on Egyptian papyrus and in paintings on the walls of Baquet III's tomb. However, little is known about magic from 400 to 1500 CE. Because access to education and the ability to read and write were limited in medieval societies, only a small group of people were able to document their experiences. In 1584, "The Discoverie of Witchcraft," written by Reginald Scot, argued that people should not be executed for performing simple magic tricks—a stark contrast to the fear of magic that was prevalent during the dark ages. The 18th century saw the emergence of conjuring as a form of distinct art that began to evolve into large-scale performances.

The late 19th century and the early 20th century brought upon the era of the "golden age of magic" with magic quickly evolving into a popular form of public entertainment. While Robert-Houdin brought magic to theaters in Paris, John Henry Anderson—one of the earliest magicians with a worldwide renowned name—also opened up his own theater, the New Strand Theatre, in London. To this day, the golden age of magic has influenced modern society by setting a foundation for well-known magic tricks and magic arenas for magicians to showcase their talents.

"Magic has a positive effect on society because it is an outlet for creative expression and entertainment. Magic brings joy to many people, including both the audience and the performers," Sophomore **Faye Ooi** said.

One magician who rose to fame in the late 19th century was Harry Houdini. He developed a wide variety of magic tricks, his most famous type being escapology. He rose to fame through a play, "Water Torture Cell," where he had to escape from being upside down in a water-filled cabinet. This grabbed the attention of audiences from around the world, who recognized his talent, showmanship and hard work. Another world-renowned magician is David Copperfield, a famous illusionist known for his innovative storytelling in his performances. One of his most iconic illusions was Death Saw, where he appeared to be sawed in half.

"I like illusion magic because of its ability to turn simple designs into something really trippy, and it is also fun to try to decipher patterns in illusions. I would like to see more physical magic evolve, such as by using chemicals to create reactions," Senior **Judy Sohn** said.

In recent times, magic has become increasingly popular due to its hold on the entertainment industry and social media. Stage magic grabs people's attention through its combination of skills, techniques and entertainment. Whether it is ancient tricks or modern illusions, magic has an ability to make people of all ages and backgrounds forget reality for a moment in their wonder and amazement.

LYN KANG ART

# SCIENCE & TECH

DESIGN BY KYAN WANG

## GPU showdown

**Kyan Wang**

*Science & Tech & Feature US Editor*

Lianhua Health, a Chinese MSG company, came under investigation on Sept. 28 by the Shanghai Stock Exchange for purchasing 628 million yuan (88.6 million USD) worth of Nvidia H800 GPUs, a specialized type of computer chip meant to perform thousands of processes simultaneously. Seeking to pivot its business from selling MSG to generative AI such as Chat-GPT and AI art programs, Lianhua Health invested more than thirty times its liquidity into purchasing American-made AI chips, becoming a stunning, if comical, exemplar of the AI boom of the past year.

The global AI industry is entirely dependent on just a few U.S. companies—primarily Nvidia—producing GPUs, as the GPUs provide immense amounts of processing power needed to train enormous AI models. Even with the increased efficiency of specialized GPUs, University of Washington researchers estimated that training Chat-GPT consumed enough electricity to power a city of one million people for almost eight hours. As future AI models become even more complicated, the need for GPUs will only continue to increase.

Amidst the U.S.-China trade war, advanced computer chips have become a battleground as the U.S. seeks to limit the growth of China's AI industry. The U.S. hopes to prevent advanced chips—especially those designed for AI applications—from being used by China for "military purposes and modernization," per CNBC. Starting on Oct. 7, 2022, the U.S. limited the specifications of GPUs that could be exported to China, primarily Nvidia's flagship H100 and A100 GPUs.

In an attempt to work around such restrictions, Nvidia introduced H800 and A800 versions of the aforementioned GPUs in Nov. 2022, which featured much of the same specifications, but with an inter-GPU data transfer rate of half the original versions. Despite these downgrades, the chips were in extreme demand in China. Even with the tightened restrictions on export-bound GPUs placed on Oct. 17 making the new chips unsellable, Nvidia plans to continue exporting AI chips to China; it is launching the new H20, L20 and L2 chips which comply with U.S. sanctions. Nvidia projects that billions of dollars will be made with the exports, and the company does not plan to halt sales while demand is still sky-high.

AI remains the fastest and most unpredictable field in tech today, and as the all-encompassing demand for processing power continues, so does Nvidia's pocketbook. With their stock prices tripling this year alone, Nvidia may be the winner in the technological conflict between the U.S. and China.

## The pink lake stink

**Claire Chang and Joshua Yan**

*Staff Writers*

In late October, the waters of Hawaii's Kealia Pond turned pink, heightening concerns about climate change and the state's ongoing drought. Located in the Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge in Maui, the pond has been crowded by visitors since its pink waters appeared on social media, with many taking interest in the peculiarity of the lake's transformation.

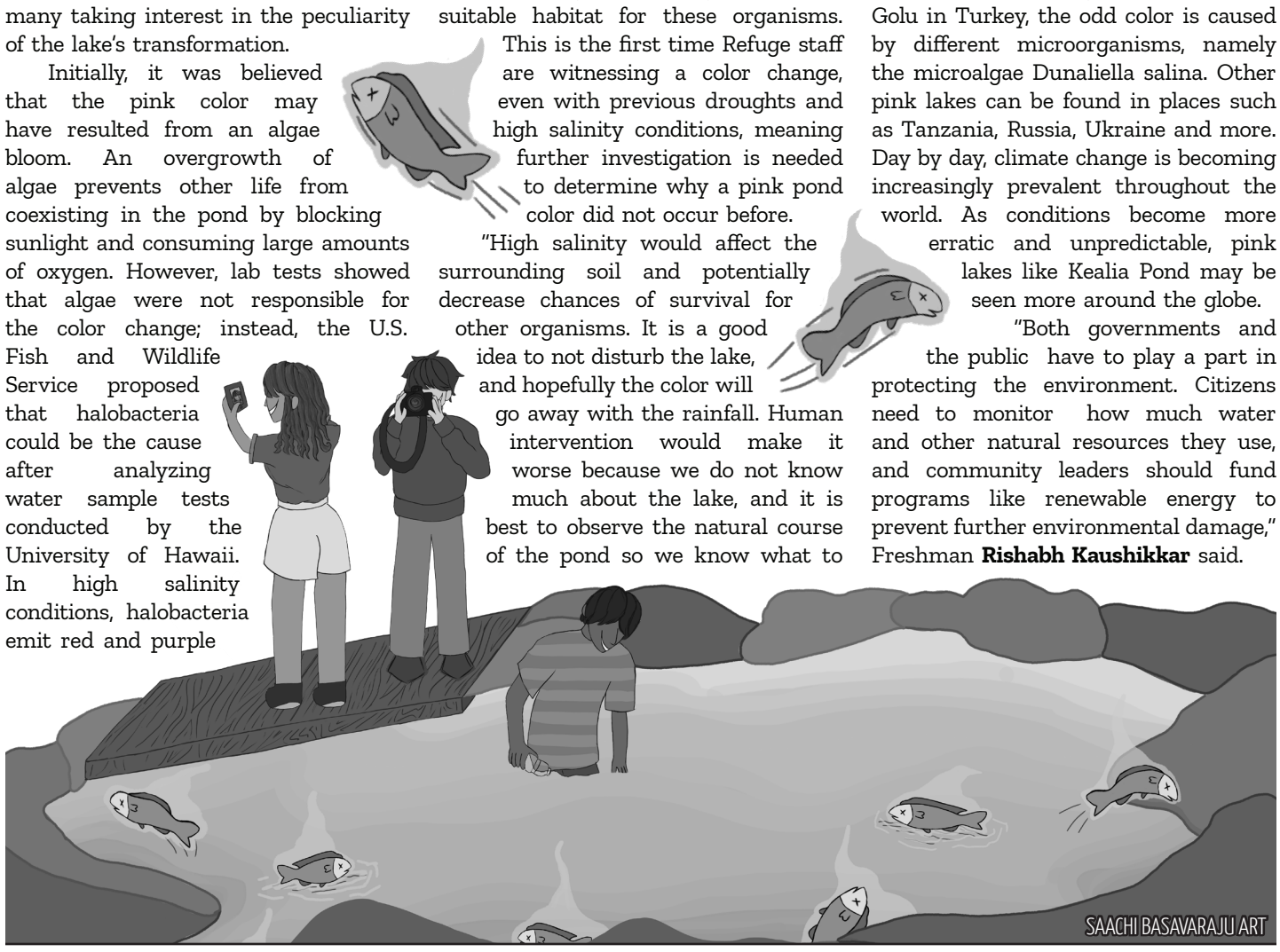
Initially, it was believed that the pink color may have resulted from an algae bloom. An overgrowth of algae prevents other life from coexisting in the pond by blocking sunlight and consuming large amounts of oxygen. However, lab tests showed that algae were not responsible for the color change; instead, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed that halobacteria could be the cause after analyzing water sample tests conducted by the University of Hawaii. In high salinity conditions, halobacteria emit red and purple carotenoid pigments, which turn water pink. However, this hypothesis has yet to be confirmed by DNA test.

According to AP News, the Kealia Pond currently has a salinity level twice as high as that of seawater. Halobacteria require high salinity to survive and grow, making the pond a suitable habitat for these organisms. This is the first time Refuge staff are witnessing a color change, even with previous droughts and high salinity conditions, meaning further investigation is needed to determine why a pink pond color did not occur before.

"High salinity would affect the surrounding soil and potentially decrease chances of survival for other organisms. It is a good idea to not disturb the lake, and hopefully the color will go away with the rainfall. Human intervention would make it worse because we do not know much about the lake, and it is best to observe the natural course of the pond so we know what to expect in the future," Freshman **Sophia Liao** said.

Pink lakes like the one in Maui exist everywhere around the world, all for similar reasons. In Australia, halobacteria is also the cause of Lake Hillier's pink hue. In other places, like Lake Retba in Senegal and Lake Tuz Golu in Turkey, the odd color is caused by different microorganisms, namely the microalgae Dunaliella salina. Other pink lakes can be found in places such as Tanzania, Russia, Ukraine and more. Day by day, climate change is becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the world. As conditions become more erratic and unpredictable, pink lakes like Kealia Pond may be seen more around the globe.

"Both governments and the public have to play a part in protecting the environment. Citizens need to monitor how much water and other natural resources they use, and community leaders should fund programs like renewable energy to prevent further environmental damage," Freshman **Rishabh Kaushikkar** said.



SAACHI BASAVARAJU ART

## The space debris disaster

**Mahika Khosla**

*Staff Writer*

While many are aware of the abundant waste throughout the world, few may know that there are masses of satellite pieces littering space. Space debris is largely due to man-made objects such as satellites and loose fragments from rocket explosions and collisions. This waste material is located 2,000 kilometers or less above Earth in low Earth orbit. Among these pieces of debris is approximately 3,000 dead satellites littering space, flying at roughly 15,700 mph and obstructing the path of active satellites.

The first accidental crash happened between two communications satellites—Russia's Iridium 33 and the broken-down military Kosmos 225. The relative velocity of the collision was estimated to be 26,000 mph. Since then, the issue of satellite debris has grown significantly—the International Space Station was forced to change paths 30 times over the past 20 years to avoid space junk, per ISS National Laboratory.

Large corporations are adding to the crisis at hand. For example, Project Kuiper is an Amazon initiative that launched 3,236 satellites with the goal of providing global high-speed internet access. Another company with a similar motive is Starlink, under the organization SpaceX. Starlink has launched over 5,000 small satellites to increase internet accessibility. While these companies have good intentions, the satellites pose many risks. Aside from colliding with active satellites and human space missions, launching too many satellites creates another problem: light pollution. Research conducted by institutions like the College of Medicine at Korea University shows that artificial light at night (ALAN) can increase risks for obesity, depression, sleep disorders and cancer, among other illnesses. ALAN also makes it difficult for astronomers to view and analyze stars.

"The amount of space debris is a large issue as it endangers space exploration. Satellite waste colliding with active satellites is especially harmful as scientists use satellites for studies like tracking animal migration. A potential solution can be building satellites that are able to reenter the atmosphere rather than accumulating in space," Freshman **Nile Rahman** said.

The growing amount of space debris has motivated many companies and countries to take action. The U.S. government and the United Nations have passed the Outer Space Treaty, which requires nations to take responsibility for the satellite launches of both private and nonprivate organizations. Each nation is expected to approve or disapprove launches whether or not it meets certain criteria. For example, if a launch is too costly or does not have significant scientific value, it can be disapproved.

"Countries should not limit the number of satellites but rather regulate them so they do not deter space missions. Satellites serve many benefits, and current and future innovations should not be stifled," Sophomore **Vedh Atmakuri** said.

Growing amounts of space debris may lead to increased accidents in Earth's orbit. With the exponential growth of satellites launched, space exploration will likely become more dangerous if the problem of satellite waste is not properly addressed.

KAVYA DESAI ART

DESIGN BY GWEN CARROLL

# FEATURE: SCHOOL

## The Laramie Project

**Eleanor Gil**

*Staff Writer*

Performed by Drama this fall, "The Laramie Project" is a unique play that aims to spark meaningful dialogue around sensitive real-world issues, underscoring the significance of equality for and social acceptance of members of the LGBTQ community. This play is about the 1988 hate crime murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay man in Laramie, Wyoming, and its impacts on the community.

Drama usually alternates between drama and comedy plays. This fall, they chose "The Laramie Project" because Drama director **Melissa Webb**, Visual Performing Arts Department, wanted to tell a story that was timely and had a significant and relevant message, with the rise in anti-LGBTQ hate crimes and legislation in America.

Drama has put substantial effort into the production of "The Laramie Project," with so much happening both behind the scenes and onstage. Members of the cast choose and assume the roles of various characters, even adding their own twists and adaptations into the play. One actress, Sophomore **Faith Greer**, reminisced about how much fun she had playing multiple roles by emphasizing certain idiosyncrasies of each character. For example, Greer played Marge Murray, for whom she created a big, loving, contagious personality. Greer brought Marge to life by giving her a heavy country drawl and always sauntering on stage with her hands in her pockets, which she believed her character would do.

In order to help the actors shine on stage, Drama's crew works hard backstage. Part of the crew designs props, costumes and sets, and some work in media to promote the show. Others manage the lights and sounds in real time. Sophomore **Anna Kochanska**, a crew member in the sound department, explained that this play was the most technically difficult they have had so far because they had to change how they operate mics to adapt to the unique interview-based nature of the production. Her department was also in charge of all sound cues, including music between scene changes and the quiet music played to highlight certain moments. Creating costumes varying in complexity and design was also challenging, which Junior **Sophie Xu** experienced firsthand working as Head of Costumes.

"There were 69 characters and only 15 actors, meaning we had to make costumes that were quick to change into and out of, but also had clear enough differences so it would not be confusing to the audience. Quick changes were also a challenge with so many characters, since some actors only had about thirty seconds to do a full change. Nevertheless, the challenges were definitely worth it because we get to hear about audiences' positive experiences and see everything come together so nicely at the end. It is always such a pleasure working with the people in my department," Xu said.

Invariably, the play was a huge hit. Many audience members expressed that the play made them realize the impact one person's death can have on an entire community, pushing them to raise awareness and fight for positive change. Sophomore **Stephen King** reflected that the play opened his eyes to the horrid extremes of homophobia and also to how many people at the school are part of LGBTQ community and have had negative experiences as a result. King applauds the cast's unbelievable job of evoking emotion, stating that the actors went far beyond simply reading a paper script and transformed words into tangible, distinct characters. Another audience member, Sophomore **Eleanor Kang**, believes the play was filled with immense heart and effort from the actors.

"From the play, I learned an incredible amount of history—such as how one community handled homophobia—and found out that not much has changed and there still is work to be done to achieve full respect and acceptance for the LGBTQ community," Kang said.

It is common for people to be emotionally detached to issues they witness in the media. In contrast, live, in-person productions covering real-life topics often prove to be more powerful because it is difficult for people to ignore these issues when they are acted out in front of them. In this manner, plays have the power to move people, as several students in the audience have expressed. This is especially the case with the school's fall play, where every line was taken from an interview with a real person. In high school drama, where the storytellers have an audience that is willing to listen and learn, a feeling of unity is fostered between students that are performing and those that are in the audience that no ordinary classroom setting can bring.

### Quotebox: How did you feel about putting on "The Laramie Project"?

*Compiled by Liliana Chai and Niru Shivakumar, Staff Writers*

GILINA VOON PHOTO

"This play resonated with me because it pushes us to confront the reality of homophobia. Hate comes from prejudice, prejudice from fear and fear from ignorance; the only way to fight ignorance is with education. That is why I am so proud to be a part of The Laramie Project."
—Junior **Addisen Heaton**

"The parallels between Laramie and Leland being "safe" draws attention to the hidden fear many queer students face when choosing to interact with different people. Bringing awareness to the impact of hate is vital to ensure that students feel safe in their communities."
—Senior **Kai Cheung-Nguyen**

"It is vital for plays with heavy topics to be brought to the school, especially with recent homophobic laws and censorship throughout the country. Performing this play, even in our small community, can make an impact by shedding light on homophobia and showing how harmful hate is."
—Sophomore **Shaun Altman**

**Melissa Webb** and various members of the Drama class share their thoughts on the play during one of their aftertalks.

## Timber tinkering

**Gwen Carroll**

*Community News & Feature School Editor*

A honeycomb shelf adorns the wall. In the same room stands a cabinet, a chair and a small desk, with pens laying across its surface. With a subtle sheen and professional finish, the wooden pieces of furniture all have one commonality: they were made by **Jamie Cohen**, Social Studies Department.

"My husband made a wood shop in our garage while I was on maternity leave. He quickly moved on to other hobbies, so rather than let the wood shop stay abandoned, I learned some woodworking. Now that I am off maternity leave, it is harder to find time to work in the wood shop, but I treasure my time there nonetheless," Cohen said.

Cohen was inspired to start woodworking when she found an abandoned cabinet on the side of the road, free to take. Cohen immediately felt that it was a waste to throw out and brought it home, intent on refinishing it. Previously, she had only tinkered with her equipment—the cabinet became her first real project. After sanding down the wood and staining it, Cohen repainted the desk to make it appear good as new, an endeavor she described as very fulfilling and satisfying. The cabinet has since claimed a place in her house, alongside countless other pieces of furniture Cohen has either refinished or built from scratch.

Although Cohen's main focus is furniture, she enjoys making an unexpected item: pens. Using a lathe—a tool that spins wood at high speeds to carve objects with perfect rotational symmetry—she carves and sands the barrel of the pen, then fits them to a tip, thrust device and ink chamber. Cohen also frequently uses dyed wood to bring some color into her pens.

Cohen's pens often serve as gifts for friends and family, helping her connect more personally with those she cares about. However, Cohen mostly shares her woodworking hobby with her daughter. Although Cohen's daughter is too young to work directly with machinery, she likes to help out where she can and enjoys keeping Cohen company.

"I cannot let my daughter work with the machinery since she is only six years old. Instead, she has her own set of equipment such as earmuffs and a mask. Sometimes, she draws what she wants to build on a piece of scrap wood and if it is doable, we build it together," Cohen said.

Sharing hobbies is much more than just sharing results—time spent working together is time spent bonding. Just as Cohen learned the basics of DIY from her parents and expanded on these skills in her wood shop, she now teaches her daughter how to refinish abandoned furniture and even build her own.

# FEATURE: US

DESIGN BY KYAN WANG

## Supreme Court, supreme shenanigans

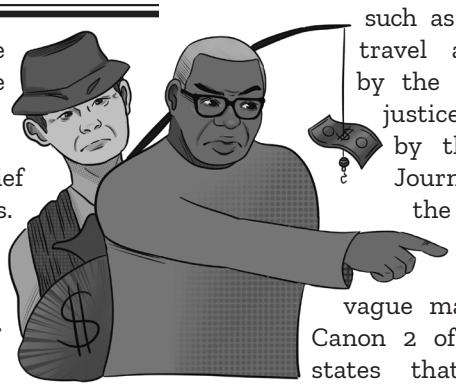
**Eleanor Gil**

*Staff Writer*

On Nov. 13, the Supreme Court implemented a Code of Conduct in the wake of recently revealed scandals, such as undisclosed, fully paid vacations and bribery, on part of the justices. However, suspicions have arisen over how effective the Code will be in preventing such scandals because the Supreme Court is responsible for enforcing the Code on itself.

*"In fact, the code does not properly outline the consequences of many ethical violations nor does it provide specific, consistent moral advice to justices and the public."*

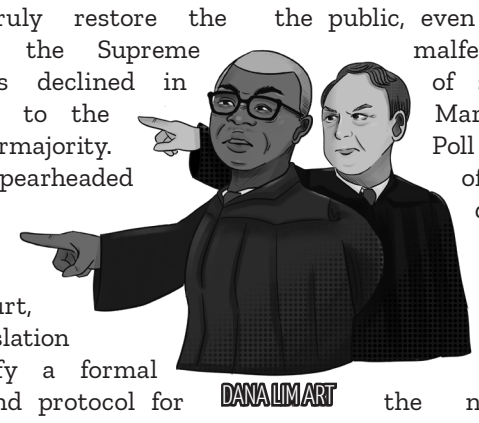
The main incentive behind creating the Code are the cases of ethical misconduct perpetrated by the chief justices themselves. For example, Justice Clarence Thomas has accepted millions of dollars' worth of luxury vacations and real estate deals for over two decades from major GOP donor and Dallas billionaire Harlan Crow, as revealed by the nonprofit investigative journalism organization ProPublica. Furthermore, according to AP News, Justice Samuel Alito accepted a resort vacation worth over $100,000 to Alaska in July 2008 aboard the private plane of two wealthy Republicans, one of whom has brought roughly a dozen cases before the court. During these cases, Alito did not recuse himself.



The Code reaffirms and formalizes in one place the principles and ethics to which the justices claim they have long subscribed as members of the Supreme Court. The Code builds upon existing anti-corruption laws and financial-disclosure requirements by outlining the protocol for ethically questionable contingencies—such as concealment of travel and hospitality by the Supreme Court justices—as cited by the Wall Street Journal. However, the Code is written in an extremely vague manner. For one, Canon 2 of the document states that justices are required to "avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all activities," but there is no mention of enforcement mechanisms, and disclosures appear entirely voluntary. In fact, the code does not properly outline the consequences of many ethical violations nor does it provide specific, consistent moral advice to justices and the public.

"As seen in the justices' scandals, the Supreme Court has conclusively proven that it is unable to enforce a binding ethics code on themselves and adhere to it," Sophomore **Emily Moen** said.

According to The Wall Street Journal, while many see the Code of Conduct as a crucial step toward reinforcing core values in the justice system such as equality and impartiality, others argue that further action must be taken to truly restore the public trust in the Supreme Court—which has declined in recent years due to the conservative supermajority. Democrats have spearheaded efforts to establish more accountability in the Supreme Court, such as legislation that would fortify a formal recusal process and protocol for handling possible contingencies of impropriety. Democrats also consider calling on external parties (i.e. lawmakers) to make the Supreme Court adopt enforceable ethics rules. On the other hand, Republican Justice John Roberts defends the existing Code, saying that the Supreme Court is so different from other federal courts that it would not make sense to simply adopt the same code applied to all other federal judges. According to NBC news, Republicans also insist that Democrats' efforts go beyond the matter of ethics and are only attempting to delegitimize a conservative court because both Justice Thomas and Alito are staunch conservatives.




"Although the Supreme Court at its current state does need more policing, the Court should not be restrained so extremely as to be deprived of their flexibility during ruling," Senior **Ethan Aji** said.

As of late, the Supreme Court appears unfavorably partisan to the public, even more so with the malfeasance reports of sitting justices. A Marquette Law School Poll discovered that 59% of adults in the U.S. disapprove of the Supreme Court's performance, and the percentage is predicted to increase over the next few years. Consequently, with this public perspective in mind, the Supreme Court might have created the new Code of Conduct to appease the public. Nevertheless, it is still seen in a negative light as a shallow attempt to quell concerns regarding the misconduct of the justices.

## APEC legends meet in SF

**Winston Chu**

*Staff Writer*

From Nov. 16 to Nov. 17, the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit took place in San Francisco, with leaders from various countries bordering the Pacific Ocean gathering to discuss how to spur more economic growth and trade. Yet, while the main purpose of the summit is establishing a consensus on global plans and efforts, this year's meeting also underscored the many challenges San Francisco has struggled to overcome in the past few years.

The APEC was founded in 1989, and has since been hosting yearly summits of world leaders and diplomats to facilitate growth, trade and investment. This year's theme was "Creating a Resilient and Sustainable Future for All"; all countries committed to fostering innovation while maintaining environmental sustainability. San Francisco was chosen for the meeting this year because of its rich history of innovation and emphasis on sustainability within the thousands of tech companies in the area. Diplomats devised goals to rebuild the economy and supply chains, especially after the global pandemic.

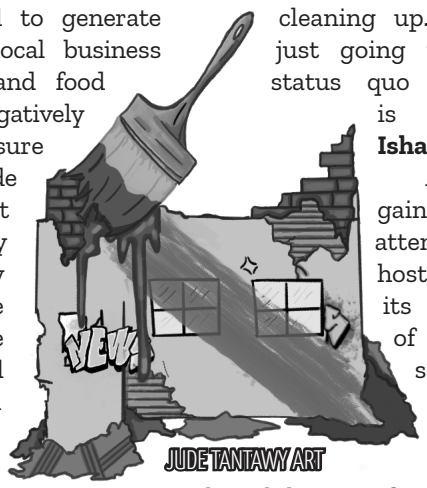
On the sidelines, another meeting was taking place—one between Joe Biden and Xi Jinping. Their goal was to improve communications and relations between their two countries. They also worked together to curb illegal fentanyl production and resume military-to-military communications.

However, with several world leaders—including Biden, Kamala Harris and other national figures—present in San Francisco, protestors seized their opportunity to emphasize their concerns. On the Bay Bridge, protestors called for a ceasefire in Gaza, shutting down multiple lanes; traffic and bus lines had to be detoured. Anti-CCP protesters also paraded outside the APEC meeting venue, as well as Xi's hotel.

In preparation for the tens of thousands of diplomats and attendees, San Francisco underwent drastic measures to make the city more presentable. In the midst of a homelessness crisis, city officials cleared tent encampments off of roads. Homeless people were ushered under freeways and into unnoticeable alleys. Moreover, workers polished sidewalks and scrubbed graffiti off buildings. Uneven sidewalks were re-laid, and empty manhole covers were finally fixed.

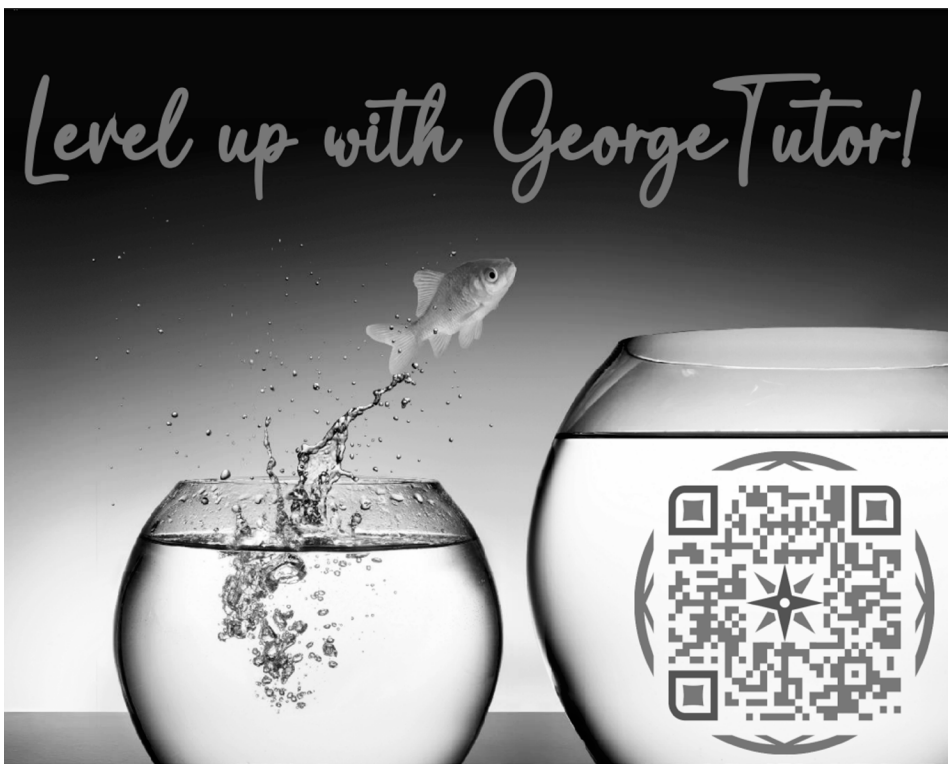
"San Francisco was not very considerate towards the homeless people because they already struggle in life, and all the city did was just make it harder for them to survive and live. Instead, the city should have helped the homeless by giving them a place to stay," Sophomore **Riya Balaji** said.

Furthermore, while the influx of people was expected to generate millions of dollars in local business revenue, many stores and food businesses were negatively impacted. Road closure and parking issues made it difficult to attract customers, causing many shops to temporarily close rather than face dismal sales. These events have also raised concern over San Francisco's willingness to fix internal problems.




"The city should not be trying to fake their image for the outside world and hide the reality of drugs and crime by cleaning up. The situation is just going to return to the status quo when the event is over," Freshman **Ishani Manral** said.

As San Francisco gained international attention as the host of the APEC, its status as a hub of innovation was solidified; however, many also criticized the city for having the ability to fix many issues, but seemingly only doing so when its international image was at stake.



DESIGN BY ELLA POLAK

# FEATURE: WORLD

## The authoritarian tyranny of the Congo

**Adrian Tomaszewski**

*Staff Writer*

From a golden state of prosperity to one plagued by slave labor, the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a prime example of colonization's devastating reverberations. Since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960, the country has undergone nearly 55 years of endless power struggles, degrading the human rights and economy of the Congolese. The DRC's first peaceful transition of power following the election of 2018 lit a torch of hope in many people's hearts before being swiftly extinguished as the Congo now faces rebel groups, secession attempts and immense economic inequality.

The Kongo Kingdom, the first centralized power in the region, formed in the late 14th century and prospered until it fell under the personal control of Belgium's King Leopold II during the European push to colonize Africa. Leopold ruled the region with an iron fist, seeking to maximize its potential as a rubber plantation through harsh labor that carried devastating punishments such as severing workers' hands if they underperformed. Leopold's Congo became one of the darkest stains on European history, leaving over 10 million Congolese dead.

"Belgium's colonial practices play a major role in the DRC's current political climate as they left behind economic, political and social instability due to the colonizer's consolidation of power and money," Sophomore **Melvin Najarian** said.

A small mutiny in 1960 led to the creation of an independent but disunited anti-colonial government. However, seeking control of the Congo's rich uranium deposits, the U.S. and Belgium installed a pro-western dictator in 1965. This dictatorship lasted until the Rwandan genocide in 1994, when the DRC harbored fleeing Hutu refugees from Rwanda, including extremists that played a role in massacring the Tutsi people. The resulting conflict led to two wars, the rise and fall of an interim government and finally, in 2003, the spread of relative peace and democracy. In 2018, Félix Tshisekedi assumed the presidency, marking the first peaceful transition of power in DRC history; however, the administration still engaged in authoritarianism and corruption.

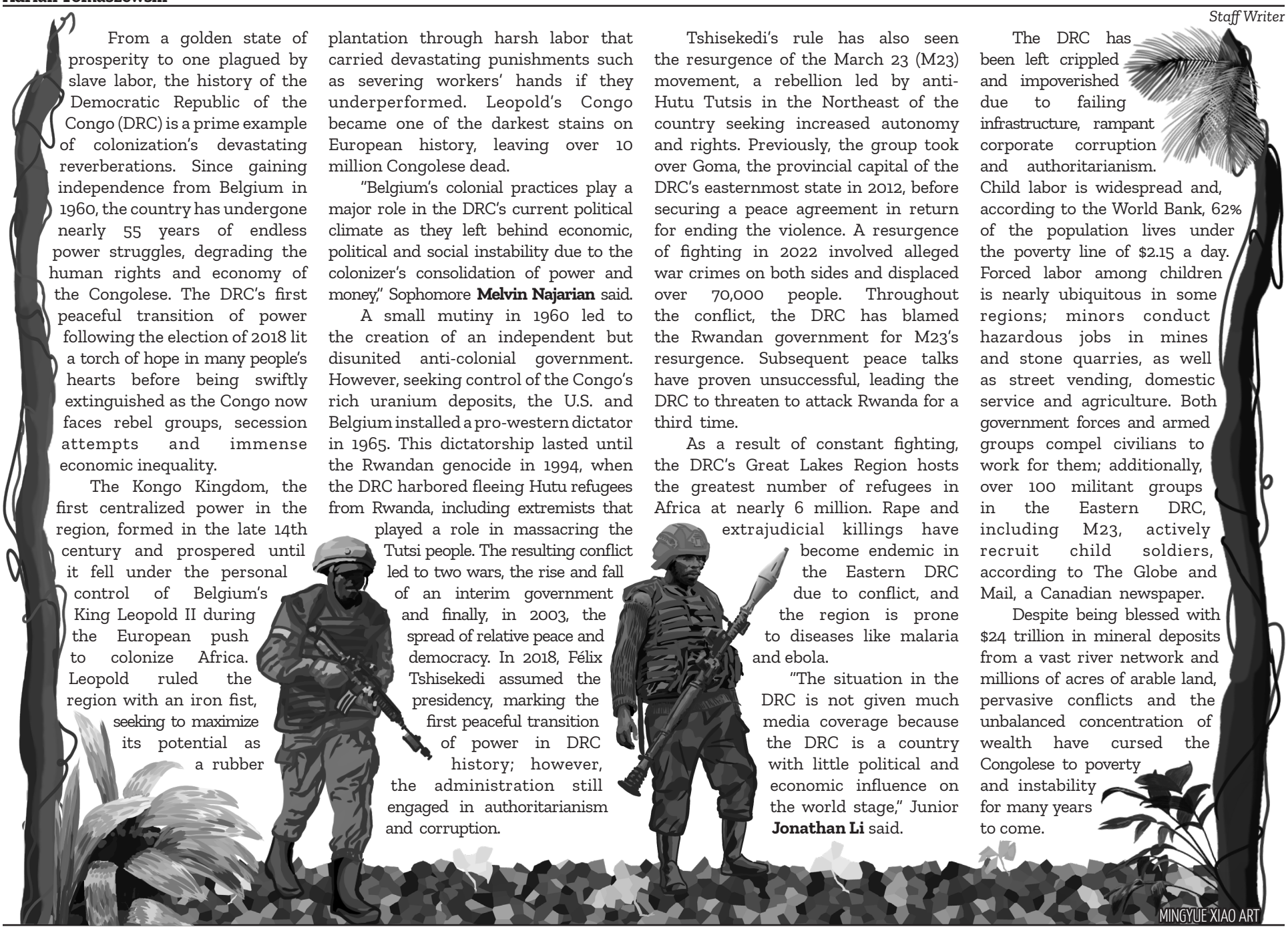
Tshisekedi's rule has also seen the resurgence of the March 23 (M23) movement, a rebellion led by anti-Hutu Tutsis in the Northeast of the country seeking increased autonomy and rights. Previously, the group took over Goma, the provincial capital of the DRC's easternmost state in 2012, before securing a peace agreement in return for ending the violence. A resurgence of fighting in 2022 involved alleged war crimes on both sides and displaced over 70,000 people. Throughout the conflict, the DRC has blamed the Rwandan government for M23's resurgence. Subsequent peace talks have proven unsuccessful, leading the DRC to threaten to attack Rwanda for a third time.

As a result of constant fighting, the DRC's Great Lakes Region hosts the greatest number of refugees in Africa at nearly 6 million. Rape and extrajudicial killings have become endemic in the Eastern DRC due to conflict, and the region is prone to diseases like malaria and ebola.

"The situation in the DRC is not given much media coverage because the DRC is a country with little political and economic influence on the world stage," Junior **Jonathan Li** said.

The DRC has been left crippled and impoverished due to failing infrastructure, rampant corporate corruption and authoritarianism. Child labor is widespread and, according to the World Bank, 62% of the population lives under the poverty line of $2.15 a day. Forced labor among children is nearly ubiquitous in some regions; minors conduct hazardous jobs in mines and stone quarries, as well as street vending, domestic service and agriculture. Both government forces and armed groups compel civilians to work for them; additionally, over 100 militant groups in the Eastern DRC, including M23, actively recruit child soldiers, according to The Globe and Mail, a Canadian newspaper.

Despite being blessed with $24 trillion in mineral deposits from a vast river network and millions of acres of arable land, pervasive conflicts and the unbalanced concentration of wealth have cursed the Congolese to poverty and instability for many years to come.

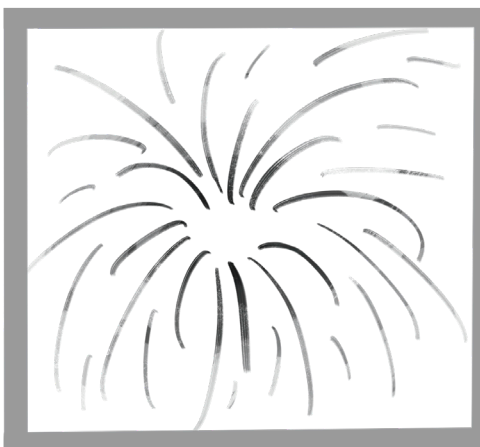


MINGYUE XIAO ART

## Lighting the lamps of Diwali

**Mahika Khosla and Catherine Nguyen**

*Staff Writers*



On the banks of the river in New Delhi, 2.22 million lamps rose in the air, setting a new world record. This year, over 1 billion people, mostly in South Asia, celebrated the holiday of Diwali and honored the triumph of good over evil. Diwali is mostly celebrated in Hinduism according to the Hindu Lunar Calendar, but Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists also participate in the festival with their own traditions and stories.

While Diwali is traced back to ancient India, there are various legends concerning its exact origins. It was most likely an important harvest festival, and some say that it was to celebrate Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity, and Lord Vishnu's marriage or Lakshmi's birthday. Other stories associated with Diwali include Lord Ram returning to Ayodhya after saving his wife, Sita.

"To me, Diwali means a celebration of light and good over darkness and evil. My family worships Lakshmi by asking her to bless us with peace and wealth, as well as doing a puja, a Hindu ritual where we gather around a little shrine and pray to the gods," Freshman **Lasya Madineni** said.

The traditions associated with Diwali are somewhat different for Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains. The Jain community uses Diwali to celebrate their founder Mahvira's moksha, or enlightenment and liberation, from the cycle of life and death. Some Buddhists commemorate this holiday as the day Emperor Ashoka converted to Buddhism. Sikhs celebrate the

release of Guru Hargobind, a figure of faith from the 17th century who was imprisoned for 12 years.

On the night of the festival, people ignite firecrackers and light oil lamps called diyas, which are placed in rows along temples and set adrift in streams. The light expresses respect to the heavens for the acquisition of wealth, health, peace, prosperity and knowledge, as well as inviting Lakshmi's presence. Families also place roses in pots of water, hang marigolds on their walls and decorate their floors with rangoli—colored sand or flowers on the ground in the shape of patterns such as the lotus blossom—to bring good luck. Many pray to deities and recite stories during this time of devotion. Gambling is also a popular festivity during Diwali as it pays respect to the Goddess Parvati and her husband Lord Shiva.

While the festivities on this day are full of celebrations, decoration and special food preparations, the amount of firecrackers that are lit during the night of Diwali has become a hazard of its own. As of 2022, India is the eighth most polluted country, according to The Times Of India, and New Delhi was at the top of the list for Indian cities with poor air quality due to the combination of widespread industrial pollution and also farmers burning leftover plant stubble after harvesting.

Anticipating the air pollution spike during the height of the festival season, Indian officials took matters into their own hands and set many guidelines, such as shutting down primary schools and banning high-pollution vehicles to reduce the worst haze and smog of the season. Moreover, local authorities deployed water sprinklers and anti-smog guns to control the haze and urged residents to light "green crackers," which emit less pollution than other firecrackers. Some Indian states even banned the sale of fireworks and imposed other restrictions to stem the pollution that has posed respiratory problems for citizens.

"Celebrating Diwali with firecrackers is fine as long as it is done in moderation. However, we can all be more mindful about how many firecrackers we are using and take the appropriate steps to make sure we are not harming the environment," Junior **Rishika Rastogi** said.

Despite these efforts, a 400-500 level was recorded on the air quality index on Diwali, which is more than 10 times the global safety threshold and can cause acute and chronic bronchitis and asthma attacks. Firecrackers can also cause additional harm to revelers; for instance, a 4-year old girl celebrating Diwali died due to a firecracker mishap. While hosting celebrations in large gatherings can often strengthen relationships, they may also pose a dangerous health risk to everyone involved.

### Quotebox: Celebrating Diwali

*Compiled by Jaein Park and Gilina Voon, Staff Writers*

"My favorite part of Diwali is the food, like gulab jamun, a sweet donut-like dish drenched in sugar syrup."
—Freshman **Ishaan Desai**

"We start by decorating our home with lights and colorful rangoli designs., which symbolize the victory of light over darkness and good over evil."
—Sophomore **Aadi Shah**

YUNSEO KIM ART

# SPORTS

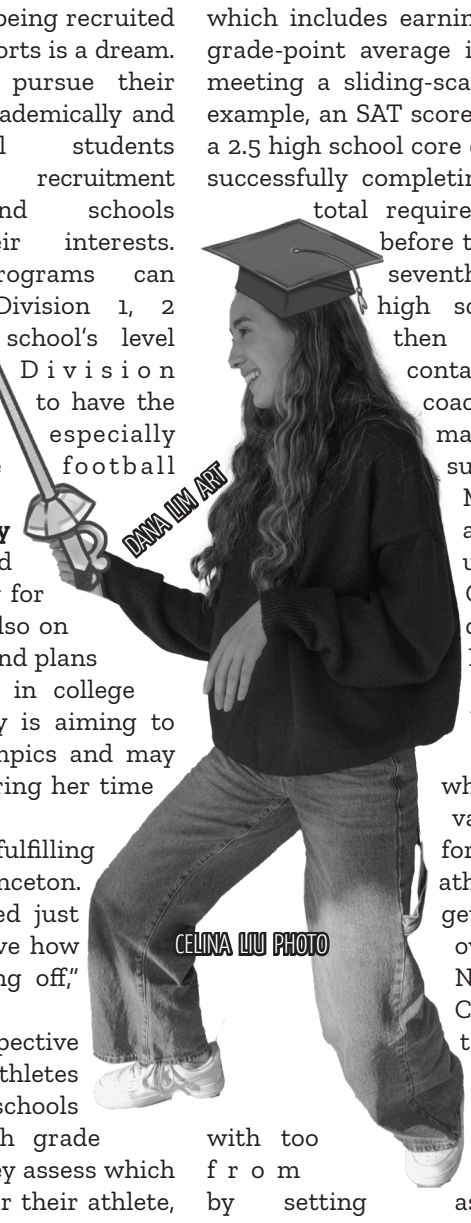
DESIGN BY ANDREW DUVAL

## Charger athletes sign to colleges

**Niru Shivakumar**

*Staff Writer*

For many athletes, being recruited to play college sports is a dream. As a way to pursue their passions both academically and athletically, several students partake in the recruitment process to attend schools that best fit their interests. College athletic programs can be divided into Division 1, 2 and 3 based on the school's level of competitiveness. Division 1 Schools are known to have the best college athletes, especially in popular sports like football and basketball.

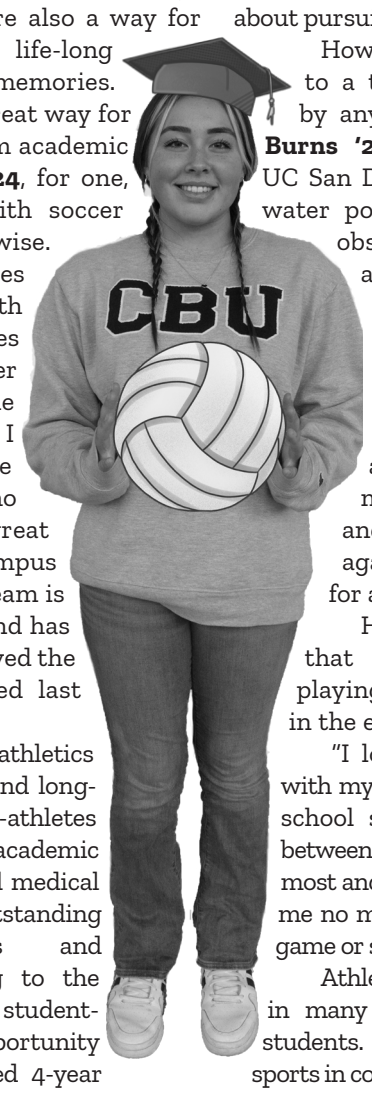



**Leehi Machulsky '24** recently committed to Princeton University for fencing. Machulsky is also on the US National Team and plans to continue her sport in college and beyond. Machulsky is aiming to participate in the Olympics and may major in economics during her time at Princeton.

"It feels really fulfilling to have signed to Princeton. Although I never fenced just to get into college, I love how my hard work is paying off," Machulsky said.

Families of prospective collegiate student-athletes start looking into schools as early as the eighth grade according to NCSA. They assess which division level is ideal for their athlete, and consider factors such as the amount of time the student can dedicate to sports and their performance. Families also make sure students are on the right track to become NCAA eligible, which includes earning at least a 2.3 grade-point average in core courses, meeting a sliding-scale standard (for example, an SAT score of 820 requires a 2.5 high school core course GPA) and successfully completing 10 of the 16 total required core courses before the start of their seventh semester in high school. Students then may initiate contact with college coaches through many platforms such as NCSA, MaxPreps, Hudl and more. NCAA uses Recruiting Calendars that detail when NCAA D1 and D2 college coaches begin actively seeking players, which are often a valuable resource for high school athletes aiming to get recruited. The overall goal of the NCAA Recruiting Calendars is to shield top athletes from being burdened with too many messages from college coaches by setting aside certain times during which coaches are not permitted to get in touch with players. According to the NCAA, creating specific time periods in which recruiting may occur helps protect the well-being of prospective student-athletes and ensure competitive equity.

Aside from their role in college admissions, sports are also a way for students to make life-long friendships and memories. They can also be a great way for students to relax from academic stress. **Sophia Sick '24**, for one, enjoyed her time with soccer both club and school wise.




"My best memories are making friends with my club teammates while getting closer to everyone on the high school team. I chose to attend the University of Idaho because they have a great D1 program. Their campus is beautiful and the team is so welcoming, kind and has such high energy. I loved the school and committed last November," Sick said.

Playing collegiate athletics has both short-term and long-term benefits. Student-athletes get top-notch academic assistance, exceptional medical care and access to outstanding coaching, facilities and equipment, according to the NCAA. Furthermore, student-athletes have the opportunity to attend their desired 4-year university based on athletic merit even if their high-school grades would not qualify them. Nonetheless, student-athletes still work hard in school—quality academic performance is important for an athlete to be recruited. Several students begin playing sports at a young age to explore an alternative option for university and feel strongly about pursuing sports in the future.

However, getting recruited to a top university is not easy by any means. According to **Ev Burns '24**, who plans to attend UC San Diego in the fall to play D1 water polo, she has faced various obstacles throughout her athletic career.

"My greatest setback would probably be my mindset when I was injured or discouraged. It was hard coming back from an injury and feeling like I had lost so much of my athletic ability, and then training again and again without seeing results for a long time," Burns said.

However, Burns explains that the memories she made playing her sport made up for it in the end.

"I loved every minute playing with my team during club and high-school season. The little moments between teammates always meant the most and made the biggest impact on me no matter what the outcome of a game or season was," Burns said.

Athletics can be rewarding in many different ways for several students. It is a gateway to pursuing sports in college as well as a way for high-achieving academic and athletic students to attend top universities. Athletic recruitment will likely remain a popular goal for students who love their sport and want to pursue it for many years to come.

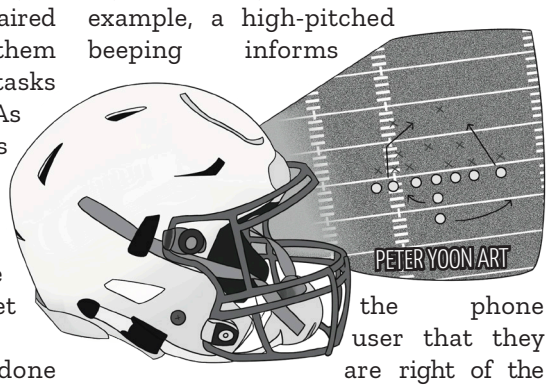
Left: **Leehi Machulsky '24** poses for the camera smiling, in a fencing position. Right: **Briana Livingston '24** stands smiling.

## Technologies for disabled athletes

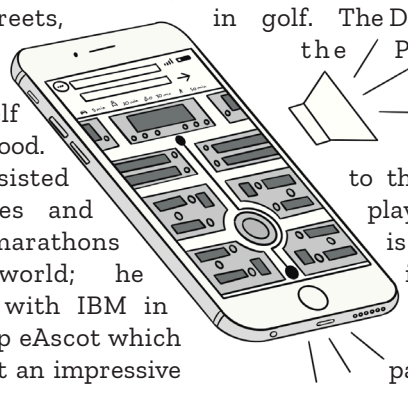
**Anna Yue**

*Staff Writer*

One might not think much about daily activities such as walking to school, driving a car or simply talking. But for 13% of the American population, these activities may be unachievable as they are challenged with disabilities such as impaired hearing or sight, obstructing them from performing their daily tasks and participating in sports. As technological advancements increase, however, many disabled peoples' athletic dreams have been fulfilled. Devices created to support disabled athletes are available in many sports and target various types of disabilities.




Simon Wheatcroft had done the "impossible" using one of these technological assistants. An avid runner, he suffered from a degenerative eye disease that left him blind at the age of 17, BBC News describes. While Wheatcroft was blind, he began running in his backyard, slowly progressing onto roads and streets, memorizing objects along the way to navigate himself through his neighborhood. Wheatcroft persisted through his struggles and advanced to running marathons all around the world; he eventually partnered with IBM in the creation of the app eAscot which enabled him to attempt an impressive 155.3 mile ultra-marathon across the Namibia desert.

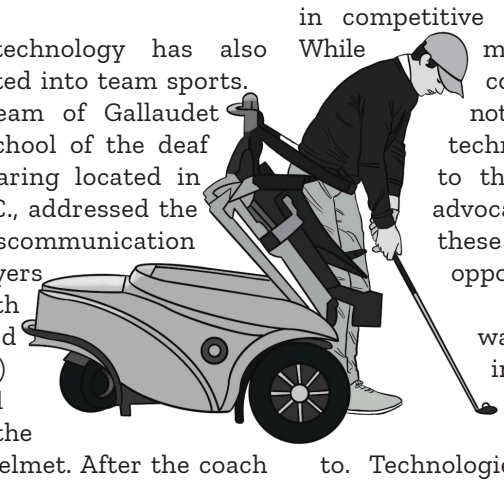


eAscot uses satellite navigation and sensors to pinpoint the precise location of the smartphone and sends signals through various sounds. For example, a high-pitched beeping informs the phone user that they are right of the designated course, while a low-pitched one informs the user that they are straying left. A series of rapid high or low-pitched beeping signals that the runner had diverged significantly from the planned path.

Beyond running, technology has also been used to increase accessibility in golf. The Daily Record describes the Paragolfer as a three-wheeled device that can transport wheelchair users to the proper position to play golf—this machine is also applicable in archery and fly fishing, a sport that requires most participants to stand within the water. Paragolfer controls are similar to those of an electric wheelchair, minimizing the learning curve between transitioning from one to the other. There are various Paragolfer-equipped golfing sites scattered throughout the U.S. as well as other countries such as Scotland and Canada.

"Technology empowers disabled athletes to overcome their disabilities by showcasing their skill on a more level playing field when compared to their abled counterparts," Junior **Lara Harb** said.

Assistive technology has also been incorporated into team sports. The football team of Gallaudet University, a school of the deaf and hard-of-hearing located in Washington D.C., addressed the problem of miscommunication between players and coaches with an augmented reality (AR) screen placed inside of the quarterback's helmet. After the coach selects a play on their tablet, the information is transmitted directly to the AR screen, allowing players to fully understand the play despite their impaired hearing. With more efficient communication, players no longer have to make eye contact with the coach to receive a signal. Furthermore, this technology reduces the possibility that opponents can read the team's communications compared to if the coaches were using sign language.



Despite this successful solution to hearing disabilities among football players, college football generally does not allow helmet-based communication systems. As reported by NPR, Gallaudet University has only used this AR technology once in an official NCAA game meant to be a trial run by the league. Debates about which technologies to help the disabled should be permitted in competitive sports have arisen. While many professional competitions do not allow these technologies, similar to the NCAA, many are advocating for a reversal of these rules to ensure equal opportunity in sports.

"Anyone who wants to participate in competitive sports should be given an equal chance to. Technologies create a fairer competitive environment, so as long as they do not provide an unreasonable advantage to one side, they should be allowed," Senior **Jessica Burriesci** said.

As technology continues to develop and inclusivity in competitive sports increases, perhaps disabled people will one day have the same chances as others to participate in high-level athletics.

DESIGN BY ANDREW DUVAL

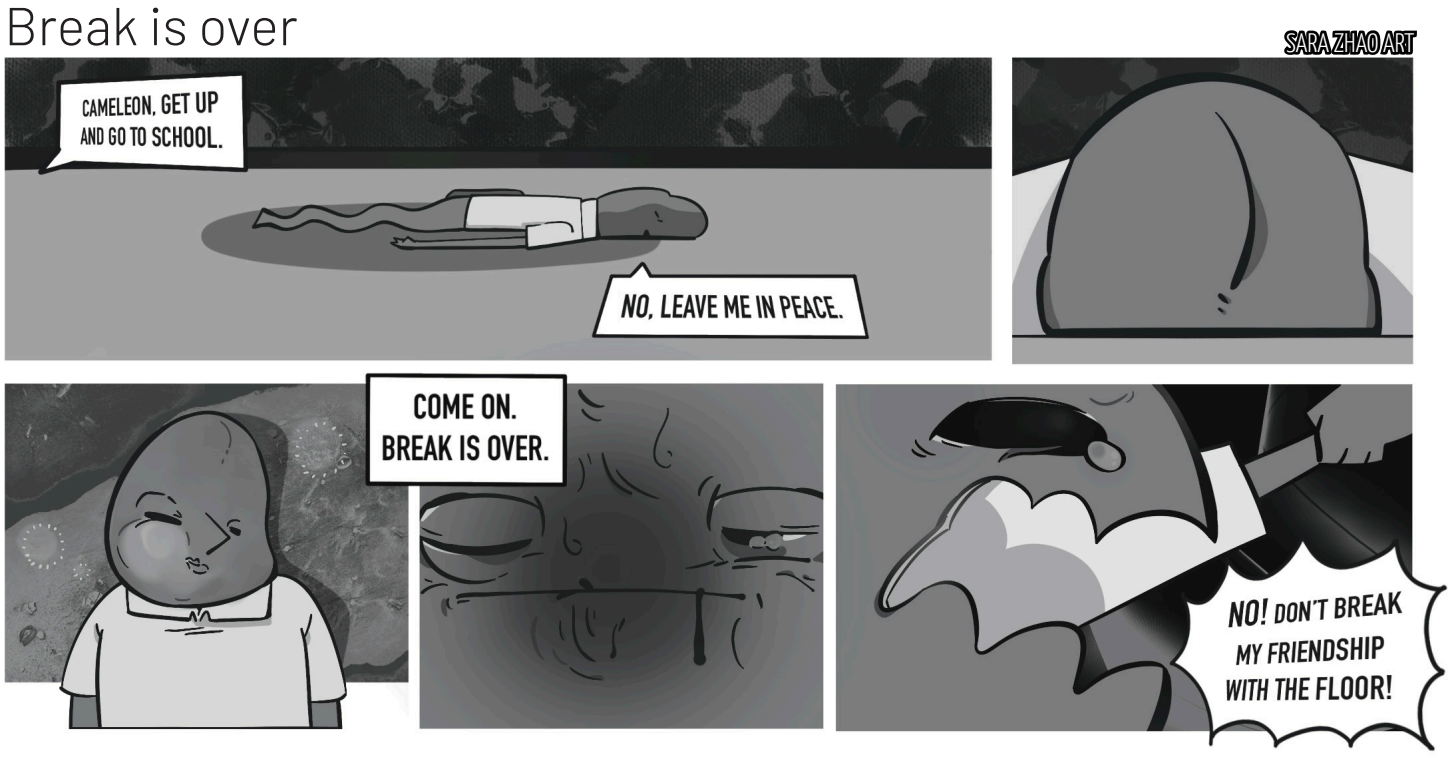
# CHARGER FOLLIES

## Flight

KAYLA CHOI ART

## Break is over

SARA ZHAO ART




## Snowy scramble

REEVE CHAN ART

Why was the snowman looking through the carrots?

1 ecauesb _____
2 eh __
3 saw ___
4 ylluferac_____
5 ginckip _____
6 roughth _____
7 sih ___
8 seon ____

What's the weather report on Christmas Eve?

1 partyl _____
2 doucly _____
3 iwth ____
4 a _
5 canech _____
6 fo _____
7 sliehg _____
8 slleb _____

Why did the reindeer become a detective?

1 ecauesb _____
2 eh __
3 watned _____
4 to __
5 estt ____
6 sih ___
7 "fooh"- ____
8 stinpr _____

## Search for holiday vocab!

CLAIRE CHANG ART

Q T B E L L S T A F E M G J L T O R N A M E N T S N W M X R
F J A C M A H S D V B L D S F R S D T I Y C H R P H I B D N
O B E T I L A I R C D H W E K I C W M G T G A X E S L U S I
D C P P O I N S E T T I A J Y I T K B L F I R E P L A C E J
H X M E T C I D I Y A D M N T W G Y S E Y N K S P F W S L R
W Y U B P E L I D S R T S C U N A T A V F G W L E V A J A E
R W T W O S M E L E F G F M W K O W L B S E P D R O D H T I
E L A Z D K B P E Q N W H S I L K S I D H R Z W M T X N Z N
A T G X S A M N T I A M L O L S W A G C A B A G I H C Y S D
T I S W J T E R K R H P S I T U A B H N K R C A N D L E K E
H V O R D E I C H L F Z E L F Z N R T P F E S O T A R U D E
A N Q L Y B O V E K T V B L R L Z J S E M A H L O E Q I H R
S A K H O T C H O C O L A T E Q A O N R B D I B M K C N G B
N R E V S T N A R S A N T A C L A U S Q L E Y A C D I F T S
G O C M I S T L E T O E Z U Y C F V K N B D C W T J N E W A

Bells
Candle
Cookie
Dreidel
Elf
Fireplace
Gingerbread
Hanukkah
Hot chocolate
Ice skate
Lights
Kwanzaa
Mistletoe
Ornaments
Peppermint
Poinsettia
Reindeer
Santa Claus
Ski
Snow
Stockings
Wreath

## "Heaven Knows"

**James Yu**
*Staff Writer*

As the spices of life—luminant summer nights, luscious long weekends, lustrous Thanksgiving turkey—freeze into memory like ice, much of singer and music producer PinkPatheress' newest album "Heaven Knows," melts into obscurity while its lead single, "Boy's a liar Pt. 2," which features rapper Ice Spice, steals the spotlight. However, for listeners searching for exciting and energetic songs to listen to as the seasons shift to winter doom and finals gloom, "Heaven Knows" exceeds in satisfying listeners' hunt.

Despite its complete 13 track length, "Heaven Knows" maintains a coherent aura from beginning to end. Starting track "Another Life" opens with an eerie orchestral organ instrumental before quickly switching into upbeat, breakneck synth. The following song, "True Romance," builds off of "Another Life"'s uplifting vibe, mixing a lively acoustic accompaniment with a vigorous clapping beat. Through "Boy's a liar Pt. 2," the last song on the album, PinkPantheress is able to utilize dynamic synths and "Jersey Club" style beats to foster a consistently vivacious mood.

However, what truly sets the album apart from other projects is PinkPatheress' strong vocal performance. Throughout the record, PinkPatheress's lyrics use each song's melodies to accentuate the uniform record's deformities. In "Feelings," PinkPantheress' wispy vocals build on top of the clicky rhythm, constructing a brazen and stirringly melodramatic song. Likewise, steady vocals blend into the ebullient instrumental in PinkPantheress' "Mosquito", concocting a lush melodic yet defined tune.

In spite of these factors, "Heaven Knows" is held back due to its features. Although PinkPatheress' strident verses on "Nice to meet you" mesh well with the playful melody, Central Cee's feature is out of place, adding blunt British rap over a fairy-like background track. Similarly, Rema's feature in "Another Life" leaves much to be desired.

Overall, "Another Life" shines brightest when PinkPatheress is able to take control of each song from top to bottom. For instance, in "Blue," PinkPatheress mixes a bouncy chorus with funky verses and hypnotic beats to form a carefree song. In this way, "Capable of Love" also mashes expressive vocals with sharp instrumentals to write a fluid, grandiose story within a song. With the year ending, PinkPatheress' newest album offers listeners powerful songs packed with enough spice to ride out the icy holidays.

"Heaven Knows" (4/5)

was i vibin'?

+ consistent upbeat melody
+ lively vocal performances
- lackluster features

# - Transportation -
# Hypersonic planes blast off to the future

**Andrew Duval and Ella Polak**

*Sports & Charger Follies and Lifestlyle & Feature World Editors*

A flight from New York to Tokyo in just one hour seems impossible—reminiscent of a scenario taken straight out of the latest science fiction novel. This fantastical scene is not a vision of the far-off future, but rather a projection for a hypersonic plane currently in development that will fly at 6,900 mph. As companies around the world rapidly advance hypersonic technology, a new era of transportation is taking flight.

Hypersonic flight goes a step further than supersonic flight, which is defined by speeds between Mach 1—the speed of sound—and Mach 5. Aircraft that surpass Mach 5, reaching hypersonic speed, travel at over one mile per second and can circumnavigate the globe in just a few hours. During the Cold War, extreme flight technology reached its peak; just 10 years after the V-2 was developed, the record for the fastest manned aircraft was claimed by the X-15, which flew at Mach 6.7 and was operated by many future astronauts, including Neil Armstrong. However, military investment in hypersonic technology petered out in the later years of the Cold War, as stealth capabilities were emphasized over the superior speed and altitude that hypersonic flight offers. Government funding was also redirected to the Space Race; a planned Mach 18 space plane, the X-20 Dyna-Soar, was scrapped in exchange for NASA's Gemini program, which trained astronauts for the first moon landing. Currently, companies like Lockheed Martin and Boeing are leading the industry, with the former creating multiple hypersonic missile systems for the U.S. Navy and the latter working on the X-51 Waverider, an unmanned hypersonic aircraft. In 2022, hypersonic missiles were first used on the battlefield by Russia to devastate Ukrainian defenses in the Russia-Ukraine war.

While nearly all existing hypersonic technology is devoted to military objectives, a burgeoning civilian market for high-speed transportation is rapidly growing. The commercial hypersonic flight industry has its roots in the Concorde, a supersonic jet that flew regular routes in the second half of the 20th century. It traveled at Mach 2 and could fly from London to New York in three and a half hours, an engineering marvel for its time. However, a fatal crash in 2000 forced airlines to make expensive safety modifications to the planes which, along with inhibiting fuel costs, made the Concorde unprofitable and ended the use of the planes in 2003.

The mantle of high-speed flight has been taken up by numerous startups since the collapse of the Concorde. Venus Aerospace raised nearly $40 million to develop a business jet capable of traveling at Mach 9, launching it high enough to see the blackness of space and fast enough to travel halfway around the globe in an hour. The U.S. Air Force awarded $60 million in funding to Hermeus, a company that aims to construct a Mach 5.5 commercial jet and other autonomous aircraft. Destinus, a European startup, has successfully tested two prototypes for a Mach 5 plane that can travel from Frankfurt to Dubai in 90 minutes, and the Chinese company Space Transportation is planning a crewed test flight of its supersonic business jet in 2025.

"As this technology is developed, there is a risk that high-speed travel will only be accessible to the rich since companies may charge high prices in order to make their products economically viable," Senior **Matthew Phan** said.

The future of the hypersonic transportation industry depends on new technology that can surpass the limitations of the Concorde. Although the transition from Mach 4.99 to Mach 5.01—supersonic to hypersonic—does not cause a significant change in the physics relating to an object's flight, as aircrafts fly at faster speeds and higher altitudes, engineers must consider numerous factors that are usually negligible in subsonic or supersonic flight. For example, traveling faster than the speed of sound causes shock waves. When the speed increases to hypersonic levels, these shock waves occur extremely close to the surface of the aircraft, creating more drag and variables to be accounted for in flight. Furthermore, most supersonic aircraft use ramjets to propel themselves at speeds between Mach 2 and Mach 4. Ramjets work by taking in air from the front of the aircraft, compressing it and heating it to cause a combustion reaction that propels the aircraft forward. However, ramjets cannot effectively be used at hypersonic speeds because when they compress the air, the molecules in the air have their speed reduced to below Mach 1 before they are combusted. As an alternative, engineers plan to utilize scramjets, which are modified ramjet engines that do not reduce the speed of the air during compression. At hypersonic speeds, the airflow over the aircraft creates so much friction that it can dramatically heat the aircraft, causing structural vibration, which would reduce the structural integrity of the vehicle. In addition, the air is less dense at higher altitudes, so the design of hypersonic vehicles must account for various aerodynamic effects that occur in lower-density air.

Many companies, such as Venus Aerospace, are finding innovative ways to overcome these problems and become profitable. Venus Aerospace's Mach 9 Stargazer will be fitted with a rotating-detonation engine, which increases combustion efficiency by 25% and reduces fuel costs, according to the company's co-founder. Destinus plans to use hydrogen as an energy source, and Airbus is constructing a hydrogen jet engine that will be tested in 2026. Hydrogen is much lighter than other fuels and more energy-efficient, and hydrogen prices are projected to drop in the coming decades.

As travel times between distant cities are massively reduced, hypersonic travel has the potential to transform global interactions. New markets will open up due to potentially increasing tourism and cross-cultural exchange will likely increase as same-day travel across the world becomes commonplace. International investment could also increase as business between different countries becomes more efficient.

"Although hydrogen fuel and hypersonic flight are still maturing, their ability to shape our society and boost the economy outweighs their risks. Humanity as a whole should always try to push the limits of technology and optimize everything," Sophomore **Tristan Mank** said.

Still, commercial hypersonic travel faces a number of significant obstacles before it becomes a part of daily life. Most development deadlines are at least a decade away, and the substantial initial investment required to create hypersonic technology has already caused some companies, such as Aerion, to collapse. As such, hypersonic aircraft have the potential to be both incredibly destructive and constructive to society.

## Infographic: Top 5 hypersonic planes

*Compiled by Niru Shivakumar and James Yu*
*Staff Writers*

### 1. North American X-15

The North American X-15 first took off in 1959 as the first winged aircraft to reach heights beyond 30,500 m (100,000 ft) and to fly at Mach 4, 5 and 6. Out of its 12 pilots, eight were awarded astronaut wings, signifying that they have flown in space or above the altitude of 50 miles. The plane was used to research the atmosphere for 199 flights in 9 years.

### 2. WZ-8

On Oct. 1, 2019, the WZ-8 made its appearance in Beijing's National Day parade. Its characteristics were not disclosed at the time; it was just referred to as a "high-altitude, high-speed reconnaissance drone." Using the proper launch attitude, a Xi'an H-6M bomber mothership launched the drone. After that, the WZ-8 fired up its rocket engines, propelling the drone to its maximum working height and speed.

### 3. Lockheed X-17

From 1957 to 1958, the X-17 served as a test vehicle to evaluate technologies related to the creation of the UGM–27 Polaris missile. The rocket was known as the Polaris Flight Test Vehicle, or Polaris FTV, throughout its testing. Before burning up, the X-17's first stage propelled the rocket 17 miles into the sky.

### 4. Boeing X-51

The Boeing X-51 Waverider was an unmanned research aircraft. Designated X-51 in 2005, it completed its first hypersonic flight on May 26, 2010. The X-51A program was not intended to be a weapon system prototype; rather, it was a demonstration of the viability of air-breathing, high-speed scramjet propulsion using hydrocarbon fuel.

### 5. NASA X-43

The NASA X-43 was an unmanned experimental hypersonic aircraft designed to investigate different features of hypersonic flight at diverse scales. On June 2, 2001, NASA's NB-52B carrier aircraft lifted the first X-43A hypersonic research aircraft and its modified Pegasus booster rocket into the air for the first of three high-speed free flight attempts from the Dryden Flight Research Center in Edwards, California.

CATHERINE NGUYEN ART