



ALLINAH ZHAN

# The ARAGON OUTLOOK

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Read our online edition!

900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo, CA 94402

Aragon High School

## Aragon Outlook's satire edition misses the mark

Emma Shen and Meilin Rife  
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

On March 26, the Aragon Outlook published its annual satire edition, beginning distribution at 8:00 a.m. By 8:30 a.m., administration received concerned reports about its content, and by the end of first period, copies of the paper were confiscated by counselors, campus security and some teachers.

"Halfway into study hall, Ms. Ho came in and said there was a typo or a mistake with the newspaper and she collected everyone's newspapers," said sophomore Azmir Khan. "I just thought there was probably something controversial in there ... I didn't know by then that it was the satirical one. [But the confiscation] made me want to read it more."

Based on orders from Superintendent Randall Booker, administration directed safety and security staff over radio to pull all the papers. However, some were unclear whether or not this entailed taking copies directly from students.

"It wasn't a part of the message, but it was not not a part of the message," said Safety and Security specialist Marilyn Fowler. "So a couple of us pulled [the papers] straight from students. We didn't know [we weren't supposed to] until it was already done. We [also] pulled them from the wastebaskets [and] the paper collection bins."

During third period, an official announcement was sent out to the staff, alerting them of issues and instructing them to collect unattended copies. Here, teachers were told they couldn't actively take them from students.

### A MAGICAL PLAY: 'PUFFS'

Ryan Li  
NEWS WRITER

From March 19-22, Aragon Drama held its play, "Puffs," in the Aragon Theater.

The play, parodying Harry Potter, follows Wayne, Megan and Oliver, who are students in the house of the

Puffs, one of the four wizarding houses at a magic school. The Puffs are known for being friendly, but also less bright than the other students — the Braves, the Smarts and the Snakes. During their seven years at school, they parallel the lives of a famous trio.

"Oliver [is] a huge nerd, so it's hard for him to make friends," said sophomore Damian Campos, who played the first headmaster. "Wayne is also a nerd ... Then there's Megan, and nobody likes her because they're scared of her mom

[who] works for [the villain Mr. Voldy], ... except for Wayne and Oliver."

Wayne spends much of the story trying to be the savior of the school, but is overshadowed by the wizard Harry. When Wayne ends up dying in the battle against Voldy, he accepts that he was the hero of his own story.

"[Puffs was] poignant at the third act," said sophomore and audience member Dresden Pham. "When [Wayne] dies at the end, even though he doesn't get the ending he wanted, the headmaster assures him that although we may not achieve our ambitions, we still have had a great impact on our lives, and we have achieved what we have always wanted to be, even if we don't realize it."

Though the Puffs are viewed by the other houses as inferior, they learn that they must keep trying in their pursuits, so they fight with Harry against Voldy in the final battle.

"In one of the scenes, the mother of [Megan says], 'But you guys are just Puffs,'" said Lucas De Leon, a sophomore

Administration then worked with the district office to send out a school-wide announcement through ParentSquare at 1:35 p.m. The message notified students, staff and families that articles in the paper included homophobic and anti-immigrant themes and apologized for the resulting harm.

The main articles in contention, as indirectly cited in this email, were "ICE Arrests Loved Felted Friends," and "Pinkies Up: Too Many Gay People." The first was a piece about Immigration and Customs Enforcement detaining the Muppets.

"It's dehumanizing immigrants by not focusing on the real harms of ICE agents but targeting immigrants instead [and] calling [them] muppets and animals," said junior Elena Alvarado. "It's making it a joke when it's not a joke."

"Too Many Gay People" was a column from two "heterosexual" Outlook editors feeling like the minority in their newsroom, and spurred concerns of homophobia.

"[The headline] 'Pinkies up: Too Many Gay People' ... makes it seem that being gay is a bad thing," said senior Lizet Nunez Camacho. "There's so many people that are gay or are part of the LGBTQ community at our school, and I think seeing that kind of makes them feel like outliers."

The article also contained a section on heterosexual displays of affection.

"I thought ... the girls with their heads in boys' laps was completely crude and unnecessary," said math teacher Cheri Dartnell. "I took it home and had my daughter read it — she's 22 — because I wanted to see what she thought and she said it was okay until it got down to the head in the lap, then it went off the rails. But I was actually even surprised she was okay with part of it, because I just thought it was ... not sensitive to groups of people that we have on campus. It wasn't funny."

Others, however, read the piece differently.

"I thought it was really funny," said senior Midori Saito. "And I'll speak as someone part of the LGBTQ community — it was not at all offensive to me. Especially reading that it was by Mr. and Mrs. Lavender, that's a very historically joked on thing, [with] lavender marriages being ... false straight marriages.

And all the references to pop culture were very queer-coded. I also thought that there's no way that someone who's actually

played the Puff J. Finch. "Then, Wayne says, 'we're Puffs and we're gonna fail, but no matter how hard we try, we'll at some point get it ...' People can be like, 'I can kind of relate to that. I can keep trying and fail, but if I keep trying, maybe I'll eventually get [it] at some point.'"

This year, the play contained more comedy and improvisation than in previous productions. "There's a scene where a character called Zack Smith can say whatever he wants," said senior Samantha Green, who played the narrator. "Ash Caballero, who's incredible and [played] Zack Smith, [did] a different monologue every single night. It is hilarious to see what she does and [how she] interacts with other people on stage."

Some audience members enjoyed the interactive moments. "I liked when [Mr. Voldy] went into the crowd and read [a] palm," said sophomore Harrison DePuy. "It was cool that he came up with that on the spot. It was also funny because he's supposed to be evil."

homophobic would have been able to write an article like that."

Although not mentioned directly in the ParentSquare message, people were also troubled with the language used to describe unhoused people in "Newsom's March: Unhoused to White House" and making the Epstein scandals fodder for joke, as was done in "San Mateo statue Leon the Giraffe found to have ties with convicted sex pest Jeffrey Epstein."

"Talking about the unhoused, pushing their stuff around in their Safeway shopping cart and using their home as weapons, the tent poles, I thought that was really insensitive," Dartnell said. "It didn't land right."

The Aragon Outlook responded with a statement on April 9, including an apology for the offensive content, an explanation of satire as a concept and three specific articles, as well as criticism of the administrative response. This statement had been drafted and sent to Booker on March 27 at 4 p.m. However, the message experienced delays in publication due to spring break and a crisis at another school in the district the following Monday.

Following the release of the statement, the Outlook received 12 emails from parents, a staff member, and a student sharing their thoughts, in addition to in-person feedback.

"It definitely seems like a very troubling situation to be in: getting censored on something like that is really important to what should be talked about right now," Saito said. "I thought it was like a breath of fresh air when I saw that [the Outlook] said [they] were actually upset about being censored ... I'm one of those people who really support journalism. It's important to allow students to have this opportunity to voice something and learn about a topic they don't really know that much about."

However, the value of including an administrative critique in the message was contested.

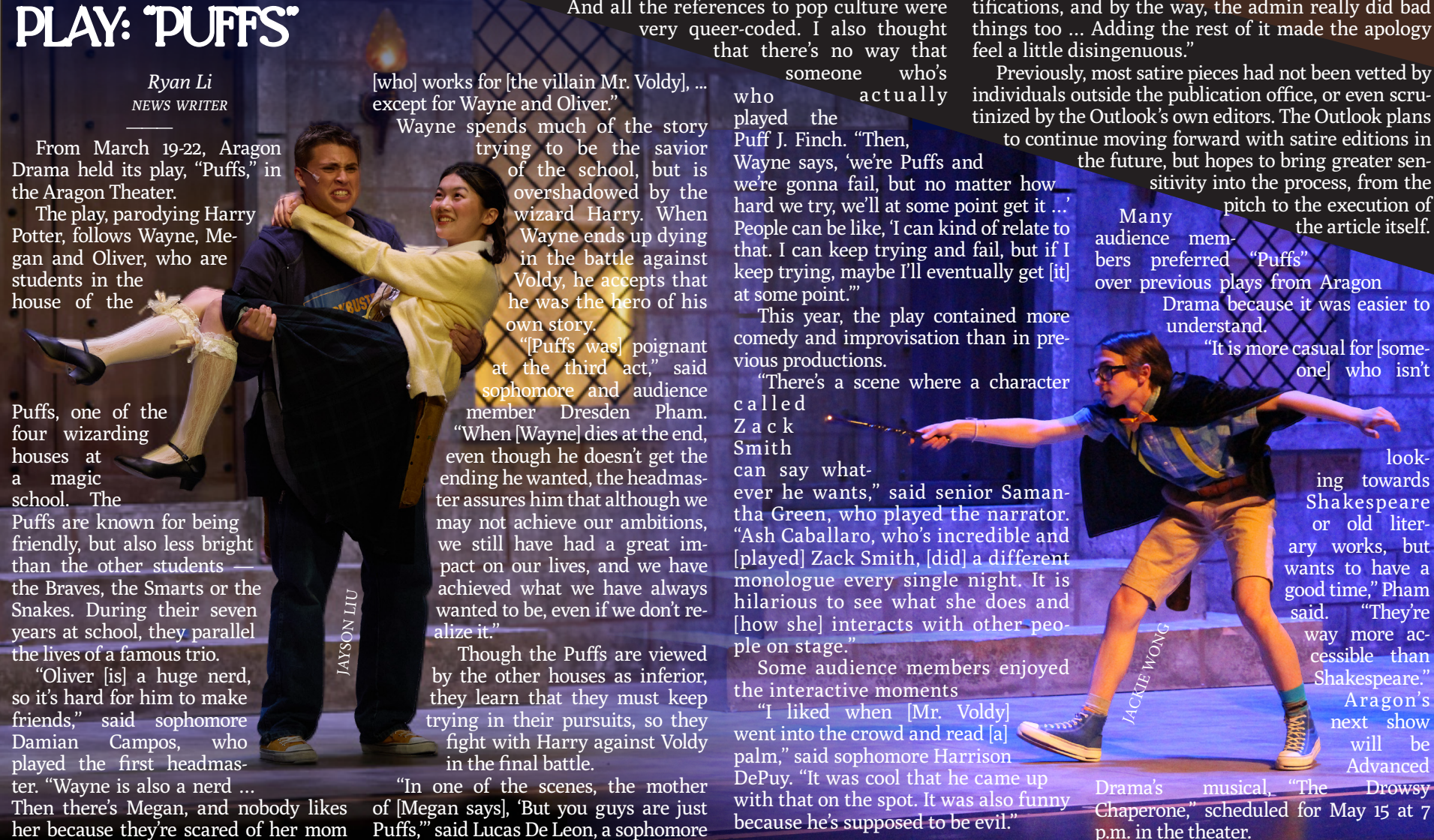
"I understand that there were probably a number of things that really bothered the Outlook staff," said social studies teacher Carlo Corti. "But it's really hard for me to read an apology that says I'm sorry in one paragraph and then devotes what seemed like most of the rest of the message, to saying ... here's our justifications, and by the way, the admin really did bad things too ... Adding the rest of it made the apology feel a little disingenuous."

Previously, most satire pieces had not been vetted by individuals outside the publication office, or even scrutinized by the Outlook's own editors. The Outlook plans to continue moving forward with satire editions in the future, but hopes to bring greater sensitivity into the process, from the pitch to the execution of the article itself.

Many audience members preferred "Puffs" over previous plays from Aragon Drama because it was easier to understand.

"It is more casual for [someone] who isn't looking towards Shakespeare or old literary works, but wants to have a good time," Pham said. "They're way more accessible than Shakespeare."

Aragon's next show will be Advanced Drama's musical, "The Drowsy Chaperone," scheduled for May 15 at 7 p.m. in the theater.



JAYSON LIU

JACKIE WONG

# Inside the counseling office: course scheduling

Diya Gourineni  
NEWS WRITER

Course selection is a lengthy process at Aragon, beginning at the end of the fall semester and ending at the start of the new school year. In early February, counselors went to the history classes to give transcripts, present about classes, allow students to explore the course catalog and answer questions about course selection. Current freshmen, sophomores and juniors then input their course requests into Aeries and fill out the course programming sheet with desired courses for next year, including alternates for impacted courses.

Many students find this process to be generally streamlined, with only a few difficulties.

"It's pretty easy," said freshman Sabrina Oh. "You can always talk with your counselor about it. Since we're doing course selection in spring and [some people are taking] summer courses or accelerated courses over summer, it's a little confusing because you have to register, get into the class, and then your counselor has to get [your transcript], and then they can open a space for you."

In March, counselors began finalizing course requests to allow the administration to build the main schedule. Throughout the month, during the math classes, each counselor met one-on-one with the students in their caseload.

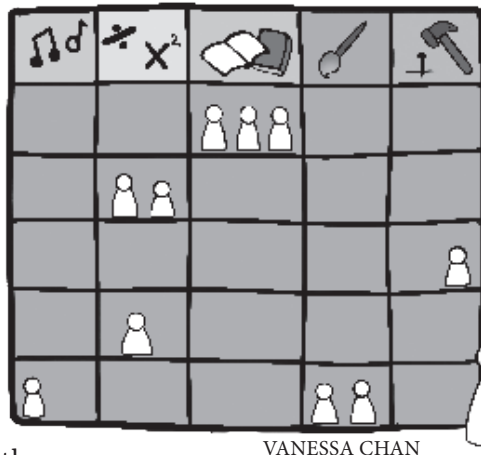
They reviewed the course programming sheet and set them in Aeries, reviewed transcripts to see if any courses need to be made up, and signed up students for summer school if necessary. Counselors also visited the six feeder middle schools to do presentations for the incoming ninth grade students.

"[We] get staff preferences for if anyone is going to be taking a leave or if anyone wants to change subjects during [March]," said assistant principal Clarisse Mesa. "After spring break, until the end of the school year, is the time when the full schedule is built with all of that information."

After course requests are in, the assistant principals, principal and department heads identify which classes should be offered, the specific periods for classes and which teachers teach which subjects. They also must take into account the number of sections allocated to Aragon by the district office, which is assigned based on enrollment number.

"Building a schedule is all about student needs for graduation requirements and their wants, so your course selections drive the whole process," Mesa said. "That tells us how many sections we need of every single course in the whole

school ... All of those course selection sheets are aggregated up for all of that data and then once we know how many sections, then we have to figure out how to spread them across periods and who teaches what. Also in that process,



VANESSA CHAN



we look for conflicts ... If there are a whole bunch of students who want to [take], for example, Chinese and Band, then we want to try to not have those in the same periods... so that students can get as many courses that they want as possible."

Aragon counselor Lea Sanguinetti also notes the potential

conflicts that arise with classes that have limited sections.

"We have singleton classes, which are classes that are only offered during one period," Sanguinetti said. "And we have so many singleton classes that one is going to end up ... overlapping with another, so we usually get a handful of students that have to make some pretty hard choices."

Most students do not have many issues with the scheduling process.

"One thing I like about the scheduling system is [that] the counselors try their best to fit you in the classes that you like," Oh said. "When you fill out your most wanted classes, you get into them most of the time, and they're very flexible."

Some students have discussed issues with course selection that they'd like to see changed. These issues include impacted science courses and counselors being unable to guarantee popular courses, among other scheduling issues. A number of students have also requested an earlier schedule release.

Sanguinetti addressed some students' concerns of why taking two science classes in the same year was not allowed.

"We are given sections for graduation requirements and there's only a two year science requirement, which means any science class that [a] student

wants to take in their junior or senior year is considered an elective," Sanguinetti said. "I may know of 50 other students that want to take a double science, but I don't have the space to allow every student to do that ... We want to make sure that we can [accommodate] all [students]. So if we're not able to accommodate everybody's request for a second science, how do we justify giving it to [only] a certain number?"

Mesa discusses the other concern of an earlier schedule release for students.

"Last year was the first time that I was able to get the staff what they're teaching by the end [of the school year before] when they left for summer," Mesa said. "I think that's super important for staff to know what they're going to be teaching next year when they go away for summer break. And then I only had to move one teacher's schedule in the summer... [but] there's still a lot of work after that with tweaking individual students' schedules. Some students still don't have full schedules when [teachers' sections are determined], and so [we] work in the summer to fix all of those things."

Although some students have issues with their final schedules, many students accept the limitations of the process. Counselors and administration are not planning any significant changes to the course selection system for the next school year.

# MAP-ing student performance and progress

Renee Ren  
NEWS WRITER

Starting in the 2025-2026 academic year, the Measures of Academic Progression tests are administered to freshmen and sophomores during the two weeks after spring break with the purpose of gauging students' performance and chart their academic growth over a school year.

"[Usually in] April, when we administer [testing], only the 11th and 12th graders are taking [them]," said district director of curriculum assessments Brian Simmons. "We've had to figure out what we were [going to do] with the other students ... [We thought it would be better to] administer the MAP test at the same time."

Unlike the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress test, where its data is used by the state to rank schools, the MAP test data is used by the teachers and the district to see each individual student's progression.

"We were unwilling to give up more class time because we have very little with this schedule, and since we administered the first one so late in the year... we didn't do both of them last year," said math department head Cheri Dartnell. "This year, we administered it early for algebra and geometry classes. So really it's a predominantly 9th and 10th grade exam only in those classes, and we'll be administering the second one during CAASPP testing, so we don't have to take it out of our class testing."

There are two MAP assessments for both English and Math throughout the school year, lasting about 90 minutes each. In order to accurately chart the students' learning growth

over a period of time, the test was first administered in the fall, and second in the spring.

"[I don't like] state testing right after spring break ... because I've just finished relaxing, and then suddenly there's this test, and I feel disoriented," said freshman Kylie Shimm.

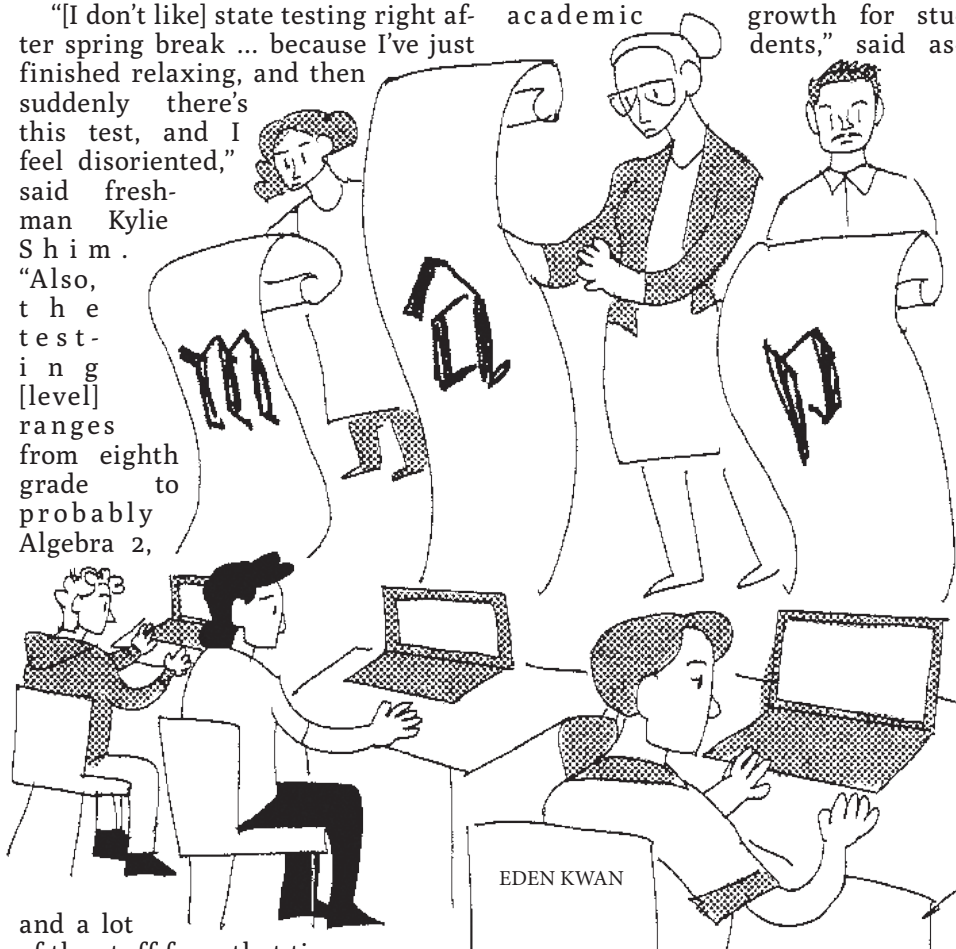
"Also, the test [level] ranges from eighth grade to probably Algebra 2,

and a lot of the stuff from that time was a while back. I learned [some of these concepts in] fifth grade, so I couldn't remember it that well."

In addition, results of the MAP testing are given immediately as the computer program already determines the student's level.

"[Our] feeder school district, San Mateo-Foster City, has been doing [MAP testing] for a few years, and

research suggests that the data from the results of the tests help teachers provide better instruction and academic growth for students," said as-



EDEN KWAN

stant principal David Moore. "[Instead] of doing it at different times throughout the year across [classes, our district] wanted to streamline all of our testing into one part of the school year."

Because juniors and seniors already take the CAASPP and California Science Test to measure progress, they do not need to take the MAP test.

"[We] understand that [taking tests] is not the best thing ever, but for us ... the more serious we can use it as a valid measure of where you are, [the more] we can help [students] develop," Simmons said. "[We] need some kind of external standard verification that [students] are making progress [because] individual teachers have individual things they focus on. We want to make sure that everybody's getting essentially a similar kind of education across the district ... [and we do this] with a standardized [test]."

Furthermore, a score of 250 — the average math level for freshmen — is now one of the prerequisites for incoming freshmen to enter Compressed Math 1. This is a trial run to see if the MAP testing scores are a prerequisite that is really necessary.

For many students, it was their first time taking the MAP tests.

"I was surprised that they actually put out our scores at the end, because I've never got to see my score until they actually put it in our grade book in the previous times," Shim said. "I have no objections [to this test, since it] catches me off guard right after [break, and] actually shows how I do."

Some students feel that the test is unnecessary and the amount of time given was not adequate.

"I felt really rushed during the last few questions," said freshman Melanie Chen. "I think it's kind of unneeded, because if they wanted to see how well we're doing, [they can] look at our grades, or at the other type of test scores. [It] kind of seems unnecessary, and it doesn't really make sense why suddenly been just making us take it."

The MAP testing will continue for the freshmen and sophomores in the two week period after spring break in following years.

# An editorial reflection on the satire edition

The many conversations we have had with fellow students, teachers, administrators, parents and faculty have given us many moments of reflection. For the graciousness that we were granted, we are eternally grateful.

In these moments, we have learned to fully consider our power as leaders of a publication that reaches over 1,600 community members, each with a wholly unique perspective that we have the difficult task of understanding. In the past weeks, we learned about this important contextual difference. What was okay in the context of fellow editors turned toxic once exposed to differing interpretations, and it is our duty as journalists to anticipate and mitigate that harm.

As people who are greatly invested in growing Aragon into an even more humane and , communicative environment, we believe it's important to own up to the mistakes we made and make it clear that insensitive jokes are not the kind of message we want to stand behind.

Going forward, although we remain committed to writing about difficult topics, we will be incorporating more outside perspectives in sensitive articles prior to publishing. We ask for you, the readers, to keep the conversation going with us, the editors. Hold us accountable to the same standards we hold up to our world. For your continued trust, we thank you.

Sincerely,  
Meilin Rife, Emma Shen  
and Scott Silton  
Aragon Outlook Editors-in-Chief and staff adviser

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MI NGUYEN

# Editorial: lessons about Cesar Chavez

This editorial represents the opinions of 11 out of 14 Outlook editors.

Cesar Chavez is primarily known for aiding in the leadership of the United Farm Workers movement, an organization that fought for the labor rights of agricultural workers. He was also a sexual abuser. According to information that came to light this March, Chavez raped Dolores Huerta and sexually abused multiple other women involved in the United Farm Workers movement. This includes young girls — Ana Murguia was 13 when Chavez began to molest her; Debra Rojas was 12. Chavez raped Rojas three years later, at 15 years old.

“It’s insane how something like this went silent for so long,” said senior Alisson Escobedo. “[The victims] were [too scared to say] what happened and to tell the world, because everybody had created this sort of [aura] around [Chavez] ... [of this sort of] savior ... He did so much for Mexican Americans.”

California in particular was the heart of the United Farm Workers movement, which can be seen through our state’s commemoration of Chavez in Cesar Chavez Day, alongside numerous streets, government signs, parades, murals and more dedicated to his memory. What is the best way, then, to commemorate Chavez’s work while still holding him accountable for his disgusting, predatory behaviors?

The Outlook supports the work the San Mateo Union High School District has already started. SMUHSD commemorated Dolores Huerta, and dedicated a day to her on April 10 with later festivities on the following day. The Outlook also recommends similarly changing the aforementioned street names, signs and murals. Further education about the United Farm Workers movement should be prioritized alongside pivoting its history away from highlighting Chavez.

Numerous other leaders, including Gilbert Padilla, Jessica Govea Thorbourne and Bert Cornona, also helped further the United Farm Workers movement. Though

they may not have been as famous as Chavez, replacing memorials of Chavez with their names and education about their efforts serve to keep the movement’s history alive.

Others raise the proposition to rename all that previously honored Chavez for Dolores Huerta, who co-led the movement and herself came forward with allegations that Chavez sexually assaulted her. However, swapping everything named after Chavez with Huerta’s name falls into the same problem as casting Chavez as the only representative of the movement: honoring a single person for the work of thousands. We understand the power of naming and honoring individuals, but instead of focusing on a single one, naming those streets and community events after a variety of different leaders in the United Farm Workers movement would reflect the work of the many in the movement who were not rapists.

Furthermore, the Outlook and countless communities are concerned about lessons on the United Farm Workers movement being minimized as a sort of damage control. The movement, however, can be taught well without the focus on Chavez. California law also requires that public schools teach about the United Farm Workers movement, meaning that the sentiment will not be lost due to a single controversial link.

“We should learn about the movement and we should celebrate the movement,” said Advanced Placement U.S. History teacher Will Colglazier. “We can praise him for his ideas. So I support the removal of Cesar Chavez names. I don’t think that’s erasing history. That’s erasing who we want to praise and hold up to [as] a standard of aspiration.”

In Advanced Placement U.S. History classes and the Thomas Jefferson lesson, there are multiple discussions about his behavior as a slaveholder and his years of abuse and rape of Sally Hemings, a young girl who was enslaved by Jefferson. Instead of focusing entirely on one aspect of his legacy, educators instead teach about both through active class discussions, personal research and a socratic seminar discussing the removal of Jefferson’s statues. Similarly, a combination of uplifting other United Farm Workers movement leaders and still teaching about Chavez — both his successes and his grave failures — would serve the student body’s education.



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# The U.S. attacks Iran, citing revolutionary goals

Diya Poojary and Naomi Kotani  
NEWS WRITERS

Tensions in the Middle East have escalated after the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran starting at the end of February, targeting military assets and killing several of the regime's leaders, including Iran's former supreme leader, Ali Khamenei.

## BACKGROUND

In 1953, the Central Intelligence Agency helped orchestrate a coup in Iran that ousted the democratically-elected prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh after he nationalized the country's oil industry. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi became the shah, or monarch, and under his rule, Iran became an ally to western countries. Pahlavi also agreed to a deal that gave western oil companies considerable control of Iranian oil. During the Cold War, the U.S. supported Iran through an "Atoms for Peace" initiative, which helped launch Iran's nuclear program.

In 1979, the shah was overthrown, ending his nearly 40-year autocratic reign. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led the establishment of an anti-Western regime in place of Pahlavi. The same year, Iranian students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran, the capital of Iran, and held 66 Americans hostage for over a year in what became known as the Iran Hostage Crisis. This prompted the U.S. to cut diplomatic ties with Iran and impose sanctions that stopped the importing of Iran's oil.

Over the next few decades, the relationship continued to worsen, especially with the September 11 attacks in 2001 by Al Qaeda, an Islamic terrorist organization. In response, then-president George Bush deemed Iran as part of what he called the "Axis of Evil," grouping it with Iraq and North Korea, and accusing Iran of supporting terrorism.

In 2015, Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the U.S. came to an agreement called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which entailed Iran limiting its nuclear power in exchange for the lifting of existing sanctions. President Donald Trump took the U.S. out of the deal in 2018, claiming that it did not adequately restrict Iran's nuclear abilities. This withdrawal put sanctions back into place, and Iran soon expanded its nuclear development efforts, exceeding limits outlined in the agreement.

In 2020, the U.S. launched an air strike that killed Iran's top general, Qasem Soleimani, and in recent years, militant groups in the Middle East backed by Iran, like Hamas and Hezbollah, have been involved in intensified conflict with Isra-

el, heightening Iranian-American tensions even further.

## GOALS FOR THE WAR

The White House released an eight-minute video on Feb. 27 stating that the ultimate purpose for the war was to eliminate the threat that Iran had previously demonstrated to the U.S.' core security interests: namely, the American people, its allies and bases across the world. One way Trump claims to do this is by eliminating Iran's nuclear program.

This goal had already been previously undertaken in June 2025 under Operation Midnight Hammer and the resulting Twelve-Day War, in which the U.S. Air Force and Navy

significant reserves of enriched uranium are reportedly being stored, although reports conflict on whether Iran pursued uranium enrichment covertly following the 2025 attacks.

Statistically, the operation has been effective in its objectives: by the fifth week into the war, the U.S. had destroyed, or severely damaged, much of Iran's military arsenal, including ~50% of its missile launchers and most of its navy. Additionally, many of the top authorities in the regime's hierarchy have been killed in the operation.

Trump stated that Iran with nuclear capability would not only be a dangerous threat against the American people

the regime is not going to budge unless they're literally all killed," said junior Saurab Gulati. "Even then there are so many replacements and so many people who actually ideologically agree with the government and they will [replace the leadership] ... I don't see how they're going to [introduce] someone in [a way] that's fair to the Iranian people and isn't just the same regime, or ... is not just a Western figurehead."

Others expect any such reform to be forced by the attacks on Iran, rather than it happening through diplomacy.

"The loyalist regime government is going to come to a point where it's so small that the people will probably just take over," said junior Thomas Carney. "Or else the strikes stop, the regime survives barely and they keep suppressing their people, and over time [the regime] will grow back."

On March 8, about a week after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed, his son Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei succeeded as the third Supreme Leader of Iran, illustrating the deeply entrenched hierarchy of Iran's leadership.

"It's that quick. It's very seamless," Gulati said.

"It's a hydra; the Greek mythological figure where you cut off a head, it'll grow back two. They are a regime that is so established that it is very difficult, near impossible to unroot it."

## ESCALATION

Within the first week of the war, the Middle East was engulfed in chaos as Tehran responded with missile and drone strikes, targeting Israeli cities and U.S. bases in the Middle East, such as Iraq and Syria. Commercial shipping supplies in the Persian Gulf were blocked and attacks by proxy militia groups in the region also erupted.

These retaliatory actions were unexpected to the Trump administration, as the latter had based their attacks on the preceding victories of such conflict against Iran.

"[They've] massively underestimated the amount of time it was going to take, and that's mostly because it's been fighting from the air," Gulati said. "Iran has been targeting U.S. bases around the Gulf, specifi-

cally ... very costly infrastructure ... What I've seen so far is Iran is not going to go down easy. The U.S. is more powerful, [but] it's going to take a lot more than what they're doing

[to win this]. It's [probably] going to take ground troops."

The Pentagon has been preparing for ground operations in Iran, although no such

plans have been approved by the president yet. However, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, composed of about 2,200 Marines and sailors, arrived in the Middle East on March 27.

While the addition of U.S. troops in the Middle East is currently uncertain, many reports suggest that such decisions would require caution, as carrying out special ground missions could prove to be difficult in terms of numbers and the mounting economic costs, especially for sustained long-time operations. According to reporting by the Washington Post, 13 U.S. servicemen have already been killed in the war so far.

Iran also enforced a de facto blockade along the Strait of Hormuz, the primary exit route located in the Persian Gulf, where 20% of global oil and gas supplies pass through. Its closure for a prolonged period of time could spark a global recession.

Already, countries in Europe and Asia that depend heavily on supplies that pass through the point are facing shortages: crude oil prices have skyrocketed to their highest since the 2022 Russian invasion against Ukraine, fertilizer prices have increased by \$100 per ton since the war began, gas prices in San Mateo alone have increased to \$6 per gallon at some stations and postal and fresh food services have begun implementing payment surcharges to cover rising costs.

"Putting [the nation] in a situation [that] you know is going to affect American people and cause them to spend more money to travel or get around in their everyday lives, I don't think that's very fair to us," said senior Michelle Dalporto. "Especially because during the election process, we were told by [Trump] that we wouldn't go to war and prices would be lower. ... That's probably my biggest issue with it: we were told this wouldn't happen."

## IMPACT

Although Israel and the U.S. have claimed its military operations are precise as to mitigate civil harm, at least 1,900 civilians have been killed since the Feb. 28 airstrikes, and about 21,000 have been reported injured.

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ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG



launched airstrikes to attack three nuclear facilities in Iran. However, the new Operation Epic Fury was initiated on Feb. 28 with the same objective and no congressional mandate.

Its first strikes killed former Supreme Leader Ayatollah

and its allies, but also worsen its reputation as an oppressive regime to its own people. In the final minutes of the video, Trump directly addressed the people of Iran, supporting the overthrow of the current regime, which Iranian citizens have protested against for decades.

"[To] the great proud people of Iran, I say tonight that the hour of your freedom is at hand," Trump said. "Bombs will be dropping everywhere. When we are finished, take over your government ... This will be probably your only chance for generations."

However, many believe achieving regime change is going to be very difficult, or even impossible, especially considering the fact that Trump has also stated he would like to have a voice in selecting a new western-friendly leader.

"[The U.S.] is a very powerful foreign influence, but

Gas prices in San Mateo have reached \$6 per gallon

Ali Khamenei, who had served as the second Supreme Leader since 1989. After that, Israel and the U.S. have bombed key facilities in major cities like Isfahan and Natanz, where sig-

# California election for governor gets crowded

Siddharth Gopinath  
NEWS WRITER

On Nov. 3, California will elect their new governor. The incumbent, Gavin Newsom, will not be able to run due to a limit of two terms. The primary election ends on June 2.

California is a largely democratic state, without a Republican governor since Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2006. In the 2022 re-election, Gavin Newsom won with 59% of the popular vote over Republican Brian Dahle's 41%.

"Ever since Ronald Reagan's term as president, California has become more and more deep blue," said freshman Jerry Sun. "However, the deep blue divide isn't as big as people think, instead being more of a 60% and 40% divide."

Three major California Democrats who were posed as possible frontrunners for this election, Sens. Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff and Kamala Harris, all didn't enter the race for governor, leaving the race without a clear frontrunner.

"I'm looking for a candidate who's very progressive, who cares about making life better for Californians, someone who cares about making things more affordable," said senior Hayden Ha. "Most importantly, they aren't politically corrupt. [For example], they avoid taking corporate [Political Action Committee] donations, or from the Israel lobby."

Currently, there are 61 total candidates on the ballot in contention with 24 being Democratic, 12 being Republican and 25 being unaffiliated or in a minor party. There are nine viable candidates in the race including Democrats Antonio Villaraigosa, a former LA mayor, former congresswoman Katie Porter, businessman Tom Steyer, San Jose mayor Matt Mahan, state superintendent of public instruction Tony Thurmond, former state Controller Betty Yee and former United States Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra. The main Republican candidates are former Fox News host Steve Hilton and Sheriff Chad Bianco.

California's primary system operates differently than most

states, in which each party nominates a candidate to represent them, but in California, all candidates run against each other in the primaries, and the two candidates with the most votes regardless of party affiliation advance to the general election. Because seven democrats can split up the votes, the two republicans could potentially advance to the Nov. general elections.

"There's a very crowded Democratic field," Ha said. "What's really interesting is that there's a chance that there could be a Republican

governor ... For Democrats, this is very worrying, because a lot of the candidates aren't dropping out, especially because there's like 10 Democrats running. And because it's split across all these fields, their approval numbers or their polling is very low."

One issue that is common among both parties is an emphasis on affordability, though they take different approaches to the same issue. Democrats including Steyer, Porter and Mahan support more social security and welfare funding, such as low income housing that is cheap to build and maintain. The Republican candidates are more focused on reducing taxes.

Mahan also breaks with party lines to oppose increasing taxes, stating that cutting down on "waste, fraud, and abuse," was more important.

"I would definitely support the more Republican-leaning candidates," Sun said. "In each gallon of gas alone, I know there's already over a dollar of just taxes, which is a huge amount of tax for gas ... The Republicans can make it cheaper by removing these taxes."

Some believe regulating Immigrations Control and Enforcement is an important policy point.

"I support Chad Bianco [because] he has a very forward idea," said freshman Warren Yao. "He's very straightforward, he has ideas planned for ICE and he's going to be strict, but he's going to let the illegal immigrants who didn't do anything wrong stay, which is good."

On April 12, Rep. Eric Swalwell, leading democratic candidate, announced his governor campaign suspension due to alleged sexual misconduct. According to CNN, Reports came in from four women so far, three of them stating Swalwell's inappropriate intimacy, "sending unsolicited messages or nude photos." One of his former staffers claimed that Swalwell raped her twice when she was heavily intoxicated, once in 2019 and the other in 2024. She recalled saying "no" and pushing him away but to no avail, and left with multiple injuries. Swalwell has since indicated that he will resign his seat in Congress.



COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

# Sanewashing: how the media works with radicalism

Ellie Blakely and  
Seona Srivastava  
NEWS AND FEATURES WRITERS

At some point in the coverage of any political statement, a reporter or an editor makes a choice — use the quote or don't, put it in the headline or bury it, provide context or let it stand alone. These choices happen dozens of times a day across hundreds of newsrooms, and for the most part, nobody outside the newsroom ever knows they were made.

"Sanewashing" is the term that critics have started using to describe what they believe happens when those choices consistently soften the edges of extreme or incoherent political speech.

The term didn't start in politics; it appears as early as 2007, in a blog post by academic Dale Carrico, which described how fringe ideas get repackaged into respectable-sounding language. By 2020, it had moved into political forums online. It wasn't until 2024 that the word attached itself specifically to the coverage of Donald Trump, migrating from academic blogs and political subreddits into the vocabulary of working journalists and media critics.

The examples most frequently cited involve headlines. In October 2024, Trump made the comment that people who commit crimes have "bad genes." In its coverage of the president, the New York Times published a story with the headline, "In remarks about migrants, Donald Trump invoked his long-held fascination with genes and genetics."

This headline was criticized by many in the media who believed it inaccurately captured Trump's original statement. Critics say his statement encourages eugenics, and the New York Times headline failed to communicate that.

"People [want to] believe good or make things make sense," said senior Sydney Miller. "Media outlets frame things in the way that people want to see it. When outlets are associated with one side they'll tend to bring in [a way that is biased]."

The reality, observers note, is that people rarely read full articles. Many get their understanding of current events solely from headlines, meaning the framing of a headline carries more weight than the reporting beneath it.

Media outlets also frequently shorten quotes from Trump or only include the most cohesive phrases. This is a fairly common practice in journalism, but critics say it becomes problematic when Trump's long-winded and frequently incoherent speeches are a part of his identity as a political figure.

In September 2024, Trump responded to a seemingly straightforward question about child-care with a two-minute-long answer discussing tariffs, fraud and more. The New York Times reported on the story with the headline, "Trump Calls for an Efficiency Commission, an Idea Pushed by Elon Musk," and only briefly touched on Trump's inco-

herence. The New York Times was again scolded for only covering part of the story and leaving out details that would have been damaging for Trump.

While sanewashing does not necessarily make media coverage inaccurate, critics say it portrays a different, more sanitized version of reality. This becomes an issue when it affects people's perception of the world and encourages biases.

"Media is obviously really influential for what people believe, especially for people who are more vulnerable to believing what they see," Miller said.

"My grandparents watch just Fox News, and they believe everything. [People will believe the media if they portray] someone in a way where it's making [them] seem more okay, even when [they're] insane, and that can be dangerous."

That concern extends beyond any single outlet. For some observers, the issue isn't certain stories getting softened but rather the incentive structure of media as an industry that makes sanitized coverage more likely in the first place.

Understanding why sanewashing happens requires looking inside the newsroom, where reporters and editors describe a set of competing pressures that shape every story.

One is structural. Headlines have character limits. Quotes that wander, contradict or trail off midway can be genuinely difficult to compress without the headline itself appearing unserious. Editors have historically been cautious about

writing headlines that could be read as editorializing, even when the underlying statement is simply what was said.

There is also what journalists describe as a saturation problem. For example, Trump's verbal style — associative, digressive, sometimes contradictory — has been consistent since 2015. A comment that would have generated significant coverage if made by another politician might not clear the bar for a Trump story, simply because similar comments have appeared so many times before.

Some journalists navigate that tension consciously, making calls they believe are editorially defensible, while knowing those calls will read differently to different audiences.

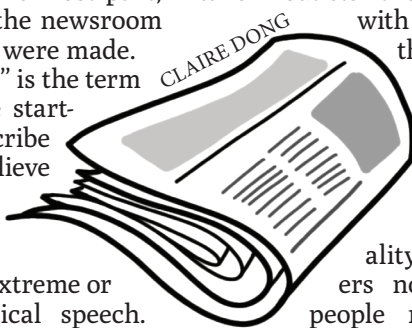
None of these pressures require bad intent. Journalists as a whole strive to help readers make sense of what politicians are saying, which can mean gravitating toward quotes and headlines that are clearest and most coherent. When applied consistently to a speaker like Trump, it can produce coverage that leaves out some of his more inflammatory comments or illogical statements.

The debate is further complicated by the fact that the opposite approach carries its own risks. When an extreme statement gets prominent coverage, the coverage itself spreads the statement. Something that may not deserve attention may be spotlighted unnecessarily and thus give the speaker the publicity that they want and the reaction they were hoping to provoke.

Furthermore, there is no agreed-upon standard for where editorial restraint ends and sanewashing begins. This line is greatly contested, and journalists on both sides of it believe they are serving their readers.

It is also worth noting that the term itself is contested. "Sanewashing" emerged primarily in criticisms from left-leaning media towards mainstream centrist outlets. The political context doesn't necessarily invalidate what the term describes, but it does shape who tends to make the accusation and how it lands.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



# Sanewashing the truth out of the public media

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

When media outlets cover the same event differently, they present readers with what can feel like entirely separate realities, contributing to an already polarized media environment.

"I like to listen to multiple ideas [in the media]," said sophomore Tanya Lee. "And oftentimes the ideas are so different that it's hard to think of them as the same situation, especially when there's two different commentaries on a certain event, or somebody's statements ... It makes me a lot more cautious to trust the media."

Trust in media in the U.S. is at an all-time low, largely due to perceived bias in the media and a shift toward more opinion-based commentary. The Pew Research Center reports that only 56% of U.S. adults say they have some or a lot of trust in information from national news sources.

Although sanewashing and polarization stem from opposite approaches to news coverage, they both exacerbate

mistrust in the media. By perpetuating an altered perception of reality, critics say that sanewashing is detrimental to the public's comprehension of world events and politics.

Some media outlets have internalized this criticism and are actively trying to avoid sanewashing Trump in their political coverage by reporting as accurately as possible, even if it differs from journalistic norms.

One approach some reporters are taking is to include Trump's full quotes in their articles, no matter how much he rambles or goes off topic.

In an article published in 2024 by The 19th News, the writer contrasts Trump's proposed childcare policies with those of then-presidential candidate Kamala Harris, using excerpts from their speeches. In lieu of a policy proposal by Trump, the article points out that he

had not given clear answers on childcare policies and instead frequently rambled and made unclear statements about the topic. The article features an unusually lengthy quote that displays Trump's incoherence to the reader.

Anti-sanewashing advocates applauded this effort, as they say it avoided altering Trump's confusing quote and highlighted his lack of a clear policy plan.

Other articles attempt to go beyond fact-checking by exposing more of the context for Trump's false claims. For example, National Public Radio published a story in 2024 that unpacked the history and racist tropes behind Trump's claim that Haitian immigrants were eating cats and dogs.

The same outlet critics accused of sanewashing have also, at times, taken the opposite approach. On April 5, the New York Times published a story on Trump's threats against Iran that quoted his social media post in full, influencing an explosive directed at Iranian leadership and the phrase "you crazy bastards," without softening or paraphrasing the language. Whether that represents a shift in how the paper covers Trump, or simply reflects the escalating stakes of a wartime context, remains an open question.

However, articles that attempt to avoid sanewashing have also faced criticism by defendants of traditional journalism, who say that providing raw quotes ignores a need for context and that concentrating on a figure's incoherence is a biased and editorialized style of reporting.

In reality, the media may always have some bias. This may

be as overt as favoring one side when covering a political issue, but bias can also appear when media outlets focus too heavily on neutrality or conciseness. As a result, some are discouraging consumers from relying too heavily on the media.

"As citizens, we can try to do our own research and make our own conclusions and not always just trust what the media says," Lee said. "There's always going to be some element of this sanewashing."

Whether sanewashing is a systemic failure, an unavoidable byproduct of editorial constraint or a politically loaded accusation depends largely on who you ask. What is harder to dispute is that the gap it describes — between what political figures say and how that speech reaches the public — has real consequences for how people understand the world. Closing that gap or even agreeing on its size remains unfinished business for American journalism.



EVA LUDWIG

## ONLINE THIS MONTH

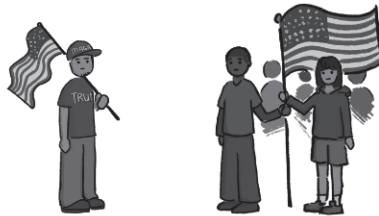
### News:

- California tax battle
- AI in education



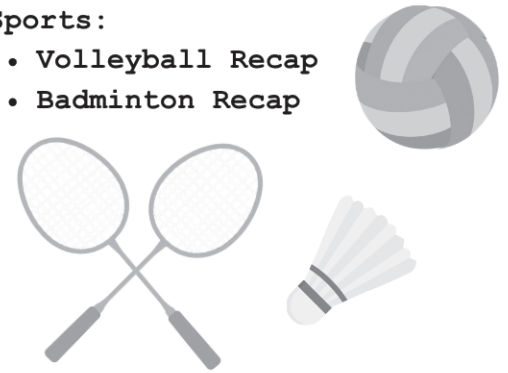
### Features:

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- Separating the people from the country



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# Friend or foe: faith in relationships

Anushka Punjabi  
FEATURES WRITER

“Love thy neighbor” is a phrase from the Bible that argues kindness and connection should come before differences. In reality, relationships are often more complicated. From friendships to romantic partnerships, faith can both unite and divide, communicate and draw boundaries.

Religion is a powerful force that guides people’s decision-making indirectly through upbringing and environment, affecting how one can approach relationships.

“The biggest thing with Judaism [is that it’s] really family-focused and really community-focused,” said senior Evan Westheimer. “The whole religion is surrounded by that idea ... Judaism taught me that in romantic relationships, having strong family values is really big for me.”

Religion simplifies relationships by giving people built-in common ground.

When people share a belief system, it offers a shared purpose that streamlines relationships beyond lifestyle and prayer. It can create an immediate sense of understanding, which makes it easier to form deeper connections.

“I have some very close friends who I’ve met in church, and one of the primary things we bond over is our faith,” said senior Samuel Young.

However, differences in religion can create misunderstandings, which can prevent people from truly understanding one another. For many religious communities, especially more traditional ones, this structure shapes expectations for behavior in relationships. Religion in these cases then works as a social framework that defines what kinds of relationships are accepted.

“My grandparents would not be as understanding [toward interfaith marriage], because they’re so rooted in their ... traditional values: marry within your religion, marry within your nationality,” said junior Yash Seth.

Avoiding discussion about religion is just one way students maintain relationships, like friendships, despite differences.

“We mainly kept religion out of the conversation,” Young said. “With more conservative indi-

viduals, [religion] may take a very large role.”

While this approach may reduce conflict, it can also limit deeper conversations. These unspoken guidelines become more significant as time goes by, especially as relationships grow more serious and questions regarding future lifestyles become harder to avoid.

“A big challenge [in interfaith relationships] is knowing what faith, what customs, what practices, what holidays you want to celebrate, [like] what you want to base your lifestyle around,” Westheimer said.

Furthermore, when one belongs to a less visible or marginalized religious group, these differences can feel prominent.

“When I was younger, I was not really proud of being Hindu, because everyone else around me was either Christian or Muslim,” Seth said. “I felt like an outsider. [My peers] sometimes joke around when they’re eating beef; they’re like, ‘Oh, look at me, I’m eating beef and you’re not.’”

Dietary preferences, while seemingly straightforward, often represent broader lifestyle choices. When there is a lack of understanding of differences, students may be more likely to pursue same-faith relationships.

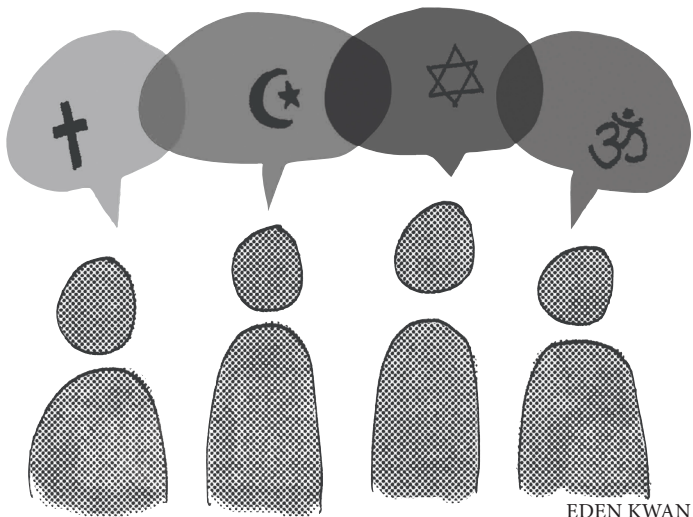
“I probably wouldn’t [be in an interfaith marriage] just because I want my kids to grow up the way I grew up and I would want my household to have all the same values, traditions and beliefs,” said junior Ayah Atawneh.

Apart from romantic relationships, students approach differences in friendships by emphasizing respect. Engaging with difference thoughtfully in these cases doesn’t dilute tradition, but can strengthen one’s understanding of it.

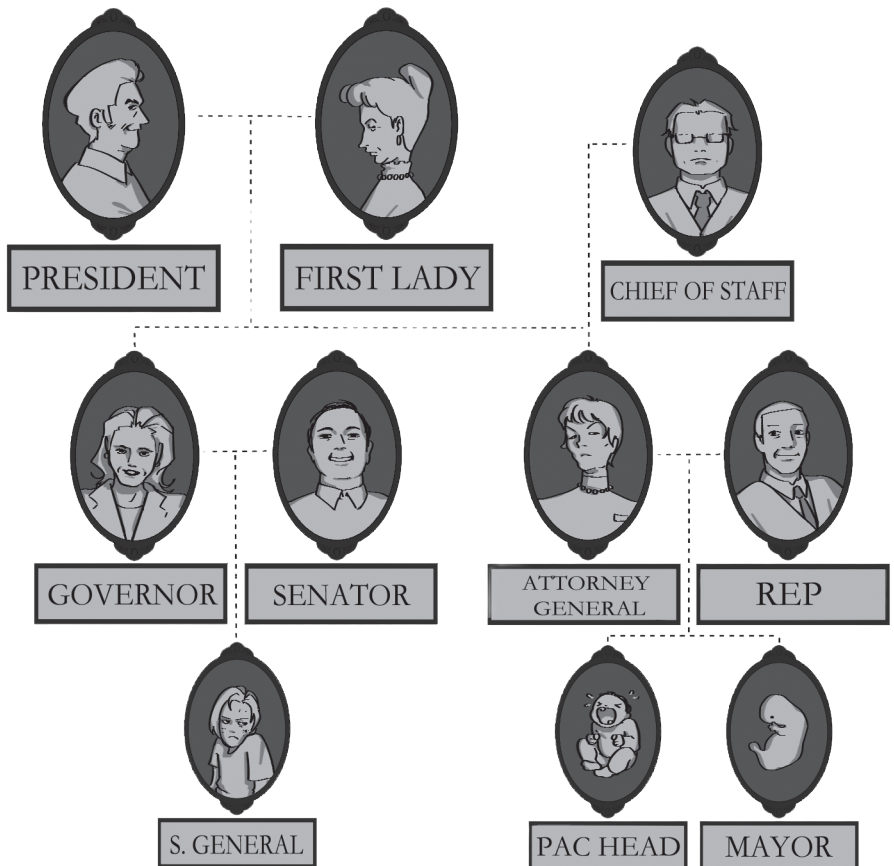
“Instead of ... shaming the [nonreligious people in my life], I’m gonna love them no matter what they say to me, what they believe in,” said junior Jaelyn Ruttenberg. “[But them] challenging me [also] helped me grow a lot in my faith.”

Overall, religion is a grounding force for students, functioning as a source of shared stability despite people’s differences. How individuals respond to religious differences depends on whether they perceive faith as a shared foundation or a cultural boundary. Often, it is both.

For 32% of American adults, most or all of their friends have a different religion than them, according to the Pew Research Center.



EDEN KWAN



DAHLIA SELIG

# New dynasty: political nepotism

Rebecca Chen  
FEATURES WRITER

Nepotism, the practice of favoring family members in political positions, has long existed in governments worldwide. In politics, it refers to officials appointing or supporting relatives for government roles. While some view it as trust and experience, many see it as a threat to fairness and democracy.

Nepotism is often subtly built into the political system. A major factor is name recognition, where familiar last names influence voters. A study by Jacobson and Carson showed that 92% of United States House incumbents’ last names were recognized by voters compared to 55% of challengers.

“[People] don’t even really care about who you are as a person,” said sophomore Noelle Mantisa. “They just care about the people that they associate you with, like your last name.”

In addition, political families tend to have stronger networks, including donors, advisors and party connections. These advantages make it easier for family members to enter politics and succeed. Informal mentorship also plays a role, as children of politicians often grow up learning about government firsthand, gaining insights that outsiders may not have.

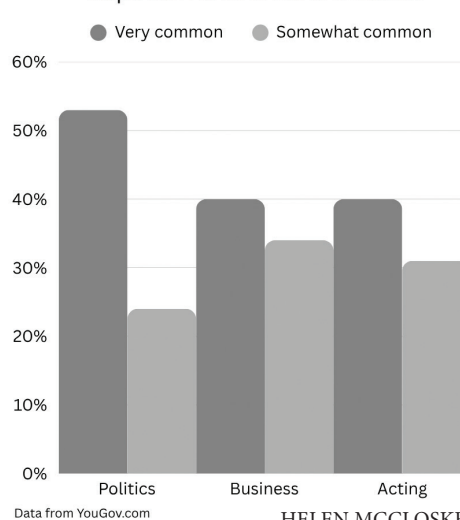
Historically, nepotism comes from monarchies and aristocracies, where power stayed within families. Even in modern democracies, influence often remains concentrated due to wealth, connections and recognition, forming political dynasties. This shows how nepotism is partly systemic, since political structures and traditions allow inherited influence to continue over time.

“It started when people had these family members, and they wanted to also get positions like that,” said freshman Samuel Wang. “And then they work through

their family members and are able to get higher positions than if they didn’t have their family members.”

Examples include John F. Kennedy appointing Robert F. Kennedy as Attorney General, Ulysses S. Grant filling about 40% of positions with relatives and Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida appointing his son as aide. Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump also held senior roles in the Trump administration. These cases show how political power can repeatedly stay within certain families, creating concentrated control among a small group of political dynasties

How common do Americans believe nepotism is in different fields?



Data from YouGov.com

HELEN MCCLOSKEY

rather than being evenly distributed across society.

Supporters of nepotism argue that it can have real benefits. One key advantage is loyalty. Family members may feel a strong responsibility to protect their relative’s reputation and legacy, making them more committed and dependable to the family’s mission.

“[Nepotism] could definitely have loyalty, sticking with what your other family members do, and maybe what you’re expected to do,” said junior Brainer Bocaj.

However, members of political families do not always share the same values. An example in recent years is Ronna McDaniel, U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney’s niece, who supported Trump and aligned herself with his campaign and Republican leadership despite his attacks on her uncle.

Nepotism can also lower leadership quality when unqualified relatives are appointed, leading to ineffective governance. For example, Kushner and Ivanka Trump held senior White House roles despite limited experience.

It also weakens public trust and reinforces inequality, as qualified candidates without connections may be overlooked. This creates a system where opportunity is not fully based on merit, reinforcing existing power structures that favor established political families over the general population.

“People should be appointed based on merit qualities ... [because] what are the chances that the person most skilled for the job is your own son-in-law?” said sophomore Ada Peretz.

Additionally, it reduces diversity of ideas and limits innovation, since families often share similar perspectives. Political families like the Bushes and Kennedys show how political views are passed down.

“[Nepotism in politics] is not very fair, because there are other people out there, there are more diverse voices out there that can be represented,” said sophomore Alison Wu.

While laws can limit nepotism, informal advantages remain, showing how it is both systemic and self-perpetuating across generations.

“It’s not just about passing one law, but it’s also about how the government functions,” Manitsas said. “The best way to stop nepotism requires a combination of strict laws, radical transparency and independent oversight.”

Ultimately, nepotism in politics raises important questions about fairness and effectiveness. On one hand, some individuals in political families work hard and are well-prepared for leadership. On the other hand, others may gain opportunities that more qualified candidates never receive. While nepotism can be efficient and loyal, it also risks lowering public trust and limiting equal opportunity.

**Anonymous**  
Jayson Estassi - He does so much for people on campus simply by being present and empathetic enough to check in with people and really listen to them when they have concerns.

**Brandon Ho (9)**  
I appreciate Mr. (Rafael) Montelongo the most because he is extremely chillaxed (chill and relaxed) as well as kind to everyone. He also makes a lot of jokes that are quite hilarious.

**Steve Ratto**  
[There] are those notes that students write. Sometimes it's a turkey [or Starfish awards]. At the end of the year, people will give me thank you cards. I read them all, and it really helps me, especially if I'm having a bad day. The pictures on my wall of former students, looking at those and remembering the times when they were here as well, just treating me like I'm a human being, coming in asking, 'Hey, how's it going?' I don't need gifts. Words are enough for me, and I'm lucky that there's enough people who spend the time to convey that. It makes me really feel good about my job.

**Anonymous**  
I really appreciate Mr. Ratto. He is an outstanding physics teacher that is always open to answering questions in depth. He makes sure to clarify and simplify concepts, provide helpful examples, and add fun jokes to make the classroom experience much more enjoyable. He also pays great attention to students' mental health. He checks in with students and also makes great efforts to decrease our stress through ample credit-earning opportunities and trying not to overlap his tests with those from other classes. Overall, Mr. Ratto is such an amazing teacher and an integral part of the Aragon community!

**Ahliana Tanielu (9)**  
I appreciate a lot of staff workers. Mainly Russ, Josiah, Ms. Perino, Ms. Watson, Ms. Ho, Ms. Leota, Mr. J, Mr. Flynn, and Ms. Cheever. I respect and appreciate them all for always helping me whenever needed. [They] all understand me as a person, and they are all super kind to me. I will always remember them all. Coming into high school not knowing many teachers but having this certain bond with a teacher is just a relief. I appreciate and respect all of them for caring for me as an individual.

**Drew Benavente (10)**  
I appreciate my counselor, Ms. Sanguinetti the most because she has helped me throughout my time in high school with choosing classes and just being someone I can talk to casually.

**Darra McLintock (12)**  
I appreciate Mr. Nelson because of his flexible nature. He also reflects pure and genuine care for his students. As a student in his class, I can tell that he deeply wants his students to thrive in the world, and he gives us insight as to how college will function. His surplus of wisdom and experience transfers to his students, thus I feel much more prepared for college as a result of being in his class.

**Carlo Corti**  
I feel appreciated as a teacher when I feel like I've done my job. And the times I feel that are when students express that they're enjoying something they've learned, or just when they show some cool attitude for learning something to know before.

**Anonymous**  
One of my favorite teachers on campus has to be Ms. Belvini, a class I look forward to throughout the week, not just because of the people in it, but the way she teaches and helps us understand, making it a fun and supportive class community. She really made me realize the fun in science I never saw before.

**Behrooz Shahrini**  
I do feel appreciated on campus by students, staff, and in general the Aragon community. It is a school community that values respect, kindness, and thoughtfulness.

**Annalee Tran (9)**  
Sr Carrillo!!! I appreciate him the most because he's really funny and his Spanish class is one of the few classes I actually enjoy going to. I actually understand and have fun learning the material AND I get to show my artwork to my classmates!

achievement mentor  
kindness regard abundance  
classroom connection  
expression obligation  
recognition coach  
esteem guidance thankfulness  
teachers ARAGON staffulty  
esteem APPRECIATION  
Students, who are you grateful for?  
Teachers, how do you feel appreciated on campus?

honor respect  
acknowledgment celebration  
assistance dons!



# In my Chinese era: Asian culture in media

Ashley Tsui  
FEATURES WRITER

Scrolling aimlessly, a video pops up captioned, “I’m at a very Chinese time in my life.” In the video, an evidently not ethnically Chinese woman drinks hot water from a mug and walks around her house wearing indoor slippers. It’s unclear if the video is satire or serious, and the next four videos have the same obscure caption.

An increasingly popular social media trend is to partake in traditional Asian customs, many of which have Chinese origins. It’s a stark 180-degree-shift from the beginning of the decade, where Chinese-Americans were discriminated against after the rise of the coronavirus, as the first case of the disease was reported in China.

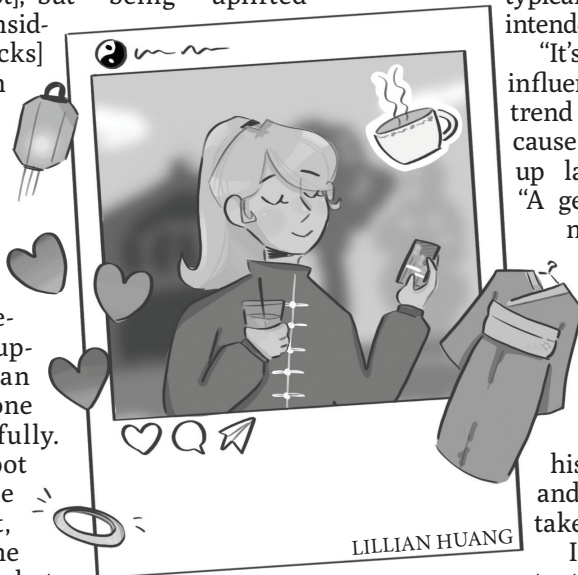
Following a long history of a disdain towards Asian-Americans, the 21st century takes on a reversal — Asian culture is suddenly viewed as desirable and even “trendy,” as seen in the popularization and, to some extent, westernization of Taiwanese boba, Japanese matcha, Filipino bebot makeup, K-pop and more.

“Some cultures [are] primarily just romanticized because some view them as aesthetic,” said junior Shamiksha Senthilkumar. “For instance, the slick back hairstyle: people started doing that [a lot], but in the past, it was considered unclean. [Slick backs] were a common thing in South Asian cultures, but now it’s romanticized, just because it fits [influencers’] current aesthetic and mood or personality.”

However, these trends are not completely harmful. Some even uplift and empower Asian communities, when done correctly and respectfully. For example, the bebot makeup trend has little discriminatory intent, instead elevating the Filipino community. *Bebot*, a slang term in the Philippines for a pretty woman, is used in this trend as a term of confidence, as creators do their makeup to embody Filipino ideals of beauty. It also seeks to embrace naturally tan skin colors, in rejection of the western ideals for fair

skin that are prevalent in parts of Southeast Asia.

“For me, when I saw the bebot trend, I thought it was interesting, because it’s really rare to see Filipino culture being uplifted



in media,” said junior Aerial Crisostomo. “I thought it was nice, especially it being a beauty trend. As a kid, growing up in the Philippines, I’ve always liked to be lighter than I am. Even in my family, we would have whitening soaps and lotions. So seeing

that, the bebot trend, it [feels] very accepting [towards] darker skin tones.”

It is difficult to define the difference between appropriation and appreciation, but what typically matters most is the intended impact of the content.

“It’s very convenient for influencers to just follow the trend and bandwagon, because they can just switch up later,” Crisostomo said. “A genuine intent [matters], not doing it for followers and likes, [rather] actually appreciating the culture behind it and the history. Asians shouldn’t just be interpreted as one [culture]; all of us have different historical backgrounds and I hope [influencers] take that into account.”

In addition, it is important to acknowledge the cultural background and history when partaking in these trends or promoting Asian traditions.

“When [people] use something from a different culture, they should acknowledge that it’s from a different culture, instead of just calling it a different name,” Senthilkumar

said. “Such as Indian culture, [where] some [traditional] clothing was [mislabelled as] Scandinavian, but when you search it up, it doesn’t look like Scandinavian clothing.”

Another interesting aspect of these trends is not only its romanticization of Asian customs, but its ignorance of non-East Asian cultures. While countries like China, Japan and South Korea are looked upon favorably due to the influence of fashion like Adidas’ Tang jacket, or media like anime and manga, Asian nations in the Middle East and South are left in obscurity, potentially due to a bias created through media portrayals and diplomatic relations.

These trends popularizing Asian cultures have garnered mixed reactions and it remains unclear whether or not creators approach these fads with appreciation. While some communities have seen positive outcomes, others continue experiencing marginalization and the continuous struggle for racial equality exemplified by simple trend patterns and social media crazes.

# The reality of sexism in the medical industry

Addie Rose  
FEATURES WRITER

Imagine going to the doctor in excruciating pain, only to be dismissed as overreacting. For many women, this is not hypothetical — it is a lived reality. Despite major advancements in healthcare, sexism in the medical industry continues to affect how women are treated, diagnosed and even how they are studied. From a lack of research on women’s health to limited access to period products, the system often falls short. Historically, these inequalities have led to serious consequences; however, progress is being made, and communities — starting with schools like Aragon — can play a role in supporting and advocating for change.

“You hear about [sexism in the medical industry] no matter what, online or in person or even at school, but you never really learn how to fix it or how to get more educated on the topic,” said freshman Jordan Kahane. “You just hear more stereotypes than real information.”

One of the biggest issues in the medical field is the lack of research focused on women. For many years, medical studies primarily used male subjects, meaning that treatments and knowledge were often based on how diseases affect men. However, men and women can experience symptoms differently. A well-known example is heart attacks. While men often feel chest pain, women are more likely to experience symptoms like nausea, fatigue or pain in the back or jaw. According to the American Heart Association, women — especial-

ly younger women — are more likely to have their symptoms misdiagnosed or dismissed because they do not match the traditional model based on male patients. A study in the Journal of the American Heart Association found that young female patients waited 29% longer for potential heart attack evaluation when compared to male counterparts, with an even longer wait for women of color. Because these differences were not widely studied or taught, many women have been ignored, with life-threatening consequences. This lack of research also affects other areas, such as chronic pain and hormonal conditions, leaving many women without clear answers or proper judgment.

Another significant problem is how women’s pain is dismissed. Research and informative articles from Harvard Health, American Medical Women’s Association and multiple others sources have proven that women’s pain is most likely to be ignored and diagnosed as stress, anxiety or hormones. Many women have been accused of being “overdramatic” or “just emotional.” For example, 35-year-old Kerri Laird repeatedly sought medical help for severe fatigue, heart palpitations and difficulty swallowing, but doctors dismissed her symptoms as stress from being a “busy mom.” It was only after she insisted on further testing that she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Experiences like this

may cause women to lose faith in the healthcare system. Over time, women become so disillusioned with the system that they no longer seek help when they need it, creating a serious problem that affects women on a large scale.

The consequences of these healthcare inequalities are severe. Misdiagnosis or delayed diagnosis could lead to serious health issues or death. In addition, mental health issues, such as anxiety or frustration due to not being taken seriously, are possible. Finally, financial issues could arise as a result of multiple visits to the doctor

yeah’, and literally whipped it out of my backpack.”

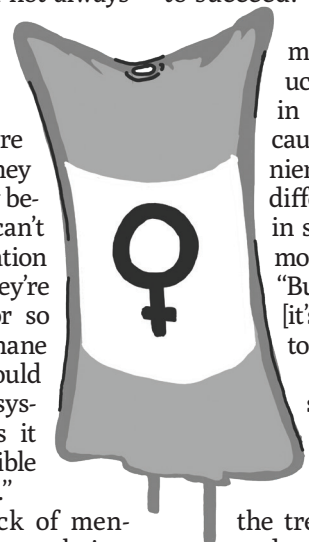
Menstruation products are often expensive and not always easily accessible, creating a significant issue for students in schools.

“They’re way more [expensive] than they should be, especially because some people can’t afford [menstruation products], and they’re such a necessity for so many people,” Kahane said. “So they should have some sort of system that makes it more accessible and less limited.”

Due to a lack of menstruation products being made available by schools in the U.S., many girls do not have reliable access to the menstruation products they need during the school day. As a result, limited availability combined with the stigma surrounding menstruation can make students feel too embarrassed to ask for help. This lack of access and support can lead to missed classes, discomfort and even skipping school altogether, negatively impacting both their education and well-being.

The roles that schools play in supporting students is crucial, especially at Aragon. By offering free menstrual products on campus, Aragon ensures that students are able to focus on their education without worrying about basic needs. In addition, access to nurses and counselors provides students with trusted resources when they have health concerns or feel unheard. By continuing to prioritize these resources, Aragon can create a more

inclusive and responsive environment where all students feel cared for and empowered to succeed.

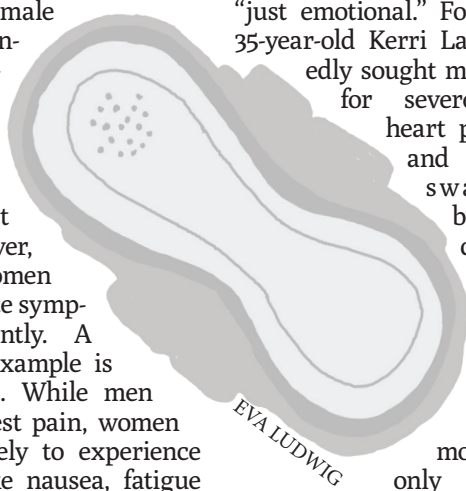


“I think [there are] more [period products] at school than in public places, because [they are] conveniently located in the different bathrooms in school,” said sophomore Naomi Dulac. “But in public places, [it’s] a lot [more] rare to find them.”

While these issues are still prominent, there have been advancements made in the treatment of women and people with biologically female body parts. The awareness of gender bias in healthcare has become more prominent, with more people speaking out about their experiences. For example, tennis player Serena Williams has publicly shared that after giving birth, she repeatedly told medical staff she was experiencing serious symptoms of a blood clot, but her concerns were initially dismissed before she was finally treated. The movement toward menstrual equity has helped bring more awareness regarding the importance of period products.

“Our health class, or even other classes, should get more in detail about [becoming aware],” Kahane said. “Because I hear about it all the time outside of school, and I never feel educated enough on it.”

Sexism in the medical field is a complex, multifaceted issue, but it can not be overlooked. By listening to the stories of women, expanding research, and implementing more equitable policies, society can continue moving toward a more inclusive healthcare system.



# Snubs and dubs: the Oscars

Ethan Fei  
FEATURES WRITER

I'd spent the past few weeks watching major contenders and convincing myself I had a good sense of how the night would go, but as the camera panned across the nominees' faces, I realized I wasn't that confident about who would win. Going into the ceremony, I predicted Timothée Chalamet taking Best Actor, "One Battle After Another," "Hamnet" and "Marty Supreme" all taking major categories, and "KPop Demon Hunters" winning Best Animated Feature Film and Best Original Song. Throughout the ceremony, I felt the Academy was deliberately pushing against expectations, creating a night much more unpredictable than what I had anticipated.

The hosting was a large part of that unpredictability. I thought the host Conan O'Brien was wonderful, as

he was both sharp and confident. However, some of the pacing felt uneven, and some jokes landed while others didn't. One of Conan's most successful jokes was a joke about tightening security, directly jabbing at Timothée Chalamet's controversial comments about opera and ballet. However, one joke that didn't land was his joke about films like "Hamnet" and "Bugonia" sounding like lunch meats. The hosting and jokes did not make the ceremony worse, but it didn't make it better either.

"Conan O'Brien is a great comedian," said senior Rory Thomsen. "There were some pretty good jokes and he wasn't afraid to poke fun at some of the attendees, [but] a lot of [his] speeches were pretty long."

However, O'Brien's personality did help keep the show from dragging on even more. I thought his style was what the ceremony needed to stay afloat.

"He's sharp, self-deprecating," said sophomore Mohan Sultur. "You need that kind of energy to survive a four-hour broadcast without losing your mind."

I was pleasantly surprised with Michael B. Jordan's win for Best Actor with "Sinners." I thought Timothée Chalamet had all but locked the award up, so I was initially caught off guard. But the more I thought about Jordan's win, the more it felt completely right. After years

of being overlooked for his career-defining performances, this win felt like the industry finally acknowledged his impact on modern cinema. Michael B. Jordan's acceptance speech turned what initially felt like an upset into one of the most deserved and memorable moments of the night.

"Michael B. Jordan finally holding that Oscar [and] the standing ovation felt so earned," Sultur said. "It wasn't just a win for the movie. It felt like a win for his whole career."

There were also other exciting upsets, such as Amy Madigan's Supporting Actress win for "Weapons." It marked a rare historic recognition of a horror performance. However, I felt like she wasn't on screen enough to develop a high-caliber performance and this was

also the movie's only nomination. It made me wonder whether the Academy was rewarding the performance itself or the cultural moment around it. There were also several brutal snubs, like when front-runner Delroy Lindo in "Sinners" lost to Sean Penn in "One Battle After Another" for Best Supporting Actor. I thought that Lindo's character was more layered and grounded in the story of his film, while Penn was more one-dimensional and did not hit as hard. Another brutal snub was with "Marty Supreme," which entered the night with nine nominations, and walked away with zero wins, joining the list of worst shutouts in Oscar history. I felt that this highlighted the Academy's distaste for the unlikable antihero, despite the greatness of the film itself.

"'Marty Supreme' not winning anything was a bit of a shock," Thomsen said. "It had some pretty incredible cinematography and performances ... and I would have liked to see it win something."

One overlooked contender was "Hamnet." Despite entering the night with five major nominations, it walked away with a single win for Best Actress, reflecting a broader trend of the Academy favoring spectacle over subtlety.

"'Hamnet' getting zero love in the big categories, it's devastating," Sultur said. "It felt like the Academy got blinded by 'One Battle After Another' hype and forgot that other movies actually exist."

There were moments that made the night feel unscripted, historic and celebratory instead of a heavy tension of the awards race. Autumn Durald Arkapaw's historic win for Best Cinematography, becoming the first woman ever to win the category, earned one of the loudest reactions of the night. Her work was visually stunning, and this win felt like a win for the entire industry. At the same time, the seventh tie in Oscar history happened in the Live Action Short category between "The Singers" and "Two People Exchanging Saliva."

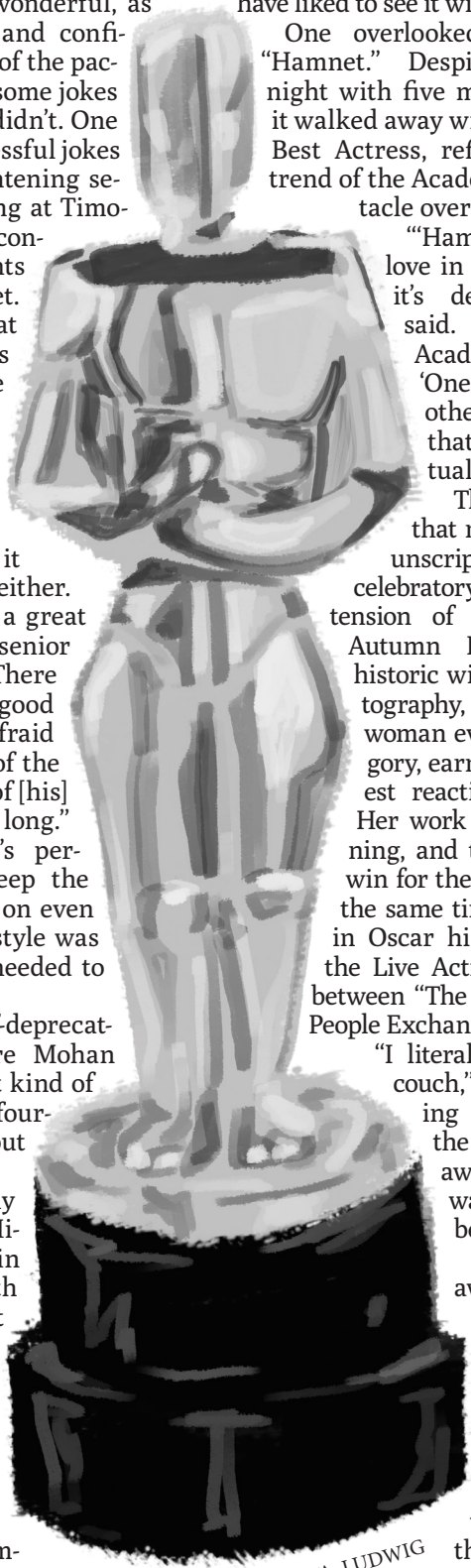
"I literally jumped off my couch," Sultur said. "Seeing two winners on the stage for the same award is so rare. It was pure chaos in the best way."

However, one awkward moment occurred when "KPop Demon Hunters" won Best Original Song, as the production team cut off the speech and went straight to the music. I felt this was very disrespectful;

this was a technical blunder that traded a meaningful global milestone, and what could've been the most memorable speech, for five extra seconds of broadcast time.

"Cutting off 'KPop Demon Hunters' was so painful," Sultur said. "You ... invite a global sensation, then play the wrap-it-up music 30 seconds into a historic speech."

By the end of the night, I realized my expectations for the Oscars had shifted. I don't watch hoping the Academy will reflect my own tastes, I watch to see what the industry chooses to celebrate. Even when I disagree with the results, I'm still drawn in by the spectacle, the emotion and the stories behind each moment that is enough to keep us talking the next day.



EVA LUDWIG



MADELINE ALLEN

# A cashless generation

Cayleigh Wilson  
FEATURES WRITER

After a long day, a trip to the vending machine can feel necessary. Whether it's a bag of Sun Chips or a pack of Pop-Tarts, many students don't think twice before paying for a treat. Within seconds, the snack drops. No cash exits a wallet, and no coins clatter. There is a brief digital confirmation, and the transaction is complete. Moments like these are so common that they rarely invoke reflection, yet they represent a major shift in how people experience money.

Money appears in daily life so frequently that its nature is often glazed over. At its core, money only "works" because people collectively agree that it has value. Like numbers, it's an abstract concept, something intangible that exists because society believes in it.

"For a long time, people used to barter for things, meaning trading one thing for another," said Jon Felder, Economics and Advanced Standing Modern World History teacher. "And there were commodity monies, like gold or other precious metals or items that were accepted for money. But then people realized over time that carrying a bunch of gold around was very inconvenient, whereas paper and coins are really portable."

Money has taken on different forms, but the evolution highlights the fact that money has never been about the physical object itself, but about trust and shared belief. That shared belief underlies modern currency, even as its form changes. Today, the dramatic shift from cash to digital money marks a transformation in how people interact with value. Students at Aragon use platforms like Venmo and Apple Pay daily, often without thinking about the implications. Transactions that once required physical exchange now happen instantly and invisibly.

"I don't check my digital cash often enough [to know] the amount of money that I have," said senior Cameron Ngai. "Even though it's a little weird not knowing how much cash I have on a daily basis in my wallet it's maybe more convenient to have it all on an app."

Many agree that digital balances bring an aspect of convenience to receiving or spending money, but without the tactile experience of holding cash, money becomes less real. This tension between convenience and awareness defines the modern relationship with money. But despite its convenience, digital currency is not universally embraced.

"I dislike that credit card companies gouge vendors with three to four percent fees per transaction," said Kris Reiss, Compressed Math 2 and Computer Science teacher. "For small transactions, it ends up being more than three percent, so when I go to the farmers market, which I go to every weekend, you have awesome small vendors, and I carry cash, so I can just give them cash."

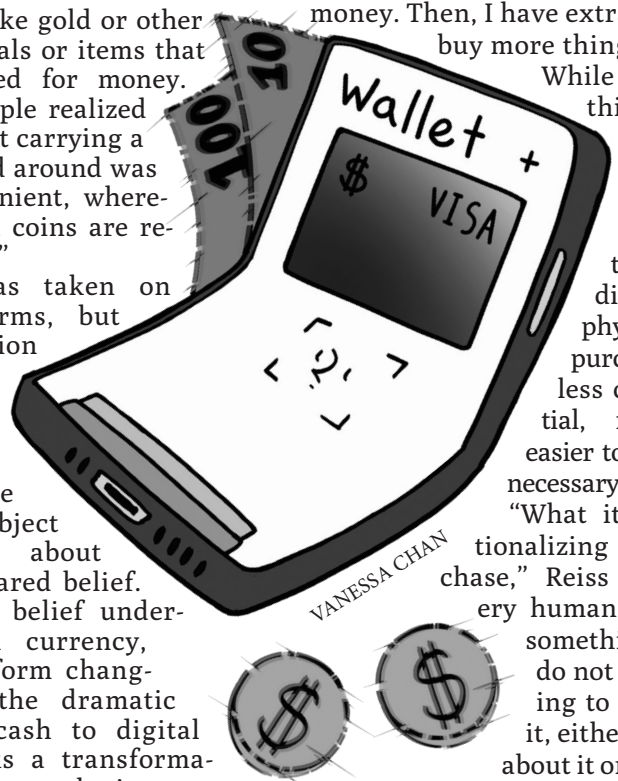
The psychological effects of digital currency extend beyond simple awareness. When money becomes invisible, consumer behavior changes. In recent years, a phenomenon jokingly referred to as "girl math" has become popular. Girl math includes behaviors such as thinking something is basically free if it's under a certain price, or justifying purchases as a "reward."

"I would define girl math as: If you buy something, it doesn't actually count as you buying anything," said sophomore Donya Paz. "For example, if I buy something and return it, then I pretty much save money. Then, I have extra money to buy more things."

While humorous, this mindset reveals a deeper pattern. Without the immediate loss of physical cash, purchases feel less consequential, making it easier to justify unnecessary spending. "What it is, is rationalizing your purchase," Reiss said. "Every human that buys something they do not need is going to rationalize it, either not think about it or give some pseudo logic."

Beyond humor, these habits reflect a shift in how people perceive spending. When payments are reduced to "just" a tap, the connection between purchase and financial loss becomes less immediate. Without the physical exchange of cash, the cost of spending feels more abstract, making it easier to justify purchases and, over time, increasing the likelihood of overspending.

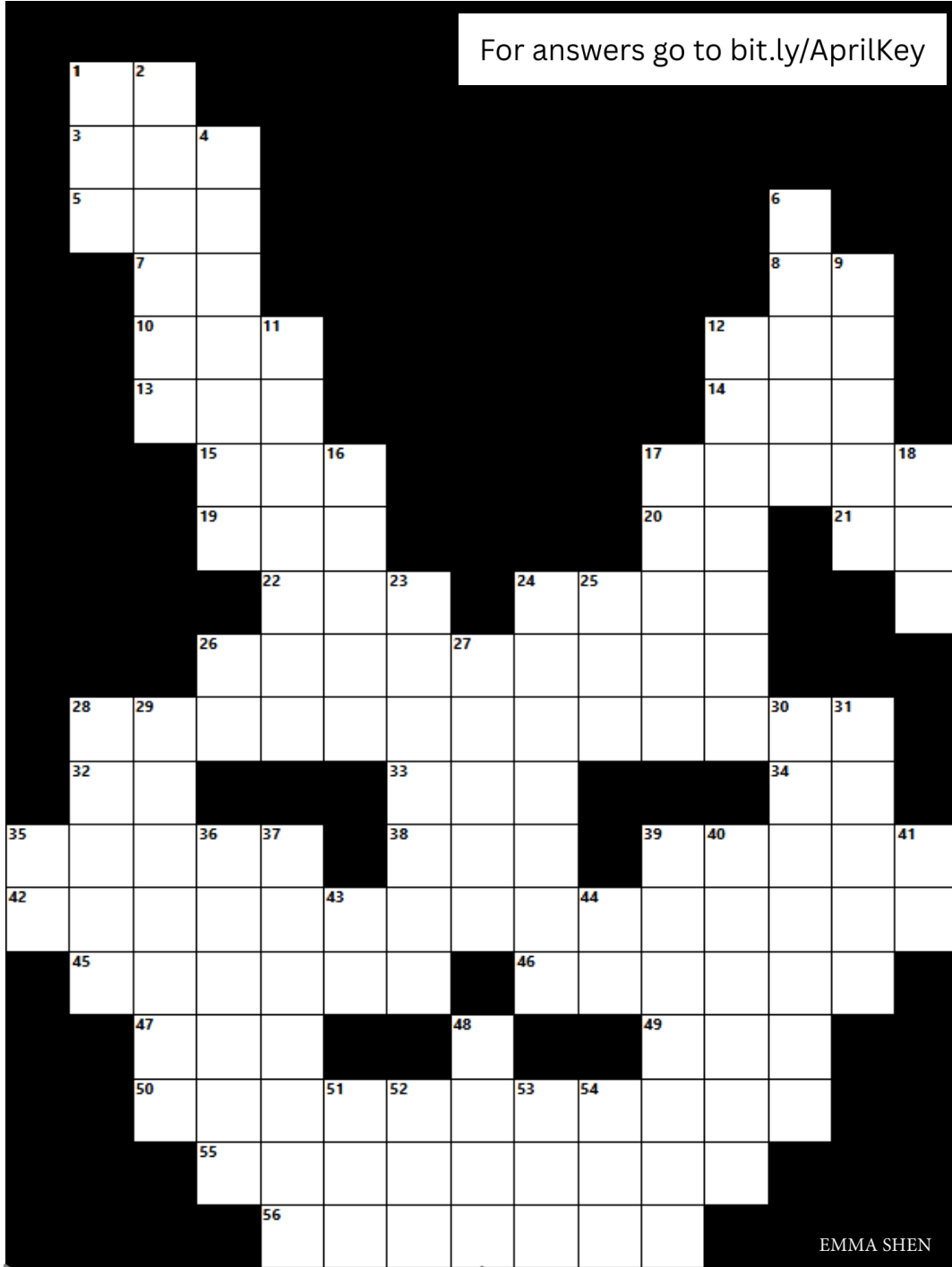
Returning to the vending machine, the ease of a digital payment masks the complexity behind it. Even though money may no longer be something students willingly hold in their pockets, it continues to shape their choices, opportunities and priorities. Money works not because of what it is, but because of what people believe it to be, and that belief remains as powerful as ever.



VANESSA CHAN

# A HOP, SKIP AND A JUMP

For answers go to [bit.ly/AprilKey](http://bit.ly/AprilKey)



EMMA SHEN

## ACROSS

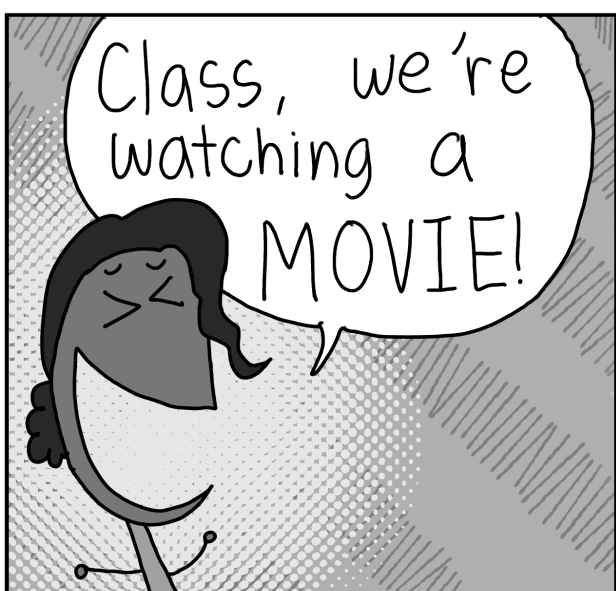
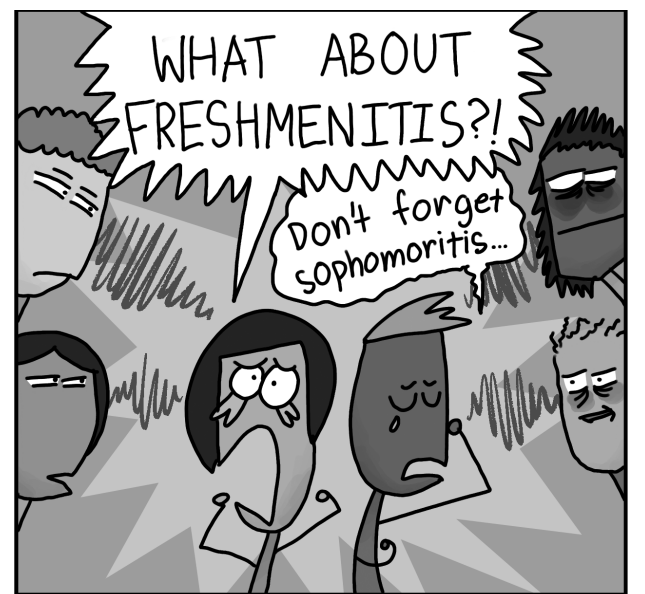
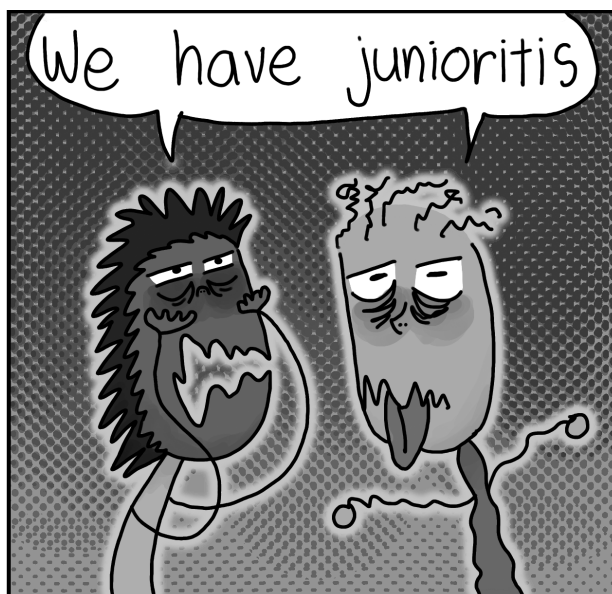
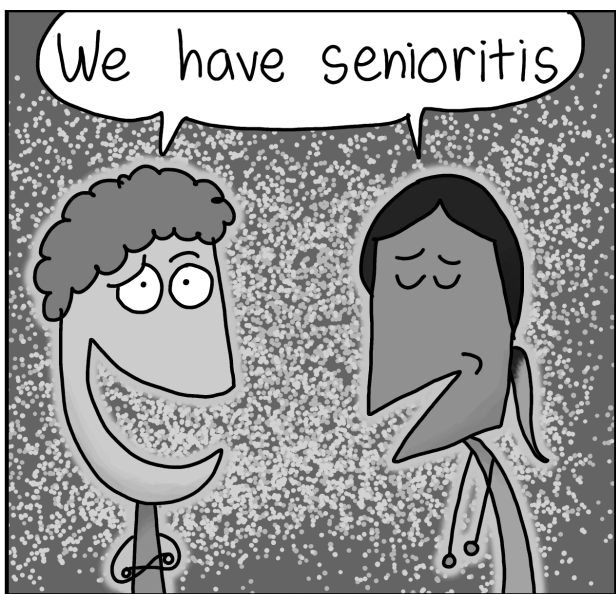
1. Cool air
3. Prices of this commodity are rising due to the war with Iran (see page 4)
5. Night before
7. Early action
8. When years counted down instead of up
10. Aragon's central student government, composed of 4
12. \_\_\_-doo magic
13. Black, sticky substance
14. To be down with 6D or 9D, for example. Cough cough.
15. Parking place
17. To no \_\_\_
19. A pair
20. District attorney
21. Colorado
22. The Big Apple

24. Banana covering
26. Failed to follow a rule
28. The California \_\_\_ race takes place on Nov. 3
32. Home to Chicago, abbr.
33. Trinity Broadcasting Network, abbreviated
34. The Golden State, abbr.
35. Cake tier
38. Affirmation, no -y
39. Dilly-\_\_\_
42. Rio de Janeiro, Fade, Lo-res, for example
45. Casual top
46. Earlet
47. Suffix with Euclid-
49. Aunt, in Spanish
50. Candy with chocolate, caramel and peanuts
55. Personality test with nine types
56. Opposite of goes home, idiomatically

## DOWN

1. To get older
2. Word of warning
4. Condiment found in 48D
6. Virus named after an African river
9. Infant ailment
11. Fudgy chocolate dessert
12. Famous composer of "The Four Seasons"
16. \_\_\_-Us, popular store for kids
17. Doe, \_\_\_
18. Cured salmon for bagels
23. To twist
24. Honey, sweetheart or darling, for example
25. Yoruba festival featuring costumed masquerades
26. Decibel, abbreviated
27. Sweet bread with Jewish origins
28. SF baseball player

29. \_\_\_ Grant, 18th U.S. President
30. Common knee injury for athletes
31. French surname meaning "the little one"
35. Lithium
36. Natural gas component
37. It's \_\_\_ cats and dogs!
39. Teenage \_\_\_ by Wheatus
40. And \_\_\_ is a man, opening lyric of "Sweater Weather"
41. Year, abbreviated
43. Sound of growling
44. Comes after Mi and before So
48. Large bodies of water
51. Chief of Naval Operations
52. Lee Kum \_\_\_, brand for Asian sauces
53. Additive color material
54. \_\_\_ Lanka, country in South Asia



# Opinion: NFL athletes are paid the right amount

Luke Trimble  
SPORTS WRITER

Whether you follow sports or not, you probably see the headlines every few months: NFL athletes signing record breaking contracts for colossal sums of money. However, these tremendous amounts of cash leave many people wondering: should we be awarding these substantial salaries to people who play football for a living? While many see them as a waste of money, NFL salaries are deserved by the players who receive them.

The Dallas Cowboys' Dak Prescott will take home \$40 million this year as the signee of a four-year, \$240 million contract that tops the NFL history books as the largest deal by annual value since the league was founded.

While the annual amounts of NFL contracts dwarf the yearly salaries of the average U.S. worker, the number of paydays a player sees is much lower. The average NFL career is a short 3.3-years-long, according to the NFL Players' Association. The minimum rookie contract for a player is \$885,000, which increases to \$1.075 million in the player's second year if they are re-signed. According to *Over The Cap*, only around 56% of NFL players return for a second year, and only 35% are around for three.

Additionally, 60% of NFL players were on minimum-

paying contracts in 2020 according to ESPN, which means the majority of players weren't making nearly as much as the top-paid athletes.

"What do you want to pay them, \$50,000 a year?" said senior Lev Peretz. "You have to set them up one way or another. Even ... the [usual] career length of notable players is only seven or eight years. That's ... a rookie contract, maybe their big extension, and then they're

out of the league."

In addition, high salaries can often mean high taxes.

"There's factors that people don't

realize," said Jabari Issa, Aragon strength and conditioning coach and former NFL player.

"[For example] taxes, depending on what state you're in. If you played in California ... for three years, about 40 to 50% ... is taken away from [your] salary ... And then you also have to take account for their agents, who take an-

other 3%, and then just cost of living."

With players entering the league through the draft, they have no way to control where they want to work unless they reach free agency and receive offers from multiple teams. A player drafted to one of three California teams would face the highest income tax in the U.S., according to Intuit TurboTax, as well as the second highest cost of living in the U.S., per the World Population Review. Conversely, a player drafted to the Indianapolis Colts would face the third-lowest income tax and eleventh-lowest cost of living in the country. For players forced to spend their whole careers in expensive states such as California or New York, each of which has three teams, paydays can seem much larger than they truly are.

In addition, an NFL career comes with risks, which justifies the high salaries due to the included possibility of lifetime medical costs. In a study by Boston University of 376 former NFL players in 2023, 91.7% were found to have Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. According to the Mayo Clinic, CTE is a degenerative brain disease, meaning it causes the death of nerve cells

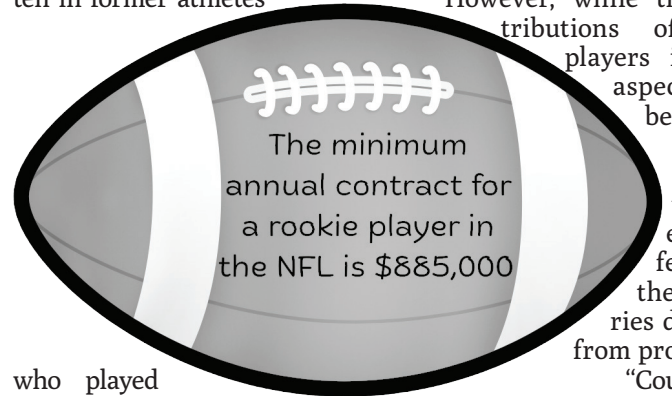
in the brain, resulting from recurring head injuries. It can cause aggression, mood changes, cognitive impairment and memory loss. CTE is found often in former athletes

could be paying our teachers more, we could be paying our police officers more when they're the ones who are actually contributing to society."

However, while the contributions of NFL players in that aspect may be small compared to other professions, their salaries do come from profits.

"Could that money be going towards something else? Absolutely," Issa said. "But it's not like it's a government job ... [It's] a result [of] fans paying that kind of money. Sponsors, TV [channels] and businesses are [also] paying that kind of money to have [streaming rights and] ads."

No matter how fair or logical anyone thinks the contracts given to NFL players are, they are the ones who bring the money into the league. The NFL made \$23 billion in the 2024 to 2025 fiscal year, 48.8% of which goes to the players per the current Collective Bargaining Agreement. None of that money would have been generated without players putting their bodies on the line to create the league's product. The players should take their fair share of the league's revenue, and their contracts rightfully reflect that.



who played contact sports such as boxing or football.

"The [former] quarterback for the Bears, [Jim McMahon], he won all these championships, but now he can't even really function as an adult without his wife's supervision," Issa said. "He can't drive, he can't do anything."

McMahon was diagnosed with early-onset dementia in 2012 at 66.

However, outside of whether players are deserving of their salaries, many find the biggest issue with paying NFL players so much money to be that their salaries could be better spent in ways more beneficial to the world.

"What they're doing for society is not that significant in making a positive impact," said freshman Henry Hermansson. "We could be paying our firefighters more, we

# Opinion: Olympic skier Eileen Gu shouldn't represent China

Madeleine Sah  
FEATURES WRITER

More than 99% of Eileen Gu's estimated \$23 million in annual earnings comes from endorsements, while only about \$100,000 comes from skiing prizes. That gap is hard to ignore — and it's also the center of why her decision to compete for China, rather than the U.S., in the Olympics continues to draw so much attention.

Gu was born and raised in the U.S. and initially competed for the U.S. before switching to represent China at age 15 in June 2019. Athletes switching the country they represent isn't new, but in this case, the scale of what followed makes it feel different.

Before the switch, her earnings looked like those of a typical rising winter athlete, built mostly on competition and smaller sponsorships. After, everything changed.

By 2021, even before the Beijing Winter Olympics, her annual earnings had already exceeded \$15 million, largely from Chinese endorsement deals. By 2025, that number had climbed to about \$23 million, placing her among the highest-paid female athletes in the world — despite competing in a sport where prize money remains relatively low.

That contrast is what raises questions. When nearly all of an athlete's income comes

from branding tied to a specific country, it becomes difficult to separate financial opportunity from the decision of who to represent.

Not everyone sees it in that way.

"I think it is okay, because people switch teams all the time," said freshman Kylie Huang.

From that perspective, money is simply part of the reality athletes face.

"We all need money," Huang said. "There's nothing wrong with that ... If you feel like your hard work isn't being appreciated enough, I think it's the right choice to go somewhere else where you will be appreciated."

That logic is understandable. Elite athletes have a short window, and the pressure to secure long-term stability is real.

But that reasoning starts to shift when applied to the Olympics as a whole. If representing a country becomes something athletes choose based on market size and endorsement potential, the meaning of the Olympics begins to change. Instead of reflecting identity and national pride, it risks becoming

a platform of mercenary motives. When representation becomes flexible, meaning starts to blur.

Additionally, Olympic athletes operate within a narrow window — often peaking in their late teens or early twenties and competing in only one or two Olympic cycles, about four to eight years total. In that time, sponsorships and endorsements often become the primary way to secure long-term financial stability.

But in Gu's case, the imbalance is unusually large. Earning roughly \$23 million a year, with only about \$100,000 coming from skiing, places far more weight on branding than on performance. That gap is what fuels criticism and makes her decision feel less about identity and more about opportunity.

At a certain point, it stops being just a personal choice. When representing a country can multiply an athlete's income by tens of millions of dollars, it raises a larger question about what international competition is supposed to represent.

"I wish she represented her [American] identity with pride, but I do understand ... she might take the other opportunity [with China]," said freshman Natcha Khachondechakul.

Is it still about national pride — or is it becoming a business decision?

Additional reporting suggests the financial incentives extended beyond endorsements. A leaked 2025 budget from the Beijing Municipal Sports Bureau indicated that Gu and another U.S.-born athlete received roughly \$14 million over three years to support Olympic performance. Although the document was later altered and their names removed, it added to criticism that money played a significant role in her decision.

At the same time, Gu's position allowed her to tap into opportunities few athletes ever have. With connections to both the U.S. and China, she became one of the most recognizable figures in Chinese sports marketing. China's massive consumer market and the visibility of the Beijing Olympics created a level of exposure rarely available to winter athletes competing solely for the U.S.

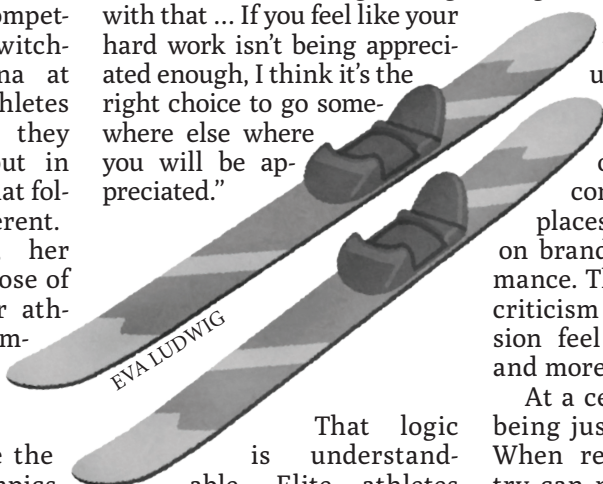
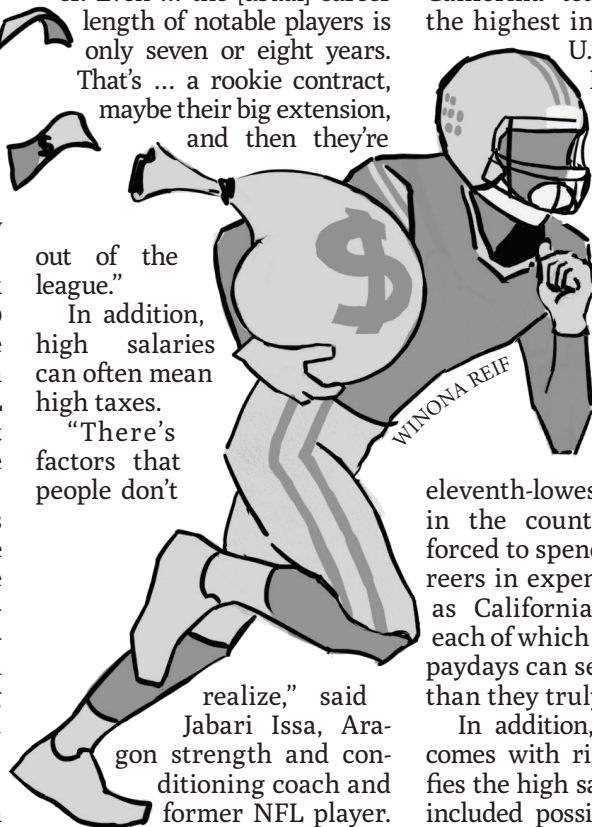
Furthermore, Gu has occasionally spoken critically about the U.S. while representing China on the global stage, garnering more criticism to her decision. In inter-

views and public appearances around the Beijing Olympics, she emphasized feeling connected to China while pointing out issues in the U.S., which some critics viewed as contradictory given

that she was born, raised and trained in America.

The Olympics have long been framed as a competition built on national pride — a rare moment where athletes represent something bigger than themselves. When an athlete can vastly multiply their income by changing which country they represent, the lines between identity, opportunity and business begin to blur and the meaning of the Olympics weakens.

If representing a country can be shaped by money, then it's no longer really about identity at all.



# MJ OR LEBRON: WHO'S THE GOAT OF BASKETBALL?

## LEBRON JAMES

Oliver Levitt  
FEATURES WRITER

As LeBron James completes his 23rd season in the NBA and begins approaching an end to the longest career of all-time, his status as the greatest player of all time remains one that continues to be challenged by the legacy of Michael Jordan, despite James's immense accomplishments.

Before one can truly decide on James' status as the greatest basketball player in history, the definition of greatness must first be defined under some set of factors. In sports, greatness can often be described as sustained, untouchable dominance in their area.

"What I think defines the best player of all time is probably the consistency of how they're playing for however many years," said junior Ethan Smith. "James' played in the NBA longer [than anyone] and been very successful at all [stages of his career]."

James exemplifies this definition of greatness to a tee. When it comes to sustained dominance, James' individual achievements are unmatched: holding the record for most points scored, receiving MVP votes in a record-setting 20 seasons, scoring 10 or more points in his 1,297 straight game that is called "LeStreak," and recently achieving the most wins ever last month. James has also effectively played more high-level basketball than any player ever, holding records for the most seasons played, most minutes played and most all-star appearances.

Whereas other all-time great scorers, like Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Karl Malone and Michael Jordan, made it to the top due to their assists to other star players, James scores and simultaneously acts as the superstar playmaker for his teams, ranking number four in all-time assists.

"James also brings up his teammates," said senior Keith Matye. "He's more of a team-first player. Obviously he's the all-time leading scorer [so] he can score whenever he wants. But he's got elite court vision. His basketball IQ is through the roof."

Although Jordan may have the famed six championships and undefeated finals record, his career is marked by years and years of failure before and after the stars aligned for six fleeting years of glory. It took Jordan seven years to make his first finals appearance, while James was already bringing a team without any co-all-stars to the finals by his fourth season in the league. Though Jordan may have his undefeated finals record, it comes at the caveat of only making the finals six times and with one team. James made the finals ten times across three separate teams, going to back-to-back finals for eight years while changing teams in the middle. Although James didn't win every series, his ability to take weak teams to the finals is something never reflected in Jordan's legacy.

"[Jordan] won the finals six years, [but] those weren't even in a row, and he was carried," said senior Charles Wilcox.

THE AKRON HAMMER...



COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

"He was hard-carried by some of the greatest basketball players ever like Dennis Rodman, Steve Kerr and Scottie Pippen. James made the finals consecutively for so many years with bums on his team ... I don't even know who was on his team because that's how sorry some of those teams were."

Jordan didn't make a single finals run without his incredibly talented, hall of fame forward Scottie Pippen by his side. In fact, when Jordan left the Bulls to pursue a career in baseball, his Bulls teammates managed to secure a record of 55-27 — only two wins fewer than with him the previous year — and make a playoff run into the Conference Semifinals. Meanwhile, both times James left the Cavaliers — teams he had previously taken to the finals — their team plummeted to a record of 19-63. James' teams have relied upon him far more than Jordan's Bulls, which was the only team where Jordan found any success.

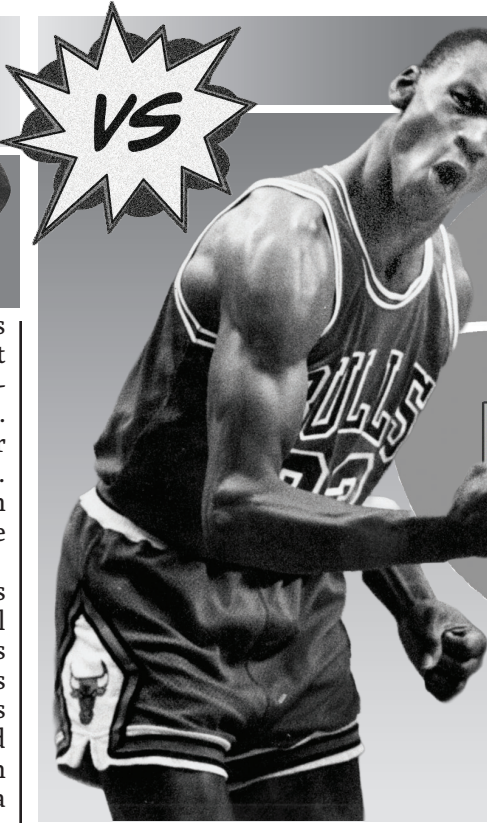
"He's a real game changer and you could see that on multiple teams," Matye said. "He's won with the Lakers. He won with Miami. He won with Cleveland. Obviously some teams are better than others, but Jordan just didn't have that longevity. He did all of [his winning with] the Bulls. The Bulls had [all-time legend] Scottie Pippen ... When James won, he had nobody around."

Kevin Love was [often] the second option [in his finals runs]. That's not great. James really carried a team of 'nobodies' until the finals and won, and I think that really shows the type of player he is."

While some push back on James for his weaker win percentage in the finals, Jordan's finals competition simply pales in comparison to James'. Besides his one victory against Magic Johnson, Jordan's competition doesn't consist of any players in ESPN's top 20 of all time, with his hardest competition being Charles Barkley's Suns, Karl Malone's Jazz and Gary Payton's SuperSonics. James, on the other hand, faced superteams — Tim Duncan's Spurs, Kevin Durant's Thunder and Stephen Curry's Warriors. In fact, in order to become a hometown hero in Cleveland, James had to take down the 73-9 Warriors, the very team that surpassed Jordan's Bulls as the winningest team of all time.

"James beat the 2016 Warriors when they were down 1-3," Wilcox said. "Michael Jordan has never played a team as complete as that Warriors team."

Though the GOAT debate in the NBA will likely remain an unending argument comparing Jordan's finals supremacy and James' incredible longevity, James sustained his dominance over a far greater period, scored while being a playmaker, led far weaker teams than Jordan and faced far tougher competition in the finals, forming his case as the greatest basketball player of all time.



MICHAEL

FACES OFF AGAINST HIS AIRNESS!!!

Max Feng  
SPORTS WRITER

It's an age-old debate. Who's the best basketball player to ever play the game? Names like Kobe Bryant, Tim Duncan, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Bill Russell often float around. But the most hotly debated names are Michael Jordan and LeBron James.

Michael Jordan is the greatest of all time. I don't discount James, but Jordan is better because of how he brought the game to the public, his legacy and his overall ability to clutch in the heat of the moment. Jordan won more in a shorter time than James, highlighting his greater skill in the sport.

"Michael Jordan's the best," said freshman Mathis Poon. "He introduced the game to everyone ... [and his] way of playing was a lot more revolutionary, like his midrange game."

Both Jordan and LeBron had their respective peaks; for Jordan, his statistical prime is widely considered to be his 1987-88 season and for James, it was in 2012-13. The respective stats in these seasons are this: in 1987-88, Jordan averaged 35 points, 1.6 blocks, 3.2 steals, 5.9 assists, and 5.5 total rebounds (1.7 offensively and 3.8 defensively), according to Basketball Reference. He was the most valuable player, defensive player of the year, All-Star, All-NBA first team and All-defensive first team. In 2012-13, James averaged 26.8 points, 0.9 blocks, 1.7 steals, 7.3 assists and 8.1 total rebounds (6.8 defensively and 1.3 offensively). That year, he won the finals, was named the Most Valuable Player, or MVP, finals MVP, runner up for Defensive Player of the Year, All-Star, All-NBA first team and All-Defensive first team.

Jordan's individual statistics were arguably far more impressive during this period, averaging almost ten more points and an extra block and steal. However, James was more offensively versatile compared to Jordan, having almost three rebounds and an assist extra per game compared to Jordan. James also had more to show for it, winning the finals compared to Jordan's failure to make it.

Some would say that James is still a better player.

"James elevates his teams," said freshman Rohan Gupta. "Jordan doesn't do that and James' proven he can."

However, two of James' four finals wins came when he was on a super-team with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh and one was in the Covid-19 bubble with Anthony Davis, which many

say wasn't a true championship. The final was albeit quite impressive, effectively reverse sweeping the Warriors dynasty in their prime. Though this is true, Jordan, even after his short retirement, went on to win the second of two three-peats in 1996-98. The first was in 1991-93. He also won 2 MVPs, 3 Finals MVPs and All NBA/Defensive first teams. This proves Jordan's consistency and superior ability to lead his team. His continued dominance is striking in a way that no other player can claim similarly.

"The difference between Jordan and LeBron playing is that, when Jordan played, he played by himself," said freshman Jordan de Perio. "He made his superteam [while] LeBron joined one to get good."

Despite this, some feel James is a better individual player.

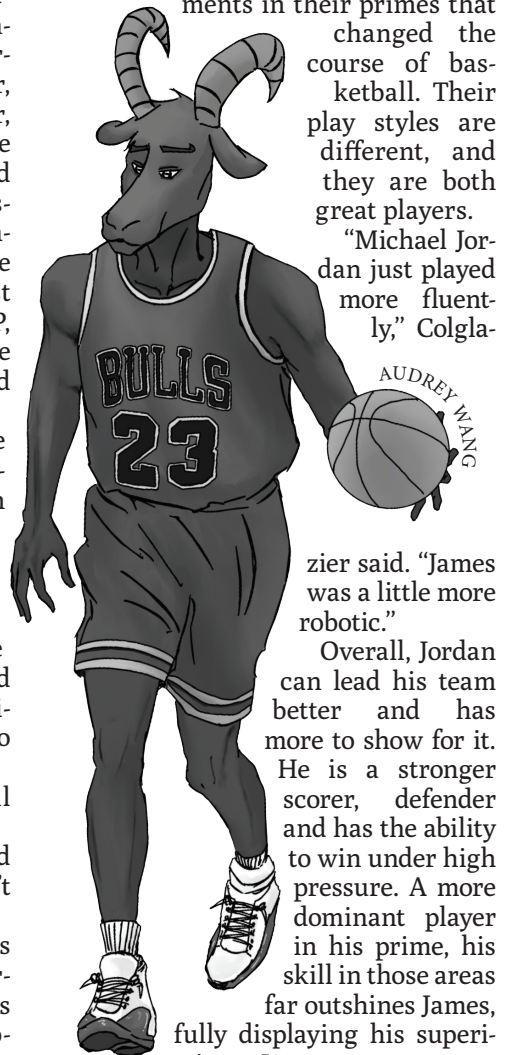
"I think James would win one on one," said freshman Clark Colglazier. "But Michael Jordan is a better team player."

One of the biggest stats people look at when determining the greatest player of all time in basketball is finals appearances and wins. James has many more appearances compared to Jordan, with a total of ten compared to Jordan's six. Although this is true, Jordan was better in the clutch, as he was undefeated in the finals as opposed to James' six losses.

Both players had crazy accomplishments in their primes that changed the course of basketball. Their play styles are different, and they are both great players.

"Michael Jordan just played more fluently," Colglazier said. "James was a little more robotic."

Overall, Jordan can lead his team better and has more to show for it. He is a stronger scorer, defender and has the ability to win under high pressure. A more dominant player in his prime, his skill in those areas far outshines James, fully displaying his superiority to James.



JORDAN

# Varsity baseball comeback victory against Lincoln

Adya Tewari  
SPORTS WRITER

On March 20, the Aragon Dons varsity baseball team defeated the Lincoln Mustangs (7-8), extending their winning streak to three games in a thrilling comeback victory, 4-3.

Early in the game, the Dons struggled to put runs on the board. Heading into the sixth inning, things looked bleak with Aragon down 0-3 and struggling to find the strike zone. However, Aragon was able to overcome these persistent challenges.

"This team fights until the last out no matter what," said junior and catcher Saxon Lucia. "Up and

down the roster everyone contributes and puts in the work."

The sixth inning proved to be the turning point the Dons needed. With runners on first and second, senior and shortstop Keith Matye hit an RBI single to right field, which put Aragon on the board at 1-3.

Following Matye, junior and center fielder Nick Mazzola stepped up and delivered a two-RBI single to right field, tying the game at 3-3.

"Nick has been our best player so far this year, but he's out tonight with a bit of an injury," said head coach John Rally. "We knew that we'd pinch hit him if the right opportunity arose in the game, and he stepped in and had the biggest hit of the night."

The Dons' defense also came through, especially during the top of the seventh inning, delivering

a double play and ensuring the Mustangs did not take the lead. Rally credited senior and third baseman Brandon Potter, who was filling in at second base, for this play.

"Potter we're asking to play second base, who's usually at third base for us," Rally said. "And he made the play of his high school career."

Matye then sealed the win with a walk-off hit in the bottom of the seventh, giving Aragon the 4-3 victory. Matye, who went 1 for 3 at-bats with one RBI, reflected on what the team still has to build on as the season progresses.

"I think our hitting could be better," Matye said. "We're just starting to find our groove, but we need to hit a lot better than we did."

On the mound, junior and starting pitcher Alex Gosselin pitched for four out of the seven innings.

"Alex was able to give us four innings of solid work and gave us a shot," Matye said.

Lucia echoed the same praise.

"Alex pitched really well, as per usual," Lucia said. "We can always count on him to grind out some innings whether he has his stuff that day or not."

In addition to the game, the team spirit influences the players.

"We have such a good group of guys who are also really fun to be around," Matye said. "I've seen a lot of improvement in everyone, and I think that's really from their work ethic and their commitment."

Confidence is an important factor in the team's performance.

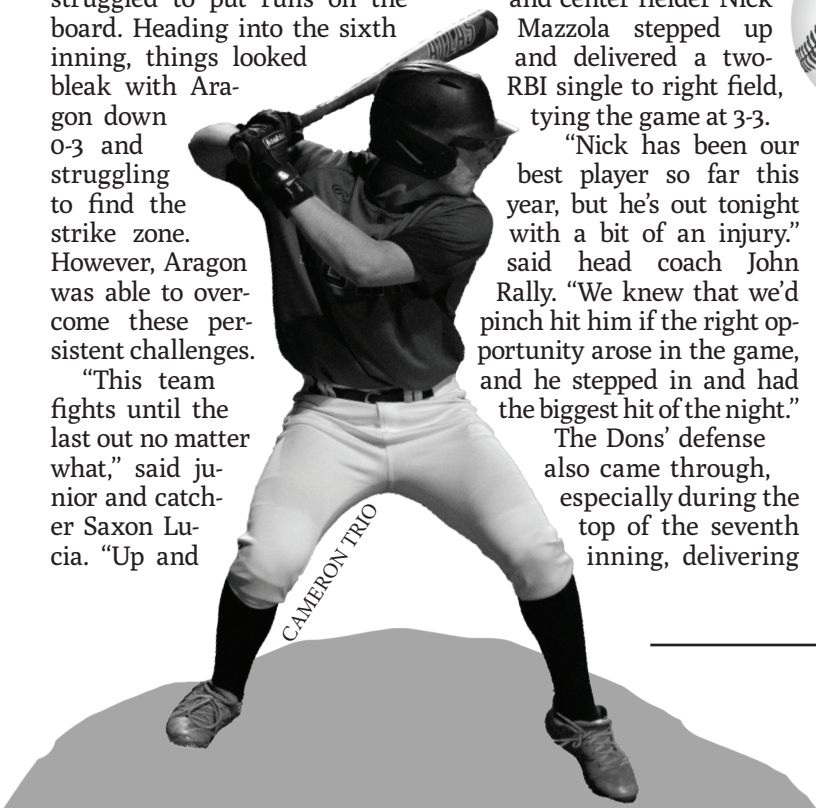
"The performance today comes from making sure the guys that did things well

tonight have that reinforced back to them and build their confidence that way," Rally said. "It's really important that when we get out and practice tomorrow, that we continue to praise them for the things they did well today."

The victory pushed Aragon's record to 5-3, while dropping Lincoln's to 2-6. With league play rapidly approaching, Rally is optimistic about his team's momentum.

"This is exactly the type of game you're looking for before you hit league," Rally said. "We had a tough year last year, and having an over .500 preseason gives the guys a lot of momentum and confidence going in."

Now with a record of 9-4, the Dons will play their next game on April 16 against Terra Nova at home.



Alex Choy  
SPORTS WRITER

With the introduction of the Automated Ball-Strike Challenge System to the MLB, the world of baseball is waist-deep in transition to a new era, spearheaded by an impending reliance on technology.

The new system brought many significant changes, some radical and even unprecedented; for the first time in MLB history, calls can officially be challenged by players, assisted by an automated system capable of instant decision-making.

The ABS system was developed as a result of fan complaints regarding inaccurate umpire calls; the first prototype of the system, which involved fully automated calls but did not include challenges, was tested for the first time in a live game environment at the 2019 Atlantic League All-Star game.

Over the next few years, various improved models underwent testing in minor leagues, but it wasn't until 2022 that the current challenge format emerged as an alternative to fully automated decisions, sprouting from public inclination towards the retention of human authenticity that existed not only in baseball but across all scopes of athletics.

"You don't want to have something that becomes super [boring to watch]," said varsity baseball coach John Rally. "Debating with officials [and] feeling emotion ... is part of the fan

experience and sports [as a whole] ... So the blend of still having umpires [make calls], but with the right to overrule them, is a good, natural transition."

By June 2025, the MLB officially adopted the challenge format for the upcoming season, opting for a middle ground between human and automated umpiring systems.

The final revised version of the system, which debuted in the MLB this season, uses a 12-camera Hawk-Eye system to produce a 3D graphic of pitches in real time. This, however, will only be used to check the validity of challenges, not to make initial calls.

Challenges are to be made only by the pitcher, batter or catcher involved in the play, right after the call has been made and with absolutely no outside assistance — not from the dugout, other players or fans. Each team gets two opportunities per game, retained if correct, and if a team enters extra innings without remaining challenges, they will get an extra one per inning.

While undeniably groundbreaking in the context of MLB, these changes evolved directly from their predecessor, the Zone Evaluation system, which implemented a similar pitch-tracking strategy for evaluating the performance of umpires and their calls.

Recently, many sports administrations have been working towards the incorporation of automated officiating in

their respective sports, and it had seemed that baseball should follow suit, especially when there was proper technology and research to turn this vision into reality.

"When it was 1983 and your instant replay was ... the same shot [with] ... no zooming in [and] the frame [jumping] from here to there, ... then you [could] still have those debates," Rally said. "But the problem is that when you have the technology to clearly show what the right call is, you can't really [leave that out], right?"

Since its highly anticipated debut in the MLB, the system has received praise for balancing emotion and precise automation — the addition of challenges maintains the sense of tense uncertainty that keeps fans engaged, while the technology has vastly improved clarity and decisiveness in calls.

"If you watch football there are times where the replays [have] you hanging on the edge of the seat and times when ... it doesn't seem to be that consequential of a play," Rally said. "You're never really going to have that with baseball ... [The technology] is going to show you that either the ball caught the strike zone or it didn't ... so when you walk away from it, you're [clear on] what the [right call] was."

During the initial testing period, a prime concern had been that the newly added challeng-

es would slow the game down too much and lead to a choppy watching experience. However, this seemed not to be the case, as further development cut the entire decision announcement process down to 15 seconds, allowing for intense anticipation to build up.

"[Imagine a] situation where bases are loaded [in] the eighth inning, and it's a 3-2 count when ... a strike [is called]," said varsity baseball assistant head coach Michael Sweeney. "The hitter challenges it and the whole stadium's attention goes to the screen, and you have this 10 second build up to the [decisive] moment ... I like the intensity that [the challenge system] brings because ... baseball breathes, so there's room ... for the sport to [pause] for a little bit and it maintains that without holding the game back too much."

However, every rule change always comes at the expense of a certain group of individuals — in this case, skilled catchers who can frame pitches. The art of pitch framing relies on the human umpire's perception and

opinion, and so it seems that they'll be the ones who suffer most from the introduction of an automated system.

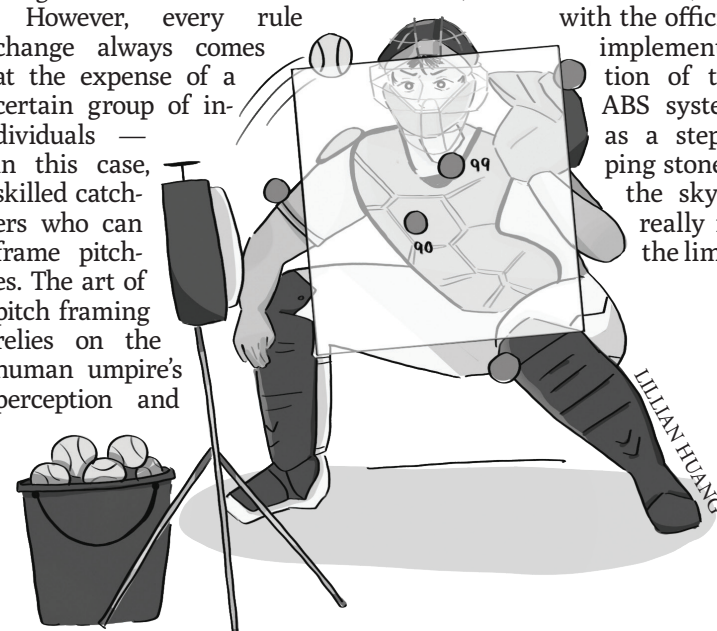
"The game's always evolving," said senior Brandon Potter. "Some things are going to be left behind and it seems like the defensive catchers are going to be the ones that are going to be negatively affected by this."

While first impressions of the new ABS system have generally been positive, a mysterious air still shrouds its long-term impact and what could lay in store for baseball in coming generations.

For many, this is an improvement, a confident stride forward; for others, it can be an uncomfortably substantial shift away from human authenticity.

These changes make it easier than ever to visualize a data-driven, mechanized future, and

with the official implementation of the ABS system as a stepping stone, the sky really is the limit.



Boys  
Tennis: 4/7  
against  
Burlingame  
2-5 loss

Badminton:  
4/7  
against Mills  
24-6 win

Swimming: 4/10  
v. Burlingame  
Girls Varsity: 76-85 loss  
Boys Varsity: 83-85 loss

Track: 4/4  
Woodside Sunshine  
Invite  
Girls Varsity: 88 (1st)  
Boys Varsity: 38 (4th)

Boys Lacrosse: 4/11  
against Scots Valley  
11-6 win

# Girls lacrosse beats Notre Dame and extends winning streak



IAN WANG



HALEY LAU

Phoebe Harger  
SPORTS WRITER

The Aragon girls lacrosse team continued its strong run in the West Bay Athletic League's Alpine Division, extending its winning streak to four games with an exciting 12-9 victory over Notre Dame Belmont on March 25.

The Notre Dame Tigers came out strong to start the first quarter, scoring three goals in the first five minutes. However, after a timeout called by head coach Ash Parham, the Dons regained momentum with a series of back-to-back goals.

Senior and attacker Phoebe Harger opened the scoring off an assist from junior and midfielder Elena Adractus, followed by a goal from sophomore and attacker Maeli Smyth and two from senior and midfielder Natalie Horwitz. With this offensive surge, Aragon took

a 4-3 lead moving into the second quarter.

The drastic turnaround occurred after Parham's advice.

"I knew we were overconfident going into the game," Parham said. "So I called a timeout and told them to settle down and to play fundamental lacrosse and bring more intensity to the game."

The second quarter opened with another goal from Horwitz just seconds after the draw, giving the Dons an early boost and building on their first-quarter momentum. Harger picked up another goal minutes later, then provided an assist to Smyth for her second goal of the game. In addition to the Dons' aggressive offensive, the team's defense held the Tigers to three goals in the second quarter. Aragon went into halftime winning 8-6.

Notre Dame came back strong in the third quarter, tying the game at 8-8 despite

multiple saves from senior and goalkeeper Peyton Varni. However, the Dons quickly regained control, as two consecutive goals from Adractus put them ahead 10-8 to end the quarter.

Notre Dame scored first in the fourth quarter, narrowing Aragon's lead to 10-9. Aragon answered with a burst of offense as senior and attacker Julia Chau, Harger and Horwitz scored three unanswered goals to seal a 12-9 win for the Dons. With the win, Aragon extended their winning streak to four games and held their position as second in the league.

Horwitz was a standout in the game, scoring four goals and helping the Dons to extend their early lead. Her performance against the Tigers earned her a nomination for the Mercury News Bay Area Girls Athlete of the Week. Harger also had a strong game, contributing several goals and assists to

continue as the team's leading goal scorer.

While Aragon's offensive dominance was apparent throughout the game, their success was also fueled by a strong defensive performance, particularly during key moments when Notre Dame threatened to close the score gap. Varni played a crucial role in the win, stepping up in the goal to make several important saves. As a whole, the team's defense worked together to shut down many of Notre Dame's offensive plays.

"[Varni] didn't think she'd have to play goalie at the beginning of the season, but she's done a really great job stepping up so far and she's made a huge impact in our defensive performance," Parham said. "It's easy to just focus on our goal scorers, but our defense has also been doing a really great job and they've re-

ally improved fundamentally throughout the season."

Looking ahead, the Dons are focused on maintaining their strong play and extending their winning record. With aspirations of making the playoffs for the first time in program history, the players are aiming to continue improving while preserving the lighthearted, team-centered environment that they value.

"We've always had fun together as a team and have taken things pretty lightly so I don't think anyone expected us to have this much success this season," Smyth said. "So for us, I think it's important that we keep getting better but we also make sure to enjoy the game and keep supporting each other."

With half of the season remaining, the Dons will look to build on their momentum and continue their winning record when they face Notre Dame again on April 17.

# Girls softball defeats Carlmont in three inning game

Sabina Gulati  
SPORTS WRITER

On March 24, the Aragon softball team (9-7) defeated Carlmont (3-12-1) in a home game that lasted just three innings before the high school mercy rule was invoked, ending 18-3.

The California Interscholastic Federation has a mercy rule stating that if any team has a 15-run lead after 3 or 4 innings, the game will automatically end.

Going into the match, the team knew they had a strong lineup assembled.

"If we do what we're capable of doing, we can definitely put up a good fight against [Carmont]," said freshman and first and third baseman Natalie Jia.

A win as dominant as this one required the entire team to put in both time and effort leading up to game day.

"We had good practices this week and last week," said senior and co-captain Elizabeth Magness. "I think we've been more focused recently."

As the home team, Aragon began the game fielding and played a steady half-inning of defense, with only one completed run for Carlmont, 1-0.

Switching sides, Aragon continued

"We had some really solid moments in offense and defense combined," said sophomore and center fielder Zoe Farrigan. "[And] every time they made an error, we took advantage of it."

As the second inning began, the team's defense proved their skill, performing a one-two-three inning, striking out Carlmont's first three batters, not letting any reach first base during their turn at bat.

"The first inning started off a little slow, maybe because we weren't communicating as much," said senior and co-captain Destiny Garcia. "The second inning [was] when we really locked in and started cheering, screaming and hollering."

At the start of Aragon's half-inning, Carlmont's defense took a major blow when they lost their pitcher to an injury.

"That was definitely a turning point, because they didn't have another pitcher [to replace] her," Farrigan said. "They [had] to put in a random girl."

Now at an advantage, the team capitalized on their second-inning turn at bat to extend their lead, continuously filling up bases and scoring runs.

"Our offense was pretty good," Farrigan said. "We were hitting singles, which is what matters — single after single — and that really got in their heads."

Aragon's offense then maintained a scoring rhythm for almost an hour. When the inning came to an end, the tally had reached 18-1.

"They hit really well today," said head coach Lizabeth Roscoe at the end of the game.

Since Aragon had created a large lead for themselves, the third inning was Carlmont's last chance to catch up, or else the game would finish early.

With persistence, Carlmont managed to bring home two more runs before Aragon's defense locked down on them, recording three outs. With that, the half-inning came to a close and the mercy rule was triggered, ending the game.

Regardless of the opponent, the team strives to keep their performance and attitude high in every match.

"Sometimes we'll face teams that are easier to beat, and sometimes we'll face teams that are super difficult to beat," Farri-

gan said. "But no matter what, we need to play our best ... at the level that we know we can."

Now, the team looks ahead to April 16, when they will have the home advantage in their game against The King's Academy.



ADAN KASTEN

