

Remembering Sensei Hosoi

Darshan Bal and Angela Nguyen
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

On July 8, the Aragon community experienced a tragic loss when Japanese teacher Junko Hosoi passed away after a long battle with cancer that kept her away much of last school year.

Hosoi began working at Aragon in 2004. Throughout her 22 year long career, she stayed incredibly engaged with the language-teaching community, attending and speaking at California Language Teachers' Association conferences and becoming an instructor at University of California, Berkeley's Academic Talent Development Program.

"She always improved her teaching by attending many conferences [and] workshops," said Chinese teacher Qi Fan. "That [was] very good for [both] the students [and] for her colleagues: she always [informed] us about new teaching strategies or pedagogy. She [was] always on top of her [own] learning [and] set a very good example for students."

Hosoi focused on making her room an immersive environment to help her students develop a stronger understanding of Japanese culture.

"She cared about her work [and] was always very focused on interpersonal [communication]," said senior Chase Rokala. "We studied trash disposal in Japan and ocean pollution, things that I [initially] thought [were] really niche. But when I went to Japan, I [realized] that's actually a huge part of the culture, that they don't really have many trash cans."

Hosoi built on that cultural learning by bringing native Japanese speakers to her classes.

"They gave a whole play in Japanese to us," said senior Macklin Berg. "We got little pamphlets, and we were able to draw on huge kanji boards. We learned how to draw bamboo, and she put [our drawings] up all over the classroom. That was unique because I never got to experience that in [any other] classroom in my life."

Above all, Hosoi wanted her students to enjoy her class and appreciate the Japanese culture and language.

"When we were learning the Japanese alphabets, she would always emphasize the characters and make a funny scenario about them," said junior Elias Kim-Steiger. "She gave us mochi once [and] that was really good. She was really passionate about [it and] really wanted to share her culture with us."

Hosoi also incorporated fun activities in her classroom to build strong relationships and a sense of community among her students.

"She loved karaoke, [and when] we used to share a wall I would hear music coming in all the time," said Spanish teacher Alejandra Cheever. "I was like, 'What's going on?' And I went over, and she and her students were [doing] karaoke, and I was like, 'Oh, cool! Next time, invite me!'"

On holidays and special occasions, Hosoi made sure to celebrate those days with her students.

"[On] Halloween, she dressed up as a frog," said senior Laura Wang. "There was this chair in front of the classroom

she [was] just sitting in [so] stoically as we all piled into class. [When] we looked at the front of the class, [it was] just a frog sitting there. It was very funny."

Hosoi's dedication and care for her students also went beyond the classroom.

"There'd be times I'd be walking down to badminton practice [and] she'd be walking down [and] give me a smile and a wave," Rokala said. "What I remember most was those small, fun interactions. She was kind and welcoming."

For senior Kira Partridge, that compassion was visible in little acts of empathy and consideration for her students.

"The Japanese class always takes walks halfway through the [period]," Partridge said. "That's always memorable because she thought it was nice to get your mind off of things, which was really considerate of her."



COURTESY OF QI FAN

Hosoi's caring nature was prominent in her interactions with children.

"She didn't have a family, but she loved young kids," Fan said. "When [my daughter] Emma was young, she visited my house [and] I [could] tell she had this affectionate language and attitude toward young children."

Hosoi's devotion to her classes at Aragon continues to leave a lasting impact on her students.

"I didn't know much about the Japanese language, but when I took her class, I fell in love with it," Berg said. "I'm definitely going to continue taking it [in the future]. If it were another teacher who was just drilling in the Japanese language, instead of making it an overall fun experience, I wouldn't have liked it as much."

For Rokala, Hosoi's class inspired a love for the language and culture that led him to study abroad in Japan for a summer.

"She's the reason why I took Japanese, because my mom went to [a meeting] and she seemed like a kind person," Rokala said. "[It] almost completely changed my trajectory because studying abroad is something I'd never have done if I didn't take Japanese 1."

Hosoi worked outside of Aragon to support the broader community of Japanese teachers in the Bay Area.

"She [was] very kind and [supported] me by [sharing] any information available," said new Japanese teacher Chiaki Vanasupa. "When I [was] looking for a new teaching job, she [told] me, 'This position is available' and 'You should apply for this,' and she [was] always [sharing] information [about] events."

Hosoi's students and colleagues remember her love for actor Harrison Ford and baseball player Shohei Ohtani, who she would incorporate into her lessons.

"When I went to visit her in her last days, she had a big poster of

Harrison Ford up on the wall that was hand drawn by students," Cheever said. "She always wore her Dodgers hat because she loved Ohtani. The things that she loved she would share with everybody. She [also] had a lot of student things up on the walls [because] her students meant so much to her."

Beyond her dedication and care, Hosoi is remembered for her courage and integrity.

"[When] I met her, I [realized] she was brave," Fan said. "When she made a mistake, she never hid [it], she sincerely apologized. That really made me respect her more. Other people [might] try to lie about it [or] hide it, but Junko was honest and brave."

In her final days, Cheever remembers Hosoi cracking jokes and having fun.

"You never know what life's gonna throw at you, but you can control how you react to it," Cheever said. "And seeing how she reacted to her situation, still [being] very much being herself, having her sense of humor, loving the things that she loved, made me see that that's how we should live our lives."

Aragon Counseling and Wellness are available to support those processing grief. Please visit the Counseling Office or Wellness Center in Room 224. Additionally, Kara Grief Support can be contacted at (650) 321-5272 or on their website, <https://kara-grief.org/>. allCove San Mateo is also available at (650) 226-7030; see their website, <https://allcove.org/centers/san-mateo/>, for more information.

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Aragon implements mobile device policy

Helen McCloskey
NEWS EDITOR

On Aug. 12, the San Mateo Union High School District's phone and personal device policy went into effect. The policy mandates that all phones, smart-watches, AirPods and other mobile non-school-issued devices be placed in zippered locked pouches called QuietCases for the duration of the school day. It also requires that all students use their school-issued Chrome-books during class time, rather than personal devices.

"[The policy is] a bit too over-arching," said senior Vikram Patnaik. "It is mildly sensible to limit the phones [because they] have become addicting and a lot of people overuse them. But people don't understand how dumb the watches are."

The SMUHSD Board of Trustees formulated the phone policy in March, in compliance with the Phone-Free School Act. The act called for all California school districts to draw up a policy restricting phones during instructional time by July 2026.

Aragon began rolling out the phone policy in the first week of school. On Don's Day, Assistant Principal David Moore and Principal Peter Alvarez gave grade-wide presentations on the policy. Though students were

expected to lock their phones in QuietCases following Don's Day, violations to the policy were not enforced until the second week.

"In theory, I like [the policy]," said Victoria Daniel, English and Advancement Via Individual Determination teacher. "[But] the execution of it has been ... not as strong. The edict came down very late; we weren't even sure we were going to get the phone pouches in time. The most confusion is over the fact that if students do not have class anymore [and are] still on our campus, they're not supposed to have their phones out."

The new policy allows students with 504 or Individualized Education Plans to work with their case manager or counselor if they need to be exempted. Students without phones were also told to get exemptions from the office.

Punishments for not complying with the policy range from confiscation by the teacher to permanently having to turn in

phones to the office, depending on the number of violations.

Some have seen improvements in student engagement.



MADELINE ALLEN

"I've heard positive feedback [of the phone policy] from staff," said Assistant Principal David Moore. "Students at lunch and brunch are socializing more, which is healthy, and during class, they are less distracted."

However, though the majority of students have complied with the policy, some have chosen not to.

"I've seen people break [QuietCases or] use different types of magnets to open them," said

sophomore Sophia Barizon. "Or, there's ways [to] not [use] them properly. I've seen people show me how [to do] that."

A concern for many is communication, especially in light of the May 22 emergency. "With [the need for] gun regulations or people getting into fights, schools aren't safe enough to not have access to phones," Barizon said. "What if the school is in a lockdown or barricade, and you're not sure if you're gonna make it, so you [need to] text your family, 'I love you,' one last time?"

However, Moore said that the noise emitted from phones could be harmful in a lockdown/barricade situation.

"If someone is coming on campus with that intent, they're trying to cause harm as quickly as possible," Moore said. "They're gonna look for humans, or try to hear humans. If students are on their phone ... there's additional panic, and that might make targets easier [to locate]."

In order to make up for the lack of electronic entertainment, teachers have proposed opening the field to students at lunch. Moore also plans for the school to pay for any games that teachers might request for students to play in their classrooms at lunch.

Editorial: improve emergency communication

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

On May 22, the public address system declared that Aragon was in a lockdown. Students ran into the nearest classrooms, where some silently hid, while others continued learning behind locked doors. The incident, caused by an altercation between students, was later de-escalated to a secure campus, totaling around 86 minutes. No official notification about the ongoing emergency was sent out to the community for over an hour, while a ParentSquare message explaining the incident was only sent three days later.

Aragon's communication during the incident fell short, with insufficient announcements both during and after the incident along with outdated PA systems in the music rooms, gym and office spaces.

"I did not know there was any lockdown initially, until a flood of students started coming into my class, and I'm like, 'What's going on?'" said music teacher Kevin Gallagher. "They said, 'It's a lockdown' ... Apparently, an announcement had happened over the PA system, but I had no idea because ... we've had a hard time hearing any announcements for years."

While Gallagher has since been notified by the San Mateo Union High School District that his classroom will receive updates and administration is working on addressing this issue, that it went several years without being fixed is troubling. According to Assistant Principal Andrew Hartig, the PA systems in these learning spaces have not been updated because the district had designated the new PA system only for "traditional" classrooms. The Outlook believes urgent updates to the PA systems in these spaces, including the music rooms, gyms, main office and counseling centers are crucial.

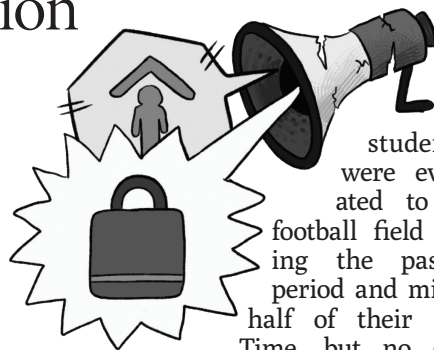
Furthermore, the message sent three days after the incident denied that the school was ever in a lockdown situation, stating that it was only a secure campus event. However, many agree that the initial announcement over the PA system directed the school into a lockdown.

"I was walking to class, and me and my friend ... hear, 'This is not a drill. This is a lockdown,'" said junior Fiona Kilroy. "We freaked out ... The teachers were all like, 'get in the class, get in the class.'"

The Outlook believes Aragon should have acknowledged calling the situation a lockdown.

Although we understand some believe the lockdown should be left in the past, discussing this is necessary to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future. As such, we propose increasing communication between the school and community immediately after emergency situations. Doing so will keep parents informed on emergencies, increasing trust in the school's ability to protect students.

This school year, Aragon has already had one fire alarm on Aug. 19 and one shelter-in-place on Aug. 24. During the fire emergency,



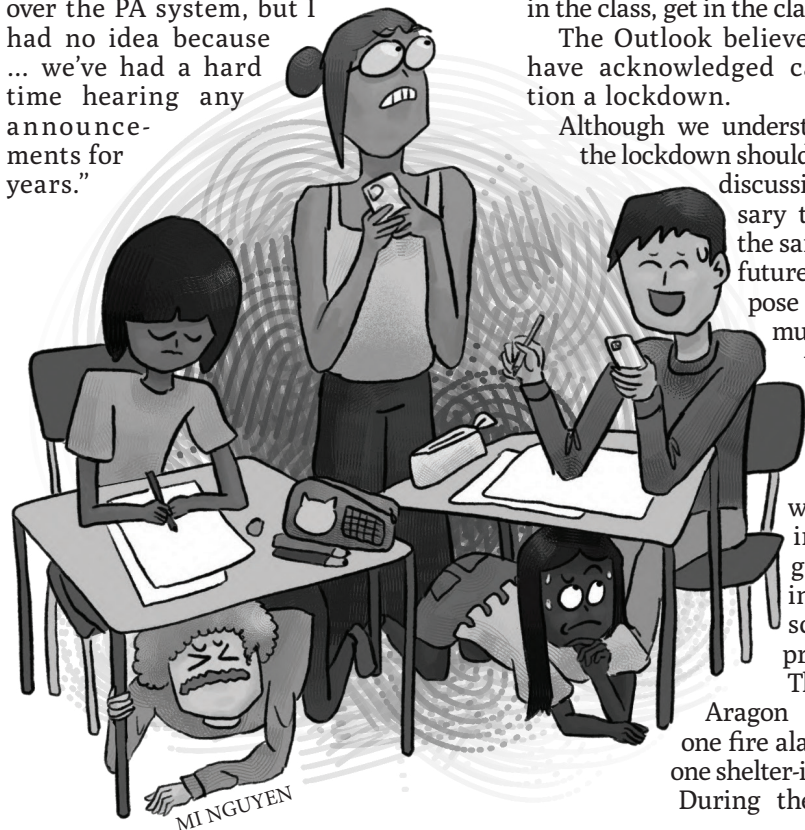
students were evacuated to the football field during the passing period and missed half of their FlexTime, but no communication was sent to parents to inform them of the cause of the emergency. Moreover, during the evacuation itself, students were confused about where to go and where teachers were located. Some were told by administrators to go to their second period teacher, while others were told by teachers to go to their fourth period.

The Outlook suggests increasing student awareness through emergency-specific presentations about where to go if the fire alarm rings during passing periods, brunch, lunch or FlexTime; this would have alleviated much of the confusion. The recent lockdown/barricade presentation on Sept. 14 is a strong step towards more awareness.

During the shelter-in-place five days later, Assistant Principal David Moore announced via the PA system that there was a medical emergency outside, which delayed lunch for a few minutes. The Outlook appreciates the transparency of this message, along with Principal Peter Alvarez sending an email soon after to inform the Aragon community of the reason for the event.

"We sent that communication because we [had] an event where students were held in class, even though it was for a very brief period," Alvarez said. "I wanted to make sure that parents knew what that was for ... The need to communicate differed between [the fire emergency and the shelter-in-place], and I wanted to be sensitive to how our community felt after the event that happened in May."

However, the Outlook suggests informing the community any time students' learning is unexpectedly disrupted. This increase in transparency promotes a healthier, more trustworthy environment where both students and families feel secure.



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Democratic socialism goes mainstream

Ellie Blakely and Naomi Kotani
NEWS AND FEATURES EDITORS

Less than three years ago, 23-year-old Syrak Micael had barely heard of democratic socialism. Now, he is running for Berkeley City Council as a democratic socialist.

"The first time I learned about democratic socialism was through [pro-Palestine] encampments that we had at the University of California, Berkeley [which I was part of in 2024]," Micael said. "The [Cal Youth Democratic Socialists of America] were a big part of the mobilization and the support for that movement. That was the first time I got to interact with people [from the organization] and learn more about it."

After participating in encampments at UC Berkeley protesting UC investment in companies involved with Israel, Micael became involved in local government, serving on the Berkeley Housing Advisory Commission before ultimately deciding to run for City Council.

"The people that I met [through local Democratic Socialists of America chapters] and the conversations that I had were the ones who really gave me the spark," Micael said. "But after learning a lot more about [New York Mayor Zohran] Mamdani's campaign and ... the way they were able to grow this movement ... it [made me realize], 'Oh, [there's an] electoral side of it too. We can get wins through people mobilization, [but] we can also get wins with electoralism.'"

Micael is part of a larger faction of Democratic-aligned voters who have rallied behind democratic socialism to alleviate Americans' concerns about affordability and accountability in government. A CNN poll from July found that roughly one-third of Democrats consider themselves to be democratic socialists. And DSA membership has essentially doubled in the past five years, according to data available on the organization's website. One of the DSA's strategies is canvassing, which, unlike establishment campaigns that tend to rely on donors and marketing, allows volunteers to directly reach out to constituents.

Democratic socialism itself is not a new ideology, having begun to take its current form in the mid-20th century as a democratic alternative to totalitarianism in the Soviet Union. The term's popularity has increased recently, as more democratic socialist candidates have been elected to positions in national and local governments.

Bernie Sanders, an independent senator from Vermont, is widely recognized as having brought the label into mainstream politics. His success was followed by democratic socialist wins in other high profile elections, such as New York Congresswoman Alexan-

dria Ocasio-Cortez, and more recently, Mamdani.

While there is not a universally agreed-upon definition of democratic socialism, the movement is united by a vision for a strong political democracy and an economy with more public ownership rather than one dominated by private corporations. Key policies supported by the DSA range from relatively mainstream policy proposals like universal healthcare and more housing to more fringe ideas, like abolishing the police, prisons and the U.S. Senate.

Democratic socialists generally believe that government intervention is the best way to solve the country's affordability issues, as opposed to capitalism, although individual candidates' policies vary.

"The affordability crisis is not going to be solved through the free market," said Caela Erickson Imbrogno, Silicon Valley DSA Co-Chair. "I don't think that's something that's going to be solved by just letting things take their course. We need to step in ... and be advocating for solutions to those things."

Affordability is currently one of the biggest issues for Americans, and it has been a main factor in increasing support for democratic socialism.

"Working people are experiencing economic precarity in a way that previous generations might not have," said Nate Adams, a DSA candidate for Oakland City Council. "No matter how much you try to propagandize [capitalism], once you push people far enough, they're going to start seeing that the system isn't working for them."

Adams had a conservative upbringing, which he said taught him to believe that one could find economic success in hard work without outside or government assistance. His own experiences clashed with this attitude, which is one of the reasons he later on decided to identify with democratic socialism.

"This 'pulling yourself up by your bootstraps' and moralizing economic situations [mindset] starts to not make a whole lot of sense when it's happening to you," Adams said. "When it was happening to my mom while she was raising me, we were saying that narrative while at the same time hopping apartment to apartment. That bootstrap logic wasn't working for [us]."

Many see establishment Democrats and Republicans as passively addressing affordability, and some of these voters view democratic socialism as offering more assertive and proactive policies.

"Centrist [Democrats] and Republicans are just like, 'We'll bring [inflation] down,' but they don't offer any tangible solutions," said Middle College senior Ryan Hecht. "Democratic socialists have a plan, a system, instead of vague words that don't get us anywhere."

While many agree that politicians need to tackle affordability, some believe that democratic socialism takes the wrong approach to solving the issue. There is concern that programs the DSA supports, such as universal healthcare and childcare, could lead to increased taxes and that this might have a negative effect on the economy.

not from candidates' economic policies but their foreign policy stances. Some cited democratic socialists' opposition to U.S. support for Israel, in contrast from more moderate Democrats, as a reason for her support of the ideology.

"A lot of people, including me, find it unacceptable that our government is so pro-Israel," said junior Sara Chiguchi. "We are enabling the genocide in Palestine, and many Democrats are supportive of it. And one of the only factions inside the Democratic Party [who are pro-Palestine] is [the] Democratic Socialists."

The DSA has made its opposition to Israel a main policy, and requires its members and candidates to agree with its anti-Zionist perspective. An internal policy prohibits members from opposing the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, being affiliated with the Israeli government or Zionist groups or having ever provided aid to Israel, including in the form of donation to non-governmental organizations. The DSA opposes Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and defines Zionism as "racist" and "imperialist," a stance that has turned off some voters.

"[The policy] definitely hinders growth to a point," Hecht said. "But [for] the protection of [the organization's] ideals, it is beneficial for them to not have people who are not acting in [their] best interest ... [If they] don't follow your policies and your values, they might misrepresent you."

Despite some polarizing policies, Americans' recent support for democratic socialist candidates seems to stem from dissatisfaction with the establishment and a concern that poli-

ticians don't have their best interests at heart.

"Whether they get a bunch of corporate donations [or] a bunch of billionaire donors, ... those [leaders] are not accountable to the people, and they weren't built up by the people," Micael said. "[But] what I see with a lot of these DSA campaigns ... [is] it's always about people first."

Americans' frustration with their government has led parties to become more polarized, leading to more radical views on both sides of the aisle. According to a report by Pew Research Center, Democrats and Republicans were already moving away from the political center more than a decade ago. Now, Republicans have moved farther to the right as a result of President Donald Trump's leadership, and Democrats are beginning to embrace democratic socialism, which is farther to the left than the rest of the party.

"People don't like these [politicians who've] been in power for 50 years and have gotten nothing done," Hecht said. "They don't like the establishment because it's currently doing nothing to fight against the radical right. So they're looking further and further left."

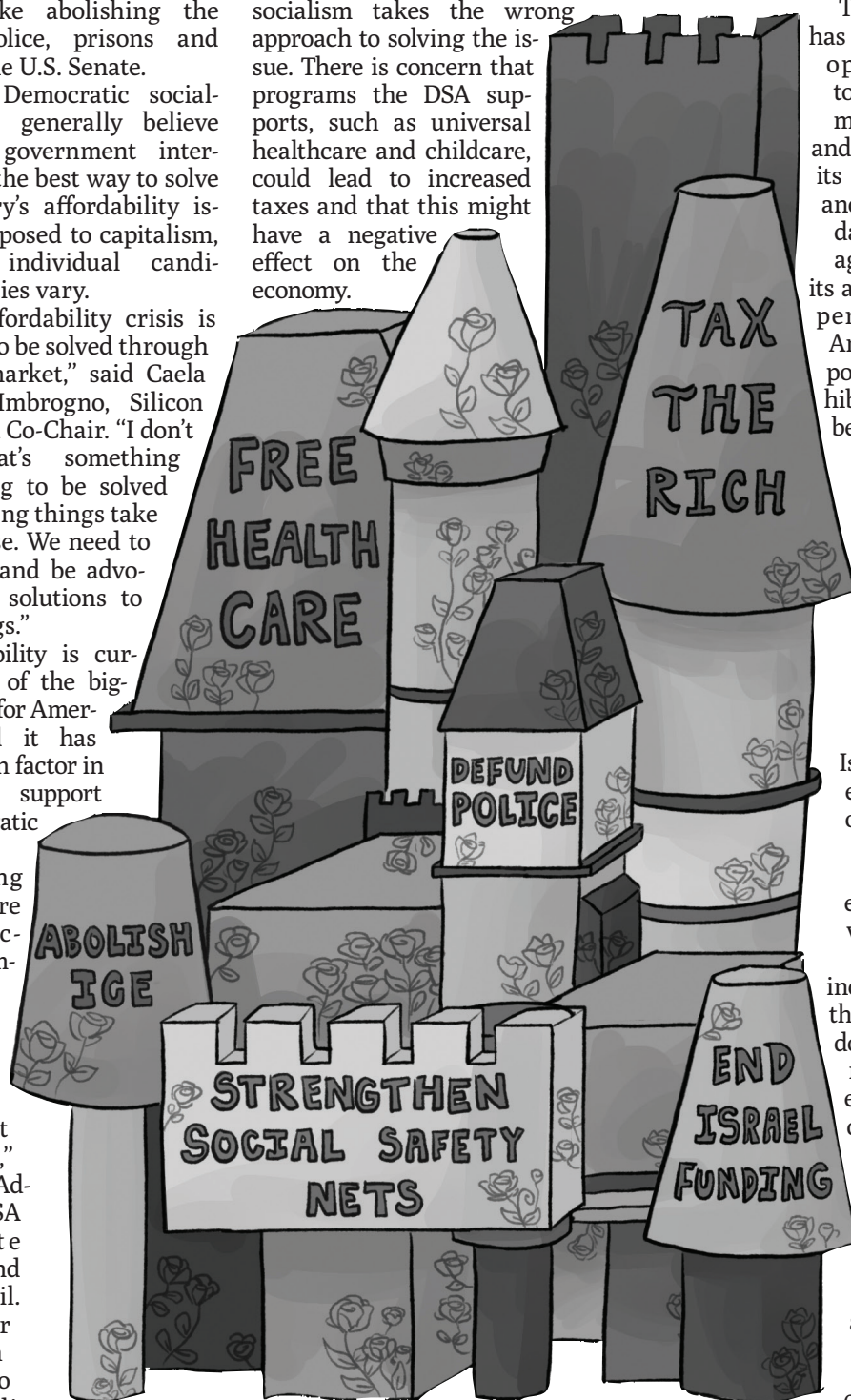
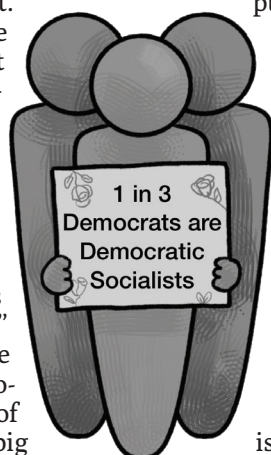
This year, democratic socialist candidates across the country, like Angie Nixon in Florida and Melat Kiros in Colorado, have won Democratic nominations for the general election in November. However, a handful of democratic socialist candidates also faced losses in primaries.

The wins have left some in the Democratic party worried about losing the general election as a result of nominating a candidate who is too far to the left to appeal to undecided or centrist voters.

However, some democratic socialists have rejected these concerns, arguing that they do not need to appeal to centrist voters.

"There's this impetus put by the Democratic Party on bipartisanship and I don't feel like we live in a world where that's possible with the policies that the Republican Party are putting into place," Erickson Imbrogno said. "As the Republicans have gone further to the right, the Democrats have [moved] to the right as well ... for the sake of trying to capture this imaginary median voter."

Overall, democratic socialists' efforts seem to have prevailed. Democratic socialism's popularity continues to increase, and as midterm elections get closer, their appeal to American voters will be put to the test. Whether democratic socialism's rise is a political trend soon to be upstaged or symbolic of a larger political shift in the U.S. remains yet to be seen.



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AI in Education

As the artificial intelligence industry continues to advance — with more users creating startups, technology and digital content — AI tools become part of many students’ daily life. This raises a concern: how should young people, specifically students, learn to use AI tools responsibly?

“[Teachers] don’t encourage us to use AI on any of our work, homework, tests, obviously,” said sophomore Kylie Shim. “When used correctly, AI is significantly more helpful than doing it by yourself. It helps you summarize better. It could be beneficial for your studying by teaching you quicker methods, and overall, it helps you search for the information you need way quicker.”

Advanced Placement Biology teacher Katherine Ward agreed that AI should not replace student thinking, but instead, be used for brainstorming, inspiration and active learning.

“Once a question is chosen, the work on developing the data, designing the experiment, running the experiment, gathering your sources ... that should be done by you,” Ward said. “[AI is] going to manipulate what we do. [But] if you’re sitting down and you’re using it as a study guide, you [can] ask the AI, ‘Help me understand chemiosmosis, transcription; help me understand symbolism, and how it might be used in a novel.’ It’s going to give you some information, and you read that information, and then it’s going to ask you a question, and you’re going to answer the question.”

Many take issue with how AI use is taught in schools, which they believe influences how students use it.

“[The way] a lot of students use AI is not intelligent,” said senior Louis Riviere. “They can’t just use it to outsource their thinking and write their essays for them, [which is] academic dishonesty. Instead of saying ‘don’t use AI,’ we should tell students to be smarter about the way that they use it. We should incentivize using AI as sort of a personal assistant as a way to help students think, rather than a way for the AI to think for the students.”

However, with AI websites blocked on school-issued Chromebooks, some believe teaching AI literacy may be difficult.

“If we want our students to use AI appropriately or not use it, we need to be able to train them how to use it,” said Courtney Caldwell, Ethnic Studies and Advanced Placement Via Individual Determination teacher. “[But] we can’t without being able to show [how to use AI in school].”

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SMUHSD Phone Ban

Before the 2026-27 school year, San Mateo Union High School District students used phones to upload assignments, check grades and access cell data when opening online resources. However, with new restrictions in place, classes have shifted away from cell phone use in education.

“I had a policy that worked,” Caldwell said. “I collected phones. They stayed in the phone chart all periods. Students were not allowed to take them to the bathroom. In my class, I don’t really notice any additional benefits, but it [the policy] is shifting the way break time works. Students have no option but to talk to each other or sit in silence.”

The movement to ban phones first took off with France prohibiting phone use for middle school students in 2018. Since then, 106 countries have banned phones during instructional time, and 30 states have bell-to-bell phone bans. In compliance with the PFSA, which called for California school districts to have a phone policy by July 1, the Oakland, San Jose and San Francisco school districts all developed bell-to-bell phone bans similar to the SMUHSD policy.

Some students have noticed new difficulties in classes due to switching from being able to use phones to exclusively Chromebooks.

“Previously, sometimes we would have to take pictures of our assignments and turn them in and that would be done using a scanning app on our phone, and that was very easy to do,” Riviere said. “It was also a lot harder to forget to do it because you would just do it the moment you’re done... just take a picture and submit it.”

TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

District Provided Technology

Following Governor Gavin Newsom’s Phone-Free School Act, Aragon adopted a bell-to-bell phone policy and a Chromebook-only protocol.

School-issued Chromebooks are now the only permitted devices during school hours, sparking conversations about technology integration into the modern-day classroom.

For instance, many frequently accessed websites were blocked by the district on Chromebooks, including LinkedIn, Spotify and various informational YouTube videos. Though Chromebooks are meant to promote educational equity, the heavy restrictions on website access can impede educational experiences.

“I understand the push to have some equity in technology, but I find that the Chromebooks are incredibly limited,” Ward said. “Even the PDF of my textbook won’t open on the Chromebook. It opens on my personal and my district-issued computer, but on [students’] Chromebooks it won’t open. What’s the point?”

Moreover, some argue enforcing a schoolwide Chromebook-only policy puts unnecessary restrictions on students with personal computers, raising questions about the impacts of pursuing equity on the broader student population.

“I agree that the school supplying students with a Chromebook during their time at [Aragon] is good because not everyone has access to a personal laptop outside of school,” Riviere said. “But I would say that if the student has a substitute for the Chromebook that they prefer to use, in most cases it will be faster [and] just better in basically every single way.”

Moreover, personal devices provide easy access to personal emails, communication and extracurriculars like drawing, and websites like AP Classroom and Common App require students to sign in with their outside accounts. Assignments are completed online through Canvas, and websites like Khan Academy and NoodleTools provide easy access to resources. Despite its prevalence today, some believe consistent reliance on computers may inhibit instruction, opting for paper-based learning instead.

“[During the] pandemic and post-pandemic, we were forced to go very technology-driven,” Caldwell said. “That was a disservice to students. The more we’re on our computers, the more disengaged we become in class, and that’s why I prefer to go paper versus digital. But [spending] time during the pandemic [becoming] more educated in different technologies was a benefit. I can do digital lessons and have these really cool tools that benefit or supplement what we’re doing on paper.”

Students have noticed the benefits of paper-based learning as well, recognizing the role that physical writing still plays in modern education.

“I believe writing something out significantly helps you study more efficiently than typing, since writing [improves your] memory,” Shim said. “It depends on the assignment and the type of work you’re trying to do, because things that you need to remember, long-term memory, you need to write down. For quicker information, you could use technology.”

Along with what some see as limitations and difficulties, technology has brought what many view as positive advancements to education.

Future?

The rapidly evolving landscape of classroom technology has forced schools into a balancing act between caution and innovation. For educators, keeping pace with constant technological shifts is both an overwhelming challenge and an essential part of the job.

“What is the future?” Ward said. “I don’t know. I need to think carefully about how AI impacts what we do here. As far as new technologies, there’s so much coming out so quickly that I don’t know how it’s going to be applied in my classroom yet. One of the things I really appreciate about being a teacher is that I constantly have to be learning new things [and] adapting.”

The rapid rollout of new tools has created immediate hurdles for schools regarding academic integrity and artificial intelligence.

“Students using AI to help them cheat in their school work has scared the school system and the educational system,” Riviere said. “[In] a panic, [they have been] like: ‘No AI, we’re just going to ban it outright.’ I’m not saying that was the wrong decision. [However], AI will only become more prominent in our lives. We need to implement it slowly into our school system so that students are not left out to dry when they leave the educational system.”

Beyond AI tools, the foundational shift toward a tech-driven classroom relies heavily on digital devices.

“I hope that big technology brands like Apple can provide schools with bigger discounts on devices, for example, laptops, iPads, keyboards,” said junior Catie Wu. “Specifically high schools [could get] better discounts, [making it] more affordable, so kids can learn better.”

Even as debates continue over hardware accessibility and the benefits versus consequences of a technology-filled classroom, daily learning remains permanently altered by the advance of digital tools.

“There’s a lot of teachers that have maintained a lot of their digital tools and are using them in classes ever since the pandemic,” Caldwell said. “You can see every year there’s new teachers with SMART boards, and digital lessons are still very much alive and well. We’re constantly evolving and trying to streamline how we use Canvas and utilize that as a classroom tool as well... Do I think some teachers shifted back toward more paper driven? Yes, but I wouldn’t say that it’s a whole staff shift [back] to that.”



MI NGUYEN

Rebranding in modern music

Ashley Tsui
FEATURES EDITOR

High ponytail, knee-high heeled boots and an oversized hoodie. There's only one name that comes to mind: pop icon and actress Ariana Grande.

Visual motifs like these contribute greatly to an artist's popularity. By promoting themselves with unique graphic designs that are easy to recognize, artists can quickly build fanbases simply by being identifiable.

"Having the right brand or catering towards a certain group of people is really important," said junior Laya Senthilkumar. "If you don't market [or] have good advertising for your music, you're not gonna get the attention you deserve."

However, artists don't always follow one specific branding strategy. Many music icons choose to rebrand throughout their career and take on new stage personas, one such example being Taylor Swift.

"[Taylor Swift] used to be a country pop artist, but she became a full-fledged pop artist with '1989' and that rebrand did incredible things for her career and worked really well," said sophomore Chris Dominguez. "It's one of my favorite rebrands ever [and] ... it completely changed how the public viewed her ... '1989' sold incredibly well its first week and that's really a testament to [its success]."

These style evolutions result from a wide variety of causes, whether it be simply growing up, different aesthetic preferences, significant life changes or differences in label management.

Take Zara Larsson and her recent spike in popularity as a pop icon of the summer. A seasoned artist who released her first album in 2014, Larsson rose to global prominence following the resurgence of her old songs "Lush Life" and "Symphony" on social media.

Playing into themes of bright colors and hyperfemi-

nism, Larsson embraced a distinct mermaid-inspired aesthetic, characterized by her Y2K style, vibrant, tropical outfits and upbeat music.

"[Before, Zara Larsson] had lighter makeup and a casual style, [whereas] now, where she's completely embracing her music persona [with] bright colors and [sparkly] makeup, the embodiment of summer," Senthilkumar said. "And her brand has made such an impact within different communities ... lots of people copy the Zara Larsson makeup look [on social media] ... She had been in the industry for a while, but that made her really popular."

Another notable rebrand is that of Sabrina Carpenter, who initially rose to fame on Disney Channel's "Girl Meets World." She first debuted as a pop singer without a clear musical identity.

However, in 2020, she changed labels and had freedom to invent herself musically, evident in her albums "Short n' Sweet" and "Man's Best Friend," which feature her signature flirtatious and witty lyrics that launched her into a mainstream music career. She also adopted an iconic feminine style: glittery bodysuits, platform boots and fluffy, curly blonde hair.

"[Sabrina Carpenter] really came into her soft, somewhat sexual womanhood and really leaned into colors that actually suit her," Senthilkumar said. "Her stylists style her for her skin tone and her features and her songs have started becoming more peppy. She [also] really leaned into the country [genre] with ['Manchild'] and she [even] collaborated with Dolly Parton."

However, in some cases, rebrands don't land well with audiences. Notably, global girl group KATSEYE debuted with a fresh, confident, Y2K style, but later changed concepts to a more mature, intense look. Their music identity evolved from

lively, clever and catchy lyricism to electronic and bold beats, complete with eccentric lyrics and choreography.

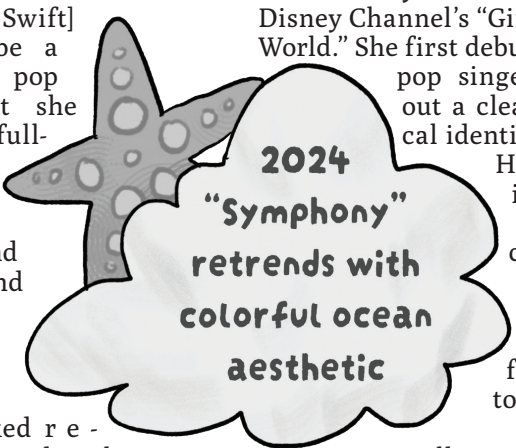
"I'm really confused about [KATSEYE's rebrand]," Senthilkumar said. "The KATSEYE community is completely flabbergasted by the drastic change that happened in such a short time ... KATSEYE [debuted] in 2024, but if you were to compare their music then to now ... you can't believe that they're the same people just two years apart."

Another rebrand that missed the mark was Katy Perry's attempt to incorporate politics with her album Witness, where she coined the term 'purposeful pop' to encourage using music as a platform for political activism.

"When a rebrand is done well, it can really expand someone's popularity and skyrocket them, but when it's done poorly, it can tank their career," Dominguez said. "Katy Perry wanted to [lean into] 'purposeful pop' and make 'Witness' political, but she just didn't follow through. Her failing [that rebrand] really tanked how the public viewed her at that time."

Rebranding can help music artists refresh their look and draw in new fans,

though it's always a gamble of success. In an industry built upon catchy tracks and visually appealing marketing, a rebrand can catapult artists to newfound fame, or pull them into controversy and contribute to an inevitable decline.



Opinion: women do not belong in boxes

Cayleigh Wilson
FEATURES EDITOR

Imagine: you wake before the rest of the house, sunlight falling across the kitchen floor as you tie on an apron that perfectly matches your dress. By the time your husband leaves for work, the children have already eaten breakfast — homemade cereal. The laundry is neatly folded, and a loaf of sourdough bread is rising in the oven.

Then, somehow, it becomes a problem. The apron is no longer just an apron, and the kitchen is no longer just a kitchen. Suddenly, people are analyzing your life. They say that you have given up on ambition, settled for less and let yourself be trapped in a role women escaped decades ago. The peaceful little life you built starts to look, at least from the outside, like something that needs saving.

A "tradwife," short for traditional wife, is a married woman who promotes traditional gender roles, fully submitting to their husbands and serving their family. They are not to be confused with a stay-at-home mother, who is the primary caregiver of her children and often completes household tasks.

Many tradwife influencers and their defenders have framed feminism as a convenient villain: a force determined to pull women out of their homes and into an exhausting, competitive workforce. But that portrayal relies on a pretty shallow understanding of feminism. Feminism doesn't mean that every woman needs to pursue the same career-focused life, or that homemaking is embarrassing. It means women should be able to choose their roles without being told that one path defines them.

The tradwife has become one of social media's most debated archetypes. On TikTok and Instagram, women wearing designer dresses make meals from scratch, clean impressive homes and document their mornings. The aesthetic is not difficult to understand. In a culture that can often treat exhaustion and burnout as proof of ambition, a slower life centered on home, family and routine can appear revolutionary, in a way.

Yet due to the popularity of the term, the label has become so broad that it is now applied to women simply because they post home cooking videos, recipes or other family content.

Nara Smith, a content creator known for making meals from scratch, is the internet's favorite example. Her videos, which often feature designer clothes and recipes that begin

with homemade ingredients most people would buy store-bought, are regularly treated as proof that she promotes traditional gender roles.

Smith rejects that label. In a July episode of the "Call Her Daddy" podcast, she described herself as a working mother who contributes financially to her family. She said she and her husband split child care based on who is working, while he handles dishes and cleaning. Cooking, she said, is a hobby, but it is not her identity.

That does not mean people are wrong to question the messages behind the tradwife aesthetic. But it does mean that posting a recipe is not the same as arguing that women belong in the kitchen.

"Being a feminist is just about making your own choice," said junior Rosie Mayor, Women of the World Club Vice President. "If you want to be a stay-at-home mom and not have a career, that's your choice. You can make that choice because of feminism."

That is the part of this conversation that often gets lost online. Feminism is not a handbook for how women should live. It is the belief that women deserve equal social, political, and economic power, including the power to decide whether they want to be a doctor, a mother, both or neither. Still, choice is more complicated than it sounds.

Mayor said she sees the tradwife ideal as more concerning when it involves dependence.

"The way I view a tradwife is someone who submits to their husband," she said. "They rely on them to make money, and they provide more of the housework, like the cooking and cleaning."

Financial dependence does not mean a stay-at-home parent is weak, incapable, or unfulfilled. The concern, however, is when dependence becomes submission.

"Tradwife is more about submission," said junior Naomi Dulac, Women of the World Club President. "You are submitting to your husband."

That is where feminism should draw a line: not at femininity, domesticity or motherhood, but at the belief that women are naturally meant to be subordinate. Choosing to bake Goldfish rather than buy them at a store is not anti-feminist. Believing women should be financially dependent on men is.

Social media simplifies this, flattening complex women into symbols: the career woman, the stay-at-home mom, the girlboss or the tradwife. Smith can be a mother, a homemaker, a model and an independently successful content creator all at once. The internet's need to force her into a single box says more about its discomfort with complicated women than it does about her.



MI NGUYEN

New teachers arrive for the 2026-2027 school year

PHOTOS BY PHOTO EDITOR MADELINE ALLEN REPORTING BY GRAPHICS EDITOR MI NGUYEN

JANE WOODMAN

AP ENGLISH LIT & ENGLISH 1

What made you choose your specific subject?

When I decided to get my teaching credential, I couldn't [pick] between English and music. I ended up just choosing music [but] then the school where I started teaching didn't have a music opening. But they wanted me and I wanted to be at the school. I studied English in college, so I was able to get a secondary credential pretty quickly and they hired me to teach English [and] I taught English and music for a really long time.

What is your favorite memory as a teacher?

[In] Band, we were playing "The Nutcracker." We had arranged with the stage crew to drop fake snow



during the Waltz of the Flowers part. But they accidentally released the snow [early, so] we had eight minutes of snow falling and piling up on the cymbals, getting in everyone's hair and everyone was just cracking up. In English, one of my favorite memories was when we were finishing up "Macbeth" and we put together a GarageBand soundtrack to play as we read the final act. Everybody was very dramatic in their reading, so it was a really fun way to end the play.

CHIAKI VANASUPA

JAPANESE 1, 2, 3 & 4H

What made you choose your specific subject?

I always feel joy when teaching Japanese. When I hear more and more students speaking Japanese and see students enjoying learning and using Japanese, it's my joy.

What do you want students to know about you?

I grew up and was educated in different countries, not in Japan. I really love multicultural lingo. I enjoy a mix of different cultures and backgrounds. I feel really comfort-



able, like I'm in this community, and it makes my class fun. I was born in Belgium, and grew up in Brazil, and I lived in the United Kingdom.

JONATHAN HUANG

CERAMICS, ADV CERAMICS & AP STUDIO ART 3D

What do you want students to know about you?

I want them to know that I'm here for them. I want them to have a breakthrough and when they do, it's dope. It's hard to explain it if you haven't experienced it. The interesting thing about ceramics is that it's so tangible — it's so physical. So when you have a breakthrough ... you're reminded by this object. And that's really satisfying.

What made you decide to pursue teaching as your career?

I went to Gunn High School and my [ceramics] teacher's name was Mr. Cooper. I could not throw on the wheel, but ... I practiced every day and Mr. Cooper saw that. He asked me to do the demo for the class, and I was shocked. He never asked anybody else to do it. That was one of the very first teaching opportunities and that guy changed my life because now, I'm a high school ceramics teacher.



BRANDT BRIDGES

ENGLISH 1AS & 2

What made you become a teacher?

My first job was as a math tutor at Mathnasium when I was 15 years old, the same age as [the] sophomores [I teach now]. That was the first moment I noticed I loved teaching. In college, I worked in the writing center at Oregon State, and [it] was fun to help people with things like poetry classes, but also [work with] physics and Ph.D. [students]. Then I taught for a year in Spain after college, and that's when I was like, "Oh, this is awesome! This is a lot of fun, because teaching is really hard and it takes a lot of work, but it's also really satisfying."

What made you choose your subject?

I always loved the sciences, but my sophomore English teacher was amazing. She was really cool, and it was the first time I felt like I wasn't just trying to be



a good student and get good grades. I really wanted to understand the books and what was going on ... they really changed my life. So I studied English in college and ever since that point in high school, I've been a reader and writer. I've always loved the kind of stuff we get to talk about in English class too, it's a really cool place.

MORE NEW TEACHER PROFILES IN OCTOBER ISSUE

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Autumn Athletics: Fall Sports Preview

WRITTEN BY:
SPORTS EDITORS
CLAIRE DONG AND LUKE TRIMBLE



CROSS COUNTRY

The Aragon cross country team is looking to repeat their success from 2025 and qualify for California Coastal Section championships again this season. Last year's team were able to grab the Peninsula Athletic League Frosh/Soph Championship title, and with

many athletes returning as juniors this year, the Dons have a strong line up for this season. "The main goals are always for the varsity teams to make it to the CCS Championship," said head coach John Abrams. "So the boys have been training during the summer ... They have their vision set on being very successful, and

they would love to get [to California Interscholastic Federation Championships]." Every athlete runs a different amount during off-season, leading to varying starting points when the season starts. "Overuse, not training and not coming in with a foundation of endurance and miles during the summer is usually a recipe for athletes to be injured,"

Abrams said. "If you get injured during cross country, you can be derailed from the training program, which can set you back, and so it can be very hard." The team's next meet will be the Artichoke Invitational on Oct. 3.



GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

After winning against Monta Vista High School with a score of 3-1 in the CCS DII finals last season, earning the title of champions, Aragon's girls volleyball team is aiming to do the same this season.

"Every game is tough," said head coach Annette Gennaro. "Everyone's out to get Aragon." Although the Dons have won three of the last four CCS DII Championships, the team has not seen a Bay Division title since 2014. With teams like Carlmont and

Menlo-Atherton, both of whom compete in CCS DI, in the Bay Division, competition is hard. This season, the team is going back to the basics to solidify their foundation. "Volleyball is a game of knowing each other," Gennaro said. "We're really working on team building to work on our trust, our communication and our cohesiveness."

The Dons have a team of accomplished players returning this year: all-league first-team selections junior and outside hitter Poppy McKenzie along with senior and setter Devyn Lee, as well as second-team selection senior and outside hitter Caitlyn Robertson. With this team, Aragon hopes to make a run for championships again this year.

The team played their first game against the Menlo School on Aug. 28 losing 3-1. They will next play Burlingame High School on Sept. 17.



BOYS WATER POLO

Following a successful 2025 season, the Aragon boys water polo team will play in the Bay Division of the Peninsula Ath-

letic League in 2026. The Dons won the Ocean division last year, earning them a playoff match against Burlingame and a promotion to the more competitive Bay division. "This is [our] first year being moved up, so I know the games are gonna be pretty

difficult," said senior and utility player Kurt Nguyen. "We haven't been to [CCS playoffs], officially before, so it'd be really nice just [to] make it into the first round." The team is also starting the season with a new head coach, Julian Garcia-Mendez, who coached the junior varsity team last year.

"It's going pretty good with the new head coach," Nguyen said. "Coach [Garcia-Mendez] is a great guy. He's reasonable, and he's very experienced. He played water polo at Menlo [School] ... [and at College of San Mateo]." The Dons will play Mountain View High School on Sept. 19.



FOOTBALL

After failing to reach the postseason in 2025, the Aragon Dons football team returns with a new team, a new coaching line-up and eight months of off-season training. This season, the Dons look forward to doing their best.

"Hillsdale is always what we're looking for," said head coach Ash Parham. "[But also] week by week, because if you look ahead, you get distracted, and someone who shouldn't beat you beats you. So you have to take it week by week." For the team, health is the number one priority to stay strong throughout the season.

"We have a lot of linemen, but we don't have a lot of experience along the offensive and defensive lines," Parham said. "So it's gonna be just make sure we stay healthy, so we can last the entire year." The Dons also have new offensive and defensive coordinators who are trying new strategies and line-ups. Former Palo Alto High School head

coach Dave DeGeronimo will be the offensive coordinator, and Johnny Richardson joins as the defensive coordinator after coaching at Palo Alto as well. With this combination, Aragon won their first two games against Silver Creek High School and Oak Grove High School. Their next game is on Sept. 18 against Piedmont High School.

Opinion: stop putting sports on streaming services

Luke Trimble
SPORTS EDITOR

On Thursday, Sept. 10, the San Francisco 49ers opened their season in Melbourne, Australia in a marquee matchup against their rival Los Angeles Rams. For anyone who follows the National Football League, the game was a must-watch, featuring two powerhouse division rivals both expected to be Super Bowl contenders in February. However, for some fans, the must-watch matchup turned into a can't-watch matchup, as the game was exclusively broadcast on Netflix. The streaming service owns the rights to five NFL games this year, including one the day before Thanksgiving, two on Christmas day and a potential playoff-altering Week 18 matchup in January, all big draws for fans around the country. Unfortunately, because they only air on streaming platforms, many people will be unable to watch these matches. However, fans should not be forced to pay for streaming services in order to watch these games. Netflix isn't the only platform with NFL games this year. Amazon Prime Video, which began paying for exclu-

sive rights to stream Thursday Night Football in 2017, will continue to be the only place to see games that occur on Thursday evenings. Die-hard sports fans now find themselves needing to pay multiple subscriptions to watch all of their team's games in a season; however, devoted supporters of a team shouldn't have to pay for several separate platforms to see their local franchise play. The issue doesn't stop at football. Major League Baseball games played Friday nights are exclusively streamed on Apple TV. Over the past few years, Netflix has been the only home of certain lucrative one-off events such as the MLB home opener and a pair of boxing matches between influencer-turned-fighter Jake Paul and former heavyweight champions Mike Tyson and Anthony Joshua, among other combat sport events.

Except for Major League Soccer, which streams all of its games on Apple TV, no major league United States sports offer a subscription that allows fans to watch matches in a season. The 49ers will play one game on Prime Video and one game on Netflix this year, with the remainder of games airing on cable networks. The price of subscriptions to two streaming services, in addi-

tion to cable, begins to grow into a hefty monthly entertainment bill, especially just to watch one local team. Apart from the cost, the need for multitudes of streaming services can quickly become a logistical issue for fans trying to watch games. "The only event that I wanted to watch on Netflix was the MLB All-Star game," said sophomore Timothy Low. "[It was] a hassle because I needed [find my] login information, [and] it's hard to do that [sometimes]. I did [watch it] but I only saw the home run derby because it took me a while to get my login." Fans pay for merchandise, buy tickets to games and provide leagues and teams with the support that propels them to these TV and streaming deals in the first place. Franchises, in turn, owe their fans for their commitment. Front offices work to build winning teams, and

players work hard at practices each day. Owners, who see the greatest financial reward of anyone in the system, must uphold their end of the deal, by allowing their fans to watch games easily. The average NFL team was valued at \$7.1 billion in 2025, according to Forbes. On Aug. 12, the Los Angeles Lakers were sold for \$12.5 billion, pushing the NBA's average team valuation up to \$6.68 billion. Forcing fans to pay for a half-dozen services to watch games is a move made out of greed. Wealthy leagues do not need to strike deals with the highest bidder for every game. "I get their purpose," said junior Warren Atkinson. "They're just trying to make more money doing this ... [but] they should let their fans watch [games]." Wealthy leagues should not be forcing fans to pay for multiple streaming platforms just to watch their favorite team. The practice creates financial and logistical problems for people who want to support their club. Leagues must put their fans before their profit and stop locking games behind streaming subscriptions.

