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Asking the QUESTION: ETHNIC STUDIES?

Jannah Nassef
NEWS WRITER

In Oct. 2021, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 101, which made Ethnic Studies a statewide graduation requirement. The course teaches history and sociology through the experiences of minority groups in America, which is also further adjusted for every school's unique cultural background. The purpose is to challenge the "dominant narrative" of history and offer multiple angles. The mandate was set to begin with the class of 2030, but due to funding cuts and controversy surrounding the class, many districts are not teaching Ethnic Studies.

The Ethnic Studies course at Aragon began as an elective in the 2018-2019 school year, and was mandated for freshmen and transfer students in the 2020-2021 school year, before the state's requirement.

"Ethnic Studies should be mandated because it's really valuable to teach students civic engagement and another side of history that they might not get in their history classes, [such as] in Modern World History or U.S. History," said

senior Aila Liu. "Ethnic Studies teaches a racial aspect of history that usually isn't spotlighted in their regular classes ... it gives [students] a different perspective on history in general, really opens their mind to minorities' experiences ... [and] teaches them how to be empathetic [towards] people that might be different from them ... It [teaches] critical thinking and logic skills when you're thinking about things that other races have been through."

However, some students hold opposing opinions.

"[Halting the mandate is] a really good idea," said sophomore William Reeves. "[Ethnic Studies] should be a class that you only take if you really want to take it. I'm glad that they're [halting] the mandate so that everybody still has the freedom to choose what they want to do ... I might not necessarily want to learn about what [others] want to learn about, and the class should be directed towards people who want to learn about [Ethnic Studies]."

Ethnic Studies has been surrounded by controversy since the very beginning. Last year, after concerns from parents prevented the Palo

Alto Unified School District from making Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement, the course passed in a 3-2 vote. CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Aragon High School
INTERSECTIONALITY
LGBTQA+
OPPRESSION
RACE
STEREOTYPES
KOU
ITY
PATRIARCHY
INSTITUTION
PRIVILEGE
SOLIDARITY
MICROAGGRESSIONS
REHUMANIZATION
AGENCY

San Mateo Bike Lanes

Ellie Blakely
NEWS WRITER

In July, the city of San Mateo proposed an improvement project for 19th Avenue and Fashion Island Boulevard, a busy thoroughfare connecting eastern and western parts of the city. The project, which has experienced some pushback from residents, would implement protected bike lanes, pedestrian improvements and changes to the roadway itself.

The multimodal project aims to address concerns about safety for cyclists and pedestrians, enhance transit connectivity and decrease congestion on the road.

"It's making transportation for today's San Mateans easier, safer, more efficient and more accessible," said Deputy Mayor of San Mateo Adam Loraine. "We expect there to be significant change and growth within our city over the next 20 years.

So it's [important] to consider ... projects and transportation that can serve more people ... in more diverse modes."

The city's plan to make the road more accessible to cyclists and pedestrians involves making several safety improvements. Currently, 19th Avenue, which turns into Fashion Island Boulevard, has bike lanes. However, two intersections along the road have been named bike injury hotspots by San Mateo County, and in some places, the road lacks a proper sidewalk.

According to a presentation at a Sept. 15 City Council meeting, there were 200 collisions along 19th Ave and Fashion Island Blvd from 2019 to 2024. Of these collisions, six involved pedestrians or cyclists. Additionally, there was a hit and run collision on Fashion Island Blvd that resulted in a pedestrian fatality earlier this year.

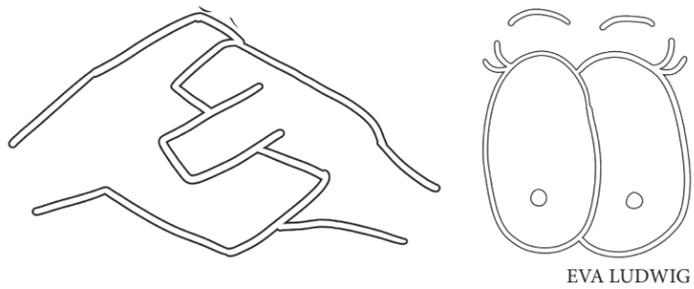
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EVA LUDWIG

Panorama Survey

Renee Ren
NEWS WRITER

The Panorama survey is taken by Aragon students, staff and families to determine areas in which the school can improve. Conducted every year, it tracks how the impacts of school policies and campus culture shift over time.

"[We] need to make sure everyone has a voice in the agency, and that all the stakeholders are involved in [the] decision making that impacts everyone," said principal Dr. Michael Jones. "[The] survey is one of the most effective ways to do that."

The survey is separated into four categories: school culture and climate, responses to hate speech, connectedness to community and engagement. In the 2024-2025 school year, 1401 out of 1685 students, about 84.1% of the student body, completed the survey.

"It's good to engage with students and then ask for their perspective, especially because they differ so widely, [even] within a grade [and] within different populations," said sophomore Sara Chiguchi. "It can be hard for faculty to understand what students are going through, [so] asking for their opinion is really valuable."

On average, from last school year's data, 73% of students gave a positive response to prompts regarding hate speech on campus, a 9% increase from the 2023-2024 survey. For example, 72% felt that adults responded in a way that made them feel safe when there were instances of homophobia, a 5% increase.

"[Last] year, [Leadership] had [presentations during] some fourth period classes where we would focus on [decreasing dehumanizing language]," Chiguchi said. "[They] told us that they want to ... [address] bullying issues, and they want to make people more aware about that."

62% of students answered that discussions surrounding people from different races, ethnicities and cultures were being held and important conversations about race were occurring — a 2% increase in the cultural awareness category compared to last year. Diversity and inclusion was at 76% after a 3% drop; 83% of respondents believed adults were treating people of different backgrounds fairly,

and 78% said they spent time at school with students of different backgrounds.

48% of students reported having a sense of belonging within the school community, a 5% increase from previous years.

"[We] have seen an increase in the number of students who feel [that] there's a sense of belonging," Jones said. "[There are many] students who feel that there are teachers [or] some adult who's here that can support them as a resource."

The existence and strength of teacher and student relationships was at 55% after a 1% bump.

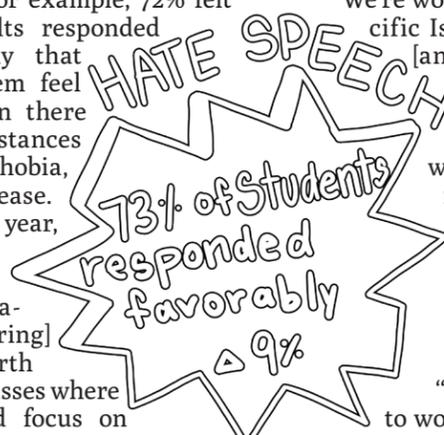
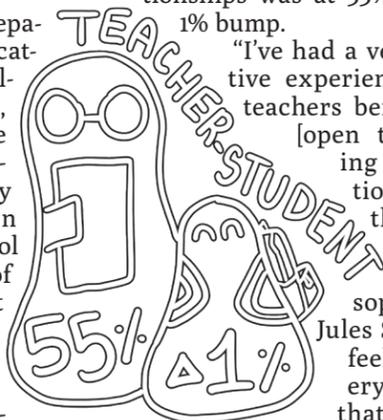
"I've had a very positive experience with teachers being very [open to] making connections with their students," said sophomore Jules Singh. "I feel like every teacher that I have, I've been able to rely on ... like [for] a letter of recommendation [or] to ask them questions that maybe aren't related to class. [The] relationship between students and teachers is very positive [and] from what I've observed, it's a very universal thing at Aragon."

In terms of parent and student involvement, students might see more changes as Aragon administration attempts to take action on items related to topics covered in the Panorama survey.

"We're working on a Pacific Islander group [and] some of the other parent groups for students who have been more historically marginalized within our school [and] our district," Jones said. "[We're] trying to work on making sure that those students and families are dialed in [on a] sense of belonging."

Students, families and faculty took another poll this year on cell phone policies. This is in response to the upcoming California law — Assembly Bill 3216 — to limit cell phone usage in classrooms in California. The school and district hope to determine a solution based on the Aragon community's feedback.

Results for this year's panorama survey are set to be reviewed during Aragon staff meetings in November.



Chancellor Trial

Naomi Kotani
NEWS WRITER

Following years of delays, opening arguments began for the trial of former San Mateo County Community College District chancellor Ronald Galatolo, on Oct. 27, at the SMC Superior Court in Redwood City.

Galatolo's 23 felony charges, brought by the District Attorney, include misappropriation of public funds, conflict of interest, embezzlement, perjury, unreported gifts and tax fraud. The alleged crimes span from 2011 to 2020, according to the case file.

Galatolo, who served as chancellor for almost 20 years, resigned in 2019 after SMCCCD's former head of human resources, Eugene Whitlock, filed a whistleblower complaint. Galatolo remained on the district's payroll for over a year following his resignation, as he was given the title of chancellor emeritus by the district, which consisted of an over \$460,000 salary on the condition that he did not visit any of the campuses. He held this status for 17 months until he was fired in Feb. 2021 after being arrested for the alleged felonies.

Among the charges, prosecutors have accused Galatolo of giving the district's building contracts to construction companies from whom he received gifts, such as concert tickets and travel, and not disclosing these gifts, as stated on the DA's website.

He is also suspected of having reported a \$10,000 charitable donation on his personal tax return in 2017, when the donation was actually made by a foundation run by SMCCCD.

Additionally, prosecutors accused Galatolo of using SMCCCD funds to hire a lawyer for himself when he faced a contract dispute with the school district.

In the trial's opening statements, Galatolo's lawyer, Charles Smith, rebutted claims that his client mishandled any public funds. He said that Galatolo's misreporting of the donation on his tax return was a mistake, and that his acceptance of gifts was not illegal. Smith also said Galatolo had permission to obtain a lawyer using the district's money, and there was a precedent for doing so.

Since SMCCCD is partially funded by taxpayers, some believed that this case could cause the public to question whether their money is being used responsibly.

"Distrust in a system can lead to the downfall of that system," said junior Anjalika Khare. "Once you start not agreeing with something, you look into it deeply. You find things like this that puts more holes in the cheese. People could be doing bad things with the [tax] money I'm giving, so why should I give money to these people?"

But the suspected misuse of tax funds is not the only point of concern for the community. For many students, Galatolo's case gave rise to worries about a potential wider lack of oversight within leadership in the SMCCCD.

"Because [Galatolo's alleged crimes] went on for so long, and I feel like there was so much [being done] that was obvious, I don't know how they didn't catch it sooner," said junior Mavis Nguyen. "That means there's a lot more room for other people to be doing similar things."

Regardless of the outcome of the trial and whether or not Galatolo is found guilty of the charges, some were bothered by what they viewed as his ethical breaches, particularly regarding the allegations that he took bribes from construction firms.

"Legality aside, there is also a sense of morality one needs to have when taking this job [of chancellor]," Khare said. "I really don't think being able to be bribed easily in a position like this is representative of anybody's good morals."

College of San Mateo student Natasha Efron felt that the former chancellor's alleged actions stemmed from a disconnect to the community.

"People who are playing with this kind of money don't understand what regular people who are living paycheck to paycheck go through," Efron said. "[They're] living in their own bubble."

Many have called for more transparency around where taxpayer money is going. Some said that this could allow the district to be more proactive in monitoring use of funds, rather than taking action after misconduct occurred, as they felt was the case with Galatolo.

"There needs to be general knowledge of what is happening with the money, because misappropriation of funds usually comes from people not really saying where it's going," Efron said. "Once something happens, then they look into it, and then they're like, 'oh, this was not going where it was supposed to go.'"

Beyond that, some thought that the district ought to implement new ways to monitor administrators' activity.

"There should be somebody holding [the chancellor] accountable on top of another person holding that person accountable," said senior Nyla Garrick. "That way, everybody knows that there's double the transparency and where the money is going."

Efron suggested that those in higher-up positions having direct, on-the-ground interactions with community happenings might be beneficial.

"[They could] visit the actual campuses, if they're not here a lot," Efron said. "[They could also] visit the food distribution activities or events that happen at all the cam-



SMC DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

pus. They can see what's going on in the community, so they get a better idea of what's happening."

In the case that Galatolo is convicted, students described what would help the district regain their trust.

"I hope that he knows that this is not okay," Garrick said. "This is not normal. Nobody should have this amount of greed when they already are privileged enough to have that salary. To be greedy and to continue to take more money for your own good, he needs to be put in jail."

In addition, many also mentioned that they would like to see the return of funds that the former chancellor allegedly embezzled.

Some said they have observed a pattern of influential people who have been found guilty of crimes getting away without what they deemed as a fair punishment, and feared that the same could happen in this instance.

"There should not be a situation where he gets off scot-free," Khare said. "You see cases like P. Diddy, where he barely gets a sentence, [and] like Trump, where his felonies go unnoticed. That shouldn't happen in this case. That's a dangerous thing to push to people, especially higher ranking people. That's just saying rich people can get away with anything."

After Galatolo resigned, the district appointed Michael Claire as chancellor. Before being selected, he held several roles at SMCCCD, including being a college president. Claire retired in June 2023, and the same year, the district appointed Melissa Moreno as interim chancellor. Her position was made permanent in April 2024, and she remains the current chancellor. Moreno has held leadership roles at Santa Barbara City College, and is the former president of Skyline College, which is part of SMCCCD, where she implemented diversity and student democracy initiatives, as per her biography on the district's website.

"She does have that experience," Khare said. "She's gone up the ladder. I think what they are doing by putting somebody in [with that] experience is trying to right that wrong."

Galatolo's trial is ongoing, and it still remains unclear how long the proceedings will take or when it is expected that a verdict will be reached.

The big question of Ethnic Studies

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At the same time, accusations of antisemitism within the curriculum sparked a Sequoia Union High School District-wide review of the course.

At Menlo-Atherton High School, a local group circulated an email falsely informing students that they could opt out of the course before the beginning of the school year.

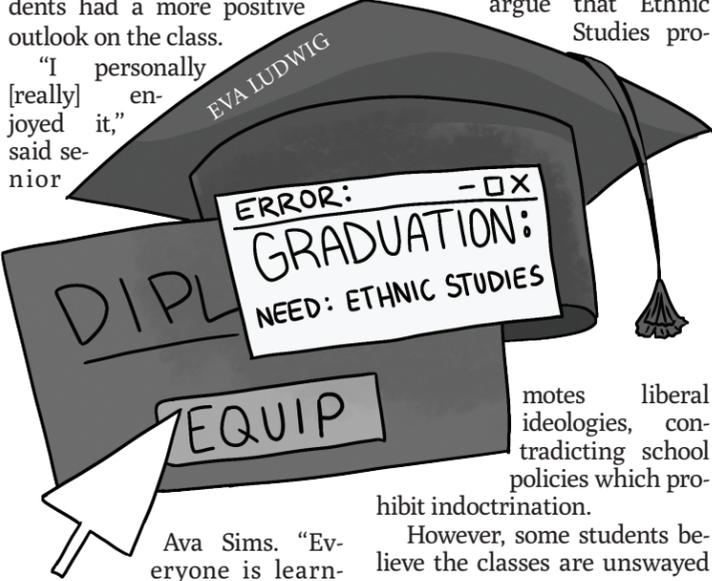
The curriculum of Ethnic Studies classes has evoked varying opinions.

"I didn't really believe that the class gave me a lot of information whatsoever," Reeves said. "It taught me about things I already knew about and didn't provide any insight. The main message that I was getting from the class that I should hate the country that I live in, and

that I should hate a lot of people [here]."

On the other hand, some students had a more positive outlook on the class.

"I personally [really] enjoyed it," said senior



Ava Sims. "Everyone is learning about the history of so many different cultures ... and [history] from the

point of view of so many different people."

Opponents of Ethnic Studies argue that Ethnic Studies pro-

hibits liberal ideologies, contradicting school policies which prohibit indoctrination.

However, some students believe the classes are unswayed by teachers' opinions.

"As long as [the class] stays objective, [that's what matters],"

Sims said. "If a teacher is teaching a controversial topic, but is constantly inputting their own opinion to manipulate how students are viewing that topic, that's wrong ... I'm in Advanced Placement [Government], and there's a ton of things I'm learning about that I don't always agree with, but it's nice to know the other side and how they're viewing things."

Some believe the course did not improve the social environment at Aragon.

"When I was taking [Ethnic Studies], I noticed that a lot of students don't take it very seriously," Liu said. "And that's just the culture ... surrounding ideas of race and ethnicity in the U.S. That [might] be combated by a different curriculum."

With Ethnic Studies omitted from the 2025 state budget, it is unknown if the requirement will be enforced in the future.

Editorial: value of Ethnic Studies

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

Ethnic Studies was codified into California law in 2021 as a high school graduation requirement for the 2029-30 school year. At Aragon, Ethnic Studies covers three units: Identity, Race and Ethnicity and Gender and Sexuality.

However, the course has encountered backlash. Some students and parents, both at Aragon and across California, don't support Ethnic Studies for reasons ranging from blatantly false, that Ethnic Studies teaches students to be "anti-white," to entirely reasonable, that avoiding any bias is difficult. That being said, when all benefits and disadvantages are weighed against one another, ultimately the Outlook believes Ethnic Studies to be valuable.

Some students believe that Ethnic Studies should not be a class separate from typical history classes.

"I don't feel like I learn as much [in Ethnic Studies] as my other classes," said freshman Hayden Chiu. "You could make history classes a little bit broader and still talk about [the counter-narrative, the untold parts of history]. You don't need a whole class to talk about the [counter-narrative]."

However, by taking Ethnic Studies before typical history classes, students are able to gain a new lens to view history through, which can be used in other social science courses. Christopher Columbus' arrival in Dominica, which is often cast in history as bringing the benefits of civilization to the Americas, though misguided, is revealed in Ethnic Studies to be the beginning of overwhelm-

ing death and mistreatment for Indigenous Americans.

Another common concern is that ideologies are being forced on students in the classroom, ranging from anti-semitism to overemphasizing race in a class's curriculum.

Nevertheless, just because the course teaches different aspects of race and oppression, it doesn't mean that the students are being "indoctrinated," but rather being informed of events and objective evidence to help them create their own opinions.

Ethnic Studies serves as more than a graduation re-

searchers and teachers who fine-tune the curriculum.

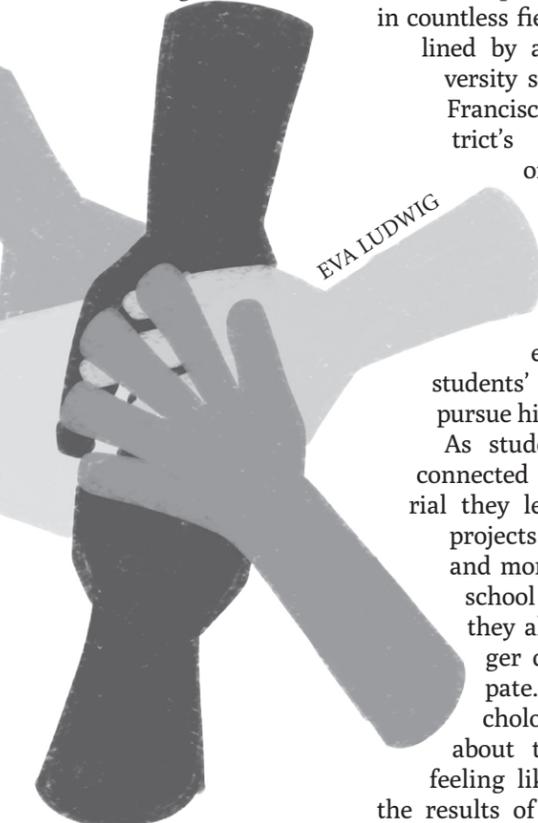
"When we're in America, they teach a lot about how we were formed as a country," said freshman Anaya Bhalla. "But [the history of minority groups is] great to learn about too, because everyone's learning about their [own] country's history."

Another vital focus of Ethnic Studies is awareness of one's own self. Students learn about intersectionality, and the pieces of an identity as well as the history behind how those pieces came to be. Benefits of such introspection can be seen in countless fields, as was outlined by a Stanford University study of the San Francisco School District's implementation of the course.

Lasting improvements were seen in attendance, grade point average and even students' willingness to pursue higher education.

As students feel more connected to the material they learn about, the projects they work on and more generally the school they attend, they also feel a stronger drive to participate. Similar to psychological studies about the benefits of feeling like one belongs, the results of Ethnic Studies are both tangible and valuable.

"Not only does everyone [learn that] it's important to understand other people's culture, [they also learn] to respect other people, and to see where other people are coming from," said sophomore Sonia Timothy Chin Hao. "People really paid attention [in class], because some people got to learn about ... their [culture's] history, ... or other cultural backgrounds they didn't know before."



quirement: it is a spotlight on the groups and stories that are often lost in other history based classes, and a way for students to fill in the holes in this nation's narrative.

The benefits of Ethnic Studies don't end at improved historical awareness. In fact, the class has resulted in transformative and curated experiences for students, along with similarly eye-opening moments for the re-

HAVE THOUGHTS YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE OUTLOOK?

50%

of high school districts in Northern California continue to offer Ethnic Studies since the mandate was halted, according to EdSource

16-19% increase

in the graduation rate of San Francisco Unified School District students who took Ethnic Studies, according to a study by Sade Bonilla et. al

Amongst the talks of removing Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement, or even as a class in general, the Outlook has found that the course is both valuable and necessary for students to take. Ethnic Studies offers students an education tailored to themselves, preparing them with a more complete knowledge of their nation's history and how their own identity plays a role. This is rarely offered in other courses, and rarely to the extent that Ethnic Studies dedicates to it. Thus, Ethnic Studies cannot and should not be replaced or removed.



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Volume 66, Issue 2
October 17, 2025

900 Alameda de las Pulgas,
San Mateo, CA 94402

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Trump's approach to foreign policy: an analysis

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On Oct. 30, Trump wrapped up his visit to Asia, in which he discussed various policy issues with foreign leaders, including those related to his imposed tariffs. This followed Trump's speech to the United Nations General Assembly in Sept., where he discussed his views on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, tariffs, foreign conflicts and climate change. During this speech, he spoke out against globalism, an ideology promoting the interconnection of political systems and economies across the world. Instead, he advocated for sovereignty and patriotism, praising the United States.

"America is blessed with the strongest economy, the strongest borders, the strongest military, the strongest friendships and the strongest spirit of any nation on the face of the earth," Trump said.

Trump is a strong proponent of nationalism, supported by his "America First" policy of putting American prosperity above global interests. Some students agree with Trump's beliefs on this subject.

"If we put Americans first, no matter which [political] side [people are on], it'll be a lot better for the country," said senior Andrew Akkawi.

Previous U.S. presidents have approached foreign affairs differently. George W. Bush focused on promoting democracy and countering terrorism after the 9/11 attack. Barack Obama fostered alliances and diplomatic solutions instead of the military. Similarly, Joe Biden used traditional diplomacy and alliances for international policy.

Trump has prioritized unilateralism and bilateral relations in both his first and current term.

TARIFFS

Currently, Trump has placed tariffs on over 90 countries. The highest rates have been placed on Brazil and India, both with 50% tariffs. These tariffs are

taxes that American companies must pay to the U.S. if they import goods from a tariffed country. This often results in companies raising prices to balance the cost of the tariffs.

"I think [Trump has] mischaracterized [tariffs] intentionally to the American public," said Modern World History teacher Scott BonDurant. "If you ask most people what they are, I think there are some misunderstandings ... That's problematic because people get the wrong idea."

According to a poll conducted by Ipsos, only 45% of the American people actually know how tariffs work, with 17% believing that tariffs are paid by the exporting country to the U.S.

Trump believes that tariffs are a necessary economic tool that should be used when countries are not following rules about trade.

"We're ... using tariffs to defend our sovereignty and security throughout the world, including against nations that have taken advantage of former U.S. administrations for decades," Trump said.

Aayushi Kothari, senior and vice president of Model UN club, disagrees with Trump's usage of tariffs.



MI NGUYEN

"If you're going to use tariffs to bring industry back to the U.S., you need to supplement that with actual domestic policy to bring industry to the U.S.," Kothari said. "That's the opposite of what we're seeing. We're seeing colleges and universities being cut ... This doesn't feel like trade protectionism to bring industry back to the U.S. because our domestic policy doesn't support that and our trade deals aren't doing that."

NATO

NATO's June 2025 summit in Hague, Netherlands was mostly focused on the defense spending of each nation, an outlier from the previous summits, which were heavily focused on support for Ukraine amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict. At the meeting, the NATO allies agreed to increase their total defense spending from 2% to 5% of their nation's gross domestic product.

Before this new budget was decided, Trump had previously remarked that if nations didn't commit to spending money on defense, he would encourage Russia to do what it wanted to them. During the summit, leaders reaffirmed their support for the collective defense of all NATO allies, including Trump. However, just last week, the Pentagon announced the U.S. would be decreasing the amount of American troops in Eastern Europe. Although several U.S. and Eastern European officials said this action was not taken because of the U.S. lessening commitment to NATO but because of Europe's increasing capacity for defense spending, senior lawmakers in Congress have criticized this change.

Others' criticisms have been aimed at NATO encouraging increased militarism.

"We spend way too much money on the military, [but] I also do feel like we have an obligation as one of the larger, more powerful countries in the world, to protect the interests of other nations as well," BonDurant said. "So those two beliefs are sort of at odds with each other ... [but] I would like to de-emphasize the necessity for NATO. I don't love that there's this international police force out there, because it certainly serves Western interest and Western capital interests. I don't necessarily know that it always lives up to its original mission."

CLIMATE CHANGE

Trump has frequently voiced his belief that climate change is a hoax, and that renewable energy is not helpful for nations. He has incentivized the fossil fuel industry to continue growing,

aligning with his "Drill, Baby, Drill" ideology. Additionally, he believes that renewable energy is disadvantageous.

Trump has also withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, an international climate treaty pledging to reduce carbon levels and limit global warming. Currently, the U.S. is one of the largest contributors of carbon dioxide emissions.

Some students are similarly skeptical of the credibility of climate change.

"This is also going to [sound] kind of radical, because they've been telling us there is an effect on the climate when we're producing so much of this unnatural CO2, but the amount we're producing is so minimal compared to what's actually naturally happening in the Earth," Akkawi said. "Obviously, we should take care of our planet, but it's gotten to the extreme where it's like we're doing so much stuff that's not really even affecting [climate change] ... I don't really see it as the biggest issue."

However, many call Trump's ideas on climate change into question.

"It's very frustrating to see our president call climate change a hoax and withdraw the nation from any movements trying to address climate change," said senior Kabir Suler. "As many activists and scientists say, this is not good for the health of the world and our environment [because] humans consume so much."

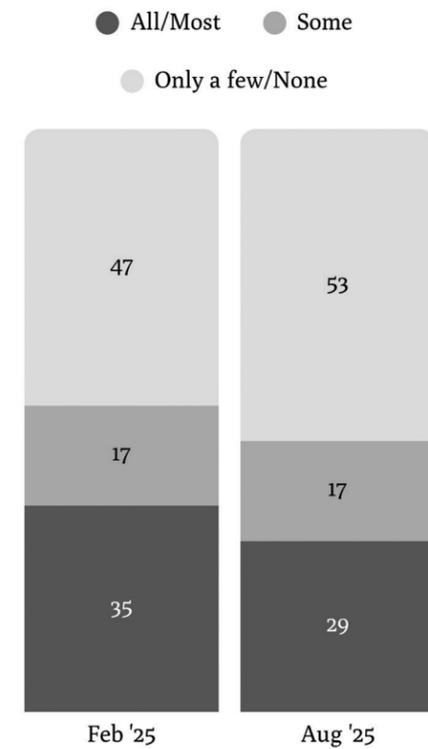
ISRAEL-PALESTINE

There have been tensions in the Gaza area for more than a century. After the 1967 Six-Day War, borders in the Middle East changed and Gaza was occupied by Israel from Egypt. Today, Palestinians mostly live in Gaza, and another area known as the West Bank. The most recent conflict began on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a terror attack on Israel.

Like the Biden administration, the Trump administration has provided military aid to Israel, which some see as defense against terrorism and others see as supporting ethnic cleansing.

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% who say they support ___ of Donald Trump's policies and plans



SOURCE: SURVEY OF U.S. ADULTS, CONDUCTED AUG. 2025; PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Proposed San Mateo bike lanes create controversy

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Math teacher Denise Morones regularly rides her bike to school on 19th and Fashion Island and said the fatality reminded her of how dangerous biking can be.

"I hate it when I go by [the site of the hit and run], because they put up the guy's picture and everything," Morones said. "And every time I go by, it makes me rethink how you can be as safe as you want, but if someone drives into the bike lane, [it] doesn't matter how safe you're being."

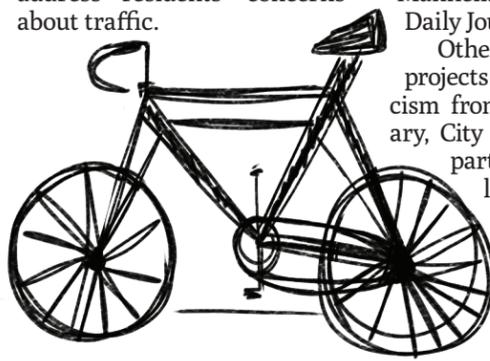
The project plans to address these concerns by adding barriers to existing bike lanes, further separating drivers and

cyclists, and it will improve the road's sidewalk and crosswalk network.

However, others are skeptical that implementing protected bike lanes would increase bike usage.

"The people they're trying to target with this don't bike around that much," said sophomore Linus Zhao. "There's a reason why they don't want to bike around as much; a car is easier. People who don't bike right now either want to be in a car, don't have a bike or they don't want to [bike] ... They're gonna stay in their cars."

The plan has also faced pushback from residents who say it would not do enough to address residents' concerns about traffic.



EVA LUDWIG

"We've been working on and waiting for congestion relief for over 20 years, and now we're

going to take that money and work on bike lanes," said former San Mateo Police Chief Susan Manheimer in the San Mateo Daily Journal.

Other San Mateo bike lane projects have also faced criticism from residents. In February, City Council approved the partial removal of bike lanes on Humboldt Street and began exploring alternative solutions after residents complained they reduced space for parking.

Loraine said that City Council has learned from its past missteps and is looking to increase

community engagement for future projects.

"The Humboldt bike lane project was a tough experience," Loraine said. "We're considering increasing the time we spend on these projects where we can to make sure that we have a robust community outreach ... and come up with creative, iterative solutions that seek to reduce parking and traffic lanes only where needed."

With multiple community meetings scheduled in the coming months, the city plans to move forward with the 19th Ave and Fashion Island Boulevard project. The design is expected to be finalized by spring 2026.

IMMIGRATION:



Diya Poojary
NEWS WRITER

*Names have been changed to protect source privacy.

Since President Donald Trump assumed office in Jan., his administration has focused its efforts on immigration through new policies and restrictions to existing immigration-related services.

On Sept. 19, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem announced that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services would end the Temporary Protected Status designated to Syrians living in the U.S. The TPS system grants renewable refuge and work permits for foreigners whose home countries are facing crises, but does not grant them legal permanent residence.

Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin stated that conditions in Syria no longer threatened their nationals, and that allowing Syrians to remain in the U.S. would conflict with the nation's interests.

"[It] just hurts my heart to think of all the families that are currently being torn apart," said sophomore Avonlea Ha. "Especially for the people that are immigrating to America to escape hostile things happening in their own country, only to be immediately sent back."

VISA PROGRAMS

Changes have also been made to other immigration programs, notably the H-1B and H-2A visa programs.

Also on Sept. 19, President Trump signed a proclamation imposing a \$100,000 fee on new H-1B visa petitions filed after Sept. 21, as an effort to curb "abuse of the program." U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services also stated it would take steps to ensure only the "best of the best temporary foreign workers" are hired, prioritizing higher skilled and paid immigrants over those earning lower wages.

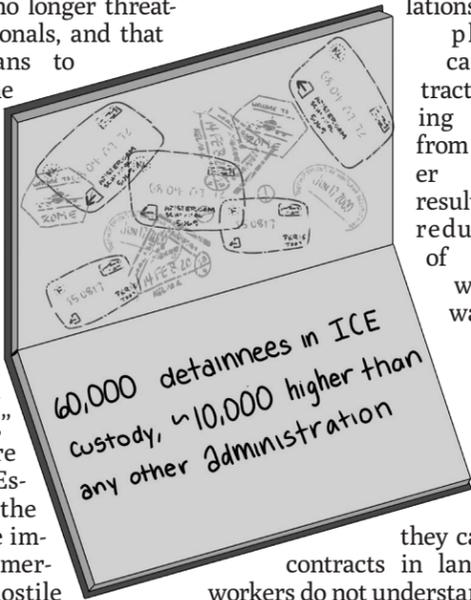
The H-1B Specialty Occupations visa is a temporary, non-immigrant visa U.S. companies use to hire foreign workers.

"In the short term, it could be detrimental ... because of the

fact that a lot of the high-skilled labor here is foreign, especially for tech companies coming from India and China," said senior Arun Yama. "But in the long term, it's definitely beneficial because Trump's goal is to promote American labor to replace these jobs. There's a sentiment [of], 'why are we having foreign nationals doing high-paying, very rewarding jobs that Americans could theoretically do.'"

Similarly, on Oct. 2, the Department of Labor declared new nationwide regulations for the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers Program. The program previously required employers to protect foreign workers by guaranteeing a minimum number of work hours, providing free housing and transportation and paying at least the annual baseline wage set by the Adverse Effect Wage Rule.

Now, under these new regulations,



employers can subtract housing costs from worker wages, resulting in reductions of farm-worker wages by more than \$3 per hour. Additionally,

they can give contracts in languages workers do not understand, and remove safety regulations and holiday and overtime bonuses.

The Department of Labor cited these changes were made because the program imposed high cost burdens for employers while granting foreign workers under the program unfair additional compensation not given to U.S. workers. Others, however, stated these regulations could make living and working conditions worse for H-2A workers who depend on the program, whilst increasing risk of labor exploitation.

PROGRAM EXPANSION

Another major step in Trump's immigration crackdown was the restoration of the Everglades Detention Facility in Florida as a federal immigration detention facility in July.

Dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz," the 3,000-capacity camp has since become subject to lawsuits

pertaining to its inhumane conditions, environmental risks and lack of legal counsel for immigrants, though the Trump administration denies such claims. Projected construction plans were temporarily halted in mid-August by a federal judge who claimed the camp posed environmental risks to the surrounding wetlands and people who depended on its resources.

"They're putting people in there [who] aren't the worst of the worst," said Tara*, whose parents are undocumented immigrants. "Most of these people, [are just] working or people who ... have the right to be here. What happened to due process? What happened to treating people like humans?"

The expansion of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the mass deportation of illegal immigrants, often unlawfully, has been most prevalent across media coverage. A \$75 billion dollar package was approved in July to expand operations for the agency over the next four years, the highest funding currently for a law enforcement U.S. agency.

The monthly average of deportations since has increased to three times greater than it was under former President Joe Biden. While ICE under Obama deported over 3.1 million people, news coverage and popular opinion claim the agency focused on deporting primarily those with criminal records while maintaining a low profile.

"[Did] you see Obama filming when they tore people apart, families apart?" said Jeff*, an immigrant who came to the U.S. a few decades ago. "You never see those scenes on TV, or you never see immigration holding cameras when they actually put people on the ground ... The way they're handling things [now] is out of control."

ICE AGENTS

ICE is also criticized for controversial tactics when confronting immigrants, such as agents masking themselves, often with no clear formal identification on display, causing many to be concerned about accountability and upholding public safety and trust. Others think this measure is necessary.

"[You] have state governments and county governments directly acting against the federal government, making the federal government's job harder ... endangering federal agents," Yama said. "That's unacceptable. The American people have a mandate that they gave the Trump administration; they voted for this."

Agents have also been seen detaining people outside immigration courts or hospitals — previously places out-of-bounds for immigration enforcement. Furthermore, the use of tear gas and other chemical irritants, like pepper spray, have been continually used on immigrant crowds, like in Los Angeles, or to dispel civilian protests against the crackdown, like in Chicago.

"It's heartbreaking to see everything that's going on in this country," Jeff said. "When I came [here], I thought I came to a different country ... What I'm seeing right now is [the] same country that I actually came [from] a few decades ago ... Right now, it's broken."

CIVILIAN RESPONSE

For many immigrants, these changes are very disheartening.

"[The American Dream was] why a lot of families came, my parents came, and I feel like it's not really a dream anymore," Tara said. "A lot of

people are self-deporting because ... all the progress has started to decline because of the administration."

Some, however, believe Trump's immigration crackdown is an effort to support American citizens.

"He is definitely promoting an America First agenda, which applies to Americans first,

right?" Yama said. "That goes hand in hand [with] creating more jobs for Americans, safety concerns, things like that. I don't want to say he's attacking immigration, but he is focusing on prioritizing America, and there definitely is an immigration component to that."

While the crackdown has instilled fear among immigrants, some, like Marie, believe people will still try to find ways to be in the U.S.

"Even with everything happening about ICE and immigration [enforcement], I think people still are willing to risk that in order to become better people and have a better life," Marie said.

Others believe there should be a different path for undocumented migrants who abide by laws and contribute to the nation.

"If you've been here for a long time [with] your family ... and you've been paying your taxes and doing everything that you're supposed to do, [then] there should be a path for these people to get in society," Jeff said.

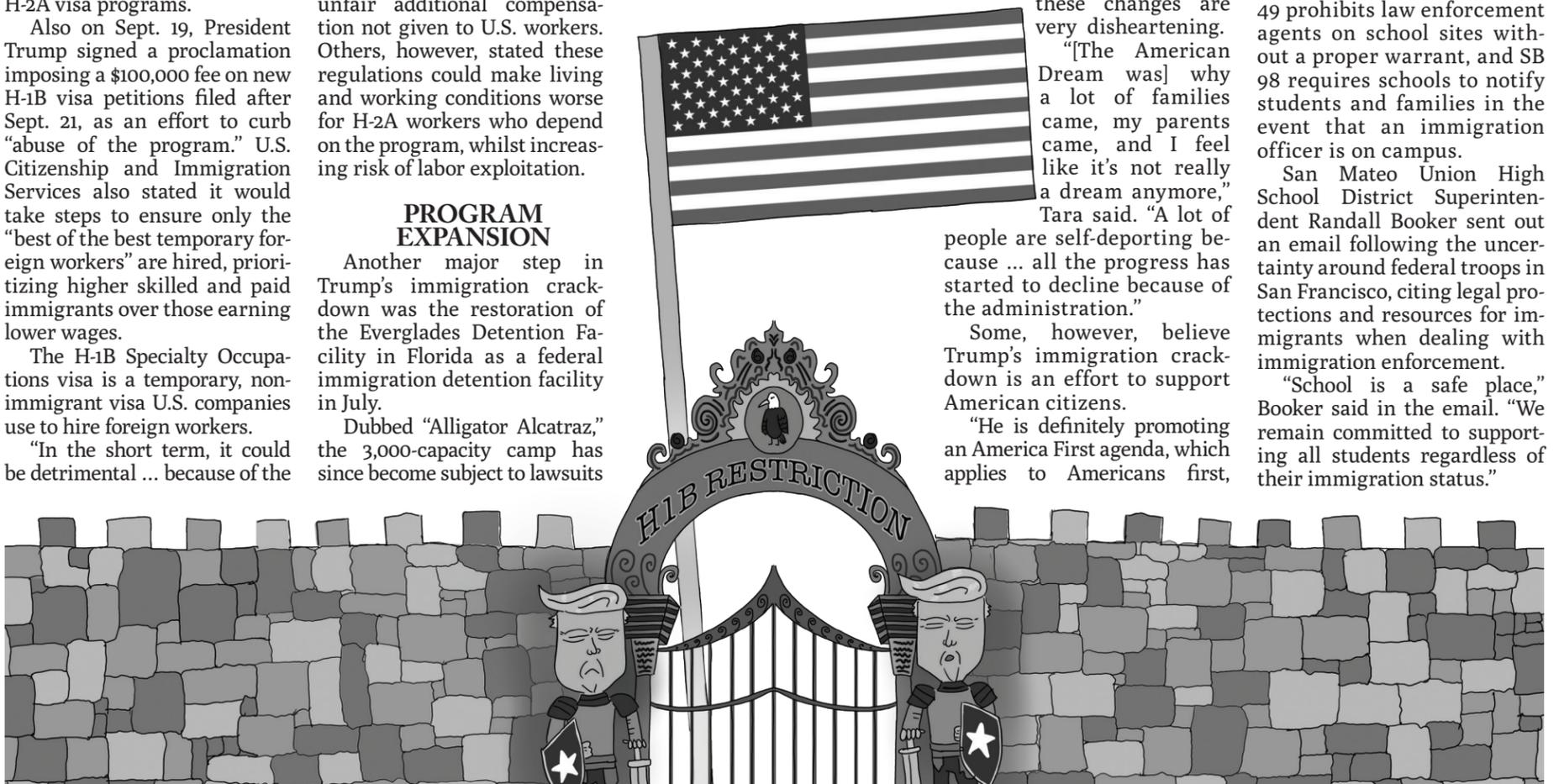
In mid-Oct., Trump also considered deploying the National Guard to San Francisco, but ultimately called it off after receiving friction from tech companies in the Bay Area and a private conversation with San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie.

Gov. Gavin Newsom responded that such actions without proper justification were equivalent to authoritarian overreach, and that California would stand by the Constitution to defend immigrant rights.

Newsom signed Assembly Bill 49 and Senate Bill 98 in Sept., which created stronger protective regulations against immigration enforcement in schools. AB 49 prohibits law enforcement agents on school sites without a proper warrant, and SB 98 requires schools to notify students and families in the event that an immigration officer is on campus.

San Mateo Union High School District Superintendent Randall Booker sent out an email following the uncertainty around federal troops in San Francisco, citing legal protections and resources for immigrants when dealing with immigration enforcement.

"School is a safe place," Booker said in the email. "We remain committed to supporting all students regardless of their immigration status."



Online friendships: to be catfished or connected?

Oliver Levitt
FEATURES WRITER

With billions of people on the internet everyday — whether it be on video games or social media apps — there is a vast landscape of online interaction, leading many students at Aragon to develop online friendships.

For senior Heli Artola, her online friendship developed through social media.

"We met through Tiktok," Artola said. "She just found one of my videos and commented on it, and we just started [direct messaging] from there ... I know a good amount of information [about] her, [like how] she doesn't live in the United States ... and her family story. I've known her for five years now ... It's bitter-sweet, because I know I'll never meet this person, but I know that they'll be there for me, whenever they can."

Moreover, as time goes on, many online friendships become more personal.

"We started by talking about very simple things, like games and just complaining about day to day life, like homework or whatnot," said senior Leilani Tsao. "But then as we grew older and we grew closer together, we actually formed a very strong support system."

Furthermore, online friendships can start at a very young age, which junior Aaron Lee now, in hindsight, views as a possible danger.

"I used to have online friends," Lee said. "It started when I got access to the internet [when] I was three. As I went through my adolescent years, the inter-

net kind of shaped my ideals. And I got lucky, because people I met on the internet were pretty good people, so they helped me to grow into a good person, the best I could be despite having less parenting ... But the same way that online friendships can help you be a better person, they can also influence you to be a worse person."

To junior Macklin Berg, online friendships are also risks.

"This person could be straight up lying about their age, or straight up lying about everything," Berg said. "And then if they pressure you into leaking your address or something."

Similarly, the dangers of online predation can be a vicious, unpublicized cycle.

"The problem with predators online is that they're not caught and no one is taking responsibility to catch them and arrest them," Lee said. "The dangers with people being online at a young age is that one: they don't know how to avoid them. Two: they don't know it is happening. And three: as they grow up, they begin to think that behavior is normal, and ultimately they become predators themselves. And that's a big problem."

To combat the dangerous cycle, some people recommend taking a number of precautionary measures to protect oneself.

"Online catfishing is a very big problem, especially today, because everybody's on the internet," Artola said. "The way of preventing it is just being cautious and asking multiple questions regarding the person. Before I started really becoming friends with my online friend, I had to ask a bunch of questions that at first seemed weird to ask, but at the end of the day, I knew they weren't because it was for my safety."

Some other approaches involve checking for human qualities based on conversations together.

"The more you talk to someone, the more [parts] of your

some point to me, I felt that there's no way this isn't a real person. Either this person is very carefully crafting some per-

LILLIAN HUANG

meet up ... Once we got past the initial, first stage awkwardness of 'oh my gosh, I'm not talking to my screen,' it was actually really relaxing, and we were able to just settle into how we normally act online."

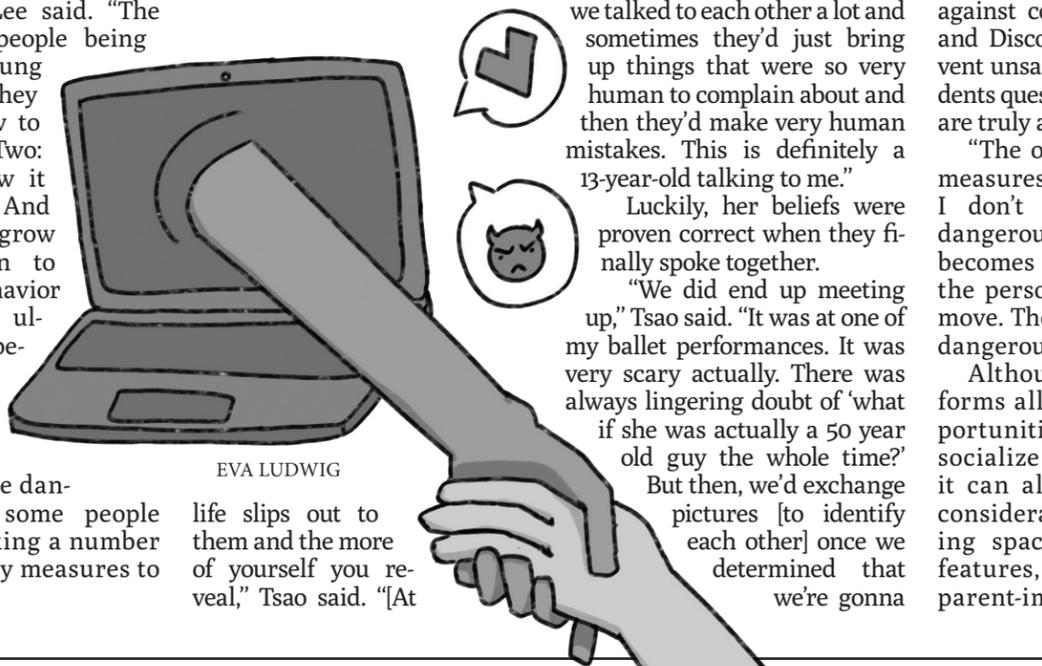
While there is some truth in the common stereotypes about online creeps, these stereotypes can often be overrepresented.

"[The stereotypes] are fair," Tsao said. "[But] if you get to the point of having a very close relationship with someone, you usually should be able to judge by yourself if they are the person you think you're talking to, so the stereotype is kind of a bit overstated."

Despite people often placing blame for these online predators, criticism often falls on the apps. With recent lawsuits against companies like Roblox and Discord for failing to prevent unsafe activities, some students question whether the apps are truly at fault.

"The ones that have safety measures installed in them, I don't think they're that dangerous," Berg said. "It becomes dangerous when the person tries to make the move. The app doesn't make it dangerous, the person does."

Although online platforms allow for immense opportunities to connect and socialize in a new medium, it can also require careful consideration before joining spaces, platform safety features, user maturity and parent-imposed restrictions.



EVA LUDWIG

life slips out to them and the more of yourself you reveal," Tsao said. "[At

sonality, or they're just a real person and they're looking to have fun ... [In my experience,] I knew it was the latter because we talked to each other a lot and sometimes they'd just bring up things that were so very human to complain about and then they'd make very human mistakes. This is definitely a 13-year-old talking to me."

Luckily, her beliefs were proven correct when they finally spoke together.

"We did end up meeting up," Tsao said. "It was at one of my ballet performances. It was very scary actually. There was always lingering doubt of 'what if she was actually a 50 year old guy the whole time?' But then, we'd exchange pictures [to identify each other] once we determined that we're gonna

Misandry: Mrs. the mark

Ashley Tsui
FEATURES WRITER

"Why are you crying? Man up." "Men are incompetent without women." "All men are creeps."

Misandry, defined as the dislike of or prejudice against men, emerged as the opposite force to misogyny, the prejudice against women. Though the term is less well known than its counterpart, misandry is nevertheless present in society as a subtly oppressive force.

Misandrist stereotypes, microaggressions and expectations, like believing that all men are disrespectful, only further embed themselves in society as time goes on. Men are often ridiculed, rather than understood when faced with physical or mental pain.

"When men are in unsafe situations, when it comes to sexual assault or assault in general, it gets downplayed by a lot of people because they're men and they're 'supposed to be attracted to this,' or 'supposed to want this' or 'supposed to be able to de-

fend themselves,' but that's not always the case," said senior Anisa Nicole Oliver.

Misandry, being rooted in prejudice, serves to introduce more negativity into society, belittling men in the same way women have been discriminated against. Rather than canceling each other out, misogyny and misandry work to create further societal divides and continue a cycle of oppression.

"[Since] misogyny is violence against women, I don't think that you should be fighting violence with more violence," said senior Sarah Walter. "[Misogyny and misandry are] two separate sides of a spectrum, but they're also similar in the way that it's an exclusion of someone based on their gender or sex."

tion due to the collective societal ignorance towards misogyny.

"The biggest cause for misandry was probably society doing nothing about misogyny," Oliver said. "It just made women hate men even more than they already did and some people just went overboard with it and started doing the same thing that we're trying to fight against."

Even so, cases of misandry can occur daily, often through subtle comments.

"I've heard [misandric] comments directed towards men who are working in traditionally female-dominated fields, like childcare or nursing," said senior Trevor

sewing were intruding on spaces for women, and I thought that felt wrong. I figure that hobbies are something that should be able to be enjoyed by anyone, regardless of ethnicity, race, sex, gender."

On a local level, misandry is also far less common than its equivalent, likely due to the way the two prejudices developed in the past and the historical influences on today's societal norms.

"[Misandry] isn't that prevalent in a lot of places," Walter said. "It doesn't have that same sort of social ingraining that misogyny does ... because misogyny is in our culture, as a default [result of the] patriarchy and how the world has worked for so long. You see misogyny in almost everything. You see it in fashion ... the workplace

... your everyday life ... in politics, everywhere, so you don't see misandry at all: it's [in] very small circles, it's not really taken seriously in most cases and misogyny is everywhere as a default."

Some people hypothesize that misandry was derived from the more extreme feminist movements.

"People took the feminist movement 1,000 times too far," said sophomore Naomi Dulac. "It's very different to say 'I wish for equal rights between men and women' and saying 'I hate men because of what they've done to women, I hate every single male that I encounter because all males are the same' ... I don't think that ... putting [men] down is going to make women seem more empowered."

This prejudice serves to belittle men on unjust grounds instead of creating positive change. Choosing to put down men likely won't help solve the problem of inequality, as it doesn't resolve the issue on a fundamental level. Though it's possible that there will never be a true way to diminish misandry due to its connection to misogyny, being more conscious of what one says and what stereotypes one perpetuates can bring us one step closer to equality.



DAHLIA SELIG

Though less well-exemplified in history than misogyny, misandry is still a serious issue, possibly emerging from frustra-

MacMillan. "[Once], I heard a woman talking about how she thought that men who were interested in art and

Poopsies! Foster City improvement politics

Seona Srivastava
FEATURES WRITER

Foster City's parks are being bombed. Canadian geese, with their knowing eyes and smug waddles, have turned the city's pristine parks into minefields of green and white, leaving a trail of droppings where no human can escape.

"When I do go to the parks, I can't really ever have a picnic because there's goose poop everywhere, and it's annoying," said junior Sonakshi Rajput, a Foster City resident and member of the city's Youth Advisory Council.

The city is enacting a non-lethal plan to reclaim its green spaces from the hundreds of geese gracing its lagoons, who leave behind as much as 300 pounds of waste every single day. The stakes are more than aesthetic: in 2022, Heal the Bay identified two Foster City beaches among the top 10 most polluted in California, largely thanks to the geese's prolific digestive systems.

The non-lethal plan came only after fierce public resistance. In May 2022, the city obtained a federal permit to kill up to 100 geese.

By Sept., about 40 protesters had gathered in front of city hall and later marched to a councilmember's home. More than 14,000 supporters from animal protection agency In Defense of Animals, over 140 times the number of actual geese, sent opposition emails to the council. Public speakers urged the council to reconsider, citing the "humanitarian need to save the animals."

The council backed down and directed staff to investigate non-lethal methods instead, resulting in the permit to kill geese expiring before a single bird had been culled. The non-lethal strategy approved by City Council last December involves a high-tech arsenal of drones, lasers and balloons designed to scare the geese away, as well as deploying highly trained dogs to chase birds from the parks and waterways. Beyond the gadgets and canines, city leaders are also focusing on a more foundational approach, including habitat modification — removing grass, which is the geese's main source of food — and public education, a campaign to stop residents from feeding them.

The city's methodical and costly approach to its goose problem may seem like overkill for a community barely four square miles wide. But to understand why the fowl get full project management treatment from Foster City, one must understand the city's very DNA.

LEVEE

Foster City's "conservative" philosophy, defined not by a political party but a cautious, preventative and long-term approach to planning, is deeply embedded in every decision. The geese, in a way, are just a living, feathered manifestation of the challenges facing a city that was built from scratch and exists by a careful act of will. This

mindset is most evident in the city's most critical project: the battle against rising sea levels.

Foster City's levee, an embankment around the city's perimeter, stands as more than just a wall; it's a shield. Without it, Foster City would simply not exist. Built on reclaimed marshland, the city's core residential and commercial areas sit below sea level. For decades, a system of earthen levees was all that stood between the community and the relentless waters of the San Francisco Bay. But a 2014 Federal Emergency Management Agency finding deeming the levee insufficient for flood protection was the wake-up call, threatening to designate the city a flood zone and forcing thousands of homeowners into mandatory, expensive flood insurance.

The city's response to this threat was, in true Foster City fashion, preventative. After years of studies and public outreach, voters overwhelmingly approved a \$90 million bond measure to upgrade the levee, a complex, multi-phase engineering effort featuring new floodwalls, seismic retrofitting, and a hope that the Bay will stay politely in its lane. Today, the project is complete, and the results are tangible.

For Rajput, who lives close to the levee, the construction was a mixed blessing.

"My parents and I used to go on a walk there all the time," Rajput said. "After the construction, we've been going less just because [the levee blocked the view] ... [That being said,] if sea level rising is a real thing, then it's important. [The city] addressed it adequately, even though it was an expensive project."

Councilwoman Phoebe Shin-Venkat, who wasn't on the council when the funding was approved but supported it as a community member, sees the levee as more than just flood protection.

"It's doing its job protecting [the city], but now we [want to tackle the question of]: how can we make this into a true amenity that more people know about?" Shin-Venkat said. "Is there a way that we can make the levee more connected to the local business and community, so that we can generate more revenue from the levee as well?"

If the geese were a minor nuisance and the levee an existential threat, housing is the slow-burning crisis testing the city's very identity.

HOUSING

The city's self-contained, cautious planning is now facing a new force even it can't out-schedule: the state of California. The state, in its quest to fix the housing crisis, has ordered Foster City to plan for thousands of new housing units, a bureaucratic earthquake in a city whose identity is built on low-density, suburban planning and the careful

separation of residential from commercial space.

Shin-Venkat, the first renter ever to serve on the city council, pushes back against the framing that the city is simply following state orders.

"I never am someone who wants to be on the back foot," Shin-Venkat said. "I never pitch building housing or doing our part as, 'Oh yeah, the state told us to do it, therefore we have to do it.' Cities that couch things that way put Foster City in a victim status. And we are not victims."

Instead, Shin-Venkat sees housing as addressing a fundamental community need.

"I've seen actual survey results coming from Foster City community members that said the top issues are housing and cost of living," Shin-Venkat said. "We have a huge opportunity to not only do the right thing, but focus on doing the best thing for the community because we want to make sure people can stay here."

The instinct, however, is to preserve. The city has engaged in a slow, deliberate process of updating its Housing Element — Foster City's plan for housing-related concerns — including extensive public outreach and numerous studies. But the process has been defined by a deep-seated desire to retain the city's "character," a word Shin-Venkat believes often obscures the real issue.

"I love when people say 'preserving character,' because I wonder who is dictating what a character is," Shin-Venkat said. "The character of a community is made up by the characters: us, each one of us that live, work and play here. We define the city. We define the community. It's changing like an organism, minute by minute ... When I hear we have to be careful around the 'character of Foster City,' it's usually a deflection to not build more housing."

The city has developed "Objective Design and Development Standards" to ensure any new construction "complements existing neighborhoods" rather than disrupting them. This is the city's attempt to meet a new challenge without abandoning its core identity.

But the cautious approach comes with trade-offs. This focus on preservation can frustrate residents who desire a more vibrant, urban environment — the very amenities that require population density to sustain.

"It's nice to have parks [and] a suburban, comfortable feel," said senior Dahlia Anapolsky. "But there's a lack of diversity in restaurants, there's limited nightlife and limited vibrant urban [activity]."

Shin-Venkat acknowledges this tension directly.

"People want amenities," Shin-Venkat said. "People want more restaurant selection. They want more retail. [To get there,] we need to make sure we have enough people, businesses and people in those businesses, to support [what] we want."

The issue also lies in keeping families together.

"My son, over the years, has had friends move away: some out of Foster City, out of the state, out of the country," Shin-Venkat said. "The [cost of living] in Foster City [is crazy]. Even within the peninsula, Foster

City has the highest pricing for rentals and for homes. It's not just about making money; it's also more importantly about keeping the fabric of the community together."

Like many others, Rajput has noticed the construction happening across the city. "Especially during COVID and still now, there's just a lot of construction projects that have

been taking place, like where the McDonald's is," Rajput said. "There's been constant construction in Foster City to expand housing ... They're using up a lot of the city with either housing [or] the bare minimum stores. Me and my friends always talk about this: you have to always go outside of Foster City to really hang out anywhere."

The housing boom has yet to be translated into the amenities young people want.

"We could have had a better mall," Rajput said. "The strip malls are just places to get food. In downtown San Mateo and Burlingame, they have streets with restaurants and smaller shops."

Even Foster City's celebrated lagoon, a centerpiece of the master plan, falls short for Rajput.

"Some of the parks like Gold Park have beaches, but I wouldn't want to go in it because the water isn't the best," Rajput said. "And again, there's goose poop everywhere."

The housing dilemma, unlike the levee project, is a problem with no easy solution, highlighting the tension between the city's foundational desire to conserve its way of life and the demands of a changing world.

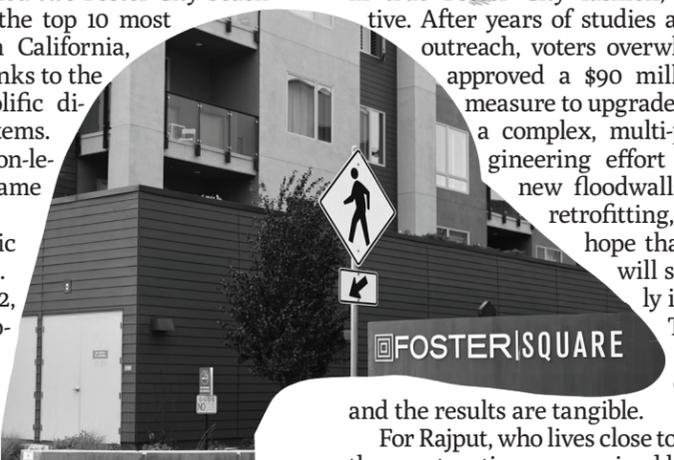
BLUEPRINT

The same master-planned origins that created the city's vulnerabilities also shaped its unique aesthetic; Foster City's "conservative" philosophy isn't just about risk aversion — it's also about the proactive, deliberate creation of a specific and beautiful community full of lagoons and parks and geese.

The presence of Eichler homes, with their iconic mid-century modern design is no happy accident. These homes were intentionally invited into the master plan by developer T. Jack Foster, who wanted to marry a progressive, open-air lifestyle with his vision for a new city. The post-and-beam construction, and floor-to-ceiling glass walls of the Eichlers were a curated choice — a bold aesthetic statement that perfectly matched the optimism of the 1960s and the forward-thinking nature of the planned community.

"They're beautiful," Anapolsky said. "I'm really a fan of that style of architecture. It's nice to have a strong piece of architectural history in our community. It's something we should be proud of."

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ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG



DAHLIA SELIG

MEILIN RIFE

LONELINESS: IN THE ABYSS

HISTORY

In January 2024, the American Psychiatric Association conducted a poll that showed that 30 percent of young people felt lonely at least multiple times a week, if not every day. This sense of isolation can be social, emotional or existential.

"Loneliness is a pit of despair like darkness," said wellness counselor Eddie Perez. "[It's] the feeling that 'even though there are people in my world, I am not understood, I'm not accepted, I'm not enough.' Somebody could be experiencing loneliness that has a best friend, but that feeling of despair can stop people from reaching out. It's a snowball effect."

In 2024, San Mateo County declared loneliness a public health emergency, allocating one million dollars to supporting anti-loneliness programs. Community leaders continue to spread awareness and give support.

Despite our world becoming increasingly connected, loneliness becomes more prevalent. The COVID-19 pandemic was a major factor, trapping people in their homes, and for many, taking away the few social relationships that subdued the dreaded feeling of loneliness.

"[For] anybody [from] elementary school through high school age, [COVID] shifted something in that ability to socially connect that is integrated so much in your schooling," Perez said. "I'm seeing a lot more socialization challenges than I saw prior to COVID ... [which] contributes to loneliness."

For some, certain circumstances can make it difficult to create lasting relationships.

"I left my old school in the middle of September, and I spent that entire time before I came to Aragon in my bed doing nothing," said senior Madison Spiegel. "I've always had to move, and it's always been habitual for me. This time was more challenging because we're older and it's harder to find friends, especially because everything is already established."



IMPACTS

Loneliness, despite being a mental affliction, poses significant physical health risks. According to the meta-analysis "Perspectives on Psychological Science" co-authored by Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a lack of social connection presents as much risk for health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, dementia and even early death, as smoking 15 packs of cigarettes every day.

"I've experienced having some relationships ... in school, and then having none," said senior Ava Baptista. "And I'd say that it really does create a big impact, whether you see it or not."

The absence of meaningful connections is a major cause of loneliness, contributing to why adolescents specifically, as indicated by a study by the World Health Organization, encounter it more often than people of other age groups. Combined with the complex environment of school, this can make it difficult for children to navigate social hierarchies and find a sense of belonging.

"I am neurodivergent, so I have a lot of learning struggles, but I didn't know until two years ago," Spiegel said. "I spent most of the time believing I was a super bad kid, which caused me to not be able to make friends super easily ... It hindered my ability to reach out to friends or teachers."

In the end, it may be easy to fall into the painful loop of failing to reach out, feeling increasing loneliness and becoming even less encouraged to open up.

21%
of adolescents report loneliness, the age group with the highest rate, according to the report "From loneliness to social connection" by the World Health Organization.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Many people turn to social media to connect with others. The COVID-19 pandemic has skyrocketed the number of people who use social media in this way, since in-person relationships became limited, if not nonexistent.

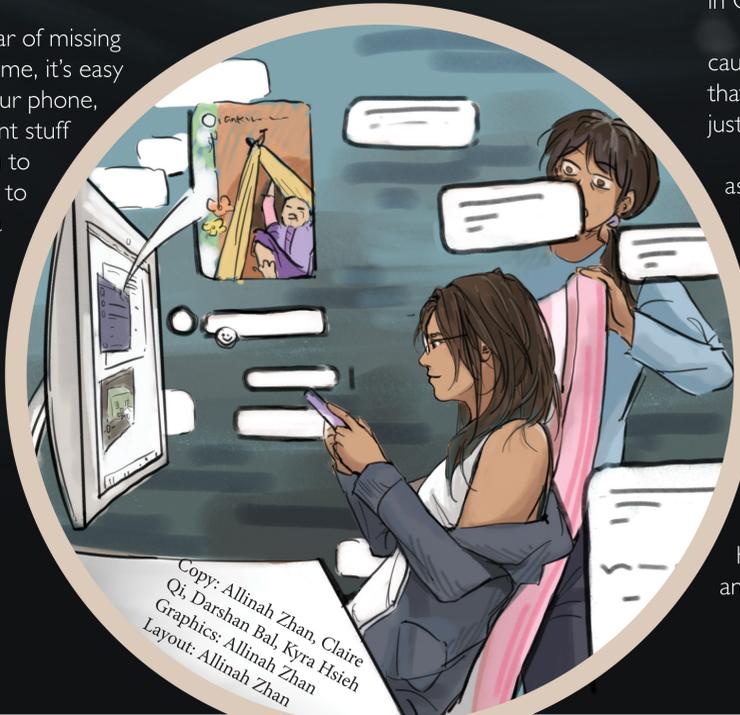
In a poll by the American Psychiatric Association, 16% of people chose social media as one of their top three places they felt the most community and belonging. Social media gives people a platform for exploring shared interests and acts as a proxy for those with higher social anxiety.

"Sometimes, texting is better because when I'm in person, I feel really vulnerable," said junior Katy Yu. "I want to be behind a screen, and it's easier to express my feelings without them really seeing my expressions. It can be an easier way to reach out to someone because the response is just online. You can just block them and forget about it."

There are many contradicting studies on the effect of social media usage on loneliness. Studies published by the National Institutes of Health show that those who use social media for more connection feel lonelier, especially people under age 60.

"A lot of social media is [fear of missing out]," Spiegel said. "A lot of the time, it's easy to feel lonely when you go on your phone, and you see people doing different stuff that your parents don't allow you to do, or you don't have the money to do, or you just don't really have a group of people to do it."

Furthermore, parasocial relationships with celebrities or fictional characters can increase mental health struggles. According to Harvard Medical School, these one-sided relationships can result in an increase in loneliness and isolation, contributing to the overall loneliness epidemic.



Copy: Allinah Zhan, Claire Qi, Darshan Bal, Kyra Hsieh
Graphics: Allinah Zhan
Layout: Allinah Zhan

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

One of the biggest challenges of addressing the loneliness epidemic lies in the stigma surrounding it, as admitting to feeling lonely feels like a confession of weakness. Hence, it takes great inner courage to find a supportive inner circle and ask for help. Even gradual steps towards opening up to others, with an emphasis on one's own self-worth, can help create a community space where connection becomes central.

"I made this mindset: it never hurts to ask," Spiegel said. "'Do you want to hang out? Do you want to go get ice cream? Do you want to come and study with me at the library?' You never know if that person also really needs somebody to hang out with."

Although using chatbots and other tools may help, it cannot replace genuine interpersonal connection.

"I've talked to my wellness counselors," said junior Katy Yu. "When you use ChatGPT, you're framing the questions in a way to get the answer that you want. With real life people and professionals, they genuinely see the problem that you're in, and they don't in this situation."

Finding common ground through shared interests helps to bridge social gaps, with volunteering and hobbies offering excellent opportunities.

"[I found my friends] through some of my interests," said junior Reagan Alegria. "For example, through playing games. We interact physically, we talk sometimes outside of class. But sometimes we interact online whenever we're out busy doing something else."

People may also find understanding and personal growth in leadership; it not only allows one to support others but also offers a different perspective.

"We discuss a lot of coping mechanisms for loneliness in Bring Change to Mind Club," Spiegel said. "Being a leader, having to put together these presentations, I'm also learning as well. And I've also learned so much from what I'm having to teach other people."

No matter how hard it may seem at the moment, loneliness is only temporary. Through self-discovery and persistence, connection and support are in reach.



According to a study from the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI, when researchers prompted language models with ideas surrounding feelings of suicidal ideation, the models would play into such feelings and enable this dangerous conduct.

AI'S INFLUENCE

As artificial intelligence technology continues to advance rapidly, many teenagers turn to large language models for the social connection that they crave.

"What quicker way to access a friend than go check [an] AI app and chat them up?" Perez said. "I definitely see an increase in the usage of [AI] ... [but] that indicates to me that there aren't supports in their life."

Chatbots often display sycophancy, a tendency to agree with the user's prompts to keep them on the app, which may create a negative feedback loop reinforcing one's own thinking. OpenAI claims they have attempted to reduce this in ChatGPT.

"Sometimes I need an objective opinion, which might not make sense because AI is always saying what you want to hear," Yu said. "But sometimes I need that validation and I know that it's not good, so I've been using less lately, and I've just been talking to more people instead."

While some tech executives like Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg promote AI as a method to fix the loneliness epidemic — as he stated in a podcast with Dwarshesh Patel — this only blurs the line between real and technological. It tricks people struggling with loneliness into believing they have developed true relationships, inevitably causing even more hurt when people realize the falsity of these relationships they've invested so much in.

"You're in your own digital world," Yu said. "Your [view] of people distorts, and you might feel disgust towards real people because you've shaped your online friend to be exactly how you want it. People have many flaws, and it's important that you learn how to adapt to facing them."

In Feb., a Florida teenager developed romantic feelings for a chatbot on Character.ai that mimicked Daenerys Targaryen, a character from "Game of Thrones." In his final conversation with the bot, it asked him to "come home" to her, and he obliged by taking his own life. On Oct. 29, character.ai announced they would bar minors from using their chatbots.

UNIQUE CULTURAL FOOD AROUND SAN MATEO

TAKAHASHI MARKET *By Features Writer Roy Kong*

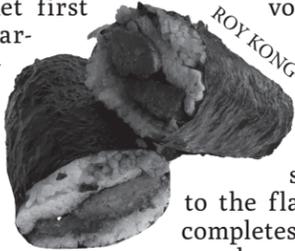
A Japanese-Hawaiian market has been building its reputation since 1906: Takahashi market, founded by Tokutaru Takahashi, a Japanese immigrant. The family-owned Takahashi market first started as a market to serve Japanese-speaking people in San Mateo in 1906. Because of large Pacific Islander and Asian immigration in the 1950s, the market turned from Japanese to a Hawaiian-Asian market.

We purchased the loco moco musubi for \$10.95, which is a hefty price for one log of musubi. The loco moco musubi comes in a foil wrap, but where it lacks

in presentation, it makes up for in flavor and aroma: it consists of a layer of soft, steaming egg above a tender beef patty surrounded with white rice enhanced by a savory sauce, wrapped in seaweed. In addition, it comes with a large portion of extremely rich gravy, which significantly adds to the flavor and inherently completes the dish, making it worth your while.

Because of the quality musubi, Takahashi is deserving of five stars out of five stars.

OUR RATING: ★★★★★



ROY KONG

Nursel Central Asian and Russian Cuisine *By Features Editor Zack Li*

Nestled in the homely suburbs of San Carlos is Nursel Central Asian and Russian Cuisine.

I had their borscht and vareniki. Before taking in the vibrant red-purple soup and the heaping plate of dumplings, the aroma strikes first — bright but earthy, a preview to the generously sprinkled dill atop either dish. The vareniki were simple Ukrainian dumplings stuffed with potatoes. The wrapping was tender, and the mashed potato filling was pillowy, well-seasoned and had an addictive dill taste. For \$22, it came with a lot of vareniki, enough for the price to be reasonable, but the dumplings are simple almost to a fault. On the other hand, I was blown away by the borscht; seasoned



ZACK LI

to perfection, the soup was pleasantly sour without overpowering the sweet or savory flavors, and it left a satisfying peppery mouthfeel. It's served with a side of sour cream, the creaminess and tangy taste of which gave every bite an interesting texture. It had just the right consistency: not too watery, but not too thick. It contained shredded cabbage, carrots, beets and large chunks of tender potato and meat. For \$16, it is a good portion of soup, but still a bit on the expensive side.

Nursel's authentic flavors truly shine, making it worthy of a glowing five stars out of five.

OUR RATING: ★★★★★

OUR RATING: ★★★★★



EVA LUDWIG

La Piñata *By Features Editor Angela Nguyen*

La Piñata stands out with its bright yellow building and the delicious aroma coming out of the restaurant. Specialized in El Salvadorean food, La Piñata boasts itself with unique and traditional food. From Salvadorean enchiladas to beef free soup (sopa de pata), the restaurant has it all.

We ordered the El Salvadorean beef tongue in tomato sauce (lengua en salsa). It came with a side of lettuce salad, a sliced piece of tomato and some avocado. Although the addition of the salad was nice, the avocado was a bit overripe. It also had a small side of refried beans, which were extremely creamy and very delicious. It also had a big portion of rice in tomato sauce, mixed with some corn and carrots. However, the rice was a little too soft for my liking. But the star of the show has to be the beef

tongue. It was just cooked enough to keep the smooth texture of the side of the beef tongue and the velvety top of the tongue. The beef was very flavorful because it was infused with a broth-like tomato sauce. The beef tongue also had lime pieces, cilantro and cucumber, all adding to the flavors of the dish.

But one of the best factors at La Piñata is definitely the joyful service that staff had there.

Overall, La Piñata is a wonderful place to get authentic El Salvadorean food, making it worthy of four stars out of five stars.

OUR RATING: ★★★★★



ANGELA NGUYEN

SWEET HONEY DESSERT *By Features Writer Madeleine Sah*

Sweet Honey Dessert glows with a warm, golden charm that immediately draws you in. The menu seems endless, offering an impressive range of traditional Cantonese desserts, but the most interesting one has to be the bird's nest soup.

Bird's nest soup comes from the hardened saliva of small birds called swiftlets that build their nests high up in caves. People in southern China started eating it over 400 years ago because they believed it helped with health, especially for the lungs and skin. It's still seen as a delicacy today.

The moment the dessert arrives, there's a smell of milk and sweetness. The first spoonful is warm silky, smooth, slippery and slightly sweet,

with soft, gelatin-like bits floating in the foamy surface. The flavor feels light yet rich, simple yet refreshing. It's not overly sugary or artificial.

Though the prices lean on the higher side, the quality, presentation, and delicate flavors make it worth it. Every bite feels carefully made, with a balance of flavor that's both savory and sweet. Sweet Honey isn't just a dessert shop. It's a little pocket of Cantonese tradition reimagined for a modern, trendy crowd, making it worthy of five stars out of five.

OUR RATING: ★★★★★



MADELINE SAH

Should Hollywood cast outside race?

YES

Rebecca Chen
FEATURES WRITER

Actors shouldn't be limited to which character's race they fit best in, because acting is about skill and the ability to tell a story — not about skin color. It may be surprising to see a face different from a book's description, but that doesn't define a film's worth. Having a great actor of a different race tell stories that aren't deeply bound by culture shouldn't be an issue.

In fantasy tales like "The Little Mermaid," race isn't the theme; it's about following your heart despite sacrifices. Halle Bailey, who played Ariel in the live action "The Little Mermaid," captured the spirit of an ambitious, curious mermaid through her singing and performance. Many people responded positively to her portrayal because she was so talented. Bailey didn't need to make a statement; she simply played Ariel well. The director chose her for her voice and never regretted it, even with the backlash that followed.

"Halle Bailey is really talented; she just happened to be a different race," said Aragon alumna Alessandra Hernandez.

While representation matters, the purpose of acting is to act. When a director casts an actor of a different race, it may not always be out of exclusion but rather a choice based on who best fits the role.

Changing a character's race isn't just found in Hollywood but also at Aragon. Last year, Hernandez, a girl of Asian, white and Hispanic descent, was cast as Deloris Van Cartier, a character initially played by Black actress Whoopi Goldberg.

"She was good for all of the other reasons, except for being not African American," said play director Shane Smuin. "If [the acting is] done well, then that's okay."

Hernandez herself also agreed.

"They know my work ethic," Hernandez said. "[I'm] reliable and hard-working. I've always looked up for rehearsal, and I tried to look for qualities in my personality that I could relate to Deloris."

But if race doesn't matter, why change the author's

original vision? Many stories were written in times when authors didn't imagine heroes of color simply because of social limitations — not because they believed only white characters could exist. That doesn't mean actors of color shouldn't play those roles today. For example, J.K. Rowling once described Severus Snape as pale to emphasize his coldness, but coldness can be shown through behavior. When she later participated in casting decisions, she didn't treat race as a restriction.

Of course, if a story's entire message depends on a character's racial identity — like in "Black Panther" or "Mulan" — that shouldn't be changed. However, when changing a character's race doesn't alter the story's meaning, it can even enhance it. In "Bridgerton" having a black actress play Queen Charlotte adds to the theme of love and power. Because people of color back then were deemed as inferior, this casting choice uplifts people of color and refutes that norm back then. The story isn't meant to be studied as a history textbook but appreciated as a fictional tale about human emotions.

"If you're good at this and it fits the integrity of the story, then they should be given that part," Smuin said. "But there's certainly a line, and it depends on what the material is."

Similarly, in "Percy Jackson and the Olympians," Annabeth Chase was originally written as a blonde girl but Leah Sava Jeffries, who is African American and plays Annabeth in the live action TV show, not only enhanced that aspect of the story but also proved herself as a great actor through her performance. It even earned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Image Award for Outstanding Performance by a Youth.

Race should never be overlooked in film, but it shouldn't become a barrier separating great actors from great roles. It doesn't need to be hated if a talented actor is cast as a character whose race they don't share — that can be the beginning of a masterpiece. True inclusivity means giving all actors the opportunity to tell timeless stories, regardless of how they look, as long as they bring authenticity and heart to the role.

No

Anushka Punjabi
FEATURES WRITER

Diversity in the media has been long overdue. But there's a difference in representation and decoration — and Hollywood often gets it wrong. The recent trend of swapping the race of established characters, while leaving their story intact, falls into the second category.

"Disney has tried to [promote diversity] through very lazy attempts of race swapping," said senior Tyler Nichols. "They switched the race, called themselves diverse and then called it a day without actually making any meaningful impact."

For example, in the live-action "The Little Mermaid," Halle Bailey's casting as Ariel is widely celebrated, and rightfully so — she is incredibly talented and fully deserving of the role. Yet the story itself is unchanged. Ariel's Black identity is

In addition, political theorist Nancy Fraser says that racial hierarchy is one of the foundations of capitalism. The economy of Britain, for example, was built partly on slavery and exploitation, so "Bridgerton's" blind inclusivity without this acknowledgement is shallow.

Supporters of these casting choices argue that the best actor got the role, as if casting is a neutral meritocracy untouched by marketing and cultural politics. Every decision about who plays whom is shaped by very deliberate creative choices: what message the film sends and how it fits the studio's brand.

When a company publicly celebrates a casting choice for its diversity, it's a statement. Critiquing the practice doesn't oppose inclusion, but demands that representation be meaningful. Superficial casting reduces identity.

Critics may argue that changing a character's race is meaningless to the plot of the story, that it's similar to changing a character's hair color or build. But race is not cosmetic. Hair color does not determine how someone navigates systemic exclusion or experiences privilege.

Philosopher and distinguished professor Charles Mills writes that ignoring race reinforces inequality by assuming that all people share the same baseline experience. It strips individual cultures of their narrative significance. Rejecting shallow race-swaps isn't anti-diversity; it is pro-authenticity.

"When you start basing things off of visuals, instead of understanding [the] deeper meaning, ... it be-

comes very dangerous, and then things like stereotypes tend to come into play," Sah said.

Films such as "Black Panther" succeed because Wakanda is deeply rooted in African culture and politics. "Coco" succeeds because it honors Mexican traditions and family structures.

"[They show] characters of historically unrepresented backgrounds and [give] them new stories instead of ... [those] that have already been portrayed in other movies and shows," Pok said.

This distinction becomes clearer when comparing "Hamilton" and "Bridgerton." Lin-Manuel Miranda intentionally cast actors of color as the Founding Fathers, serving as commentary on the historical exclusion of people of color. In "Bridgerton," by contrast, an integrated aristocracy exists alongside the stark reality of Regency England. Representation works when it is integral to the narrative, not merely decorative.

Hollywood has the talent and resources to do better. Representation should be built into a narrative rather than layered on top, and inclusion should not be just a marketing slogan.



VANESSA CHAN



VANESSA CHAN

FEATURES ONLINE!

Shaped by screens:
childhood media



AUDREY WANG

BELOW SPEED
LIMIT



EDEN KWAN



Fast, fun and fatal:
teenagers on e-bikes



WE ARE NUTS ABOUT THIS CROSSWORD!



ACROSS

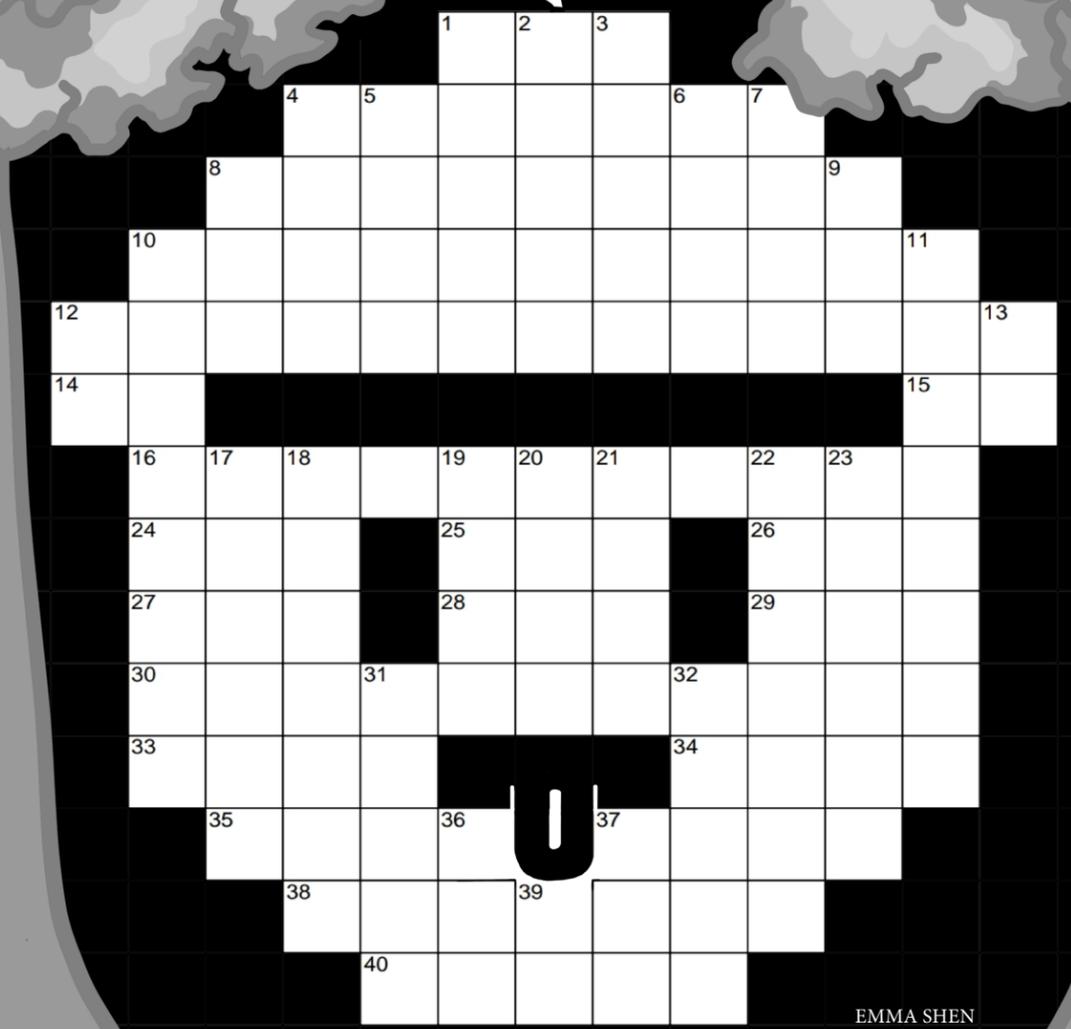
- 1. I'm leaving you, in text
- 4. Mozzarella pouch, often served with basil, tomatoes and balsamic
- 8. An idiom meaning to reveal everything
- 10. The actress of the live action Ariel, whose casting sparked much controversy (see page 12)
- 12. A Southern Chinese delicacy found in Sweet Honey Dessert (see page 10)
- 14. The chemical symbol for silver
- 15 See you, in text
- 16. A childhood game involving concealment
- 24. Junior, abbreviated
- 25. Abbreviation of New Year's Eve
- 26. Come, in Mandarin
- 27. Spanish article; singular, female
- 28. How a British person might pronounce "hope"
- 29. Common enzyme suffix
- 30. People who have a prejudice toward men (see page 6)
- 33. Teacher's favorites
- 34. Leave in, to an editor
- 35. The "S" in SOH-CAH-TOA
- 37. To mix
- 38. Kind of arrest
- 40. Fallback option

SOLUTIONS:

bit.ly/NovSolutions

DOWN

- 1. Roy Biv's middle name
- 2. Another word for Native American group
- 3. Female cats, in Spanish
- 4. Lacking hair
- 5. Web addresses, for short
- 6. How a Scottish person might pronounce "tight"
- 7. ___ Well That Ends Well, a Shakespearean play
- 8. Unit of soap
- 9. Zodiac sign known for being self-centered
- 10. Track-and-field event a frog would excel at
- 11. Opposite of yummiest
- 12. Bachelor of Arts
- 13. A reaction to something that is the 11D
- 17. Inward-facing bellybuttons, or the work-life counterparts in Severance
- 18. Extreme; rhymes with 22D
- 19. Anonymous, abbreviated
- 20. Cops of the Big Apple
- 21. Do, a ___
- 22. Flexible; rhymes with 18D
- 23. An April holiday with egg imagery
- 31. That's easy!
- 32. What a serial killer might say they do for a living
- 36. An earl missing its second letter
- 37. A moral wrong, or 35A minus the last letter
- 39. Abbreviation of district attorney



EMMA SHEN

EVA LUDWIG

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Girls golf secures spot in CCS

Adya Tewari
SPORTS WRITER

The Aragon Dons girls varsity golf team (8-2 overall) defeated both the Carmont Scots (5-5 overall) and the Burlingame Panthers (10-0 overall) on Oct. 21 in the Peninsula Athletic League Qualifiers at Popular Creek, securing a spot in the Central Coast Section playoffs. Aragon's team scored a total of 214, while Carmont and Burlingame scored 227 and 236, respectively.

Aragon's scores were led by senior Kate Chong and junior Vicky Ferrero with a score of 38 and 41 respectively. They were followed by senior Hannah Lin with a 43, junior Ariel Ogawa with a 44 and junior Autumn Ogawa with a 48.

"The team as a whole did really well," Ferrero said. "This is the best score we had in the regular season this year."

The Dons golf team has a history of good seasons in re-

cent years as well, with varsity making it to CCS for the past three years. As such, the match carried added pressure for many of the players on the varsity team.

"We were anxious about the match because we wanted to go to CCS and we wanted to beat the other teams," Ferrero said. "Our performance can still be improved, but we're on the right path."

Head coach Mike Loy shared the same sentiment, highlighting the team's consistency and growth throughout the season.

"Watching each girl practice and really trying hard to be better is the best part," Loy said. "Players have had time to bond and teach each other."

For players, the season has also been an opportunity

to develop confidence and to refine technique.

"When I started playing this season, I struggled a lot with my chipping and putting," Chong said. "Throughout the season I improved a lot ... This helped me lower my score."

However, golf also presents a mental challenge for many players.

"Golf is really difficult not only because of the sport itself but also the mental component," Ferrero said. "Sometimes when I don't play well or when my opponent is impolite, I get angry and that leads me to play even worse."

Other players agreed with frustrations that come with the sport.

"I still need to work on controlling my emotions when I play," Chong said.

Beyond just individual improvement, the team chemistry plays an important role in the team's overall success during the season.

"At first most of us were a little shy, but practice after

vital in propelling them forward, emphasizing the dedication the players have to the sport.

"We are the only high school in the league who has summer practice," Loy said. "Golf is a presence game, if you don't continue playing, you lose your skills."

Other players shared similar sentiments and pride in their team. "Every school knows Aragon is a strong team," Ferrero said. "We will continue being a strong team."

The team earned ninth place in the CCS Championships on Nov. 4, ending their season.

CCS SCORES

ROUND 1

HANNAH LIN: 79

KATE CHONG: 85

ARIEL OGAWA: 87

AUTUMN OGAWA: 87

VITTORIA FERRERO: 98

ABBY LIN: 104



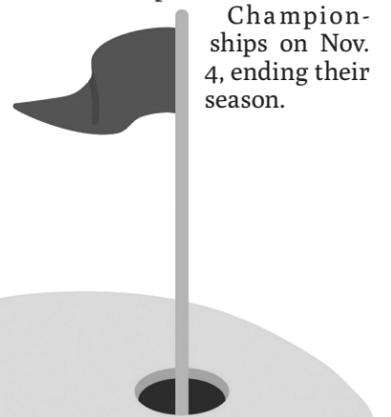
COURTESY OF SARAH WALTER

practice [led] us to become not just teammates, but really good friends," Ferrero said.

Chong also highlighted the success that having a team can bring.

"Golf is seen as individual, but in high school matches, it becomes a team sport," Chong said. "Everybody tries their best and cares a lot about the team."

Loy also believes that the team's dynamic is



Girls varsity tennis sweeps San Mateo

Luke Trimble
SPORTS WRITER

On Oct. 23, the Aragon girls varsity tennis team (17-4 overall) swept San Mateo (3-11 overall) with a score of 7-0, a strong performance in their final match of the season before they moved onto Central Coast Section.

"They've been working hard at practice and just putting in to play," said head coach David Owdom. "They were very impressive ... I wish I could go out and say I needed to coach them more, but they looked really good."

For many players, however, the game was more than just their final win of the year; Thursday's match was also senior night.

"[This game] was more special," said senior and co-captain Taylor Lee. "It was also kind of sad because you've been with the same team for your entire high

school career and you know it's coming to an end, but at the same time I think it gave us a lot of extra strength and energy [on Thursday]."

Freshman Mia Lo kicked the match off by dominating No. 1 singles, winning both sets 6-0.

"I was trying to go in and attack, like move her [around the court] a lot," Lo said.

"But that was my whole goal, to keep it short and simple."

Sophomores Ella Teng and Hayley Chong kept the ball rolling in No. 2 and No. 3 singles matches, respectively, with both players winning their first set 6-1 and their second 6-0.

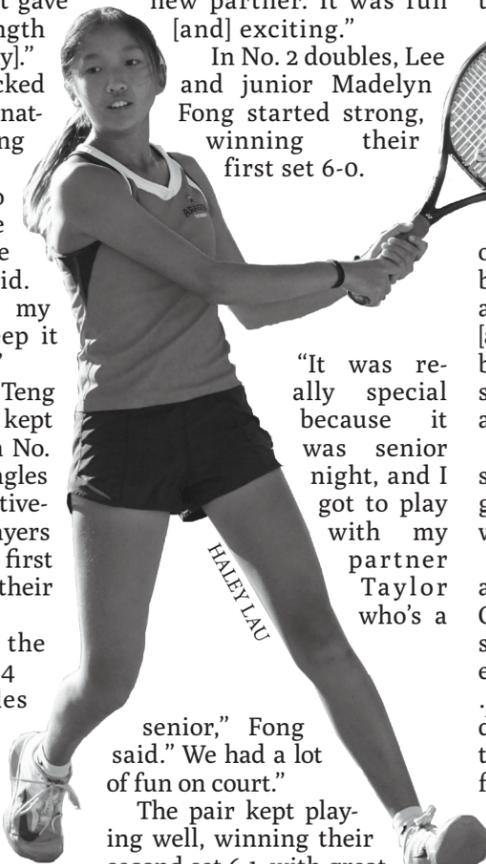
In the No. 4 singles

match, sophomore Allison Newman continued the Dons' success, winning both sets without losing a single game as Aragon claimed the final singles match.

Juniors Shanay Biouk and Jessalyn Williams won the first set of No. 1 doubles 6-1 and followed it with another strong performance in a 6-0 win.

"I felt good," Williams said. "I got to play with a new partner. It was fun [and] exciting."

In No. 2 doubles, Lee and junior Madelyn Fong started strong, winning their first set 6-0.



HALEY LAU

"It was really special because it was senior night, and I got to play with my partner Taylor who's a

senior," Fong said. "We had a lot of fun on court."

The pair kept playing well, winning their second set 6-1, with great teamwork being an important factor.

"Particularly, our last game we played stood out to me a lot because my partner ... did such a good job setting me up for volleys at the net," Lee said. "We worked [together] super ... well for that one."

In the No. 3 doubles match, senior Meilin Rife and sopho-

more Catie Wu finished off the sweep of San Mateo, winning the first set 6-0 and securing the victory in the second set, defeating their Bearcat opponents 6-2.

The win finished off a fantastic season for the Dons.

"This has been one of our strongest seasons so far because we've gotten a lot of really good incoming freshmen [and] the people who were here before have practiced a lot over summer and improved ... overall," Lee said.

Although the seniors were sad to be playing in their final game, they followed the match with fun and celebrations.

"Sometimes they don't realize how fast time goes," Owdom said. "A couple of seniors ... made posters for each other ... It was a great day for them, they all had fun. We carried it over [to] Friday too. We had a two day party."

While the team enjoyed the win Thursday evening, they also looked ahead to potentially making a CCS

playoff run, starting with a match against Burlingame.

"I'm ... looking forward to our opponents because these are new opponents that we haven't faced before, so that'll be exciting," Lee said.

Additionally, Owdom recognized how the players' excellence extends beyond the court.

"They work hard and they're exemplary representatives of our school," Owdom said. "I'm just fortunate to have them on my team. I'm very happy to be their coach."

The team defeated Burlingame 7-0 in their first playoff matchup on Oct. 29. In the first round of CCS, they beat Stevenson High School 5-2 and continued to the second round on Nov. 11 against St. Ignatius.

CCS TENNIS

ROUND 1

WIN

5-2

AGAINST

STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL

Gender roles in sports

Alex Choy
SPORTS WRITER

Sports have always been inherently gendered — most are split literally into female and male leagues. With that come implicit biases.

For example, the stereotypical male physical dominance and female weakness have shaped the basis of gender inequality in sports.

Much of society's current perception of sports originates from historical ideas about gender. Since ancient times, expectations for men and women have differed fundamentally.

The Victorian era had one of the most major influences on the spread of traditional gender roles.

Men were expected to earn money for the household and emphasize their independence, boldness, strength and aggressiveness. Women were taught to be more submissive, nurturing and emotional. They were also discouraged from doing strenuous physical exercise due to the belief that their bodies were too fragile.

These social norms were implanted at a very young age, and their impacts resulted in the exclusion of females from most sports. In fact, it wasn't until the early 20th century that women's athletic clubs began to gain traction and popularity.

In recent years especially, an increase in protests and campaigns brought attention to gender stereotypes and inequality, not just in sports, but also on a broader spectrum.

These issues are undoubtedly very important to focus on as they result in many unfair disadvantages in opportunities, pay, media and abuse.

"Female athletes should have 100% the same opportunities that male athletes have," said physical education teacher Michael Flynn. "There's no reason to limit or change rules or do anything like that just because of gen-

der, and I think that they want the opportunity to play the sport just like their male counterparts do."

Additionally, a narrow interpretation of sports that are considered mostly single-gender often cause other important skills to be overlooked.

"I've done both cheerleading and football, and I feel like there's obviously very big differences between them, and cheerleading is a quote, unquote girls sport, and I feel like [people] see it as, oh, [you just] do your hair, do your makeup, cheer for the crowd and look the best and present the best for the [crowd]." said sophomore Kara Lau. "But also, you're literally lifting another human above your head ... that's hard."

However, Aragon's athletic program tries to ensure that such gender stereotypes have little influence on athletes' opportunities and participation in sports. It emphasizes inclusivity and bases its judgements on ability rather than gender, age and other factors.

"What has to happen is that student athletes would show interest in participating in a sport, and then based upon their ability and level of effort and dedication, they should be able to participate in the sports of their choice," said boys junior varsity football coach Steven Henderson. "Gender shouldn't be a reason why someone's excluded from participation."

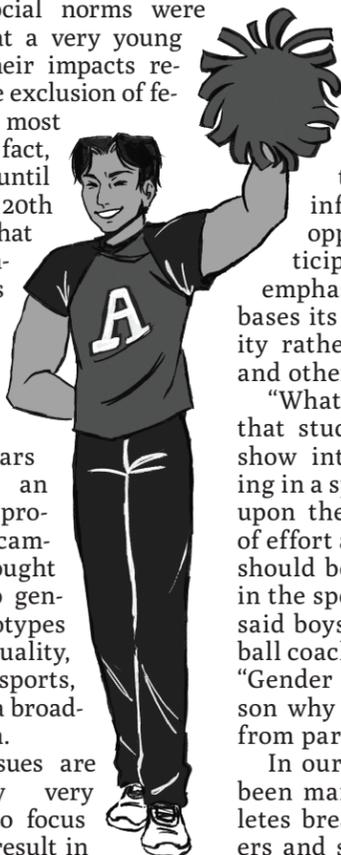
In our history, there have been many examples of athletes breaking gender barriers and stepping across limits set by gender perception.

"Here at Aragon, we've had a handful of CCS wrestling champions that were girls, competing and mixing on boys teams, and so I'm proud of that legacy," Henderson said. "There are a number of boys that have been involved in cheer, competitive and sideline cheer in recent

years and everyone has been respectful of those kids and their choice to participate if that is their chosen sport, so I'm incredibly proud of the fact that we as a school stand behind that."

Gender continues to heavily impact sports across many domains. Society's perception of gender and traditional roles has been the root cause as to why males and females are being treated differently in sports.

Although in recent decades the gender equality movement has been more prominent and powerful than ever, there is still much work to do regarding athletes' pay, governing bodies, media, among other matters.





At 14, girls are dropped out of sports at two times the rate of boys.

WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION



Women's sports received an average share of 15% of media coverage in 2022

FORBES



The average WNBA player makes ~1.55% of what the average NBA player does

FORBES

Boys water polo beats San Mateo

Olivia Mukherjee
SPORTS WRITER

On Oct. 28, the Aragon boys water polo team (17-4 overall) played San Mateo (1-2 overall) for their senior night game and won with a final score of 14-7. It was a tough matchup, but the Dons came out on top, closing out the game with a sizable margin in the final quarter. Aragon went in with a strong mental game, staying focused to avoid past mistakes against the Bearcats.

"Last time we played San Mateo, we slipped up in the second half [and] they got a little comeback," said junior Kurt Nguyen. "So overall, we just wanted to be locked in the entire game."

This focus was consistent throughout the team, with the emphasis on a win especially important due to senior night.

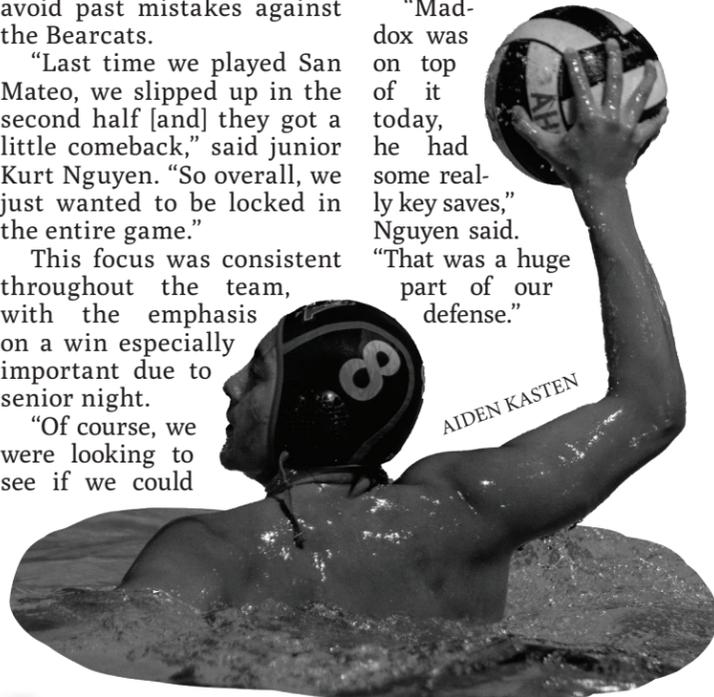
"Of course, we were looking to see if we could

Bearcats heading into the last quarter. A key aspect of maintaining this lead was defense and communication.

"I was focused on just trying my best to make it as hard as possible for them to shoot and being verbal with my team and telling them where to go," said sophomore Maddox Walti.

His performance in the goalie box was key, keeping San Mateo from making a comeback late in the game.

"Maddox was on top of it today, he had some really key saves," Nguyen said. "That was a huge part of our defense."



get ahead really early," said coach Julian Garcia Mendes. "But we really wanted to make sure that this game was dedicated to our seniors."

There was a charged atmosphere as players prepared to celebrate the seniors and bring home a win in the second game of league play.

"Emotions were really high today," Mendes said. "It felt like it was like a video game, a big stadium. You could just feel the energy from the crowd and the players."

Players also focused on staying ready and being energized for the matchup, especially in the hours leading up to the game.

"I'm gonna bring the energy today, of course everyone brings the energy on our team, especially our team captain, Simon LaCarruba," Nguyen said.

The game began tight, with Aragon initially unable to materialize the early advantage emphasized by the players and coach. However, there was a turning point halfway through the third quarter.

"Especially with some of the calls in the first half, keeping our composure was a really big part of it," said junior Odin Le.

The Dons did just that as they carried a consistent five-point lead over the

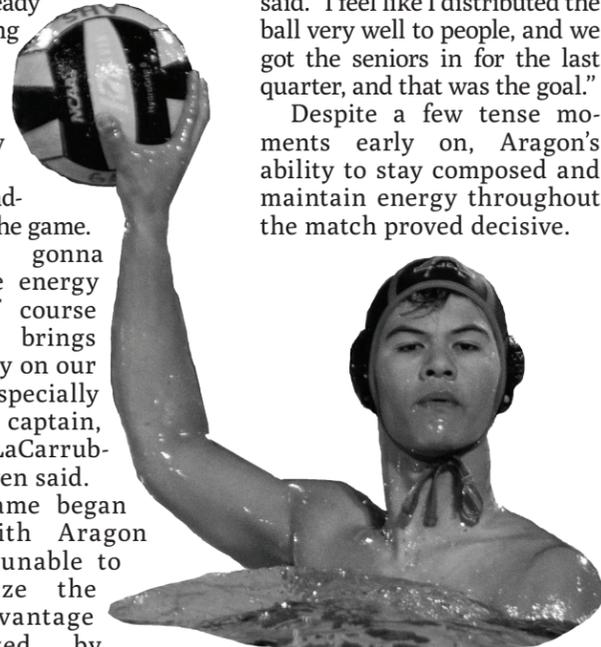
That defense was supported by a cohesive team effort across the pool.

"We worked together really well as a team, and we were talking to each other a lot," Walti said. "As a team, we're one of the most communicative teams, and we have the biggest team bond."

That unity translated into a fluid offense as well, with several players contributing goals and assists to widen the gap later on in the game.

"I dropped the most goals on the team, lots of assists," Le said. "I feel like I distributed the ball very well to people, and we got the seniors in for the last quarter, and that was the goal."

Despite a few tense moments early on, Aragon's ability to stay composed and maintain energy throughout the match proved decisive.

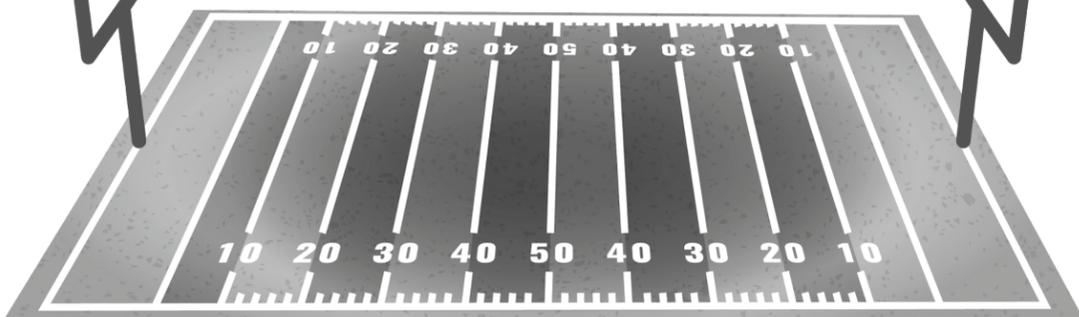


"It was the mindset going into the game," Le said. "Everyone really played their best, and especially the seniors."

The Dons closed out the night with a strong finish, sending off their seniors with a statement win, but they later ended their season with a 10-4 loss against Burlingame on Oct. 31.

ONLINE THIS MONTH:

ARAGON V. HILLSDALE RIVALRY



Equipment Costs in high school sports

Sabina Gulati
SPORTS WRITER

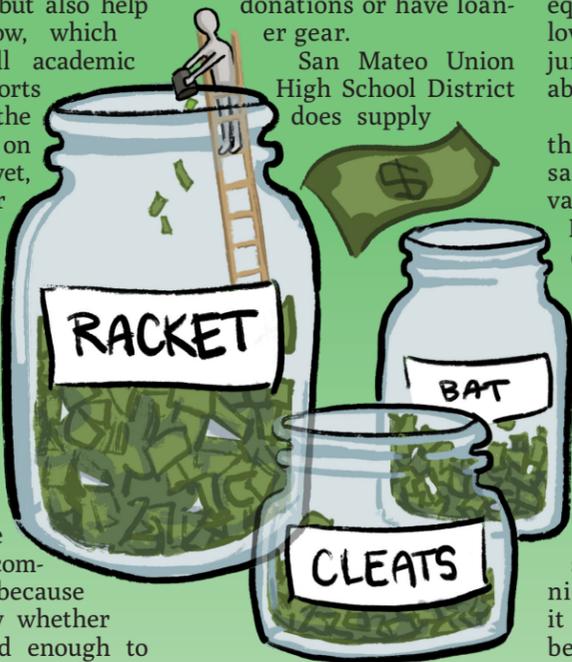
The majority of studies show that sports are highly beneficial for high school students, as they not only supply physical fitness but also help your brain grow, which improves overall academic performance. Sports participation in the U.S. is actually on the rise and yet, rising costs for equipment and team fees have become a financial barrier for students from middle or lower-income households who'd like to participate in a sport.

"I've seen people hesitate to try out or commit to [a sport] because they don't know whether they're dedicated enough to cover the expenses for the entire season," said junior and golfer Advika Singh.

According to the California Code of Regulations, "a pupil enrolled in a school shall not be required to pay any fee, deposit, or other

charge not specifically authorized by law," meaning that public schools cannot require fees for educational activities, including extracurriculars, but may request voluntary donations or have loaner gear.

San Mateo Union High School District does supply



much of the necessary equipment for students.

"I can't remember a case where a kid has not been able to play a sport because they don't have the equipment," said athletic director Steve Sell.

"That doesn't happen in our district. And we're very fortunate that way."

Football is one sport at Aragon where a lot of the equipment is provided, allowing both the varsity and junior varsity teams to have about 50 players each.

"At least for football, the gear isn't bad," said sophomore and varsity football player Kymani Nabung. "It's not outdated at all."

Still, with some sports, the costs per player have risen sharply with inflation.

"Tennis does have a little more equipment to get," said girls and boys tennis coach David Owdom. "When you play basketball, you only need the basketball and some shoes, but [since tennis needs more equipment,] it can impact some people, because I know not everybody's doing well out there."

Students can dabble in a sport inexpensively by purchasing low-quality equipment or borrowing some from teammates. However, many who stick with sports get serious about them.

That's when the financial factor comes in.

"To really get good at something it takes a lot of effort from you, but you also need proper coaching, and proper coaching can be expensive," said freshman and tennis player Mira Metzger.

High school teams are very selective, given there are only a set number of spots per sport.

Aragon is no exception, meaning

that athletes must be very competitive in order to make a team. Oftentimes, this high level can only be achieved through good coaching and proper equipment. Since these resources are expensive and even unaffordable for some, people can end up missing out on a sport due to financial constraints.

"When you can't really afford the equipment or you can't get the money to fully dedicate yourself to the sport, [the school is] losing

people that might have been a really valuable addition to [the] team," Singh said.

Rising costs have also changed the way Aragon and the district handle money regarding the athletics program.

"Our district has adjusted their spending to account for the inflation," Sell said. "We have to be a lot more careful and a lot more discerning about what is really needed and what is wanted."

Aragon does provide support with its athletic boosters club, but the club can't spend all its time searching for those in need. If a student needs help, they must ask.

"I think if somebody reached out to [us], we would accommodate them, because Aragon is really good about doing that," Owdom said. "We can probably find a way to fix you up ... [it's] just a matter of speaking up a little bit."

ARAGON FLAG FOOTBALL DOMINATES HILLSDALE

Erena Irokawa
SPORTS WRITER

On Oct. 29, the Aragon varsity flag football team (6-5 overall) faced off against the Hillsdale Knights (12-6 overall) in a non-conference game. This was Aragon's last regular season game, and after their last win against Hillsdale in Sept. this season, they were determined to secure another victory.

"It's our last game of the season ... [and] there's people we know on [Hillsdale's] team that we want to beat," said sophomore and safety Makayla Hafoka. "I think we can beat them because last time we didn't really show our best, and I know we really want this win."

The match started slowly with both teams' strong defense, as neither team allowed the other to pass enough to get an early touchdown.

Although both Hillsdale and Aragon were consistently getting first downs, it wasn't enough to secure an upper hand against the other. As both defenses worked relentlessly, the first quarter came to an end with 0-0 on the scoreboard.

In the second quarter, the Dons tightened their defense even more, forcing the Knights into shorter plays and more incomplete passes. Aragon's offense gradually began to gain mo-

mentum, pushing towards the end zone. Senior and wide receiver Daisy Pantoja was able to find a breakthrough and score the first touchdown of the game.

"Having the energy just hypes the team up to play better," Pantoja said. Her touchdown shifted the momentum of the game towards Aragon's favor and Aragon was also able to get the extra point.

Although Hillsdale tried to fight back, Aragon's defense continued to stay strong.

pletely taking control of the game. The Dons' defense came up strong again, including an interception that nearly led to a touch-

down at the end of the first half. After a short halftime reset, both teams were back on the field, ready to fight for the momentum of the second half.

Hillsdale pushed to close the gap, but once again, Aragon's defense stayed firm. Although both teams had several strong plays, neither team was able to score a touchdown in the third quarter.

In the last quarter, the Dons moved the ball across the field and scored a touchdown early in the quarter. The Dons continued to rely on their communication and chemistry, which is one of the strengths players credited as a major role in their team's performance this season.

"Our [strength] has been the team bonding," said

sophomore wide receiver and cornerback Kayla Sims. "We've had a lot of team dinners together, and the chemistry flows well ... so our communication on and off the field is amazing."

The flag football team believes that their teamwork has grown significantly throughout the season.

"At the start, we were still figuring out positions and how to work together, but now everything flows more smoothly," said sophomore wide receiver and safety Eva Felix. "We've grown a lot as a team, both in communication and strategy."

In the final moments of the game, Aragon maintained their lead and kept their defense strong, securing a victory against Hillsdale yet again with the final score of 20-0. With the win, the Dons qualified for CCS playoffs this season, and they recently ended their playoff run on Nov. 5 with a 13-12 loss against Saint Francis.



COLIN FOURNIER