

TRUMP'S ATTACK ON SCIENCE

Allinah Zhan and Diya Poojary
FEATURES AND NEWS WRITERS

In today's America, science is under siege. From gutted research budgets to the silencing of vital health data, the institutions that power innovation and save lives are struggling to stay afloat.

Upon taking office, President Donald Trump pulled billions of dollars from scientific research and health initiatives, impacting federal agencies, universities and medical organizations. By the end of January, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention removed key databases and censored research papers, including data on HIV statistics and teen health. A temporary rollback restored access to some information weeks later.

"Public trust in science has already been decreasing," said senior Noah Lin. "There [are] people who will trust an influencer online over medical study, simply because it either conforms with their beliefs or they want to feel different. And if we get ... less public funding, it might push researchers to publish information that might not be as heavily vetted."

The National Science Foundation saw a partial unfreezing of funds in early February, but soon after, National Institutes of Health research overhead funding was slashed from 40% to 15%. Numerous universities, from Stanford University to North Carolina State, have been affected by hiring freezes, reduced PhD admissions and cuts to financial aid. The Trump Administration's defunding of these agencies and more is being contested in court by legal experts, who claim it violates the will of Congress, in the case of NIH, or that it violates free speech, in the case of universities.

"It's a goal ... [for] a lot of people I know to apply for scholarships," said junior Dahlia Anapolsky. "College is expensive. It's hard to pay for ... and lack of funding for scholarships is harmful because some people that want to go to college will have to take a little back seat or take out loans or not be able to have freedom when they go there."

The funding cuts have also impacted patients dependent on research-driven treatments. For those in early clinical trials with few treatment options, the loss of funding could be a death sentence.

While the cuts pose an immediate threat to patient care,

the broader impact hinders Science, Technology, Engineering and Math advancement in America. Scientists don't feel safe to do accurate research under the current administration. For instance, Dr. Marc Ruel, a world-renowned heart surgeon, declined the Chief of the Division of Adult Cardiothoracic Surgery position at the University of California, San Francisco, citing concerns over the evolving political climate in the U.S.

The administration also announced plans to cut over 10,000 workers from the U.S. Agency for International Development. By mid-February, layoffs within the NIH, CDC and National Science Foundation became widespread.

"Some of my friends who work in natural resource management and the National Park Service got termination letters," said Katherine Ward, Advanced Placement Biology and Biotechnology teacher. "These are people ... checking [for] avalanche problems [and] rock slides ... [They're] being told that they were being fired because they were incompetent ... They feel demoralized, they feel lied to, they feel betrayed. If you want to

downsize the government, that's fine, but don't do it in a dishonest way."

The U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement, along with proposed cuts to climate research and clean-energy investments under Project 2025, signals a shift in national priorities. With science increasingly constrained by political ideology, concerns arise about its future alongside global innovation.

"It is absolutely motivation for other countries to develop their own scientific power whether it's for nuclear power and nuclear weaponry or drug development and drug discovery," Ward said. "It is absolutely a call to arms for every other country on the globe to start putting more dollars into their ... own research. That can only mean that it's going to get more competitive, and that may be to our detriment."

The administration also dismantled diversity initiatives, enforcing a rigid definition of biological sex and restricting grants referencing race, disability or gender studies.

"There's a very small minority ... making their voices very loud and projecting their thoughts onto others that are in control right now," Anapolsky said. "I wouldn't say it reflects the country as a whole, but we live in this bubble [in the Bay Area]. Everyone around us doesn't agree with it, but it's hard to say how people outside of it do."

As funding and staffing cuts continue in critical sectors and politics reshape academia, the future of U.S. science and education remains uncertain.

Editor's Picks

Homelessness crisis pg. 4

Trans scapegoating pg. 12

Swim meet recap pg. 15



HANNAH LI

SENIOR ASSASSIN CANCELLED

Meilin Rife
FEATURES EDITOR

On March 26, Senior Assassins was abruptly ended by the game's admin. The next day, seniors were required by the administration to meet in the South Gym for a special Flex time where San

Mateo Police Activity League's Youth Services Officers Alison Adle and Carlos Basurto warned against reckless behavior associated with the game that happened recently.

"There are some safety concerns that are associated with senior assassins," Adle said in the Flex time meeting. "Our

whole objective is to make sure that you guys are safe and the community is safe. We want you to succeed. We don't want you blindsided by unexpected consequences. Too often, in moments of excitement or anxiety, we act without thinking. And those actions have serious repercussions."

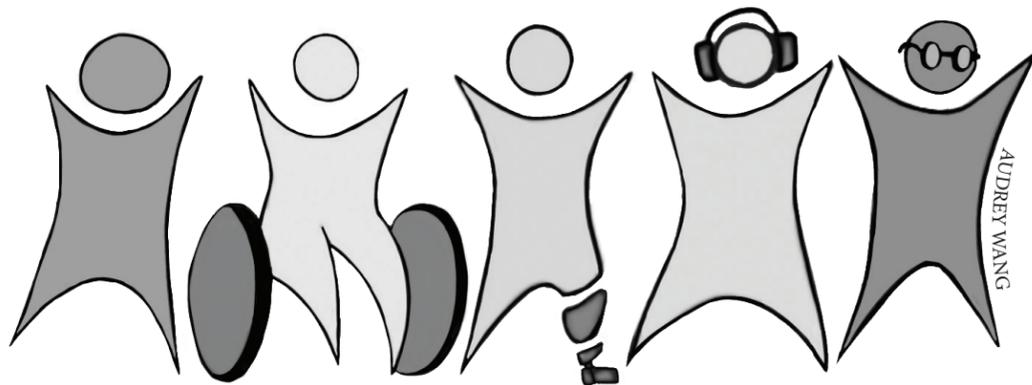
Senior Assassins is a non-school-sanctioned game where seniors team up in groups of two to eliminate other teams by spraying them with water. Participants were also required to share their location with the Splashin app, encouraging them to ambush their targets outside of school.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Oliver Levitt and Helen McCloskey

FEATURES AND NEWS WRITERS



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

An important aspect of the Humanizing Aragon campaign is spreading awareness about and understanding people with differing abilities. When addressing this in an academic context, Aragon strives to support students of all learning capacities through its special education classes, Directed Studies classes and the district's Bridging Adults in Youth Academy, among other strategies.

PROGRAM

Special education at Aragon and the San Mateo Union High School District consists of a variety of different services depending on the student's Individualized Education Plan, a legal document drawn up by the stakeholders that determines how to support students with disabilities in their learning. The district offers Directed Studies, which is a homework support class for all students, co-taught classes that include both a general and special education teacher, and separate services such as speech language therapy and psychology. Specialists also personally assist students who take general education classes or prepare students for their post-high school paths through a Career Awareness program.

Junior *Carter uses speech therapy and takes Directed Studies to fulfill his IEP.

"Whenever I struggle, [my] teachers give me so much help," Carter said. "My English teacher does a really good job. She gives a lot of detail on the subjects we talk about; currently, we're learning about the Odyssey ... With [the] help I'm getting, I have a great career ahead of me ... Everything about [having] an IEP at Aragon is pretty good. I don't find any major issues whatsoever."

Although Aragon shares all of the District's special education services, it also features academic classes co-taught by a special education teacher and a general education teacher, which no other school in the District provides.

Giancarlo Corti teaches two sections of Government and Economics, one of which is a co-taught class.

"The extra resource of another teacher makes it so that it's really easy to meet the needs of all the students individually," Corti said. "I'm sure there [are] situations where the needs of students with IEPs might be higher than what two teachers can manage while still trying to get through [the] curriculum for everyone else in the class. But that is not my experience. My experience, at least with teaching Government Economics, has been [that] we can do both those things at the same time."

The San Mateo Union High School District special education system is considered to be largely successful.

"We have one of the best special education programs that I have had an opportunity to work with, and I've been doing this for quite some time," said director of Special Education services Rochelle Hooks. "All of the teachers do a really excellent job. I appreciate how they go above and beyond to support families ... One of the differences [between our district and others] is that a lot of case managers are working with general [education] teachers significantly more than I'm used to seeing previously, and that's really key ... Where a lot of districts sometimes keep students separate, we do a really good job at integrating them into general education. When you're in general education, that's where you're getting the first and best instruction with teachers who are credentialed in that subject."

The District also aims to help students in special education classes in many of the same pursuits as general education students as best they can.

"The main hope is that they are successful in however they identify success and do the things that they want to do," Hooks said. "It can look like going to community college or a four-year college. It could look like going to the military or vocational school or jumping right into the job market. For our students who are more severely impacted by their disability, sometimes it's an adult day program or supported employment or supported housing."

STUDENT AWARENESS

One group that aims to create greater awareness and support for students receiving special education services is Aragon's Best Buddies Club. This club works as a space where students in general and special education can spend time together and spread positivity on campus. When the BAY Academy, a program for students with moderate to severe disabilities, was at Aragon from 2022-24, members

of the club were able to form connections with those with the BAY Academy program.

At a young age, junior Best Buddies Club treasurer Samantha Stanley observed a lot of the struggles that students in special education face.

"Back from elementary school, when I was in the same classroom [with students with special needs], there wasn't really a special [education] department, [as] they were in [general education] classrooms," Stanley said. "And there was never really any support for them. They would have

Aragon between students that further isolates students with special needs.

"It never felt like blatant disrespect, like mean bullying or anything, but [people would talk] behind their back, or maybe just a snide comment that you wouldn't say to a 'normal' person," Stanley said. "A lot of people don't [appreciate their] personalities. A lot of people just put them in a box and don't go out of their way to interact with them. Even just saying 'them,' like 'them and us,' is very rooted in our everyday life ... If you just sit down and have a conversation at our club, they're just people, and it's super fun, just like having a conversation with anyone else."

Junior Best Buddies Club president Victoria Chen similarly believes students must change their mindset to allow for more unity on campus.

"It's the same thing as someone who doesn't have a disability," Chen said. "You can still be friends and you can do everything ... People being more open to different people [helps]. Going out of your way to include someone that you might have not originally may be out of your comfort zone, but you should still do it."

This idea of inclusivity falls in line with the Humanizing Aragon campaign.

"In [terms] of the humanizing language and humanizing, it's more an inclusive practice in being empathetic to potentially how others are impacted," Hooks said. "And considering that, you'd want to think, 'how am I including students with disabilities?'"

LARGER IMPACTS

On a broader scale, these special education systems have been proven to be successful at helping students with special needs graduate, especially in comparison to statistics statewide.

According to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges report, 94.3% of Aragon students with disabilities graduated in the 2022-23 school year, compared to 86.4% of California students that same year,

as indicated in the California School Dashboard. Nationally, the graduation rate for students with disabilities is 74%, from the 2021-22 school year.

However, special education has been a point of contention within the Trump administration's newest decisions.

On March 20, President Donald Trump signed an executive order mandating the shutdown of the Department of Education. The department administered the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, which provided public and special education services to students with disabilities and grants nationwide. The following day, Trump announced that special education would be moved to the Department of Health and Human Services. It is unclear whether special education employees from the Department of Education will work on special education at the HHS or employees from the HHS will be involved.

With the fate of federal special education up in the air, states might play a larger role in the administration of special education.

"If the state laws were what started governing special education in California, I have a lot of faith that ... California as a state would be very good at meeting that need [for special education]," said Aragon Psychologist Gina Sunie-Lopez. "My hope is that that doesn't go anywhere from the federal law, and we don't stop getting support from the federal government because it's necessary to keep these programs going."

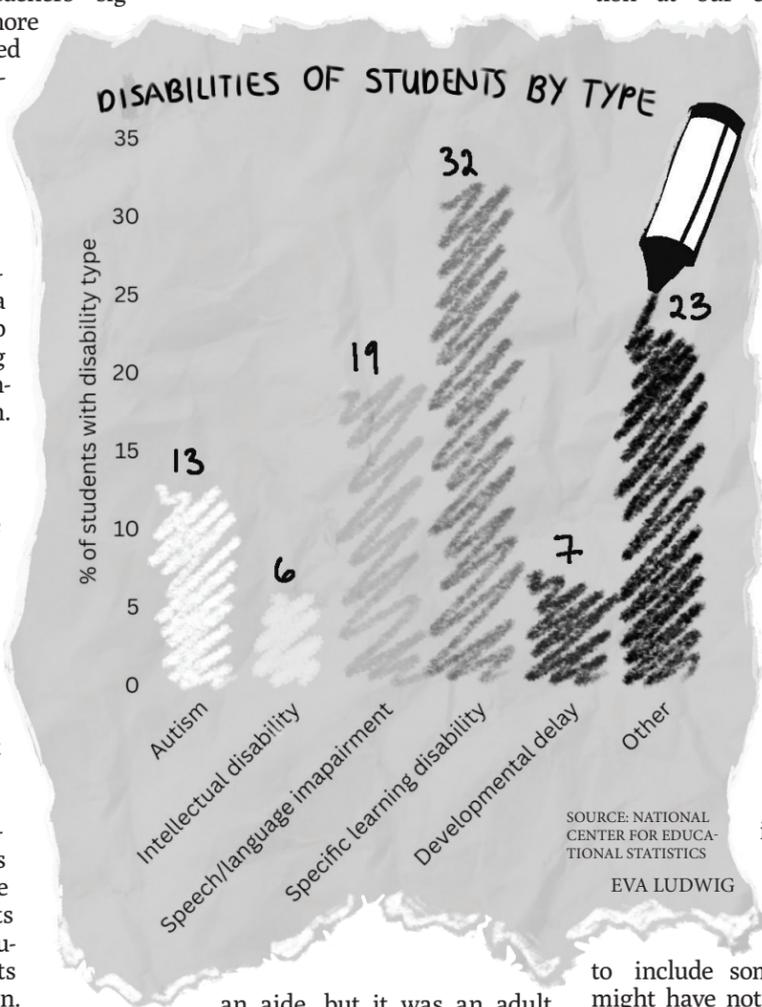
Some students strongly oppose the idea of removing funding for these programs.

"That sounds like a stupid idea," Carter said. "It's pathetic how ... the Trump administration thinks that disorders like autism [are] a disease when it is not."

However, even if national funding is slashed, some believe that it may have a smaller impact than expected.

"The federal government has not paid their fair share [of funding for special education] for years," said Special Education teacher Michael Gibbons. "If they totally stop funding, then the District has a lot of money, they'll have to decide how to spend it and special education services are a legal [state] mandate."

While the effects of the Trump administration's actions on special education at Aragon remain unknown, its special education department will continue striving to provide quality education for students with disabilities.



an aide, but it was an adult, and it was definitely more isolating. I had a friend and she was special needs, and I didn't even register [that] in my brain, I [just] knew she looked different from other people. She had Down Syndrome, but she was just a normal person and people never really saw her that way. She was in my classes and we would have normal conversations and people would be like, 'oh, isn't she weird? She acts differently.' I was like 'not really, she's just a normal person.' So [that experience] built empathy [and] got me into advocating for basic human rights or treatment."

Despite this mentality that Stanley has seen in elementary school, Carter has not personally experienced it at Aragon.

"Students with IEPs like me are treated well," Carter said. "Other students treat [us] pretty fairly. There hasn't been any bullying or stigma in any way."

Though students may not be overtly rude, some believe there remains a barrier at

Gunn graduate sues UC for racial discrimination

Ellie Blakely
NEWS WRITER

On Feb. 11, Stanley Zhong, former Henry M. Gunn High School student, and his father, Nan Zhong, filed a lawsuit against the University of California and the U.S. Department of Education for racial discrimination, claiming that Zhong was rejected from UC schools because he was Asian.

In 2023, Zhong was rejected from 16 out of the 18 colleges that he applied to, including several UCs and Ivy League schools. Zhong had a 4.42 grade point average, received a 1590 out of 1600 on the SAT, ran his own startup and tutored kids in coding during high school, then was later hired as a software engineer for Google, the company his father works for.

These statistics and extracurriculars, when combined with the college rejection stories of other Asian students, led Zhong and his father to believe that his rejection was race-based — despite the UC system denying the use of race as a factor in admissions. After making headlines, Zhong's lawsuit has attracted both sympathy and skepticism.

"I would be upset if I were him because he worked so hard throughout school, [and] he seemed to have a really strong drive [and] work ethic," said se-

nior Isabella Lew. "But going that far to say it was racism was a jump because there was no conclusive evidence that they denied him for those specific reasons."

Even so, some see Zhong's story as part of an overall pattern of Asian applicants being rejected from colleges in the name of diversity.

"I'm not surprised [that Zhong was rejected]," said freshman Yui Hayashi. "A lot of the time, colleges are trying to try to show equality, [and] they end up trying to select a certain percentage of each race [to admit] to make them look more diverse. There's going to be people who are getting cut off because they [can't fit] into the small range that the college prepares for them."

According to the UC president Michael Drake, one factor of college admissions is an applicant's academic achievements relative to the opportunities available at their school. Gunn High School is considered one of these schools that has many opportunities for its students; U.S. News & World Report ranks it as the 14th best public high school in California and reports that 83% of students at the school take at least one Advanced Placement course.

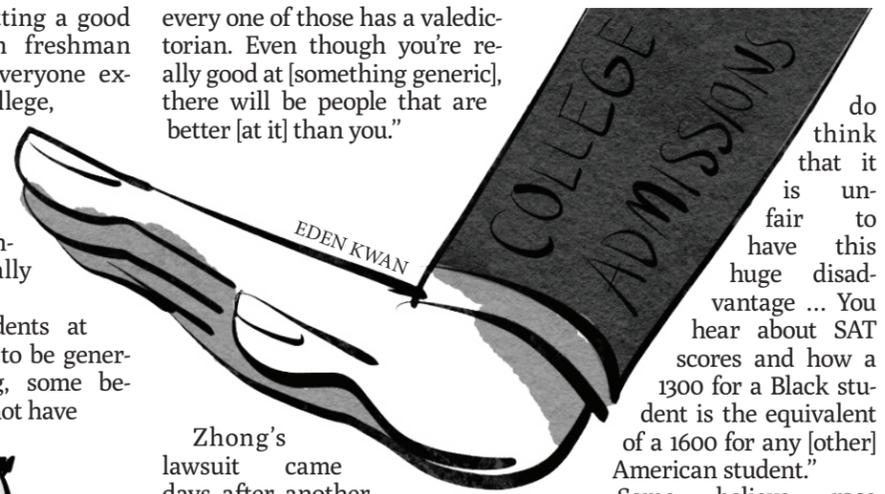
"Everyone [at Gunn is] really focused on APs or the hon-

ors classes and getting a good grade," said Gunn freshman Megan Tarbell. "Everyone expects to go to college, and [to] go to a good college. A bunch of people from Gunn this year got into Stanford [and other] really good schools."

Given that students at Gunn are reported to be generally high-achieving, some believe Zhong might not have stood out to colleges when compared to his peers or other highly qualified applicants.

"[Colleges] look for uniqueness and passion, instead of just straight-up extracurriculars," said freshman Naomi Dulac. "There are more than 22,000 high schools in the U.S., and each and

every one of those has a valedictorian. Even though you're really good at [something generic], there will be people that are better [at it] than you."



Zhong's lawsuit came days after another lawsuit against the University of California, filed on Feb. 3 by a group called Students Against Racial Discrimination. The lawsuit alleges that the University has illegally considered race as part of college admissions.

The practice of race-conscious admissions is known as affirmative action and has been illegal in California since the passing of Proposition 209 in 1996. In 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that colleges across the country could not consider race during the admissions process.

"Having affirmative action is good to some extent, so it allows people to break the cycle of poverty that's been going on for generations," Dulac said. "But I

do think that it is unfair to have this huge disadvantage ... You hear about SAT scores and how a 1300 for a Black student is the equivalent of a 1600 for any [other] American student."

Some believe race should not be an important factor in college admissions.

"If you focus too much on diversity, sometimes the color of someone's skin can overlook the quality of someone else's hard work, and I don't think that's very fair to either of them," said senior Sam Pirzadeh.

The Zhongs allege that the University of California has knowingly violated laws that prohibit affirmative action, and by suing the University of California, they hope to achieve a more just college admissions process for future Asian applicants.

As of March 22, the Zhongs have issued more lawsuits, namely against Cornell University, the University of Washington and the University of Michigan.

Editorial: cafeteria improves

This editorial represents the opinions of 14 of 14 Outlook editors

In the past two years, there have been significant upgrades within Aragon's cafeteria that the Outlook commends.

The efforts of the cafeteria staff to supply the student body with fresh and well-balanced foods are evident. The majority of menu items are now made from scratch instead of being pre-packaged, with the cafeteria staff only outsourcing a few items.

With this shift towards house-made items, fruits and vegetables are now more integrated into meals, rather than handed off in a separate bag. Fruits are also made easily accessible to students who don't want to go through the full line, with a cart near C hall.

Further, several students have praised the food at Aragon for overall flavorful — especially since the meals are free, as a result of the 2021 Universal School Meals Program Act. This means many more students who would not have been able to bring food from home sustainably, are able to get meals from school instead. And given the aforementioned increases in nutritional benefits, this allows many to not only have convenient access to food, but food that's free, appetizing and nourishing — saving them the time and resources from having to prepare food themselves

or in more serious cases, saving them from not eating at all.

Even with how many students are in line, the cafeteria staff is still able to work quite quickly, with their 18 student workers distributed across days and the two large food stands near C and D Hall. This ensures that students are still able to enjoy the bulk of their break time — and this efficiency starts from the preparation part itself.

"We are more organized ... each [person] here knows what [they] have to do," said Nutrition Services Lead Raghda Zumot. "We don't have to just

finish our task and then wait [until] somebody tells us what to do. We jump from here to here, without asking [or] waiting ... which makes our job really easy."

Most importantly, the Outlook is very appreciative of the constant trend of improvement. The staff takes feedback both directly, through talking to some students at the window, or indirectly, through their student workers. Actively seeking these student opinions has resulted in a greater prevalence of menu items that people enjoy.

The cafeteria staff evidently places much focus on providing greater varieties of food items from day to day, making more meals from scratch and incorporating more nutritious elements — making school brunch and lunch much more enjoyable experiences.



AUDREY WANG

The ARAGON OUTLOOK

aragonoutlook.org

Ellen Li & Leah Hawkins
Editors-in-Chief

Scott Silton
Faculty Adviser

FEATURES

- Chloe Chen*
- Hannah Li*
- Angela Nguyen*
- Meilin Rife*
- Gemma Albertson
- Kyra Hsieh
- Oliver Levitt
- Zack Li
- Ceylon Liu
- Antonio Mangano
- Anushka Punjabi
- Seona Srivastava
- Ashley Tsui
- Allinah Zhan

PHOTO

- Anna He*
- Madeline Allen
- Felix Ma
- Darra McLintock
- Victoria Santana
- Ethan Tawn
- Mia Thurrell
- Lian Wang
- Martin Zheng

NEWS

- Darshan Bal*
- Darren Lo*
- Emma Shen*
- Ellie Blakely
- Dora Chen
- Christine Choi
- Claire Dong
- Naomi Kotani
- Reika Lam
- Helen McCloskey
- Jannah Nassef
- Diya Poojary
- Yang Yang

BUSINESS

- Anna He*
- Hannah Li*

EDITORIAL

- Emma Shen*

CENTERSPREAD

- Alexa Sterry*

TECHNOLOGY

- Chloe Chen*

SPORTS

- Andrew Dong*
- Jack He*
- Phoebe Harger
- Charlie Henderson
- Sora Mizutani
- Olivia Mukherjee
- Claire Qi
- Quinn Shirley
- Advika Singh
- Adya Tewari

GRAPHICS

- Eva Ludwig*
- Vanessa Chan
- Felix Gee
- Lillian Huang
- Eden Kwan
- Winona Reif
- Audrey Wang

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Anna He*
- Meilin Rife*
- Alexa Sterry*

* denotes editors

California lawmakers target homelessness crisis

Naomi Kotani
NEWS WRITER

In 2024, there were over 187,000 homeless people in California — the highest number out of all states. The homelessness crisis has been a topic of intense debate, with politicians proposing various solutions ranging from funding housing programs to clearing out encampments.

Last year, the Supreme Court ruled that city governments could punish people sleeping in public spaces. However, there are questions as to whether these policies are effective strategies to fix homelessness in the long run.

In San Jose, the mayor's plans to arrest homeless people who do not accept multiple opportunities for shelter were recently approved. But while homeless shelters offer a temporary place to stay, they often have unsafe conditions that can make homeless people hesitant to utilize them due to issues like sexual abuse and health hazards.

"I was beat up [in a shelter] and raped, then they kicked me out and the police came and they wouldn't make a police report," said Jennifer Matter, who has been homeless for over a decade. "So I was cast out with nothing and I had to start over."

During his 2024 presidential campaign, President Donald Trump talked about banning encampments. Gov. Gavin Newsom has also

pushed for encampment clearings and threatened to withhold funding from cities that do not do so. However, many believe forcing homeless people to leave encampments where they have built communities can undo progress they have made towards exiting homelessness, such as the connections formed with service providers or the sense of community within the encampments.

"Instead of attempting to help these people and solve their problem through giving these people options, you're taking away the little options that they do have," said sophomore Aliya Khan.

Additionally, some argue that incarcerating people who refuse shelter does more harm than good. Those who are convicted as a result of these laws would have criminal records, which is likely to cause them to face discrimination when seeking housing and employment, according to a 2016 report about the reintegration of people released from prison.

"When you exit incarceration, if you don't have services, if you don't have connection to housing, if you don't have jobs, you're going to end up experiencing homelessness again,

especially in California, where it's so expensive to live," said Teya Hisel, policy manager at Downtown Women's Center in Los Angeles, which provides services for homeless people. "It's just a brutal cycle."

One method of addressing homelessness, called Housing First, ensures that homeless people have a stable place to live without requiring them to get mental health treatment or use other services

before getting housing. A 2021 review found that Housing First reduced homelessness by 88% and housing stability increased by 41% compared to when treatment was prioritized instead.

"If you're suspended in that kind of fight or flight, it's really difficult to start dealing with anything else that's going on in your life," Hisel said. "It's really hard to sustain a job [or] access mental health ser-

VICES. But if you can get into housing first, you have a place to come home to, and you have that sense of safety and security. You need your basic needs taken care of first before you can expand and start to deal with other things in your life."

Unaffordable housing is a major cause of homelessness. Measure T, passed during the 2024 elections, is a city ordinance in San Mateo that imposes limitations on Measure Y, passed in 2020, which restricted the height and density of residential housing that could be built on a certain amount of land. Proponents of such measures believe that they will ease the housing shortage, gradually leading to more affordability.

"Increasing production, increasing housing density, just creating more housing that is affordable, is so important," Hisel said. "People need to be able to afford the housing they live in. Increasing the housing stock that is affordable helps that."

Even with Measure T introducing the possibility of more housing units, some do not think that this alone will help alleviate homelessness. "[The] price range wouldn't be something that someone who's homeless could afford," Khan said. "I don't think it would even be close just be-

cause of the amount of money that these apartments cost ... we need more low-income housing to solve the issue."

Others add that mistrust of donating to the homeless is preventing successful programs from being instated.

"Homeless people are homeless because they couldn't find stability, and so if all they can really afford is a \$5 beer bottle, then how are they gonna afford a whole house?" said sophomore Jordyn De Los Santos Bordner. "They have to turn to the drugs for support, and that's why people don't like giving homeless people money because they think that they're gonna use it to buy drugs. And some do, some don't, but when you're kind of put in that difficult situation, it becomes a habit to turn to anything that provides you comfort."

Several felt that the approach to finding strategies to reduce homelessness needs to be more tailored to the needs of the homeless.

"If anything, they should have more agencies coming out to pick [the homeless] up and put them into shelters or hotels, because there's a lot of resources but there's not a lot of footwork being done about it," Matter said. "It would be really stupid to waste the taxpayers' money to put them in jail."

As the homelessness crisis continues to worsen, many feel that lawmakers' responses are not sufficient enough to lead to long-term solutions.



VANESSA CHAN



Pope Francis returns from hospitalization.

RAWPIXEL.COM

Pope Francis recovers

Jannah Nassef
NEWS WRITER

On Feb. 14, Pope Francis, head of the worldwide Catholic Church and head of state of the Vatican City State, was admitted to the Agostino Gemelli Hospital in Rome due to bronchitis, a viral infection that makes it hard to breathe, causing coughing and fatigue. While in the hospital, Francis developed further infections including bilateral pneumonia, an infection in both lungs due to bacteria or viruses.

Due to the seriousness of his infections and illnesses, the concern regarding the possibility of Francis being replaced arose.

"My grandparents probably would be very judgmental [of a new pope]," said freshman Dash Reeves. "In the sense that they're probably not ready to let go of [Francis] ... [because] he did a whole bunch of work to make things better."

Many feel older people would be much more sensitive to the election of a new pope.

"A lot of the older generation would definitely have shifting views on [a new pope]," said freshman Arianna Beltran. "But for a lot of my family, like my aunts, a lot of them converted to Christianity ... from ritualistic Catholic beliefs. So in my family, it doesn't matter as much, except for my Lola, my grandmother, on my Filipino side. She always likes to watch the news and livestream church things. So she would definitely pay attention to that."

Some are not opposed to the idea of a new pope being elected.

"It could be good to have someone fresh because he's been the pope for a while," said junior Sarah Walter. "I [also] don't think [a new pope] would change too much ... a lot of people, specifically here, don't really care [about the pope or] the Vatican probably because the people who are Catholic here take [Catholicism in] their own interpretation."

CONTINUED ON
ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG

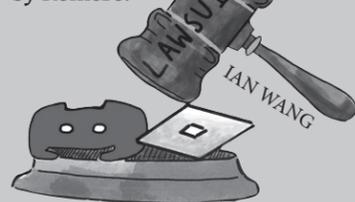
Roblox and Discord face lawsuits

Christine Choi
NEWS WRITER

In February, a lawsuit was filed against Roblox, a popular online gaming platform, and Discord, a leading online messaging site. The lawsuit claims that adults use these platforms to contact and exploit minors.

Cotchett Pitre & McCarthy filed the lawsuit on behalf of the family of a 13-year-old boy, who was an active user of both Roblox and Discord. The family claimed that they let their son have access to these platforms since they were led to believe they were safe for children. However, in 2024, the parents learned Roblox and Discord had enabled an adult — later identified as 27-year-old Sebastian

Romero — to coerce the boy to send explicit images and information. After more investigation, authorities identified more than 25 victims in the San Mateo area targeted by Romero.



Some students believe that the lawsuit is fair, but that situations like this are inevitable on the web.

"The lawsuit could be justified," said junior Kaitlyn Zee. "But the individual users should

be more cautious and alert while talking to others so they can spot something suspicious."

However, junior Bradley Lum hasn't experienced such behavior on Discord.

"Anytime you're on an online space, you're bound to run into people who are going to use it for not what it was intended [for]," Lum said. "I've been on Discord for a pretty long time, and I've never encountered any dubious messenger."

For students at Aragon, most have had a positive experience on these platforms. Many students use them for convenience and ease of communication with others, especially in school and social settings.

CONTINUED ON
ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG

THE DOROTHY PENDANT
THE COMPASS PENDANT
BY MONICA RICH KOSANN

Kerns
Fine Jewelry

214 Lorton Ave
Downtown Burlingame
kernjewelers.com

allcove

find your moment.

find your space.

find your center.

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.
- Peer support.
- Family support.
- Supported education and employment.

allcove San Mateo
 2600 S El Camino Real,
 Suite 300
 San Mateo, CA 94403
 (650) 226 -7030
 allcove.org/san-mateo

  @allcovesanmateo



Germany and the world shifts right

Claire Dong
NEWS WRITER

On Feb. 23, Germany's government hosted its 2025 federal election seven months earlier than originally planned due to the collapse of the government in late 2024. The election saw a record-breaking turnout of 82.5%, the highest it's been since Germany's unification in 1990. This turnout, up from 76.6% in 2021, reflects the heightened interests and concerns of the German public regarding Germany's current political and economic state.

This election came after months of political instability in 2024. The previous government, a coalition known as the "traffic light" alliance, consisting of the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Free Democratic Party, collapsed due to growing public dis-

satisfaction over economic and energy policies. The election results signal a dramatic reform of Germany's political landscape. The center-right Christian Democratic Union and its sister party, the Christian Social Union, led by Friedrich Merz, emerged with the largest share of the vote at 28.6%. Their campaign primarily focused on peeling back business regulations and reducing taxes in order to jumpstart Germany's economy.

Despite winning the most votes, the CDU and CSU still do not have a majority in parliament and therefore will have to ally with another party. Early signs point to a potential partnership with the SPD, which, though weakened, still gained 16.4% of the votes.

The most surprising development from this election was the Alternative for Germany's performance. This far-right party took 20.8% of the votes, placing it second overall. While the AfD has a growing base of support, Germany's domestic intelligence agency has officially labeled parts of the AfD as "extremist" due to their re-migration movements, which involve deporting people who are not of German descent. Their label prevents them from being a part of the government because the country's mainstream parties have maintained a strict policy of non-cooperation, also known as the "Brandmauer" or firewall, created after World War II to prevent extremist influences.

This shift in power from left to right isn't only seen in Germany. In the United States, the Democratic Party lost to the Republican Party in the 2024 election, Botswana's Democratic Party lost power for the first time in nearly 60 years and Austria's far-right Freedom Party secured the highest percentage of the outcome for the first time in Austria's history at 29% of votes.

For some students, these political changes around the world feel personal, especially when they impact countries they're connected to.

"I'm partly German," said sophomore Mia Gottschalk. "It definitely feels bad that the country where part of my heredity is [from is] not

in a very good situation, and it will definitely affect how people here see Germans. They'll think that all Germans are like that, even though that's definitely not true, especially because there's a lot of mass protests going on against it."

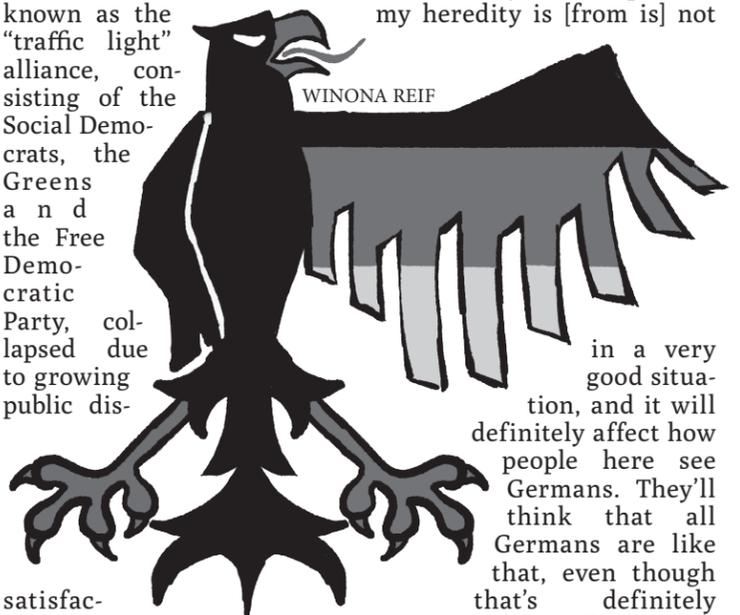
Others view the rise in global conservatism through a geopolitical lens, worried about how international alliances may shift.

"I do not like how the entire world is currently trending towards conservatism," said Burlingame sophomore Emma Yu. "That means everyone's going to be associating with Trump, giving him more allies, and as a result, it'll be harder to limit him as a global power and influence, especially as every major country aligns with a side."

Some students are also concerned about how the global conservative shift could impact long-term issues like climate change, especially as many right-wing governments deprioritize environmental action.

"For climate change, [right-wing governments] definitely are not focusing on it as much," Gottschalk said. "It's an ongoing problem, and not supporting climate change, even for a moment, is going to affect the world quite a lot. People should focus more on the environment and what effects they'll make towards it."

These parallel shifts reflect a larger political realignment, where many voters are turning their backs on more traditional centrist parties in favor of those with strong beliefs promising stronger borders, national identity and economic security.



PROTECT DEFEND SAVE



CONNECT WITH A RECRUITER TODAY!

IS1 KASEY STEWART -OR- AMT1 JESSE TORRES
 PRODUCTION RECRUITERS, SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

GOCOASTGUARD.COM

ONLINE THIS MONTH



NEWS
 District blocked websites



SPORTS
 NBA analysis



Trump tariff-ies America's economy

Hannah Li and Anushka Punjabi
FEATURES EDITOR AND WRITER

On April 2, President Donald Trump announced sweeping tariffs on nearly all of the U.S.'s trading partners. Self-dubbed as "Liberation Day" for American manufacturing and industries, the policy included a 10% baseline tax on all imports and country-specific reciprocal tariffs. One week later, he announced a 90-day suspension on tariffs beyond the 10% baseline for countries who did not retaliate. Notably, China was exempt from this pause, with Trump increasing duties to 125% in response to their retaliation.

According to the White House, President Trump has declared the trade deficit a national emergency. This approach allows him to utilize laws such as the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to enact tariffs without congressional approval. Critics argue this is an abuse of power, as the IEEPA's use in this context bypasses the legislative branch's authority over trade policy.

"[Trump] found out later in his first term how much power the President has to implement, change [and] manipulate tariffs," said U.S. Government and Economics teacher Carlo Corti. "[Now] he's using ... it for both political and economic reasons, and that can be confusing to people who want to know ... how much things are going to cost."

TRUMP'S GOAL

At their core, tariffs are taxes imposed by a government on imported goods, which tend to reduce entry into a market by foreign companies.

"Tariffs alone are a useful tool," said Lilly Loghmani, Aragon alumni and Barnard Economics student. "They can protect certain industries and help them develop inside the U.S., or they can protect the U.S. from unfair trade practices, like if a certain country engages in monopolistic behavior, dumping lower prices, etc."

This perspective aligns with broader goals cited by the Trump administration, such as revitalizing domestic employment.

"Trump mentioned the idea of wanting to bring American jobs back to America that have been lost to globalization trends over the last 50, 60 plus years," said U.S. Government and Economics teacher Heather Sadlon. "And also there's a pretty big trade imbalance, so he's looking at trying to put the U.S. more on the positive side of trade with this [current] kind of globalization."

Politically, however, tariffs can be used as leverage in international negotiations or as a show of strength, making them a bargaining chip.

"He'll say sometimes it's for helping our industries out, but he will also say, 'I'm putting a tariff on Canada because they're letting fentanyl into this country' or 'because they're letting

illegal immigrants in this country,'" Corti said. "That is a very clear punishment for something another country does politically."

EFFECTS OF TARIFFS

The reality of these tariffs becomes more complicated when considering their ripple effects on consumers.

"Every industry somewhere in their supply chain are getting some sort of goods and services internationally," Loghmani said. "They're going to face higher costs, and those are eventually going to get placed on the consumers ... Placing tariffs like this go against free trade principles [and] a free market, which is what's touted as the ideal economic structure by a lot of people ... So in a sense, this is basically sabotaging a lot of the U.S. industry."

Additionally, by isolating the United States from the global market, Trump undercuts the benefits of comparative advantage, in which countries focus on producing what they're best at and trade for the rest.

"There's a reason why we use China, Vietnam and the Philippines for labor, because it's cheap, and we benefit from that," said senior Adin Beltran. "We buy our clothes for cheaper, and we can specialize in [making] tech ... That's the point of [specialization]: everything will come at a cheaper cost because some other country will produce it for cheaper, so you can just import it and then specialize in something else."

Of course, the real-world impact of tariffs extends beyond just economic theory; it affects everyday people and businesses.

"My mom's [company has] to outsource work to other countries, and [because] Trump wants to tariff almost everything that comes into the U.S., [it] just makes it harder for companies to make a profit," Beltran said. "My mom's job is in danger because of increasing costs to operate, so they need to fire people to make room for that."

RECIPROCAL TARIFFS

Traditionally, reciprocal tariffs are defined as equal tariff rates imposed in response to another country's tariffs.

By contrast, Trump's retaliatory tariffs were calculated based on the ratio of the U.S. trade deficit with a country to the total value of imports from that country, which could be seen as a measure of the imbalance in a trade relationship. In relationships with economically disadvantaged nations, which may not be able to afford large volumes of American imports but rely heavily on exports, high tariffs reflect a natural imbalance between wealthy and poorer nations, not trade barriers. Moreover, the administration's inclusion of factors such as currency manipulation and other non-tariff barriers in the tariff calculations were not consistently applied or defined, leading economists from the American Enterprise Institute to suggest that some tariffs were overinflated by a factor of four.

"The U.S. has essentially cut off all of its allies for whatever reason, and Europe has already started making plans without the U.S. being a major player," said senior Gio Rodriguez. "China, Japan and South Korea, countries which all historically have almost 3,000 years of beef, basically, have come together ... just in response to what Trump is doing currently, which I just find hilarious on one hand, and so deeply worrying because how are you able to be this dividing and yet ironically uniting."

As countries retaliate with their own tariffs, they could target key U.S. industries, disrupting global supply chains, with the potential to isolate the U.S. from its traditional allies. Such a trade war could leave the U.S. surrounded by adversarial nations, creating economic and political tension long-term.

EFFECTS ON STOCK MARKET

The U.S. stock market has also experienced significant volatility following the President's announcement of tariffs. On April 3, the S&P 500 companies lost a combined \$2.4 trillion in value, the largest one-day loss since COVID-19's start, followed immediately afterward with a more than 9% climb after Trump's suspension announcement.

"Stocks aren't a measure strictly of welfare or economic strength; they're a measure of expected returns from investments," Loghmani said. "But the fact that we are seeing ... such a huge dip in the stock market means that even investors have major concerns over investor policies ... Every industry, index funds, etc, are all expecting to brace for impact."

This sharp market reaction emphasizes growing economic uncertainty.

"[People aren't] going to invest in a company if [they] don't know what the effects of tariffs on that company would be," Corti said.

Tariffs are often framed as a way to protect American industries and workers, yet the costs they generate can ripple down to consumers.

"The public can't have it both ways," Beltran said. "Many Americans see protectionary acts like tariffs as a good for the U.S. economy, because we hear like, 'protect American jobs' or things like that, and we get pretty patriotic about it, but we also hate it when prices of goods go up, and a company that has to pay more for imported goods are going to raise the prices on consumers."

As global markets react to the growing tension between the U.S. and its allies, the effectiveness of these tariffs remain uncertain.



Senior assassin cancelled

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

On three separate occasions, participants of Senior Assassin committed reckless acts around San Mateo, warranting the involvement of the San Mateo police and Aragon administration.

"If you look at our rules compared to other schools, we're much more strict," said Olivia King, senior and Senior Assassin admin. "We made it clear that if anyone is being threatening or aggressive we will remove them from the game ... All the issues that had arisen recently we didn't even know about."

Prior to the school shutting down Senior Assassin, someone had made a threat on Instagram about attacking the school with a gun on account of Senior Assassin. This was reported to the administration, who promptly began an investigation with students who they theorized were associated with the poster.

"Everyone knows that it's just games," said senior Russell Yee. "I didn't think [the school] had to take it so seriously."

The Senior Assassin game at Junipero Serra High School was also heavily discouraged by the school administration on March 15 after the school received a phone call threat.

Other incidents involving Aragon students that were reported to police included students throwing eggs at other students' homes, shooting uninvolved civilians and being reported for looking suspicious. No one was harmed in these.

"Me and my partner were waiting for our target to come out of their house," said senior Sophia Hsu. "We were sitting there for kind of a long time ... [Their neighbor] kept checking their window. Later on, the police showed up ... saying, 'we just got a call that kids were running in and out of a car. We can tell you guys aren't doing that.'"

To join Senior Assassin, participants had to pledge \$10 per person.



Before getting shut down, the prize pot for Senior Assassin had amassed around \$1600. All of that was nonrefundable.

"We had people vote on Instagram on whether they would like [the money] to be donated to class council so we could spend it on events like senior activities day and senior sunset," King said. "Or we could split the prize pot among the three winners ... They voted to donate to class council."

Senior Assassin is officially canceled for this year, but it is up to next year's students if it will resume next spring.

"[Senior Assassin] is student-run so we don't have control over it," said vice principal David Moore. "We are shutting it down for this year, but who knows for the future."



Chart: Liz Hoffman/Semafor • Source: Yale Budget Lab



Passion Projects

Reporting by Ashley Tsui
FEATURES WRITER

REGENERATIONS, ADELE RYONO (10)

What is your passion project?

It's an oral history project at the intersection of preserving history, understanding the origins of our diverse perspectives and connecting generations. I lead workshops and teach middle school students about how to create an oral history profile on [an] older adult who has impacted them. Each profile focuses on the idea of how perspectives are passed through generations and how the people around us have impacted the people we are today ... Once I teach a series of workshops at schools, the students complete their profiles and they submit them. [Then] I go over [and] read them, maybe do some light editing and then publish them on our website [our-regenerations.org].

What is the goal of this project?

The first [goal] is simply to build writing skills and [a] love for writing, [which is] something that's lost in school a lot. The second [goal] is to connect generations. I'm really passionate about how intergenerational connections can build happiness ... So with this project, as we challenge a young person and an older person to sit down together and have a conversation. I hope that'll bring them a little closer together ... They [can] already know this person, but maybe sparking a conversation about something that they never knew about helps them see a new side to a person they've known for a long time.

What's your favorite thing about this project?

Seeing all of those profiles come together is super rewarding. I love how you can see not only students' hard work, but it's this tangible way of seeing how the relationships between people can change lives [and] how people impact each other so much. You get this archive and you see how the older adults in our lives have so much to say from what they've lived. We can learn so much, and we don't always sit down and stop and ask them that. So this project [is] giving students a chance [and] encouraging them to do that, [which] is really important.



EVA LUDWIG

HOPE UNIFORMS, ETHAN HUA (11)

What is your passion project?

HOPE stands for "Help Our Planet Earth" and it's a uniform program. It's an initiative dedicated to recycling school uniforms and community support. We collect uniforms and we redistribute them back to the community. We partner up with schools, and we have donation [and] recycling bins stationed in the front office, and through that, the community can either pick up or drop off orders. For families who need new uniforms, they'll request through our website, through a simple form, and on our end, we'll fill out the uniform donation order through our inventory. We drop it off at the school, they pick it up and once they outgrow the uniforms, they could donate it back by dropping off the uniforms they don't need back at the school site.

Why did you start this project?

I've been in the San Mateo-Foster City School District and public school district my entire life, and I went to College Park first, and then to Bayside. What [these schools] have in common is that they have a uniform. These schools [also] have a student body population of diverse economic backgrounds, and I have many friends who were struggling with procuring uniforms for themselves. I thought [the fact] that some students were struggling to fill [that dress code] needed to be addressed.

What makes this project special?

We're very sustainable. This all stems from my beliefs [about] sustainability. The main purpose of this program is to prevent environmental waste, from textile waste, specifically, being contributed to landfills. Annually, 11 million tons of textile waste [is] contributed to landfills. I thought that as a kid, that was a scary number. I thought that this program could combat that.

THE RECAP PROJECT, BRANDON LIN (10)

What is your passion project?

My passion project involves [turning] clean medical waste into useful products. Currently, I've been making clipboards, and I'm collecting mostly needle caps, like the safety caps that they remove before giving shots and turning them into clipboards.

What is the goal of this project?

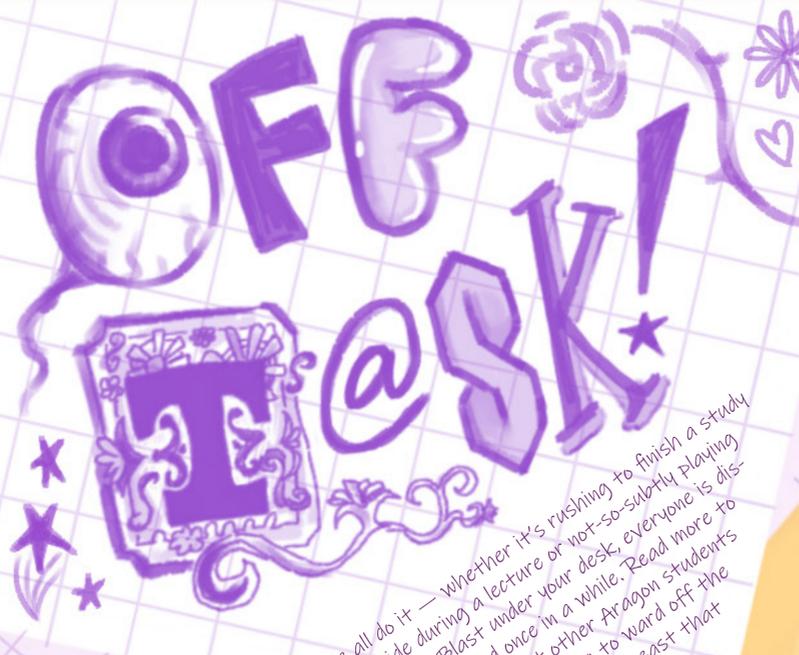
The goal is to remove as much medical waste from the waste stream as possible [and] keep it out of incinerators and landfills. Also, to spread the word about sustainability. It's getting a lot more important nowadays because the effects of climate change are so huge now. Every time someone collects plastic and gives it to me, it really helps them think of their daily life and how they're impacting the environment.

What was the process of getting the project started?

I was just inspired because my dad, who's a physician, he's like, 'there's so much waste at the office.' I'm like, 'why can't we just use that waste to make other products?' ... I'm working with this nonprofit called Peninsula Precious Plastic, so I reached out to them, and [asked if] I can use their facility ... to experiment with [making] plastic items. [When] I went there the first time, I made a few clipboards, and they ended up pretty good.

What are some of the highlights of this project?

We just hit collecting over 1,000 pounds of plastic the other month so that was really exciting. It's really fun to make the boards. I get to have all these different color plastics that I sort [into] bins, and then I can just pick whatever I want to put into each clipboard, so it's personalized. Distributing was really fun to see everyone like, 'I want that clipboard.' Sometimes they'll request certain designs on it.

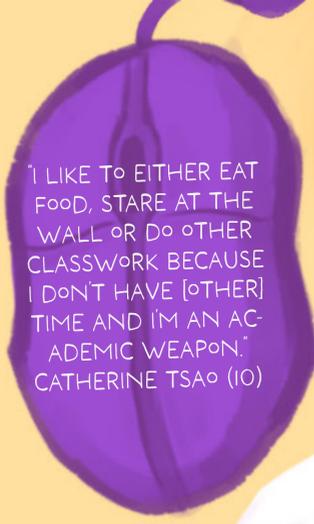


COPY: ALEXA STERRY, ANDREW DONG,
ANGELA NGUYEN, ANNA HE
GRAPHICS: ALEXA STERRY
LAYOUT: ALEXA STERRY

we all do it — whether it's rushing to finish a study guide during a lecture or not-so-subtly playing Block Blast under your desk. Read more to see what other Aragon students enjoy doing to ward off the immortal beast that is boredom.



"SOMETIMES I MAKE ORIGAMI IF I CAN'T SLEEP. I DO ORIGAMI BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE IF I DO SOMETHING WITH MY HANDS, I'LL STAY AWAKE."
KATE SHINTANI (10)



"I LIKE TO EITHER EAT FOOD, STARE AT THE WALL OR DO OTHER CLASSWORK BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE [OTHER] TIME AND I'M AN ACADEMIC WEAPON."
CATHERINE TSAO (10)



"WHEN I'M OFF-TASK, I SCROLL THROUGH INSTAGRAM REELS A LOT. I LOOK AT BRAINROT CONTENT AND I TEXT MY FRIENDS ... I'M A BRAINROT ADDICT. I'M SPREADING THE DISEASE."
ANJALIKA KHARE (10)

"SOMETIMES I FALL ASLEEP AND I BEGIN TO WONDER WHY AM I HERE? ... I FEEL LIKE [TEACHERS] PROBABLY DO NOTICE, BUT THEY DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO ME, WHICH IS PROBABLY BETTER FOR THE BOTH OF US."
LUZZIE YUAN (10)

"I USUALLY TALK TO MY FRIENDS [OR] DO THE HOMEWORK FOR THE CLASS I HAVE NEXT... I GO TO COOL MATH GAMES AND PLAY PAPA'S SCOOPERIA. IT'S THE BEST, [MOST INTERESTING] PAPA'S GAME, I'D RATHER SCOOP ICE CREAM THAN MAKE PIZZA."
JACKIE WONG (10)

"I LIKE TO DRAW OR I LOOK THROUGH INSTAGRAM. I USUALLY JUST DRAW MY CAT, BOOTS."
KATELYNN TILTON (10)

Crossword!

LOOKING TO KILL TIME? DO THE OUTLOOK'S

Constructed by Alexa Sterry | Play online/reveal answers answers at tinyurl.com/aprilcross

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14													
16													
18				19		20			21				
22			23			24	25						
		26				27			28	29	30	31	
		32				33			34				
35	36					37							
38								39					
40					41			42					
				43				44			45	46	47
		48	49					50			51		
52	53				54	55			56	57			
58									59				
60										61			

ACROSS

- 1 - "___ YOUR ROOM!"
- 6 - "I'D RATHER WATCH _____!"
- 14 - MASKED HOCKEY POSITION
- 15 - "ANYTHING" AND "NOT A LOT, JUST FOREVER" SINGER LENKER
- 16 - NOT LATE
- 17 - ICY FORMATION AT THE TOP OR BOTTOM OF THE GLOBE
- 18 - POETIC TRIBUTE
- 19 - "WHAT'S THE BIG _____?"
- 21 - MARTIAL ARTIST BRUCE OR FILM-MAKER SPIKE
- 22 - "THE QUICK BROWN _____ JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG"
- 23 - TO THE _____ DEGREE
- 24 - UC BERKELEY, FAMILIARLY
- 26 - COUNTERPART TO THE ID, IN FREUD'S TERMS
- 27 - SO CLOSE YET SO _____
- 28 - "WOULD YOU STILL LOVE ME IF I WAS A _____?"
- 32 - SLANG TERM FOR WHO CONSTANTLY LOOKS ANNOYED, FOR SHORT
- 33 - COMES TO AN END
- 35 - TOTAL SNOWZEFEST... OR A CLUE FOR 1-ACROSS, 6-ACROSS, 60-ACROSS AND 61-ACROSS!
- 38 - WORD BEFORE "MENTION" OR "DISCHARGE"
- 39 - NINE-DIGIT ID, FOR SHORT
- 40 - DRENCH
- 41 - "HI-_____" OR "IN MEDIA _____"
- 42 - WHAT YOU MIGHT DO AT POKER
- 43 - CLASS TAKEN BY SOME IMMIGRANTS, FOR SHORT
- 44 - PREFIX FOR "INFORMATION" OR "CONSTRUE"
- 45 - "_____" *NSYNC HIT
- 48 - BUDDY
- 50 - COMMUNITY CELEBRATED BY GSA CLUB
- 51 - GOOD TO GO
- 52 - LUNAR OUTPOST
- 56 - IVY _____ OR _____ OF LEGENDS
- 58 - ONE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S THREE CAPITALS
- 59 - CANVAS HOLDERS
- 60 - "MY DOG ATE MY _____!"
- 61 - MAKING _____ TALK

DOWN

- 1 - OWNED APARTMENT, FOR SHORT
- 2 - BALLOON MATERIAL
- 3 - COTTON GIN INVENTOR ___ WHITNEY
- 4 - TARGETING
- 5 - "... ON A _____KNOW BASIS"
- 6 - THE MAMAS AND THE _____S
- 7 - RECENT ARAGON SHOW, "MUCH _____ ABOUT NOTHING"
- 8 - OFFLINE, IN ONLINE TERMINOLOGY
- 9 - ONE DIRECTION EX-MEMBER HORAN
- 10 - ZERO, AS A SCALE
- 11 - "CAKE BY THE OCEAN" GROUP
- 12 - GENETIC INFO CARRIER
- 13 - "UH HUH"
- 14 - PLAYFUL ADMISSION OF FAULT: "I DONE _____ED!"
- 20 - CANADIAN FILLER WORD
- 24 - BOAT SIMILAR TO A KAYAK
- 25 - GAS STATION CHAIN
- 26 - NOVEL THAT YOU MIGHT DOWNLOAD TO YOUR KINDLE
- 27 - "APRIL _____!"
- 28 - SAUSAGE THAT DOESN'T SOUND THE BEST?
- 29 - CHIEF NORSE GOD
- 30 - KYLO _____, STAR WARS CHARACTER
- 31 - BOUILLON CUBE INGREDIENT
- 32 - "MISS _____," SLANG NICKNAME FOR COVID-19
- 33 - BOSS WITH ALTER-EGO SELVIG "SEVERANCE"
- 34 - RUN OUT OF STAMINA
- 35 - NEIGHBORING SCHOOL WHICH DIANNA AGRON OF "GLEE" ATTENDED, FOR SHORT
- 36 - TIC-TAC-TOE WIN
- 37 - ROWS, AS A BOAT
- 42 - GOOD BOOKS?
- 43 - MACARONI SHAPE
- 44 - 1/1000 OF A GRAM, FOR SHORT
- 45 - BREAKFAST OPTION APPARENTLY ENHANCED BY NYC TAP WATER
- 46 - "_____" BE BACK," KING GEORGE III SOLO IN "HAMILTON"
- 47 - BARELY MANAGES, WITH "BY CLUB
- 48 - PIECE OF NON-PROSE
- 49 - UP THE _____
- 50 - BIG PROBLEM IN A ROWBOAT
- 52 - 0.03 FOR SNAILS OR 69-75 FOR CHEETAHS
- 53 - GOLD, EN ESPAÑOL
- 54 - NOT EXPERIENCING ROMANTIC ATTRACTION, FOR SHORT
- 55 - TITLE FOR KNIGHTS, LIKE ___ LANCELOT OR ___ PAUL MCCARTNEY
- 57 - BLIND ___ BAT

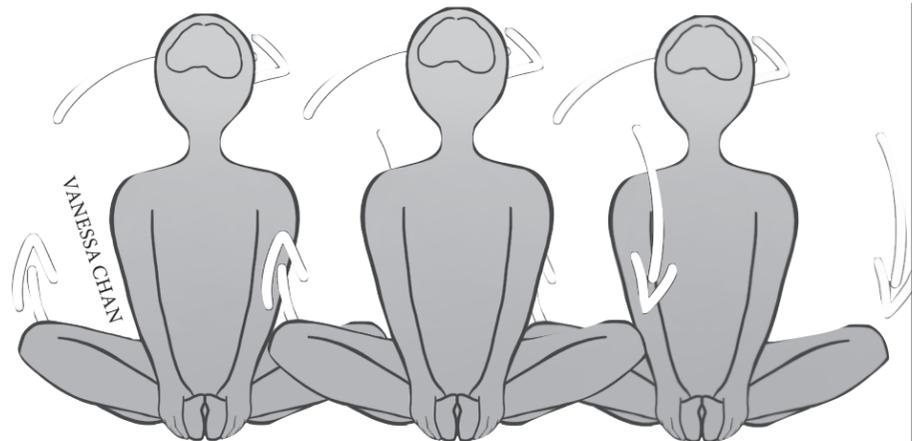
*THE OUTLOOK DOES NOT OFFICIALLY CONDONE OFF-TASK BEHAVIOR, EVEN TO PLAY OUR AWE-INSPIRING CROSSWORD

XOXO
"BOREDOM IS MY DRIVING FACTOR. IT BRINGS ME TO THE NYT [GAMES]. I [ALWAYS] START WITH WORDLE BECAUSE [IT'S] THE OG, [THEN] CONNECTIONS ... I DO STRANDS AFTER, SO EVEN IF I LOSE CONNECTIONS, I FEEL LIKE I STILL WON IN THE END. ... I LOVE THE OUTLOOK CROSSWORD. THE OUTLOOK CROSSWORD MAKES ME FEEL SO ENERGIZED! [ESPECIALLY] IN [THE] MOST RECENT EDITION - I COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THE ENERGIZER BUNNY."
LI JENNINGS (10)

XOXO
"I'M USUALLY ON THE CRUMBL COOKIE WEBSITE, SPECIFICALLY DURING ENGLISH. I ALSO DO THE WORDLE AND THE FLAGLE AS WELL AS ALL THE NEW YORK TIMES GAMES ... IT TAKES ME ALL FIVE TRIES, SO I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT SAYS ABOUT ME, BUT ... I USUALLY FINISH [EARLY], SO I [PLAY GAMES TO] PASS THE TIME."
NAOMI DULAC (9)

XOXO
"I'M NEVER OFF-TASK. I'M ALWAYS LOCKED IN. [WHEN] I'M NOT LOCKED IN, WHICH IS A VERY RARE OCCURRENCE, I LIKE TO CHECK THE STOCK MARKETS, [ESPECIALLY] WITH THE TARIFFS. I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS GOING SWELL ... SOMETIMES, I LOOK AT NFTS TO SEE HOW I SHOULD INVEST IN MY FUTURE."
SAMUEL CHOSLOVSKY (9)

XOXO
"I WATCH TENNIS VIDEOS, I PLAY GAMES AND I SOMETIMES WATCH GOOFY VIDEOS. I'M BORED, AND IT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN KEEP MY FOCUS UP. FOR [CERTAIN TEACHERS,] THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN CATCH WHAT THEY'RE SAYING, EVEN IF YOU ACTUALLY TRY TO PAY ATTENTION."
KAZ ONUMA (12)



Mind-body connection

Zack Li
FEATURES WRITER

Perhaps the audio of a low and relaxed voice guiding a breathing exercise comes to mind when some think of the mind-body connection. For others, it could be meditation, yoga or Pilates. These practices, and many more, all fall under an umbrella term — mindfulness-based therapies, which foster awareness of physical and mental health.

Mindfulness-based therapies encompass a variety of techniques that focus on both improving someone's connection with their mental state, such as meditation. Oftentimes, there are also physical components in the case of yoga or tai chi. Yoga is widely known to reduce stress, and this mood-enhancing and stress-reducing effect appears to even affect the body directly from a neurological perspective, with a study from the National Institute of Health revealing that yoga practice leads to better regulation of the nervous system. Similarly, tai chi has been practiced in China since the 17th century, dating back to the Thousand Year Temple in Henan. Nowadays, people connect their mind and body in a variety of different ways, not just by sticking to one practice or exercise, but by making lifestyle choices that allow them to de-stress.

"I connect to the mind and body by relaxing and decluttering," said junior Madison Spiegel. "A lot of people think that a good way to improve your mental health is to always be up and moving ... and trying to be productive. But it is also really important to just listen to your body and get rest when you feel you need it."

Based on the idea that one's mental state — thoughts and feelings — can impact physical health, and vice versa, mindfulness-based therapy is all about approaching stress and pain in the present, and acknowledging when to take a step back. It can even be as simple as taking a fraction out of your day to take a few deep breaths.

"I teach my students that it's really important to take even just three breaths," said health teacher Barbara Beaumont. "So if you say, today, I'm going to take my brain offline for three minutes, I'm going to set a timer and just inhale and exhale for three minutes. [Eventually] you can slowly increase that time to ten or twenty minutes of your time."

A lot can be gained from investing just a few minutes out of the day to realize our stressors. Framing a clear mental picture of our stress and health helps keep the mind grounded when anxiety creeps up.

"I remember [I had one week where] I was very unmotivated," Spiegel said. "Because I have Attention Deficit Disorder, it definitely helped to declutter, because instead of thinking about all of the 10 missing assignments I had I [could] actually focus on what matters."

Especially with difficult course loads, students find connecting the mind and body to be more important than ever.

"This is a very academic school," said junior Lorelei

Lorelei

EVA LUDWIG

Rustay. "People have a really hard workload, people kind of load their courses up with AP [classes], which can be super stressful. And I think if they don't find ways to manage their mind and body, then it can lead to a lot of stress and other issues."

This change in perspective is a focal point of connecting to the mind and body — considering one's feelings in the moment and what's within one's control is critical towards coming to terms with difficult emotions and stressors. A study conducted at the Stanford University of Medicine observed that mindfulness-based therapy led to a 30% decrease in stress-related symptoms that are commonly conducive to illnesses. For example, rumination is a known driver of stress and depression.

In addition to more mellow exercises such as yoga or tai chi, aerobic exercise also can help with mental health.

"Going to the [soccer] field with my friends helps a lot because it just takes my mind off what I have to do," Rustay said. "It gets my body moving and my blood flowing, which is super beneficial."

Mindfulness-based therapy also helps improve physical health in addition to mental health: improve flexibility, release body tension or counteract the effects of chronic illness.

"I do workouts ... I practice meditation [and] physical therapy," Beaumont said. "I started therapy to help with my early onset arthritis ... it's affected my hips, my back [and] my shoulders."

From tai chi to yoga to soccer, many teachers and students at Aragon find mindfulness-based therapy, or some other form of physical exercise, to be helpful in connecting the mind and body, and find more happiness as a result.

Sunrise of the reaping

Kyra Hsieh
FEATURES WRITER

"Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few and the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers," said philosopher David Hume.

Inspired by Hume's idea of implicit submission and the use of propaganda in today's society, Suzanne Collins released "Sunrise on the Reaping" on March 18. The novel is a prequel to her beloved trilogy "The Hunger Games" and follows Haymitch Abernathy, who was Katniss and Peeta's mentor in the original books, during his Hunger Games.

Despite being a sixteen-year-old boy from the poorest part of

served to advance the storyline and emphasize the book's greater themes.

However, the structure of the novel mimicked the original "The Hunger Games" book almost exactly, which did not allow as much suspense as it could have and gave the book a slower pacing than what the book truly needed.

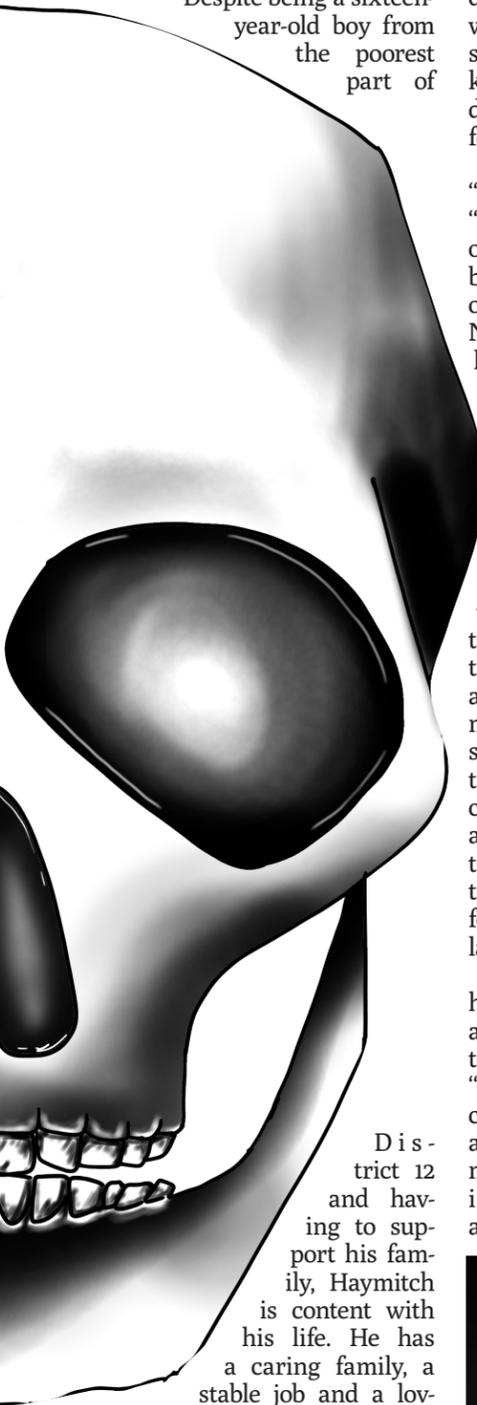
One of the most exciting parts of the book was the connections to the original books and the earlier prequel, "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes." Along with creating new characters, Collins explores the backstory of many familiar characters that readers hadn't known much about. The main character, Haymitch, is one, as readers discover why Haymitch is so misanthropic and cynical in the original novels.

Maysilee Donner, one of Haymitch's district partners, is another character who has an excellent and unexpected story arc as Haymitch slowly gets to know her and understands her true depth. She becomes a character to root for due to her fiery, fearless personality.

A recurring theme throughout all the "Hunger Games" books is rebellion, and "Sunrise on the Reaping" showcases not only how Haymitch is a rebel, refusing to be a pawn for the pleasure and demands of the Capitol, but more importantly, why. Nearly all of the people he surrounds himself with encourage him to defy the Capitol: his girlfriend, Lenore Dove, Maysilee and his fellow tributes.

Furthermore, a new theme explored is propaganda and implicit submission. Although these ideas had taken shape in Collins' previous novels, they took the main stage this time. Collins investigates this theme thoroughly with characters who either easily submit to the government in the Capitol and believe that the Games are necessary, or question the Capitol's methods and stories. The Capitol constantly warps the true image of not only the Games but nearly everything they can control. However, while Collins does argue against all usage of propaganda in the book, she does offer more nuance to the people who are affected by it by offering understanding to those manipulated by the government's propaganda.

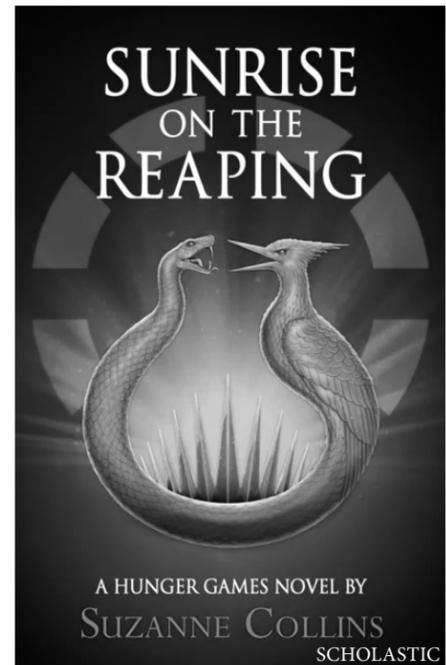
While "Sunrise on the Reaping" did have some flaws with pacing, overall it is a captivating novel with daring characters and compelling themes. Fans of the "The Hunger Games" books can draw countless parallels to the characters and themes in the original books making the novel even more riveting and earning the book a four and a half stars out of five stars.



District 12 and having to support his family, Haymitch is content with his life. He has a caring family, a stable job and a loving girlfriend. However, his dreams of happiness are crushed when he is reaped for the 50th Hunger Games. These Games are even more deadly than previous ones because they feature double the amount of children sent into the arena, a total of 48 instead of the usual 24. Along with his fellow tributes, Haymitch must try to survive the Games and make sure the Capitol doesn't make him a puppet for their entertainment.

One of the greatest concerns fans had before reading the novel was making the story fresh. Readers of "The Hunger Games" trilogy already knew the outline and ending of Haymitch's games because Collins wrote it into the second book, "Catching Fire," so the question became how Collins would keep readers engaged and the story fresh.

Collins eradicated all doubt when "Sunrise on the Reaping" was published because she created unexpected twists and turns, keeping readers on the edge of their seats that miraculously didn't feel forced. Each surprise in the plot



Anora: from rags to riches (to rags)

Angela Nguyen
FEATURES EDITOR

The movie *Anora* has taken the internet by storm with its roller coaster-esque plot, fast pace and newly won five Oscar awards — many of which are the first Oscars for writer and director Sean Baker, who is known for movies that highlight sex workers like “Red Rocket” and “Tangerine.”

The movie follows Anora, a sex worker in Brooklyn, who meets a Russian oligarch, Vanya Zakharov. As Anora becomes entangled in Vanya's life, they decide to marry each other without his parents' knowledge. However, when his parents find out, they send Vanya's godfather, Toros, and his goons, Garnik and Igor, to bring Vanya back to Russia. The moment Toros and his goons show up, Vanya leaves, abandoning Anora.

As an independent movie, *Anora* had a \$6 million budget, which is considerably less than other Oscar-nominated films. When independent films like *Anora* win, it inspires upcoming films.

“For a long time, it [felt] like there's been a big gap between the big directors ... and the people who are [just] trying to start their career,” said San Mateo High School sophomore Noa Johnson. “It's hard for them to be successful and [be] recognized and win awards ... because they don't have the right connections.”

One such actor is Mikey Madison, who plays Anora. Anora is introduced as a feisty and bold woman who argues with the club's owner for better working conditions. When Toros' goons hold down Anora to prevent her from running away, Madison does an excellent job of portraying Anora's anger and exhaustion. From kicking to shouting, Madison maintained Anora's stoic facade while hinting at her crumbling faith in Vanya coming back to save her — her range of emotions throughout the movie creating a captivating performance.

Madison also deeply immersed herself into this role, taking dance and Russian classes and visiting clubs to observe the etiquette and style. These club visits led to her getting long butterfly-themed acrylic nails and tattoos, a reference to the “night butterfly” term used to describe sex workers.

However, the cherry on top was the addition of the hair tinsels hinting at Anora's femininity. The little details in the costumes and visuals made Madison worthy of the best actress Oscar award.

“There were moments where Madison's acting really stood out to me,” Johnson said. “It was when she was about to board the plane with Vanya and he [said] ‘Thanks for making my last time in America so fun’ and Anora [says], ‘Yeah, you have fun?’ I watched this analysis of it and they were saying [that] she switched from her normal speaking voice to her working voice. It showed how she stopped viewing Vanya as someone she was in love with and it turned transactional for her again, because it was transactional for him the whole time.”

The different lighting and color saturations throughout the different scenes also added emotional depth to the movie. Most of the scenes in *Anora* depict red, blue or white to symbolize the American Dream that Anora tried to pursue by chasing Vanya. However, as the movie goes on, the film's colors change from extremely saturated to desaturated, representing Anora's fading hope of the American Dream.

However, the movie lacked details about Anora's back story all of the drama and beyond her work life. Small details such as her not speaking Russian and being reluctant when she had to speak Russian with Vanya didn't advance any understanding or plot about Anora; it instead made the audience crave for more backstory on Anora. Furthermore, it often felt that Anora was confined to her work and how even though she tried to break free from that life by marrying Vanya, it couldn't be helped that she had to come back to the club again to find her husband.

“The way that Anora and all of the sex workers were represented ... felt like we didn't really see their whole lives,” Johnson said. “It really would have benefited if a woman wrote more of the script and had more of a perspective on Anora's life ... [because Baker] doesn't know what it's like to do this job, know what it's like to be viewed in that way by society, and especially by men.”

However, Anora did have some character development

shown when her perspective on Igor changes. Initially, she viewed him as dangerous when he arrived with Toros to find Vanya — telling him he had “rapey eyes” when he tried to restrain her.

“You could see Igor become more humanized the more Anora gets to know him,” said junior Anna Gubman. “As she becomes comfortable with him, we start to see more of him and stop seeing him as a threat the way that she saw him originally, which is also [a] development of her own [when] she's come

While the pacing of all the scenes and relationships had its purpose, the scenes where Toros' goons and Anora left to find Vanya felt extremely long with no direction. Unlike the previous fast-paced parts with Anora and Vanya, this part was dragged out and seemed too centered toward Vanya, inhibiting the audience's captivation with the movie.

Besides romantic relationships, rivalries and friendships play a powerful role in the movie to demonstrate the hardship and struggle that Anora has to go through.

Most noticeable is Anora's rivalry with another colleague, Diamond.

Throughout the movie, Diamond has expressed jealousy that Anora met Vanya, and even went as far as to offer Vanya a lap dance while he was drunk to upset Anora. These relationships were able to fill in the gap regarding Anora's lack of outside-of-work personality.

“I connected with Anora because a lot of people and a lot of women know the feeling of being so excited about this opportunity like, love ... and just being let down and feeling not knowing what to do,” Johnson said. “When you have people you don't like and you're on a similar path as them, it feels very competitive. It's [similar to] seeing Anora be so happy to succeed, and then Diamond's doubts coming through.”

However, the most thought-provoking part of the movie is definitely the sobering ending. The colors were bleak and it was snowing, adding to the raw emotions that are felt through the screen. After Anora gets back to Brooklyn from Las Vegas to annul her marriage, Igor gives her the engagement ring that was supposed to be given back to the Zakharov family. The recurring theme of transactional relationships is highlighted when Anora jumps

on Igor to have sex with him, an act to repay the ring because that's what her job is based on and she knows that people are only nice to her when they want something in return. But when Igor tries to kiss her, Anora slaps him and breaks down completely and Igor embraces her. In this ending moment, Baker leaves the two labor-working characters just having each other at the end of the day to demonstrate the struggles and pain that sex workers have to go through.

“They're trying to show how hard it is [for] these women,” Johnson said. “Because a lot of people say ‘oh, it's such an easy job’ but everyone is complex, and everyone has their own life and their own emotions. Showing this tragedy is important because it gives these women more of a voice to speak out on how it's unfair and how it's not easy like people say it is.”

Baker also highlights the importance of having real genuine human connections. This shift in Anora's behaviors clashes with the Cinderella motif that has been displayed in the previous parts of the movie. Instead of viewing Vanya as her Prince Charming, Anora is now stepping up to the rude awakening that she's alone like before, but Igor steps in to provide her comfort, such as giving her back the engagement ring she had. It also demonstrates Anora is learning to see affection over sex. The movie overall highlights the reality in life that there isn't always a happy ending like in fantasies.

Despite trying to highlight the dangers of being a sex worker, the film itself didn't employ any intimacy coordinator. Without one, it reflects the real danger of what sex workers have to experience.

“The fact that they had no intimacy coordinator ... ruins the message of the movie a little bit,” Gubman said. “With how much sexual assault and harassment happens on film sets, directors or producers could easily manipulate a young actress like Mikey Madison to not want an intimacy coordinator.”

Ultimately, the movie does an excellent job of portraying the reality of life through the lens of Anora by using witty elements like tones in the lighting and different relationships. Baker not only honored and humanized sex workers but also expressed the hardships that labor workers in general have to experience. This allowed audiences from all walks of life to relate and be touched by this film, making *Anora* worthy of four stars out of five stars.

FILMNATION ENTERTAINMENT CRE FILM

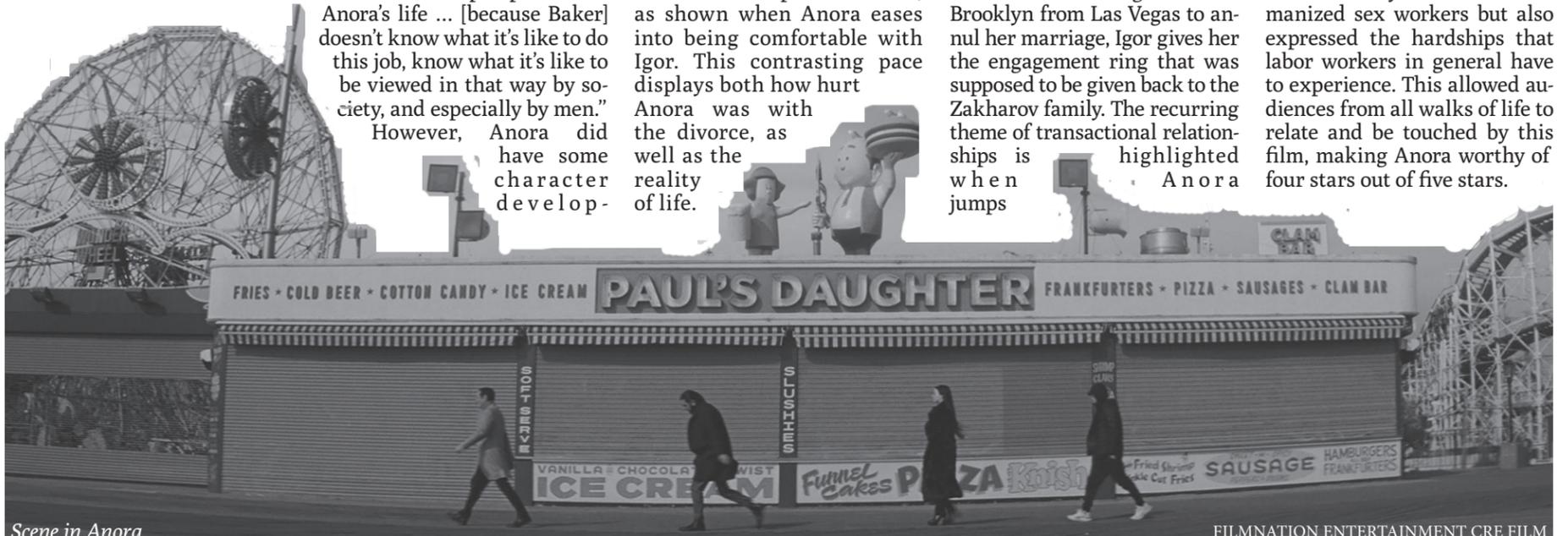


OUR OUTLOOK



back down to earth, and not stuck in that fake scenario she was in with.”

These different character dynamics offer both emotional intensity as well as comedic relief in the most serious scenes, such as with Toros and his goons. The relationship between Anora and Vanya is very fast-paced when they immediately get married, while Anora and Igor's relationship is slow-burn, as shown when Anora eases into being comfortable with Igor. This contrasting pace displays both how hurt Anora was with the divorce, as well as the reality of life.



Scene in *Anora*

FILMNATION ENTERTAINMENT CRE FILM

Trans fear: targeted and misunderstood

Gemma Albertson
FEATURES WRITER

During a Turning Point event in Arizona, President Donald Trump vowed to remove “transgender insanity” from schools. Scapegoating transgender people has been a cornerstone of this administration’s political campaign. Trump released national ads during his second campaign targeting former Vice President Kamala Harris’ support of nonbinary people; in total, the Republican party spent \$65 million on anti-trans ads, according to the New York Times. In the past few years, transgender people have experienced a resurgence of bold anti-trans rhetoric and policies.

POLITICS

Setting clear boundaries for the definitions of gender and biological sex may seem unnecessary or even outdated, considering all the progress America has made in recent years, but with a president who has made his anti-trans sentiments abundantly clear, advancements in favor of transgender rights are being halted and even reversed.

“[The situation for transgender people] is gonna get a lot worse,” said senior Samirah Field. “The amount of bills being introduced since the inauguration is shocking, and it’s not looking good. They’re certain they want to kill us. [It’s] terrifying. I don’t feel safe in the country anymore.”

In early 2025, Trump signed executive orders that claimed the U.S. government would only recognize two sexes: male and female. Under the guise of “protecting women’s spaces,” these orders work to end federal agencies’ equity, diversity and inclusion programs. Transgender people “invading” spaces primarily made for women has been a long-standing weapon harnessed by anti-trans rhetoric.

“If a man really wants to come into the women’s restroom to do stuff, he’s not gonna transition his entire gender identity,” said junior Dahlia Selig. “[He] can just walk right in ... There’s no electric shock collar that’s gonna be like, ‘can’t come in.’ There’s definitely fear-mongering about protecting your family, protecting your children.”

Similar to the inaccurate stereotypes about gay men or drag queens being predators, fear of those who stray from the cisgender, heterosexual norm develops into false accusations. By pushing transgender people to the outskirts of society, trans youth lose means of support, thus making it even harder for them to thrive and, in some cases, survive.

YOUTH VOICES

“Would you rather have a kid that is potentially very depressed and unhappy and maybe even suicidal, as we’ve seen in a lot of cases, or would you rather let them explore their identity?” Selig said. “See what they like, even if they’re not being put on hormone blockers or something like that. Let them explore who they want to be. That’s just a good thing to do.”

In describing the acceptance of transgender women as “legal and other socially coercive means to permit men to self-identify as women,” it is made clear that the goal of these orders is not to protect women as it claims, but instead to escalate the fears and misconceptions surrounding transgender identities, with a specific focus on trans women.

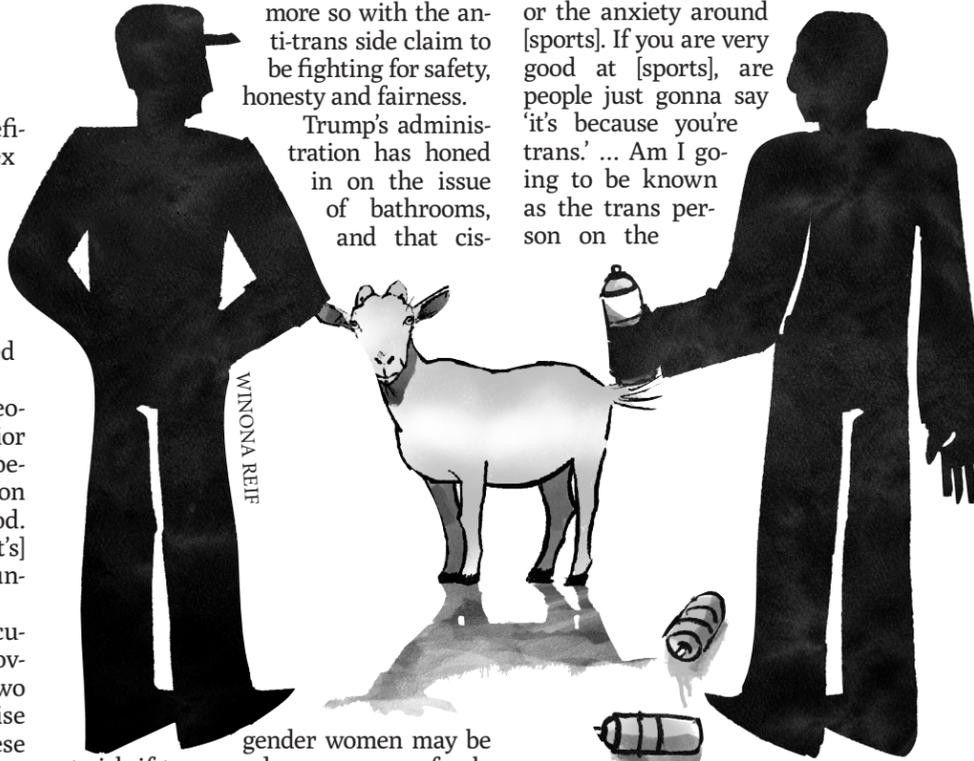
“Their approach to trans women specifically ... shows very much how they’re

not caring about [women’s safety],” Field said. “[If they did] care about women’s safety, they would do more investigations into rapes and sex trafficking and all of these other crimes that hurt women a lot more than a woman with a penis in the bathroom. Their hypocrisy has been blatant from the start, and their goal has been blatant from the start.”

Transphobia runs rampant in numerous aspects of daily life. Debates over which bathroom to use, whether or not one should disclose that they’re trans in a relationship and if it’s fair to have transgender people play for the sports team that aligns with their gender are all current hot-button issues. Those who align

more so with the anti-trans side claim to be fighting for safety, honesty and fairness.

Trump’s administration has honed in on the issue of bathrooms, and that cis-



gender women may be at risk if transgender women are freely able to enter intimate, more vulnerable spaces for women. However, according to a study by the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law, transgender people are over four times more likely to experience violent victimization, which encompasses aggravated simple assault, rape and sexual assault. A study from the Human Rights Campaign also revealed that 78% of lives lost from the transgender community in 2024 were people of color, with

56% of these deaths being Black transgender women. Punishing trans women for the actions of predatory men simply does not make sense when they are the ones being victimized by them.

Openly transitioning may seem common in a state like California, where people are more accepting and the state offers protection. That is not the case for the rest of America.

“I have this friend who wanted to go to an Ivy League,” said Senior Matthew Grabow. “But now, [she’s] second guessing this big decision to move out of California due to the violence and hate that she might experience.”

FAIRNESS

As sports become more inclusive of trans athletes, the question arises of which team one should play for: the team that aligns with their biological sex, or the team that aligns with their gender identity. A key argument has been for fairness. Simply put, transgender women are at a biological advantage when compared to cisgender women, and transgender men are at a biological disadvantage when compared to cisgender men.

“I’ve gone against a trans girl goalie for soccer before,” said junior and athlete Aila Liu. “We lost, but I don’t [think] solely because of the goalie, because soccer is a team sport ... A lot of my teammates were really angry about it [though] be-

cause they felt it wasn’t fair. They would be like, ‘Oh, it’s not fair that ... she’s on a team going against girls, because ... she hasn’t taken any estrogen hormones or anything. So it’s not fair for her to be competing with women.’”

While these differences in performance do conjure worries about cheating in sports competitions or skewing results, they can be reduced and even removed through extended periods of hormone therapy.

“[Sports are] very male-dominated, for one ... and that definitely pushes a lot of trans women away, and maybe even trans men,” Fields said. “It’s the fear of being harmed or harassed or the anxiety around [sports]. If you are very good at [sports], are people just gonna say ‘it’s because you’re trans.’ ... Am I going to be known as the trans person on the

team, or am I going to be known for my ability to play? ... That is a very big contributor.”

Transgender athletes are also much less prevalent than the scrutiny they receive has made them out to be. On a collegiate level, president of the National College Athletics Association Charlie Baker states that there are less than 10 openly transgender athletes. While trans rights in sports are highly important, the “threat” they have been made out to be represents less than 0.002% of college athletes.

MEDICAL REALITIES

Trans athleticism is not the only area that has been criticized and hyperbolized. In the cases of transgender youth, spirited discussions over gender-affirming care for individuals under 18 target cases that simply do not exist. One of the biggest arguments against youths transitioning is that it may “just be a phase,” and if they decide to do something drastic, such as going on hormones or getting gender affirming surgery, it may not be reversible when their minds have changed.

“The harsh reality is people kill themselves over this stuff,” Grabow said. “The fact that people want to deny [gender affirming care] when it is proven to reduce suicide rates, reduce self-harm rates and overall amend these harsh, bad feelings they feel about their gender. The fact is, that’s really saddening [and] dehumanizing.”

One of the main worries is that trans youth will detransition despite already receiving gender-affirming care, but detransitioning itself is extremely rare, with recent studies revealing that only

8% of people who transitioned have de-transitioned, and most of them only de-transition temporarily. For comparison, one in five patients who have undergone the very common knee replacement surgery leave dissatisfied. The major factors causing sparse cases of detransitioning are not “realizing they got it wrong,” as has been asserted in countless anti-trans statements, but instead that the pressure from parents, discrimination, difficulty with transitioning and struggles to find work got to be too much.

Trans youth are not receiving “extreme” surgeries either, and the misconception that all gender-affirming care youths can access is on the same level works against trans youth who are already struggling to feel comfortable and safe. Surgeries, or any sort of gender-affirming care, are extremely expensive, and tens of thousands of dollars are not easy to come by. There are also extensive steps one must go through before receiving any sort of care.

“It’s so hard to get gender-affirming surgery,” Fields said. “[My insurance has] denied [my surgery] over half a dozen times ... To prepare for surgery, you have to get laser hair removal, [and] just getting that I’ve had [insurance block it] three times. [Gender affirming care] is not something you just pop into a clinic and do ... It takes years ... There [are] waitlists, and there’s [scheduling] surgeons [and] you get three letters from different therapists saying this is medically necessary before you can even start the process of arranging [surgery].”

And even if they do qualify for care, options are largely limited to puberty blockers, though a medical transition is not the only option. There are a number of ways for transgender youth to transition and feel more comfortable without going through the “irreversible, faulty treatments” that anti-trans officials claim every trans child gets.

MENTAL HEALTH

At this time, states are currently further raising the barriers for trans youth to get care for their body dysmorphia. 26 states currently have laws prohibiting gender-affirming care for trans youth ages 13-17, with some of these states pushing to extend the maximum to 26 years old.

“Even though I’m not directly affected, it’s a human rights issue,” Liu said. “Everyone deserves to identify with what gender they are, and we should affirm their gender. If they’re negatively impacted, it might actually negatively impact me too, because this is a gender issue ... A lot of people are using women’s rights as a platform to be transphobic, and so [attacking trans rights] will [affect everyone].”

These real-world policies have real-world consequences. According to NPR, anti-transgender laws can cause up to a 72% increase in suicide attempts among transgender youth, and these

possible deaths should not be disregarded as

collateral. Youths deserve to be able to feel comfortable with themselves. Youths deserve to be able to express themselves and discover who they are instead of being told who they are by those around them. Youths deserve to be protected, not driven to suicide. These are all non-negotiables, and should not be disregarded when it comes to the case of youths who are transgender.

ONLY 9%
of transgender youth
say their communities
are very supportive

COURTESY OF LGBTMAP.ORG

COURTESY OF CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY

Seventy percent of transgender adults are experiencing depression these days



Thirty-six percent of cisgender men and 43% of cisgender women reported symptoms of clinical depression

Senior Assassin: no longer child's play

Antonio Mangano
FEATURES WRITER

Senior Assassin is a nationwide game where high school students pair up to eliminate each other using water guns. Participating students are safe from the water guns if they wear swim gear, which acts as a shield. At Aragon, Senior Assassin is immensely popular among students, though the game brings various concerns.

Recurring ideas of safety concerns, as well as privacy concerns, bring up conversations about whether this game is worth playing.

It is also important to note that there are designated

days when safety gear does not protect students from being eliminated: purge days. In simple terms, everywhere and everyone is fair game, which poses many concerns.

"[During purge], you can still get your own targets," said senior Yuna Irokawa. "You can then see your target's location through this app we use."

at around \$1,600, as students pay an entrance fee of \$10 each. If a bounty is set on someone, half of the bounty goes to the prize pool, and the other half goes to the student who eliminated the bounty.

Senior Assassin brings many safety concerns such as the danger of cars being involved, the disobeying of rules, legal ideas of trespassing and the misinterpretation of water guns in public. Cars can pose a threat, as this game is physical and people need to be quick. A lot of the time, students rush their cars up to opponents, sometimes even breaking rules and eliminating their opponents in a moving car.

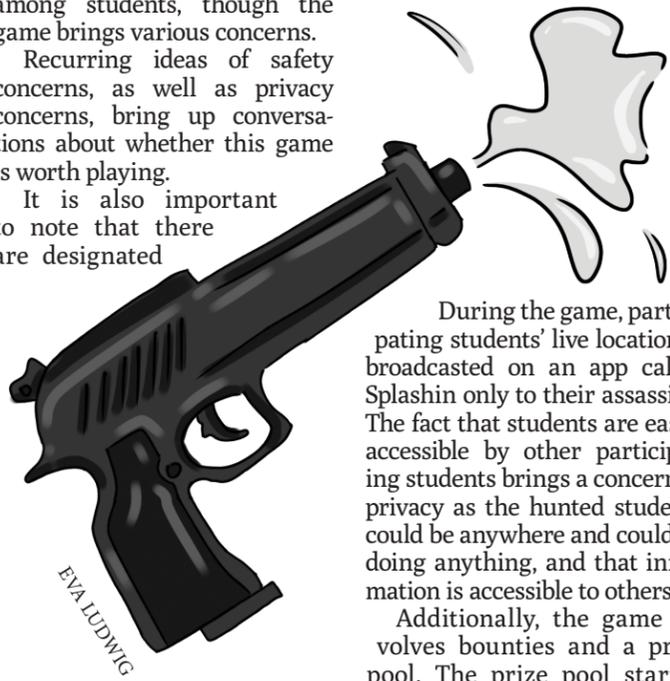
"I would probably make the rules at the beginning [of the game] more clear," Irokawa said. "For this round, a lot of the rules weren't fully listed and a lot of rules were added on later on."

Trespassing is a very evident idea of the privacy concerns, as students feel obliged and are able to go into people's yards during this game, especially during purge which

concern of trespassing, there are concerns about stalking and invasions of home privacy. At times, commonly during purge, students have snuck on to someone's property to eliminate them from the game.

Moreover, it is required for students to film their targets when eliminating them from the game. Students upload their "kills" on the Splashin app to be verified, which brings an invasion of privacy to the eliminated student. Though it is legal to film in public areas in California, a lot of the time these eliminations are filmed in places where filming is illegal, like homes or places of activity like an office building or gym.

Though the game is widely popular, Senior Assassin is not worth the concerns of safety and privacy that it brings. This was proven true, as the game was eventually canceled on March 27, halting students from further participation. Therefore, if this game wants to make a comeback for the graduating class of 2026, various revisions need to be put in place.



During the game, participating students' live location is broadcasted on an app called Splashin only to their assassins. The fact that students are easily accessible by other participating students brings a concern of privacy as the hunted students could be anywhere and could be doing anything, and that information is accessible to others.

Additionally, the game involves bounties and a prize pool. The prize pool started

could potentially get students involved with the law.

Furthermore, if playing in a public setting, there is a risk of the water guns being mistaken for actual guns. Last year, there were two separate instances in which the police were called to threats of potential firearms — at Hillsdale Shopping Mall and at a resident's house — but these turned out to be water guns. In relation to the safety

Franchise necrophilia: stop movie sequels

Ceylon Liu
FEATURES WRITER

Every time I hear rumors about a potential movie sequel or a new television show season, my reaction is frustration, not excitement. For all the time and emotions I've invested into the worlds of each series, the thought of consuming each new sequel sounds like a chore, not a fun reward or break from my daily life. Inevitably, I find myself watching each sequel anyway, my wages lining the pockets of studio executives in the process.

We've all seen the movie franchises that continue to pump out sequels despite the lead actors moving on to different projects or the TV show that continues to get renewed for a new season despite the writers running out of new content. This uncertainty of when a franchise or series will finally be laid to rest has ripple effects that negatively impact series as they continue along.

When TV shows continue to be renewed for new seasons over and over again, it diminishes the overall quality of said show, especially in its later seasons.

"For 'Friends,' the plotlines by the end of the show seemed to be very rushed and almost like [the writers] wanted to please the viewers more than they

stood true to what the story actually was," said senior Kaylin Longueville-Marks. "It made the story feel repetitive [and] there were no new developments to the characters by the end. It gets frustrating ... watching [a show] that's going nowhere, especially [if] you enjoyed [it] before."

Not all additional TV show seasons are bad, but timing plays a key role in how well a show and its additional seasons will hold up as writers work toward reaching an ending. As an example,

"Avatar: the Last Airbender" is a series where the writers knew how many seasons their show would span. As a result, the ending and build-up to it feels well-paced and results in an overall stronger show. Contrast that to this show's sequel, "The Legend of Korra," which, while still good, faces issues where each season tries to have a satisfying close only for the little bits of

progress made to be completely undone at the beginning of each new season.

One of the largest concerns about the constant production of sequels and re-makes is that the prioritization of quick cash grabs could push out

without connections or previous successes from breaking into this limited industry. Sequels also often do not have the luxury of time to allow writers to think about fresh, exciting ideas that flesh out the worlds or characters established in previous films, leading to a subsequent decline in the quality of sequels.

While many studios may be inclined to invest larger sums of money into the sequels of successful franchises, doing so tends to lead to larger losses that then lower the budgets of all subsequent films studios produce. "Joker" (2019) was a film that had a budget

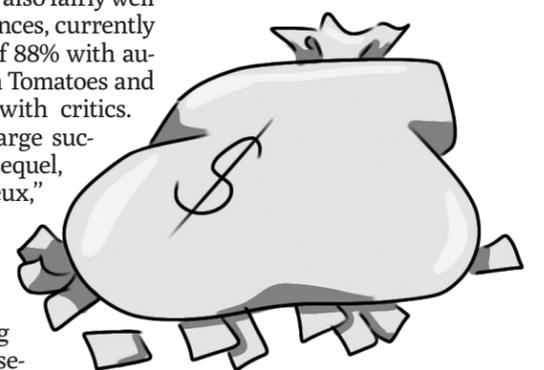
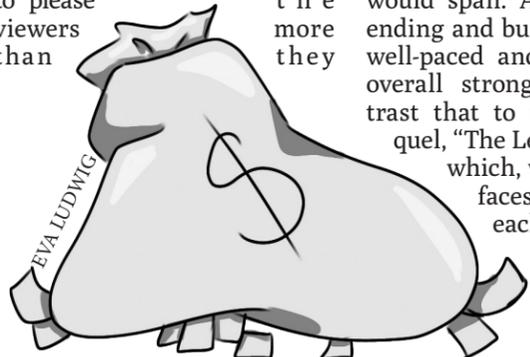
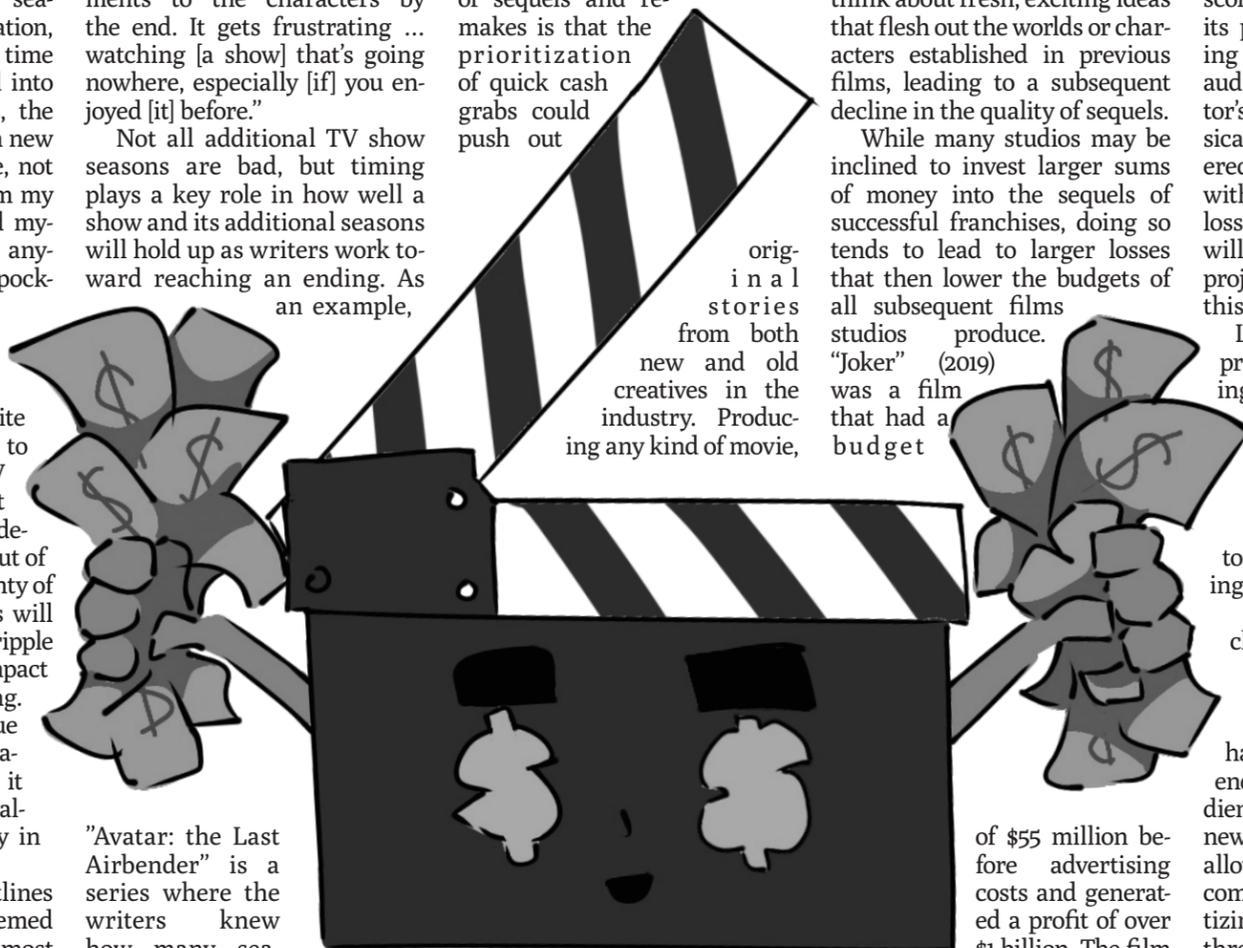
of \$100 million for advertising costs, only to generate about \$206 million profit globally, losing millions in the process. The film also earned much lower scores on Rotten Tomatoes than its predecessor, currently holding a 31% score with critics and audiences alike. While the director's decision to include the musical genre in the film likely lowered the film's overall reception with its intended audience, the losses it incurred for the studio will continue to impact future projects that aren't related to this current Joker series.

Lowered funding causes problems for producers working on a sequel. In addition, to recoup costs, studios feel further pressure to fall back and rely on producing sequels because they know it will sell as opposed to taking on the risk of funding an entirely new property.

As Hollywood continues to churn out new content, there should be careful consideration about if a movie should get a sequel despite having a pretty conclusive end. While it isn't wrong for audiences to appreciate and enjoy new sequels, executives should allow for new and novel ideas to come to light instead of prioritizing squeezing cash out of fans through sequel after sequel.

TV show or even book is expensive, leading the executives in charge of budgets to distribute money accordingly. Those with new or novel ideas that don't ride off of the success of previous hits can be pushed aside in favor of producing a sequel or reboot of a series that already has a well-established fan base. The prioritization of guaranteed money-makers over artistry further limits the ability of those

received by audiences, currently holding a score of 88% with audiences on Rotten Tomatoes and a score of 68% with critics. Following such large success, the film's sequel, "Joker: Folie À Deux," was, according to Forbes, given a reported budget of \$200 million before advertising costs and a subse-



Girls lacrosse falls to Notre Dame 10-5

Advika Singh
SPORTS WRITER

On March 28, the Aragon varsity girls lacrosse team (2-4 overall) faced a difficult game against the Notre Dame Regents (5-2 overall), which ended in a 10-5 loss. Hitting the halfway point of the season, the Dons had an uphill battle, ranking fourth out of six teams after their drop to the Alpine Division of the West Bay Athletic League.

With two wins under their belt, the team has been challenging themselves with new strategies since the beginning of their season. Playing two to three games a week, the Dons have been working hard on recuperating after their drop from the Skyline League and have played various new opponents to rebuild their ambition on the field.

"We're starting off a lot stronger than we have in past seasons," said senior Audrey Castiglia. "It's only the beginning for us."

Anticipating a challenging game, the team attempted various plays to counter the Regents onslaught but were unable to catch the lead.

"[Notre Dame] is at a pretty similar skill level as us," Castiglia said. "We need to stay focused and do our best."

Notre Dame took initiative in the first quarter, scoring three goals whilst Aragon pushed momentum and stayed in heavy pursuit. The Dons stayed steadfast in their resolve, subbing out new players and countering with various strategies, closing the quarter losing 3-0.

"We just need to play to our strengths," said junior Hannah Qutteineh. "And make sure that we cover our defense well."

Although the Dons returned rejuvenated onto the field, the second quarter proved to be difficult for both teams in safely advancing their positions. Ramping up tensions, the Dons regrouped to score a goal in the first three minutes and the Regents countered with two more at the halfway mark.

"One of our strategies was to assign our strongest defender towards their best player to make sure they don't keep scoring goals," Qutteineh said. "We want to try to keep an advantage."

The approach was successful, as Notre Dame followed up with a goal and the Dons pursued, reaching halftime with 6-3 box score.

"We practiced a lot of double-teaming and doubling the ball," Castiglia said. "We're definitely still learning, but we're getting a lot better at it."

At the beginning of the third quarter, the teams recalculated and approached one another with increased tenacity on the field, with the ball lobbying both sides with unsuccessful goals. The Regents worked on maintaining their position while Aragon pushed to even the score.

"One of our weaknesses is that in a difficult situation, our defense gets a little bit freaked out," Qutteineh said. "It messes up our game when we falter like that."

Despite several offensive plays by the Dons and repeated formations from Notre Dame, Aragon was unable to restructure and the Regents continued with an additional three goals. At the end of the third quarter, the scoreboard read 9-4.

As the fourth quarter began, the Dons fought with renewed vigor and redoubled their efforts, advancing two goals and holding their defense as a counter to Notre Dame's plays. With four minutes left on the clock, the Regents pushed through with their lead and scored another goal, holding their defense against the Dons till the end.

"Our strengths have us communicating really well," Castiglia said. "One of our weaknesses that goes off of that is that we have a lot of fun and tend to get distracted — we need to be more focused."

Although they faced their fourth loss of the season, the Dons are focusing on improving their play by

working together and staying persistent till the end. The girls lacrosse team's next game will be away on April 26 at Monte Vista at 11 a.m.



Boys lacrosse players in action against Los Altos.

LIAN WANG

Boys lacrosse loses 16-6 to Los Altos

Quinn Shirley
SPORTS WRITER

On March 20, the Aragon boys lacrosse team fell short against Los Altos in their first league game, losing 16-6. The loss was upsetting, yet expected by the Dons, due to the young nature of the team and the experience of their opponent.

"I expected some nerves," said Head Coach Evan King. "We got through a lot of that in the first half, [but] by the second half we exceeded my expectations. The boys did a good job playing within themselves and actually executing on a lot of what we practiced and managed to claw back a few goals."

The Eagles came out firing, dominating the first quarter with six goals and shutting down Aragon's offense. However,

Dons were able to find their footing in the second quarter, with senior Mathew Auyeung finding the back of the net at 9:30 to put them on the board.

Despite the goal, Los Altos quickly regained control, scoring three more goals before the end of the quarter. Senior Keagan Vigil had a great save at the end of the second, to keep the Eagles from reaching double digits, leaving them up 9-1 heading into halftime.

Aragon found their rhythm in the third quarter, scoring their second goal four minutes in. They followed suit with a third less than two minutes later when junior Aidan Schneider rifled one in, scoring his first of two of the night.

"Tonight we kept our spirits high, we weren't too angry at each other," Schneider said. "I know that was a problem last year because people got frustrated, but now we were motivated to keep going."

Gaining momentum, Aragon scored again with five minutes left of the third. However, Los Altos answered back, scoring two goals in the span of thirty seconds. Aragon scored a goal in the last 29 seconds of the quarter to leave the score 11-5.

Senior Vincent Ragone, with two goals on the night, attributed this scoring streak to the coach's advice at halftime to play it simple in order to reduce unforced errors.

"At half[time], our coach told us to settle down, work it around on offense and play man on defense," Ragone said. "Just play cool,

calm and collected, especially when taking the ball up the field from defense to offense."

In the fourth quarter, Aragon's fight continued as they scored their sixth and final goal at the 10:00 mark. However, Los Altos quickly answered back, ensuring the game ended with a decisive 16-6 victory for the visitors.

Despite the loss, King was proud of the Dons' fight.

"A big strength tonight is that we didn't get discouraged even when the opposing team went up half a dozen goals early on," King said. "We showed a lot of really good mental toughness, good resistance and ability to come back from those goals in the first."

Acknowledging the skill and experience of their opponent, the team headed into the game knowing it would be a great learning and growing opportunity.

"Expectations were just to get the new guys ready for the season, and for the old guys to get the rust off," Ragone said. "And form some good relationships on the field."

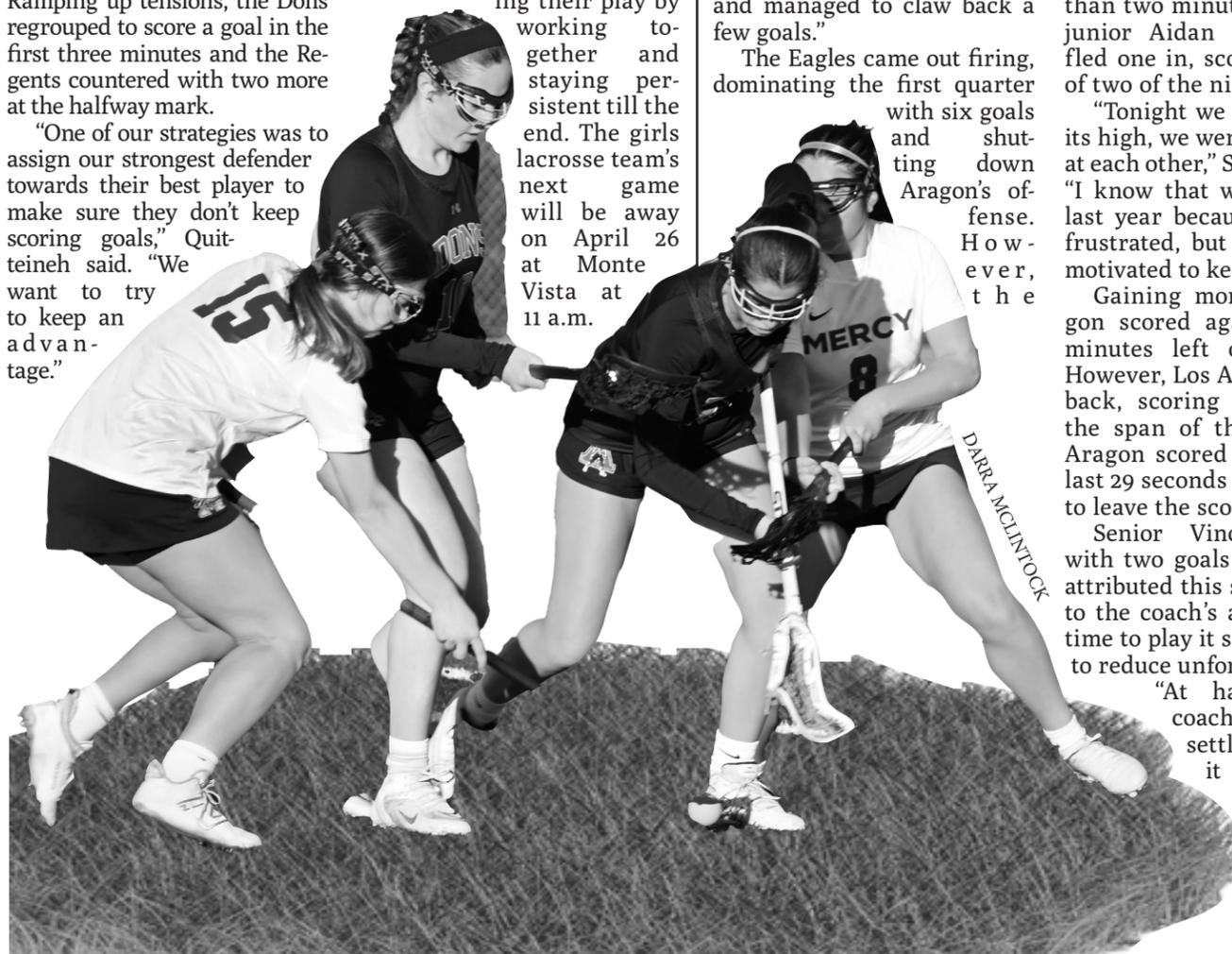
Moving forward, there is much the team needs to improve on, including talking on the field.

"Our communication ... was a bit quiet," Schneider said. "Our defense was lacking a bit in that section."

Overall, the Dons are optimistic about the team's future and have their sights set on the games ahead of them.

"Everyone on the team has been showing up and being consistent with their work," said junior Jude Bautista. "No matter the outcome, I was just ready to see how we were gonna work as a team."

The team's will play against Sequoia on April 17 at 7 p.m.



DARA MCINTOCK

Girls lacrosse falls to Notre Dame 10-5

Advika Singh
SPORTS WRITER

On March 28, the Aragon varsity girls lacrosse team (2-4 overall) faced a difficult game against the Notre Dame Regents (5-2 overall), which ended in a 10-5 loss. Hitting the halfway point of the season, the Dons had an uphill battle, ranking fourth out of six teams after their drop to the Alpine Division of the West Bay Athletic League.

With two wins under their belt, the team has been challenging themselves with new strategies since the beginning of their season. Playing two to three games a week, the Dons have been working hard on recuperating after their drop from the Skyline League and have played various new opponents to rebuild their ambition on the field.

"We're starting off a lot stronger than we have in past seasons," said senior Audrey Castiglia. "It's only the beginning for us."

Anticipating a challenging game, the team attempted various plays to counter the Regents onslaught but were unable to catch the lead.

"[Notre Dame] is at a pretty similar skill level as us," Castiglia said. "We need to stay focused and do our best."

Notre Dame took initiative in the first quarter, scoring three goals whilst Aragon pushed momentum and stayed in heavy pursuit. The Dons stayed steadfast in their resolve, subbing out new players and countering with various strategies, closing the quarter losing 3-0.

"We just need to play to our strengths," said junior Hannah Qutteineh. "And make sure that we cover our defense well."

Although the Dons returned rejuvenated onto the field, the second quarter proved to be difficult for both teams in safely advancing their positions. Ramping up tensions, the Dons regrouped to score a goal in the first three minutes and the Regents countered with two more at the halfway mark.

"One of our strategies was to assign our strongest defender towards their best player to make sure they don't keep scoring goals," Qutteineh said. "We want to try to keep an advantage."

The approach was successful, as Notre Dame followed up with a goal and the Dons pursued, reaching halftime with 6-3 box score.

"We practiced a lot of double-teaming and doubling the ball," Castiglia said. "We're definitely still learning, but we're getting a lot better at it."

At the beginning of the third quarter, the teams recalculated and approached one another with increased tenacity on the field, with the ball lobbying both sides with unsuccessful goals. The Regents worked on maintaining their position while Aragon pushed to even the score.

"One of our weaknesses is that in a difficult situation, our defense gets a little bit freaked out," Qutteineh said. "It messes up our game when we falter like that."

Despite several offensive plays by the Dons and repeated formations from Notre Dame, Aragon was unable to restructure and the Regents continued with an additional three goals. At the end of the third quarter, the scoreboard read 9-4.

As the fourth quarter began, the Dons fought with renewed vigor and redoubled their efforts, advancing two goals and holding their defense as a counter to Notre Dame's plays. With four minutes left on the clock, the Regents pushed through with their lead and scored another goal, holding their defense against the Dons till the end.

"Our strengths have us communicating really well," Castiglia said. "One of our weaknesses that goes off of that is that we have a lot of fun and tend to get distracted — we need to be more focused."

Although they faced their fourth loss of the season, the Dons are focusing on improving their play by

working together and staying persistent till the end. The girls lacrosse team's next game will be away on April 26 at Monte Vista at 11 a.m.



Boys lacrosse players in action against Los Altos.

LIAN WANG

Boys lacrosse loses 16-6 to Los Altos

Quinn Shirley
SPORTS WRITER

On March 20, the Aragon boys lacrosse team fell short against Los Altos in their first league game, losing 16-6. The loss was upsetting, yet expected by the Dons, due to the young nature of the team and the experience of their opponent.

"I expected some nerves," said Head Coach Evan King. "We got through a lot of that in the first half, [but] by the second half we exceeded my expectations. The boys did a good job playing within themselves and actually executing on a lot of what we practiced and managed to claw back a few goals."

The Eagles came out firing, dominating the first quarter with six goals and shutting down Aragon's offense. However, the

Dons were able to find their footing in the second quarter, with senior Mathew Auyeung finding the back of the net at 9:30 to put them on the board.

Despite the goal, Los Altos quickly regained control, scoring three more goals before the end of the quarter. Senior Keagan Vigil had a great save at the end of the second, to keep the Eagles from reaching double digits, leaving them up 9-1 heading into halftime.

Aragon found their rhythm in the third quarter, scoring their second goal four minutes in. They followed suit with a third less than two minutes later when junior Aidan Schneider rifled one in, scoring his first of two of the night.

"Tonight we kept our spirits high, we weren't too angry at each other," Schneider said. "I know that was a problem last year because people got frustrated, but now we were motivated to keep going."

Gaining momentum, Aragon scored again with five minutes left of the third. However, Los Altos answered back, scoring two goals in the span of thirty seconds. Aragon scored a goal in the last 29 seconds of the quarter to leave the score 11-5.

Senior Vincent Ragone, with two goals on the night, attributed this scoring streak to the coach's advice at halftime to play it simple in order to reduce unforced errors.

"At half[time], our coach told us to settle down, work it around on offense and play man on defense," Ragone said. "Just play cool,

calm and collected, especially when taking the ball up the field from defense to offense."

In the fourth quarter, Aragon's fight continued as they scored their sixth and final goal at the 10:00 mark. However, Los Altos quickly answered back, ensuring the game ended with a decisive 16-6 victory for the visitors.

Despite the loss, King was proud of the Dons' fight.

"A big strength tonight is that we didn't get discouraged even when the opposing team went up half a dozen goals early on," King said. "We showed a lot of really good mental toughness, good resistance and ability to come back from those goals in the first."

Acknowledging the skill and experience of their opponent, the team headed into the game knowing it would be a great learning and growing opportunity.

"Expectations were just to get the new guys ready for the season, and for the old guys to get the rust off," Ragone said. "And form some good relationships on the field."

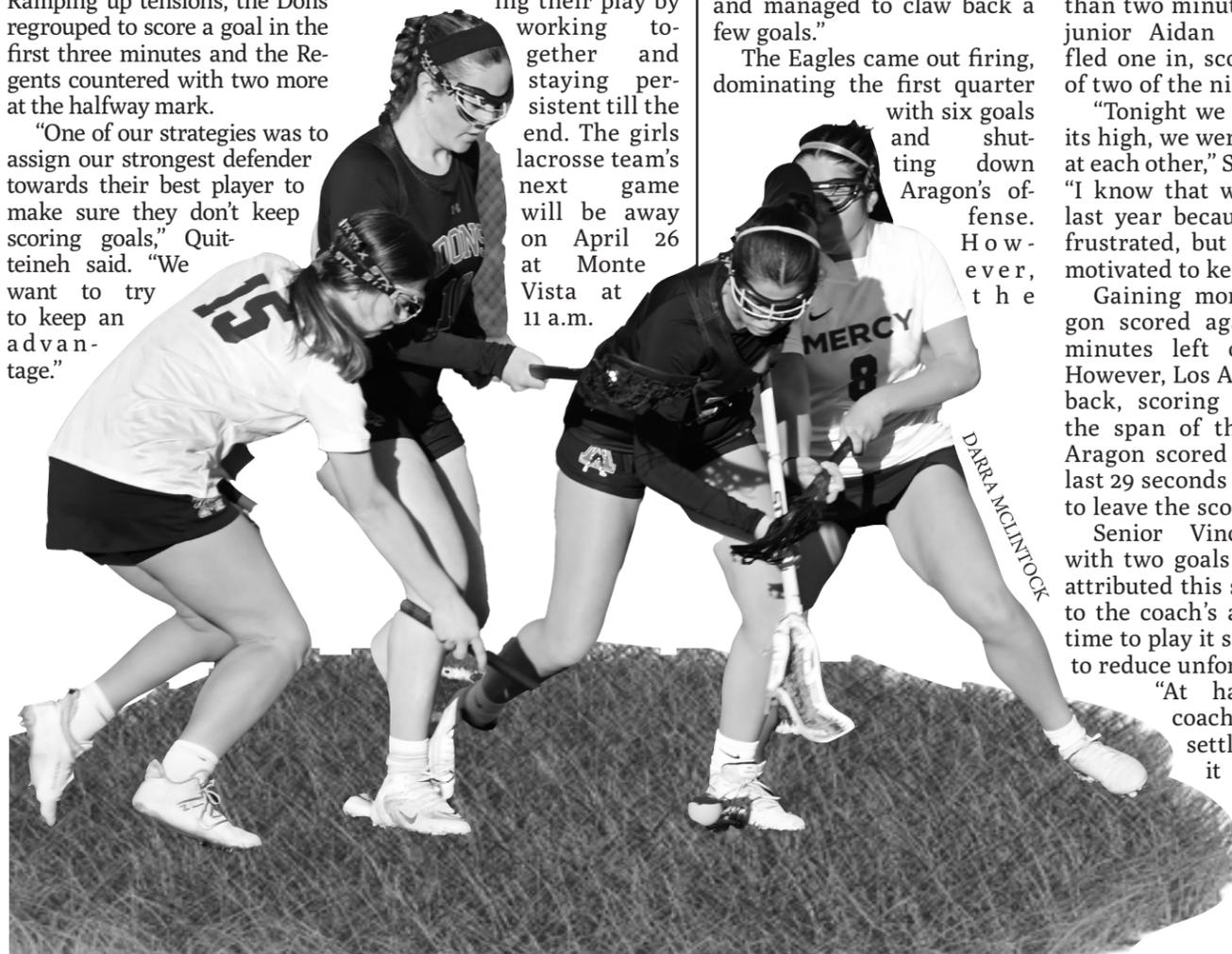
Moving forward, there is much the team needs to improve on, including talking on the field.

"Our communication ... was a bit quiet," Schneider said. "Our defense was lacking a bit in that section."

Overall, the Dons are optimistic about the team's future and have their sights set on the games ahead of them.

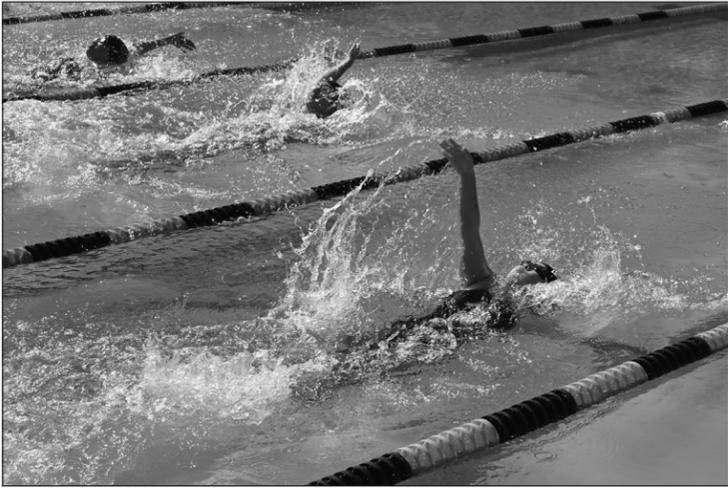
"Everyone on the team has been showing up and being consistent with their work," said junior Jude Bautista. "No matter the outcome, I was just ready to see how we were gonna work as a team."

The team's will play against Sequoia on April 17 at 7 p.m.



DARA MCINTOCK

Dons swim to dominant victory against Woodside



Sophomore Ashley Tsui swims backstroke.

VICTORIA SANTANA

Olivia Muckherjee
SPORTS WRITER

On March 21, the Aragon swim team (1-3 overall) faced off against Woodside in a highly anticipated meet. The Dons secured significant victories across multiple teams and events.

Their efforts to win paid off as they showcased strong performances across all groups. The boys varsity team secured a decisive 102-64 victory, while the boys junior varsity followed with a 96-73 win. The girls varsity carved out a 93-82 victory over Woodside, and

the girls junior varsity put up a strong effort but fell short with a final score of 113-72.

Junior Yury Bychkov, who swam the 200 medley relay, free, 100 backstroke and 400 free relay, reflected on his performance as well as some obstacles on the pool deck.

"I think [my performance] was pretty good," Bychkov said. "[I] definitely got some better times than before. Turns are a big portion, and the pole is a bit different ... so just adapting to that and making sure that, especially during the sprints, my breakout is fast."

There were a few critical events during the meet, with close finishes keeping the excitement high.

"The key moments were the relays," Bychkov said. "Because it's a team, you get to support each other and hear more support from others."

Junior Lillian Anagnoson swam the 200 medley free, 100 free, 200 free relay and 400 free relay, and highlighted the unique atmosphere of high school meets compared to club competitions.

"High school meets are just a lot of fun," Anagnoson said. "Compared to club meets, they're a lot more lighthearted. In both places, my teammates and family motivate me the most. My brother was

a swimmer — he swims in college now — so he definitely motivates me a lot."

Anagnoson also highlighted a major achievement for the team during the meet.

"We definitely got our [Central Coast Section] cut in the 200 medley relay, which was a lot of fun," Anagnoson said.

This was an important milestone for the team, as underlined by sophomore Lincoln Elliott, who played a role in the 200 victory along with participating in the 500 free, 200 free relay and 400 free relay.

"It's something we've been working on all season," Elliott said. "When we finally hit that mark, it felt like our hard work was paying off."

Behind the scenes of these impressive results, balancing academics and athletics remains a challenge.

"Creating a calendar, setting aside time for homework and studying for tasks is very important," Bychkov said. "Essentially

making sure that I do what I need to do for

swimming, but also ... that I'm staying on top of my tasks."

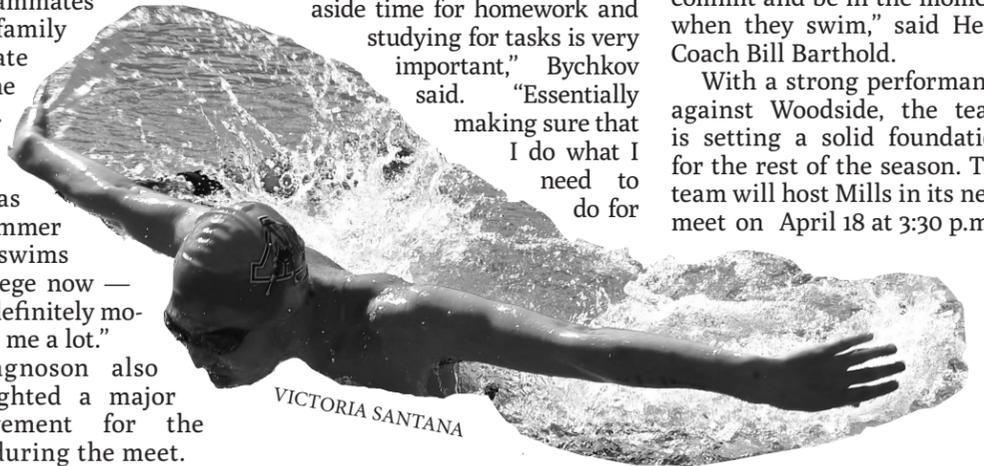
Anagnoson echoed similar sentiments about balancing school with swimming.

"It's definitely hard, there's a lot of staying up late to do homework," Anagnoson said. "But mostly, just staying on top of my stuff, doing as much as I can over the weekends, and not getting distracted with my phone."

Looking ahead, the team will continue working on their skills and fitness, both mental and physical to prepare for future meets.

"It's important that they make sure they come to practice on time and work hard ... commit and be in the moment when they swim," said Head Coach Bill Barthold.

With a strong performance against Woodside, the team is setting a solid foundation for the rest of the season. The team will host Mills in its next meet on April 18 at 3:30 p.m.



VICTORIA SANTANA

Boys tennis earns 6-1 win over rival San Mateo



Senior Keiya Wada returns a shot.



Junior Darrin O'Brien serves.



Senior Ziv Rapoport hits a backhand.



Senior Thomas Nie hits a volley.

Claire Qi
SPORTS WRITER

On March 26, Aragon boys tennis (6-1 overall) defeated San Mateo (4-3 overall) 6-1, continuing their great season.

The team went into the game with confidence, having beaten San Mateo the previous year. They've also had a good season so far other than their match against Burlingame.

"We've been winning most of our matches," said senior and No. 2 doubles Ziv Rapoport. "We had a surprising loss against Burlingame, but it's good because they also lost to [Menlo-Atherton], so it was a rock-paper-scissors situation, since we beat [Menlo-Atherton]."

A contributing factor to their success was the presence of most of last year's team configuration. After the graduation

of last year's senior class, only two seniors had left. However, they knew San Mateo was a good team and expected it to be a tough game.

"It'll test us, and I think we're good enough to beat them, we just have to play well," said head coach Dave Owdom.

Additionally, some promising freshmen also joined the team this season, adding to the strength of the team.

"[A lot of our players] are ... freshmen," Owdom said. "They're really good, and they can't make the starting lineup but [they're] gonna play a little."

Despite the dominant score, Aragon won many of the matches by a small margin or in a super tiebreaker.

"Even though it looks like 6-1 is a very good score ... [there were] a lot of very close matches," Owdom said.

In No. 1 doubles, seniors Thomas Nie and Jack He ultimately had to play in a super tiebreaker after they lost the first set 1-6 and won the second 7-5. After an intense match, they narrowly lost the super tiebreaker at 7-10.

In No. 3 doubles, senior Justin Wong and freshman Adam Beg also had to participate in a super tiebreaker after they won the first set 6-1 and lost the second 5-7. They were able to win it by a comfortable amount at 10-3.

Owdom was particularly impressed by their comeback.

"You never know how they're going to react when you have a big lead, you lose it, you lose the set and you [have] to play another [tiebreaker]," Owdom said. "So that mental toughness, [I'm] very happy about that."

Senior Keiya Wada also won his match against San Mateo's No. 4 singles, winning each set consistently at 6-2. However, he believes that the large difference between scores can be misleading.

"The scores might not show it," Wada said. "But a lot of the games are deuce games. So I would say it was pretty close."

Wada attributes his win to good strategy. He was able to find the opponent's weak and strong points when they were warming up.

"I was able to figure out that he had a weak backhand side," Wada said. "So I was ... distributing more of my balls to his backhand side, so that I can get easier points that way."

One of the matches with a larger margin between scores was No. 1 singles. Senior Akbar Beg racked up a stable win of 6-2 in both sets. Despite that, his game progressed slowly, especially in the first set. Beg was one of the last singles to finish.

No. 2 singles player and junior Veraaz Khan won by a complete shutout in the first set. Conversely, the second set was much closer after his opponent reset and went on to play much better. They were neck-and-neck, but Khan still won the set and the match with a score of 6-4.

In No. 3 singles, junior Darrin O'Brien dominated his opponent in both sets at 6-1, resulting in another win for Aragon.

By far the longest match was No. 2 doubles. Junior Max Gan and Rapoport won the first set, scoring 7-5. For the second set, the two teams tied at 6-6, resulting in a tiebreak. Aragon won the tiebreak and the match, finishing the game on a good note for them.

While Owdom is happy about the victory, he feels that there are definitely parts of the game they can improve.

"[Our] doubles ... need to get a lot better at the net and keeping the ball in play," Owdom said.

The team will be working hard to improve, especially in preparation for their rematch against Burlingame. Their next match will be away against Menlo Atherton on April 15 at 4 p.m.

It's all fun and games: March Madness

Sora Mizutani
SPORTS WRITER

As the National College Athletics Association Division I Basketball Tournament, more commonly known as March Madness, came to an end on April 7, the Aragon community reflected on its engagement with the sports tournament.

March Madness is a single-elimination tournament of 68 teams that compete in seven rounds for the national championship.

There are a variety of ways the Aragon community interacts with the tournament, the most popular of which is to fill out a bracket by predicting which team will advance further on and

trying to get as many correct predictions as possible.

"I look forward to creating brackets and just picking teams to follow," said junior Kabir Sulur. "It's always fun to tune in. There's always crazy matches, and March Madness is very unpredictable, so especially in the beginning stages, you do not know what's happening or what's going to happen, so it makes it very enticing."

The sheer satisfaction of correctly predicting the matchups is what entertains most of the community. However, others compete for special prizes.

"[Two] years ago, my brother won [the March Madness] at my mom's work," Sulur said. "We got to go to [Los Angeles], for the Nuggets-Lakers game four in the playoffs. I got a really good seat. It was a great experience."

Within the Aragon campus itself, Advanced Placement U.S. History teacher Will Colglazier hosts an annual competition called the "Glaze Madness" for his students. The winners from both the Men's and the Women's bracket get their names engraved on the Glaze Madness trophy.

"I want to see [the students] as a three-dimensional human being," Colglazier said. "I want them to see me as the same thing, so when we can do fun things that aren't always associated with teaching and learning history, it's a good way to build community and have a good time."

Not only are students entertained, but



always have both the Men's and the Women's bracket.

"[Until] 2022, it was just the men's bracket," Colglazier said. "With the #METOO movement, I had this realization of like why wouldn't we do a women's bracket? I almost felt embarrassed, but I recognized it and said, 'we need to do it.'"

As competitive as March Madness can be, others enjoy it differently.

"I do not do brackets," said Katherine Ward. "Be-

cause I'm such a competitive person ... that I will only get wrapped up in the wins and losses ... I will [then] get so disappointed and be so upset because my bracket is busted that it [will] literally sour me from watching the rest of the tournament ... So, I just mark off who's still in it and who's not."

The Aragon community engages with March Madness in many ways, from competitive bracket challenges to enjoying the energy and excitement of the young athletes, and in the process, growing closer.



they also bond over March Madness. "It helped me connect with a few people I didn't actually know," said senior Anthony Lu. "Some people would talk to me about [the topic of March Madness], even though I wasn't really friends with them."

The Glaze Madness did not

"I definitely can't name a single competitive eater," said junior Julia Baltodano. "I don't really like those types of videos; they kind of gross me out."

Like Baltodano, many consider competitive eating off-putting and unappealing, given the extreme quantities of food consumed and the often messy and frantic nature of the event. While these contests may seem grotesque to some, they also raise concerns about the impact they could have on the health of competitors. In preparation for big events, athletes often fast for several days, which can lead to dehydration, metabolic shifts and malnutrition.

Aside from choking being a major risk during the competition, competitive eating poses many long-term threats to athletes as well. According to the National Institute of Health, frequently consuming tens of thousands of calories within minutes can have consequences such as intractable nausea, gastric perforation, tearing of the esophagus and morbid obesity. Although the stomachs of professional eaters appear to have unique properties, like the ability to expand to an unnatural size, health professionals are concerned that years of chronic overeating can result in severe muscular dysfunction and even cancer. These health concerns have led some to criticize the sport for promoting unhealthy eating habits, especially on impressionable adolescents through social media.

Eat! Eat! Eat!

Phoebe Harger
SPORTS WRITER

While it may not include running or catching a ball, competitive eating is in fact considered a sport — and is one that is growing in popularity thanks to its high-stakes nature and the rise of social media. The spectacle can be both fascinating and unsettling, capturing viewers with its unique nature and leaving them unable to look away.

While competitive eating may appear to be a modern phenomenon, records of competitive eaters date back as early as the seventeenth

century, such as Nicholas Wood, also known as The Great Eater of Kent. Featured in a 1630 pamphlet, Wood's stunts included eating a whole

raw sheep at once, seven dozen rabbits in one meal and four hundred pigeons in another meal.

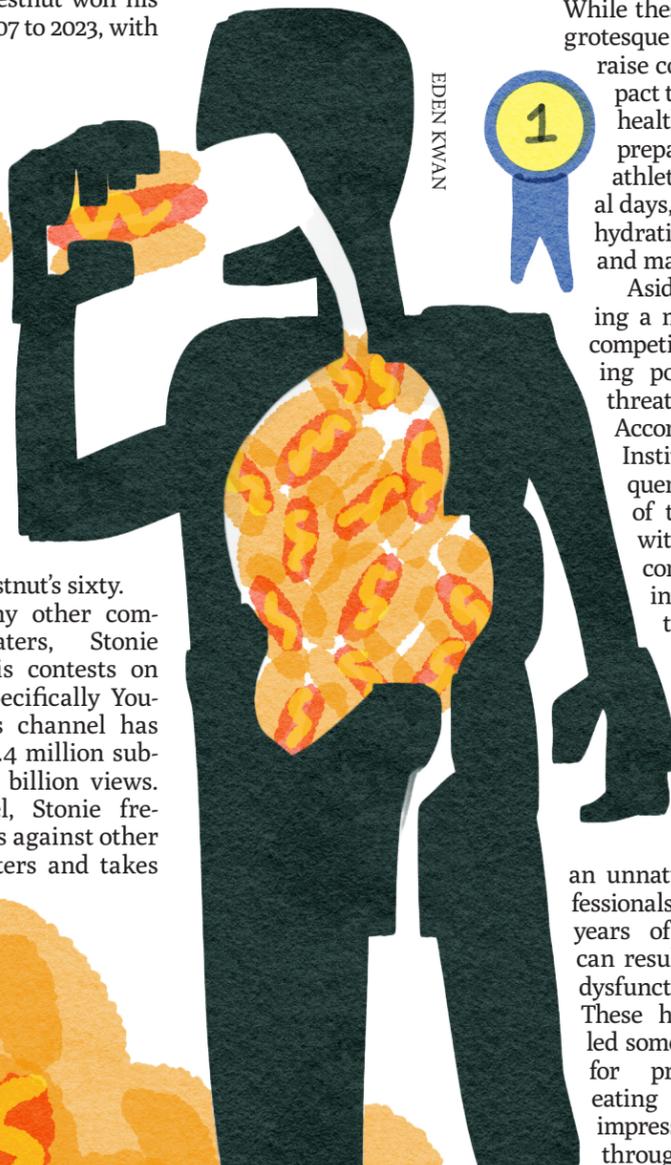
Fast forward to today and competitive eating has evolved into a global spectacle, with one of its most iconic events being Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest, which takes place every year on the Fourth of July in New York City. During the event, the contestant who eats the most hot dogs and buns within 10 minutes wins and takes home a grand prize of \$10,000. The contest is broadcast nationally on ESPN and has helped propel many to fame, most notably Joey Chestnut, who has won the competition sixteen times and set the record by eating seventy-six hot dogs in 2021. Chestnut won his titles between 2007 to 2023, with

on food challenges, including eating one thousand slices of bologna and one hundred slices of cheese. Social media influencers have played a significant role in boosting the popularity of the sport, as competitive eating videos and televised contests such as Nathan's gain more and more viewers every year.

However, while eating competitions may be gaining traction globally, many Aragon students appear to be indifferent or completely unfamiliar with the topic.

only one notable loss to Matt Stonie, a San Jose native, who ate sixty-two hot dogs compared to Chestnut's sixty.

Like many other competitive eaters, Stonie documents his contests on social media, specifically YouTube, where his channel has amassed over 16.4 million subscribers and 3.7 billion views. On his channel, Stonie frequently competes against other competitive eaters and takes



EDEN KWAN