

# The ARAGON OUTLOOK

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900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo, CA 94402

Aragon High School

## CLIMATE CHANGE

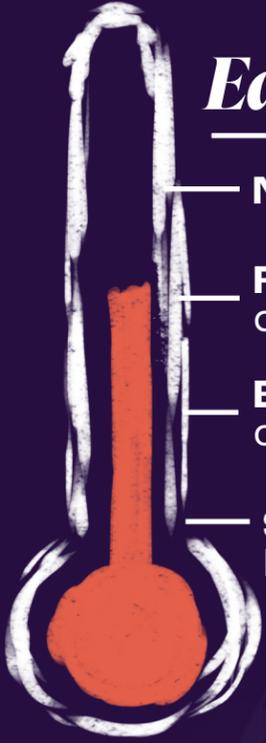
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Climate change isn't just some term one can skim past in their textbook or news feed. It's not far off, it's not fiction, it's real and it's happening now. Every time a student drives to school, every time they desperately consult ChatGPT for homework help, every time a problematic celebrity flies a private jet to Coachella, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere, causing the Earth to suffer the effects of global warming.

The current administration has expressed little concern with climate change, despite scientific evidence supporting its presence and active worsening. On March 9, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said the Department of Defense "does not do climate change crap." On Jan. 21, President Donald Trump signed an executive order pulling the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accords and has encouraged the use of oil and gasoline.

The importance of climate change comes from its numerous impacts on our daily lives. Unpredictable weather patterns are caused by rising temperatures and can affect water supply, food production, displacement and the spread of disease. Extreme heat can lead to strokes, dehydration and other health issues. Climate change doesn't only affect us — other species also face the threat of lower survival rates because of food scarcity and habitat loss.

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HANNAH LI



COURTESY OF SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Deputy Sheriff Christina Corpus discussing law enforcement activities.

# County votes, Sheriff out?

Helen McCloskey  
NEWS WRITER

On March 4, San Mateo County held a special election to vote on Measure A, which has now passed with 85% of the vote, giving the Board of Supervisors the power to oust Sheriff Christina Corpus. Corpus, who oversees law enforcement in San Mateo County, has come under scrutiny for allegations of an inappropriate relationship with a colleague, a culture of retaliation in her office and for using racist and homophobic slurs in the workplace as detailed in a Nov. 12, 2024 report.

The report, commissioned by San Mateo County Counsel John Nibbelin, found that Corpus had an affair with Victor Aenlle, a member of her election campaign, and later her transition team when she was elected. Corpus promoted Aenlle, who is not a certified peace officer, to positions such as Reserve Deputy, Executive Director of Administration, Chief of Staff and, in response to the Board of Supervisors' no-confidence vote, Assistant Sheriff. Corpus has also given Aenlle several pay raises.

"People in government or law enforcement need to be qualified for what they do," said sophomore Annie Donnellan. "It was corrupt [that Corpus] put people in places [where they] didn't have the authority or the experience, and especially that she used her power to lay people off. It's put a dark mark on the sheriff's office, and that's bad because we need to have faith in our law enforcement."

Corpus, along with her Executive Team, struck back against those in her office who contributed to the investigation or raised questions about Corpus' relationship with Aenlle. A sheriff who was interviewed for the report was fired, the president of the Deputy Sher-

iff's Association union was arrested on charges of fraud that were later dismissed by a judge and most interviewed employees feared retaliation from Corpus, Aenlle and Corpus' executive team, according to the report.

Lisa Diaz Nash, one of the San Mateo City Council members and a supporter of Measure A, believes Corpus should resign.

"I am very disappointed in the actions of our county sheriff," Diaz Nash said. "The sheriff is responsible for the safety of everyone in the county, and we entrust our funds [and] believe in the county Sheriff's Office. Through her actions with [Aenlle], she has demonstrated that she has broken trust with the people and is not capable of living up to what we elected her to do."

When Corpus was voted into her position as County Sheriff in 2022, some had lofty expectations for her.

"I thought that she [was] really empowering because she [is] the first female Sheriff [of San Mateo County]," said junior Emily Peng. "I had really high hopes for her. And then the report came out ... and [now] I think she needs to be kicked out immediately."

Recently, the Board of Supervisors and several city councils in the county have unanimously passed no-confidence votes against Corpus, including the San Mateo City Council. A no-confidence vote is a measure passed by a governing body declaring a person as unfit to continue their position.

"Our morale [among the sheriffs] is extremely low," Diaz Nash said. "The main reason why we voted [for the] no-confidence [vote] was because the county operates our jail. The morale of the officers there, the things that were going on in the jail, [have] put the jails

in a very dangerous position, and that is not what we entrust the county Sheriff's Office to do with our jail."

Despite San Mateo County and the captains of the Sheriff's Office asking Corpus to resign, she has refused and has denied the allegations of the report, describing herself as a victim of racism and sexism.

"Up until now, I've stayed silent about the retaliation and abuse of power, discrimination and bullying tactics I've been facing as part of a broader pattern I can no longer ignore," said Corpus in September 2024, when the investigation ensued. "[County Executive Mike Callagy] made an inappropriate and offensive request [that] I needed to inform him who I dated within the county and when. As a woman of color who has endured sexual harassment in this county, I was shocked by his actions and conduct."

However, some are skeptical of Corpus' response.

"While she is a trailblazer [as] the first Latinx female sheriff in San Mateo County, there's a lot of evidence against her," said sophomore Chase Rokala. "I don't think it's possible that many people could be discriminating against her and doing what she's accusing them of doing."

In early January, Corpus filed a \$10 million lawsuit against San Mateo County, alleging discrimination, defamation and harassment.

"I'm very hopeful, everyone I've had a conversation with has been in favor of Measure A," Diaz Nash said. "Measure A [exists] to give the supervisors very limited powers ... [and] we're in a situation right now where the safety of our county requires us to take extraordinary measures."

Measure A, which gives county supervisors the power to remove sheriffs from office for breaking the law related to neglect of duties, misappropriation of funds, falsifying documents or obstructing an investigation will expire in 2028.

# ASB corrects club probations

Ellie Blakely  
NEWS WRITER

In October 2024, Aragon's Associated Student Body re-implemented a strike system for clubs, resulting in 32 clubs receiving strikes this semester and 14 being put on probation this school year.

ASB put the strike system in place to hold clubs accountable and ensure that they follow through with their responsibilities, which includes submitting detailed minutes for each meeting.

ing ASB officers if they believe their strikes are unwarranted.

"If [clubs] feel that something is unfair, they should always report back to ASB, and we'll work it out with them," said senior and ASB President Justin Wong. "We have extensive documentation to make sure that we're all accountable."

During the fall semester, multiple clubs successfully appealed their probations, and in November, ASB removed all strikes and canceled all existing probations.

"We were looking at the system, and we realized that some clubs were unaware, even

though we sent them multiple emails about the strike system," Wong said. "To ensure there wasn't any unfairness for the rest of the clubs, we just avoided all probations."

Given the confusion and backlash related to the strike system, ASB held a meeting for club officers on Feb. 26 to remind clubs of the expectations for meeting minutes. However, some clubs felt the meeting didn't fully address the issues they had faced.

"I'm not sure [the meeting helped]," said Yael Boaz, senior and Creative Writing Club Vice President. "During the presentation they didn't mention the [folders for the new semester] or anything along the lines of what we had experienced."

ASB officers acknowledged that the implementation of the strike system has not been without hiccups.

"There were moments on our end where we checked [a club's archive] and they did have their [minutes], but it was a manual error," Vij said. "We've gotten a lot better about the system over time because it's been months."

ASB has said they are committed to making the strike system better for the 2025-26 school year.

"[There] might be a lot of pushback now," Wong said. "But our hope is we have a smooth transition for minutes and



"We [noticed] that clubs weren't on top of things, and they would keep the agenda super short, or they would copy-paste the same agenda," said senior and ASB Treasurer Ria Vij. "We want to make sure that all of our clubs are being productive and [the strike system is] an easy way for us to manage them."

ASB checks the Club Minutes Archives every two weeks, and if they find that clubs have not submitted meeting minutes properly or on time for either of the two weeks, that club receives a strike. After three strikes, clubs are put on a two-week probation and are not allowed to meet for the duration of the probation.

Many clubs have been frustrated by the lack of transparency from ASB about their strikes.

"More communication [from ASB] would be great," said Jackson Keane, sophomore and E-sports Club Vice President. "And [it would be good to get] the reason for our infractions so that we can work to improve rather than just getting more [strikes] and being put on probation."

Additionally, some clubs were not aware of the rules they had broken to receive strikes.

Model United Nations Club received strikes for not submitting their meeting minutes while on probation, which they were not aware was required.

"I wouldn't [have minded] doing meeting minutes on probation if they had communicated that with us," said Melody Liu, senior and Model UN Club Secretary. "It [also] wouldn't be a terrible thing to be more le-

nient with the club minutes. If so many clubs are having this issue, maybe it's something that ASB can re-evaluate."

ASB offers clubs a chance to appeal their probation by email-

club expectations for next year."

Clubs can contact ASB with any questions or concerns regarding club expectations or guidelines.

## Clubs



FELIX GEE

# Editorial: ASB activities need more accountability

*This editorial represents the opinions of 14 out of 14 Outlook editors*

The Associated Student Body's recent handling of club minutes has made it clear that their process for receiving and adapting to student feedback is far too slow and inefficient. Yet, as an organization elected by the students, the most basic duty of ASB is to represent those opinions — but in order to do so, there must be more consistent and more transparent communication between the two bodies.

Since November, 14 clubs have been put on probationary status for failing to submit weekly meeting minutes on time, meaning they were prohibited from meeting for the two weeks following their notice. This status is dictated by a three-strike system, one strike given as a warning each time a club fails to submit meeting minutes properly. 44 clubs — nearly half the clubs at Aragon — received at least one strike at some point last semester, and 32 clubs total have received at least one strike this semester.

While the strike system is an appropriate measure to ensure clubs meet regularly and gives ASB over-

sight power over all clubs, the lack of transparency has caused immense confusion and frustration for clubs this year. Clubs were shocked in late November when ASB notified various clubs of reaching three strikes and being put on probationary status immediately. ASB had reversed the policy about ending the strike system without making an official announcement or revising the club handbook. Instead, they had sent warning emails as warning strikes without explicitly saying so. Furthermore, ASB began to require clubs to submit their meeting minutes on the day of the meeting or else receive a strike, a policy that wasn't explained until some clubs had been put on probation.

Hearing and accepting student input is a core responsibility of student government — one that ASB has failed to meet this year. This feedback from the student body not only would

hold members accountable but would also ensure that they are able to accurately represent the voices of the students who elect them each year. In fact, it was upon hearing feedback from

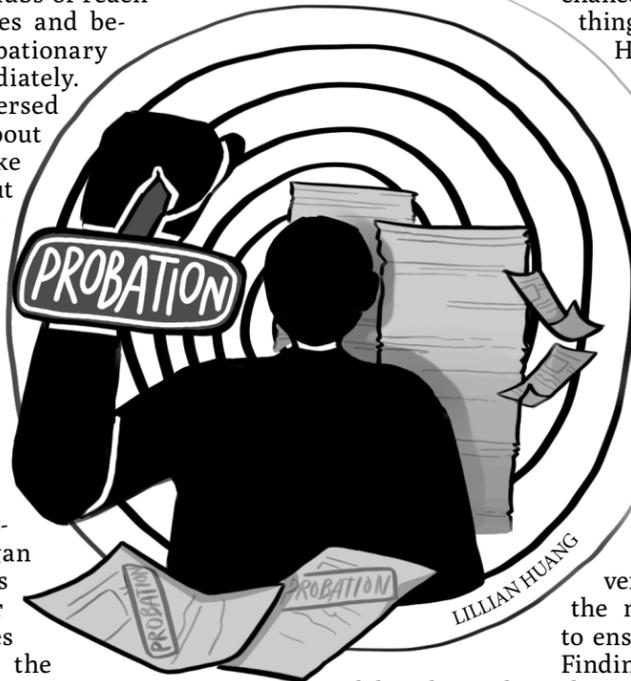
In the past, Town Halls have provided a way for students to give input. These meetings, held during Flex time with members of ASB and class councils, gave students a chance to provide feedback on things happening at Aragon. However, this tradition has been discontinued this year.

We believe Town Halls were and can continue to be effective in helping to bring student input to ASB and class council. ASB should re-implement the process from last year, randomly selecting students from each grade to participate during Flex to ensure diversity while opening up the meetings to volunteers to ensure fruitful discussion. Finding one room per grade that could be used for Town Hall and notifying chosen students of their selection is a simple process that will yield significant results.

While there were concerns regarding the effectiveness of Town Halls in the past, which ASB has cited as their reason to stop hosting them

this year, this system would be able to thrive with reform. First of all, student government must be able to establish what is actually under their jurisdiction, so meetings remain focused on issues that can feasibly be addressed. Once these guidelines are set, discussions should be guided with more focused prompts regarding the organization of events, club management and school culture. The most important aspect of Town Hall though, is accessibility; in order to make communication with ASB more efficient, there must be multiple methods for students to contact their student government — one such idea being an increase in Google Forms. These forms should be available to both the students in Town Hall, as a form of written reflection, or for those who do not want to speak in the larger group or could not attend Town Hall.

Finally, to keep ASB accountable, the Outlook proposes that a monthly summary system is established and pushed out to the student body by email that outlines ASB actions that month and goals for the future, so students may be able to see when and if their issues are being addressed.



clubs about the lack of transparency that led ASB to acknowledge their mistake and reverse the probationary statuses of many clubs. Had ASB accounted for student opinions earlier on, the time it would have taken to reach a solution for this issue could have been substantially shorter.

## Unblock Discord

*This editorial represents the opinions of 14 out of 14 Outlook editors*

In early February, Discord was blocked on all the school wifi networks, prohibiting student access to the platform while they are at school. While we as the Outlook acknowledge and appreciate the district's attempts to reduce distractions in school settings, blocking Discord is ultimately more harmful than helpful.

"Discord is a very unique platform where we can connect with other students [and] mentors, and there's a lot of structure there that has become integral to all of our organizations," said sophomore Emily Ma. "For Robotics, this is a platform we've been growing for years. There are links and other important pieces embedded into the system ... that we don't want to lose ... Sometimes there are last-minute updates that people need to know about ... People get distracted by Discord, but that's the same as with any other communication channel ... People can still chat with their closest couple of friends on messages or find some other way."

Many clubs and other student-run organizations use Discord as their primary method of communication — the Aragon High School Discord hub alone houses 53 student-led servers. Whether it's coordinating meeting times, sending out announcements or project collaboration, Discord serves as a way for students to speak with each other more easily and efficiently.

"Just a couple days after [Discord] was blocked, one of the mentors on Robotics tried to reach out to me, and I knew because I saw the notification pop up on my phone screen, but when I tapped it and went to Discord, I couldn't find anything," Ma said. "And that was a bit stressful, because the mentors aren't here during the school day, and I don't have any other way of contacting them besides Discord."

When we're considering how large student organizations are and their need for organized communication, not being able to correspond during the school day or even shifting to other platforms is simply unfeasible. Regardless of the potential for distraction, Discord is ultimately a platform many students use for beneficial collaboration.

# The ARAGON OUTLOOK

aragonoutlook.org

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Have something you want to share on the Outlook? Submit a letter to the editor!

bit.ly/OutlookLetterToEditor

# Chinese AI DeepSeek emerges as ChatGPT competitor

Claire Dong  
NEWS WRITER

On Jan. 20, DeepSeek, a Chinese artificial intelligence start-up created by Liang Wenfeng in 2023, released its new model, DeepSeek R1. Within the week, the app was able to top charts, beating out OpenAI's ChatGPT for the most downloaded free app in the U.S. on Apple's App Store.

DeepSeek's rapid rise has led to comparisons with ChatGPT, which has been a key player in the AI space since its launch in November 2022. While both models function as AI chatbots, students have noted key differences in their performance, accuracy and accessibility.

"I tested out [American Invitational Math Exam] questions on both of them," said sophomore Sofia Johari. "They both failed question number 15, but for question number one, DeepSeek actually got it correct, and ChatGPT was off by a couple hundred."

Following the release of DeepSeek, several tech stocks experienced a noticeable dip in value. According to Reuters, Nvidia dropped just under 17%, losing almost \$593 billion. Microsoft saw a 2.1% decrease, while Alphabet, Google's parent company, fell by 4.2%. The rise of DeepSeek has also ignited discussions on the competitive nature of AI development between

China and the U.S..

"A lot of Americans are stuck in an oppositional attitude towards China," said English teacher Gregory McGarry. "And a lot of American companies are focused on playing into that because they want to keep their shareholders happy. [DeepSeek] originates from China, [so] a lot of American media is going to try to fearmonger about it. They like to build up hysteria. We

should evaluate the tools just on how they function, and not on country of origin."

As with other AI tools, concerns have emerged over data privacy and potential government surveillance, especially with DeepSeek being a Chinese-developed product.

some point you should just not use the internet, because using the internet means all your data is online. It could be a concern, but I wouldn't take

really it too seriously that DeepSeek is going to leak your data to the Chinese [Communist Party] or anything."

However, the role of AI in education is complex. While it presents new opportunities for learning and efficiency, it also challenges traditional academic practices.

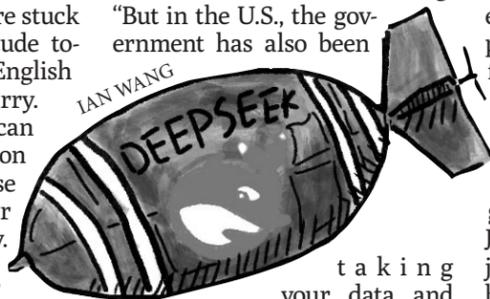
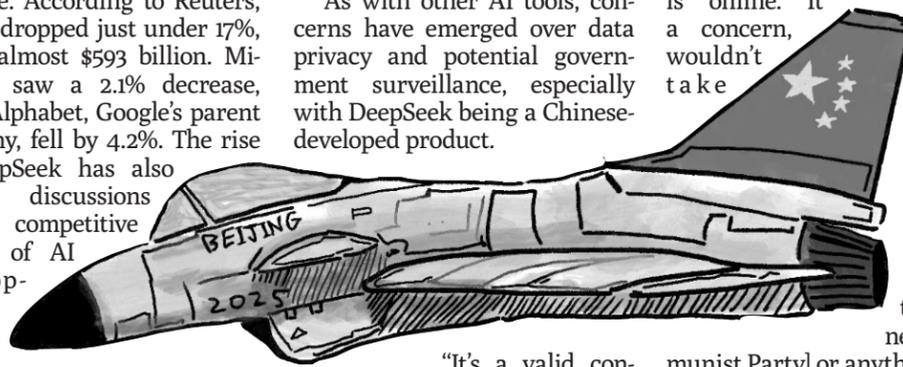
"[When I'm studying], sometimes Google doesn't give me the answer I want," Johari said. "With AI, I can just modify my query a little bit and it'll give me exactly what I need. AI is an amazing tool, but the problem is that if you can reliably get AI to

write your essay for you and it's a good, solid essay, then maybe the education system needs to change so that we learn how to use AI to get what we want out of it, rather than just doing everything on our own."

While some students view AI as an invaluable tool for studying, teachers worry about the ethical implications of relying too heavily on it.

"Frankly, I'm not interested in using any of these tools," McGarry said. "So [many] of the benefits from research and development of ideas comes from thinking things through, and shortcuts for that type of stuff are not really interesting."

As AI continues to integrate deeper into daily lives, competition between companies like DeepSeek and OpenAI will continue. The balance between technological progress and ethical considerations will be crucial in shaping the future of AI.



"It's a valid concern," said senior Alex Jiang. "But in the U.S., the government has also been

taking your data and can take it from ChatGPT. So if you're scared about getting your data leaked, then at

## Letter: disclaimer policy

Darren Lo  
NEWS EDITOR

I am writing this to express my concern with the disclaimer in the "Misrepresentation of Palestinian suffering in Western media" article from last cycle, labeled: "This column represents the opinion of the author."

The Outlook has written opinions on antisemitism, criticism of Israel and genocide. None of these articles include that disclaimer. Just this one. While the disclaimer is factual, including the disclaimer for the first time in a sensitive piece where the staffer is vulnerable is not only poor precedent, but outright dangerous.

By saying this piece does not represent the Outlook, it implies other pieces do represent the Outlook. I have nothing against the disclaimer itself, but policy must be created to ensure its safe use so it is not potentially weaponized to exclude minority opinions.

The Outlook should take every step possible, no matter how small, to enshrine the safety of our staff. We must be prepared to stand behind the words on our paper, not as an endorsement of every single piece, but to protect the forum as one built on integrity and fairness. More importantly, with the rise in hate, the Outlook must be ready to defend the students

## Response from the Editor

Ellen Li and Leah Hawkins  
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

While we acknowledge that the use of disclaimers is inconsistent, we believe it was appropriate in this case. The decision to publish the "Misrepresentation of Palestinian suffering in Western media" article proves that the Outlook is willing to take any responsibility or repercussions concerning the piece.

Additionally, the Outlook has faced criticism of the publishing of the article, with the disclaimer, and has spent time and effort defending our stance and allowing free speech to flow throughout our publication.

In a perfect world, the column would be a dual opinion, with a different writer representing the other side of the debate. However, the column itself was suggested by the writer, and we were unable to find anyone else

willing to write an opposing opinion. As a publication, we do not force any of our staff to write opinions on topics they personally disagree with.

The article was printed on a general features page and needed clarification to prevent any misunderstanding by readers that the article was also a general features piece based in fact, rather than opinion, as it was. In the past, opinion pieces have faced unwarranted criticism from readers who did not understand the difference between news reporting and subjective opinion.

We are aware of the inconsistency with the disclaimer due to its unprecedented nature. Therefore, we are piloting a policy in which any opinions concerning controversial political issues will contain a disclaimer in order to protect the members of our organization and to uphold consistency.

# Trump takes swing at DEI

Jannah Nassef  
NEWS WRITER

Diversity, equity and inclusion is an attempt at creating a workforce with different opinions, backgrounds and skills. DEI includes policies and programs that assist marginalized groups in getting equal opportunities, including training for employers to ensure candidates are chosen based on merit rather than background, the Americans with Disabilities Act and affirmative action.

While DEI may be a new term, it traces its origins to the 1940s and legislation in the 1960s. President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Title VII

made baselines for equal employment and denounced discrimination. Johnson signed an executive order in 1965 which further prevented such prejudice. Activists fought for equity in the workforce for African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s, but this snowballed into more marginalized groups, such as the disabled, women, people of color, immigrants and ethnic groups. DEI programs started expanding in the 1970s, with the first extensions being affirmative action. These policies were enforced as a solution to bias in college admissions and hiring systems, but affirmative action in college admissions has since been outlawed by the Supreme Court in 2023.

President Donald Trump's Executive Orders, which were signed in his first week of of-

fice, aim to remove DEI programs from the Federal government. Section 1 of his EO states, "The injection of 'diversity, equity and inclusion' into our institutions has corrupted them by replacing hard work, merit and equality with a divisive and dangerous preferential hierarchy."

Trump's decision has sparked controversy.

"It's really easy and convenient to point the finger at minorities, at immigrants, to rile up his base,"

said history teacher Scott BonDurant. "I mean, it worked, right? He got re-elected despite being an awful human being with a terrible criminal record. He got enough people mad about it. It's an old trick ... Leaders have been blaming minorities forever. [If you] don't like your life, or your country's social problems, it's their fault, and this is the newest 2025 version of it."

Specifically, these EOs terminate DEI programs and positions in the federal government and cancel previous executive orders from previous administrations. Beyond the workplace, the Department of Education has also commanded schools to halt "racial preferences" in curriculums and threatened to stop federal funding.

"While the current administration has eliminated some DEI policy in the federal agencies, it is important to recognize that diversity can naturally arise when focusing on merit," said Queenie

Hua, Career Technical Education and Career coordinator. "Diverse teams often outperform homogenized ones in creativity, problem-solving [and] decision-making. It's important to maintain a fair, unbiased hiring process to evaluate candidates based on skills."

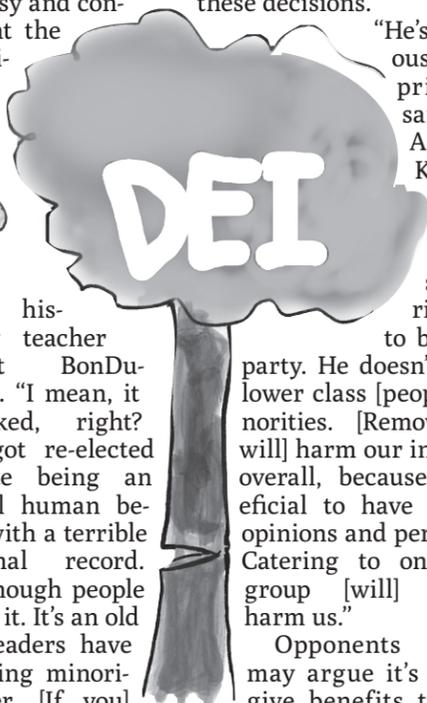
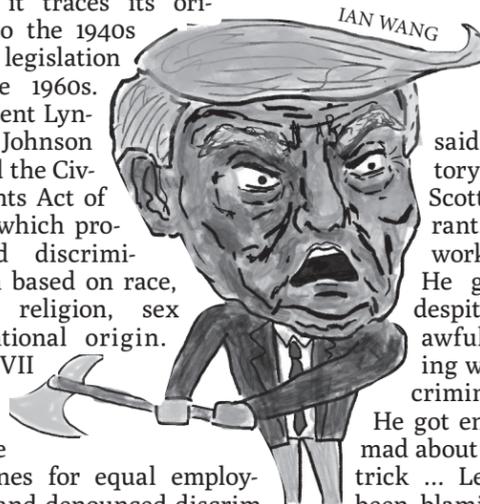
Some feel as though Trump's socioeconomic status affects these decisions.

"He's obviously very privileged," said junior Annalise Krause. "All he wants to do is to serve the rich [and] to benefit his party. He doesn't care for lower class [people] or minorities. [Removing DEI will] harm our institutions overall, because it's beneficial to have [different] opinions and perspectives. Catering to one certain group [will] definitely harm us."

Opponents of DEI may argue it's unfair to give benefits to certain groups due to their historical disadvantage, and that DEI is biased against groups who aren't from diverse backgrounds.

Students disagree, believing there's a misunderstanding about the purpose of DEI. "If you immediately [assume] a person of color is hired [because] 'the company wants diversity,' I don't think that's necessarily true," said freshman Julian Rhodes. "You don't know anything about the person, their background or what they can do for the company."

While these decisions will impact DEI programs, other federal civil rights laws and constitutional equal rights protections remain in place.



# allcove

allcove is a youth drop-in center for ages 12-25 to take a moment of pause. Youth can hang out and access a range of services that include:

- Mental health.
- Physical health.
- Substance use.
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find your space.

find your center.

# Rise in retail theft

Reika Lam  
NEWS WRITER

San Mateo County has experienced a 53% increase in shoplifting from 2019 to 2022, when the county had its highest rate of 347 reported incidents. This rise of arrests and retail theft-related cases over the years has brought the police of San Mateo, San Bruno and Daly City into a partnership, forming The Organized Retail Theft Task Force in November 2023.

Even though the supposed surge in retail theft was overblown, with a CNN report highlighting a Walgreens executive admitting that they had overreacted to losses as a result of shoplifting, California has taken steps to mitigate retail theft.

In September 2023, The State of California offered grants to fund crime-fighting programs through the California Board of State and Community Corrections. The grants totaled \$242.25 million and were awarded to 31 City Police Departments and seven Sheriff's Offices.

San Mateo, San Bruno and Daly City were given nearly \$8 million collectively and put the money to combat retail theft.

"We have an officer who sits in front of Apple [in] Burlingame," said Jeanine Ovalle, San Mateo Police Department county relations officer. "We have an officer that sits in front of Sephora. These businesses were now taking it a step higher and actually hiring law enforcement to help protect their businesses because [retail theft] was so rampant."

Alongside this new task force, there have also been new, statewide laws that target organized retail theft that went into effect recently. Proposition 36, an initiative that cracks down drug and

COVID, they were able to wear masks, which would hide their identities and their features from video."

Tommy Predovich, the owner of the Vinyl Solution Records store, describes an organized theft incident that happened in the past at his store.

"A couple guys, years ago, came in," Predovich said. "Both of them were stacking up stuff towards the front. And then [someone else] ... came in the back and distracted us with a bunch of questions while the other ones tried to grab [merchandise]."

Ron Ansley, the owner of the California Art Supply Company store, had a similar experience.

"I feel personally affronted when that kind of thing happens," Ansley said. "It's a very personal thing, like when somebody breaks into your car. You feel violated."

Shop owners who are aware of the likelihood of retail theft keep an eye out for those they deem suspicious.

"[Businesses] get to a point where they don't trust anybody," Predovich said. "They don't trust a certain age group, or they don't trust a certain this, or that."

However, some people believe that in certain situations, theft can be viewed as understood and possibly excusable.

"During COVID, let's say you lost your job," said freshman Quinn Henry. "You still need to get food for your family, so you would go to a store, maybe shoplift a couple of loaves of bread or something, put it under your shirt and walk out. That's fine, you have to eat."

Many stores have been taking further actions to prevent their merchandise from being stolen, such as in drug stores like Walgreens or CVS, where certain items are locked up.

"It prevents me from getting the



LILLIAN HUANG

theft crimes, was enacted Dec. 18, 2024.

Proposition 36 turns burglary and shoplifting valued at under \$950 from being classified as misdemeanors to felonies. Robberies committed by groups will also suffer extended sentences.

"We can now aggregate cases together," Ovalle said. "Prop 36 has really given us a few different ways now to charge organized retail theft where we didn't have it before."

The need for the ORTTF and other retail-combating laws are mainly due to the increasing complexity regarding the execution of modern theft operations.

"[These shoplifters] are organized," Ovalle said. "They are crews. They go in, and a lot of them were getting away with this stuff because, during

things that I want," Henry said. "I don't want to call an assistant over every time I want to get a new mascara."

Bystanders can help out the police with retail theft by being an extra eye during the scene.

"Be good witnesses," Ovalle said. "Who did you see? What did they go? Are you able to catch a license plate? That's the type of information we need that helps make our job a lot easier."

Since the ORTTF's establishment, the task force has been able to make significant improvements in curbing retail theft as of the new year. There have been a total of 229 arrests, 199 taken cases and over \$90 thousand recovered in stolen items.

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# Trump imposes new immigration policies

Gemma Albertson and Naomi Kotani

FEATURES AND NEWS WRITER

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

Since President Donald Trump took office in January, he has implemented many changes targeting immigration, including ones that seek to deport the 13.7 million undocumented immigrants, pause refugee and asylum programs and increase the military presence at the U.S.-Mexico border.

## REACTIONS

Across the country, that constant fear of being arrested and deported leads some undocumented immigrants to avoid public spaces. Many of these places were previously considered sensitive locations for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, such as schools and churches. However, that policy has been rescinded by Trump, so those locations are no longer protected.

"I'm not going out as much as I used to," said senior and undocumented immigrant \*Margaret. "I used to go to church every Sunday, but now I cannot. I don't feel safe in church anymore. My dad tries to be safe [and] when [he] goes to work, he tries to come in early or tries to work as fast as possible."

In spite of this, others have continued with their daily routines out of necessity.

"In a way, [I'm] a little bit scared because I'm a human being," said undocumented immigrant \*Walter. "But I have to continue with my life. I have to continue going to work. If it's my time [for ICE] to get me, okay, I'm here. Nothing to hide, nothing to fear. That's the way it is, unfortunately, for us immigrants in this country."

Yet, some believe that an immigration crackdown will benefit the U.S. by changing its priorities.

"America has this view that we should help other countries at all times, but then our country is becoming a mess because of that," said junior Anna Gevorgyan. "I agree [with Trump] about fixing up our country ... [Immigration] either [has a] bad [impact] for us or for [other countries]. And at the end of the day, if you're an American, you want it to be good for you."

Another reason that some support deportation is because of the belief that immigrants have higher crime rates. However, the National Bureau of Economic Research found that immigrants in the U.S. are 30% less likely than white people who were born in the country to be incarcerated.

"I agree with [immigrants who have] a criminal record [being taken] out of here," Walter said. "But what I don't like is

if [ICE] goes to one apartment building, or they go to a restaurant, they just get [whoever] is in their way."

## EFFECTS ON AMERICA

The consequences of mass deportations are not limited solely to immigrant communities. According to the Joint Economic Committee, if mass deportations continue, by 2028 the United States will have reduced its GDP by as much as 7.8%, prices will rise up to 9.1% higher and the number of workers for key industries will be reduced dramatically, among

several other concerns. While it may not seem like it on the surface, many

jobs rely on the work of immigrants. For every half million people deported, 44,000 U.S.-born workers will lose their jobs as well.

"I work in consulting," Walter said. "The owner is a white dude, and he's very, very nice with us. So imagine his company, [where there] are 35-40 people [working, and] one day, the [ICE] comes and gets all [of] us. [What's going to happen] with all his customers, all the companies we work for?"

The government would have

to spend roughly \$315 billion at minimum if every undocumented person is deported at once, and if spread over the course of 10 years, that cost will rise to \$967.9 billion, according to the American Immigration Council.

"I understand where [Trump's] coming from because we don't want people who are illegally here to stay here," Gevorgyan said. "But I just don't agree

with getting rid of people who are making a living, because there's actually people who are trying. They're paying taxes, so they're basically like citizens ... If you're paying your taxes, you're contributing to America, [and] you should stay."

In 2022, undocumented households paid \$46.8 billion in federal taxes and \$29.3 billion in state and local taxes. About 8.3 million undocumented immigrants are part of the American workforce, which covers over

75% of all undocumented immigrants in total. Since they contribute majorly to the agricultural and construction fields, work is often backbreaking, with

long hours. They also reap fewer benefits when compared

to citizens. New American Economy found that, between 2012 and 2018, all immigrants regardless of documentation status contributed, on average, \$165 more to the Medicare Trust Fund than was spent on them.

## EFFECTS ON IMMIGRANTS

For immigrants who have built their lives in this country, deportation would completely uproot what they have established.

"I feel very disappointed [about Trump's policies] because I tried my hardest to get good grades, maintain a 4.0, [and] my life [in my native country] would be totally different from what I had here," Margaret said. "It would be like all of this was for nothing."

Similarly, sophomore \*Ruthie, whose parents are both undocumented, would face struggles.

"[If my parents get deported], it's a very difficult situation, because my parents are from two different countries," Ruthie said. "My mom is Guatemalan, and my dad is Mexican, so they would have to be sent back to their respective countries. [So] our plan is to go with my mom, and then [when] we enter Mexico, we [would] live there with my dad ... [Our] house [there] is very old ... It's made of stone,

and the roof is a rack of metal, [it's] very muddy, and they live all the way up in the mountains, so it would be pretty hard to [house] all of us there, because [all of my family lives there] so everyone [would be] crammed in a small, little house [and] I don't think that would work ... We'd have a little foundation but we'd have to build up."

On top of this, many immigrants came to the U.S. to escape dangers in their home country or to pursue better economic opportunities.

"My mom used to live with my dad's mom and she didn't like that experience," Margaret said. "We didn't have education. It was either work or be a housewife, so my mom decided to go [to the U.S]. [My mom] didn't go to high school, and my dad [only went to] high school ... [My mom] felt very disappointed, so she wanted us to have a better future than what they had."

With many undocumented

immigrants staying back in the U.S., many haven't applied for citizenship, similar to Walter, who has been in the U.S. for 25 years and hasn't applied because he has not explored means of naturalization other than through a spouse. But some of his colleagues are in a different situation.

"I have a couple of co-workers who are in trouble with the law," Walter said. "They were deported and they came back. So now they are afraid they're gonna get caught [by ICE] ... They are the only [ones in their families who] bring the money in for their rent and food. If they get caught, who's gonna support those kids, the wife and everything?"

## PROTECTION

As ICE branches out to cities like San Mateo, there have been multiple efforts put forth by San Mateo County to ensure safety and security for undocumented residents. A board meeting in 2023 passed an ordinance restricting the usage of county resources, such as money, labor or

property, to assist ICE or other immigration enforcement initiatives. Restrictions were also placed on sharing personal information about residents, like their citizenship status or country of origin, unless in response to a warrant.

San Mateo County also offers multiple resources about what to do if faced with ICE. If one is confronted by ICE directly or has seen them in their area, the rapid response hotline for San Mateo County is (203)-666-4472. The San Mateo County website has links for legal assistance, information about different pathways to citizenship and even "Know Your Rights" meetings.

"A lot of our role really involves connecting the community, either to information or resources that are available within the county of San Mateo. [We also work] very closely in partnership with community organizations," said Sarah Feldmen, a presenter and representative of the Know Your Rights program.

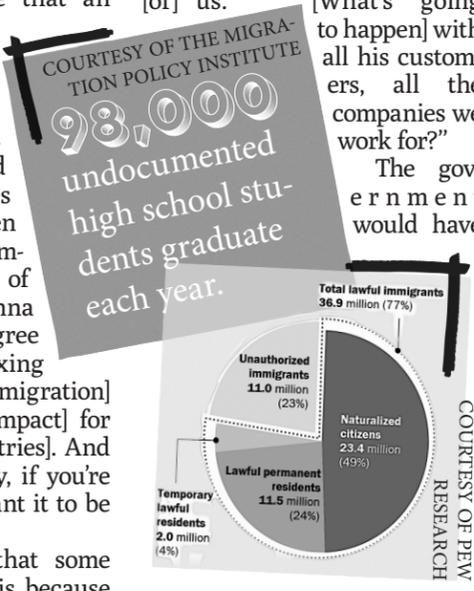
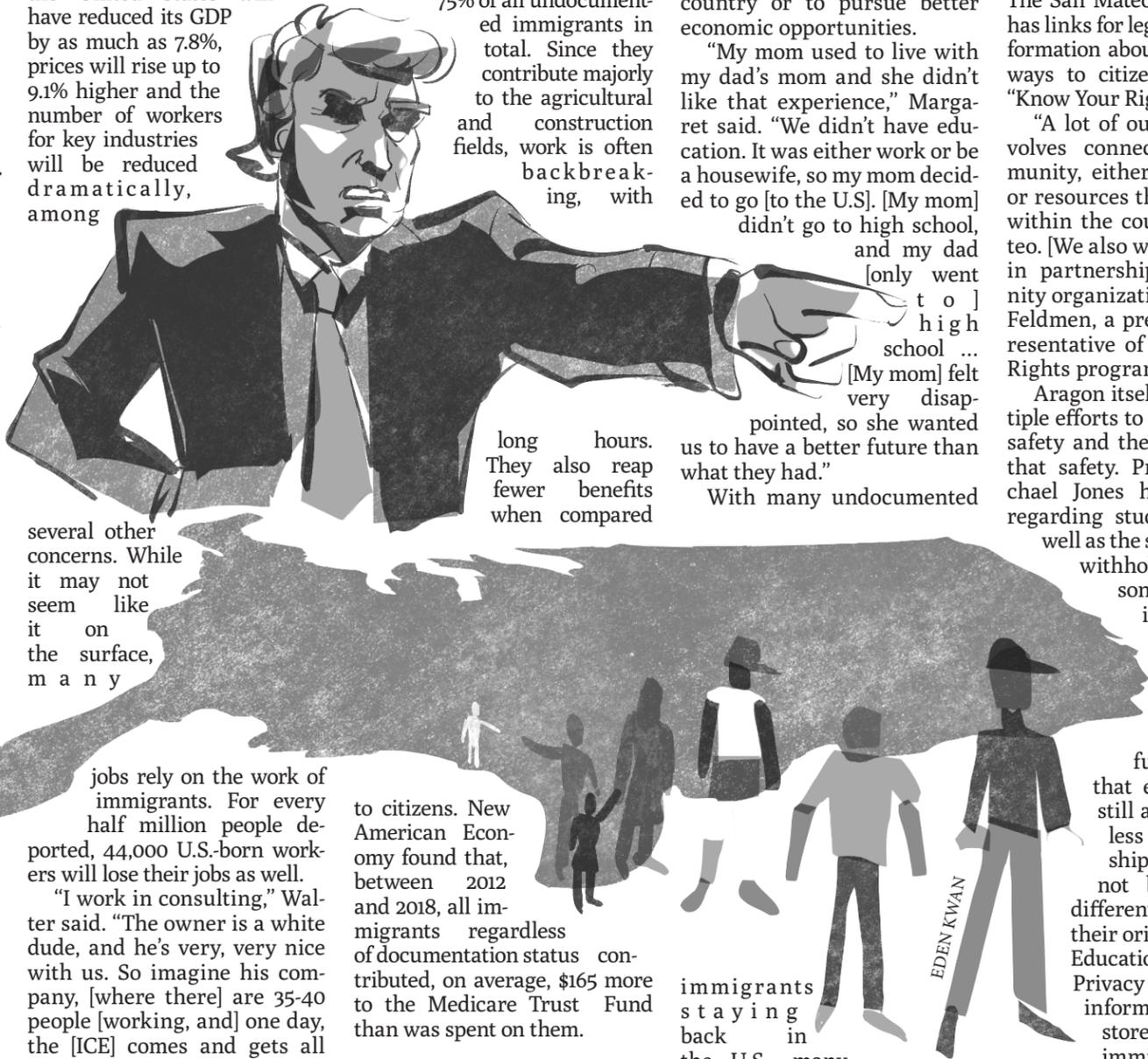
Aragon itself has made multiple efforts to ensure students' safety and their confidence in that safety. Principal Dr. Michael Jones has sent emails regarding students' rights, as well as the school's ability to

withhold students' personal information if it comes into question. Flyers have also been put up throughout the school further affirming that every student is still a student regardless of their citizenship status, and will not be treated any differently because of their origins. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects any information a district stores about families' immigration status, and thus this information can not be given away without parental consent.

Besides the school's and district's support, friends have also been supporting those in need.

"I always try to offer [help by saying] 'my house is always a place you can come if you ever need help [and] my family is always there to help you,'" said \*Kiara, a sophomore at San Mateo High School. "I definitely remember I was texting a few of my friends. They told me they were worried about walking to school, and they were worried if they would be approached [so] me and my friends would offer to give them rides to school."

Immigrants play an important role in America's story. Trump's policies targeting immigrants will have detrimental effects on everyone. After all, as President John F. Kennedy famously declared, "Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life."



# THE AP-CP DIVIDE:

# ARAGON'S SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SPLIT



## o AP ENGLISH

Zack Li and Diya Poojary  
FEATURES AND NEWS WRITER

It's difficult to find labels shorter than the two-letter AP and CP bubbles on the course selection sheets that have made their annual wave through the hands of Aragon students.

Yet, these labels, representing Advanced Placement and College Preparation respectively, go beyond class schedules and perpetuate a social divide between AP and CP students — especially considering that Aragon offers 19 AP classes, twice the number the average high school offers.

"Students that have taken [Advanced Standing] classes ... have been together for a couple of years [and] by the time they get to AP, they're a nice little family unit," said counselor Lea Sanguinetti. "[But] sometimes students, if they've never taken an AS class, but [choose] an AP ... feel like students in the class don't pay them any attention, don't want to get to know them. When I hear from [those] students, it makes me believe that there is that divide out there that students are creating."

But familiarity with peers, or lack thereof, is only one cause of the divide. Others argue that the difference in academic rigor creates a preconceived assumption of what kind of person a CP or AP student should be. The choice to take an optional, more advanced class forces students to mold themselves into what best fits restrictive stereotypes of taking the "normal people" or "smart people" courses.

"People perceive people who take mostly APs as being more studious," said senior Samarth Hegde. "Sometimes, even I fall into that tribe and when someone's telling me, 'I don't take any APs,' it's just that thing in my brain [that's] like, 'oh, maybe they're not as studious' ... sometimes you unconsciously do it."

The divide may also be caused by academic pressure. Aragon's many alternative pathways and courses, especially in math, science and career technical education contribute to its reputation as an academically competitive school.

Counselors often observe that students stack their schedule with the sole goal of putting together an ambitious college application. Many students also take up summer courses to accelerate once they enter high school, even if it may not align with their interests.

"What's the drive to do that?" Sanguinetti said. "A lot of the time [students] can't answer that question. 'Oh, my mom or my dad want me to take that' or 'oh, I have 10 friends that are doing that' ... it's that fear of missing out again ... all of a sudden everybody's running [in] that direction ... There's not a real reason [for] why that student wants to accelerate."

Meanwhile, students rushing to take AP classes retain a flawed label of what CP classes are, which only serves to perpetuate the notion that taking more advanced classes makes one superior to others.

"I was talking to one of my friends [about] how Algebra 2 is really rough for me and [she] started comparing me to her, [saying] 'but you've never tried AP [Statistics]. AP Stats is so much harder,'" said junior Heli Artola. "And just being like, 'oh, you might be in that class, but I'm in a higher level. I'm more academically well, it's so much harder up here' just [made me think] we really do only care about what academic status people are [at]."

This mindset propagates a culture of academic elitism at Aragon,

## o CP ENGLISH

one that promotes academic exclusivity and the dismissal of struggles faced by students who cannot keep up with the rising and unrealistic academic expectations at Aragon.

"Grades are a big part of Aragon compared to some other schools," said freshman Emilia Matye. "So when I'm talking to friends about tests or something, everyone's really concerned about what I got on the test or what my grades are because that's just the standard here. Everyone wants ... to be better and that's a good thing but it can be a lot of pressure ... it worries me when I don't get good grades because I know there are many other people who are like, 'oh no, I got a B.'"

These generalizations, often obvious to the receiving end of students, foster insecurities when they begin to compare their academic lives to students in more advanced classes.

"Even though I'm taking so many [hard] classes ... I still feel like I'm not as smart as everybody else," Artola said. "Because ... if I turn around and ask somebody, they're taking more ... it definitely makes me feel lesser than I am because I'm struggling so much with what I'm doing."

Some students also take these classes because their friends are doing so, contributing to the divide because their social circles become stagnant and they interact with the same people every day.

"I have a good gauge of when a student comes in and it's a true passion ... but where the problem lies is that person's five friends, who feel like they're missing out," Sanguinetti said. "And that's not what it needs to be about, because that person's friend might really shine in physics or science or the arts or band or drama."

Taking classes solely to accumulate credit despite having no interest in them could also lead to an unhealthy internal mindset.

"Sometimes I don't have interest [in] the things I'm doing, I'm doing it just because I can," said

freshman Rui Liu. "Then it would get too hard to the point that I don't want to learn it anymore, it would be too complicated for me to understand, and by then it would be very easy for me to give up ... And eventually I'd be like, 'why did I do this at all? I just wasted so much of my time, and I never actually got the wanted result.'"

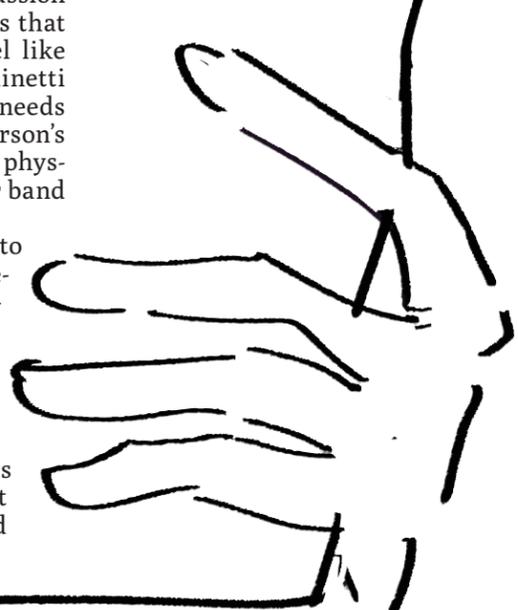
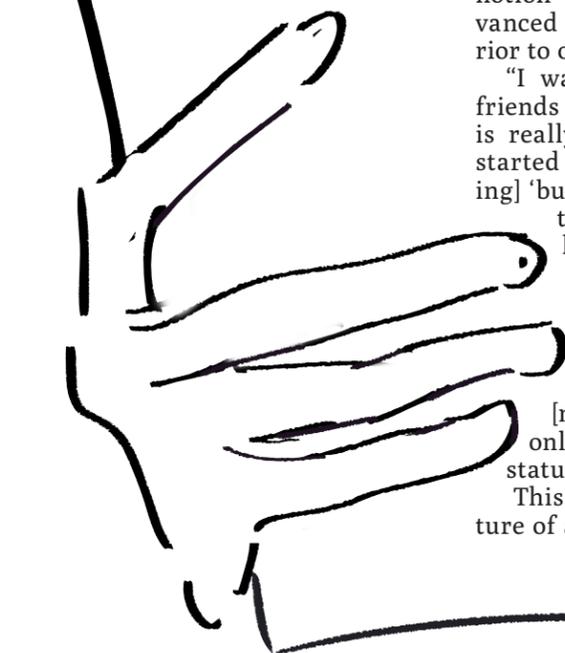
However, not all students feel this pressure to take hard classes.

"The level that all these classes [I'm taking] are good for me," said sophomore Orli Riter. "I'm already very motivated and I know what I want to do for the future, so I don't think it's going to sway me much."

Of course, the divide is not a black-and-white issue. While having classes together certainly makes friendships stronger, community can also be found elsewhere, such as in extracurriculars or clubs.

"At the end of day, it's just a class," Hegde said. "You might sometimes talk to people from that class more but it doesn't mean you're going to suddenly only have friends that are in APs. You're still going to have that old friend group and structure in other classes."

Ultimately, the divide between AP and CP classes reflects a broader issue of perceived academic status tied to course rigor. While these classes may help to cater to different academic goals, students can also acknowledge communities beyond academics.



# it's gettin' HOT in here!

## DOOMSDAY CLOCK

The Doomsday Clock has been featured on every cover of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, an academic magazine, since 1947. The Doomsday clock was originally created to measure humanity's proximity to nuclear war, but has since expanded to consider factors such as energy, politics and climate sciences. The Doomsday Clock was set at 17 minutes from midnight in 1991, after the Cold War, but has steadily gone down since. This year, the clock was set at 89 seconds from midnight, the closest humanity's ever been to a potential apocalypse. Scientists cited multiple reasons for the clock having moved closer: 2024 was the hottest year on record, the global temperature has risen by about two degrees Fahrenheit since the 20th century and President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Accord. Another pressing factor is war, especially with the use of drones and artificial intelligence in militaries across the world. In addition, the spread of Avian influenza could spell disaster mirroring the COVID-19 pandemic and test humanity's resilience and patience for potential quarantine once again. However, former Colombian president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Juan Manuel Santos said that the clock is reversible. In fact, he said there is a chance that the hands of the clock will be turned back next year, but only if world leaders take progressive steps towards a peaceful future. Although the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists only offers vague solutions, they generally urge people to be optimistic.

## HOW TO HELP

Although the threat of climate change can seem hopeless, there are ways to help.

The district has already built charging stations at the San Mateo High School bus parking lot. Some electric buses are already in rotation. Additionally, Aragon is planning to build more solar panels.

"Our roofs already have solar panels," said Greg Moretti, a member of the district sustainability committee and science teacher. "[This] summer, they're going to put solar panels on the student parking lot, [kind] of like at San Mateo High School."

Aragon is also addressing the issue of plastic by participating in a district-wide petition to ban the sale of single-use plastic bottles on campus. Individual students can also help, like by joining local organizations.

"I [volunteer] at this local nonprofit called Peninsula Precious Plastics," said Sophomore Brandon Lin. "They recycle plastic and process it into useful items."

Clubs at school like the One World Club educate about climate issues.

"[We have] posters about sorting trash [and] pass out reusable bottles [and utensils] in center court," said Lauren Tazbaz, a senior and president of One World Club.

Students can now make use of the new tri-color trash bins around the center court to recycle and compost conveniently and help the environment.

"Food scraps that go in the trash end up at the Ox Mountain landfill," Moretti said. "They get buried and decompose, [producing] methane, [which is] 25 times more potent [than] carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas."

Students can reduce the amount of greenhouse gases they emit by walking, biking, carpooling or using public transportation to get to school or travel.

## GOVERNMENT

The election this past November was a pivotal one for the future of American climate policy.

In general, the Trump administration plans to deprioritize environmental concerns in favor of economic interests by increasing fossil fuel production, ending former president Joe Biden's environmental protections, slowing climate research and much more. Trump has used the slogan "drill, baby, drill!" many times, including during his campaign and in his inaugural speech, to express his fervent support of drilling for fossil fuels.

Considering the current conservative-dominated national government, climate policy seems to be in jeopardy with little support. Elon Musk, Tesla founder and Trump's senior advisor, was once a staunch advocate of climate action but has recently adopted a less urgent stance on it — the Economist's analysis of Musk's tweets found that climate change went from his most talked-about political issue to his least from 2019 to 2024, being replaced by immigration and free speech.

Trump himself is known for his skepticism on the causes and existence of climate change, calling it a "hoax" or "scam" on several occasions and joked in a 2024 "Fox & Friends" interview that rising sea levels meant nothing but more beachfront property.

Most members of Trump's cabinet have expressed similar views — some outright deny the existence of climate change, some downplay its severity, some see it as a political ploy — very few of them see it as a real threat.

**MARS**

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Mars is one of the only planets where life may have existed. As NASA explores different technologies to allow astronauts to eventually live and work on Mars by the 2030s, the effects of climate change on Earth pose a pressing reason for regular civilians to migrate to Mars in the long term. However, traveling to Mars presents a challenge as it is between 33 million to 249 million miles from Earth. Additionally, temperatures on Mars can range from -284 degrees to 86 degrees Fahrenheit, gravity on Mars is 38% of Earth's and 96% of the atmosphere is made up of carbon dioxide. Currently, NASA is developing ways to produce oxygen from the Martian atmosphere, initiate plant growth on space stations and create life systems that can recycle food, air and water. SpaceX's Starship spacecraft, a two-stage fully reusable launch vehicle, also presents a reusable transportation system designed to carry both crew and cargo to Mars.



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 Layout: Alexa Sterry

# Book banning: censorship or protection?

Oliver Levitt  
FEATURES WRITER

Nearly everyone has heard the saying “knowledge is power,” but this statement carries great implications: when access to knowledge is restricted, so is power.

Throughout history, censorship has been used by governments to construct or force narratives upon groups of people. Recently, the Trump administration’s crackdown on diversity, equity and inclusion programs has reignited these concerns, particularly in the form of book banning. Just last month, famous actress Julianne Moore’s children’s book, “Freckleface Strawberry,” about a girl learning to stop hating her freckles, was banned from Pentagon-run schools for its anti-discrimination and pro-identity messaging, raising concerns about how far governments will go to shape discourse — and whether such restrictions are justified.

According to Poets, Essayist, Novelist America, more than 10,000 book bans occurred in public schools during the 2023-2024 school year. Many Aragon students and staff have felt disturbed by this recent rise in the use of book banning, especially against progressive and inclusive messaging.

“Until recently, it seemed like something from olden times, sort of akin to Jim Crow or segregation laws,” said Holly Estrada, Advanced Placement English Language and Composition and Advanced Standing English 1 teacher. “It was terrible, but it’s from the hazy days of the 1950s, and [it’s something that] we’ve learned [from], and something that’s passed now. In the last five years, it’s become something really, really, really scary. It seems that a lot of really thoughtful, powerful, organized people have seen that they can come for a lot of our strength by coming for our books.”

For Estrada, the idea of unlimited access to knowledge is incredibly valuable. She acknowledges that while some books may contain controversial or

even dangerous ideas, their existence serves a purpose.

“I don’t think that banning books is ever appropriate,” Estrada said. “I remember being a teenager and having [a] friend. We went into the library and he was like, ‘Oh, here’s this book about how to make Molotov cocktails’ ... or ‘Oh, here’s Mein Kampf’. I love that those books are out there in the world, but that doesn’t mean that I think they should be brought to ev-

erative of a movement towards problematic history, rather than progress.

“It makes me pretty frustrated because I feel like it’s a step backward,” Demeule said. “It’s very reminiscent of totalitarian dictatorships and really bad people who are obviously evil, and it feels very wrong.”

Aragon Teacher Librarian Anna Lapid has felt a similar concern regarding the idea of book banning, though she does understand there can be warranted concern from parents on a student-to-student basis.

“[Book banning is] a killer of free thinking or critical thinking, and hampers stu-

among students, especially for those interested in learning about discrimination and different cultural experiences.

“I feel a lot of anger and a lot of sadness that people feel the need to control and regulate what other people read because reading should be a process in which you have a lot of free choices,” said senior Chloe Levadoux. “‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ is a phenomenal book that I read recently, and it’s banned in schools in Florida, Texas and Oregon, which is horrifying because it’s about women’s rights, about the patriarchy, and it’s really frustrating to see that those books are still getting pushed out

cally an adult, I shouldn’t read those books, that indicates that they’re trying to take away my autonomy when really I should be learning to be autonomous at this age.”

For Aragon History teacher Jennifer Seif, timing is a very important lens for understanding when teachers should introduce books in classes.

“There’s an appropriate time to introduce different levels of texts to learners,” Seif said. “And that’s a conversation that should include parents, administrators, teachers, academic professionals. It’s not a cookie cutter, one size fits all. For example, I wouldn’t be introducing kids to the Holocaust in a kindergarten classroom.”

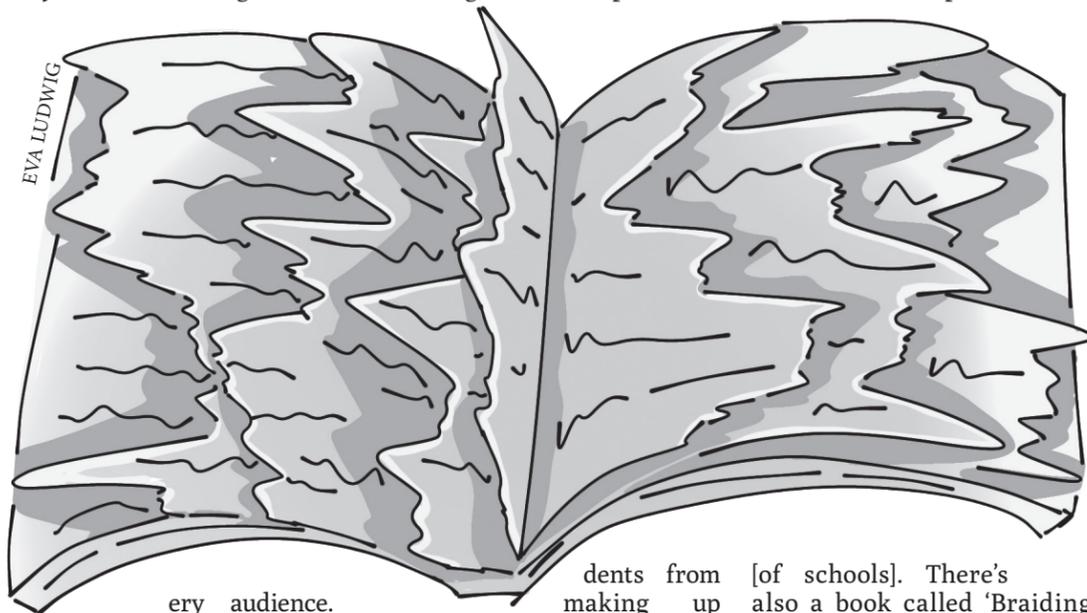
Not only is book banning often used to harm certain groups, people may see book censorship as being ironic in a democratic America.

“I would feel upset [if Aragon banned books] because people have the right to acquire knowledge and books are a great way of doing that,” Demeule said. “It goes very much against American ideals of individualism and freedom to not let people access knowledge through books. I would be upset and try to find a way around it.”

Luckily for students worried about the impact of these bans at school, Aragon has remained relatively free from them.

“I actually appreciate that ... guidance from the school, so I would not have a problem with banning a book in the library if a principal or a school board objects,” Lapid said. “But that [hasn’t] happened in our school district ... So far, we haven’t had any requests to ban any books that [people] have wanted to read.”

As the debate over book banning continues nationwide, its impact on education, free expression, and access to diverse perspectives remains a critical issue.



EVA LUDWIG

ery audience.

It’s great to be able to know what was on Hitler’s mind so that you can build your counterargument. Do I think that book should be handed over to a young person? Do I think that book should be taught in school? I wouldn’t want to do it or defend that decision. But banning books? No, I’m not good with it.”

Junior Sylvia Demeule had a similar dismay that the bans were indica-

dents from making up their own mind

Lapid said. “I don’t think it’s okay for anyone to determine whether patrons at a library can have access to information, [although] I think it’s okay for parents to object to a book and to have a conversation with a librarian about a book that might be triggering for their student.”

[of schools]. There’s also a book called ‘Braiding Sweetgrass’ that I’m reading right now that’s banned in both the Carolinas that’s about indigenous knowledge and ways of life.”

For Levadoux, the idea of her school limiting her access to books feels like a restriction of her freedom.

“I’d be angry,” Levadoux said. “I’d be really broken-hearted, because if the school thinks that, as someone who’s basi-

These bans have been a cause of great unrest

## WAKE ME UP!

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### ACROSS

- 1. Pigpen
- 4. Hippocratic \_\_\_ or mild \_\_\_
- 8. Short-lived pro-Europe UK party, abbreviated
- 9. Accumulates
- 12. Traveler’s aid, abbreviated
- 13. Assault and \_\_\_
- 14. Money-maker, in a way
- 15. Card game with a “no mercy” version featuring a +10 card
- 16. Katy Perry’s “Ur So Gay” lyric: “You’re so \_\_\_, maybe you should buy a happy meal”
- 17. Meander
- 19. Covers someone’s house with Charmin, briefly
- 21. Brand with pink drum-beating bunny mascot... or a descriptor of 1 down, 13 across, 27-

### DOWN

- 25. “Golly \_\_\_ willikers!”
- 26. Birds, to biologists
- 28. “Take on Me” group whose members were all knighted by the Norwegian government
- 31. Govt. commerce grp.
- 33. Environmental prefix
- 34. Fahrenheit alternative
- 36. Nothing, in soccer
- 37. Mont Blanc range
- 38. Relaxation station
- 39. Branch of biology, abbreviated
- 40. From “The Star-Spangled Banner”: “\_\_\_ the ramparts we watched...”

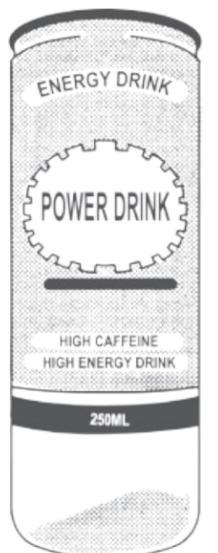
### DOWN

- 1. Maroon 5 hit with wedding-crashing music video
- 2. Walk quietly
- 3. Smithers, to Mr. Burns
- 4. Eight-legged animals
- 5. Blond of “Challengers” love triangle
- 6. Day following Mon.
- 7. Wife of Zeus
- 9. Aladdin’s sidekick
- 10. “I’ve fallen, and I \_\_\_!”
- 11. \_\_\_ Barrett of Pink Floyd or \_\_\_ Tha Kyd of Odd Future
- 18. Punching bag of “Family Guy”
- 20. “30 for 30” and “Kill Bill” singer
- 22. Second cup
- 23. Nevertheless
- 24. Cookbook entry
- 27. Not lunar
- 28. “\_\_\_ natural” or “\_\_\_ a fool”
- 29. Goggle over text

- 30. Baldwin who played Trump on SNL
- 32. Programming language related to HTML
- 35. \_\_\_ Paulo, Brazil



SOLUTIONS



# Decline in luxury

Ashley Tsui  
FEATURES WRITER

For the first time since the Great Recession in 2008, the luxury brand market has been experiencing a steady decline. According to a study by Forbes, designer brands have lost around 50 million consumers and sales have dropped about 2% over the past two years.

To be considered a luxury brand, a company's products must be of high quality, precisely made and highly priced. Often, they are handmade and exclusive, reserved for those willing to pay large sums of money for expertly crafted pieces.

"I would say Hermés [is a good example of a luxury brand] because they have very exclusive customers and they have exquisite materials," said senior Mana Ueno. "[Like] croc leather, for example, that's very hard to source, so not every brand in the world can have that. Or maybe Cartier because they have a long history as a brand and they have nice materials and are very exclusive."

It's also worth noting that even within luxury brands, there are staggering differences in the availability of products.

"When it comes to luxury, people look for exclusivity," Ueno said. "For example, people wait 10 plus years for a [Hermés]

Birkin bag and wait to be on their customer list and be a VIP client. Whereas, you can just walk into a Louis Vuitton store and buy their most basic logo bag. So people want more than just a shelf bag."

Despite the overall popularity of these designer brands, a decline has appeared nonetheless, which can be traced back to a variety of sources.

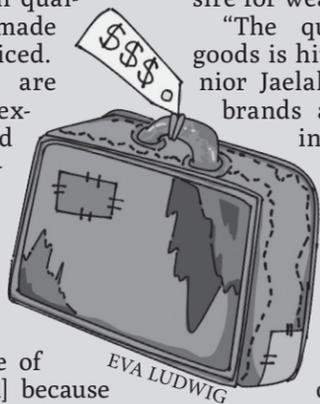
Some believe this is due to an increase in a brand's desire for wealth.

"The quality of luxury goods is hit or miss," said senior Jaelah Miller. "Luxury brands are more so selling [for] cash grabs now ... I noticed there's a lot of decrease in runway shows and [brands] using fashion as art, and there's definitely an obvious decrease in quality in luxury brands."

Others source it to cheap material usage and a decline in craftsmanship as well.

"[Quality] is definitely going [down]," Ueno said. "For example, the Chanel bags, their quality is declining every day because ... they're using cheaper leather and they're not even using real gold anymore, but they're charging double the amount they did in the 90s. The quality and the price just doesn't correlate much anymore and people are not buying into that."

CONTINUED ON  
ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG



# Foster youth: breaking the cycle

Kyra Hsieh  
FEATURES WRITER

"[My friend] was telling me about how she's at this [foster care] facility because she got caught drinking or smoking ... but this facility is like a prison," said junior Nyla Garrick. "Nobody, no matter how bad you were as a child ... should have to go through that because once you do, [even after you] age out of foster care, it stays with you your whole life. That girl [is] not gonna be good, and neither are any of those kids in that program."

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, foster care is "a temporary, court-monitored service provided by States to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of children and youth." While the goal of foster care may be noble, as it aims to provide children a safe place to live when their home life may be troublesome, it is filled with countless issues, including the quality of the facilities and the overall lack of resources and money.

"[The program is given] about \$1300 a month, which is around thirty dollars a day [to spend on the foster kids]," Garrick said. "Especially living here in the Bay, they don't necessarily [adjust] the money [area to area]. You get the same money every time wherever you go. Especially if you're placed with blood relatives, they give you less support."

The lack of social workers is another issue that plagues the nation. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics believes there will be a decrease of 74,000 social workers each year through 2033. Although many social workers begin their careers because they want to help these children, many get overwhelmed because they have so many children in their care.

"The social worker has to physically see you every month, [but] it doesn't mean they have to talk to you," Garrick said. "They'll come to your door and have the kids step outside, [and they'll say] 'Oh, they look good. Great. I'm gone.'"

To combat this, programs such as California Youth Connection work to make sure that social workers are held accountable and actually serve the children for what they really need. Garrick, a member of the orga-

nization, explains that they are currently working to pass a bill to hold social workers responsible and make sure that they are truly educated in what they need to do.

"We went to the Capitol, Washington D.C., and worked with policymakers, legislators and senators to talk about our struggles and what needs to happen," Garrick said.

Aragon counselor Lea Sanguinetti is also the Homeless and Foster Youth Liaison for Aragon High School. She works with any foster youth who come into Aragon to provide them with any extra resources they may need to succeed.

"Sometimes if I get a student, I don't have any records for them, so I have to

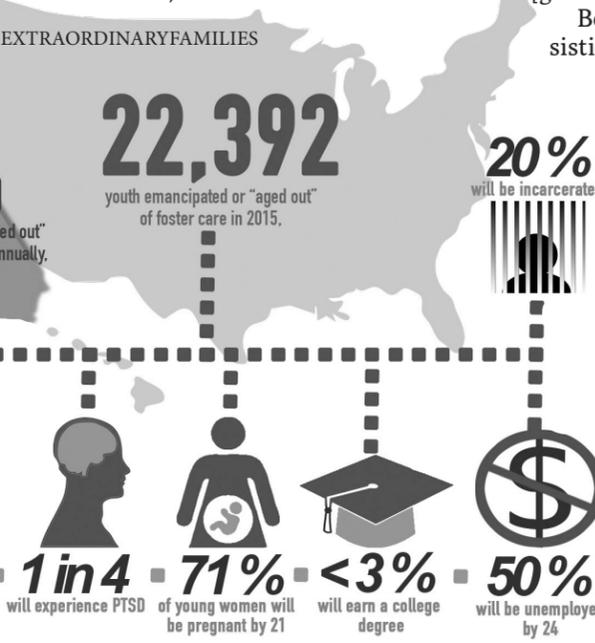
... and the free breakfast, brunch and lunch."

Another outside resource that some foster youth in San Mateo County may turn to is Pivotal, a non-profit organization contracted through the county.

"I help youth establish goals and find out where their strengths are," said Pivotal coach Sarah Rodriguez. "From there we [look at] interest in careers, college and trade schools and how to get there. [We] teach them how to advocate for themselves. [We also] collaborate with social workers, probation caregivers and academic counselors to review their academic transcripts, making sure they [graduate]."

Besides assisting foster youth with academic aspects, they also provide other forms of support.

"We do a lot of different strategies in coaching," Rodriguez said. "Motivational inter-



get to know the student," Sanguinetti said. "Because the goal is to get them across the stage to get that diploma."

Graduation requirements are one thing that the state of California does have specific differences for between non-foster youth and foster youth. According to the California Department of Education, under specified criteria, some foster youth only need 130 credits to graduate, unlike Aragon's 220 credits. This helps with foster youth whose placement changes so quickly, that no record has yet been created at their previous school regarding grades and classes.

Aragon High School provides a number of resources for academics, physical and mental needs for foster youth.

"We try to set students up with tutoring if need be," Sanguinetti said. "You don't want to overload them with so many things because sometimes they just want to feel a sense of normalcy. Supplies and backpacks [are also provided], as well as the outside piece of school clothes

ing is one of our techniques to navigate all the [mental struggles], coming out with a positive outcome."

Foster youth can face very difficult life circumstances, which may include post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual abuse, abandonment issues or being around drug or alcohol abuse. Many different organizations work together to support the youth in overcoming any trauma, including Pivotal coaches who can connect youth with mental health experts and counselors.

Last year, all six of Rodriguez's seniors on her caseload graduated from high school.

"When I watch my youth [walk] across the stage and I see them graduate, I had a box of Kleenex," Rodriguez said. "It's the most rewarding to see them graduate that way and move on."

Overall, there is more work to do to increase success for foster youth, yet there are many individuals and organizations dedicated to fulfilling that cause.

# Body dysmorphia

Seona Srivastava  
FEATURES WRITER

\*Names have been changed to protect source privacy.

"That skinny, blonde, white archetype that's always described as the pinnacle of beauty makes me mad," said junior \*Sally. "I [thought] if I didn't fit that, I'm not really beautiful no matter what I look like."

This intense frustration reflects the core of body dysmorphia — when a person becomes obsessively fixated on an idealized standard of beauty, often feeling that they don't measure up.

Body dysmorphia, or Body Dysmorphic Disorder, is a psychological condition where a person becomes obsessively pre-occupied with perceived flaws in their appearance. These flaws, whether they involve skin, hair or other physical features, are often exaggerated or completely imaginary.

For many, body dysmorphia begins with external pressures. The constant scrutiny and pressure to meet certain body ideals can lead to the development of distorted perceptions about one's physical appearance.

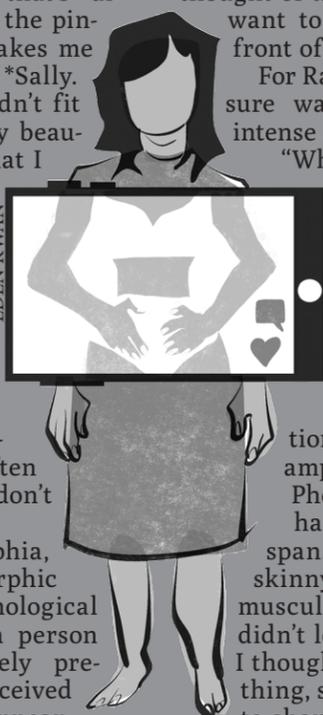
"I play multiple sports where the majority of your body is exposed for everyone to see," said student \*Randy. "You can't throw on a jersey. Everyone sees your body. The thought of that makes you want to look good in front of everybody."

For Randy, this pressure was particularly intense as an athlete.

"When you think of a swimmer, you think of someone tall, toned and lean," Randy said. "I didn't fit that description ... For example, Michael Phelps is tall. He has a long wingspan. He's very skinny but he's very muscular as well ... I didn't look like [him]. I thought it was a bad thing, so I really tried to change my body so I could look like him."

This pressure to conform to a specific body type is amplified by social media, where influencers often portray idealized versions of themselves. In fact, many even use social media as a means for validation, feeding their body dysmorphia.

CONTINUED ON  
ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG



# Dueling opinions: grade inflation

Ceylon Liu  
FEATURES WRITER

As a senior who recently finished applying to colleges, my grade point average has been at the forefront of my mind. Over the past four years, I've stressed over each letter grade and what impact it will have on my next four years.

But when I look at the average GPAs of my fellow applicants, it's easy to notice that as the years go by, the numbers continue to go up and up. Both myself and students across the nation have benefited from grade inflation, a pattern of rising student grades. While the rising GPA average of teens across the nation may seem to signal a decline in the quality of student learning, students stand to gain confidence, time for new activities and a generally healthier life from these inflated grades.

Today, more and more colleges are placing emphasis on the activities and accomplishments a student achieves outside of the classroom. While GPA is still a factor, extracurriculars give colleges a much better idea of an applicant's character. If students can earn higher grades more easily, they should not need to spend as much time studying to be considered as an applicant. They can then invest more of their time into the activities that truly make them stand out to colleges. Additionally, students can also have more time to relax and enjoy their life outside of school, something they'll only be able to do for a few more years.

Regardless of how it is earned, nine times out of ten, any high grade a student achieves is still a result of their hard work and effort, regardless of how much grades have been inflated.

"Grades have taken on their own life," said Advanced Placement Physics teacher Steve Ratto. "It's very detrimental to students because it's 'A or bust' for a lot of [them]. When you get that A, it isn't a celebration, it's an expectation ... [A lot of students] forget that an A means you've put in ... an exemplary amount of work."

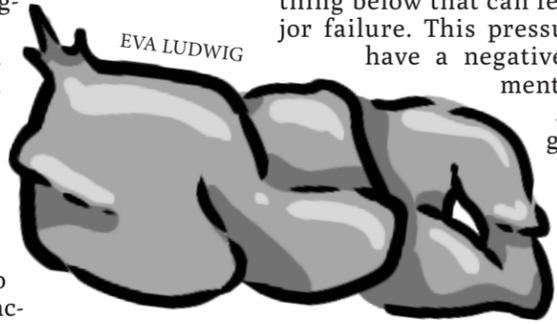
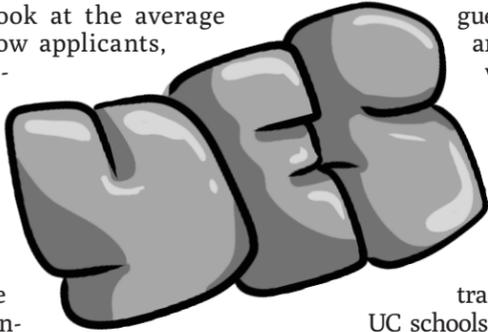
Furthermore, lowering the bar for students to earn higher grades can help ease the common problem of a student's sense of wellbeing becoming entangled with their grades.

"I've been doing this for 16 years, and there's many teachers who have been doing it a lot longer ... and they'll tell you,

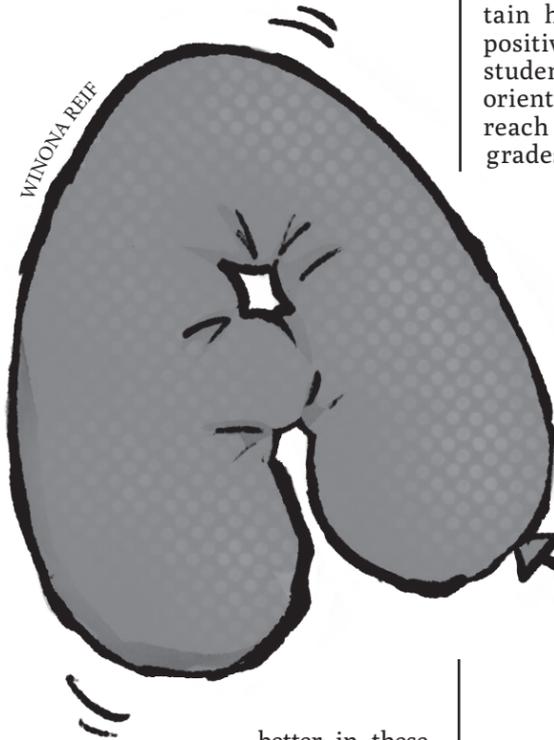
students destroy themselves because of grades in many different ways," Ratto said. "They don't sleep, they don't eat, ... [they] miss out on events because they are so concerned about grades. I may not stop that, but I'm ... not going to add to it ... If I am adding to it, I need to figure out a way to do better, because that should never be the case."

While some may argue that if their grades are inflated, students will not be prepared for the academic rigor of college, a study published by the University of California study actually found some contrary results. While the

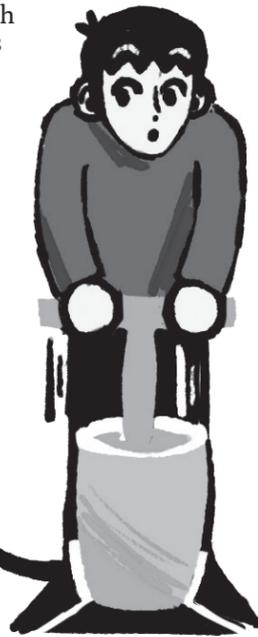
UC schools no longer use SAT or ACT scores in admissions, they found that there were correlations between higher high school GPAs and higher standardized test scores. Furthermore, in models that used both high school GPA and standardized test scores to analyze student success in terms of retention rate and graduation rates, researchers found that students were predicted to do



EVA LUDWIG



WINONA REIFE



better in these categories. The findings of this study indicate that even if grades are inflated, students are still equipped with the knowledge necessary to learn and succeed in college courses and graduate.

Rising GPAs are not indicative of an educational crisis in America. Increasing grades serve to benefit students more than they harm their education. As grades increase, so too does a student's free time, their sense of wellbeing and their self-confidence.

GRADEINFLATION.COM

Allinah Zhan  
FEATURES WRITER

In today's educational landscape, the idea that "everyone's a winner" has become more than just a motivational slogan; it's slowly, but surely, permeated into the grading system itself. As teachers seek to avoid discouraging students, grade inflation has become a widespread practice where students are given the same grades for less rigorous work. According to Stuart Rojstaczer, who wrote an op-ed piece about grade inflation for the Washington Post, grades surged in America during the 1970s and once again in recent years, even more so during the pandemic.

To truly understand what's so harmful about this, the causes of grade inflation must first be examined. Schools, particularly competitive ones, are pressured to maintain high academic standards and positive reputations. The attending students are similarly very career-oriented and reach for high grades. This

become much more average. When students receive higher and higher grades, it becomes harder to discern who truly excels. The distribution of grades becomes more clustered at the higher end, and lower grades stick out much more, becoming even more devastating. When the average is pushed so high, anything below that can feel like a major failure. This pressure can also have a negative impact on mental health.

Although grades are rising, true mastery of curriculum doesn't seem to be. According to the 2019 National Assessment Educational Progress High School Transcript Study, although the grade point average increased from 3.00 in 2009 to 3.11 in 2019, the mathematics assessment score decreased. A similar 2021 study on ACT data by Edgar Sanchez showed that despite average ACT Composite scores declining to its lowest in the past decade, test takers have received more A grades and less B grades over time.

Grades and tests are meant to measure students' abilities, but with grade inflation, they fail to do so accurately. This can give students a false sense of accomplishment, undermining the true purpose of education. They may spend less effort to truly understand the material and be satisfied with an easily gained, shiny A rather than be more motivated to pursue harder classes.

In today's competitive college application process, high grades and AP courses are often seen as essential for getting into prestigious schools. However, due to grade inflation, a good high school transcript now may not actually represent a student's true capabilities, possibly leaving them unprepared for the academic rigors awaiting them in college.

"If we bend to every student that wants extra credit to get the A's, and they're not showing mastery of material and they get into X-school, will they be successful?" Dartnell said. "Is that actually the right fit? You might be a big fish in our little pond, but when you get to that X-school, you're a tiny fish. That may not be the right fit for you if you have been, 'Can I please do extra credit? Can I please retake that test' ... All of it makes a package that maybe gets you in somewhere that is not a right fit."

Some people may argue that grade inflation helps alleviate inequalities in the school grading system, particularly between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In one way, it might act like an equalizing force and give everyone a fairer shot at success. However, according to the Atlantic, "students whose parents had the lowest levels of education experienced the least grade inflation."

Although taking a more holistic approach to education where learning and individuality are top priority is a step in the right direction, inflating grades can unintentionally diminish the value of academic achievement.

puts teachers in a difficult position, as they may face pressure from students and parents to inflate grades.

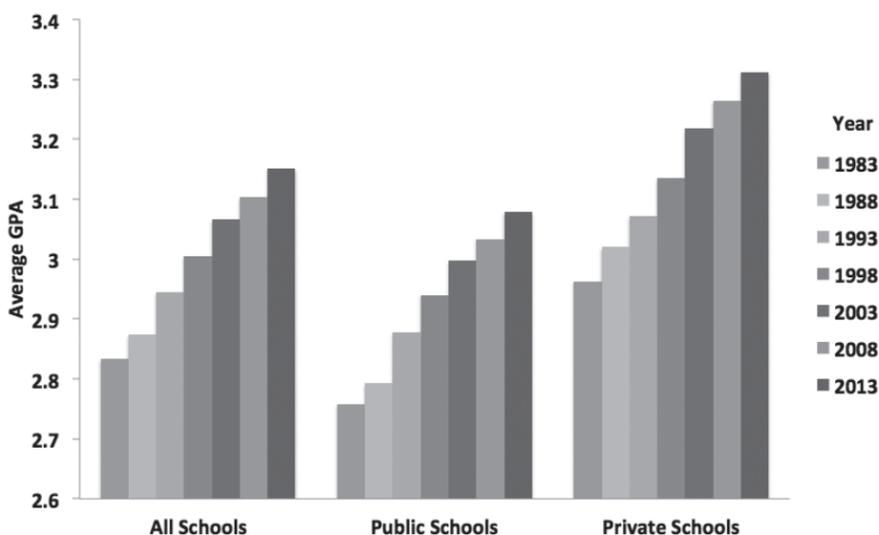
"Sometimes, it feels hard to give a student a grade they deserve when they expect something else," said Pre-Calculus and Advanced Placement Calculus teacher Cheri Dartnell. "It's a constant battle of maintaining your standard regardless of the tears and pressure that come from students and parents for high grades. I have observed, 'I didn't do as well as I wanted to on the last test, is there extra credit?'"

Schools are also shifting towards more holistic teaching approaches that emphasize collaboration and creativity. While this on its own is a step towards a better educational future, the traditional grading system struggles to reflect these shifts. As a result, grade inflation emerges as the convenient, though flawed, workaround.

Despite well-meaning intentions, grade inflation carries severe consequences. For one, high grades



Recent GPA Trends Nationwide  
Four-Year Colleges & Universities



# So Close, yet so familiar: Tate McRae's new album

Anushka Punjabi  
FEATURES WRITER

On Feb. 21, Tate McRae released her sophomore album, "So Close to What," marking another milestone in her fast-rising career. Known for her viral TikTok hits and moody, whispery vocals, McRae has built a signature style that resonates with Generation Z audiences. This new album showcases growth in her confidence and vocal strength, but despite its polished production and catchy hooks, it struggles to stand out in an oversaturated pop landscape.

"This album feels like she's growing up — she's 21 now, and her songs don't sound like a teenager anymore," said Hillsdale sophomore Makayla Alex. "They're more about figuring out life as an adult."

One of the most noticeable improvements in "So Close to What" is McRae's vocal delivery. She moves beyond the breathy softness of her earlier work, and has a much more controlled and powerful performance, highlighted particularly in "Purple Lace Bra."

Rather than focusing solely on breakups, the track explores the pressures of fame and the unrealistic expectations placed on young female artists. The line, "Would you hear me more if I whispered in your ear?" felt like a direct commentary on how women

in pop music must present themselves in a way that is overly sexualized by the media to be "memorable."

"She's way more comfortable telling her own story now," Alex said. "This album isn't just about fail[ing] — it's about moving forward."

Instead of overcomplicating emotions with metaphor-heavy verses, she opts for a straight-to-the-point approach that makes her music instantly relatable. In an era where pop artists often strive for poetic depth, McRae proves that

sometimes, simplicity is the strongest storytelling tool. "I've never really known Tate to be a lyricist," said sophomore Lincoln Elliott. "She's just having fun with her lyrics, and she is able to convey what she needs in a more monotone manner and less of a profound way."

However, while her vocals have improved, the album

doesn't take many risks. Many songs follow a predictable structure — soft verses leading into heavy, bass-driven choruses. It's a formula that works well on TikTok, but as

radio hit, with a chorus that sticks long after the song ends.

Unfortunately, not every track makes an impact. "Cut My Hair" and "Stay Done" feel like standard background

RCA RECORDS

music — pleasant but indistinguishable from countless other mid-tempo pop tracks. These songs aren't bad, but they don't do much to separate McRae from artists like Olivia Rodrigo or Billie Eilish, who have carved out much stronger

and distinct musical identities. "I don't necessarily think that she stands out compared to [other artists]," Elliott said. "They're very niche, as opposed to Tate McRae, who is a bit of everything."

McRae's success is largely tied to TikTok, where short, catchy snippets often matter more than full-length art-

istry. This raises the question of longevity: While songs like "Greedy" have taken off, will people still be streaming "So Close to What" a year from now? Right now, her music feels like it's riding a wave rather than defining one.

Although artists like Rodrigo and Eilish have managed to balance commercial appeal with unique storytelling and production choices, McRae hasn't quite reached that level yet. While this album is an improvement, it still feels more like a collection of radio-friendly pop songs than a cohesive artistic statement.

"She's very talented, but I don't think she's at the level of those other artists that have been dominating the music scene," Elliott said. "But she definitely has potential."

"So Close to What" proves that McRae is evolving as a singer and performer. The production is sleek, the vocals are stronger and the album brings back some of the fun energy of early 2000s pop. However, the repetitive song structures and lack of bold artistic choices keep it from being truly memorable, earning it a three and a half stars out of five stars.

## OUR OUTLOOK



# Captain America fails to create a brave or new world

Antonio Mangano  
FEATURES WRITER

On Feb. 14, "Captain America: Brave New World" was released nine years after the previous Captain America movie release. Based on Marvel Comics, the film was set to meet high expectations as the first independent movie to follow Steve Roger's successor, Sam Wilson.

At the beginning of the movie, at the request of President Ross, Captain America and Joaquin Torres, the new Falcon, embark on a mission to Mexico to recover a stolen sample of the newly discovered element, Adamantium. Soon after, during a meeting at the White House, Isaiah Bradley, an abandoned super soldier, unknowingly under mind control, fires a gun near the President and is imprisoned, while the real culprit, Samuel

Sterns, is later revealed to be manipulating people's minds as part of his revenge against President Ross for previously running experiments on him. This led to Ross being turned into Red Hulk. Ultimately, Captain America stops the chaos, Sterns is taken into custody, Bradley is freed and Ross is sent to an asylum to get rid of Stern's mind influence.

It is important to highlight the fact that this film housed a cohesive storyline. The film connected all of the big action moments to be a continuation of the overall mission for the U.S. to have the first sample of Adamantium. Although the focus wasn't explicitly stated during the film except at the start

and the end, "Captain America: Brave New World" made sure to fuse the goal throughout many action scenes.

Similar to other Marvel films, "Captain America: Brave New World" was action-packed, and rarely gave viewers a break. The overall pacing of the film was quick, but fitting for an action movie.

"One of my favorite moments was when Torres came close to death when fighting against the fighter pilots, because it implied that he would die. He ended up surviving and being recognized as a hero," said freshman Jules Singh.

Being a work of Marvel Studios, this film was overall very enjoyable, and definitely an engaging and interesting watch. However, comparing this film to the other greats in the Marvel universe, it seems to underperform in some areas.

Relating to previous films, this film seems to fit nicely within the development of Captain America. This movie in particular played a huge role in the introduction of the new Captain America. Towards the end of Marvel's "Avengers: Endgame," Chris Evans, the actor for Captain America at the time, passed his shield to Mackie, the actor for Falcon at the time, signaling a change of role for following movies.

In "Captain America: Brave New World," Anthony Mackie's role of Captain America was displayed for

the first time. His new role is certainly played well, but doesn't completely fill the shoes that Evans left behind.

"He did [a good job stepping up to a new role], while also putting his own twist to the role," Singh said. "He wasn't a carbon copy of Evans, and how he portrayed Captain America."

Although the role of Captain America was changed, Marvel still made sure to develop the characters thoroughly with a distinction between Mackie and Evans.

"The development of Captain America was displayed very well through this movie," said junior Alex Nunez. "We learned of many different things he was able to do while he got into more fights."

Comparing this movie to previous Captain America movies, "Captain America: Brave New World" seems to have mixed opinions. Previous Captain America movies have been better watches overall, so naturally, this movie proves to be slightly lackluster.

"I've definitely seen better, but it was a pretty good movie overall," Nunez said. "It had some interesting concepts that I really enjoyed, so it's definitely up there with the best ... One thing that would have made the movie so much better is if there were two Hulks and they just battled it out instead of Captain America fighting. That would have been so much cooler to see."

The public agrees — "Captain America: Brave New World" scored an un-

derwhelming 49% on Rotten Tomatoes.

The themes of power and politics circulate throughout the film, from the beginning of the movie when there was controversy between American citizens about the new president being close to superheroes. The film highlighted the importance of heroes' roles to fight for citizens' safeties against villains. This was shown through President Ross directing Captain America to lead missions.

Since future Avengers movies are on the horizon, and the fact that this movie revealed a considerable amount of information, this movie definitely seems to have a significant impact on future Marvel storylines. The film itself felt more like a setup than a standalone movie.

"It does [have an effect on future Marvel storylines], because it implies that they're forming a new Avengers group," Singh said. "There are two new Avengers movies coming out in the future, so [this movie is] probably a lead-up."

Ultimately, "Captain America: Brave New World" played a great role as a continuation of the Marvel storyline, though the film itself wasn't the best work in the Captain America series, making it worthy of three and a half stars out of five stars.

## OUR OUTLOOK



# A dope watch or a doped sport?

Charlie Henderson  
SPORTS WRITER

Bigger, faster, stronger — but at what cost? For centuries, athletes have sought methods to push their bodies to the boundaries of human performance. Sports captivate audiences because they display the limits of human potential. Fans are drawn to the spectacle of athletes beyond what was once thought possible. From the hallucinogenic herbal concoctions consumed by athletes in the ancient Olympics to the high-tech doping scandals of the modern era, the rampant pursuit of greatness has often been overshadowed by ethical dilemmas.

To understand the use of performance-enhancing drugs, one must understand the athletes who take them. A majority of elite athletes have dedicated their entire lives to becoming the best they possibly can at their sport, placing their entire self-worth in the wins and losses column, setting themselves up for either extreme highs or extreme lows. In this hyper-competitive environment, fractions of a second or ounces of muscle can separate immortality and fading into the annals of obscurity.

The use of performance-enhancing substances dates back to ancient civilizations. Roman gladiators and Greek Olympians used hallucinogens and herbal stimulants to boost strength and endurance. These crude forms of performance enhancers may or may not have worked in the way we think steroids work today, but they do prove that it is human nature to seek any possible edge in the pursuit of victory.

By the late 19th century, cyclists and marathon runners began to utilize a plethora of substances, including cocaine, strychnine and alcohol, to enhance performance and reduce fatigue. The 20th century saw the rise of anabolic steroids, which were developed in the late 1930s. The Cold War escalated the problem of doping in sports. As countries vied for global dominance, international athletic competition became a proxy for the Cold War. During this era, many countries dedicated some of their most brilliant scientific minds to the advancement of athletics via the advancement of doping. In most cases, athletes unknowingly or unwillingly participated in these elabo-

rate state-backed doping programs. These programs went unchecked for years and created an environment where if you were not doping you were at a disadvantage.

One of the most infamous doping scandals in sports history took place in the Bay Area. The Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative was a laboratory headquartered in Burlingame. BALCO provided PEDs to numerous high-profile athletes such as Major League Baseball superstar Barry Bonds and Olympic track athletes Marion Jones and Tim Montgomery. BALCO's signature drug, known as "The Clear," was a designer steroid engineered to evade drug tests. The scandal rocked the sports world, leading to congressional hearings, suspensions and a broader crackdown on doping. It also uncovered the constant cat-and-mouse game between athletes using PEDs and anti-doping agencies striving to detect them.

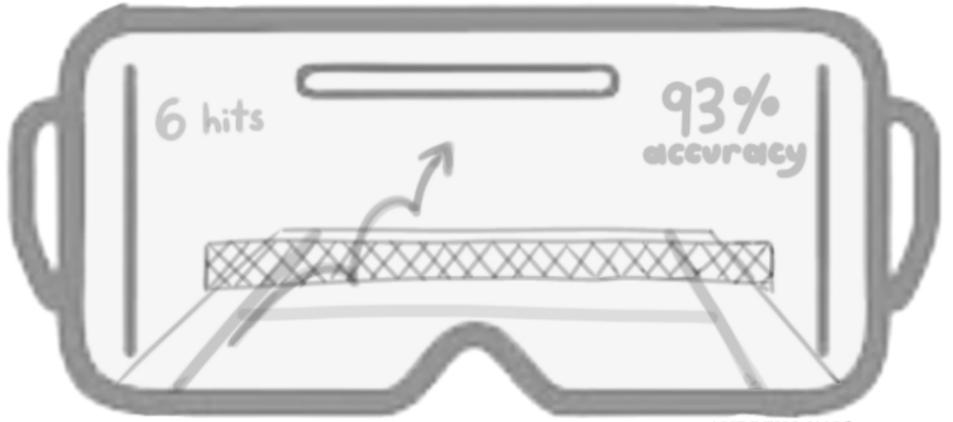
A recent doping controversy involved world number one tennis player Jan-nik Sinner. Sinner tested positive for traces of clostebol in March 2024, he claimed he unknowingly ingested the substance through a spray used by his physiotherapist. Sinner faced a two-year suspension. However, the World Anti-Doping Agency concluded that he had no intent to cheat and gained no competitive advantage from the substance. In a settlement, Sinner received a three-month ban from February to May of 2025 meaning he will not miss any major tournaments.

Sinner took little responsibility for his team's actions, and his case has reignited debates about strict liability and the fairness of doping sanctions. An important legal issue that arose from this case is the distinction between intentional doping and unintentional doping. Strict liability ensures accountability, but some argue that athletes should not face the same penalties for consuming PEDs without knowing it. This debate will likely shape future anti-doping policies, as governing bodies try to maintain fairness while working through the complexities of real-world cases.

With the constantly evolving nature of athletic performance, the line between natural talent and engineered performance will only blur further. Sports organizations and society are forced to continually redefine what it means to compete on a level playing field.



WINONA REIF



AUDREY WANG

# Changed game, augmented reality

Adya Tewari  
SPORTS WRITER

Augmented reality is changing the way sports are played, watched and analyzed. By overlaying digital elements onto real-world sports plays, AR has the capability to enhance viewing experiences for fans and provides athletes with tools for training and performance analysis. It is widely used in industries like healthcare, education and entertainment, but it is now being integrated into popular sports, including soccer, football, cricket and baseball.

Unlike virtual reality, which replaces reality with a fully digital environment, AR enhances what's around us by adding real-time data without disrupting the physical world. Augmented reality superimposes a computer-generated image onto a user's view of the real world. Early implementations of AR were designed to make the game simpler for viewers, but over time AR has advanced beyond television screens. Now, it is often used to assist referees, coaches and players, allowing them to play the game at the highest level.

One prominent use of AR is in football, where it is used to highlight the line of scrimmage and the first-down line during broadcasts. Similarly, AR is used in soccer to ensure accurate decisions on whether the ball has fully crossed the goal line. In basketball, it's mainly used in shot analysis, with the ability to assess a player's

form and inefficiencies and provide corrective feedback. In baseball, AR helps both pitchers and batters, allowing them to visualize the strike zone and analyze pitch trajectories.

Additionally, sports like cricket and tennis rely heavily on AR for officiating. Hawk-Eye, an AR-powered ball tracking system, provides instant replays and precise ball placement data, helping determine whether a ball was in or out in tennis. In cricket, Hawk-Eye helps to predict the ball's trajectory towards the wickets, helping determine whether a player is out or not.

With cameras tracking the movements of balls at various speeds, AR provides referees with precise visuals, reducing human errors and controversy. Coaches and analysts also use AR to break down plays and provide real-time feedback to players.

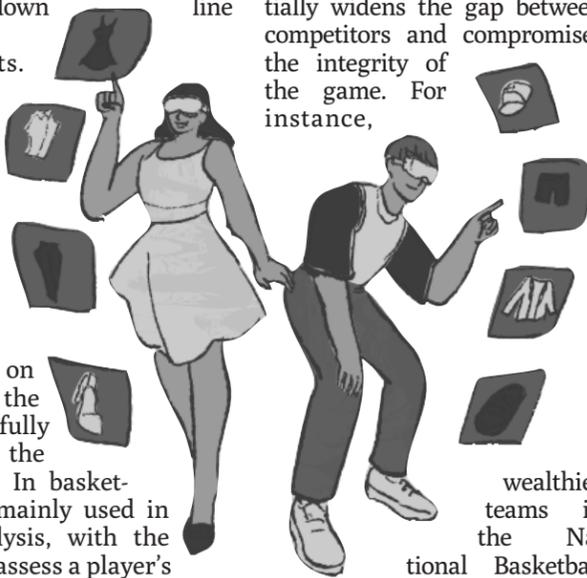
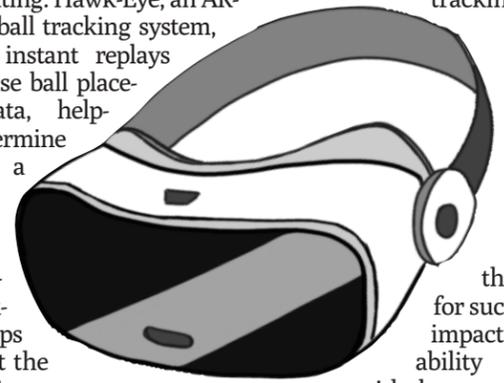
While AR offers many clear advantages, it also raises ethical concerns regarding fairness and competitive balance. This potentially widens the gap between competitors and compromises the integrity of the game. For instance,

Association integrate AR-based shot tracking systems providing real-time arc and depth analysis, while lower-funded teams might only have access to basic video analysis. Additionally, in college football, teams use AR-enhanced play simulations and motion tracking to improve training and strategy. Smaller college teams often lack the funding for such systems, impacting their ability to train with the same precision.

Athletes also face increased pressure in an AR-enhanced world. With their every move being tracked, players are under constant scrutiny from coaches, analysts and even fans. This heightened level of analysis can be beneficial for improving performance, but it may also heighten the stress that players are under.

For fans, AR features such as instant replay, dynamic graphics and relevant real-time statistics allow spectators to become more engaged with the game. However, there is a risk that AR could shift attention away from the human aspects of sports, diminishing the emotional intensity and spontaneity that makes sports so compelling.

Moving forward, sports organizations must decide whether AR should be regulated to maintain a level playing field or fully embraced as an inevitable part of the future. While AR has potential to make sports more accurate and exciting, it is not without its ethical concerns. Striking a balance between technological innovation and the integrity of competition will be crucial in shaping how AR is used in sports for years to come.



**THE DOROTHY PENDANT**  
**THE COMPASS PENDANT**  
BY MONICA RICH KOSANN

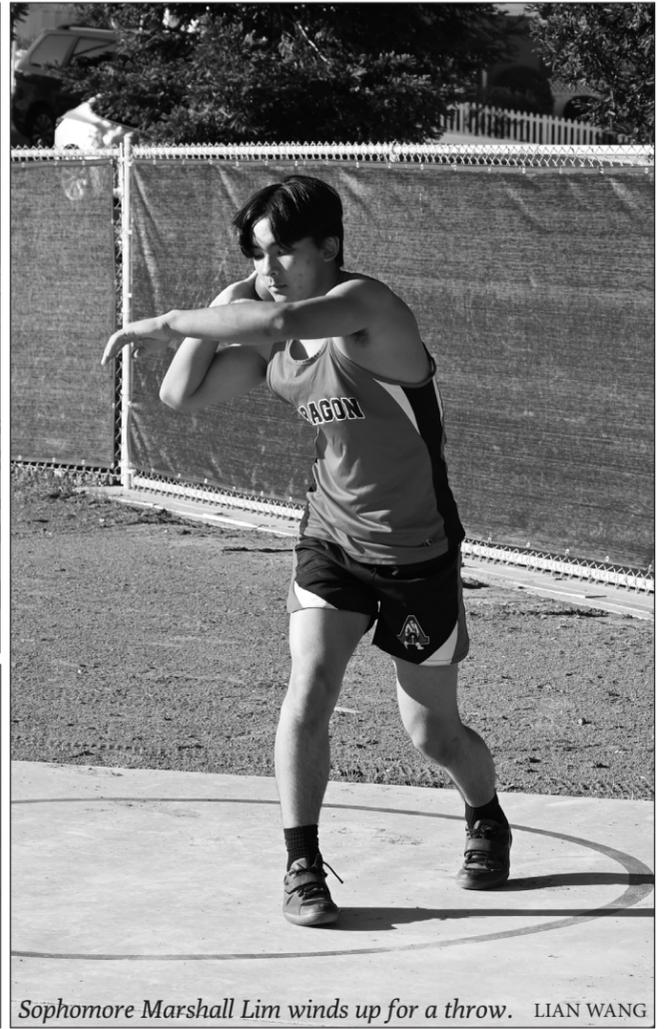
214 Lorton Ave  
Downtown Burlingame  
kernjewelers.com



Senior Lina Cruz Parada competes in the varsity girls 1600-meter.



Varsity boys run the 1600-meter race.



Sophomore Marshall Lim winds up for a throw. LIAN WANG

# Off to the races in track and field scrimmage

Phoebe Harger  
SPORTS WRITER

On Feb. 25, the Aragon track and field kicked off their pre-season with an at-home scrimmage against Woodside. While the scrimmage did not have an official winner, the Dons dominated the meet, with all four divisions winning a majority of their events.

While the scrimmage does not affect the team's league standings, it served as a warmup for the upcoming season and gave athletes, particularly those new to the sport, experience ahead of the first league meet. Head coach Greg Alvarado says that the practice meet was specifically designed to help underclassmen with limited track experience.

"I wanted to let them know how to get ready for their races," Alvarado said. "I want them to know how to use the blocks, time management and how to warm up and warm down because those things are just as important as the actual race."

Despite Tuesday being many athletes' first meet, Alvarado says that he was pleasantly surprised by the team's good marks, specifically in pole vault, long distance and long jump, in which Aragon came in first in every division.

"I felt really good about the jump I got at the meet because I haven't jumped since middle school and it came back really quickly," said Madison Britt, a junior who took first place in the girls varsity long jump with a jump of 16 feet and 3.75 inches.

Additionally, the scrimmage showcased a handful of the team's standout athletes, such as varsity junior Victoria Chen and sophomore Mina Hwang. Both took first place in the 4x400 meter, with Chen also winning the 400-meter and triple jump, and Hwang claiming first in the 100-meter and 200-meter.

Chen credited the 4x400 team's success to their teamwork and coordination.

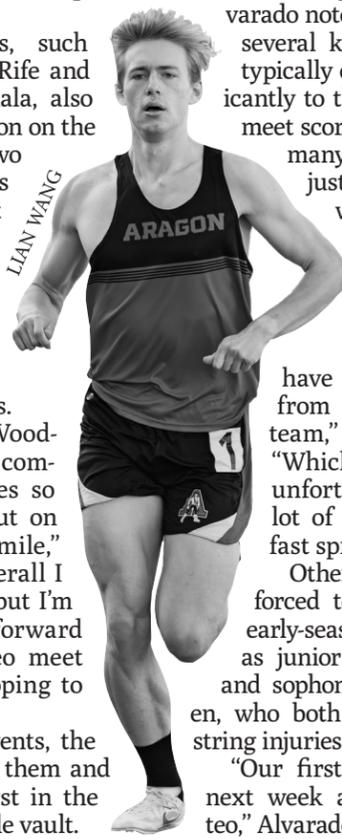
"Our girls relay team had really great handoffs during our race," Chen said. "So it's really

nice to see all our hard work in practice pay off and help us get a win."

Other athletes, such as junior Meilin Rife and senior Miles Rokala, also made an impression on the track. Rife set two personal records while taking first in the varsity 100 m and high jump, while Rokala won both the varsity 1600-meter and 4x400-meter races.

"A lot of the Woodside guys were coming off of injuries so I was kind of out on my own for the mile," Rokala said. "Overall I felt pretty good but I'm mostly looking forward to the San Mateo meet because we're hoping to get some PRs."

In the field events, the girls swept all of them and the boys took first in the long jump and pole vault.



LIAN WANG

While the team had lots of success at the practice meet, Alvarado noted the absence of several key runners who typically contribute significantly to the team's overall meet scores. This included many athletes who just finished their winter sports season and started their track season later than usual.

"We didn't have any runners from the girls soccer team," Alvarado said. "Which was definitely unfortunate because a lot of them are really fast sprinters."

Other runners were forced to sit out due to early-season injuries, such as junior Charles Harger and sophomore Kurt Nguyen, who both sustained hamstring injuries.

"Our first league meet is next week against San Mateo," Alvarado said. "But with-

out Charlie and Kurt who are our fastest sprinters, things are going to look a little iffy."

Rokala agreed that the loss of key athletes can greatly change the outcome of a meet.

"We're really lucky that we have a few runners who can really carry an event and pull the whole team along in the meet," Rokala said. "So hopefully everyone can get healthy as soon as possible so that we can get the best results possible."

With a full season ahead, Coach Alvarado is prioritizing the fitness of his athletes, as well as their commitment.

"They need to understand, especially the younger kids, the seriousness of the competition," Alvarado said. "This is not a club and I expect each and every one of them to work hard."

After several weeks of practice and a scrimmage under their belt, the Dons continue to grow more and more prepared for the season. They will showcase their progress on March 15 in the St. Francis Invitational at St. Francis High School.

# Softball suffers 16-2 trouncing in season opener

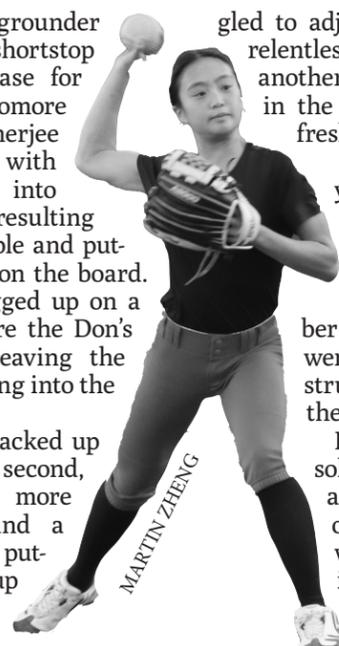
Quinn Shirley  
SPORTS WRITER

Aragon girls softball faced a tough opponent on Feb. 25 in their season opener against Livermore, losing 16-2. Livermore came out on fire in the first inning, scoring back-to-back home runs against the Dons. After a pitching change, Aragon freshman Makayla Hafoka shut down the remaining Livermore batters, leaving the Dons down 6-0 heading into their first at-bat.

Sophomore Taylor Workman set the tone early with a line drive deep into left field, but a diving catch from the Livermore outfielder resulted in an out. Aragon freshman Aliyah Adle got the next hit for the

Dons, with a grounder splitting shortstop and second base for a single. Sophomore Olivia Mukherjee followed up with a bomb deep into center field, resulting in an RBI double and putting the Dons on the board. Mukherjee tagged up on a pop fly to score the Don's second run, leaving the score 6-2 heading into the second inning.

Livermore racked up runs in the second, having two more home runs and a grand slam, putting them up 16-2. Aragon's defense strug-



MARTIN ZHENG

gled to adjust to Livermore's relentless offense, having another pitching change in the third to bring up freshman Chloe Wan.

"We have a young pitching staff that we need to develop," said head coach Liz Roscoe. "My number one pitcher [Wan] went in and she didn't struggle as much as the other two."

Despite several solid hits by the Dons and getting runners on base, Aragon was unable to score in the fourth. However, they turned around their de-

fense, and held Livermore the remainder of the game, leaving the final score 16-2.

"I knew the [opposing] team was really good and I knew we still had some things to work on," said junior Destiny Garcia. "I expected it to be a rough one."

Roscoe agreed and headed into the game knowing it was going to be a good challenge for the girls.

"We're a very young team and I knew that Livermore was a really good team," Roscoe said. "So I was throwing the girls out there knowing it was gonna be tough for us, but I believe if you play tough you're going to get better."

Despite the result, Garcia does feel there were some highlights to take away from the

game, particularly in the offensive aspect of the game.

"Something we did well was hitting," Garcia said. "We read a lot of the pitches and came back and did better the second time."

As the team prepares for a tough league schedule, the Dons are going to keep their heads up and focus on improving.

"We all have accepted that it's early in the season and that it's a new team," Workman said. "Mistakes are going to happen and bad games are going to happen, and if we just don't worry about it too much we'll get better."

The team's next game is March 13 at home against Carlmont at 4 p.m.

READ EXTENDED VERSION ON ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG

# BOYS TENNIS SWEEPS CARLMONT 7-0

Sora Mizutani  
SPORTS WRITER

On Feb. 27, Aragon boys tennis (3-0 overall, 2-0 league) continued on with their strong start to the season in a 7-0 win against Carlmont (1-2 league). The team already had great confidence going into the game.

"Carmont is one of the better [teams]," said No. 2 singles and junior Veraaz Khan. "But we're still going to do good because our team is really good."

Though the team had some changes in the lineup, with senior Justin Wong substituting for senior Keiya Wada at No. 1 doubles, the team swept Carlmont.

"They played very well as Justin last year played with Thomas and [once] beat a really good team [against Menlo-Atherton]," said head coach Dave Owdom. "So I had some pretty good faith that they would do fine."

The team started this season with an excellent start, defeating the neighbor Hillsdale 7-0 in the Peninsula Athletic League Bay division and is looking forward to becoming the defending champion of the league from last year.

"We have the talent to win the league, but you still got to do it," Owdom said. "Everybody's going to play you harder because they know you're the defending champion, so you just got to be up for every match. You can't take it easy."

The game had already begun during the warm-up with both teams fiercely cheering up their teammates.

"Our team is very good all around; everyone is pretty fit," said No. 2 doubles and junior Max Gan. "We know how to run. We're pretty quick, and our mental strength is good because we support ... and hype up each other. It's a lot different from all those other quiet teams."

The team quickly secured their first win with No. 3 doubles and senior Dylan Cheung and freshman Adam Beg in a 6-0, 6-4 match within the first hour.

Despite the fast-paced win, Beg looks forward to improving even more for the next game.

"My serves and my team's consistency in shots [led to the easy win]," Beg said. "[But] we could try to be a little more consistent [in talking] to each other."

Later on, No. 3 singles and junior Darrin O'Brien won 6-1, 6-2, followed by No. 1 doubles and seniors Thomas Nie and Wong who showed a little struggle in the end, but ultimately won with ease 6-0, 6-3. Khan cruised through both sets by a score of 6-0, 6-1. With high expectations, No. 1 singles and senior Akbar Beg — who went to the second round of Central Coast Section Individual last year — did not have the best start, but slowly got his momentum back with a 6-4, 6-2 victory.

No. 2 doubles and senior Jack He and Gan had a long match, being neck-and-neck with Carlmont for the entire first set. However, in the end, they were able to bring the first set to a tiebreaker, win-

ning 7-6 (7-5), carrying the momentum into the second set and winning 6-3.

Nevertheless, the longest match of the day was No. 4 singles and senior Ziv Rapoport. The match was a close game from the beginning. Back-and-forth rallies happened throughout the first set, in which he came back to win 7-6 (9-7). For the second set, no one on the Aragon team was left other than the coach, while Carlmont had most of their team cheering for his opponent. Exhaustion was evident in their faces with frequent sighs from both sides, both using their last bit of stamina, yet Rapoport pushed through taking the victory after two hours 7-6 (11-9).

Moving forward, to continue with the success of the team, Owdom is hoping to see even more improvements.

"I'd like to see improvement in groundstrokes, especially with singles guys," Owdom said. "For the doubles, we had some issues serving a little bit today. Serving issues usually are two things. Most of the time, it's a toss. Toss is the hardest thing to do in a serve. And

if it's too low, it goes in the net, or you speed up your mechanics and you're way ahead of the ball."

As the reigning champion team of the CCS, the team's primary focus is ultimately on the mental game.

Their next game will be on March 13 at 4 p.m. at Burlingame.



MIA THURELL

# BOYS BASEBALL DEFEATS WASHINGTON 5-0

Olivia Mukherjee  
SPORTS WRITER

In their first game of the season, Aragon's varsity baseball team secured a 5-0 victory over Washington on Feb. 26.

The win was a well-rounded effort, with contributions from multiple players, including key performances on the mound and at the plate.

Senior Dalton Kane was a standout on the mound, striking out six batters and allowing just one hit. His control was crucial, as he kept the Washington hitters off-balance for most of the game.

"My goal was just to put the ball in the zone, let my defense work and get ahead in the count early," Kane said.

His ability to utilize some key pitches, as well as trust his defense behind him was a major factor in the team's shutout win.

"My fastball was definitely getting a lot of swing and misses," Kane said. "My slider, in particular, was missing a lot of barrels."

Senior Mason Miller, who also contributed from the mound, pitched well in his relief outing, adding to the team's strong pitching depth. Miller's performance provided a complement to Kane's

appearance, helping the team maintain control of the game.

"Mason came in and did a great job for us," said head coach Don Hahn. "It's great to have that kind of depth in our pitching staff, and Mason was really effective in his time on the mound."

Offensively, the team capitalized on the opportunities they were given, with seniors Ian Chang and Cole Sloan each recording one of the four hits.

Chang, who went 1-for-3 in the game, acknowledged that the offense still has room for improvement.

"We had great pitching today, and our defense was solid," Chang said. "Our hitting might need a little work, but overall, we did enough to get the win."

The team has been preparing both physically and mentally for the season through daily practices.

"Mentally, I just visualize before the game and focus on what pitches I'm looking for when I'm at the plate," Chang said.

On defense, outfielder Adi Shankar and shortstop Jordan Kiaaina made several key plays to keep Washington from generating any significant offense.

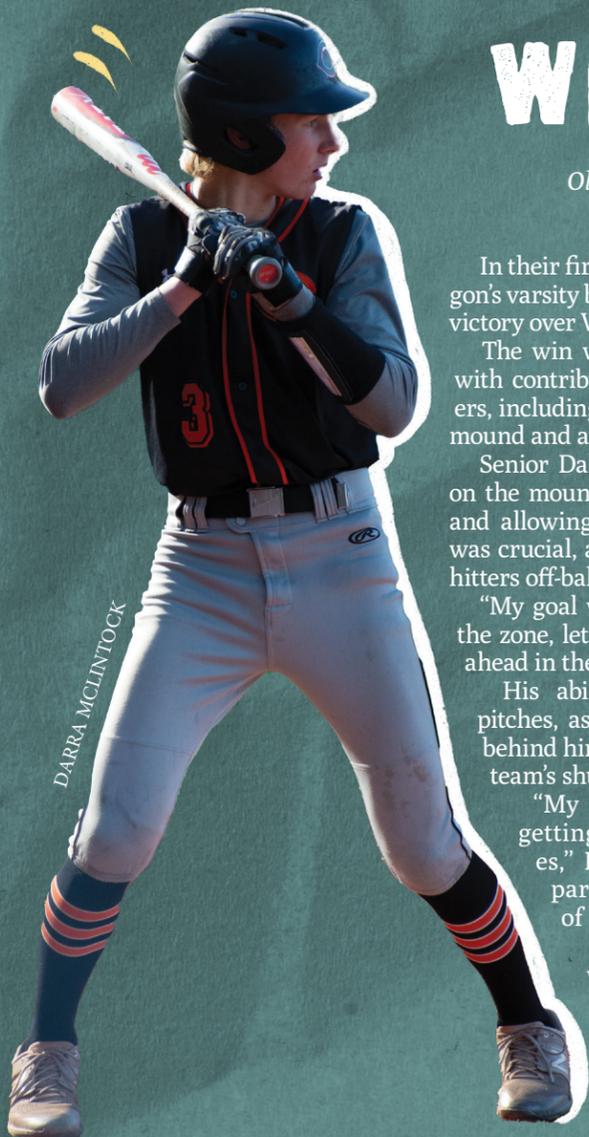
Following these plays, Kane was quick to praise his defense.

"Adi Shankar made a great catch," Kane said. "And [Kiaaina] at shortstop is amazing to have."

Hahn also noted that while there are areas to improve, the team is heading in the right direction, especially on the mound.

"We're going to rely on our pitching," Hahn said. "If our pitching holds up and comes through, we'll be in every game."

The team expects to carry the momentum of this sweeping victory on to their upcoming league games, focusing on an effective offense and defense. The team's next game is scheduled at home for March 15 at 11 a.m. against Carlmont.



DARRA MCLINTOCK

