

The CHARGER ACCOUNT

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DESIGN BY ANTARA GANGWAL

Winter Formal plans melt away

Niru Shivakumar and Gilina Voon

Staff Writers

The soft glow of fairy lights bathe the gym in a magical, wintery ambiance. The walls come alive with projected snowflakes, and scattered fake snow adds an enchanting touch to the floor. Lined with Christmas trees and white, gold and blue decorations, a winter wonderland unfurls within the gym.

At least, that was the vision. Other schools have been hosting Winter Formals for years, and this year, the school hoped to host its first-ever Winter Formal on Jan. 29 in response to a high demand from the student body. Yet despite the hard work put into making this event happen, ASB canceled the Winter Formal on Jan. 23.

Junior **Bella Chobanian**, ASB Commissioner, began brainstorming for the Winter Formal last year, started official planning alongside co-chairs Sophomore **Hana Shah** and Senior **Jeyda Sloneker** three months before the event.

"We hoped to host a

Winter Formal at the school because we wanted a dance other than Homecoming to be available for all grades, fulfilling the demands of some underclassmen who had requested a winter dance. Other schools like Branham High School host annual Winter Formals, so we thought it would be an exciting event for us to try as well," Sloneker said.

Due to the success of past events, ASB was given a budget of \$6,000 for the dance. While planning, they prioritized cultivating a wintery feel and hiring a good DJ. Furthermore, they wanted to offer students activities not typically available at Homecoming or other school dances; for those not interested in dancing, a photo booth, golf simulator and inflatable basketball game would be available for students to enjoy. To accompany the wintery spirit, free hot cocoa would be offered to students.

From Jan. 8 to Jan. 26, ASB sold tickets at the bank. Prices varied depending on who was attending: students with ASB paid \$20, students without ASB paid \$25 and guests had to pay \$30. However, many students did not buy tickets to the dance.

"I attended homecoming, but I

did not buy a Winter Formal ticket because the Winter Formal was in the gym, which was strange as it is not the usual dance location. Additionally, most of my friends were not attending Winter Formal," Junior **Charlotte Lewis** said.

Although some students were looking forward to the dance, according to ASB teacher **Meg Walsh**, the ticket sales projection would not meet the 350 tickets—required amount that needed to be sold to break even.

Various factors played into the insufficient ticket sales. ASB decided to schedule the dance on a Friday night instead of a Saturday to accommodate for the lack of available staff for Saturday and ensure adequate supervision from the admin. However, many students had conflicts on Friday. Additionally, choosing the gym as the dance floor over the cafeteria further limited available time spaces as there are many sports in session. Furthermore, according to Walsh, students had talked amongst themselves and began circulating rumors that pitted their friends against the dance.

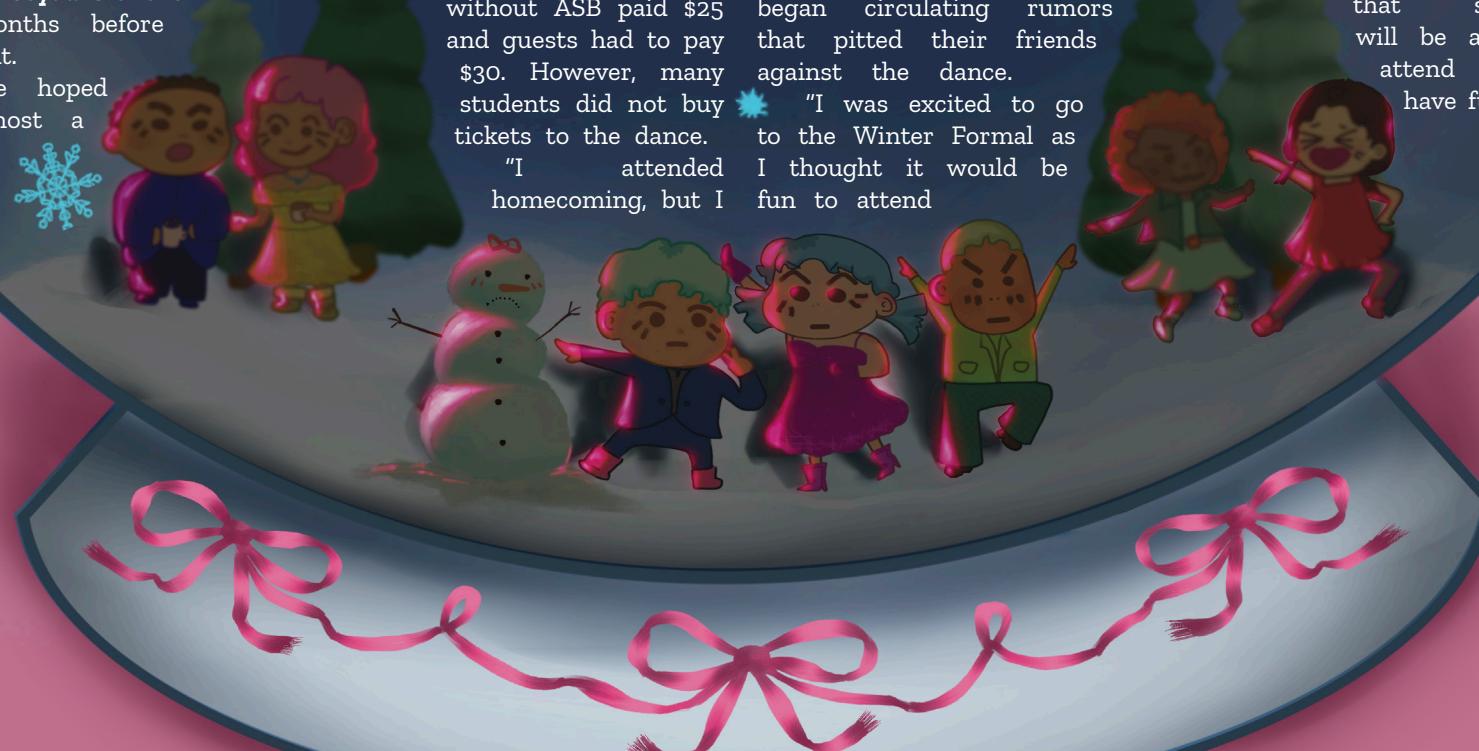
"I was excited to go to the Winter Formal as I thought it would be fun to attend

a new dance. I was disappointed it was canceled, but not surprised since so few students had bought tickets," Senior **Marvin Steinert** said.

Walsh mentioned that ASB strives to put on exceptional events and hopes this cancellation does not damage other events' reputations.

In fact, ASB gained helpful feedback that can be applied to future events: students did not want the dance to take place in the gym and preferred Saturday dances due to scheduling conflicts. While ASB was unable to execute the Winter Formal this year, they are determined to try again next year. ASB will continue to host several events in the future, taking lessons from the Winter Formal's failure into account in order to ensure that students will be able to attend and have fun.

YUNSEOK KWON ART



Gen Alpha goes gaga over Gisou

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Portable X-rays transform medical accessibility

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Joyful journeys: Entertainment on the move

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CATHERINE NGUYEN ART

COMMUNITY NEWS

DESIGN BY GWEN CARROLL

Homing in on new housing policies

James Li and Gilina Voon

Staff Writers

In an effort to reduce crime rates, cities nationwide have participated in crime-free housing programs since 1995. These programs required landlords to evict tenants associated with criminal activity or law enforcement involvement, including incidents requiring a 911 call. Landlords were also encouraged to conduct background checks on applicants before accepting them as tenants.

Previously, crime-free housing had been a common occurrence in California, with one-third of local governments employing crime-free housing legislation. It is also present in 48 states across the United States, with 37 of the 40 largest cities in the U.S. utilizing some form of "nuisance property ordinance," according to LawAtlas, a site tasked with identifying variations in law across the U.S. over time.

However, these programs had unintentional consequences. The Los Angeles Times asserts that these programs pushed individuals to homelessness, contributing to increased property crime. It also caused landlords to evict tenants for minor inconveniences, such as complaints over barbecuing or children playing basketball.

Thus, on Jan. 1, Governor Gavin Newsom enacted legislation to abolish all crime-free housing laws in California. Assemblywoman Tina McKinnor introduced this law, in hopes of preventing local governments from charging landlords penalties or

compelling landlords to evict tenants based on suspected criminal records or law enforcement associations. The legislation also prohibits local governments from mandating background checks on tenants and from evicting entire families due to a single resident's felony.

"This act is beneficial as it helps prevent discrimination against people who are most impacted by law enforcement. It helps expand tenant rights, suppress inconsistent local ordinances and increase lease protections for families. An entire family should not have to pay the price for one member's illicit activities," Senior **Rhea Naik** said.

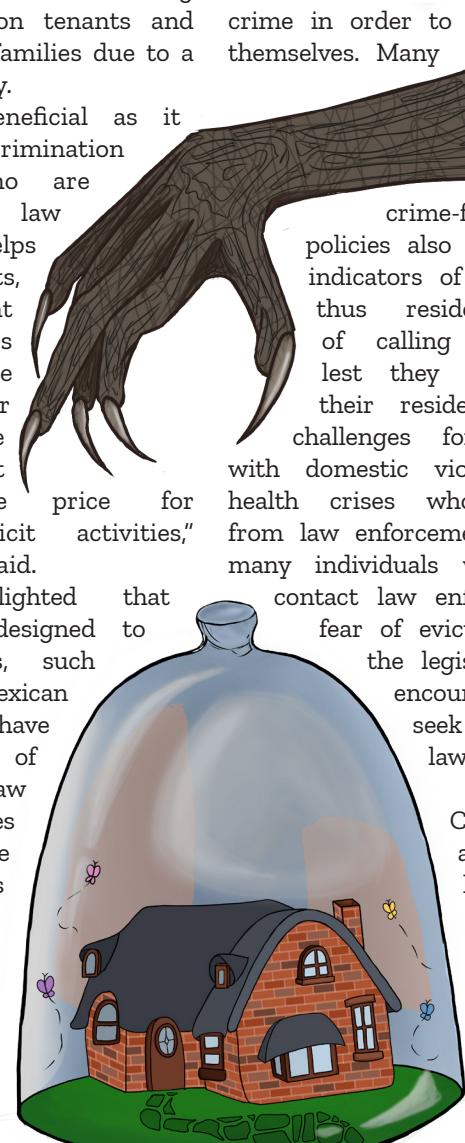
McKinnor highlighted that the legislation is designed to safeguard minorities, such as African and Mexican Americans, who have a higher rate of encounters with law enforcement. It serves to prevent the eviction of minorities and discourages the use of crime-free housing rules as a gentrification tool.

Along with the discriminatory enforcement of crime-free housing, it

has been found that such laws are hardly effective in reducing crime rates. By preventing individuals from gaining residence, people are driven out onto the streets and towards crime in order to sustain themselves. Many

of these new laws so this law might increase the trouble that landlords face," Sophomore **Alex Kim** said.

California also plans to implement additional tenant protections. Currently, under the



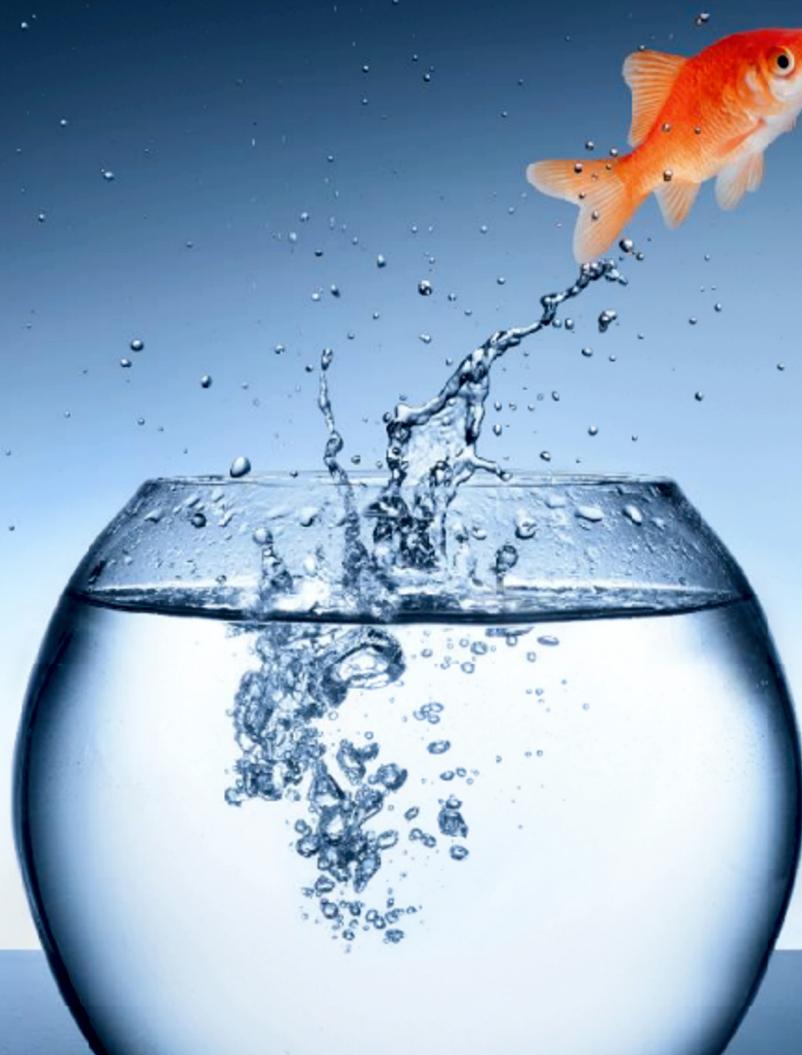
crime-free housing policies also consider 911 calls indicators of criminal activity; thus residents are wary of calling the authorities, lest they risk endangering their residency. This poses challenges for those dealing with domestic violence or mental health crises who required help from law enforcement, as previously, many individuals were hesitant to contact law enforcement due to fear of eviction. In this way, the legislation intends to encourage renters to seek assistance from law enforcement.

"These new California laws are important in helping protect tenants and prevent them from being taken advantage of. However, some people will still try to take advantage

"No Fault, Just Cause" policy, landlords can evict tenants and withdraw the property from the rental market under the pretense of occupation. However, starting April 1, landlords or their families must move into the rental within 90 days and reside there for at least a year to justify evicting tenants for personal use. Another new law in the California Civil Code Section involves reducing the upfront payment tenants need to make for rentals. Previously, tenants were required to pay a security deposit and up to three months of rent charges in advance. The new change aims to ease the financial burden on tenants by adjusting this upfront amount to only one month of the security deposit.

The removal of crime-free housing policies allows California to move past the divisive policies of its past like the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which first introduced crime-free housing. Instead, the state now moves toward legislation that encourages more inclusive and protected communities.

Level up with George Tutor!



Reading into declining literacy rates

Anna Yue and Vira Patil

Developing literacy skills—the ability to read, write and comprehend—is vital in education, as it enhances children's communication and critical thinking skills. In 2023, however, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that the average reading scores of 13-year-olds in the U.S. had fallen four points since 2020, reaching the lowest it has been since 1975. Ben Domingue, an assistant professor at Stanford University, believes that declining children's literacy is an urgent problem, as it could greatly alter the generation's academic success. Some deemed the COVID-19 pandemic and screen time as the main culprit of the decline. No matter the cause, several methods have been proposed to counter decreasing literacy trends, including reading in groups or at home, visiting the library and limiting screen time.

Literacy is an essential skill, required to understand and express ideas, study and communicate effectively with others, among various other applications. Reading comprehension is especially important in primary school because it enables young pupils to understand and process information effectively, fostering critical thinking on a wide range of subjects. Furthermore, literacy enhances problem solving, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and educational achievements, as stated by the University of Michigan. Practicing these skills in school is essential, as students can apply these skills for college applications, job interviews and other future responsibilities.

The pandemic greatly decreased the reading comprehension levels of American youth. Online school removed teacher-student interactions, which impeded student learning outcomes. Specifically, many children took longer to reach reading milestones and there was an increase in students with developmental disabilities and behavioral disorders due to the lockdown, per the National Institutes of Health. Attention spans have also decreased after online school. Gloria Mark, psychologist and professor at the University of California, Irvine, stated that the time one can look at a screen before being distracted has decreased from 120 seconds in 2004 to 75 seconds in 2012, and recently dropped to only 47 seconds. To restore the pre-pandemic levels of achievement, students need at least five additional months of instruction, as reported by Edweek, a U.S. newspaper.

"I notice that now, it is hard for people,

including myself, to sit down and read for a while. Since most of us are so used to stimulating, loud and colorful short-form content, reading becomes bland and thus feels inconvenient," Freshman **Elise Nguyen** said.

In a world where the importance of literacy is increasing, the young generation's ability to read and write seems to be progressing in the opposite direction.

The lack of literacy skills in the younger generation can have significant impacts on the economy. Illiteracy could cost the global economy up

to \$1.19 trillion—the World Economic Forum predicts that by 2025, 97 million new jobs will require more soft skills as technology is predicted to automate millions of low-wage and low-skill professions.

Digital distractions have also been gaining influence as technology advances. Notifications, text messages and social media are all forms of disturbances that promote multi-tasking, short attention spans and cause extra cognitive energy consumption. The rise of short-form video platforms in recent years further hinders the population's ability to focus, as people get used to the minimal attention span required by each video.

Andrea Yon, a middle school teacher in South Carolina, observes that students look up every three to five minutes when told to read for 20 minutes.

"The decreasing literacy rate stems from increased screen time. Now, students use the internet to get answers to a question within seconds instead of reading a physical textbook to find it. Also, children mindlessly

scroll through Instagram reels and other media rather than reading and writing—activities that stimulate one's imagination," Junior **Mirei Takano** said.

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, surveys show that 90% of teenagers between the ages of 13 to 17 use social media. On average, teenagers are online almost nine hours a day, excluding time for homework.

Due to the long durations of time spent on Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and other platforms, students are distracted from academic priorities.

"Although some social media can promote reading, the prevalence of digital and screen-based stimulation for young children can divert their growing minds from reading and traditional literacy activities. When a child stares at their parent's screen all day, the only reading they do is through captions on social media posts. Social media also drains children's creativity, as they are not encouraged to come up with their own entertainment because it is handed to them," Sophomore **Rachel Park** said.

Learning to read is even more difficult for many low-income students, due to limited access to additional tutors and for foreign students who struggle with language barriers in school. However, while school resources may not be sufficient for those who require additional support, public libraries are a valuable resource. Students can go there to access materials such as

free books and audiobooks to improve their literacy throughout the year, as stated by Thunder Bay News Network.

Without the proper literacy development, underprivileged students are likely to experience lower learning outcomes compared to their peers, which is already a prominent issue. The U.S. Census Bureau asserts that individuals in the top socioeconomic quartile are eight times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree compared to individuals from the lowest quartile.

Faced with the pressing issue of declining literacy rates, school systems have emphasized the importance of literacy in higher education and jobs, magnifying efforts to address the problem. For example, California spent over \$50 million in 2020 to train and hire teachers and assistants, as well as buy books for 75 schools with the lowest testing scores.

"Children now stay home watching TV or surfing the internet. Today, public parks are empty and children do not go outside to play. We should take children to libraries and encourage them to read, showing them that reading is fun. Neighborhood kids' reading clubs should also be put in place. The fixation on technology must

be curbed to raise a generation of citizens that can compete with other countries intellectually, economically and socially. Reading and writing fluidly is the key to a complete and well-rounded education," **Priyanka Dinesh**, Counseling Department, said.

Just like any skill, literacy can be practiced and improved over time. Professionals suggest that children read about topics they enjoy, as they will naturally be more motivated and focused in the process.

Restrictions on screen time can help increase children's attention spans and parents can become role models for their children by reading alone or with their children. Public libraries are another resource that communities can promote to improve reading.

In the future, advancing literacy can ultimately help reduce poverty, create job opportunities and improve both mental and physical health for the next generation. Thus, it must be a crucial goal for both schools and families.



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The Charger Account

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Gen Alpha goes gaga over Gisou

Lauren Wilson

Sephora, an established beauty retailer known for its appeal to young women, has experienced a takeover by Generation Alpha, or Gen Alpha. These post-2010 babies are flocking the stores to indulge in their newly found skincare obsession, eager to purchase expensive items that are unnecessary for their still-developing skin.

Beauty brands anticipated significant holiday sales for 2023, expecting parents to buy skincare products for their Gen Alpha children who tagged brands like e.l.f. Beauty and Bubble in their wishlists. Australian socialite Roxy Jacenko shared her 11-year-old daughter's list, consisting of Sol-de-Janeiro Spray and moisturizer from Drunk Elephant—a skincare brand catered to middle-aged women with anti-aging products priced up to \$150. Moreover, 12-year-old content creator Evelyn gained 500,000 followers through videos showing her elaborate skincare and makeup routines. Many questioned why Gen Alpha needs to use several expensive products, claiming it diminishes a traditional childhood.

Gen Alpha's makeup and skincare craze is rooted in the desire to change their appearance. Obsessing over beauty at a young age negatively impacts children's self-esteem. Gen Alpha's time spent on the internet has contributed to this widespread obsession. To combat this, parents should provide their children with

hands-on activities to stimulate their developing brains and be mindful of what their children are exposed to. In addition, beauty brands should avoid targeting easily impressionable younger audiences in their advertising.

"I saw videos of Gen Alpha children going to Sephora to buy skincare products, and although taking care of your skin can be beneficial, worrying about it at such a young age will only worsen body dysmorphia over time. When I was younger, I received toys like Skylanders and a 3DS for Christmas and I feel bad that young children are now too invested in their appearance to have fun," Sophomore **Timothy Song** said.

Although skincare can instill good habits, it remains problematic due to the pressures it imposes on young individuals. Anti-aging advertising is prevalent, with influencers and corporations encouraging viewers to start wearing sunscreen early to prevent wrinkles. According to Nate Jones, a Gen Z marketing consultancy, there is a desire among young individuals to emulate older age groups, with tweens feeling more mature for using products like retinol. This is damaging for Gen

Alpha's self-esteem, as comparing themselves to influencers may diminish their confidence for not having the same looks or luxurious lifestyles. Online creators hold responsibility for causing these insecurities in children, as they frequently promote their unrealistic lifestyles while being aware of their young audience. Instead of marketing expensive products and fixating on beauty, influencers should encourage their young audience to enjoy youth and feel confident the way they are.

"The influence of beauty products online harms young children because it sets their expectations too high, making themselves feel that they must have a specific product routine to fit in. It is fine for children to be interested in makeup or skincare, but it becomes a concern when they buy unnecessary and potentially harmful products promoted by people they idolize," Junior **Sheridan Cabi** said.

Ultimately, the pressure for women to conform to society's beauty standards promotes unrealistic expectations and insecurity for girls of all ages. Whether it be parents limiting screen time or providing more offline activities for Gen Alpha, it is clear that there must be change when children as young as six are blindly influenced to follow the expensive beauty routines of grown women.



SAACHI BASAVARAJU ART

The paradox of pomegranate poetry

A balancing act of clarity and oversimplification



"Pomegranates are a feminine art, what man would take the time to peel the soft, bitter flesh apart?" So begins a piece of pomegranate poetry, a TikTok sensation in which writers use pomegranates as metaphors for human relationships. It portrays the torn, dripping fruit emblematic of a woman mutilated by a man, labeling men as animalistic for breaking pomegranates open roughly in contrast to women's presumed gentleness in removing seeds without bloody juice spilled.

Some such metaphors effectively use the analogy to make a message easier to digest, while others take this symbolism too far, creating a faulty analogy that fails to account for critical nuances in the situation. People are not fruits, and equating opening a pomegranate without care to disrespecting and "tearing apart" a human being may be overextending symbolism to find meaning in a surface-level phenomenon. Although these poems can serve as a way to connect through and express lived experiences, the oversimplification

The Charger Account Editorial Staff of gender roles in pomegranate poetry may inadvertently perpetuate the mainstream portrayal of men as brutish, fostering the real-life adoption of such attitudes among the general public.

This raises the question of how metaphors should balance making a message understandable without oversimplifying. As seen in works like Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," metaphors can depict the experiences of a certain group of people through the lens of a more generally relatable experience; in this case, King urges the mostly non-Black audience to sympathize with the fear for their lives experienced by African Americans in the segregated South by equating these experiences to painful "stinging darts" and "living constantly at tiptoe stance."

In any case, it is important to acknowledge the potential oversights and lack of nuances that are inherent to any metaphor. Every situation has its context and complexities that make it difficult to equate with any other scenario. Effective arguments are clear and qualified, acknowledging counterarguments in an empathetic manner. Thus, if we use a simplified metaphor, we must clarify exactly what situation we are attempting to illustrate and what aspects of this situation may be overlooked by the metaphor.

December issue corrections

Community News:

"Misinformation mitigation"

- Bill 873 is inconsistent capitalization
- Non-credible has inconsistent hyphenization

Opinions:

"Formulaic Franchises: The death of indie films"

- Yunseo Kim's art is incorrectly credited to Caitlynn Sue
- "Closing the curtains on censorship"
- Jude Tantawy's art credit is missing



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Harvard's profound presidential plight

Adrian Tomaszewski

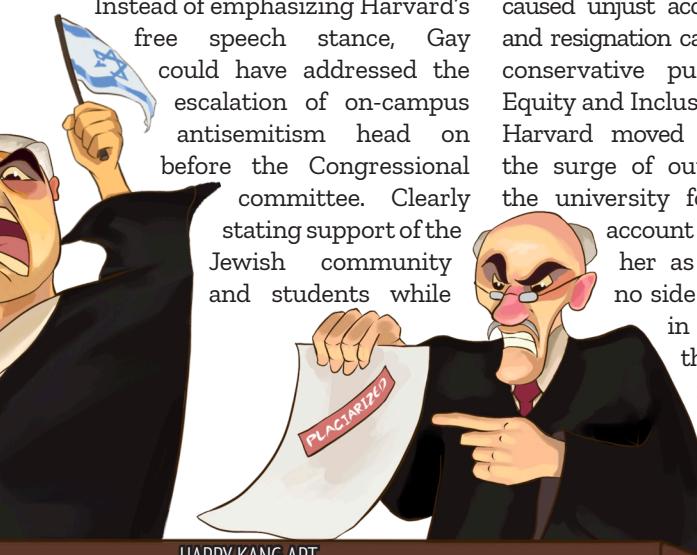
Six months was all it took for Harvard President Dr. Claudine Gay to resign amidst issues of antisemitism and plagiarism. How a career could sink so rapidly into the vast ocean of American academia is a stunning example of the damage inaction can cause amidst controversy.

Gay's involvement in Harvard began in 1998 when she earned her Ph.D. in African American studies. In 2006, Gay joined Harvard's staff as a tenured professor of government, later becoming the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. After Harvard President Lawrence Bacow announced his retirement, Gay was chosen as his successor,

violate university policies, Gay, in a vague and legalistic manner, stated how Harvard "[embraces] a commitment to free speech, even views that are objectionable."

Instead of emphasizing Harvard's free speech stance, Gay could have addressed the escalation of on-campus antisemitism head on before the Congressional committee. Clearly stating support of the Jewish community and students while

biases, seeing her lack of immediate response as a viable opportunity to express their hidden discontent and anger. Furthermore, Gay's race may have caused unjust accusations—her backlash and resignation came alongside a broader conservative push against Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies. When Harvard moved to protect Gay after the surge of outrage, many criticized the university for protecting Gay on account of her race, denoting her as underqualified. While no side is completely accurate in the DEI controversy, the emphasis on Gay's race signifies a deeper issue concerning racial prejudices that should not be masked by the focus on Gay's response



HARRY KANG ART

October 8, 2023	October 10, 2023	December 5, 2023	December 10, 2023
Over 30 Harvard student groups release a signed statement condemning the Israeli occupation of Gaza for Hamas's attack.	Gay releases a second statement directly condemning Hamas. Despite disassociating with the student statement, several donors are outraged at her two day delay.	Harvard, UPenn, and MIT presidents testify before Congress regarding antisemitism, with Harvard and UPenn presidents facing calls for their resignations.	Bill Ackerman accuses Gay of plagiarism and only being given her role as Harvard President because of diversity.

Compiled by Amie Ahn, Ariel Lee, Vira Patil, Adrian Tomaszewski and James Yu
Staff Writers

becoming the very first Black president in Harvard's history.

Signs of danger for Gay's presidency came following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas conflict when antisemitism and Islamophobia erupted on campus, including calls for Israeli-Jewish ethnic cleansing through the complete elimination of the state of Israel and graffiti calling all Palestinians terrorists. On Oct. 8, a day after Hamas' initial attack on Israel, a statement signed by over 30 student groups was released, blaming "the [Israeli] apartheid regime" for inciting the conflict. The letter received intense backlash for seemingly condoning the attack and showing no sympathy for Israeli casualties. However, it took Gay two days and two separate statements from when the letter was released for her to directly condemn Hamas' violence and state that the university's values did not align with the document. Gay's lack of immediate response to the document was detrimental to Harvard's image. Yet, factoring in the intense flames of controversy surrounding the Israel-Hamas conflict, a starkly divided study body and immense conservative pressure placed upon Gay, her delayed response was understandable.

"It is important to keep our shared humanity in mind when discussing antisemitism and Islamophobia, especially when what we say and do can so deeply affect other people. However, the media tends to sensationalize many events, and their coverage of Harvard's on-campus rhetoric was definitely no exception," Harvard Freshman Alexander Lee said.

On Dec. 5, Gay testified before a Congressional committee with University of Pennsylvania President Elizabeth Magill and MIT President Sally Kornbluth. When asked if calling for the genocide of Jewish students would

condemning hate would have helped quell the situation.

In part due to Gay's mistakes, major billionaire donors such as Len Blavatnik and Bill Ackman began withdrawing from the university despite having donated hundreds of millions in the past, which is especially damaging to Harvard since 45% of its revenue relies on donations. By trying to please both sides, she failed to charm either, hurting the university greatly in the process.

"Gay's response was inadequate because despite the gravity of the situation at hand and as president of Harvard, she did not show much disapproval to the public promotion of genocide on campus. Her position of power allowed her to say much more to contain the situation, yet she did not," Junior Sarah Wong said.

The hearing was disastrous for Gay, leading to widespread condemnation and even more demands for her resignation from over 70 Republican Senators. Yet it is important to recognize that perhaps not all the backlash Gay received solely originated from dissatisfaction with her response to the Harvard student groups. The Israel-Hamas conflict is a highly contested issue—supporters of both sides possess strong emotions and opinions. It is possible that some critics of Gay used her initial letter as an outlet for their

and trial. Another blow came when conservative scrutiny opened up accusations of plagiarism in Gay's dissertations. As reported by the Harvard Crimson, these allegations mostly include omitting quotations for direct quotes.

Although these allegations were comparatively minor, they were enough for the Harvard Corporation board to break their silence and announce unconditional support for Gay, despite condemning her late response to the document. She committed the same plagiarism that certainly would have led to consequences for any student, and this seemingly preferential treatment was undiscussed in any statements by Gay.

Gay's final fall finally came as more plagiarism allegations emerged, more donors withdrew from the university and Congress expanded its search into her. Gay announced her resignation as president "with a heavy heart but a deep love for Harvard" on Jan. 2 and returned as a professor of African American studies. The board replaced her with longtime board member Alan Garber.

"It feels like everybody on campus is just hoping for the best. Many were hurt by this situation last semester, so we are all working on returning this semester with more compassion and understanding," Lee said.

Gay failed to effectively handle controversy, opting to remain a silent statue while someone was drilling into her foundation. Instead of disassociating from extremist student groups, she took a misleading stance at best; instead of condemning on-campus antisemitism in Congress; she responded vaguely; instead of openly addressing the plagiarism allegations, she issued unnoticed corrections. Now Gay bears the consequences of her inactions on her community and students.

"Organ Meats"



Antara Gangwal

School News & Entertainment Editor

This novel lives up to the raw, grotesque implication of its name. Following Anita and Rainie, two young girls who wish to become dogs, K-Ming Chang's "Organ Meats" blurs the line between girlhood and animalhood, fabulism and fiction and dreams and reality.

Most of "Organ Meats" makes no sense at a surface level: a sycamore tree whose branches bruise when cut off; red thread stringing together fate; dogs living beneath the sidewalk pavement and emerging from puddles. The story unfolds like a dream sequence where Chang entangles folklore with fiction, blending myths into Anita and Rainie's real lives.

The prose is often uncomfortably descriptive, only serving to enhance the crude, visceral nature of the novel. Furthermore, details like its long, comical chapter titles and constantly shifting chapter formats (some are written in first-person perspective, some in third; a few are scripts, while others are letters) make it much more interesting to read. It is clear that Chang began her writing career as a poet; this story is so infused with emotion that it is almost a living, breathing account—a candid yet gritty interpretation of girlhood.

In fact, my favorite part of "Organ Meats" is the friendship between Anita and Rainie, where Chang explores how an innocent childhood friendship can sour as both members grow up. Despite the surrealism rendering me confused about most of the plot, I was always able to feel the intense emotions of the girls' bond, one that persisted even after they grew apart.

Chang's skill as an author is undeniable—so it makes sense that my complaints of "Organ Meats" actually arise from my own faults as a reader. Enticed by Anita and Rainie's story, I disliked the long, meandering tales sprinkled into the main plot. Additionally, I was sometimes overwhelmed by Chang's intense writing style, and skimmed descriptive passages. Looking back, this is likely why most of the symbolism and themes passed over my head—I needed to spend more time with the story to understand it.

The more I think about it, the higher rating I think "Organ Meats" deserves. I have never read anything like it before, and maybe next time I decide to pick it up, it will become a new favorite.

"Organ Meats" (4/5)

worth the read?



- + unflinchingly raw
- + poetic style choices
- oversaturated prose

ENTERTAINMENT

DESIGN BY ANTARA GANGWAL

"Mean Girls"



Jay Li

Opinions Editor

"On Wednesdays, we wear pink!" With this one iconic quote, Tina Fey—creator of the original cult-classic "Mean Girls"—launched me right back into the cafeteria cliques and Plastics of the ever-nostalgic Northshore High School.

Although strangely not advertised as one, the 2024 "Mean Girls" remake is a movie-musical based on the 2018 Broadway musical of the same name. This adaptation hits the same storybeats as its progenitor, following Cady Heron's move from Kenya to Evanston, and thankfully preserves what made the original so "fetch" while still offering a vibrant new score and cast. However, "Mean Girls" takes hardly enough risks to justify an entire remake. Initially fun aspects such as its TikTok videos and fourth-wall breaks ended up being heavily overused, making them come across more of a tacky gimmick.

Moreover, several aspects of "Mean Girls" do not translate well from the Broadway musical format onto the big screen. Unlike other musical-movies like "La La Land" or "Tick, Tick... Boom!", the majority of "Mean Girls'" musical numbers—such as the introductory "What Ifs" and painfully uncomfortable "Sexy"—fall short on enhancing narrative and suffer from abruptly awkward beginnings and ends. This results in an uncanny movie viewing experience incessantly interrupted by musical numbers.

Nevertheless, the new cast shines bright as one of the few enjoyable additions. Regina George remains iconic—from her domineering introduction with "Meet the Plastics" to her scandalous revelation of the Burn Book with "World Burn," Renée Rapp's solo numbers prove to be the musical highlights of the film. "Mean Girls" also breathes new life into bestie duo Janis and Damian; their actors replicate what made the original characters so likable and turn the charisma dial up to a hundred. Yet, Angourie Rice as Cady lacks the screen presence necessary for a main character, leaving her far overshadowed by her fellow cast members.

Despite its flaws, "Mean Girls" boasts a talented new cast and maintains the best parts of the original. Regina's bus accident and Kevin Gnapoor's triumphant shirt tear will still leave you cackling as it did years ago.

"Mean Girls" (2.5/5)

a movie of all time?



- + preserves original humor
- + fun new cast
- weak musical numbers

Golden Globes spin back to success

Mahika Khosla and Joshua Yan

After years of controversy, the Golden Globe Awards returned on Jan. 7. Once again, the Beverly Hilton Hotel filled up with Hollywood celebrities, with viewers eager to see who would be taking home one of the show's prized golden namesakes.

First broadcast in January 1944, the Golden Globes is an annual awards show that recognizes achievements in the film industry. However, in recent years, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA)—which is responsible for organizing the Golden Globes and deciding winners—has been at the center of controversy. For example, the organization was accused of accepting bribes and being involved in various scandals, garnering the event a negative reputation.

This reached a breaking point in 2021, when the Los Angeles Times discovered that of its 87 members, the HFPA had no Black voters for at least 20 years. The newspaper's accusations angered viewers, inciting boycotts and storming of the HFPA office. Following this, the Golden Globes was taken off air in 2022—although the HFPA claimed that this was due to the pandemic. The show's decline continued into 2023, with viewership reaching a new low of 6.3 million viewers, as per Entertainment Weekly.

A 2023 initiative by USC Annenberg found that the Oscars faced similar problems; throughout

the show's history, only 17% of nominees were women and 6% were people of color. In 2023, every winner was white.

In response to backlash, the Golden Globes underwent a promising number of changes this year. Under its new owners, the HFPA was reorganized into a more diverse voting organization; a press release stated that the body was now 10% Black. Furthermore, the show debuted two new categories: the Cinematic and Box Office Achievement Award and the Best Performance by a Stand-Up Comic Award. The number of contenders allowed in each category was also expanded, allowing more diverse faces to join the competition.

"Although there is always more to be done, we are making huge progress towards improving diversity in the entertainment industry. It is critical for diverse winners to be honored in awards shows, as this inspires people from different backgrounds to enter the industry to tell their stories," Senior Vishnu Dhev Kumar Yogenkran said.

Notable winners of the show this year included Cillian Murphy for Best Actor in a Drama Motion Picture and Billie Eilish's "What Was I Made For" for Best Original Song. Historic wins were also celebrated, with Lily Gladstone

Staff Writers

becoming the first Indigenous winner of Best Actress in a Drama, and "The Boy and the Heron" being the first PG-13 winner of Best Animated Feature.

"My favorite wins of the night were Ali Wong and Steven Yeun, who won Best Actress and Actor in a limited series. I felt extremely proud as they were the first Asians to receive an award in this category," Freshman Aastha Chivakula said.

The show did not occur entirely without backlash, though. This year's host, American comedian Jo Koy, was criticized for making insensitive jokes belittling women. He blamed his writers for the quality of jokes, telling CBS that the Globes were his "off night."

Regardless, this year's show was more well-received than last year, with 9.4 million views on average—signaling an over 50% increase and a potential return to the Globes' former glory. With no current plans of halting, the Golden Globes are on track to continue making their mark in the coming years.



MINGYE ZHAO ART

Steamboat Willie steers into the public domain

Ariel Lee

The black ears, oversized gloves and big yellow shoes of this special mouse are recognizable everywhere. An icon of the Walt Disney franchise, Mickey Mouse was first created in 1928 by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks. The original version of Mickey is known as Steamboat Willie, who steers a steamboat while whistling to a song. However, Steamboat Willie's 95-year copyright term expired at the beginning of this year, placing him in the public domain. Now unprotected by intellectual property laws such as copyright, trademark or patent laws, no one owns the character—yet anyone is allowed to use it.

Keeping Mickey Mouse's copyright for 95 years was not an easy process. Disney had to lobby the U.S. government to bypass the original expiration date in 1984, altering the copyright law to last 50 years after the creator's death. Disney lobbied the government again in 2004 when Walt Disney Co. chairman Michael D. Eisner requested another 20-year extension. Despite Disney's efforts to renew the copyright once more, U.S. copyright law dictates that the company is only able to hold exclusive rights to the hallmark for 95 years—which expired on Jan. 1.

With Steamboat Willie going public, artists now have the freedom to produce creative, unique pieces

inspired by the character. For example, there have been renditions of the original Steamboat Willie in the anime style. Similar adaptations have also been created with other Disney characters in the public domain, such as Winnie the Pooh, who was reimagined as a bloodthirsty murderer in a horror movie titled "Winnie the Pooh: Blood and Honey."

Similar ideas are circulating about putting Mickey Mouse into a horror movie.

"Mickey becoming public can lead to more creativity because a big part of art is inspiration from others. Other animators or artists can build off of Mickey's design to create

new, modernized work. Characters' copyrights should be allowed to expire and enter the public domain like Mickey because, after a period of time, the general public should have the ability to expand on a creative work," Sophomore Isabella Cruz said.

However, some netizens worry that this will destroy the pure, innocent figures of these children's show characters. Moreover, many believe that copyright must be preserved to protect symbolic characters.

"Steamboat Willie becoming a public figure will most likely impact Disney by making the original character more widely known and allowing

Staff Writer

for more opportunities for it to gain publicity through the creation of new merchandise, media and potentially theme parks. However, I think that Mickey's new publicity could also end up harming the company because people may abuse the lack of copyright," Freshman Jessamine Sloan said.

While Steamboat Willie is in the public domain, the latest version of Mickey Mouse is still owned by Disney, meaning that there can be no new interpretations of this character. This way, Mickey will continue to play a leading role as a global ambassador for the Walt Disney franchise in merchandise and theme park attractions. Any pieces that use the Mickey mascot can still be taken to court by Disney, and the artist may be sued. However, as long as they use the original Steamboat Willie, nothing will be charged.

As the public continues to debate over whether the copyright of iconic characters should be kept or allowed to expire, Steamboat Willie going public has spurred a bloom of creativity from artists, which could further expand the popularity of Disney's franchise and bring to light the history of Mickey Mouse.



DANIEL CHOUART

DESIGN BY ELLA POLAK



THIRD PLACES

In an age of constant connectivity and hectic lifestyles, a silent epidemic is sweeping across communities, contributing to the decline of "third places." Ranging from cozy cafes to bustling parks, these once bustling social hubs pulsing with energy are vanishing into a shadow of loneliness.

The concept of third places was first explored by American sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his 1989 book "The Great Good Place." He described third places as locations outside of home, school and work that promote social interaction. They include, but are not limited to, coffee shops, bars, libraries, bookstores and community centers—both private and public facilities. The most common third places are unassuming, simple and affordable, providing environments where people can freely express themselves. They are also a great way for individuals to meet new people and chat about their interests. Oldenburg mentioned that in an increasingly lonely society, third spaces play a crucial role in helping people build identities and connections.

For instance, community members not only get a fresh cut at their local salon or a drink from a bar but also find socioemotional support in conversations with hairstylists and bartenders. For some, third places have become havens where people gather to soak in lively vibes and experience a warm social atmosphere.

"Third spaces like cafes and parks have really helped me feel welcome and secure in my community. A place I love to visit is Memorial Park. Having a park where I can walk and talk with my mom has helped me grow closer to her and brought me joy knowing that I was able to spend time with her," Freshman Hrishita Diwan said.

Although third places have been recognized for their importance by several communities, they are on the decline in the U.S. According to Business Insider, Americans are working longer hours than decades ago to compensate for wage stagnation, leaving them with less time to hang out with friends. Americans reported spending six and a half hours with friends per week for decades until the period between 2014 and 2019, when the number dropped to four hours per week. In a YouGov poll, the rate of loneliness among young adults rose nearly every year from 1976 to 2019. Loneliness is associated with high health risks that can cause strokes, type 2 diabetes or premature death from heart disease.

The shift is also visible in the shows and movies during different decades. In the '90s, TV shows such as "Friends," displayed the characters spending a significant amount of time with each other, hanging out in cafes, diners and bars. However, in more recent shows such as "Succession," most scenes take place in work-related environments.

A number of factors have contributed to the decline in third spaces. One reason lies in the way American cities reshape the urban landscape to promote higher car usage, with many streets and neighborhoods becoming divided by highways. This has caused isolation, with more people riding in private vehicles instead of walking, biking or using mass transit. The issue supports Oldenburg's argument that the design of American neighborhoods prevents the establishment of interactive

communities. For example, in the 1950s, Los Angeles destroyed three Mexican American neighborhoods to clear the way for the construction of Dodger Stadium. Businesses that served as third places are also becoming cost-prohibitive due to gentrification; wealthy families moving into low-income neighborhoods are attracting pricier amenities that longtime residents are unable to afford, reducing their capacity to hang out at third local places. For example, there may be certain restaurants that are exclusive to wealthy people, keeping those with less money from going there.

Even as city layouts make up a large part of the problem, the pandemic has been attributed by some as a more significant contributor to the dwindling of third places. With everyone isolated at home, opting for online services was the only way to communicate and form new relationships. As a result, online platforms like Instagram, Twitch and TikTok became the new "placeless" third places. Furthermore, as schools transitioned to online platforms, the ability for students to meet face-to-face was severely hindered, further resulting in the loss

of social interactions. With online culture gaining popularity in the past few decades, users' increasing preference to communicate via online platforms has also resulted in a decline of third places. As social media takes over peoples' lives, people are more likely to scroll on their phones and talk to family and friends online instead of face-to-face. This can have a negative effect, as research conducted by Dr. Narae

Lee at Pennsylvania State University has shown that in-person communities demonstrated a better impact on well-being compared to virtual community building.

"Technology like phones has caused a new divide between people and third spaces, and also distracts people from being fully present in their environment. I prefer socializing in person because I find it easier to communicate with other people and I have more fun with my friends rather than just texting them," Junior Sienna Lee said.

Places where people can hang out still exist despite these continuously

Liliana Chai and Ariel Lee
Staff Writers

KAYADESAI
ART

changing social dynamics. For example, shopping malls and food

Quotebox: What is your third place?

Compiled by Mahika Khosla
Staff Writer

"My favorite third places are Barnes & Noble, Feng Cha, stores and malls."
- Sophomore Rachel Hoe

courts can still serve as accessible third spaces, as people do not have to spend money to enjoy a fun time with friends there. Moreover, most malls

provide free heating, air conditioning and bathrooms. However, as the retail crisis persists, malls have been dying off in great multitudes, depriving communities of yet another widely used gathering place.

Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democratic Senator, blames the lack of third places in America's downtowns on the government's disinvestment. Murphy introduced legislation in 2022 to fight loneliness using national strategies. He proposed that federal agencies boost social infrastructure by setting guidelines to prevent loneliness. Additionally, Murphy wants to utilize funds from the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to create vibrant and active downtowns, crucial areas for social development. To combat the mass closures of retail stores, the bill's tax policy would seek to help small retailers thrive instead of favoring large retailers. Other solutions are also being proposed; for example, some urban planners have received valuable information about how to construct places that nurture social connection from researchers like Tayana Panova, who studies the effects of the environment on mental

health. According to Panova, parks should not be stark and barren fields; instead, they should have desirable amenities like shade and water that attract people.

"Events in third places can build a sense of community, but these events would only work if they are easy to join and news of such an event is being shared with the members of the community," Senior Ariya Acharya said.

Third places are a major part of healthy social infrastructure—they build confidence and security while providing stimulation and support. Loneliness is directly correlated with depression and other mental health issues, which makes the proliferation of third places all the more critical. The fundamentals of society are built upon interaction and socialization, and without an equitable

and effective solution, serious repercussions on the mental health of many American communities could take place.

LIFESTYLE

Q-Pot Korean BBQ & Hotpot



Anna Yue

Staff Writer

Located in Silver Creek, Q-Pot Korean BBQ & Hotpot is an all-you-can-eat Korean buffet providing an excellent array of options for customers craving a warm and delicious meal. My family decided to dine here when we received an excellent review from my brother's friend.

The restaurant was bustling with guests when I visited on a Sunday evening. Upon entering, I was astounded by the long waitlist, estimated to be over an hour. Luckily, due to our large party size of five, we were able to be seated within 30 minutes. Although hotpot and barbecue can be served simultaneously at an additional cost, we decided to go with just the hotpot for its all-you-can-eat price. All orders of meat and vegetables, as well as soup bases and drinks, are done through an iPad.

The store offers many hotpot additions, from lettuce, napa cabbage and bean sprouts to thinly sliced pork, beef and lamb, as well as various kinds of seafood and less common items like iced tofu and sweet potato noodles. Mouthwatering soup bases included Japanese Miso, Spicy Tofu Soup and Creamy Milk. I especially enjoyed the Healthy Herb soup base for its light yet savory taste. These pots can be swapped out anytime, allowing customers to taste multiple flavors.

Each table has an electric stove that can be independently controlled, offering versatility to satisfy every customer's preference. Dishes are brought ready to be cooked within two minutes of submitting an order. A variety of condiments are available to be self-served, ranging from fresh spring onion and minced garlic to hot chili sauce and ponzu sauce. Other more common seasonings like soy sauce, vinegar and sesame oils are placed in jars on a separate table on the other side of the display, so make sure not to overlook them. After your heavy meal, be sure to check out their dessert section; the cold, refreshing fruits and cheesecake will not disappoint.

If you do not mind a long wait, Q-Pot is the perfect place to enjoy an all-you-can-eat hotpot with countless food options for an affordable price. I particularly appreciated the special attention to detail, like the cold desserts to balance out the hotpot and the mouthwash in the bathrooms. I am already planning to visit again for their Korean Barbecue menu!

Q-Pot Korean BBQ & Hotpot (5/5)

how fan-taste-ic was it?



- + great value for price
- + wide variety of options
- long wait time

Gardening the way to happiness

Eleanor Gil

Staff Writer

Gardening—the careful practice of cultivating plants—dates back to 2000 BC in Mesopotamia, where humans gardened for food. Today, gardening is more commonly a hobby, with hundreds of unique seed packets and saplings lining the racks of many department stores.

Gardeners reap endless benefits, such as receiving more sunlight and thus more vitamin D and reducing their risk of cancer and heart disease. Gardening also reduces stress, as it provides a chance to focus and spend time alone in nature; neuroscience studies, including one by Princeton University, have shown that connecting with nature relieves anxiety and calms the mind. Additionally, gardening plants for harvest aids in establishing a healthy diet by encouraging greater vegetable consumption of readily available, fresh produce straight from one's home.

"I enjoy having a garden because my plants are vibrant and aesthetically pleasing. Gardening is also my way of getting in touch with nature after being absorbed in technology all day long—plants create a calm and nurturing environment, which helps me destress," Freshman **Anvani Narasimhan** said.

Besides being beneficial to the gardener, gardening also contributes to environmental sustainability and local biodiversity. Gardening enables an outdoor space to become natural again, providing habitats for all sorts of organisms. For instance, sowing wildflowers will attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies, and creating a garden pond will attract mayflies and other invertebrates.

It is important to take incremental steps when gardening because attempting to harvest a large area may be overwhelming and demotivating. So, start with a small plot, and expand over time with success. But before beginning, there are several things to keep in mind. For the basics, all plants need space, the right temperature, sunlight, water and essential nutrients to grow. Therefore, an essential first step is to designate a suitable area to turn into a garden, taking into consideration the aforementioned factors.

According to NPR, the soil for plants must also be painstakingly selected because soil must have the right texture and structure full of microbes for plant roots to ground into. Composting consistently by applying coffee grounds, eggshells, sliced banana peels and other organic matter directly to the soil or burying them a few inches beneath adds further nutrients for plants to absorb.

From there, it is critical to research and choose the appropriate plant that can thrive given the climate or hardiness zone, the latter of which is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature, mapped by the USDA. For example, shrubs can be planted throughout the year, but they are best planted in fall for areas with warm climates so that they can prepare for a spring growth spurt, as advised by the botanical website Garden Design. There are two options when it comes to planting: seeds or transplants, which are pre-cultivated saplings that come in pots. Seeds require more attention and are unpredictable, but transplants are easier to care for because they have already begun to grow. However, it is important to keep in mind that if too many seeds sprout, they may overcrowd and compete with each other for nutrients. As for watering, it is best to water plants during cooler hours at night to avoid evaporation before absorption.

"I prune my rose buckwheat and cypress and orange trees regularly, especially during the spring and dry weather. For example, with my buckwheat and shrubs, I cut off any parts that are dead, going from the bottom to the top of the plant so that the top is narrower than the base," Sophomore **Keira Vladescu** said.

Gardening takes immense skill, dedication, patience and a sprinkle of luck, but with practice, it is a valuable skill that helps cultivate not only fresh produce but also a palpable sense of joy and fulfillment.

Quotebox: How do plants improve daily life?

Compiled by Liliana Chai, Catherine Nguyen, Niru Shivakumar and Anna Yue
Staff Writers

"We grow cherries, figs, peaches, brussels sprouts, blueberries and tomatoes, which I water daily during the summer. When I am with my tomatoes, I feel happy and peaceful because I love my tomatoes, and I am so proud and fulfilled to see them grow—they are almost as tall as me now."

—Sophomore Catherine Wang

"I walk outside every couple of days to get everything off my mind, relieve stress, refresh myself and explore nature. I have succulents and other plants in the house, which make me feel calm and more connected with nature even when I am indoors."

—Freshman Amulya Tadimeti

"I like to take pictures of any flowers and plants I encounter in my little walks outside. Greenery and fresh air brings me peace, improves my mood and helps me calm down."

—Freshman Chloe Xia

Re-leaf-ing stress with biophilic design

Caitlynn Sue

Staff Writer

The gentle lull of waves lapping against a sandy shoreline. The sweet twittering of birds echoing through a lush green forest. When thinking of relaxation, the first things that come to mind are often images affiliated with nature. The desire to bring the tranquility of nature indoors into everyday life is the main goal of biophilic art and design.

The word "biophilia" means the love of living things. It was popularized by Harvard biologist and entomologist E. O. Wilson in his 1984 book, "Biophilia," which conceptualizes biophilia as "the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms." Biophilic design is incorporated into buildings through natural patterns, green spaces, natural lighting and the use of natural materials.

"I have succulents in my bedroom. Every time I get distracted, I look at my succulents and their beautiful simplicity helps me refocus. I also like seeing the growth of my succulents, as they remind me of how much time has passed. I reflect on how much I have changed, what I need to work on and what my strengths are," Senior **Kimberly Horng** said.

Some architects have taken biophilia to the next level. "Gardens by the Bay" in Singapore showcases the beauty of nature through towering "Supertrees"—giant structures covered with waterfalls, exotic ferns and vines—as well as housing vast indoor gardens. Each year, the gardens receive millions of visitors from around the world. In the U.S., Frank Lloyd Wright's "Fallingwater" is another example of biophilic design. Fallingwater is a house built over a waterfall in Pennsylvania, its stone terraces blending harmoniously with the surrounding forest environment. Designed in 1935, the house has garnered high praise and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976.

Aside from its beauty, biophilic design has been shown to have many psychological benefits. A 2014 study by the University of Exeter showed that people who moved from an urban area to a green area experienced improvements in their mental health. Exposure to nature helps lower blood pressure which correlates to reduced stress. In addition, working in biophilic environments can boost productivity and creativity. Research by Dr. Craig Knight found that the addition of house plants into work environments enhanced the performance and memory retention of employees, increasing their productivity by 15%.

"My brain feels more relaxed when there are elements of nature in my surroundings since I typically associate nature with balance, tranquility and focus. Because of this, I find myself gravitating towards decorations and areas that feature a lot of plant life so I can relax," Sophomore **Vivian Lai** said.

Due to the benefits of biophilic design on mental well-being and efforts to incorporate sustainability into architecture, planners and public officials have been showing increased interest in creating biophilic cities. Singapore, Portland, San Francisco and Milwaukee have made moves to integrate urban nature into their environments, including installing green walls and rooftops, creating public gardens and restoring urban waterways. Advocates of biophilic design hope that more people will begin to recognize the value of nature and make it an essential part of cities.

In a world where it is easy to get caught up in the fast pace of modern schedules, nature offers a haven to take a step back from daily stresses. Through the incorporation of biophilic art and design, the beauty of nature can provide both physical and mental serenity, even in an urbanized world.

"I found that walking outside with my dog lets me decompress after a long day and sort through my thoughts. I have a lot of plants in the room I keep my 3D resin printer in because they act as extra carbon filters, and taking care of them is calming."

—Freshman Angelica Liljenstam

"I enjoy photographing plants, especially since they vary in color, shape and size. I believe they add to creating better environments for us."

—Junior Wei Wang

"I like to take a walk after school around the neighborhood because my elementary school is nearby. On my walk, I clear my head and smell the fresh air."

—Senior Hailey Tan

SCIENCE & TECH

Screen shakeup



Kyan Wang

Science & Tech & Feature US Editor

Walking into Costco is always a sensory assault, as dozens of ultra-bright ultra-colorful TVs blare their supposedly cutting edge XYZ-Giga-LED screens. Display technologies named QLED, OLED, Mini-LED and infinitely more permutations of prefixes are all vying for the title of the ultimate digital display. The sheer variety boggles the mind and also begs the question of why there are so many in the first place.

Modern displays arose out of a desire to replace the bulky and blurry cathode ray tube displays; the plasma screen ushered in the flat-screen TV revolution. Nowadays, you will hardly see plasma screens, but mostly liquid-crystal displays (LCDs) and organic-LED displays (OLEDs). Tech companies are engaging in an arms race as they all seek to make each one of these technologies into the ultimate display: one with high brightness and vibrant color without drawbacks.

LCD TVs arose first, composed of liquid crystals that selectively block light emitted from a backlight and pass them through color filters to create pixelated images. However, LCD displays cannot achieve true black, since the backlight is always shining a bright white light, causing some amount of brightness to bleed through "black" pixels.

OLED technology emerged to remedy this issue, as each individual pixel creates its own light when electricity is conducted through it, allowing true blacks to be displayed by simply turning a pixel off. The brightness attainable by OLEDs was much higher than LCDs as well. However, OLED is not without its problems. The pixels degrade over time, especially if static images are kept on screen for extended periods of time, burning permanent patterns into the display.

The two sister technologies, LCD and OLED, have become more and more similar as tech companies race to build the ultimate display. LCD first evolved into the QLED display, which uses quantum dot layers in front of the backlight to drastically up the vibrance of colors. To address the problem of the backlight, companies simply place millions of tiny light sources in lieu of the single white light source at each pixel, reminiscent of the individually light generating OLED pixels. Such technology is called microLED, for the miniature LEDs brightening up the screen.

OLED is making its own strides, with Samsung pioneering "tandem" OLED displays that stack two layers of OLED material to double the brightness and allow the pixels to run at lower power to prevent burn-in. Both of these technologies seem to be approaching the same final form, and at the rate the technologies are progressing, perhaps consumers will soon be able to own the personal ultrabright 16K hyperLED displays we all dream of.

X-rays for all: The rise of portable x-rays

Joshua Yan

Amidst isolated towns of the world's tundras and the forgotten villages of the African savanna, disease runs rampant, killing people before they can name their affliction. Inhabitants have been forced to rely on the shoddy equipment of local facilities to make a guess about their sickness, as the trek to the nearest real hospital often takes far too long.

Healthcare quality has historically been lacking in the most remote areas of the world. In many regions, local facilities are lacking in adequate sanitation and sufficient resources, with costly x-ray rooms being few and far between. Among nomadic and displaced groups in developing nations, the distance from adequate hospitals means that it is nearly impossible for some to get x-rayed. When certain life-threatening diseases require an x-ray to be detected, this can mean the difference between life and death.

Portable machines emerged as a remedy to these problems by bringing healthcare directly to patients. There are two variants of the machines: mobile and ultraportable. Mobile x-rays refer to wheeled machines, while ultraportable

x-rays are small enough to be held by one person.

In many cases, portable x-rays utilize artificial intelligence to read the images, allowing diseases to be reliably detected without formal—and expensive—facilities nearby. This dramatically quickens the process and also increases accuracy in smaller machines.

The technology has had a profound impact on medical accessibility in disadvantaged areas. In Scotland's Orkney Islands, portable variants have reduced the non-attendance rate for x-ray appointments to zero. In less wealthy countries like the Philippines and Nigeria, the devices are greatly improving the detection of tuberculosis, which causes over a million deaths per year.

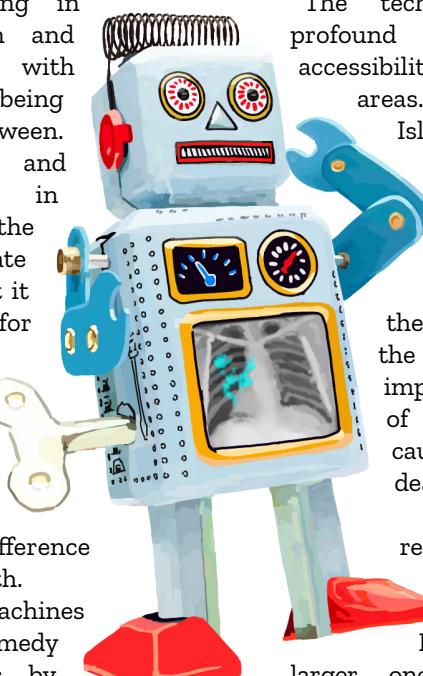
The safety concerns regarding the devices lie in their lack of radiation shielding. Portable x-rays, like larger ones in hospitals, use concentrated bursts of radiation to create their images. Unlike their counterparts, however, portable variants lack measures to minimize patients' radiation exposure. In

hospitals, x-ray rooms have lead-lined walls to block the radiation, but it would be impossible to provide the same accommodation in a device created to be compact and mobile. Critics also argue that the cost remains too high. Despite being less expensive than their alternative, the price of an ultraportable x-ray machine can be

"between \$47,000 to \$66,000. "The benefits of portable x-rays are definitely worth the drawbacks. The cost is around the price range of other normal medical equipment and I doubt the radiation is too much of a problem, especially since scans are done in open outdoor spaces," Junior Ewan Bailey said.

In spite of the criticism, the industry is expanding at an unprecedented rate. In 2023, the global market for portable x-rays was estimated to be worth \$7.1 billion and is expected to grow to \$14 billion by 2028.

"More data should be gathered about the radiation risk, but overall the technology is a very good and convenient idea. The next step would be to address actual treatment; being able to do x-rays outside of the hospital is good for diagnosing conditions, but there is no point if patients have to travel to the hospital to be treated anyways," Senior Andres O'Hara said.



MINGYUEXIAOART

Sickle cells meet their match

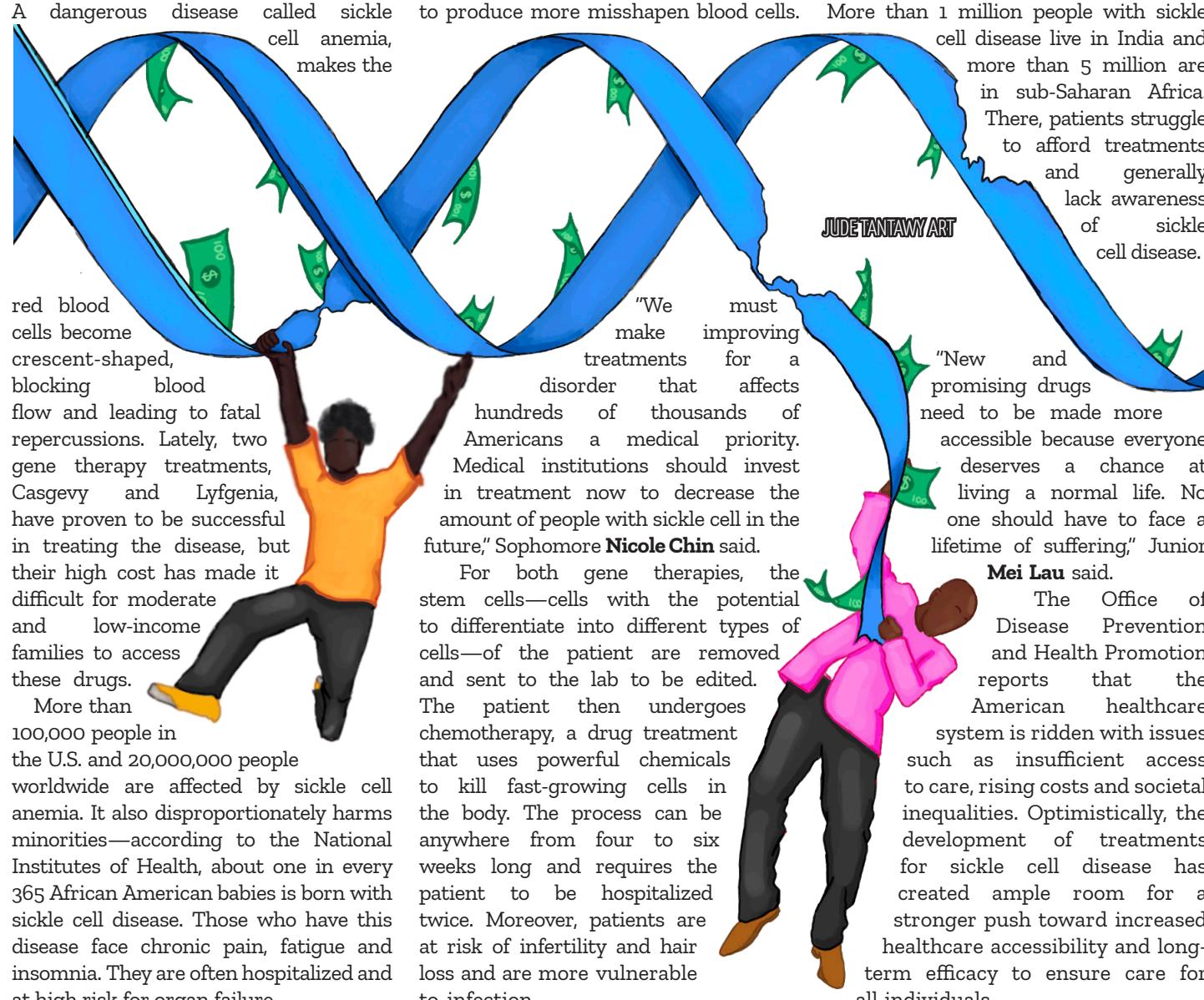
Mahika Khosla and Vira Patil

Staff Writers

At any given moment, humans have between 20 trillion to 30 trillion red blood cells. The circular shape of these cells allow them to transport oxygen, excrete waste and generate nutrients. A dangerous disease called sickle cell anemia, makes the

In the past, sickle cell anemia was treated by blood transfusions, which decreased the concentration of sickle cells. However, this is not a curative solution, as the body continues to produce more misshapen blood cells.

Aside from medical drawbacks, the staggering cost of these two gene therapies keep them out of reach for many: Lyfgenia's list price is \$3.1 million and Casgevy's is \$2.2 million. More than 1 million people with sickle cell disease live in India and more than 5 million are in sub-Saharan Africa. There, patients struggle to afford treatments and generally lack awareness of sickle cell disease.



"We must make improving treatments for a disorder that affects hundreds of thousands of Americans a medical priority. Medical institutions should invest in treatment now to decrease the amount of people with sickle cell in the future," Sophomore Nicole Chin said.

For both gene therapies, the stem cells—cells with the potential to differentiate into different types of cells—of the patient are removed and sent to the lab to be edited. The patient then undergoes chemotherapy, a drug treatment that uses powerful chemicals to kill fast-growing cells in the body. The process can be anywhere from four to six weeks long and requires the patient to be hospitalized twice. Moreover, patients are at risk of infertility and hair loss and are more vulnerable to infection.

"New and promising drugs need to be made more accessible because everyone deserves a chance at living a normal life. No one should have to face a lifetime of suffering," Junior Mei Lau said.

The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion reports that the American healthcare system is ridden with issues such as insufficient access to care, rising costs and societal inequalities. Optimistically, the development of treatments for sickle cell disease has created ample room for a stronger push toward increased healthcare accessibility and long-term efficacy to ensure care for all individuals.

Making music, making waves

Catherine Nguyen and Niru Shivakumar

While many students listen to music as a way to explore their feelings, for Junior **Michael "Mickey" Fekade**, that catharsis comes through creation. Known online by his social media handle YungCartiXr, Mickey has strong support from his friends and boasts over 5,000 monthly listeners on Spotify, proving his dedication to music and the special place it holds in his life.

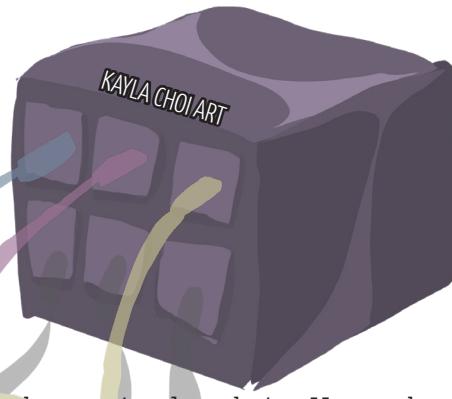
Mickey has been surrounded by music his whole life; his dad played the saxophone, which introduced him to the magic of creating music. He was inspired by younger rap and hyperpop artists, as well as his crush in 7th grade—though nothing much came of that—to begin his career. Mickey taught

himself to produce music through YouTube tutorials and working with friends that he found through Discord, some of whom he has collaborated with on his songs. Realizing that he could profit off of this hobby, he later began to post his music on Spotify, YouTube and Soundcloud, despite his original intentions of just making songs for enjoyment.

"At the end of the day, making money would also be ideal for my music career. As for fame, if it happens, it happens, but I am not chasing it," Mickey said.

Music is like therapy to him, something that he can find comfort in during troubled times. Whenever he feels down and needs someone to talk to, he turns to making music.

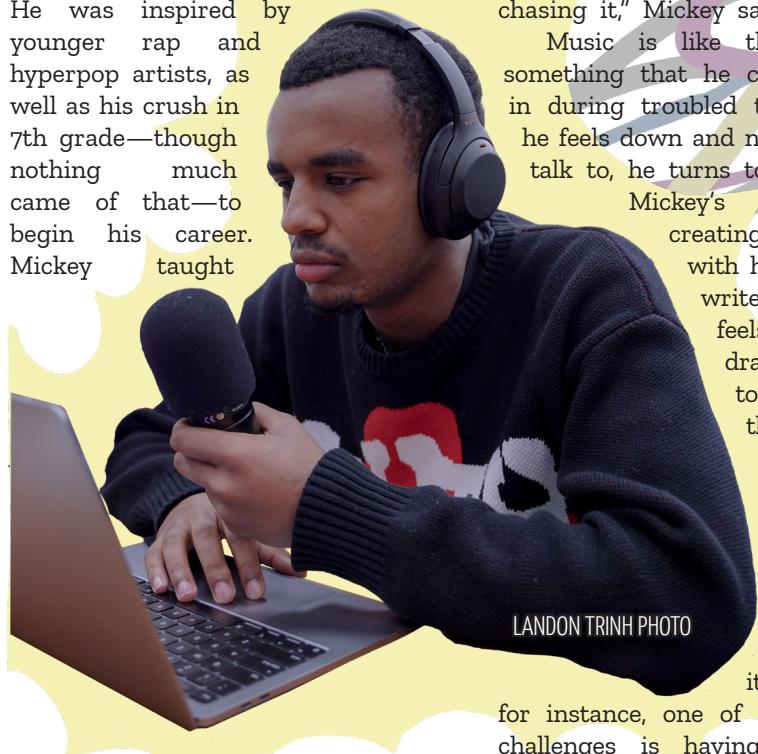
Mickey's process with creating music starts with his notebook—he writes down what he feels, then quickly drafts a few lyrics to go with it. After that, he pulls out his computer, chooses or improvises a beat and begins to record. The process also comes with its struggles—for instance, one of Mickey's biggest challenges is having writer's block



when putting down lyrics. He may have the ideas and emotions in mind, but he does not always know the right words to express them with. To overcome this, he calls a friend to brainstorm and generate ideas together.

His favorite part of the process, however, is hearing the result of his hard work. He enjoys listening to his own songs when he finishes because "every song feels like a kid" to him—each completed track represents the culmination of his time, effort and dedication. He now focuses on making better music and expanding his platform to a wider audience while also inspiring others to pursue their own dreams in the process.

"My goal is to inspire others to do what they love. Anyone who wants to go into music needs to understand that it involves a lot of hard work, dedication and patience. Start now or never start. No matter what happens, just keep going and trying," Mickey said.



Junior **Michael "Mickey" Fekade** records his most recent song, "one last time."

Behind the scenes of Charger News Channel

Eleanor Gil

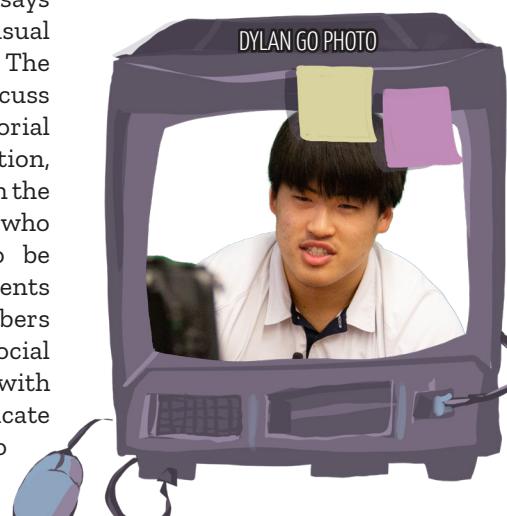
Every Monday, students wait excitedly as their teacher turns on the latest episode of the Charger News Channel (CNC). With its bright, colorful graphics and edits, upbeat music and humorous lines, the club creates videos that inform and engage students across the campus.

Dedicated to keeping the student body up to date, CNC broadcasts school news every Monday, says advisor **Alison Rutsch**, Visual Performing Arts Department. The club meets every Tuesday to discuss the script, then films during tutorial on Thursdays. Since its inception, CNC has worked in tandem with the Assembled Student Body (ASB), who helps determine the content to be broadcasted, such as advertisements for school events. CNC members also draw inspiration from social media, compare their news with professional outlets and communicate with various parent groups to decide on content. Although most of the information comes from ASB or staff, anyone in the club can pitch ideas.

"My goals are to help the members run the club independently and support them so that they cultivate their skills in various aspects of creating the news such as art, logo designs, aesthetics and creative ideas for segments. For instance, it is wonderful to notice that different editors express their individual styles with the episodes they are in charge of. I can actually distinguish which editor created which video because they each have such unique pacing and visual and musical choices."

Ultimately, I hope that through CNC, students get to pursue heightened opportunities," Rutsch said.

Beside sharing information, the club also allows students to collaborate with one another and learn leadership skills. Rutsch is incredibly proud to see how much each of her students has grown and improved throughout the years she has guided the club. Every year, as



leadership positions are passed down from one student to the next, a new batch of students gets the opportunity to learn, organize and connect with each other. Additionally, they gain various skills, such as video editing, graphic design, broadcasting and crafting backgrounds, depending on the role they assume. For instance, Senior **Owen Puryear**, vice president of the club, holds various responsibilities, including determining what segments go on the news, overseeing onset work and camerawork, scriptwriting, prop handling and managing schedules.

sports schedule announcement in preparation for the upcoming episode.

Staff Writers

Day's lucky day



Gwen Carroll

Community News & Feature School Editor

As the rolling camera cut, the lights dimmed and **Nick Day**, Speech Therapist, walked off the set \$7,600 richer. Although he was not the episode's big winner, Day had managed to cross off one of the most daunting items on his bucket list: to appear as a contestant on his all-time favorite game show, Wheel of Fortune.

Games had claimed a spot in Day's list of hobbies ever since he was a small child. Enamored with the joy of winning a game, he soon became increasingly fixated on game shows, particularly those featuring word games, as he reveled in the adrenaline rush of a win.

"I have always been very fond of games. I love to watch people win and take part in the infectious enthusiasm that comes from it. I wanted to be able to provide that joy myself, but I never saw participating on a game show myself as much more than a pipe dream, especially after several of my applications were ignored," Day said.

Subsequently, he was shocked when the application he had sent in on a whim to Wheel of Fortune in 2020 was accepted for a round of virtual auditions—three years after he submitted it. The audition process was nerve-wracking and difficult, but Day pulled it off nonetheless. Not long after the auditions ended, Day received an email offering him a spot. Without hesitation, he accepted.

Despite the high stakes, Day felt very little anxiety during the taping because of the episode's fast pace—there was never a moment of rest, even between games. Before the taping, Day met participants from other episodes that were being filmed simultaneously. The mutual buzz of excitement in the air made it impossible to feel anxious. Additionally, on top of his bonding with fellow contestants, Day had familial support.

"My mom flew all the way out from Louisiana to come watch the taping. Knowing that there was someone watching who was rooting just for me was a very encouraging feeling. We both understood that by being on set, I was fulfilling a longtime dream of mine and we were able to reconnect because of her support. I want to spend my prize money on a trip to Hawaii and invite my mother as thanks for being in my corner the whole time," Day said.

While some may feel empty after achieving a lifelong dream, Day has experienced little of this sentiment. If anything, he views his appearance on Wheel of Fortune as less of a peak and more of a debut, stating that although his time on this show may be over, there are countless more shows to take his chances on. Indeed, Wheel of Fortune may turn out to simply be the first of a series of television appearances for Day.



KAYLA CHOI ART

"I joined as a sophomore with hardly any knowledge in the field, but now that I am in my third and final year with the CNC, I have learned so much, from how to anchor to communicating more effectively with my peers. In retrospect, all the skills I have gathered are paying off," Puryear said.

Puryear was interested in filming and took Multimedia as a sophomore, so joining CNC was the perfect opportunity to dive deeper into his interests. Puryear is now applying to college as a film production major; he is certain that his experience in CNC helped guide him toward this decision. He believes one of the most valuable aspects of the club is that it allows students to flesh out their creativity without overburdening them and he hopes that after he graduates, the rest of the team can continue to come together, dedicating their hard work and unique styles to crafting each episode.

CNC members are immersed in a learning environment that combines the intellectually stimulating atmosphere of a tight-knit classroom with the fast-paced, collaborative workplace of a news broadcast production. In this way, students with various roles can have fun together while serving the school community.

FEATURE: US

Winston Chu and Ella Polak

One moment, the plane was quiet, with passengers settling into their seats as the Boeing 737 steadily gained altitude. Then, with a loud bang, the cabin suddenly filled with the deafening sound of air rushing in, and oxygen masks dropped from the ceiling. About 20 minutes into Alaska Airlines Flight 1282—after the plane had reached an altitude of 16,000 feet—a fuselage piece detached from the plane and created a gaping hole in place of a wall panel, causing rapid depressurization and forcing an emergency landing. While no fatalities or serious injuries were reported, numerous objects, including phones, a pilot's headset and a child's shirt, were sucked out of the door-sized hole.

These specific models of planes, known as Boeing 737 MAX 9s, are certified for 220 passengers. However, Alaska allows a maximum of 178 passengers to maximize space. Therefore, some of the originally installed emergency exits were replaced by door plugs—which are not meant to be opened. Investigation over the faulty door plug at Spirit AeroSystems and Boeing are currently underway by the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA). While Spirit is the one who produces the fuselage—the main body of the planes—Boeing is responsible for final assembly.



In December 2023, a lawsuit was filed against Spirit for allegedly allowing the distribution of products known to be defective, failing to remove leftover debris and omitting

Spirit's products with defects spotted on the tail fin of some aircrafts and in incorrectly drilled fastener holes. The 2023 lawsuit claims Spirit had even told workers to not check for significant defects, placing an emphasis on product quantity over product quality.

Inspections by United Airlines and Alaska Airlines of their several models of MAX 9 planes revealed loose door plug bolts. Boeing has acknowledged

Boeing's big blunders

Poll: How scared do you feel on airplanes?
Compiled by Claire Chang, Eleanor Gil, Caitlynn Sue, Gililna Voon and Joshua Yan
Staff Writers
113 students polled

fasteners. Since 2018, quality failures among its production oversights and has pledged complete transparency and cooperation with the federal investigations. Additionally, in response to the incident, the company has formed a new quality control team to oversee its commercial plane production line.

"I will definitely be skeptical about flying on Boeing planes in the future, but I cannot avoid it. For accessibility purposes, I have to fly Boeing just because of

how widespread their planes are," Sophomore Warren Tan said.

Echoing this sentiment, while the company was known in the 20th century for its safety and reliability, many consumers have lost trust in Boeing due to numerous accidents in recent years. Most notably, a software error in the 737 MAX caused two crashes in 2018 and 2019, killing hundreds. The planes were grounded worldwide for over a year, resulting in over \$21 billion in financial losses for the company, per CNN. Boeing's troubles have not ended here, however; on Jan. 18, the engine of a Boeing 747 lit on fire mid-flight, prompting an emergency landing and another FAA investigation. The company's stocks have plummeted by almost 40% in the past four years as their reputation has eroded.

"Boeing planes have issues with quality control—though accidents in planes can happen, it is unusual for this many incidents to be taking place in one airplane company. Boeing should be working towards making higher-quality planes that are less likely to crash and malfunction," Senior Sky Shih said.

Despite going through difficult times, Boeing will likely remain a leader in commercial air travel, given that its only significant competitor is the European company Airbus. However, this incident only adds to a pattern of mistakes that has pervaded the company in recent years. As regulators continue to investigate, questions remain concerning both the quality of Boeing's products and the future of the company.

Adrian Tomaszewski

Following his four indictments over the past two years, former President Donald Trump is now facing potential disqualification from the primary elections in two states: Colorado and Maine. The decisions, formalized on Dec. 19 and Jan. 2, were taken to the Supreme Court on Feb. 8.

The proceedings largely stem from President Trump's involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021 riots. Whether Trump is responsible for the violence is key to the proceedings; while Trump's comments in his "Save America" rally may not have been meant to call for literal violence, the Colorado Supreme Court ultimately found that these and other remarks incited the insurrection that followed.

The Colorado Supreme Court therefore ruled that Trump is barred from participating in the Colorado primary because he violated Section 3 of

the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, which prohibits anyone who has engaged in insurrection after taking an oath to support the Constitution from holding office again. Notably, the section does not specifically list the president as one of the barred offices. Based on this fact, the lower Colorado court ruled that Trump was allowed to participate in the election. However, the state Supreme Court disagreed, stating that it was evident that the presidency was also intended to be limited by the Amendment. Maine's Secretary of State agreed with this assertion and barred Trump's candidacy.

"Trump did have an involvement in the events of Jan. 6, but the degree to which that involvement incited the insurrection is not very clear. Some of the Colorado judges, being partisan, have a political bias that may have influenced their decision, but the ruling

may also be necessary to preserve democracy in our country," Junior Gaurav Rao said.

Immediately, the Colorado decision was appealed to the

United States Supreme Court, which first heard oral arguments on Feb. 8. The hearing centered around three major points: Whether Trump's statements can be considered insurrection, whether a state has the power to disqualify a candidate running for federal office and whether the 14th Amendment even applies to the office of the president. The decision in Maine has similarly been appealed to the state courts but will likely be decided instead by the result of the Colorado decision in the Supreme Court, where hearings continue on Feb. 16.

While these decisions do not bar Trump from the presidential ballot—only from running as a Republican candidate in the primaries, the elections that parties use to decide which candidate to field in the actual presidential race—they can later be used as precedent to justify a similar

removal in the general election. Trump can still run as an independent to circumvent a primary ballot restriction. Both Colorado's and Maine's primaries occur on Super Tuesday—by which point the candidates are usually decided. However, the decisions could discourage even more independents from considering a vote for Trump or further

solidify Trump's supporters' beliefs that the "deep state" is out to get him.

The Colorado and Maine decisions have been heavily scrutinized by the Republican Party as well as some independent observers as politically motivated. However, the Supreme Court ruling also may not be untouched by politics. Trump nominated three of the court's judges during his presidency, leading to a 6-3 conservative-liberal split; together, these factors almost surely guarantee Trump's victory.

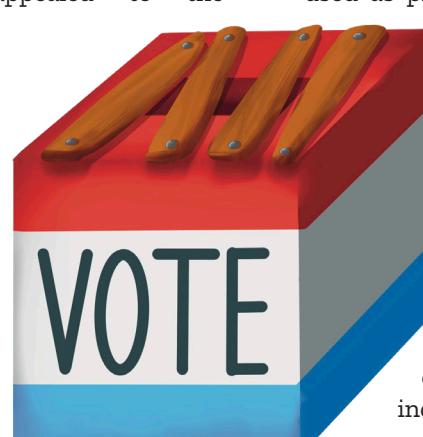
"I want to vote in the primaries because I pride myself in being a socially and politically involved citizen. We all need to stand out and show our support for our democracy in the face of politically transformative events like the Colorado ruling by voting," Senior Eshan Velidandla said.

Indeed, various prominent conservatives have argued that the Trump ruling could set a precedent for the disqualification of current Vice President Kamala Harris, who raised money for arrested "insurrectionist" Black Lives Matter rioters. Amidst these pushes to disqualify Trump and Harris, it seems as if both parties will do anything to win an ever more polarized America.

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Taiwan's election and territorial tension

Winston Chu and Andrew Duval

Taiwan's three major parties—the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP)—vied for a presidential position on Jan. 13 in an election that has the potential to determine foreign policy for years to come, especially Taiwan's relationship with China. Ultimately, DPP candidate Lai Ching-te won with 40.1% of the votes, succeeding President Tsai Ing-Wen.

Territorial claims were a major topic of discussion in this election. Located off the coast of southeastern China, Taiwan is an island with a rich and complex history. For centuries, Taiwan was fully controlled by China. In 1895, it became a Japanese colony after the Sino-Japanese War, but after Japan's defeat in World War II, China reclaimed the island.

Following an internal revolution opposing the Qing Dynasty, the newly-formed Kuomintang party founded the Republic of China (ROC) on the mainland in 1912. The KMT would later find itself embroiled in conflict with the Communist Party of China (CPC) during the 1927-1949 Chinese Civil War, when the Communist Party won, and the KMT fled to Taiwan. China officially became known as the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Taiwan as the ROC.

Now, both the PRC in China and the ROC in Taiwan claim the mainland and the island of Taiwan as their territory, though the ROC has not made attempts or shown intent to reclaim any

mainland territory. Despite their ethnically Chinese background, the majority of people in Taiwan consider themselves Taiwanese, not Chinese, Pew Research Center reports. Many oppose reunification with the mainland and have formed their own cultural identity.

"Though China may have historical claims to Taiwan, they do not rightfully own it if the territory desires its own independence and autonomy from China," Senior Vienna Simon said.

Although Taiwan's low wages and housing problems are a major concern for Taiwanese voters, their greatest focus lies on China and the choice between independence or eventual reunification, per The Economist. Taiwan has always been threatened by war with the mainland, but recently, China has become increasingly aggressive, navigating past the de facto median line separating Chinese and Taiwanese territorial waters and hosting military exercises over the island. Taiwan now faces a high risk of Chinese invasion or a military blockade, as China's President Xi Jinping ordered his country's military to be prepared to invade Taiwan by 2027.

More recently, Xi claimed reunification

with Taiwan was inevitable in a New Year's speech. China has justified its provocative actions with its "One China" policy, which claims all historical territories of China—including Taiwan, Hong Kong and Tibet—as its current territory. Before the election, Beijing sent warnings against voting for a candidate known as a separatist or "troublemaker," framing the election as a "choice between war and peace."

The three parties have varied views on relations with China. DPP candidate Lai Ching-te originally advocated for Taiwanese independence, which would mean a formal declaration of Taiwan as a sovereign state. He later softened his position, stating that Taiwan is already autonomous, negating the need for a formal declaration of independence. Lai aims to lead Taiwan towards increased self-sufficiency with assistance from other democratic countries like the U.S.

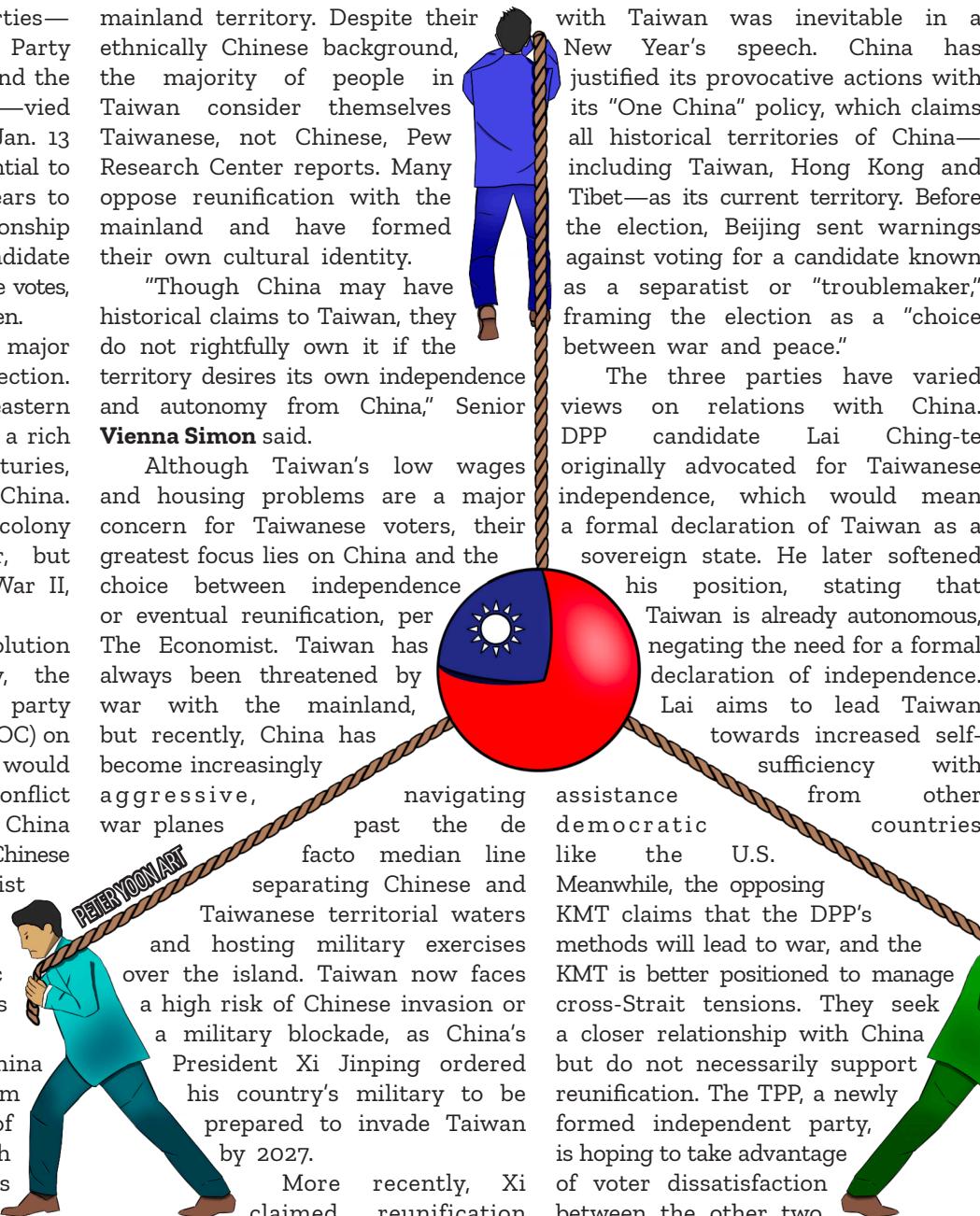
Meanwhile, the opposing KMT claims that the DPP's methods will lead to war, and the KMT is better positioned to manage cross-Strait tensions. They seek a closer relationship with China but do not necessarily support reunification. The TPP, a newly formed independent party, is hoping to take advantage of voter dissatisfaction between the other two

Staff Writer and Sports & Charger Follies Editor parties and aims to maintain the status quo.

"From a Taiwanese point of view, the result of the election has been beneficial because it will bolster the country's defense by creating closer relations with America. From a Chinese point of view, the outcome is a big problem because it will pose a challenge to their goals to reunify," Sophomore Edward Chang said.

Still, Lai Ching-te only won with 40% of the vote, compared with 33% for the KMT and 26% for the TPP, according to the Associated Press. Additionally, Taiwan's legislature is divided after no party won a majority of seats (51 for the DPP, 52 for the KMT, and 8 for the TPP). The relatively close election and split legislature present potential future challenges to the relationship between Taiwan and China. Disagreements in the government on how to deal with Chinese aggression could weaken Taiwan's stance in a future military conflict.

Lai Ching-te's victory has been perceived as an act of defiance against China. After he won, China condemned countries that congratulated the president-elect, claiming that it encouraged "Taiwan independence separatist forces." As the current vice president of Taiwan, Lai's skills gained from holding the position will be further tested as he forges a new path for the island.



Sikhs seek sovereignty

Amie Ahn and James Yu

Sleek sheets flutter out of a bulky beige box, uniform in appearance except for two slim checkmark boxes and a single dark graphite mark. On Jan. 28, Sikh Americans across California went to the polls, voting on whether a new Sikh nation, Khalistan, should be formed in the Punjab region of Northern India. Although the vote was non-binding, it still sparked discourse on ethnic autonomy and gauged support for an independent nation.

Referendums around the world have garnered hundreds of thousands of votes, and this one was no different: The Nation reported that over 127,000 Sikhs turned out for the California vote alone. Likewise, Independent reports that over 100,000 Canadian Sikhs turned out in an early Canadian referendum and 10,000 in a London referendum. The non-binding nature of the vote means the results serve as an indication of independence support, rather than a legitimate independence vote.

Sikhism is a religion with origins in Punjab, India, and was founded in the 15th century by Guru Nanak. Its followers seek to practice honesty, compassion, kindness and generosity to all, and they value equality and service to humanity. Sikhism has 25 million members worldwide, 16 million of whom reside in Punjab. The religion clashes with the hierarchical caste system in Hinduism, and a tense relationship between Indian Hindus and Sikhs has resulted from these opposing values. In a country where certain social classes can encounter extreme discrimination, the Sikh belief

that all people are created equal faces mainstream backlash.

"To me, being Sikh means always having a positive outlook for any situation, that everyone is equal and that anything is possible in life if you put your heart into it. As Sikhs, we value human life and work hard to spread compassion and help others," Senior Divjeet Sohi said.

The Khalistan Movement, which was founded over a century ago under British rule over India but recently gained immense traction, seeks to establish an independent nation out of the Indian state of Punjab and neighboring Punjabi-speaking provinces. Al Jazeera reports that Khalistan supporters, unified by a common religion and language, desire independence from India to preserve Sikh culture, which India—a country dominated by its Hindu majority—has actively worked to suppress.

The Indian government, supported by a majority of the Indian people, opposes any form of Sikh separation. Even though tensions have

always existed between Hindu majority India and the Sikh minority, the Indian government only adopted a heavily anti-Sikh stance in the 1980s, when Lt. Gen. Kuldeep Singh Brar led an attack on Sri Harmandir Sahib, an important Sikh temple also called the Golden Temple. It was in an attempt to get rid of Sikh separatists, but it also destroyed parts of the temple, an extremely sacred site for Sikhs. The raid was perceived by Sikhs as an attack on their religion, and in retaliation, Sikh bodyguards of then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi assassinated her due to her role in ordering the raid. This led to four days of rioting and violence, which resulted in the deaths of anywhere from 3,000 to 17,000 people, the majority of whom were Sikhs.

Moreover, the BBC explains that Sikh militants further responded to the 1984 raid by bombing an Air India flight in 1985, killing all 329 passengers on board. Numerous more clashes between Hindus and Sikhs have occurred since



then; Canada recently accused the Indian government of ordering the death of Canadian Khalistan independence leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, whom the Indian government previously described as a terrorist. Nijjar was described by his supporters as a peaceful advocate for the independence of Sikhs.

"The creation of a country purely based on one religion such as Khalistan could yield negative effects. People that were once brought together by sharing the same religion could be broken apart by differing beliefs that arise over time," Freshman Avni Harsh said.

Despite the movement being outlawed in India, many Sikhs outside of the country are still advocating for Khalistan, and the U.S.-based group called Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) was the organizer of the Khalistan Referendum. The referendums seek to garner enough support to fuel an official referendum in Punjab. Sikh supporters refer to the referendum as a peaceful, democratic tool for resolving the conflict in India, but SFJ is banned in India and not all Sikhs express support for Khalistan. The Indian government also firmly believes the referendum will incite violence.

News agency Foreign Policy states that Indian officials must tread carefully to create future policies that hold a strong stance against Sikh violence while also upholding equal treatment for Sikhs. However, as Western leaders falter in support of Sikh self-determination in fear of damaging their relationships with the Indian government, it remains the job of unaffiliated referendums to decide the future for the Sikh people.

Claire Chang

DESIGN BY ANDREW DUVAL

Staff Writer

A home run for diversity in the MLB

On Dec. 9, 2023, designated hitter and pitcher Shohei Ohtani signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers for 10 years on a \$700 million contract, one that setting a new record in all of baseball history. Players from baseball-loving Japan have a complicated history with America's MLB: they are often seen as underdogs, but have become some of the league's superstars.

As a 19-year old, Masanori 'Mashi' Murakami became the first MLB Japanese player in 1964. Murakami played well, pitching with a 1.78 ERA, or earned run average. Low ERAs prevent the opposing team from scoring runs, and they are used to measure the effectiveness of a pitcher. With Murakami's success, he showed the league the potential of Japanese baseball.

Due to disagreements between Japan and America as for what team Murakami would play for, the two countries signed an agreement honoring the contracts of their respective players in 1966, stopping the participation of Japanese players in big American leagues for the next three decades. It was not until 1995 with Hideo Nomo's contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers that Japanese players re-entered the MLB scene.

In the early 2000s, Ichiro Suzuki and Hideki Matsui followed, playing for the Seattle Mariners and the New York Yankees, respectively.

Furthermore, Ichiro Suzuki became the first Asian player in Mariners history to be in the team Hall of Fame. Throughout his career, Suzuki was doubted due to his race. Since it was still uncommon for Asian athletes to play in the MLB, Suzuki felt that his performance dictated how Americans would perceive his home country's baseball culture, according to NBC News. Weighing 170 pounds at five feet nine inches, Suzuki's build is significantly smaller compared to that of the average MLB player. With every action magnified by his peers, Suzuki and other Japanese players worked hard to disprove negative stereotypes.

"Japanese players' journeys in the MLB are similar to Jackie Robinson's during a time of discrimination against African Americans. The success of Japanese players empowers the Asian community and demonstrates to professional sports leagues that Asian

players are just as good, if not even better than American players," Senior **Ryan Pimental** said.

According to NBC, when Suzuki first started off as an outfielder, fans and his teammates did not think much of him. During games, fans yelled at him to go back to Japan and threw such as quarters, one of which hit Suzuki in the head. However, Suzuki turned the tables through his quality performance during games, eventually becoming the American League rookie of the year. Despite facing racism, Suzuki was one of the greatest players, winning three Silver Slugger Awards, 10 Gold Glove Awards and accumulating over 3,000 hits.

Suzuki was not the only Japanese player who encountered prejudiced attacks. In 2021, former Yankees pitcher Masahiro Tanaka returned to Japan with his wife and children partially due to concerns over racism, since hate crimes and discrimination increased following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The success of Japanese players will influence the league to be more inclusive and serve as an inspiration for others. More Asians will be motivated

to play sports, and there will likely be a larger Asian audience in the MLB than ever before," school baseball player **Ryan Son** '26 said.

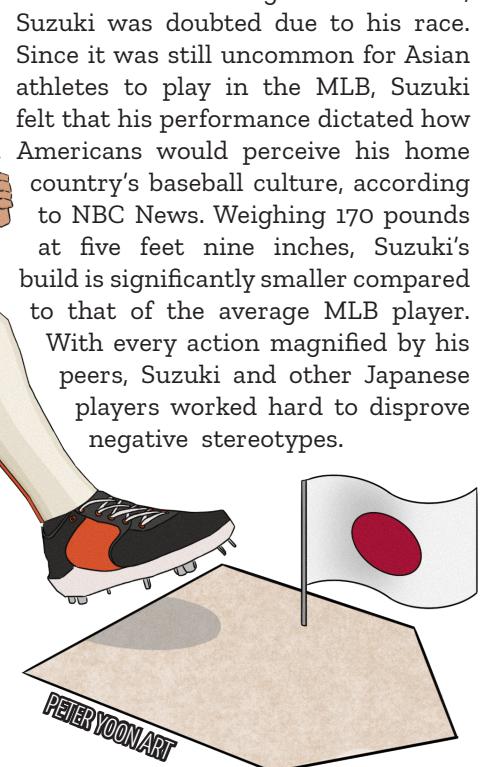
From being doubted to being highly sought after, many Japanese players have made significant progress in the MLB. After signing a \$325 million, 12-year contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers last December, pitcher Yoshinobu Yamamoto has become

the highest-paid rookie in the MLB. Furthermore, to form deeper connections with his teammates, Ichiro Suzuki picked up slang and the native languages of his teammates.

"Asians are starting to have more representation in big league sports, a major milestone for a lot of Asians because there is a stereotype that they are purely focused on education. With the increase of diversity in the Major League, the increased representation would likely shift the

public perspective towards Asians in high-level athletics," school baseball player **William Ro** '26 said.

Japanese players in the MLB have overcome historical challenges and stereotypes to get where they are now—reflecting their individual resilience and serving as a catalyst for increased Asian representation in professional sports.



Stylistic concerns clash with life-saving gear

James Li

Staff Writer

On Oct. 28, 2023, veteran National Hockey League (NHL) player Adam Johnson died after suffering a laceration on his neck caused by a hockey blade during a game. Johnson was not wearing a neck guard, a life-saving piece of equipment that prevents the blades of ice skates from cutting the skin on contact. His death prompted USA Hockey to mandate neck guards for players under 18, and led to a renewed debate about the value of style compared to safety, as players did not want to wear neck guards for aesthetic reasons.

Neck guards vary in size, appearance and cost. The smallest and most affordable ones are typically thin guards and go around athletes' necks. Bigger and more expensive protective gear consists of full shirts that are made out of thick, cut-resistant material with built-in neck guards.

Out of the 387,000 youth hockey players in the U.S., almost seven percent of them seek medical attention every year due to lacerations. One of these players, Evan Smolik, was struck with a teammate's ice skate in practice. The blade sliced through his jugular vein, on the underside of the neck, but the guard that he was wearing prevented it from puncturing his carotid artery, saving his life.

Yet a majority of the professional hockey community still does not utilize neck guards. Many hockey players in the NHL view wearing protective equipment such as neck guards as being less "manly," according to AP News. Hockey has had a long history with such attitudes of machismo interfering with safety. For example, helmets were not mandated by the NHL at its inception. Only after player Bill Masterton died due to slamming his head down onto the ice were there real changes in players' attitudes towards safety equipment. However, helmets were still not made mandatory until 10 years afterwards.

"While the opinions and feelings of players are important, ultimately safety should be the priority above all else, and organizations such as the NHL should enact policies promoting player safety," Sophomore **Andy Kim** said.

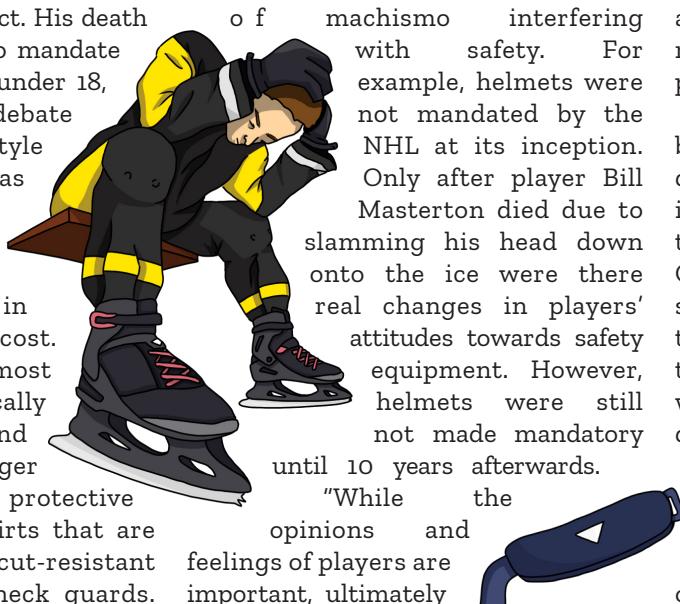
However, attitudes are changing across the hockey community regarding protective equipment. The International Ice Hockey Federation, which manages tournaments such as the Olympics and both men's

and women's world championships, released statements mandating neck protection for their tournaments. The English Ice Hockey Federation now also requires all players to use proper neck guards. Other groups, including USA Hockey, are now working on regulations regarding proper neck gear.

The conflict between stylistic designs and safety is not just limited to the ice rink. Formula One racing faced a similar dilemma with the implementation of the halo protection device within vehicles. The halo device is a protection system

placed on the cockpit that consists of a semi-circular ring anchored to the chassis going around the driver's head. It is the strongest part of the car, designed to deflect debris and absorb energy from impacts. When the device was first introduced, it faced several complaints, including the obstruction of drivers' views and ruining the stylistic elegance of unencumbered drivers' cockpits.

"Player safety is far more important than aesthetics, especially in dangerous sports like ice hockey and racing, where fatal accidents can happen if people are not mindful.



and women's world championships, released statements mandating neck protection for their tournaments. The English Ice Hockey Federation now also requires all players to use proper neck guards. Other groups, including USA Hockey, are now working on regulations regarding proper neck gear.

The conflict between stylistic designs and safety is not just limited to the ice rink. Formula One racing faced a similar dilemma with the implementation of the halo protection device within vehicles. The halo device is a protection system

placed on the cockpit that consists of a semi-circular ring anchored to the chassis going around the driver's head. It is the strongest part of the car, designed to deflect debris and absorb energy from impacts. When the device was first introduced, it faced several complaints, including the obstruction of drivers' views and ruining the stylistic elegance of unencumbered drivers' cockpits.

"Player safety is far more important than aesthetics, especially in dangerous sports like ice hockey and racing, where fatal accidents can happen if people are not mindful.

Wearing extra protective gear should not be a problem for ice hockey players since they are already all layered up—neck guards would not stand out if athletes are worried about looking good," Senior **Lexi Xu** said.

Despite these concerns, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile stuck with the halo, determining it to be a valuable piece of equipment for driver safety. The halo proved its worth on many occasions; for instance in Bahrain, Romain Grosjean was saved from impact by the halo when he collided with a barrier in 2020. Also, in 2023, Zhou Ganyu's car inverted in Britain, skidding across the track upside down. Were it not for the halo device, his helmet would have slid across the track at high speeds.

The benefits of hockey neck guards and halo devices illustrate the importance of prioritizing safety over style. However, debates about protective equipment continue. Perhaps if athletic governing bodies emphasize the consequences of inadequate safety measures, athletes in sports including hockey and racing will be more receptive towards protective gear.



KAWA DESAI ART

The decision



Frost



Decode

DIYABOYOPATI DESIGN

In this cryptogram cipher each letter in the phrase has been replaced with another letter. Decode all the missing letters to reveal the final phrase!

	P	P		
T	I	I	E	R

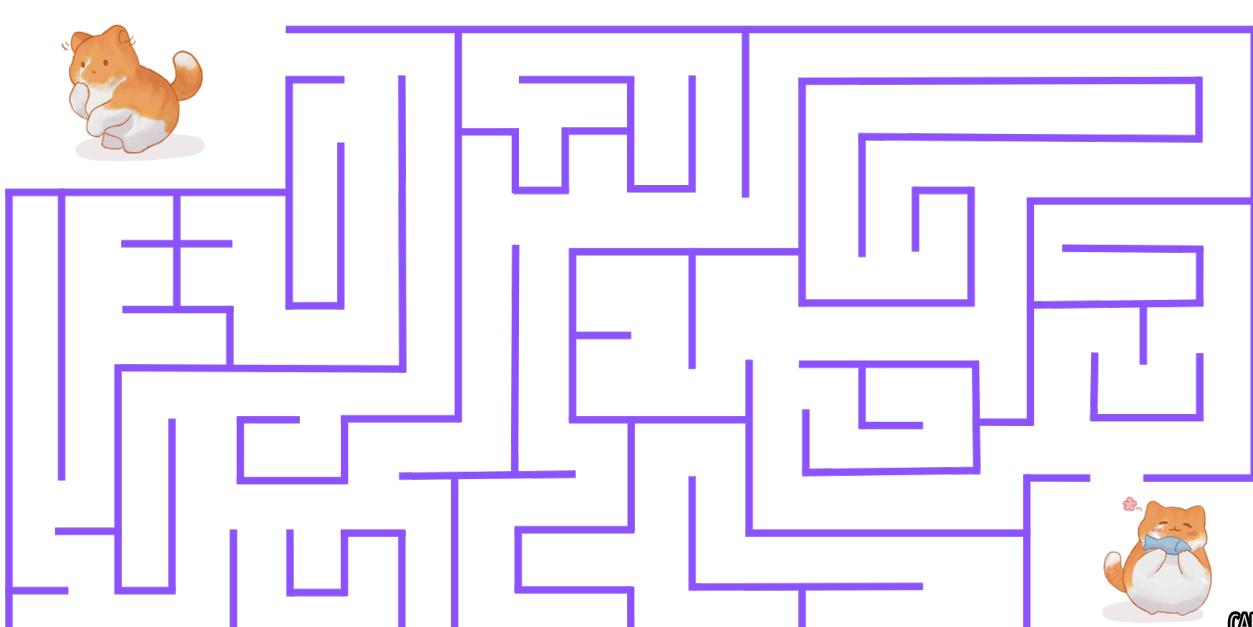
	O	
Y	H	K

J	O					
C	H	N	K	G	T	E

	O			
M	H	W	T	R

Maze fun!

ALEXAJOSEPH DESIGN



CATLYNN SUE ART

CHARGER FOLLIES

"The Loveliest Time"



James Yu

Staff Writer

Time is fleeting. Life's limited repository of time is what makes spending time wisely quintessential. Although Carly Rae Jepsen packs a diverse assortment of sounds in her most recent album, "The Loveliest Time," the album fails to leave a lasting impression, disposing of nearly 44 minutes of my time.

Jepsen opens the album with "Anything to Be With You." Despite its lively arrangement of bouncy instruments which complement Jepsen's excited vocals well, Jepsen repeatedly hoists the pitch of her voice so high it shatters my ears, making me wish that the song would end—though her squeaky voice euphorically exclaims that it will "never be over."

Luckily, Jepsen's subsequent song, "Kamikaze," trades in the high pitched squeals for a melody led by heavy vocals crafting a cohesive story of love's often sacrificial desperation. Rising out of the melodic depths of "Kamikaze," "After Last Night" elevates listeners to a lighthearted, wispy side of Jepsen.

Unfortunately, despite the bold performances in "After Last Night" and "Anything to Be With You" from Jepsen throughout the rest of the album, the tracks blur into an amalgamation of tunes and themes. In spite of several listens, past "Kamikaze," the rest of the album remains repetitive. Although there is value in consistency, "The Loveliest Time" faces trouble separating each song from the next.

Nevertheless, Jepsen inserts a few diamonds in the rough. "Psychedelic Switch" flows well, accelerating and decelerating throughout when needed. Despite the forgettable nature of the songs themselves, "Psychedelic Switch", is able to build a holistic narrative in line with other songs in the album, such as "Kamikaze." In "Shy Boy," Jepsen incorporates toned down ad-libs into a buoyant instrumental to form a sleek, groovy tune. However, both "Shy Boy" and "Psychedelic Switch" fail to display themselves as anything new, sounding more like reused radio hits than original songs.

"Kollage" suffers from a related issue. Although the calm, slow pace of the song sets itself apart from its peers on the album, the song does not bring anything new to listeners, instead doing a mediocre job of an overdone emotional style.

Overall, despite claiming to present listeners with "The Loveliest Time," Jepsen's latest album misses the mark. Its repetitive performances, despite demonstrating strong potential, find themselves in an ocean of irrelevancy, dooming the album to never take up a moment of my time again.

"The Loveliest Time" (2/5)
was i vibin?"



- + strong initial performance
- repetitive tracklist
- forgettable tracks



Amie Ahn

- Transportation -

Joyful journeys: Entertainment on the move

Staff Writer

A grand, gleaming cruise glides through the deep blue waters of the Caribbean Sea, voyaging to the Bahamas. Inside this sophisticated establishment, over 3,000 guests are enjoying their time at a bar, getting a spa treatment, watching a theatrical performance or devouring a three-course meal. Currently, many forms of transportation hold more purpose than solely arriving to a destination, having shifted their focus to providing recreation, competition and entertainment.

On a cruise ship, it is easy to forget that the ship is in motion because of its wide and elegant selections of food, pools, water slides and advanced, highly engrossing shows. Cruise ships have provided relaxation for 150 years, becoming a staple in the entertainment industry. Unlike any other ordinary vacation, cruises can foster a sense of tranquility one needs after a busy month or year of work, allowing the mind to take a break from the hectic hustle of daily life. Moreover, cruises take periodic stops at well-known cities and encourage passengers to disembark the ship and explore—making cruises a central hub for tourists.

"Cruises are a valuable part of both the transportation and entertainment industry due to their ability to merge the two while prioritizing safety for passengers. Thereby, passengers gain positive memories of new experiences on the ocean, while not having their safety compromised," Sophomore **Bhavya Kumar** said.

Numerous forms of entertainment today were once crucial methods of transportation in the past, such as horseback riding. People regularly rode horses for long-distance travel until the mid-20th century, when automobiles became the norm for transportation. Now, horseback riding is primarily a leisurely activity, used for entertainment and sports. Some people take riding lessons as a hobby, while others compete in horse racing more seriously. Referred to as equestrian sports, these events arose during the Renaissance, requiring a human and horse to collaborate to perform tricks. For example, in show jumping—a popular activity in the Netherlands—a horse must leap over and avoid obstacles in its path, as stated by the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI).

Not all forms of transportation are on ground level. Wandering above the blue sky, with a vibrant hue in its bubble shape, some may struggle to comprehend that hot air balloons were once used as transportation. Hot air balloons were first used for travel, commerce and war in the late 19th century, per Smithsonian Magazine. Seattle Ballooning, a balloon ride tour agency, stated that the Montgolfier brothers launched the first-ever hot air balloon in 1783; the balloon was unmanned and rose approximately 75 feet above the ground.

The balloon merely consisted of a paper bag with an opening at the bottom and a fire lit beneath it. In contrast, modern air balloons have several components—a basket, burner, envelope and various instruments—utilizing gravity, air density and changing temperatures in the envelope to control its height. As mentioned by Napa Valley Aloft, a balloon tour agency in California, the average modern hot air balloon usually reaches about 1,000 to 3,000 feet in elevation, but the highest record is 68,000 feet.

Balloons are now embraced in Japanese culture, despite Japan initially using hot air balloons to carry bombs during World War II, per Seattle Ballooning. Specifically, hot air balloons have evolved into a competitive sport. Within the country, the Ojiya Balloon Festival held in Niigata is an annually celebrated event that hosts a competitive balloon contest in which balloon fliers navigate through the wind and weather to reach a target point on the ground. The festival also features food stalls and an opportunity for non-competitors to ride a balloon for fun. Hot air balloons are widely enjoyed for tourism in many other countries too, including the U.S. In California, wine-country flights—where people taste a variety of wines while at high altitudes—are popular attractions.

Despite the diverse forms of entertainment transportation has produced, some believe that recreational transportation is extravagant and impractical. Many value the daily essential services transportation provides more than the light-hearted entertainment purposes that are becoming more common. For one, cruises are very expensive—companies invest \$500 million to over \$900 million just to build the ship, as reported by The Points Guy, an American travel website.

"Money spent on transportation that is solely designed for fun could be better spent elsewhere; no hot air balloon is going to transport someone to the hospital. Recreational transportation lacks the capacity to provide access to essential services, including education or the transport of valuable goods such as food," Junior **Via Thekongkerur** said.

Ultimately, recreational transportation showcases how inventions evolve over time, transforming from their original purpose. Horse-back riding and hot air balloons, once forms of travel, now play a greater role in entertainment as technology advances. Emerging transportation may adopt additional purposes, potentially leading to a dramatic shift in how people view recreation and transportation.

