

DR. JONES RETIRES

Meilin Rife
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On Feb. 2, principal Dr. Michael Jones announced that he will be retiring this academic year. His last day will be June 30. Jones made the decision to spend time with his son and take care of his elderly parents, both of whom are 86-years-old. "I was talking to my parents about the decision to continue working another three years or retire now," Jones said. "My dad said to me, 'You're not getting any younger ... You have more

years behind you than you have ahead of you.' And something in me just clicked." This is the second year of Jones's role as Aragon principal in his 33rd-year-long career in education administration.



"I feel proud that this is the place where I can hang my principal hat," Jones said. "[Aragon has an] outstanding school community, a great administrative team to work with, great parents [and] community student leaders. I know that this school is going to be just fine."

As principal, Jones has been focusing on achieving Western Association of Schools and Colleges goals that qualify Aragon as a WASC-accredited school. These goals include connecting all students to academic and skill-based success.

"We are committed as staff to supporting our multi-lingual learners and struggling students," Jones said. "We want to make sure that every student has the same experience here. [We are] very equity-centered and student-focused."

Superintendent Randall Booker will be meeting with recruitment firm Leadership Associates on Feb. 17 to begin the hiring process for Aragon's next principal.

Editor Picks

- Sports: Wrestling recap (pg. 15)
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EVA LUDWIG

ICE OUT

walkout

Helen McCloskey and Kyra Hsieh
NEWS AND FEATURES EDITORS

On Jan. 30, students from Aragon, San Mateo, Burlingame and Hillsdale high schools walked out at lunch to protest recent Immigration, Customs and Enforcement actions and to support immigrants at risk of deportation. They were accompanied by students from Borel and Abbott middle schools, The Nueva and Crystal Springs Uplands schools, the College of San Mateo and adults, totalling about 5,000 protestors. On the same day, students from the Sequoia High School District walked to Redwood City Hall and students in San Francisco walked out to Mission Dolores Park. Aragon students met at Central Court at the beginning of lunch, before walking to Central Park, where they met students from the other schools.

"[By] coming together as a unit and organizing this, we provided a stance out there to show that the youth — this new generation — wants change," said senior and Aragon walkout organizer Lizet Nunez Camacho. "We won't let this administration abuse their powers of authority over minorities."

Before the school day began, Aragon teachers and staff members walked together from Woodland Drive into Aragon High School and their classrooms, carrying signs. Staffulty at all other SMUHSD schools held their own walk-ins.

"My personal reason for being out there is that I would want students to know that the adults on this campus are committed to keeping them safe and protected; that this is a place where you come to be educated," said Advanced Placement Psychology teacher Carlo Corti. "[The demonstration] was a communication to the community and to our students that we are on their side."

Information about the students' protest circulated on social media from the Instagram account @ahs.walkout starting the week before, galvanizing other schools to join the walkout. During the week before the protest, @ahs.walkout also shared a story detailing how students should act peacefully during the walkout, as well as Instagram posts that the protest would be nonviolent. Clubs such as Samaritan House Aragon and Filipino Club hosted poster-making for the protest at lunch.

As well as working with other schools, the organizers worked with the San Mateo City Police Department, which had officers posted to block roads for students to cross the street as they marched to Central Park. Later, at Central Park, police patrolled the area and monitored the protest from the median on El Camino Real.

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carried terrorists from another Latin American drug cartel. More strikes followed, which some international law experts characterized as illegal. On Sept. 4, Venezuelan fighter jets flew over American warships in the Caribbean. By Oct. 2, Trump had ordered an end to all diplomatic outreach to Venezuela. November and December brought more airstrikes and escalation, until Jan. 2, when Trump announced via social media that U.S. forces had captured Maduro and posted a photo depicting a handcuffed and blindfolded Nicolás Maduro in custody.

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U.S. INVADES VENEZUELA

Seona Srivastava and Ellie Blakely
FEATURES AND NEWS WRITERS

The U.S. launched a military strike in Caracas, Venezuela and captured Venezuelan president and authoritarian leader Nicolás Maduro on Jan. 3. President Donald Trump then stated that the U.S. intends to "run" Venezuela for the foreseeable future, sparking debate about the future of both the Venezuelan government and U.S. foreign intervention.

The operation, which Trump referred to as a "large scale strike," occurred around 2 a.m. local time. It involved 150 U.S. aircraft and 200 special defense forces, which attacked Venezuelan air defense to make way for U.S. military helicopters that were transporting troops to Caracas. Fatality counts vary, but Venezuelan officials say that over 100 people, including Venezuelan civilians, were killed in the operation, and U.S. officials report that seven U.S. soldiers were injured.

Once captured, Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were transported to New York, where Maduro faces charges of narco-terrorism, conspiracy to import cocaine and other counts related to the possession of firearms. Prosecutors allege that Maduro worked with several large and well-known groups involved in illegal drug trade, including the rebel group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Venezuela gang and crime organization Tren de Aragua and the prominent Sinaloa and Zetas cartels.

However, in his first court appearance on Jan. 5, Maduro pleaded not guilty and said he had been "kidnapped," by the U.S. Additionally, experts say that while Maduro benefited from the drug trade, Venezuela is not a major conduit for cocaine distribution to the U.S. Trump also pardoned a former President of Honduras who was exporting cocaine to the U.S.

The capture follows a recent series of escalations by the U.S. in regards to Venezuela. On Sept. 2, Trump ordered a strike on a Venezuelan boat, claiming it



Gavin Newsom profile

Diya Poojary
NEWS WRITER

On Jan. 8, Gov. Gavin Newsom delivered his final State of the State Address, outlining his goals for a year and the progressive policies he oversaw in the last seven years.

As governor of California, he has signed legislation restricting oil and gas polluting operations near communities, brokered deals between labor and business groups for greater litigation and generally receives praise for embracing fiscal restraint, especially following federal funding cuts under the Trump administration.

Yet, despite the majority voter approval of Newsom, 54% think California is headed in the wrong direction, revealing a mixed consensus on his intent and approach to major policy areas.

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING

The homelessness crisis is one of Newsom's signature policy areas. But critics claim he has yet to deliver substantial results.

Though policies like Homekey — which provides state funds to purchase and convert abandoned hotels into housing units for the homeless — and a \$20 billion budget solely dedicated to the problem, his initiatives have yet to deliver on his 2018 campaign promise to build 3.5 million houses.

And while California's unhoused population has dropped by 9% statewide, the state makes up 24% of the nation's homeless, a figure that continues to rise.

While these numbers can be attributed to the expensive cost of living in the state, critics also complain that programs like Homekey shift the financial burden of caring for the homeless to local and county governments, which does not guarantee protection from federal cuts. They also claim that his policies fail to address the root of the crisis.

"[It's] scorched earth," said senior Erin Finn. "He's trying to clear the streets. That's not addressing the root problem ... poverty, drug use, lack of compassion. [That] leads people to desolate [situations] forced to be on the streets and not [having] anywhere to go ... [It's] more of a question of mental health than policing but he's definitely leaning into the policing."

MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES

One of Newsom's most anticipated policies was the Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment Act, which provides behavioral health care plans through civil court petitions for adults with severe mental illnesses.

Projected to help 7,000 to 12,000 Californians, many families were disappointed; about 45% of petitions get dismissed, and successful results across counties range from less than a thousand to none.

Yet, while critics claim it has done nothing to solve the inadequate housing and mental health services, others believe the program, with improvements and resources, holds potential.

"It's not right that they advertised [that] they could ... help way more people than they could," said junior Lia Alves. "But it's partially our responsibility as people and members of the community to help out others and ... support the funding for this so that more people can be helped."

In 2025, Newsom signed SB 27 to expand CARE Court's eligibility, though the changes it will bring are still unclear.

NATIONAL PRESENCE

It is no secret that Newsom is considering running for the 2028 presidential election, given his increasing social media presence nationally, especially after President Donald Trump took office last year.

Through tweets and public addresses, Newsom depicts himself and California as the "beacons of democracy," a foil to the Trump administration, and has opposed them through controversial measures like Proposition 50, which redistricted California in the Democrats' favor as a response to gerrymandering in Texas to help Republicans.

"A complaint I see online is that people think Democrats don't do enough in response to Republicans," Finn said. "[Newsom's] doing pretty good at appearing as a contrast to that."

However, he has also received criticism for trying to appeal to more right-wing activists, primarily through his podcast "This is Gavin Newsom."

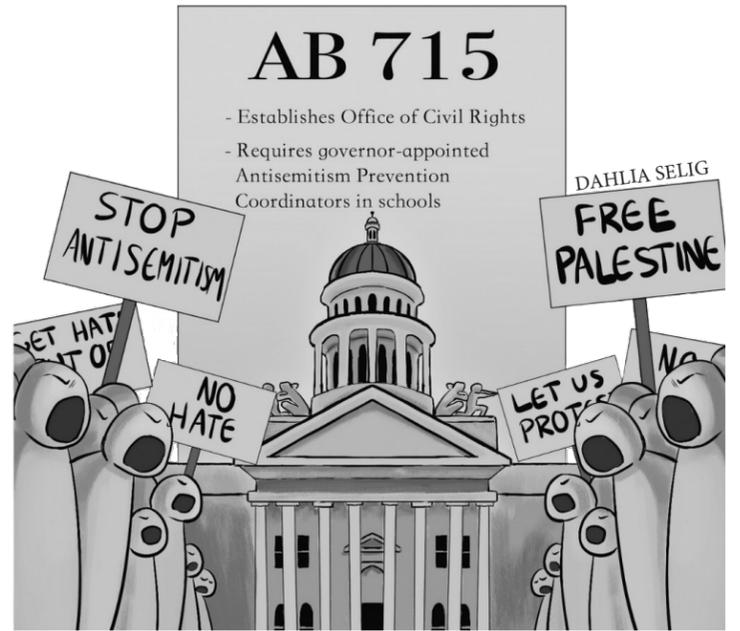
"He's like a Democrat Donald Trump in that he's extremely populist," Finn said. "[He'll] say anything he thinks would help him get voted. So he does flip-flop on

stances a lot based off the tides of the day ... For example, [regarding] transgender rights, ... when he's governor of California, he's like, 'I support that.' Then he did a podcast for national audience and was like, 'not so much, actually.'"

However, his attempts at appealing to various audiences also garner mixed responses from viewers concerned about his sincerity and values, leading to comparisons with political phenoms like New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

"[While Newsom] did start his big campaign before Zohran Mamdani, Mamdani built himself as [someone who] cares for his people," Debnath said. "I think that's what Newsom's trying to do, but instead ... he's trying to connect with everybody in the country, which isn't going to work because of how big this country is and the many different people in it."

With eyes on Newsom on a state and nationwide level, many expectations are set upon him as he focuses on finishing the initiatives he started.



Office of Civil Rights

Diya Gourineni
NEWS WRITER

On Oct. 7, Calif. Assembly Bill 715 was signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom. The bill went into effect Jan. 1. It established the Office of Civil Rights and required the government appointment of an Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator to prevent antisemitism in schools and advise the California legislature on antisemitism prevention.

First proposed in February 2025, the bill went through multiple amendments, facing debates between lawmakers about what constitutes antisemitism and other issues. The final version broadly addressed bias rather than directly mentioning the Israel-Hamas war.

"The [Senate] voting for the bill was 71 to zero and then 35 to zero [in the Assembly] because no one would dare vote no on it," said senior Sevara Saidova. "They didn't want to sound antisemitic."

Besides causing debate in the California State Legislature, the bill has also caused controversy among the public.

Major supporters of AB 715 were the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California and the American Jewish Committee, who believe the bill will tackle antisemitism. It promises that "the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator [will] develop, consult and provide antisemitism education to school personnel to identify and proactively prevent antisemitism and to make recommendations ... to the Legislature." According to the California Department of Justice, around 15% of California hate crimes were anti-Jewish in 2024, an uptick from 8% in 2014.

Some students agreed the bill could yield positive results.

"It will [hopefully] reduce ... derogatory language in schools," said junior Tahlia Shahani. "It [can be] hard for big public schools to respond to small instances of discrimination."

Meanwhile, major opponents included the California Teachers Association, American Civil Liberties Union and Muslim organizations. Opponents claim the bill censors pro-Palestinian voices and constitutionally protected speech.

"People are gonna be a lot [more] wary of ... [spreading] their own opinion," said sophomore Emma Sakai. "Teachers shouldn't be teaching rhetoric that is antisemitic [but] it's going to make conversations, especially about the conflict in Israel

and Palestine, a lot harder ... [even though] those are conversations we need to be having."

Modern World History teacher Scott BonDurant argues for a bottom-up approach instead.

"Schools like ours have disciplinary policies in place already around hate speech," BonDurant said. "Aragon is a great example ... Last year, when we started seeing increases in dehumanizing language, the whole school ... did a full campaign and saw ... [a] reduction in that ... language. Do we need a full statewide bill that legislates what we can and can't teach in our classrooms? We didn't. This sets a dangerous precedent."

Several Aragon students also shared their expectations of the bill, considering how it might affect Aragon classrooms.

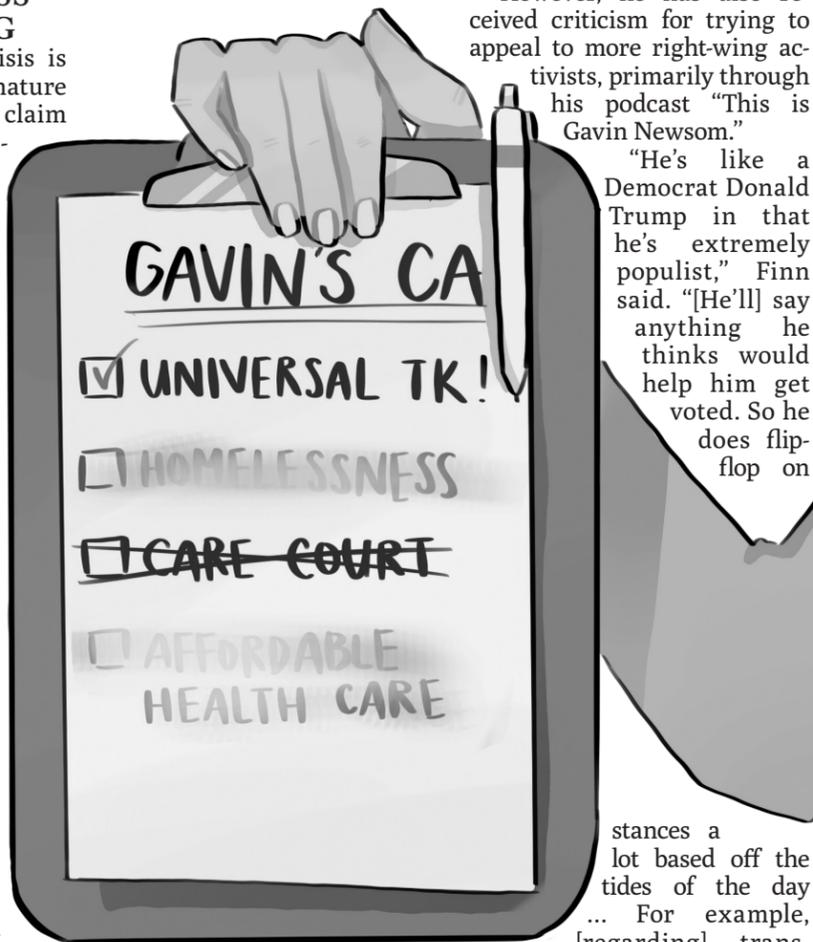
"I don't think that it would help Jewish students ... because if they're experiencing something right now they can go and report [it]," Saidova said. "I definitely agree with the intent of the bill, but [not] the implementation ... because it [stops] discussion in classrooms."

BonDurant worries about potential free speech violations.

"For any population, any religion, any race, any ethnicity, we teach our students to be thoughtful about our sources and potential bias," BonDurant said. "If we are ... not allowed to present any sources that are critical of the foundation of the State of Israel or its right to exist or even that are pro-Palestinian, we're not giving our students ... the chance to corroborate and make up their own minds. That is the hallmark of good social studies teaching. That's concerning to me ... [that] we're moving away from free speech."

In December, a federal judge blocked a request to pause the law by citing how teachers do not have the First Amendment right to insert personal political views into education and claimed it's language mostly builds on California's current education law banning discrimination. There is still an ongoing lawsuit with plaintiffs planning to appeal to higher courts.

Although the bill has passed into law, the authors of the bill acknowledge that there is still more to be done with the bill, specifically with the vague phrasing in several sections. Furthermore, this year, California lawmakers will need to clarify how instruction that doesn't include as much bias will be implemented.



LILLIAN HUANG

EDUCATION

One policy area Newsom has been praised for is his efforts toward making education universally accessible.

"[When] I went to transitional kindergarten, the age range ... was any children turning four or five between September and December," said sophomore Urjita Debnath. "We had 20 kids, maybe less. But it really helped because I only went to one year [of] preschool and ... while I was good enough for preschool, I was in a weird phase [academically between preschool and kindergarten]."

Since then, public-funded TK eligibility expanded from 50,000 to over 500,000 4-year-olds, mostly under Newsom. He has also expanded child care and preschool slots for low income families, while removing barriers to higher education and increasing funding for the University of California and California State University system.

Senate Bill 729 creates more families

Naomi Kotani
NEWS WRITER

On Jan. 1, a new California law requiring certain insurance providers to cover in vitro fertilization, a fertility treatment, went into effect. Lawmakers say it will expand access to IVF coverage, notably for same-sex and single-by-choice parents who were excluded by similar laws in the past.

IVF entails collecting eggs from the uterus and fertilizing them with sperm in a lab, and then transferring the embryo into the uterus. Without insurance coverage, one round of IVF usually ranges from \$20,000 to nearly \$30,000, according to the University of California San Francisco's Center for Reproductive Health.

"That's a really hefty price to pay, and it's not 100% guaranteed that it's gonna work, so if it doesn't, you're down \$25,000 and have nothing to show for it," said junior Nathan Harris, whose same-sex parents used IVF for his conception. "And that can do a lot to people."

Harris' parents went through several cycles of IVF before having a successful pregnancy, which caused them a lot of stress financially and emotionally. He believes the new legislation will change that for parents trying to conceive via IVF going forward.

"[The law will] take a lot of stress off of their shoulders," Harris said. "People deserve to

be able to have a family, regardless of if they're infertile or not. Isn't that the American Dream? They shouldn't have to pay an obscene amount for it."

This perspective reflects the reality that many Americans face. A 2024 survey by financial service company MassMutual found that almost a quarter of Gen Z and millennials do not plan on having kids for financial reasons.

State Sen. Caroline Menjivar, an author of the policy, estimated that the law will allow nine million Californians to gain access to IVF. The statute requires large-group health plans, meaning insurance sponsored by employers with over 100 employees, to cover diagnosis and treatment of infertility, three egg retrievals and an inexhaustible number of embryo transfers. The law does not apply to Medi-Cal, which serves low-income people, religious health coverage or self-employed people.

Those opposing the law argue that using insurance money to fund IVF coverage will increase monthly premiums, but some considered this reasoning to be a double standard.

"There's lots of other treatments that people don't get, but

you still have to pay for it," said junior Justin Chan. "Not everyone's gonna get brain surgery, but you still have to cover other people's brain surgery. If you exclude IVF just because not everyone [uses it], it's unfair."

Still, some viewed the exclusion of Medi-Cal, religious and small-group insurance as inexcusable since it would leave people who rely on those health plans to pay for IVF out-of-pocket if they wanted to use it.

"No one should ever be put in a situation like that," said junior Catherine Tsao. "From a cost perspective, healthcare is a very unfair world, and those who are low income shouldn't be punished for being low income by not being able to have a [biological] kid of their own."

Some critics with religious beliefs that objected to IVF had concerns about the law.

"In a way, the person who is making [the embryos] in the lab is playing God," said junior Andrea Cruz Velarde, president of Aragon's Catholic Youth Group club. "The Catholic Church values natural conception, so taking the marital act [away] from someone's conception goes against the [Church's] views."



MATILDA BACANI

Editorial: clean up the confusion with district funding

This editorial represents the opinions of 13 out of 14 Outlook editors.

No matter how many members of the Aragon community come forward about an initiative, it has no backing if there is no money available to execute them. There are thousands of dollars available from the district for school projects, yet the process of accessing and understanding this large budget is often confusing, causing issues for any student, parent or staff member not already involved in budget allocation and funds.

Existing ways to gain insight about the budget exist, but are limited. Contacting Yancy Hawkins, the SMUHSD head of Business, Maintenance and Operations, provides for a quick and informational answer to questions about budget allocation. District meetings and presentations are available to interested students, though it does require a little digging.

Reading the current 150-page-long annual district budget report is a painful task — both long and convoluted. While this is not a fault of the district itself, as state laws require certain formatting for budget breakdowns, a more digestible version for the public would aid students and families as they attempt to understand what their school's money is used for. A summarized version of general initia-

tives along with bold and easily understandable graphics would aid in bolstering community awareness and allow SMUHSD families to be more involved in financial aspects.

A more digestible budget would also hold the district accountable for representing stakeholders. For example, the gender-neutral locker room proposed two years ago faced numerous constructional challenges that were never communicated to the Aragon community.

While Aragon can put forth proposals for how the budget should be spent, final approval and construction are controlled by the district, primarily the Board of Trustees. From the solar panels to moving the school's electrical components, Aragon is constantly left in the dark regarding construction completion.

Our school deserves to know about projects happening on our campus.

Increased transparency also helps to support community-district relations. The recent signage used to label rooms across campus was required for emergency safety standards, but the lack of communication from the district about this need for update made the change seem like a waste of resources.

To better incorporate student, family and staff input

in determining where funding should be allocated at Aragon, the Outlook suggests there should be a survey specific to funding allocation. The school or district could put forward an open form for budget allocation and projects, sectioning off different responses based on necessity, interest and cost. Feasible projects could then be put through a petition system, with the proposer or related interest holders garnering a certain amount of support for the project itself.

Many students in particular have opinions about the aspects of school that the budget would go towards changing and yet have no clue about how to begin the process of raising the initiative. Students are already somewhat involved in budget allocation through the student representative system but they are limited in numbers. Direct communication between students and district members would be both more accessible and understandable, opening the field of suggestion to the whole student body instead of a select few.

Adoption is another option for families to grow without natural conception. Children who have not been adopted are placed in the foster care system.

"People are trying to stop this infertility problem, but we need to start with the people who are already here, all the kids who are growing up in the foster care system, which, in many ways, is broken," said College of San Mateo student Bridgette Martin, who was adopted after her parents were unable to have biological children.

During his 2024 presidential campaign, President Donald Trump expressed a desire to make IVF free. More recently, the federal government made a deal with a pharmaceutical company that manufactures IVF medication to offer a discounted price on Trump's proposed federally-run prescription marketplace, TrumpRx, that is expected to open this year. It's unclear how much the IVF medication will cost through this program.

According to RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, 15 states currently have laws requiring most insurance to cover IVF, though in many of these states, small businesses and religious organizations are exempt, as is the case in California's law.

The law applies to eligible health insurance contracts issued or renewed in or after January 2026. For employees relying on the California Public Employees' Retirement System, coverage starts in July 2027.

Approximately 82% of SMUHSD's budget goes towards salaries and benefits.



WINONA REIF

Another possible solution would be to resurrect the School Site Council. Composed of students, parents, an administrator, teachers and staff, the School Site Council was in charge of advising the principal on funding expenditures. By including a School Site Council in Parent Teacher Student Organization decisions, whose voices already hold weight in Board of Trustee discussions, the larger Aragon community can be heard.

Almost every member of the Aragon community, from staff to parents to even students, has something to say about budget spending.

Though interest ranges in specificity, it is clear that people care about how their school's money is divided up. With changes in involvement opportunities at both a school and, more importantly, district level, funding allocation will become more community-driven and understandable

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From Bach to bytes: Coding for Culture Competition

Ryan Li
NEWS WRITER

On Feb. 6, the Coding for the Culture competition was held at Stanford University.

Coding for the Culture is an annual competition that takes place during the week of the Super Bowl. Students from a local high school present music they have coded using the code editor EarSketch to a panel of judges, and the winning piece is typically played in the locker rooms at the Super Bowl.

This year, 30 students from Aragon participated: 10 students taking Engineering Technology, 10 in Computer Science and 10 in Digital Photography.

Over the course of three FlexTime sessions, Coding for the Culture employees held Zoom calls to teach students how to use EarSketch, which were held in engineering technology teacher Arron Apperson's classroom.

"I hope that kids understand that computer science and these types of technologies [may] often seem out of reach because of [their] complexity, [but] they're not," said digital photography teacher Nick Carrillo. "Computer science is fun. I don't think a lot of students make the connection of coding and fun and putting it together. And this really is an opportunity for kids to make that connection."

The students' music was Super Bowl themed, and the categories of music that the students

created included anthems for the competing teams, a halftime show remix, a game day hype track, commercial jingles and victory celebration.

The competition was hosted by JReid InDeed, a philanthropic organization. Justin Reid, a professional football player in the NFL, founded the organization to support underprivileged youth. The aim of Coding for the Culture is to bring computer science education to students while allowing them to express themselves through music.

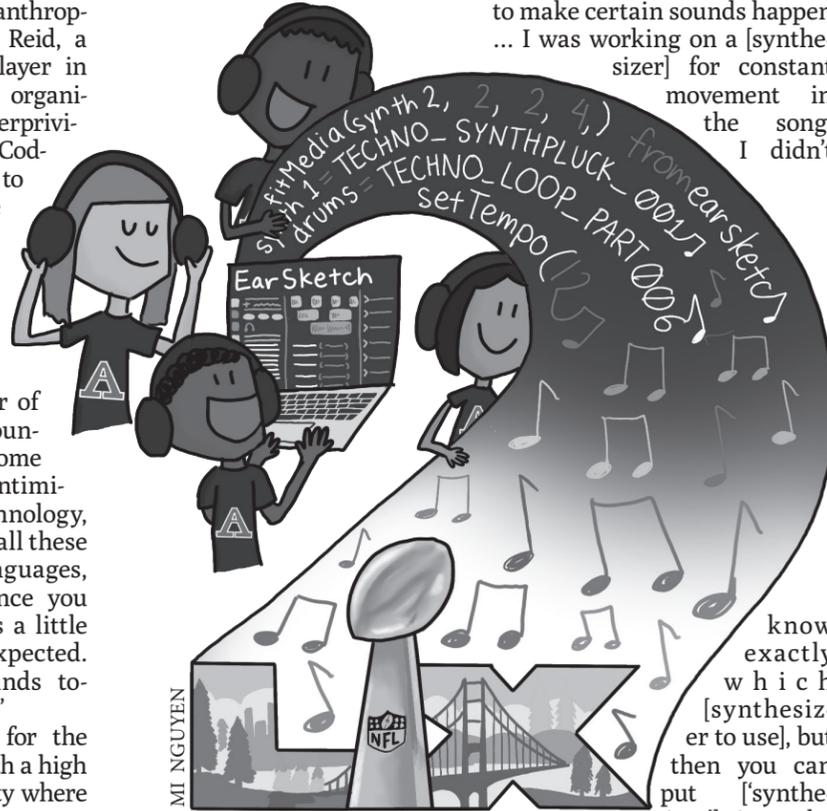
"The students love it," said Alanna Murray, Executive Director of the JReid InDeed Foundation. "Sometimes some of [the students] are intimidated [by] coding, technology, HTML, JavaScript and all these different coding languages, not realizing [that] once you actually get into it, it's a little bit simpler than you expected. It's opening their minds towards something new."

Each year, Coding for the Culture collaborates with a high school in the community where the Super Bowl is held.

"Because [Reid] was a student at Stanford, he reached out to his previous professor," said College and Career Advisor Queenie Hua. "Then [the professor], because [of] his community partnership with Aragon, invited Aragon to do this event with him ... [because] we hosted his

students before for their final exam projects [where they] go to [a] high school and do a presentation on AI in the classroom for the students and work with them on a project."

"It's fun because you have to figure [EarSketch] out," said junior Alexander Gutzman. "But it's not so hard to the extent where it's annoying you because you can't figure out how to make certain sounds happen ... I was working on a [synthesizer] for constant movement in the song. I didn't



MI NGUYEN

In order to take part in the competition, students learned how to use EarSketch to create 30 to 45 second pieces of music. Students could code using Python or block coding, and could work alone or in groups of two to three.

search bar of the different possibilities, and you can try them out and then figure out which one sounds really good."

Students could use preset sounds, including clips from famous songs, apply effects or create their own sounds to produce a song.

"I'm using this as an opportunity to familiarize myself with coding and incorporate my love of music into that because I've always been interested in music composition," said sophomore Leah Magliulo. "I play with MuseScore; sometimes I'll write music but I haven't ever really tried making beats and remixes based off already existing soundtracks."

Some students believed that Coding for the Culture was more enjoyable compared to other competitions.

"If you compare this to those traditional hackathons, [here] you actually have fun making it," said junior Allison Hsu. "[And] you can actually listen to the music that you make. Meanwhile, [for] hackathons, are you [really] gonna use all that [code]? This is [an] actual functional thing."

The winners of Coding for the Culture were junior Isaac Cheung, Magliulo and senior Luke Novak in first place; junior Alina Liashenko in second place; and juniors Emi Lo and Claire Dong in third place.

"It was a fun, once in a lifetime experience," Magliulo said. "My team ... thought outside of the box the most and I think that's what made us stand out. We incorporated our own sounds, we uploaded our own music and had lyrics."

Coding for the Culture is expected to take place in Los Angeles in 2027.

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From books to streets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The walkout follows weeks of protests and unrest in Minnesota, heightened when Renee Good, who had just driven her son to school, was killed by an ICE agent. The agent said that her death was an act of self-defense, as she was going to drive into him. However, video evidence showed that she had been trying to steer away from the agent. After Good's death, more deaths and deportations occurred.

"ICE's recent actions are repulsive, vile and ille-



gal," said freshman Nishka Hari. "You can't kill two U.S. citizens and say it's self defense when they were disarmed. It's not self defense. It's murder. And detaining a 5-year-old. What is a 5-year-old going to do to harm this country? [ICE] can't keep saying, 'this is completely legal' or 'that 5 year old's parents abandoned him.' It's repulsive that the Trump administration can say things like this [which are] completely false and untrue."

Since President Donald Trump's inauguration in 2025, ICE has ramped up its efforts to detain undocumented immigrants. As of January 2026, 73,000 people are in detention centers, according to the American Immigration Council — a 75% increase from the previous year.

"If you're not upset with what we're seeing, you're not paying close enough attention," said Hillsdale parent Andrea Savage, who was present at the protest. "These [immigrants who are being detained] are community members, parents [and] children. These are not violent criminals. There are improvements that we can make [to immigration], but [ICE's method] is not the way."

During the walkout, Aragon students marched from the school to Central Park on Aragon Boulevard, where they were met with applause, cheers and

honks of support from neighbors. They were joined at Central Park by thousands of students and adults who brought signs or handed out water.

Many people who decided to take part in the walkout had personal ties.

"My dad's [immigration] case recently got reopened and even though he did all the legal processing, [his immigration status is] being questioned," said a junior. "He's in a tough spot because he provides for us and has his whole life here. That's why speaking [out] about it and people in our community supporting [immigrants] is very important."

The protestors took up chants at Central Park, which they continued when they later moved to line both sides of El Camino Real.

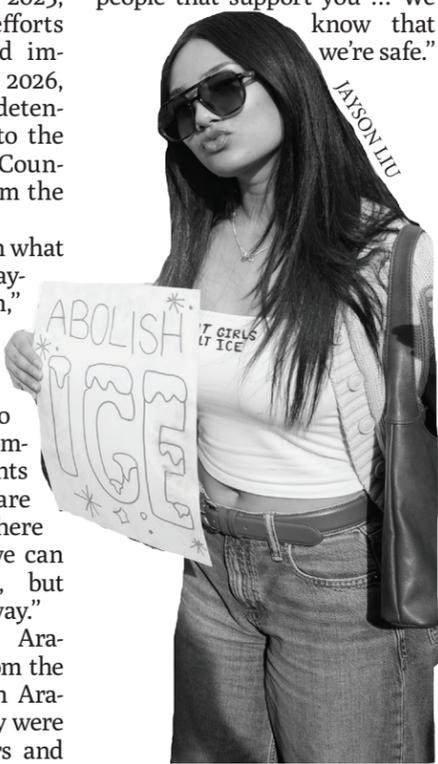
Students were also joined by many of their teachers and counselors, who gave up a personal day to attend the walkout.

"It's important to use our individual voices for the collective good, to fight what's happening right now with immigration and our government," said wellness counselor Eddie Perez. "I want to support the students that I have the privilege of seeing and working with every day."

Though the aim of the protest was to be peaceful, there was one instance of violence. When a truck flying a "Trump/Vance" flag drove down El Camino, some protestors threw empty water bottles at it.

With the protest's large turnout, far more attended than the organizers had expected.

"I'm from an immigrant household," Nunez said. "You think that everyone's against you ... so seeing the amount of people that came out and didn't go to their class or didn't go to their job to come support this movement is heartwarming because you know that there's people that support you ... We know that we're safe."



COURTESY OF ICELAND REVIEW

Protests continue in Iran

Jannah Nassef
NEWS WRITER

On Dec. 28, 2025, anti-government protests sparked across Iran due to the economic instability and lack of support felt by citizens from the government. Protests, as well as the Iranian government's response, caused mass casualties and a death toll of tens of thousands, although reports vary on the exact number.

Inflation, the leading cause of disruption, has skyrocketed. The price of food rose by an average of 72%, and purchasing power has dived by more than 90%.

"Bread was [around] 30 cents, and now [it's] \$3 to \$5," said sophomore Kiana Aref Adib. "My uncle [and his family aren't] that well-off right now, so it's a really big struggle for them. It's insane how high the price [rose] for basic groceries."

The rial, Iran's currency, reached a

ratio of 1.36 million rial per U.S. dollar in late December, a record-low.

"In my family [we talk about] gold prices: one day, you should be buying gold, because it's at such a cheap price [in] U.S. dollars," said sophomore Arianna Aref Adib. "But another day, [it changes and you] shouldn't be getting it because it's so expensive. I would love for the currency of Iran to have be at a set [value] rather than [fluctuating]."

Iran weakened after facing economic sanctions placed by the U.S. preceding Iran's revolution, the United Nations enacting sanctions over Iran's nuclear programme in 2006 and Israel's attack on Iran in June 2025, which caused a 12-day war.

The protests preceded a nationwide blackout, preventing news organizations from receiving and reporting live

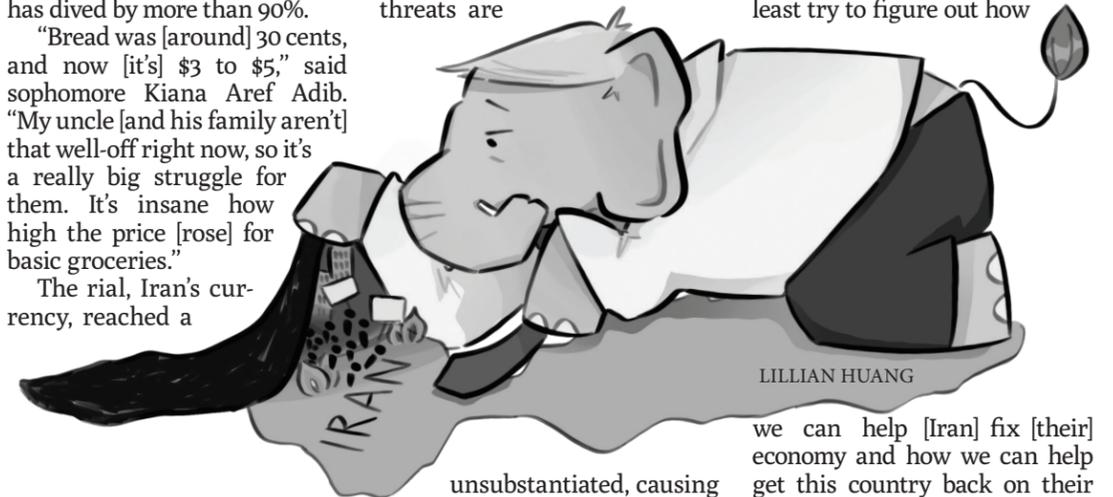
updates, as well as phone calls, outside connection and internet access to citizens. The death toll was estimated between 5,000 to 36,500, 24,669 were arrested and 2,109 sustained serious injuries. Shopkeepers have shut down due to the chaos in the streets. Vandalization and tensions between the government and the Iranian population have continued to heighten.

President Donald Trump made very serious threats in response to protests, stating that he will take action against the Iranian government if they continue to kill protesters. Such threats are

[has] a very strange [foreign] policy, and he's trying to find new allies after he's damaged so many of the relationships [with] the countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and a lot of European countries."

The messy political climate between America and Iran, especially due to American allyship with Israel, has contributed to the hostility.

"There's always merit to trying to improve relationships [in] international affairs; it's always good to have relationships that are friendly on both ends," Lindberg said. "[America can] at least try to figure out how



LILLIAN HUANG

we can help [Iran] fix [their] economy and how we can help get this country back on their feet. I don't know how much of that is going to happen, just because international affairs is not the highest priority right now within the U.S. government."

On the contrary, Trump stated that he plans on making peaceful arrangements as well as a treaty with Iranian officials.

"A lot of people are now starting to see that it isn't right that he's in office, and that there are things that he's doing that [the population] don't necessarily agree with, even within Republicans and really right winged people," Lindberg said. "[Their opinion is] not changing completely, they aren't doing a full turnaround, but because people are starting to doubt him, he's losing popularity, and by painting himself as a white knight and a hero, he will be able to gain that popularity back, even if [his efforts aren't] real."

Online this month:

SPORTS:

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- SUPERBOWL RECAP
- COMP CHEER

FEATURES:

- FEMALE DRIVERS
- PHYSICAL MEDIA

GEMMA ALBERTSON

US operation in Venezuela captures Nicolás Maduro

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

OIL JUSTIFICATION

Beyond the drug trafficking narrative, Trump repeatedly referenced that Venezuela holds the world's largest oil reserves when justifying the operation.

In 1976, Venezuela created *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.* to manage the state-controlled sector of oil. While initially meant as protection from foreign companies and an opportunity for oil revenue, aggressive nationalizations under Hugo Chávez led to a severe decline in oil productivity.

"My dad and his family lived there for 35 years," said senior Javier Del Rio. "The reason they left was because Hugo Chávez and the Chavismo government made it unsafe ... After taking steps to become more authoritarian, abolishing term limits and rigging elections, the [nationalized] oil led to the [top] 1% of Venezuelans benefiting from the oil money. People in the middle and bottom never got that kind of wealth, power or security. After 27 years of people not having control over the future, [of] not having enough to eat for the week, [of] not being able to] speak up for yourself [at] risk of being kidnapped, arrested or shot, the initial sense [after Maduro's capture] was [freedom]."

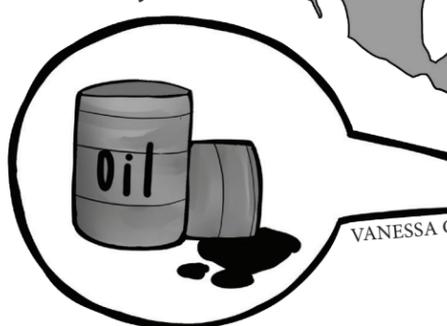
In nationalizing the industry, Chávez fundamentally altered contracts with major U.S. oil companies like ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips, who refused to cede majority control of their projects to PDVSA. Chávez and PDVSA then seized their assets and operations without adequate compensation for their property losses, leading to billions of dollars in investments lost. The current intervention has thus been framed as reclaiming American property rather than simply seizing another nation's resources.

On Jan. 6, Trump announced Venezuela would begin giving some of its oil supplies to the U.S.

PUBLIC AND LEGAL CONCERNS

The public's reaction to the raid has been mixed. Some believe Maduro's capture and the U.S. decision to "run" Venezuela will lead to a better future for the country.

"[U.S. control of Venezuela] isn't inherently bad," said junior Vidhu Thirunagari. "It could turn out for the better ... Obviously people don't like having other people rule over them, but in the long run, it might be better in regards to government and infrastructure and school systems."



Many have also expressed concerns about the legality of the raid. Abroad, U.N. officials, other nations and legal scholars say the raid violated international law and posed a threat to Venezuela's independence.

Some justify the military operation by questioning the legitimacy of international law.

"Maduro wasn't democratically elected," said sophomore Veer Bhalla. "He rigged the election [and] took out his political opponent. International law sometimes doesn't have to be followed. It's more of a guideline ... [It's] very strict [about]

the way you can't do certain things, but sometimes those things have to be done."

However, these explanations are often contested and viewed as attempts to create impunity rather than true legal exceptions.

"[My family] can't return to my grandmother's entire home region in Jalisco because of severe cartel activity," said senior Erin Finn. "People [dying] during the Venezuelan operations with bombings is something people gloss over ... Other than some strange sense of nationalized glory, what might one get [from] this? Not much."

Bhalla acknowledged the human cost but maintained his position.

"Obviously civilian deaths should be prevented at all times," Bhalla said. "But in operations like this, there's bound to be some deaths."

VENEZUELA'S POLITICAL FUTURE

Trump has caused additional controversy by backing Maduro's former vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, over members of the opposition. This suggests that the leadership of Venezuela and the status of democracy in the country may not be as important to Trump as the prosecution of Maduro and the U.S. gaining access to Venezuelan oil reserves.

Overall, life in Venezuela remains similar to before Maduro's capture.

"Day-to-day life hasn't really changed, and people are still getting arrested for celebrating the capture of Maduro in certain states," Del Rio said. "It's not like the U.S. can take down one [person] and then all of Venezuela's problems are fixed. Maduro has so many people within the government, even people that aren't within government — people in different neighborhoods that get money, weapons and drugs from him. If you take down the guy at the top and leave everything else, it just creates a vacuum of power that people are looking to fill."

The intervention has added another layer of confusion to the already complex Venezuelan politics. It is unclear what Trump's vague promise to "run" Venezuela entails, raising fundamental questions about what direct American administration of a sovereign nation would look like: its structure, scope and duration remain undefined.

A democratic transition faces insurmountable obstacles due to the Maduro government's deeply entrenched power.

"There are so many people in the streets in each city, each neighborhood that depended or are affiliated very closely with that government," Del Rio said. "To bring [a different] leader into power would be dangerous."

Many have concerns regarding the future of Venezuela given Rodríguez's legitimacy and opposition leader Edmundo González Urrutia in exile. Ultimately, whether the U.S. raid on Venezuela achieves lasting change with regard to the country's government remains yet to be seen. In the meantime, the Trump administration appears to be increasingly intervening in foreign affairs with the goal of gaining assets for the U.S. and showcasing its power.

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ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG

Opinion: the US capture of Nicolás Maduro is justified



Nate Wilson
FEATURES WRITER

Is kidnapping back in style? Yes. That is, if you plan on capturing South American oppressors.

Nicolás Maduro is the president or, if you're the U.S. government, "dictator" of Venezuela, who now resides at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York. The capture of Maduro has been controversial: the Secretary-General of the United Nations said he is "deeply concerned that the rules of international law have not been respected." However, this issue is more complicated than just international law, and may be justified by looking at impact rather than intent.

Before anything else, I would like to appreciate why capturing Maduro has or will likely help Venezuelan citizens.

As The London School of Economics and Political Science puts it, "[Venezuela's] economic collapse was largely due to mismanagement and Mr. Maduro's

'kleptocratic cronyism,' an arrangement where state power is hijacked for the personal enrichment of the ruling elite."

On top of this, Maduro has been labeled a narco-terrorist by President Donald Trump's first administration and Joe Biden's administration for his involvement in the production and spread of drugs.

Furthermore, the average Venezuelan has suffered under Maduro, evidenced by the 7.9 million who fled. Therefore, ridding Venezuela of such an oppressive and parasitic leader is a humanitarian benefit.

The main pieces of international law critics claim the U.S. violated are Article II Section 4 of the U.N. Charter, which states that countries shall refrain from the "use of force against the ... political independence of any state" as well as Article II Section 1 which stresses "the principle of sovereign equality."

"It depends on what the person you're doing violence towards has done in the past," said junior Liam Harris. "Let's say Hitler was around today, would it be wrong to go and grab him and make sure that he doesn't ... oppress people like Maduro [is]? I feel like what we did was right."

Although comparing Maduro to the 'H' man is a stretch, I hope readers can appreciate the extrapolation: is limiting ourselves with international law worth the moral high ground if adversaries wouldn't do the same?

"Technically, yes, it is a violation of international law," said junior Jason Lao. "But regard-

less, Maduro has committed human rights violations against his own people."

Additionally, the U.S. and other nations such as Canada and the European Union view Maduro as an illegitimate president. This charter, which is meant for legitimate states, is not applicable to a predatory government.

With over 750 military bases in over 80 countries and territories, the U.S. has the responsibility of dealing with international conflicts of national interest. Maduro's capture continues the ideas presented in the Truman Doctrine: the U.S. will provide political, military and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from authoritarian forces. While political circumstances today don't tightly match those of 1947, when the Truman Doctrine was declared, the precedent for U.S. intervention is clear. The fact that this action rids Venezuelan people of an oppressive dictator is an indicator that international law has limits and shouldn't be applied to protect predatory leaders.

"[Capturing] Maduro is essentially a step ... towards [safeguarding] U.S. [national] interests, and also giving the Venezuelan people, who have already suffered so much, an

opportunity to rebuild and ... regain the wealth that they have lost under 27 years of socialism," Lao said.

Another key aspect of this capture is competition with China. Soft power, the ability to influence a country without coercion, is one of the biggest weapons of large players such as the U.S. and China. China has historically constructed key infrastructure in some countries to increase their soft power in those places. For example, in Pakistan, through

China's "Belt and Road" initiative, China now controls the strategic Gwadar Port, extensive energy projects and major transportation networks connecting Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea.

Venezuela is currently billions of dollars in debt to China, which they have been paying back in oil. While Venezuela will likely not default on this unless the U.S. forces it to, Chinese companies have developed extraction infrastructure and helped develop other sectors, "including agriculture, power

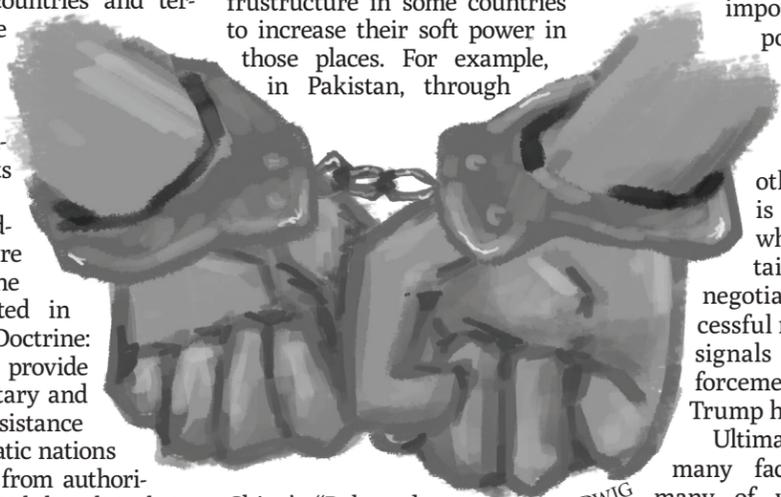
generation and transmission, ports and water," according to U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. China's influence has been undeniable and stopping China's soft power is part of the bigger picture.

Although disrespecting a foreign sovereignty may damage American soft power, this also makes foreign compliance with U.S. policies smoother. As important as soft

power is, hard power, the nation's ability to use force to influence other countries, is the end goal, which can be obtained through negotiations; this successful military action signals credible enforcement to threats Trump has made.

Ultimately, there are many factors at play, many of which I can't cover, such as Venezuela's sovereignty, U.S. international relations — not just with China, but Cuba, Colombia, the EU and Canada — oil and the U.S.'s sphere of influence. The intent of Maduro's capture appears to be securing national interests and oil, with the bonus of helping Venezuelan citizens.

Whether or not U.S. oil companies will reap the benefits or Venezuelans will see a real democracy, only time will tell, but U.S. intervention has been a step in the right direction.





Tourism: flights and plights

Roy Kong
FEATURES WRITER

Warm beaches, sparkling ocean water, palm trees swaying in the wind: the life of a tourist is full of beauty. Tourism has always been popular, and for good reason. Tourism enables travelers to explore a new culture, climate and more. For those who have the access and money to travel, booking that trip is an easy choice. The governments in these vacation spots, in turn, continue to pander towards tourism, despite various concerns from locals about rude tourists or other issues.

The main reason countries promote tourism is for money, as the average tourist in the U.S. spends around \$1,800 to 2,000 for a week-long trip. This cost begins to multiply when accounting for larger travel groups or longer trips. The money then goes on to fund the local restaurant, hotel and entertainment industries.

Due to these prices, governments and large companies significantly benefit and profit from large amounts of tourists, often disregarding the state of their own nation and instead prioritizing tourism revenue. For example, the city of Los Angeles has recently been dealing with floods of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and chaos among its streets, possibly the worst hand dealt among all American cities regarding the recent outburst of immigration control. Despite this, the government of Los Angeles launched its "LA is Open" Campaign, in hopes of promoting tourism.

Tourism's impact on the

are pushed out of housing opportunities. While tourists are only forced to tackle these high costs for the duration of their trip, locals must manage them indefinitely.

Consequently, Hawaiian natives have been forced to leave their country as it is unaffordable. Hawaii has become almost comparable to the prices of California, who is first in regional price parities among all 50 states. According to the Health resources and Services Administration, prices in Hawaii were 13% above the U.S. average. With Hawaii now in third on the list behind New Jersey, Hawaiian locals have started to move to more affordable places to live. As of 2020, less than half of the population of Native Hawaiians or any combination re-

sides in Hawaii due mainly to high housing prices and high cost of living. The effect of high prices goes beyond where one resides: 29% of SNAP benefit users reported to be either fully or partially native Hawaiian.

For many citizens of popular travel destinations, it seems as if their relationship with tourists is unbalanced and never ending. These locations have become extremely reliant on tourism, with Hawaii having 17 to 23% of their state's GDP coming from tourism and visitor spending. Although this is nowhere close to normal for the wide majority of countries and cities, many are in a similar situation. Just like Hawaii, the city of Las Vegas is highly invested in tourism, with over 250 hotels — a similar number to San Francisco — and an economy that panders to tourism.

"Tourism can benefit

airlines, and more, giving money back to the community. Because there are many different brands associated with travel in popular destinations, jobs become easier to acquire. Money is dispersed among citizens, boosting the economy.

While the reactions of those who experience it may differ, the behavior of tourists usually doesn't. Boundaries and normalities change depending on location, but many disrespectful behaviors affect places negatively. Some of these behaviors include not having proper etiquette and manners, choosing to support large hotels and large chain restaurants instead of locally owned businesses, blocking walkways or paths and leaving behind a mess.

"You obviously need to research the country you're going to and not just go in and not know cultural expectations," Galstan said. "You can't just assume that everything is going to be the same as your home country."

More travelers are beginning to not only travel, but learn as they traverse the world. For people who appreciate history-rich destinations, learning about culture certainly helps, and for those who seek to better understand the community in the place they're visiting, knowing at least the basics of the language can aid in connection.

As a result of an increasing amount of tourists that are learning to visit countries more respectfully, more citizens and natives are accepting them. However, citizens in Barcelona have reacted differently. Protests, signs and graffiti express the hatred of

tourism in Barcelona, with crowds of protesters spreading a similar message that tourists are not welcome in Barcelona. While media coverage of Bar-

celona's retaliation often portrays citizens in a violent light, the general message is similar to what Hawaiian natives have been stating for years.

As tourism continues its rigorous cycle of benefit and pain, two things become clear: while tourism has the potential to leave lasting negative impacts on nations, it introduces travelers to new cultures and experience, and in turn helps people become less close-minded. While tourism can be viewed differently by different people, it's an integral industry for many locations, despite its ramifications.

the economic situation of an area, and some tourist spots can be really heavily reliant on that tourism," said senior V Galstan.

Although large brands take away from smaller businesses, they do provide thousands of jobs within hotels,

locals and land of a location can perhaps be seen most clearly in Hawaii. As a result of the over 9 million tourists Hawaii receives each year, the state's cost of living has skyrocketed to being among the highest in the nation. To capture tourism demand, large hotel chains are pitted against each other in a race for land. In doing so, prices of housing rose, allowing for richer tourists to purchase land while locals

Teens on public transportation

Ethan Fei
FEATURES WRITER

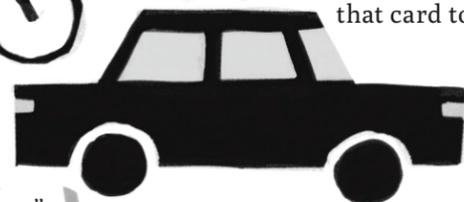
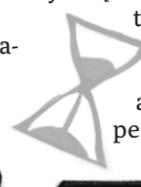
For many teens, public transportation is the difference between getting home on time and waiting alone in a parking lot. It provides a dependable way to go to and from school, participate in activities and become more independent. But alongside these benefits, students encounter issues such as crowded buses, inconsistent arrival times and occasional safety concerns. While still valuable, the public transportation system still has room for improvement.

Access to public transit gives students greater control over their schedules, allowing them to manage time more flexibly without relying on family schedules.

"[Riding public transportation made it so that]



WINONA REIF



I didn't need to get anyone to pick me up," said senior Tomas Canova. "It was sometimes the only way I could get home from school without having to wait hours at school for one of my parents to come pick me up."

Convenience is also a major factor in using public transportation, as it provides a moment of calm in an otherwise busy school day.

"You just sit down ... you don't have to drive or anything," Canova said. "It's pretty easy to use."

This simplicity extends beyond the ride itself, influencing how families coordinate transportation. When transportation is straightforward, families can plan their mornings more easily, taking stress out of the daily commute and making the

cramped ride could make it impossible to relax, turning the daily trip into one of the more frustrating parts of daily life.

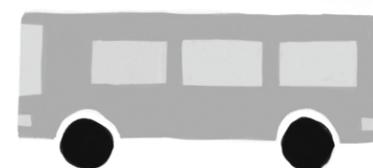
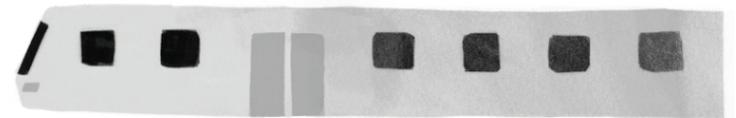
Besides space, the price of a ride can become a limiting factor, especially when teens rely on transit multiple times a day. What may seem like a small amount can quickly add up for those who take the bus to and from school every day. A SamTrans fare costs \$2.00 for a day pass, which can quickly lead up to over \$360 a year.

"There's two types of bus passes," Webster said. "There's one the school offers, which is [where] you pay \$100 and it's unlimited for the school year. That's the one I have. I paid \$100, and you can just [use] it infinitely from a time period to another time period. The Sam Trams website actually offers a Clipper card. You can either put a set balance on that card to

use, or you can just renew it." While affordability is one part of the equation, teens also emphasized that riders cannot entirely rely on public transport to adhere to exact times of arrival and departure.

"Sometimes it's inconsistent," Canova said. "If I really have to be somewhere punctually, I wouldn't always rely on the bus to get me there."

Although cost remains an important consideration, students have also noticed several positive changes that have enhanced their experience, such as its role in saving the environment. The transition to electric buses reveals that the district is taking student wellness and the environment seriously. This gives students a real sense of progress, and by replacing gas-



schedule a whole lot smoother for everyone at home.

"It's super convenient for my parents," said sophomore Beckett Webster. "Because they only have to drive me to the bus stop and not all the way to school."

However, this convenience also comes several downsides.

"Especially on the 59, it gets really crowded," Canova said. "Not getting a seat kind of sucks, because I'm just standing there the whole time. And I've seen people on the bus fall down ... [which] must hurt a lot."

Crowding and student safety concerns like these often shape how students feel about their daily ride, influencing their overall comfort. For many, a

oline-fueled buses, which emit harmful nitrogen oxides, carbon emissions can be reduced by up to 181 metric tons per bus each year. Electrification also provides for smoother rides, therefore enhancing students' experiences beyond environmental concern.

"They used to be using gasoline-fueled buses, but now they're using electric buses, which is better for the environment," Webster said.

At the end of the day, public transit is a reflection of the community; whether that's protecting the environment, keeping people safe, or making daily life less stressful. As transit systems continue to evolve, the goal is to not just move teens from place to place, but to make their day better along the way.

SAN MATEO HISTORY

The Ramaytush Ohlone lived in settlements along San Mateo Creek and Laurel Creek, with settlements of about 100-250 people who relied on the land's natural resources.

Copy: Allinah Zhan, Claire Qi, Helen McCloskey, Madeline Allen
Graphics: Allinah Zhan

Many thanks to Mitchell Postel (San Mateo: A Centennial History), NBC Bay Area, City of San Mateo, San Mateo County and San Mateo Daily Journal!

Pre-1769

1776

Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza camped in the area and named it San Mateo after St. Matthew, marking the beginning of Spanish influence in the region.

"One of the reasons that San Mateo became a city back in 1894 was because of the lack of fire protection," said San Mateo historian Mitch Postel. "These services, whether it's fire, police or sanitation that we take for granted today, weren't at people's fingertips at all, and that was a big reason to [incorporate San Mateo as a city] and improve [it]."

San Mateo's first formal fire department was established, on the same day as a large fire broke out in Library Hall. The Redwood City Fire Department was summoned to stop the

Alvinza Hayward created the Crystal Springs Reservoir, allotting 300,000 gallons a year to San Mateans.

1865-1887

The arrival of the railroad, led by Charles Polhemus, helped establish downtown San Mateo and attracted wealthy San Franciscans who built their summer estates in the area.

1887

1888

San Mateo High School was founded with 24 students.

1902

Elsa McGinn reorganized the fire department, and San Mateans were able to avoid a fire in 1934 from spreading.

1922

The College of San Mateo was created, long before San Francisco's first community college.

1929-39

San Mateo grew rapidly as a place for electronics and steel workers to live.

1941-45

"If you were Asian and trying to establish yourself in a place like Burlingame, ... the neighborhoods were restricted and you couldn't get in," Postel said. "San Mateo, from the beginning, [was less restricted and] always had Chinese, [Japanese, African American and Italian] communities [that were] very strong early on."

"Every Friday night, everybody went to the Y," McClain said. "We danced. It was rock and roll time, and you're with kids from all the schools. You were dancing, or you were in a big lounge where you were just sitting around talking, and there was another huge area that had basketball and volleyball. Once in a while, a boy might show up who had too much beer."

"I lived in Shoreview Parkside ... and the kids on that side of the highway had to go to Aragon way up there," McClain said. "There was no choice. I, to this day, believe it was economic. The rich kids got to stay at San Mateo. Hillsdale, Aragon, and Mills were all built at about the same time. How come one of those schools couldn't have been built on the other side of 101?"

San Mateo was the only city to officially honor returning veterans with a parade.

During the Vietnam War, Linda Patterson got a letter from her 19-year-old brother Sergeant Joe Artavia of the "Screaming Eagles," explaining that morale was low. San Mateo residents sent thousands of packages of cookies, candies and letters.

1972

"Vietnam veterans were not applauded or thanked or given the same sense of heroism that was found during World War II and World War I and [the] Korean War and so on," Abrams said. "There was always a sense of, 'what were we really doing there? And did we accomplish anything? And did we help the world? Or did we just kill off 50,000 of our youngest and in Vietnam?'"

1980

10% Asian
6% Black
79% White
12% Hispanic

29.8% Asian
1.9% Black
36.1% White
25.0% Hispanic

2007

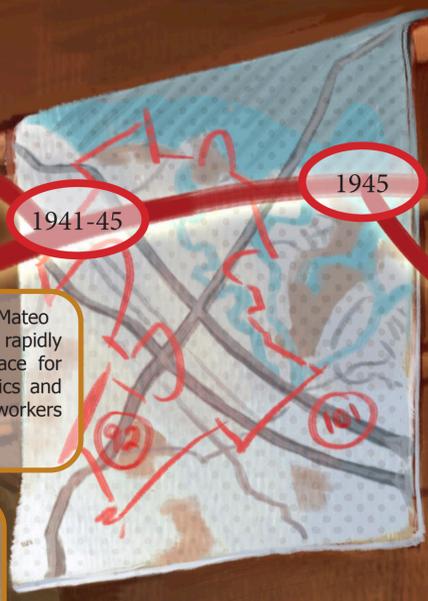
The last restrictive covenant in Cuesta La Honda Guild was officially removed, and the Federal Housing Administration encouraged redlining. 1988-2014: The county issued permits for only 34% of the required low-income housing, leading to significantly less affordable housing today.

"So many people today are looking at how can we afford things like medical coverage and housing," Abrams said. "My wife and I were able to buy our first house when we were 23 years old [and] our second house when we were 29. Young families like that now have such a difficult time buying in San Mateo."

2020

"There are office buildings now," Tobin said. "Everything was relatively low rise [before]. And on El Camino is what used to be the Bayview Federal Savings Building, which is maybe 10 stories. That and the Ben Franklin Hotel were the two biggest buildings in San Mateo. And then they built the Bank of Bank of America, which was a big building. But basically, there were office buildings, but none were very big."

D. A. Raybould subdivided the Parrott estate into the Baywood area and the Howard lands into the Shoreview area. At the same time, David Bohannon bought and developed the Beresford area, naming the area Hillsdale.



1945

After World War II ended, Japanese Americans returning from incarceration camps were generally received with more warmth and support in San Mateo than in other West Coast locations.

Hillsdale High School opened to help accommodate the massive influx of families.

1956

The Borel estate remained as the only original grand property left standing. The population boomed, with David Bohannon's Hillsdale project and other similar works transforming the landscape into a suburban hub.

"There's something to me about living so close to that big, huge Pacific Ocean," McClain said. "That has kind of given California its energy. My father came from Kansas during World War II. When he got to San Francisco in the army, he said, 'I live through this army, but if I survive World War II, I'm coming back to California. This is just gorgeous.'"

"We had a lot of Asian kids, and I remember I was in junior high [at] College Park," said Diane McClain, founding class alumnus of Aragon. "So many of my Japanese friends were born in the camps. I remember a teacher had us do a family project and bring in pictures when we were little, and those kids were bringing in what few pictures they had of being born in those camps."

Mayor Roy Archibald and Mayor Tasuku Fujito established a sister-city relationship between San Mateo and Toyonaka, Japan.

Aragon High School's opening soon followed (originally planned for 1960, but nationwide steel strikes delayed construction).

1961

1963

"There's cultural exchanges, so our baseball and softball teams from our city have an exchange with their baseball and softball teams," said history teacher Jennifer Seif. "At our middle school feeder schools, Borel has a sister relationship and Japanese pen pals."

While San Mateo experienced less overt segregation due to developing as a relatively diverse region, the region still saw the emergence of de facto "Asian" and "Black" schools. The district enacted an administrative transfer plan to combat this, but the personnel still remained overwhelmingly white. The "Action Now" group formed in response to social pressure, and its goal was to improve the lives of East San Mateo low-income residents. Simultaneously, the College Readiness Program was established to provide minority students with financial aid and other assistance.



Zombie apocalypse strikes Bone Temple 28 years later

Rebecca Chen
FEATURES WRITER

On Jan. 16, "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple" was released as the sequel in the zombie apocalypse franchise 28 Days Later. Following "28 Years Later," the 2025 prequel, which focused on survival, loss and a young boy's coming-of-age in a quarantined Britain, "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple" attempts to push the franchise into a darker, more philosophical direction.

The film takes place after the events of the previous movie, "28 Years Later," and moves away from the relative safety of quarantine zones into the mainland, where hierarchical cults, extreme belief systems and human savagery run rampant. Instead of trying to survive, the movie portrays a group of people roaming the land and killing its people. This differentiates it from traditional zombie thrillers, where the objective is to survive, creating a darker theme of human selfishness.

"[The movie] talks about different societies and how they connect to our society, like different social classes," said sophomore Ella Li.

However, even with its challenging the norm, the movie's storyline was weak. The narrative often feels unclear and fragmented, giving the impression that there is no plot or overarching goal driving the film forward. The movie plays out in a way that feels confusing rather than purposeful, lacking the traditional Fichtean Curve of rising action, climax and resolution that most movies have.

"I was unclear on why Jimmy, [the cult leader], turned the way he did," said sophomore Sofia Cabrera. "It wasn't really well-explained if you hadn't watched the prequel."

Very few moments actually stick with the viewer as they walk out of the theater. That being said, there is one major exception: a very unusual scene involving the doctor in the movie performing a disturbing dance, accompanied by unsettling music. That moment popped from the otherwise blended story because it was so bizarre, making it so distinctive.

Furthermore, the pacing of the movie is very uneven. There were long stretches that

moved very slowly, making it seem like the story was not advancing, while other moments happened very abruptly. This imbalance contributes to the film's lack of structure and

strength. The characters are portrayed with intensity and conviction, making even the most unsettling or bizarre moments feel believable. Jack O'Connell's portrayal of the cult leader Jimmy is particularly effective, bringing out strong emotional reactions from the audience.

In terms of tone, "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple" is bleak and deeply unsettling. The film focuses less on the infected and more on the dangerous belief systems humans create when society collapses.

"[The movie is] about corruption and humanity versus dehumanization, especially with how Jimmy lost himself because of the cult," Cabrera said.

A major theme is how people use "the end of the world" to justify violence and bring distress among the survivors instead of the zombies

— suggesting that humans, not the virus, are the true source of horror. While it is an important idea, it's not always clear throughout the movie.

"Some parts [of the movie] were confusing," Li said. "One of the characters just disappeared and there was no storyline for it."

The sound design, however, is one of the more successful creative elements of the movie. Silence was used to create tension and unease. And when there was sound, it left the viewer unsettled. The soundtrack enhanced suspense, making the audience feel uneasy even when nothing important was really happening on the screen.

Overall, the movie did try to reach the height of its prequels, but it did not live up to the narrative strength of them, nor did it do the previous movies justice. Although it introduced ambitious themes and had strong performances, the film's weak plot, confusing structure and uneven pacing prevented it from achieving its full potential. As a result, the movie earns a rating of one and a half out of five stars.



makes it feel longer than it actually is.

Despite a weak plot and rocky pacing, the performance of the actors was a

OUR OUTLOOK



Watch out! Car drifting: adrenaline and stunts

Cayleigh Wilson
FEATURES WRITER

The video lasts just 20 seconds, but it contains all the elements necessary to command attention: tires screeching, smoke filling the air and a car drifting mere feet away from a crowd of cheering onlookers, mostly young people. It captures the sheer thrill associated with car drifting while blatantly omitting its dangers.

To drift a car, the driver must deliberately oversteer, forcing the car's rear wheels to lose traction while remaining under control through a turn. Although street drifting traces its roots to professional drifting, there are key differences.

"Professional cars have a lot of mods that you couldn't do on a street car," said junior Adam Sahib. "A lot of the stuff they do, they could get arrested for. That is why they have professional drifting."

Beyond car modifications or fancy upgrades that give a vehicle a stand-out look and improve its performance, street drifting and professional drifting differ in execution. Professional drifting happens in sanctioned environments, usually racetracks, under strict rules. Drivers are judged on control, angle and style rather than speed, and safety measures keep both cars and the audience protected.

Many are already familiar with drifting, even if they do not recognize it by name. Terms like "donuts" or "burnouts" are often referenced casually. An informal gathering where drivers perform stunts like donuts and burnouts are called sideshows. As the crowd grows, participants use their vehicles to slow or block traffic, creating space for drivers to drift. Often starting with just a single car performing a few spins, word can spread quickly through social media posts or live locations, and within a matter of minutes, more cars and spectators arrive.

Sideshows appear nationally in urban environments, but originated in Oakland during the 1980s. To this day,

Oakland is still an infamous hotspot for sideshows, making them easily accessible to Bay Area teens.

Especially for these Bay Area teens, social media plays a central role in how the culture spreads and evolves. Hashtags like #Sideshow and #Cardrift have amassed over 70,000 posts, and accounts like @oakland_sideshows possess over 3,000 followers. Platforms like Instagram reward spectacle: daring

stunts, tight turns and dense smoke gain likes, shares and views, turning drifting into a performance crafted for an audience beyond those physically present.

"It's more or less people that don't know [about sideshows], just see it and have a sense that it's cool," Sahib said. "They see people doing all the actions, and they want to tag along, and they just get in it themselves."

Street drifting's appeal lies in its rush. The proximity to danger can create an immediate surge of adrenaline. The closer the driver gets, the louder the crowd cheers, creating a loop of excitement that pushes both drivers and onlookers further. In these moments, fear and excitement blur, creating a heightened yet hazardous emotional experience.

Beyond adrenaline, street drifting has an element of rebellion. Taking over public streets challenges authority, which can be attractive to teenagers who want to test boundaries. There is also a strong sense of community. Sideshows bring together people who have a shared interest in both cars and performance. For many, it offers a sense of belonging. Drifting can showcase skill, creativity and me-

ties and 124 injury cases. Beyond the more obvious dangers and disruptions, loud vehicle noise results from sideshows. These disruptions can cause annoyance, loss of sleep and a feeling of unsafety in neighborhoods. In the average week, the city of San Francisco receives at least three reports of sideshow incidents after being alerted by the sound of loud engines and tires screeching.

"I saw ... some lady that was driving around in her car, just minding her own business, and she happened to come across [a sideshow]," said senior Alex Nunez. "And the people that were in the takeover just destroyed her car for no reason. I found that really messed up."

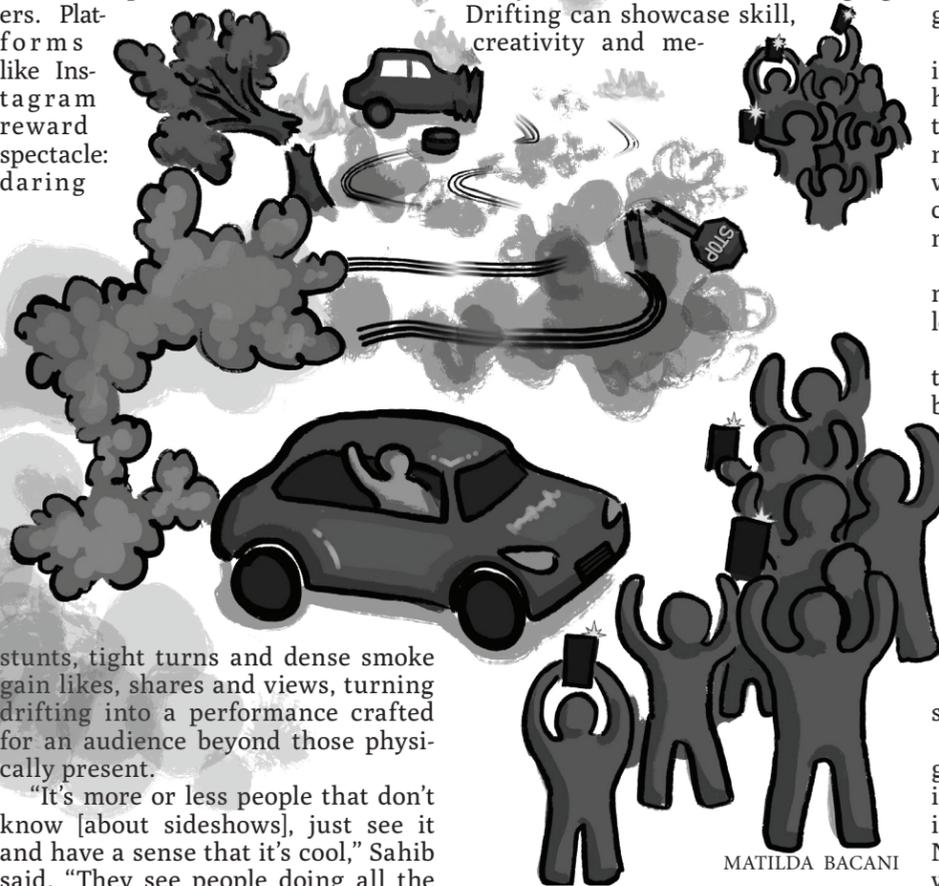
Incidents like these highlight why many car enthusiasts recommend safe, legal options for drifting.

"There's a bunch of different tracks, like one in Sonoma, [where a] bunch of people go up there to track their cars and to race them up there legally," Nunez said. "And there's also a bunch of pits that people can actually go to for takeovers too, and they don't have to just do it on the streets."

Others worry that sideshows misrepresent the wider car community, attracting negative attention and painting all enthusiasts with the same brush.

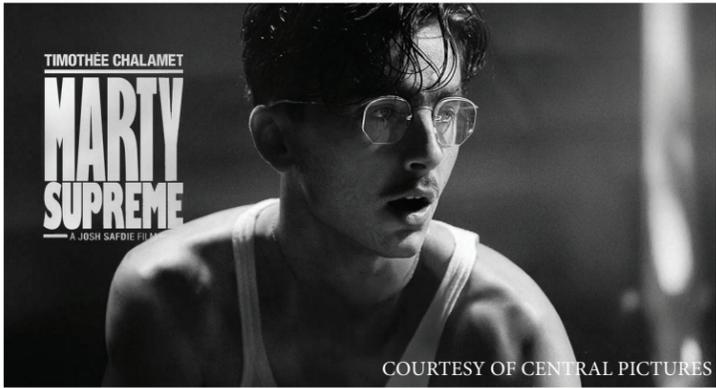
"Three years ago, [sideshows] really gained a lot of traction and popularity in news and social media, and it was in a very negative way," said senior Noel Padilla. "You had a lot of people who were getting hurt, and it just brought a lot of bad attention to car enthusiasts. The news portrayed it as the car community was doing it, but it was a very, very small portion, so it just put a bad light on people who love cars like myself and my father."

Street drifting's allure is undeniable. The challenge lies in balancing that appeal with safety, raising the question of whether the culture could exist without the inherent danger that makes it so magnetic.



chanical knowledge, and for many participants, it starts as genuine passion rather than recklessness.

Yet, street drifting carries undeniable risks. Drivers can lose control, property can be damaged and blocked traffic disrupts neighborhoods and affects civilians. Over the span of five years, the California Highway Patrol reports that street drifting and sideshows were linked to 264 crashes, resulting in 30 fatali-



Marty reigns supreme

Oliver Levitt
FEATURES WRITER

After seven years of ping pong training between film shoots, a Timothée Chalamet Wheatie's box and a campaign of orange blimps, "Marty Supreme" and its leading man have been confidently promoting and positioning the movie for cinema greatness. With nine recent Oscar nominations, it may have the chance to do just that this March.

Walking out of the theater after my first viewing, my head was spinning from the bizarre, stress-inducing and ever-evolving story of Marty Mauser's pursuit of ping pong greatness.

"I don't think I felt as positive about a movie as I did for 'Marty Supreme' in a little while," said senior Oscar Nicolson. "It's definitely an energizing movie. I finished seeing it close to midnight, but I felt ready to go. It's one of those movies like 'Rocky' where it makes you want to run through a wall."

The movie creates intensity by keeping Mauser in a perpetual state of panic. His cunning and risky decisions in combination with his impoverished and collapsing familial ties leave him battling to escape his web of lies and destitute circumstances. After losing money and fame to Japanese opponent Koto Endo on the global stage, Mauser becomes determined to redeem himself at the next championships in Japan, no matter the cost.

"The story structure of the film never really lets you expect a certain thing," said Aragon alumnus and Emerson film major Andrew McColl. "The narrative structure throws a bunch of different events at you and it shuffles them around. ... It's really going to be a lot of fun to watch [for the first time] because it contains a consistent high energy."

This pattern of tension, release, repeat continues as the film follows the now penniless ping-ponger and the disasters that follow his desperate attempts to pay for a flight to the tournament. He sexually manipulates Hollywood star Kay Stone, hustles table tennis players at a bowling alley, ransoms a dog he doesn't even have and along the way falls through a bathtub, blows up a gas station, bashes his lover's ex-husband with a ping pong trophy and totals three cars. Failing to trick his way to the tournament, however, Mauser gives up his dignity and begs businessman Milton Rockwell to fly him there to lose a staged match against Endo.

In a devastating but deserved turn of events, Mauser's unsportsmanlike conduct leaves him unable to actually compete in the tournament, forcing him to risk his deal with Rockwell by competing to his fullest at the staged match. Beating Endo in front of a massive audience, Mauser returns home title-less yet in a blaze of table tennis triumph. Upon his return, Mauser finally sees his newborn and is brought to tears, perhaps realizing the fault in his prior reckless ambition and understanding his greater purpose.

The crux of my emotional connection to the story stemmed from my paradoxical admiration of such a flawed yet inspiring character as Marty Mauser. The film draws upon the youthful aspirations for supreme greatness, leaving many young people like myself feeling inspired in spite of his ego and endless wrongdoing.

"He's a likable, unlikable character if you will," Nicolson said. "He screws basically everybody in his life over in pursuit of a dream that he never achieves in full. In some way, you can see it as this pointless sacrifice. But equally, at the end he has this beautiful moment with his child. There's a portion within you that says 'I want to be Marty Supreme: I want to have a dream that worthy of chasing and I want to have a passion that I feel so committed to.'"

As for Chalamet, he could certainly win a first-time Oscar this March, though he is facing some tough competition.

"[Chalamet] deserves the awards," Nicolson said. "He is the film. At some level, it's totally dependent on him. And I've seen a lot of the other movies that are being nominated — 'One Battle After Another' and 'Sinners' — there's no other movie that rests solely on one individual in the way that 'Marty Supreme' does. So he definitely deserves acclaim ... He is a producer on the film, so if they win Best Picture that goes in his cabinet as well."

Having enjoyed numerous strong award contenders this year, I personally hope that "Marty Supreme" wins best picture and would be elated for Chalamet to finally win a leading actor Oscar. I would give "Marty Supreme" a smashing five out of five stars.

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"Don't Be Dumb": not an A\$AP listen

Anushka Punjabi
FEATURES WRITER

Released on Jan. 16, A\$AP Rocky's new album "Don't Be Dumb" comes after an eight-year hiatus following his 2018 album "testing". During that time, the Harlem-born rapper has focused on his modeling career and released singles.

Before this album, Rocky leaned into surreal, experimental music, with songs like "Hun43rd" and "Fashion Killa" garnering widespread praise. "HELICOPTER", the lead single, signaled a different musical direction, however. Featuring catchy lyrics and an aggressive, high-energy beat, the song showcases his shift to a more dynamic style, where he has usually erred on the side of trap.

"I was really nervous because [it's] so different from everything else that we've seen with him," said senior Julian Koop. "'HELICOPTER' being the first song he released [seemed] intentional on his part to

in grayscale, seems to be preparing fans for a new direction.

"ORDER OF PROTECTION" opens the album, intended to grab the listener's attention through its ominous intro. Although it matches the energy of most of the other songs, the music is not noteworthy; it falls flat and simply isn't meaningful.

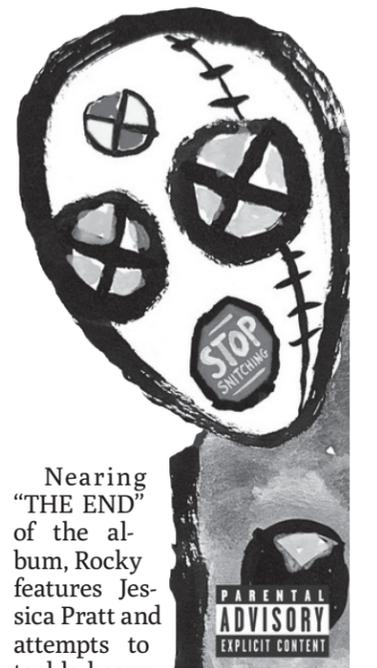
"STOLE YA FLOW" is arguably the most discussed track from the album, circulating across Instagram immediately after the album's release — and rightfully so. The song begins with a diss aimed at Drake, as A\$AP raps, "First you stole my flow, so I stole yo' [b---]," a reference to Rihanna's fling with Drake in 2009. The track has confidence, swagger and is hard-hitting, reminding listeners that Rocky is unafraid to assert himself. Later in the song, he references Drake's alleged history of plastic surgery — that Drake is getting a Brazilian butt lift, but "luckily we ain't body-shame".

"Everyone loves rap beef," Koop said. "[The music he produces] has definitely become a lot more personalized to Rocky himself, rather than [the

verse feels out of place, and her forced, provocative voice disrupts the rhythm of the flow, sounding grating rather than complementary.

"It was trauma," Koop said. "She's just doing too much."

The breathy vocals she used were over-the-top, and what could have been a solid Rocky track ends up frustrating. While much of the song's criticism seems to be forced hate for Doechii, for me, the feature ended up derailing the song and direction I would've liked to see.



Nearing "THE END" of the album, Rocky features Jessica Pratt and attempts to tackle heavy topics such as screen addiction, school shootings and global warming. The song features a whopping 50-second outro.

"A lot of his [new] songs are ... too long for my liking," Koop said. "He's trying to incorporate more skits now ... and that's cool, but when you're listening to a song, you don't want to just hear [that]. My attention span is cooked as is."

In addition to this, the song just doesn't land. The track's somber tone and vocals feel overblown, and the lyrics, while meant to be reflective, come across as a pseudo-philosophical attempt at seeming socially conscious.

Lines such as "ain't plantin' trees no more" feel forced, and the pacing drags. While it was meant to be a powerful conclusion to Disc 1, "THE END" is one of the album's low points. But it's worth mentioning that while the album concludes on a low note, it wasn't without its merits.

Given the long waiting time and the lack of many catchy, playworthy songs throughout the album, I felt that the album also reflects a broader trend in rap as a whole: experimentation has slowed, not necessarily because artists lack creativity, but because the genre has exhausted the many possibilities available for rap in the past decade. Albums like Don Toliver's "Octane" and Travis Scott's "Utopia" that are held to a higher standard are difficult to meet today. I rate the album a three and a half stars out of five.



COURTESY OF RCA RECORDS

prepare us for something ... that branched out from what Rocky has kind of become known for — that ... gritty, partially psychedelic [tone]."

Even the album cover is a contrast from previous album covers, featuring art from renowned animator Tim Burton. Rocky, whose album covers usually feature a photo of his face

hip-hop collective] A\$AP Mob."

"STAY HERE 4 LIFE" is an indisputable highlight on the album, and Rocky captures his long absence while maintaining his playful melodies, featuring Brent Faiyaz; "Ain't no dials on the clock, got me lookin' down at my watch / Wish I could buy time back right now," he says. The track is melodic, introspective and compelling. It ends with a skit that fades into "PLAYA," although the transition diminishes the song's impact.

"[A lot of the album] was all over the place, in a good way though," said junior Avi Tripathi. "When [Rocky] said in an interview that he was going to be experimental, he was ... serious."

Now at track six out of 17, going into "PLAYA" is underwhelming. After the catchy production and rhythm of "STOLE YA FLOW" and "STAY HERE 4 LIFE", "PLAYA" lacks the focus and brilliance of its formers. Its around 30-second-intro was excessive, a characteristic I found consistent with the other songs, and it failed to stand out as an individual track.

"ROBBERY" has garnered largely negative reviews and misses the mark entirely of being a play-worthy song. The song starts with Rocky's usual swagger, rapping about luxury, power and romance through lyrics like "Got it out the mud, whipped it out the bowl / Drop it on the scales to sell it down the road," showcasing his confident flow. However, the track is utterly annihilated by Doechii's terrible feature. Her

Opinion: It's okay to be single forever

Addie Rose
FEATURES WRITER

Society often treats romantic love as the ultimate goal, something everyone is expected to want or eventually achieve. Comments like “you’ll find someone someday” or the ideas of “love at first sight” and “happily ever after” make the message evident: being single is seen as temporary, and lifelong partnership is viewed as a key marker of success. But this definition of fulfillment may overlook many other ways people build meaningful, happy lives. Friendships, family and personal passions can provide just as much connection and passion as romance.

“[Romance] might be [overvalued] overall,” said junior Jake Chan. “Because it’s that whole American idea of the perfect family, the nuclear family, of having a wife [or] a husband and then one or two kids.”

Valentine’s Day, a holiday focused around love and romance, reinforces the idea that romantic love is crucial for human connection, overshadowing self-love and friendships. Marriage is often seen as a milestone. Weddings emphasize proof of love’s triumph, prioritizing a single event over an ongoing relationship, often motivated by social media ideals. Meanwhile, being single is phrased as being lonely or something to eventually “fix.” People who are single get asked presumptuous and invasive questions about their love life, even if they are certain on where they are at the moment. The overemphasis on romance can make those who don’t want a relationship still feel left out or incomplete, even when they are not.

sources of fulfillment are all valid, even if they are often overshadowed by society’s focus on dating and marriage.

Nontraditional family structures also make romance seem unnecessary for a full life. Families do not necessarily look like two parents and a kid. Single parents by choice, for example, create families without romantic involvement but still offer nurturing environments for their kids. Strong communities, or someone who has friends as their source of happiness proves that there are numerous ways that love and care in one’s life can be achieved.

Still, there remains a stigma attached to the concept of remaining single forever. Society tends to believe that remaining single for an extended period of time can result in feelings of loneliness, sadness, regret or dissatisfaction.

However, being alone doesn’t mean being lonely. Feeling lonely is related to feeling disconnected, not specifically isolation from romance. One can feel as much loneliness while in a relationship as they would alone. If being single is an individual choice, it can lead to empowering oneself to standards for success, apart from what society has planned for them.

Therefore, is it wrong to live single all one’s life? That depends on who gets to decide what is “right.” Romantic relationships can be an important part of someone’s life, and there is nothing wrong with that desire. However, that doesn’t have to be the standard against what is measured and found lacking. A good life is not based on relationship status but is based on happiness and having meaningful relationships of any kind.

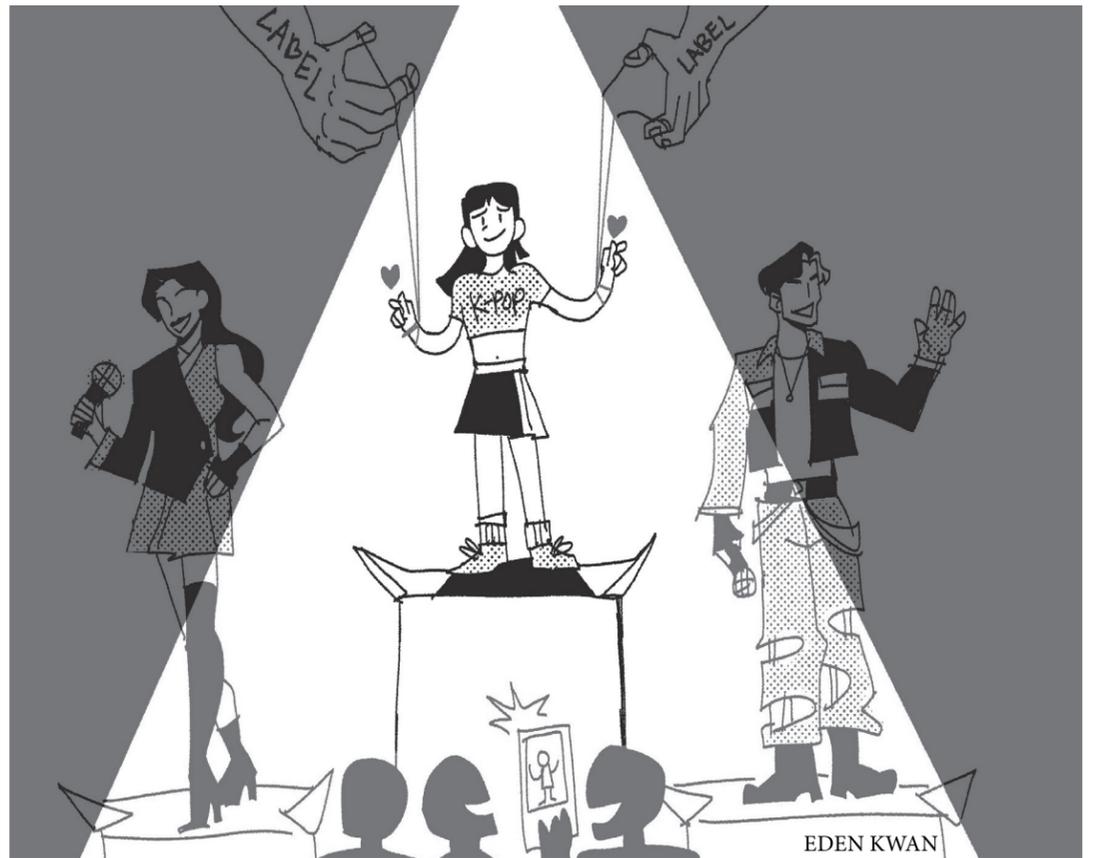
“There’s been lots of people who have lived happy, meaningful lives without romantic partners,” said senior Sophia LaCarrubba. “It all depends on how you define happiness in your own life.”

Regardless of whether oneself chooses to live in a relationship, single life or somewhere in between, all have equal value. Living single does not mean failure it simply is one of many ways to live a whole life.



However, fulfillment does not come from romance alone. Many people find satisfaction through strong friendships, close family bonds, careers and personal growth. Friendships, in particular, offer emotional support and shared experiences. Chosen families provide stability and love that last for decades. Additionally, being single can allow people to focus on independence, self-discovery and goals that would be harder to achieve and prioritize with a romantic relationship. These

DAHLIA SELIG



Opinion: K-pop idols should stop debuting far too young

Ashley Tsui
FEATURES WRITER

Wake up. Eat. School. Train. Sing. Dance. Sleep. Repeat.

This is the life of thousands of hopeful K-pop trainees, working tirelessly to balance their academic lives and the rigorous preparation they must undergo to achieve greatness.

These trainees sacrifice their childhoods, their social life and sometimes education to debut, typically doing so as minors. They’re thrust into the public eye at an underdeveloped age and they only seem to debut younger and younger as time goes on.

Take the leader of popular girl group TWICE, Jihyo Park, who began her journey to become an idol at 9-years-old, or renowned soloist BoA, who began training at SM Entertainment at age 11 and debuted at 13.

Debuting minors forces a child into a very public occupation and may be pushing the boundaries of what the idol is comfortable with, especially when their popularity begins to soar and they become victims to paparazzi and swarms of crazed fans.

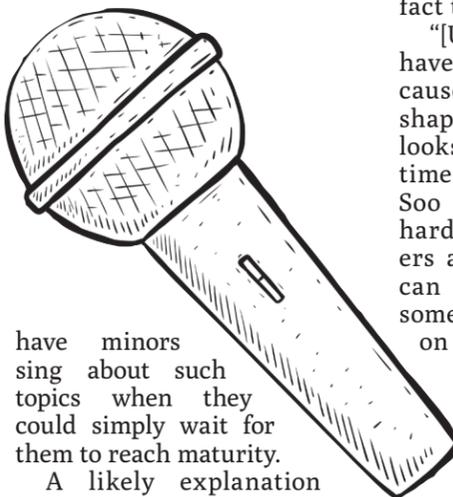
“I was at [an airport] in Korea and P1Harmony came in and it was so chaotic,” said junior Naomi Dang. “Everyone was screaming and crowding, rushing towards them ... I’m sure it was really scary for the idols as well.”

Though the members of P1Harmony are all currently adults, this sort of fan conduct is not limited to adult groups — underage idols still risk being crowded and overwhelmed by this terrifying behavior.

Additionally, K-pop companies are seemingly unafraid to have younger idols be part of mature concepts, allowing them to take part in songs or albums with suggestive themes.

For example, Ni-Ki from ENHYPEN debuted at only 14-years-old. When the group released their hit song “Fever,” which featured considerably racy lyrics and a rather sensual music video, many listeners took to sexualizing the teenager and treating him like he was an adult.

These incidents are too common in the K-pop industry and are an unacceptable way to portray an underage celebrity. It makes one wonder why companies would



have minors sing about such topics when they could simply wait for them to reach maturity.

A likely explanation for debuting minors is an attempt by agencies to increase an idol’s industry lifespan. Because K-pop idol contracts typically last for seven years, by debuting younger idols, companies can maximize the amount of time they are on stage and gain more profit, leading to idols debuting at 16, 15 or even 14-years-old.

However, even though some K-pop companies are motivated by business incentives to debut minors, some idols themselves are eager to debut as soon as they can. Many are fueled by their desire to find success through a lifelong idol career, despite the many challenges they undergo in the process.

“If it’s something that [the idol] really, really wants, then good for them: they’re chasing their dream,” said sophomore Audrey Joe. “But

they also have to make a lot of sacrifices, like giving up [their] education [and] moving away from [their] family. [They also] have to put a lot of trust in strangers.”

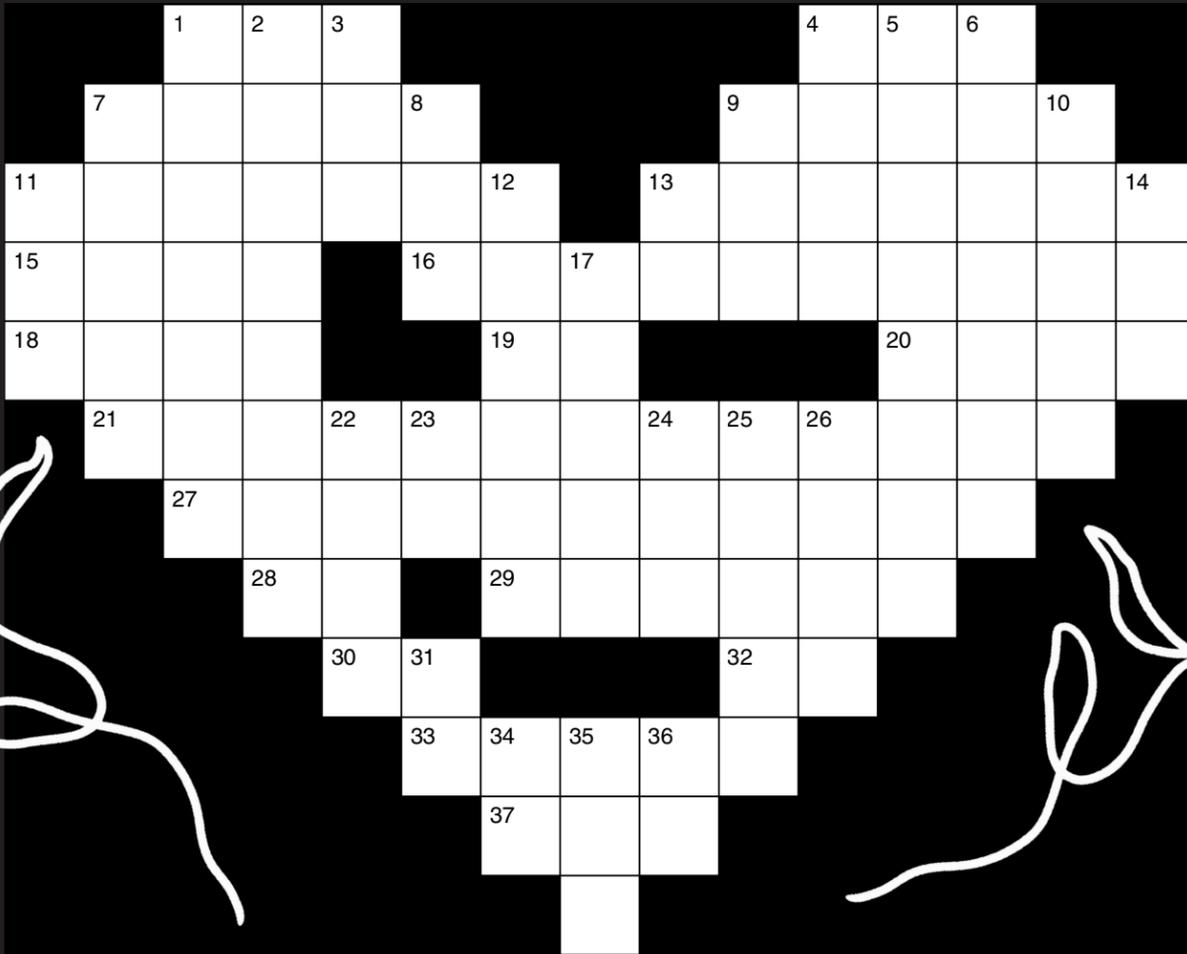
Though it’s admirable for a teenager to be so determined to achieve their goals, this decision doesn’t come without its downfalls. The mental health toll that debuting takes on an individual can be enormous, with constant feelings of inadequacy weighing down on oneself, which is heightened by the fact that they are young.

“[Underage idols may have] eating disorders because they have to be in good shape and have to have good looks or good skin all the time,” said sophomore Dylan Soo Hoo. “It can be really hard on them because trainers are really strict ... They can have anxiety because some trainers have an eye on one person and they’ll [critique] that person really hard ... Sometimes [trainers] say they’re not good enough to become a K-pop idol.”

Both the process of debuting and the career of being a K-pop idol can have incredibly damaging effects on a person’s mental health, as well as their overall life experience. The normalization of putting minors into an intensive and draining position has to be diminished, as it’s evident that companies prioritize efficiency over the well-being of their employees.

Even if a minor is willing to take on the exhausting challenge of idol training to support their dreams, companies should not be thrusting underdeveloped adolescents into the public eye. Minors are not informed enough, nor psychologically mature enough to make this decision. It is the company’s responsibility to act in the best interest for their employees, even if this means opposing the pursuit of profit.

PARDON MY FRENCH



EMMA SHEN

DOWN:

- 1. American marsupial known for playing dead
- 2. Enclosed within a vehicle
- 3. Harper ____, author of "To Kill a Mockingbird"
- 4. Roman numeral four if it followed the patterns of 1-3
- 5. French Enlightenment writer who championed freedom of speech
- 6. A beret, if it rhymed
- 7. Planet-__, a special theater to view simulations of the sky
- 8. Autism Spectrum Disorder
- 9. Nickname for Valorant
- 10. French city that was an inspiration for Van Gogh
- 11. A universal file format, convenient for printing

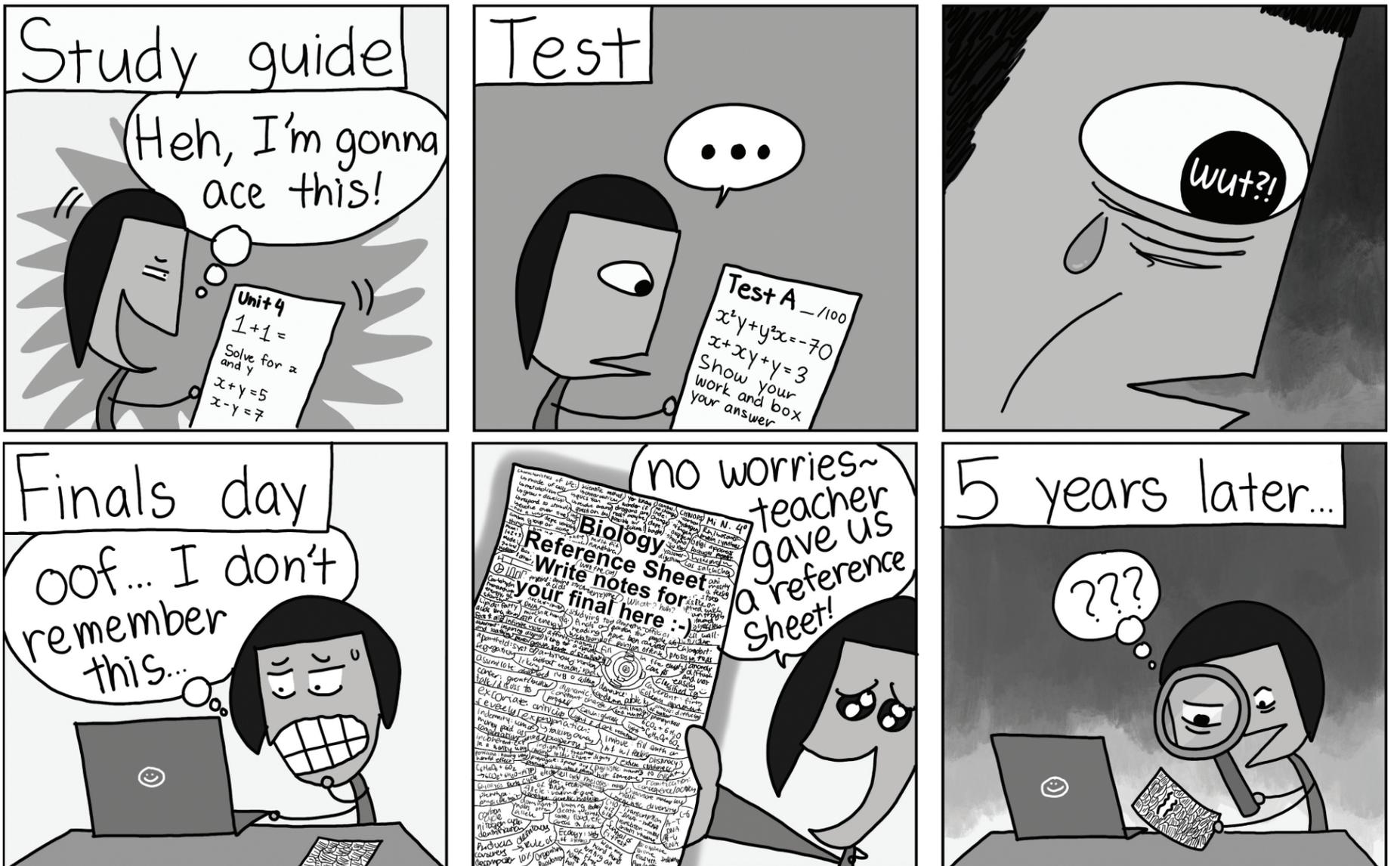
- 12. __ Paytas, hit songwriter of "I Love You Jesus"
- 13. Nitrogen Monoxide, or 32A in reverse
- 14. Someone with a quick __-per has a short 18A
- 17. Edgar ____, French painter of Ballerinas
- 22. Korean pop : K-pop — Hungarian rap : H-rap
- 23. The "A" in ASAP (see pg. 11)
- 24. Really, in text
- 25. Metallic mixture
- 26. French city that was a site for the Battle of Normandy
- 31. Opposite of p.m.
- 34. Chemical symbol for silver
- 35. Rodent that terrorizes Aragon
- 36. Thank you, in text

ACROSS:

- 1. Venezuela's main industry (see pg. 6)
- 4. A lab-based fertility treatment (see pg. 3)
- 7. Sleep ____, a disorder that affects one's breathing while asleep
- 9. Violin's sister
- 11. A common form of civil disobedience (see pg. 5)
- 13. Manicurist work
- 15. My favorite __ is a mug -Demi Lovato
- 16. A storybook doctor who can speak to animals
- 18. To combine
- 19. Latin abbreviation meaning "that is"
- 20. Noise made clearing one's throat

- 21. Many thanks, in Spanish
- 27. If Justice Thurgood took up karate?
- 28. A student leader in the dorm
- 29. Asylum leader in a dorm
- 30. Pennsylvania, abbreviated
- 32. Above something
- 33. __ Mauser, ping pong star
- 37. What Billie Eilish kinda wishes you were

SOLUTIONS:



MI NGUYEN

Spring into the new, fall out of the old

Phoebe Harger
SPORTS WRITER

The transition between sports seasons can vary in difficulty depending on the athlete.

These seasonal shifts involve more than just swapping jerseys. Moving from one sport to the next shifts practice schedules, conditioning regimens and even daily habits such as sleep and diet. These new sports require quick mental shifts as well, as athletes must adjust to new coaching styles and team dynamics during the short preseasons.

While some athletes adapt easily to the fast-paced transition between sports seasons and even benefit from the variety that they provide, others experience significant physical and mental challenges when moving between sports.

Senior Charlie Wilcox faced a unique challenge this year as he entered his first season playing basketball after finishing a rigorous football season.

Despite the conditioning required in football, Wilcox found that basket-

ball tested his fitness in many unexpected ways.

"Football didn't really prepare me as much as I thought it would for the basketball season," Wilcox said. "Basketball requires way more conditioning, and even though we ran sprints every day at football practice, it was nothing compared to the fitness you need to play basketball."

Wilcox explained that football requires more strength, with spread out bursts of sprints throughout games followed by rest due to the sport's heavy contact. Meanwhile, basketball involves running back and forth across the court in nearly every drill and play, demanding sustained cardio throughout both practice and games.

Beyond the physical demands of basketball, Wilcox mentions that he had to make a mental shift when switching between sports as well.

"There's also a mental aspect to it too," Wilcox said. "I went from being involved in every single play to just trying to help the team out in whatever way I can."

While many athletes' transitions, like Wilcox's, were physi-

cally and mentally demanding, not all sports shifts present the same challenges. This was the case for sophomore Chloe Watson, who shifted from sideline cheer in the fall to competitive cheer in the winter, a move that felt significantly easier due to the continuity in coaches and teammates. Moreover, the two sports are also very similar as both involve dancing and stunting, although competitive cheer is performed at a much higher level.

"The switch was pretty easy but the hardest part was definitely the increase in discipline that we need in [competitive cheer]," Watson said. "We used to just run a warm-up lap during sideline, but now we have to condition every single day and our practices are much longer and a lot later at night."

While many athletes cited conditioning as the biggest change, senior Reina Younes says that balancing new practice schedules on top of her busy schedule was the hardest adjustment as she entered her final season of soccer at Aragon.

Unlike Wilcox and Watson, Younes did not play a fall sport,

and therefore had to make the difficult transition from open weekday afternoon to daily two-hour practices. While this new schedule took some time to get used to, Younes says it ultimately became a routine after a few busy weeks.

"I was stressed some days at the beginning of the season balancing school and soccer," Younes said. "I felt like I had no free time since I would come home from practice, do my homework and then immediately go to bed."

However, having played soccer throughout high school, Younes quickly grew accustomed to her new schedule, as she had for the past three years.

"Going from no sport to now playing soccer every day has helped me become more motivated and get my right after practice instead of procrastinating it all day," Younes said.

Whether athletes are moving between one demanding sport to another, or returning to a sport after a long off-season, transitions look different for everyone. While some struggle to adapt to the physical demands of their sport, others thrive on the schedule and structure that they provide. Overall, these shifts challenge Aragon student-athletes both physically and mentally, with most athletes ultimately finding balance as their seasons progress.



Alex Choy
SPORTS WRITER

With over 10 years of coaching experience, new head coach Kaylyn Toyama took the helm of the varsity girls soccer team this season, looking to build on the foundations laid by previous head coach Michael Flynn.

Toyama grew up in Sacramento and played for varsity at Cosumnes Oaks High, Cosumnes River College and San Francisco State University, where she graduated in 2015.

"I had a desire to start coaching after college," Toyama said. "I played club my whole life and then went to [San Francisco] State and ... [I] just wanted to stay in the soccer world."

After serving as a youth soccer summer camp counselor at SF University, Toyama's first coaching role

Kaylyn Toyama takes the ball as a coach

came at SF Glens, formerly SF Glens Evolution, where she was head coach of various youth teams. From there, she operated around the Bay Area, coaching at Peninsula Youth Soccer Club and Crystal Springs Uplands School before being appointed as assistant varsity coach at Academy of Art University in 2019.

With plenty of experience coaching in the Bay Area, Toyama joined Aragon looking for a new challenge at a higher level, simultaneously reuniting with some players she had previously coached.

"I've personally wanted to coach in this area for a long time ... I wanted to go to the next level and ... have a head coaching position," Toyama said. "I coached a lot of [Aragon] players when I was younger, so I haven't seen them for a long time. Coming to Aragon, seeing these players and how they've developed, it's just been unreal to see the young women that they've grown into."

Toyama ingrains a strong team player mindset into every team she coaches and

prioritizes dedication and teamwork as core concepts of her coaching ideology. She proactively works towards a more uplifting, supportive environment whilst holding players accountable for their effort and engagement.



COLIN FOURNIER

"I like her dedication to the team and how she's always valuing our time, and how she wants the best for us—it's really encouraging," said senior Victoria Chen. "[She] ... makes sure we do our best ... every day, that we show up [and] we're putting in all our effort."

Coming to Aragon, Toyama implemented a new set of principles in playing that focused on honor and putting the team first.

"At ... Aragon, we came up with three core values: unity, passion and pride ... and that's something that we wanted to focus on throughout the season as [part of our identity]," Toyama said. "For me, the biggest thing is [staying committed to] those core values and keeping [them] at the forefront of how we're training and ... developing as a group."

Aside from soccer, Toyama aims to take advantage of her position as head coach, to promote important values that can help players become better equipped not just in sports, but also for life as a whole.

"Dedication, commitment and respect, those are the three biggest [virtues in players], at least for me as a coach," Toyama said. "I try to implement those values [because they] are important in everyday life, not just soccer, and I think any player can benefit from holding true to them."

This is just a small part of their life right now ... but if I can help them learn a thing or two that they can take with them throughout their life, then I'll feel like I've done my job."

While Toyama's coaching philosophy revolves around dedication and teamwork, she believes the most fulfilling aspect of her job lies in watching the players' growth. As a former player herself, her passion for coaching stems from this concept of mentoring and nurturing players, giving them opportunities to play to their best ability and just enjoying the beautiful game.

"When you really take a step back and reflect after a season and [think about] how far your team has come, or you see a player who maybe wasn't the best at the beginning of the season, but they've improved in certain areas ... that's the most fulfilling [aspect] of coaching for me," said Toyama. "That [applies] at any level—the U-11s that I'm coaching or the college team at Skyline. It's just seeing the improvement from the players that I coach, that's the most rewarding."

Wrestling team falls to Carlmont

Sabina Gulati
SPORTS WRITER

On Jan. 20, the Aragon wrestling team battled Carlmont in a sequence of tough matches. While the boys varsity team took a hard loss with a final score of 9-71, the varsity girls had a closer 18-30 defeat. This season, difficult meets aren't a surprise for the team due to a certain significant change.

"It was pretty rough since we moved up a division from last year," said junior Perlina Tse. "Everybody we've been going against is more challenging."

Aragon also had a few things physically holding them back on meet day.

"[Some players] got hurt," said head coach Angelo Goumenidis. "Some weren't fully prepared and I didn't really have all my team there because it was the day after Martin Luther King Jr. Day."

The meet began with the girls varsity matches. Matches have three periods that are each two short minutes long.

"[During matches,] you have to think very quickly," Tse said. "If something's not working, you have to switch up your moves. Opportunities won't show themselves outright."

The lineups of both girls teams had several gaps, meaning there wasn't anyone to wrestle in some weight classes. This led to many points being earned purely from forfeits. Only three matches were played out, and Carlmont managed to triumph in each.

"It was the most humbling thing ever," Tse said. "But that's okay, because that's what loss is for. It's for people to grow from."

After three forfeits from Carlmont, each worth six points to Aragon, the girls team was able to end their meet with a competitive final score.

The team considered how they can inspire each other to reach their collective potential as they face their upcoming meets.

"I have a lot of friends on the team, and [when] I see them ... working hard, it makes me want to work hard," said sophomore Cali McFadden. "[The team is] pretty close, so we motivate and encourage each other."

The boys teams had more players, and therefore more matches, with ten bouts being played. Overall, there was only one forfeit from the Aragon side and none from Carlmont.

With win after win in the first few matches, Carlmont dominated the mat. In doing so, they successfully demotivated the Aragon wrestlers.

"After our first few losses, we all got pretty discouraged," said sophomore John Schwab. "I think we definitely could have won more matches than we did, but we all just gave up a little bit, and that made the biggest difference."

However, sophomore Drew Benavente did not give up and was able to overcome his opponent, putting Aragon on the scoreboard.

"[Drew] did a really good job being in control, sitting on top, [and] using his hips to control his opponent," Goumenidis said.

Looking back, Benavente highlights his focus going into his match.

"The main goal was to be aggressive on him right as the match started," Benavente said. "I needed to let myself dictate how the match would go, instead of letting him take the wheel."

Still, this victory was Aragon's first and last of the night. With each game, Carlmont made their skill more and more apparent.

"Carlmont's a really good team," Goumenidis said. "So I understand [the loss]. I have a lot of hope for my team. They have a lot of potential. I know they can do a lot better, but it's just coming to practice all the time, being prepared [and] being ready to wrestle."

After the final match ended, Aragon players huddled together to strategize on how to perform better in their next meet.

"It's not going to get any easier from now, so [we need to] train harder, work harder and [remember that] this is a great opportunity for all of us," Tse said. "It's not a bad thing to lose. [This way, we'll make] improvements, and we can take what we've learned to use for our next matches."

The team continued to reflect on what led to the disappointing results.

"When you go into a match thinking you're gonna lose, you're gonna lose," said freshman Madeleine Kasai. "[But] honestly, not getting psyched out and staying calm and confident is really hard."

Although this result wasn't the desired outcome, the team hopes to improve on their performance as they roll into the second half of the season.

"The loss really gets us," Tse said. "[It] makes us want to win even more, and [provides] our drive to push further."

Now, the team looks ahead to Feb. 14 for a CCS away meet held at Gunn High School.

Girls varsity basketball loses to MA

Olivia Mukherjee
SPORTS WRITER

On Jan. 21, the Aragon girls varsity basketball team (9-9 overall) lost 54-36 to the Menlo Atherton Bears (17-3 overall).

Having played the Bears before, Aragon developed a strategy going into the game Wednesday night.

"We know they have a tough group of girls, so our goals were to win the categories of rebounding and reducing turnovers," said head coach Kristie Hala'ufia.

This sentiment was echoed by players who reflected on their own experiences from the last match up between these two teams.

"I'm definitely focused on rebounds and ensuring that we are quick to cover the defensive side after we score, since that's something we struggled with last time," said junior Saanvi Chawla.

However, despite this preparation, the game got off to a rough start, with Aragon trailing behind by nine points at the end of the first quarter.

The team worked to bridge this gap and prevent Menlo-Atherton from increasing the margin, with senior Daisy Pantoja Beltran contributing heavily on the offensive side. Beltran and senior Ellie McGinty led the team with 12 and 14 points, respectively.

"I thought just doing my job by containing their players, getting the ball down the court and communicating on defense was key," McGinty said.

The Dons were able to utilize this teamwork well into the second quarter, and held the Bears at just a ten point lead at halftime.

"At halftime ... we wanted to continue pushing the ball to get out quick, pass ahead and secure early fast breaks," Hala'ufia said. "We also switched up our defense a couple of times."

Another key aspect of the game was adapting to Menlo-Atherton's aggressive offense, which the Dons managed in a variety of ways. One of these adaptations was from the attacking side, revealing holes in Menlo's defense.

"Since we're short for guards, I knew I had to take every shot," said junior Jaclyn Ruttenberg.

Similarly, some players moved to cover defensive spots to help close the gap from the back line.

"I think we did a good job transitioning, especially after defense, into a more fast-paced game style, just moving the ball while pushing it after every defensive turnover," McGinty said.

Despite these strong efforts, the Dons entered the final quarter with a score of 43-28, with the Bears firmly in the lead. Menlo-Atherton continued to push through the Dons' defensive line, with their small and

power forwards carrying momentum against Aragon.

The Dons continued to push, with no lack of effort on their part, though the score continued to widen, ending in an 18 point loss.

"I'm just glad we stayed together as a team," Ruttenberg said. "I think we did that really well. We were able to communicate and just hold each other accountable."

Despite this setback, the team still found lessons to learn and carry forward into their upcoming games.

"When we're solid on defense, we can compete with them," Hala'ufia said. "That's something we're going to take away, learn from and get better at."

From the players' perspective, numerous players found aspects of their game to improve in antici-

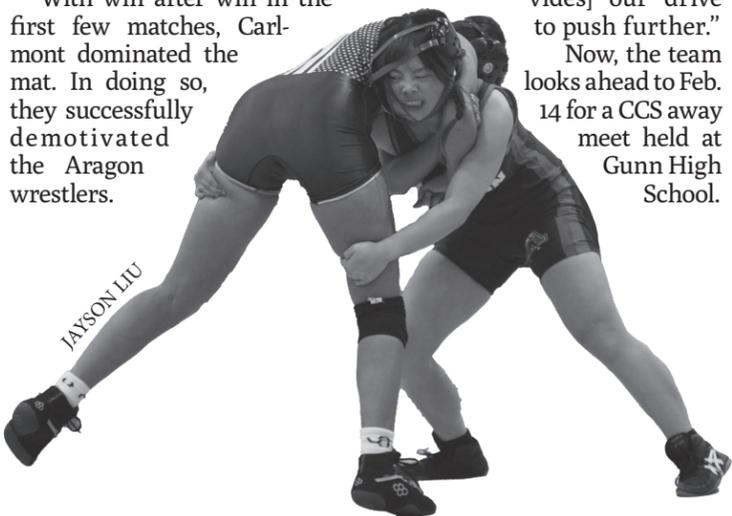
pation for the next game.

"I hope to take into the next game my defensive breaker and continue to push myself to contain the players," McGinty said. "[We need to] focus heavily on defense, just rebounding, boxing out and playing good straight-up defense."

The game against Menlo-Atherton also helped players notice gaps in their skills.

"Personally, I know I need to focus on boxing out more and getting back on defense quickly after a point, since Menlo really took advantage of that," Chawla said.

With these lessons in mind, the Dons look to bounce back in their next matchup as they continue their season. Aragon girls' varsity basketball next game will be on Feb. 13 against Half Moon Bay.



Junior Jaclyn Ruttenberg shooting a three-pointer.



PHOTOS BY: JAYSON LIU, COLIN FOURNIER, DARREN BENAVENTE, IAN WANG, HALEY LAU & CAMERON TRIG

VARSITY BOYS SOCCER LOSES TO SEQUOIA

Max Feng
SPORTS WRITER

It was an intense game as Aragon's boys varsity soccer team faced off against its Sequoia High counterpart on Jan. 23.

"I feel like it was more competitive [compared to previous games]," said freshman and right midfielder Christian Dominguez. "We weren't on the ball as much, so we didn't have many chances, [but] we weren't taking control over the game too."

The game was rather even until Sequoia took control in the second half. The final score ended as 0-2 in Sequoia's favor.

The team's win rate has declined compared to previous years. Their record thus far has been 4-9-2 overall and 3-6-1 in their league compared to last year's 12-6-2 overall and 6-4 in league.

The main reason is the vastly different lineup from before. The team this year is much younger, almost completely

rebuilt and composed of largely sophomores and freshmen. This widely differing arrangement has reduced the connection between players.

"Last year, the team had more chemistry than now," said junior and right back Peter Lopez. "Our team right now is full of younger kids, so [our] coach has to adapt."

While the chemistry is still somewhat stagnant, the team is doing well in other facets.

"We have a pretty easy time connecting our passes to each other," said senior and midfielder Rone Yamasaki. "We're sort of forced to do that since we're a young team, [and] we don't have a lot of humongous athletes."

Nevertheless, the team takes pride in their defense.

"We usually hold teams to no more than two [goals]," said senior and striker Benjamin Peachin. "I think the past few games have been pretty low-scoring games, like 1-1, 0-1, 0-0. Our strong suit is definitely our defense."

The game started with Sequoia in possession, but within the first two minutes, Sequoia was edging towards Aragon's goal,

ready to attack. The back rank was able to repel them, stealing and passing the ball towards Aragon's offense. By the eighth minute, it was Aragon's turn to attack.

The tension of the game shifted back and forth for the next ten minutes, with both teams making their respective attacks on goal. 20 minutes in, Aragon had a chance to take a shot at the goal. It went slightly high.

In the 26th minute, it felt as if Aragon's momentum came to a stop as #10, senior and attacking midfielder Josue Morales, got injured. He walked off and was replaced. Momentum continued to change, but by the end of the first half, the odds were shifted in Sequoia's favor. They had made more attacks and had control of the game.

Sequoia rode the momentum into the second half, scoring the first goal of the game in the 59th minute.

"I felt like they took over the game and we just dropped our heads [after Sequoia scored their first goal]," Dominguez said. "We didn't want to play anymore."

Later in the second half, Sequoia had an injury of their own as #12 Alexander Kodl came down and was replaced.

In the 73rd minute, Sequoia was back on the attack and started to move towards Aragon's goal. The ball, however, went slightly high and landed atop the goal.

From the 76th minute onward, the game's intensity cranked up even higher. Sequoia continued to break through Aragon's defense, eventually scoring a goal.

The final score was 0-2, a strong contrast compared to Aragon's 3-0 win a month and a half ago. Some players reflected on the loss after the game.

"I felt like we could have done better as a team," said Dominguez. "I felt disappointed because not everybody gave it 100%."

The team is in a rough spot, being composed of young players.

However, things still seem optimistic as the young team continues to grow. Their next game will be Feb. 13 against Hillsdale High School.

