

THE CHARGER ACCOUNT

Vol. W No. IV

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Design by Caitlynn Sue

Scrambled Plans and Cracked Budgets

Yoon's Presidency Ends

H-1B Visas

7

11

14

rage

**cally
een
its
ul**

Private Profit, Public Misery

JOSHUA YAN STAFF WRITER

The shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thomson and the subsequent nationwide manhunt expose a double standard: killing is only decrided when it is not linked to profit. Per the Associated Press, nearly 80% of Americans, regardless of political orientation, express concern about access to healthcare, a figure that is not without reason. Being driven by private companies, American healthcare centers itself around generating profit, leaving medicine's true priority—saving lives—on the sidelines.

Continued on Page 4

Buddying Up For Better Grades

LILIANA CHAI AND SHINY XU STAFF WRITERS

Multicolored flashcards spread over a desk as pages of in-class notes and practice problems are frantically flipped, along with the background noise of students loudly quizzing each other on academic material—a familiar sight for many students during the days leading up to a tedious assessment. Although numerous students have their own study methods to accomplish academic success—ranging from making flashcards, creating mnemonic devices and teaching a topic to themselves—the collaborative group efforts of studying with partners can be appealing for many.

Continued on Page 13

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



SCAN FOR MORE ISSUES

2 Nicole Gribstad Elected as New Area 5 Trustee

6 Beastly Games

Elon's Heartfelt "Straight-Arm Gesture"

How two thousand years of history proves that Elon Musk was just really excited.

THE CHARGER ACCOUNT EDITORIAL BOARD

Leland High School and SJUSD Disclaimer: San José Unified School District believes that freedom of expression and press freedom are fundamental principles in a democratic society that provides all citizens with the right to engage in a vigorous discussion of ideas. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution and California Education Code 48907 protects freedom of expression through school-sponsored media. No expression made by students in the exercise of free speech or free press rights shall be deemed to be an expression of Leland High School or San Jose Unified School District policy.

The Charger Account Disclaimer: This article is a work of satire. The Charger Account condemns antisemitism and all forms of hate speech.

He goes by many names: conqueror of Mars, leader of the Department of Government Efficiency, Technoking of Tesla (his actual self-assigned title on Tesla's website, by the way). But to this editorial board, Elon Musk will always be the 21st century's most glorious king.

At Donald Trump's second inauguration, our glorious king made a gesture to his crowd, one that media outlets and white nationalists have thoughtlessly misconstrued to compare to a Nazi salute. Although on first glance the salute may obviously look like a fascist gesture, we must listen to the wise words of Big Brother and reject the evidence of our eyes and ears.

Upon closer inspection, one easily realizes that the 140-degree angle at which Musk raised his arm is absolutely nothing like the typical 135-degree arm typically associated with a Hitler salute! Indeed, it more accurately resembles a Roman salute. But please, do not bother doing a basic Google search of this "Roman salute" to verify these facts. The very first article may cite a complete lack of evidence in Roman art, literature and records of such a "Roman salute," but that is only because historians have conspired to erase its existence. After all, why would early 20th-century fascists invent something out of thin air when they could appropriate a fictional ancient tradition? Checkmate, scholars. Facts do not care about your feelings.

We will no longer stand for this blatant anti-billionaire bias in our modern media landscape. The humble, self-made men hailing from African emerald mines and small loans of one-million dollars are the true underdogs of society. Put some respect on their name!

Using critical thinking makes you realize that even if Musk intentionally made a Nazi salute, his well known difficulties with social interactions is obviously to blame—not his deep-seated political leanings, or heaven forbid, a misguided attempt to pander to a certain far-right demographic. Because if someone were to accidentally do a Nazi salute, they would apologize, but our Technoking has instead opted for a defense consisting of tasteful Nazi jokes on Twitter. Clearly not guilty, you so-called free-thinkers.

This, of course, is the same man who declared that "pronouns suck" while saying he was "too busy" running a 300-billion-dollar tech empire to care about trivial social issues. So naturally, it stands to reason that basic history, symbolism and antisemitism are concepts too complicated for a man who is "too busy" calculating the physics of Mars colonization and designing the next Cybertruck.

But really, why let minor things like the context or intent cloud the picture when we can blame it on blind enthusiasm? Let's face it. Every move oligarchs like Musk make deserves every benefit of the doubt we have to give. Nazi salute? All we saw was a misunderstood yet heartfelt wave, and all we had to do was abandon all logic entirely.

Santa Clara County Board Rejects Artificial Turf Ban

ANNA YUE ENTERTAINMENT & LIFESTYLE EDITOR

First created in the late 1950s, artificial turf—a fake grass surface typically made of synthetic plastic like nylon, polypropylene or polyethylene—has been a popular option for those who desire the function of natural grass without its maintenance efforts. However, some have begun to call out its environmental and health impacts. A recent proposal to ban new artificial turf installations on Santa Clara County grounds tipped the balance as activists from both sides advocated for their beliefs—and on Jan. 28, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to reject both a total turf ban and a turf ban with exceptions on athletic fields.

Continued on Page 3

Nicole Gribstad Elected as New Area 5 Trustee

MELVIN NAJARIAN STAFF WRITER

The San José Unified School District (SJUSD) school board works with the superintendent to ensure district accountability, advocate for students' needs and engage with the school community. Composed of five members who are reelected once every four years, the board represents constituents from SJUSD's 41 schools, spanning downtown San Jose to the Almaden Valley. Its newest addition is Nicole Gribstad, who campaigned for Trustee Area 5 and secured the vote on Nov. 5, 2024. She was sworn into office on Dec. 13, 2024.

The school board is responsible for the continuous review, improvement and development of important educational values that embody SJUSD's values. Board members are also involved in various committees; for example, Gribstad will serve as an alternate on the San José Unified Council of the Parent Teacher Association, Budget Advisory Committee and District Audit Committee.

When asked about her background, Gribstad described herself as an educator, parent and "visionpreneur" of leadership development. She also started Wellness360, where she serves as a Christian wellness coach, focusing on trauma recovery and global wellness. While balancing this work, Gribstad has homeschooled her children for 18 years rather than sending them to SJUSD schools. She stated

that she is proud that families can choose whether or not to send their children to public or private school.

"I ran for this position because I saw a need that met my expertise. I am happy to serve and excited to work with other board members to advocate for students' well-being, mental health and leadership," Gribstad said.

Area 5 contains nine schools with vastly different demographics. For example, of the total student population at Leland High School, 49% of students are Asian, 30.1% are white, 10.4% are Hispanic or Latino and 0.8% are African American, according to the California Department of Education. By contrast, at Pioneer High School, 11% of students are Asian, 37.6% are white, 39.8% are Hispanic or Latino and 1.8% are African American. When questioned how she plans to uplift all these demographics and address their varying needs to ensure academic success, Gribstad stated that she wants to celebrate diversity.

"I see every student as a soul, and every soul is loved and valued, so every student will be supported. We receive and provide a safe environment, regardless of socioeconomic class, regardless of whether you are documented or not. I would like to see a more robust safety plan that will outline all these guidelines on treatment, language and teaching our students," Gribstad said.

According to a study conducted by the Center for American Progress, schools comprised predominantly of students of color often have access to fewer resources. In fact, schools where 90% or higher of the student population consists of students of color receive \$733 less per student annually than schools that have a 90% or higher white student population.

"I am happy to serve and excited to work with other board members to advocate for students' well-being, mental health and leadership."

Nicole Gribstad

"Schools have different needs based on their students' backgrounds, so treating them all the same does not really work. If education leaders do not consider factors like demographics and income levels, then some schools are going to struggle more than others. It is not about giving every school the same resources, it is about making sure each one gets what it actually needs to help students succeed," Junior Payton Ahlgren said.

Gribstad explained that her top three priorities include maintaining academic excellence, ensuring school safety and building a strong and healthy community. She plans to raise the district's ranking by improving students' math and English proficiency scores as much as possible.

In 2024, test data from the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) showed that 49.53% of SJUSD students met or exceeded standard English proficiency, while 50.47% fell short. In math, 40.86% of students met or exceeded the standard, while 59.14% fell short.

"I plan to work with the other board members and the superintendent to assess our curriculum, ensuring that it is the most robust and competitive. We are going to review and assess to make sure it is proving our track records," Gribstad said.

While campaigning, Gribstad was officially endorsed by both the Santa Clara Republican Party and the Moms for Liberty Santa Clara chapter. The latter is a far-right conservative organization; according to The New York Times and Newsweek, the Moms for Liberty agenda has been pushing for harsher classroom disciplines, calling for books with LGBTQ+ and critical race theory themes to be banned, reducing funding for schools that champion progressive ideas and advocating to close the federal Department of Education. Additionally,

Week reports that Moms for Liberty supports school choice programs, including vouchers, tax credit scholarships and education saving accounts, which have been controversial because they often serve as a backdoor method to funnel public money into private schools. Gribstad accepted both endorsements because she needed the political capital to win against her opponents.

"The Santa Clara Republican Party found my campaign somehow, and then Moms for Liberty reached out to me. Since they were also aligned with the same priorities that I have, I did not see a harm in them supporting me," Gribstad said.

In terms of these similar priorities, Gribstad has placed a significant emphasis on parental rights. On her campaign website, she stated that parents have the right to ensure transparency and involvement in their children's education. For example, she said parents should review the educational materials that their children receive and determine whether they align with their values—if they do not, parents should have the right to opt their children out from reading the text and participating in class activities and lessons.

"If parents are opting students out of aspects of their schooling, they are doing their children a disservice. High schoolers live in a complex and challenging world, and it is not going to get any less challenging or less complex as they get older. There is no opt-out from the real issues and experiences of life, and school is generally the safest place to encounter challenging topics and themes where they can be explored and discussed, hopefully moving us all toward greater understanding, empathy

and intellectual growth." Jennifer Touchton, English Department, said.

While running for office, Gribstad also supported an unclear policy that teachers should retain neutrality. When asked to explain, she elaborated that teachers should adhere to the district bylaws, which are directed by the superintendent.

Aiming to make the district number one in the area comes with the significant challenge of satisfying all groups: the parents, the teachers and, most importantly, the students themselves. Gribstad stressed that she wants students' voices to be heard, whether through online meetings or in-person.

"We are going to leverage the students and the parents—the people in the schools who see things most clearly. The best way to help the district is by creating a system by which students and teachers can give direct feedback on what is working and what we can improve," Gribstad said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SJUSD.ORG



DANA LIM ART

Infographic: Roles of an Area 5 Trustee

COMPILED BY ANDREW XIE STAFF WRITER

Policy Leadership: Develop and implement policies that uphold educational standards and equity.

Fiscal Responsibility: Oversee district budgets, ensuring financial accountability and proper resource allocation for student success.

Community Advocacy: Communicate and cooperate with the community, fostering trust and building bonds by gathering feedback from parents, students and educators and addressing concerns through public forums and meetings.

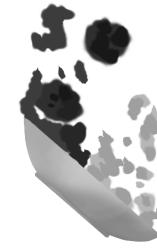
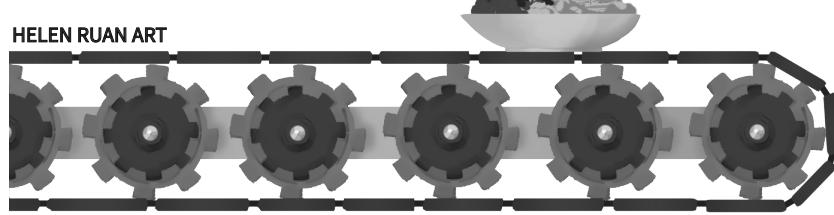
Strategic Oversight: Address systemic district issues and guide district leaders, staff and the superintendent to ensure that long-term decisions align with district goals and community needs.

Superintendent Oversight: Hold the superintendent accountable for achieving district goals and operational transparency.

(Per the Superior Court of Santa Clara County and the Santa Clara County Office of Education)

Newsom's New Nutrition Notice

WINSTON CHU AND SHINY XU STAFF WRITERS



Weaving through aisle after aisle in the supermarket, shoppers reach for a variety of different foods. While some grab the fresh produce, others opt for comfort snacks, such as chips, sweets and sodas. However, the distribution and purchase of these unhealthy foods may be experiencing a shift in California's near future.

On Jan. 3, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order to raise health standards in California, a month after the release of the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Report. Written by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, the report provides information about health and nutrition; this year's report found that 73% of American adults are overweight

or obese, while 38% of American children are prediabetic. Healthy eating has long been associated with reducing the risk of lifelong health conditions like heart disease, diabetes and some cancers, as per the National Institute of Health.

Based on the report's findings, the order aims for state agencies to develop recommendations to limit the sale of ultra-processed foods: packaged foods that consist of many manufactured ingredients, including chips, cereals, instant meals and soft drinks. To enact the order, California's Department of Public Health, Department of Health Care Services and Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment are considering the addition of warning labels on certain products. The state will also continue to investigate more

potential health impacts of food ingredients such as synthetic dyes.

Newsom also plans to decrease the purchase of unhealthy foods, especially soda, through spending \$44 million on public education initiatives like the Rethink Your Drink campaign, spreading awareness of the dangers of consuming sugary drinks to encourage students to make healthy choices.

"Newsom's order might dissuade people from purchasing ultra-processed products, encouraging them to instead consider cooking healthy food from scratch. Hopefully, the order will allow school nutrition to feature healthier items," Junior Aishwarya Vinodh said.

This has been Newsom's latest nutritional directive in a series of battles. In October 2023, Newsom passed the California Food Safety Act, banning red dye 3, propylparaben, brominated vegetable oil and potassium bromate from all food products. These chemicals were found to be carcinogenic or neurotoxic, according to CalMatters, and will be illegal in California by 2027.

Likewise, in September 2024, he signed a law prohibiting K-12 schools from selling food containing artificial food dyes such as Red 40. When drafting the order, Newsom asked the California State Board of Education and Department of Education to identify how state school meal standards can become even healthier than federal requirements. He also hopes to make school lunches healthier.

by investing in partnerships with farm-to-school programs to provide schools with fresh, organic ingredients.

"Encouraging a healthier and more balanced diet in school can help students with their academics because a better diet will allow them to be more concentrated on their classwork. Also, students eat tons of unhealthy food outside of school, so a controlled diet would be beneficial to their health," Sophomore Chloe Xia said.

Currently, this executive order does not pose any direct changes to Californians' lives, as it mostly involves recommended actions and investigations for ultra-processed foods. However, as the legislation proceeds, Californians can expect to see fewer synthetic dyes and other artificial ingredients on store shelves.



Proposition 65 requires businesses to provide warnings for products with harmful chemicals
1986

California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment finds that some food dyes are harmful to children
2021

California Food Safety Act bans four food additives causing diseases including cancer
2023

Newsom signs a law prohibiting K-12 schools from selling food with artificial dyes
2024

COMPILED BY WINSTON CHU AND MICHAEL IM
STAFF WRITERS

California legislature strips local governments of power to restrict artificial grass in residential areas
2015

California Department of Toxic Substances Control studies the health and environmental impacts of turf
2022

California legislature restores the power to restrict artificial grass back to local governments
2023

Newsom vetoes a bill that would have banned artificial grass containing PFAS
2024

Santa Clara County Board Rejects Artificial Turf Ban

ANNA YUE ENTERTAINMENT & LIFESTYLE EDITOR

Continued from Front Page:

During an initial county board meeting on Apr. 12, 2024, the supervisors voted to study the effects of artificial turf on county land. Since then, community members supporting and opposing the ban have spread the word through methods such as sending emails to the city council, holding webinars and organizing petitions; on decision day, over 100 individuals from various backgrounds expressed their thoughts during the meeting, per KQED.

Supporters of artificial turf advocate that these fields require lower maintenance and are capable of longer playtime. On the other hand, natural grass cannot operate during some winter climates and demands higher maintenance costs and resources—like water, fertilizers and pesticides. This can be more efficient for many in the state of California, where drought is a common occurrence.

"Our nonprofit youth sports organization provides a variety of accessible

and affordable soccer-related programs to over 1,800 kids and relies heavily on public fields. It is impossible for us to purchase land to build fields, so the sad reality is that in our city of 150,000 people, there is only one public field open between December and March due to the rainy season in winter, and that field is our artificial turf field," Damon James, President of the Sunnyvale Alliance Soccer Club, said.

Yet the benefits of artificial turf fields do not come without a cost. Turf ban supporters like Cortney Jansen, co-founder of Community For Natural Play Surfaces, critique the hazardous

and potentially cancer-inducing chemicals that are necessary in turf's production process, the lack of methods to effectively recycle turf and the maintenance cost that is arguably comparable with natural grass (most turf fields are recommended by their user manuals to be replaced every 8 to 10 years). Specifically, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)—human-made chemicals that are difficult and slow to break down, hence the nickname "forever chemicals"—are found in most artificial turf.

"My daughter used to play soccer, and I would hate to think that she has been exposed to cancer-inducing chemicals," Linda

Hutchins-Knowles, co-founder and team coordinator of activist group Mothers Out Front Silicon Valley, said.

However, James cites a recent incident in Irvine City to exemplify that non-PFAS turf alternatives exist and have been validated by a local government. On June 13, 2023, the Irvine City Council approved and funded the installation of four artificial turf fields that utilized a reportedly PFAS-free coconut fiber base at the Irvine Great Parks Sports Complex. This transition away from traditional natural grass approximated 1,500 more hours of usage and a \$1 million reduction in maintenance cost, per New University, the official campus newspaper of the University of California, Irvine.

Senior Annika Park, who plays soccer for the school and outside of school clubs, has played on both types of fields.

"I prefer to play on real grass because there is less pressure on my body when I'm running, whereas artificial turf does not have as much cushion. However, turf definitely makes playing easier and more consistent because it is more even, allowing the ball

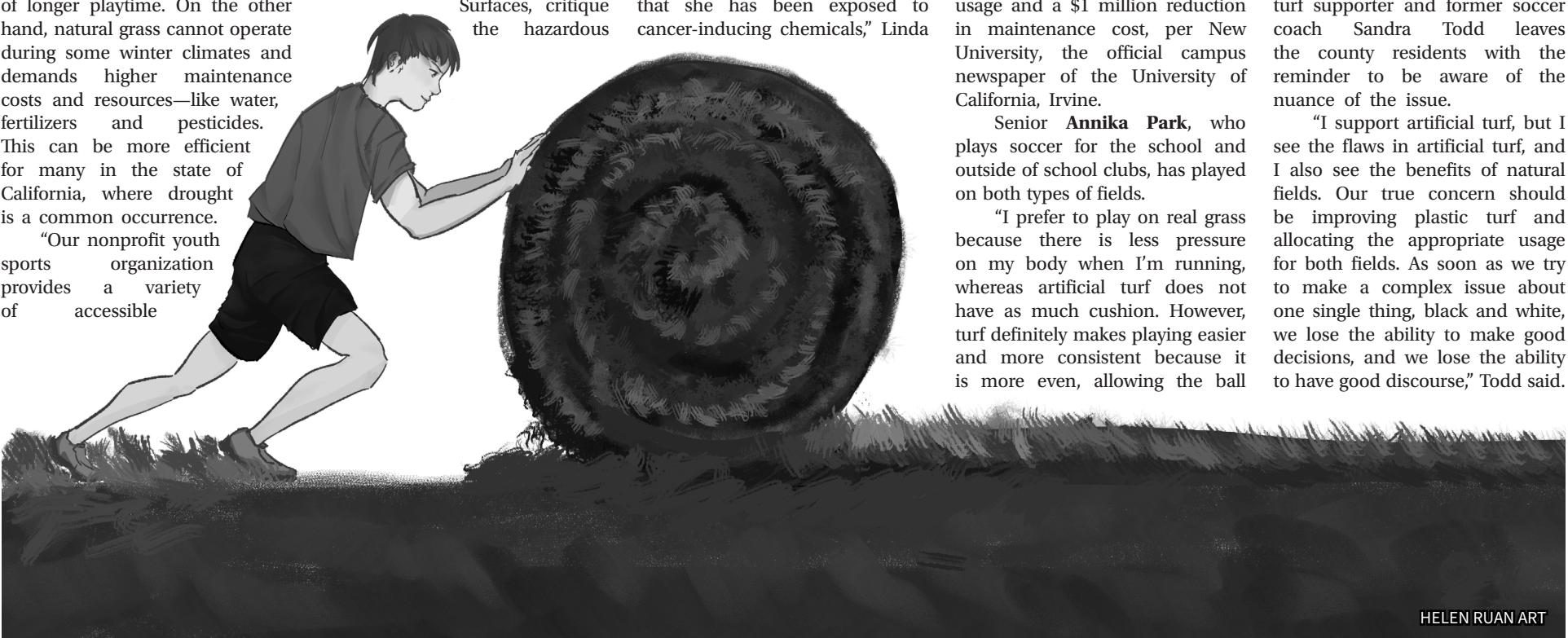
to roll a lot faster, and with less deviation," Park said.

Despite persistent disputes between both sides of the issue, each group found their advocacy process a rewarding experience.

"It was a fun and collaborative process. We held a poster-making party with music, food and snacks, and invited the community to come make posters with us. Kids and parents showed up and made really creative posters, making it intergenerational," Hutchins-Knowles said.

As this issue remains open for future debate or legislation under the recent vote, artificial turf supporter and former soccer coach Sandra Todd leaves the county residents with the reminder to be aware of the nuance of the issue.

"I support artificial turf, but I see the flaws in artificial turf, and I also see the benefits of natural fields. Our true concern should be improving plastic turf and allocating the appropriate usage for both fields. As soon as we try to make a complex issue about one single thing, black and white, we lose the ability to make good decisions, and we lose the ability to have good discourse," Todd said.



HELEN RUAN ART



THE CHARGER ACCOUNT

Leland High School
6677 Camden Ave.
Principal Harveen Bal
San Jose Unified School District
San Jose, CA 95120-2142
(408) 535-6290
thechargeraccount.com

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Antara Gangwal
Jay Li
Kyan Wang
Lauren Wilson

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Harry Kang

ART DIRECTORS

Lyn Kang, Dana Lim

PHOTO DIRECTOR

Landon Trinh

MEDIA MANAGER

Diya Boyapati

AD MANAGER

Adrian Tomaszewski

MANAGING EDITOR

Sophia Qin

ADVISOR

Elaine Ngo

PAGE EDITORS

FRONT PAGE

Caitlynn Sue

NEWS

Gwen Carroll, Eleanor Gil

OPINIONS

Andrew Duval, Caitlynn Sue

ENTERTAINMENT & LIFESTYLE

Anna Yue

VIEWPOINT

Jane Hong

FEATURES

Andrew Duval, Eleanor Gil,
Adrian Tomaszewski

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Claire Chang

SCIENCE & TECH

Adrian Tomaszewski

SPORTS

James Yu

LAST WORD

Gwen Carroll

STAFF

WRITERS

Amie Ahn	Melvin Najarian
Liliana Chai	Catherine Nguyen
Winston Chu	Niru Shivakumar
Michael Im	Teresa Sun
Lauren Law	James Tong
Ariel Lee	Andrew Xie
Chelsea Lu	Shiny Xu
Srihita Madiraju	Joshua Yan

ARTISTS

Yunseo Kim
Ryan Park
Helen Ruan
Eleanor Wang
Mingyue Xiao
Isabella Zhu

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Reeve Chan
Chaerin Kang
Wei Wang

Our mission in the community is to inform, educate and investigate the events occurring within Leland's community and beyond. Views and opinions published in The Charger Account reflect the viewpoints held solely by their authors. All unsigned editorials are representative of the combined opinion of the editorial staff of The Charger Account. The Charger Account invites submissions of signed letters of opinion. We reserve the right to edit submissions and pieces will be published at the discretion of the editorial staff. Readers can notify The Charger Account to any errors in print by emailing us at lelandchargeraccount@gmail.com. We will acknowledge our mistakes in our next issue. For advertising information and pricing, please check out our website at thechargeraccount.com/advertise-with-us. The Charger Account is distributed to the Leland community free of cost.

OPINIONS

THE CHARGER ACCOUNT

DESIGN BY CAITLYNN SUE

Private Profit, Public Misery

JOSHUA YAN STAFF WRITER

Continued from Front Page

Insurers, drugmakers and hospitals all contribute to healthcare's inaccessibility. Insurance companies avoid covering medical costs, and before the Affordable Care Act (ACA) would sometimes outright deny coverage for expensive conditions. Pharma companies overstate their prices and focus on extending patents to retain monopolies instead of researching new treatments. Hospitals create a nationwide maldistribution of medical personnel through a career pipeline that places the majority of doctors in urban areas, making healthcare less accessible and more expensive for individual patients.

As a result, individuals in the U.S. face ridiculously high costs for their medical needs, with even something as simple as

cholesterol medication costing upwards of \$600 a month. Those who choose to pay for lifesaving procedures often find themselves financially crippled, causing over a fourth of Americans to skip treatments entirely, according to USAFacts. While ignoring health maladies is never a good idea, a system that forces its citizens to choose between putting food on the table and living to retirement age is inherently flawed. For many, the question is not whether they would like to live, but what they would like to die from.

"I disagree with Mangione's methods, but the anger he raised against the healthcare system has shown healthcare companies that the people are fed up with their practices. As citizens, we should take advantage of the spotlight Mangione shone on our healthcare system's flaws to actively push for change, whether that be through protesting or voting

for reform," Sophomore Zack Ogle said.

In the last decade, the percentage of Americans who believe healthcare to be a government responsibility has grown from 42% to 62%, according to a Gallup poll. And while the government has taken some action to reflect this—namely the ACA, which increased health insurance coverage to 94% of U.S. citizens, and which 62% of Americans now favor (according to KFF)—the system is nowhere near perfect.

"The root of this issue is the dependence on private companies. If possible, the government should imitate other first world countries and move towards universal healthcare. To pay for this, we can redirect money from overfunded parts of the military-industrial complex, which receives far more money than it needs," Senior Brian Zhou said.

Healthcare in Europe is government-run, leading to drastically lower costs. The healthcare expenditure per inhabitant is less than \$4,000 in the E.U., compared to nearly \$13,000 in the U.S., according to data from 2022 Eurostat and Statista surveys. With respect to accessibility and cost, Americans are objectively worse off—but given that the U.S. is one of the wealthiest nations in the world by GDP per capita, the government has no excuse.

It took the deaths of millions of Americans and the public execution of a healthcare CEO to unite the American people against the injustice of their system. This opportunity for change is built upon mountains of graves and debt. Now, more than ever, it is time to act.



JANE HONG ART

Leaving Behind Legacy Leverage

JAMES TONG STAFF WRITER

Percentage of colleges that consider legacy preference, per UNC Ethics and Policy



While millions of high school students tirelessly strive for perfect GPAs, 1600 SATs and extraordinary extracurriculars, a select few hold an edge: their last name. Legacy admissions have long prioritized heritage over merit and bred inequality in the college admissions process.

Yet, a new ban on legacy admissions will prohibit public and private colleges in California from using legacy as a factor in admissions. The law was passed in September 2024 and will take effect this September. The legislation hopes to end legacy admissions entirely by targeting both public and private universities, although difficult to manage in practice due to the lack of transparency in admissions systems.

Legacy admission policies have anti-Semitic roots, originally being used as a way to bar Jewish students from elite universities, as per National Geographic. They disproportionately benefit wealthier white families who have historically dominated college enrollment by favoring applicants with familial connections. Selective institutions in the US that consider legacy statuses have an 8% higher percentage of white undergraduates than those that do not, as stated by Forbes. Because of this, first-generation students and applicants of underrepresented backgrounds are put at a disadvantage.

Today, many colleges use legacy admissions to encourage donations and create a prevailing sense of loyalty among alumni. According to Forbes, an investigation on Harvard admissions between 2014 and 2019 found that donors were seven times more likely to be admitted, and those from alumni

families were six times more likely to be admitted.

"Legacy admissions create an imbalance in factors that applicants cannot control. Grades, test scores and extracurriculars should be a greater measure of a student's success because they are genuine reflections of their accomplishments. The fact they are born to a parent accomplished enough to be admitted to a prestigious university proves nothing about them," Sophomore Rishabh Kaushikkar said.

For every student admitted based on legacy, another deserving applicant is denied the chance to attend their dream school. The Daily Princetonian states that the class of 2022 at Princeton had a legacy admission rate of 31.7%, whereas the overall decision rate was merely 5.5%, as per Top Tier Admissions. As such, the system fails to reward merit and effort and destroys the fairness in the admissions process, which is so important to high schoolers and their futures.

"A ban on legacy admissions allows more candidates to have an unbiased chance to get into a prestigious school. It is important for college decisions to be more focused on extracurriculars and the student's overall life circumstances," Freshman Nathan Tewari said.

The American Civil Liberties Union states that only 27 of the top 100 universities have never used or have discontinued legacy admissions. Ending legacy admissions is a necessary change, and California's move should serve as a model for other states by highlighting the importance of ending biased decisions. By instead prioritizing merit, colleges can create a system that allows all students an equal opportunity to succeed.



COMPILED BY CHELSEA LU AND JAMES TONG STAFF WRITERS

The bustling streets of Manhattan are a cacophony of honking engines and road rage. The traffic stretches through the streets; miles of cars create a constant and unrelenting gridlock. The solution: congestion pricing, or a toll for the drivers. The long-overdue congestion pricing system in Manhattan is a necessary step in the right direction for New York City.

As of Jan. 5, drivers now must pay \$9 to enter Manhattan south of Central Park between 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays, and between 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends, via charges sent to E-Z passes at over 100 detection sites; although, for off hours the price is lowered to \$2.25 and the fees vary for ride share apps, truck drivers and motorcyclists.

Early data has already indicated an increase in public transit usage, as according to the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), the ridership for their buses has gone up nine percent compared to 2024—furthermore, the average weekday entries into the highway zone fell about 7.5% compared to the average weekday in January of last year, as per the MTA. Fewer vehicles on the road suggest less traffic, demonstrating the effectiveness of the poll tax so far.

In addition, The Federal Highway Administration predicted that congestion pricing would lower levels of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and greenhouse gases—pollutants that exacerbate climate change and respiratory illnesses. Case studies from cities like London, Stockholm and Singapore show the long-term health and environment benefits of

MTA's Toll to Roll

CATHERINE NGUYEN STAFF WRITER

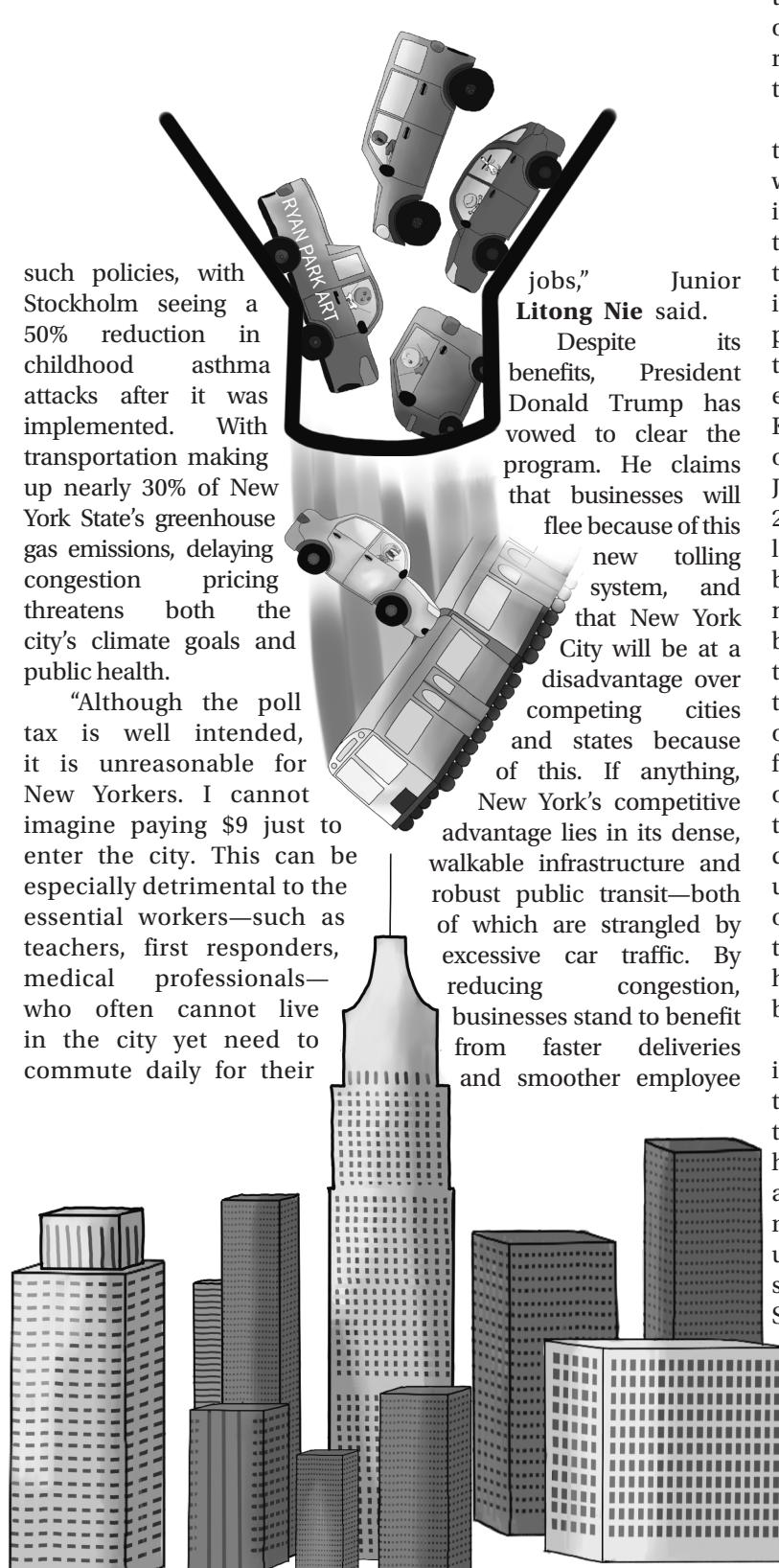
such policies, with Stockholm seeing a 50% reduction in childhood asthma attacks after it was implemented. With transportation making up nearly 30% of New York State's greenhouse gas emissions, delaying congestion pricing threatens both the city's climate goals and public health.

"Although the poll tax is well intended, it is unreasonable for New Yorkers. I cannot imagine paying \$9 just to enter the city. This can be especially detrimental to the essential workers—such as teachers, first responders, medical professionals—who often cannot live in the city yet need to commute daily for their

jobs," Junior Litong Nie said.

Despite its benefits, President Donald Trump has vowed to clear the program. He claims that businesses will flee because of this new tolling system, and that New York City will be at a disadvantage over competing cities and states because of this. If anything,

New York's competitive advantage lies in its dense, walkable infrastructure and robust public transit—both of which are strangled by excessive car traffic. By reducing congestion, businesses stand to benefit from faster deliveries and smoother employee



DESIGN BY ANDREW DUVAL

commutes. Cities like London and Stockholm faced similar backlash when implementing their congestion zones, only to see public approval rise as traffic eased and transit improved.

The money collected for the MTA through the poll will help with their financial issues, thus contributing to their goals of modernizing the subway system and improving the quality of public transportation. In 2024, the MTA lost \$15 billion in expected funding when Gov. Kathy Hochul canceled the original congestion pricing in June. Furthermore, as per a 2023 report by the MTA, they lost \$315 million because of bus fare evasion and \$285 million from subway fare beaters—this problem seems to be common in New York, as the MTA has noted that 48% of bus riders fail to pay bus fares for the first three months of 2024. Experts say that they might be emboldened due to the slowness and unreliability from the lack of bus lanes and heavy traffic—the poll tax could help with this traffic and fund bus system improvements.

"I would pay the poll tax if I could see changes to the transportation system. I would try to make a difference and help the system, but if there are no improvements I would not want to pay because it is no use paying the poll and being stuck in traffic all day long," Sophomore Shine Lee said.

New York cannot afford to continue prioritizing cars over people. Congestion pricing is not a punishment for drivers—it is an investment in a city that desperately needs a better transportation system.

"Submarine"



JAMES YU SPORTS EDITOR

There is almost never a time throughout my day during which I wished for the time to pass faster. Some of my most enjoyable moments—whether it be spending time with friends or traveling across the country for debate tournaments—become distant memories before I am able to fully appreciate the beauty of them. As such, I deeply appreciate music that is not afraid to take a slow and steady approach. Most exemplary of this is LA indie band The Marias's newest album: "Submarine." Throughout the album, The Marias do not shy away from the sluggishness of life, instead embracing it through wispy, drawn-out melodies.

The third song on the project, "Echo," is representative of everything I admire from "Submarine." The song's smooth beat perfectly complements lead singer María Zardoya's soft vocals. Despite its several distinct singing pitches, Zardoya's wide vocal range enables her to fill the role of singer for the entire song while delivering a variety of unique sonic elements. Similarly, layered under Zardoya's ethereal, almost whispering singing, "No One Noticed" maintains a constant, relaxing riff. The layering of different vocals and instrumental parts is where "No One Noticed" shines brightest. Each part of the song operates on its own schedule, culminating together to form a cohesive sound once overlaid. "Sienna" follows the same sonic themes as the previous two, with its dreary romantic lyrics evoking feelings of sweet serenity.

However, calm and collected is not the only thing "Submarine" brings to the table. "Run your Mouth" turns up the tempo while preserving the wispy lyrics common throughout the album. The groovy guitar instrumental gives the song an upbeat kick, while still exploring the same themes of melancholy romance and strife prominent in the slower songs.

"Submarine" continues to explore experimental sound design through its second track "Hamptons." The song's unique spatial audio builds suspense and an adventurous atmosphere for listeners to dive deep into. I wish that more songs on the album incorporated "Hamptons'"s surround sound design; the three-dimensional audio truly aids in immersing listeners into the themes "Hampton" explores.

Overall, listening to "Submarine" helps me clear my thoughts and value the world around me, as if I am an isolated submarine submerged in the illustrious deep sea. I highly recommend listeners give the album a full listen through, even if slow, vocal-heavy indie music is not their traditional style, as they too may gain a greater appreciation for the mundane.

was I vibin'?

(5/5)



- + serene and calm theme
- + varied instrumental
- + uniquely wispy vocals

Edvanced
LEARNING ACADEMY

EDVANCED LEARNING ACADEMY

"A quality education teaches you how to begin to educate yourself, a project that will last the rest of your life."

Drew Faust, Former President of Harvard University.



ABOUT US

Advanced Learning is a leading provider of high-quality college counseling services. We focus on providing students and their families strategic guidance on how to prepare for the college admissions process based on our extensive experience working with high school students across the country. Whether you're a freshman interested in learning how to plan your high school career or a senior with questions about how to apply to your top choice schools, we bring extensive experience and professionalism to address your individual needs and concerns.

We're passionate about education and enjoy giving you exceptional advice that will help you succeed in college and beyond!



CHIEF COUNSELOR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JOHN W. GARDEZI

A.B., HARVARD COLLEGE
FORMER HARVARD ADMISSIONS INTERVIEWER

OUR SERVICES

College Planning Program (CPP) – 9th to 11th grades

- Academic coaching
- College and major selection
- Mentoring for extracurricular activities
- Standardized test planning (AP, IB, SAT, ACT)

College Application Program (CAP) – 12th grade

- School selection
- Resume composition
- Application form completion
- Essay editing
- Interview preparation
- Letters of continued interest

FOR A FREE CONSULTATION,
PLEASE CALL

(657) 214-0736

www.advancedlearning.com

advancedlearning@gmail.com

"One of Them Days"



WINSTON CHU STAFF WRITER

As part of the elite 0.5% of SZA (Solána Imani Rowe) listeners worldwide according to my 2024 Spotify Wrapped, I was surprised when I heard about her debut on the silver screen. Yet SZA's performance in the comedy "One of Them Days," along with other talented cast members, demonstrates her natural acting abilities as the film's comedy sparks laughter.

Set in the South Central neighborhood of hectic Los Angeles, the movie follows two best friends—Dreux, played by actress and singer Keke Palmer, and Alyssa, played by SZA—living together in an apartment. On the first of the month, they discover that Alyssa's boyfriend has stolen their rent money. Dreux, a waitress, and Alyssa, an aspiring artist, do not have the cash they need to avoid eviction, so they spend the movie searching for any way to make the rent money. Their escapades—ranging from donating blood, stealing shoes and even getting involved with gangsters—kept me in a constant state of excitement.

In fact, throughout their journey, the characters constantly encounter original situations that I have never seen in other similar films. Blending in a variety of crazy events, funny

puns and hilarious one-liners, the situations are sure to make the audience laugh.

Dreux and Alyssa's friendship is also completely on point—whether the two are frustrated or happy with each other, their bond remains undeniably constant; through every challenge, they trust each other wholeheartedly. This strong bond ultimately allows them to solve their problems, reminding viewers to maintain positive relationships with those closest to them.

Outside the fictional world of the movie, "One of Them Days" also plays an important role in the real world. Featuring a majority Black cast, producer Issa Rae aims for the film to bring more Black stories to the screen. Additionally, the film was taped in a real Black neighborhood in Los Angeles, allowing Rae to explore the effects of gentrification especially as the neighborhood is facing construction developments for the 2028 Olympics.

Although all the chaotic events in the movie's timeline occur in a single day, it successfully shares a funny tale in just an hour and a half. Even then, through all the jokes and laughter, "One of Them Days" finishes in what feels like minutes, leaving viewers with nothing but a great time.

showstopper or snoozefest?

(4/5)

+ hilarious jokes
+ fresh storyline
- unsuitable for young audiences

ENTERTAINMENT

DESIGN BY ANNA YUE

Beastly Games

LAUREN LAW AND CHELSEA LU
STAFF WRITERS

Cameras capture every move. Alliances are shattered by deceit. Food is scarce, medical care is inadequate and contestants suffer physical injuries—this is not a punishment, it is "Beast Games," a reality TV competition created by YouTuber James Donaldson, or MrBeast. When it first aired on Amazon Prime Video in December 2024, the show promised a high-stakes competition inspired by the global sensation "Squid Game." However, it has instead delivered a wave of controversy, with many claiming it neglects the original's exploration of human morality.

"Squid Game" is a South Korean Netflix series that debuted in 2021, praised for its dark commentary on poverty, capitalism and exploitation. Its plot featured hundreds of financially burdened players competing in deadly children's games for a hefty cash prize.

On the other hand, "Beast Games" follows 1,000 contestants participating in challenges such as physical obstacles and mental puzzles to win a \$5 million prize. Like "Squid Game," each challenge ends in eliminations, progressively reducing the number of participants. Contestants were chosen through an online application process, though they were free to leave the show at any time.

"I really enjoyed both shows, and 'Beast Games' stood out to me for its intriguing mix of competition and character development; it did a great job of

SQUID GAME

- Scripted narrative
- 456 participants
- Final prize: 45.6 billion Won (\$31.27 billion)

COMPILED BY AMIE AHN AND ARIEL LEE STAFF WRITERS

BEAST GAMES

- Reality show
- 1000 participants
- Final prize: \$5 million
- Facing class-action lawsuit

ELEANOR WANG ART

crafting organic storytelling moments with the contestants, allowing the audience to be more invested in their journey. However, sometimes the show's editing felt forced and exaggerated," Junior **Maxim Kerns** said.

Despite the initial excitement, the show has not been received well. With a low critical rating of 17% on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, many reviews called out "Beast Games" for being purely exploitative with repetitive plotlines. In line with this, Sports Illustrated states that while the point of "Squid Game" is to mock capitalism, "Beast Games" is capitalism embodied in a show. Commentators from The Guardian also wrote that while the show is addictive, it exists solely to showcase the worst of human conditions for others' entertainment.

"Beast Games" is unsettling at times. The way MrBeast orchestrates these over-the-top challenges feels like something out of a dystopian novel. It is like watching humans in a live social experiment," Senior **Daniel Fogg** said.

Furthermore, news outlets such as The New York Times and NBC News have exposed allegations of misconduct and

mismanagement behind the show. Due to an overwhelmed and understaffed crew, contestants were allegedly not given adequate food or water for long periods of time, and their medical needs were ignored. Physical challenges such as pulling cars also caused several serious injuries: some participants left the competition arena on stretchers and had to be hospitalized.

On Sept. 16, 2024, five anonymous "Beast Games" contestants filed a class-action lawsuit against MrBeast in the Los Angeles Superior Court. According to The New York Times, their claims alleged mistreatment during the production of "Beast Games" including sexual harassment, lack of medical care, inadequate food and unpaid expenses and wages. On Newsweek, MrBeast responded to the claims by stating that they were blown out of proportion.

The lawsuit has yet to reach a decision, with some doubting the claims and others questioning the ethical practices of such large-scale productions. As the conversation about exploitation in entertainment deepens, discussions about the cost of high-stakes content and the values it promotes remain.



AP[®] EXAM PREP 2025

MAR 8 - APR 27

15+ AP SUBJECTS

8-WEEK WEEKLY
LECTURES EXAM REVIEW
& STRATEGY

CLASSES LED BY
OUR EXPERT
INSTRUCTORS



CONTACT US TODAY!

Elite Prep San Jose

(408) 266-3838 • sanjose@eliteprep.com

Business Hours:

Monday - Friday: 11:30 AM - 7:30 PM

Saturday: 9:30 AM - 5:00 PM

COUPON

Honey's Sweet Deceit

CHELSEA LU AND ANDREW XIE STAFF WRITERS

For many, the thrill of scoring a coveted deal is unmatched—but rarely does it ever come easy. From endlessly comparing prices to navigating suspicious websites, the journey to the checkout can be surprisingly draining. Enter Honey: a free browser extension that automatically searches for coupon codes and ensures that users snag the best bargains possible with the least amount of effort. By combining two universally loved practices—online shopping and saving money—Honey seems almost too simple and good to be true, perhaps because it is.

Honey was launched in 2012 by George Ruan and Ryan Hudson to help users save money by automatically applying coupon codes at checkout. In 2020, PayPal acquired Honey for \$4 billion and integrated it into its portfolio of online payment and shopping tools, including Venmo and eBay. Prominent creators such as MrBeast and Mark Rober promoted the extension, which in turn accumulated approximately 5,000 videos across 1,000 channels, totaling 7.8 billion views for Honey, as per Fortune Magazine. Their promotions—combined with the promise of easy savings—contributed to Honey amassing over 18 million users, as per its Chrome web store page.

But Honey's promise faces skepticism: in December 2024, YouTuber MegaLag—best known for conducting investigations and social experiments—released a video titled “Exposing the Honey Influencer Scam.” He claimed that Honey intercepts affiliate links shared by influencers and redirects commissions to itself, stealing content creators' shared earnings for products they promote. The video also accuses Honey of prioritizing its partner stores' coupons over better discounts elsewhere, potentially withholding lower prices from the consumer.

“Once when I was using Honey, it stated that it could not find any working coupon codes. However, when I searched manually online, I found several that worked. Although it was strange, I did not second guess it at the time, but upon the exposure of their methods, it adds up now,” Freshman Gowri Palival said.

Additionally, in 2021, a Twitter post by user Barnacles advised others to apply Honey's discount codes in a different browser to avoid it taking the affiliate credit. In a 2022 forum reply, a Linus Media Group employee also explained that Linus Tech Tips—a prominent Canadian technology YouTube channel—dropped Honey as a sponsor after discovering its shady affiliate link practices.

LIFESTYLE

DESIGN BY ANNA YUE

In line with the accusations, Honey runs a background tab that swaps affiliate cookies—a browser extension that reveals sources that send customers to a product link from an influencer, YouTuber or website—as their own, without notifying the buyer. In December 2024, prominent technology influencer Marques Brownlee removed all Honey-sponsored videos from his channel and called on his 20 million subscribers to uninstall the extension.

“While the scam is definitely unwanted, it serves as a wake-up call for influencers to fact-check the brands they promote. Many endorsers advertise companies solely for their own benefit, but the Honey scandal proves that it can hurt both the creator and viewers,” Junior Sophia White said.

Even with Honey Gold—the premium version of Honey that serves as a cashback and rewards program—the fraud continues. Honey Gold promises to share a fraction of their stolen commissions with the customers in terms of their point system: with an adequate amount of points, one can redeem small gift cards to participating retailers. This program enables the company to earn a large commission, while sharing only a small fraction of the sum with the consumer. Thus, Honey's profit margins are prioritized over consumer benefit once again.

Soon after the video was released and gained massive attention worldwide for its discoveries, a class-action lawsuit was filed on Jan. 3 in the San Jose U.S. District Court. Five online content companies represented influencers, alleging that PayPal uses “deceitful and clandestine” methods to steal money from social media influencers and content creators.

What was once hailed as an effortless tool to save money and support creators has been accused of undermining the very trust it relied upon to thrive. As lawsuits mount and creators speak out, the situation underscores the need for greater accountability from tech companies that profit off consumer trust. For users, it is a stark reminder to critically evaluate “too-good-to-be-true” services, and the unseen costs that may come with them.



MINGYUE XIAO ART

Scrambled Plans and Cracked Budgets

LILIANA CHAI AND TERESA SUN STAFF WRITERS

Eggs, once a breakfast staple, are now luxury items due to their soaring prices amidst a bird flu outbreak sweeping across the nation's farms.

Commonly found in poultry and wild ducks, the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) strain H5N1 virus has affected over 130 million poultry birds in 1,400 outbreaks across all 50 states since January 2022 per the U.S. Department of Agriculture, leading to the culling of millions of hens. California has been hit

especially hard, with 17 commercial flocks and 4.2 million poultry birds affected. Infection spreads through both direct contact with infected birds and indirectly from contaminated surfaces and feed. Thus, the shortage has resulted in a staggering 63% increase in egg costs nationwide, as per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The site further states that the average price for a dozen Grade A large eggs in California has jumped from \$2.50 in November 2023 to \$7.75 in January this year.

Additionally, the holiday season has only exacerbated the problem: the demand for eggs typically rises for baking seasonal treats, putting significant strain on local restaurants and bakeries. With the increasing prices, pastry shops like La Flor de Puebla struggled to make their usual numbers of Rosca de

Reyes, a seasonal Mexican cake that requires eggs, during their Día de Los Reyes Holiday in January. The owner, Carmen Torres, stated that each case (360 eggs) cost the shop three times more. Even retail stores like Trader Joe's and Raley's erected signs citing the complications of supply in their egg sections, limiting purchases to one carton per person.

“I am very fortunate to not feel the effect of the egg shortage, but I sympathize with everybody that is. Without eggs, I would probably have to find an entirely new source of protein. I also would not be able to bake as much as I like, since eggs are a crucial ingredient,” Sophomore Avni Harsh said.

Still, scarcity surrounding popular foods is not limited to eggs; similar shortages have been seen with sriracha, a popular spicy Thai sauce, whose supply lowered due to a drought that reduced pepper production. However, unlike eggs, sriracha is not nearly as relied on as a daily essential for peoples' diets, making the egg shortage pose an even greater challenge. According to an article from the University of Georgia's CAES Newswire, the egg shortage could lead to a recession through several interconnected economic mechanisms. As a staple ingredient, egg scarcity would drive up costs for businesses that rely on eggs, leading to higher consumer prices. Without money from shoppers, supply chains could be disrupted, affecting food production and contributing to inflation overall.

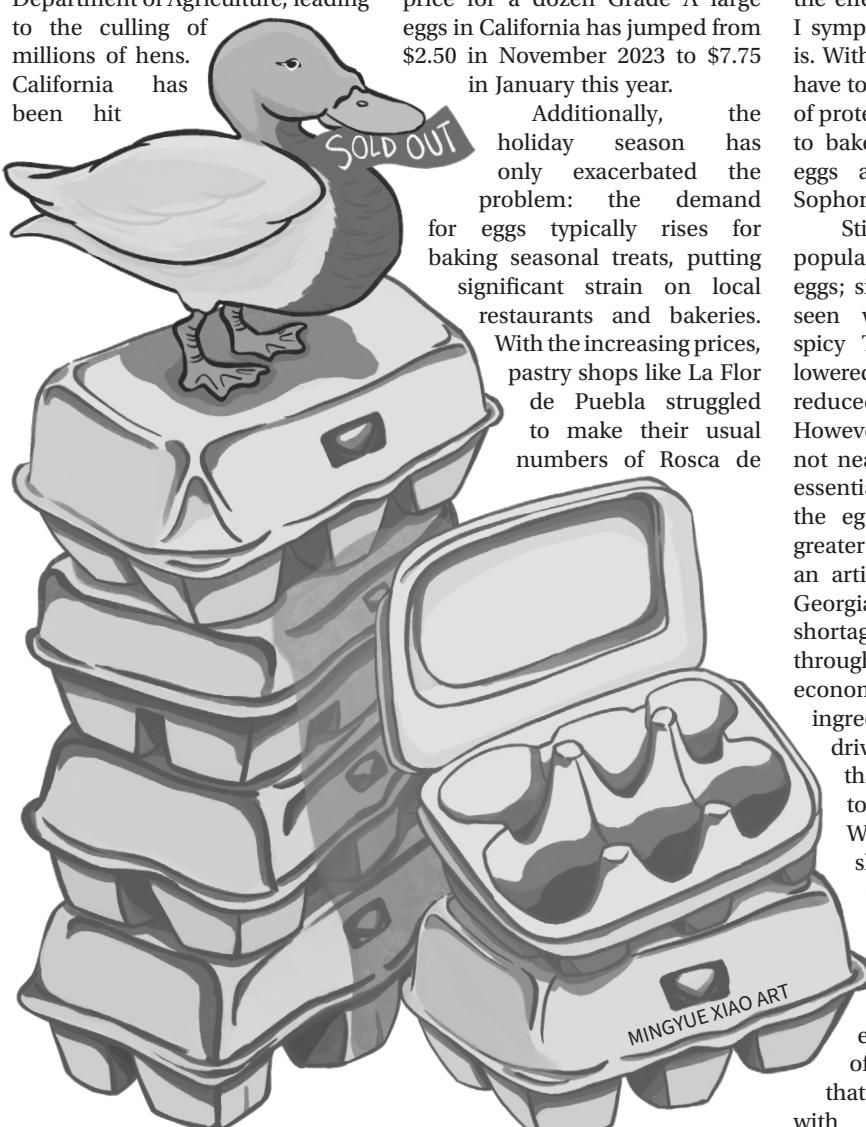
“The inflation for egg prices is only a fragment of a larger problem—a trend that started during COVID-19, with shortages and discord

over food and even toiletries. Companies need to find ways to keep the food supply consistent so prices can maintain affordability, especially for low-income families,” Senior Sofia Derollo said.

Moving forward, the shortage is expected to persist until mid-2025, according to USDA officials. The agency is collaborating with farmers and ranchers to implement biosecurity measures to limit the spread of the virus, including quarantining infected farms, regular testings and culling affected flocks.

In the meantime, brands like JUST Egg and Hodo Foods are providing plant-based alternatives to help mitigate the impact of the egg shortage on their operations. However, these substitutions are out of the financial range of many: most options are about double the price, but half the amount of eggs that consumers would have purchased in a dozen Grade A large eggs. For instance, JUST Egg charges around \$7.99 for 12 ounces of plant-based eggs, while a dozen eggs in November 2023 would have cost \$2.50 for 24 ounces.

Ultimately, the egg shortage highlights the vulnerabilities in industrial farm systems. As reported by the USDA, the heavy reliance on large-scale operations makes the food supply chain particularly susceptible to disruption and disease outbreaks alike. This crisis illustrates the interconnectedness of food systems and the need for greater resilience in food production and distribution. Moving forward, there may be a placed emphasis on prioritizing sustainable and diversified agricultural practices that can better withstand unforeseen challenges, hopefully ensuring a more stable and secure food supply for the future.



“Shadow and Bone”



CLRAE CHANG INVESTIGATIVE REPORT EDITOR

In the kingdom of Ravka, light and darkness collide in an unending battle taking place in the fantasy novel “Shadow and Bone” by Leigh Bardugo. At its heart is Alina Starkov, a young woman thrust into the world of the Grisha—the magical elite—who discovers her rare ability to summon light, holding potential to save the kingdom from the terrifying Shadow Fold, a vast region of darkness that divides the kingdom in half. Aside from confronting her internal power, she is forced to see beyond the deception that nearly fooled her into helping the charming Darkling, who has an insatiable hunger for power.

Although Alina starts off as an orphan and an exceptional mapmaker, she is whisked away to the King's palace to receive training for her newfound powers and become Ravka's savior. From the lavish splendor of the castle to the haste of the maids, I followed Alina as her newfound status and initial challenge to summon her power left her feeling out of place. Her vulnerability resonated with me, as she wrestled with her own self-doubt while striving to meet expectations. As she gradually develops confidence, trusts her instincts and embraces her strength, Alina's growth reminds us that we as individuals have the ability to grow, change and take control of our own lives.

At first, the Darkling appears as a guide for Alina's potential, but when his dangerous ambition to destroy the kingdom comes to light, layers of menace are added to his character. His charm becomes a mask for his true intentions, sending a chill down my spine upon realization that he was simply treating Alina as a pawn in his quest for ultimate power.

The Shadow Fold is not only mysterious and dangerous; it also stands as a metaphor for the darkness and uncertainty that Alina and the kingdom must confront. The danger of the Fold mirrors Alina's self doubt as she grapples with her abilities, but feels unworthy of the power given to her.

While Bardugo creates an immersive and intricately constructed realm, the plot feels predictable and reminiscent of typical fantasy tropes. Despite the cliché storytelling, Alina's character arc triumphed over how the events unfolded, and her progression and purpose made this piece still worth the read.

book hooked?

(2/5)



+ poignant self-discovery journey
- cliché fantasy story
- dragged-out plot line

The Sequential Art of Visual Storytelling

JAMES TONG STAFF WRITER

A superhero plummets through a towering skyscraper, swiftly escaping the robotic villain that trails just behind him through the skies. The panels erupt—livid explosions and laser beams streak up above. Suddenly, the action pauses when Mom's voice cuts through, calling that lunch is ready, bringing the reader back to reality as the comic book closes and lunch awaits. With their stylistic elements, comic books serve as powerful storytelling tools by blending both visuals and narratives on each page to create immersive experiences for readers.

From newspaper strips to novels, comics have a long and diverse history. One of the earliest recorded comics, "The Yellow Kid in McFadden's Flats" comic strip published in 1895, introduced speech bubbles and sequential art. Eventually, comics expanded their selections with genres that ranged from comedy to horror, as well as the introduction of iconic superheroes like Superman and Spider-Man, each with unique storytelling methods and artistic styles. Superhero comics especially peaked in popularity between 1938 and 1956, as per the Norman Rockwell Museum—but their legacy lives on.

Today, superhero comics remain popular among new generations of fans, continuing their traditional epic battle features and flashy action. Originally, most superheroes were men, which attracted male audiences, but recent efforts highlighted heroic narratives for all genders, engaging diverse audiences.

Meanwhile, graphic novels and personal memoirs touch on deeper topics, such as Art Spiegelman's piece "Maus," a biography based on his father's experience in the Holocaust, raising awareness and connecting devastating realities into comics. Notably, manga, a Japanese comic style, has also gained popularity and is often adapted into animations known as anime. To achieve their immersive storytelling experience, comic creators integrate both text and visuals in their work: the artwork helps readers visualize settings, from sci-fi cities to fantasy kingdoms. At the same time, facial expressions and body language convey emotions. According to the Nieman Foundation at Harvard, a single panel can evoke strong emotions without words, setting a mix of art and narrative to engage readers.

"I enjoy how visuals bring the world inside comics to life, and display unique styles and atmospheres. Art makes stories immersive, and creates a tangible bridge between the panels in the story and the imagination of the reader," Junior Abhay Shukla said.

Additionally, comics were found beneficial for children's education and cognitive development. Based on observations conducted by Outschool, an online learning platform, following sequential panels and interpreting visuals in comics can improve young pupils' focus, literacy and attention to detail. Thus, engaging art and stories can encourage young readers to continue reading and simultaneously boost creativity. Jabari Sellars, a Harvard graduate and Intellectual Contribution Award winner for his comics and graphic novels, explained that comics correlating with children's interests motivate them to read, entailing greater exposure to a wider range of vocabulary and the use of literary strategies.

Additionally, layouts guide readers through the story with dynamic arrangements. Colors set the tone and emotion, such as how darker palettes are utilized to entail seriousness. Character designs are also crucial for communicating personality, themes and overall styles that add to the depth of the narrative. Among other famous characters, Tintin in "The Adventures of Tintin" wears unique cultural outfits to match the places he explores in the stories.

"The visuals in comics make them more exciting to read than a page of text. The art styles help show the story's moods, as humorous cartoons are drawn in a fun lighthearted manner, while serious novels are often depicted in black and white. For example, the panels in 'Calvin and Hobbes' comics make them funnier," Sophomore Isaac Jin said.

From their early development to their diverse and widespread genres today, comics can captivate readers of all ages and backgrounds. Although many forms of reading have rapidly become digitized, traditional comics have withstood the test of time and continue to be a tool for both learning and entertainment.



Digitizing the Future of Comics

ARIEL LEE AND IZABELLA ZHU STAFF WRITERS

With an increasing popularity of the World Wide Web in the late 1990's, the webcomic industry was brought to life: digital comics blossomed almost immediately, as the masses of artists online were eager to publish and expand their work online for free. While originally emerging as just an endeavor to avoid censorship, the method of publishing quickly attracted creators and audiences alike through a shared desire of authoring or perusing digital comics.

Webcomics, or comics published online, are a form of visual storytelling that allow creators to self-publish their work on different platforms. Their popularity grew during the early 2000s, with comics such as "PvP" by Scott Kurtz and "Penny Arcade" by Jerry Holkins and Mike Krahulik making cameos. Originating in South Korea, webcomics gained worldwide popularity starting in the early 2010's, particularly among teenagers. Webcomic platforms such as Webtoon, known for their vertical scrolling format, allow creators to publish directly to a global audience. Their algorithm helps match content with readers' preferences, enabling creators to swiftly gain visibility.

"Webcomics are beneficial to readers because they offer more artists, genres and content variety. Meanwhile, traditional printed comics are difficult and inconvenient to access and advertise due to their pricey production," Freshman Ava Williams said.

Moreover, the accessibility of digital tools has also played a pivotal role in shaping the webcomic industry; digital drawing tablets and software such as Photoshop and Clip Studio Paint have enabled artists to experiment with unique layouts, like vertical scrolling, which enhances pacing for mobile readers. Webcomic platforms often support features like animated panels, soundtracks and interactive storytelling, making them more dynamic than traditional comics. According to a report done by Grand View Research, webcomics stand apart from conventional comics by reflecting a broader range of art styles and providing fresh ways to engage readers in the digital age.

Unlike traditional comics, which can be difficult to find and purchase, webcomics are available online at any time, typically being offered for free and on mobile apps. Many platforms foster community interaction, allowing readers to leave comments, interact with authors and build a sense of loyalty and connection around the stories. The growing trend of adapting webcomics into K-dramas has further amplified their popularity, introducing these stories to even broader audiences. For example, "True Beauty" by the artist Yaongyi was developed into a popular on-screen drama, which rapidly boosted views for the webtoon and the artist. While some viewers were against certain changes in the plot, others enjoyed it, claiming that the new scenes of comedy and character development were necessary for the drama. Several other popular webtoons have film adaptations, such as "All of Us Are Dead," "Sweet Home," "Love Alarm" and more.

Additionally, the webcomic platforms's flexibility allows artists from different backgrounds to share their comics without the influence of mainstream market needs, incorporating diversity and newfound principles of thinking into these pieces. According to an analysis website from the University of Florida, the variety of artistic representations are a prominent attraction; unlike traditional comics, which mostly follow a monochrome palette and cartoon or western style, webcomics are an explosion of color, design and contrast.

"In the future, webcomics will continue to grow and guide future generations of artists. Developing comic artists will be able to learn and add on to stories and memories of the past, engraving a community of support, trust and creativity in our society," Sophomore Emma Wang said.

Essentially, webcomics are an enticing way for artists to expand their horizons and experiment with new styles. Artists from any background continue to produce unique works of art, reflecting the influence of technology as it continues to transform alongside the future of visual storytelling. Thus, as the community prevails, so does artistic creativity, innovation and curiosity.

DESIGN BY ADRIAN TOMASZEWSKI

Healthcare Neglected, A Murder Accepted

MIRA REDDY STAFF WRITER

Living with Spondylolisthesis causes the vertebrae to slip out in the spine, enforcing a lifelong weight on one's lower back. This weight grows heavier until it affects physical functions, becoming unbearable to live with. As healthcare becomes more controversial in the U.S., it is increasingly difficult to find the relief that a certain suspected murderer, Luigi Mangione—needed to face the brunt of the condition. As of now, Mangione has been extradited to New York, where he allegedly committed the second-degree murder of Brian

Thompson, CEO of UnitedHealthcare, the U.S.'s largest health insurer. He is situated in the Metropolitan Detention Center, with charges placed against him for possessing weapons and performing acts of terrorism.

UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was shot in New York on Dec. 4, 2024 while he was en route to attend a yearly investors meeting. Thompson was walking in front of



HELEN RUAN ART

Domestic Terror-rising

NIRU SHIVAKUMAR AND JOSHUA YAN STAFF WRITERS

As 2024 came to an end, fireworks and confetti were not the only explosions to erupt across the nation. The start of 2025 saw a spike in domestic terror incidents across the country, creating a wave of screams to go along with excited New Years' Day cheers.

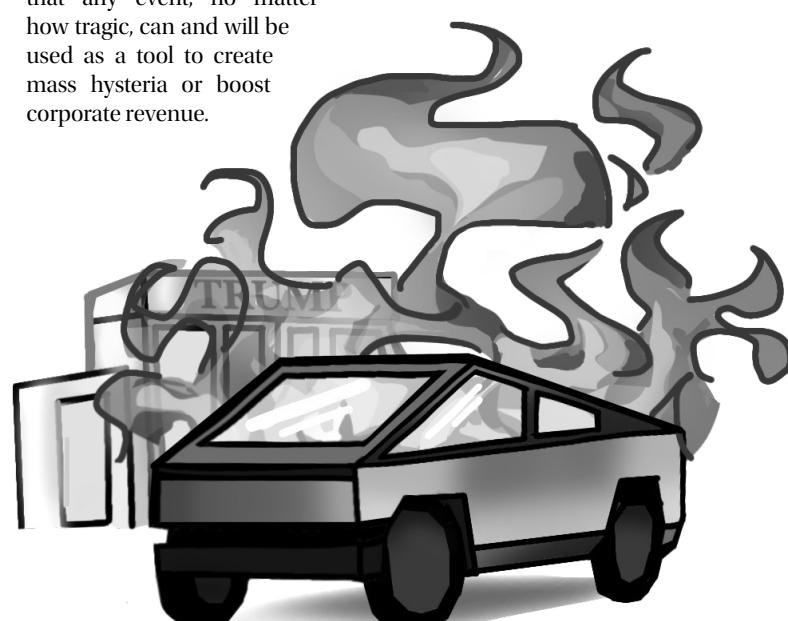
On Jan. 1, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old veteran, drove a rented pickup truck into a large crowd of New Year's day revelers on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, Louisiana. The attack resulted in 15 deaths, including Jabbar, as well as 57 injuries. The FBI has identified Jabbar as an Islamic State (IS) sympathizer, and they found him to have been researching similar attacks, possibly searching for inspiration. He had closely looked into a deadly car attack in Germany, which aligned with his own attack. An IS flag was found inside of the truck as well. However, the FBI has not found a direct link between Jabbar and the IS, which indicates he may have acted alone.

Several hours after the Bourbon Street attack, active-duty Army member Matthew Alan Livesberger drove a rented Cybertruck into the valet area of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, where it exploded and injured seven bystanders. Livesberger—who struggled with PTSD—committed suicide via a gunshot to the head, likely causing the detonation of the 60 pounds of pyrotechnic material and 70 pounds of birdshot within the vehicle. Livesberger's journals indicate that he did not intend to harm others in the explosion. In an email sent to a retired U.S. Army officer, Livesberger claimed that he was being followed for his knowledge about classified weaponized anti-gravity drones.

The attacks shared similarities—both perpetrators had ties to the U.S. army, were staying in an Airbnb and rented their vehicles through Turo—but there is currently no evidence that they were connected. While these attacks have created an unsettling mood over increasing terrorism, statistics show that the US is much safer now than it was in the years 2016 and 2001, which were the peaks of global terrorism. Thus, the perceived increase may be due to large media coverage rather than a broader trend.

"The news media often reframes incidents like these in the context of more provocative issues in order to increase engagement, but presenting every issue so sensationalizes desensitizes the public to violence." People lost lives in these attacks, and we shouldn't lose focus of that, Senior Mercury Shih said.

However overstated the rise in domestic terror may be, the lives stolen in these attacks were very real. Still, the news media's wording in its coverage of these attacks shows that any event, no matter how tragic, can and will be used as a tool to create mass hysteria or boost corporate revenue.



ELEANOR WANG ART

a Hilton entrance where Mangione was presumed to have shot him fatally before fleeing the scene on an electric bicycle. Before the shooting, the company had been scrutinized by the public for its high costs and denial of insurance claims, despite its goal to make the health system "work better for everyone."

Mangione hails from a wealthy family that made its fortune in real estate and nursing home businesses. A valedictorian at a private school in Baltimore, Mangione attended the University of Pennsylvania and pursued a career in computer engineering, per ABC.

"Often, when I tell people I am from UPenn, the first thing they do is ask me if I know Luigi, even though most undergraduates do not know him since he graduated in 2020. There has been much more talk about Luigi on campus—the school even had a look-alike competition of who dressed the most similarly to him," school alumnus Gilina Voon said.

The suspect of the homicide departed an arriving bus in New York on Nov. 24, 2024. He is believed to have checked in and out of the HI New York City hostel on that same day, taking a six-day leave before returning and checking himself back in.

Soon after, the killer rode an electric bicycle to the Midtown Starbucks before he ventured by foot to his final location—the Hilton, where Thompson would soon walk past. When Thompson passed by, the killer shot him behind his back with an unserialized gun and abandoned the scene on the electric bicycle. He made his getaway on a bus to Pennsylvania after disembarking from the bicycle, continuing to Pittsburgh.

Mangione was located and taken into custody on Dec. 9, 2024, after being recognized at an Altoona, Pennsylvania McDonald's by a customer. As the murder scene was analyzed, investigators found the

infamous gun with bullet casings engraved with the phrase "deny," "delay" and "depose," a false ID that he allegedly used to check into a New York hostel and a written letter that claimed he was responsible for the crime.

Mangione's suspected motive is his frustration with the healthcare system, as "deny," "delay" and "depose" are words that commonly describe the tactics insurers use to stop insurance claims. Legal experts have stated that he will likely appeal to jurors' bias against insurers in his

trial due to the possibility of jury nullification—the tendency for a jury to avoid convicting a defendant on moral or ethical grounds despite extensive evidence to do otherwise. It is often seen in cases where an individual is found with illegal materials such as drugs or alcohol, and in instances where a person commits homicide on a rapist. Mangione has currently pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Mangione has previously shared his experiences on Reddit about trying to find healthcare for spondylolisthesis, advising others struggling to seek support much earlier than he had. Since then, the general public has responded to his insight with support on social media, and fundraisers for Mangione's legal fees have raised thousands of dollars.

Still, many view the assassination as unjustified, and dislike the praise that Mangione continues to receive despite the death of Thompson. The complex opinions on the killing could have an impact on the verdict that Mangione will receive from the jury, per Forbes.



"People should not be supporting an act like murder, even if they are united in their anger for the US healthcare system. Still, it indicates that change must happen as soon as possible to the people in power," Junior Tara Sarhangnejad said.

Regardless of the outcome of the case, it has raised awareness of failings in the US healthcare system. Although many actions have been attempted in the past to do so, they have failed due to various obstacles in the nations that prevent indication of change. To the angered people of the US, it raises hope that healthcare will potentially be addressed rather than ignored.

Honoring Jimmy Carter

ANDREW XIE AND SRIHITA MADIRAJU STAFF WRITERS

On Dec. 29, 2024, the 39th president of the United States, Jimmy Carter, passed away at 100, leaving behind a legacy of commitment to public service and peace. A small-time peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia, Carter built his presidency on his life of hard work. After a lengthy retirement dedicated to human rights and democracy,

Carter entered hospice care in his hometown in February 2023, remaining there until his passing.

Carter's funeral service occurred in his hometown at the Maranatha Baptist Church, where he once taught Sunday school. Carter's family, friends and many world leaders—including several former U.S. presidents—attended and offered their condolences to the former president's family.

The nation mourned his death with an outpouring of tributes focusing on his compassion. Former President Biden proclaimed Jan. 9 as a national day of mourning, ordering flags nationwide to be flown at half-staff until 30 days after Carter's passing.



ELEANOR WANG ART

Raised during the Great Depression, Carter worked on his family's peanut farm and lived among neighbors of diverse racial and economic backgrounds. These experiences instilled the empathy, strong work ethic and devotion to social justice that would guide his political career.

Beginning as a progressive and pro-equality Georgia senator, Carter ran for president in 1976, appealing to a nation rattled by the Watergate scandal. His promise to restore trust in government resonated with voters, leading to his victory over former president Gerald Ford.

As president, Carter achieved significant milestones, most notably the still-standing Camp David Accords of 1978—a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel that championed human rights. Despite his advocacy for change, Carter's honest values sometimes made him come off as indecisive, and his efforts for energy conservation were harmed by the 1979 energy crisis.

Carter's post-presidency is considered one of the most impactful in American history. In 1982, he and his wife Rosalynn founded the Carter Center, a nonprofit dedicated to human rights. Through it, they led efforts to eradicate Guinea worm disease, even negotiating a cease-fire during the Second Sudanese Civil War to combat the illness. Carter's global health initiatives earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

"While Carter's presidency included many accomplishments, his philanthropic work will likely define his legacy. His dedication through the Carter Center has saved countless lives and promoted democracy in numerous nations," Freshman Tony Dung said.

Yoon's Presidency Ends

ARIEL LEE AND MELVIN NAJARIAN STAFF WRITERS

The South Korean President, Yoon Suk Yeol, shocked his nation as he proclaimed martial law on Dec. 3, 2024. Despite martial law being lifted soon after being declared, his action became widely interpreted as a means of maintaining power, sparking protests and laying the grounds for his eventual impeachment. The opposition party, the Democratic Party, considered Yoon's proclamation of martial law treason.

Yoon justified the martial law as an effort to eliminate "anti-state forces" in the opposition government. He claimed they were "pro North [Korea]," to undermine the democratic system, per the International Federation of Journalists. This was a turning point in South Korea's history, as it was the first time martial law had been declared since the 1980 coup. According to the opposition legislators, the Democratic Party, argued that Yoon's declaration of martial power demonstrated an insurrection since he sent troops to the National Assembly. Furthermore, they stated that Yoon's actions were an attempt to prevent the legislators from voting against a bill. After the Democratic Party won the general election in 2024, he became a lame-duck president and could not effectively pass bills.

Yoon has had previous scandals; First Lady Kim Keon-Hee faced numerous

accusations that damaged Yoon's reputation even before his election in 2022. In 2021, Kim admitted to fraud on her resume, and was recently confirmed to have plagiarized in her master's thesis. She also faced allegations of stock manipulation, election interference and accepting bribes.

President Yoon, running for the People Power Party (PPP), came to office in May 2022, winning by a slim 0.7% margin. However, Yoon's approval quickly plummeted, and his approval rating fell below 20% before declaring martial law. He continuously struggled to



achieve his agenda's goals and his opponents, the Democratic Party, have accused him of imposing martial law due to anger and the desire to gain personal power.

"Presidents should listen to their people's opinions because they are the ones who voted them into office, and if they do not follow their wishes it seems like they are trying to become a dictator," Sophomore Chunhwee Choi said.

From Dec. 4 through Dec. 7, ordinary citizens gathered in front of the National Assembly and protested day and night, playing K-pop songs and carrying crude posters. Many skipped school and work, and some workplaces even gave paid days off to those who went out to protest. Impeachment proceedings began on December 7. The motion to impeach him would require a vote of two-thirds of the National Assembly. The first impeachment motion failed after the PPP boycotted the vote. The second attempt on Dec. 14 was successful, with 12 members of Yoon's party voting in favor of the impeachment motion—the opposition only required eight members of Yoon's party to approve it. The approval of the motion meant that Yoon's presidential powers would be suspended for six months. Yoon's Prime Minister, Han Duck-soo, became acting president after Yoon's impeachment, but himself was impeached on Dec. 27 after failing to conclude Yoon's impeachment.

A Seoul court has issued an arrest order for him after he repeatedly refused to appear for interrogation. According to BBC, 100 police and Corruption

Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) investigators visited Yoon's residence on January 3 and faced his security staff. After six hours of waiting, the CIO stopped the procedure. On January 19, Yoon was arrested at his presidential residence in Seoul, and could face time in prison for his proclamation of martial law.

"In any democratic system no one should be above the law. If anyone is, then it is not a true democratic system. Because the government functions on trust and the systems are more truthful in democratic systems, they tend to foster more accountability. If there is no trust in the systems in place—then we are effectively turning away from democratic systems and instead going towards dictatorships and totalitarianism," Brian Marchetti, Social Science Department, said.

The use of military force to suppress dissent underscores a troubling trend of democratic backsliding, where leaders manipulate state mechanisms to cling onto power, often at the expense of constitutional norms. Such actions erode



trust in governance and encourage more authoritarian tendencies, threatening the very foundation of democracy. Leaders such as Hungary's Victor Orban, who has brazenly referred to his tenure as prime minister as an "illiberal democracy," have used democratic means to pass new policies and even constitutions to hold power. From South Korea's recent crisis to Hungary's systematic weakening of democracy, these examples highlight the fragility of democratic systems in the face of unchecked executive overreach. For South Korea, the citizens are fighting hard to save their democracy and restore order to the nation.

A Sad Day for Assad

CAITLYNN SUE STAFF WRITER

Within two weeks of initiating a surprise offensive, opposition forces in Syria captured the capital of Damascus, toppling the longstanding regime of Bashar al-Assad. This marked the end of the Syrian civil war, an international conflict that started over 13 years ago in response to Assad's cruel crackdown on protests during the Arab Spring. The war had transformed into a complex conflict involving numerous domestic opposition groups and international powers, resulting in the deaths of over 500,000 Syrians and the displacement of over half the population, according to the BBC.

Assad's rule during the Syrian Civil War had been characterized by brutality, particularly towards civilians. According to the Global Public Policy Institute, the Assad regime carried out over 300 chemical attacks, often through chemical carpet bombing on rebel-controlled civilian areas. Other extreme methods of counterinsurgency carried out by the regime included extrajudicially detaining and torturing thousands of Syrians for alleged disloyalty. Various reports have documented the regime's systematic killing of thousands of detainees and detailed the widespread use of torture methods such as starvation, electrocution and strangulation in Syrian prisons.

"Governments that use torture to silence their opponents show a lack of respect for human rights and rely on fear to maintain control. While this might work

in the short term, it often leads to resentment, instability, and rebellion in the long run. Assad's treatment of Syrian citizens was brutal and dehumanizing, causing immense suffering and fueling the conflict," Sophomore Katherine Zhu said.

The leading group among the Syrian rebel forces was Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an organization that started off as an al-Qaeda affiliate in opposition to Assad, but publicly broke away from al-Qaeda in 2016. In November 2024, HTS led rebel forces in an attack in Northwestern Syria, faced little resistance from Assad's army; Many of Assad's soldiers abandoned their posts, pretending to be civilians or fleeing the country. HTS and their ally the Southern Operations Room, a coalition of 25 rebel groups in Southern Syria, advanced on Damascus from multiple sides.

On Dec. 8, 2024, rebels declared Damascus liberated, and Assad fled to Moscow, where he was granted political asylum by the Russian government. Syrians around the world rejoiced at the news of Assad's fall, hoping that this would lead to a new era of peace in Syria.

Both international and domestic factors contributed to the rebels' quick takeover. Assad's regime had heavily relied on Russia and Iran for military support. However, in 2024, Russia was preoccupied with its invasion of Ukraine, and Iran was focused on

missing friends and relatives. In one of the largest prisons, Sednaya prison, between 5,000 to 13,000 prisoners were executed between 2011 and 2015, per Amnesty International. While there were some joyous reunions, many Syrians will be forever left in the dark on the fate of their loved ones.

"It would be difficult for families who had lost loved ones in the imprisonment to recover, especially since they never got closure on why



their family member could not be found. Additionally,

from power, many Syrians may feel anxious about whether they can trust the future of the government," Junior Kali Gruenhagan said.

Following Assad's fall, many European countries such as Germany and the UK have suspended Syrian asylum applications. Over a million Syrians have sought refuge in Europe since the war began in 2011. While many Syrians

express joy at the thought of returning to their country, others have pointed out that current conditions in Syria are not safe enough for dignified returns. More than half the population lives in areas contaminated in land mines and at least 144 have been killed by landmines since Assad's fall, the BBC reported.

Israel has also invaded the buffer zone between Israel and Syria designated in the ceasefire of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, ostensibly to protect the neutral zone, and has begun building military bases in the territory. The Mediterranean nation launched extensive airstrikes against Syria in support of its operation, attacking their navy, chemical stockpiles, and other military targets.

The leader of HTS, Ahmed al-Sharaa, is now seen as the de facto leader of Syria. While he has criticized Israel's campaign in Syria, he acknowledged that his country was not in the position to get involved in a new conflict. Although the HTS has been designated a terrorist organization by the United Nations, it claims to not impose extremist interpretations of Islamic governance such as restrictions on women's education or religious discrimination. However, a 2023 U.S. State Department report found that the HTS has arrested, tortured and killed activists and civilians that they perceived as threats or violated their strict religious interpretations. Given the dubious nature of the new HTS government and the conflicting desires of the various regional groups, the future of Syria is still uncertain, and the region may struggle to find stability. Ultimately though, the people of Syria are hopeful for a fresh start.

Diving Into Walton's World



GWEN CARROLL COMMUNITY NEWS & LAST WORD EDITOR

Many Bay Area residents have been to the ocean, but **Lon Walton**, Science Department, is more familiar with it than most. For over 30 years, he has participated in scuba dives as deep as 100 feet, having been introduced by his father who taught at San Jose State University. His father would bring his students on ocean diving trips, where despite being significantly younger, 13-year-old Walton assisted in preparations.

Since then, his dives have been regular family outings: first with his father and sister, now with his wife and children. They have also taken him far beyond the California coast: Walton has gone on dives in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and even Australia. He particularly notes his dive in Cozumel, a small Mexican island in the Caribbean Sea.

"There are a lot of interesting sea creatures to see in the waters of Cozumel, from coral and fish to lobster and octopus. My favorite marine animal to look for on dives are octopi, since their nocturnal nature makes them a challenge to find, especially when I am helping newer divers find wildlife on group dives," Walton said.

As much as he enjoys finding sea creatures, Walton also likes searching for them for another reason: hunting. At lower depths, the main joy of diving becomes spearfishing. Species such as halibut thrive off the Californian coast, making it the perfect hunting range for a more aquatically attuned hunter.

After retiring as a teacher, Walton plans to steer his diving expertise in a different direction. He has taken interest in marine life restoration projects, particularly urchin abatement, an operation in which divers armed with small hammers descend into kelp forests and cull the urchins, preventing them from overeating the kelp and damaging the ecosystem.

"When I retire, I want to spend more time diving, this time in the context of environmentalism. I am interested in restoration efforts globally, such as coral reef restoration projects in Florida, but I would also love to help out more locally in the kelp forests of Monterey Bay," Walton said.

Walton himself does not usually take any footage of his dives, only standing in for when his family cannot, but treasures each underwater memory nevertheless. From his wife's photo albums to his son's GoPro footage of each outing, Walton's dives have become more than just a hunting trip or sightseeing activity—they make a valuable and unique family tradition that shows no signs of slowing down.

DESIGN BY ELEANOR GIL

From Classroom to Content

ANDREW DUVAL OPINIONS & FEATURE WORLD EDITOR AND NIRU SHIVAKUMAR STAFF WRITER

From dancing stars like Charli D'Amelio to science educators like Veritasium, the internet is a place for anyone to post content and create their personalized company as an influencer. With time spent online becoming a larger part of modern life, a number of students have taken their social media presence to the next level by becoming influencers themselves. In fact, according to a Morning Consult report, 86% of young Americans are willing to try out influencing.

Junior **Bella Luu** is an influencer at the school with over 112,000 followers on TikTok. Though Luu often feels like she is missing out on the more academics-oriented lives of most of her fellow students, she finds content creation worth the extra stress. Luu feels it is important to be genuine online, as doing so can help her followers get through the same struggles she went through or is going through.

"Social media became a passion for me when my viewers began to message me to tell me that I had helped their mental health or given them greater confidence and comfort within their body image. As such, in the future I want to use my platform for motivational and uplifting content for my audience," Luu said.

While TikTok and Instagram are where Luu has obtained the most followers and engagement, she is focusing her efforts on growing on YouTube, as the

platform tends to have the most loyal audiences and monetization opportunities. In fact, Google has already assigned her a YouTube manager, who invited her to red-carpet events and brand deals. The connections she has made will support her through life, and many were found through brand lunches and meetings in Los Angeles. Ultimately though, her goal is to create a sustainable business with her content without losing out on her personal privacy.

"I would not want my future kids to be placed in the same situation that some of my fellow influencers have—where their family is dependent on them being posted as a source of income. If I ever have to rely on regularly recording my family and sharing my personal life to make a living, I would want to stop being an influencer," Luu said.

Luu still plans on attending college, and she wants to put her college degree towards improving her social media presence. She either wants to major in marketing or entrepreneurship, since she believes it would help her reach a wider audience but also allow her to have a backup career plan for job security.

Though Senior **Caleb Park** has a similar follower count on TikTok as Luu, his relationship with social media is different. Park views TikTok more as a fun hobby than a side hustle at the moment, but he sees potential for it to make him money in the future.

"People tend to have a misconception that I make money off of TikTok, but I have not made a single dollar off my work. Though I have received free products from brand deals, I was not eligible for monetization until recently because I was under 18 years old," Park said.

In the future, Park hopes to move toward making content that he enjoys more—while the "POV" skits he creates are easy to make, he finds it more gratifying to make more meaningful content like vlogs. He noticed that in his experience with social media, he initially had an awkward phase where he was very fearful of being judged for his content. However, he eventually overcame it and

his confidence in expressing himself authentically grew. Park's social media presence has even helped him in his college application process.

"I was able to write a UC Personal Insight Question about my passion in video creation and how I transformed that skill into a professional advertising space. TikTok also helped me find a part-time internship with a clothing brand called Niche Street LA, which was great," Park said.

Park's general advice for other aspiring content creators is to never hesitate, since someone will always judge. Through his content, he always strives to stand out by being himself, never behind a facade, and presenting something new and unique to people's feeds.

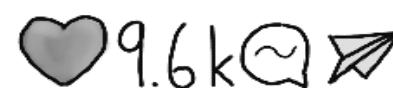
"People need to be less judgemental online and be more accepting of new creators who are trying to get started. I have had many people assume things about my identity based on a single video I published, which is not reasonable. While my social media presence is a small reflection of my humor, fashion or hobbies, it is important to understand that it does not nearly capture who I really am as a person," Park said.

While Park and Luu have had varying experiences with content creation, they ultimately share a common trait: they both love making videos and do not plan on stopping anytime soon.



CHAERIN KANG PHOTO

Junior **Bella Luu** poses for a selfie to upload to her social media.



Earning Whilst Learning

LAUREN LAW STAFF WRITER

After the bell rings, most students at the school already have to juggle extracurricular activities, sports practice and homework from AP classes. Some choose to add another responsibility to their afterschool to-do list: earning a paycheck. From brewing coffee to babysitting to lifeguarding, these young workers are learning life lessons and managing responsibilities far beyond the classroom.

According to Indeed, high school students most commonly take up jobs as fast food attendants, servers, baristas, grocery baggers and retail sales associates. These positions offer flexible hours to adapt to students' other responsibilities, in addition to valuable experience for young workers entering the job market. Popular employers include fast food chains, retail stores, tutoring centers, local businesses and summer camps.

Students take up part-time jobs for many reasons. Some join the workforce to earn money for

personal expenses, savings or college funds. For some, these jobs align with their career interests, offering insight into specific industries they may seek to formally enter later. Others seek work experience to build their resumes, develop new skills and gain independence.

Senior **Stephanie Lu** works as a swim instructor at Waterworks Aquatics, a company dedicated to teaching children water safety. Since starting in July, Lu has committed two days a week to this role with the full support of her parents, who encouraged her to gain work experience and prepare for the future. She took the job to save money for college and to have extra spending cash. While Lu enjoys the job, she does not see it as a long-term career and plans to step away after next summer.

Balancing work and school can be challenging, but I strive to manage my time effectively to ensure my grades remain strong. Through this experience, I have developed greater patience,

kindness and empathy—qualities that are especially important when teaching young children, who can sometimes be tough to instruct," Lu said.

Other Chargers, like Junior **Swathi Thayaparan**, merge their personal hobbies with part-time jobs. Thayaparan saw tennis coaching as a perfect opportunity to earn money while playing the sport she loves. She works at the Almaden Racket Country Club, where she has coached tennis for children twice a week since last summer. She plans to increase her hours especially during the summer before college and hopes to return to the job during college breaks to contribute to her savings.

Thayaparan's job offers a refreshing change of pace and an escape from school-related stress. The fact that she gets paid for doing something she loves keeps her motivated and makes the challenges of juggling both responsibilities feel worthwhile. One particularly unforgettable moment highlighted the balancing act she manages daily—rushing to work while running out of gas and driving most of the way in neutral gear.

Meanwhile, Junior **Brianna Le** has been a ride operator at Great America for about a year.

"I wanted something productive to do over the summer and to save money to attend concerts. While working, I learn to quickly communicate and devise solutions while thinking on my feet. But by far my favorite part of the job is when my coworkers and I

get to ride the park's attractions after we close," Le said.

While many students rely on traditional part-time jobs, others earn undeclared income outside of working for a formal organization. Senior **Manya Patel** creates unique jewelry, bracelets, bag charms and upcycled clothes sourcing materials from thrift stores and flea markets. She markets her products on social media, Depop and at in-person pop-up markets like the Berkeley SoSo Market.

"As my own boss, the more effort I put in, the more sales I make. One highlight was being featured in SoLucky, a student-run magazine, where I had my pieces professionally photographed and displayed for a 'Gossip Girl' theme," Patel said.

For many students at school, balancing academics, athletics and extracurriculars is a challenge in itself, but adding a part-time job to the mix adds another layer of responsibility that requires extra dedication, resilience and drive. Whether they are teaching swim lessons, operating amusement parks or independently selling handmade goods, part-time jobs not only teach students the value of hard work but also allow them to explore their interests, build independence and create lasting memories along the way.



Senior **Manya Patel**'s hand-crafted jewelry at a local market.

RYAN PARKART



Tutorial Time Turbulence

AMIE AHN STAFF WRITER

The overlapping chatter of numerous students fills the classroom: children laugh with their peers and text on their phones, creating a disruptive, unproductive work atmosphere. Meanwhile, in the room next door, silence lingers—students aggressively type away at their keyboards, while teachers talk in hushed tones to a student about their quiz. Many students can use the provided tutorial period as a productive academic time, but for others, it becomes a free period loaded with distractions, questioning its effectiveness.

Tutorial is intended to serve as an extra instructional period where students independently complete their assignments, make up or retake assessments and express any concerns to their teachers. Many students utilize this time to meet with others for group projects or presentations. However, some students choose to relax, with the expectation to not disrupt their peers. Thus, many students find relief in having tutorial time, providing a break from the rest of their busy days.

"Tutorials are always there for me as a safety net when I do not finish my homework at home, or if I still feel unprepared for a test. Without tutorials, I would feel rushed trying to complete the assigned work," Freshman **Rebecca Huang** said.

In addition to being a valuable academic period, tutorials are also time to make use of other resources to avoid interfering with instructional class time: drills are conducted, and students can visit the Community Resources Center to talk to counselors and attend occasional specialized events, such as Career Week and Wellness Week. Regardless, tutorial also provides opportunities for easy distraction and low productivity, especially when students use electronic devices without particular supervision. Besides socializing with friends, many students access social media.

Recently, a district-wide policy to turn off and confiscate phones was extended from class to tutorial as well, per the San Jose Unified School District policies. Previously, there was a stark difference between

different teachers' use of tutorials regarding their phone rules—while many teachers allowed a certain extent of usage in their classroom, others completely prohibited their usage, such as **Heidi Pimentel**, Foreign Language Department.

"Tutorial is one of the few times when students can complete necessary tasks without any distractions, and so expectations must be set to create a focused environment that encourages students to maximize their time," Pimentel said.

Still, most students tend to make use of tutorials at least a few days of the week, depending on the number of assignments they have. Technology is essential for academic tasks, proving difficult for teachers to distinguish those who truly use their devices for school-related work.

"At the end of the day, the school

can only filter and block so many things. With an innate tendency to find solutions to problems, students will find ways to navigate around these restrictions. The school is already doing the best that it can, but the unproductive environment in some tutorials is inevitable," Senior **Aarush Zarabi** said.

While productivity varies from student to student, tutorials are inarguably a vital part of the school schedule. While some tutorials mimick test-taking environments, it seems the use of electronic devices and socializing can serve as a distraction, but still contribute to a natural, pressure-free school atmosphere.



ISABELLA ZHU ART

Buddying Up for Better Grades

LILIANA CHAI AND SHINY XU STAFF WRITERS

Continued from Front Page:

Having a peer, or a "study buddy," to review with, provides plenty of benefits for enhancing students' academic performance. Study buddies can keep each other motivated, avoiding procrastination through shared accountability. According to a study by Northwestern University, individuals apply themselves toward their goals more when they are shared with others. Thus, setting a mutual objective will result in both partners pushing themselves to accomplish it.

Additionally, discussing challenging topics with a partner can make material more approachable. By sharing different perspectives on the course material, students can find successful and creative solutions more easily by complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to struggling individually.

"Collaborating with study buddies has improved my test and

assignment scores because we often catch each other's mistakes. Once when I was studying with my friend, I thought I completed everything correctly on my math assignment, but she noticed several errors that would have gone unnoticed otherwise," Sophomore **Yashika Agarwal** said.

Despite many finding study buddies useful, they can also bring distractions, turning what should have been a productive study session into a social hour. Also, it is natural for group members to have different learning and studying styles that conflict with one another—students who prefer to audibly go over material may clash with those who would prefer to organize their papers in silence.

"It may be worse to study with a partner than study independently,

as many people end up chatting and wasting time together. In the end, the effectiveness of study buddies depends on the person you are studying with, and how seriously you both take the study session," Junior **Jaya Bhattacharyya** said.

Complete reliance on group members can hinder an individual's learning process and critical thinking. These aspects are crucial to performing well on assessments in class, and they cannot be fostered ahead of time when a student leans too heavily on another peer for answers.

"It is nearly impossible to study with others. Discussions often derail, and individual weaknesses get little attention—especially for slower learners. Groups spend minimal time on topics before moving on, which can overwhelm those who are struggling to keep up. Not only are they falling behind and confused, self-confidence and motivation could also plummet," Junior **Adalyn Lin** said.

Even inside of the classroom,

collaborative techniques can be introduced. Many teachers at the school implement group or partner quizzes to encourage teamwork and enhance the learning experience, such as **Nathan Lee**, Social Studies Department.

"Articulating and discussing information is one of the best ways to fully understand a concept. It teaches an important lesson that no one always has the right answers. Since collaboration can help combat a large portion of the problems society faces, the classroom is a great place to start," Lee said.

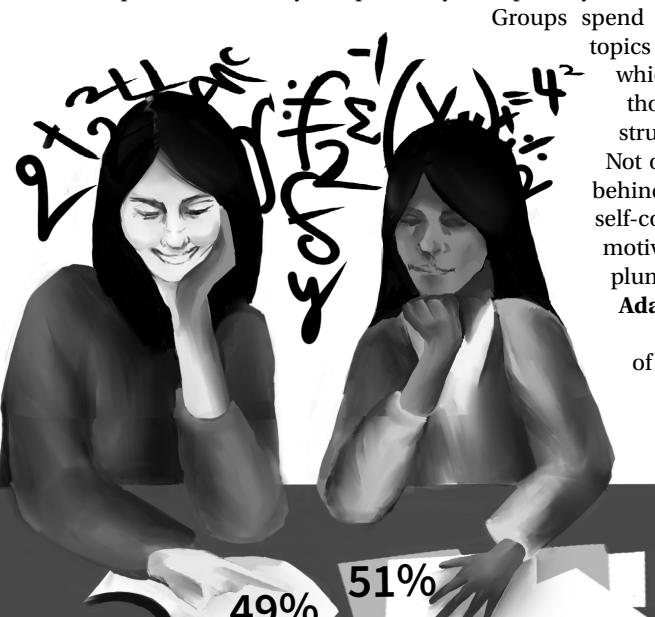
Collaboration during assessments can reduce stress while promoting self-confidence. However, failure on an individual test can hit harder than collective group failure, where the responsibility is shared. Lee has observed that students who collaborate more often gain patience and adapt their communication style depending on who they are talking to. Those who need help also feel more engaged in a group setting.

Whether students thrive in group settings or independently, the key is finding a study method that aligns with their individual needs and learning goals. As adolescents prepare for their future at school, it is vital to consider that collaboration is a necessity in most jobs after graduation. Students must still be self-reliant to navigate adulthood.

Poll: Do you prefer studying alone or in a group?

COMPILED BY LAUREN LAW, SRIHITA MADIRAJU AND JOSHUA YAN STAFF WRITERS

104 students polled



ISABELLA ZHU ART

How to Prep for Exams



ELEANOR GIL SCHOOL NEWS & FEATURE SCHOOL EDITOR

We have all been there—you have a big exam coming up, and you feel unprepared and overwhelmed. Common advice focuses on studying techniques: take notes, do practice tests and space out your review. Meanwhile, more niche advice proposes brain-fueling foods and getting a good night's sleep before the test.

Firstly, what you eat not only before an exam, but also on a daily basis, can significantly boost cognitive function. Complex carbohydrates such as whole grain oatmeal provide slow-releasing energy, while organic bananas are packed with potassium and vitamin B6—both crucial for brain function. Protein-rich foods, such as eggs or Greek yogurt, can improve focus and memory.

Meanwhile, highly processed foods such as commercial cereal, potato chips and fast food tend to clog the arteries and cloud the blood, decreasing circulation to the brain and heart, as per the National Institutes of Health. Given this, avoid sugary snacks or caffeine overloads. While they provide temporary energy boosts, they also induce sluggish crashes.

Most importantly, you must never sacrifice sleep—but it is not just about getting enough hours, it is also how you get the right kind of rest. Dr. Jamie Zeitzer, Stanford University neurobiology professor and researcher, recommends that all students maintain a consistent rest schedule.

"Sleeping at the same time every night becomes very helpful for your brain, because the circadian system can then anticipate your actions and become robust. If you have an erratic schedule and erratic sleep timing, your circadian system is much weaker, which means your brain and body do not function as effectively during sleep or during the daytime. Focus on consistency and timing, but do not focus too much on deep sleep versus light sleep," Zeitzer said.

Beyond good sleep and nutrition, certain habits may enhance academic performance and learning. Develop positive rituals to calm yourself—whether it be deep breathing, meditation or listening to relaxing music. Quiet confidence and positive energy are crucial to succeed—not only in exams but also in athletics, relationships and essentially everything in life.

Key steps to improvement:

- Choose nutritious foods
- Sleep consistently
- Develop calming rituals

Immigration, whether it be legal or illegal, has been a major point of polarization in American politics. And even the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, centered around their support of Donald Trump's anti-illegal immigration policies, has recently been split over a very controversial, yet legal, visa program.

In December, Elon Musk, a close Trump ally, began voicing his support for Trump's appointment of Sriram Krishnan, an Indian-American venture capitalist, as the Senior Policy Advisor for AI. However, many MAGA supporters found this intolerable, believing immigrants such as Krishnan are lowering American wages and taking U.S.-born jobs.

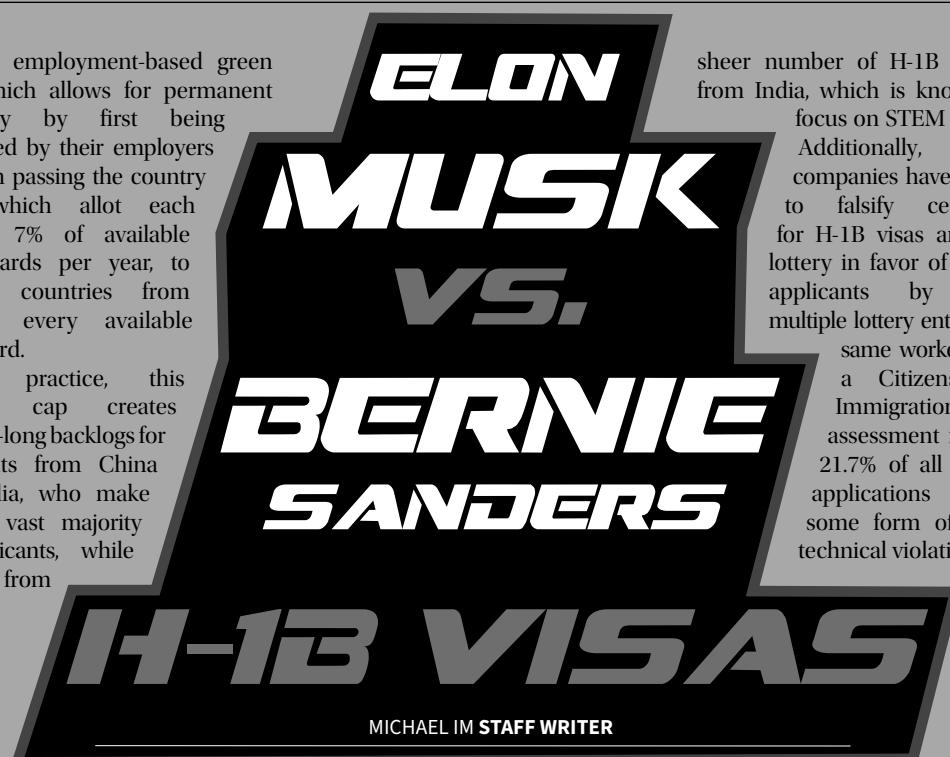
The H-1B visa program, created by the Immigration Act of 1990, offers temporary visas allowing employers to hire foreign workers in specialty occupations. Major corporations in the tech industry lobbied for the program, arguing that foreign talent was required to compete in the modern economy.

In its current form, the program begins with an American company entering the chosen workers into a lottery which annually distributes 85,000 temporary visas, allowing the worker to remain in the U.S. for up to six years. During this time, many workers choose to

seek an employment-based green card, which allows for permanent residency by first being sponsored by their employers and then passing the country caps, which allot each country 7% of available green cards per year, to prevent countries from hogging every available green card.

In practice, this country cap creates decades-long backlogs for applicants from China and India, who make up the vast majority of applicants, while those from

SCIENCE & TECH



MICHAEL IM STAFF WRITER

other countries receive visas in just a few years. This problem is uniquely difficult for H-1B visas, as many other visas, like the O-1 and F-1 visas for nationally recognized talent and students respectively, are not subject to annual caps.

The vast majority of H-1B visa holders are

paid around 12% less than American-born workers on average.

Of the shortages that do exist, many are artificial. For example, Congress imposed a limit on residency programs for graduate medical students in 1997, artificially creating a shortage of physicians that the healthcare industry was quick to fill with H-1B holders. Since then, corporate lobbyists in Congress have maintained this limit, even as the industry grows, leaving foreign physicians as the only option.

"While I did not immigrate from a country with high green card demand, my experience with the H-1B program in the early 2000s was fairly smooth. The company that sponsored me took care of most of the logistics and paid for my legal fees until I acquired a green card. Nowadays, H-1B applications are contentious, without any time guarantees for approval. They create roadblocks for good engineers, even those who went to school in the U.S. I would rather see the existing system managed more effectively rather than expanded, as I do not buy that there is a domestic labor shortage in these industries," an anonymous tech worker said.

This dependence on H-1B holders has allowed companies to pay workers less, as the government-set "prevailing wage" (the minimum wage companies are required to pay foreign workers) is often less than the standard market rate. Additionally, these workers face significant hurdles when attempting to switch employers or negotiate higher wages, as their residency in the U.S. is dependent on the sponsorship of their current employers.

When combined, these two aspects of the H-1B visa program give employers a cheaper, more compliant source of competitive labor than domestic workers. In 2018, the Department of Labor found that Cloudwick Technologies Inc., a California based data service that had been subcontracted by a massive list of companies including Apple, Cisco and Comcast, had abused the H-1B visa system, promising Indian workers monthly wages of over \$8,000, but only paying as little as \$800 once the workers had been visaed.

These exploitative hiring practices are known to target Indian workers, partially because of the

sheer number of H-1B applicants from India, which is known for its focus on STEM education. Additionally, many companies have conspired to falsify certifications for H-1B visas and rig the lottery in favor of their own applicants by entering multiple lottery entries for the same worker. In 2008, a Citizenship and Immigration Services assessment found that 21.7% of all H-1B visa applications contained some form of fraud or technical violation.

politicians and pundits like Steve Bannon, Laura Loomer and Bernie Sanders have spoken out against H-1B visas, advocating for reforms and reducing the number of visas granted. Right-wing figures such as Loomer and Bannon claim that immigrants and CEOs have duped the MAGA movement into replacing American workers, while from the left, Sanders claims that billionaires have abused the program to lower labor costs at the expense of workers. Trump, who has emphasized the difference between legal and illegal immigration in his campaign rhetoric, has mostly sided with Musk, to the chagrin of many in his base.

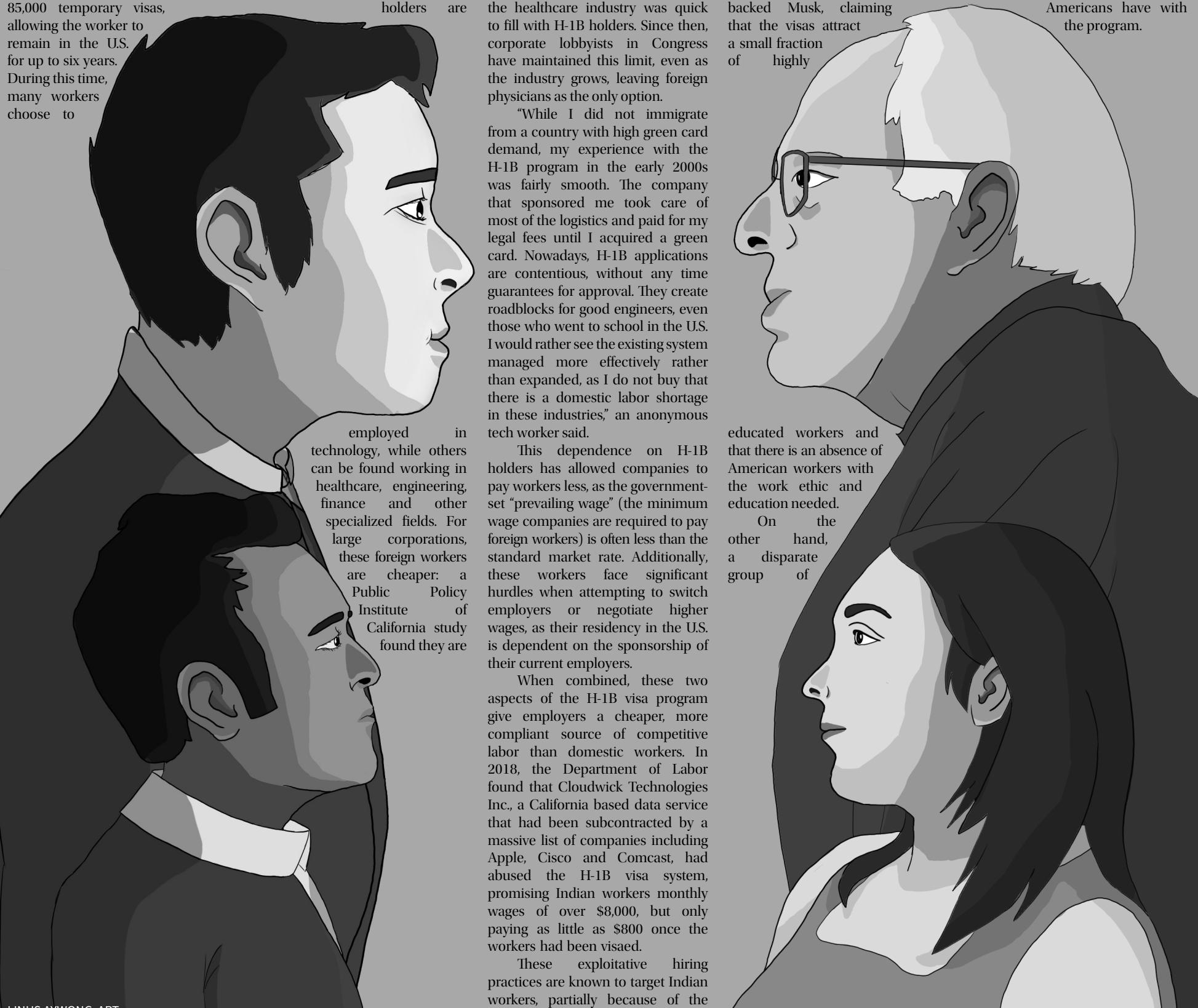
"The program needs to be reformed, as these H-1B visas are offering opportunities at the expense of Americans. American workers should always be prioritized and educating them should be our main focus when attempting to fill labor shortages," Junior Oliver Kutzler said.

This strange mix of conspiracies and personalities has marked this dispute since the beginning, with accusations primarily being lobbed on X or Truth Social. While the jury is still out on the future of the H-1B, this feud has shed light on many of the fundamental issues Americans have with the program.

employed in technology, while others can be found working in healthcare, engineering, finance and other specialized fields. For large corporations, these foreign workers are cheaper: a Public Policy Institute of California study found they are

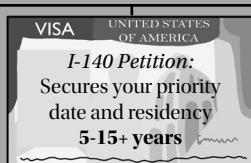
educated workers and that there is an absence of American workers with the work ethic and education needed.

On the other hand, a disparate group of



LINUS AYWONG ART

COMPILED BY ANDREW XIE STAFF WRITER





Chargers Clinch CCS Championship

TERESA SUN STAFF WRITER

With the game tied late into the fourth quarter, the crowds were tense as the two teams huddled and got into formation. The stadium lights lit up the football field like a stage as the ball was snapped, reflecting off of helmets as players darted around the field, their movements accompanied by the excited cheering from the stands. Suddenly, the spotlight shifted; the ball soared from the quarterback's hands into that of a running back, hidden in the shadows of the backfield. Weaving through the opposing team's defense, the running back burst into the endzone and the crowd erupted, even louder than before. Thanks to this late game strategy, the school's football team was able to beat Sequoia High School in the last moments of the game and bring home the CCS championship title.

The school showcased a three-headed rushing attack led by running backs **Hudson Vye** '25 and **Brady Hernandez** '25, along with quarterback **Jacob Gibson** '25, which played a crucial role in their late-season success. In their championship game against Sequoia, Gibson threw a 76-yard game-deciding touchdown pass to Vye in the fourth quarter, securing a 27-21 victory and the CCS Division V championship.

During the second half of the game, the school found themselves losing 21-15 after countless passes were completed by Sequoia running backs Jordan Crockett V and Randy Nunez. But with the help of their coaches, the team adapted accordingly by substituting out defensive players and being more aggressive.

"We said at halftime we were not going to lose to Crockett or Nunez. Make somebody else beat us," Coach **Kelly King Jr.**, Athletic Department, said.

This strategy worked in their favor, as the team held Sequoia scoreless over the final two quarters. They also intercepted Sequoia's first possession of the second half before marching 91 yards of 14 plays, which tied the teams 21-21. After Vye's touchdown reception, Sequoia was unable to come up with a big gainer like it did in the first half, and the school secured the win.

"After two tough seasons, a CCS title is what this program needed. It meant a lot to me since it is my last year here. Our next generation is losing a lot of seniors, but I have no doubt the team will be ready to get another title," **Kaleo Gonzalez** '25 said.

This win marked the school's fifth section championship. The team finished the season with an impressive overall record of 10-4 and a conference record of 4-1, coming in second in the league. This was a major improvement from last year's 4-8 record and 2-3 conference record, ranking the team fifth. One of the season's standout moments was their triumph in Battle of the Den, which was especially sweet after last year's loss.

Still, their victory at CCS was the most significant milestone for the team, marking their first title in over four decades with their last championship win occurring in 1972. The season ended with a tough loss at Nor-Cal regionals, but the team's spirit remained unbroken. The championship win, despite the Nor-Cals defeat, was a major accomplishment and source of pride for the team and their fans. Many players agreed that the close team connections were a main difference between the two seasons, which improved morale and kept players motivated to do better.

"Most of the team was made up of seniors, so we had to get our

boys a ring in their final year. I am very glad we got to play together as a team and build a connection with everyone throughout the season. The friendship that we created with each other was definitely a key reason why we were so successful this season," **Isaac Bybee-Del Real** '27 said.

The younger players also cite that their desire to win CCS championships for their senior team members drove them to train harder than previous seasons, their common interest forging strong bonds within the team. Unfortunately, with the season over, many seniors will bid farewell and leave their spots empty on the field.

"This year, the whole team grew much closer as a whole, and not just the players. The coaches connected with the players much better and team communication greatly improved. The previous season, we had come off a pretty bad loss, so we spent the offseason building off of that newfound dedication to do better. It felt cathartic to have our hard work pay off and to finally bring home a championship win after over 20 years," **Philip Arsintescu** '26 said.

The players and coaches are already setting their sights on next season, eager to build on the momentum of their championship-winning performance. With their impressive record and undeniable growth as a team, it is highly likely that they will move up a division, presenting new challenges and opportunities to prove themselves on an even bigger stage. Every grueling practice, every hard-fought game and every lesson learned along the way has shaped them into a stronger, more unified team. With their newfound teamwork and drive, the future of the school's football team looks promising.



ALL OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF SIERRA MEADE-PHAN

The team poses with their trophy after winning CCS.

DESIGN BY JAMES YU

SCOREBOARD

BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL - 1/29

	61-51	
Leland (13-0-8)		Lincoln (11-0-1)

GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL - 1/23
BATTLE OF THE DEN

	40-53	
Leland (4-0-14)		Pioneer (9-0-11)

BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL - 1/31

	54-34	
Leland (13-0-8)		Silver Creek (7-0-13)

GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL - 1/25

	55-59	
Leland (4-0-14)		Christopher (16-0-4)

BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL - 2/5

	50-45	
Leland (13-0-8)		Prospect (11-0-10)

GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER - 1/28
BATTLE OF THE DEN

	0-0	
Leland (8-2-5)		Pioneer (11-2-3)

BOY VARSITY SOCCER - 1/24

	1-0	
Leland (7-7-1)		Ann Sobrado (1-13-1)

GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER - 1/30

	1-0	
Leland (8-2-5)		Branham (12-2-4)

BOYS VARSITY SOCCER - 1/29

	2-1	
Leland (7-7-1)		Silver Creek (9-5-3)

GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER - 2/6

	5-0	
Leland (8-2-5)		Piedmont Hills (5-6-6)

The Death of Flash

- an early internet flashback -

AMIE AHN STAFF WRITER AND JAMES YU SPORTS EDITOR

The room is enveloped in a soothing silence as students click and clack on their keyboards. The colorful screens of bulky desktop monitors light up the space, and each screen displays a different game—Alien Hominid, Run 2 and Club Penguin. Many recall this unforgettable time of day of their childhood—computer class—as what they eagerly looked forward to every day in elementary school. In the 2000s, browser games, developed using Adobe Flash, peaked in popularity because of their casual gameplay and accessibility before being dethroned by modern digitally downloaded games and mobile games.

Despite their wide-variety of themes—gritty Age of War to cheerful Poptropica—all of these games were unified by one common platform: Adobe Flash. According to technology news organization TechMonitor, Flash was a widely used development platform software which allowed for online video streaming and gaming. Several common web browsers integrated support for Flash Player, which allowed browser game developers to easily update and manage the compatibility of their games. Flash gained popularity as a result of its usage by several popular early internet websites such as Newgrounds. Originally an entertainment website based on user-generated content, it became the first Flash-centered website in 1999 with the release of the Flash game “Pico’s School.”

“I loved playing Club Penguin growing up. The game’s free-to-play accessibility and easy-to-run online system allowed me to quickly immerse myself into the virtual penguin world,” Senior Songhee Rha said.

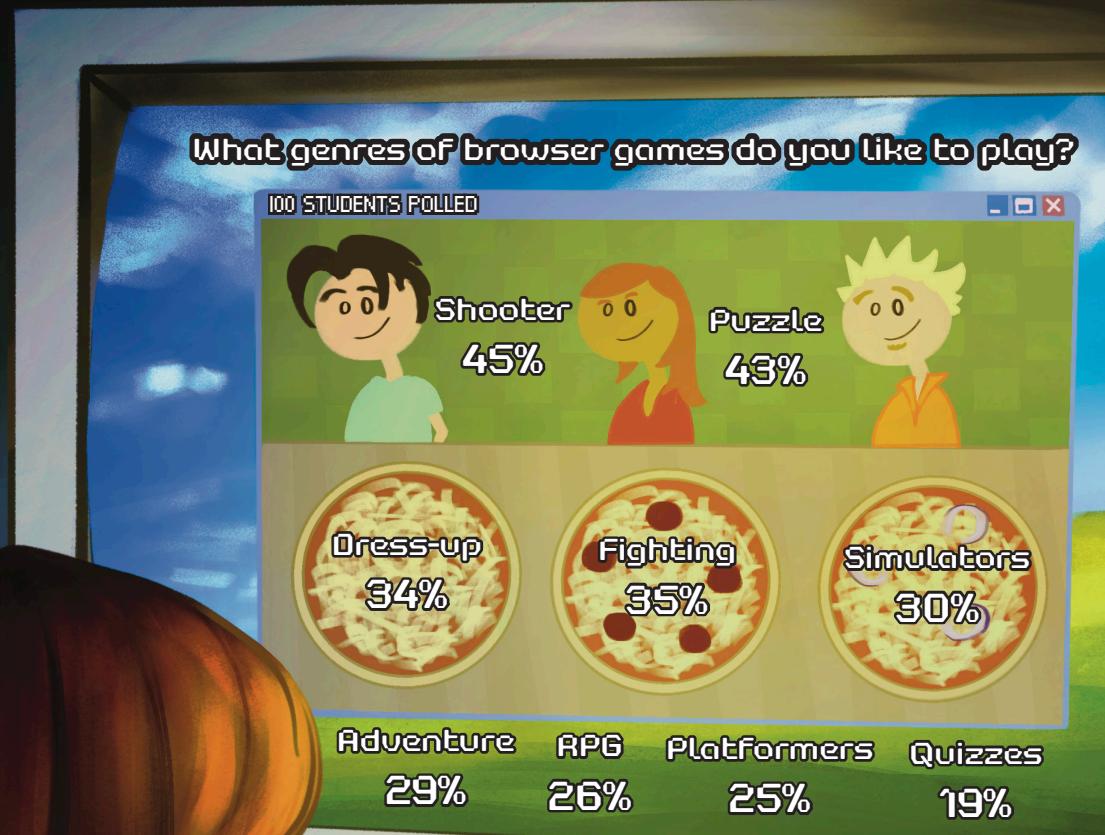
However, as the platform aged, Flash’s security issues and inefficient code increased concern. In 2010, Steve Jobs, then CEO of Apple, banned Adobe Flash Player from Apple mobile devices, noting the lack of stability, security and its high usage of battery power in his public letter “Thoughts on Flash.” While stopping support of a proprietary solution like Flash, Jobs promoted the open standard Hypertext Markup Language 5 (HTML5). HTML5, a more modern multimedia platform, beat Flash in performance and stability. Soon, HTML5 emerged as the main platform for new browser games, and eventually, Adobe ended support for Flash in 2020, rendering everything developed with it unusable.

By the time HTML5 was widely being used across many platforms for various web applications, smartphones came to be used by nearly everyone, including students and casual gamers. The advanced graphic capability and processing power of such smartphones were tremendously improved over older cell phones, making HTML5 an ideal platform for new games. Subsequently, games downloaded onto phones largely supplanted browser games as a form of casual fun.

“I prefer mobile games over browser games because of their better graphics and ease of access, including when playing offline. However, browser games are widely played in elementary schools because they are more convenient for younger kids without mobile devices,” Sophomore Krishay Madhav said.

In line with the transition to downloadable video games came the rise of video game marketplaces, such as game studio Valve’s “Steam,” which revolutionized the way gamers accessed their favorite titles. Starting in 2003 as a software service designed to control updates for Valve’s video games, Steam quickly found another use after the Steam marketplace was introduced in 2005. The marketplace offered users the ability to buy and play video games by other developers. While browser games do offer gamers a download-free experience, the marketplace allows gamers to easily access thousands of the most popular and performance demanding games all in a single convenient place. Indeed, today, Steam now boasts a peak of 38 million concurrent users per day, placing itself at the forefront of computer gaming.

But despite being overshadowed by more advanced technologies, Flash games are still valued by many individuals. Shortly after Adobe announced ending support for Flash in 2017, fans created the Flashpoint Archive, an archive dedicated to preserving browser games and making them playable even with the discontinuation of Flash Player. Although countless projects have become lost media, through this project, over 200,000 games and animations have been preserved and remain playable. Additionally, upon Flash’s termination in 2020, Flash games were often preserved by converting them to HTML5.



COMPILED BY CATHERINE NGUYEN AND SHINY XU

STAFF WRITERS