

# THE CHARGER ACCOUNT



SCAN FOR MORE ISSUES

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

Vol. W No. I

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

Design by Caitlynn Sue



## Back to School

Sophomores stand proudly in their white class shirts, excited to cheer on their peers participating in the rally games. At the first rally of the year, the sophomores won by one game with a score of 3-2 against the freshmen. Read more about the Olympic-themed rally, along with ASB's plan to combat declining school spirit culture on Page 2.

WEI WANG PHOTO

### Aviation Diversity Soars

ANNA YUE ENTERTAINMENT &amp; LIFESTYLE EDITOR

Tracks line the field. Planes zoom overhead. Drones circle the air. This is Reid-Hillview airport in East San Jose, home to the first non-profit aviation academy of the city: Hera School.

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### Doordash Drives Students Off Course

CHELSEA LU STAFF WRITER

A growling stomach, a ticking clock and a stalling lunch bell are all shared experiences among students. For some, relief is found in winding lunch lines; for others, it is in warm, home-cooked meals. However, for a special few, it takes place form of an unlikely savior—

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### SJUSD's Wake-Up Call

*A saga of mismanagement and denial*

THE CHARGER ACCOUNT EDITORIAL BOARD

DISTRICT ADRIFT, in all-caps, titles a new 41-page report on the woes of the school's very own San José Unified School District (SJUSD). The Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury's findings were published on June 10, outlining the persistent failures of the district leaders and Board of Trustees to provide staff and students with expected resources.

SJUSD is the largest district in Santa Clara County, but its mismanagement issues and failures to effectively serve its students are reflected in many facets of its governance. For one, it has the highest staff turnover rate out of any school district in the county; the Grand Jury reports that more than half of the school's principals have served for just two years or fewer. Although SJUSD attributes these losses to COVID burnout and administrators seeking higher-paying jobs, the report highlights a toxic workplace culture as the main source of resignations, creating a culture where critical issues affecting SJUSD students often go unaddressed.

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### School Alumna's Olympic Debut

CLAIREE CHANG INVESTIGATIVE REPORT EDITOR

As the opponent splashes water into her face, a determined water polo player skillfully shoots a goal right as the referee blows the whistle. The crowd roars, and the player immediately relocates

herself in the pool to prepare for the next play. Leland alumna Jenna Flynn, who previously played for the school's varsity water polo team, has scored another point for Team USA at the Paris Olympics.

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41% of employees have reported that the district's culture is one of distrust, and 33% of long serving administrators feel afraid to speak out against problematic policies, creating a culture where critical issues affecting SJUSD students often go unaddressed.

The district has also lagged behind in addressing its students' mental health concerns. The report claims that, of SJUSD's 41 schools, only one has an open wellness center for students. Additionally, instead of hiring new staff, the Grand Jury criticizes the district's plans to simply add wellness center responsibilities to existing employees as it further stretches already minimal resources. Disorganization is rampant as well—safety responses are not standardized throughout the district, and employee misconduct investigations are mismanaged. In one case, hundreds of thousands of dollars were stolen from a parent organization over the span of four years, yet SJUSD refused to investigate entirely. If their students' academic success is truly the district's main goal—as it should be—they must be held accountable for such oversights.

SJUSD has also ignored the concerns of its community; it took no action on a petition signed by 300 concerned parents about school safety in May 2023. Furthermore, its board meetings remain difficult to access—only audio recordings are released, and the meetings are not livestreamed nor uploaded in video-format. Not all parents can attend in-person meetings, but this is no excuse to silence their voices by making online participation impossible. Virtual meeting tools are streamlined, so SJUSD could easily introduce these. Both parents and students must increase pressure on the district to be more transparent.

SJUSD responded to the report on July 24 with a 24-page document, claiming that the Grand Jury lacked concrete evidence and examples. The district highlighted how their approach already accounted for many of the shortcomings they were accused of. For example, they explained that all schools have counseling and health services in place, and four are scheduled to implement wellness centers this school year. SJUSD does not plan to carry out most of the Grand Jury's nine recommendations, but they will partially implement one: improving staff training on preventing opioid overdose, as the Grand Jury reported that the district is one of very few that has yet to stock Narcan, an essential drug in combating the urgent opioid crisis.

Yet ignoring the county's recommendations is not enough. The district must take actionable steps to improve upon its shortcomings, as even small mistakes impact thousands of students. By attending public schools, students and families place trust in the district—this trust needs to be respected by SJUSD, both to justify the taxpayer's dollar and the rights of students and staff.

DESIGN BY ELEANOR GIL

## Olympic Rally Attempts to Spark School Spirit

LAUREN LAW STAFF WRITER

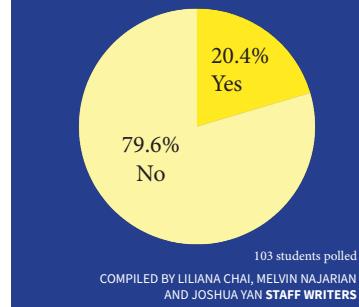
**T**he gymnasium buzzed with excitement as students and faculty piled in. Rhythmic hand claps and cheers from the stands filled the air, rising to the ceiling, where Olympic-themed banners illustrating various sports hung. Students' chants echoed off the walls at the first rally of the school year, the perfect opportunity for Chargers to come together and strengthen school spirit.

The rally took place on Aug. 23 and was Olympic themed in honor of the Paris Olympics this year. Participants could compete in games such as an Olympic relay, musical chairs, "Just Dance," tug-of-war and finish the lyrics. The gymnasium was embellished with decorations based on the Olympics such as a replica of the five interlocking Olympic circles in the center, along with themed posters for each grade.

According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals, participating in school events and pep rallies helps students relieve stress and take a break from academic pressure. Furthermore, rallies bring students with different interests together, fostering a more unified circle both inside and outside of the classroom. Rally games not only strengthen teamwork between the participants, but also promote school pride as students cheer on their respective class from the sidelines. A Harris Polls survey of 1,300 students found that 75% of students who were perceived

to have the most school spirit performed better academically, and nearly 90% of those students felt more connected to their school and classmates and happy about coming to school in general.

### Have You Ever Participated in a School Rally Game?



However, at the school, many students have reported a lack of enthusiasm for spirited events, which can be attributed to negative opinions about school; students often feel stressed by their course load and associate school with long, tiring hours of work. Many students reported that when they were swamped with work, they did not feel motivated to participate in spirit events. Students like Freshman Venice Lu are also reluctant to join because they are afraid of embarrassing themselves.

"I wanted to participate in the rally games, but I was scared that people would make fun of me for dressing up and showing school spirit. My friends, who chose to participate, enjoyed the games, but I am unsure if I myself will participate in the future," Lu said.

On the other hand, students like Junior Brady Kramer were considering participating but simply forgot to sign up.

"At the first rally, we did not get the number of game signups we wanted, so we decided to pick students from the crowd randomly to increase overall spirit and participation. School spirit has definitely been going down at the school, so our plan this year is to take things back to the basics," ASB President, Senior Jeffrey Tseng, said.

Tseng explained that ASB's word of the year is "elementary" because their goal is to make things easier and more "elementary" to rebuild school spirit from the bottom up. Thus, ASB plans to incorporate simpler, more popular spirit days before hosting complex activities.

Regardless, students who participated in the games enjoyed the overall experience. For

example, in the "Just Dance" game, students went head to head, dancing against each other while the crowd cheered them on from behind.

"I thought it would be fun to participate in 'Just Dance.' My favorite part was how everyone got super excited and cheered for their classmates to win. The team spirit really made the school feel more connected," Freshman Logan Derse said.

Partaking in rally games creates a positive atmosphere of school unification, reduces stress and allows students to connect with their classmates. As participation in the school's rallies declines, ASB has implemented strategies to revive spirit and has focused on fundamental yet engaging activities with the hope that school spirit and pride, along with the student body, will continue to prosper and create lasting memories.



WEI WANG PHOTO

## New Budget Improves School Facilities

CHELSEA LU AND SHINY XU STAFF WRITERS

**R**eturning students may have noticed the upgrades the school received this year, with sleek new golf carts dashing around and fresh synthetic floors in many classrooms. Ranging from the new floors to upgraded classroom technology, these renovations intend to create an effective learning environment for students to reach their full potential.

According to Principal Harveen Bal, the school has a School Plan for Student Achievements (SPSA): a strategic action plan that details school goals, along with the amount of money needed to help fulfill these critical needs. Last school year, one major goal was supporting student engagement, providing social education learning, expanding extracurricular opportunities and increasing participation in athletic events, while the budget was set to \$39,449. The school will present the SPSA for this year to the School Site Council on Sept. 25, and the council, made up of parents, teachers, students and administrators at the school, must approve of where the money is going. Once the council approves the budget, it can receive funding either from the district or from ASB and its related organizations.

Each year, the school receives a set amount of money from the San José Unified School District (SJUSD), who controls funding and matches

resources to needs. SJUSD is a basic aid district, meaning the funding it has is based completely upon property tax. According to the Orange County Department of Education Newsroom, Proposition 98 mandates that 40% of California's budget must be designated for schools and education programs.

On the other hand, ASB is in charge of the money that comes from the Student Bank. ASB manages a separate budget from the school, overseeing all clubs and classes such as Journalism and Yearbook. Money raised from Vertical Raise or boba fundraisers go directly to the ASB account of the club that is hosting them.

Beyond district funding, school-affiliated organizations such as Leland Parent Club and Leland Bridge provide donations as well. Originally, these organizations would provide a hundred dollars to each teacher for classroom resources, but it was difficult for the teachers to buy anything with the given amount. As a result, they now fund budgets for the different departments, rather than individual teachers—with departments receiving between five to ten thousand dollars to support the teachers. For example, when Multimedia needed more computers with access to Adobe Creative Cloud, Leland Parent Club and Leland Bridge bought 15 iMacs through donations; this year, they gifted the school new golf carts and paid for teachers' summer training.

Furthermore, state-wide propositions may directly establish budgets for specific education areas. A new boost to this year's budget comes from Proposition 28, an initiative passed by California to improve arts and music funding in

schools and support art and music education. As a result, the school will receive \$38,000 for the Visual and Performing Arts Department, which will go toward repairing or replacing instruments.

"I am really excited about this new funding because the students who borrow instruments from school can finally receive newer ones. Sometimes the school doesn't have the resources to fix instruments, so students have to either play on an old one or wait for a really long time to get it fixed," Sophomore Sarah Li, school orchestra member, said.

So far, the school's overall budget has been used for projects such as remodeling the gym, classroom flooring and roofing. During fall break, plans are in place to remodel the weight room flooring as well. The school does its best to use its money to go towards its specific educational goals, though some students would like to see the budget go towards other places.

"The school should work on funding student events more efficiently. Tickets for Homecoming and other dances are expensive yet relatively overwhelming to me; the high ticket prices should mean a better experience," Junior Pargol Kouchesfahani said.

Each year, much goes on behind the scenes to establish a sufficient school budget, which is critical to maintain a high-quality education. Through strategic allocation and use of the resources, administrators, teachers, parents and students themselves can provide students with the tools necessary to flourish.



# Aviation Diversity Soars

ANNA YUE ENTERTAINMENT &amp; LIFESTYLE EDITOR

*Continued from Front Page:*

Motivated by her lack of opportunities and resources as a woman in aviation, Michelle Galvis co-founded Hera School with her uncle in October 2023. She hoped to increase participation in the aviation field for marginalized youth such as women and people of color; Pilot Institute reports that only 9.57% of the total pilot demographic are women—and only 10.7% of aircraft pilots and flight engineers are Hispanic or Latino, per the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. To combat this discrepancy, Hera School boasts a fully funded program for low-income students who wish to obtain their private pilot's license; the first classes began in June.

Galvis began her flight journey in 2019 when her uncle, George Rodriguez, introduced her to flying and sponsored her private pilot license. As Galvis continued to fly, she noticed the lack of gender diversity in her field, leading to her dream of opening her own flight school.

"While my uncle gave me the opportunity to fly when I was still young, I wished I would

have started earlier. In high school, I had never seen women pilots, so I did not realize this was a career option I could pursue. With the opening of Hera School, I wanted to give back to the community and teach girls how to fly for free so they could be aware of this career option," Galvis said.

Aside from their youth program, Hera School also hosts additional programs for adults. Galvis described how the school's drone programs and private pilot license lessons only require adult students to pay for instructor and oil replacement costs, significantly lowering the high price of entering the aviation field.

"We are trying to show the community that you can use this airport as an opportunity and a springboard for your career, not just to be a pilot but also an airplane mechanic and a drone flier. We consider ourselves the bridge between aviation and the community, demonstrating how they can be mutually beneficial," Galvis said.

Students like Sofie Beard, a 16-year-old Hera School student in her junior year at Abraham Lincoln High School, recognize Hera School's valuable education.

"Hera School is such a unique experience. I love how easy it is to connect with Michelle because she is a woman and a pilot."

"Even after being a part of the aviation world for so long, I still rarely meet other female pilots. Although I am not a part of Hera School, encouraging female minorities to fly while alleviating the high expenses could be a major step towards empowering women in a historically male-dominated field," Daley said.

powerful and reliable airplane had cost \$130,000 and regular maintenance consisting of monthly oil changes, inspections and annual examinations results in an additional \$15,000 per year.

However, the school continues to seek grants and sponsorships, and Galvis persists on installing

improvements, which include buying another airplane for instruction, establishing an electronics library to lend to students and developing a transportation system between high schools and the aviation academy.

"Through our programs, I want girls to understand: this industry is for you too. It may seem like an overwhelming mountain, but

Galvis continues to inspire the next generation with her story and her school. However, her journey is not one without struggles. Starting up as a non-profit, all of Hera School's materials—including their plane—are being paid out of pocket by Galvis and Rodriguez; purchasing a more

coming from someone who has just put one foot in front of the other, you can do it too. You can put yourself through school while climbing the ladder in aviation. Do not feel intimidated. Some people say women make better pilots anyway," Galvis said.



Deepening my introductory insights into flying through structured learning brings me more confidence when I introduce myself as a flier," Beard said.

DANA LIM ART

# Refining Richmond's Environment

AMIE AHN STAFF WRITER

**U**p on looking out onto the horizon, Richmond residents catch sight of a gray, polluted sky—the result of smog blowing from smokestacks at the Chevron oil refinery looming over the city. Yet reparations are being made: on Aug. 14, the Richmond city council unanimously agreed to a \$550 million settlement with Chevron so the company could pay for the heavy air pollution inflicted on the citizens.

The settlement money will replace a proposed tax that would have required drivers resupplying their gas at a Chevron gas station to pay an additional sum of money. Chevron expressed disapproval; instead, beginning in July next year, the company will make \$50 million payments annually to the city, increasing to \$60 million annually after five years. This money will go into Richmond's general community fund.

"The money should have a definite purpose, either for environmental purposes or for raising public awareness about the harms of the factory. If it

sits in the city funds with no immediate or clear use, it may fall into the hands of corruption," Junior Daniel Xu said.

Chevron, a private energy company specializing in gas and oil, operates gas stations in over 180 countries. Its refinery in Richmond serves as the city's largest employer and source of tax revenue. However, the factory poses a threat to residents of the city; a 2012 fire forced 15,000 residents to seek medical care due to respiratory issues.

Along with the harmful impact of these oil accidents, the smoke led to a prominent uptick in respiratory illness and cancer in Richmond residents, per Natural Resources Defense Council—five to 11 premature deaths occur each year due to factory emissions and the asthma rates for Richmond are higher than 90% of other Californians, according to state data. Furthermore, one in every four children growing up in Richmond develop asthma. However, minority groups are

more vulnerable to health threats imposed by the factory; due to historical redlining, the refinery was established near low-income communities of color. Additionally, local news reports have little coverage on oil accidents at the plant because "The Richmond Standard," the primary newspaper of the city, is owned by Chevron.

"Private institutions should not be allowed to own news companies because it will inevitably lead to bias, benefitting their personal agendas. Such bias could be prevented by having articles peer reviewed and fact checked by journalists unaffiliated with the company," Sophomore Trisha Harish said.

As a result of media censorship, Richmond city people commonly rely on each other for accurate information. Accordingly, residents spoke out against Chevron the

most through protests and organizations. For example, the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, a group that advocates environmental justice for the Laotian community in Richmond, succeeded in securing a multilingual warning system for the refinery on top of initially proposing the refinery tax.

After decades of environmental harm, Chevron's settlement has the potential to improve health conditions and contribute to environmental restoration. This could mark the beginning of a cleaner city for all Richmond residents, including those of historically discriminated communities.



DESIGN BY GWEN CARROLL



## 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](http://thechargeraccount.com)

### EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

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Jay Li  
Kyan Wang  
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Lauren Law  
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Chelsea Lu  
Srihita Madiraju

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James Tong  
Andrew Xie  
Shiny Xu  
Joshua Yan

**ARTISTS**  
Yunseo Kim  
Ryan Park  
Helen Ruan  
Eleanor Wang  
Mingyue Xiao  
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**PHOTOGRAPHERS**  
Reeve Chan  
Chaerin Kang  
Wei Wang

**MEDIA TEAM**  
Alexa Joseph  
Shirin Moaledj  
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## OPINIONS

## THE CHARGER ACCOUNT

# Breaking Limits: Raygun's Olympic Debut

WINSTON CHU AND ANDREW XIE STAFF WRITERS

Enter Rachel Gunn: hopping like a kangaroo and crawling on the floor, she represented Australia in the 2024 Olympics for its brand new official sport: breaking. Gunn was met with tar and feathers: memes, criticism and rumors about her qualification spread like wildfire. However, Gunn, who goes by Raygun in the dance scene, was misunderstood by many who thought her display was a mockery of breaking culture when she aimed to display creativity on the world's biggest stage.

Breaking is an energetic style of street dance characterized by stylish footwork and acrobatic movements. Originating in the Bronx, New York, it was created by African American and Latino youth in the 70s during the age of hip-hop as a way to express themselves. Breaking's Olympic debut in the 2024 Paris Games followed its success at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires, where the fusion of dance, sport and urban culture made it a fan-favorite for younger audiences.



JANE HONG ART

However, the topic that dominated the center of attention at the Paris games was not breaking's premiere, but Rachel Gunn's performance at the event—her unconventional routine landing her three consecutive losses.

Gunn is an Australian break dancer who obtained a PhD in cultural studies, focusing on breakdance cultural theory. When the Olympics started, she quickly went viral for her routine. Her signature moves, which included "the sprinkler" and "the kangaroo," generated memes and attracted ridicule from all over the internet. There were complaints of cultural

appropriation as Raygun's unorthodox routine was seen as mocking breaking's roots in African-American and Latino culture. Other critics argued that Raygun's performance did not represent breaking, believing she was toying with the culture during a significant moment for the sport.

"I was flabbergasted by Gunn's performance as I did not expect such a silly routine at a competition as renowned as the Olympics. I have seen many extremely impressive breaking routines, and her performance was not up to par to the high standards of the competition," Sophomore **Kyu Won Yeom** said.



COMPILED BY WINSTON CHU, JAMES TONG AND SHINY XU STAFF WRITERS

## The Hidden Divide in Feminism

GWEN CARROLL COMMUNITY NEWS & LAST WORD EDITOR

From feminists flooding X, formerly Twitter, with #MeToo posts to marching against Roe v. Wade's overturning, today's feminist movements have evolved and adapted to the modern world. Even so, feminism retains its original ideals: the pursuit of equality, desire to be heard and, unsurprisingly, racism.

The feminist movement has a long history of excluding marginalized women in a trend known as white feminism: the tendency of feminists to prioritize progress for white women while failing to consider the differing needs of women of color—although "failing to consider" can refer to anything from ignorance to outright animosity.

A prime historical example of white feminism would be the Seneca Falls Convention. While widely regarded as a significant step towards gender equality and women's suffrage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the most influential speakers at the convention, never intended to include women of color in the fight, nor was she shy about announcing so. To an audience of white men and women—women of color were excluded—Stanton declared that only white women deserved to vote, since other races were of "lower orders" than "educated, refined"

white women, according to History.com. And yet, the racist overtones of the Seneca Falls convention are not properly taught in schools, buried in favor of promoting the white feminism the convention was based upon.

"I took AP English Language and Composition and AP U.S. History, both of which taught the Seneca Falls Convention as a significant milestone for the feminist movement. We were never taught the convention's promotion of racist ideas or the exclusion of women of color," Senior **Niharika Roy Choudhury** said.

Although the Seneca Falls convention happened in 1848, white feminism persists. Modern political views in white-dominated countries reflect the white feminist idea that white women should hold decision-making power over women of color. France makes itself a notable example, with its bans on hijabs in schools and the Paris Olympics. For many Muslim women, the hijab is a form of religious expression—not the tool of misogynistic oppression that many policymakers treat it as. The so-called "feminist" movement against

hijabs is not done out of solidarity but out of ignorance and white saviorism, crowding out Muslim women from influencing these policy decisions. It is not feminist at all, as it only serves to oppress Muslim women further under the false guise of freedom.

Indeed, white feminism was never about uplifting women out of a misogynistic system, but rather winning within it, a task that is significantly easier for white women than women of color. The #girlboss trend-turned-culture that swept social media highlights this disparity well, as the idea of a woman being the breadwinner is far less reasonable for women of color, who face extra discrimination in the workplace. It romanticizes the idea of conforming to traditional ideas of success that favor white people over people of color. Rather than focus on escaping the traditional misogynist system, aiming to "win"

within it naturally means there must be losers as well—who end up being women of color.

"A 'girlboss' does not have a certain appearance, instead the term entails a woman who is self-confident and powerful. The most important part of a woman being strong is not her appearance or race but her mindset," Freshman **Ling Wei Li** said.

Ultimately, white feminism is just another form of racism masquerading as an uplifting movement. What feminism needs is intersectionality, which allows women to express their cultures instead of conforming to a white idea of acceptable womanhood. Women are no monolith, and feminism must fight the notion rather than continue to build one around the white experience.

DESIGN BY CAITLYNN SUE



ELEANOR WANG ART

# Silence: A New Campus Trend

DESIGN BY ANDREW DUVAL

MELVIN NAJARIAN STAFF WRITER

Throughout history, college students have defended their stance on social justice and political ideologies through demonstrations and protests, often held directly on campuses. But colleges have not always been a safe haven for student activism—demonstrations against the Gulf War and Vietnam War became bloody, and Civil Rights and Israel-Hamas protests ended in mass arrests.

Colleges have long served as a place for students to express their opinions, especially political ones. However, today, students' self-expression seems to be decreasing. A recent study shows that 52% of college students express concern about voicing their political views, emphasizing issues related to freedom of speech in higher education and citing fear of loss of respect among professors and peers, or possible effects on grades. The U.S. politically has been more divided now than the past two decades. According to a Pew Research Center survey, 36% of Republicans consider Democrats to threaten the welfare of the country. Hence, it is crucial for college students to have the opportunity to openly express their political opinions and peacefully protest.

The Oct. 7 attack on Israel sparked a rise in political activism among college students across the nation. Those receiving the most national attention were protests at UCLA and Columbia University, where students demanded an immediate ceasefire and an end to US aid to Israel. In UCLA, law enforcement cleared out roughly 100 protesters and arrested 27 protesters due

to campus policy violations and vandalism, per Rick Braziel, UCLA's Associate Vice Chancellor for campus safety. Similarly, at Columbia, over 100 students were arrested after just one day of pro-Palestine student encampments.

These crackdowns and arrests are an infringement of freedom of assembly, a right held dear in this nation. All forms of nonviolent demonstrations, whether in support of Palestine or Israel, should be allowed without disruption and authorities involved. College institutions used to champion the idea of self-expression, a battle for a better and more peaceful society, have been now betraying the values that they use to uphold.

"When campuses call police to quell protests, constitutional rights are limited and students are prevented from peacefully spreading awareness of pressing current events. Even worse, when they involve

law enforcement, it directly disincentivizes future protests by threatening students, likewise suppressing the engagement of younger demographics in our political system," Junior **Raahil Sengupta** said.

Elite colleges have established strict speech codes to regulate student debates on possibly offensive or controversial topics, aiming to create a more less controversial environment. For instance, Harvard has established campus speech codes, yet their wording remains vague. The vague language allows the administration to impose restrictions on students speech according to their own preferences, silencing students' voices and discouraging debates on contentious topics. Elite universities have also begun restricting debates on controversial topics or limiting the participation of guests with differing views from the students and the college's

political stance. Dorian Abbot, a geophysicist at the University of Chicago was originally a guest speaker on climate change at MIT, but was uninvited because of his criticism of affirmative action. MIT graduate students and many faculty members felt that Abbot's words against affirmative action had caused controversy, prompting the university to cancel the invitation. The move ignores the intellectual input Abbot could have contributed to scientific discourse within the student body, instead choosing to focus on the professor's personal opinions on an entirely irrelevant issue.

"Diverse viewpoints are necessary for everyone to discover many perspectives and see the world through a wider lens. By sharing these different perspectives, we learn to respect and accept one another, which can bring us together towards more effective solutions to our world's problems," Senior **Amber Lee** said.

College campuses have endured protests from students that attempted to bring change to social and political issues nationally and globally. Within higher education, creating an environment where controversial topics are debated respectfully and institutions are challenged and questioned is vital to create positive change. Through having an open dialogue and understanding how to have peaceful discussion with opposing viewpoints, society can grow and work collectively, ultimately guiding the nation as a whole toward a more promising future.



LYN KANG ART

## The Road Ahead For America's Car Culture

JAMES TONG STAFF WRITER

Since the launch of the Model T Ford in 1908, over 15 million personal automobiles were brought onto American roads in only two decades. As cars transitioned away from being an exclusive luxury, road systems expanded to the new growing industry. America's transportation is driven by its car-centric culture, but there is a changing preference toward developing an extensive public

transit system. Despite the downsides to our society which relies on cars, the infrastructure it has shaped for America remains suited to our dynamic daily lives.

In 1982, car manufacturing provided the most job opportunities for Americans and automobiles had become the center of American consumerism. Prior to the introduction of mass-produced cars in the U.S., trains were the primary long-distance transport method and cities were designed to be easy to navigate by foot. Although Ford's mass production innovations were a major factor in car-centric culture, General Motors systematically bought public rail transportation options and removed them to increase the market for the automotive industry which directly led to more paved roads.

The widespread preference for personal vehicles ultimately fueled the automotive industry in America and began the transformation of its infrastructure to accommodate for the influx of automobiles. The convenience of personal vehicles led Americans to move out of

cities and assisted in connecting rural areas.

Suburban neighborhoods developed as a result of car culture—it allowed people to live in low density residential areas while being able to get to work in cities. Rural areas, especially in the Midwest, benefit greatly from owning personal cars. As such, owning personal vehicles provides the freedom needed to keep up with the pace of daily errands in these large, spread-out communities.

"Although I've never used public transportation because I've heard it to be unsanitary and slow, it is effective at accommodating those who may not be able to drive," Sophomore **Nathan Varshavsky** said.

Conversely, a car-oriented infrastructure has its obvious drawbacks: traffic congestion, urban sprawl, ineffective land use and massively increased greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, the U.S. car infrastructure has also harmed underrepresented communities in the form of highways. In the mid 1900's during segregation, highway developments were sometimes purposefully routed through minority communities and used as racial zoning. The U.S. should invest in moving these highways away from residential neighborhoods and revamp city road networks to solve both community separation complications and traffic.

Granted that the car culture results in high emissions, the U.S. economy is heavily dependent on gasoline. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity, automobiles were classified as the top four exports and the top

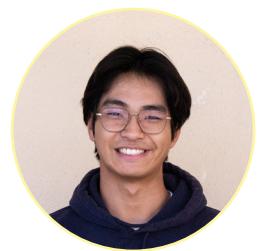
two imports of the U.S. in 2022. If America switches against individual transportation, not only would the economy be majorly impacted—as both the automobile and petroleum industries are cornerstone to the American economy—but over 4 million Americans will also lose their jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Furthermore, the replacement of roads and implementation of rail is not feasible at this scale. Unlike the transit that is widely used in European countries, the U.S. is much larger and has widespread rural areas. Infrastructure in smaller countries cannot simply be magnified to fit in the complex U.S. transportation networks.

"I use my car every day to get to my swim practices and to work so I never need to take public transit. However, my grandmother lives downtown, so she often takes the light rail when she visits because it is convenient for her," Junior **Leonardo Yousefpor** said.

The infrastructure the car-centric culture has shaped for America remains suited to our fast-paced daily lives. While emission rates are undesirable, the U.S. economy is heavily dependent on the automobile and petroleum industries and a switch towards a public transit oriented society is impractical not only economically but also logically. Moreover, the implementation of public transportation is unrealistic at this immense scale as it is used everyday for almost every American. For these reasons, the U.S. should instead invest in road systems and improving traffic rather than trying to promote public transit against an already extensive car culture.

## "14minutes"



JAMES YU SPORTS EDITOR

Confusion is an infuriating feeling; it presents no pathway for rejoinder. As artists experiment with increasingly complex themes, the substance of their music is often obscured by unnecessary lengths in order to flesh out the music's message, confusing listeners. However, Dominic Fike breaks this trend with his most recent album "14minutes," presenting 14 delightful minutes of solemn sunny ballads and on-brand energetic summer tunes for which he is renowned.

Opening with a somber guitar instrumental and muffled vocal performance in "megaman," "hi grace" and "1.23.23," Fike settles listeners into the tranquil nature of the album—a drastic departure from his previous "Sunburn" and "What Could Possibly Go Wrong," which largely consisted of lively pop anthems. Employing static vocal ad-libs and rhythmic drums, Fike twists the formulaic summer hit on its head by using relaxed melodies to form cohesive sentimental yet vibrant songs. Although the identical themes present between the first three songs would come off as repetitive on another album, their brief runtime prevents the tracks from growing stale.

Diverging from the uniform sound catalog established from the previous songs, "THICKRICK" calls forth a contrast of heavy, metallic instrumental strums on top of melodic guitar riff, invoking a unique, soothing, yet confident presence for listeners to enjoy.

Returning to the calm norm established in the first three songs, "bowie box" heavily utilizes his angelic vocals to direct his guitar's energetic emotional rays. As one of the last restful songs in the tracklist, "bowie box" delivers a final hurrah for the experimental serenity Fike spread throughout the project.

Turning up the pace, "misses" forwards an upbeat humming instrumental with syncopated drums and strident singing to formulate a romantic summer groove. The song's melancholy cheerfulness invokes feelings of playful nostalgia. Borrowing the muffled vocals of previous songs, "to say to say" mixes the singing with a bouncy yet ariose guitar and drum instrumental. Although the guitar solos fit together well with Fike's vocals, the muffled singing vocals, which throughout the song comes off a bit tinny, giving a lackluster finish-line approach to what is overall an overall consistently good album.

Closing the album out, "coast2coast" unleashes the guitar riffs for the magnum opus: "14minutes." "coast2coast's" bright instrumental blends well with Fike's sporty singing, culminating in a clear, invigorating hymn which leaves listeners in confusion over why the album is only 14 minutes.

was I vibin'?

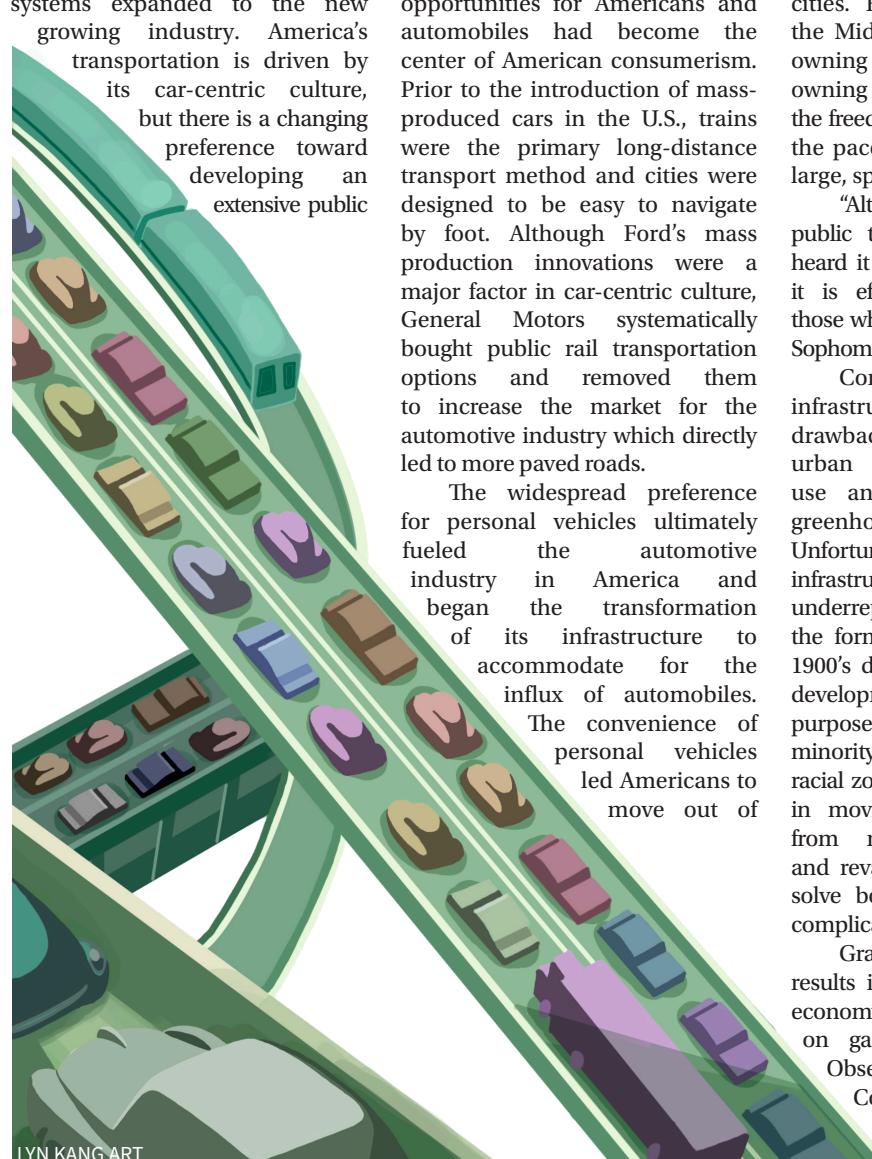
(5/5)



+ upfront instrumentals

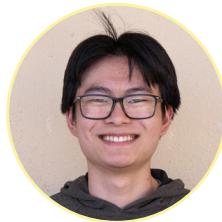
+ vibrant vocal range

- short run time



LYN KANG ART

## "Didi"



WINSTON CHU STAFF WRITER

Normally, coming-of-age movies are a hard pass, always featuring the same corny clichés and stereotypes. But "Didi" was anything but a typical coming-of-age movie. The comedic drama presents a story that is captivating and relatable to teens, adults and parents alike.

"Didi" follows 13-year-old Chris Wang as he navigates his last summer before high school. Yet in the summer of 2008, Chris battles more than just pre-high school anxiety. Growing up Asian-American in Fremont, he struggles to find friends he can truly trust. He struggles with his older sister leaving for college. And of course, the pinnacle of growing up Asian in the Bay Area, he struggles with the high academic expectations of his mother.

However, unlike other movies with similar motifs, Didi is written accurately because it avoids over-dramatizing the interactions between family and friends. The bond between Chris and his sister Vivian feels genuine, depicting not only their petty conflicts, but also their heartwarming sibling relationship that grows between them as Vivian goes off to college. The anger and hurt children feel when parents compare them to others is also captured all too well through passive aggressive dialogues.

Didi can also resonate with parents. Exploring the fine line between supporting children and controlling their actions, adults are likely to rethink their relationships with their sons and daughters after watching the film. Similarly, while watching Chris's frustrated mother explain how she truly feels about her kids, children can empathize with the arduous challenges of parenting.

Director Sean Wang masterfully maintains balance throughout the film. The hilarious and heartbreaking moments complement each other, and all the characters are beautifully fleshed out; their stories unite like a puzzle to tell a complex tale. Set in the late 2000s, the film also skillfully captures the trends of the era, such as Myspace, YouTube and camcorders, allowing viewers to see the same struggles teens today face from a different perspective.

Whether you are going to laugh or shed a tear while watching "Didi"—or, probably, do both—it is certain to prompt a relevant and nostalgic reflection on your teenage years and family.

showstopper or snoozefest?

(4/5)

- - 
  - 
  - 
  -
- + great variety of humor  
+ creative cinematography  
- unsuitable for young audiences

The movie adaptation of Colleen Hoover's popular romance novel "It Ends with Us" released in theaters on Aug. 9. However, many fans are criticizing Blake Lively—who plays main character Lily Bloom—for publicly ignoring serious themes present in the film.

"It Ends with Us" follows Bloom as she moves to Boston to pursue her career as a florist. There, she meets and falls in love with a neurosurgeon, Ryle Kincaid. However, as their relationship blossoms, Ryle's dark and violent side is revealed. At the same time, Lily reconnects with Atlas Corrigan—her first love. Stuck between lovers, Lily faces the difficult decision between staying with Ryle or leaving him and breaking a cycle of abuse.

The novel "It Ends with Us" received skyrocketing popularity from the "#BookTok" community on TikTok when it was released in 2021; fans resonated with the heavy themes and new perspectives on abusive relationships. On the surface, the novel details the unavoidable threat of domestic abuse through out Lily's life, yet it also highlights themes of empowerment, resilience and courage.

Despite receiving extensive praise, many have accused "It Ends with Us" of glamorizing domestic abuse. For example, Hoover released an "It Ends with Us" coloring book last year, which critics argued inappropriately trivialized the serious issues in the novel by making light of trauma. Additionally, according to Bristol Film Fest, Hoover's son Levi faced

sexual harassment allegations in 2022; Hoover received backlash for failing to adequately address these allegations. In spite of the controversy, Sony Pictures still adapted "It Ends with Us" into a movie which has grossed \$206.7 million worldwide since its release.

Lively's co-star Justin Baldoni, who played the role of Ryle, also directed the film. However, Lively and Baldoni promoted the movie in completely contrasting tones; the two did not appear for promotional interviews together and were never photographed with each other. This unusual distance led to questions about whether there were tensions on set.

In Lively's interviews during her press tour, she brushed over themes of abuse and instead promoted her husband Ryan Reynolds's new movie, "Deadpool and Wolverine," as well as Blake Brown, her haircare company. Lively encouraged audiences to watch the film with their friends while wearing floral outfits, marketing the movie as a lighthearted romance. In an interview with Jake's Takes, Lively was asked how fans could connect with her if they were struggling with domestic abuse. In response, Lively mocked the interviewer and sarcastically answered by asking if she should give out her phone number, address or location.

"She also released a line of alcoholic drinks based on the movie, including one named after the abusive character. Lively deserves the blame because she is using the exposure for her benefit to promote her own products," Freshman Sheena Kamali said.

On the other hand, Baldoni discussed the empowering message behind the movie in his interviews. He provided support to victims of domestic violence by sharing a link to the No More organization—which aims to take action and break the silence of victims—in his Instagram biography.

Lively and Baldoni also had conflicting opinions on creative directives in the movie. Lively wanted to alter Lily's style to be more modern than it was in the novel and incorporate Reynolds's scene ideas, while Baldoni wanted to follow the book as closely as possible. According to USA Today, many fans noticed the tension between the two stars early on, as Lively and majority of the cast unfollowed Baldoni on Instagram succeeding the premiere. Yet

in July, Baldoni praised Lively's contributions to the film in an interview with Entertainment Weekly. He complimented her professionalism while shooting the movie's darkest scenes, describing her as an instrumental part of the production.

"The team should have followed Baldoni's ideas because they stayed more true to the book. Blake's ideas merely focused on the outfits and her haircare line, which dampened the serious themes of domestic violence," Senior Zadela Valero said.

Despite the drama between Baldoni and Lively and controversies surrounding Hoover's novel, Baldoni has made attempts to provide domestic abuse victims by raising awareness about the realities of abusive relationships through the "It Ends With Us" film.



AUGUST GRINFELD ART

Although the word brat is traditionally used to demean poorly behaved children, to English songwriter Charli XCX, the term takes on a new meaning. As the name and theme of her newest album, Charli XCX has transformed what it means to be a brat through the lively and upbeat themes ingrained within each track.

Released on June 7, the album charted at number one on Billboard magazine for the dance/electronic music category on release. Songs such as "Apple" and "365" made their way onto the Billboard Top 100, and grew equally viral on TikTok. The album cover—a minimalist lime green square with the word "brat" displayed in an Arial font—epitomizes Charli XCX's intentions for the album: in a TikTok, she proclaimed a "brat" as a girl who is a wild party animal that is still down-to-earth

## Bumpin' That Ballot With "brat" Summer

WINSTON CHU STAFF WRITER AND JAMES YU SPORTS EDITOR

and unaframed to be in touch with her emotions.

"Charli XCX's music inspired me to make the most of my summer, unapologetic about what others would think of me and just focused on having fun. Songs such as '365' and 'Talk Talk' always excite me when I listen to them," Sophomore Emily Chen said.

New fashion and makeup trends based on the album arose, focused on showcasing a confident identity; lime green items, such as matcha and colored apparel, became affiliated with "brat." According to news publication Today, the "brat" summer trend thus entailed a bold fashion aesthetic in sync with rebellious makeup styles.

Outside of popular culture, "brat" is also shaking up politics.

On July 22, shortly after President Joe Biden announced his decision to

drop out of the presidential race, Charli XCX shared her endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris on X, tweeting "kamala IS brat." The post skyrocketed in popularity, receiving over 55 million views.

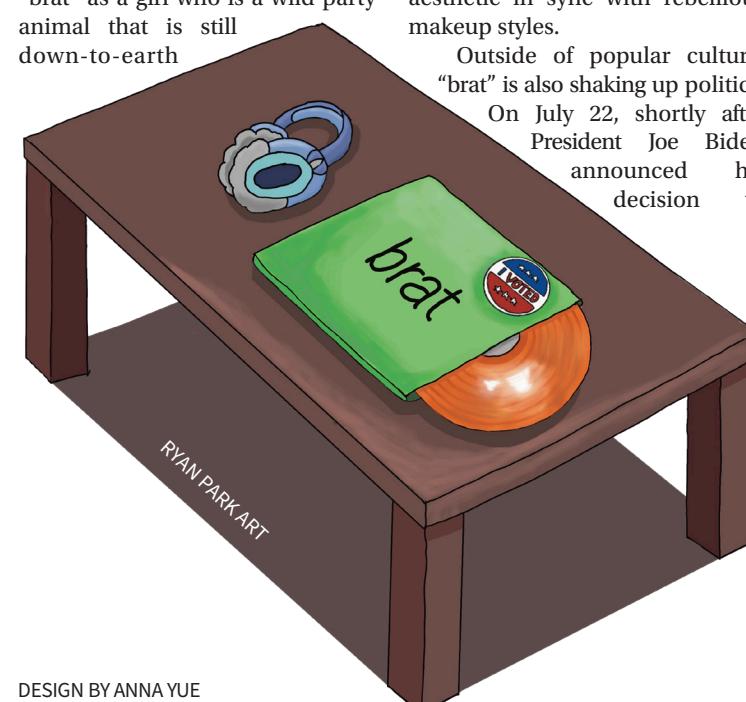
Harris's campaign accounts on TikTok and X quickly capitalized on the high praise, changing their banner to read "kamala HQ" in the same design style of "brat's" cover. Vanity Fair reported that Harris's TikTok account "Kamala HQ's" marketing is founded off of videos associating Harris with the "brat" trend. Additionally, many Harris supporters on TikTok have made fan edits to Charli XCX's songs and even remixed her speeches to the beat; for example, Harris's remarks about a coconut tree and her laughter were edited by fans to the tune of the album's lead single "360," escalating into a viral meme. As a result of this publicity, there was a 62,800% increase in Harris's mentions on social media, according to Axios.

This is not the first time politicians have tried to appeal to the youth vote. In 2016, Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton infamously exclaimed, "Pokémon go to the polls," alluding to the popular mobile game among the younger generation at the time. At this year's Democratic National Convention, Representative Nancy Pelosi was introduced as the "Mother of Dragons," a reference to "Game of Thrones." These tactics helped them gain more popularity and support among younger generations.

However, Harris's unique campaign marketing has drawn criticism; conservative opponents such as popular commentator Ben Shapiro claim that the "brat" campaign advertising is childish and will dissuade older voters from supporting Harris. Similarly, her campaign has been condemned as a high risk strategy in an article published by The Guardian, which claimed that voters are ultimately unpredictable and might not be swayed by memes and cultural references. On the contrary, news publication Vox reports that "brat" is funneling optimism from young voters into the Harris campaign. Vox furthered that young voter interest is spiking; of the over 100,000 new voters who registered to vote in the week after Biden dropped out, 84% were in the young age group of 18-34 years old.

"Listeners often resonate with singers that share the same values. It is important for politicians to use trends like pop music to connect with the younger audience, but they should be careful. Rather than swaying people to be biased, these trends should be used as a tool to provide information," Junior Mahika Khosla said.

Despite "brat's" simple beginnings as an audacious music album, its powerful messaging has made a notable sway on youth voters in the upcoming election. The album's long-lasting legacy will lie in the social change it is fostering through "brats" around the world.



DESIGN BY ANNA YUE

## One Chip Too Far

SRIHITA MADIRAJU AND JAMES TONG STAFF WRITERS

Once a viral internet trend, the "One Chip challenge" dared participants to test their spice tolerance by consuming an alarmingly spicy chip. Due to its physically agonizing results, this challenge faced scrutiny following reports of severe incidents—a common response from unsafe food trend challenges. Although the intense flavor from extreme ingredients in certain foods may provide irresistible stimulation to the taste buds, it can also stir up controversy due to often unpleasant health effects.

Social media is a prominent factor for promoting foods that pose health risks from dangerous ingredients, the "One Chip challenge" alike. Since the trend was first popularized on TikTok in 2021, many have attempted it due to a fear of missing out, until a fatal incident made headlines. Prior to the event, hundreds of videos were posted of people enduring the spice levels, which viewers found exciting and often hilarious to watch. However, upon the accidental death of Harris Wolobah, a 14-year-old curious to try the challenge, controversy emerged on several media platforms. Although Wolobah's death was also correlated to having an enlarged heart, Paqui, the creator of the chip, discontinued the product.

Buldak, a brand of intensely spicy instant noodles, also proved controversial. This June, Denmark recalled three flavors of the

product, as the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration deemed them unsafe due to high capsaicin levels; capsaicin is a concentrated compound of chili peppers. Although the decision was reversed briefly after further investigation, concerns remain as excessive capsaicin consumption may result in circulatory problems, heartburn, vomiting and pain in the abdomen or chest.

Despite the pain caused by extreme-tasting foods, many people still enjoy eating them, as the neurological responses can feel satisfying. Hazardous amounts of sourness or spiciness can release endorphins and dopamine. Thus, the brain may override initial reactions of discomfort, perceiving it to be enjoyable, per Paul Rozin, a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

"The first time I tried the double spice Buldak, I was lying on the floor after the first few bites. As soon as I recovered, I finished the rest and loved it," Sophomore Ishaan Desai said.

On the flip side, dangerous food challenges are not always related to flavor. Panera Bread's highly caffeinated Charged Sips beverages have faced several lawsuits. A 30-ounce cup can contain upwards of 390 milligrams of caffeine, while the FDA states that most healthy adults can only safely consume 400 milligrams a day.

A lawsuit was filed on behalf of Sarah Katz, a 21-year-

old university student who was previously diagnosed with a heart condition. Unaware of the caffeine content within the drink, Katz underwent a fatal cardiac arrest after consuming the drink. Similar incidents occurred as the drink was often perceived as a lemonade rather than a source of caffeine because of misleading labeling. A second lawsuit was filed following the death of 46-year-old David Brown. Similarly, unaware of the high caffeine levels, he also ordered the Charged Lemonade, despite his high blood sugar.

"I had the Charged Lemonade once without realizing how caffeinated it is, and I regretted

it so much because I was overly hyper and my hands were shaking for hours after I drank it. People must be aware of the ingredients in certain food products before consumption. If I had carefully read the label that stated the amount of caffeine, I simply would not have ordered it," Junior Shina Assl said.

While food extremes can perpetuate thrilling experiences, their health risks must be monitored. Both food creators and people on social media have realized the cruciality of approaching these potentially dangerous foods with awareness of both their exciting and adverse effects.



ISABELLA ZHU ART

**L**ove comes in several forms: warmth, affection and in recent years, thirsty midnight hookup requests over Snapchat. In essence, hookups are uncommitted sexual encounters that entail the sexual physicality of a long-term relationship without the assurances of one, despite the original intimate nature of intercourse. This version of romance reduces relationships to awkward bonds, nicknamed "situationships," "friends-with-benefits" or a continuous "talking stage." This contrasts the original norm, which included having a long-term relationship and genuine love for one another, often dating for marriage.



ISABELLA ZHU ART

## Love on the Hook

ARIEL LEE STAFF WRITER AND JAMES YU SPORTS EDITOR

However, as hookup culture erodes the traditional connection between commitment and physical affection, many have started to question the morality of the practice.

Social media and dating apps provide a less nerve-wracking and convenient way to begin relationships, bypassing the potential struggle of setting schedule-fitting quality time together and decreasing the awkwardness and fears

the commitment associated with relationships as a result of the lowering age of puberty and the rising average age of marriage. Indeed, since young adults have the freedom to engage in sexual relations but are usually not in the right phase to settle down into a marriage yet, hookups are utilized as an outlet for sexual exploration.

"Hookup culture is so normalized in our generation, leading people to forget how intimate and sacred sex truly is. Honestly, it disgusts me how some people could just casually sleep with anyone. It has also ruined the true meaning of love, as people who participate in it are usually not interested in being in a committed relationship, which could lower their self-esteem and cause them to develop a negative perspective of love," Junior Nhi Ly said.

Specifically, college students are the largest participants in hookup culture, with approximately 60% to 80% of American college students involved, per The University News. Additionally, a study cited by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that 70% of sexually active youth between the ages of 12 and 21 had engaged in hookups.

"Hookups are a natural consequence of society's expectations for the youth to mature at a much faster rate than in the past. If teenagers continue to be expected to mature into adults, then both teenagers and young adults will continue to participate in adult activities," Junior Timothy Song said.

Furthermore, social media rapidly accelerated the spread of

hookup culture with the launch of dating apps like Tinder and Bumble. Pew Research reported that 30% of Americans and almost 50% of college students used these apps, which made finding possible hookup partners nearly an effortless process. However, with the normalization of hookups over the past few decades, numerous consequences arose as a result; an APA survey discovered that 82.6% of hookup participants reported that they regretted it and felt a loss of self-respect.

Moreover, hookup culture pressured numerous people into sexual situations against their will; the same APA survey found that an estimated 78% of unwanted sexual encounters occurred from hookups. Additionally, The Journal of Sex Research deemed that the shallow nature of hookups—involving all of the intimacy of love without the love itself—has increased depression rates.

"Currently, finding a partner is increasingly challenging because more people are looking for short casual relationships instead of something deeper. Physical intimacy should stay primarily within the bounds of relationships, where it can be practiced simultaneously with emotional attachment," Sophomore Emma Huang said.

Ultimately, with hookup culture incentives and sexual exploration, many are eager to avoid committed relationships to keep their short-term options available. Until long-term romance is prioritized over temporary pleasure, hookups will remain ingrained within popular culture.

## “When the Summer Was Ours”



CLAIRE CHANG INVESTIGATIVE REPORT EDITOR

Roxanne Veletzos captures the complexity of love between two doomed lovers in her historical fiction novel "When the Summer Was Ours." Set in 1943 Hungary, amidst Nazi occupation during World War II, Jews, Romani people and other groups were actively wiped out in systemic genocide. The central character Eva—the daughter of a Hungarian bourgeois—meets Aleandro, a passionate Romani fiddler while spending her summer on her family's estate in Sopron, Hungary. One initial encounter with Aleandro bloomed into secret meetings in her garden every night, the only time they could be together without facing persecution.

Knowing that society and war forbid them to be together, Eva and Aleandro say their devastating farewells. Eva marries a doctor that she was engaged to before meeting Aleandro. Witnessing the brutalities of the Holocaust, Eva takes it upon herself to provide the best patient care in a makeshift underground hospital, while the fiddler is held captive in a Dachau camp. There, he meets Rufus, a friend who encourages him to move out to New York to create a name for himself. Yet Eva is always on his mind.

Aleandro's relentless pursuit of Eva highlights the clash between desire and reality; no matter how hard he tries to reconnect, he and Eva face obstacles, underscoring the beautiful yet heartbreaking nature of love. Meanwhile, Aleandro's unwavering loyalty to Rufus reminds readers of how our deepest bonds provide strength in adversity.

The plot is slow to intensify, with some predictable and cliche tropes, such as star-crossed lovers. However, Veletzos makes up for it through vivid imagery, allowing readers to see war and love unfold chronologically before their eyes. Throughout the novel, the characters send heartfelt letters to each other, which are printed in the pages. This personal touch allowed me to imagine myself as the recipient, at times evoking tears.

Ultimately, the ending was unsatisfactory, as I was left on a disappointing cliff-hanger. Regardless, the love between Eva and Aleandro captured my interests. For now, this poignant historical tale is a promising title on my bookshelf.

### book hooked?

(4/5)



- + well-developed characters
- commonly used tropes
- predictable plot

# DREAMS

## Exploring Consciousness in Lucid Dreaming

AMIE AHN STAFF WRITER AND CAITLYNN SUE FRONT PAGE & OPINIONS EDITOR

Although most fantasies remain as lingering ideas in the mind, there is an imaginary realm where people are able to control and experience them as if they were real life. Welcome to the world of lucid dreams, where astounding creativity momentarily feels like a reality. Despite the increased artistry, mental awareness and popularity on social media, critics feel that lucid dreams are over-romanticized and that the negative effects—such as sleep deprivation and anxiety—are ignored.

A lucid dream occurs when an individual is consciously aware that they are dreaming and can control aspects of the dream to some extent. Lucid dreams take place during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, a stage where the body is temporarily paralyzed, except for the eyes. Parts of the brain that correspond to higher cognitive functions—such as the attention and memory—receive increased activity during lucid dreaming, per the National Library of Medicine. However, this occurrence does not match the brain activity during waking or normal REM sleep, indicating that lucid dreaming is a hybrid state of consciousness between the two.

"One night, I accidentally had a lucid dream that I was flying with floating whales and goldfish in an abyss that only contained water, sky and rainbows. I could not choose the subject of my dream, but I was aware of my state and could do anything I wanted, including teleporting and summoning objects. However, when I woke up, I was a bit sad because I had vivid conversations with characters in the dream, but I would not be able to see them again," Senior Mirei Takano said.

The benefits of lucid dreaming expand beyond the simple excitement of having one. Lucid dreams can increase mental awareness and creativity, as well as reduce anxiety. For instance, many people who entered a lucid state during a nightmare were able to stop it from progressing. Additionally, some dreamers used lucid dreaming to overcome the grief of losing a loved one: in their sleep, they met with the deceased and talked to them, holding meaningful conversations to help them understand their emotions.

In fact, the appeal of being able to control fantasies in the mind garnered an increased popularity for lucid dreams among numerous individuals. Specifically, during quarantine, several tips to induce lucid dreams rapidly spread on social media—such as keeping a dream journal, doing reality checks or waking up at odd intervals. People came together to share their experiences with lucid dreaming and gave each other advice and suggestions, such as keeping a dream journal. Similarly, "reality shifting," or the concept of being transported into alternate realities through meditative techniques, also gained attention on social media. However, unlike lucid dreaming, it is not supported by science and many viewers questioned its legitimacy.

However, there are still negative impacts of lucid dreaming, which include sleep deprivation and the worsening of certain mental issues. Having either vivid or lucid dreams often leads an individual to awaken during the night, disrupting sleep patterns. Also, lucid dreaming techniques can increase the chance of sleep paralysis, a phenomenon that occurs when someone wakes up but their body is still in the paralyzed state of REM sleep. During sleep paralysis, an individual can hallucinate terrifying figures while being unable to move.

In other cases, pre-existing mental conditions can be further agitated—such as psychosis, which affects people by stimulating a sense of detachment from their own bodies. This sensation can be encouraged and further practiced in lucid dreaming, potentially worsening the severity of an individual's mental illness, per Sleep Foundation journal.

"While experiencing a lucid dream for the first time, one may panic and get pushed to become alert, rather than entering a meditative state of mind. Although lucid dreaming has a healing aspect, it also possesses an anxious, confusing side," Freshman Jiyun Yun said.

Ultimately, lucid dreams will continue to compel individuals with the opportunity to momentarily live in a different reality. However, it is vital for people to be aware that lucid dreaming has both beneficial and harmful aspects, as everyone experiences these dreams differently.

"If I experience a scary dream, I often will undergo it again to try to control it for a better outcome. When I was younger, I would have dreams of attending my own funeral and I would see a deceased version of myself."

*Tomás Blandino, World Languages Department*

"I have lucid dreams frequently and easily. I usually fly in them because I know I am dreaming, so I do things I cannot do in real life. Most of my dreams are adventurous, as I am always going on a journey somewhere, usually based on things that happened during my day or from books and shows I watch. The most unusual dream I have ever experienced is when I helped Peter Pan stop a volcano from erupting on his island."

*Sophomore Maile Bock*

"The majority of my dreams feel extremely vivid, as if they are taking place in that moment. Dreams are very weird; sometimes I feel like I am flying and in some cases, I have nightmares that jolt me awake. Many of my dreams are related to my family; for example, the most recent one had to do with my childhood when I visited my aunt, uncle and grandma, who have all passed away. I also commonly feel the presence of my mom, who has also passed. I frequently hear her voice, but I am never able to see her face, even though I see other people."

*Roberto Gutierrez, World Languages Department*

### Quotebox: What is your experience with dreams?

COMPILED BY AMIE AHN AND ARIEL LEE STAFF WRITERS

## Dreams: A Slept On Subject

SRIHITA MADIRAJU STAFF WRITER AND JOSHUA YAN STAFF WRITER

An individual scavenges through an obstacle course at school, encounters Howie Mandel selling mangoes and suddenly turns into Curious George—a fragment of human imagination. Although occurrences like these may seem like nothing more than scenes from a bizarre movie, dreams serve as a window into one's inner psyche, offering both insights into the past and revelations for the future.

Currently, a sole reason explaining why dreams occur has not been discovered yet, but many theories have been proposed. For example, the Sigmund Freud Theory suggests that dreams represent unconscious desires, thoughts, motivations and longings. A more analytic theory, the Activation-Synthesis Dream Theory, proposes that circuits in the brain activate during Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep—the stage of sleep where dreams happen the most frequently. The amygdala and hippocampus, the processing center for emotions and the part of the brain responsible for memories, are triggered to create an array of electrical impulses. Thus, this operation stimulates random thoughts, images and memories in dreams.

Nevertheless, dreams are a crucial aspect of the human experience. Putting the mind into an active situation stimulates creative thinking, which explains why it is not uncommon for people to credit a dream as an inspiration or idea. For example, in 1965, Paul McCartney released his hit song "Yesterday" with a melody that he attributed to a dream. Additionally, Mary Shelley came up with her historically-acclaimed novel "Frankenstein" in her sleep. Director Christopher Nolan created the plot for his psychological thriller "Inception" from his lucid dream as well. Last of all, the inspiration for Albert Einstein's groundbreaking theory of relativity stemmed from an idea he cultivated in a dream.

"One of my dreams inspired a great dance choreography that I created. Immediately after I woke up, I had to write down the parts I remembered," Sophomore Maansi Ranjan said.

Moving forward, dreams may reflect an individual's mentality or experience. For example, the classic dream of teeth falling out usually represents a fear of aging. Dreams that revolve around being late or missing an event could symbolize anxiety or stress levels. Also, frequently repeating the same dream is referred to as a recurring dream, usually occurring because of a subconscious hyperfocus on a concept. Nightmares can also be a result of irregular sleep patterns, medications or a mental health disorder which frequently repeat until the dreamer allows it to finish so that the brain can fully process the information.

"Occasionally, I dream about my family leaving me behind in an airport. Perhaps it represents my attachment issues or fears of being abandoned. To keep track of any patterns in my dreams, I am considering getting a dream journal," Junior Hope Tran said.

Essentially, the wandering mind is an enigma. There is no true reason for what it means when an individual finds themselves at night listening to an unmade melody or watching the events of a book that they have not yet written unfold. Regardless of whether dreams are just arbitrary thoughts or vessels for something beyond the surface, they are both a profound and alluring aspect of the human experience.

"I had a terrifying nightmare where I thought I woke up and I heard a girl laughing in my right ear. Then I saw a shadow walk by me, which made me truly wake up, as I was terrified. This was strange for me because I normally do not remember my dreams and I believe this one was the weirdest dream I have ever experienced."

*Freshman Avni Badhe*

In what may be a turning point in the history of large technology companies, Judge Amit P. Mehta of the US District Court for the District of Columbia ruled on Aug. 5 that Google had created and abused a search engine monopoly. This could potentially result in the first major breakup of a tech corporation, and permanently shake up Big Tech's relationship with the law.

The ruling ended the case United States v. Google, which began in late 2020 when the Department of Justice and several states sued Google over violations of the Sherman Antitrust Act, which disallows anti-competitive agreements and monopolistic behavior. Google was accused of monopolizing internet search through its deals with companies like Apple and Samsung to make its search engine the default option on their devices. The legal proceeding revealed that Google paid Apple approximately \$20 billion in 2022 to be the default search engine in its Safari browser, present in iPhones, iPads and Macs. Google Senior Vice President Prabhakar Raghavan testified during the trial that the payments to companies in such deals totaled \$26.3 billion in 2021 and represented the company's largest expenditures for the year.

During the 10-week-long trial, Google defended themselves by stating that Google simply provides a better service than its competitors, such as DuckDuckGo and Microsoft's Bing, which the ruling acknowledged. Google also argued that rival search engines like Yahoo! had been able to win similar contracts, but did not keep them due to lower product quality. However,

# Justice For Google

ANDREW DUVAL *OPINIONS & FEATURE WORLD EDITOR* AND MICHAEL IM *STAFF WRITER*

ELEANOR WANG ART

the sheer scale of Google's payments, reaching \$18 billion annually to Apple alone, deterred competition from attempting to outbid them, allowing Google to access a much larger customer base and further improve their product. Additionally, their near total control of the search engine market has allowed them to raise ad prices beyond that which the government believed should exist in a free market, resulting in the 2023 case somewhat confusingly named United States v. Google and an upcoming trial on Sept. 9.

"There are many alternatives to Google that have their own unique advantages, such as Ecosia, which pledges to plant trees and combat climate change using proceeds from searches. However, Google's unfair practices prevent these search engines from receiving the success and attention they deserve," Freshman **Lucas Sutijono** said.

After the verdict, Department of Justice officials have been weighing their options when it

comes to restoring competitive markets. The most radical would be to entirely break off parts of the company, like its Chrome

browser or Android operating system, and turn them into entirely new companies. More moderate proposals, such as mandating Google to make its user data publicly available or to revoke the deals they made to preserve Google as the default search engine on several devices or browsers, are being considered, and are seen by experts to be more likely outcomes.

However, Bloomberg has reported that lawyers plan to push for the breakup of Google in its Sept. 9 ad monopolization trial.

"Google is a monopoly because it is the default search engine for all phones, and the difficulty of setting another browser makes people not want to go through the hassle. I do not think Google needs to be broken up, but there should be easier ways to access the competitors, like choosing your preferred engine when setting up your phone," Junior **Omar Sanchez Claudio** said.

Still, Google's Chief President of Global Affairs, Kent Walker, has stated that the company plans to appeal the case, harkening back to United States v. Microsoft, a similar 2001 case against Microsoft for monopolistic behavior regarding their browser Internet Explorer. The case concluded similarly, with the Justice Department attempting to break up the company. However, when Microsoft appealed the ruling, they successfully overturned the breakup with the Department of Justice

eventually settling for a lighter antitrust penalty. Over the past two decades since United States v. Microsoft, large tech companies have been mostly insulated from antitrust cases through lobbying with their vast financial resources. However, under the Trump and Biden administrations, the government has been much fiercer in investigating these companies, beginning with a 2018 investigation into Facebook's nonconsensual collection of data from millions of its users. In 2020, a bipartisan House Judiciary subcommittee investigated four large tech companies: Apple, Meta, Amazon and Google, concluding that all four were monopolies.

This has led to all four companies facing antitrust lawsuits, with Google merely being the first to reach a verdict in their case. In Europe, Google has also been charged with numerous antitrust violations for digital ad market manipulation. Whatever punishment Google faces as a result of this ruling, it is speculated to greatly influence these upcoming cases against Big Tech, and the industry as a whole.

# Sanctimonious Santos

SHINY XU AND CATHERINE NGUYEN *STAFF WRITERS*

**G**eorge Santos is a Jewish multimillionaire, Wall Street employee, famous Brazilian journalist, target of an assassination attempt, college volleyball star and the producer of the musical, "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark," one of the biggest flops in Broadway history. His grandparents were Holocaust survivors, his mother was a victim of 9/11 and his niece was kidnapped by Chinese communists.

None of this is true. These are all lies made up by Santos himself. George Santos is actually a former Republican Congressman for New York, who is now a convicted felon.

On Aug. 19, Santos pleaded guilty to criminal charges of wire fraud and identity theft, including laundering campaign funds for personal expenses and using the credit cards of donors without their authorization. He faces a mandatory sentence of two years in prison. As part of his guilty plea, Santos will have to pay a \$373,749 restitution and a \$205,002 forfeiture. He was initially charged with 13 counts of fraud in May 2023 and in October of that year, another 10 counts of fraud were added. Santos originally pleaded not guilty to all 23 charges.

On Dec. 11, 2023, the House of Representatives voted 311-114 to expel George Santos from Congress, making him the sixth member to ever be expelled. The last time someone was expelled was in 2002—Congressman James Traficant was removed after being convicted of ten felony counts. His expulsion followed an ethics report that had discovered evidence his misappropriated campaign funds were spent on Botox injections and on luxury goods. Santos was also found to have stolen personal

and financial information from his contributors, with which he charged their credit cards without their authorization. He had transferred funds from his campaign to his own bank account, sometimes even from the supporters of his campaign.

Santos was already controversial since December 2022, when The New York Times released an exposé that found the Congressman-elect had made up

multiple aspects of his resume and biography. He had lied about where he went to both high school and college, claiming he went to the prestigious Horace Mann School, graduated with a degree in economics and finance from Baruch College and earned a Master's Degree from New York University. None of the schools could find records that he had ever been enrolled. His campaign biography

stated that he had worked on Wall Street, at companies Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, yet neither company had record of his employment. Santos was also found to have fabricated much of his personal biography. He lied that his grandparents were Holocaust survivors and had fled prosecution during World War II, even though both were born and lived in Brazil. Santos retracted his claims, saying he had never claimed to be Jewish and only claimed that his mother's family were of Jewish heritage, making him "Jew-ish." He further lied that his mother was inside the Twin Towers during the September 11 attacks, but

immigration records showed that Santos' mother had not even been in the country that year. Santos also claimed he ran a pet charity: Friends of Pets United. While he did raise a sum totalling \$3000 for surgery on a service dog belonging to a veteran, the dog had never been sick. Santos took the money anyway.

"As a convicted criminal and repeat liar, Santos should not be a representative of America. Santos' actions cannot represent the American Dream. Those in the House of Representatives are important enough to be elected by citizens who trust them—if that trust is broken, our country may become less united," Freshman **Juliana Shin** said.

The real story of George Santos goes like this: he was born in Queens, New York to Brazilian immigrant parents. He recalled that his family was poor and relatives say he already had a reputation for lying and stealing as a child. In 2020, Santos had his first campaign experience, losing to the incumbent Democrat in a bid for the House. He ran again in 2022 as the first openly gay Republican and won against a new competitor. During his campaigns, journalists had questioned the truthfulness of his history, but only after his victory did media outlets begin reporting on the issues with his biographical details. Santos has said himself that he made up lies about his biography in order to gain acceptance from New York voters.

"Still, lying especially about his family history does not benefit Santos in any way and in politics, if any lies are said, it is to boost their image. Americans do not want the American Dream to be built upon lies," Junior **Que-Tran Nguyen** said.

While George Santos may have been able to weave an intricate web of lies that fooled New York's wealthiest congressional district, he has quickly learned that he could not run away from the truth, especially when his lies were so absurd.



# MBS: The Crown Prince of Controversy

MICHAEL IM STAFF WRITER

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) of Saudi Arabia has been accused by a former Saudi official of forging the signature of his father, King Salman, in 2015 to authorize intervention in the Yemeni Civil War. This comes as the latest in a series of allegations of fraud and human rights abuses leveled against the Prince, who has risen to become the de facto leader of the kingdom.

The signature forgery allegations were first brought to light by the BBC in an interview published Aug. 19, with Saad al-Jabri, a former Saudi major general and intelligence officer who now lives in exile. He alleged that MBS used his forgery to forgo the planned aerial bombardment of Yemen, and instead launch his preferred ground invasion, kicking off a now decade-long war between the government of Yemen supported by

the Saudis and the Houthi rebels supported by Iran.

The Saudi intervention in the Yemeni Civil War has been fraught with accusations of human rights violations and war crimes, and has led to the death of an estimated 150,000 along with putting millions of other Yemenis at risk of starvation, causing what the BBC has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

MBS rose to prominence in the Saudi government during the war, being appointed minister of defense just

months before the war began. He soon amassed greater power, taking on the roles of deputy crown prince, second deputy prime minister, president of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs and finally crown prince, leaving him in command of the military and the economy, and only a single step from the throne.

Using his newfound influence, MBS then announced Vision 2030, a radical economic proposal intended to shift the Saudi economy away from its reliance on oil, increase the number of women in the workforce and help create new jobs for the youth. However, his rise to power was brutal, as many of his political opponents, from princes to business elites, women's rights activists, religious leaders and other critics were imprisoned, or like journalist Jamal Kashoggi, outright killed.

"He needs to do better on human rights, but also continue his

progressive reforms. As long as it is economically viable, he should also continue his Vision 2030 proposals. The Saudis are already rich with oil money, so even if they continue to fund some of their more crazy projects, they might succeed in diversifying their economy," Senior

**Shota Yu**

said. After King Salman stepped down from an active political role in 2019, MBS took near total control over the Saudi state. He has pushed for certain progressive reforms, like enabling women drivers and reducing the role of Islam in the Saudi government. Still, his regime remains as repressive as always towards dissidents, who have been executed for crimes as trivial as social media criticism against the government, like Muhammed al Ghamdi was in 2023.

"His regime does not care about the negative publicity because they just use their oil money to avoid all consequences for their human rights abuses. Despite their historical

dependence on oil, their move away from it will eventually be successful, although I doubt the same can be said for some of their other projects, like NEOM," Junior

**Maxim Kerns** said.

NEOM is a proposed planned city in northwestern Saudi Arabia, born out of the Vision 2030 economic initiative. Its most eye-catching feature is its width of 600 feet, centered on a single 110 mile long line, similar to 1800s urban planning proposals that have never been realized on NEOM's scale. Saudi officials have promised the city will house nine million residents, and be powered solely by renewable energy. However, it is predicted to be devastating to the local environment and natives have been expelled from the area, but the Saudi government has not stopped construction. Whether MBS's legacy will be defined by his visionary plans and progressive reforms, or his purges and human rights abuse, remains to be seen.



compared to the worldwide average of 79.9%, per India's National Sample Survey.

India has experimented with many programs aiming to increase girls' access to education, notably Bihar state's bicycle program. Launched in 2006, the initiative provides girls in ninth grade with resources to obtain a bicycle for commuting to school, tackling one of greatest barriers to girls' education: transportation. The program improved enrollment by 32% overall and reduced the state's gender gap in enrollment by 40%, per Northeastern Global News. For many girls, bicycles represent a symbol of self-liberation and female empowerment. The news agency also claims that girls involved in the program reported feeling a greater sense of potential for reaching success in life and a greater sense of control over their lives.

"Biking is very convenient in India and is the main way of transportation for close distances like getting groceries or going to a friend's house. In older parts of cities that are more cramped, biking is often the only option to get around," Sophomore **Ayush Deshpande** said.

Nibha Kumari, a female resident in Bihar, shared that the bicycle that she received from

the state government changed her life when she was 15, per BBC. She was able to efficiently cycle from home to school and outside tutoring classes six days a week. Kumari also stated that if she did not have the opportunity to have a bicycle, she would not have finished high school.

"Cycling to school allows me to go places on my own schedule, and has the bonus of letting me skip the long lines of traffic. Because most of my extracurricular activities are close by, I can cycle there as well. Being able to cycle has given me greater autonomy without needing a car," Senior **Colin Jubert** said.

Besides supplying bicycles, other programs have been enacted to increase school enrollment of Indian girls. Cash incentive programs aimed at poor and less privileged families have increased the probability of girls continuing school by 23% across the country, according to The Times of India. Such programs provide frequent payments each time a periodic milestone in the girl's life is achieved, like reaching adulthood unmarried. However, despite persistent efforts, the gender gap remains significant. As studied by the International Centre for Women, girls are given less time at home to study than their brothers and sexual violence is a threat for many in school.

The rise in cycling levels among girls in India has been referred to as

## Pedalling to a Brighter Future in India

LILIANA CHAI STAFF WRITER

a "silent revolution" by Aditi Seth from the Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai. Despite India's significant gender disparities, the strategies to improve girls' mobility are proving to be effective without causing great public disruption to other commuters. Building on India's achievements, Nishith Prakash and a team of researchers at the Northeastern University are working

DANA LIM ART

to implement similar programs in other parts of the world, such as Zambia. Ultimately, Prakash hopes to inspire global efforts in order to bring greater gender equality using the strategies that have proved successful in India.

DESIGN BY ELEANOR GIL

# Welcoming New Staff

ARIEL LEE STAFF WRITER

**Kristen Webster**  
Science Department



Webster is originally from Western Kentucky, and she worked different jobs before returning to college at Cabrillo College and UC Santa Cruz at the age of 26, where she completed her undergraduate Bachelor of Science degree. Webster decided to join the school as she felt welcomed and comfortable in the interview. She believed that she would be happy to work with the teachers and admin, and she hopes to provide a rigorous and fun science experience for all students.

**Brian Haugen**  
Social Studies Department

Haugen started his teaching career at Willow Glen High School, then transferred to John Muir Middle School in 2010, learning that middle schoolers can be enjoyable to teach after being leery of them at first. However, Haugen missed teaching at a high school and looked forward to returning. High school is special to him because he believes that it is a critical time in people's lives when they are preparing themselves for adulthood. Haugen hopes to



be a positive part of the staff and provide students with a holistic education and opportunities for personal growth.

**Linda Wung**  
Attendance/Office Assistant

Wung graduated from the University of Minnesota and worked for Target and Macy's before having a family. She decided to join the school because she thought it was a great opportunity for her to impact her community in a positive way, especially since her children have graduated and moved out of the house. As the school's Attendance Clerk, Wung hopes to achieve her goal of contributing to the learning process by making sure students are present and ready to learn every day despite the school's stressful academic environment.



**Katherine Ciciarelli**  
Accountant Clerk/ASB Bank

Ciciarelli graduated from Santa Clara University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance which she used to get her start as a financial analyst. After raising her four children, she regularly volunteered at Graystone Elementary School as their paralibrarian. She decided to join the school because all of her children have either graduated or are currently attending the school. Ciciarelli hopes to keep the Bank as a fun place to visit and get to know more students. A change she predicts to see by the end of the school year is her getting familiar with her new job.



**Chelsea Ray**  
Physical Education Department

Ray was a P.E. teacher at Bret Harte Middle and Gunderson High before coming to the school. She had also previously taught at an elementary school in Phoenix, Arizona. Her decision to join the school was influenced by the fact that she knew the community and students here well because of her previous experience at Bret Harte. She saw it as a chance to see many familiar faces around campus. Ray hopes to create a space for students to feel seen, heard and valued while staying active.



**Bessie Cheng**  
Mathematics Department

Cheng got her master's in Statistics from the University of Pennsylvania and her master's in teaching from San Jose State University. Before coming to the school, she was as a math teacher at San Mateo High and Milpitas High. She decided to move to the school as she loves working in a school with a diverse student population. She hopes to build a positive relationship with her students and make learning math fun. Cheng believes that working with her students is the most rewarding part of her job as they are all hard-working. She also predicts that there will be a lot more wonderful student work being put up on her classroom walls by the end of the school year.

# Doordashing Drives Students Off Course

CHELSEA LU STAFF WRITER

*Continued from Front Page:*

The school's closed campus policy has been mandated for more than 30 years, primarily attributed to health and safety concerns. While some rumors have emerged, there is not an official reason for the policy, which establishes that all visitors must check in with the front office if they wish to enter campus during school hours. Furthermore, students may not leave campus for the duration of the school day unless their guardian signs them out in person at the front office. Students are also not permitted to venture into the parking lots during any breaks or lunch. In accordance with these regulations, Doordash was banned for both staff and students as Doordash drivers are considered unregistered strangers on the campus.

Many high schoolers do not prepare lunch every day, and the food provided by the school has a reputation for being unsatisfactory. Individuals who skip breakfast frequently go through the entire school day without eating. Under these circumstances, numerous students found Doordash to be the most appealing option for a quick and fulfilling lunch from one of their favorite restaurants.

However, if an individual is caught Doordashing, their food is taken away by staff members, resulting in both wasted money and unsolved hunger. Students



RYAN PARK ART

may also receive detention for defiance and suspension in the case of multiple offenses. To enforce these policies, school administration and staff are constantly patrolling the campus to intercept food delivery drop-offs.

"I started using Doordash as a sophomore, as I do not eat breakfast in the morning and I avoid school food, so by lunchtime I would get hungry and desire something more appetizing than the food from the lines. I was rarely caught, but for the

class, with the anticipation of the food's arrival taking away from class engagement. Some also would pick up their food during lectures, claiming that they need to use the bathroom, and then spending several minutes wandering campus to find the dasher.

"I understand where students are coming from, but taking out their phones in class to order Doordash is simply too much of an intrusion. Usually, the most important announcements, such as the due dates for homework and upcoming tests, are made at the end of class. Students cannot give full attention when their thoughts and conversations revolve around what they are having for lunch," **Lon Walton**, Science Department, said.

Although many people will continue to crave a convenient delivery from their preferred eatery, the Doordash ban is unlikely to be lifted. However, there are still many alternatives for a healthy lunch. Making a simple sandwich or soup the night before does not require much time or effort, and can still be delicious. While time might be a restraint, Doordash is not the only method for students to eat a satisfying lunch.

handful of times where I was, staff members took my order to the office and I had to meet with the administration team," Senior **Charlie Smith** said.

Additionally, teachers are concerned that Doordashing may perpetuate frequent unwanted distractions. Since the delivery takes time, students would typically place orders during

## Fostering a Safe Environment

MELVIN NAJARIAN STAFF WRITER

The sound of the first bell fills the air, shifting the mood from excitement to nervousness as the first class of the school year begins. Upon entering each of their classrooms, students are introduced to a classroom syllabus consisting of teacher's rules, as well as an introduction to new school policies within classrooms that every student is required to abide by. In addition to new policies for students, the school has also put in their best effort to create a safe and productive learning environment.

To ensure campus security, several police officers are located around campus, referred to as School Resource Officers (SROs). They are part of the San Jose Police Department and are responsible for ensuring the safety of the school by providing protection and defense during emergencies. Additionally, SROs prepare school administrators for safety measures that must be taken in case of a threat. SROs also can call for direct dispatches, resulting in faster responses for the school in the case of an emergency.

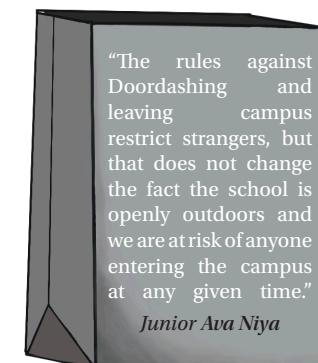
In addition to the long-lived ban

from entering the parking lot during breaks and lunches, this year electric bikes, referred to as e-bikes, are now entirely prohibited from entering the campus area, while traditional bikes are still permitted. The majority of e-bikes can travel up to 20 mph, while some can even reach up to 28 mph, which made administrators worry about potential accidents. Also, e-bikes have previously damaged the turf and football field, resulting in expensive repairs.

"As both of my parents work, biking to school makes my life easier. However, banning e-bikes at school is a perfectly valid decision. Frankly, e-bikes are a hazard to traditional bikers, including myself. Their travel speed exceeds any regular bicycle, yet they are allowed to travel in the bike lane. They are too ambiguously classified, given that they hold aspects that could classify them as motorcycles," Junior **Advi Wehzan** said.

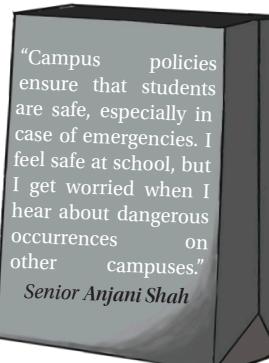
Moving forward, the "Minor Behavior Intervention Log," was introduced to classrooms this August as a new school policy. The form states that if a student violates the same classroom policies more than three times, they will be brought to the administration; it aims to help troubled individuals have a better

understanding of classroom policies and improve their communication with teachers before further measures are taken, ultimately standardizing behavior logging at the school. It also applies to student athletes, as their behavior in practice and games still represents the school.



"The rules against Doordashing and leaving campus restrict strangers, but that does not change the fact the school is openly outdoors and we are at risk of anyone entering the campus at any given time."

Junior Ava Niya



"Campus policies ensure that students are safe, especially in case of emergencies. I feel safe at school, but I get worried when I hear about dangerous occurrences on other campuses."

Senior Anjani Shah

**Quotebox: How do the current and new safety measures affect your sense of security at school?**

COMPILED BY MICHAEL IM, LAUREN LAW AND SRIHITA MADIRAJU STAFF WRITERS



"Although I do not always feel the safest at school, I trust my teachers to help keep us safe if the time comes where we face an emergency."

Junior Marlene Rotzow

"The Minor Behavior form is a necessity within classrooms because it helps students and teachers manage behavioral conflicts before the matter becomes a major consequential issue. It also allows students to improve their behavior in collaboration with the teacher, as it influences more one-on-one interactions," **Christopher Barros**, Foreign Language Department, said.

Substantially, school policies are not only regulated for safety, but they also aim to shape student's behavior for the greater good. The school's enforcement of rules enable students to distinguish both right and wrong, so in the future when faced with real world

situations, they are capable of understanding the manner that they must conduct themselves in and out of a learning environment.



RYAN PARK ART

## How to Become a Great Storyteller



ELEANOR GIL SCHOOL NEWS &amp; FEATURE SCHOOL EDITOR

Imagine yourself telling a story as if you were composing a song. Like music, stories have the power to make any message understandable, compelling and memorable for their audience. Whether your goal is to charm new acquaintances at a social gathering or to convince an audience of a certain cause, your storytelling ability may become your next best friend.

First, to tell a captivating story, you must act it out. Express your experience with facial expressions and exaggerated gestures at appropriate times, and briefly pause if you need to.

Change the tone and volume of your voice and pretend like you are using your words to create a song. Even the most simple stories can make a significant impact, because it is not the event itself that makes a good story, but how you interpret and communicate it.

Next, employ metaphors and analogies to transform ordinary sentences. Metaphors are effective for persuasion, as they affect how individuals process information by stirring emotions and simplifying a message, per Laurie Santos, a Yale University psychology professor. For example, if you are telling a story about the significance of telling a story, you might say something like this:

"If you were to imagine everyone's brains and emotions as a locked door, my dad's brain would be the most solid steel door you would ever come across. But when I told him this story, I found the key to unlocking it." In response, people will feel the clarity and understand exactly what you are implying when you put it in context.

Finally, explain what happened to your audience as if you are experiencing it for the first time with them right beside you. Guide them through each step of the journey, and allow them to experience your story as if they are part of it. Recount and describe every unique detail you remember of the setting, but make sure to keep your story's overall message in mind.

In essence, everyone has a story to tell, whether it emerged from an experience in their life or from a fictional fantasy. If you frequently share your stories, perhaps others will share their own as well to create new memories and narratives for the future.

### key steps to improvement:

- act with your voice, face and body language
- use analogies and metaphors
- employ unique details

# Stranded In Space

JOSHUA YAN STAFF WRITER

**S**urrounding two astronauts is nothing but metal, glass and the deep, cold expanse of space. Colder still is the Boeing logo, staring them down as they realize they have been stranded. Any semblance of home is no less than 250 miles straight down, and all the pair can do is wait until a voice can reach them, telling them when rescue is near. This is no movie synopsis; this terrifying scene has become reality for two astronauts stranded aboard the International Space Station as they await help.

When Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams set aboard Boeing's Starliner vessel on June 5, they only planned to stay on the ISS for eight days. However, due to persisting thruster failures, helium leaks and other issues, NASA conducted a flight readiness review on Aug. 23, ruling that the transport vessel was unsuitable to bring the two home. Instead, the Starliner will be autonomously flown home and the astronauts will have to remain in space until they can hitch a ride home aboard a SpaceX Dragon

spacecraft in February of next year. Meanwhile, Wilmore and Williams have been working alongside the Expedition 71 crew, conducting fluid dynamics research and plant facility maintenance.

"I am not surprised by the news. Boeing seems very disorganized and incompetent, especially with the mid-flight door incident and plane crashes in past years," Junior **Maggie Shen** said.

The Starliner is Boeing's reusable low-Earth orbit transport vessel, designed to accommodate up to seven passengers. The vehicle was meant to make Boeing the second private company—SpaceX being the first—to provide NASA with a means of transporting astronauts to and from the ISS. The manned flight on June 5 was its first successful crewed launch attempt and took place following several years of delays and failed launches costing Boeing a total of over \$1 billion.

This incident will undoubtedly worsen Boeing's reputation. The company has already been criticized for poor safety in the past, most notably when two different Boeing 737 Max airplanes crashed in 2019 and 2020. It could also potentially harm the Artemis Project, which intends to send astronauts to the moon by 2026. Boeing is partnered

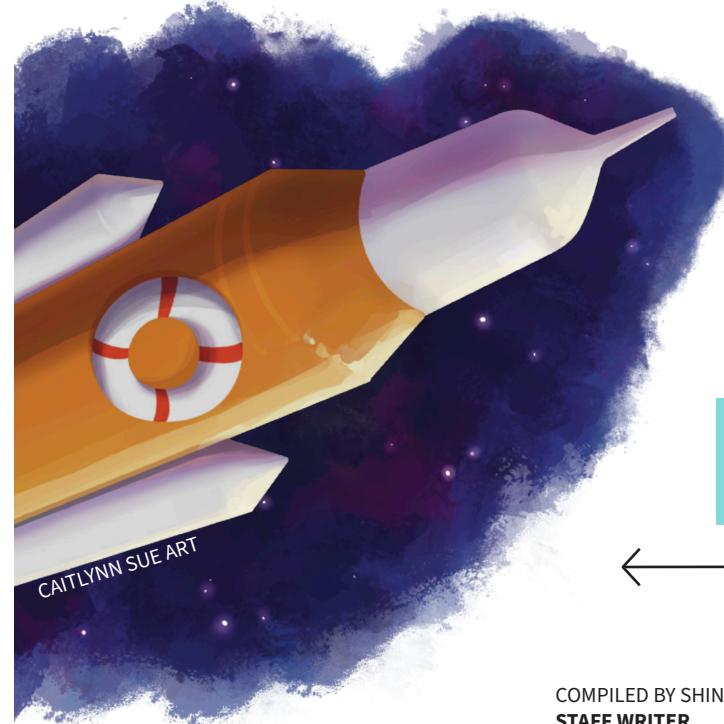


with NASA in the endeavor, tasked with providing vital components in its Space Launch System (SLS) rocket and Orion spacecraft. With growing safety concerns, NASA may delay the mission's timeline. This could cause the space agency to drop Boeing altogether, instead relying more on SpaceX, whose Falcon Heavy rocket and Dragon spacecraft have already proven the company's value as a spacecraft manufacturer.

"Boeing represents legacy space travel. They're funded by politicians

and their goal is to extract as much money as possible, rather than to advance humanity. This incident is a perfect example of their inability to compete with companies like SpaceX, even while receiving double the money from the government," **Kevin Tibbs**, Science Department, said.

In any case, the future seems bleak for Boeing. What happens next will determine company's ensuing involvement in the American space program—whether they will make it to the stars or lose their wings trying.



CAITLYNN SUE ART  
COMPILATION BY SHINY XU  
STAFF WRITER

Boeing wins \$4 billion Starliner contract  
2014

Second uncrewed test flight docks to ISS  
2022

Completed integration with Atlas V rocket  
June 2024

Starliner remains stranded on ISS  
August 2024

First uncrewed test flight misses ISS  
2019

Parachute failure delays manned launch  
2023

Starliner has issues on first crewed launch  
June 2024

## Consume To Conserve

ELEANOR GIL SCHOOL NEWS & FEATURE SCHOOL EDITOR AND TERESA SUN STAFF WRITER

If someone has ever had food poisoning or rotten food and never gone near it again, they have experienced taste aversion—a learned response, usually long-term repulsion, after encountering toxic food. Scientists have poisoned crocodiles by purposefully inducing this same phenomenon in them, all because of one tiny creature twice the size of a teacup.

The cane toad—a slimy creature with dark, brown warts running across its skin—has become one of the worst invasive species in the world, according to the Global Invasive Species

Database, with the potential to kill any animal it comes into contact with. Native to the Americas, cane toads were introduced to Australia in 1935 to eat the pest beetles that were destroying Queensland's sugarcane crops; they quickly spread across Australia, and today, an estimated 200 million cane toads inhabit the Australian continent.

The Australian crocodile has become one of the most vulnerable native species because their natural prey includes native frogs, which the crocodiles confuse with the non-native cane toad. The toads have glands that secrete a potent brew of toxins that are stored in their bodies, including bufotoxin, a potent compound that causes seizures, hallucinations, cardiac and respiratory problems for predators. However, unaware crocodiles consume them whole, promptly after which the crocodile dies from massive cardiac arrest. The cane toad has also led to the near extinction of other species, including Australia's northern quolls and yellow monitor lizards. The

decline of these larger predators has caused a huge imbalance in the ecosystem—a ripple effect that may leave the entire ecosystem in complete shambles.

To combat the issue, scientists have introduced a technique known as conditioned taste aversion (CTA) to train crocodiles to avoid eating the cane toads. Scientists cut off the top half of the toads, which contains the toxic parts, and lace the rest with a nausea-inducing compound. This way, the crocodiles associate the taste and smell of the drugged half-toad with extreme sickness, making the real toxic toads less appealing. As a result, the toads are less likely to be eaten in the future by hungry crocodiles.

"It is crucial to support the ecosystem and ensure it doesn't collapse, and we can only do that by intervening with the dynamic between crocodiles and cane toads," Senior **Vira Patil** said.

CTA is an evolutionarily relevant method of learning where an animal associates a transitory or short term sickness, such as nausea, with the taste, odor or other characteristics of a specific food. Over generations, this behavior

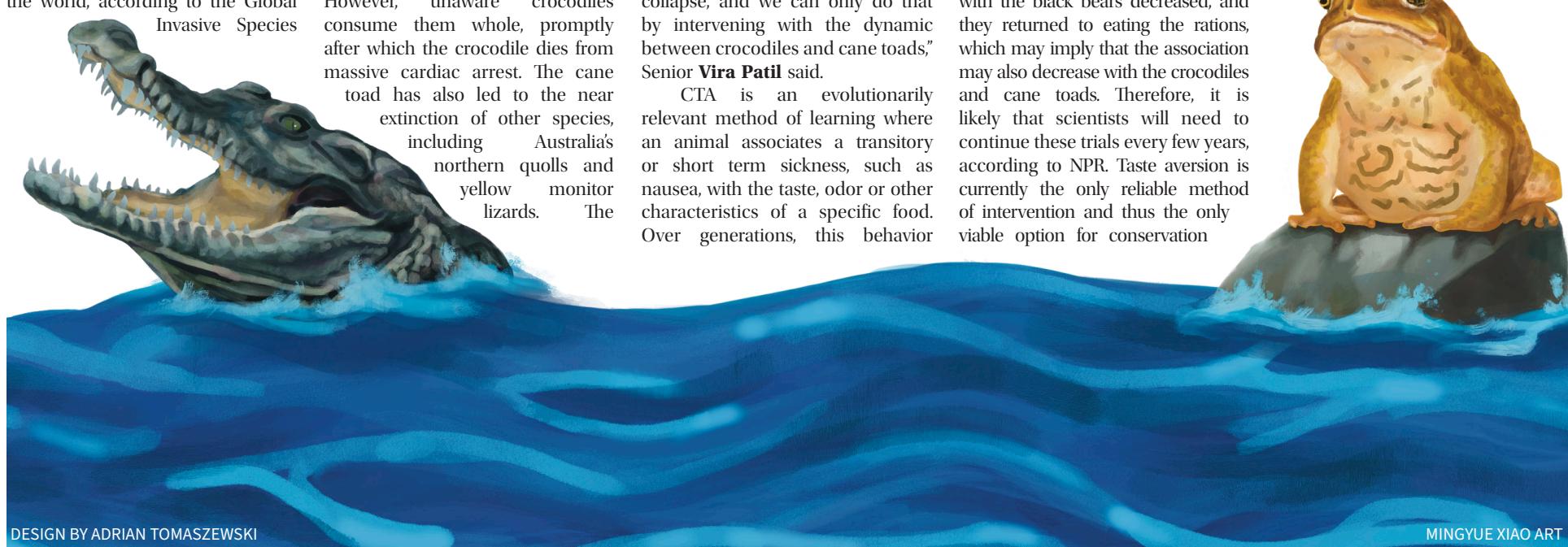
becomes more prevalent as the animal adapts to its environment. This results in a long-term change in the crocodiles' perception of the food's edibility, protecting them from consumption of toxic food. Human intervention was necessary in this case because it is impossible for the reptiles to learn the toads are toxic on their own, as cane toad encounters are always lethal. CTA has been a crucial step in rebuilding Australia's crocodile populations, with Ward-Fear saying that the use of CTA has decreased crocodile mortality rates by 95% in areas where the toads were distributed in prior years.

This taste aversion strategy is not new—for example, it was used two decades ago to condition black bears to stop eating military rations. However, after a year the association with the black bears decreased, and they returned to eating the rations, which may imply that the association may also decrease with the crocodiles and cane toads. Therefore, it is likely that scientists will need to continue these trials every few years, according to NPR. Taste aversion is currently the only reliable method of intervention and thus the only viable option for conservation

since trying to eliminate all toads has been impossible, per The Guardian.

"Taste aversion as a strategy demonstrates the ability of humans to intervene in a positive manner and protect the environment they had initially threatened. Also, taste aversion is scarcely effective—I remember eating a spoiled mango when I was a kid and throwing up, and from then on, I have never touched mangoes or any other fruit again," Junior **Chris Chen** said.

From a conservationist lens, this intervention may be applied to protect other crucial species across the world in similar situations. As the intervention has the power to leave a direct impact within the brain, the results are quick, and quick is what is needed right now to help save the natural world.



# SPORTS

## Flag Football Flies High

TERESA SUN AND LILIANA CHAI STAFF WRITERS

This year, the school is launching its very first Girls Flag Football team, joining nine other high schools in the Blossom Valley Athletic League (BVAL) and over 60 others across the Central Coast Section (CCS). This initiative's goal is to provide girls the opportunity to stay active and engage in a sport traditionally dominated by men.

The team, composed of about 20 players, is preparing for its first season against regional rivals, such as Pioneer High School. The players are enthusiastic about the new sport, with many citing the appeal of playing for and being part of a pioneering school team.

"I have loved playing football casually my whole life, but I never had a formal team to play with, so when I heard about the

school's flag football team, I was very excited to join it. I have mostly competed in individual sports, so it is nice to play on a team with many people who can support you," **Camille Jubert '27** said.

The school's decision to introduce flag football stems from a wider trend to offer girls the chance to participate in football. The sport as a whole has been gaining traction in the CCS, the California Interscholastic Federation and across the country

for several years. Girls are now able to take advantage of the opening pathways for flag football careers, whether it be at the amateur, collegiate or professional levels. On the collegiate level, 15 universities have begun to offer flag football programs. Scholarships for flag football are also being offered at 25 National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics colleges, with five National Collegiate Athletics Association Division II colleges

by 2025. This rise in football experiences for girls and the shift in attitude towards flag football has majorly contributed to the school's decision in participating in BVAL's inaugural flag football league.

"Many girls were interested in flag football at the school. I am sure that many of them have always been interested in football but were never given a chance to play because of our gender, like myself," **Emily Moen '26** said.

Unlike tackle football, flag football greatly reduces physical contact and the head, neck and spine injuries that may come with it. A 2021 Center for Disease Control and Prevention study



Kiana Vanevery '28 dashes down the field in game against Willow Glen.

LANDON TRINH PHOTO

## School Alumna's Olympic Debut

MIRA REDDY STAFF WRITER AND CLAIRE CHANG INVESTIGATIVE REPORT EDITOR

### *Continued from Front Page:*

After graduating from the school in 2022, Jenna Flynn signed with Stanford University, playing for the Cardinals' water polo team. Following her freshman year at Stanford, she took a gap year off from her collegiate water polo career to train with other athletes in hopes of competing in Paris, but it was not until May that Flynn learned that she made the national team.

For over two decades, Team USA has secured a spot on the podium at every Summer Olympics. This summer, Flynn contributed greatly to Team USA's success in the Olympics. Specifically, in Team USA's first game against Greece on July 27, Flynn scored 4 goals, more than any of her other teammates. Flynn's efforts concluded in a final game score of 15-6, pushing Team USA into quarterfinals.

"Scoring points felt surreal, but it also eased my nerves since it confirmed that all of the training I put in had paid off. My first goal affirmed to me that I knew what I was doing and gave me the confidence to continue forward."

It is a great honor to be playing in the Olympics and representing my country," Flynn said.

Flynn cites several figures in her life as inspirations to her athletic career. Growing up, Flynn was a fan of Maggie Steffens, the team captain of Stanford's women's water polo team. She recalls attending Steffens's games

and getting an autograph when she was eight years old, and said it felt like a "dream came true" when she was able to play alongside her in the Olympics. Though she felt intimidated when she first joined the USA team, Flynn was inspired by Steffens's confidence and strategic thinking.

"When you spend so much time with your team, you establish deep bonds and unwavering support both in and out of the pool. During Thanksgiving, my Olympic teammates pied each other, and I got hit in the face. Since all of us are very competitive, it is a great way to destress," Flynn said.

Flynn's family is one of the biggest reasons she stuck with the sport: playing water polo with her two older sisters, Flynn's love for water polo's teamwork and coordination drove her to continue the sport for ten years. She played on the school team with her sister Nina for one year.

"My youngest sister Christina is a big inspiration to me. Without her older sisters around, going to practices and training alone is tough. Through the Olympics, I hoped to show that, with hard work and dedication, this is a path she too can take," Flynn said.

The school's water polo coach **Eric Rise**, Athletics Department, was one of Flynn's teachers in elementary school; she appreciated having someone who knew her well as her coach, as Rise's deeper understanding of her strengths and weaknesses allowed him to tailor his guidance. She also has cherished memories of bonding with her Leland teammates over meets, dinners and travel games.

found that children between the ages of six and 14 sustained 15 times more head impacts while playing tackle football as compared to flag football. Furthermore, tackle football requires expensive equipment like helmets and shoulder pads. Conversely, flag football is accessible as it is flexible while still providing benefits such as improved cardiovascular health, strength, endurance and teamwork.

The NFL has strived to grow this sport, working with over 2,000 high schools to include flag football in their physical education curriculums. The sport's inclusion in the upcoming Los Angeles 2028 Olympics is another testament to its growing popularity both nationally and internationally.

"Flag football will definitely be here to stay at the school. It is super fun and fast, and girls have been watching boys play football since they were young. Most players on the team are underclassmen and excited about being able to play the sport," **Jeffry Sloneker**, Athletics and Science Department and Flag Football Head Coach said.

The school's adoption of a Girls Flag Football team is a significant advancement towards inclusivity and diversity in the athletic program. As flag football as a sport continues to grow across the nation, it will surely inspire and empower future generations of female athletes from the school and beyond to break gender barriers.

TEAM USA PHOTO



Jenna Flynn winds her arm in preparation to launch the ball.

"Jenna always stayed positive and raised our spirits during low points in our matches, even when everyone else on the team was losing hope. She was a great team leader, and our coach still brings her up as an example of a great player," **Sofia Derollo '25** said.

When Flynn tried out for the school's water polo team in her freshman year, the coaches instantly took note of her talent. As her high school years progressed, she won Central Coast Section Player of the Year twice and Blossom Valley Athletic League Player of the Year four times.

Additionally, she was a player in the Junior Olympic team for 18 year olds that placed third overall and was a six time Junior Olympic All-American.

"Flynn had an immediate impact as a freshman by helping lead us to our third straight section title. She continued as a leader in and out of the pool over the next three years. In her senior year, she played with an injured hand and still scored 161 goals that season.

Even after graduating, Flynn has returned to coach the team during the summer," **Rise** said.

Flynn's accomplishments do not end at high school. She featured in exclusive water polo events including the Junior Olympics, the Pythia Cup in Greece and the Youth Pan American games—where she was named the most valuable player. She is also a National Collegiate Athletic Association champion on top of playing for Team USA.

While she hopes to return for the 2028 Summer Olympics, Flynn will be resuming her collegiate water polo career at Stanford this fall. Training for and playing at the Olympics allowed Flynn to pick up techniques from more advanced players, so she looks forward to sharing what she learned with her teammates at Stanford. She encourages aspiring athletes to find a sport they can fall in love with and to chase after their dreams. The school is proud to have helped foster an outstanding athlete and alumna.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

# Storytelling in Video Games: Playing with Points of View

ANDREW XIE AND ISABELLA ZHU STAFF WRITERS

With a simple click and load, video games can launch worlds full of beautiful graphics, textured sound design and engrossing interactive stories. As game developers continue to raise the bar in graphics and animation, the evolution of storytelling has allowed people to experience and play games like never before.

When video games were first popularized in the '80s, the technology at the time could not support sophisticated graphics. The only form of progression was a linear story, so games only accepted simple commands in response to prompts. Thus, these early games emphasized basic visuals and easily accessible gameplay.

However, as 3D graphics were pioneered, developers began to realize the possibilities of environmental storytelling with ever-expanding game worlds.

"One of my favorite games is 'Half-Life 2,' which allows players to discover small details while exploring. From parents grieving that they cannot have a child under the current dictatorship to a group of rebels hiding out and partying with their newly seized freedom, the player can feel small in such a vast world," Sophomore **Zachary Fusilier** said.

Video games also began to explore complex topics through storytelling, becoming more cinematic in scope. Naughty Dog's 2013 game "The Last of Us," for instance, has been celebrated for pioneering a character-driven storytelling format emphasizing the emotional depth and gray moralities of its cast in surviving the game's post-apocalyptic world. It was even adapted into a critically acclaimed TV show on HBO Max, averaging 32 million viewers per episode—many of whom never played the game.

Many other games allow players to create their own story through a variety of actions and dialogue options that branch into differing storylines and endings. This freedom has become a cornerstone of modern video game storytelling; even with wildly different core gameplay—from the action-packed and boss-battle-filled "Elden Ring" to the calm and therapeutic story-driven world of "Journey"—unique endings are often an essential part. Every setback is a stepping stone to something greater and motivates the player to keep moving forward.

"Video games require more individual investment, allowing them to hold a more intimate connection with the viewer, unlike other forms of media which are more suited towards the general public rather than a single individual. The different endings available in a video game give an undeniable satisfaction that one may not be able to get from certain movies with strictly sad endings," **Jenny Park**, English Department, said.

Story structure in video games has also undergone a significant shift, moving from straightforward, linear narratives to open-world, non-linear and occasionally branching storylines. The freedom provided by these kinds of games—particularly choice-driven games—unlocks an exponential count of possible story paths and endings with each decision the player makes. For example, Quantic Dream's "Detroit: Become Human" masters multi-linearity by having the player weave between the three main protagonists' stories. Because the three characters eventually all cross paths, the player's decisions toward one protagonist also affects the other two's outcomes, building the story's tension.

Role-playing aspects also serve as a sincere and uninterrupted means of developing empathy in players by presenting moral, existential and personal dilemmas. Through the eyes of the main character Arthur Morgan, the Wild West-inspired "Red Dead Redemption II" gives players the choice to play as either a dishonorable, hardened outlaw or a morally conflicted fugitive conscious of his wrongdoings. One of the vital mechanics in the game is the honor scale dictated solely by the player's actions. If one decides to rob a store, the scale shifts left, while deciding to help a lost traveler return home shifts it right. This duality of vice versus virtue determines which ending the player gets, allowing them to witness the consequences of their moral judgment.

Players can also become emotionally attached to characters through personalized experiences, bringing the story together and granting the player a deeper understanding of the game itself. Characters in movies, on the other hand, are often only developed as much as they need to serve the plot.

"Storytelling in games is much more immersive than in movies. When players engage in a story, they understand the full extent to which their actions and choices impact both the characters and the direction in which the story unfolds. When players fail or get bad endings in games, they feel the frustration of not being able to satisfy the requests they were asked to fulfill, while moviegoers are often more detached from the characters," Freshman **Fangyi Niu** said.

Although video games boast impressive stories, accessibility issues persist. When it comes to new high budget releases, few people own the expensive hardware required to process their intricate 3D graphics. Some popular games also do not allow the player to adjust the difficulty; players must often possess a certain level of skill to progress. These constraints can deter players from appreciating game storytelling. In spite of this, video game storytelling will continue to evolve as new trends and technology are developed, pushing the boundary of possibilities.

DESIGN BY GWEN CARROLL

CATHERINE NGUYEN ART

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