

Leland High School  
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DESIGN BY SOPHIA QIN

## Dancing the night away: Dandiya Raas

Antara Gangwal

Wooden sticks clap along to the sound of dholak drums pulsing from the speakers. The scent of samosas and pav bhaji and the vibrant colors of traditional clothing fill the room. With over 800 attendees gathering for a night of dance, music and festivities, the school's Dandiya Raas Night is in full spirit.

Garba is a traditional Indian folk dance typically performed during the Hindu festival of Navratri, which celebrates Hindu goddesses. Dancers wear traditional outfits such as blouses and long skirts, mirroring the beat of the music by clapping and following step patterns. When dancers clap decorative sticks called "dandiya" together instead of

their hands, Garba transforms into Dandiya Raas.

"The school has hosted Dandiya Raas annually for over a decade to celebrate our community's cultural diversity. Dandiya is also the school's biggest fundraiser," Leland Parent Club President Sheela Harish said.

Harish explained that this year, the club sold a record high number of tickets, as pandemic regulations limited the number of guests last year. To ensure that the event would run smoothly, the club began planning decorations, finding volunteers and booking facilities and food vendors in May.

The Dandiya Raas Fundraiser took place on Oct. 15 in the school gym. Outside, food vendors sold Indian dishes such as samosas, vada pav and pav bhaji and drinks including mango lassi and chai. Parent Club volunteers also sold dandiya sticks.



JULIANAKANISHI  
PHOTO



Guests could take photos with family and friends in the mini gym, where volunteers set up a photo backdrop with garlands and colorful umbrellas. The dancing took place in the main gym, and a band featuring veteran Dandiya musicians Asim Mehta and Madhvi Mehta played live music that incorporated drums, keyboard, flute and vocals.

The event opened at 7 p.m. with the Garba dance, which lasted until 8:45 p.m. Afterward, Principal Peter Park and Leland Parent Club officers, including Dandiya Coordinator Shilpa Dalmia, gave speeches about Dandiya Raas's importance for the school community. Then, Naach—the school's Bollywood dance club—performed to a mashup of four Bollywood songs. They were met with thunderous applause celebrating their self-choreographed performance.

Right: Junior Samayra Gupta performs

*Staff Writer*  
"I was extremely nervous to perform in front of such a large crowd with Naach, but after hearing all of the cheers, I felt proud to be showing off the product of our hard work over the past month," Junior Juhi Khetawat said.

Following Naach's dance, dandiya began—hundreds of brightly-colored sticks rhythmically echoed throughout the gym. Dandiya lasted until 11 p.m., and to close the night, popular Bollywood songs blasted over the speakers.

Students and parents alike celebrated throughout the night, bonding over their shared heritage. Leland Parent Club views this year's Dandiya Raas Night as a major success and eagerly anticipates next year's festivities.

Left: A community member spins dandiya sticks to the beat of the music.

Right: Junior Samayra Gupta performs

with Naach during Dandiya Raas Night.

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# COMMUNITY NEWS

**Dr. Franklin Cutaran:**  
Physical therapist



Imran Shaikh

Community News & Feature World Editor

Helping people regain their motion, strength and balance, Dr. Franklin Cutaran treats patients with various medical conditions and musculoskeletal injuries as a physical therapist. On weekdays, Cutaran works at an outpatient clinic where he sees patients with orthopedic conditions, while he works in a hospital to treat those with neurological, cardiovascular, respiratory and other medical issues on weekends.

"At the clinic, I evaluate patients with musculoskeletal problems and develop individualized treatment plans accordingly. My goal is to facilitate functional activities, manage pain, improve quality of life and assist in a return to sports by providing hands-on care through manual therapy, neuromuscular re-education and specific exercises. I also use therapy modalities such as heat, cold or taping to help treat my patients. At the hospital, I see patients with acute illnesses," Cutaran said.

To become a physical therapist, one must attend physical therapy school, which is a doctorate program. Prerequisites include a bachelor's degree in science along with a high score on the Graduate Record Examination—a standardized test that many graduate schools require for admission similar to the SAT for undergraduate admissions. Applicants must also serve at least 100 volunteer hours or work a paid position in a physical therapy clinic or hospital before they are eligible to apply to a physical therapy school.

Once accepted, students usually take around three and a half years to earn a Doctorate of Physical Therapy. After completing their education, students must pass the Physical Therapy Board exam and ethics examination before they can start working as a physical therapist.

Cutaran takes new education courses each year, engages in small projects at his job and volunteers as a clinical instructor to help advance his career. He enjoys seeing his patients' muscular function improve through hard work and determination. Many people arrive at his clinic in wheelchairs, walkers or crutches, but are able to walk—or sometimes even run—after a few weeks of rehabilitation.

"Physical therapy is a very satisfying job. Additionally, since physical therapy is in such high demand, there is a high level of job security. If you are interested in making a difference in someone's life and can handle the demanding journey necessary to become a physical therapist, I highly recommend pursuing this path," Cutaran said.

## California High-Speed Rail: A bumpy ride to success

Andrew Duval

Staff Writer

Twenty years ago, a trip from Shanghai to Beijing would have taken at least 12 hours by rail. Today, the trip has been shortened to as little as four and a half hours thanks to an extensive network of high-speed rails (HSR), or rail systems made to handle trains traveling at least 124 miles per hour—the fastest and most efficient form of ground transportation today. A project is currently underway to bring the first HSR to California. However, the California High-Speed Rail (CAHSR) project has been plagued with difficulties, including delays, poor management, trouble securing land, engineering issues and a steep price tag.

The CAHSR Authority hopes to build several lines and have trains running by the end of the decade, with the main route extending from San Francisco to Los Angeles and passing through San Jose. However, The Guardian has found that though the project was approved in 2008 with a goal to have it operational by 2020, there has not been a single mile of track laid. Service is not expected to begin in San Jose until 2029. Additionally, despite the project's initial proposed cost of \$40 billion, the estimate has since grown to over \$105 billion.

When requested for a statement on the cost overruns, CAHSR spokesperson Kyle Simerly stated that if all operations went according to plan, the project could be paid off as soon as 2040 due to high demand for the service.

"The delays and cost overruns for this project are acceptable if it means getting closer to building HSR in California. I hope to be able to ride it as soon as possible," Freshman Tristan Mank said.

The project aims to lower housing costs by connecting areas with cheaper housing in the Central Valley to the Bay Area and other population centers. Simerly also claims that CAHSR will lead to significantly lower transport times and reduced emissions as high-speed rail runs on electricity—which is both cheaper and cleaner than transport by car or plane. CAHSR would also decrease traffic

connecting Los Angeles to San Francisco has set a high bar for CAHSR to meet, compared to what could have been a much shorter but more feasible line between Los Angeles and San Diego.

"I do not support the project because \$105 billion is a lot of money just to connect San Francisco and Los Angeles. The money could be better spent funding local projects instead. If the line does end up being completed and CAHSR charges a reasonable price, then I would consider it as an option," Junior Hillary Chen said.

Although the project currently lacks the funds required to complete all of the planned rail lines, Simerly has stated that the Authority has the money to build the initial operating segment located in the Central Valley. While many other large infrastructure projects had significant amounts of federal funding, CAHSR has yet to receive such funding, so there is potential for more financial backing in the future.

Politics have also handicapped the CAHSR project. According to The New York Times, lawmakers have begun to lose hope in the project and have diverted funds towards local rail lines instead, believing that any further investment would

be a waste of money. In addition, since the initial project proposal, instead of running a direct line between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the route was diverted inland under former Mayor of Los Angeles County Mike Antonovich's lobbying. The change added 41 miles to the route and as much as \$8 billion to the already high costs.

Despite the obstacles, delays and cost overruns, public support for the project remains relatively strong. According to San Jose Spotlight, supporters of HSR in California outnumber dissidents five to three. With billions of dollars already spent on the project, the CAHSR Authority is working to fulfill its promises one track at a time.

### Infographic:

#### California High Speed Rail Route

24 Stations

Passes through  
Central Valley

800 Miles  
of Track

DANIEL CHOI ART

congestion by  
providing an  
alternative method of  
transportation, clearing up  
highways within the state.

Despite the grand promises, the project has run into many obstacles as work has commenced, with cost becoming one of its greatest adversaries. The New York Times reports that, based on engineers' predictions, the rail system will not be completed by the end of this century at the current rate of spending. Opponents fear that the massive price tag of the project could draw money away from other projects and public resources.

The allocation of land for the project also displaces hundreds of residents and businesses in the train's path, as reported by SFGATE. In addition, the initial promise of

Top speed:  
200 miles  
per hour

Projected cost:  
\$105 billion

50 million  
riders per  
year by 2040

Infographic:  
California High  
Speed Rail Train

Compiled by Ella Polak, Staff Writer

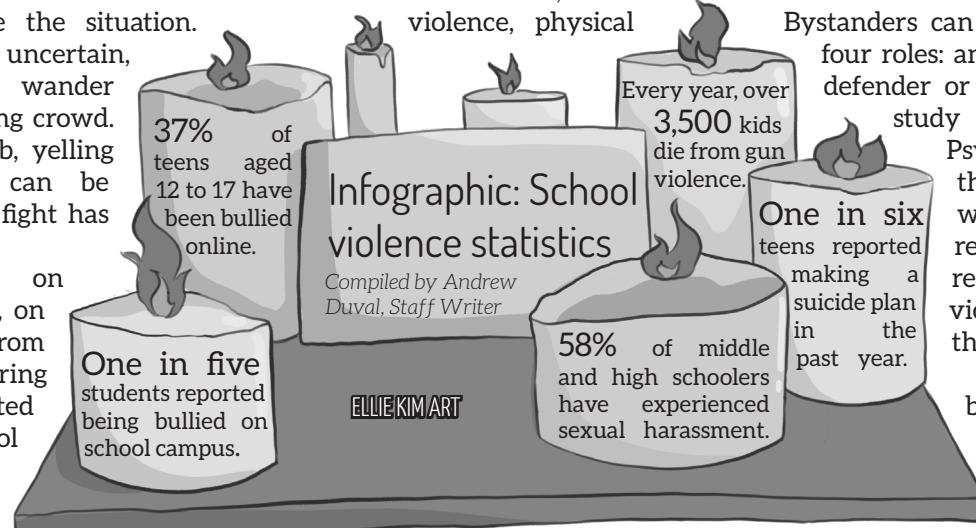
Sophia Qin

# The impacts and prevalence of school violence

A mass of students begin to congregate inside the school cafeteria as staff and administrators rush over to diffuse the situation. Confused and uncertain, more students wander into the growing crowd. Within the mob, yelling and cheering can be heard; a school fight has broken out.

Whether on school property, on the way to or from campus or during a school-related event, school violence may not only disrupt learning but also negatively impact the students physically, psychologically and emotionally.

In a nationwide survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in five high school students reported being bullied, while 7% were threatened by an unadministered weapon within the past year. The frequency of such incidents continues to increase with school officials across the country noticing a rise in misbehavior and assault, as reported by Fox Business author Summer Park. As students transition from online learning back to in-person learning, they struggle with social skills and building relationships, causing negative behavior at school.



aggression and cyberbullying. According to a report released by UNICEF, bullying is the most common form of violence in schools—in the U.S., 19% of students experience bullying throughout their four years in high school. Cyberbullying, a branch of bullying where individuals are targeted through a digital platform, is another major concern for school districts. As per StopBullying, a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, among the victims of bullying, 15% were bullied through an online platform.

However, most students are indirectly involved in violent

school events as bystanders—an influential actor that can either hinder or encourage the bully. Bystanders can take on any one of four roles: an assistant, reinforcer, defender or passive outlooker. A study published by BMC Psychology revealed that 55% of students who are bystanders remain passive, refusing to defend the victim nor stand up to the bully.

"Whenever a fight breaks out at school, I try to stay away and ignore it. I do not want to get involved and cause more trouble for myself and others," Sophomore Emma Li said.

There are various factors correlated with students who frequently participate in school violence: poor academic performance, poverty and high crime rates in their community. The CDC highlights how students with a history of violence and low-income family backgrounds are more likely to commit violent acts at school.

The impact of school violence on students and staff depends on its severity. Most victims sustain nonfatal injuries such as cuts, scratches, broken bones or bruises. In more serious cases, death could result from school violence. Although

these cases are rare, with only 2.6% of all youth homicides taking place at school, a 2016 CDC report reveals that victims often suffer from mental trauma, prompting long-term anxiety and depression.

"School violence significantly affects both students and staff. Therefore, it is crucial to build mutual respect and learn how to appropriately interact with one another," Assistant Principal of Student Services Sara Mingione said.

With the return to in-person learning, principals from various districts have been reporting an increase in negative behavior at school. To reduce the effect of such violence, schools are starting to implement solutions that can effectively counter them and create a more positive environment for both students and staff to thrive in.



Students can also play their part to reduce school violence by standing up and speaking out when they encounter acts of violence, whether overt or covert, online or in person.

## Tackling the issue of school violence

Jay Li

Staff Writer

Every state in the U.S. requires youth to attend school until their late teens, but the promise of education does not guarantee that the students will be safe. According to Education Week, forms of school violence continue to pervade the nation.

The RAND Corporation, a nonprofit think tank, reveals that the traditional method of tightening grips on school policies or increasing the severity of consequences to combat bad behavior is ineffective. Using punishments as a form of control not only lacks the backing of scientific research but also has negative side effects on students.

For example, an evaluation by RAND revealed that implementing school-wide weapon searches and using cameras to increase surveillance causes a spike in students' fear and anxiety, prioritizing physical safety at the cost of their emotional well-being. Additionally, the approach fails to address the underlying reasons students bring weapons to school in the first place.

"The traditional method of punishment is ineffective because kids do not understand how their behavior affects their peers. In my middle school, Castillero, students would fight a lot and teachers would intervene, but they were not taught why their actions were problematic," Sophomore Levin Gong said.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, "positive discipline" or conscious discipline encourages young people to improve their behavior, including self-control,

social competence and teamwork. It focuses on identifying the underlying motivations behind one's actions rather than just attempting to change surface-level behavior. Endorsed by UNICEF, positive discipline can be employed both in the classroom and at home.

Positive discipline is effective because it engages both students and adults, establishing mutual respect and consistent communication between them. Learning these skills teaches young people how to be responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. Moreover, research from RAND shows that positive discipline is better at deterring misbehavior than traditional methods.

A study of a four-year implementation of positive discipline at a low-income elementary school in Sacramento demonstrated a dramatic decrease in the number of suspensions and vandalism incidents. Teachers who engaged in positive discipline also reported an overall improvement in classroom atmosphere, attitude and academic performance.

"I absolutely support implementing a school-wide positive discipline program. We always encourage our students with the Charge On motto: Community,

Honesty, Acceptance, Responsibility, Grit and Empathy. I have observed that when students are encouraged to follow these values by their peers, such as those from ASB, it is often more effective than being told to do so by an adult," Assistant Principal of Student Services Sara Mingione said.

If an incident does occur, many schools utilize an anonymous reporting system. The Sandy Hook Promise, a non-profit organization aimed to prevent school violence, initiated the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS) which allows students to proactively prevent their peers from harming themselves or others. A study conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Firearm Injury Prevention on the effects of SS-ARS

displayed improvement in both cognitive and behavioral outcomes among sixth grade students and reduced overall school violence.

"We always keep an open door policy, so if something is happening, or if students see or hear something, they can always come to us and we will investigate it," Mingione said.

If students are affected by school violence, schools provide students with resources to recover.

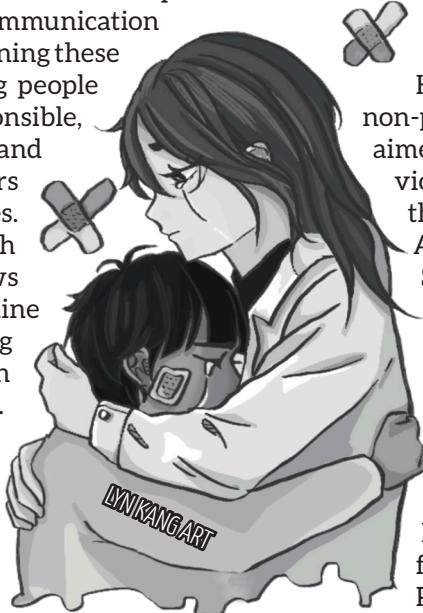
At the school, students can turn to the counselors for help, who can provide guidance on a variety of topics including personal challenges and conflict mediation. Key services counselors provide include mental health instruction, short-term therapy intervention and referrals to community resources for further long-term support.

"I would like to see more forms of restorative justice. If students are having a disagreement with each other, I would facilitate a conversation in a safe space to help

*"Teachers who engaged in positive discipline also reported an overall improvement in classroom atmosphere, attitude and academic performance."*

clear misunderstandings. It is helpful to have an outside perspective from a counselor, teacher, administrator or other school staff to help resolve conflicts," Mingione said.

While traditional methods of deterring violence at school have proven ineffective, new forms of positive discipline are showing potential. Schools may also provide resources such as counselors and support staff to help mediate conflict and improve students' overall mental health on campus and at home.



# OPINIONS



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Our mission in the community is to inform, educate and investigate the events occurring within Leland's community and beyond.

The ideas and opinions expressed in our articles represent over half of The Charger Account staff but do not represent the views and beliefs of any particular staff member.

The Charger Account invites submissions of signed letters of opinion. We reserve the right to edit submissions and pieces will be published at the discretion of the editorial staff.

Readers can notify The Charger Account to any errors in print by emailing us at [lelandchargeraccount@gmail.com](mailto:lelandchargeraccount@gmail.com). We will acknowledge our mistakes in our next issue.

For advertising information and pricing, please check out our website at [thechargeraccount.com/advertise-with-us](http://thechargeraccount.com/advertise-with-us). The Charger Account is distributed to the Leland community free of cost.

# Teacher accountability or student responsibility?

Jay Li

Students often dread the day teachers hand back tests, anxiously counting seconds until they see their score. Then, in a jaw-dropping fashion, they see they have failed, seriously threatening their chances of passing the class.

For Organic Chemistry students at New York University (NYU), this was an all too common occurrence. In response, 82 of 350 students signed a petition against their professor, Maitland Jones Jr., resulting in NYU terminating his contract. While students should be able to hold teachers accountable, the NYU administration drastically mishandled this instance; resulting in the loss of a respected faculty member.

Jones was a distinguished chemistry professor, boasting a 43-year tenure teaching at Princeton University followed by 15 years at NYU. In 1997, he authored "Organic Chemistry," a textbook that fundamentally changed the way universities teach chemistry. Jones's termination disregarded his expertise and instead favored a petition of only 23.4% of his students.

"I would sympathize with those struggling in the class, but 82 out of 350 signatories is insubstantial to elicit Jones's dismissal. For such an impactful decision regarding a respected professor, there should have been a greater consensus. If it was this easy to remove teachers, many would not have their jobs," Sophomore Calista Shih said.

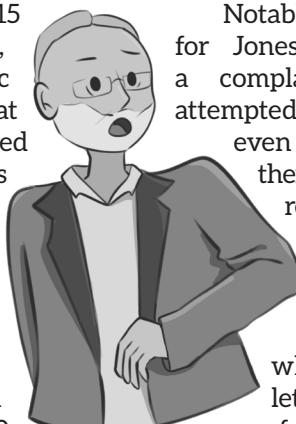
Those 82 students expressed frustrations regarding the class's

difficulty. Their second midterm test had a 30% class average, and because the class did not have any extra credit opportunities, the students identified Jones as the cause of their abysmal grades. The petition began while the university transitioned from online to in-person learning, which Jones cites as the reason for their decline in performance. Mental health declined along with grades, subsequently impacting academic performance further as shown by the National Library of Medicine. Passing Organic Chemistry is essential to entering medical school, so students had all the more incentive to launch the petition. Jones defended himself by stating he had lowered the difficulty of his tests and claimed students were not coming to class or utilizing the resources he provided to score higher.

Notably, the petition never called for Jones's dismissal—it was only a complaint. Yet, administrators attempted to appeal to the students even further, offering to review their grades and permit them to retroactively withdraw from the class as an exception.

The school's response to the situation sparked much discourse. Students who supported Jones wrote letters of endorsement and professors from across the nation came to his defense. Others aligned themselves with his termination, stating that Jones's teaching methods were outdated.

Colleges are beginning to resemble businesses, offering education as a product with students as their customers. This incident demonstrates how colleges have started to pivot away from professors' autonomy in the



Staff Writer



ELLE KIM ART

classroom and towards a "customer is always right" mentality, rather than what would genuinely benefit student learning.

Jones's termination sets a dangerous precedent, potentially emboldening students to petition against any teacher. It also deters demanding courses—as a prerequisite course for a physician, Organic Chemistry's rigor is justified. Education is not a commodity served on a silver platter; it is a struggle that requires time, energy and commitment.

"Even though students should be able to keep their teachers in check, Jones should not have been fired. NYU made a hasty decision in this case. If students hold the ability to fire their teacher on a year-by-year basis, teachers will not push their students to overcome their boundaries out of the fear that they will lose their job," Junior Aralyn Connolly said.

Jones's termination from NYU was an appalling mistake by the administration. If schools continue to dismiss educators because of a mere handful of complaints, the future of the education landscape will be bleak for all students and educators alike.

## Floating duck syndrome

A new perspective on mental health and transparency

*The Charger Account Editorial Staff*

to floating duck syndrome than just mental health.

In the pursuit of success, relationships between students can often turn toxic as they compete against each other for a limited number of leadership positions, college admissions acceptances or high grades. The issue is further exacerbated by the prevalence of social media, where people mainly post the highlights of their lives, burying the hardships they had to overcome to reach their goals. Thus, when certain students pretend that they are effortlessly floating on the water, others may feel inclined to push themselves further to keep up with their seemingly relaxed peers—while concealing the work they do to maintain an illusion of ease.

Transparency and openness are key to a healthier student culture. It is easy to tell others to take care of themselves and reduce their workload, but one's own actions speak much louder than words. In many cases, the same individuals who preach for mental health awareness are also the ones who inhibit floating duck syndrome the most, actively or subconsciously.

The Tech—the official newspaper of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—puts it perfectly: "the only ducks who can float truly effortlessly are rubber ducks, and the rest of us can only pretend."



High school is difficult; many students go all out to maintain stellar grades and devote countless hours to extracurricular and volunteer activities. Should they wish to take on leadership positions, they must invest even more time and resources. To keep up with their classmates, each of whom seem more impressive than the next, immense stress looms over students and unexpected predicaments in both academic and social spheres often arise. Despite their struggles, students often remain silent about their hardships and effort, perpetuating a culture of the floating duck syndrome.

"Floating duck syndrome," first coined at Stanford University, refers to a phenomenon similar to a floating duck, students appear to be graceful and at ease while in reality, they are furiously paddling beneath the surface to remain floating. As KQED explains, many students hide the work they put into school work and activities from their peers, fearing they will be perceived as "trying too hard." However, there is more

## September issue corrections

### School News:

- Champions at The Challenger Exhibition Game is on page 14, not page 12.

Leland Bridge holds annual Freshman Welcome Party:

- Ash Sanjeev's name is misspelled as "Ashe Sanjeeev."

### Opinions:

- Jay Li was excluded from the list of Staff Writers.
- Gwen Carroll's name was written as Genevieve.

### Feature School:

- "Library Media Center Technician" was incorrectly written as "Library Media Center Tech."

### Sports:

Champions at The Challenger Exhibition Game:

- Year in "Riley Maravilla '24" and "Armen Rolando '25" should not be bolded.
- September 6 should be abbreviated as Sept. 6.
- Sophia Qin should be credited as "School News & Science & Tech Editor" instead of "Sci-Tech Editor."
- "Courtesy of the Maravillas" and "Courtesy of the Rolandos" should be written as "Courtesy of the Maravilla family" and "Courtesy of the Rolando family."

For the full list of errors, visit [thechargeraccount.com](http://thechargeraccount.com).



## AI: Artistic Imitation

Gwen Carroll

For as long as computers have existed, robots driving humans out of jobs was always a concern. Before, the worry was confined to manual labor; now, technology is coming for an unexpected field—illustration.

Art generated using artificial intelligence (AI) has been rapidly increasing in popularity since the 2022 Colorado State Fair. Hosted from Aug. 26 to Sept. 5, the Colorado Department of Agriculture held their annual art competition, in which the first prize in the digital art/digitally manipulated photography category was awarded to Jason M. Allen's "Théâtre D'Opéra Spatial". Much controversy has arisen from the fact that Allen did not draw his entry himself. Instead, he used Midjourney—an AI trained to use a text input to generate an image—to create the base. Then he touched it up in Photoshop and used Gigapixel AI to increase the resolution before printing the final image on a canvas.

Allen has defended his submission by claiming his image fits the contest's criteria, as the rules for the digital art division fully permit AI-generated work. He also stated that he had spent around 80 hours determining what text inputs would lead Midjourney to create the result he wanted and spent more time touching up the generated image in Photoshop. Despite his arguments, "Théâtre D'Opéra Spatial", while it is art, does not belong to Allen.

"Allen did not break any rules, but to allow AI-generated submissions in a general digital art category is insane. The big difference between AI generated art and art created by humans is the number of creative decisions the artist must make. Plugging some text into an AI does not make the typist the artist," **Stacy Rapoport**, Visual Performing Arts Department, said.

Rapoport added that the amount of time spent on an art piece is not important to determining the quality of the finished piece, countering Allen's argument about spending hours learning to use Midjourney. However, the judges disagree, claiming that although they did not know that the piece was AI generated at the time, they would have still given him first place had they been informed.

Supporters of AI art insist that because of the creativity required to choose text to input, AI-generated art is the typist's art. However, art skills, the ability to visualize an image and transcribe imagination to the real world, are also necessary. To rely on the crutch of AI in this crucial step undermines true artistry.

"Artists employ years of practice and hours of work to create an illustration. Compared to the amount of effort artists invest, typing words into an AI art generator does not require much skill. To call the result 'art' implies that an artist's skills are insignificant," Senior **Felix Xiang** said.

The ethics surrounding the training of AI art generators are also dubious. AI art generators are trained based on online images from massive searches, often returning with art from human artists. When an AI generator uses this art without the initial artist's consent, it is stealing.

AI art generators also endanger artists' jobs. People are disincentivized to commission artists when it is much easier and cheaper to enter a prompt into an AI art generator themselves and receive a result in a matter of minutes. As efficient as it sounds, this attitude is damaging to artists.

Another argument in support of AI generated art is that it makes art easily accessible to people without artistic skills.

However, no person is owed custom art, be it from their own artistic abilities or someone else's commission.

Although time does not affect the quality of a commission as Rapoport said, it does have an impact on its monetary value. One must treasure the effort it takes for an artist to hone their skills the same way a chef or woodworker would. Nevertheless, supporters insist that AI art benefits the greater good because it makes art more affordable. However, this mindset overlooks the many digital artists who rely on selling commissions as a source of income.

AI art supporters cite expensive commission prices, but high prices are only fair payment for skilled labor. Artists already horrifically undercharge for their work, barely charging over minimum wage—and sometimes under—despite the years required to hone their skills. Therefore, to use AI-generated art to avoid paying artists a fraction of what they deserve is merely entitled behavior by people who cannot wrap their heads around the fact that others deserve compensation for their efforts.

"AI-generated art does not require technique nor effort. It lacks the thought artists put into their work. Art is derived from an emotion or a message, and AI-generated art is not this personal," Sophomore **Gwen McKenna** said.

AI-generated art has the potential to be an incredible tool, but it has plagued hardworking artists. As the medium gains more traction, it becomes more important than ever to remember that a true artist does not rely on a text box.

## OPINIONS

### "Queen of the Tiles"



Antara Gangwal

Staff Writer

Queen. 14 points. Noun: Winner of the annual Malaysian Youth Scrabble Tournament. For 16-year-old Malaysian teen Najwa Bakri, every word is measured by its worth on a Scrabble board. The game means everything to her, but it is also the reason behind her best friend Trina Low's death. In Hanna Alkaf's tumultuous thriller "Queen of the Tiles," Najwa vows to avenge her best friend's death, learning about both grief and growth along the way.

When Trina mysteriously dies in the middle of a Scrabble championship game, everyone is stunned. Trina was the perfect girl; her carefully-constructed image as the "Queen of the Tiles" commanded admiration and at times, hatred—which is why Najwa thinks that her death was not an accident. This year, Najwa plans to find the truth behind Trina's death and honor her by winning the Scrabble tournament, becoming the new Queen of the Tiles.

Scrabble is expertly ingrained into the novel; Alkaf begins each chapter by defining a word and listing its Scrabble point value, setting the tone for the chapter's events. Even Najwa's emotions elicit new words and point values: she equates her friendship with Trina to a "syzygy," 21 points and comes to a shocking "anagnorisis," 12 points, by the end of the novel.

"Queen of the Tiles" also explores the complexities of grief. Alkaf masterfully portrays Najwa's anxiety after Trina's death unfolds in front of her, affirming that grief is a difficult, nonlinear process.

The novel started off strong; I sped through the beginning, eagerly anticipating each plot twist. Unfortunately, my excitement dissolved upon reaching the anticlimactic finale, primarily due to Trina's insufficient development. She lacks depth, leading to confusion about her true nature. Trina and Najwa's friendship—meant to be portrayed as toxic, spearheaded by Najwa's jealousy—is also underdeveloped. More emphasis is placed on current plot twists rather than the past, leading to a disconnect that deprives the final reveal from the emotional punch it attempts to deliver.

"Queen of the Tiles" ultimately tells a unique story that explores the nuances of grief and friendship. However, it falls short of the depth that would cement it as a favorite.

Queen of the Tiles (3/5)

worth the read?



+ unique concept  
+ explores grief  
- lacks depth

## Poll: Is AI generated art real art?



Queen of the Tiles (3/5)

worth the read?



+ unique concept  
+ explores grief  
- lacks depth

# ENTERTAINMENT

## "The Woman King"



Daniel Lin

Viewpoint Editor

Following the Agojie, a group of all-female warriors akin to the Amazons of Greek mythology, "The Woman King" explores the history of 1820s Dahomey, an African kingdom in modern-day Benin. While the movie shows the Agojie's dedication to defending Dahomey, it does not accurately portray all aspects of the story. The film excludes the Agojie's frequent slave raids, portraying them instead as emancipators. Thus, it downplays Dahomey's role in the African slave trade in the 19th century and omitting how the kingdom's wealth primarily originated from this practice. I was disappointed that the film producers missed the opportunity to truly delve into Africa's rich and vibrant history—imperfect as it may be—but the quality of the movie held up otherwise.

I enjoyed seeing into the lives of the Agojie, as they were a mystery to their people since the king forbade commoners from looking at them. Much of the runtime is spent displaying the challenging training programs that new initiates must pass to become fully fledged Agojie and highlighting the relationships they built as they faced these hardships. As the trainees learn to become real fighters, the Agojie are faced with a new threat when the Oyo kingdom, a longtime rival of Dahomey, forms an alliance with the Mahi kingdom and other neighboring tribes to conquer Dahomey.

The film follows a straightforward heroes versus villains plot; however in areas lacking complexity, it makes up for in a meticulous focus on connections between different characters. Besides the rushed story of an Agojie initiate and a Spanish slaver who went from acquaintances to near-lovers in the span of a few minutes, character relationships were well developed and moved the plot forward through their effect on the characters' choices.

Ultimately, "The Woman King" was well made and had strong attention to detail. For example, the Agojie oiled their bodies before battle to make themselves harder to grab—enhancing the experience. Overall, I recommend the movie to anyone looking for fresh entertainment but without a priority for historical accuracy.

"The Woman King" (4/5)

how movie-ing was it?



- + empowering
- + strong subplots
- historically inaccurate

## Celebrity affairs attract public attention

Lia Yereslove

Staff Writer

At a steakhouse in Burbank, California, Ned Fulmer, a former member of the comedy television show Try Guys, was caught cheating on his wife and kissing another woman by an anonymous individual—who filmed the interaction on their cell phone and sent it to Fulmer's wife as well as posted it on the internet. Subsequently, multiple scandals have quickly arisen on media platforms regarding the infidelity of numerous media influencers and celebrities, who have all been considered "family men" and "loving husbands to the public"—Fulmer is merely one example.

Fulmer was revealed to be having an affair with Try Guys associate producer, Alexandria Herring. The company reacted by editing him out of videos and officially removing him as a manager and employee from the company on Sept. 16. Now a trio, the remaining members of the Try Guys released a video this month to explain the conflict with Fulmer. They detailed how the company decided they could not continue working with him after his inappropriate conduct and how it has affected their company's image.

"What Fulmer did was unacceptable and very off-brand for both his company and the image he has presented for himself. I wholeheartedly agree with the Try Guys' decision to remove Fulmer. Their conduct was professional; they took action carefully when removing him

from the company," Junior Sharokina Williams said.

The internet has been fraught with debates ever since the cheating scandal. Although many social media users share a similar stance with Williams, many have been questioning why Fulmer was removed at all, with hashtags such as #BringBackNed appearing on Twitter.

"I am surprised the Try Guys fired Fulmer. This incident is more of a personal matter than a business matter. It does not seem like something that would affect the business," Junior Ryan Mahinfallah said.



JANEHONGART

Joining the list of recent infidelity scandals was Maroon 5 frontman Adam Levine. Levine drew massive backlash after an allegation emerged last month that he had cheated on his pregnant wife Behati Prinsloo with Instagram model Sumner Stroh. A few days after news of Levine's cheating scandal broke, actress Nia Long grabbed headlines when the NBA team Boston Celtics suspended her husband, head coach Ime Udoka, for a year following an investigation into his alleged relationship with a staff member of the Celtics.

These scandals received attention on many social media platforms, becoming widely exposed to the public. This kind of media coverage can have positive and negative effects on consumers. Critics claim that this widespread discussion might normalize infidelity for younger generations. However, others believe anger towards infidelity in media actually paints it in a negative light.

"The Fulmer scandal positively impacts younger generation because it demonstrates how having an affair is immoral, especially when the same person preaches loyalty to their significant other. Fulmer has received backlash and criticism for his actions, and it teaches the younger generation that there are consequences for these actions," Senior Brandon Mohr said.

As the influence of social media expands over the years, the effect these recent cheating scandals have on younger generations' perceptions of infidelity remains to be seen.

## A tail of representation

Andrew Duval

Staff Writer

After it was announced that African American actress and songwriter Halle Bailey would be playing Ariel in the new live-action remake of Disney's "The Little Mermaid," users on a variety of social media platforms have been voicing their opinions.

Since Ariel was depicted as a white character in the original animated film, the casting caused outrage among many fans for a variety of reasons. According to Forbes, some fans believed that Ariel should not be Black for scientific reasons. They claimed that due to the fact that there are low levels of sunlight underwater, there would be low levels of melanin present in mermaids, leading to a paler complexion. Others asserted that the casting of actors for this new movie should be the same race as the characters in the original film.

"Those who are familiar with the source material may feel disrespected that the character they admire underwent what they see as an unnecessary transformation," Junior Michael Leong said.

However, these arguments were fiercely rebuked with the opinion that since "The Little Mermaid" is a fantasy movie meant for young children and mermaids do not exist, claims related to scientific realism are invalid. Furthermore, those who believed that the race of the actor

would be trivial to child viewers were proven wrong when many videos of Black children expressing enthusiasm for a character of the same ethnicity as them flooded the internet. Supporters of "The Little Mermaid's" diversity casting argued that the representation Bailey's casting brings to Black children outweighs scientific accuracy.

"It is great that producers are trying to incorporate more diversity in the film industry, as representation for all races is very important in mainstream media. However, others I know do see forced diversity as harmful and they believe that changing the race of the character could come across as belittling," Freshman Raahil Sengupta said.

Changing the race of a character could also be viewed as tokenism by some. This is when characters from minority groups are created only to portray a certain race, often playing into stereotypes. These depictions are mostly done to make audiences happy and increase

praise for the companies that brought the representation according to The State Press.

"If an actor being Black significantly changes the main character, a new role should be made instead and diversity should not be forced," Junior Abhay Dharnidharka said.

Dharnidharka shows yet another viewpoint within this controversy, suggesting that instead of remaking old movies and television with a diverse cast, companies should create new media and make those casts more diverse. Many movies and shows have been made with more diverse casts recently, such as

a new Scooby Doo cartoon called "Velma" by HBO.

However, "Lord of the Rings" fans were upset with the diverse casting in "The Rings of Power." As more forms of media are diversified due to social change, consumers will have to confront this issue of representation in media. Companies will also have to determine how to address diverse casting and characters in the future.



DANALIMART

# Being real on BeReal: Analyzing authenticity on social media

Tammy Newman

Surpassing Tiktok, Instagram and Google Maps, social media app BeReal has skyrocketed to the top of the charts on Apple's App Store. The app was launched in 2020 by French entrepreneur and former GoPro employee Alexis Barreyat and experienced a surge in popularity 2022; as per The Washington Post, it accumulated over 11 million downloads in August alone.

To expand its user base, BeReal hosted numerous college parties through its ambassador program. The Harvard Crimson states that in February, BeReal sponsored a party in Harvard Square's Tasty Burger Basement and offered free entrance to students who downloaded the app and added five friends. Furthermore, Business Insider reports that Simran Athavale, a BeReal ambassador and freshman at the University of Texas in Austin, handed out energy drinks and slices of pizza to each student who downloaded the app. From college campuses, the app's popularity spread by word of mouth.

"I downloaded BeReal because all of my friends were using it, and I thought the concept of posting exactly what

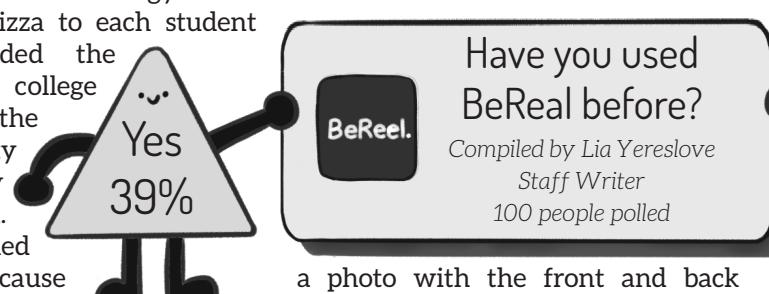


DANA LIM ART

you are doing at the moment is creative," Junior Ryan Azuma said.

BeReal stands out from other apps due to its unique posting schedule. At a random time each day, it sends out a notification informing users it is time to "BeReal," urging them to post a picture of what they are currently doing within two minutes. One can also upload their image after the two-minute time slot, but the app will mark it as late—which is frowned upon. When the user snaps a photo, the app utilizes both the phone's front and rear camera simultaneously, overlaying two shots to form a single image.

Due to BeReal's resounding success, other social media companies are beginning to copy its mechanisms. For example, TikTok recently added a new feature called "TikTok Now" with the slogan "Time to Now" that prompts users to record a ten-second video or



a photo with the front and back camera. Additionally, The Washington Post states that Instagram is testing an internal prototype for "Candid

Challenges," a feature reported to be almost identical to BeReal.

BeReal encourages its users to take unfiltered, spontaneous photos and advertises itself as being a genuine social media platform. There is no way to boost a post's popularity on BeReal; unlike Instagram and TikTok, the app does not have a like count, followers or filters.

According to Time magazine, critics argue that BeReal generates a false sense of authenticity, as users can ignore the notification and compose their shots by choosing what appears in the photo. Azuma stated that despite downloading the app, he rarely posts when he gets the notification. Rather, he waits until he is doing something that he feels would be more interesting to share.

"BeReal's principle of sending a snapshot of your daily life does promote authenticity to some extent, but the app has its limitations; it allows BeReals to be posted late, which many users do—unless you are like me and live by the BeReal notification. Still, it is more genuine than social media platforms like Instagram, where most people only post the highlights of their life. It is not possible to be truly authentic on social media as we cannot record every moment of our lives, but BeReal is better in this sense compared to other popular sites," Senior Daniel Xie said.

## Shifting norms: A spike in skipped-generation households

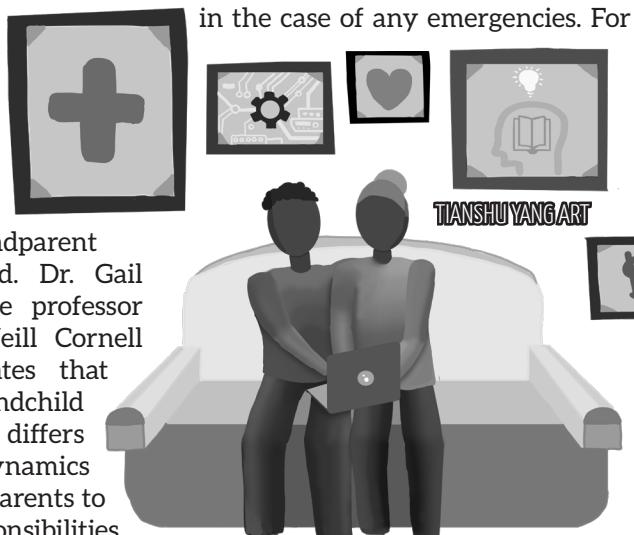
Diya Boyapati

Whether the goal is to maintain close family bonds or avoid paying high rent prices for a regular apartment, many children choose to continue living with their parents throughout college and beyond. However, as demographics and socioeconomic trends shift, some young adults are opting to move in with their grandparents instead.

The term "skipped-generation households" refers to the growing trend of young adults living solely with their grandparents, with the absence of a middle generation. The New York Times explains that because there are no traditional parental demands or expectations, grandkids and grandparents can form stronger bonds and communicate with each other as mature adults, rather than a strict grandparent and a young grandchild. Dr. Gail Saltz, a clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the Weill Cornell Medical Center, elaborates that the grandparent-grandchild relationship dynamic differs from parent-child dynamics because it is difficult for parents to forgo their parenting responsibilities.

"If I had to choose between moving in with my parents or grandparents as a young adult, I would pick the latter option. My grandparents are more relaxed, and living with them would offer me greater freedom and flexibility as opposed to living with my parents," Sophomore Shota Yu said.

Young adults choose to live with their grandparents for a myriad of other reasons. Both grandparents and grandchildren have unique demands. As per The New York Times, the grandchildren are looking for affordable housing while they are still in school or working entry-level jobs. Meanwhile, grandparents—who are older and often dealing with isolation and health challenges—might be looking for company, help with technology and assistance with transportation and paying the rent. With their grandchildren present, grandparents have greater assurance in the case of any emergencies. For



example, actor Adam Kantor got a job on Broadway in his last year of college and moved in with his grandparents, who had recently bought a sublet in Manhattan. He only intended it to be a brief stay, but after his grandfather's death, Kantor chose to continue living with his grandmother to keep her company.

"This is similar to people moving in with multiple roommates to lower the cost of living. However, this living arrangement is more temporary for many young adults; as they earn more money, they will eventually move into their own house," Junior Anika Pai said.

This spike in skipped-generation households can partly be attributed to the pandemic. As housing prices increased drastically, it became more difficult for young adults to sustain themselves. Waves of young Americans returned home after the pandemic began; according to research conducted by real estate marketplace Zillow, in March and April of 2020, nearly 2.7 million adults in the United States moved back in with a parent or grandparent.

Outside of the benefits of living in skipped-generation households, many grandparents move in with their grandchildren out of necessity. Author Susan Adcox—whose writing focuses on grandparenting—explains that some grandparents become their grandchildren's main caregivers due to various factors including divorced or incarcerated parents, orphaned kids, alcohol or substance abuse or teen pregnancy.

As skipped-generation households allow for the formation of mutually beneficial relationships, young adults may choose to live with their grandparents permanently as a means of maintaining financial stability and forming deeper connections with their grandparents.

## LIFESTYLE

### SGD Tofu House



Ella Polak

Staff Writer

SGD Tofu House is a restaurant chain with multiple locations across the Bay Area. It specializes in traditional Korean dishes like bibimbap, kimchi fried rice and spicy tofu soup. Their tofu soups are highly customizable; customers can select the spice and salt level and the choice of protein. I visited the location just off Blossom Hill Road and ordered the seafood pancake for my appetizer and the Original Tofu Soup—with spice level four on a scale of ten, low salt, beef and udon noodles—as my entrée.

First came a cup of barley tea and an assortment of banchan—small plates of seaweed, pickled vegetables, cold noodles and fish cakes. The earthy flavor of the tea complemented the soup, which arrived in a stone bowl with the broth bubbling furiously and a raw egg to crack and cook inside.

The tofu tasted like a fluffy cloud, its silky smoothness made it the most enjoyable component of the dish. I tried to restrain myself and ration out a few pieces of tofu in the soup, but within minutes I had finished it all. There was a balanced serving of mushrooms, which centered the flavors of the soup around its light umami taste. The beef was disappointing; it was too chewy and had a mild flavor.

The savory seafood pancake arrived a few minutes after my soup was served. It was perfectly battered—crispy on the outside, soft on the inside. The pieces of peppered seafood tasted slightly fishy, complementing the acidity of the dipping sauce.

I started tasting the broth once it had cooled enough. The subtle flavor of the mushroom paired well with the spice of the chili flakes, giving the soup a good kick. Then I bit into the egg, which had poached slowly in the soup's residual heat. I slurped up the hot yolk and enjoyed the egg white mixed in the broth. After the egg, I worked through the udon noodles, which were soft yet chewy, giving the soup a pleasant variation in texture.

Overall, the tofu soup was delicious and I loved the variety of components. However, I had a few complaints with the service and food: the seafood pancake appetizer arrived after the entrée, the amount of tofu was meager for a tofu soup, and the flavor profile became repetitive. Nevertheless, SGD Tofu House is a reliable option for a hot and satisfying meal.

SGD Tofu House (4/5)

deal or noo-dle?



- + large portion size
- + wide variety of dishes
- repetitive flavors

# A world devoid of color

Bertina Fan

Lifestyle &amp; Feature School Editor

The human eye can detect up to a million colors by operating just three types of cone cells—red, green and blue. These photoreceptor cells transmit light signals to the brain, which are then interpreted as color. However, no pair of eyes is the same: genetic mutations and certain medical conditions can alter the occupancy of the cones in the eyes, resulting in a condition known as color blindness.

John Dalton, an English scientist most famously known for his atomic theory, was the first to research color blindness. He and his brother suffered from red-green color blindness and would often confuse different colors. As a result, Dalton hypothesized that his eyes were tinted blue and conducted an examination, which ultimately proved his theory false. In 1798, he published a scientific paper that detailed his symptoms of color blindness and later donated his eyes to science for research after his death. Further observation of his tissue and DNA revealed missing photopigments in his eyes.

Today, over 300 million people are affected by color blindness around the world, encompassing 8.3% of men and 0.5% of women. Despite these numbers, color blindness is often misunderstood. The most common misconceptions are that all affected individuals suffer the same symptoms or are completely unable to perceive color. Rather, there are several different classifications, with 98% of individuals suffering from red-green color blindness known as protanopia or deutanopia and the other 2% suffering from tritanopia—blue-yellow color blindness—or the rarest type, achromatopsia—total color blindness.

"I have red-green color blindness, which often prompts my friends to test my vision. They once hid a Cheeto in the grass and challenged me to find it. Additionally, I once colored the ocean purple after mixing up my blue and purple colored pencils," Senior **Nicholas Valdez** said.

However, color blindness can affect more than just an individual's ability to create art. It can restrict a wide range of career opportunities, including joining the military, becoming a doctor or piloting a plane. In addition, the condition may make it more difficult for some to drive, as traffic lights have different colored lights.

Currently, there are no cures or surgeries available for color blindness. However, various tools can help individuals differentiate shades of color, ranging from contact lenses to filters to special glasses. One company, Enchroma, is a glasses manufacturer that specializes in filtering certain wavelengths. Their eyewear can aid four out of five colorblind cases. Individuals take a test to determine the severity and type of color blindness they have and are recommended glasses tailored to their needs.

"I am only partially colorblind, so my vision does not affect my daily life. However, when I am painting I do ask others to help differentiate colors for me so that I do not mess up my art. I am not sure what type I have but it does not bother me; I actually think it is cool how I am able to see the world in a different way," Senior **Neiman Nguyen** said.

Although there can be downsides to color blindness, it enables some individuals to form unique views of the world. Their differences do not take away from their experiences, but rather provide a new perspective on their surroundings. As the medical field progresses, more treatments and methods may develop to help restore color to everyone.

Poll:

What is your favorite color?

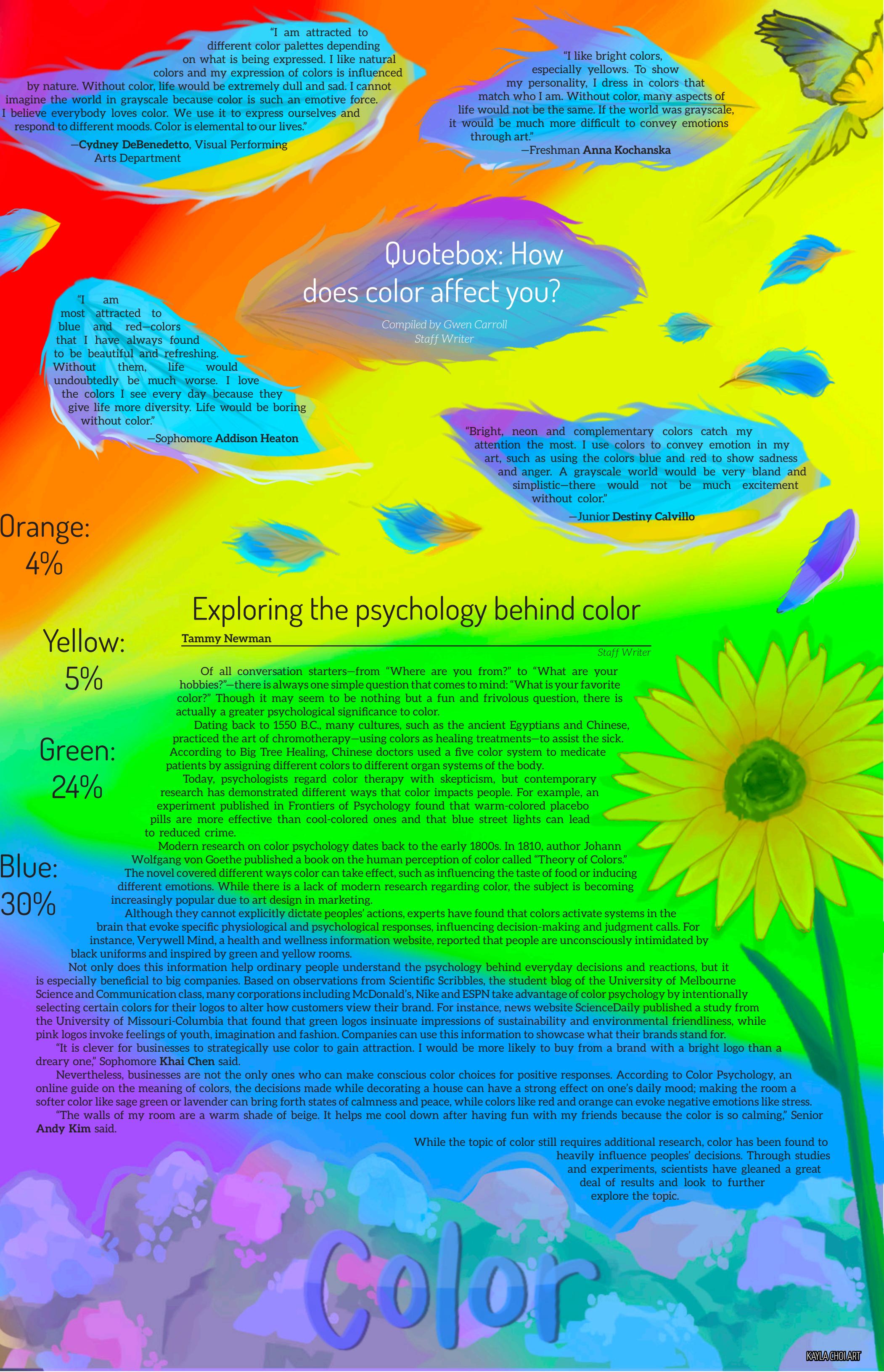
Compiled by Lauren Wilson  
Staff Writer

113 students polled

Purpl

16%





# SCIENCE & TECH

## Study Bunny



Suvia Li

Opinions Editor

With a 4.8 rating and over one million downloads across iOS and Google Play, Study Bunny is a well-received productivity app that employs a bunny to encourage the development of good study habits.

Upon opening the app, users are greeted by their study bunny, a virtual pet rabbit in the middle of a charming room. Its whimsical design and pastel tones creates a comforting atmosphere.

Study Bunny's main utility lies in its timed study function—users can choose between a countdown clock and stopwatch to track the time they spend studying. For every ten minutes of studying, the app grants one coin, which can be used to purchase accessories and food for the bunny, incentivizing users to study longer. I enjoy the app's myriad of wallpapers, including the ice rink and rainforest, which each curates a different mood. The app also includes a timed break service known as the Pomodoro Technique, which interrupts intense work sessions with short breaks to prevent burnout.

Study Bunny does not prevent users from opening other apps while the study timer is running, but it discourages them from doing so. If a customer leaves the app while the Honesty Mode is active, it asks "Were you distracted?" once reopened. If the user answers affirmatively, then a punishment—such as a loss of coins or an advertisement—is inflicted. Additionally, the program's Happy Meter changes the bunny's emotions and facial expression according to the amount of the time the user allocates to studying; the more time spent working, the happier the bunny is.

The app contains other miscellaneous study functions including a customizable to-do list and a page to create flashcards. Study minutes are also organized into a calendar-style bar graph, which users can categorize based on the subject studied.

I have been using Study Bunny for about a month and I find the bunny's presence helpful as it increases my productivity. However, I do not view it as a necessity; alternative study methods can be just as effective.

From its adorable design to its effective applications, Study Bunny is a great match for anyone looking to stay focused and spice up their study sessions.

### Study Bunny (4/5)

how app-ealing was it?



- + adorable design
- + increases productivity
- unnecessary for studying

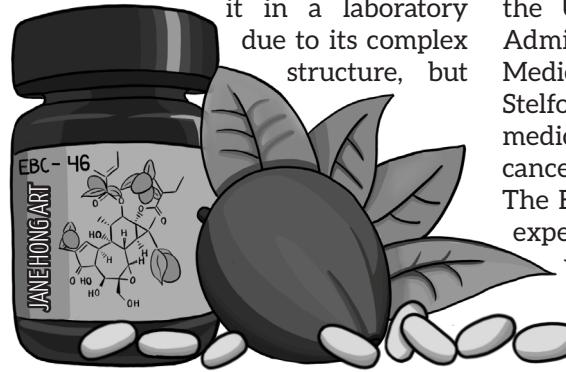
## Breakthrough: Researchers synthetically produce cancer cure

Gilina Voon

Stanford researchers recently succeeded in synthesizing EBC-46—also known as tigilanol tiglate—a drug that treats cancer. The compound activates the protein kinase C (PKC) once it enters a cancer cell, promoting an immune response that breaks tumors' blood vessels and effectively kills them.

EBC-46 originally caught the attention of scientists when it was revealed to be an anti-tumor agent during a drug screening process conducted by Australian company QBiotics. However, harvesting the drug for cancer-treating purposes proved difficult due to geographical factors. EBC-46 is found in the seeds of fruit of the brushwood tree, which is difficult to plant outside its natural habitat of the Northeast Australian rainforest. Stanford News explains that brushwood trees only grow in high altitudes, are vulnerable to foreign pathogens and require specific pollinators like pigeons and doves.

As a result, scientists concluded that synthesizing EBC-46 was the best way to ensure sustainable and large-scale production. Initially, researchers were unable to synthetically produce it in a laboratory due to its complex structure, but



recent research conducted by a team of PhD students at Stanford University has overcome this roadblock.

Paul Wender, a professor at Stanford's School of Humanities and Sciences and a co-author of the report, explains that a plant-derived compound called phorbol was chosen as the starting point for synthesizing EBC-46 due to its low cost and abundance in nature. Phorbol is found in the seeds of the purging crotalaria herb, which the researchers ground up and purified with a chemical solvent to extract a phorbol-rich oil. They then used instrumentation including microscopy, mass spectrometry and computer modeling to discover how to add extra oxygen atoms, enabling the activation of PKC to the oil compound. This process successfully synthesized EBC-46 in just 12 steps and its analogs—chemically-similar compounds—in four to six steps. Researchers hypothesize that the analogs can be used to treat a variety of diseases such as Alzheimer's, AIDS and multiple sclerosis.

The drugs' variants are already being used in medicine. In 2020, the United States Food and Drug Administration and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved Stelfonta, an EBC-46-based medication commonly used to treat cancer, specifically dogs' skin tumors. The EMA describes how in a certain experiment, 88% of dogs with cancer were cured upon two doses of the drug, prompting researchers to begin clinical trials of Stelfonta for human skin and tissue



cancers. QBiotics states that EBC-46 trials in humans have been successful so far. In a study of 22 patients with skin cancer, 18% had their tumors completely eradicated and 24% of the patients displayed partial tumor shrinkage upon treatment with the drug EBC-46.

"It is impressive that the efficacy rate in treating cancer in dogs is so high. However, I am concerned that there may be hidden side effects because the drug was synthetically produced very recently. There should be more experiments with larger samples conducted before EBC-46 is widely used," Junior Jennie Yang said.

Optimistic about the drug's medicinal capabilities, scientists plan to continue EBC-46 trials on humans with skin, neck and head cancers. With more research and experimentation underway, the drug may be synthetically produced on a commercial scale in the future, revolutionizing the treatment of various diseases.

## Buzzing to life: The rise of cyborg insects

Isaac Ang

Scuttling in from a gap in the wreckage is a metal beetle. Equipped with carbon dioxide sensors, the insect detects human life under the rubble of a large building. Minutes later, rescuers follow the beetle's signal and pull a worn, old man out from the debris. The beetle has saved his life. Part-insect, part-robot, cyborg insects have a wide range of uses from detecting buried survivors to pollinating farms.

However, numerous technological and ethical issues stand in the way of the commercialization of cyborg insects.

With their small size and existing capabilities, cyborg insects can scope out enemy territory. Drones present the challenge of compacting flight and other functions into a small body, but insects' biology allows them to fly naturally. Cyborg insects are also advantageous from an economic and environmental standpoint. In an NBC News article, Texas A&M University engineer Hong Liang explains that fitting real insects with mechanical components is less expensive and more energy efficient than constructing a robot insect from the ground up. Additionally, the cyborg insects can respond to dangers in their environment utilizing their own natural instincts—helping them avoid obstacles like guard dogs and carry out operations successfully.

"In finding ways to improve the efficiency of surveillance and search-and-rescue missions, it is clever to pull inspiration from insects as they can

access small spaces such as caves. I can see these bugs becoming a staple of our society in five to ten years," Senior Ethan Chen said.

Cyborg insects were made possible by recent technological developments in making lighter sensors and more convenient fabrication techniques. However, according to The Washington Post, engineers hoping to deploy the insects on a large scale face the challenge of replicating a larger robot's workload in a smaller electronic unit. In order to accomplish this, they need to improve the efficacy of actuators—mechanical parts that transform energy into motion—and create tinier, yet more powerful batteries.

Animal welfare activists have also raised questions regarding the ethics behind controlling insects. Kenjiro Fukuda, a researcher at Japan's Riken Thin-Film Device Laboratory, is attaching devices to cockroaches and steering them left and right through momentary shocks. In The Washington Post, New York University bioethics professor Jeff Sebo expressed concern over the lack of insect welfare policies and how bugs feel with heavy devices on their back—despite there being no scientific proof to show that they feel pain from it. Additionally, others assert that it would be difficult to establish the sight of cyborg insects in everyday surroundings as a societal norm.

"Cyborg insects may be useful for rescuing disaster survivors, but it is unnecessary to employ them beyond this role, especially with

Investigative Report & Last Word Editor regards to surveillance. It is better to forego some of the potential benefits than to terrify people," Freshman Andrianna Wilkinson said.

Despite higher production costs, robot insects may be a practical and ethical alternative to cyborg insects; they have similar agility and size to real bugs and longer life spans, as per technology magazine Robotics Tomorrow. Pioneering the field, a team of researchers at MIT built lightning bug robots that mimic firefly bioluminescence. They created artificial muscles for the robots, allowing them to dictate their light emission and wing beat frequency. Kevin Chen, an assistant professor of electrical engineering and a member of the team, hopes that they can eventually be used to pollinate crops in vertical farms.

After scientists overcome the hurdles, cyborg insects can be utilized in countless applications. Living or man-made, insects have the potential to take flight where humans are unable to.

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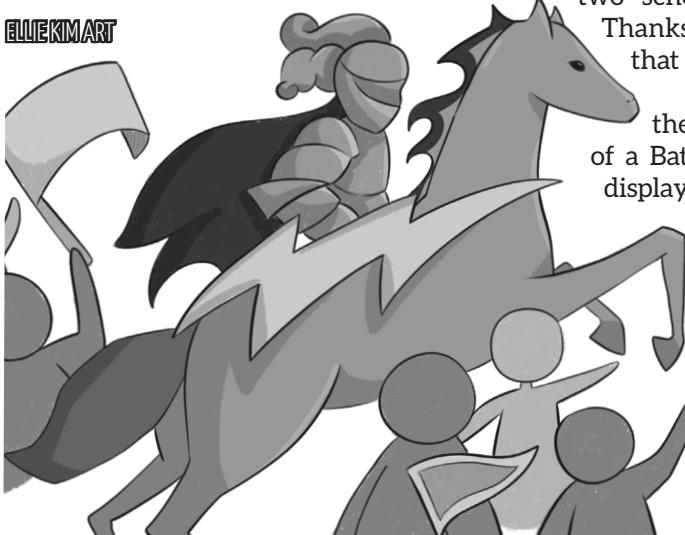


## Clash of clans: Chargers versus Mustangs

Jay Li

At the Pat Tillman Stadium, the bleachers are filled to the brim. Students, parents and members of the Almaden Valley community gather to watch and cheer for the players. Every year, the community comes together to watch this paramount sports game: the Battle of the Den. Although sports, seasons, players and coaches come and go, one thing remains consistent: the school's long-standing rivalry with Pioneer High School, with both schools alternating to host the Battle of the Den. The Battle of the Den game is the most anticipated sports game at the school. However, the Battle of the Den refers to every athletic competition the school and Pioneer High School play against each other, originating from the school's founding in 1967; the very first class of students transferring from Pioneer. This year, it also involved a celebratory dance between both schools. The school and Pioneer's rivalry is attributed to their close proximity of Almaden, from which the name of the competition is also derived from—as the "Den" refers to the last syllable of Almaden.

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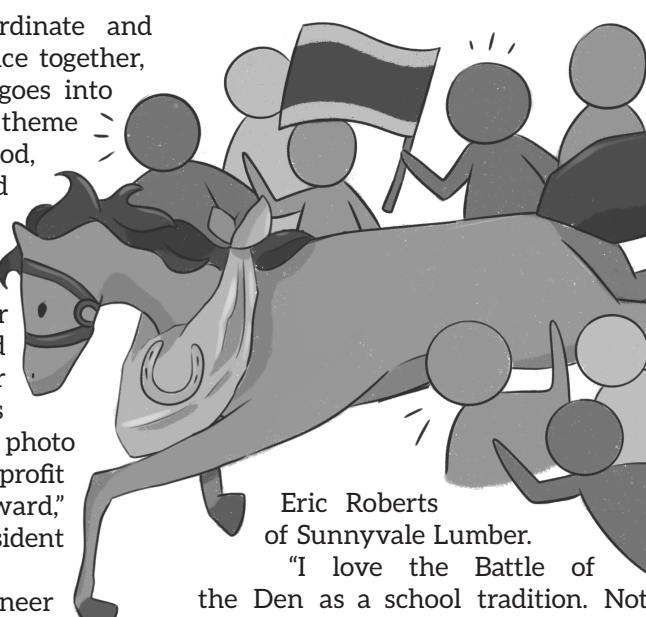


"Both schools coordinate and plan the game and dance together, so a lot of teamwork goes into the event. From the theme to the DJ to the food, everything is decided collaboratively. Each school receives about \$10,000 to \$16,000 in revenue from their own independently sold tickets for the mixer dance. The schools split the cost of the DJ, photo booth, decoration and profit from the tickets afterward," Pioneer's ASB President Allison Grove said.

The school and Pioneer are not the only schools that partake in a school rivalry tradition: Almost every high school with another in its proximity spontaneously begins a rivalry, where other rivalries are formed by school officials in an efforts to sell tickets or support school programs. High school sports rivalries, such as the one between Norwich Free Academy and New London High School can be centuries old. The two schools host an annual Thanksgiving football game that dates back to 1875.

The school celebrates the event in the form of a Battle of the Den shield displayed in the front office.

The shield records whether each football game was a win or loss against Pioneer since 2017. Neil Hamilton, Visual Performing Arts Department, built the shield with redwood donated by



Eric Roberts  
of Sunnyvale Lumber.

"I love the Battle of the Den as a school tradition. Not only does it bring students together here at the school by encouraging camaraderie, but it also brings Mustangs and Chargers together by engaging in school spirit and connects the Almaden Valley community as a whole," Sophomore Erin Andrade said.

However, school rivalries have the potential to get out of hand. For example, last year, when the school played Pioneer in the annual Battle of the Den basketball game, Pioneer students taunted "daddy's money" when the school's cheerleaders walked in.

"In some ways, the Battle of the Den breeds a healthy environment because it brings the school together. However, it can also bring toxicity and ignite unsportsmanlike behavior from both sides," Senior Nicole Magana said.

The Battle of the Den is a long-standing Almaden tradition. Representing the Charger-Mustang rivalry that has existed since the founding of the school, it has no indication of coming to an end.

Staff Writer

The key to a perfect sound



Gwen Carroll

Staff Writer

Videos focusing on satisfying sounds, Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), have been rising in popularity on the internet. There are a plethora of genres to choose from, ranging from chewing to rain. Johnson Huynh, Science Department, enjoys ASMR of typing, a fondness that bloomed into building mechanical keyboards of his own.

Huynh's interest in mechanical keyboards began three years ago, when he bought his first one. Anticipating excellent sound feedback, he was disappointed when the keyboard did not meet his expectations. He looked into options to make it sound better and realized that keyboards were extremely customizable, which led him to discover specific sounds that he liked and how he could recreate these sounds using his self-made keyboards, expanding his hobby from buying different materials to include experimenting with many assembly techniques.

Building keyboards is time consuming, but Huynh manages to fit it into his schedule. Some keyboards have up to 108 keys that must be individually opened and lubricated. Huynh spends four or more hours just lubricating parts every other month, though he finds the process soothing rather than boring.

Huynh found a way to work keyboard building into his relationships with others as well. He regularly lets his students try out his keyboards and enjoys sharing his hobby with them. Furthermore, he has bonded with his partner over building a mechanical keyboard with them.

"The act of making a custom mechanical keyboard for someone close to me takes a lot of thought. Keyboard building is something I love to do and I enjoy sharing this hobby, giving people suggestions on designing their keyboard. Everyone wants a different sound, and I like helping my friends achieve the sound they want," Huynh said.

In the process of cultivating his hobby, Huynh discovered an engaged and welcoming community. He is grateful that the environment is experimental and full of love for learning. He also appreciates the options available for experimentation.

"There are equally as many combinations of boards, switches and key caps as there are grains of sand on a beach. One of the most interesting parts of building keyboards is that there is always something to find," Huynh said.

Especially over the course of the pandemic, people have been searching for ways to ward off the monotony of daily life. Despite the clamor of the world, Huynh makes sure to find time to partake in a soothing hobby to clear his mind.

## Quiz Bowl scores big at Nationals

Sophia Qin

Containing subjects ranging from science, literature and pop culture to mathematics, history and geography, Quiz Bowl is a team trivia-based contest that aims to academically challenge participants. After intensive preparation, the school's Quiz Bowl club marched into the High School National Championship Tournament (HSNCT), ready to confidently execute their knowledge.

The members of the school's Quiz Bowl team, led by Sophomore Aarush Zarabi, have been training together since fourth grade and have attended countless tournaments throughout the years. Consisting of a total of nine rounds, each tournament lasts eight hours. Quiz Bowl team holds weekly practices to revisit old material and assess new knowledge. During this, members individually review material to further strengthen their proficiency.



HSILOK CHAN PHOTO

along with three bonus questions to the team that answers the toss-up correctly. A buzzer is given to each individual participant: if they have the answer to a particular question, they click a buzzer, giving them the opportunity to respond. Toss-ups can earn the team up to 15 points, while bonuses are worth up to 30.

"I love being the Moderator because it allows me to learn about the team's weaknesses and strengths

School News & Science & Tech Editor hosted a donut fundraiser at the school, gathering more than \$200 in profit. With this support, the team flew to Atlanta, Georgia for the HSNCT on May 26. To prepare for the tournament, the team practiced four hours every week, excluding independent study time. In the presence of 272 teams and over 1,200 participants, the team was one win shy from qualifying for the playoffs during preliminary games, with Tomaszewski and Zarabi in the top 20% of highest scoring players.

"Nationals was a great learning experience for everyone. I was able to pick up techniques used by other teams and apply them myself," Sophomore Joshua Yan said.

Recently, the team attended a local regional competition, qualifying for the 2023 National Quiz Bowl High School Tournament hosted by the National Academic Quiz Tournament (NAQT). However, until then, they still have numerous local competitions to attend.

When club sign-ups begin, the team hopes that more students will join and find joy in the academic experience that Quiz Bowl brings.

While building up my knowledge on different subjects," Sophomore Adrian Tomaszewski said.

With support from parents and fundraisers, the school's Quiz Bowl team is able to attend out-of-state competitions. Last season, the team

## FEATURE: WORLD

### Microchip mania



Kyan Wang

Staff Writer

The tech industry is one of dizzying innovation. Insurmountable obstacles are overcome in the name of profits time after time. Nowhere is this more visible than in the semiconductor industry, where competitors push the boundaries of microchips to their physical limits.

The transistor is the most instrumental part of a microchip, controlling the electric current passing through the circuit. Billions of these devices populate a chip, and the size of these transistors is constantly shrinking. Two years ago, researchers hypothesized that the transistor had reached its minimum size, which contradicted Intel co-founder Gordon Moore's observation that the number of transistors on a microchip would double every two years—dubbed "Moore's Law."

Just as all hope seemed lost for Moore's Law, Dutch corporation Advanced Semiconductor Materials Lithography (ASML) Holding revolutionized the semiconductor manufacturing industry with extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography machines, which print minuscule transistors on silicon wafers at sizes not previously commercially available.

So far, ASML has been the sole supplier of EUV machines due to their complexity and the resources the company has invested since 2006. Droplets of tin are superheated to create plasma, which releases X-rays in the form of EUV radiation. These X-rays have an incredibly high frequency, etching patterns 20 atoms wide into silicon.

The \$200 million machines are in high demand, with major players in the tech industry putting them into use. Notably, Apple's new line of central processing units, Apple Silicon, contains the highest commercially available transistor densities, successfully employing Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's (TSMC) EUV microchip factories.

Although EUV technology is remarkable in its ability to push the boundaries of transistor sizes, it has its limits. According to the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, silicon cannot conduct electricity at transistor sizes under ten silicon atoms due to a phenomenon called quantum tunneling. Although this prediction has been made many times in the past, Moore's Law now truly seems to be nearing its end.

Judging from this ambitious undertaking, one thing is certain: when companies smell profits, they will deliver. In developing EUV lithography, companies spent immense resources. If we can make solving pressing issues in our world profitable, companies will take action.

### Redefining royals: The role of the modern monarchy

Lauren Wilson

Staff Writer

Until the 20th century, monarchies were one of the most prevalent forms of government. Once regarded as a death-defying icon of royal power, Queen Elizabeth II, the longest reigning British monarch, passed away on Sept. 7. While her death was mourned by thousands of visitors who waited in 30-hour lines to pay their respects, it also sparked debate over whether monarchies should continue to exist.

Traditionally, a monarch is a leader that inherits power at birth and leads a state their entire life unless renounced. Today, it is rare for monarchs to have absolute power over their government, as the majority of the world has transitioned into representative government systems. Most monarchs hold ceremonial roles as a figurehead of tradition and religion. For example, Penn Today states that modern Japan is built around a constitutional monarchy; the emperor is a ceremonial symbol, taking on roles such as promoting cultural practices. Meanwhile, Pope Francis of Vatican City is the only absolute monarch in Europe, with legislative, executive and judicial power.

"It is unnecessary to dispose of ceremonial monarchies, as long

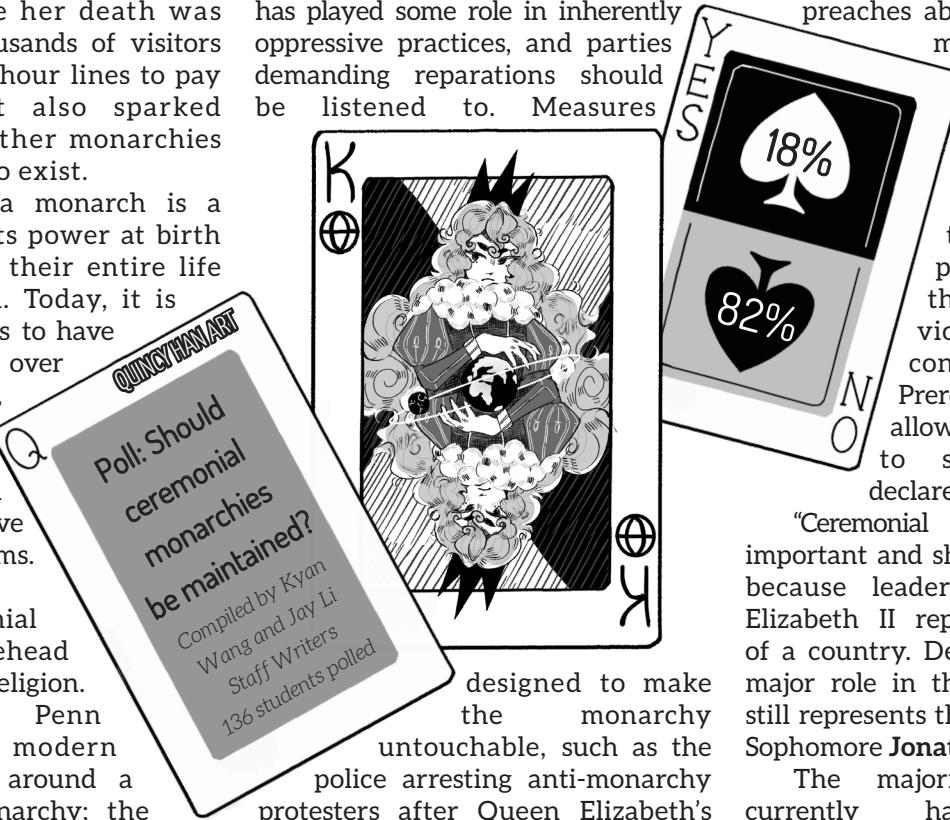
as they do not hold any actual political power. In most countries, they are deeply embedded in the nation's cultural fabric. However, like any other institution, they should be open and subject to criticism. Nearly every monarchy has played some role in inherently oppressive practices, and parties demanding reparations should be listened to. Measures

with over 6,000 responders reports 74% of individuals surveyed believe the United Kingdom's monarchical system should be abolished, while only 26% favor maintaining it.

Republic, an advocacy group, preaches abolishing the British monarchy. They claim that the current system is unreasonably expensive and allows politicians to have unchecked power. Supposedly, the monarchy violates Parliament's consent through Royal Prerogative—rights that allow the prime minister to sign treaties and declare war.

"Ceremonial monarchies are important and should be maintained because leaders such as Queen Elizabeth II represent the history of a country. Despite not holding a major role in the government, she still represents the United Kingdom," Sophomore Jonathan Li said.

The majority of monarchs currently have considerable restrictions on their governmental powers. Monarchs are mainly valued as a token of unity and embodiment of the country's traditions, except in the rare exceptions of absolute monarchies. Modern monarchies are not as influential as the past, yet they are still upheld.



designed to make the monarchy untouchable, such as the police arresting anti-monarchy protesters after Queen Elizabeth's death, are unacceptable," Senior Ilinca Flacau said.

According to World Population Review, the United Kingdom's constitution prohibits the monarch from making independent decisions. However, many U.K. citizens still oppose the monarchy system. A poll by Third Face News

### Ashalim tower illuminates efficiency issue in green tech

Reagan Liu

Entertainment &amp; Student Spotlight Editor

Looming over an Israeli desert like a glowing beacon, the Ashalim power station is a new source of clean energy. The 800-foot-tall solar tower is the Israeli government's initiative for a more sustainable future. Unlike traditional solar panels, which utilize silicon panels to convert sunlight to electricity, the tower uses the sun's thermal energy to generate heat. Surrounding the base of the Ashalim tower lies a field of over 50,000 mirrors, all perfectly calibrated and aimed towards the top of the tower. These mirrors reflect the sun's rays toward a water tank, which uses the heat to power a generator with steam. The energy produced from this generator is enough to power around 120,000 homes, according to The New York Times.

The power plant is part of the Israeli government's plan to derive more of its electricity from cleaner, renewable sources. In addition to harnessing green energy, the government hoped that the Ashalim tower would reduce the country's dependence on foreign-sourced energy and increase its global influence. Despite its efforts, Israel failed to reach its goal of sourcing 10% of its energy solely from renewable sources.

"While the power station is impressive and its potential to increase the use

of renewable energy is significant, the project's massive expenses may not be worthwhile in the long run as there are many cheaper alternatives," Junior Mykayla Liu said.

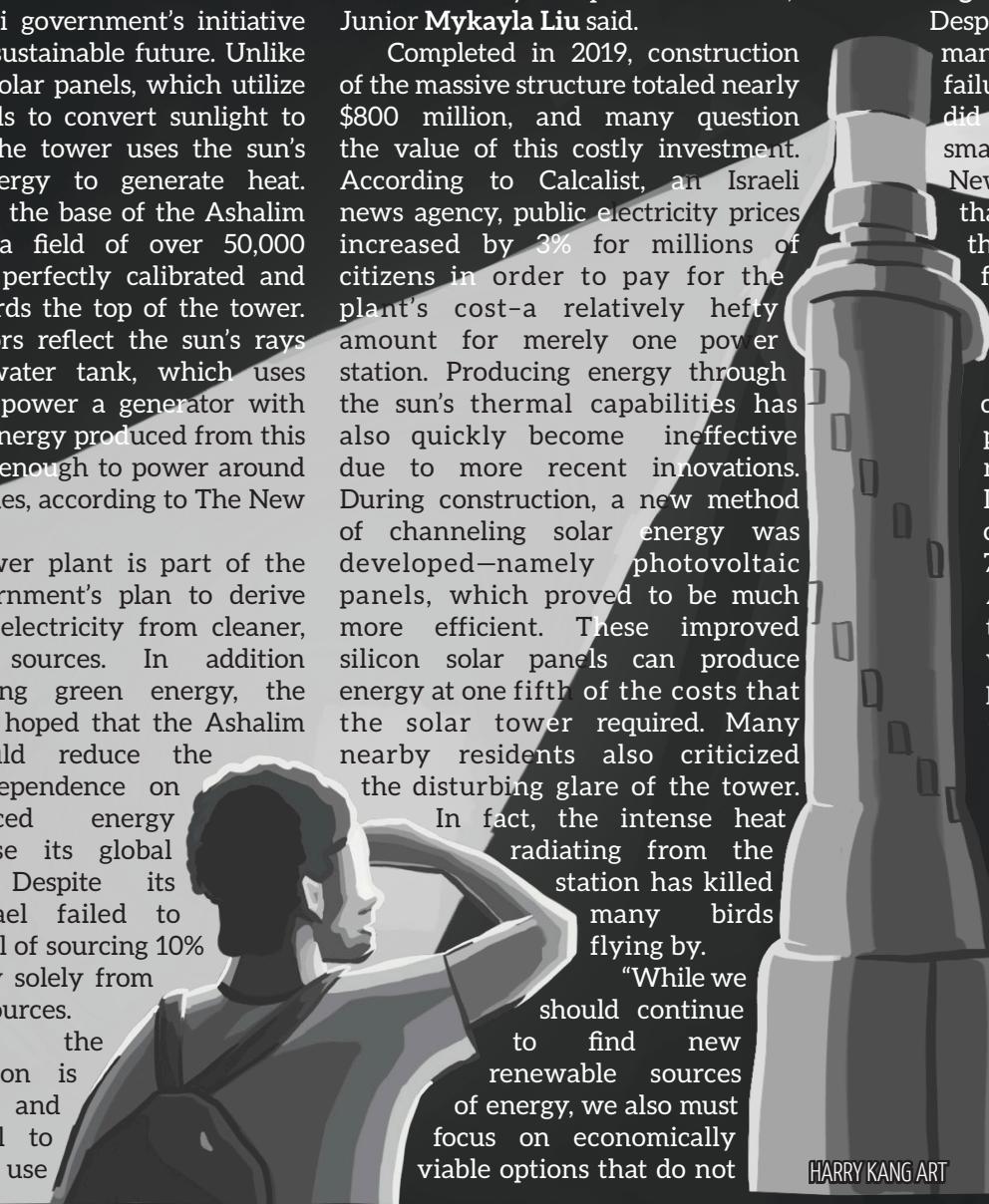
Completed in 2019, construction of the massive structure totaled nearly \$800 million, and many question the value of this costly investment. According to Calcalist, an Israeli news agency, public electricity prices increased by 3% for millions of citizens in order to pay for the plant's cost—a relatively hefty amount for merely one power station. Producing energy through the sun's thermal capabilities has also quickly become ineffective due to more recent innovations. During construction, a new method of channeling solar energy was developed—namely photovoltaic panels, which proved to be much more efficient. These improved silicon solar panels can produce energy at one fifth of the costs that the solar tower required. Many nearby residents also criticized the disturbing glare of the tower.

In fact, the intense heat radiating from the station has killed many birds flying by.

"While we should continue to find new renewable sources of energy, we also must focus on economically viable options that do not

significantly raise electricity costs, as this can financially burden lower- and middle-class citizens," Senior Vincent Nguyen said.

Despite being considered by many as an expensive failure, the Ashalim station did somewhat benefit its small namesake town. The New York Times reports that Megalim Solar Power, the company responsible for commissioning the power plant, spent millions of dollars investing in the local community, building public infrastructure like roads and a youth club. In addition, the station's creation brought around 70 new jobs to the area. Ashalim was initially a tiny impoverished town with only around 750 people. However, the establishment of this shining landmark has launched the town to national significance and boosted its economy. As nations continue to transition to renewable sources, balancing economic viability with ecological conservation will be at the forefront of these projects' planning processes.



HARRY KANG ART

Ella Polak

Staff Writer

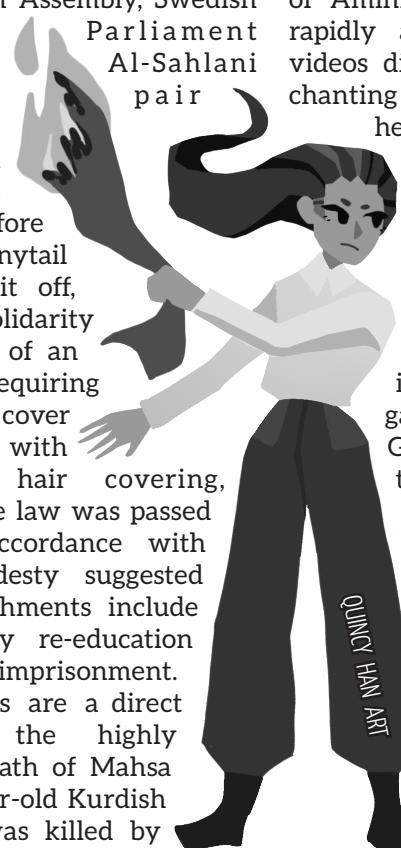
Concluding her speech to the European Union Assembly, Swedish European member Abir Al-Sahlani wielded a pair of scissors and shouted "Women, Life, Freedom!" before grabbing her ponytail and chopping it off, an act of solidarity with protesters of an Iranian law requiring women to cover themselves with hijab, or a hair covering, in public. The law was passed in 1983 in accordance with values of modesty suggested in Islam. Punishments include fines, mandatory re-education seminars and imprisonment.

The protests are a direct response to the highly publicized death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman who was killed by Iran's "morality police" for not wearing her hijab correctly. On Sept. 14, Amini was arrested by the Guidance Patrol and then transferred to the custody of Moral Security—another law enforcement agency. Eyewitnesses that were detained with Amini claimed she was beaten by police and fainted shortly afterward. Amini was taken to Kasra Hospital in Tehran and died on Sept. 16 after falling into a coma.

Initial protests began the day of Amini's death and have spread rapidly across Iran. Social media videos display groups of protesters chanting slogans and twirling headscarves in the air. Many riots have turned deadly; Iran Human Rights reports that at least 255 protesters have been killed since Sept. 17. News has also emerged of police shooting live ammunition into crowds and using tear gas to disperse protesters. Government officials reacted to the civil unrest by deflecting blame for Amini's death and claiming that the protests were driven by foreign influences, as per The Guardian.

"Prior to these protests, many associated the Iranian people with the Iranian regime. Thus, the actions of the government blinded them from seeing how the dictatorial regime's problems affect everyday Iranians," Sophomore Laily Afzalzadeh said.

The Iranian government has also restricted internet access to combat the resistance.



QUINCY HAN ART

When the initial protests erupted, the Internet was completely shut off in Tehran and parts of Kurdistan, regions where the protests were most intense. According to The Guardian, protesters have used social media to coordinate gatherings. As a result, since Sept. 21, the government has disabled Instagram and WhatsApp; both apps were also used to share videos and pictures of protests such as footage of people burning their hijabs.

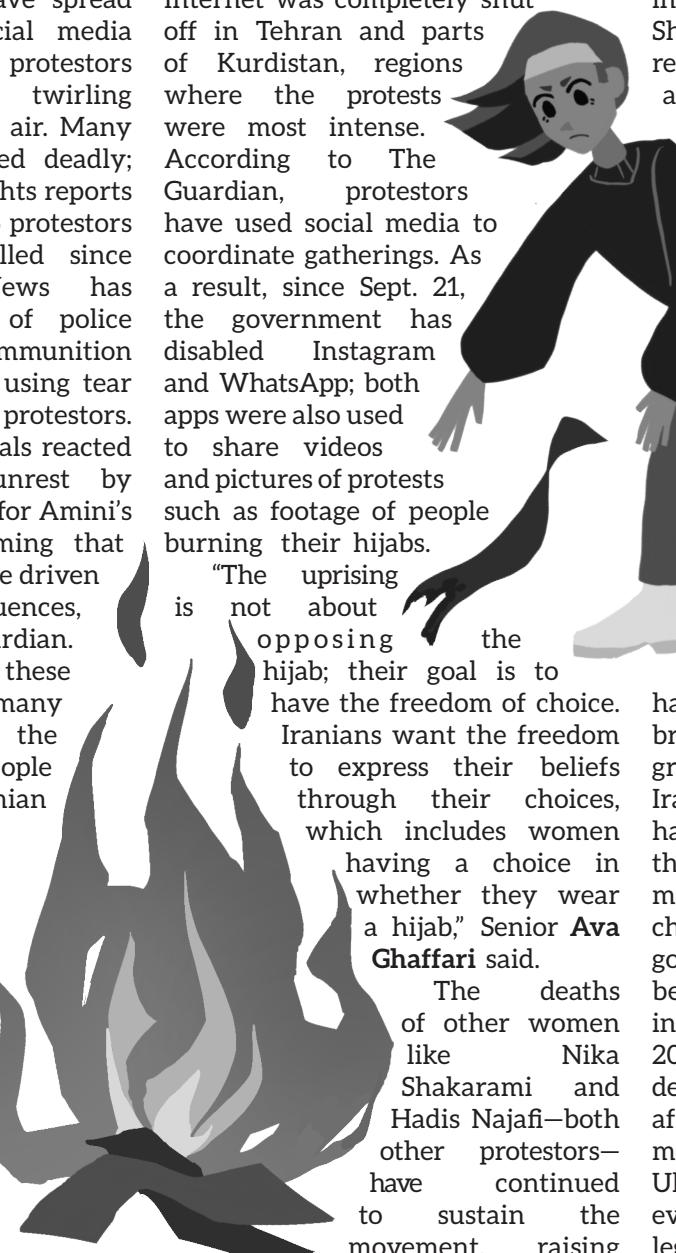
"The uprising is not about opposing the hijab; their goal is to have the freedom of choice. Iranians want the freedom to express their beliefs through their choices, which includes women having a choice in whether they wear a hijab," Senior Ava Ghaffari said.

The deaths of other women like Nika Shakarami and Hadis Najafi—both other protesters—have continued to sustain the movement, raising

questions about police involvement in the crackdown on the protests. Shakarami, for example, was reportedly pushed off a tall building after leaving a protest. Members of her family were arrested after claiming her corpse showed evidence of blunt force trauma to the head, suggesting that her actual cause of death was different from what was reported, and that the police targeted Shakarami.

While some protesters have participated in large gatherings with the sole intent of repealing hijab laws, others

have expressed their hopes for a broader societal shift allowing for greater freedom of expression in Iran. The wide range of protests has led many people to suggest that there is enough political momentum to drive large-scale changes such as overthrowing the government. Although there have been similarly intense protests in Iran in the past such as the 2019 Bloody Aban protests, public demonstrations continuing months after Amini's death reveal that the movement for freedom is persistent. Ultimately, the impact on people's everyday lives will determine the legacy of this modern revolution.



## Qatar's contentious World Cup

Kyan Wang

Staff Writer

The 2022 FIFA World Cup is set to begin on Nov. 20 in Doha, Qatar, marking the first time a country in the Arab world has hosted the tournament. The best soccer players from around the world will compete in eight newly constructed stadiums, all supported with other infrastructure such as roads and hotels for billions to watch worldwide. The prestige of hosting the Cup is very appealing, even with its hefty price tag of over \$200 billion. However, since Qatar's initial bid to host the Cup in 2010, controversy has marred the tournament.

According to World Soccer Talk, FIFA is the highest governing body of international soccer and is responsible for deciding the World Cup host. The FIFA Council—which consisted of 24 FIFA officials from six continental organizations during the 2010 bidding process—voted for host countries, eliminating the lowest-performing countries until reaching a majority. The U.S., along with other international organizations, have accused Qatar of bribing officials—the country allegedly paid bribes of over \$5 million to secure votes.

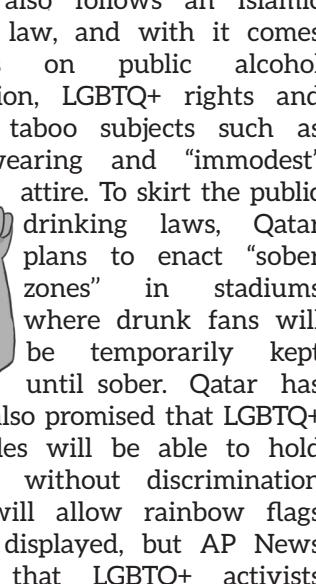
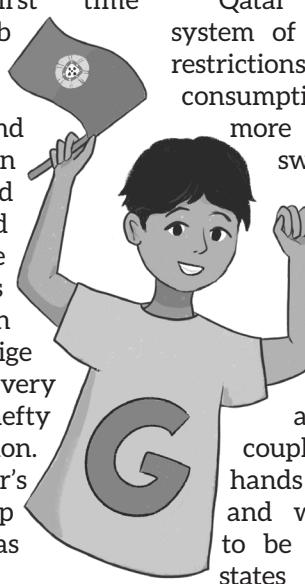
"Qatar, a small country with a small population and strict laws, should not have been chosen to host the World Cup. Because of the council system, a small number of bribed officials influenced the election

enough to secure Qatar's victory," Sophomore Arya Jalayer said.

Qatar also follows an Islamic system of law, and with it comes restrictions on public alcohol consumption, LGBTQ+ rights and more taboo subjects such as swearing and "immodest" attire. To skirt the public drinking laws, Qatar plans to enact "sober zones" in stadiums where drunk fans will be temporarily kept until sober. Qatar has also promised that LGBTQ+ couples will be able to hold hands without discrimination and will allow rainbow flags to be displayed, but AP News states that LGBTQ+ activists

worry that Qatar's poor track record of rights regarding same-sex relationships—which are criminalized in the country—could lead to repression towards LGBTQ+ fans there.

The stadiums' construction practices have also come under scrutiny, as Qatar has been accused of exploiting migrant labor under the Kafala system. Under the system, migrant laborers, mostly from Africa and Asia, have their expenses paid for and are effectively controlled by private employers, who offer workers higher wages than those in their home country.

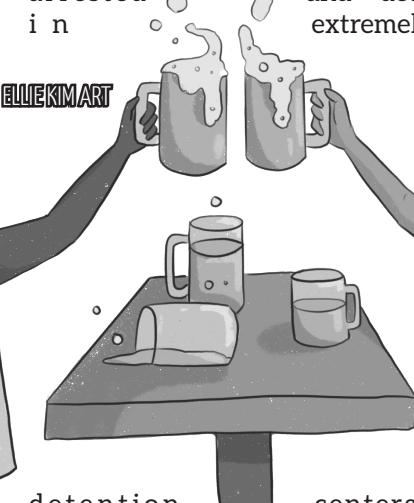


Amnesty International states that the lack of government oversight over the Kafala system allows the companies building the stadiums to exploit workers. The system permits private employers to block them from returning to their home countries through destroying passports, denies justice when migrants' rights are violated and facilitates late or unpaid wages. Migrants also face excessive heat due to Qatar's daily weather exceeding 100 F and a lack of food and water. Migrant workers who protested the poor conditions were arrested and detained in

construction. These violations demand a response from the international community to raise awareness so that abused workers are not only compensated, but also protected with regulations that safeguard their rights," Senior Elliot Marshall said.

While FIFA has stated it is open to paying \$440 million towards reparations for the mistreated migrant workers, Marshall says the rest of the world should still stand up to FIFA to prevent further abuses. Qatar has contributed \$164 million to a fund for 36,000 migrant workers to receive compensation and passed labor laws which it hopes will benefit workers, a move that has garnered praise from the Council of Europe. However, some organizations such as the Human Rights Watch say this fund, as well as other Qatari programs, are committing too little and too late to remedy the problem.

The concerns arising from Qatar hosting the World Cup underscore corruption in FIFA along with the country's controversial government policies regarding both fans and workers of the Cup. Soccer brings people together worldwide, but this year's World Cup shows that the sport's highest level of competition may not be as untarnished.



detention centers without air conditioning before being deported.

"The Kafala system has led to thousands of deaths from poor working conditions and human rights abuses throughout the stadiums'



# SPORTS

Reagan Liu

## The Midnight Basketball league dunks on crime

The echoing thumps of basketballs signal a gathering in the apartment basketball courts, inviting people of all ages to compete in friendly games. With cheering spectators, bustling food trucks and intense gameplay, these nights serve as one of the few bonding opportunities for neighbors, friends and families in less affluent neighborhoods in the Bay Area.

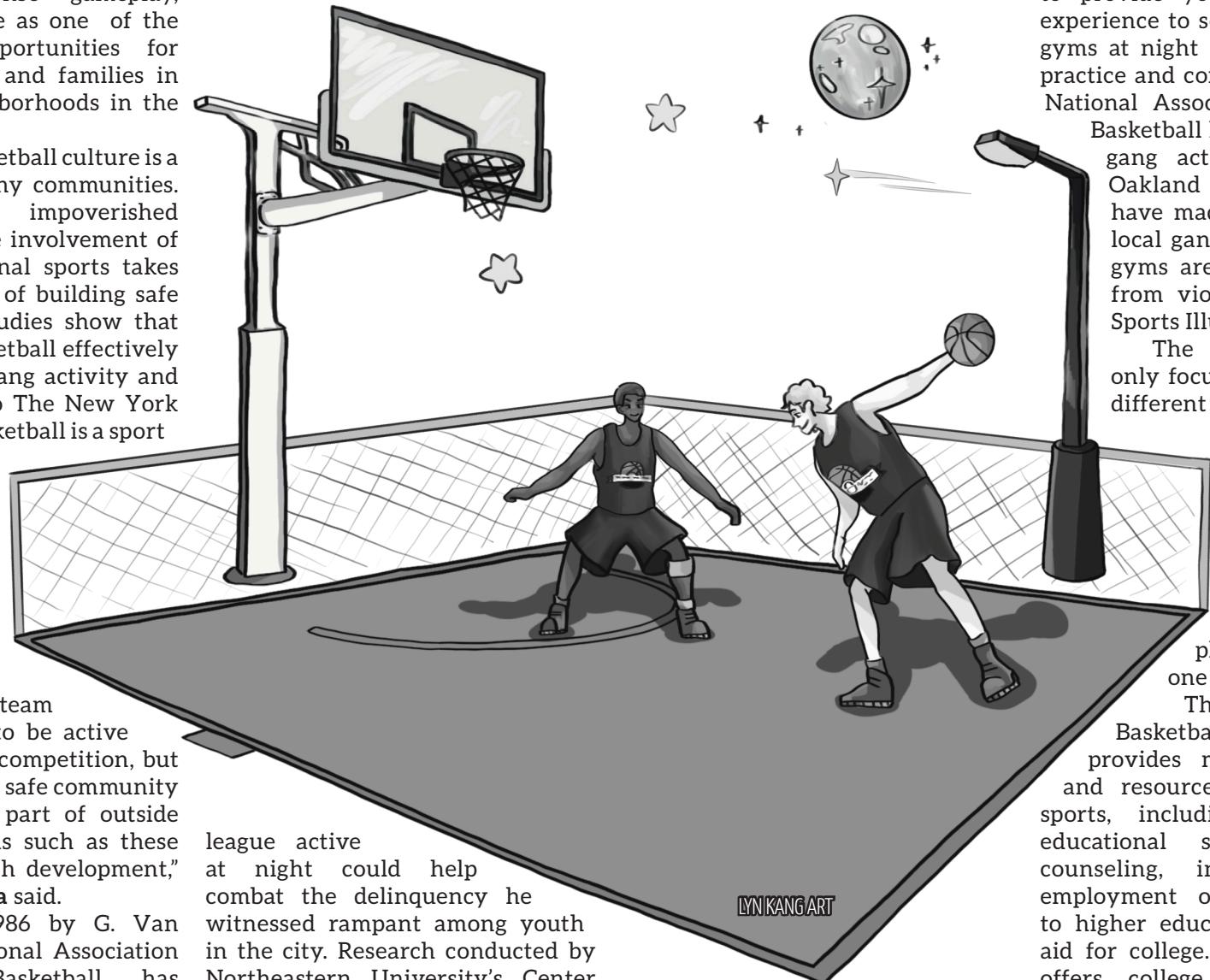
The street basketball culture is a cornerstone in many communities. Particularly in impoverished neighborhoods, the involvement of youth in recreational sports takes on the crucial role of building safe spaces for kids. Studies show that sports such as basketball effectively keep youth from gang activity and crime, according to The New York Times. Because basketball is a sport built on trust, The New York Times claims that the games build bonds between teammates that players would otherwise develop in gangs.

"Not only do team sports allow kids to be active and learn friendly competition, but they also promote a safe community for them to be a part of outside of school. Programs such as these are critical to youth development," Junior **Ryan Azuma** said.

Founded in 1986 by G. Van Standifer, the National Association of Midnight Basketball has established 50 chapters around the country in the hopes of bringing youth together through the love of

basketball. As a former city official of Glenarden, Maryland, Standifer noticed that during late hours, teenagers more frequently engaged in crime, drug usage and violence. He felt a recreational basketball

reductions in property crime rates than other cities. Despite the initial success, a lack of federal funding led to the program's decline, with a majority of chapters shutting down by 2004.



LYNKANGART

league active at night could help combat the delinquency he witnessed rampant among youth in the city. Research conducted by Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society revealed that cities with midnight basketball programs had greater

Since then, a few cities have reopened their chapters, most

notably in Oakland. Oakland maintains one of the highest crime rates in the country, with NBC ranking it the eighth riskiest American city to live in. However, midnight basketball programs aim to provide youths with a safer experience to socialize. By opening gyms at night to invite players to practice and compete in games, the National Association of Midnight

Basketball hopes to fight youth gang activity. Furthermore, Oakland chapter organizers have made agreements with local gang leaders that these gyms are to be safe havens from violence, according to Sports Illustrated.

The league does not only focus on young players; different divisions invite athletes of all ages to compete in games. The league operates in a tournament style: teams are drafted and named before being scheduled to play matches against one another.

The Midnight Basketball program also provides many opportunities and resources outside of team sports, including an array of educational services such as counseling, interview training, employment opportunities, paths to higher education and financial aid for college. The initiative also offers college scholarships and maintains steady involvement in the community to help build better futures for underprivileged youth.

## Mind sports: A show of intellectual athleticism

Andrew Duval

Launched to newspaper headlines by a conspiracy cheating controversy earlier this year, the Sinquefield Cup chess tournament has prompted a spike in the popularity of mind sports—games based on intellectual ability.

The term "mind sports" rose to popularity in the late 1990s, but many of the games themselves have ancient origins. They have retained popularity over the years for a variety of reasons, the most notable of which include their simplicity. Enthusiasts often showcase their skills in the Mind Sports Olympiad, an international board game competition. The Mind Sports Olympiad has hosted annual competitions, mainly in London since 1997; at the first Olympiad, the winner was awarded a 100,000 pound prize fund. The competition features mind sports ranging from classics like chess, Scrabble, Backgammon and Go to newer games such as Settlers of Catan, 7 Wonders, Dominion, Ticket to Ride and Carcassonne, as stated by the official website.

"Mind sports are just as important as physical sports; we should respect those that want to train their brains instead of their quadriceps," Freshman **Gavin Liu** said.

Mind sports gained even more recognition in 2002 when the

British Minister for Sport declared that mental agility deserves the same degree of respect as physical agility and that mind sports must be legally separated from trivial board games. Moreover, countries such as Belgium, Ireland, Poland and the Netherlands have officially recognized bridge, a four-player card game, as a competitive sport.

Despite this support, mind sports have not always been regarded with such importance. Even though the International Olympic Committee recognized chess and bridge as sports in 1990, neither has made an appearance in the Olympics. Furthermore, a British court ruled in 2015 that bridge could not be considered a competitive sport, with Justice Ian Dove claiming that the definition of sports does not include mind sports. According to The Guardian, the court's ruling

is supported by the 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act, which categorizes sports as activities involving physical fitness.

"I have participated in a few mind sports. They have been very enjoyable and helped me be more creative and improve my problem solving skills," Junior **Aoto Sakamoto** said.

According to Higher Education Review, mind sports benefit science, tech and math students, helping build mental skills such as the ability to make quick decisions, cognitive agility, memory as well as game theory.

"Mind sports reduce stress and help me develop skills such as discipline, perseverance and a growth mindset, which are important for kids," Junior **Amyea Kulkarni** said.

The most popular mind sport, according to World Mind Sports Games, is chess, which was adapted from the Indian game Chaturanga.

The game has consistently evolved, with intricate new tactics constantly introduced and many competitive tournaments held around the world every year.

Poker, a card game played at both casinos and tournaments, is another popular mind sport. It is highly competitive and requires the ability to make profitable decisions. A game often thought of as another way of gambling, Poker requires strategy and planning. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the game involves a player who must bet that the value of their hand is greater than any of their opponents' hands. Afterwards, each subsequent player must either raise the bet or drop out. The player holding the highest hand at the end wins the prize money.

Speedcubing is another mindsport especially popular with younger athletes—the average age of players has been reported to be about 11. Critics speculate that the popularization of this sport for the younger generation could be due to social media. Many users have gone viral after sharing videos of themselves solving a Rubik's cube at record rates.

Although many are skeptical of their status as a true sport, mind sports are rapidly gaining recognition and increased participation.



**Art by Jeweliana Teeters**  
Instagram: @jewelianat



Junior **Jeweliana Teeters** enjoys art and design. She sketches in her sketchbook, watches TV and movies, and listens to music in her free time.

**Art by Tiffany Ng**  
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## Inexpressible Sadness

Senior **Nicholas Yen**

"Why are you crumpled and dampened like a piece of paper?"  
I can feel your words wrap around my eyes,  
Then disappear when I open them, as if they were the vapor  
Of my tears, with the light of reality bringing their demise.

Why are you so near, but all at once so far?  
Your ears are open, and they would be anodyne words to hear;  
But why all at once does the action seem so bizarre,  
And black clouds all around imprison me with fear.

You would rather suffer the cold pangs of silence,  
To be victim of an honorable self-reliance,  
And alone have the darkness transpire...

And I would rather end the haunt of my vision,  
To wrap around your shoulders and overcome our indecision;  
For I am saddened, but still capable of fueling a fire.



**"Nilou" by Anonymous**



**Art by Anonymous**

# Zoosemiotics

- Connecting Through Communication -



## Quotebox: How do animals communicate with humans?

Compiled by  
Tammy Newman,  
Staff Writer

light to the outer layer and changing the chameleon's skin color to a yellow hue.

"Through horseback riding, I have observed that horses stomp their hooves to express anxiety, lick their mouths to show they are relaxed and pin their ears back to communicate that they are feeling threatened by or angry at another horse," Sophomore Anne Bujtas said.

Over time, animals' physical features and physiological capabilities have evolved, enabling them to protect themselves from predators and communicate effectively during mating. According to the New England Complex Systems Institute, female peacocks are attracted to male peacocks with large, vibrant feathers. As such, genes for large plumage are passed down. Furthermore, a study published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science states that vervet monkeys—a primate species native to Africa—utilize different alarm calls to warn fellow members in their social group of nearby predators. After recordings of different acoustic signals from an adult male vervet monkey were played, the monkeys either hid under or climbed up trees, believing that one of their main predators—eagles, pythons or leopards—was nearby.

During mating rituals, many animals also use stridulation, or the act of producing sound by rubbing together two or more body parts. In their book "Advances in Insect Physiology," University of Bristol researchers Thomas Neil and Marc Holderied report that grasshoppers rub their hind legs against their forewing to convey attraction towards potential mates. Pheromones, chemicals capable of eliciting a sexual or social response in another member of the same species, facilitate key interactions between animals. For instance, queen bees emit pheromones to signal to their workers that they should stop reproducing, as per the American Scientist magazine.

Human-animal symbiosis is also a critical form of communication, but it is not as expansive as interspecies communication due to animals' limited understanding of the grammatically complex sentences that define human languages—which is restricted to imitation and following simple commands such as "sit" and "lie down." Despite this, animals are still capable of communicating their needs in ways that humans can comprehend. For example, a viral video uploaded by the YouTube channel Windy City LIVE showed how a dog named Bunny learned to use a device with buttons that each played a specific phrase to "talk" to his owner. After the owner modeled how to use it for a few weeks, he was able to communicate his emotions and his desire to go outside by pushing the right buttons.

Meanwhile, people communicate with domesticated animals in an instinctive manner, with many treating their pets as they would humans. To reward them for following orders, owners might praise them using a high-pitched voice or offer a tempting treat. In *The New Yorker*, author Jia Tolentino describes the phenomenon as "pet anthropomorphism"; it encompasses the tendencies

to imagine a pet's thoughts and feelings and provide too much care and attention—in the form of overfeeding and expensive clothing and grooming treatments. Critics assert that the fabrication of animals' supposed motives offers false justification for punishments as owners believe that their pets know when they have done something bad. Rover Time, a dog walking company, states that owners should communicate with their dogs through positive reinforcement, rather than punishment. However, others claim that it is natural for humans to attempt to connect with their pets by anthropomorphizing their actions.

"The way animals communicate with people without language is similar to how infants communicate with their mothers. Just like how mothers can understand their child's needs without them voicing them, humans can also understand animals through observing their actions and the sounds they produce," Senior Arash Mazloumattar said.

Despite differences in communicative abilities, animals and humans can develop an understanding of each other through various types of non-linguistic communication methods. More research on how animals express their emotions may pave the way for deeper connections between people and animals and uncover the evolutionary factors that shaped animals' unique systems of communication.

SUVAILI ART

"I learned about chimpanzees' system of communication; they are highly social creatures that use a myriad of hand signals in their interactions with other members in their community. Since this resembles the way humans communicate nonverbally, it is not surprising that humans and animals can understand each other on a higher level." —Freshman Hope Tran

"Based on my experience volunteering at Mini Cat Town, a newborn kitten rescue nonprofit, I noticed that many cats show that they want attention by sitting on people's laps. They enjoy the presence of humans and love it when we play with them with cat toys, feather teasers and laser pointers."

—Senior Heejun Nam

"Animals can definitely understand humans to a certain extent. My dog does not understand when I tell him to leave my shoes alone, but he performs tricks and obeys me when I give him the command to walk."

—Junior Ryan Azuma