

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

SEONA SRIVASTAVA *Names changed to protect source privacy
FEATURES WRITER

"[My abuser] drove me away from everyone I knew and loved," said junior Brooklyn*. "He made sure I was separated from everyone I could look to as a source of help and kept me to himself. I didn't have an outlet. I didn't have anyone to go to at the time."

Brooklyn's experience illustrates a troubling reality for many teens in abusive relationships. Isolation, one of the most common tactics used by abusers, cuts victims off from the support systems they need most. For Brooklyn, this was the beginning of a cycle of control and manipulation — a cycle that affects almost one in 10 high school students, according to the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Domestic abuse among teenagers often goes unspoken but is more prevalent than many realize. It can take many forms, from physical violence to emotional manipulation, verbal degradation and psychological control.

"The biggest misconception is ... that in order for it to qualify as [an abusive relationship] that it has to involve some sort of physical abuse," said wellness counselor Eddie Perez. "There are a variety of ways that one could be abused in a relationship because it is centered around power and control."

PATTERNS

Abusive relationships often start small and subtle, blurring the line between normal interactions and harmful ones. For Brooklyn, the abuse initially appeared casual.

"We'd play-fight with each other," Brooklyn said. "At first, I didn't see anything wrong with that, but then it became a point where he would be the one attacking me all of the time and I would have to be the one having to defend myself."

Control and manipulation can begin with seemingly trivial actions, like isolating the victim.

"First, he made me drop some of my close friends," said senior Paige*. "It didn't seem to be for any particular reason. He would make up reasons or excuses ... He would say a lot of fake stuff and make things up. 'Oh, they were talking [bad] about you. They don't have your best interests at heart.'"

Abusers' actions can also affect other interpersonal relationships, as victims pick up some of their behaviors.

"If I was having fun with other people he would get really upset, like 'oh, you care more about them than you care about me,'" said Aragon alumni Lana*. "I

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had the same mentality [with my friends] ... I ended a friendship of over five years because I was set in the same mindset he was in. I felt indoctrinated."

Victims often internalize the stigma, choosing secrecy over seeking help, even from close friends.

"Even though nothing was outright said, it was very heavily implied," said junior Diane*. "She would talk about her parents being angry and she'd have bruises ... She kept it all to herself [because] you never know how someone's going to react to something like that. She wanted a normal life at school and to not have that pity."

The manipulation can spiral into more overt forms of verbal abuse.

"He called me a 'slut' all the time," Paige said. "At homecoming last year when we were dating ... he was holding my hand because we were dancing ... [But] when we went outside, he threw my phone and said 'here's your phone, you bitch.' He was calling me 'passed-around' in front of all my friends ... [Later] that night he said 'I'm so sorry. I never should've said that to you. I really care about what's best for you.' It seemed really genuine at the moment because he act[ed] like he cared about me."

Abusers diminish self-worth by drawing unfavorable comparisons, often targeting their victims' appearance or worth.

CONTINUED ON

HANNAH LI

Editorial: students must learn to disagree respectfully

This editorial represents the opinion of 12 out of 14 Outlook editors

As post-election discussion circulates — both around Aragon and the country as a whole — it is clear that now, more than ever, students need to be given the resources to engage in effective political discussion, to succeed in such a polarized nation.

Nationally, there has been a breakdown of mutual respect that can partly be attributed to overreactions to opinions other than one's own. Fear of such retaliation pushes many into self-censorship, impeding what could be meaningful discussion.

In addressing these issues, it is crucial to promote civil discourse — an essential aspect of our democratic process — within our classroom settings, to ensure that students feel comfortable sharing their own views and can respond to others.

We believe teachers have already done a phenomenal job creating a discussion-oriented curriculum that enhances the learning experiences of students by encouraging collaboration. However, to make the most of these discussions, there must be a greater emphasis on how to disagree with others.

Disagreements can seem messy and difficult, but they don't have to be. In fact, they shouldn't be. We acknowledge that it requires a certain level of vulnerability to put one's opinion out there, especially with the very real risk of retaliation, but this cannot be a deterrent.

This is exactly why it's so critical to address the concepts of dissent when we have the opportunity to. When we have at our disposal these classes of

students, still young enough to be receptive, we must use that to our advantage — this is the time to straighten out these messy disagreements before students are inevitably confronted with controversy down the line.

To begin, open discussion begins by creating an environment where students feel rewarded for their input. This starts by ensuring that students embrace an open mindset over sticking to their own beliefs, be active listeners and ground arguments in fact rather than subjective generalizations. To promote active listening, it may be helpful to have students briefly paraphrase what their peers are saying before responding. Some teachers may already utilize this technique, but we believe it should be extended to all social science classes. This would ensure that everyone's voices are heard and under-

stood, allowing for more thoughtful responses.

Now, for curricular activities, the Outlook proposes three methods that can be used in tandem with each other or selected independently under the teacher's discretion.

First, students can be assigned to reenact certain his-

torical figures and defend their stances accordingly. This would not only improve content absorption and class engagement, but also provide students with the chance to dispute ideas, without fear of expressing controversy.

Second, there should be more overt debate. While techniques like Socratic seminars are

Adding debates would be highly beneficial, where students would be assigned sides to ensure their arguments remain clear. Even if they are assigned a side they may not agree with, it is beneficial to understand the opposing point of view and fully

Most students do have an initial bias, whether or not they admit it, and may continue to cling onto those preconceived notions when their arguments/beliefs are not directly addressed. This activity would again, give them the chance to hear more diverse perspectives, respectfully challenge other people's ideas and thus understand the full scope of nuanced topics.

Although many issues go beyond a simple black-and-white divide, the purpose of these activities is not to promote one specific viewpoint, but rather to provide students with opportunities to interact with the main arguments from both sides, so that they are able to come to their own conclusion by the end.

At the end of all these activities, students should be asked to reflect upon the lesson: what new information they've learned, if their opinion has shifted, and what caused that opinion shift, if at all. This allows them to review the variety of arguments made in the discussion, while also fortifying or reforming their own opinion.

We realize the limited scope of power that school holds, but constant exposure to such discussions ensures that, at the very least, students will have had adequate practice.

Although we have curricular solutions, the overarching problem with civil discourse goes beyond curriculum, and addressing it through interactive discussion-based activities is one method out of many to encourage students. Ultimately, though, teaching students to rationally disagree with one another will allow for better conversations and expand capacity for empathy in our increasingly polarized world.



immerse themselves within the content of what they're arguing for.

These would also be completed in smaller groups of four, beginning with speeches from both sides, that would serve as a launchpad for further discussion. Learning to disagree will also allow Socratic seminars to be effective as a thorough discussion where students interact with contrasting opinions.

Third, an activity in which students specifically gather to discuss with people who have different opinions would further promote the spread of ideas. Students would respond to a prompt with an agree or disagree — these responses should be collected anonymously, to avoid voter influence — then be placed in a larger group with a few representatives from each side.

helpful, students' voices can blend into each other within the first few minutes, rendering further discussion circular. It is crucial to prevent students from mindlessly agreeing with each other and entrapping themselves in a bubble of only their own opinion, without being exposed to differing viewpoints that allow students to truly develop.

Donald Trump wins 2024 presidential election

Ellie Blakely
NEWS WRITER

**Names have been changed to protect source privacy.*

On Nov. 5, former President Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election. Trump and the Democratic candidate, Vice President Kamala Harris, had opposing views on many issues, making this election especially polarizing.

Trump won the election by 86 electoral votes and increased his margins compared to his popular vote in 2020, even in states he did not win. Trump won all seven battleground states, receiving 312 of the 538 electoral votes.

Trump's win has left some feeling worried about the future.

"I felt defeated," said freshman *Inara. "So many people in America are going to be affected so badly by his whole plan ... I know that the Hispanic community has voted for him a lot this election. But a lot of Hispanic people are illegal here or they got papers as of recently, so [they might get] deported, sent back or even [have their citizenship revoked]."

However, other students believe having Trump as president will be beneficial to the country as a whole.

"Trump was president before, so [people] kind of got a taste test," said freshman Vincent Guaraldi. "So clearly, Trump was good if he got reelected. Overall, [people] should trust Trump, because we're not in bad hands."

Some attribute Trump's victory to his unique character.

"Maybe his policies aren't the best, but I feel that he has a personality that attracts this major following," said junior Evie Stern.

Moreover, some believe Harris' identity as a woman of color impacted the way people voted.

"I think [identity] played a really big role, because I saw some people [say], 'Oh, we don't want a female president or much less a woman of color,'" Inara said. "I feel like if [Harris] was a white man, she would have won because she had pretty good policies."

Trump and Harris had very different visions for policy, and Trump has made many promises to the public about what he will do in his second term. These include mass deportations of undocumented immigrants, shifting the country's focus from fighting climate change through renewable energy to bolstering the fossil fuel industry, end-

ing the [Russia-Ukraine war], enacting tax cuts and instituting tariffs on foreign goods.

Some think that Trump will do a better job than Harris would have on economic issues, given Harris' role as vice president in the Biden-Harris administration.

"Since Biden didn't do much this year, and this is the biggest inflation [rise] we've had in a long time, I think that accounts for why

[Trump won]," said freshman Connor Eng.

"Trump is willing to try and fix the economy."

On the other hand, many at Aragon are concerned by some of Trump's proposed policies.

"[I care about] preserving the right for women to get abortions in the states that still have them," Stern said. "I don't know if he's gonna go after that, but I wouldn't be surprised. Also, [Trump disregards] a lot of the work that we've done to protect and prevent climate change."

Many students expressed concerns with Trump's views on abortion.

"My mom [would always tell] me that I would be able to make my own choices, [and] I would be able to do all the things that the boys could do," said junior Sheridan Stewart. "And now, instead of putting women in the position of power, we are putting men in

the position to control women and control their bodies. It's kind of heartbreaking."

Others are worried by Trump's strong stance on immigration and the border.

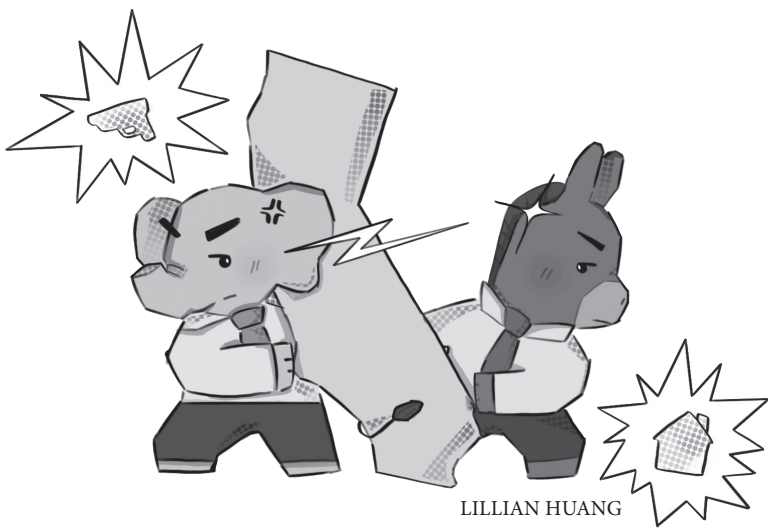
"A lot of my family are immigrants," Inara said. "My parents are, [and] my cousins, grandparents, aunts [and] uncles [are]. A lot of them don't have papers, so the possibility of me not being able to see my family is something that I don't really want to think about."

Amid the uncertainty encompassing Trump's second term, some students remain optimistic about the future.

"I really wish this wasn't the outcome," Stewart said. "But I do think as a country, we're gonna be okay."

Congress is expected to officially certify the election results on Jan. 6, and Trump's inauguration will take place on Jan. 20.





LILLIAN HUANG

Schiff and Mullin win

Reika Lam
NEWS WRITER

Following Election Day on Nov. 5, Republicans secured a majority in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.

However, in California, there seemed to be a different consensus: voters elected Democratic candidates for both the Senate and the majority of the state's 52 House of Representatives seats.

For California's 15th congressional district, which encompasses San Mateo County, re-elect Democrat Rep. Kevin Mullin won by a landslide with over 200,000 votes against Republican Anna Cheng Kramer. Democrat Rep. Adam Schiff, who served in both the California State Senate and the House, won against Republican Steve Garvey, a former major league baseball player.

"In California, it's solid blue," said Rudy Espinoza Murray, the California communications lead for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. "Schiff was a shoo-in, having been a part of Trump's impeachment and having been a [political leader on the national stage]. So when he decided to run for U.S. Senate, it was already given that Schiff would be at the top of the ticket for the Democratic Party."

Schiff secured nearly 60% of the people's vote and will be representing California alongside incumbent Democrat Sen. Alex Padilla.

Women's rights have been an important voter issue this election, especially due to the Supreme Court having overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, a court case that originally ruled the right to abortion as a federal law.

"I tell people that this election for me was about my daughter," Espinoza Murray said. "[It's about] her future as a woman ... that she would still have the same rights and privileges and civil liberties as we have now, and that we're not shrinking those rights and protections."

The overturn of *Roe* eliminated the federal right to abortion, sending the regulation of it back to each state.

"I'm pro-life," Cheng Kramer said. "We've gone overboard in devaluing life. I think we've been too cavalier in saying, 'Well, I'll just get an abortion, and I'm proud that I got an abortion.' I don't think any woman should be proud."

Schiff aligns with the idea that abortion should be a nationwide right, but Garvey opposes this, believing abortion should stay a state-by-state ruling.

"Voters differentiated between abortion and political parties," said Lee Ryan Miller, a political science professor at the College of San Mateo. "People voted majority to support abortion rights ... yet [there was] a much lower level of support for Democratic candidates ... [Voters] cared about abortion rights, about reproductive rights, but they didn't feel that electing Republicans is a problem for reproductive rights."

Results from Aragon's school-wide mock election revealed that more than 75% of 335 students believed the economy was a key decision in who they would vote for.

"I missed the vote by two weeks," said Hailey Wells, one of Cheng Kramer's student interns. "But if I [had voted], I was going to vote on more of an economic standpoint, rather than women's rights, because I feel like getting groceries and people surviving [are] really important [so] that people [are] able to provide for their families."

High living costs, especially in California, throw much focus onto the economy in the election.

"There are many people here in the Bay Area, especially in San Mateo County, that are very comfortable," Cheng Kramer said. "They're not worried about living paycheck to paycheck. So they keep voting blue ... never mind that the poor are bearing a large burden of taxes."

Economic issues are an important factor to voters.

"I bought a bag of groceries the other day," Wells said. "One bag was \$120 and that's absurd ... Once we feel comfortable in living because of economic issues, such as just feeding your family or having a roof over your head, then social issues and factors can come and play."

Other voters tend to prioritize other considerations over economic factors.

"I'm not so worried about the economic side," Espinoza Murray said. "I'm more worried about [whether] my daughter is going to be able to live and survive and thrive in a world that values her, protects her. Just like it would a man ... We're two dads, and we want to make sure that she's growing up in a world where she's not pushed aside or treated differently for the family she was born into."

Schiff and Mullin's terms will both begin on Jan. 3, 2025. Schiff's will end in 2031, while Mullin's goes until 2027.

Student voices: yes, talk politics



Aayushi Kothari
GUEST COLUMNIST

The idea of political discourse typically brings to mind an image of shouting, finger pointing and friends and family storming away in a huff, which is not a pretty sight. Yet we also know that the alternative — idly sitting by without engaging in the debates democracy demands — is far worse. After all, a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" requires us to reflect on the best path forward, according to the people. Our challenge then comes in carrying out these reflective conversations with respect and in a way that makes them genuinely effective.

I believe that the key to maintaining healthy political discourse comes from a mindset of wanting to understand the other side's point of view. As tempting as it is to treat these discussions like debates, going in with a closed mind ensures that we will refuse to listen to each others' points, turning a supposed two-way conversation into two people both talking to a wall. So instead, we should make our way through discussions with the goal of finding our commonality, then our contentions. Most of us have overlap in our values, and our political beliefs are usually grounded in these similar values. Conversely, nobody you will ever talk to is an expert in every political question that exists, meaning the way in which we translate our values into policy beliefs is often dependent on other sources of information. This translation — how policies, parties and candidates reflect our shared values — is often where our differences come from, and thus, is where we must focus the energy of our conversations.

This is not to say that we can't have disagreements

about politics. On the contrary, effectively communicating about our disagreements is the best way for us to overcome our current state of national divide and polarization. However, disagreements should not preclude us from listening. We must listen to the other perspective, ask questions and learn why others believe what they do. Then, put forward your side and make your case to change their mind. If we enter the discussion with the mission of finding out where your beliefs diverge from your commonality, the worst that can happen is that neither person in the discussion gains anything new. The best-case scenario, however, is that one or both people are able to deepen their understanding of the complexities of politics and are able to integrate their newfound knowledge into their beliefs.

Our society is polarizing more and more and our ongoing refusal to communicate only deepens our existing divisions. The only way out is through, and the only way to get through this polarization is to acknowledge it and discuss our beliefs in a way that can actually lead to consensus.

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Standardized test scores drop by five percent

Naomi Kotani
NEWS WRITER

On Oct. 10, the California Department of Education released results for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress from the 2023-24 school year. The CAASPP test measures the proficiency of students in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics based on the California Common Core State Standards and is taken by juniors each year.

In last year's results, there was about a 5% drop in students who met or exceeded the Common Core Standard for both ELA and math compared to the 2022-23 school year at Aragon. This followed a trend of scores decreasing in recent years, with a small decline between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, but the amount that both subjects dropped last year was the most since students resumed state tests after distance learning.

The current seniors, who took the CAASPP test last year as juniors, missed at least one year of state testing in middle school during the pandemic. Some believe this affected those students' experience and familiarity with state testing.

"Students who [took CAASPP in the 2022-23 school year] had [in-person] testing in middle school, [paid] a little bit more attention to it," said Advanced Placement English teacher Victoria Daniel. "Looking at last year's scores, those students have one [less] focused year on [CAASPP]."

Daniel also pointed out a shift away from prioritizing testing.

"There's been a de-emphasis on testing in general, especially since [some] colleges [stopped requiring] the SAT," Daniel said.

At Burlingame High School, which had the highest scores in the district, students are reminded about CAASPP testing

should make sure they know that we're a good school by taking this test seriously."

Similarly, Aragon sent out messages about CAASPP with studying tips from the district's Director of Curriculum and Instruction Brian Simmons.

it seriously ... A lot of people take it as a challenge to do it as fast as they can. I had a friend finish [the two-hour test] in 15 minutes."

Moreover, advanced students might have trouble recalling content from earlier courses.

"This is just a one-day test," said math teacher and co-department head Cheri Dartnell. "It's a snapshot of one day of a student's entire school career. It's low-stakes for students."

Some believed the drop in scores this year was random, although larger trends may exist.

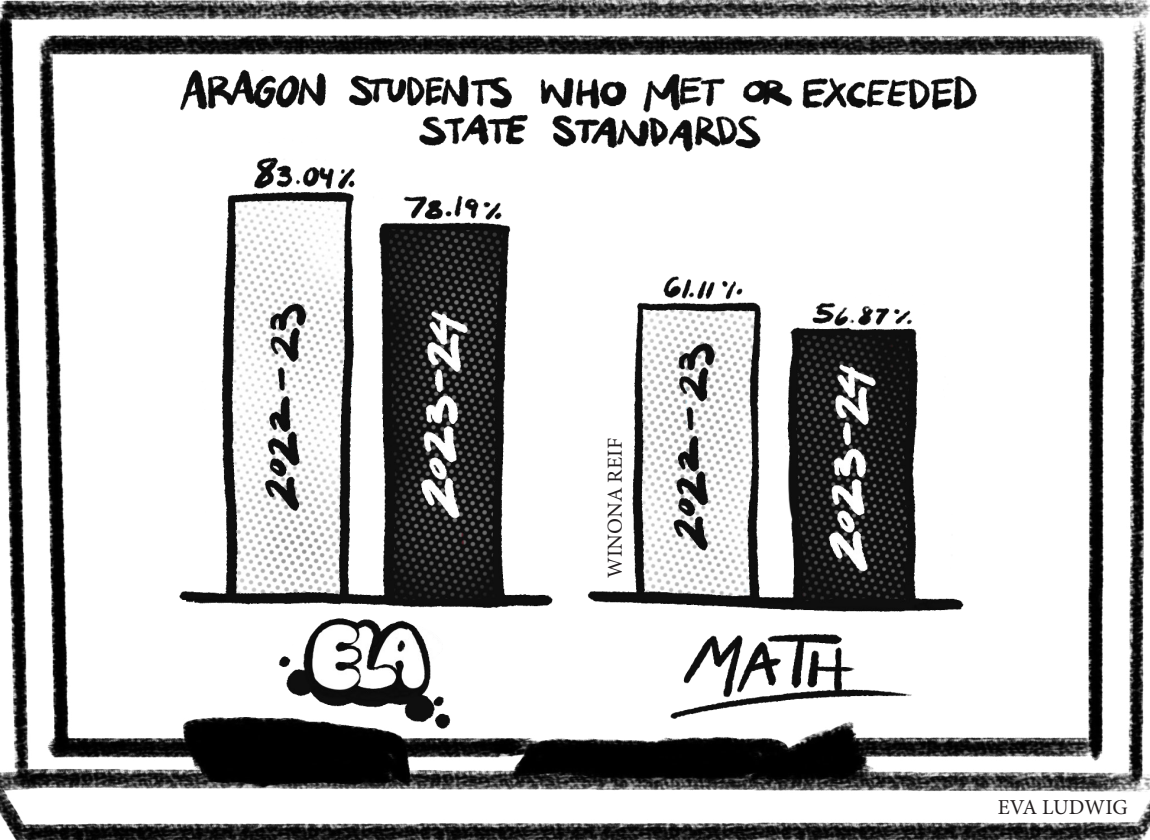
"You're not comparing the same students," Daniel said. "So there's always going to be changes, and sometimes that's just reflective of the particular students. [Although] the excitement over reading and the number of students who read for pleasure has gone down, I can't point to that in a year. If I look at the past decade, it's a marked difference."

Aragon implemented a new elective course this year, called Community and Literacy in Action, that aims to address this.

"Students will practice and develop academic English proficiency to be successful in their content area classes," said Assistant Principal David Moore. "[They'll also] work on communication and collaboration skills that will support them in the areas of academics and life outside of school. We hope, as we continue to have these types of classes, that our scores do go up for certain demographics, most likely our multilingual learners."

Apart from this, the school plans to continue utilizing resources such as Flex Time and the Roaming program, where math teachers offer extra support to students in algebra and geometry.

The next CAASPP testing will take place in two sessions, from April 8-9 and 15-16.



through a letter and on Burlingame's video announcements.

"[We] try to [tell] students the individual consequences of this test," said Burlingame High School principal Jen Fong. "We do talk about how [their performance] is a reflection of Burlingame High ... If you think that colleges want to know that we're a good school, then perhaps you

However, some felt that the importance of state testing for the school was not emphasized enough, which could have led to students expending less effort on it.

"The CAASPP testing is not [for] a grade," said senior Sou Matsumoto. "It doesn't affect [students], so people just fool around. They're not taking

"I was in precalculus last year instead of Algebra 2," said senior Frankie Mayor. "Some of [the test content] was stuff that I had learned a couple years prior so I wasn't totally up to date on it."

Math teacher and co-department head Cheri Dartnell felt the scores were not fully representative of student capabilities.

25 new laws going into effect in California

Christine Choi
NEWS WRITER

There will be 25 new laws going into effect in either 2024 or 2025, which were passed by the California legislature over the past few years. These new laws include education-related laws, labor and employment laws and civil rights laws.

One of the many education-related laws that came into effect in 2024 includes AB 1540. This law finds its roots in the California Dream Act, which allows students who do not qualify for financial aid from the federal government to apply for state financial aid.

"AB 1540 is in place for students, especially undocumented students, to access financial aid [in order] to further their education after high school," said College Advisor Mary O'Reilly. "So it's extremely important for students to access higher education and broaden [their] opportunities."

However, this law only pertains to local California residents.

"The challenge might be with the federal government," O'Reilly said. "What's great is that the California Dream Act is a California state program, so it's protected by California right now.

But other undocumented students who are outside of California don't get the same resources."

However, there are a lot of resources to aid students who are undocumented.

"There's a lot of great resources for information," O'Reilly said. "Immigrants Rising is a great [organization]. They do a lot of financial aid guides for students who are undocumented to help support through the application process and the Dream Act process."

Law SB 247 prohibits expulsion and suspensions on the grounds of willful defiance, which are low-level behavioral offenses, will go into effect as well. With this law, California schools will take on new regulations regarding one of the California suspension codes, code K489100.

"In the past, it could be used by itself to suspend a student," said assistant principal Andrew Hartig. "More recent practice dictated that it could only be used in conjunction with another reason. For instance, if a student were to engage in a fight with another student, the 'disrupt and defy' could be added to the suspension. The new legislation says that code may not be used for the suspension period."

For Aragon, this new law will not change the existing expulsion and suspension protocol.

"The law was designed, I think rightly so, to prevent students from being suspended because of a perception or a bias," Hartig said. "I think about when I was in school in the 90s, where that might be used: 'I don't like your attitude.' So it's really about making sure that the reasons for removing a student from the educational environment are very particular to both

the ed code and a very valid reason for doing so."

In addition to laws regarding education, there are also new labor and employment laws. This year, the minimum wage was increased by 50 cents, raising it to \$16 an hour in January. The minimum wage for fast-food workers was raised from \$16 to \$20 an hour in April. This increase brought about a rise in interest from students in joining the workforce.

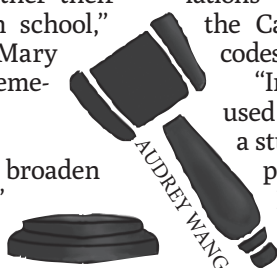
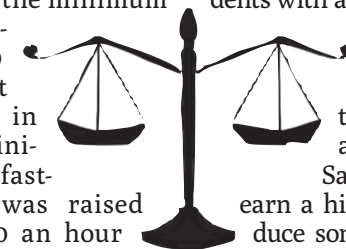
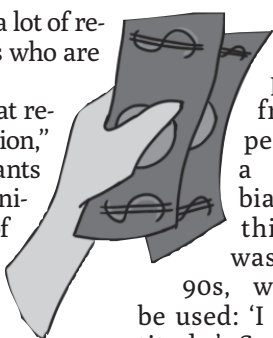
"Being in the Bay Area, the cost of living is very high. With

the increase to \$20 it helped to lift family burden," said Career Technical Education and Career Coordinator Queenie Hua.

The increase also helped students with academics.

"After the increase, my life changed positively," said Aragon alumni Kristen Salazar. "I was able to earn a higher wage and reduce some working hours, [which] helped prioritize my focus on my studies."

Overall, the new education and labor laws will have a lasting effect on Aragon students and the community.



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Alessandra Hernandez and Bridgette Martin acting. LIAN WANG

An un-convent-ional musical: "Sister Act"

Yang Yang
NEWS WRITER

From Nov. 21-24, the Aragon Drama department hosted the fall musical "Sister Act" in the theater.

"Sister Act" follows a young female singer named Deloris Van Cartier, played by Alessandra Hernandez, who witnesses her mobster boyfriend Curtis, played by Andrew McColl, murder an undercover police agent. Eddie Souther, played by Macen Adams, the cop who vows to help her, takes her to hide in a convent led by Mother Superior, played by Samantha Green. Deloris has to navigate the ways of being a faithful nun, but slowly she brings change to the other nuns who had previously only seen one world, like Sister Mary Robert, played by Bridgette Martin.

"My favorite character was either the lead or [Sister Mary Robert] because I thought [Robert's] character arc was interesting," said junior V Galstan. "At the end, she did a 360 and was breaking the norm."

Adams explains some challenges he faced in his role.

"Some of the challenges with my character was definitely [with] some of the singing," Adams said. "It was supposed to be more of a gentle [mood], then rock, then gentle again, so switching between those genres of music and [the] change of tempo [was challenging]. The hardest song was Fabulous Baby Reprise because I kept going too quick or too slow. It was hard to find the right tempo."

There are many different roles in a musical. Ensemble actors are on stage and specialize in keeping the fluidity of a scene.

"Ensemble can play many different parts," said sophomore ensemble member El-lie Goldvekht. "They can be a mom, they can be a dad. [They] add to the story and help it to seem more natural."

Stage crew is in charge of moving sets and props, making scenes flow together. Senior stage manager Dani Drobot describes her role in the musical.

"As the stage manager, you have to be there for all of the rehearsals," Drobot said. "As it starts to get closer to the show, I have to organize all of the scene changes that happen and start to coordinate all the technical aspects so that everything works well together."

There was lots of effort put into the cosmetics of both the set and costumes. For example, on set, there were three disco balls hanging above the stage, and near the end, there were colorful costume changes for the characters.

"I really like the end with all the sequin dresses and the holographics," said junior Maeve Newsom. "It's really fun and bright and colorful. [For] most of the show, they're all just wearing black, and then when it switched to the end, it made me really happy and [feel] the energy that they were bringing and singing about."


There was also a live band in the stage pit as performers sang along on stage.

"It makes it really engaging for people, instead of having an audio track," said junior Briana Bernal. "It was really fun and it just made the experience of the musical feel a lot more real."

With many scenes and songs, sophomore Jesus Avila shares his favorite scene in the show.

"I really liked near the end where all the nuns are being chased by the gangsters," Avila said. "The nuns take them all down [then] the main villain is shot ... It [was] pretty funny [and] that scene was pretty action-packed. I like how all the nuns use creative techniques to take down the thugs."

Aragon Drama will be back to present their spring play, Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing," starting March 20.



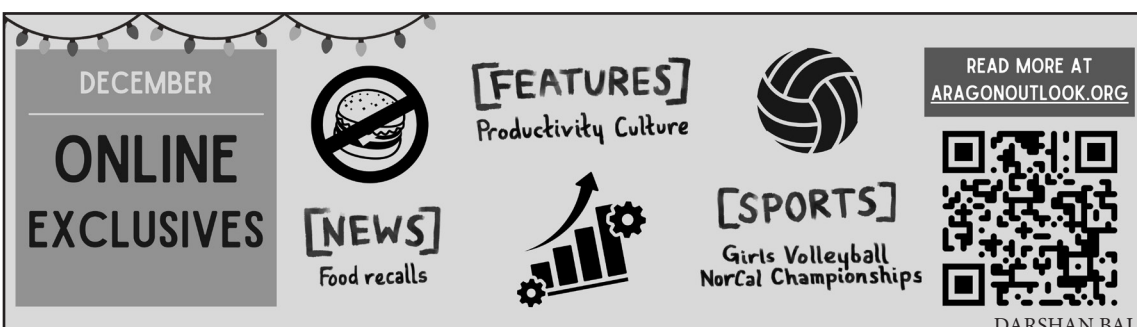
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Who's watching: chrome extensions

Helen McCloskey
NEWS WRITER

"On multiple occasions [I had friends who were reported through tracking software for sensitive behavior and sent to a counselor], [and] the counselors apologized, saying that it shouldn't have been flagged," said senior Felix Gee. "When [a person] vents to a friend [online and] one of those [messages] got flagged, it's really awful."

The extensions Blocksli and Hapara, as well as the software Bark, appear on all San Mateo Union High School District-issued Chromebooks. Hapara is used to track students on their computers during tests, while Blocksli and Bark use artificial intelligence to constantly track students' activity.

Advanced Placement literature teacher Genevieve Schwartz has used Hapara since it was approved by the District last school year to ensure students do not use external sources on timed writes.

"[Hapara] creates a situation in which students have to generate their own writing, their own thinking, and it prevents that temptation [to go] to outside sources [such as] generative AI for ideas," Schwartz said. "[In the past,] students have turned in timed write essays that were marked for AI-generated content."

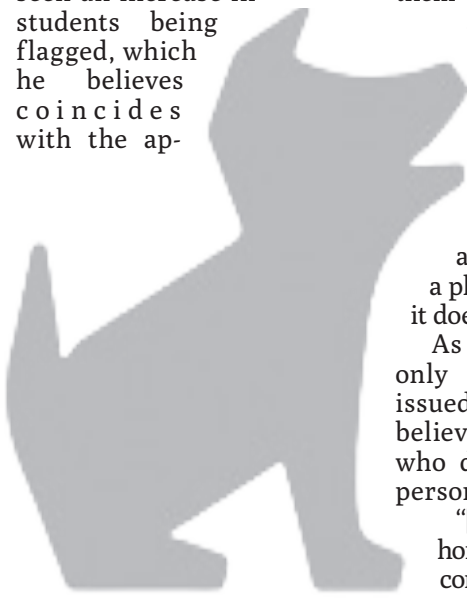
As for Blocksli and Bark, both track users 24/7 online. Blocksli employs AI to find what it believes to be sensitive information, which is then sent to human reviewers who determine whether to send the information to the school.

"My sister was writing an [assignment] for The Scarlet Letter' and it got flagged [through Bark], and she had to go into the office and explain that she was just doing an assignment," said sophomore Alex Moskewicz. "I had another friend who got called into the office for something, [but] they couldn't find the actual message, so she doesn't know [why she was flagged]."

Chrome Web Store listed that Blocksli may not be supported in the future as it goes against Chrome guidelines. However, it is visible on the list of Chromebook extensions on school-issued computers.

"We constantly ask ourselves whether [services are] invasive or not [and] we are constantly asking ourselves what is safe or not," said SMUHSD Director of Curriculum and Assessment Brian Simmons. "It's a fine line between data privacy and being a bit invasive."

This past year, Gee has seen an increase in students being flagged, which he believes coincides with the ap-



pearance of Blocksli on the list of extensions on school-issued computers.

"Everybody has a right to their privacy, and when that's breached, that's really concerning," Gee said. "I have a [personal] laptop so I can afford to not be tracked 24/7, but what if there's a kid who doesn't have that? They can't do anything [personal] using [their Chromebook] because it can track you. What if you report somebody for expressing suicidal thoughts, what happens after they get sent to the hospital? Can their families afford that? Will their family be more distraught, more upset at them? There's just so many factors."

Others view all student monitoring services as a privacy breach.

"I feel like I'm getting punished [by] being watched [all] the time because students in the past cheated," said junior Anya Kurinskas. "It makes me feel like I'm not trusted ... because now I'm getting spied on."

Assistant Principal David Moore, however, views the Chromebooks as property of the District and thus should reasonably be subject to searches by the administration.

"We tell students that these Chromebooks are not your property when you're using them here on our server or anywhere you go on any other server, so they have to use it wisely," Moore said. "Sometimes we get students [attempting] to view inappropriate sites on Chromebooks, and that's a warning and a phone call home. Usually, it doesn't happen again."

As the extensions are only available on school-issued Chromebooks, some believe it is unfair for those who do not have access to personal computers.

"[When people] use their home computers, [they are] completely unrestricted," Moskewicz said. "So it feels like preferential treatment towards the people who [have] MacBooks or laptops."

Despite the use of Chromebook extensions for student safety, Gee advocates for more transparency.

"[Aragon] should tell us, or [tell us in] our assemblies [about Blocksli and other Chromebook extensions]," Gee said. "Every year, every time they change the software, they should have a physical consent form that is detailed and puts all this [information in] like, 'Oh, we're gonna track [you] 24/7.'"

There is a student technology agreement, the Acceptable Use Policy, that every parent and student signs via Aeries, however, not all of the specific tracking softwares are mentioned.



Students admiring the AIDS quilt.

MARTIN ZHENG

AIDS quilt display

Mark Rumberg
NEWS WRITER

From Dec. 2-6, Aragon displayed the AIDS Memorial Quilt in the Multi-Purpose Room for students to view during their classes. The AIDS Quilt was created by the NAMES Project Foundations, which hosted the event in conjunction with Aragon's Gender and Sexuality Alliance Club.

The 54-ton quilt, which has 50,000 panels and includes over 110,000 people, has traveled from San Francisco to Washington D.C., going to over 1,000 schools, places of worship and community centers to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS. There were three large sections of the quilt at Aragon, some panels displaying rows of names and others being dedicated to a single person.

"I felt really moved [as] these were very deep and personal messages," said senior and GSA Secretary Matt Grabow. "It was touching that these family members would devote their time to pay homage and honor to the people."

Some panels were particularly noteworthy for students.

"One of the panels shows this three-year-old, and it was a shock to some people because they thought AIDS could only be contracted by adults," Grabow said. "There was [also] one panel that someone made while they contracted AIDS, and they had died after, [which] just really shows the impact of AIDS back then; it was a very dark time for a lot of people."

Despite misconceptions, HIV/AIDS also affects children. According to Center Disease Control and Prevention, in 2021, there were 53 cases of children under the age of 13 years old who were diagnosed with HIV in the U.S. Among the panels, Aarron Phillip Nelson was one of these children who passed away — his panel is adorned with toys and baby socks. He was born Nov. 7, 1988, and died three days before his third birthday on Nov. 4, 1991.

Duane Kearns Puryear was born on Dec. 20, 1964, and was diagnosed at 22 years old on Sep. 7, 1987. His panel reads, "My name is Duane Kearns Puryear. I was born on December 20, 1964. I was diagnosed with AIDS on September 7, 1987 at 4:45 PM. Sometimes, it makes me very sad. I made

this panel myself. If you are reading it, I am dead ..."

He died on Oct. 8, 1991, at the age of 26. He would have turned 60 this year.

The AIDS Memorial Quilt serves a variety of purposes ranging from commemoration to a call for better sexual education.

"The AIDS Quilt is a reminder of a generation of loss and a pandemic that impacted the Bay Area Community greatly," said GSA adviser Vincent Bravo. "It also is a reminder of public health care [and] a reminder of the human nature of coming together to remember [the victims]."

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has been ongoing since the 1980s and has affected millions of people, with over a million Americans currently infected, and 13% not knowing they have HIV. In addition, according to HIV.gov, 19,310 adults and adolescents have died because of HIV in 2022 in the U.S.

"Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area in the '80s and '90s, HIV and AIDS was really a part of my life," Bravo said. "I lost a cousin to AIDS. I had adult friends who were HIV positive, and I watched [one] die. I watched communities turn their back, I watched my family turn their back on people. But then I also watched my family and community accepting people and really taking care of people."

Although HIV infections are still prevalent, they have fallen by 39% globally and continue on a declining trend, partly due to the availability of treatments and preventative measures, such as STD testing.

"If you're going to engage in sex, both you and your partner should go and get tested [for STDs]," said health teacher Barbara Beaumont. "Be able to have open communication with your partner to talk about it ... and be able to see the results for your partner's test."

Planned Parenthood and the San Mateo Edison Clinic both offer STD testing services, condoms and pre-exposure prophylaxis, which reduces the chance of an HIV infection if someone is particularly at risk. At Planned Parenthood, confidential HIV tests are available, providing results in 10-40 minutes.



Experiences with abusive relationships

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“He told my friend that he wished he hooked up with her instead of me while we were still dating,” Paige said. “He’d compare me to other girls, especially on social media. ‘You should look like her.’ In school, he’d constantly call other girls hot in front of me.”

Abusers find different ways to put their victims down through subtle put-downs to undermine their victims’ sense of accomplishment.

“In my junior year and his sophomore year, I had trouble with my math class but I finally got a good grade on a test,” Lana said. “When I told him, he said ‘oh I’m in [Advanced Placement] Calculus BC as a sophomore, so you’re kind of nothing.’”

EFFECTS

These constant comments can have a detrimental impact on self-esteem.

“It felt like he was setting traps along the way to throw me down,” Lana said. “I felt confident in myself before the relationship but I just hated myself after we broke up. He’d constantly throw jabs at me and it’d always be the same ones.”

Abusers can also do this through public humiliation and embarrassment.

“He would always make fun of me in front of his friends,” Paige said. “He would just try to embarrass me in front of my friends or bring up really personal stuff I would tell him or secrets.”

Besides these behaviors, gaslighting is often used by abusers to manipulate reality to make their victims feel “cra-

zy” or at fault. The cumulative effect of these behaviors can erode victims’ confidence and sense of self-worth, leaving them questioning their own perceptions.

“It made me super confused and it got to the point where I thought I was in the wrong at times or ‘he’s not really a bad guy,’” Paige said. “He constantly made me feel like I was crazy. One time he said to me ‘I’m not gaslighting you, you’re just crazy.’”

Other mental health outcomes include struggling with emotional regulation, disassociation, numbing and trouble reading social cues.

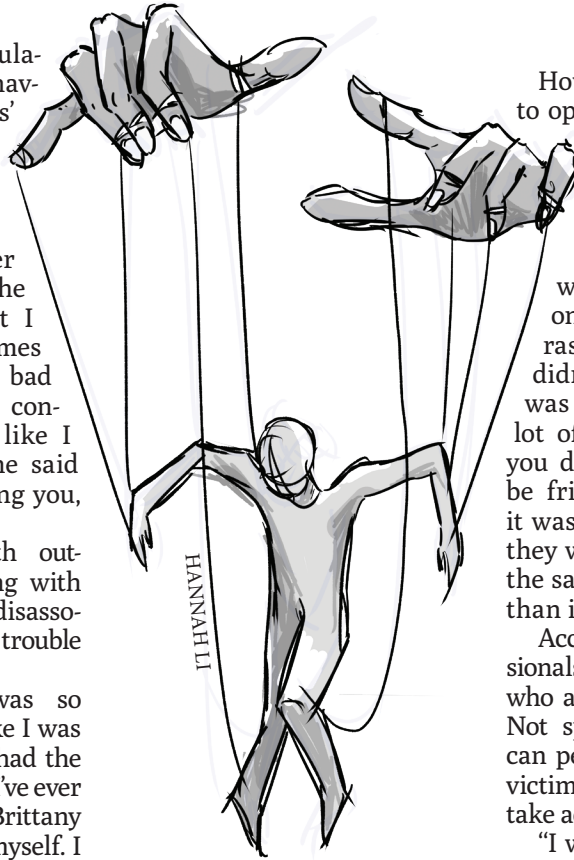
“The relationship was so toxic that I didn’t feel like I was human anymore, and I had the worst derealization that I’ve ever had in my whole life,” Brittany said. “I was so upset that it was my fault for the harm that had happened to me ... At the time, I was almost brainwashed to the point where I was like ‘it’s my fault, I ruined the relationship.’”

While abuse has a significant impact on the victim’s mental wellbeing, it also has profound effects on their life outside the relationship as well.

“I stopped trying in school,” Paige said. “I could only think about the relationship, and gave up on my friendships.”

Many victims’ changed perception of love and ongoing healing prevent them from fostering healthy relationships.

“It was really hard for me to accept love after that relationship,” Brittany said. “I got into a



HANNAH LI

relationship three months after I dumped him and it wasn’t healthy because I don’t feel like I loved that person the way I should have because I was still healing from all the trauma and everything I went through. It’s hard to give and receive affection when you were treated so horribly for such a long time.”

Ultimately, the impacts of abuse vary from person to person and are detrimental.

“I’ve seen so many horrific cases where people don’t trust anybody anymore, not even themselves,” Perez said. “The trauma is so great that it shows up in alcoholism or suicidal ideation or [having very] impulsive [urges].”

LEAVING

However, getting a victim to open up about their abuse and seek help is due to a variety of factors, including stigma and embarrassment.

“I never told anyone what was actually going on because I was embarrassed because [people] didn’t understand why I was leaving,” Paige said. “A lot of people [said to me] ‘if you don’t leave him, we can’t be friends anymore,’ because it was just so bad. I get where they were coming from, but at the same time, it’s a lot harder than it seems.”

According to some professionals, standing up for peers who are suffering is necessary. Not speaking up about abuse can perpetuate cycles that trap victims, especially since abusers take advantage of this.

“I was a therapist that wanted to hold everything in the room with me,” Perez said. “The Lead of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in my organization did work with the perpetrators and asked them ‘what would have stopped you?’ The majority of them said ‘if I believed the child would have told [others].’ That was life changing for me. [I realized that] I can’t hold everything because I am continuing to keep the secret and the way to healing is letting the secret out of the dark and letting the light come in.”

For many, especially in toxic relationships, emotional ties also play a huge factor in the difficulty of leaving.

“I wish I was still with her, but [only] if we improved,” said

senior Fred*. “I doubt that’s going to happen but I’d rather not cut [her] off unless [she does] me crazy wrong ... She’s familiar to me and she’s my only relationship. I don’t have experience with other people. She feels comforting [to me] and if I’m seeking validation then she feels like my default.”

The healing and recovery process for a victim varies. For some, it’s extremely difficult.

“Everything’s blurry,” Paige said. “I just sat there in my room and did nothing. I exited the relationship. I got away from [him] as much as I could. I blocked [him] on everything. I distracted myself ... The one thing that changed everything was telling my dad about everything that happened to me, everything I suffered. He really woke me up and said ‘Why are you still with him?’”

Some victims make a conscious and deliberate effort to break cycles of harm.

“I’ve made an effort to be the exact opposite,” Alberto said. “It hasn’t taken a bad toll on me, but it’s pushed me in a more positive direction.”

Ultimately, in toxic or abusive relationships, setting boundaries and finding support can be difficult but deeply important. Safety and wellbeing deserve to be protected, and seeking help is a brave and vital step toward healing.

“Take a step back,” Fred said. “Consider if it’s worth it or not. Sometimes it feels like they’re the only person in the world that [can] accept you for who you’re ... If it starts impeding on your mental health, [then] they might not be the person for you.”



HOLIDAY CROSSWORD

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ALEXA STERRY

DOWN

- World’s largest independent record store founded in Berkeley
- Class taught by DeMarchena or Dartnell, for short
- Norse goddess of medicine
- To pack something neatly
- What a throat clearing garners, for short
- Unit that sounds like 26-down
- Two-year humanities degrees
- “Pink Tape” rapper Lil ___ Vert
- Harley Quinn love interest, Poison ___
- Position of Zuckerberg or Musk
- Unconventional convent member in sister act (see page 5)
- Says impolite words
- Language used in “A Quiet Place,” for short
- Spelling ___ or The ___ Gees
- Archaic mild oath
- Famous German highway: the Auto-___
- Measurement of weight relative to height, for short
- What a teacher or chihuahua might do
- Senator-elect Schiff (see page 3)
- The type of girl MGK claims to have fell in love with

ACROSS

- Class taught by Moretti, for short
- Sanskrit term for “immortal”
- ___ asphyxiation - act referred to in opening lines of Ur So Gay by Katy Perry
- Ancient Empire with capital Tenochtitlan
- Entwined
- Comedian named after sailor from 1001 Nights
- Prefix relating to muscles
- Baldwin who served as Trump on SNL
- 16th president, for short
- Friendly within a group
- Sonic the Hedgehog company
- Al-Qaeda founder Bin Laden
- Aragon class responsible for planning Homecoming, Food Fair, etc.
- TV sequel to horror film “Omen”
- Something you could liken to lichen

Education

Censorship in education is a hot button issue considering the prevalence of legislation dictating curricula.

For example, Texas's State Board of Education passed a new optional curriculum which would emphasize biblical teachings in school in November 2024. Although it isn't mandated, schools who choose to teach it are rewarded with higher funding, incentivizing religiosity in schools. The Parental Rights in Education Act, known colloquially as the "Don't Say Gay" law, is a 2022 Florida statute that prohibits the discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity in educational settings.

Another Florida law passed in 2022, the Stop WOKE Act, or the Stop Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees Act, prohibits teaching about racism, gender, privilege and similar social issues in schools and businesses.

The censorship of school curricula, especially backed by right-wing or evangelical movements, has been a consistent source of controversy throughout history. From the removal of anti-slavery content in Civil War-era textbooks to the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial, in which the teaching of evolution was opposed by religious groups, to the present day, where schools debate over topics like social justice and sex education, school lessons are often a battleground for political debate.

Besides curricula, schools have also historically served as a domain for protest. In the case of West Virginia v. Barnette in 1943, the Supreme Court decided that it was okay for students to refuse things like saluting the American flag or reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in schools as part of their right to free speech. The Supreme Court decided in favor of students in 1969, when they decided in the case of Tinker v. Des Moines that schools were not allowed to punish students for protesting without evidence that it was substantially disruptive or interfering with the rights of other students.

Recently, the 2024 pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University garnered attention for their response from administration. Columbia students set up tents and occupied a building to send a pro-Palestine message. Columbia's president allowed the police to raid and arrest protesters on campus, which led to controversy — some, including Joe Biden and Donald Trump, said it was Columbia's responsibility to end possibly disruptive protest. Others, like U.S. representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, condemned Columbia for violating students' right to protest.

Aragon also has a history of protest, with recent walk-outs in 2018 against gun violence and 2016 to promote acceptance.



Placed at 159th place out of 180 countries,* Venezuela has had a history of suspending social media apps like X and Reddit. During rising political instability in the 2024 election, the president Nicolas Maduro pushed allegations of electoral fraud to issue an investigation on the creators of ResultadosCorVzla, a website that reported that he did not actually win.

In addition, there have also been threats towards people who protest the election results. Currently, there are four journalists in prison for "violence and obstruction of public order."

Russia stands at 162 out of 180* countries when it comes to press freedom. Many independent media and organizations have been banned from the country, like BBC and France 24. Additionally, there are currently 33 cases of journalists who are detained and six of media workers.

"[There's] social media platforms where many people don't deal with that [censorship], they just use [a] VPN," said sophomore Russian immigrant Lila Kuznetsova. "The idea is to not take content from countries you're on bad terms with and to not speak badly about the government."

China earns its place at 172 out of 180 countries* when it comes to press freedom by controlling the country's news, banning websites like Google and detaining the most journalists in the world.

Even when living in the U.S., people feel wary communicating with people in China.

"Communicating with [my friends in China] is sometimes difficult because I have to limit what I can say to them," said senior **Bart. "[The] Chinese government still has a lot of surveillance over the messages you send online, [so] I have to be careful [about] what sort of updates I give them."

Eritrea is ranked as the country with the worst press freedom out of 180 countries.* It has no independent media outlets and dissidents are often arrested or exiled. One of the cases include Dawit Isaak, who was detained in 2001 without any official charges after his independent newspaper, also the first independent newspaper in the country, Setit, published letters that demanded democratic changes to be made in Eritrea. Since then, he has been detained for 23 years, making Eritrea famous for detaining journalists longest in the world.

* Data from Reporters Without Borders, as of 2024
** Names have been changed to protect source privacy.

[REDACTED!]

1984 by George Orwell, ironically the most banned book in history, imagines a world rampant with thought-policing and propaganda, a dystopia ravaged by censorship. While reality may not be quite as extreme, censorship continues to be a very real threat to liberty around the world.

CENSORSHIP IN JOURNALISM!

December 12, 2024

In America, we preserve the freedom of press under the 1st Amendment, but this right isn't cut and dry. Individual journalists and publications can be prone to self-censorship, limiting their own expression to avoid negative consequences. The Pew Research Center reported that 41% of journalists say they've either avoided newsworthy subjects or changed the tone of their writing to favor the interests of their employers. In a recent example of self-censorship in journalism, both the Washington Post and L.A. Times refrained from endorsing a presidential candidate in the 2024 election.

In the Washington Post's case, an editorial endorsement for Kamala Harris was drafted, but then vetoed by publication owner and Amazon CEO, Jeff Bezos. Criticism came about, speculating that Bezos was preemptively trying to curry favor with Donald Trump in case he won. The L.A. Times is similarly owned by billionaire Patrick Soon-Shiong who may have a vested interest in Donald Trump's favor. The non-endorsements resulted in subscription cancellations, numbering ~1,000 for the L.A. Times and ~250,000 for the Washington Post.

Some governments restrict freedom of press, serving as an indicator of general freedom, across both time and the globe. In totalitarian regimes, journalists have historically been targeted, especially those who voice criticism against the government. Corrupt countries in the past and present tend to make laws restricting news publications in an attempt to inhibit one of journalism's most vital purposes — holding the government accountable by reporting on its actions. These regimes often eliminate oppositional publications or manipulate their content, rendering them a vessel for propaganda.

MEDIA

Copy: Alexa Sterry, Meilin Rife, Eva Ludwig, Angela Nguyen
Graphics: Alexa Sterry
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From deleting scenes to banning books, the entertainment industry has a long history of censorship. A notable example is the Hayes code, a set of guidelines during the early 1930s to late 1960s used to regulate the film industry. The Hayes Code addressed concerns of the era about the entertainment becoming too violent, sexual or profane by prohibiting scenes that featured sex, drugs, crime, homosexuality, etc.

In 1968, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Ginsberg v. New York that it is lawful to censor pornographic content. The Motion Picture Association of America created its own standards going from G, suitable for children, to NC-17, suitable only for adults.

Censorship has blocked marginalized groups from being represented. Over time, though, diversity has become more commonplace, like in the 1968 "Star Trek" episode "Plato's Stepchildren," where the first interracial kiss was broadcast. The episode helped bring acceptance to interracial love. While filming, the production company proposed doing different takes to please Southern audiences by just implying the kiss; however, it was ultimately shut down by the actors who wanted to show the kiss nationwide. Similarly, in 2019's "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker," they broke from the norm by introducing their franchise's first same sex kiss. Previously, television shows attempted to avoid censorship with "queer coded" characters, hinting at LGBTQ+ representation without doing it canonically. Representation within the media makes people feel seen.

"As an Asian woman ... [it] means a lot [to see Michelle Yeoh win an Oscar]," said junior Charlotte Wang. "It's just really amazing to see the other people spearheading something that maybe not directly impacts you, but is about you."

Social Media!!

The First Amendment protects social media platforms' right to moderate. According to the Code of Federal Regulations, social media platforms are not liable for users' actions and have no obligation to remove or keep harmful content. They also have freedom to control what users see.

For example, tech billionaire Elon Musk changed the algorithm behind X, previously Twitter, significantly upon purchasing it in 2022. A paper at the Queensland Institute of Technology found that after Musk endorsed Trump on July 13, the amount of times people saw his posts increased an average of 6.4 million views per day, proving that X promoted Musk's page. Following the endorsement, X suppressed Democrat accounts in favor of Republican accounts, suggesting manipulation.

TikTok also has a history of censorship. In 2021, influencer Ziggi Tyler found that when he entered phrases like "Black lives matter" in his bio, they were flagged as inappropriate, but he could write "I am a neo nazi" without repercussion. Research also suggests that TikTok pushes pro-Chinese government ideas while suppressing anti-Chinese government content. A report by the Network Contagion Research Institute found that the ratio of posts referencing Hong Kong protests was 181:1 when comparing Instagram to TikTok.

Social media platforms have considerable power to control what their users see, so it's important to be aware of bias, misinformation and censorship when using social media.

The feminine urge for progress

Ashley Tsui
FEATURES WRITER

The 1920s are known for the Jazz Age, flapper dresses, prosperity and the success of the women's suffrage movement. With one of their greatest goals achieved, supporters of feminism celebrated, but their fight persists even a century later.

First popularized in the 19th and 20th centuries, feminism continues to be a prominent, yet sometimes misperceived, movement in today's society.

"Feminism [is] the fight for equality between women and men," said senior Charis Hsieh. "A lot of people have the misconception that women want to have more power, more rights over men, but it's really the fight for equality."

Rather than issues of women's suffrage, which has been achieved by the addition of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, feminists today have different gender inequalities to face.

"What feminists are fighting for has changed over time, but some of them are still the same in terms of 'we want equal treatment, we want to have rights over our own bodies,'" Hsieh said.

Feminists today focus on topics such as sexual assault and identities.

"Now, we see the Me Too movement, where women come together to talk about

sexual assault, and it's a lot more about gender identity versus just specifically women," said junior Emerson Makuta. "I'm definitely excited to see how society has united to not only focus on the issue of women's rights but identity rights as well."

However, another notable issue in the feminist community is the recent election, where Vice President Kamala Harris lost to former President Donald Trump. Some believe this result to be because Harris is a woman.

"A lot of the red states that voted for Trump in this election did so under the guise that they didn't want to vote for a woman," Makuta said. "That is definitely portrayed through a lot of surveys detailing the education level of certain states. The fact that we see a horrible person being elected over a less horrible person and the defining factor is their gender is very detrimental to our country."

In addition to improving societal norms and fighting for equal rights, feminism has also positively impacted portrayals of women in media.

For example, Disney has been exploring stories that center women characters outside of traditional princess roles.

"The fact that [Disney] has moved on from just princesses looking for their true love [to having] characters like Elsa and Anna who have

sisterly love or Mirabel, who wants to save her family or Rapunzel, who wants freedom, is great," said sophomore Annie Donnellan.

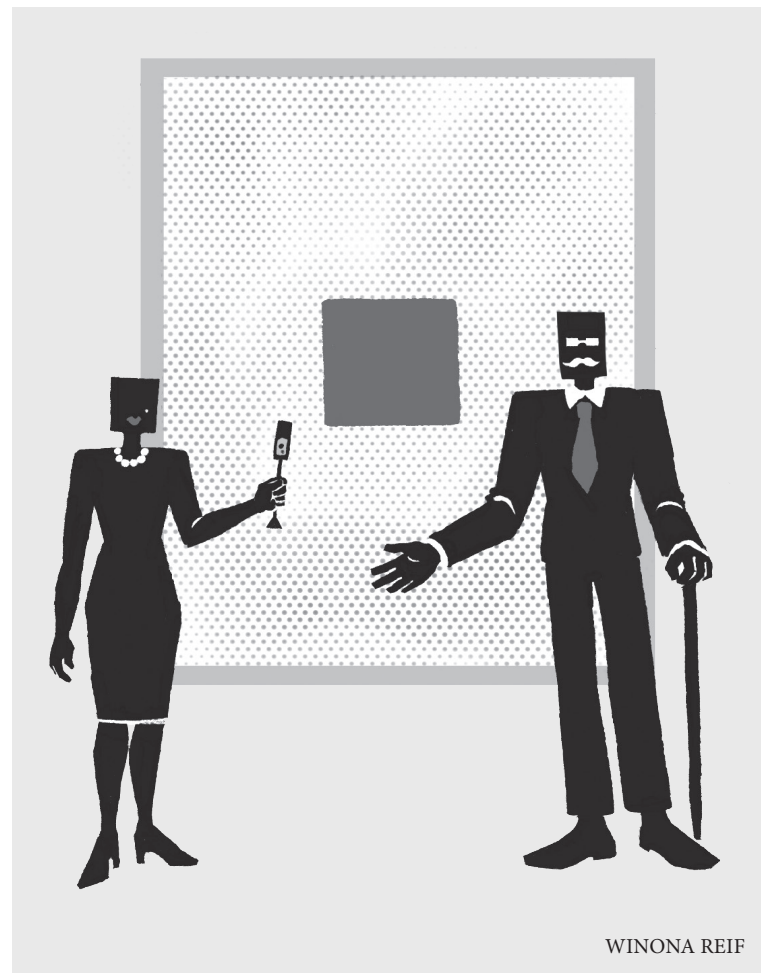
Another new aspect of feminism is the "boy sober" concept—recently popularized across social media platforms, it refers to the idea of women abstaining from dating altogether and instead focusing on personal independence and success.

Many agree with this movement, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing personal happiness over the opinions or influence of others.

"Don't let people you love take away from your independence," Donnellan said. "Make sure you have people you love in your life, but also make sure you're in a good place with your job. [Also make sure] you have independence where [others] don't control your life."

At the end of the day, a big goal of present-day feminism is the search for individuality and self-love.

"If women want to focus on themselves and not on love, then that's up to them," Hsieh said. "But if women do want to place love somewhere in their life, then that's also up to them. Ultimately, women should place self-love over finding love [from] other people, and if finding independence is their way of showing self-love, then I think that's a good thing."



WINONA REIF

Fine art under the microscope

Anushka Punjabi
FEATURES WRITER

With its central role in human expression, the history of art has always been colorfully drawn across the canvas, yet it commonly finds itself in contention with other academic subjects like the sciences. With initiatives like California's Proposition 28 promising to allocate \$1 billion annually for arts education, the discussion on the importance of art is gaining new attention.

"Art has always somewhat been commentary, even if it's not conscious," said senior Calvin Chao. "[Art] can also subconsciously talk about the state of a society. Art movements were heavily influenced by the time around them. It tells us where we [are] as people."

The accessibility of art has risen, particularly through digital platforms like Pinterest, known for its popular aesthetic boards, which have reached 7.4% of the global population and allowed people to be connected to different aesthetics.

"People will take on micro-labels and turn it into a lifestyle," said sophomore Mavis Nguyen. "People will follow a Pinterest board as [if] it's [their] life's purpose."

Many feel that art's value is no longer being defined by high society, but instead becoming democratized.

"Art used to be high society," Chao said. "Now, it's ... internet fan fiction and web novels. Anybody can publish anything ... More and more art is in the hands of people, which is good. But they start to overlook any significance."

This can also represent a growing shift in what is considered 'good art.'

"When I think of museums and aesthetics, it screams academia," Nguyen said. "Back in the day, artists needed

credentials and history. Now, that's not always the case."

Even as digital and accessible forms of art gain traction, physical forms of expression remain deeply valued.

"There's something so enchanting about going to a museum and seeing [a painting's] layers in real life," Nguyen said. "It has this gorgeous frame, and it has ... so many colors. It's not the same when you see it online."

With the growing competitive nature of high school, many see a growing disinterest in arts-related classes.

"Sadly, with the way these are going right now, there's a little bit less of a focus on arts in the competitive, academic environment, [where] people are more worried about ... grades and academic classes," Chao said. "It's like 'It's just an elective, I don't care about learning it at all.'"

Additionally, increase in consumerism makes it so that people find less value in making their own art.

"Buying things off Amazon or other fast fashion ... costs so little [and] takes less time," said sophomore Megan Hugo. "You find joy in customizing it yourself ... [and] feeling deprived of that joy knowing there's somewhere else that can do it for cheaper or less time is ... upsetting to see."

In addition, many still embrace art as a way to foster personal growth and self-discovery. "I've definitely changed as a person through art," Nguyen said. "In the beginning, I didn't know where I fit in. It helped me understand my identity, my values and my emotions."

With the growing digitalization in the world, many have seen a decline in appreciation for art. However, the rich history and variety of art still play a big role in self-identity and expression to many.

Timeline of Feminism in the United States

1ST WAVE (1820s - 1920) Women begin collectively organizing to make political impact

1848

Seneca Falls: First women's rights convention. Wrote the Declaration of Sentiments outlining women's rights.

1920

19th Amendment: ratified with the persistent direction of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and other suffrage activists.

From the Wikimedia Commons



2ND WAVE (1960s - 1980s) After achieving suffrage, feminists focused on achieving equal treatment in society

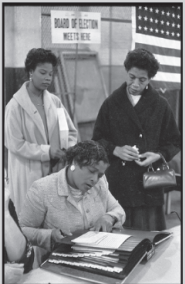
1968

Civil Rights Act signed: Prevents employer discrimination on basis of sex, race, religion or ethnicity.

1991

Roe v. Wade: Supreme Court rules it unconstitutional to deny women right to abortion. Overturned in 2022.

Courtesy the Library of Congress



3RD WAVE (1990s - 2010s) Feminism begins focusing on identity, intersectionality and redefining stereotypes

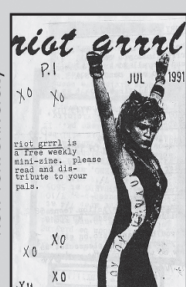
1985

Riot Grrls: Punk bands like Guerrilla Girls's anti-establishment feminist message leads the movement.

1991

Anita Hills: testifies against Supreme Court justice about sexual harassment, igniting other women to speak out.

Courtesy the Riot Grrrl Collection, New York University



4TH WAVE (2010s - NOW) Feminism movements move online and become decentralized

2017

March on Washington: After the inauguration of Donald Trump, millions of women attend march promoting civil rights

2017

#MeToo: Began in 2007 by Tarana Burke, #MeToo goes viral, exposing sexual abuse in all aspects of society

List Donovon, "Hear Our Voice"



MEILIN REIF

The business of outrage — inside rage bait

Ceylon Liu
FEATURES WRITER

Pineapple is the perfect pizza topping. Milk goes before cereal. Taylor Swift is overrated and whiny. Gen Z is a lazy, spoiled generation.

All of the statements above are a simplistic example of rage bait, which according to Urban Dictionary, is “a post on social media designed expressly to outrage as many people as possible in order to generate interaction.”

As students spend hours on social media, many people see rage bait daily.

“[It’s] gotten [to be] a lot more of a common thing to see online, and it’s gotten more aggressive and more extreme,” said freshman Tollia Fa.

Social media influencers stand to gain more views, comments and shares when they create controversial content online.

“The way [influencers] make the most amount of money on the internet is [based on their videos] retention rate,” said senior Calvin Chao. “So if they have something that makes you stay [and] watch their video for longer, [they make more money].”

Others feel that there may be more sinister intentions behind some influencers’ creation of rage-bait content.

“Some people just do it for the fun of it ... [or] just to get views,” said freshman Julian Rhodes. “But some people are trying to drive hate [to ward certain groups].”

Rage-bait content and its quick, attention-grabbing statements can further draw students into online spaces.

“Sometimes I’ll get influenced by rage-bait, but I hate when I do [and] I’ll [try to] stray away from it,” Rhodes said. “[When] I see rage-bait I start digging a rabbit hole, I’m [just] feeding into it and giving them views.”

Rage bait can warp students’ relationships with these platforms in general.

“[Social media is] not this personal thing anymore,” Chao said.

“[People are] using the site to spread their own malice and it’s wild. I haven’t [left] a comment on social media posts in a long time ... because there’s a lot of toxicity.”

Despite the negative associations many have with rage bait, there may still be some inter-

esting upsides to the otherwise simplistic content.

“I actually appreciate the discussion that can [be brought up] because everybody has different perspectives, and rage bait [can be] how people end

when viewers take this content at face value.

“[People will often] see something and instantly believe it without checking for credible sources,” Rhodes said. “If misinformation gets passed around a lot, nobody [decides] to look more into it.”

Students feel the need to be cautious when interacting with rage bait content, especially knowing how it could influence their real-life behaviors.

“[Watching rage bait] doesn’t have super obvious effects immediately,” McMillan said. “It won’t really change your actions, but it will start subtly influencing what you believe and how you start interacting with people. Every statement that

[others] say all of a sudden [something] you have to dissect and you have to de-

cide if this [is] something [you] can argue against. Having that argumentative point of view isn’t necessary in real life.”

But as rage bait continues to invade social media, avoiding it is a task much easier said than done.

“You can [avoid rage bait, but] the problem is that you have to actively choose what you get on your feed, which is hard to do,” McMillan said. “[Platforms are] giving you something that they know you’ll interact with ... You have to purposely go block it ... And eventually the algorithm will recognize how it’s [not] holding your attention.”

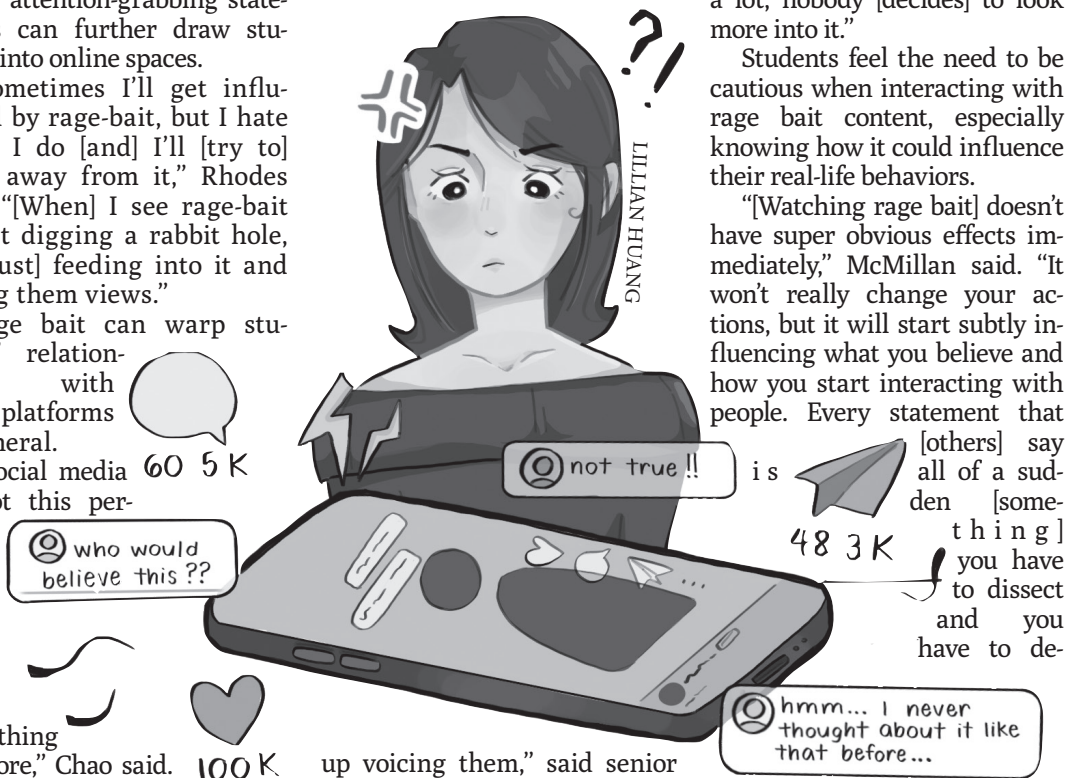
Rage bait online may be easier for students to avoid if they make use of social media’s built-in features for tailoring what content they want to see.

“I’m very glad that social media has these ‘do not recommend’ buttons now,” Chao said. “You have the option to step away. That’s something you can’t do in real life.”

Others have a more positive view of how rage bait and the heated arguments that follow it can be avoided in general.

“[Rage bait] can be avoided if ... [instead of] slashing other people for their opinions, you [acknowledge that you] have your own opinion, they have theirs, [and] agree to disagree,” Fa said.

With social media becoming a prevalent part of everyday life, rage bait, ranging from deceptive content to provoking experiences, has become a common occurrence hard to avoid.



up voicing them,” said senior Cassandra McMillan. “A lot of times, [there’ll be] one person who’s just lying about what they believe in, but then everybody else will come in and fight truly for what they believe.”

Other students still worry about how rage bait content can spread misinformation

Force of nature: natural disaster preparation

Antonio Mangano
FEATURES WRITER

At approximately 11 a.m. on Dec. 5, the National Weather Service sent out a tsunami warning to Northern California residents. Despite the warning eventually being recalled, the incident reminded California residents of the real threat of natural disasters. In California, the most common natural disasters are earthquakes, extreme heat waves and droughts. In the face of disaster, governmental agencies and individuals have methods to prepare for life threatening situations.

“It’s definitely good to be prepared for anything that could happen,” said junior

Giovanni Viglienzoni. “If you have to get out of your house quickly, like during an earthquake, it’s good to have a go-bag of essentials just in case.”

However, when combating a natural disaster, students can also take action during the event.

“When it comes to others such as droughts and heat waves, I just take it day by day,” Viglienzoni said. “In a drought, I try not to use more water than I need to, and in a heat wave, I make sure not to be outside for a super long time, or try to go swimming.”

In addition to the importance of preparedness within a household, preparation for natural disasters in schools and workplaces is very important as well.

To combat natural disasters like earthquakes, Aragon follows a district-wide protocol: The Big Five safety protocol, which includes the drop, cover

and hold, evacuation, shelter in place, lockdown/barricade and secure campus. The Big Five safety protocol is often practiced at Aragon.

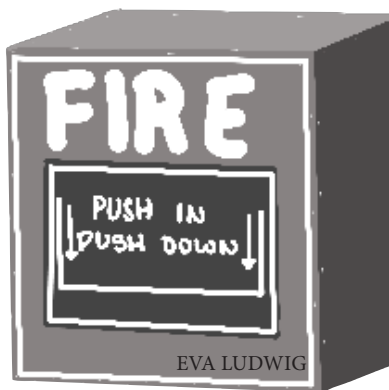
“[At] any school site, we need to be prepared for the absolute worst,” said Assistant Principal Andrew Hartig. “So we do prepare for natural disasters, especially earthquakes ... Part of the reason we do drills is not to have people practice what to do, but to expose the flaws or the things that we could do better... [After our last drill], we actually debriefed in a Zoom meeting altogether. We had superintendent Booker there in the meeting, our Director of Student Services there, principals, assistant principals and facilities managers all weighing in on how each site did.”

Furthermore, every classroom and office space at Aragon is equipped with a red emergency bag that includes first aid supplies and water.

Aragon is also prepared for the case in which students would have to stay on campus for an extended period of time and provide a safe space for the surrounding neighborhoods.

“The district has been working with all sites to

have emergency supplies in a separate shed, including things like food and disaster toilets,” Hartig said. “All school sites also function as places in the community where the community can go in the event of a natural disaster.”



Global warming has led to an increase in the amount of natural disasters. According to the International Disaster Database, the number of recorded natural disasters has increased by 80% in the last ten years. Therefore, a strong correlation between global warming and the rise of natural disasters is evident.

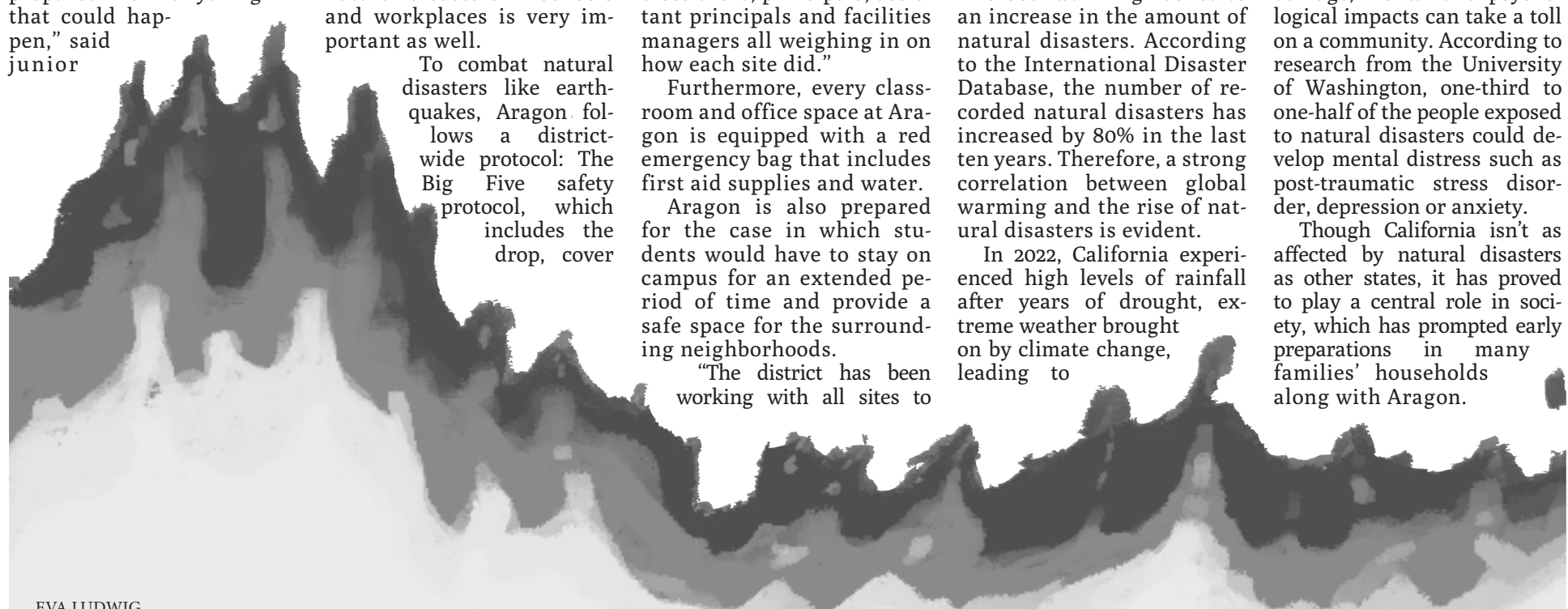
In 2022, California experienced high levels of rainfall after years of drought, extreme weather brought on by climate change, leading to

widespread flooding, power outages and falling trees. Aragon’s disaster preparedness extended to their facilities crew during this time when a tree crashed on Alameda.

“Our facilities crew are amazing individuals,” Hartig said. “They’re constantly out and about looking at our facilities. So they actually noticed that some of the trees looked like they were leaning and there was also a community member who brought to our attention one tree out near Alameda. We were made aware ahead of time, and then part of what we did was to cordon off areas where students couldn’t go.”

In addition to physical damage, mental and psychological impacts can take a toll on a community. According to research from the University of Washington, one-third to one-half of the people exposed to natural disasters could develop mental distress such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety.

Though California isn’t as affected by natural disasters as other states, it has proved to play a central role in society, which has prompted early preparations in many families’ households along with Aragon.



Arcane's visually striking animation

Zack Li
FEATURES WRITER

Since the cliffhanger ending of the League of Legends based Netflix TV show "Arcane's" first season, Season 2 has been a long-awaited continuation and conclusion for this fan-favorite show. Season 1, released back in Nov. 6, 2021, shocked audiences with its stunning animation, masterful storytelling and profound dialogue despite being a video game adaptation, leaving Season 2 with some mammoth shoes to fill. The season traces the aftermath of Jinx's rocket attack on the Council as the war between Piltover and Zaun rises to a boiling point. Meanwhile, the world becomes more corrupted and dangerous as the world uses more of the rune-based technology Hextech, sending characters into new situations with magic.

From a visual standpoint, Season 2 has somehow surpassed the mind-blowing animation that stunned audiences in Season 1. Fortiche, the studio behind "Arcane," has pushed the boundaries of animation through the use of 3-D rigging with 2-D textures and hand-drawn effects to parallel the appraised animation style of "Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse."

"There was not a point where I could see the anima-

tion was bad," said senior Sam Gulchin. "[The scene featuring] Echo, Heimerdinger and Jayce in the Hexcore was some of the most beautiful animation I've ever seen."

This approach has also enabled "Arcane" to bring its fight scenes to the next level of action that is dynamic and visually striking, yet still easy to follow.

"The choreography was very good," Gulchin said. "In a lot of other shows with big fight scenes it's hard to keep track of what's happening and [they] jump from character to character ... but 'Arcane' did a really good job of matching each character with each event."

"Arcane's" musical composition, however, has generated mixed feelings from fans as some believe the season's many music videos break immersion while others feel that the stylized aesthetic brings a powerful conveyer of emotion to the show.

"It felt like a musical," said freshman Sara Chiguchi. "The music added to all the scenes in a way that most shows can't accomplish."

A worse letdown to the masterclass "Arcane" delivered on animation, however, was the season's lackluster pacing. There was a simple shortage of screen time and too much content to cover, and it reflected clearly on the pacing — many character

arcs didn't have enough time to breathe and were left either sidelined or with a variety of plot holes and confusion.

For example, Caitlyn's whip-lash-inducing betrayal of Ambessa is supported by little context and Mel's awakening as a mage and interaction with the Black Rose was also incredibly confusing to follow. Meanwhile, Jinx and Vi's entire arc is neglected in Act II and their brief sibling reconciliation in Act II after their anticipated standoff in Act I feels disappointing. Unlike Season 1, which had a more fleshed-out storyline, the plot is bare-bones — stripped down to the minimum scenes needed to propel the arcs forward — and doesn't fully allow the masterful storytelling that "Arcane" is known for to shine through.

To me, a slight saving grace in light of the pacing, thankfully, was the ending. It succeeded in wrapping up the arcs, primarily Jayce and Viktor's moving, emotional conclusion and Jinx and Vi's bittersweet separation. The finale resolves the show powerfully and dramatically in classic "Arcane" fashion while still leaving room for

interpretation and future development for Noxus and other League of Legends societies.

"I am happy that they did cut it off short," Gulchin said. "I didn't want it to stay past its welcome. I want to see the other parts of 'Arcane's' world."

While it's frustratingly and incredibly close to a five star rat-

ing, Season 2 of "Arcane" rightfully deserves a four out of five stars for its missed potential.

OUR OUTLOOK



Wicked: Defying Gravity and expectations

Oliver Levitt
FEATURES WRITER

Over a decade after the musical "Wicked" first opened on Broadway, a film adaptation was released Nov. 22, starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande. The film excels in establishing a strong story, filled with powerful themes, beautiful visuals and fantastic music.

"Wicked" is the story of the Wizard of Oz is retold as a prequel from the perspective of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West. After facing discrimination for her green skin color, Elphaba is given an opportunity to study alongside the "normal students," eventually meeting the Wizard of Oz, who she learns is an evil, fraudulent leader, trying to use Elphaba's powers to end the existence of sentient animals within Oz. The musical is split

into two films, allowing writers to honor the entirety of the original musical, while also adding new depth and complexity.

"The way they adopted it from the original musical was perfect," said senior Veronica Kwok. "I liked how they kept some things the same and how they adapted it from the book [The Wizard of Oz] as well."

One of the most powerful elements was its strong, thought-provoking themes.

"I noticed [there] were a lot of themes of oppression about [the] lower class," said senior Gavin Baquiran. "The animals were getting oppressed by the wizard. I also saw themes of discrimination because Elphaba [was] green. Other people are scared of her because of her skin color and treat her differently."

Throughout the film, Elphaba's green

skin provides a compelling and direct allegory for racism, where she is constantly ridiculed and denied opportunities: a symbol also heightened by their casting of a black woman to play the lead. The underlying themes of racism force the viewer to question their preconceived notions of Elphaba's place as a villain, depicting how society can be quick to villainize those who are different. The discrimination she faces allows her to be more compassionate towards another oppressed group throughout the film: sentient animals. They are silenced in classrooms, mutilated and enslaved by the Wizard of Oz. The viewers are forced to come to

terms with their ability to follow the narrative that society chooses to build. The film as a whole depicts a counter-narrative to the original, iconic story of the Wizard of Oz, forcing the audience to question if evil is truly evil and good is truly good.

Not only does the film utilize the powerful narrative structure from the first movie, but it also utilizes the powers of cinema to enhance the film through the use of beautiful visuals, many without the use of computer-generated imagery.

"The sets were amazing, especially knowing they were all [real]," Baquiran said. "I liked the textures and how unique the costumes were ... They're really extravagant, big and unique from other films this year."

With huge ensembles in every scene, the vibrant dance numbers were very satisfying. The directing staff always made Glinda and Elphaba stand out from the large ensemble visually through clever costuming and staging. Unlike on a stage with limited sets, the movie manages to expand the physical settings throughout the film. Whether Elphaba is running across a cliff's edge, the munchkins are dancing around Munchkinland, Glinda and her entourage are strolling through school or the Emerald City citizens are marching around their beautiful, green town, every scene was visually satisfying.

The acting and vocal performances were another incredible element. As both leading actresses sang live, rather than lip-syncing, the musical numbers provided for astonishing, authentic vocal performances.

"I love the soundtrack of Wicked and having two great singers, Grande and [Erivo], sing all the songs was really

amazing to hear," said junior Neeharika Kumar. "Going into the movie knowing that they were singing most of their songs live as they were filming the movie was really fun to listen to while watching."

Most notably, Grande's performance as Glinda was not that of a pop artist, but a professional actress. Grande fully embodied the selfish, outgoing and attention-seeking popular girl that is Glinda. Her vocal capabilities were incredible, but her acting was a more shocking feat of talent. Erivo's performance as Elphaba was similarly incredible, with an extremely powerful, dynamic voice to match Elphaba's magical capabilities. However, the most remarkable part of

their performance was the leading actresses' phenomenal chemistry.

"The main theme of the whole [movie] was sisterhood and friendship," Kwok said. "I liked how you could see the chemistry between [Erivo] and [Grande], and how they both just seemed really connected on and off-screen."

One of the possible complaints is the one-year wait time between the two films, especially as the audience is quite eager after the thrilling first film.

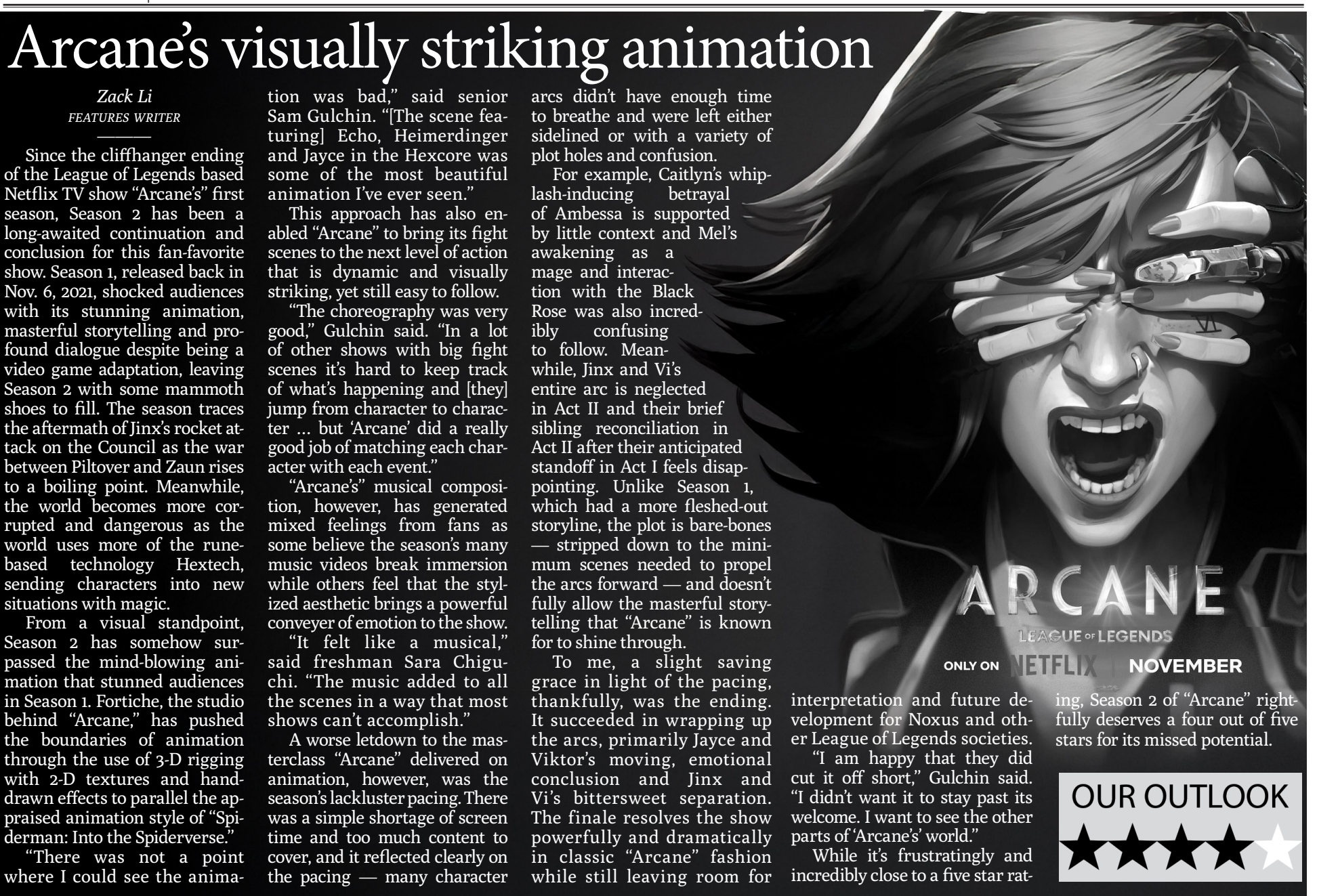
"It leaves us on a gigantic cliffhanger and it leaves you wanting a lot more of the story, but you have to wait a year," Kumar said.

Ultimately, the film was a very strong adaptation of the story Wicked. The directing staff attempted to honor and expand upon the original story by splitting the musical into two films

to encapsulate the entire narrative, though at the cost of some disappointment from its audience. With a compelling narrative, beautiful visuals and remarkable leading actors, Wicked was overall a well-made,

magical movie musical adaptation, worthy of four and a half out of five stars.

OUR OUTLOOK



Be conscious of holiday spending

Gemma Albertson
FEATURES WRITER

The first thing a person does a week before a big holiday is write down their shopping list.

"[My parents buy things for the holidays] quite often," said freshman Jules Singh. "Pretty much every holiday, people buy gifts or cards or [give] money so people can buy other things ... New stuff is considered nice, and people do nice gestures to show that they love people."

Almost every holiday relies on some sort of new purchase. The main attraction of Halloween night is going door to door to ask for candy. But if no one spends money on bags of candy, then the ability to trick-or-treat is completely eliminated. One's Halloween would be reduced to walking around in the dark.

Another prominent example is Christmas.

"Everybody forgets the true meaning of Christmas, of how it's [about being] with family," said junior and Project Pantry Club secretary Heli Artola. "There is a lot of mass buying of this and that, on toys, on shoes and clothes ... You need to spend money on the stocking stuffers for somebody, or you need to have presents for everybody ... [Christmas] is really focused on spending money for others."

Come Christmastime, Rockefeller Center erects a real Christmas tree. Overall, a fake Christmas tree would be much more cost-effective, but there's one large factor holding them back from turning to plastic: tradition. Tradition stands as the justification for numerous other holiday purchases. A traditional celebration is widely considered as being the best way to celebrate, with many unnecessary purchases being chalked up to "keeping the holiday spirit alive." The mountains of gifts and candy wrappers, however, stand as a distraction from the true meaning of the holidays. Purchases shouldn't hold more importance than connecting with the people one cares about.

Companies nationwide benefit heavily from the holiday season, as it gives them the opportunity to create limited-edition, holiday-themed products. The demand for these products, which only stay in stores for about a month, comes from their "novelty," despite the scheduled ap-

pearance every single year. The holiday menu at Starbucks, for example, is minimally changed every year. Favorite drinks or products will come back. But the rush of the impending end of the season has consumers in a frenzy, as they try to stock up on all the pumpkin spice lattes and peppermint mochas they can before they're gone.

"There are usually more customers during the holidays," said DJ Djinguezian, a part-time barista and Aradogon alumnus at Starbucks. "It's usually a very overwhelming time for me and my coworkers. ... Starbucks advertises [their new menu] pretty well so that people get excited to try it. I think the high demand is because people are aware that it's only a seasonal thing, and it's going to go away pretty soon, so they need to experience it before it goes away."

The repercussions of these excessive holiday purchases run deeper than "too much stuff." In the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, waste generation increases by 25%, which is one million tons of trash added to already heaping landfills. Only around 27% of American homes compost, so all those spoiled leftovers pile onto the landfills as well. While purchasing an artificial Christmas tree may seem like a better alternative, they never biodegrade, and sit in landfills indefinitely. The wrapping paper that's trashed from presents

can only partly make it to a recycling bin; glittery, foil wrapping paper requires too much energy to recycle and is thus turned away.

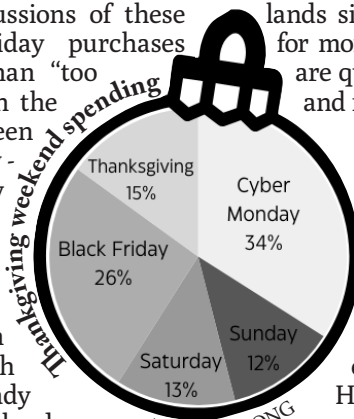
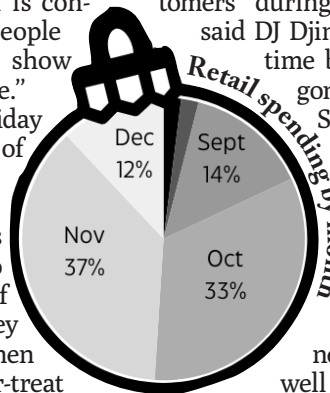
"People tend to buy too many gifts and a lot of plastic and waste continues to be manufactured as people buy more," said senior and secretary of One World Club Fiora Tripple. "There's also a lot of shipments, and that causes more waste in the atmosphere, [through the usage of] planes and [other means of transport]."

Holiday products can also vary in sustainability, as the materials used are lacking in longevity and reusability. 600 million pounds of Halloween candy purchased every year are packaged in one-time-use wrappers that are often extremely hard for recycling companies to process. Each trick-or-treater is responsible for about one pound of trash from candy wrappers alone. Holiday food and drink are often served on single-use plates or cups. While decorations are reusable, certain decor like Halloween cobwebs or garlands simply don't hold up for more than a year, and are quickly thrown away and repurchased.

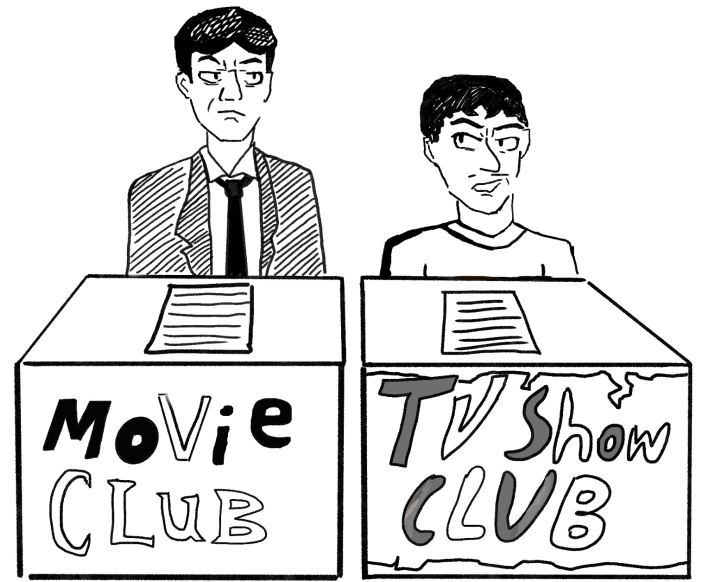
While it's practically impossible to avoid purchasing new products during the holiday season, there are still ways to mitigate one's spending. Halloween costumes can be built out of clothes one already has, seasonal items can be bought in moderation and gifts can be homemade. Before making the purchase, one might first consider its necessity.

"I [constantly see] a lot of people buying 20 cans of beans for Thanksgiving, and they're not always used and are usually thrown away, so that just contributes more to the food waste that we have in our society," Artola said. "A good way to cut down the amount of food that we buy and waste is just better portioning ... [If you're gonna have 20 people at your house [for Thanksgiving then] you [should] have leftovers [other] than not [having] enough for everybody. But instead of buying 50 portions, buy 30 ... The amount of stuff that you buy will really help [reduce] food waste."

Holiday consumerism isn't entirely preventable. However, with the holiday season coming up, one may consider each purchase more carefully before adding it to the cart.



AUDREY WANG



IAN WANG

Too many clubs!

Allinah Zhan
FEATURES WRITER

With the fall semester well underway, students have settled into their routines, juggling classes and extracurricular commitments. In particular, the school's bustling club landscape – currently boasting over 80 active clubs – may seem like a sign of a thriving, engaged student body. However, a deeper look raises an important question: is having this many clubs truly beneficial, and how much is too much?

Of the 85 clubs from last year, 23 disbanded by the school year's end. This year, there has been a surge of 25 new clubs, filling up the gaps. The enthusiasm is commendable, but it raises a pressing concern: is the lifespan of some clubs becoming too short to justify their existence, and can they really meet the needs of the student body and avoid simply adding to the cycle of turnovers?

The vast array of clubs available is meant to provide students with opportunities to explore their interests and find a community where they truly fit in, yet the overwhelming number of options can have the opposite effect. Students may instead feel stretched thin and unable to commit fully to any one group. After all, one student can only attend one club a day due to the short lunch period allotted to meetings.

"I have a variety of interests [in] different subjects," said sophomore Tiffany Wang. "I have to struggle [to choose a club], and it takes me five or ten minutes to decide every time. For example, every time I want to go to Chinese [Culture] Club, there are other clubs that I'm [also] interested in. I need to balance the time to go to both of them."

This overlap not only limits students from fully engaging with the clubs they care about but also reduces the overall participation. Additionally, as more clubs form, overlapping missions may create confusion about which club to join and lead to fragmented, shallow experiences.

"There's so many finance related clubs – Investors, Smart Money, Business Club – I can't even name all of them off the top of my head just because there's so many," said senior Katie Yue. "When there are too many clubs about a similar topic, the focus [on that topic]

is a little bit less. First of all, people don't even know which one to go to, and I feel like it would be more impactful if they are all consolidated into one club, because it would get more engagement overall."

This challenge is compounded by the fact that each club requires faculty supervision, which may be a burden on teachers.

"Teachers have to give up their lunch to be there for the club," said math teacher Craig Sipple. "For instance, this year, I'm supervising two clubs. Last year I did three clubs. For every club we have, there's a teacher that has to supervise it."

This points to a critical imbalance: with the addition of more clubs, faculty members may get stretched thin, and they may be spending time supervising groups that could operate informally or lack meaningful direction.

Some clubs act more as casual friend groups rather than organized bodies working towards a shared goal.

Another sensitive issue is the swelling of clubs formed primarily to bolster college applications. In today's competitive admissions landscape, starting a club can be an appealing way to stand out and show one's leadership skills. However, without another central goal in mind, clubs may just end up lacking direction or meaningful activities.

"There are a lot of people who are passionate about an idea and they want to start a club, but at the same time, there are some people that just want to put something on their resume," Yue said. "[In those clubs] it doesn't feel like we're living up to the purpose of the club ... It felt a little superficial."

Some may argue that this trend is simply the byproduct of students being strategic about their futures. Yet, these short-lived clubs may be problematic. Resources are diverted from more "productive" clubs, and members who join with genuine interest may be left disappointed when a club dissolves after just a year.

Ultimately, while the abundance of clubs reflects the enthusiasm and creativity of the student body, it also creates challenges. Without careful oversight, the rapid turnover of some clubs could undermine their long-term impact and the sense of community they aim to create.

Boys basketball bested in tight preseason opener

Phoebe Harger
SPORTS WRITER

Boys basketball is back, and after finishing second in the Peninsula Athletic League Ocean Division last year with a 7-3 record, the team is focused on claiming first place.

Along with these aspirations, head coach Hosea Patton has big goals for the team's Central Coast Section campaign.

"We were a few points away from a first-place finish," Patton said. "So we're really trying to build and push for that first place spot and get a good seed in CCS so that we can go farther than we got last year."

As the regular season approaches, Patton believes that the team's overall experience will carry them to success.

"Experience is probably our biggest strength right now," said coach Patton. "I think it's a matter of [the players we had last year] teaching the [players] that came up from JV and just being leaders on the team."

Many players are confident that their team chemistry will benefit this season.

"As a group, we get along really well, and I find myself having a lot of fun at practice because I enjoy working with everyone on the team," said senior Grant Palmer. "If we focus on collaboration and playing true team-based bas-

ketball, we can get very far this season."

Junior Thomas Luong shared the same opinion.

"This team is really strong in the sense that we have a lot of communication," said Luong. "We're really connected so we have really good chemistry on the court."

With high hopes and a strong sense of unity, the team kicked off their preseason with a home game against Burlingame on Nov. 19.

The Dons held a 14-9 lead over the Panthers at the end of the first quarter, fueled by two notable three-pointers from junior Brandon Potter. While Aragon was able to hang on to their lead for the majority of the second quarter, Burlingame outscored them 14-19, tying the game 28-28 at halftime.

After falling behind by one point at the beginning of the third quarter, junior Charlie Platz sank two three-pointers to reclaim the lead for the Dons. However, Aragon couldn't maintain their lead and entered the fourth quarter trailing 42-41. Despite their good passing game, the Dons struggled to find the net, scoring only three points in the final quarter. Burlingame, on the other hand, added twelve and ultimately came out on top with a score of 54-44.

Despite the loss, several Dons had standout performances,

contributing greatly to the team's offensive effort. Potter led the team in scoring, putting up nine points throughout the night, followed by Platz and senior Jasper Caffo who both scored seven.

However, while the Dons had good communication and passing throughout the game, the team's weak defense prevented the team from securing a win.

"Defense is definitely our biggest weakness right now," Patton said after the game. "We're working hard, but not smart ... but we'll strengthen it up. We got a couple more defensive schemes that we'll put in place to help us moving forward".

Palmer added that effort was an additional area in need of improvement.

"Something we could work on is simply playing harder," Palmer said. "There are many times when we give up possessions simply through lack of effort. If we stay determined our team can get really far".

Although the team did not get the result they were hoping for, they know there is still a long season ahead of them with lots of time to grow and enhance their skills. Committed to improving their defense and working hard in practice, the Dons are confident they can bounce back and make a strong push going into the regular season.



Junior Charlie Platz contests a Burlingame player.



Senior Robert Kelly shoots over Burlingame. VICTORIA SANTANA

Girls basketball loses preseason to Lick-Wilmerding

Advika Singh
SPORTS WRITER

On Nov. 25, Aragon Girls Basketball (1-1 overall) lost 37-67 in a preseason skirmish against Lick-Wilmerding (1-1 overall). Having attained a 17-10 record overall and a 6-4 record in league the previous year, the Tigers proved a formidable opponent against the Dons.

"For playing a really amazing team like Lick, we played our hardest and tried to get better off of our mistakes," said shooting guard Jaelyn Ruttenberg.

Gaining an 18-9 lead over the Dons in the first quarter, the Tigers started off strong and took control of the game. While the Dons continued pushing for the remainder of the quarter, they were unable to keep up with Lick.

The Tigers continued their onslaught in the second quarter, widening the lead to sixteen points by halftime with the score set at 19-35.

"Our shots just weren't falling tonight," said head coach Hala'ufia. "But it was all just to learn where we're at right now, and push towards league play in January."

While the game revealed areas of improvement for the team, it also emphasized the close bond that the Dons already have.

"I know the team will always have my back," said senior and captain Sofia Dioli. "I know they'll always be cheering me on and tell me to keep shooting — and that's something that has really kept me going."

Though the Dons were able to score eight more points by the

end of the third quarter, they were ultimately bested by the Tigers as the buzzer sounded, the final score being 37-67.

"For the past few seasons, I would always struggle with getting super nervous and I found it hard to focus," said Dioli. "I've definitely been working on staying calm and focused on what I'm trying to do."

Sophomore Jaelyn Ruttenberg pointed out other points for improvement.

"Our two main ones are defense and rebounding," Ruttenberg said. "We have a structured system to emphasize those two and I definitely think we can get better this year."

The girls will look to bolster their strengths and improve play in preparation for their next game tonight at 6 p.m. at King's Academy.



Junior Lauren Pong looks to pass the ball.

MADELINE ALLEN

Wrestling wrestles improvements as season starts

Olivia Mukherjee
SPORTS WRITER

As winter sports jump into action, the wrestling team is preparing for the upcoming season with a combination of experienced wrestlers and newcomers. One of the newer athletes, sophomore Carlos Christerna, explained his reason for joining.

"I joined wrestling because I wanted to do more sports, so I'm not just sitting at home, and I heard some of my friends were joining," Christerna said.

As the season kicks off, Aragon's wrestlers are also focused on refining their skills and strengthening team bonds.

"I've gotten to know a lot of people," Christerna said. "I talk

to people I probably wouldn't have spoken to before."

The team has grown close leading up to the first matches of the season, benefiting them on and off the mat.

"I feel more connected with the team," said junior Matt Hagan. "I'm proud of our ability to bond and just get on the mat."

Some players commented on the joint courage displayed by this growing network of wrestlers at Aragon.

"Our ability ... as a team ... to get out there on the mat is a big testament toward courage," Hagan said. "Seeing everyone out there made me feel more connected and self-confident."

Along with the social aspect, training has been focused on building both physical and men-

tal strength. Training sessions typically begin with warm-ups, followed by skill drills to help wrestlers improve.

"After we do all the drills, I'll show technique for a bit," said head coach Goumenidis. "Then we'll spar for the last 15 minutes."

Christerna is aiming to improve his technique and mental game this season.

"I lost my first match really quickly," Christerna said. "But I learned that I need to work on my technique and mental game."

The team is continuing to grow, focusing on inclusion and diversity for the upcoming season.

Coach Goumenidis also emphasized expansion within the team, particularly the

girls section within the wrestling program.

"I'm trying to grow the girls' team," Goumenidis said. "It's been getting bigger, and I want to keep that momentum going."



Aragon wrestler executes a move in practice.

MARTIN ZHENG

Girls soccer preview

Charlie Henderson
SPORTS WRITER

Just three seasons ago the Aragon girls soccer team netted only two wins in the Peninsula Athletic League Bay division. In the 2021-2022 season the Dons were an extremely young team that struggled against more experienced Bay division teams. They came in fifth place out of the six teams in their division, and interestingly they moved down a league while the sixth place team remained in the Bay division. This disappointing season resulted in their relegation from the Bay division to the P A L Ocean division.

In their two Ocean division seasons the Dons were dominant, capturing back-to-back league titles and two straight Central Coast Section play-off berths. As a result of

their two great seasons in the Ocean division, the Dons are back up in the Bay division this year.

"The group of four seniors were the last group of girls who played in the Bay before we got relegated," said head coach Michael Flynn. "There's been a hunger to get back to the Bay since we got relegated, [and] this team realizes the gravity of moving up."

The Dons are led by a core group of seniors who were freshmen on the 2021-2022 team. As seniors who are finally back up in the Bay division they not only look to prove that they belong, but they look to prove that they never should have been relegated in the first place. On top of that, the Dons have three more seniors who started their varsity careers as sophomores.

"The seniors realize that we have to establish a culture of winning, and that starts with them," Flynn said.

Even though the Dons are new in the Bay division, they bring a championship pedigree to the league coming off of their two back-to-back

Ocean titles. The team expects to win, and they believe that they possess the tools to do so.

"This year we are benefiting from having a big senior class that have been playing together since freshman year," said senior captain Sierra Troy. "We've all learned how to play to each other's strengths over the years which will allow us to go far this season. The fight to win within every single player on our team is special."

The Dons' first test of the season came on Dec. 3 at Palo Alto,

where the Dons (2-0) squared off against the Palo Alto Vikings (0-1).

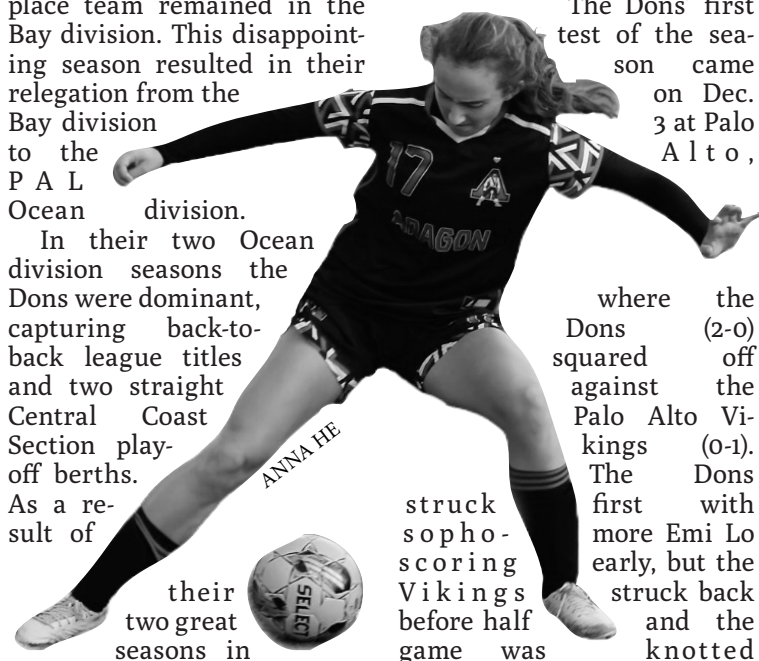
The Dons first with more Emi Lo struck back and the game was knotted up at one heading into half time. After the break the Dons completely controlled the game. The Dons' defense tightened up shutting Palo Alto out in the second half.

On top of the team's defensive performance, senior Stela Pisaro tallied two second half goals to carry the Dons over the Vikings.

"I don't think we were expecting to win three to one," said sophomore Emi Lo. "We were tied one to one at the half, and in the second half we really came together as a team and ended up scoring two more goals."

The Dons have already started off strong with high hopes for the season, but they know that their biggest challenges lie ahead. "How do we react when we go down?" Flynn said. "Games are going to be close, and we might find ourselves having to find a way to score to tie or win the game. For us that's the big challenge this year."

The Dons will play their next game today at 4:30 p.m. at home against Menlo School.



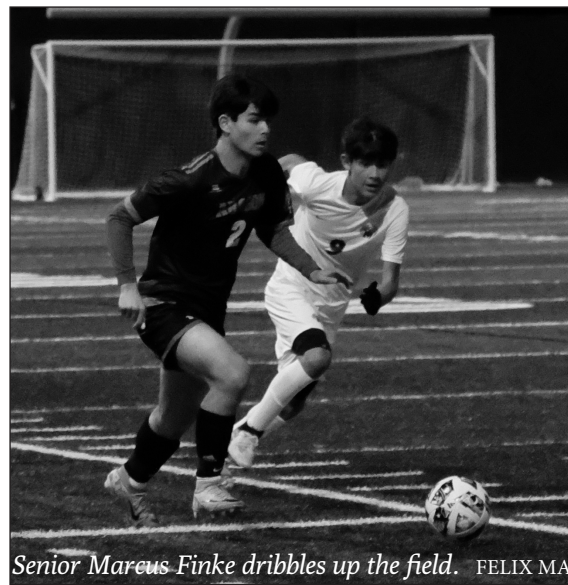
Senior Stela Pisaro controls the ball. ANNA HE



Senior Stela Pisaro controls the ball. ANNA HE



Senior Pouyan Sheikh fights for possession. FELIX MA



Senior Marcus Finke dribbles up the field. FELIX MA

Boys soccer draws Los Altos

Adya Tewari
SPORTS WRITER

On Dec. 2, Aragon boys soccer (0-0-2 overall) faced off against the Los Altos Eagles (0-0-1 overall) under the leadership of new head coach Daniel Arevalos, with the game ending in a draw.

With this being Arevalos' first year at Aragon, he has already made his mark on the team, emphasizing teamwork and consistency.

"Today's game is just building from the basics," Arevalos said. "You're only as good as your worst player, so everyone needs to be on the same page."

Arevalos also commented on changes he has implemented to the team's practices, focusing on efficiency.

"In the beginning, they were learning my system, but now they know we start to warm up right away," Arevalos said. "They know we like high intensity, giving it our all."

Aragon struggled in the beginning of the game, with the Eagles scoring to start out the first half. The Dons managed to get the ball close to the goal a couple of times throughout the first half, but Los Altos' goalie managed to hold up, keeping the Dons scoreless at halftime.

"I could have done more to help the team, especially [by] creating chances and creating more opportunities for my teammates," said senior and co-captain Pouyan Sheikh.

Despite the rough start, the Dons continued to fight throughout the second half, with senior Marcus Finke scoring the tying goal in the last five minutes of the game.

"We played strong," said senior and co-captain Charlie Birkelund. "We were down by a goal up until the last five minutes, [but] we managed to clutch it out and get that finish and tie it up."

The beginning of the season has been a challenging one for the Dons, with the introduction of a new coach requiring players to adjust. However, the team is embracing the challenge and expresses their satisfaction with Arevalos' performance.

"Obviously, with a new coach there's been new tactics and new ways to play," Sheikh

said. "It's been a little difficult, but we're slowly starting to adapt and starting to get used to how he wants to play."

Team members also praised Arevalos' ability to adapt to what the team needs.

"He's actually been pretty quick at catching on and being able to communicate with us," Birkelund said. "He's always available if we need to ask him a question."

Beyond just tactical changes, Arevalos has been successful in fostering a high-intensity, focused mentality in players.

"They know the goal. The closer it is to the game, the more they tend to focus," Arevalos said. "But we set the standard from a normal recovery practice to a tactical practice that everything has to be at 100%."

Additionally, players reflected on their growth so far, finding ways to look forward and adjust throughout the rest of the season.

"I'm always striving for more, and I had an average

game on Monday," said senior Maxim Musaev. "I'm excited to find my feet in the games going forward and I look forward to bonding more with my team."

Other players expressed their pride in the team's ability to overcome challenges as well.

"It was a disappointing result, but honestly, we were missing a lot of our starters due to injuries," Birkelund said. "Considering it was only our second game playing together, we played well."

Looking ahead, the Dons aim to capitalize on their progress as they prepare for upcoming games.

"We tied this game, only scoring one goal," Sheikh said. "We need to score more goals, so that's what we have to work on moving forward in the season."

The Dons also aim to adjust their flexibility with positions.

"[We need to] find the positions where everybody can play at and they're comfortable in," Birkelund said. "If somebody needs to play in a position they're not comfortable with [and] we can get them more accustomed to that, we should be able to be much more consistent."

Aragon will play their next game against Mills High School on Dec. 13.



Senior Marcus Finke crosses the ball towards the goal. FELIX MA

Senior Josh Jacobs slides into home base

Claire Qi
SPORTS WRITER

On Aug. 17, senior Josh Jacobs committed to play baseball at Claremont McKenna College. He is looking forward to attending outstanding university.

"I would say the biggest thing is academics," Jacobs said. "And then the way the school supports their students and makes sure that they have successful lives in the classroom, beyond the classroom and then beyond college, that was very appealing to me. And the facilities [are] really nice."

Jacobs has been playing baseball since he was three years old. His parents enrolled him in Little League baseball and he has loved it ever since.

"He always wanted to play," said his father and math teacher Adam Jacobs. "He always loved hit-

ting, and always, always just loved playing baseball."

One large motivation for Jacobs to continue working hard at baseball is winning. As baseball is a very difficult sport, failure is more common than success. However, the possibility of success is what really encourages him to keep getting better.

"What really pushes me is the fact that success is there and potential to succeed is always there," Jacobs said.

"When you actually fulfill that potential and succeed at ... getting a hit, getting on base, winning a game [or]

winning a championship, it feels really good."

Jacobs wasn't always planning on continuing baseball in college. He had been debating it for a long time over the summer.

However, according to Aragon varsity baseball coach Don Hahn, it came as no shock that his final decision was to go to college for baseball.

"He loves the game, and he's very good at it, but he puts a lot of work in," Hahn said.

Claremont's offer was a large deciding factor in Jacobs' choice. The offer itself came as a pretty big surprise to him. He had been primarily researching places like Seattle University or Chapman University and didn't even learn of Claremont's existence until they emailed him. Still, Jacobs is very satisfied with the college and his friends and family are both very proud.

"I was very excited for him to have the opportunity to play at the college level," Adam Jacobs said. "Because such a small percentage of high school athletes actually play college sports."

It wasn't easy for Jacobs to get where he is now. During the baseball season last

year, he hit a slump where he was struggling hitting-wise. It got to the point where the coach only gave Jacobs one at-bat. However, Jacobs persevered and overcame it during a game against Wilcox High School.

"I ended up hitting a home run," Jacobs said. "And that was my breakthrough. It was a moment that just sparked something in my swing."

After getting over his slump, Jacobs went on to have a great hitting season. Despite the difficulty, he persisted and ended up playing better than before.

Another challenge for Jacobs was time commitment. Working on baseball took a lot of time that he could've spent doing something else.

"I noticed that during the summer he had to choose between football and baseball," said senior Zachary Floresca. "That impacted how the coaches saw him on the football team because they felt like he was uncommitted to football because he was playing baseball."

Nevertheless, Jacobs feels that the sacrifice is worth it, even needed to get better.

"If you want to go to the next level at anything, you have to be able to sacrifice a

lot of stuff," Jacobs said. "Like times with friends, hanging out [or] going out. You have to be able to spend



time working at whatever it is you're doing."

He attributes his determination to his motivation to continue practicing.

"[It's very important] to find a way to work, or not give excuses to yourself that you can't do something," Jacobs said.

Although unsure whether he will continue playing baseball after college, Jacobs plans to work hard while attending Claremont McKenna College.



COURTESY OF JOSH JACOBS

The new protector for football players: Guardian Caps

Sora Mizutani
SPORTS WRITER

Guardian Caps are soft-shelled pads worn over regular football helmets to prevent risks of head injuries. According to the National Football League research, the Guardian Cap can reduce the force from head contact by 10%. Guardian Caps have been around since 2015, but in 2022 the Guardian Caps were mandated during the NFL training camp.

This year, for the first time, NFL players have the choice to wear Guardian Caps, specifically the Guardian NXT, during season games. Following the NFL rules, the National Federation of High School Associations also allowed teams to wear the Guardian Cap in games, although Aragon has not worn them during games.

Aragon High School implemented Guardian Caps this summer, with a mandate for contact athletes every practice which includes linemen, tight ends and running backs. Despite

being additional equipment to an already equipment-heavy sport, Guardian Caps have been well received by players and coaches alike.

"I watched a player with [Guardian Caps] in college [football], [so] I heard about it [already,]" said junior

wide receiver Daniel Castillo. "It looks really safe, and the material looks helpful for contacts with other helmets."

Guardian Caps are used Monday through Wednesday. Specific situations in which Guardian Caps are used include any game situation and one-on-one practice for skill players.

"[Guardian Caps are] good to have during practice," said head coach Ash Parham. "[Because] that's when more contact happens."

From a player perspective, some believe that the use of Guardian Caps should be universal.

"It definitely should be implemented into games because players [are] prone to concussions," Castillo said. "The Guardian Cap reduces the chance, and it's also safer for them."

Because of the Guardian Caps' design and light-weight feature, it is essentially floating on top of the helmet. This allows the Guardian Caps to redirect the impact, acting as moving plates, around the helmet instead of directly towards the head. Although the concept of taking extra precautions to prevent injuries is enticing, some drawbacks come along with it.

"I heard that it is a little bit uncomfortable in hot weather, wearing the Guardian caps," Castillo said. "Because it is on top [of the helmet,] the ventilation [gets covered] and you sweat more."

Even with Guardian Caps, Aragon's football team experienced a high number of injuries this season, more than previous years.

However, although unfortunate, Parham seems to be unsurprised about this fact.

"The Guardian caps prevent long-term [damage]," Parham said. "They prevent concussions at the time, but it's more about the hits over time getting dampened."

Regarding the long term effect, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy is a major disease that is caused by repeated impact to the brain. CTE can lead to memory issues, and abnormal motor skills. Other than acute injuries like a concussion, Guardian Caps can help reduce accumulated impact of collisions to the head.

The NFL Vice President Jeff Miller said to CNN that in the last two seasons, there was about a 50% decrease in concussions in the

positions that were mandated to wear them. However, the NFL has not released the data behind its claims, leading to some skepticism.

Data from multiple researchers have led to different conclusions. A recent study by researchers at Stanford found that Guardian Caps reduce impact on players when tested in the lab, however, there was no significant difference in impact when it comes to measuring in-game impacts.

Despite the costs and lack of substantial data to back up their effect, some believe that Guardian Caps are worth the price.

"It can be expensive," Castillo said. "[But Guardian Caps are] good quality, good material and it's really great padding, so very effective."

Guardian Caps are a step towards protecting football players from the effects of concussions, and researchers will continue learning more about the impact of these new helmets in the coming future.



EVA LUDWIG

