

The CHARGER ACCOUNT

Vol. V No. 2

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Leland High School
6677 Camden Avenue,
San Jose, CA 95120



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The College Board goes digital

DESIGN BY ANTARA GANGWAL

Eleanor Gil

The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), also referred to as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT), has gone digital this October, and the SAT will follow suit next year. The College Board, the administrator of the SAT, made digital versions of the PSAT/NMSQT available before the digital SAT so that students

Program, an academic competition for a scholarship aid award.

The Princeton Review reports that the College Board created digital versions of the PSAT and SAT due to security breaches of the exam and the ease of digital exams during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now taken on College Board's custom-

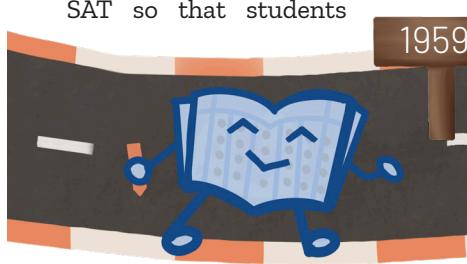
I am thankful to all our supportive staff that helped proctor the tests," Assistant Principal of Student Services **Sibel Ilsever** said.

There are numerous changes to the digital PSAT's structure. It is now adaptive by section and will not be the same for all test-takers—a student's performance

2020 on the

with the highest possible PSAT score still a 1520.

"Though the paper PSAT was more difficult for me, I still prefer the paper format as it resembles a more formal testing feeling, and I am more familiar with paper testing strategies," Junior **Jin Yu Lee** said.



may familiarize themselves with an online testing experience.

Sophomores take the PSAT at the school as it gives them an idea of what to expect when taking a standardized exam, allowing them to gauge their readiness for the SAT. Many juniors also opt in because the PSAT is the only qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship

built application called Bluebook, the PSAT requires a stable network and appropriate testing device.

"We ensured all students had access to a Chromebook by borrowing 90 additional devices from the district office. Although we have had some challenges with our WiFi in the past couple of months, we spread out testing over several days to prevent any possible interruptions.

first section will determine their next set of questions. Not only is the online version 1 hour shorter, students' answers are also weighted; scoring will depend on each question's difficulty level. The reading passages are shorter than they were on paper and a built in graphing calculator is available for the entire math section. Since the test is digital, scores will also be reported faster

College Board's transition to digital testing for PSAT is setting precedents for similar standardized tests with plans to offer some of its 2024 AP Exams online. As students prepare to take AP Exams, the ACT and the SAT next year, the digital PSAT offers a preliminary look into the future of these digital standardized tests.

Homecoming games go big, Homecoming skits go home

Ariel Lee and James Yu

Students waving Bingo slips scramble to the doors of the Gay Brasher Auditorium. Glossy bead necklaces shimmer in the sunlight as they are wagered. A matte emerald bell flutters in the morning breeze. For Homecoming this year, ASB pulled the deep-rooted tradition of Homecoming skits out from the ground and planted a new form of class competition: Homecoming games.

The skits, which were a school tradition for over 20 years, were not performed last year due to a lack of interest and participation from students. According to **Meg Walsh**, Activities Director and Leadership Advisor, the new games allow all students to participate.

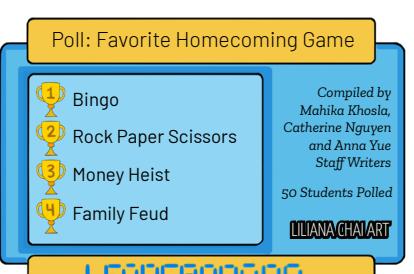
Walsh explained how the games were a more approachable option compared to the skits because ASB provided all materials to students. Additionally, the games promoted more interaction

between classes, as all students could participate.

Senior **Emelie Kim**, ASB Design Captain and Homecoming Dance Chair, helped create the games. Kim and other ASB officers finalized the games after brainstorming

a list of potential games that were related to the Vegas theme of Homecoming and accessible to all students.

"One of the main reasons for why Homecoming skits had such low participation in recent years was the time commitment attached to being in the skit. As such, for Homecoming games, ASB chose games that would be easy to participate in while also being fun and competitive," Kim said.



ASB worked hard to set up the games: students prepared bags of Bingo cards, purchased thousands of necklaces for Rock Paper Scissors, created prompts for "Family Feud" and arrived at school early to hide money

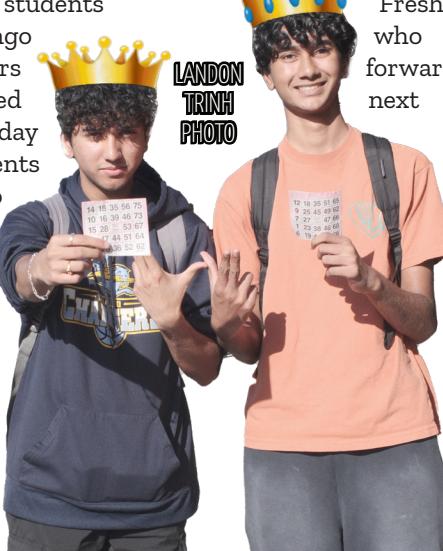
for "Money Heist."

On Monday, students were given a Bingo card and numbers were announced throughout the day until lunch. Students who scored Bingo won a phone card holder. For Tuesday's Rock Paper Scissors, students were each given one necklace at the start of the day and competed against one another, with the

loser forfeiting their necklaces to the winner. Students signed up to participate in "Family Feud" during lunch in the gym on Wednesday. Lastly, for "Money Heist," students looked for fake dollar bills scattered throughout the campus on Thursday.

Senior **Alex Hemprich** preferred the Homecoming games over the skits because they were fun to play; his favorite game was "Family Feud." Similarly, Freshman **Emma Huang**, who won Bingo, looks forward to playing again next year.

Due to positive reception, ASB will continue the games to cultivate school spirit. While Homecoming's Las Vegas theme may stay in Vegas, the new tradition this year's Homecoming pioneered will continue for years to come.



Left: After playing Rock Paper Scissors, Juniors **Sophie Azari** and **Ariana Tavakoli** adorn multicolored necklaces. Right: Juniors **Shrivats Sudharsan** and **Gaurav Rao** celebrate scoring a Bingo.



"Amoura Awakened" by
Meg Kramer

on page 2



Caffeine: Fiends
resisting addiction

on page 9



Techno-magic mind
reading

MINGYUE XIAO ART

on page 10

COMMUNITY NEWS

SJPD's new firearm policy: Held at gunpoint

Vira Patil

As of Sept. 20, the San Jose Police Department (SJPD) recognizes pointing a gun as a "use of force" in its "Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms." The "use of force" in the police department is defined as an action required by the police department in order to force compliance by an unwilling citizen, as stated by the National Institute of Justice. Previously, only actions that involved physical restraint such as the use of tasers, firearms and blunt force objects like batons were considered forceful actions toward the offender—such actions can only be used when the safety of others is at risk.

When a police officer points a gun at a person, the situation can quickly escalate. Such escalations resulted in the SJPD's internal affairs unit labeling complaints against officers who pointed guns at potential offenders as a procedural issue, as stated by San Jose Spotlight. This can be seen as an infringement on a person's Fourth Amendment rights, which provide

American citizens with the right to be free from excessive force by law enforcement officials. The new policy of categorizing pointing a gun as a "use of force" allows for a sense of transparency between the department, its officers and the offender.

"The new policy of categorizing pointing a gun as a 'use of force' allows for a sense of transparency between the department, its officers and the offender."

Additionally, this policy provides accountability and documentation covering the actions of both parties, not just the police officer. Officers are required to cite instances of pointing a gun as a "use of force" in their reports, keeping them accountable. They must also detail the actions undertaken by the offender which warranted the degree of force used by the officer.

"This policy provides accountability for our actions in the field while still allowing us to point guns as long as there is probable cause to do so. It will not change anything in my daily work, only call for more documentation on the actions of the police in certain situations," Tim Harden, the school's on-campus officer, said.

Prior to the change by internal affairs, only unjustly

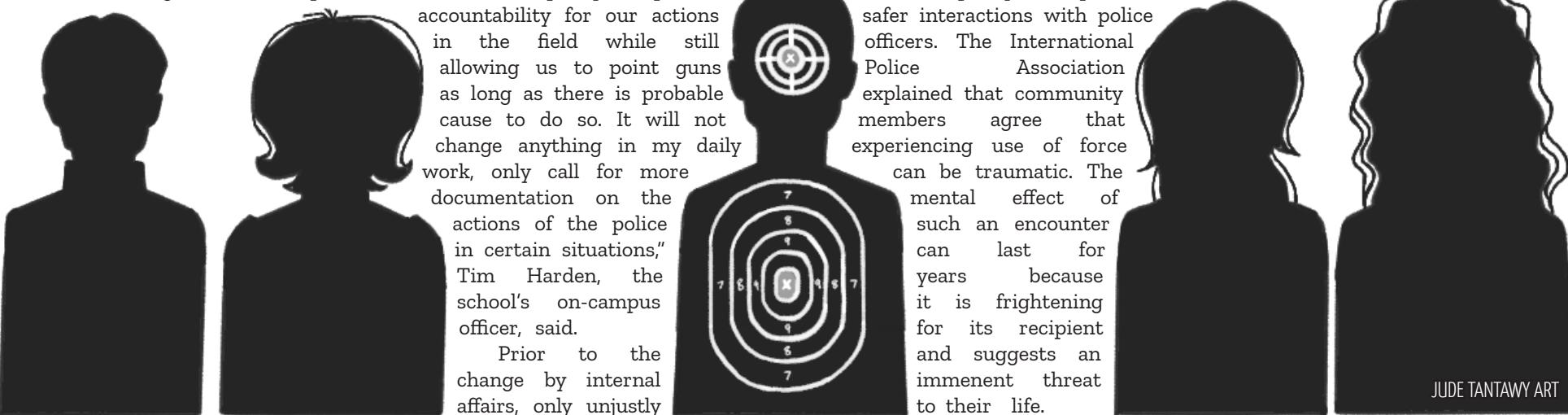
pointed firearms were classified as a "use of force" in the SJPD. Situations that qualify as justly pointing a firearm include when someone's sense of safety is threatened and when an offender gives an impression of intent to harm another. However, pointing firearms, choking or strangling civilians are categorized as lethal force, and are only utilized when absolutely necessary and justifiable in terms of the new policy, which includes if the officer has reason to believe that the offender is an imminent danger to other civilians. When used unnecessarily, these actions are categorized as "excessive force," when more force is used than the situation warrants. Lethal force, on the other hand, is force that can have lethal consequences for the offender. Officers using excessive force can be convicted of tort of battery, negligence or violation of Civil Code Section 52.1, therefore resulting in criminal penalties.

Many San Jose civilians consider this new policy a step toward safer interactions with police officers. The International Police Association explained that community members agree that experiencing use of force can be traumatic. The mental effect of such an encounter can last for years because it is frightening for its recipient and suggests an imminent threat to their life.

According to the American Psychological Association, being held at gunpoint has serious psychological ramifications. Shock, anxiety, guilt and depression are common initial effects when someone is threatened with a firearm, which can later lead to severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Experiencing gun violence can also cause substance abuse, self harm, major depressive disorders and even suicidal ideation.

"A gun is more of a threat than it is a use of force. I would consider a "use of force" to be if you are complying with the officer's requests but they still decide to be rough with you or harm you in any capacity," Junior Jenna Matar said.

By categorizing pointing a gun as a "use of force," SJPD aims to foster an increase in both responsibility and accountability for its officers. This will help the police effectively maintain public order and ensure the physical safety of citizens without compromising the mental health of those they apprehend.



"Amoura Awakened" by Meg Kramer

Antara Gangwal

In her debut novel "Amoura Awakened," Bay Area-based author Meg Kramer reimagines the city of San Francisco, instilling magic into its vibrant Victorian architecture, sprawling green parks and bustling, diverse communities. Characterized by a sense of mystery, the golden city is the perfect backdrop for Kramer's fantastical story of a young witch coming of age.

"Amoura Awakened" follows the titular character Amoura, a 16-year-old girl who lives in a world where witches and humans coexist. Adopted by human fathers, Amoura always believed she was human herself until an incident at her school cements her as a witch, completely upending her sense of identity. Invited to move from her home of Portland, Oregon to San Francisco to attend the prestigious Elderwood School for the Magically Inclined, Amoura

learns to embrace her powers and is soon entwined in a shocking mystery about her past.

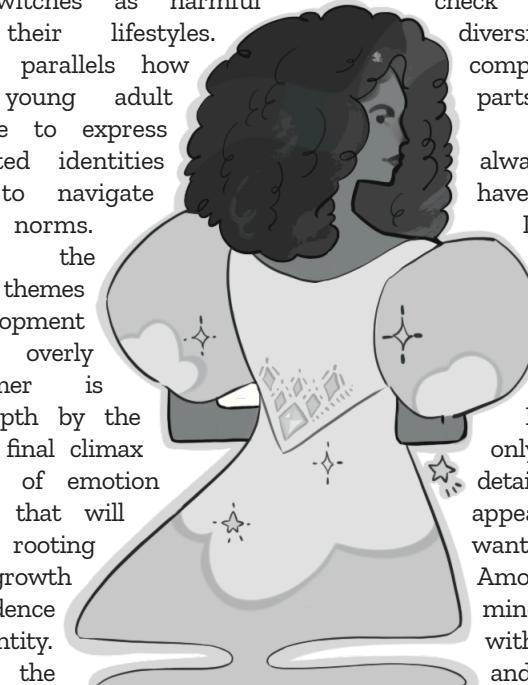
Told in descriptive, easy to read prose sprinkled with the perfect balance of humor and touching moments, it is easy to fly through the pages of "Amoura Awakened." With countless references to locations in San Francisco—such as Golden Gate Park, Cole Valley and the de Young Museum—Kramer pays homage to the city. In fact, Elderwood was inspired by a real preschool that Kramer passed every day in San Francisco. As for the vibrant, kaleidoscopic interior of the school, Kramer cites the San Francisco Grace Cathedral as her inspiration.

"The seeds for this story were planted when I moved to San Francisco in 2004 to attend the University of San Francisco. This book is definitely a love letter to the essence of the city, the magic I have always felt in its bones," Kramer said.

At its heart, though, "Amoura Awakened" is also a love letter to young teenagers like Amoura who are coming of age in an increasingly hostile, difficult-to-navigate society. While attending Elderwood, Amoura faces discrimination from other witches who look down on her human upbringing; when visiting her human family and friends outside of school, she realizes how

humans see witches as harmful threats to their lifestyles. Amoura's story parallels how many other young adult readers struggle to express their multifaceted identities while trying to navigate divisive social norms.

While at the beginning, these themes lacked development and seemed overly juvenile, Kramer is able to add depth by the novel's end: the final climax is a whirlwind of emotion and excitement that will leave readers rooting for Amoura's growth and confidence in her identity. Furthermore, the diversity of the Bay Area is highlighted within the novel's pages; LGBTQIA+ characters and characters of color are present not just to



School News & Entertainment Editor
check off surface-level diversity—they are all complex and nuanced parts of the story.

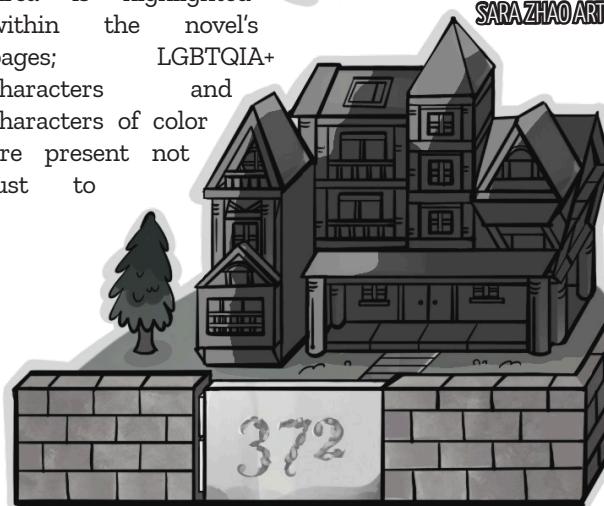
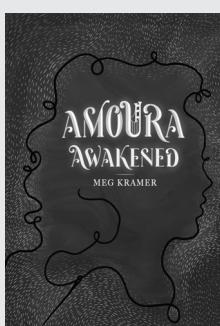
"This book was always going to have a diverse cast;

I wanted any young person who picked up the book to be able to relate to a character.

I purposely give only a handful of details about Amoura's appearance because I want readers to form Amoura in their own minds and connect with who she is and what they think she looks like," Kramer said.

"Amoura Awakened" encapsulates the satisfying arc of Amoura's coming-of-age within its pages, yet still leaves many intriguing plot threads unresolved. Setting the stage for a five-part series set in the same magical universe, this first installment is equal parts spellbinding and heartwarming, leaving readers eagerly anticipating the next.

Buy "Amoura Awakened" today on Amazon and at Barnes & Noble!



INVESTIGATIVE REPORT: Gym Culture

Teenage gym craze

Vira Patil and Niru Shivakumar

Staff Writers

In the unassuming setting of the local gym, a unique culture thrives. Spending their hours lifting weights, doing cardio and other various forms of strength exercises, regulars and newcomers alike from the school come together in the pursuit of health and self-improvement. For many highschoolers, the rise of "gym influencers" has encouraged them to begin a journey that may transform their diet, lifestyle, academics and mental health.

The increase in teenagers consistently going to the gym can be attributed to influences from social media and the health benefits of a consistent workout routine. Teenage fitness enthusiasts go to the gym on an average of four times a week to achieve their fitness goals specific to their lifestyle, as reported by KidsHealth. For example, wrestlers focus heavily on weight training, and runners focus mainly on cardio related exercises. One influencer that promotes going to the gym is Michelle Lewin—a model, bodybuilder and fitness influencer on platforms such as Youtube, Tik Tok and Instagram. Lewin has accumulated a following of 15.3 million people. Another influencer is Simeon Panda, who amassed over 8.2 million followers due to his prominence in the bodybuilding world after he won the European championships in 2013.

"I started regularly going to the gym two years ago and continue to go for the majority of the days in a week. I feel motivated to lift heavy weights and consume as much protein as possible to gain strength so I can improve my skills in wrestling. Before wrestling season, I consume five high protein meals a day, but I do not track the calories," Junior **Nobuhisa Ishiguro** said.

On social media, several gym influencers have grown their presence considerably. For example, influencers such as Jennifer Selter and Bradley Martyn promote their workout routines and occasionally offer private specialized training. This has encouraged several students to adopt a gym-centered lifestyle. Junior **Sophia Noelle Neubert** regularly attends the local gym after school everyday at least five or six times a week. She makes sure that regardless of her schedule, she makes time to work out. Neubert believes that going to the gym builds a strong work ethic and gives her motivation to work hard. Her primary motivation to attend the gym regularly is to maintain peak physical condition. Besides Neubert, other teenagers also make their fitness journey a priority by dividing the week into leg day, arm day and core day.

"The gym can build a lot of discipline as you create your own routine, meaning you have to try various things that you might fail at or see no progress over a long period of time," Neubert said.

While Sophia was not specifically influenced by social media to begin attending the gym, several other high schoolers were. Neubert believes that social

media lures many teens into the gym, but not all.

As stated by the CDC, constantly working out can reduce health risks, strengthen bones and increase muscle mass. Exercising on a regular basis can also improve self discipline by teaching one to stay focused on achievable goals and get into healthy habits. Furthermore, a poll by the National Library of Medicine illustrates that teenagers responded quickly and with greater accuracy to a variety

of cognitive tasks such as inductive reasoning and processing language after engaging in physical activity.

Senior **Vishal Makaram** agrees with these statements; he explains that going to the gym has made him a stronger athlete and more disciplined. During the off season, Makaram attends the gym regularly to be fit for the spring swim season. He explains that letting his energy out at the gym helps him focus when studying, as it allows him focus and complete his work on time.

"I have a way more productive lifestyle than I did prior to going to the gym. I am able to focus and feel better about

myself. Going to the gym has also improved my mental health because it creates structure in my life and keeps me healthy both mentally and physically," Makaram said.

However, some students may struggle more with managing their academic work while working hard to achieve their dream physique.

For example, students taking several AP classes or applying to colleges may not have enough

time or energy to go to the gym. Ishiguro manages his

time with school work

Health Association. Exercising can also alleviate depression and anxiety and boost an individual's overall mood.

"Going to the gym improves my mental health and clears my mind. I love how I feel more productive, and I am able to focus on my other priorities after the workout is done like my school assignments," Junior **Alexa Friz** said.

Even though attending the gym on a regular basis can help students lead a healthy and productive lifestyle, unhealthy gym habits may harm students. According to The New York Times, people may pick up dangerously heavy weights that can cause injury when they try to mimic an online fitness enthusiast. Moreover, to improve their performance, several gym enthusiasts adopt diets that may not be nutritious or healthy such as to bulk or cut. Bulking is a process to increase muscle mass and gain weight by eating high protein foods to help athletes quickly gain muscle, while cutting is when athletes follow a calorie deficit in order to lose fat, while only eating high protein foods. However, these diets can have an excess of protein and low carbohydrate levels, describes Healthline. These diets also can lead to metabolic burden on the bones, kidneys and liver as stated by the National Institute of Health (NIH).

For teenagers whose bodies are still developing, these diets are potentially harmful if done excessively.

"Sometimes spending hours at the gym on a daily basis can be very mentally exhausting since this routine is very time consuming and difficult to balance with AP classes. However, it is worth it to me because I physically feel more energized and stronger. Gaining more strength has improved my self-esteem and given me a daily activity to commit to," Ishiguro said.

Regular gym habits can also lead to an increase in confidence due to positive body perception. Exercise can produce brain chemicals which may result in feelings of happiness and self-esteem, per American

"I used to consume regular energy drinks, pre workout, protein powder and creatine to improve athletic performance and increase muscle mass. While I have stopped taking these, I know many who are avid fans of these products," Neubert said.

Additionally, gym culture idealization can cause participants to have improbable expectations about their appearances, resulting in body insecurity according to the NIH. This problem is exacerbated by social media fitness influencers who boast unrealistic appearances to increase views. For example, students may begin to compare themselves to others when working out, potentially causing feelings of insecurity. For example, as described by ACE Fitness, interactions with others at the gym may cause an individual to perceive themselves as less fit or muscular, leading to self-esteem issues.

The gym can be a positive hobby and pastime that encourages students to lead healthy and productive lifestyles amidst a stressful school schedule, but students should be aware of the negative effects that it can cause and learn to create a balance in their lives as gym culture continues to grow.

PETER YOUNG ART

while attending the gym several days a week, but describes that it can be difficult at times.

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Vishal

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"I have a way more productive lifestyle than I did prior to going to the gym. I am able to focus and feel better about

Almost every day/every day:

7%

3-4 days a week:

25%

1-2 days a week:

17%

Rarely or not at all:

51%

Poll: How often do students go to the gym?

Compiled by Claire Chang, Eleanor

Gil and Gilina Voon

Staff Writers

102 students polled

OPINIONS



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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.

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The enigma of exaggeration in entertainment

Catherine Nguyen

The spotlight shines brightly on comedian Hasan Minhaj—he jokes about his familial background, quips about stories that fellow Muslim communities can relate to. The falsehoods that he masquerades his story in cannot hold longer, as an exposé by the New Yorker brings to light his lies and sparks controversy. Comedians commonly exaggerate stories to accentuate their point, but a line must be drawn to prevent harmful misinformation.

"Comedians do a great job of engaging with a crowd and allowing them to briefly forget their burdens during a performance. Acting out unusual situations that would normally be unpleasant makes others feel better about themselves and laugh," Freshman Apurva Tadimeti said.

In his response to the exposé, Minhaj detailed his alternating roles as both a political and storytelling comedian: with political comedy, he is rigorous with the facts while in personal stories, he prioritizes emotional impact. Minhaj claimed his stories were "emotional truths" built on true persecutions as a Muslim American, and his artistic choice to exaggerate the truth in order to express himself. For example, one of his stories

involved a letter containing a white powder resembling anthrax that was mailed to his house. Minhaj detailed his and his wife's panic as they rushed their daughter to the hospital after the powder fell on her, only to find out that it was not actually anthrax. However, a majority of this story was untrue: while he did receive a letter he suspected had anthrax due to previous threats he received, it never fell on his daughter, and the hospital scene was completely made up. Minhaj claims that he created that scene to put the audience into the same shock and fear he and his wife felt that night.

Minhaj fails to recognize that his rise to fame was because his experiences appeared sincere, and his falsifications could lead to people losing trust in other Muslim experiences due to the fact that Minhaj, a prominent figure in their community, lied. Likewise, the community is also impacted by seeing a relatable figure lie about those shared experiences. While it is understandable to want to emphasize the stress of the situation, lying about the hospitalization makes it seem as though the feelings were less real than they actually are. Misleading audiences must be avoided through practices such as having clearer limits to exaggerating stories. Such is

The bore of gore
Splatter films' fading relevance



Upon its release in 1975, Steven Spielberg's "Jaws" became the highest-grossing movie to date. The film arrived during the peak of traditional horror—it was so impactful that after hitting theaters, people went into a frenzy, hunting sharks until their population declined 71% since 1975.

However, horror movies seem to have lost their edge in recent years: "Saw X," the most recent entry in the extreme-gore horror franchise "Saw," was met with memes, rather than terror, across social media. Earlier this year, Rhys Ifans Waterfield's "Winnie the Pooh: Blood and Honey," was widely viewed as a joke because of its absurd premise despite its bloodiness.

The dwindling impact of the slasher genre reveals an overall desensitization towards violence, and the types of successful horror movies in recent years have reflected this. Jordan Peele, comic turned horror director, has been pushed to the forefront of the genre; his modern horror films "Get Out" and "Us"

The Charger Account Editorial Staff received high levels of attention from both horror fans and not. Similarly, Ari Aster, director of "Hereditary" and "Midsommar," has become a leading figure in the horror scene.

All of these films diverge from the traditional horror route: rather than focusing on gory kills or jump scares, they dive into the psychological aspects of horror, terrifying audiences with human actions instead of a supernatural entity or unstoppable killer. Instead, they force audiences to confront the madness of individuals and society. Peele's films, for example, deal with race and class while Aster highlights the consuming effects of grief on individuals and families, as well as the horrifying power of cult mentalities. Viewers respond well to such ideas because of their prevalence today; intense negative emotions are felt by everyone, and many people have experienced some sort of discrimination.

While such topics may not scare audiences now as much violence did in the past, they have become successful due to their thought-provoking nature. This shift in media appreciation marks changing values in today's society. Instead of sitting through two-hour bloodbaths, people would rather be challenged by themes that are relevant to today's world and that have sparked intense discussion and brought awareness to proliferating social issues.

Staff Writer

key to preserving the true stories they were based upon.

This issue extends to other forms of media; true crime shows such as "Dahmer— Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story" have several inconsistencies with the real events that inspired them. Analyzing these discrepancies has become much tougher, as it has been speculated that "facts" presented in films can reshape society's wider beliefs due to the fact that people tend to forget the source of their memories: new research has discovered a link between the media one consumes and their political beliefs and attitudes towards real-world issues; blurring the line between entertainment and education.

"An example of media spreading misinformation can be seen in the hijab, which is depicted as a tool of oppression, creating a dangerous stereotype. In reality, Muslim women choose to wear the hijab: it is not forced upon them," Sophomore Yusairah Asif said.

Misinformation spread through the media—whether intentional or not—can impact audiences' perception of reality. As such, Hasan Minhaj's actions should push audiences to question the "emotional truths" told in media. The feelings they provoke may pale in comparison to the intricacy of the unfiltered truth.

September issue corrections

Community News:

"San Francisco's autonomous adversary":

- "have already begun doing impacting" should be written without "doing"
- "Companies" is misspelled as "Companise"

Investigative Report:

"Inclusive insights for unique learners":

- Breanna Chakraborty's last name is misspelled as "Chakroborty"

Opinions:

- Lauren Wilson's last name is misspelled as "Wilson"
- "The ethics of ending a life":
- Lin Jiang's last name is misspelled as "Jang"
- "A grim future for humanity without the humanities":
- "Declining government funding from Virginia" should be written as "from West Virginia"

Entertainment:

- "eventually finds the villainous organization behind it" should be written as "find"

Science & Tech:

- Gwen Carroll is incorrectly credited as "Genevieve"

Amie Ahn and Ariel Lee

A sleek Tube blitzes through the veiled tunnels and solitary stations that comprise the London Underground. Passengers lounge and laze on the convoy's cerulean blue seats, idly awaiting their stop. Amongst the tranquil bliss of the passenger cart, a lady arises from her chair, draws out her phone, and struts valiantly down the tube's columns, her hair twirling wildly in the air while her lips sync to the lyrics of "Greedy" by Tate McRae. Ever since 22-year-old influencer Sabrina Bahsoon pioneered

this viral trend in August on TikTok, her

"While Tube Girl might be a new great way to build confidence in public spaces and empower women, I myself would not participate in this trend since, independently from confidence, I do not enjoy doing things that make me stand out in front of others."

—Sophomore Mina Shin

"Social media trends like Tube Girl are great ways to build confidence, but you should always keep in mind that you are not always going to receive positive comments."

—Freshman Ana Flacau

flooded the feeds of users, with the original video garnering over 12 million likes. The trend has been dubbed the "Tube Girl" challenge, as it was originally filmed on the London Tube. Although the challenge has evolved into an avant-garde mechanism for confidence growth by inducing people to challenge social norms and outside pressures to conform, it has also revealed concerns over the trend being a public inconvenience.

"The Tube Girl challenge features TikTokers confidently lip syncing to a catchy pop song while in a public area, dancing with an energetic flair under a jarring 0.5 lens."

TikTok viewers often leave comments expressing how amazed they are with the girl's confidence and how they could never do the trend, reflecting the various reasons viewers fear to genuinely express themselves in public spaces: fear of standing out, embarrassment and societal norms.

Subway riders are typically expected to conform to strict etiquettes: talking on the phone or eating is discouraged, and it is preferred for everyone to go unnoticed. Societal pressures like these can lead to feelings of inadequacy for

not conforming to roles that society assigns them. Bringing back one's authenticity is not an easy journey, but with this trend, participants are using #tubegirl as a tool for breaking out of social boundaries and their comfort zone. It has become part of their goals to overcome social anxiety, and participation in the challenge has given participants a new perspective: people are able to look at everyday life in public with a brighter view since they worry less about what others think about them. This portrays the freedom one feels after breaking out of the box society has made; they learn that what others think of one's appearance, personality or other qualities

in their own romanticized life, separating them from reality.

Others also criticize participants for not considering others' thoughts on them doing such a trend in public tubes. Critics view tube girls as rude, arguing that they could violate the privacy of those in the public spaces in which they are filming. However, those in the public can not reasonably expect privacy. The Tube Girl trend focuses on the girl filming the video, largely disregarding the bystanders caught in the camera's crosshairs. People minding their own business on the subway may not want to be filmed, but it is

to the schools and students. It is important to differentiate from these trends and note that the Tube Girl trend merely tries to promote self-expression in public areas. After all, it only involves one person filming themselves on their phone and it does not pester anyone else.

"People should always respect others around them, so they might have to come up with new compromises and solutions if it is particularly bothering somebody, but everyone should be able to express themselves and do what they want,"

Freshman **Ria Kumar** said. "I personally would not be bothered by those who record Tube Girl videos,

but those who participate in such trends must be conscious of those around them who may not feel comfortable being filmed and appearing in the background due to privacy concerns."

—Senior **Sahana Gopalan**



should not interfere with their happiness. Thus, the Tube Girl trend is an excellent method for empowerment to reject the public's judging eye and to choose self-confidence.

"The Tube Girl trend builds self-confidence, but it can also be extremely obnoxious to others. However, it definitely depends on the specific person because they might like the trend, but they could also be opposed to performing the challenge themselves," Sophomore **Angela Xue** said.

On the other hand, critics of the trend argue that it encourages toxic self-obsession and promotes "main character syndrome," where one often fails to consider the feelings of those around them. Main character syndrome began as a way to encourage people to make the most out of their lives, framing themselves as the "main character" of their own story. However, it was soon criticized about the unrealistic portrayals of one's life and how it could cause people to be consumed

unreasonable to grant them complete privacy in a public space.

Conversely, some other trends are bothersome or outright harmful. For example, in 2021, a challenge where students steal or vandalize school property, called "devious licks," resulted in harmful impacts

However, since social media can be very toxic, one's confidence and self esteem should not be based entirely on the attention they receive on social media. Moreover, casting aside constricting social expectations and being overly self conscious in favor of doing what one wants in public spaces is not always a symptom of main character syndrome, especially in the case of Tube Girl.

"Social media can be a person's specific outlet for representing confidence and showing that they are living a life that they enjoy."

Labeling Tube Girl as overly self-promoting or obnoxious is unfounded; the trend promotes a positive message, and people should have the right to take on the challenge to increase their confidence in public spaces. Tube Girl acts as an easy first step for someone to take on this journey of self-confidence and esteem. Following social norms every single day of your life can become suffocating, so it is refreshing to see people join a trend to start breaking free from the chains of social expectations all while inspiring others to follow suit and create their own definition of "normal."

ENTERTAINMENT

"Killers of the Flower Moon"



Jay Li

Opinions Editor

The Oklahoma Osage murders of the 1920s represent the harrowing struggles of indigenous communities that are often overlooked in historical discussions. This is why Martin Scorsese's magnum opus "Killers of the Flower Moon" is so significant. By displaying an unfiltered retelling of this true story rife with corruption, tragedy and injustice, the film illuminates a dark and bloody chapter of early American history from the perspective of the Osage community. Despite a three-and-a-half-hour runtime, its effective pacing and suspense make the film pass by in an instant.

"Killers of the Flower Moon" opens with the discovery of huge oil deposits on the Osage reservation, which endowed the tribe with extravagant wealth—and attracted the attention of crime boss William Hale, played by Robert De Niro. Hale masquerades as a friendly benefactor of the Osage people yet conspires to assassinate their leaders to steal their lucrative oil rights. He plans for his nephew—Leonardo DiCaprio's Ernest Burkhart—to marry into a wealthy Osage family through their daughter Mollie Kyle, played by Lily Gladstone.

Yet, when Burkhart genuinely falls in love with Mollie, the movie shifts to focus on their twisted romance; caught between his love for his wife and his uncle's greed, DiCaprio's exceptional performance highlights Burkhart's internal conflict.

"Killers of the Flower Moon" is one of the most impactful movies I have ever seen. DeNiro's ruthless performance highlights the Osage's heartless slaughter; in stark contrast, Gladstone's innocent and sympathetic performance captures the great tragedy endured by her people. However, the emotional core of the film—Burkhart and Mollie's relationship—defines it, centering a deeply human romance amidst the conspiracy and betrayal that ultimately destroys it.

While Native American stories are rarely explored on the silver screen, the ensemble cast and legendary director at the helm transformed this story of historical injustice into one of the most profoundly unforgettable movie-going experiences I ever had.

"Killers of the Flower Moon" (5/5)

a movie of all time?



- + powerful performances
- + complex characters
- long runtime

Winston Chu and Mahika Khosla

The reality television show "Love is Blind" offers viewers a glimpse into the world of true love: Singles attempt to fall in love with someone on the other side of a wall, removing physical appearance from the equation. This unique social experiment has captivated the attention of many viewers. However, amidst a supposed heartfelt atmosphere, contestants have made allegations against the show regarding sexual assault and neglect.

In August 2022, contestant Tran Dang filed a lawsuit against the show's producers, Kinetic Content and Delirium TV. Dang claimed that her then-fiancé, Thomas Smith, "forcibly and repeatedly made sexual contact" despite her "expressing objections" while filming the show in May 2022. She also complained that the production crew had filmed the entire event without her knowledge. The defendants claimed that the problem lied in communication and ignored Dang's concerns.

This was not the first time "Love is Blind" was hit with a lawsuit; Jeremy Hartwell, a competitor on

season two, reported that the cast were forced to film up to 20 hours per day, while deprived of food and water. Producers also gave excessive alcohol to contestants in order to make them behave in ways entertaining to viewers and cut off their phone access—although the show creator defended that contestants are forewarned about the lack of technology during the show, and have the right to stop participating at any time.

The allegations led many viewers to question whether the show should continue airing.

"Certain reality shows will do whatever they can in order to make it funny and entertaining to watch. These measures are often harmful to contestants and violate their rights," Junior Vincent Chung said.

Such allegations have not only arisen in

"Love is Blind," but in various other reality TV shows as well. Contestants on "Bachelor in Paradise" were involved in controversial incidents regarding excessive alcohol consumption. Other

reality shows like "Love Island" have caused several actors to attempt suicide because of the lack of attention that was given to their mental health and personal well-being. These disturbing incidents emphasize the necessity of ensuring a more responsible and ethical approach to filming on reality shows.

"Reality TV often does not provide a truthful account of what actually happened. Editing, manipulation, selective casting and the pursuit of entertainment value can distort the accuracy of events, leading to a portrayal that is more dramatized than a reflection of reality," Sophomore Shreya Manu said.

The increasing popularity of reality TV shows may be a result of the rapid commercialization of the modern world; people desire "authentic" experiences, which makes them turn to reality TV shows. However, many of these shows continue to sustain an unethical culture behind the scenes, fueled by approval and engagement from viewers. By boycotting or petitioning against the unethical practices behind reality TV shows, viewers can use their influence to put an end to this abusive culture plaguing the entertainment industry.

Staff Writers

covered in red crystals—I once saw Doja Cat wearing a similar outfit. I also loved the textured bodysuit covered in puffs that Sita Abellan wore; it was truly original and creative," Freshman Miku Kiyonaga said.

Unexpected guests also attended this fall's Paris Fashion Week. Bed bugs, which were already spreading throughout Paris at the time, spread to the runway through clothing pieces. Additionally, activists from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) crashed the Hermès show, protesting the company's use of animal skins in fashion.

Butterflies and bedbugs on the Parisian runway

Amie Ahn and Jaein Park

The lights go out. Just as the crowd starts to think the show is over, the stage begins to glow. Tutu-like dresses gleaming with fairy lights waltz across the runway. Inside lie genuine flowers and delicate, fluttering live butterflies.

This terrarium dress, pioneered by the Japanese fashion brand Undercover, was only one of many unique clothing pieces featured at this fall's Paris Fashion Week—which took place Sept. 25 to Oct. 3. Originating in Paris in the 19th century, fashion weeks are meant for "haute couture"—high-end designer brands to display their latest collections to buyers and media on the runway. The big four fashion weeks are held in the fashion capitals of the world: New York City, London, Milan and Paris. Fashion industry professionals and celebrities typically attend fashion weeks, inspiring new designs and trends.

Paris Fashion Week is organized by the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode, the governing body for the French fashion industry. In addition to the butterfly dress by Undercover, this year's

fashion week boasted several unique collections. Loewe unveiled dresses with massive pins, Givenchy layered sheer socks over heels and Miu Miu showcased an undie-ful runway, substituting underwear for pants.

"Fashion weeks are important for the industry because without them, much of the profit and newest ideas would be lost. They draw in a lot of investment and spotlight new trends, helping keep the fashion industry running," Sophomore Ryan Etter said.

Street style also plays a significant role in fashion weeks. At this year's Paris Fashion Week, Louis Vuitton's unique collection blended a retro-inspired style with checkered prints and striped leather details. Another common runway trend inspired by street style was upcycled double denim.

"My favorite piece is the one where the models were



DW KANG ART

An opportunity for designers from around the world to share their unique styles, fashion weeks foster creativity and collaboration within the fashion industry. Though the shimmering dresses and fairy lights have faded into the darkness, Paris Fashion Week once again radiated light onto fashion's latest styles.

California's crusade on chemicals

Andrew Duval and Eleanor Gil

California governor Gavin Newsom passed a bill on Oct. 7 banning four specific chemicals from all foods and beverages, making California the first state to ban FDA-approved substances. The bill will take effect in 2027.

Assembly Bill 408 will prohibit the production, distribution and sale of brominated vegetable oil, potassium bromate, propylparaben and Red No.3, a food dye. If a person or entity violates the ban, they will face a civil penalty of up to \$5,000. Most of these banned products are not harmful enough to cause significant damage to the body, but over time, exposure can lead to numerous side effects. For instance, brominated vegetable oil can irritate the skin and mucous membranes and cause numerous neurological symptoms like headaches and memory loss. Some of the products are linked to cancer as well—Red No.3 has been proven to induce cancer in lab animals from various testings, as well as contribute to behavioral problems such as hyperactivity in children.

In the European Union, all of these products are already banned, although propylparaben is only banned in cosmetic products. Propylparabens are preservatives often used in personal care products but also in foods such as specific brands of muffins, trail mix and pancakes. A Harvard study suggests that propylparabens are linked to reduced fertility in women, and a study by Pereira-Fernandes et al. found that propylparabens disrupt thyroid hormones and contribute to

fat accumulation. Additionally, some scientists and FDA officials claim that parabens in low doses, especially found in cosmetics, cause harm to the body. If such low, FDA-approved doses of parabens are consumed constantly, whether it be through makeup or diet, they could accumulate and lead to serious harm, as cited by the food-certified journal Eating Well.

Many substances are only banned in cosmetics because the chemicals are on permanently approved lists for food and would require separate action to be removed. Adding to the difficulty, the banned products are common in food products. Red No.3, for example, can

be found in sodas, juice, yogurt and frozen desserts; as is brominated vegetable oil, seen in familiar brands such as Mountain Dew, Crush Pineapple and Sun Drop.

"Consuming harmful chemicals on a regular basis could be damaging to one's health. As much as I love Mountain Dew, they should definitely change their recipe in order to protect consumers," Senior **Justin Etter** said.

Although California's government cites these dangers as the reason to ban the products, The National

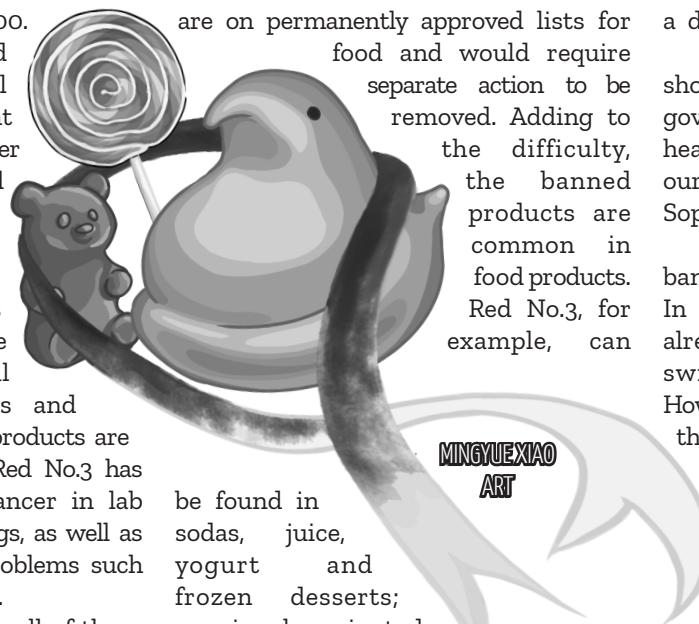
Sports & Charger Follies Editor and Staff Writer

Confectioners Association (NCA) spoke out against the ban, arguing that the Californian government was basing its decision on "soundbites rather than science." However, while the ties to cancer are not strongly established enough in many people's eyes, a clear connection has been made between some of the chemicals and health issues. Foods containing harmful chemicals are also more commonly consumed in disadvantaged communities, leading to a disproportionate impact.

"These harmful chemicals should not be banned as it is not the government's responsibility to make healthy decisions for us; rather, it is our responsibility to limit ourselves," Sophomore **Gavin Liu** said.

The NCA also asserted that the ban would lead to product shortages. In countries where the additives are already banned, most corporations switched to alternative recipes. However, an FDA spokesperson claimed that the U.S. relies on a unified food system, and California banning them while other states do not could leave California without certain food products.

Newsom's passing of the bill is significant for many because it represents a critical effort to protect Californians from harmful chemicals in their food and other products. Hopes are rising that the new California law will push the FDA to realize the harm of various chemicals and execute a national ban against them in the future. Regardless of the impact of the chemicals, the ban is a landmark bill that represents a critical governmental approach to promoting public health.



Adaptive architecture helps birds soar

Caitlyn Sue and Anna Yue

A carpet of corpses greeted David Willard, a bird strike data collector and retired bird division collections manager at Chicago Field Museum, on the morning of Oct. 5. Nearly a thousand dead birds littered the ground beside McCormick Place Lakeside Center in Chicago, forming a layer of bodies around the window-lined building.

Birds lack the ability to differentiate reality from reflection and fail to recognize glass as solids. During the daytime, reflections created by sunlight on windows and reflective materials cause the birds to crash into glass as they believe they are flying toward the sky. Beneath the moon and stars, birds follow their migration journey at night to avoid predators. However, the brightness of city lights in the dark can confuse birds, leading to crashes or fatal light attraction, where birds circle light sources until they die of exhaustion.

Bird collisions are a growing issue around the world, especially in big cities. Research from the Smithsonian in 2014 found that 365 million to one billion birds are killed from collisions every year in the U.S.

Scientists from Cornell University estimate that bird populations in North America have dropped by 3 billion in 50 years. The number of corpses found at McCormick Center tops the current record of bird deaths in a single day by over 700—the average number is between zero to 15 per day. Common

reasons for bird deaths could no longer be used to explain the abnormality.

Unusually high temperatures in September and October are partially to blame. Many birds were waiting for northern winds to help them fly south, but southern winds created by the warm weather prevented them from migrating at their usual times.

On Oct. 4, the northern winds arrived, leading to the abundance of birds in the air above Chicago that night. Pre-dawn rain drove them to fly at lower altitudes and lights from the city disoriented them, making them crash into windows.

Precautions can be made to reduce the chance of window strikes. Experts advocate for architecture that helps birds understand that a solid object is in front of them. Some designs that have been proposed use tinted, patterned or sparser glass or alter the positioning of glass windows. In addition, turning off lights when they are not needed can prevent collisions—many cities run "Lights Out" campaigns during bird migratory seasons.

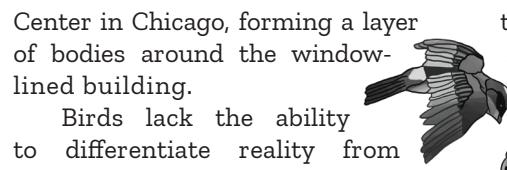
"Since they are vital to biodiversity, birds should be protected. I would be willing to make changes in my lifestyle, such as sacrificing window aesthetics and visibility, to help

preserve their lives," Junior **Alisha Ahuja** said.

In 2016, Manhattan's Javits Center replaced its clear glass walls with glass panels covered in ceramic dot patterns, which decreased bird fatalities by 90% but cost \$500 million, per The New York Times. However, other bird-friendly designs such as stickers and tape are much less expensive. These can be placed on windows to help birds recognize that a solid object is in their way. Yet, since glass windows cover the majority of the surface of many modern buildings, it would be difficult and inconvenient to adjust all of them to follow bird safety measures.

"Birds are important for society, and affecting their migration patterns could have a negative impact on the ecosystem. However, I would not put stickers on my own windows to protect birds since it would not be aesthetically pleasing and birds usually do not bump into them," Senior **Tasaria Kilpatrick** said.

Despite the rising construction of more skyscrapers in the world today, the deaths of migratory birds can be reduced by spreading awareness of the danger of reflective surfaces and taking extra care and consideration when designing buildings.



Dolce Spazio Gelato



Anna Yue

Staff Writer

Founded in 1980, Dolce Spazio Gelato is a traditional dessert café and espresso bar located in the heart of Los Gatos. They offer a wide variety of post-meal delights, serving anything from sorbets and root beer floats to croissants and chocolate cakes, as well as their signature dessert: house-made Italian gelato.

I recently visited the café on a sunny Saturday afternoon, and the shop's appearance immediately caught my eye upon arrival. The traditional brick walls contrasted with the drastically more modern structures surrounding the shop. The interior of the shop was dimly lit by warm lights, creating a private yet cozy and comfortable space for all of those craving something sweet.

I was quickly lost in the 16 flavors of gelato displayed behind the glass, and after a few minutes of intense contemplation, I decided to go with two of their best-selling flavors, the Amaretto Almond and Oreogasmic. The amaretto flavor immediately filled my mouth as the gelato began to melt away, revealing almond chunks ready to be crunched. The Oreo flavor was just what one would expect: creamy and full of crushed cookies. The Oreo bits provided each bite with a surprise, adding intensity to the vanilla base. Whenever I got tired of the Oreos, I simply scooped a spoon from the refreshing amaretto side.

Surprisingly, even as someone who enjoys less sweet desserts, I did not find the gelato's sweetness to be overpowering, which suited its rich and creamy texture perfectly. The only tradeoff of the satisfactory texture is the melting speed of the dessert, so make sure to ask for napkins if you decide to take it to-go.

I also ordered the Chocolate Buttermilk Cake, which was too sweet for my liking; I encountered a sick feeling after eating only a third of the slice. Despite that, the texture is all that one can ask for in a cake: the frosting was smooth and creamy while the cake itself was light and fluffy.

I would highly recommend this place for a quick dessert after a meal, or just a place to hang out with a friend. Dolce Spazio Gelato is one of the best ice cream parlors I have visited, and I would definitely come back again later to explore the rest of their flavors.

Dolce Spazio Gelato (4/5)

how fan-taste-ic was it?



+ great gelato
+ quick and patient service
- disappointing cake

Caffeine: Fiends resisting addiction

Staff Writer and Investigative Report & Last Word Editor

Poll: Which is the best coffee?

Compiled by Winston Chu, Joshua Yan,
James Li and Vira Patil
Staff Writers

100 students polled

Espresso:
7%

Frappuccino:
31%

Latte:
42%

Cappuccino:
20%

Jaein Park and Lauren Wilson

Although coffee consumption in adolescents and young adults has decreased in the past few years, caffeinated energy drinks and other sources of caffeine such as pre-workout have become increasingly popular. With numerous high school students combating the pressure of their schoolwork and extracurriculars, many have resorted to caffeine as a way to temporarily heighten their energy and focus.

Caffeine is a natural stimulant that stops the course of adenosine, a chemical messenger, in the brain, which blocks signals of fatigue and leads to increased awareness. Sources of caffeine include cacao beans, tea leaf plants, synthetic caffeine and the most common source—coffee beans.

Although caffeine is most known for its presence in coffee, it is also regularly consumed in many foods such as tea, chocolate, energy drinks and soda. Caffeinated pre-workout supplements are popular among athletes as an energy boost before exercising. One serving can range from 150 mg to 300 mg of caffeine, which is approximately equal to three cups of coffee—a considerably large amount.

In addition to the temporary increase in energy, alertness and attention span, caffeine can provide several long-term health benefits as well, including strengthening long-term memory, per Medical News Today. Furthermore, according to the National Library of Medicine, a Japanese study conducted in 2018 discovered that women who consumed over three cups of coffee per day had a 20% lower risk of developing colon cancer compared to those who consumed one cup or less.

However, while caffeine is widely enjoyed for its benefits, it also has a wide range of negative effects. Frequent caffeine consumption can lead to addiction, which can cause anxiety, depression and nervousness. Another common effect is its impact on sleep patterns—caffeine can disrupt circadian rhythms, which eventually leads to insomnia.

"I drink coffee for most of the days of the week because it motivates me to finish school work by keeping me awake and focused. The only negative repercussion I experience is struggling to fall asleep, but the main point of caffeine is to stay awake, so I just need to make sure to not overdo it," Sophomore **Ekatherina Yagubyan** said.

In an effort to reduce these health risks, TriHealth, a unified health system, suggests that the average adult without medical struggles should consume a maximum of 300 mg of caffeine per day. According to Cleveland Clinic, an academic medical center, more than 400 mg of caffeine may be damaging for adults with adequate health. Adolescents from ages 12-18 should be limited to 100 mg because their brains are still developing, and children under 12 should not consume any caffeine.

Harvard Medical School argues that exercise should entirely replace caffeine, as it has the same positive results without the burden of the negatives. Brief sessions of any cardiovascular activity can boost alertness, accelerate cognitive functions and improve the way the brain stores memories, and these effects last longer than the effects of caffeine regardless of an individual's physical fitness or level of fatigue.

"Caffeine has had various effects on my lifestyle—it has helped me improve my concentration while studying—but has also hindered my sleep schedule as I have ended up sleeping significantly later than my usual bedtime. Having healthier alternatives for caffeine at a young age is important. I have tried going out to exercise, drinking more water and having a balanced diet in order to achieve the same effects as caffeine," Senior **Ameya Kulkarni** said.

Ultimately, it is crucial for individuals to learn how to make informed decisions about consuming caffeine, mindful of the potential consequences that it may have on overall health. Monitoring the side effects of caffeine intake and exploring other options is key to achieving a healthy lifestyle.

Coffee crisis brews a bitter harvest

James Li and Niru Shivakumar

Staff Writers

Coffee is one of the most popular drinks in the world, consumed by almost three out of four Americans daily, but it is also one of the most vulnerable. A vast majority of the coffee the world consumes stems from just two variants of the coffee plant: Coffea Arabica and Coffee Robusta. These two variants are under threat from a variety of factors, including climate change, fungal diseases and environmentally destructive farming practices.

Climate plays a pivotal role in the production of any plant, including coffee. The ideal temperature for cultivating Arabica and Robusta is 18 to 22 degrees Celsius and 22 to 28 degrees Celsius respectively. However, rising global temperatures have led to biomes shifting and thus dramatically different growing regions for plants. Coffee is one of the most heavily affected, as researchers from the Climate Institute predict the amount of suitable land available for coffee production to halve by 2050.

These changes are already impacting the coffee growing world. Tanzania has experienced a 50% decline in coffee production, and Central and South American countries will soon be similarly affected by the changing climates that have ushered extreme temperatures and precipitation. Guatemala has been especially battered by these circumstances, leading to over 85% of the harvest being decimated by pests and diseases.

"As coffee production declines, the consistent demand for coffee will put pressure upon the supply chain. As someone who frequently drinks coffee myself, I worry about how shortages in coffee supply might impact the cost for my own consumption. I would be willing to reduce the coffee I drink in order to preserve coffee stores," Junior **Ryan Chan** said.

These problems are further exacerbated by the fact that Arabica is only able to be grown within a narrow strip of land situated between the Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn, and it is afflicted by coffee leaf rust, a fungal disease. This led to the incorporation of robusta into the coffee growing industry. Robusta is, as its name suggests, far more robust due to being less susceptible to coffee leaf rust; it is also able to be grown in more diverse environments. Yet this still is not enough to stave off the fungus—farmers have reported coffee leaf rust impacting over 70% of their crops, leading to massive levels of die-off.

"Although a frequent buyer of coffee myself, I am personally not aware of where my coffee is sourced from. This could be due to the fact that coffee producers find it easier and cheaper to use less sustainable methods to grow their crops, which means they can generate more profit," Senior **Mykayla Liu** said.

One way in which farmers hope to revitalize the struggling coffee industry is through innovative agricultural practices such as agroforestry, which is the practice of growing crops amidst trees. This contrasts the monocultural growing practices of typical coffee farms, where coffee is the sole plant in the field. Agroforestry provides shade for the plants and is more environmentally friendly. While diminishing the overall growth of the coffee plants due to decreased sunlight, agroforestry leads to sweeter and more flavorful coffee beans. The shade provided by the plants also assists in lowering temperatures and increasing carbon dioxide absorption by surrounding plants.

In order to explore how to combat the issues within the coffee industry, researchers experimented with planting hybrid coffee varieties. The results of this research were quite promising, as the hybrid plants were able to increase productivity alongside agroforestry. Plots experienced 10% to 30% more productivity, whilst also increasing pesticide resistance by 15% to 20%.

The path to a more sustainable coffee industry extends beyond scientific and agricultural methods; it hinges on the power of collective action and a transformation in perspective. This journey necessitates not only supporting research and funding breeding programs but also fostering a communal commitment to positive change.

SCIENCE & TECH

The Reality of AR



Kyan Wang

Science & Tech & Feature US Editor

Buzzwords are an inevitable part of the tech world. The terms Metaverse, quantum computing and Web3, have all burst to the forefront of technology and fallen back just as quickly. However, augmented reality (AR), where digital information is integrated into the real world, has been a dream unwilling to die.

Apple announced the Vision Pro mixed-reality headset in June, beginning the AR cycle of hype (think Google Glass and Pokémon Go) once again. Apple is positioning the Vision Pro as a beta test for any future AR products they may release, with its high \$3,499 price tag keeping it out of the hands of all but the most wealthy techno-fanatics, largely due to high production costs brought about by the device's custom parts. The Vision Pro is Apple's first foray into "spatial computing," meaning that the users will interact with digital screens overlaid in the real world. These screens are like holograms in sci-fi movies, but they are only visible with a pound of aluminum on your face. Apple markets the device as a desktop computer that is accessible anywhere, and early testers have praised the futuristic device as "mind-blowingly impressive" per Inverse and "the future" per TechRadar.

Despite the superfluous nature of the Vision Pro in everyday life (the device's battery lasts a mere two hours), the device could herald the AR revolution that has been false-starting ever since Google's Google Glass flopped. The Google Glass launched in 2014 as a pair of sunglasses equipped with a camera, heads-up display, a touchpad and a microphone. Marketed as a "ubiquitous computer," Google sought to make browsing the internet as simple as seeing. Despite its ambitious scope, the product ended up being discontinued after a mere seven months of sales. Critics raised issues with the device's violation of privacy and security due to its facial detection features and discreet video recording. Ultimately, its high price point of \$1,500 proved its downfall, with few willing to shell out such an exorbitant sum for an early prototype.

Despite the price point being out of reach for so many, Apple is unlikely to abandon the Vision Pro as readily as Google did with their glasses. Apple can afford to throw billions at AR technology, and the promising foundation (great build quality and a seamless user experience) of the headset has allowed Apple to dodge the "why is this necessary?" question that older AR projects have raised. Elements such as the touch screen that made the iPhone such a massive success are present within the Vision Pro as well. Perhaps one day many will own an AR headset in addition to a phone. Only time will tell the success of future Apple AR devices, and the Vision Pro shows great promise. Maybe AR will finally stop being a decade-long embarrassment!

Techno-magic mind reading

Liliana Chai and Gilina Voon

"If you could have any superpower, what would it be?" One of the most common answers among children is the ability to read people's minds. With a new approach using GPT-1 technology, that dream may soon become reality.

Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) have discovered a method for translating brain activity into speech using AI and fMRI. Previously, language decoding systems, like Neuroprosthetic Speech Devices, often required surgical implants and were limited to decoding only a few words at a time. However, UT Austin's new non-invasive technique can map out large amounts of speech with high accuracy, allowing for real-time mapping and increasing cost efficiency.

The research was conducted by a team of scientists led by Dr. Alexander Hunt. First, Hunt observed three participants who, over several days, listened to narrative podcasts like "The Moth." During this time, the fMRI scanner recorded their blood oxygenation levels (which changed in response to brain activity) and AI language models were used to match patterns in brain activity with phrases the participants were hearing. However, this method of translating brain activity made real-time tracking

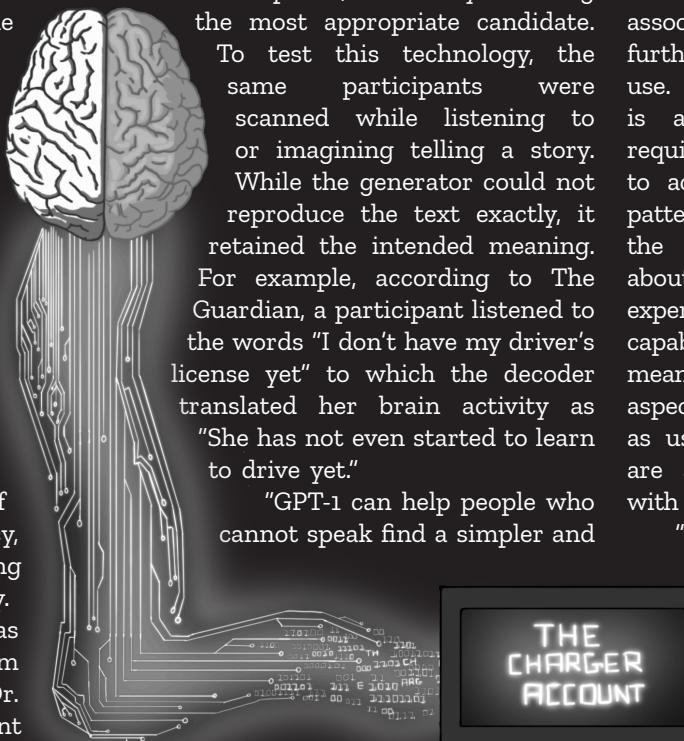
impossible due to lag between the signals fMRI measures and neural impulses in the human brain.

The GPT-1 model addresses the fMRI delay by generating numerous possible word sequences for a recorded

brain response, ultimately choosing the most appropriate candidate.

To test this technology, the same participants were scanned while listening to or imagining telling a story. While the generator could not reproduce the text exactly, it retained the intended meaning. For example, according to The Guardian, a participant listened to the words "I don't have my driver's license yet" to which the decoder translated her brain activity as "She has not even started to learn to drive yet."

"GPT-1 can help people who cannot speak find a simpler and



JUDE TANTAWY ART

more efficient way to communicate. Previously, communication methods such as eye tracking devices were more time-consuming," Senior **Amir Salman** said.

UT Austin researchers are optimistic about the potential of GPT-1 in medical care, such as enabling disabled people with previous strokes or motor neuron disease to

communicate. Professor Tim Behrens, a computational neuroscientist from the University of Oxford, argues that the technology can also be used to decode dreams or analyze how the brain comes up with ideas.

There are certain limitations associated with GPT-1 that will require further research. fMRI is expensive to use. Furthermore, training the model is a time-consuming process and requires a large number of subjects to account for diverse brain activity patterns. Participants can also impair the decoder's accuracy by thinking about unrelated matters during the experiment. Moreover, while GPT-1 is capable of linking words to specific meanings, it struggles with several aspects of the English language such as using appropriate pronouns. There are also ethical concerns associated with AI mind-reading.

"The initial purpose of new technology was to make life easier, but it can often be abused. Mind-reading is an invasion of people's privacy, as individuals are not voluntarily expressing themselves verbally or in writing," Sophomore **Ellisa Kim** said.

With the advancement of technology, mind reading could be applied to grant individuals with speech impairments the ability to communicate or assist in criminal interrogations. However, when used improperly, tools like GPT-1 could infringe upon individuals' privacy, prompting researchers to be mindful of ethical concerns.

How Sam's bank fried

Adrian Tomaszewski

On the morning of Nov. 1, 2022, all was going swell for multi-billionaire Sam Bankman-Fried (SBF) and his cryptocurrency-trading firm FTX, the second-largest crypto exchange in the world. Cryptocurrencies, often shortened to crypto, are a type of digital currency that use cryptography for secure transactions.

A day later, a financial report by cryptocurrency info site CoinDesk would cause FTX to declare Chapter 11 Bankruptcy. In the remaining ashes of FTX lay the question of how a company so successful could collapse, resulting in millions of financial victims. SBF's trial, which began on Oct. 3, sought to answer this question.

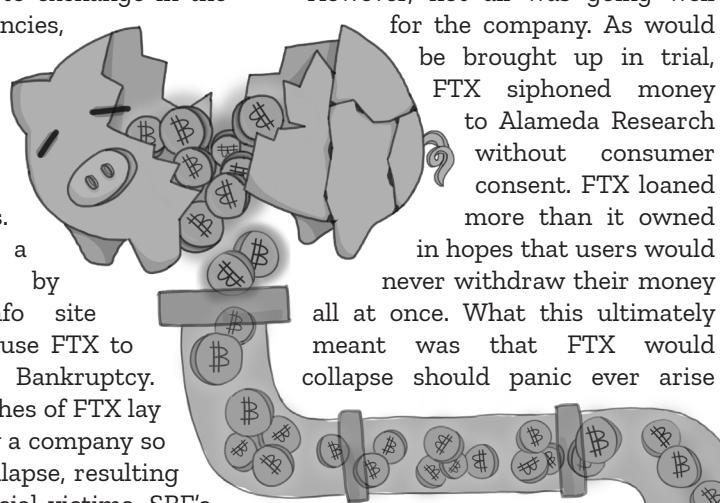
FTX was started in mid-2019 by SBF and Gary Wang as a side project to SBF's other crypto-trading firm, Alameda Research. FTX was a platform that facilitated the exchange of certain cryptocurrencies and its own token called FTT. Users could also trade cryptocurrencies—which currently have few real-world use cases—for fiat (government-issued) money. Due to its reliability, low exchange fees and widespread advertisements, FTX rose to prominence during the crypto boom of 2020 and 2021.

"Banks and various funds still almost exclusively trade in fiat money, which has several benefits over crypto such as stability, convenience and legal recognition. It is more likely that fiat money and cryptocurrency will

coexist, as crypto has the benefit of decentralization and can be used for black market dealings," Senior **Abhinav Arunkumar** said.

However, not all was going well for the company. As would be brought up in trial, FTX siphoned money to Alameda Research without consumer consent. FTX loaned more than it owned

in hopes that users would never withdraw their money all at once. What this ultimately meant was that FTX would collapse should panic ever arise



surrounding the company's or FTT's stability.

Coincidentally, panic occurred on Nov. 2, 2022 when CoinDesk published a report that exposed FTX's backroom deals with Alameda Research, triggering doubt about FTX's stability. This fear was further compounded when Binance—the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange—announced that it would sell a year's worth of its FTT tokens due to doubt over FTX's handling of funds.

This announcement would be the last straw, causing the price of FTT to plummet as investors and ordinary people rapidly withdrew their money. Soon after, FTX

was forced to declare bankruptcy, evaporating almost \$2 billion in users' accounts in a matter of seconds.

SBF was arrested in the Bahamas three days later, where he pleaded not guilty to seven different criminal charges and was sent to the U.S. for trial. Despite his claims of innocence, SBF was found guilty on all counts of fraud on Nov. 2, as per the Wall Street Journal. His sentencing is planned to commence next March.

"While SBF had good intentions, he should have only invested and donated the money through legitimate means. Although he may not have deliberately committed fraud, he failed to honor the trust of the company's users," Junior **Spencer Yip** said.

The collapse of FTX coincided with the end of the cryptocurrency boom in late 2022. However, due to the accomplishments of cryptocurrency businesses like

Ethereum and Bitcoin, crypto has become one of the most stable modes of currency even amidst rampant inflation and a general lack of economic growth in the Western world, as stated by Trading Economics. While FTX's collapse shows inexperience in some sectors of crypto, the overall success of the crypto industry suggests that it will keep going strong into the far future.



SACHIN BASAVARAJAART

Joshua Yan

Clubs: The old and the new

Clubs have always been an integral part of student life, helping students with similar interests congregate, but as the student body changes every year, so too does the collection of associations the school has to offer.

Though many clubs simply fizzle and disappear over the course of a school year, others persist for years. Despite being long-lasting, however, such clubs are still privy to change, especially as leadership changes. One example is Junior **Susie Goldsmith**, who took her place as president of the Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA)—a club intended to provide a safe and welcoming place for individuals in the LGBTQ+ community—after its previous president graduated last year. Following her experience last year,

Goldsmith wanted to have a bigger role in the club to expand its impact further.

"I plan to encourage a lot more interaction and discussion with the whole club. Last year, there were a lot of presentations, but clubs are a lot more fun when everyone is more actively involved," Goldsmith said.

The same is the case with Key Club, which is part of a larger organization that has been providing volunteer opportunities to students at various high schools since 1967. Like in the case of GSA, its former president graduated, leaving the spot open for its current leader, Senior **Amber Lu**. This year, Lu hopes to increase member retention by increasing the amount of social events and bonding activities in the club.

While some students form clubs to foster communities and have fun, others tackle social issues by promoting female representation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics or raising charity for underprivileged groups, among other efforts.



Staff Writer



CELINA LIU PHOTO

Left: Members of the Calligraphy Club practice calligraphy on a whiteboard. Right: The Stroll Club recruits a new member at Club Rush.

School finds new ways to connect with students

Joshua Yan

As a part of her new policies as the school's principal, Principal **Harveen Bal** has started to host student panels, in which students are able to voice their concerns surrounding the school policies and student life.

"We have done climate surveys in the past, but we always get more insight through face-to-face discussions with students. I want to be able to tell students about what we are doing to improve the school and get to know their concerns firsthand. Hearing the student voice is important because they are impacted the most from new policies," Bal said.

Bal's inspiration for the student panels came mainly from the Western Association of

Schools and Colleges (WASC), which accredits schools and sets goals for their improvement. WASC examines schools for nine subgoals, such as maintaining student mental health and addressing the needs of every student regardless of performance. The commission's focus on these goals inspired Bal, who turned to the panels as the best way to address these issues.

So far, four student panels have been conducted. Each teacher at the school is able to choose one student from their classes to be a representative at the panels, which are planned to be held monthly during lunch.

The student panels discuss a wide range of topics, from the aims of specific school policies to funding for certain school



SARAZHAO ART

From left: Sophomores **Emily Moen** and **Avila Williams** and Junior **Via Drewery** participate in the panel, discussing the issues they see in the school.

facilities. Concerns with school WiFi have also been brought up, prompting the administrators to take initiative to improve the situation. Turning off WiFi on cell phones is one example of their efforts, but more deeply, staff and faculty have been looking into specific locations within classrooms where the WiFi is weak and contacting vendors to tweak some systems accordingly.

Similar panels are also being conducted at the district level in the form of Intra-district Leadership Council meetings. During these meetings, representatives from each high school in SJUSD meet with the district's superintendent in order to discuss issues at each school, such as the quality of school-issued chromebooks, phone policies and tardy policies. The school's representative this year is Senior **Kiana Shah**.

"During the meetings, we get to learn about how other schools deal with certain problems. If it is a problem that enough schools struggle with, we collectively brainstorm solutions," Shah said.

Student panels represent the school's efforts to be more transparent and better accommodate the student body. In the same way that collaboration is important in group projects and team sports, with the introduction of these panels, student input and feedback will play a crucial role in the way school policies will be implemented and enforced in the future.

Mrs. Brasher's "Mrs. Brasher"



Gwen Carroll

Community News & Feature School Editor

Well-known for her passion for speech and debate, **Gay Brasher**, Visual Performing Arts Department, is a much-beloved mentor of the school's Speech & Debate team.

Brasher had her start in speech and debate in high school when she gave a speech at an academic decathlon, but her affinity for public speaking started long before. Brasher loved to speak throughout her childhood—and for this, she was both punished for speaking too much in school and asked to appear as a student representative for her high school. Brasher committed to University of Louisiana at Lafayette: A small college known for the strength of its debate team.

"Small colleges are more personalized. It was also my opportunity to get to know some excellent professors, such as Roy Murphy," Brasher said.

Murphy, who Brasher affectionately refers to as "Prof," quickly became Brasher's and many of her classmates' favorite professor. She recalled a gathering between her college classmates, in which every single graduate spoke fondly of his memory.

"He was the best professor I have ever had. He created such a welcoming atmosphere and always took time out of his day to explain material to us and help us go over our performances," Brasher said.

She now follows in his footsteps as the school's Speech & Debate coach, spending her mornings organizing community events and her afternoons honing the team's skills to perfection. Brasher laments the fact that she no longer holds the title of "teacher," but with her newfound free time, she is now able to engage in a wider variety of speech and debate related activities.

"I love seeing my students grow to love Speech & Debate. Whether they walk in confident or extremely shy, I can see them change over the years—anything from the way they carry themselves to how they declare their love of Speech & Debate. Public speaking is the number one fear in the U.S., yet so many of even the most anxious students come to call it fun—that is no small achievement," Brasher said.

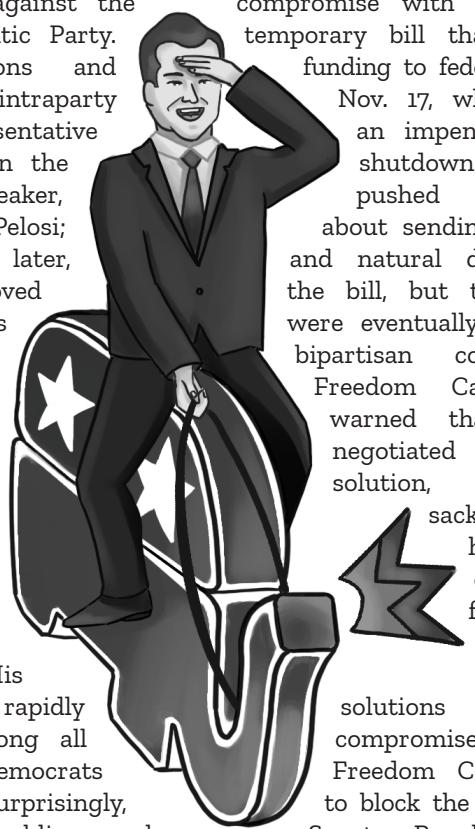
As a coach, Brasher still gets to watch over her students and foster their improvement. Although she is no longer head coach, she rests easy knowing that the Speech & Debate team is left in the capable hands of other coaches, including **Priya Garcia**, English Department, and **Stacy Fernandez**, Special Education Department.

FEATURE: US

Adrian Tomaszewski

In surfing, when a wave fails to materialize, there is a period of tranquility amidst the chaos. In politics, however, more chaos ensues. Although a highly-anticipated "red wave" largely fizzled out before reaching shore in the 2022 midterm elections, a tiny nine-man Republican majority in the House of Representatives narrowly brought an end to the Democrats' governmental trifecta. It was now crucial for the Republicans to remain united against the unfaltering Democratic Party. After 15 resolutions and multiple rounds of intraparty negotiations, Representative Kevin McCarthy won the post of House Speaker, succeeding Nancy Pelosi; but just ten months later, he would be removed by members of his own party.

On Oct. 3, hardliner Republican Representative Matt Gaetz of Florida launched a motion to vacate McCarthy, a moderate Republican, from the chair of Speaker of the House. His motion, as expected, rapidly gained support among all the present 208 Democrats of the house. More surprisingly, however, eight Republicans also voted against McCarthy, officially



vacating him from the Speakership. This was the first time ever in Congressional history that a sitting Speaker of the House was removed. All eight of the Republicans were members of the Freedom Caucus, the most hardline conservative faction of the Republican Party. They were also responsible for much of the opposition to McCarthy's election as Speaker in the first place.

McCarthy's removal came as a result of his willingness to compromise with Democrats on a temporary bill that would extend funding to federal agencies until Nov. 17, which would avert an impending government shutdown. Democrats also pushed for provisions about sending aid to Ukraine and natural disaster relief in the bill, but these stipulations were eventually removed in the bipartisan compromise. The Freedom Caucus previously warned that if McCarthy negotiated a bipartisan solution, he would be sacked—the Caucus has historically opposed stopgap funding bills, demanding long-term single-party solutions over "band-aid compromises." While the Freedom Caucus threatened to block the bill in the House, Senate Republicans promised to pass the bill bipartisanly.

"McCarthy was justified in his negotiations. Any effort where the two parties work together will decrease political division, and even such small compromises are preferable to long term fix-all solutions," Senior Natalie Shin said.

Following his removal, McCarthy had refused to run for reelection, and only nine Republican candidates were seeking the now politically dangerous position. The main candidates were Jim Jordan, the founder of the House Freedom Caucus; Steve Scalise, the House Majority Leader; and Tom Emmer, Scalise's protégé.

JANE HONG ART

polarized. Although not a member of the Freedom Caucus, Johnson is still one of the most right-leaning members of Congress, being anti-abortion, anti-gay rights and fiscally conservative. His election materialized the right-wing shifting of the Republican Party ever since the beginnings of the Tea Party Movement in the late 2000s and solidified the hardliners' control over the House of Representatives.

"McCarthy's sacking was definitely a rushed idea, and the resulting fallout highlights the Republican Party's failure to establish a direction for the future. McCarthy did indeed make many concessions and bold promises, but they were necessary, and Johnson will have to do the same," Junior Khedaar Kashyap said.

The government funding issue that prompted McCarthy's sacking will return to the House floor again by mid-November, potentially leading to another forced bipartisan compromise. But with polarization on the rise—especially within the Republican Party, where moderates and hardliners are growing increasingly divided—compromises appear ever more difficult to reach."

On Oct. 25, after four failed elections to replace McCarthy, Representative Mike Johnson of Louisiana was selected as the new Speaker of the House. A four-term backbencher with little leadership experience, he was a relatively unknown figure in the political sphere—a great advantage for a House that is becoming increasingly

The journey of Marine integration

Winston Chu

As determined Marine recruits line up to challenge their physical abilities at the daunting obstacle course and swimming pool, their attention is diverted to the nearby combat station. While the swimmers are separated by sex, male and female recruits practice hand-to-hand combat together in an octagonal ring, representing recent efforts for gender integration in the Marines—efforts strongly resisted by some and strongly supported by others.

"The Marine Corps should emphasize equality between male and female recruits in lectures and classes, drilling this into their heads just as much as the drills they run."

Since the establishment of the United States Marine Corps in 1775, Marines have been responsible for protecting naval bases and acting as an amphibious force to protect U.S. interests all over the world. For nearly a century and a half, the Marine Corps was strictly limited to men until 1918, when women were permitted to enroll for clerical duty. Beginning in 1942, women were allowed to officially enlist in the Marines, albeit still restricted from many positions. Throughout the years, however, positions have gradually expanded. In 2016, when then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter ordered all roles in the military to be opened to women, women Marines began assuming more combat duties. Today, 5.1% of active duty force servicemembers enlisted in the Marines are female, according to the Marine Corps University.

Despite the significant increase in opportunities for women, they continue to face significant challenges within the Marines. Rates of reported sexual harassment and gender discrimination continue to grow with each survey period. Women are thought of as less capable, which is why they were separated from men while training at boot camp in the first place. Some argue it should stay that way, although they cite different reasons.

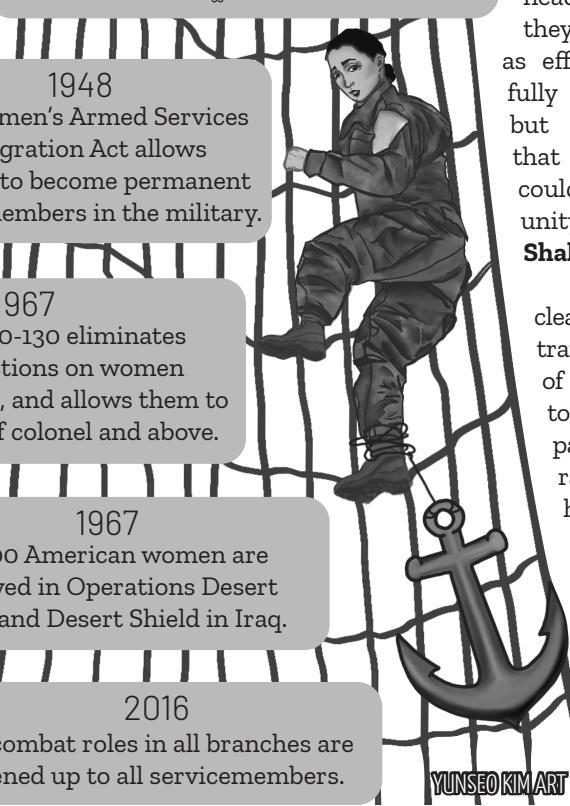
Several generals and officers believe that separating men and women makes it easier to provide instructions specifically tailored to each sex, optimizing the training schedule and creating a more organized and effective training program. They also claim that because many recruits are young—51% are 17 and 18-year-olds—integration would make it significantly easier for them to be distracted by feelings and emotions for one another.

"As much as I think women are equal to men, women have different needs which will not be fulfilled in integrated camps. I think it will actually be harder for women to be in the same camps," Sophomore Mira Kapadia said.

But others strongly support integration because separating recruits based on sex reinforces the stereotype that women

Infographic: Women in the Armed Forces

Compiled by James Yu and Adrian Tomaszewski
Staff Writers



Staff Writer

are inferior and should be treated differently. Many female recruits claim that segregated training causes their male counterparts to look down on them and makes it extremely difficult for them to learn to work together. Integration would help promote equality and inclusion, as well as potentially improve collaboration between Marines of different genders.

"The Marine Corps should emphasize equality between male and female recruits in lectures and classes, drilling this into their heads just as much as the drills they run. The Marines may not be as efficient as they are now if they fully integrate the training camps, but other classes or activities that don't require physical contact could be integrated as a means of unity and inclusion," Junior Anjani Shah said.

However, one thing is clear: Women have played an transformative role in the history of the Marine Corps. In addition to combat roles, their roles as parachute riggers, mechanics, radio operators and other jobs have fulfilled many vital functions in the military. Although progress toward integration is gradual and still faces much controversy, the dedication and resilience of women in the Marines so far paves the way for future generations of women to continue breaking barriers in the Corps.



YUNSEO KIM ART

Brazil's Indigenous people win landmark case

Ella Polak

Bearing thousands of years of history and culture, Brazil's Indigenous peoples gained new protections from the country's Supreme Court in a landmark ruling on ancestral land claims. On Sep. 21, the court ruled in favor of Indigenous groups, supporting their right to claim new areas of Brazilian land as their historic territories. Such land claims allow Indigenous tribes to establish protected territories where they can live according to their customs and practices.

The ruling, which was passed by nine of the court's 11 justices, rejected a lawsuit from Brazil's Santa Catarina state that sought to limit Indigenous land claims. The dispute emerged due to contesting land claims between the state and the Xokleng Indigenous people. The state argued that all Indigenous land claims made after 1988—when Brazil's Constitution was put into effect—should be considered invalid. This meant that any lands that were not inhabited by Indigenous people before 1988 could

not be claimed. However, the Supreme Court rejected that argument, affirming that ancestral Indigenous lands are protected under the law, even if they are not presently populated by tribes. Indigenous rights groups also opposed Santa Catarina's claims, calling it unfair to impose a deadline on land claims considering Brazil's extensive history of oppression against native peoples, the Associated Press reports.

Many native groups have been displaced from their lands by farmers and ranchers, keeping them from physically inhabiting the land and living there.

"The indigenous tribes in Brazil were the original inhabitants of the land and therefore have the right to claim it back. Taking their land would erase important history that has shaped Brazil into what it is today," Sophomore **Mariam Jiva** said.

Hundreds of Indigenous people celebrated, danced and cheered in the capital city of Brasilia after the case was resolved. The decision was a rare win for the Indigenous groups that have faced years of repression under the government of former President Jair Bolsonaro, who largely promoted landowner interests and the commercial development of Indigenous lands, in spite of

pushback from the Indigenous people. According to CNN, the illegal extraction of natural resources from Indigenous lands tripled after Bolsonaro took office in 2019. The majority of Indigenous territories in Brazil are located in the Amazon Rainforest, where deforestation and illegal logging occur relatively unchecked. Thus, the ruling marked a key victory in the effort to turn the tide and protect Indigenous lands.

In contrast, Brazil's Indigenous groups have been supported by current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who vetoed a bill in October that also sought to delegitimize new land claims since 1988. Although the Supreme Court ruling would have overturned the law had it passed, Lula's veto stands as a show of solidarity with Indigenous Brazilians. Since assuming office in January, Lula has recognized eight new Indigenous territories, which gives them legal protection to fight against loggers, gold miners and cattle ranchers encroaching on their lands.

In the Amazon, the ruling does more than just protect Indigenous lands—the forest itself is also a direct benefactor. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, an advocacy group, Indigenous people help maintain over 30% of the Amazon through sustainable practices like low-impact agriculture and agroforestry. As a result of their

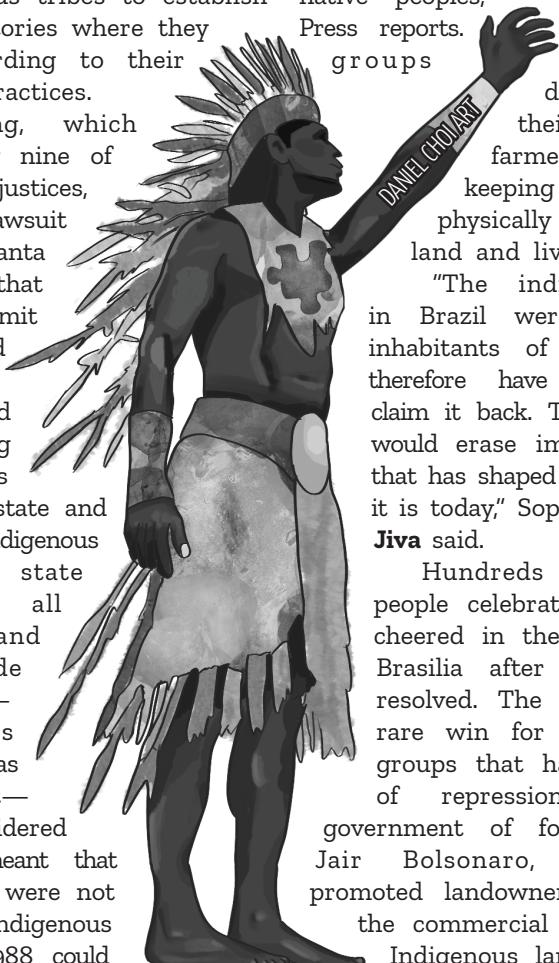
Lifestyle and Feature World Editor

protection and oversight, deforestation rates in Indigenous territories are roughly half of those in other parts of the rainforest. The Amazon plays a critical role in combating climate change—it is the world's largest tropical forest and one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth. By validating Indigenous land claims, the Supreme Court has ensured that Brazil's threatened ecosystems will continue to be defended.

The precedent set by the Supreme Court's ruling may have ripple effects beyond Brazil as other Indigenous groups draw inspiration from the victory. Indigenous groups such as the Native American Landback movement in the U.S. and Canada have also advocated for the return of their ancestral territory.

"Brazil's ruling serves as a powerful shift towards the indigenous people reclaiming the land they should rightfully own. The U.S. government can use Brazil as a model to repatriate historic lands to Native Americans," Junior **Vedika Byakod** said.

By affirming Indigenous peoples' right to live on their territory without interference, Brazil has propelled a movement that could spread internationally and restore autonomy to native communities worldwide. While recent policies have degraded the rights and freedoms of Brazil's Indigenous people, the milestone ruling marks a turning point in the fight to preserve Indigenous history.



Kenya's criminal lawyer

Imran Shaikh

Editor-In-Chief

The ability to win over two dozen cases in a row is something many lawyers would be proud to have. This achievement is what characterized Kenyan lawyer Brian Mwenda. However, upon investigating Mwenda, the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) made a shocking discovery: Mwenda was not even a lawyer in the first place.

After they intercepted this imposter, the LSK revealed how he was able to practice law without even passing the bar exam. They explained that Mwenda, whose full name is Brian Njagi Mwenda, impersonated Brian Ntigwa Mwenda, a legitimate lawyer who practiced in Nairobi. After gaining access to the LSK portal, Mwenda switched the real lawyer's profile picture with his own and applied for a practicing certificate.

With his infiltration successful, Mwenda is rumored to have participated in 26 cases, apparently winning every single one of them, per The New York Times. The real Mwenda only found out about this in September, when he was blocked from logging into his account. After being notified by the real Mwenda, the LSK sent its Rapid Action Team to pursue the fake.

The LSK denounced Mwenda, explaining that he is not an Advocate of the High Court. However, the general

public expressed mixed reactions to the whole ordeal. While many legal officials are outraged at the irony of having what they deem as a criminal act as a lawyer, many others have expressed their support for Mwenda.

Kenya's Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) praised Mwenda as a brilliant young mind who was able to find success without a traditional education. Additionally, Francis Atwoli, COTU's secretary general, argued that Mwenda should be given an assessment of his legal skills to determine whether he should become an actual lawyer or not.

The former governor of Nairobi, Mike Sonko—who was accused of engaging in drug deals and money laundering to such an extreme extent during his time in office that he and his immediate family are currently banned from entering the U.S.—also weighed in on Mwenda's situation through a video released on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. He explained that those criticizing Mwenda are "nincompoops" and that he is not a criminal. Sonko also called for his viewers to refrain from

condemning Mwenda, emphasizing that people like him are the future of the country.

In the same video, Mwenda voiced his appreciation for his supporters. Throughout the video, Mwenda maintained his innocence, claiming that he lacks the technological prowess to hack into the LSK portal. Mwenda concluded the video by explaining that, although he has not yet been arrested, he plans to record a statement and let the court decide on the situation.

"Mwenda is very inspiring. However, although his great achievement of winning 26 cases in a row without the necessary qualifications to become a lawyer is quite impressive, his circumvention of government laws should not be allowed, as this may promote further crimes," Junior **Sean Nguyen-Fell** said.

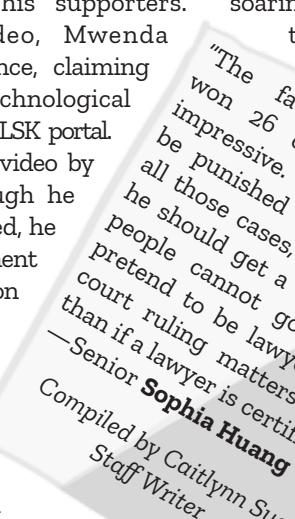
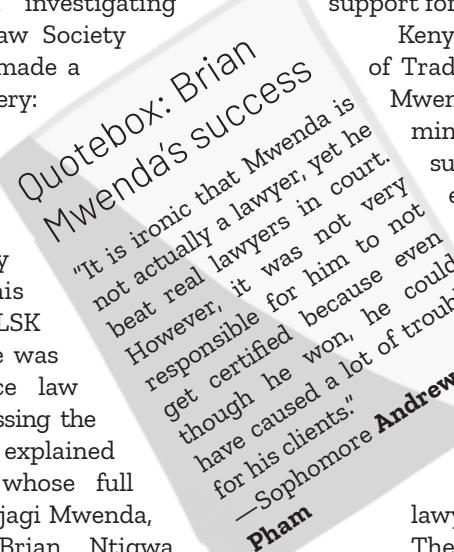
Mwenda is not Kenya's only fake lawyer in recent times—Kenya's Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions reported four other cases of people pretending to be lawyers or fraudulently running law firms. On Oct. 16, a woman named Sharon Adunya Atieno was arrested for forging documents to impersonate a lawyer with a similar name, which

resembles Mwenda's case. The New York Times attributes this number to Kenya's current economic state; rising inflation, tax hikes and soaring gas prices have made some turn to impersonating lawyers in order to earn a living.

This influx of fake lawyers has sparked debate in Kenya. While legal officials argue that a proper education is needed to enter a profession that determines the course of so many people's lives, others doubt the necessity of traditional paths.

"The presence of fake lawyers undermines the effort of real, certified lawyers who worked hard to get to where they are now. Nevertheless, I do understand how economic stressors can cause individuals to take such extreme measures," Senior **Alana Shin** said.

While Mwenda's actions may have shown the need for more rigorous background checks, his supporters claim that his case serves as a call to make entering the legal world more accessible. The inspiration of Mwenda's success may propel others to surpass traditional barriers and reach for their dreams. In a country where less than 5% have a college degree, a lawyer who is successful without a university education can be seen as a folk hero.



Compiled by Caitlyn Sue Staff Writer

DANIEL CHOLART



SPORTS

DESIGN BY ANDREW DUVAL

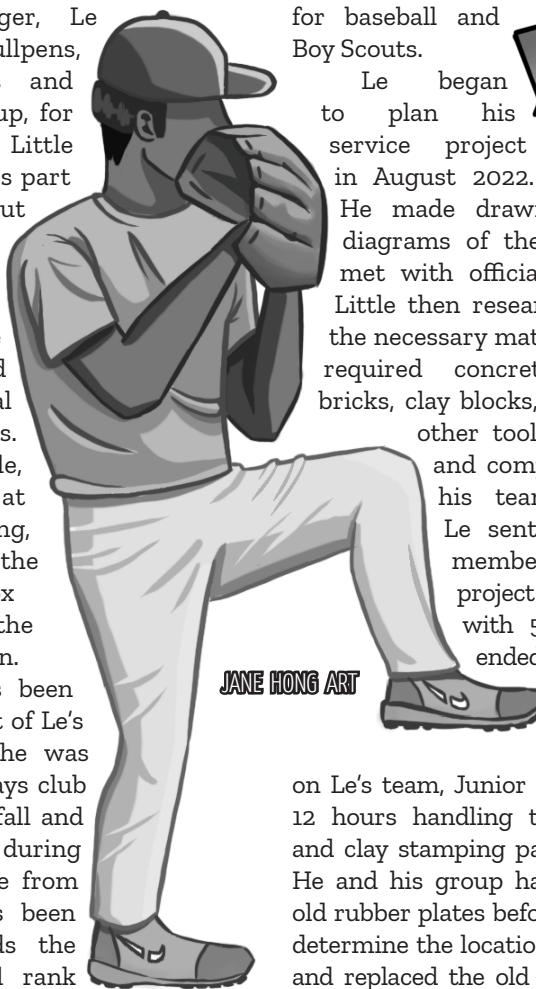
Students volunteer to improve local baseball field

Mahika Khosla

In school, each student volunteers for a set number of hours to fulfill their graduation requirements. While traditional activities include helping out at fundraisers, tutoring organizations and school events, students have gotten more creative and passionate about their volunteering efforts. Junior **Austin Le**, for one, went a step further and revived the baseball field at Challenger School.

At Challenger, Le built two bullpens, where pitchers and catchers warm up, for the Almaden Little Leagues teams as part of his Eagle Scout project in Boys Scouts. The current bullpens at the Little League field possessed several safety concerns. For example, they were not at regulation sizing, eroded, and the catcher's box had sunk into the ground in the pen.

Baseball has been a significant part of Le's life ever since he was six. Today, Le plays club baseball during fall and for the school during the spring. Aside from baseball, Le has been working towards the prestigious final rank

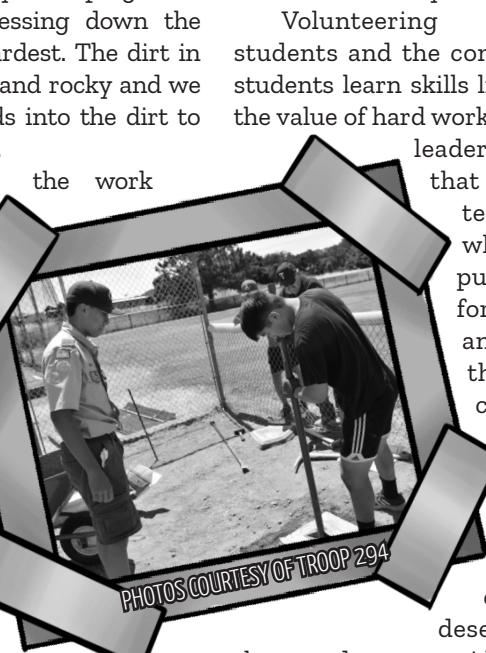
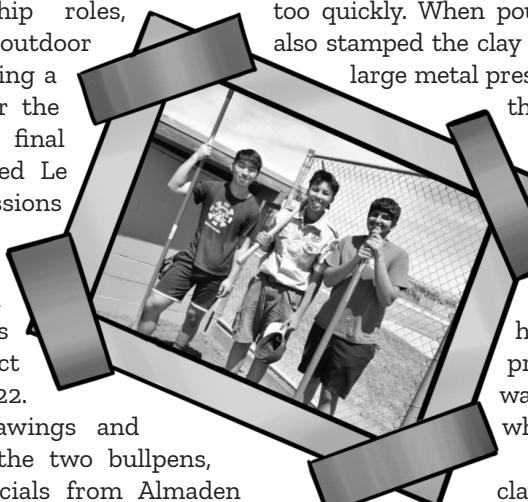


JANE HONG ART

in Boy Scouts, the Eagle Rank, since the end of fifth grade. The Eagle Rank is achieved by completing the previous ranks, earning at least 21 merit badges, fulfilling leadership roles, demonstrating outdoor skills and completing a service project for the community—the final of which motivated Le to combine his passions for baseball and Boy Scouts.

Le began to plan his service project in August 2022. He made drawings and diagrams of the two bullpens, met with officials from Almaden Little then researched and bought the necessary materials. The project required concrete-retaining wall bricks, clay blocks, baseball dirt and other tools like metal rods and compressors. To grow his team of volunteers, Le sent emails to every member in his troop. The project began on June 10 with 50 volunteers and ended on June 11 after roughly 15 hours of work each day.

A volunteer on Le's team, Junior **Levin Gong**, spent 12 hours handling the rock breaking and clay stamping parts of the project. He and his group had to first dig up old rubber plates before he measured to determine the location of the new bases and replaced the old dirt with red clay.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TROOP 294

Staff Writer

In order to fit the clay bricks together, Le and Gong poured water on them to remove the dirt and sand and prevent mortar, a workable paste, from hardening too quickly. When pouring water, they also stamped the clay bricks down with large metal pressing tools. Lastly, they shoveled red clay on top of the clay bricks to polish the look of the new field.

"It was hard to measure precisely, so there was a lot of adjusting which meant extra digging and clay stamping. The process of pressing down the clay bricks was the hardest. The dirt in the area was very dry and rocky and we had to slam metal rods into the dirt to break it up," Gong said.

Le hopes that the work done will benefit the community as pitchers and catchers using the bullpen will have a quality baseball field. He hopes to inspire others to improve areas of their own community that are lacking in certain aspects.

In addition to Le and Gong, Sophomore **Rahil Sengupta**

also participated in the project by constructing the pitching mounds and creating the home plate area.

"My goal was to make the new mounds more player-friendly and safe. I hope the new bullpen will help more people fall in love with baseball like my friends and I have," Sengupta said.

Besides Le, Gong and Sengupta, many students at the school have worked to positively impact the community. One example is Junior **Ariana Tavakoli**, who helped build tables, chairs, desks and signs for drama. She also built tables, desks and chairs for a new YMCA community center. Tavakoli believes that volunteering can help one improve their teamwork skills and learn the importance of helping out in the community.

Volunteering benefits both students and the community greatly; students learn skills like responsibility, the value of hard work, punctuality and

leadership. Le explains that volunteer work teaches students what it means to put in hard work for a good cause and shows them that their actions can have a real-life impact on the people around them.

He argues that the world can use and deserves the help that students provide through their volunteer work.

Top middle: Juniors **Levin Gong** and **Austin Le** and Sophomore **Rahil Sengupta** stand side by side and pose for the camera. Right: **Austin Le** watches **Levin Gong** work on stamping the plate.

Women fight for equality in sports

Claire Chang

Staff Writer

Before the late 19th century, women were only allowed to participate in recreational sports. While Title IX in 1972 banned discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and gave women more opportunities to play sports, their opportunities were still limited. Despite the progress made over the years, women today are still fighting for their equal right to play.

Notably, women's sports teams have been fighting to close the pay gap. In 2019, the U.S. women's soccer team generated more revenue than the men's team, yet the women were only paid one-fourth of what the men were paid. A wage discrimination act was filed against U.S. Soccer, prompting an increase in financial support for the women. The women's team also filed a lawsuit for unequal marketing exposure, which led to lower attendance rates and fewer sales.

However, women's sports have been receiving significantly more attention since the start of the 21st century. The teams are receiving more financial support; according to the Washington Post, 90% of the money made from an ad by Ally Financial Inc., a financial services company, will go to women's professional sports this year. In addition, over two billion fans watched the 2023 Women's World Cup. With technology, women's sporting events have gained popularity quickly. ESPN stated the NCAA Women's Final

Four college basketball semifinals had the most viewership this year compared to previous years.

Regardless, there are still areas for improvement. Formula 1, the most prestigious international motorsport competition, has been facing backlash for not including women. 47 years ago, Lella Lombardi of Italy was the last woman to drive in the Formula 1 Grand Prix. To empower women to race again, Formula 1 started the W Series in 2019, which is an all-female racing championship. However, it collapsed in 2023 due to a lack of funding. Following its collapse, the F1 Academy rose this year.

Continuing from the W Series, the F1 Academy aims to provide opportunities for women both on and off of the track. The Academy managing director, Susie Wolff, hopes to see a woman drive in Formula 1 within the next eight to 10 years, but more importantly, wants to inspire future generations of young women to have jobs like a mechanic or an engineer. This

year in F1 Academy, each of the five teams will have three cars competing, with a total of 15 drivers who are selected from the less competitive F3 and F2 racing divisions. It is not yet revealed how 10 of these 15 women will be selected to participate in 2024. To advance from F3 is very costly; an F1 car alone can cost 15 million dollars, so the F1 Academy subsidizes each car with a \$150,000 budget per season to aid women in their journey to F1, the most competitive division.

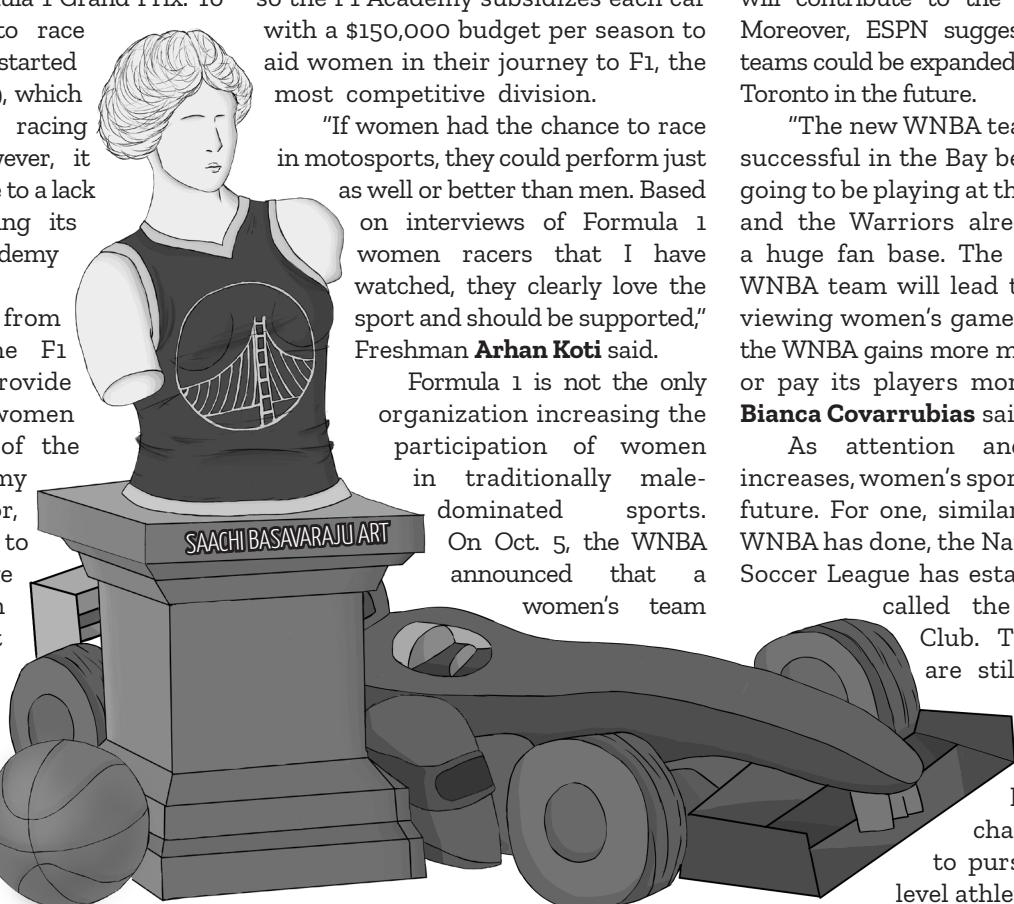
"If women had the chance to race in motosports, they could perform just as well or better than men. Based on interviews of Formula 1 women racers that I have watched, they clearly love the sport and should be supported," Freshman **Arhan Koti** said.

Formula 1 is not the only organization increasing the participation of women in traditionally male-dominated sports. On Oct. 5, the WNBA announced that a women's team

would become part of the Golden State Warriors franchise. Compared to the rest of the NBA in 2022, the men's Warriors team generated the greatest profit, and Joe Lacob, the Golden State Warriors' chairman, expects the new team to have the most revenue in the women's league. The money will be used for training facilities, equipment and more that will contribute to the team's success. Moreover, ESPN suggests that WNBA teams could be expanded to Portland and Toronto in the future.

"The new WNBA team will become successful in the Bay because they are going to be playing at the Chase Center and the Warriors already have such a huge fan base. The success of the WNBA team will lead to more people viewing women's games and hopefully the WNBA gains more money to expand or pay its players more," Sophomore **Bianca Covarrubias** said.

As attention and momentum increases, women's sports hold a bright future. For one, similarly to what the WNBA has done, the National Women's Soccer League has established a team called the Bay Football Club. Though women are still combating a long history of inequity, they may one day have the same chances as men to pursue their high-level athletic dreams.



SAACHI BASAVARAJU ART

Memories



KAYLA CHOI ART

A secret admirer



DANA LIM ART

"For All The Dogs"



James Yu

Staff Writer

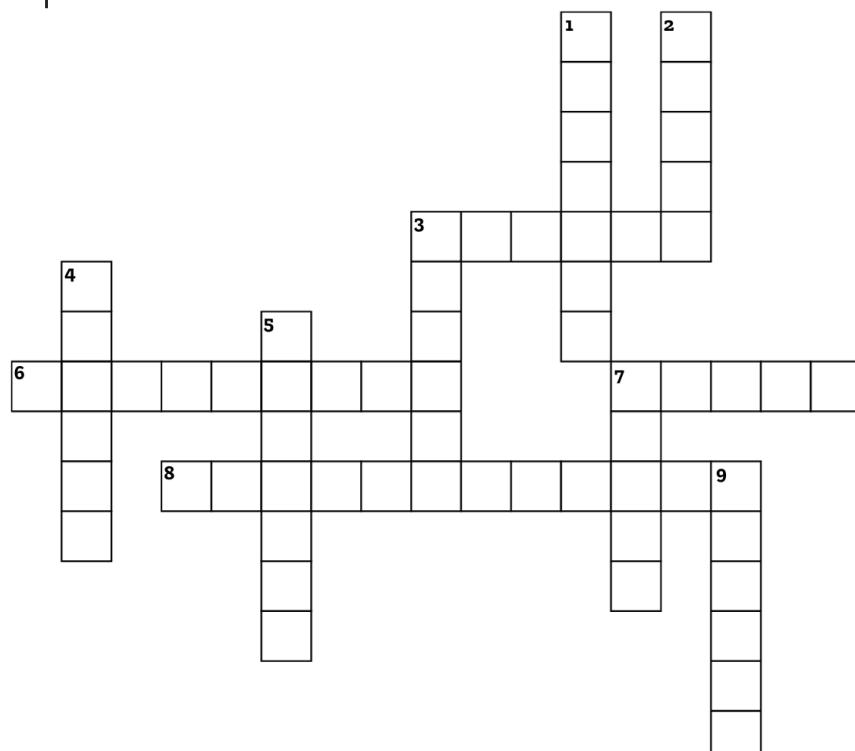
When I opened the track list for Drake's newest album, "For All The Dogs," my expectations for the project fell the instant I saw the song "Rich Baby Daddy." After listening to the album in its entirety, I came to three revelations. First: "For All The Dogs" met all of my abysmal expectations. Second: "Rich Baby Daddy" ironically is one of the better songs on the album. Third: Drake is like a baby daddy—sometimes he comes home with the milk (i.e. a good album), and sometimes he leaves the house and never comes back. I wish that daddy Drake never came back.

The spoiled milk which Drake brought home pours into my ears on track one, titled "Virginia Beach." Before spoiled milk rots, it is fresh—just like "Virginia Beach," which begins with an immaculate instrumental that merges a moody vocal sample with an ethereal synth in order to evoke a sentimental, reflective feeling in listeners. However, the second Drake's vocals arrive, my ears shrivel up. Drake's vocals are dry and flat, with their only redeemable quality being the hysterical nature of the lyrics themselves: "Birkin is croc like the rubber shoe, I swear that I'm not tryna smother you."

The rest of the album is made up of similar spoiled dairy, with songs such as "Bahamas Promises" and "Amen" being akin to Drake coming home with strawberry milk and buttermilk because he ran out of ways to make his spoiled milk albums new and refreshing. However, to give Drake credit, in an album filled with spoiled milk, Drake brought some fresh dairy. "First Person Shooter," which features rapper J. Cole, has cohesive bars with a refreshingly simple and serious tone and "IDGAF," which features punk rapper Yeat, opens with a poetic vocal sample before descending into a rugged yet smooth verse by Yeat, with additions of Drake's mediocre vocals. Although both songs are great listens which have earned spots on my playlist, they sound more like J. Cole and Yeat songs with Drake features rather than Drake songs with their features.

Overall, it seems Drake only releases good music when he has someone else to lean on. However, just like how a cow's measure of monetary value is the milk it produces, if Drake fails to deliver, his album may actually only be "For all the Dogs."

Spooktacular crossword



REEVE CHAN ART

Down

1. _____ Patch
2. Halloween's treat
3. Giving _____
4. falls during Autumn
5. _____ Weather
7. Pumpkin _____ Latte
9. Season of _____

Across

3. Thanksgiving _____
6. October holiday
7. keeps your neck warm
8. November holiday

Search for spooky vocab!

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

ALEXAJOSEPH ART

Acorn	Costume
Autumn	Fall
Campfire	Halloween
Chestnut	Harvest
Corn	Leaves
Cornucopia	Pie

Pumpkin
Scarecrow
Spooky
Sweater
Thanksgiving
Tree

"For All the Dogs" (2/5)

was i vibin'?



- + refreshing features
- bloated tracklist
- odd song names...



- Transportation -

Women-only transit: Safe spaces or segregation?



James Li

Staff Writer

Women across the world have experienced discrimination and harassment when utilizing public transportation. In Britain, over 90% of women have said that they have felt uncomfortable while riding public transportation.

In South and Central Asian countries, over 50% of women have said the same, per TransportXtra, a transportation news source. Such statistics, along with the countless other complaints from women across the world, have led to the implementation of public transportation exclusively for women in a multitude of cities across the world, including Rio de Janeiro, Lahore, Jakarta, Dubai and Tokyo.

Previously, when attempting to solve the problem of women feeling unsafe when utilizing public transportation, architects aimed to remedy the problem by creating "safer" environments via better lighting and cameras. However, experts found that these had little to no effect in making women safer, nor did most women feel any safer. Thus, they introduced the solution of separate transportation for women.

In regards to public transportation, men utilize it more to get to work whereas women use it more for domestic chores, including dropping their kids off at school or buying groceries, per a study conducted by the Los Angeles Metro. Around 50% of men's public transportation trips are work related, causing them to take more linear paths. On the other hand, women make shorter trips with frequent, sporadic stops due to irregular working hours and a greater variety of errands. Furthermore, women are the primary users of public transportation, as studies have found that women are more likely to ride public transportation to work compared to men, who prefer to drive.

"I would utilize women-only transportation if it was really late at night and there are not a lot of people around. In these cases, if I am in an unsafe area I would feel more comfortable being surrounded by women in transportation than men," Junior **Vidheya Iyer** said.

Despite these statistics, most public transportation does not have accommodations for women. Strollers and carry-ons prove to be cumbersome when brought onto trains; going to multiple destinations in one trip is expensive as there are rarely linear paths when embarking on trips, forcing many women to pay multiple fares throughout the day. Bus and train stations are also poorly lit at night, which adds to women's insecurity about their safety when traveling.

Some individuals question the effectiveness of women-only public transportation. In Japan, where women-only train cars were implemented, cases of disruptive behavior towards women dropped by about three percent per year. Still, a majority of Japanese women appeared to be ambivalent at best about the prospect of gendered train cars. Only 3.8%

of Japanese women

surveyed said that they utilized these specialized cars "all of the time." When South Korea attempted to implement women-only carriages, they ultimately discontinued them due to lack of use, as did Jakarta and Mexico

City upon facing similar issues.

Moreover, many dissidents of these systems have cited how the creation of separate transportation systems for women does not solve the root problems at hand. Rather than addressing the poor behavior of individuals who occupy public spaces, officials instead further discrimination by segregating women, thus deepening the gender divide instead of allowing women to move towards equality.

"While partitioning transportation by gender is a good temporary solution, it fails to address the deeper issue of ingrained misogyny in historically patriarchal or less progressive, more 'traditional' cultures," Senior **Amil Gokhale** said.

As the issues faced by women utilizing public transportation continue to gain public attention, various solutions—such as gender-separated transportation—will continue to be implemented across the world. However, if the initial problem of women being tormented and harassed is never addressed, this problem is unlikely to reach a permanent solution.