

THE MARK

by the numbers

MENLO-ATHERTON HIGH SCHOOL
555 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD, ATHERTON CA
VOLUME X ISSUE II
MARCH 2019

In This Issue

Policy

The Mark, a feature magazine published by the students in Menlo-Atherton's journalism class, is an open forum for student expression and the discussion of issues of concern to its readership. The Mark is distributed to its readers and the students at no cost. The staff welcomes letters to the editor, but reserves the right to edit all submissions for length, grammar, potential libel, invasion of privacy, and obscenity. Submissions do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all M-A students or the staff of The Mark. Send all submissions to submitttothemark@gmail.com

About the Cover

In this issue the Mark staff looked into a series of issues and broke them down by the numbers. This allowed us to dive deeper into issues that often go unnoticed and better understand the world around us.

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Editorial: Crossing the Line

Two of M-A's feeder schools, Belle Haven and Hillview, are less than four miles apart, yet they are separated by a freeway and the invisible, jagged lines of school district boundaries. Where one has struggled to provide a library, arts and music programs, and even long-term teachers, the other has a complete multimedia library, robust special programs, and teachers who stay for their entire careers.

By combining districts, revenues also combine. With increased monetary flow, the current elementary school districts could — and likely would — even out in terms of resources over time.

The impact your education has on your opportunities in life is obvious and well-researched. Your neighborhood has dictated too much for too long.

We propose that the middle and elementary school districts in our area rezone, so as to share resources and decrease racial and economic segregation. By combining or rezoning Menlo Park City School District (MPCSD), Ravenswood City School District (RaCSD), Las Lomitas Elementary School District (LLES), and Redwood City School District (ReCSD), we would help eliminate the striking achievement and opportunity gaps at M-A.

Backlash against rezoning or combining districts is the most convincing argument in favor of doing so. If some parents are reluctant to send their child to one district out of fear of a lower quality education, then we should wonder why that education is fit for students from less affluent neighborhoods.

The economic

disparity between districts is stark. While each district is funded by a combination of federal, state, and local sources, discrepancies arise primarily from property taxes and donations to districts' education foundations.

Although the revenue per enrolled student amounts for RaCSD and MPCSD are not drastically different, districts that rely more heavily on state or federal funding may be more

restricted in how they use their money.

"Basic aid" districts like MPCSD and LLES do not rely primarily on state funding — for MPCSD, 86% of their total revenues come from "local property tax, parcel taxes, and community donations." However, districts like ReCSD and RaCSD rely substantially on state aid, which puts great emphasis on average daily attendance in its calculation, meaning they lose money when students are frequently absent.

While treating students differently based on race is illegal, variation between district funding isn't. This knowledge determines where more wealthy — usually white or Asian American — families move.

A district with a positive reputation, in turn, drives up demand for housing in that area, which then drives costs up, pushing more low-income families out, making the disparity larger.

When caught in a cycle of exclusion and recruitment based on financial

well-being, privileged areas become exponentially more inaccessible. Decades of wealthy west Menlo Park's failure to alleviate this has sustained educational inequalities.

By combining districts, revenues also combine. With increased monetary flow, the current elementary school districts could — and likely would — even out in terms of resources over time.

Teachers at Menlo Park and Las Lomitas schools also make an average of about \$40,000 more per year than those at Ravenswood and Redwood City, an average of \$119,690 versus just \$77,970. Yet all must compete for rapidly diminishing affordable housing in our expensive area. This drives quality teachers away from low-paying districts.

Budget cuts also impact how many faculty members a district can afford to keep. Fiscal difficulty necessitates reductions like the ones recently adopted in RaCSD, which Palo Alto Online says will "eliminate the equivalent of 83 full-time positions."

If resources were consolidated, more students might benefit from exceptional teachers who can remain in the area long term. Students would not have to ask, as Ravenswood teacher Avani Patel's students did, "How come everyone always leaves us? What did we do?"

All students would have access to well-funded STEAM programs and libraries. Perhaps, one school would not implement a 1:1 iPad program in the face of a district four miles away fighting to provide for the 95 percent of students who either qualify for free or reduced-price meals, are English Learners, or are foster youth.

According to Niche.com, a website that rates schools, LLES and MPCSD get "A's" based on an analysis of "academics, teachers, diversity, student life, and student outcomes." ReCSD and RaCSD receive a "C" and "D," respectively. If districts shared resources, worry over where your house is would diminish.

The current districts, whether intentionally or not, divide our communities by ethnicity and socioeconomic standing.

The districts are practically drawn around the demographic makeup of the areas. Nationally, education is more segregated today than it was three decades ago, as found by multiple studies.

Our area is no different. RaCSD and ReCSD are both over 70 percent Latino, with white students making up 0.47 percent and 20.05 percent of each, accordingly. LLES and MPCSD are both majority white, with the next largest group being either Asian-American or Latino, respectively.

Most of these students then combine as freshmen at M-A, never having interacted with students from the other schools beyond a few sports games.

Research shows that low-track classes have negative effects on learning, educational gaps compound over time, and having ineffective teachers for three consecutive years can lower achievement gains by 50 percentile points. While many RaCSD and ReCSD teachers are undoubtedly passionate and skilled, too many classes are taught by long term substitutes.

After attending a school where "[Patel] was the only 8th grade teacher that

[her] students had for the entirety of the year,” it comes as no surprise that students from RaCSD and ReCSD have a much harder time achieving in high school and beyond. The schools they have attended, by no fault of their own or their family, are systematically linked to inequality at large.

Where segregated schools fail students, integrated schools succeed. Research has consistently proven that, in addition to the academic benefits for minority students, white students’ academic achievement is either not affected or improves with integration. The socioeconomic mix of a student’s peers is one of the largest indicators of success.

In a Cleveland study, the more often that African American and Latino students were exposed to desegregation before high school, the greater the beneficial effects of attending a desegregated high school became. Desegregation was shown to benefit white students as well.

In an area where housing is stratified socioeconomically, school is one of the only places children meet people with diverse experiences. Indeed, M-A may be the most diverse place any of us ever are. When students of different backgrounds interact with each other on equal footing, prejudice and stereotyping — which develop early in childhood — are reduced and critical thinking skills increase.

In a research brief from The National Coalition on School Diversity, they conclude that “the timing of the contact is important — elementary school age children are both aware of race and most likely to display flexible thinking around what racial differences may or may not signify.”

The friends we make and the people we see as children dictate much of how we live in the future: segregation repeats itself throughout our lives. Sustained, early contact with people of different experiences makes us more likely to seek integrated employment and housing and actively engage in more civic duties.

For districts whose missions include statements about preparing children for a more global, democratic society, a major component is missing when students are separated by ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

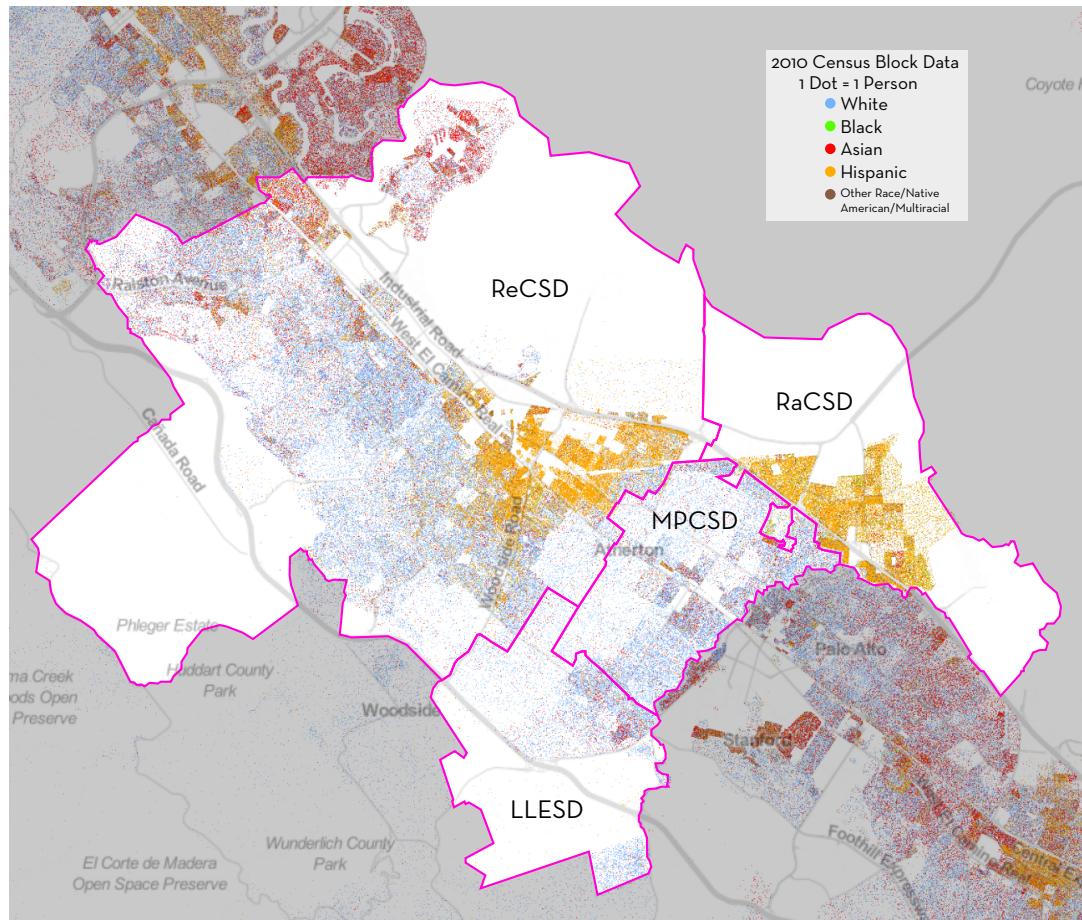
The discussion surrounding RaCSD and ReCSD has focused on “fixing” schools with pressure and sanctions, ignoring the fact that they are part of a system designed for failure. The

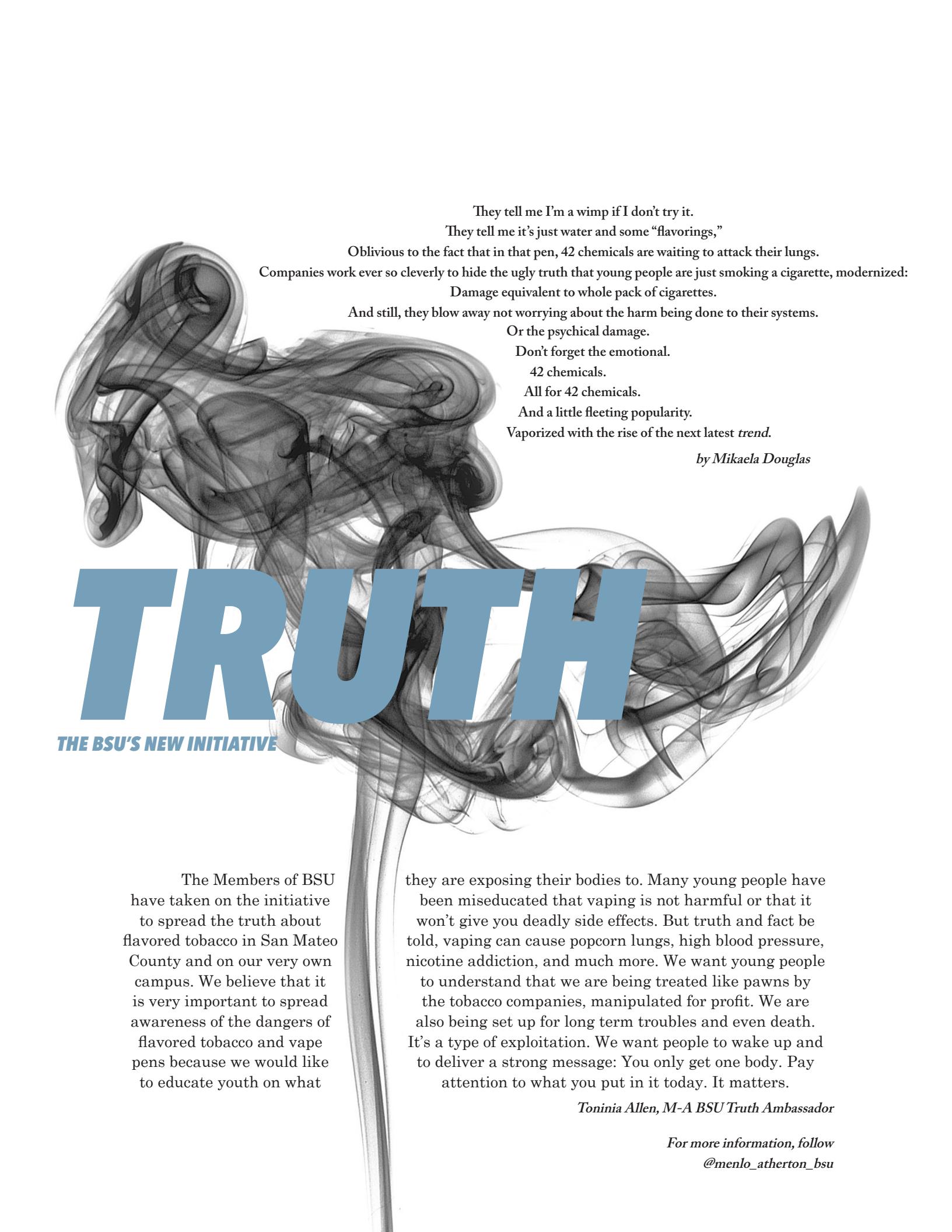
system is not broken: it works how it was designed.

The lack of resources—and subpar outcomes—for poorer, less white students and communities are never forced upon their richer, whiter neighbors. We are quick to dismiss Brown v. Board as the last of school segregation, yet we tacitly accept the rhetoric of “separate but equal.” Segregation is our area’s norm. The problem does not go away if we stop looking: it gets worse.

If the consolidation of resources would lead to better education for all students, the possibility should be welcomed.

We need to face this issue head-on, and we suggest combining district funds as a concrete first step towards educational equity.





They tell me I'm a wimp if I don't try it.
They tell me it's just water and some "flavorings,"
Oblivious to the fact that in that pen, 42 chemicals are waiting to attack their lungs.
Companies work ever so cleverly to hide the ugly truth that young people are just smoking a cigarette, modernized:
Damage equivalent to whole pack of cigarettes.
And still, they blow away not worrying about the harm being done to their systems.
Or the psychical damage.
Don't forget the emotional.
42 chemicals.
All for 42 chemicals.
And a little fleeting popularity.
Vaporized with the rise of the next latest trend.

by Mikaela Douglas

TRUTH

THE BSU'S NEW INITIATIVE

The Members of BSU have taken on the initiative to spread the truth about flavored tobacco in San Mateo County and on our very own campus. We believe that it is very important to spread awareness of the dangers of flavored tobacco and vape pens because we would like to educate youth on what

they are exposing their bodies to. Many young people have been miseducated that vaping is not harmful or that it won't give you deadly side effects. But truth and fact be told, vaping can cause popcorn lungs, high blood pressure, nicotine addiction, and much more. We want young people to understand that we are being treated like pawns by the tobacco companies, manipulated for profit. We are also being set up for long term troubles and even death. It's a type of exploitation. We want people to wake up and to deliver a strong message: You only get one body. Pay attention to what you put in it today. It matters.

Toninia Allen, M-A BSU Truth Ambassador

For more information, follow
[@menlo_atherton_bsu](https://www.instagram.com/menlo_atherton-bsu)

Legend of the Fates

*By Izzy Villa, Nathaniel Gerard,
Karina Takayama, Brynn Baker, and
Triana Devaux*

2

7

*of the 53 M-A English books that we tested do not
pass the Bechdel Test*

Rules of The Bechdel Test:

1. Must have two female characters
2. They must be named
3. They must talk about something besides men (weather, birthdays, food, etc.)

Pass

15

Enrique's Journey
Never Let Me Go
A Thousand Splendid Suns
The Merchant of Venice
Middlesex
Uglies
The Hunger Games
Divergent
Fahrenheit 451
Song of Solomon
The Tortilla Curtain
Salvage the Bones
Anna Karenina
As I Lay Dying
King Lear

Do Not Pass

27

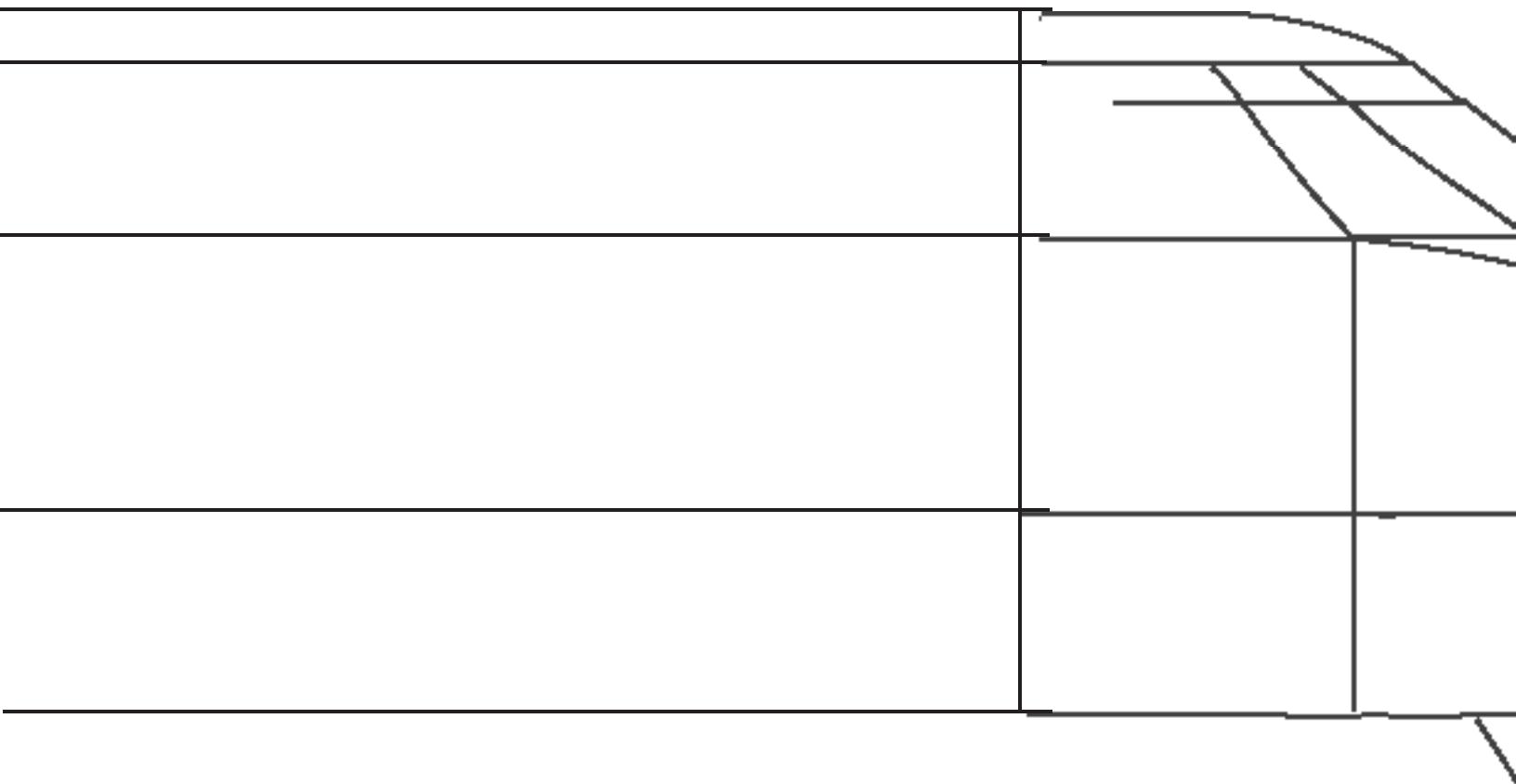
Shark Bait
Diary of a Part Time Indian
The Odyssey
Ender's Game
The Plague
The Lord of the Flies
Frankenstein
1984
Twelfth Night
Candide
Macbeth
Slaughterhouse Five
The Metamorphosis
Flight
The Maze Runner
A Separate Peace
Kindred
Into the Wild
The Namesake
The Road
Equus
The Catcher and the Rye
Olenna
Heart of Darkness
Othello
Invisible Man
The Things They Carried

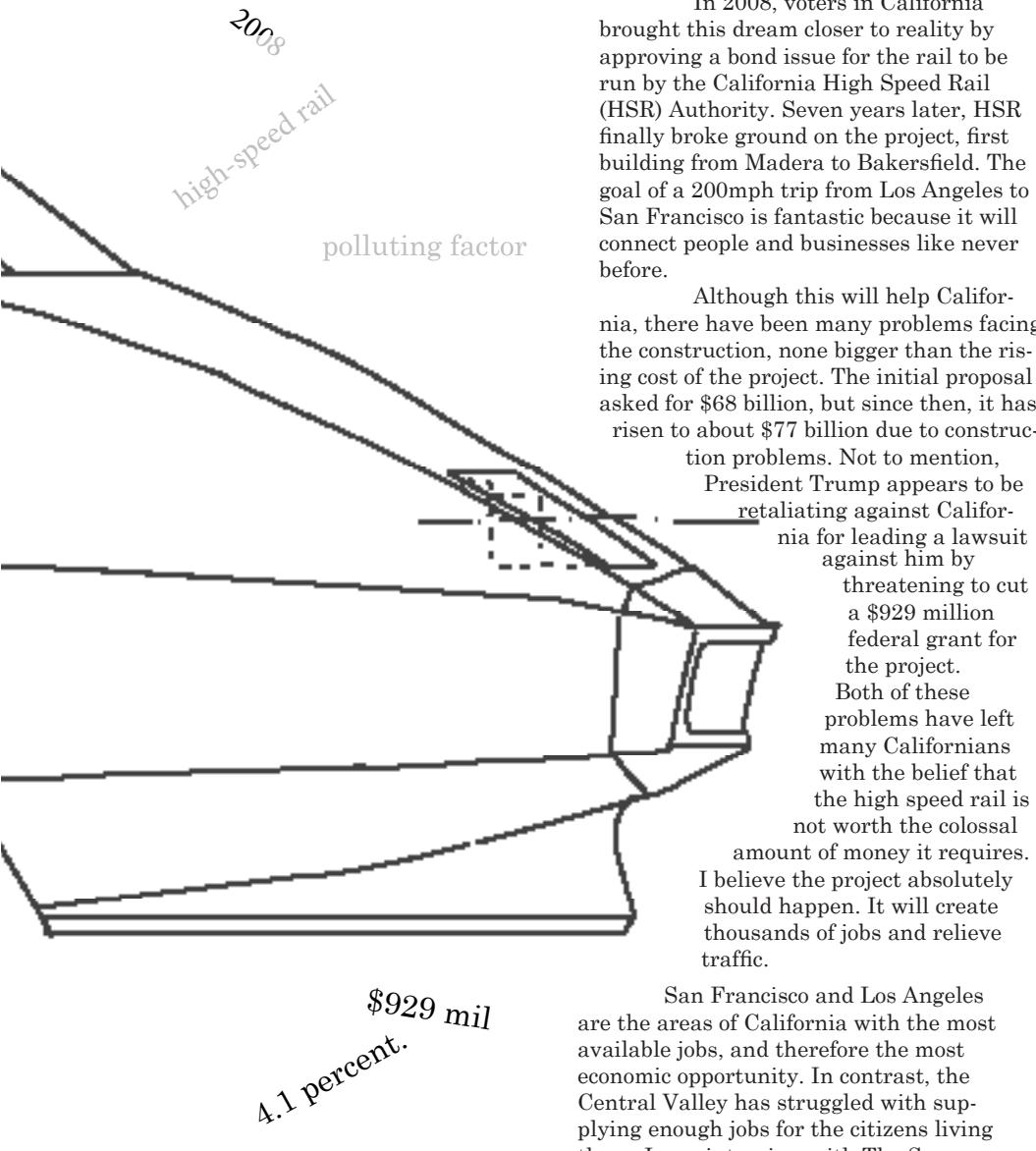
Barely Pass

10

Romeo and Juliet
Fences
All Quiet on
the Western Front
The Sun Also Rises
The Handmaid's Tale
The Great Gatsby
The Crucible
Just Mercy
The Narrative Life of
Frederick Douglass
Pride and Prejudice

Is the High-Speed Rail Worth the Money?





Imagine a Bay Area where people could live in affordable communities while still working in Silicon Valley. What if our teachers had the chance to live in cheaper areas and were still able to commute to M-A easily? Or imagine leisurely travel from Los Angeles to San Francisco in three hours, without enduring the hassles, frustrations and TSA indignities that come with air travel. All of this could become a reality with a high speed rail from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

In 2008, voters in California brought this dream closer to reality by approving a bond issue for the rail to be run by the California High Speed Rail (HSR) Authority. Seven years later, HSR finally broke ground on the project, first building from Madera to Bakersfield. The goal of a 200mph trip from Los Angeles to San Francisco is fantastic because it will connect people and businesses like never before.

Although this will help California, there have been many problems facing the construction, none bigger than the rising cost of the project. The initial proposal asked for \$68 billion, but since then, it has risen to about \$77 billion due to construction problems. Not to mention,

President Trump appears to be retaliating against California for leading a lawsuit against him by threatening to cut a \$929 million federal grant for the project. Both of these problems have left many Californians with the belief that the high speed rail is not worth the colossal amount of money it requires. I believe the project absolutely should happen. It will create thousands of jobs and relieve traffic.

San Francisco and Los Angeles are the areas of California with the most available jobs, and therefore the most economic opportunity. In contrast, the Central Valley has struggled with supplying enough jobs for the citizens living there. In an interview with The Sacra-

to Bee, Lee Ann Eager, CEO of the Fresno County Economic Development Corporation, said, "From the very beginning, for me it was about connectivity for the Valley. It's always been an issue for people doing business. Fresno's unemployment rate, at 6.3 percent, is considerably higher than the statewide rate of 4.1 percent." HSR projects the creation of 20,000 jobs over the course of five years in the first leg of construction, and 66,000 jobs after 15 years in the phase one blended stage of construction.

Increased job availability can alleviate the concerns over the construction costs. A lower unemployment rate caused by HSR will drastically help the economy by employing more people and raising tax revenue, which pours more money back into the California budget.

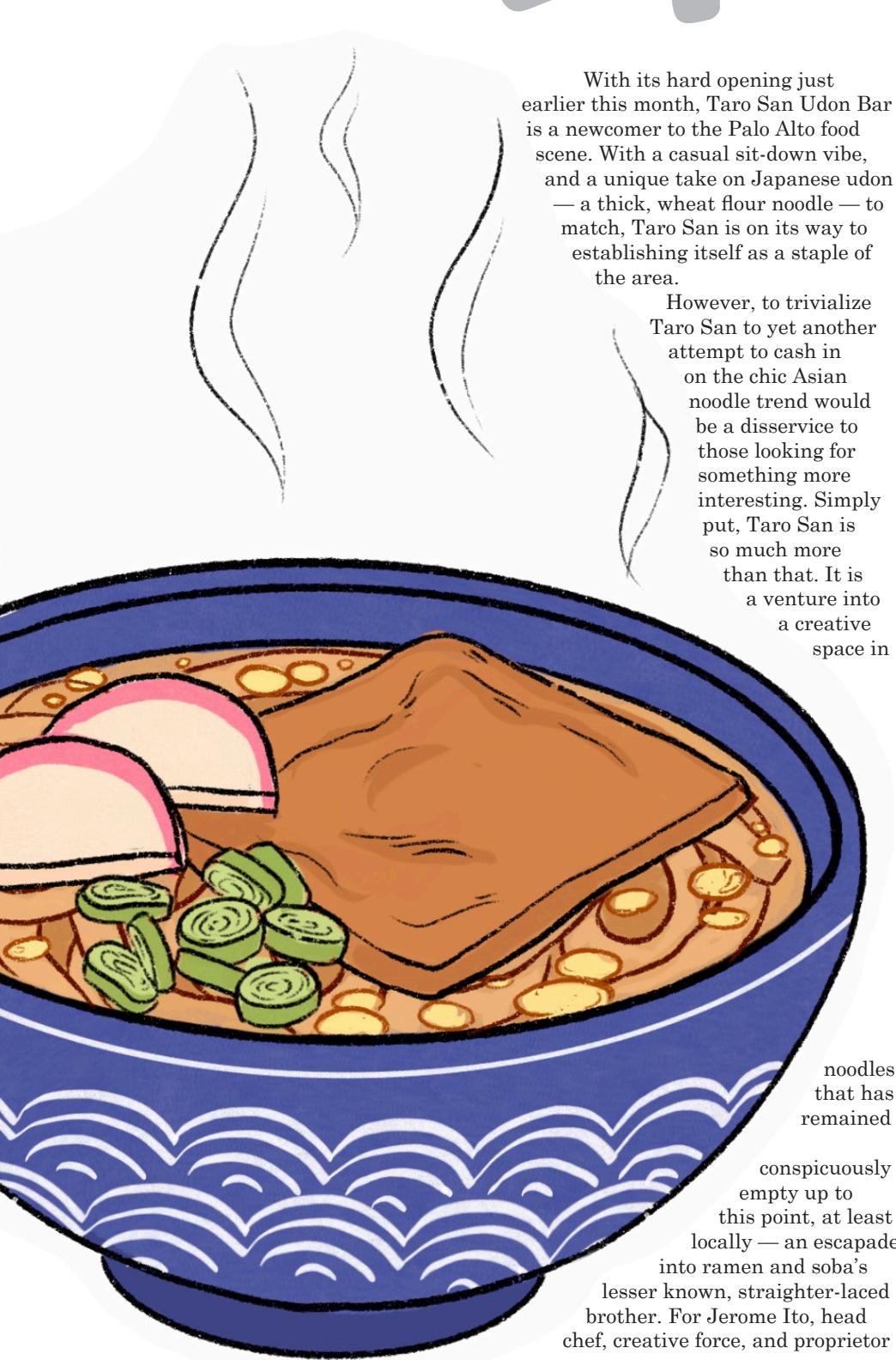
According to Inrix, U.S. citizens lose \$1,400 per year while stuck in traffic. As a whole, the U.S. wastes \$300 billion each year in lost productivity, with California accounting for \$18.7 billion. HSR would relieve stress from traffic and airport congestion in California. With more people taking the rail, there will be fewer cars on the road, which will relieve traffic on highways from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The reduction of cars on the road will also reduce our carbon footprint.

Another factor contributing to pollution in California is airplanes. Each day on average, there are 50 flights that last 1.5 hours from San Francisco to Los Angeles, burning an incredible amount of fuel that is released into the atmosphere. On a 300 mile trip, a medium sized car generates about 104 kilograms of carbon dioxide. A commercial jet produces only about 184 kilograms per passenger. Critics argue that even with the added benefit of a high speed rail, people use airplanes more often because of the efficiency and cost. However, if you factor in arriving early, parking, checking in at the airport, getting through security and waiting for your flight, the amount of time evens out between an airplane and high speed rail.

Although the project has gotten off track for the past several years, our state officials should invest more time and resources in making it a reality.

By: Cole Trigg

TARO SAN UDON



With its hard opening just earlier this month, Taro San Udon Bar is a newcomer to the Palo Alto food scene. With a casual sit-down vibe, and a unique take on Japanese udon — a thick, wheat flour noodle — to match, Taro San is on its way to establishing itself as a staple of the area.

However, to trivialize Taro San to yet another attempt to cash in on the chic Asian noodle trend would be a disservice to those looking for something more interesting. Simply put, Taro San is so much more than that. It is a venture into a creative space in

behind Taro San, it remains clearly one thing: a passion project. Ito, a fourth-generation Japanese immigrant, grew up in Los Angeles, and “on Japanese food.” For him, cooking Japanese began early in his life, although this arose more out of necessity than anything else. Ito said, “my mom— don’t tell her this— was not always the best cook, and while she did certain things well, they were often not Japanese. Cooking, for me, was a way to fill that void.”

Ito, growing up, often felt estranged from his ancestral home. In his words, his daily life felt “Americanized.” He went on to say, “I ate as much [Japanese food] as possible; it was an easy way to connect. I just didn’t want to lose any of my Japanese heritage.”

If this wasn’t reason enough to constitute a career in Japanese food, other qualities, besides its cultural significance, drew Ito to it as well. “It is very light and refreshing, and something that I could eat every day. I love Italian food, and I love French food, but I just can’t eat them like that. Japanese is just different in that way.”

Through college, cooking remained more of a hobby than a career path for Ito. In fact, he originally went to college as an art major before he went to culinary school. But this interest in art too played a role in his interest in Japanese food. After getting his grounds at culinary school, he began to focus on developing his sushi skillset. Ito described sushi as “one food which truly has capacity for creativity. You can be creative with any food, but the plating of sushi is truly on another level. For me, it was a way of combining cooking and art.”

As a result, Ito’s first real escapades into the world of restaurants were by way of sushi. After working as a sushi caterer in Los Angeles, Ito made the move up to the Bay Area, where he initially worked as Head Chef of Google’s first full sushi bar, the Kitchen Sync. In 2014, he started his own poke restaurant/catering service, Go Fish,

noodles that has remained conspicuously empty up to this point, at least locally — an escapade into ramen and soba’s lesser known, straighter-laced brother. For Jerome Ito, head chef, creative force, and proprietor



which now has five locations across the Bay Area. Despite this success, Ito still felt unfulfilled as a chef. "At that point, while I enjoyed doing poke, I wanted to do more. It was pretty limiting, and I knew I had a lot more to offer."

"My first child, my daughter, really loves noodles. She just always wanted noodles, and udon, and we ended up trying more places that had them. So, I ended up eating a lot of noodles, and after trying some marugame udon in Hawaii, meaning fast and casual, we realized that model was genius," said Ito. Thus, the idea for Taro San was born.

"Building this was not nearly as easy as with Go Fish. I know sushi, but this is entirely new. There are so many things that have to be done right just for the system to work. At the same time, though, it is kind of great, because I get to create this new atmosphere with interesting, quality, and most importantly tasty food," said Ito.

One thing to get right, for Ito, was a noodle authentic in both flavor and texture. He said, "I needed a much deeper understanding of how to make udon. For that, I went to the Yamato Udon School in Japan and Singapore, which brought me up to a whole different level."

"Doing noodles at Yamato was very much like baking, which was an unusual experience as a regular chef. Bakers are very precise, because they have to be, versus a chef like me, where you leave much more up to feeling. At the school, they really force you to be exact, in both ingredients and timing, which results in not only a better, but more consistent noodle," said Ito.

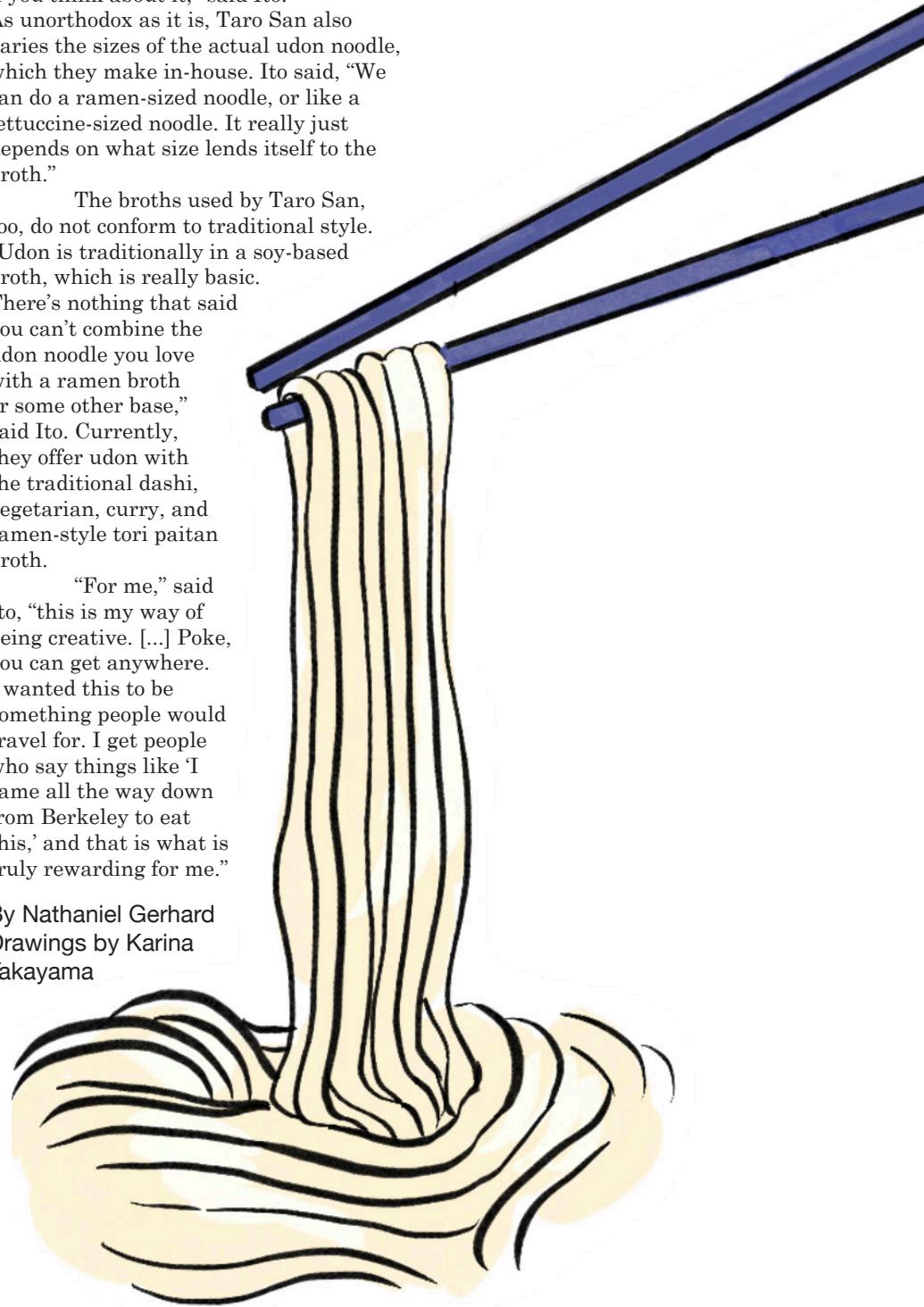
Taro San opened the ninth of February, offering a menu rich with variety, from sea urchin-oriented udon, to panko-fried oysters. "I didn't want to just do udon. I like to get a lot of different things when I go out to eat," said Ito. This meant, for him, adding izakaya, or Japanese pub food, to the menu in addition to the udon. "This could be our salmon on crispy rice, or really panko fried anything. It is like Japanese tapas,

if you think about it," said Ito. As unorthodox as it is, Taro San also varies the sizes of the actual udon noodle, which they make in-house. Ito said, "We can do a ramen-sized noodle, or like a fettuccine-sized noodle. It really just depends on what size lends itself to the broth."

The broths used by Taro San, too, do not conform to traditional style. "Udon is traditionally in a soy-based broth, which is really basic. There's nothing that said you can't combine the udon noodle you love with a ramen broth or some other base," said Ito. Currently, they offer udon with the traditional dashi, vegetarian, curry, and ramen-style tori paitan broth.

"For me," said Ito, "this is my way of being creative. [...] Poke, you can get anywhere. I wanted this to be something people would travel for. I get people who say things like 'I came all the way down from Berkeley to eat this,' and that is what is truly rewarding for me."

By Nathaniel Gerhard
Drawings by Karina Takayama



Government & Economics

Should You Take them Online?

by Sarah Lehman and Emilie Mueller | Art by Karina Takayama

As much as seniors complain about government and economics, these are cornerstone classes that give students crucial skills. Why is it, then, that many students opt to take these classes online, paying to complete the graduation requirements without the help of a teacher or their peers? And how does that affect the students still in the classroom?

There is no getting around the cost of online classes. One of the more popular programs, Brigham Young University (BYU) Independent Study, starts at \$156 for most online classes, including government and economics. Already this number makes online study difficult within some students' budgets.

Those who do pay for these classes do it for many reasons — maybe they needed room to take a music class; or, as Felix Jeantet said, "I thought it was too easy as a class, based on previous history classes at M-A, and I preferred to do homework in a [teacher's assistant] class."

However, enrollment is still high. Government teacher Ellen Jacobson said, "I think the classes are still pretty full...I do appreciate the fact that kids might want to take it online so they have a free period, especially if they work, they get to leave campus early."

Sean Fabrega chose to take the courses online, "because [she] wanted to take art history [her] senior year and [she] wouldn't have been able to get it into [her] schedule otherwise." She continued, "I've really enjoyed the class I took instead, and I'm done taking both [gov and econ] so I don't have to worry about it."

Head guidance counselor Silvia Torres said that opting for online study can be "very helpful during fall semester" because seniors can direct more of their

time toward college applications. However, she noted that this convenience is "only accessible to students whose parents can afford to pay." Torres estimated that roughly 50 to 60 seniors [out of a class of 620] are currently enrolled in government or economics outside of M-A, with the number growing each year.

Jacobson stated, "I don't agree with online education if the class is offered on campus." She teaches Driver's Education in addition to government and commented, "I can interject even with Driver's Ed, they're trying to get rid of it. But...the kids in my class might not have that 50 dollars to take it online."

Connor Gentile said he "would have taken both [classes] online, but it's pretty expensive." M-A cannot cover the cost of an online course, because as Torres explained, "M-A doesn't have the resources [to pay for that]...We have our own online credit recovery program...if you wanted to take it outside M-A, it is the responsibility of the parent to then pay for that."

Economics teacher Candace Bolles added, "I question the assumption that online is actually easier. The online courses can seem like a cop-out in the sense that while a student may pass the online course, I question how well they really know the material."

For Ethan Gao, the time management component put online government and economics out of the picture. "I know I'm not responsible enough to take it online because I'll probably never do it and put it off till the last week," he said. Meghan Child described the online courses as "a weight on [her] shoulders" as she struggles to motivate herself to complete them.

Some students do not have the

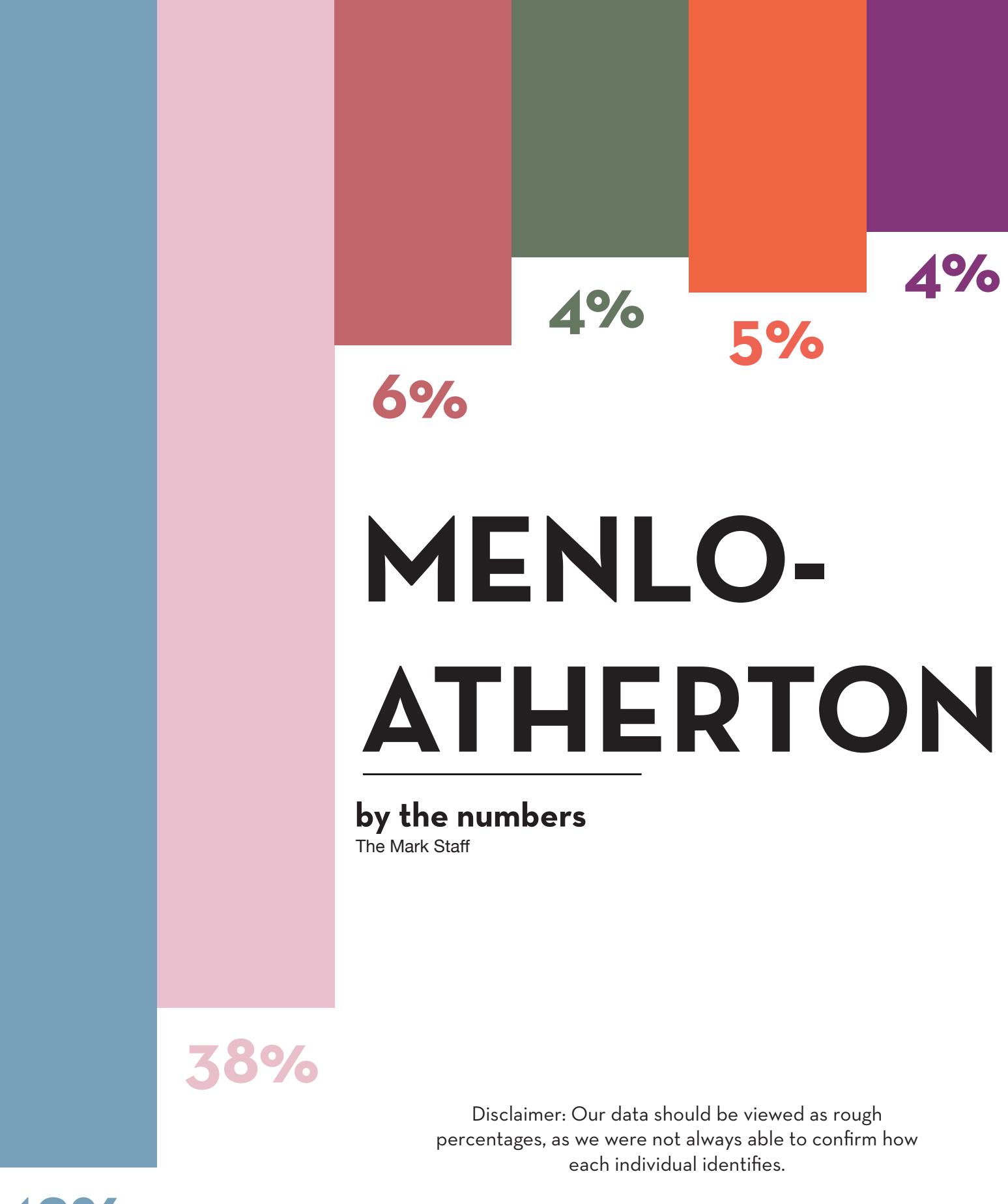
opportunity to make a decision about online study simply because they are unaware that it exists. Autriyana Hardy and Kaila Alcazar are currently taking government and economics at M-A, but both said that they would have opted for online classes had they known about them.

According to Bolles and Jacobson, there is an educational difference between a class that meets every day and has discussions, and an online program that can be completed nearly individually. Bolles stated, "A traditional 'in-class' environment means the teacher is there to help instantly with any issues. The student also has classmates that they can discuss problems with and figure out as a team. Also, most students learn better when they have a teacher to explain and demonstrate the material. Simply reading the material doesn't work for many students."

Fabrega has completed both government and economics through BYU and also acknowledges the shortcomings of online learning. She stated, "I definitely didn't receive the same quality of education that I would've if I had taken [the classes] at M-A."

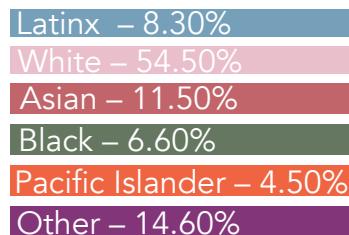
The impacts of virtual study go beyond individual students. Torres explained that government and economics are some of the "few classes where... there's no AP level offered... so you're back into the whole student body, and you start seeing kids that maybe you hadn't seen since freshman year." She added, "The downside of [the online classes] is that some of that diversity disappears because more students with means are able to take the class elsewhere."





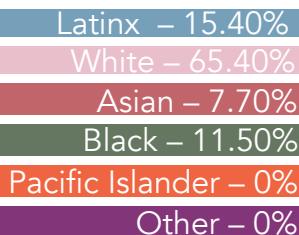
Representation in the M-A Chronicle

Interviews, photos, and coverage from August 2018 to March 2019



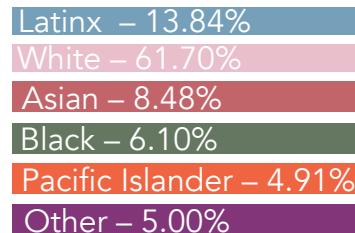
Representation in the Mark

Interviews, photos, and coverage from our last issue



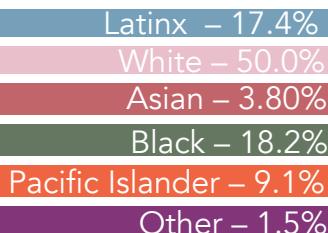
Representation in the Yearbook

Non-school portrait photos, superlatives, and senior pages from 2017-2018 school yearbook



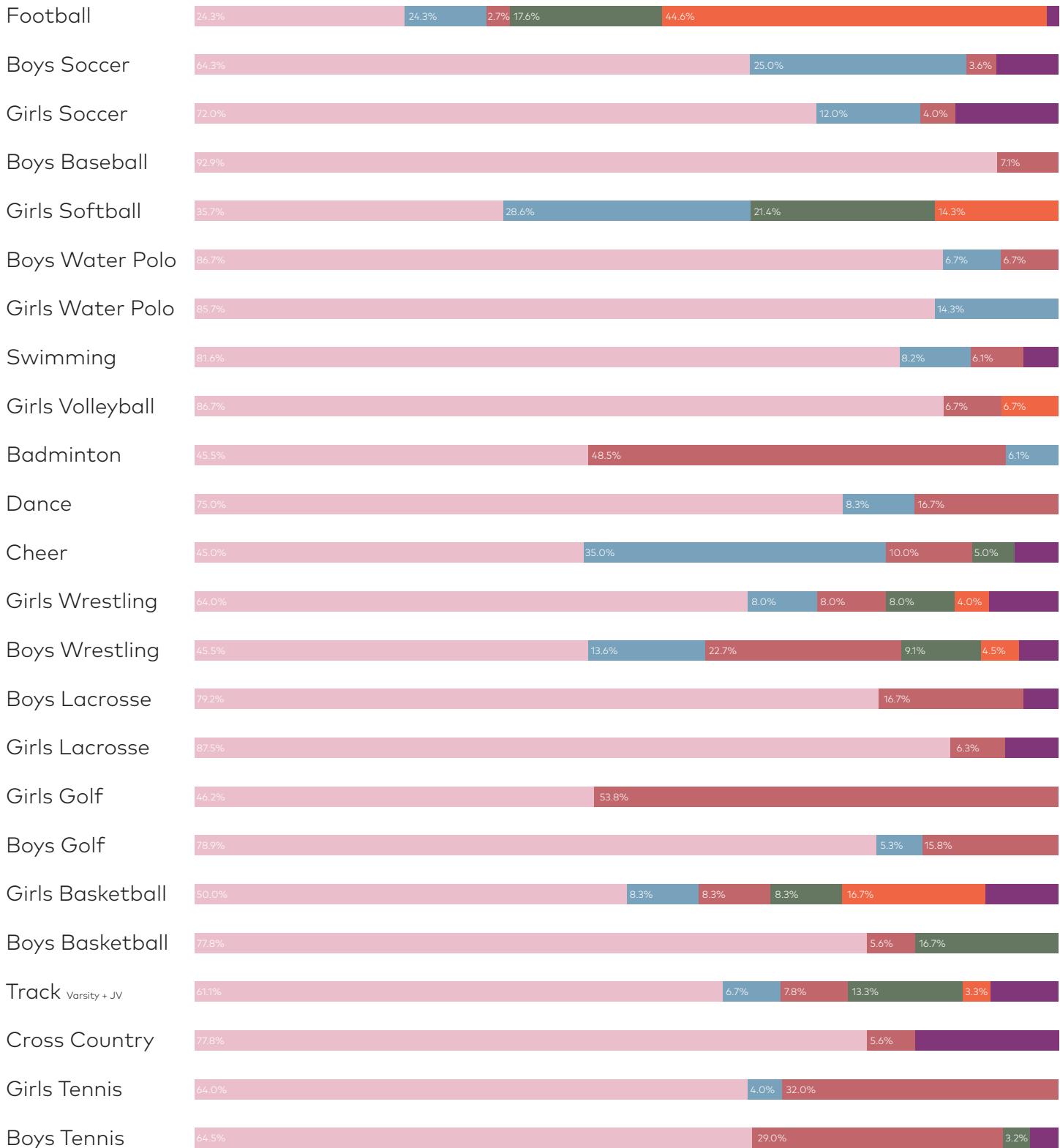
Representation in M-A Today

Interviews, photos, and coverage from August 2018 to March 2019



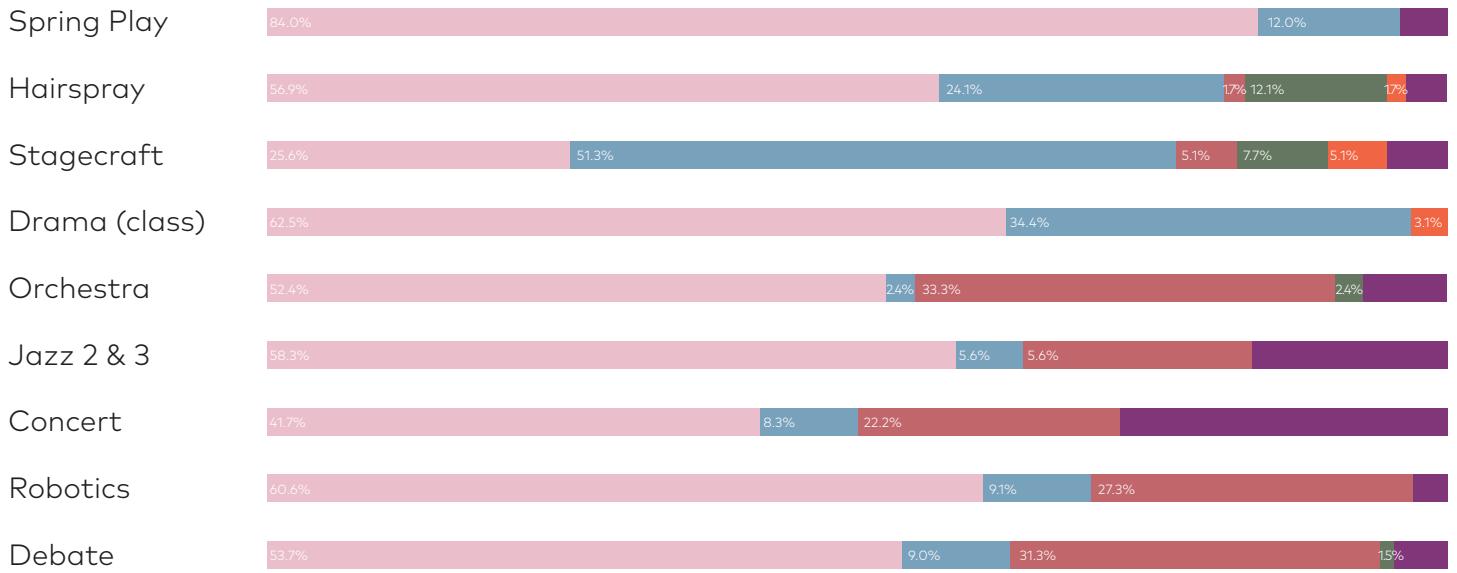


Varsity Sports

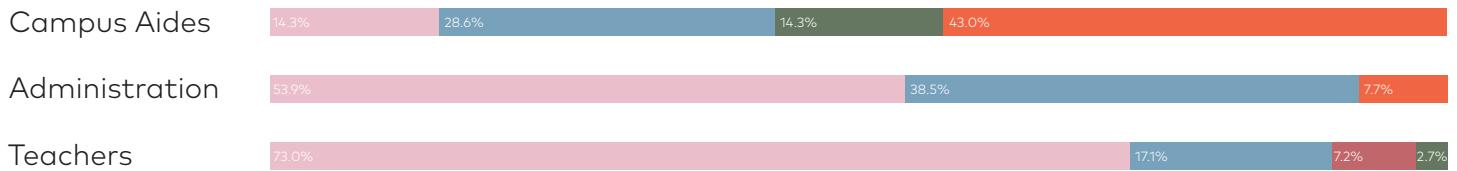




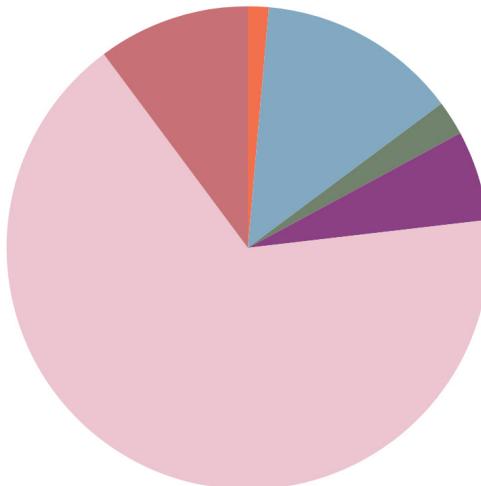
Extracurriculars



Staff



Senior Election Voter Demographics



White: 66.7%
 Latinx: 13.43%
 Asians: 10.2%
 Black: 2.3%
 Pacific Islander: 1.4%
 Other: 6.0%

In December, our class came together to do a complete audit on the demographics of our interviewees, our stories/features, sources, and pictures. Even though the majority of our student body is people of color (POC), our numbers show that we have mostly served a Caucasian and Asian audience. This, of course, is due to the fact that our staff are made up of these students, and our coverage of plays, extracurriculars, and sports games leans towards people of our race. While it seemed shocking to the rest, the numbers didn't surprise me. Although my complexion is pale, I walked into journalism and other classes as one of the few Latinx students -- I'm the first Latina editor-in-chief M-A's had in at least a decade. I grew up in a predominantly Latinx neighborhood, but I didn't attend the feeder schools nearby. Being thrown into a large school with new classes and without any friends took a toll on my self-confidence, but being the only Latinx student enrolled discouraged me even more. This is the case for other minority groups as well; for me, being the only POC in a class made me uncomfortable, especially in classes such as English or History where the fear of the teacher asking how I felt as "an immigrant" is a constant worry.

Other times I've felt pressured to choose a different class because I will feel left out in another. We choose the "easy classes" because it is a comfort zone. We all are content with seeing recognizable faces in all of our classes, so when it comes to picking electives or trying out for sports teams, white and Asian students choose one side and POC choose another. Looking at my journalism class, we interview the same students or staff members because it is easier to reach out to them than to students we don't know, when our job as journalists is to do exactly the opposite. When pressed with a deadline, we choose the easy way so we don't have to create any awkwardness.

At times, I know I find myself frustrated when the Latinx community is ignored. There comes a point where we feel that we aren't represented, and strength in diversity is fake. When I became editor-in-chief, I knew it was my responsibility to lead our staff away from the comfortable, even if it meant taking myself out of that comfort zone. We, however, continued to take the easy choice through reporting on the same demographics as the year before. This pattern seen through the audit and other aspects of campus life should make us realize that if we want classes to look different in 10 years, we can't just do what's comfortable.

Percentage of the Menlo-Atherton Student Body That is Latinx

En diciembre, nuestra clase de periodismo hizo una inspección sobre las demográficas de las personas que entrevistamos, incluyendo si fueron parte de las historias o artículos y si fueron sujetos en fotos. Aunque la mayoría de los estudiantes en nuestra escuela son personas de color (PDC), por la parte mayor, nuestra revista escribe casi todas sus historias sobre estudiantes asiáticos y anglosajones. La razón es que nuestras periodistas pertenecen a esas razas, y las personas en los extracurriculares y juegos de deportes populares son de las mismas razas. Aunque fue un momento de sorpresa para los demás estudiantes, no fue para mí. Mi piel es blanca, pero cuando llegué a la clase de periodismo y otras clases avanzadas, me di cuenta que fui la única estudiante Latina -- soy la primera editora Latina de M-A en casi diez años. Vivía en un vecindario Latinx pero no fuí a las escuelas cercas del distrito. Porque estuve en una escuela grande con clases diferentes y sin amigos, mi autoestima fue baja. Esto es muy común para otros estudiantes de color. Personalmente, siendo la única estudiante de color en el salón me hizo sentir incómoda. Tenía la mayoría de mi temor en clases como Inglés o Historia, donde hubo la posibilidad de que un maestro me preguntara sobre mi experiencia como un inmigrante. Hubo un momento cuando me sentí presionada en escoger una clase diferente porque me sentí aislada. Escogemos clases que son más fáciles porque nos sentimos más cómodos. Igualmente cuándo vemos rostros que reconocemos, nos sentimos tranquilos. Entonces cuándo estudiantes de MA están escogiendo extracurriculares o probando para deportes, no es sorpresa que anglosajones y asiáticos escogen un lado, y personas de color escogen el otro. Observando mi clase de periodismo, entrevistamos los mismos estudiantes y maestros porque es más fácil cuándo el alternativo son personas que no conocemos.

Esto es irónico porque como periodistas, debemos escribir artículos sobre toda la población de MA, no solamente los que conocemos. Pero cuando no hay suficiente tiempo para terminar un artículo, es más fácil hacer lo que se siente más cómodo.

A veces, estoy frustrada cuando nadie le hace caso a la comunidad Latinx. Decimos y sentimos que no estamos representados y que la fuerza en la diversidad es falsa. Cuando llegué a ser editora, supe que era mi responsabilidad de sacar nuestras periodistas afuera de lo cómodo aunque yo tenía que hacer lo mismo. Nosotros todavía tomamos la opción más fácil cuando reportamos las demográficas mismas del año pasado. Estas demográficas demuestran que si queremos hacer un cambio grande, tenemos que poner nuestras diferencias al lado para cambiar la situación.

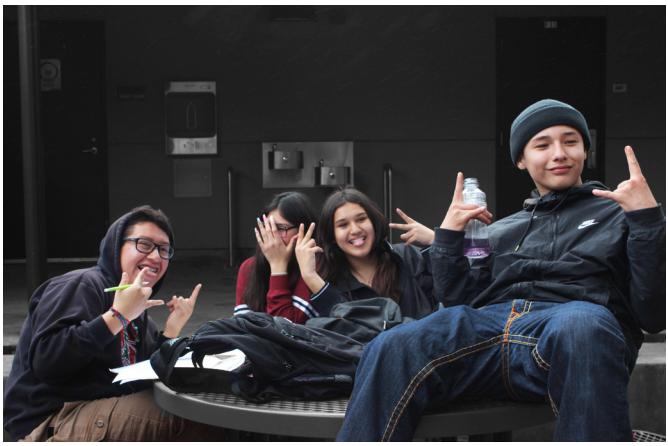
by Izzy Villa

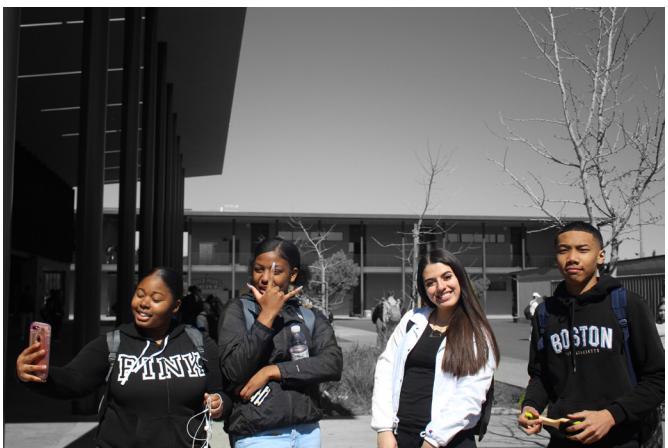
The



of Menlo-Atherton

*Contributing photographers: Greta Hoffman, Lucida Fu,
Amelia Wu, and Aashka Popat*





STRESSED?

Varsity Athletes: Is There a Stress Problem?

In response to an October article in the M-A Chronicle detailing high stress levels among some of our student-athletes, we expanded our sample size to include 121 varsity athletes. These are their opinions.

Based on only four interviews, we shared opinions by athletes who complained that coaches added unnecessary stress and others who felt their mental health was their coaches' top priority. In order to get a more accurate picture of the whole, we reached out with a survey to all varsity athletes, with 121 responding.

In the survey, students cited vastly different stress levels across the board. While 56% of students felt more stressed during the season, 5% said that the sports season lowered their stress, and 40% of students said that they felt the same amount of stress all year round.

The three most common sources of stress were the demands from the coach, the pressure to perform well, and the lack of time for homework.

According to senior Oron Estes, "Both require an immense amount of time and dedication," referring to basketball as well as her homework load.

Senior baseball player Ben Ferrick said that the most stress would usually come when "important games and academic deadlines all fell within the same week" because he would run out of

time to balance the two.

Over half of the athletes responded similarly. "I'm starting homework at around 7:30 or 8 p.m. during tennis season, which is not exactly conducive to healthy stress and sleep levels," said junior Katie Donahue. But even in the most time-consuming sports, one of the biggest indicators of an athlete's stress was the way they felt their coach treated them.

While a minority, the strongest negative responses were about coaches. Students had higher stress levels when they said they felt pressure from their coach, more so than academic load and time commitment. 36% percent of students said they rarely or never feel comfortable talking to their coach about stress. This negative feedback was concentrated in a few teams, and so the dynamic of a team may be more indicative of stress than other aspects.

Lacrosse player Christian Andersen stated that "living up to expectations of the coaches" was the most stressful part.

"We are all held to a very high standard," explained junior lacrosse

player Audrey Koren.

"I was the only person of my position, so [the team] relied on me extensively to always succeed," said junior volleyball player Mariah Grover.

Jake Andrew simply stated his stress as "the pressure to win."

Co-Athletic Director and math teacher Steven Kryger says that "some of it is about time management—if a student knows that they have a difficult class load and their time management skills aren't the greatest, then maybe adding a sport isn't good."

Kryger also gave advice for students who might be afraid of speaking to their coach about their stress levels. "If a player were to write out their questions, that might help them. Or you could send an email saying 'Coach, I'd like to meet. I'm a little nervous. I'm going to write out some of my questions for you.' That's an icebreaker, and you're still getting your point across and it's not face-to-face immediately. But the bottom line is, this is a skill that we all need to know. It's not easy for everybody, but it's not so different than talking to a teacher."

by Sarah Marks

Trigger Warnings

Trigger warning /triger/ /worniNG/ (*n.*) a statement at the start of a piece of writing, video, etc., alerting the reader or viewer to the fact that it contains potentially distressing material (often used to introduce a description of such content).

Should a teacher give a formal warning or let students leave their class if they do not want to read about suicide? How about a sexual assault?

We often hear calls for mental health precautions like trigger warnings, but it is rare that we implement them in a systematic way, and even rarer that we question whether or not we even should.

While proponents of trigger warnings are working towards expanding their use in classrooms, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt argues in his new book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, that trigger warnings create a culture of fragility and overprotectiveness. According to Haidt, the post Millennial generation, or ‘Gen Z,’ has “a different set of reactions to external adversity than previous generations.” He argues that we do not acknowledge the ‘antifragility’ of most people, the idea that we need to be challenged in order to get stronger.

Mental health statistics for children born after 1995 are devastating, with anxiety and depression skyrocketing. According to a study by Ramin Mojtabai, a professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the odds of adolescents suffering from clinical depression grew by 37% between 2005 and 2014. The rate of suicide for teenage American boys is up 25% since 2011, and up 75% for girls.

Haidt attributes this phenomenon to social media and a culture of vast overprotection, such as the reduction in ‘free-range’ parenting, the removal of dangerous play structures from campuses, and, after the Columbine shooting, schools’ ‘zero-tolerance’ policies targeting issues such as weapons, guns, and drugs. This poses a complicated dilemma -- as mental health issues continue to rise, educators want to do more to accommodate students’ poor mental health, but they may, in fact, be exacerbating the issues. In the words of Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, “In a variety of ways, children born after 1980 - the Millennials - got a consistent message from adults: life is

dangerous, but adults will do everything in their power to protect you from harm, not just from strangers but from one another as well.”

Haidt concludes that trigger warnings are unhelpful and actually harmful in the long-term, reinforcing this culture of fragility. He believes that this “vindictive protectiveness” does not prepare students for future life, as they cannot be shielded from emotionally challenging or traumatic material forever.

Yet trigger warning policies are being implemented at institutions across the country. Alyssa Leader, a student at Harvard University, was sexually assaulted in her dorm and ended up taking a political violence class with professor Kimberly Theidon. Theidon “consistently warned the class before discussing sexual violence and other emotional material, and she encouraged students to request help should any distress interfere with coursework,” which Leader found valuable.

The rate of suicide for teenage American boys is up 25% since 2011, and up 75% for girls.

Sofie Karasek, the director of education and the co-founder of the organization “End Rape on Campus” states, “Our national dialogue about trigger warning has all but ignored experiences like Leader’s.” She continues, “When professors give these warnings, provide alternative readings, and facilitate respectful conversations about deeply personal issues, it is easier for all students to participate. Accusing students of being coddled or institutions of killing academic freedom is an extreme overreaction against those who wish to be valued and respected in class.” She concluded, “It’s not that difficult issues should not be taught — it is that they should be taught with nuance.”

As an English teacher whose class covers literature from King Lear to Invisible Man, Lisa Otsuka has had similar interactions with students. She

said, “A student’s therapist basically emailed me and said the student could not read anything existential or tragic, which is a lot of what we do in literature. I honored it; I had to give that student a separate curriculum, but it was unfortunate because it made it a little difficult. I mean, even *Invisible Man* is existential. So this person did kind of have a separate experience in my class.”

Most of the time in Otsuka’s class, “students are triggered by other things going on in their lives, not by the actual curriculum.” Michelle Cristerina, M-A’s mental health coordinator in student support services, said that she remembers “a student from many years ago that had some issues in a class,” and that “there was a lot of material in the reading that was quite triggering to that student.”

Otsuka, although never implementing a trigger warning policy herself, hinted that policies might be reevaluated next year. She explained, “I know [next year] for summer reading, they’re adding *The Hate U Give*. We’ve talked about this a little bit with *Handmaid’s Tale* this year, so it would definitely be interesting to know how teachers are planning to talk about that.”

On the other hand, some institutions are adopting anti-trigger warning policies. In 2016, the incoming class at the University of Chicago received a letter from the dean that stated, “Our commitment to academic freedom means that we do not support so-called ‘trigger warnings,’ we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual ‘safe spaces’ where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own.” Geoffrey Stone, chair of the Dean’s committee, law professor and past provost at the University of Chicago explained, “The university is preparing students for the real world and would not be serving them by shielding them from unpleasantness. He continued, “The right thing to do is empower the students, help them understand how to fight, combat, and respond, not to insulate them from things they will have to face later.”

A survey of more than 800 college educators by the National Coalition Against Censorship showed that 62%



said they think trigger warnings have or will have a negative effect on academic freedom, with 17% reporting a favorable view of trigger warnings (that they have or could have a positive effect on education and classroom dynamics).

Some universities are taking the opposite stance, though. Northwestern University president Morton Schapiro believes that safe spaces are necessary on campus, remarking that “students don’t fully embrace uncomfortable learning unless they are themselves comfortable. The irony, it seems, is that the best hope we have of creating an inclusive community is to first create spaces where members of each group feel safe.”

For the most part, formal policies on trigger warnings are rare. In a survey of more than 800 college educators by the National Coalition Against Censorship, less than 1% of respondents said their institution had one. Karl Losekoot, instructional Vice Principal at M-A, stated that we “do not have a formal policy requiring or prohibiting the use of trigger warnings.”

The psychological research on the effectiveness of trigger warnings, while extensive, does not lead to a solid conclusion. PsychologyToday advocates for the use of ‘prolonged exposure ther-

apy,’ which “encourages repeated exposure to triggers so that patients can get used to them and no longer find them upsetting,” explaining that “avoiding trauma, while beneficial in the short term, can worsen symptoms in the long term.”

Cristerna believes that trigger warnings depend on the situation. She explained, “If you’re going to take an elective class that’s going to talk about sexual assault, rape, things that might

62% of college educators said they think trigger warnings have or will have a negative effect on academic freedom, with 17% reporting a favorable view of trigger warnings

be triggering to somebody, maybe that should appear in the course selection.” She continued, “Do I think that you need to have a trigger warning every time the teacher hands out a book or something? I don’t know, and I think that’s where the controversy comes in. I’m not an expert

in trigger warnings, but I would say that I don’t think it’s an exact science. I think it’s important that there are discussions about it.”

An article published by the American Psychological Association in 2017 explains that even for students with post-traumatic stress disorder, “offering general warnings about sensitive topics may be ineffective due to the unpredictable nature of triggers.” Often, people with PTSD experience distress without knowing what triggered it, and furthermore, “triggers often relate to experiences occurring immediately prior to the trauma, not the trauma itself.” For example, an assault victim may be triggered by reminders of the setting of the attack rather than the attack itself, and that means trigger warnings about assault will be “of no benefit.”

As some universities are implementing trigger warnings in the classroom to keep students feeling safe, others are getting rid of them entirely in order to promote so-called academic freedom. With mental health issues and political polarization continuing to increase, the tension between the protection of students and the academic freedom of institutions is likely to rise.

Winter Sports Report

A recap of M-A's recent postseason success

By Heath Hooper & Cole Trigg

Boys Basketball: The M-A boys swept through the Peninsula Athletic League (PAL) South Division, winning the PAL tournament over Carlmont in dominant fashion. As the 4th seed in the Central Coast Section (CCS) Open Division playoffs, the Bears became the second public school in the tournament's history to win a game over a private school, defeating Serra of San Mateo. In the semifinal, M-A was defeated by Sacred Heart Cathedral, the tournament's eventual champion. After being awarded a berth in the Division 1 CIF State Championship Tournament, the Bears went down in a hard fought battle in Fresno against the third seeded Clovis West.

Girls Basketball: After a 15-10 regular season, the M-A girls made a run deep into the CCS Division 1 playoff, defeating Homestead of Cupertino and North Salinas before being upended by Palo Alto in the semifinal. Their strong showing in the CCS tournament earned the Bears a spot in the Division 4 California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) State Championship Tournament, where the Bears rattled off convincing

wins against Argonaut, Foothill, and Lowell, before facing off against a tough Oakland Tech squad in the semifinal, where the Bears' title run was ended. However, for reaching the semifinal the Bears were awarded a runner-up CIF Norcal Championship trophy.

Boys Soccer: Despite a strong regular season in the PAL Bay Division, the Bears finished second to Burlingame by a margin of one loss in the regular season standings. In the CCS Division 1 tournament, M-A defeated Alisal in the first round before being bounced by Prospect of Saratoga in the semifinal, who would go on to become the eventual tournament champion.

Girls Soccer: The M-A girls had strong league record of 4-2-3 in the PAL Bay Division, earning a share of the regular season title with Burlingame. Their consistent play leading up to the postseason awarded the Bears a spot in the CCS Open Division playoffs. The Bears, who were seeded seventh, lost to second seeded Leland of San Jose in their last game of the season.

Boys Wrestling: This season, the Bears ended Half Moon Bay's five season

long reign atop the PAL Bay Division with a perfect 4-0 record in league play. It was M-A's first league title in recent history, and the success in the regular season rolled over into the postseason. At the PAL tournament, Josh Meyers, Songi Eke, Julian Garza, and Nicky Wong won their respective weight classes, and Liam Dunn placed second. All five wrestlers competed in the CCS tournament.

Girls Wrestling: M-A girls wrestling maintained their recent supremacy this season, as another wrestler — this time senior Folashade Akinola — became the undisputed state champion in the 189 lb weight class. As a team, the Bears qualified seven wrestlers in total. Strong showings across the board from Evelyn Calhoon, Lauren McDonnell, Abby Ericson, Angie Bautista, Anna Smith, and Akinola got the Bears within 12 points of 1st place in the state. In their dominant season, the team racked up the regular season PAL title and took home the CCS/SF championship by a 50-point margin. Akinola, Calhoon, Ericson, and McDonnell took home gold at the CCS Tournament. Smith and senior Paola Ramirez won silver in their respective weight classes.

Photos by Bob Dahlberg



Of M-A's 6 winter sports teams:

4

PAL Titles

1

CCS Championship

3

CIF State Championship
Berths

6

CCS Playoff
Berths

4

Individual CCS
Playoff Wins

2

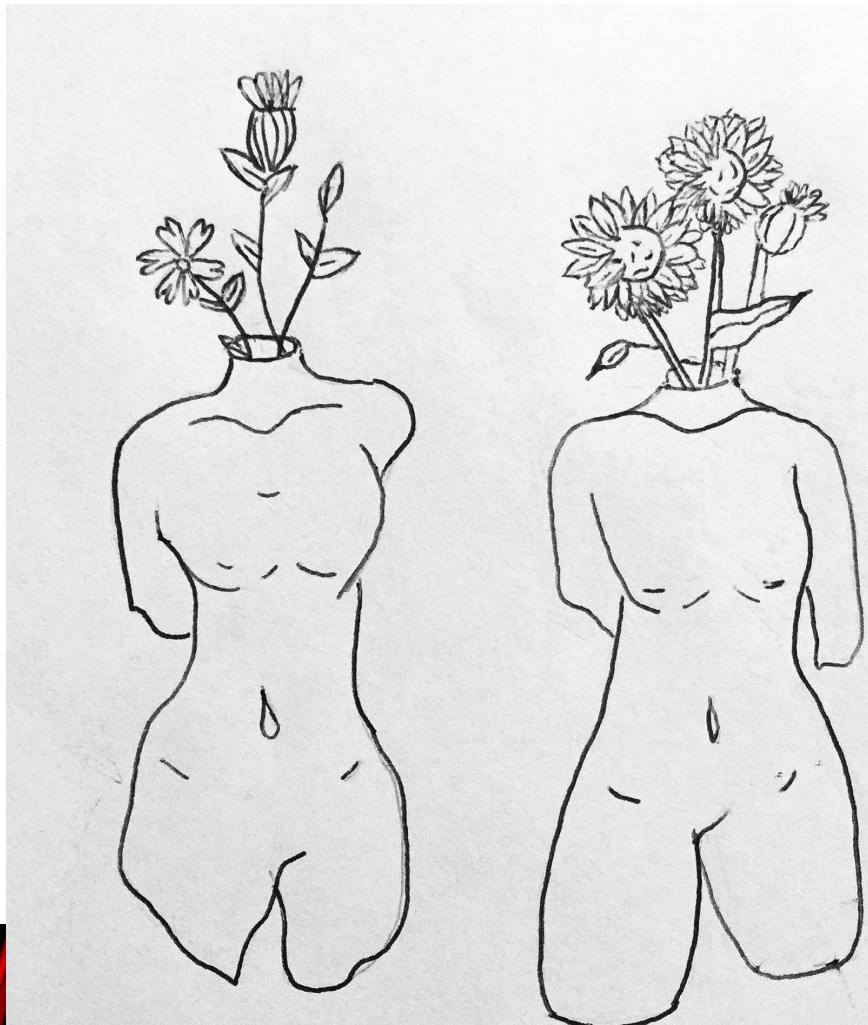
CCS Open Division
Berths



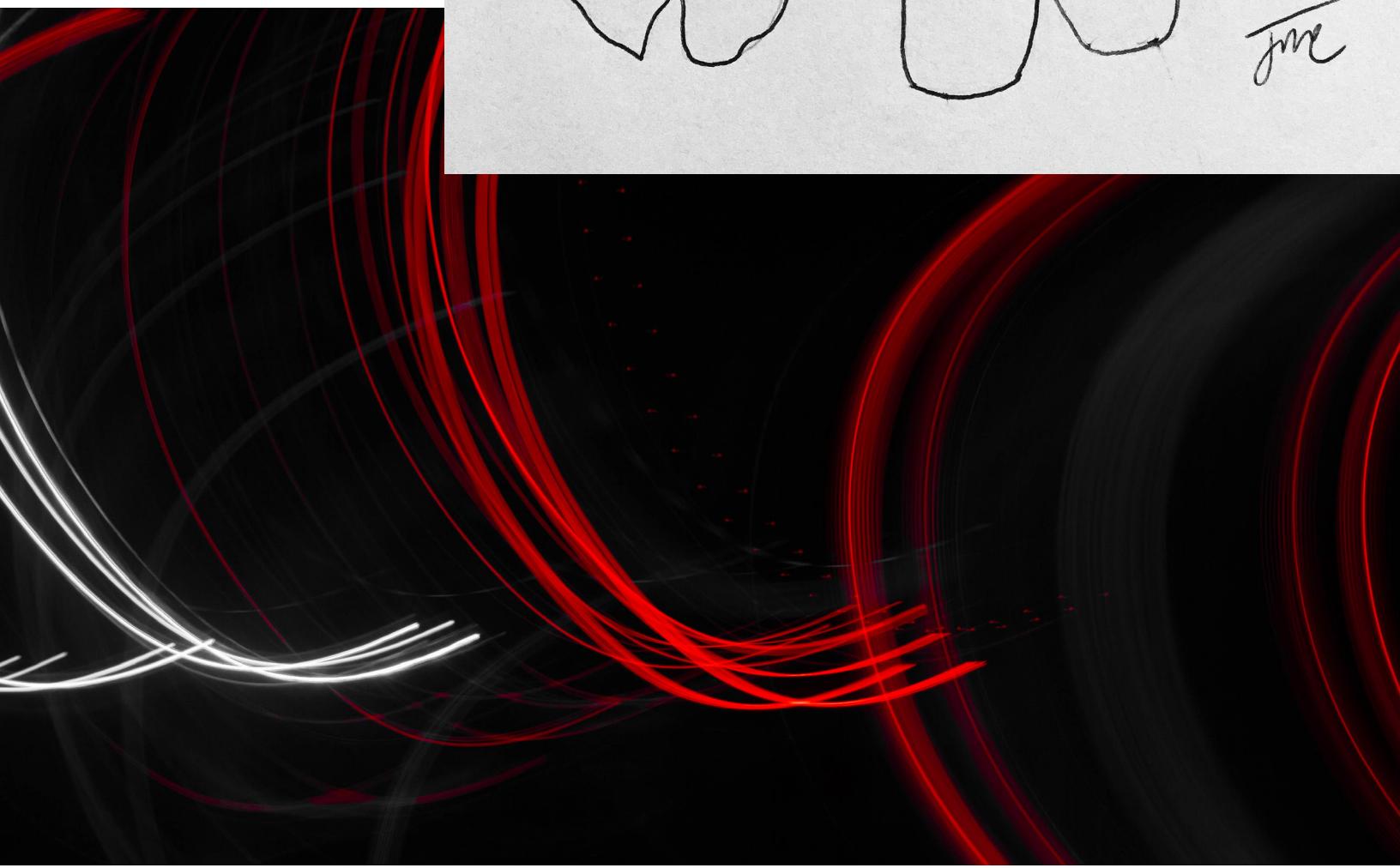


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