

ALLINAH ZHAN

The ARAGON OUTLOOK
Thursday | November 12, 2026 | Volume 67, Issue 3
900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo, CA 94402
Aragon High School

READ THE ONLINE EDITION

Two of the Little Rock Nine visit Aragon

Max Feng
NEWS WRITER

On Oct. 14, two members of the Little Rock Nine, Minnijean Brown-Trickey and Elizabeth Eckford, visited Aragon and other San Mateo Union High School District schools. The event, a question and answer session mediated by social studies teacher Carlo Corti, was held in the theater.

The Little Rock Nine were a group of African American students who were the first to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, a previously whites-only school, where they faced backlash from the white community.



Corti interviews Eckford and Brown-Trickey. JEFFREY LIU

Attendees were mainly U.S. History and Government and Economics students, though other social studies teachers who brought their fourth period classes. The event was planned with the Sojourn Project. This is the second time Aragon has hosted Brown-Trickey.


JACKIE WONG

"[Sojourn Project leader] Jeff Steinberg has relationships with these people," Corti said. "Since [Brown-Trickey and Eckford] are coming out here, he reached out to a few people that he knew ... and said, 'Do you have any interest in having them come and talk to your school?'

Because I knew Jeff, we worked [it] out that way."

At the beginning of the event, Corti gave a brief overview of the Little Rock Nine, specifically focusing on Brown-Trickey and Eckford's experiences. During the speech, Corti showed images of Eckford being prevented from entering the school on the first day by white parents and students.

"Images of Eckford [walking] up to the school and armed officers being there and her being turned away were really impactful to me," said sophomore Noe Miyashita. "I could see that person in the picture, but I could also see her on stage, and it really felt like there was a real-world connection."

After the overview, Corti asked questions based on those students had written on the back of the field trip forms.

One of the first questions Corti asked Brown-Trickey and Eckford was about what students at Central High School had been like.

"I was 15 years old and I saw these people who had given up their minds, given up their intellect, given up their decorum [and] had become monsters," Brown-Trickey said during the question and answer session. "I said to myself, 'I'll never be that way' ... Sometimes you can take good things from bad events."

Corti then moved on to ask if Brown-Trickey or Eckford had people on their sides when they attended Central High School. Eckford explained that though there were a small number of students who were nice to the Little Rock Nine, they were in the minority of an otherwise unwelcoming school.

"What I remember most is the people who passed right by [us] when we were being attacked and didn't seem to notice," Eckford said during the session. "It made me feel as though they thought we were getting what we deserved. And they [said later] that they didn't do anything. But not doing anything is a decision that you make to let things continue as they are."

Later, Brown-Trickey left the audience with a word of advice.



"When you see something that is so wrong, sometimes you've got to see what you can do to change it," Brown-Trickey said. "Don't try to do it alone. Work with other people of similar interests and make a difference."

To conclude the event, students asked the speakers questions or expressed gratitude by approaching the main stage. Afterwards, students reflected on what they observed.

"The most important moment was when [Brown-Trickey] was apologizing to the audience, saying, 'I'm sorry that we couldn't have done enough [to deter racism],'" said senior Devyn Lee. "It was insane to hear that because ... [they've] already done so much and the fact [they] feel bad that we have to carry it on was [both] sad and interesting to hear."

Miyashita took a meaningful lesson from the speakers' comments.

"I learned that there was a lot of injustice during the time, but [also] that it's still a problem today," Miyashita said. "It's not completely solved like they hoped; but there's a lot of things we can do to continue to work towards the goal of equality."

Sophomore Amen Yosief also noted the new perspective that he gained.

"Whenever I get called slurs ... and every time I say, 'Wow this is the worst,' I can remember [this] and be like, 'I live in a pretty good time, because if I lived back then it would have been much worse,'" Yosief said.

Lastly, Lee wants to follow Brown-Trickey's message about not being a bystander.

"Brown-[Trickey] went on this [talk] about how things aren't going to change unless you stand up and try to speak out for people who can't," Lee said. "That overall message stuck with me."

The history department hopes to host Eckford and Brown-Trickey again so more students will be able to meet the speakers.

New e-bike laws swerve into San Mateo

Ryan Li
NEWS WRITER

On Sept. 30, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed three laws addressing e-bike safety, including one which gives San Mateo County the option to be the first in California to ban children under 12 from riding e-bikes. Municipalities in the county are in the process of deciding whether or not to implement the ban for San Mateo youth.

Assembly Bill 2595 authorizes local authorities in San Mateo County to ban children younger than 12 from riding Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes, which can go up to 20 mph with motor assist, a function that turns on the motor of the e-bike when the rider pedals. Violators are fined $25 but can take an electric bike safety program in lieu of paying the fine.

"I would much rather kids use traditional bikes over e-bikes," said Foster City Councilmember Stacy Jimenez. "It's better for your health, it's better for the environment. The batteries that come with the e-bikes are very dangerous ... The fire department is reporting a huge increase in the number of fires related to [lithium ion] batteries, [which e-bikes use]."



Children under 16 are already prohibited from riding Class 3 e-bikes, which can travel up to 28 miles per hour.

"[Restricting e-bikes] is very situational because of course there's a very wide spectrum of e-bikes," said junior Liam Persson. "And for certain ones, like a pedal assist bike, a 12-year-old could ride that fine, it's like a normal bicycle. If you ride a full [e-motorcycle] ... [there] definitely need to [be] restrictions; someone under 12 shouldn't be riding one of those."

These new laws come in response to the deaths of two young children in bike collisions. In one of these incidents, which took place in Burlingame, a car fatally hit a four-year-old child after colliding with an 11-year-old on a Class 2 e-bike.


LILLIAN HUANG

This is part of a larger trend of rising e-bike collisions, with collisions increasing in California from two in 2018 to over 1,500 in 2024. Additionally, children under 14 years old had the highest recorded number of e-bike injuries.

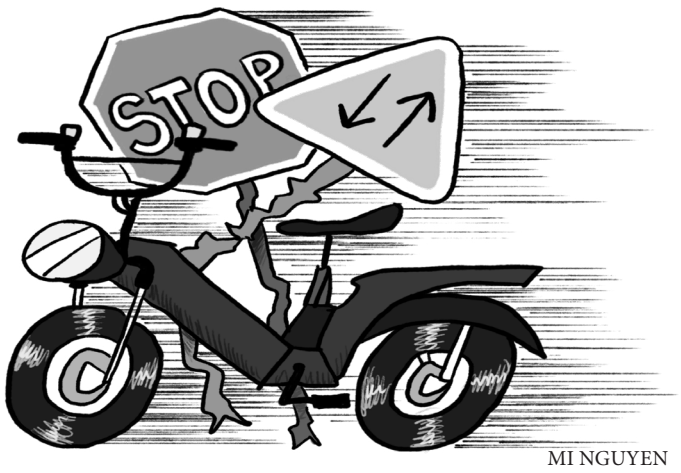
"I personally have seen a lot of reckless riding coming from younger kids in middle school," Persson said. "Like not wearing a helmet and just kind of fooling around on the bike. That's just a stupid thing to do. I could see why they're putting restrictions towards kids like that."

However, some officials are concerned about how the ban could realistically be enforced in the local residential area.

"If we were to enact a ban on e-bikes for anyone under 12, you are immediately going to have issues with officers trying to figure out whether or not someone who appears to be young is actually young," Jimenez said. "And it's not like 12-year-olds are carrying around driver's licenses or IDs that state accurately how old they are. So, it's definitely difficult to be able to profile someone easily."

Additionally, some believe that more accountability should be placed on car drivers when near bikers or pedestrians.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



MI NGUYEN

E-bike ban continued

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"A lot of times, the accidents that I hear about are because of a driver," said Maggie Trinh, President of the San Mateo-Foster City School District Board. "It's not because a rider was doing something reckless, which is a common narrative ... It's easy to get online and complain about teenagers on e-bikes, just as people used to complain about teenagers on skateboards ... Making infrastructure that is safe for everyone is what our focus should be on, and not necessarily this very narrow restriction on e-bikes for under 12-year-olds."

Similar programs for older teenagers were approved in San Diego and Marin counties. Marin County's pilot program, which began in July of 2025, prohibits Class 2 e-bike usage for those under 16. Since then, e-bike accidents among children aged 10-15 years dropped from 16.25 in 2026 to 11.65 in 2024 per 10,000 residents.



"Marin has a whole system of bike trails," said math teacher Craig Sipple. "So they were having issues with kids [thinking], 'How fast can I go?' A lot of times, these paths are shared paths [with] pedestrians ... so they had issues of people getting hit. This [law was only created because] people get hurt."

Another one of the new state laws mandates manufacturers and distributors of vehicles faster than e-bikes to disclose that they are motor vehicles and prohibits them from selling them as e-bikes. According to the San Jose State University's Mineta Transportation Institute, many of the accidents attributed to e-bikes actually involve faster vehicles that legally aren't e-bikes. In fact, as few as 12% of electric two wheelers parked in California schools may be legal e-bikes.

"Kids don't care if that's an e-bike or an e-motorcycle," said senior Ryan Liang. "They're gonna see that e-motorcycle and think, 'that one's cooler. I want that one.' They're not gonna know that thing is much faster, much more dangerous for them. The law is going to be needed to prevent any accidental buying."

Lastly, Assembly Bill 2346 requires Class 2 e-bikes to have speedometers and all e-bikes to have front and rear lights. The bill also requires sellers to make clear the maximum speed of the e-bike and sets a speed limit of 10 mph on sidewalks.

"You definitely need some lighting to alert people much better that you're approaching during a darker situation like in a tunnel or at nighttime," Liang said. "Because I biked at night, [and] that was incredibly scary to do. It's hard to see what's in front of you, and hard for people to see if you're coming, especially if you don't have flashing lights."

According to Jimenez, the City and County Association of Governments, which is a board of all cities in San Mateo County, will develop a set of guidelines to help cities have the same rules regarding the potential pilot program as they begin to discuss restricting children's ability to ride certain e-bikes.

Aragon new bleachers petition

Anais Delune
NEWS WRITER

Aragon's Parent Teacher Student Organization Co-President Margie Kim launched a petition on May 22 calling for expanded stadium seating on behalf of Aragon's Athletic Boosters, Music Boosters and PTSO, gaining 1,022 signatures and exceeding the 1,000-supporter goal.

The purpose of the petition is to encourage the San Mateo Union High School District Board of Trustees to prioritize this project within the Facilities Master Plan after six years of consistent requests. The Facilities Master Plan guides decisions about maintaining and modernizing district school facilities. In this case, officials will examine the proposed project for expanded bleachers to see if it aligns with Aragon's safety codes.

"I know that it's expensive for our district to cover the cost of our bleachers, but our students deserve it," said Aragon Band Director Kevin Gallagher. "Our community deserves it. Some of the other schools are getting brand new athletic centers, so it's Aragon's turn to have that upgrade as well."

Organizers believe that increased stadium seating would bring the Aragon community together.

"Our role is to advocate together for our community's needs and ask for a clear path forward," Kim said. "We have also encouraged a phased approach if that helps move improvements forward: for example, expanding the home bleachers first while planning for the more complicated visitor-side improvements which will be costly and may require a bond measure."

The petition states that Aragon has some of the most limited seating capacity of any high school in the area, with a total of 650 seats for nearly 1,700 students.

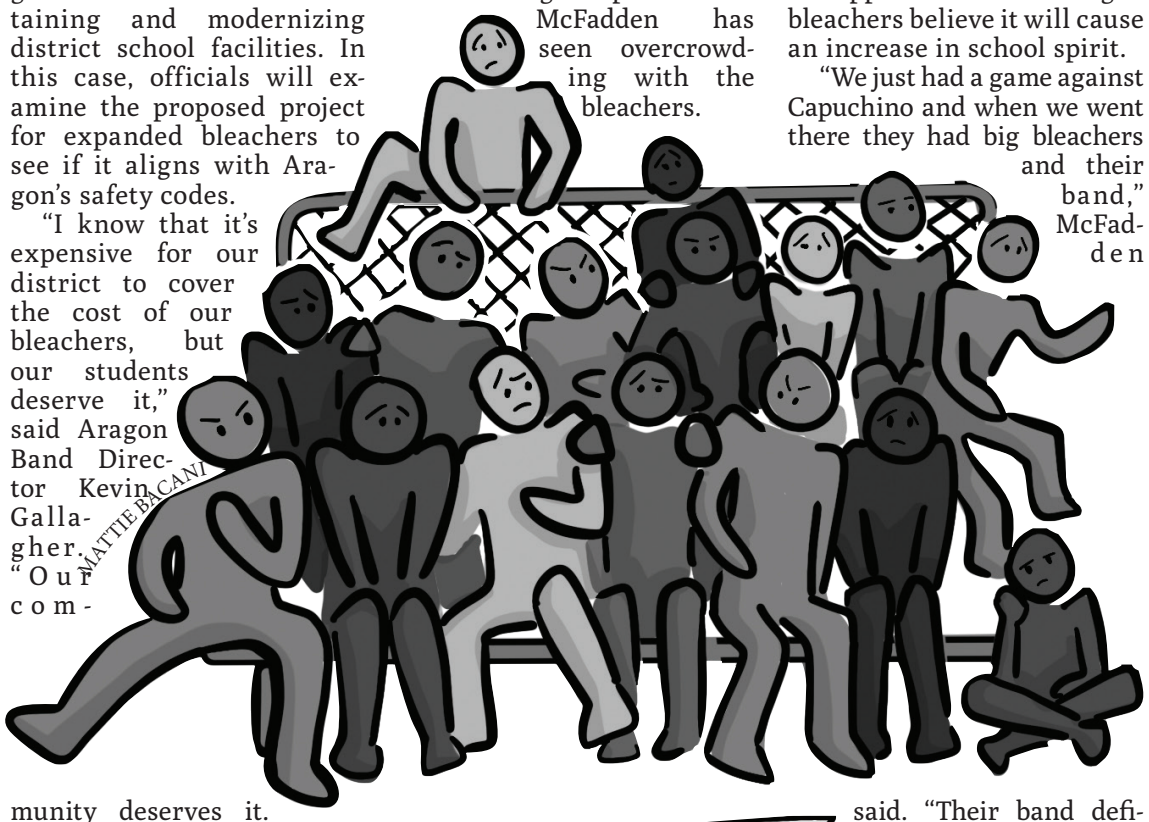
"Crowded standing areas raise concerns about accessibility, clear walkways and emergency access," Kim said. "Limited seating also restricts opportunities for our music program to participate [in pep band] and for us to hold school-wide gatherings. It's also an equity issue that our seating-to-student ratio is far lower than the other schools in the district."

HELEN MCCLOSKEY

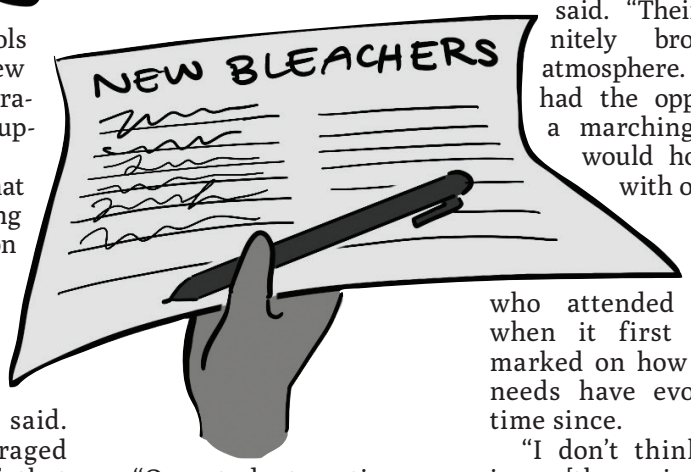
971 people

out of the 1,000 required have signed the "Expanded Stadium Seating" petition

Junior and junior varsity cheerleading captain Cali McFadden has seen overcrowding with the bleachers.



MATTIE BACANI



"Our student section, every time, gets so full that everyone ends up having to stand, and there's people around the snack shack area," McFadden said. "Since this year we're a really big team, it's hard since our bleachers are so short and [our formation is] so long that sometimes some [cheerleaders] are performing not in front of people."

If the Aragon bleachers are expanded, it would be possible for an Aragon pep band to perform at games.

"We're lacking school spirit in terms of the band program and connections between the band program and sports fields because we don't have any real way for us to connect with each other," said senior and Wind Ensemble flute player Jackson Keane. "That is definitely partially due to the bleachers. It's a missed opportunity."

Supporters of enlarged bleachers believe it will cause an increase in school spirit.

"We just had a game against Capuchino and when we went there they had big bleachers and their band," McFadden said. "Their band definitely brought some atmosphere. If we ever had the opportunity for a marching band, that would hopefully help with our spirit."

Gary Tobin, an Aragon alumnus who attended the school when it first opened, remarked on how the school's needs have evolved in the time since.

"I don't think it was an issue [then, since] our first year only fielded a [junior varsity] team and there were only 500 out of 600 students who attended [the games]," Tobin said.

For football head coach Ash Parham, who said he has wanted expanded bleachers since 2022, the petition is a sign of community support.

"I was excited," Parham said. "I thought it was only a few people, like the football players and coaches and athletic directors who would complain about the size of bleachers. But it was great to see the community getting behind the effort."

The Facilities Master Plan, potentially including plans for larger bleachers, will be approved by the board on Nov. 19.

The Aragon bleachers originally seated

500-600 students

Editorial: blocked websites hinder lessons

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

This school year, Aragon required students to only use school Chromebooks while on campus, unless staffulty explicitly allowed usage of personal devices. With this increased reliance comes more interaction with websites blocked by Linewize, a web-filtering platform newly implemented on school-managed devices this year. Intended to decrease distractions, Linewize instead blocks several educational websites, occasionally interfering with teachers' lessons. The Outlook proposes two main solutions: enabling teachers to unblock certain websites that are necessary for class materials for students during their class period and the district creating a publicly accessible directory of blocked websites.

According to the district, websites may be blocked for lacking a student data privacy agreement, misaligning with the district's instructional guidelines or requiring users to be at least 18-years-old when logging in with school email. Specifically, they block sites that are inappropriate, disruptive, questionable or have high-bandwidth streaming. However, many students are finding loopholes around this filter system, including finding unblocked websites that host games.

"It's like a game of cat and mouse," said junior Braden McMillan. "You're never going to be able to block all the websites. If a student wants to play games, they're going to find the website."

We believe these blanket restrictions, which block educational websites without always preventing students from finding distractions elsewhere, should be disbanded by the district.

Right now, some teachers are frustrated with the filter because many websites and videos accessible to teachers are not viewable on student Chromebooks; therefore, teachers usually don't know if their resources can be accessed until students open the websites in class.

"I was trying to let students have access to a video in class, and it [was] blocked," said social studies department head Carlo Corti. "When I'm planning a lesson, I'm like, 'this link works.' [But] to then know that it could be blocked [for] students, [which] wipes out a third or half of what was going to happen in class, is really frustrating."



The filter interfering with teachers' lessons extends to departments outside of the humanities as well.

"In my biotech class, which is career technical education, there's some responsibility on the part of the teacher to provide students with opportunities and lessons for them to learn the skills that they're going to need," said science department co-head Katherine Ward. "The world of work includes cover letters, resumes and employability skills, but it also includes networking and being able to help my students develop their first LinkedIn page and think about what design [and] layout looks like, how you choose your words, etc. I can't do it because LinkedIn is blocked, and the only option then would be to have them bring in their personal device and do it on that because it's not blocked on their own devices. It's difficult when [students] don't have access to the technology."

As such, the Outlook recommends that teachers be given a way to control which websites students can access during their class period, both blocking and unblocking them. As of now, teachers are unable to unlock websites for students at all. Thus, we recommend the district find another system to implement this option.

Currently, when students believe there is a legitimate website being blocked, they can email help@smuhsd.org with the website URL and a brief explanation. However, many students are unaware of this option, so the Outlook suggests increasing transparency about both the unblocking process along and exactly which websites are blocked by implementing a directory made available on all school websites.

Moreover, we propose that this directory act as a growing database based on students' and teachers' suggestions. If the district decides to keep a website blocked after receiving an email at help@smuhsd.org, its reasoning could be documented in this directory to promote transparency.

Currently, websites like Slack and Zoom are blocked, with Linewize mentioning "Default Blocked Application, Standard Filtering," which offers little reasoning. A more detailed directory would move away from blanket restrictions that treat every website within a broad category as equally inappropriate. The district should consider a website's educational value and intended uses while reviewing websites.

Finally, the directory would establish a clearer appeal process with timely explanations of the district's decision. This would clarify who makes blocking decisions and why, while allowing the district to reconsider restrictions when appropriate.

The Outlook firmly believes schools should help students learn how to navigate the internet responsibly, not rely on restrictions as a substitute for that judgment. Because we understand that restrictions will likely not be completely lifted, we instead encourage students and teachers to have the opportunity to ask and understand why websites are blocked.

"It's best if everyone gets a say in this," said freshman Gabriella Rendon De Santana. "Technology is getting better, people are growing with the technology and therefore [we need to] know more about it. It'd be nice for kids in high school who are going into adulthood [to have a] say about [blocked websites]."

Both solutions in tandem create a better internet environment for students. Teachers having the ability to unblock websites during class periods ensures their lessons are free of technological disruptions and a growing directory would enable increased, accessible communication between students, teachers and district administration.

Construction and Trades class attends field trips

Keira Hamilton
NEWS WRITER

The students of the Aragon Construction and Trades class attended two field trips this month. On Oct. 23, students attended the Santa Cruz Trades Day, where they visited exhibits by professionals in the trades industry to learn about a multitude of career opportunities. On Oct. 27, at the Redwood City Port, students toured boats, participated in hands-on activities relating to the trades and learned about the maritime industry.

A trade job is a specialized career that requires technical skills and training custom to the specific job; it can be an alternative to going to college for a degree. The purpose of the technology trade program at Aragon is to help students explore careers in trades such as jobs as locksmiths, plumbers and electricians.

"They're learning about the trades that are out there in the construction industry [and] about jobs that are available to them through [apprenticeship] programs," said Arron Apperson, Engineering Technology and Construction and Trades teacher. "Overall, I want them to learn that there are many more ways to have a successful life than to graduate from college and be somebody that's academic."

Students appreciate the class and believe that the opportunities it offers are beneficial to their preparation for future careers in the trades.

"That's what I want to do in the future," said senior Sebastian Diaz-Jones. "I want to be an electrician, and it's good to learn it earlier so I can have a head start in the actual workforce."

On the trips, students had the opportunity to meet people who work in a variety of trades, which allowed them to hear personal stories and to understand reasons to pursue a career in trades.

"My students [were] able to talk to people, do some hands-on activities and find ... job opportunities," Apperson said. "[We talked] to people from ... a huge construction company all the way to firefighters and police officers."

Students say that hearing these stories helped broaden their perspectives and introduced them to a wider variety of possibilities in the workforce.

"I liked meeting new people," said senior Isaac Perez. "I want to learn more about what [the trades have] to offer and ... other than college, what paths [there are]."

The field trips gave students the opportunity to network and connect with the trades community while hearing the real-life experiences of people who work in those industries.



Santa Cruz Water Department presenting.


Trade experts speaking to students. COURTESY OF DEI CAPARROS

aragonoutlook.org

Scott Silton
Faculty Adviser

Darshan Bal &
Angela Nguyen
Editors-in-Chief

FEATURES
Naomi Kotani*
Ashley Tsui*
Cayleigh Wilson*
Neharika Choudhary
Ethan Fei
Rohan Gupta
Pavinoor Jaggi
Roy Kong
Anushka Punjabi
Addie Rose
Warren Yao
Linus Zhao

NEWS
Ellie Blakely*
Diya Gourineni*
Helen McCloskey*
Anais Delune
Max Feng
Keira Hamilton
Ryan Li
Jannah Nassef
Khoi Nguyen
Ronen Paynter
Diya Poojary
Renee Ren

SPORTS
Claire Dong*
Claire Qi*
Luke Trimble*
Alex Choi
Albert Feng
Dhruv Gourineni
Sabina Gulati
Deven Shahani
Emmy Teufel
Adya Tewari

GRAPHICS
Mi Nguyen*
Matilda Bacani
Oulu Ford
Lillian Huang
Makenna Nguyen
Karen Suzuki
Anna Suzuki
Justin Zheng

PHOTO
Madeline Allen*
Brandon Ho
Aidan Kasten
Haley Lau
Aaron Lee
Jeffrey Liu
Ian Wang
Jacqueline Wong
Naoki Yoshimura

SOCIAL MEDIA
Madeline Allen*
Naomi Kotani*

BUSINESS
Ellie Blakely*
Claire Qi*

EDITORIAL
Diya Gourineni*

CENTERSPREAD
Allinah Zhan*

TECHNOLOGY
Ashley Tsui*
Allinah Zhan*

Volume 67, Issue 3
November 12, 2026

900 Alameda de las Pulgas,
San Mateo, CA 94402

* denotes editors

Foster City and San Mateo city council elections

Diya Poojary
NEWS WRITER

On Nov. 3, residents in San Mateo and Foster City not only voted in the upcoming midterms, but also for candidates running for their respective city councils.

In the city of San Mateo, seven candidates ran for three open seats representing districts 1, 3 and 5.

SAN MATEO DISTRICT 1

In District 1, covering northwest regions of the city including the Baywood-Aragon area, incumbent Councilmember Lisa Diaz Nash faced off against Taso Zografos.

COURTESY OF LISA DIAZ NASH



Nash, a long-term San Mateo resident, began her career in consumer marketing before shifting to local government.

"[It was] a wonderful chance to have a perspective of the basic consumer promise," Nash said. "That's the same in local government ... [it's] a service business ... our whole job is to understand our constituents and what their needs and priorities are, and advocate for them to accomplish those barriers."

Nash's priorities for her campaign included public safety, affordable workforce housing, addressing the city's $15 million budget deficit and increasing community engagement.

As councilmember, she has worked on expanding affordable housing through projects and also intends to address the budget deficit with Measure H, which would institute an additional quarter-cent sales tax, and by temporarily freezing several open positions and projects.

Although Nash first ran for city council in 2020, she was first elected in 2022, and ran for reelection this November.

"I learned the first [and] second time around how important it is to just get out and knock doors," Nash said. "You can have all the fancy social media you want and do all the big events, but at the end of the day, people's decisions are made when they understand who you are, whether you agree with them and whether you're going to stand up for them."

Running in opposition to Nash is Taso Zografos, who has been involved in implementing transportation, parking and infrastructure solutions through his professional career at Lockheed Martin, an aerospace and defense contractor. Zografos serves as the company's Customer Success Executive.

His priorities include safe neighborhoods by prioritizing public safety and emergency services, smarter transportation and infrastructure policies, affordable housing and fiscal oversight and accountability at City Hall. Notably, he opposes Measure H.

"There is more than one way for a city to bring in money," Zografos said on his campaign website. "I would focus on expanding the City's economic base — retaining the businesses we already have, filling the commercial vacancies sitting empty along our corridors and actively attracting new employers and businesses our community actually wants."

As of the time of publishing, Diaz Nash led Zografos with 61.8% of the vote.

SAN MATEO DISTRICT 3

In District 3, the region nestled between El Camino Real and the Bayshore Freeway, incumbent Council Member Robert Newsom Jr. and San Mateo Planning Commission member Seema Patel faced off to represent the seat.

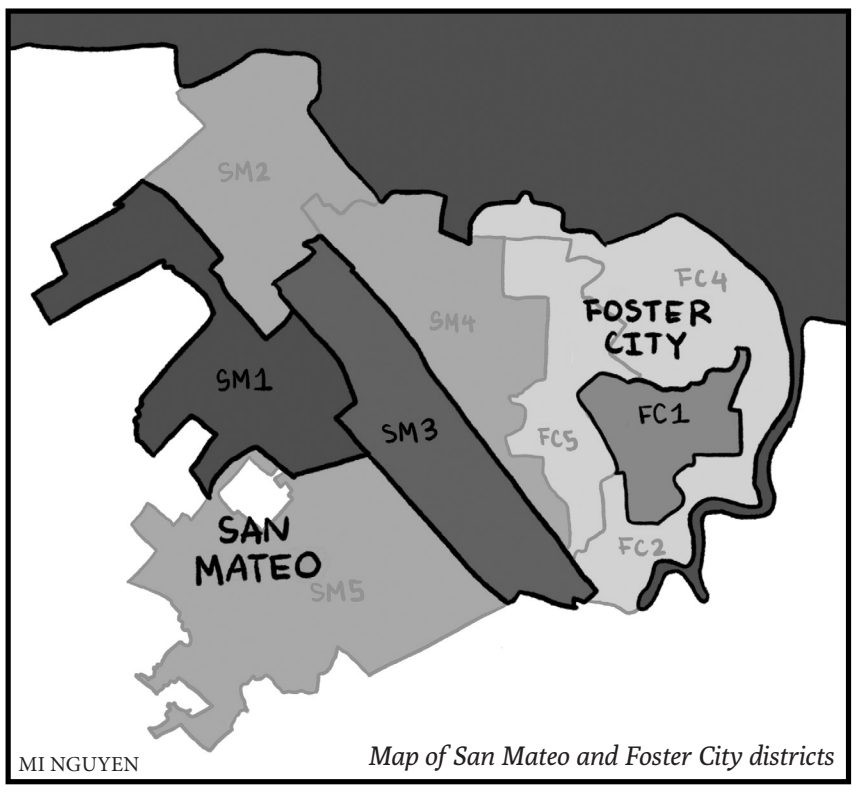
San Mateo native Newsom's priorities include pedestrian and school safety, affordable housing and continuing to update public safety and community facilities across the city.

In 2024, Newsom worked with the San Mateo Police Department to launch the Real-Time Information Center, which has played a significant role in crime reduction, real-time mapping and surveillance and the use of automated license plate readers through integrated databases, such as Flock, to provide information to officers and first responders. He is also working to update Fire Station #27, the oldest in San Mateo, creating RV Homeless Outreach to get people without homes into shelters and funding programs to prevent housing loss for families with financial challenges.

Running against him is Seema Patel, who has worked in city government since 2021, as part of the Community Relations, Civic Arts and Planning Commissions.

COURTESY OF SEEMA PATEL





MI NGUYEN *Map of San Mateo and Foster City districts*

"[Up] until six years ago, I would focus all my advocacy at the state and national level, and ... I would rant on social media about some crazy thing happening at the national level," Patel said. "[A friend] would [say], 'Seema, 95% of what you experience in your daily life is controlled by your city. [The] best thing that you can do is get involved at the local level [and] have the maximum amount of impact on people's daily lives' ... [And] I finally [decided to] apply for a commission."

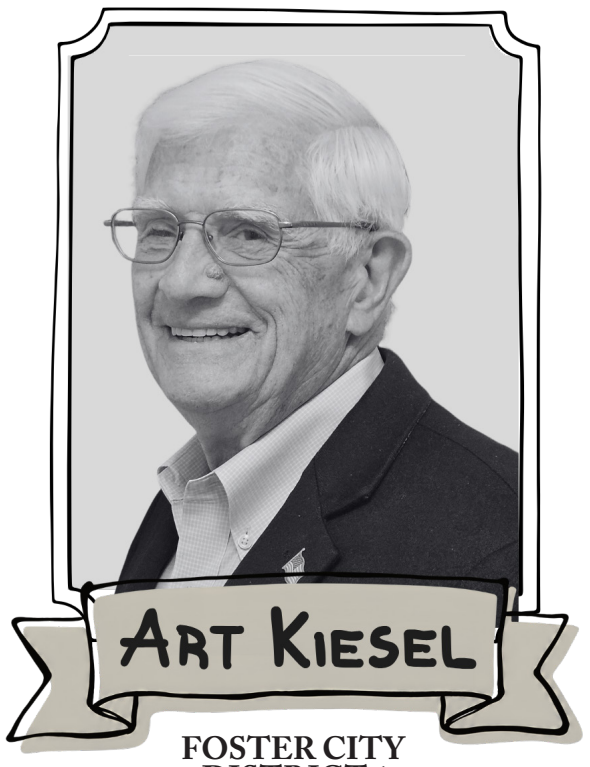
A major priority for Patel has been bike and pedestrian safety; she hopes to introduce more proactive approaches in implementing safety improvement projects.

"[The] way that [the projects are] prioritized usually is ... [through] how many collisions have been there, how many people have been injured [or] killed," Patel said. "I would love to figure out a metric that's based around other factors rather than injuries or deaths, like vehicle volume or speed or [street] design."

Patel's other priorities include affordable housing, specifically by eliminating bureaucracy and introducing policies balancing the ratio of office to housing space, bringing new jobs to support residents and investing in transitions to clean energy.

At the time of publishing, Patel led the race, garnering 62.71% of the vote.

COURTESY OF ART KIESEL



FOSTER CITY DISTRICT 1

In District 1, which spans the central part of Foster City, Mayor Art Kiesel and Councilmember Phoebe Shin-Venkat ran against each other for the seat.

A resident of Foster City for over three decades, Kiesel has served on the city's Planning Commission and for two terms on City Council.

His priorities include responsible housing and managed growth while taking Foster City's limited area and traffic conditions into account, fiscal responsibility, responsive public safety services, improving park and recreation facilities and expanding climate-resilient infrastructure, like the Foster City Levee Improvements Project, which reinforced the shoreline embankment to protect the city against floods.

Senior Emily Ma views the improved levee as a successful step toward sustainability.

"[If] we hadn't had that project, I would probably be significantly more concerned about the future of Foster City and what it would look like in 30 years in 2050, when climate change and its associated impacts have been further exacerbated," Ma said.

Councilmember Phoebe Shin-Venkat, first elected in 2024, was the first renter and Chinese woman to serve on the City Council. She previously served on the Planning Commission, and now serves as a board member for Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse and a founding executive member of the San Mateo County Asian American Pacific Islander Alliance.

Her priorities as councilmember include fiscal safety, maintaining public safety, attracting and retaining businesses, sustainability, affordable housing and supporting organizations that bring multiple generations together.

"She definitely takes in [others' views] and adds her own little twist," said Rhia Kulkarni, a member of the Foster City Youth Advisory Council. "[She] overall is a very nice, cooperative and engaged person."

At the time of publishing, Kiesel was ahead of Shin-Venkat, taking 65.04% of the vote.

Since San Mateo and Foster City employ staggered elections, the candidates seeking to represent the remaining districts in both cities will run for election in 2028.

Becerra defeats Hilton to become next CA governor

Jannah Nassef
NEWS WRITER

On Nov. 3, California voters chose Xavier Becerra, a Democrat, over Steve Hilton, a Republican, for governor. As of Nov. 5, Becerra has 65.8% of the vote and Hilton has 34.2%. In Aragon's mock election, Becerra won 81.1% of the vote.

Becerra has served in the U.S. House of Representatives, as California Attorney General and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services under the administration of former President Joe Biden.

Hilton served as a top advisor to David Cameron in the U.K., who would later become Prime Minister. He is also a professional advertiser, taught at Stanford and previously hosted a program on Fox News. He has portrayed himself as not a "career politician."

During several interviews and social media messages, Becerra reaffirmed his commitment to affordable healthcare in California, stating that it will be his main priority if he is elected. He aims to expand access and coverage to Californians, particularly people in underserved communities.

Specifically, Becerra has called for dedicating more state funds to universal healthcare coverage. In addition, Becerra also plans to focus on strengthening the healthcare workforce by investing in nurses, doctors and caretakers.

Becerra has said he intends to write executive orders for state agencies to provide continuous coverage for Californians unable to receive healthcare coverage due to federal funding cuts from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. He has stated that he will direct state agencies to protect immigrants' access to healthcare, maternal health support and protect reproductive rights. In addition, Becerra plans to evaluate the needs of rural communities and hospitals, and intervene to reduce closures.


COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

However, some are concerned about the financial cost necessary to implement universal healthcare.

"My question is, how are you going to pay for it?" said Lee Miller, a political science professor at the College of San Mateo. "There's a limited ability of the state to raise taxes because if they raise taxes too much on corporations, the corporations could just move their operations out of the state … It's also very difficult to raise taxes in California because various constitutional provisions enacted by voters over the past half century or so … It's a real challenging issue to solve in the state when the state doesn't have a budget surplus where they have a bunch of extra money to spend."

Hilton also discussed healthcare in his campaign, but had different plans for improvement. His plan included giving families more control over their child's healthcare information, personalizing support for people with autism and prioritizing using technologies, such as wearables, sensors and AI, to aid medical professionals when reviewing data.

Some do not believe AI should have large involvement in medicine.

"AI can be helpful to a certain extent," said Middle College senior Gia Ocon. "But to use AI in medicine [is questionable because] AI will never be smarter than [humans]. AI should not be used in a space where it needs human thought and [requires people] who went to college for degrees."

Hilton believes that scientific information, alongside data shared from people with chronic conditions, can be used to help medical professionals evaluate changes in people's conditions over time. He believes that the U.S. healthcare system is faulty due to the lack of in-depth time spent between doctors and patients. His plan involved creating a "People-First Healthcare Commission" which would create projects meant to evaluate, understand and alter-how California's healthcare system works and prevent complex chronic diseases and illnesses. Doctors, universities, technology companies, privacy experts, scientists, parents and patients were to be on the Commission, with Hilton stating that those affected by chronic disease should determine which questions were asked and which issues would receive priority.



Another priority for Becerra is the high amounts of homelessness in California, which he has attributed to insufficient mental health treatment; he has said that he will implement every reform detailed in Proposition 1, which authorized bonds for housing and mental health support. Further, he states he will declare a state of emergency for housing and launch public outcome dashboards to track costs and housing retention.

Similar to his healthcare plan, Becerra finds prevention to be the most important solution, implementing rental assistance by creating a funding stream from California's homelessness response and supporting eviction defense as well as foreclosure prevention. Becerra has also stated that he will expand shelter capacity and permanent housing.

During his campaign, Hilton said that he would end mass homelessness by the end of his first year in office. He planned on doing so by building homeless recovery centers, which would have included meals, beds, showers and medical staff to provide psychiatric help for those who need it.

"[Hilton's] homelessness [policy was not] very realistic," said junior Allison Lin. "Getting rid of [it] is not possible. I know he [wanted] to bring gas prices down, but you have to bring prices down [in other areas of life], especially housing prices."

California has consistently leaned Democratic in past statewide elections, making Becerra's win unsurprising for many. His win is still historic, though, as he is the first directly elected Latino governor of California.

allcove

allcove San Mateo is a **FREE** youth wellness center for ages 12-25. Youth can hang out and access a range of services that include:

- Peer Support
- Education & Employment
- Family Support
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Substance Use





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

scan the QR code to learn more!

Sexual assault: Jane Doe's story carries beyond Cornell

Anushka Punjabi
FEATURES WRITER

50 pounds.

The weight of the mattress Columbia University student Emma Sulkowicz carried across campus for months in 2015. Her senior thesis, "Mattress Performance (Carry That Weight)," was an act of protest following her allegation that she had been sexually assaulted by another student. Her alleged rapist would go on to graduate. More than a decade later, another university has become the center of a similar discussion.

At Cornell University, a former student identified as Jane Doe filed a lawsuit in September alleging that seven members of the Chi Phi fraternity house on campus sexually assaulted her at a party in October 2024. According to the complaint, Doe had already consumed drinks before arriving at the fraternity house. Two fraternity members, Matthew Ingalls and Jonathan Newell, allegedly pressured her into taking ketamine, using marijuana and consuming additional alcohol.

The lawsuit claims that she became increasingly incapacitated as the night continued and that other fraternity members were invited to get "free pussy" via Snapchat group chat. Men in the group chat would allegedly go on to enter the room and sexually assault Doe. In a six-page summary of Doe's report sent to the district attorney's office, her statement that she "was 100 percent … raped" was excluded.

The criminal investigation has been reopened, and the seven men named in the lawsuit have denied wrongdoing as of October 2026.

Responding to backlash due to a lack of accountability for the alleged rapists, Cornell University conducted its own investigation and disciplined several Chi Phi fraternity members, yet no criminal charges were filed at the time. Several students disciplined by the university were reportedly required to write a reflective statement, a consequence that has drawn criticism from those who felt that it did not adequately address the seriousness of the allegations.

"I was horrified, but not terribly surprised," said Advanced Placement Literature teacher Genevieve Schwartz. "There is a deep culture … in which women are objectified and seen as possessions, things to be had."

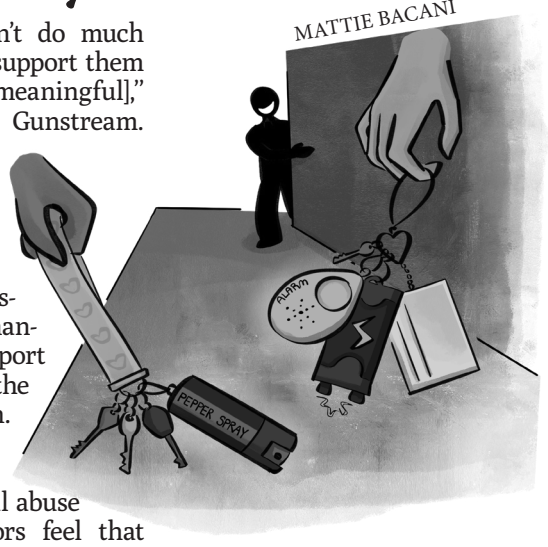
The response to the Cornell case spread quickly to social media. Under the hashtag #IAmJaneDoe, women across social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram began identifying with Jane Doe through their experiences with harassment and assault.

As stories began to circulate online, women questioned how universities respond when someone reports sexual violence. When Schwartz was a residential advisor in college, she experienced this lack of safety.

"One of the girls [on my floor] said, 'there's somebody in the bathroom,' and a young man was crouching in one of the stalls," Schwartz said. "I said to him, 'You need to leave immediately. We're about to call the police,' and he threw the door open and shoved me against the bathroom wall. I went immediately to the head of the dorm, and from what we heard, there was not enough evidence to figure out who it was."

Schwartz's experience emphasizes a reality that spans generations; the historical tendency of institutions to drop investigations due to a self-imposed "lack of evidence." For the current generation of students watching the Cornell case unfold, it feels like a continuation of this exact cycle.

"It's just sad that so many women can relate to this scenario, and then to also hear about how [Cornell] didn't do much about it, or didn't support them in a way that [was meaningful]," said junior Sophie Gunstream. "All these women have had similar experiences."



In the Cornell case, the university's Title IX investigation and its handling of Doe's report became part of the public discuss+ion. Gunstream argued that the stigma surrounding sexual abuse can make survivors feel that coming forward will change how others view them.

"Society [places blame on the woman], like you're gonna be tainted," Gunstream said. "[Aragon's] anonymous alerting system would make it easier [to report instances], but coming forward and talking about it, that would be hard for anyone."

But often when coming forward, conversations shift away from what the real trauma victims undergo to whether the assault happened in the first place.

"Is it a possibility that there are false accusations?" Schwartz said. "Of course, there's always a possibility, but that's often weaponized as a way to underwrite stories. We know now the effect of trauma on a victim of sexual assault. It takes time to fully metabolize what is happening."

Young women are often taught to question their own reactions, leading some to struggle recognizing when someone has crossed a boundary.

"You're stuck in this moment where you're trying to evaluate what's just been said to you," Schwartz said. "Did it cross a line? Is it in the gray area? There are all these questions. Am I misinterpreting this?"

Today, years after Sulkowicz carried her mattress across Columbia, young women continue to navigate the same questions of safety and accountability.

Diversity, equity and inclusion in the public

Ethan Fei
FEATURES WRITER

When Stanford University displayed promotional banners meant to celebrate its student body, an AI-altered image did the opposite. Hispanic student Billy Ramirez was replaced by a nonexistent Black woman, raising questions about whether institutions value diversity, or simply its appearance.

Diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, is a framework used by schools and workplaces to ensure that everybody is given equal opportunities to succeed. Yet, it has recently become entangled with public relations. Identity has become a weapon rather than a tool for genuine progress, allowing public figures to shield themselves from public criticism by pointing out that they are completing diversity milestones.

"I would define [DEI] as measures that are set in place to prevent companies from only choosing people who aren't part of oppressed groups in the past," said junior Emma Sakai. "Like making sure those people aren't overlooked just because they're part of an oppressed group."

This has caused a major divide. On one end, hyper-sensitive DEI supporters see any creative choice as a targeted attack upon minority groups. They push inclusion and representation to the point that it becomes a "checklist." This can then cause complaints about ideological conformity and reverse discrimination, but expanding access does not need to mean prioritizing demographics over ability.

"People say there's danger because they see it as 'get the quota filled or else,'" Sakai said. "[But] it's more like we need to focus on outreach so that we get more people from these groups interested so they want to apply."

On the other hand, DEI critics treat almost any form of representation or diversity as a threat. They use that to deny real opportunities to the less privileged.

"Companies that advertise DEI are trying to fill the workspace up with people who have been secluded in the past," said junior Elias Hybl. "That comes with a consequence, though, of prioritizing people's backgrounds over their actual skill level. Because, for me, whoever can perform the job the best should be hired."

This fear has caused scandals like the Stanford University dining hall banner incident. Terrified of facing backlash over lacking diversity, university administrators panicked, turning towards generative AI to literally manufacture a synthetic Black woman over the very real Hispanic student Billy Ramirez.

"It is important to get different perspectives for a lot of different job markets or in school as well," said junior Diego Vargas. "But sometimes it can feel forced, almost like it's like a check box they need to fill out."

This fear is spreading rapidly due to new federal policies. With several policies from the Trump administration, such as "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing," the pressure on companies has reversed. Rather than feeling the pressure to include diverse and inclusive racial messages, large entities are reducing equity campaigns, revealing a shift where inclusion is increasingly being viewed as a legal and public relations liability.

This debate has become an issue within the world of education. Critics argue that by prioritizing racial diversity in universities, it may be harder for highly qualified applicants from different backgrounds to get into the same school. This led to the Supreme Court case Students for Fair Admission v. Harvard, in which the Supreme Court ruled against race-conscious admissions. According to Harvard University's official student newspaper, The Harvard Crimson, in the years after the Supreme Court ruling, the university has received more Asian American enrollment while experiencing a decline in Black student enrollment.

"Too much DEI can cause students to feel unmotivated to try to succeed," said junior Tanya Lee. "They feel that their chances are already being restricted before they have any opportunity to show who they are."

However, some see the controversy surrounding DEI as a marketing opportunity, as companies realize that controversy can serve as free publicity. In an era where algorithms reward controversy, being heavily criticized by one side of the spectrum often leads to millions of dollars from the other side."I definitely feel like a lot of the time it's to catch a trend or to appeal to their consumers," Lee said.



Consider American Eagle's recent campaign featuring actress Sydney Sweeney, which included a slogan about "good jeans," that many interpreted as "good genes," causing debates over genetics, privilege, and representation. According to CNN, American Eagle stock rose by 25% in part because of the sensation caused by the Sydney Sweeney ad. Another company that faced heavy backlash was Converse. They created an ad featuring K-pop singer Karina, and many criticized it after noticing the studio lighting on her white clothing looked like a white triangle that strongly resembled a Ku Klux Klan hood. These controversies reveal a clear pattern about modern marketing strategies in which companies deliberately cause a culture war, knowing that the public outcry will keep their brand trending.

Ineffectively carrying out DEI in education can cause a generation to view diversity as a boring corporate policy rather than something that shapes everyday experiences. When schools fail to address stereotypes about different backgrounds, it makes it harder for marginalized individuals to feel welcome in professional schools and workplaces.

From an educator's perspective, the focus on diversity could be changed to focus more on socioeconomic status than race. By looking at adversity from people from differing class, income and regional backgrounds, schools and companies can promote less represented individuals without causing resentment from those of other races. Therefore, they will be able to promote genuine diversity while still being able to value individual merit.

Thanksgiving: is it an inclusive holiday?

Warren Yao
FEATURES WRITER

On the fourth Thursday of every November, families set their tables with succulent turkeys and scarlet-red cranberry sauce, amongst many other traditional dishes.

It's Thanksgiving, that time of year when families and friends gather to celebrate and reflect on the perilous journey to North America. The holiday symbolizes the hope European settlers had: the yearning for freedom.

The holiday has its origins from a 1621 feast that lasted three days, celebrating the new relationship between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag, the native tribe of Plymouth.

Abraham Lincoln established Thanksgiving as a federal holiday in 1863, more than two centuries after the initial feast, in the midst of the Civil War. His ideals of national unity inspired him to establish Thanksgiving as an annual tradition and symbol of togetherness, even though the country was divided between the Union and Confederacy.

Today, Thanksgiving has become a holiday with lavish dinners celebrated by millions in America. According to a United States Department of Agriculture poll, compared to other holidays, Thanksgiving consistently ranked the highest among young adults for two major categories: meal prep and cleanup — almost three times higher than the next closest holiday — and eating and drinking, which was almost two times higher.

Thanksgiving is a time-consuming, food-based holiday, where families spend hours planning mesmerizing visuals and flavorful dishes. As a result, a sense of pride is instilled in the holiday, as people want their efforts to be noticed and cherished by others.



Colonization is inherently unjust and the settlers' actions are unforgivable. Their centuries-long mistreatment of Native Americans cannot be ignored.

However, celebrating Thanksgiving and recognizing the history of continued damage towards the Indigenous peoples are not mutually exclusive. The intention of Thanksgiving is not to glorify colonization; rather, it honors the generosity of the Native Americans and the settlers' gratitude towards them.

The past damage to Indigenous people cannot be undone, but only remembering that part of history takes away from the main message of the holiday: it's a time for people to set aside their differences, share a few smiles and be grateful for their loved ones.

Thanksgiving can still be celebrated, though a greater emphasis on understanding the holiday's history should also be established.

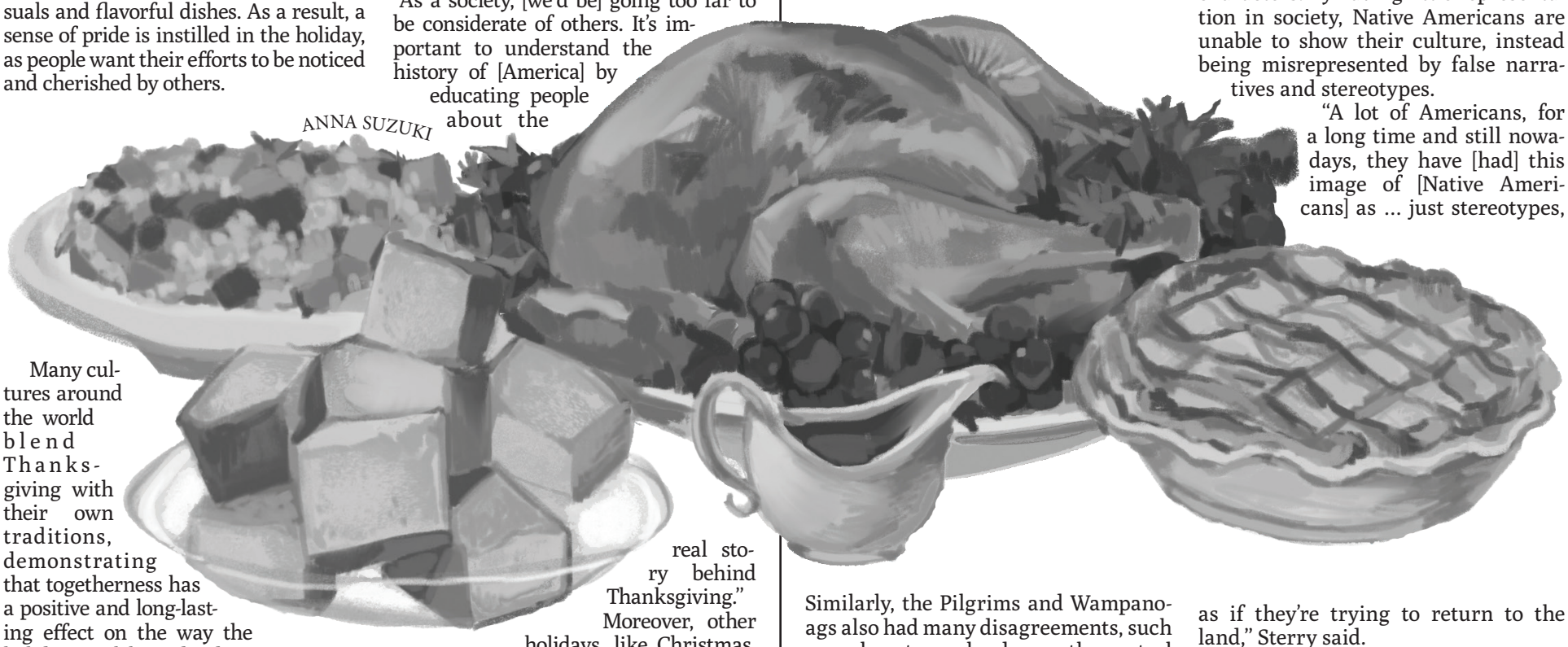
"If we [dismantled] Thanksgiving, people would get upset," Cooper said. "As a society, [we'd be] going too far to be considerate of others. It's important to understand the history of [America] by educating people about the real story behind Thanksgiving."

Moreover, other holidays, like Christmas, have been detached from their origins by the general public. First originating as a Christian holiday, Christmas is now enjoyed by many non-Christians, and according to the Associated Press-National Opinion Research Center, 48% of Christmas observers view the holiday as a non-religious cultural celebration.

As with Christmas, the public can acknowledge the history and backstory of Thanksgiving while also continuing to celebrate it.

Voiding the widespread holiday would eradicate a day of gratitude and mindfulness. It would also go against the morals of our previous generations, who fought numerous wars in order to build a country where everyone could live in harmony.

As one of the nation's oldest traditions, Thanksgiving shouldn't be forgotten about. It carries familial significance and is an acknowledgement of those who lost their lives in pursuit of a better future. Due to its ability to unite in growing times of division, it should remain a widely-recognized holiday.



Many cultures around the world blend Thanksgiving with their own traditions, demonstrating that togetherness has a positive and long-lasting effect on the way the holiday is celebrated today.

"I'm usually with family having hotpot on Thanksgiving," said senior Sophia Tiu. "It's a fun way to combine [Asian] and American culture."

However many have acknowledged that there was a darker side to the story of Thanksgiving: the harmful impacts European colonists had on the Indigenous population.

"There was forced assimilation when [Native American] children [were] forced to fit the [European] societal norms," said junior Dimitri Cooper. "There was immense displacement and physical and cultural violence [towards the Natives]."

European settlers introduced devastating new diseases to the Natives and were notorious for exploiting Indigenous peoples. Some argue that the holiday fails to acknowledge this controversial history and shouldn't be revered so highly.

"The origins of Thanksgiving that we learn [about] isn't the whole story," Tiu said. "[The story] takes away [from] the [Europeans' abuse] of kindness and it wasn't [actually] as peaceful."

Linus Zhao
FEATURES WRITER

Thanksgiving, like most holidays, is a time when families gather to express togetherness and gratitude.

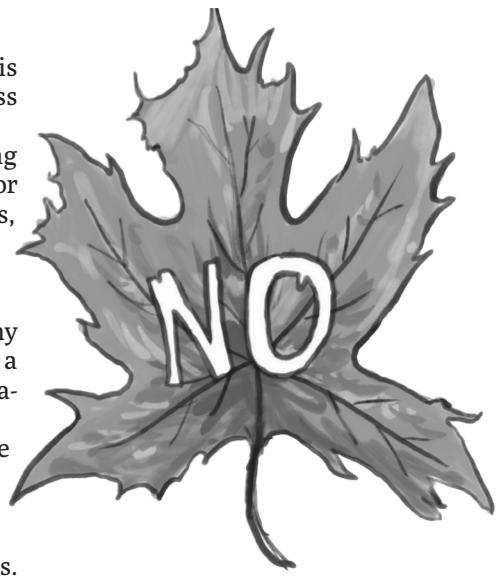
"[Thanksgiving is] about ... getting together with the family," said junior Cohen Tabler. "Out of all the holidays, it's the main one that's about being with your family, being with your loved ones."

However, these feelings of harmony and unity at the dinner table mask a centuries-long tradition of abuse of Native Americans.

Originating in the fall of 1621, the Thanksgiving tradition comes from an alleged three-day feast in Plymouth, Massachusetts, between the Pilgrims and the local Wampanoags. However, according to Christophe Boucher, an associate professor of Native American history at the College of Charleston, the feast was originally only meant for the Pilgrims, not the Wampanoags. The narrative of Thanksgiving and tradition of togetherness was only created after Wampanoags joined the feast after hearing colonists fire guns during their celebration.

"If you start thinking about it, it is messed up that we celebrate [Thanksgiving]," said junior Tyler Sterry. "Is it this peaceful gathering between ... Natives and white [people]? I mean, clearly our history contradicts that."

Additionally, the ideas of unity and togetherness found in the traditional Thanksgiving narrative aren't based in truth, with the Pilgrims holding heavy prejudice against Native Americans.



Similarly, the Pilgrims and Wampanoags also had many disagreements, such as on how to use land or on the control of European livestock that actively destroyed Native American crops.

Only 50 years after the original event of Thanksgiving, these disagreements between Pilgrims and Native Americans erupted into a war, primarily due to the increasing population of the Pilgrims. The war would forever change the Pilgrims' view of Native Americans, seeing them as savages and pests that needed to be eradicated.

"After [the] original celebration, if it was a celebration, there [were] centuries of mistreatment of Native Americans," Sterry said. "[They faced lots] of racial prejudice by white [people]."

In following centuries, Native Americans have continued to suffer from the impacts of colonists' abuse and the actions of many United States institutions. In the 1830s, in an attempt to get more land to grow cotton, hundreds of thousands of Native Americans were brutally marched off their land on the Trail of Tears and onto reservations.

On these reservations, starvation was common, and disease easily wiped out Native American populations, making their culture almost impossible to maintain. Additionally, due to boarding schools implemented on the reservations, which Native Americans were forced to attend, what was left of their culture was almost destroyed. Native American children were forced to learn English, convert to Christianity, unlearn their Indigenous traditions and instead learn the traditions and customs of white people.

Today with "inclusivity" being a key topic, Native American perspectives and ideas have continued to have little representation in society. In a study by Dr. Stacy L. Smith at the University of Southern California, less than 1% of speaking roles in the top-grossing films in Hollywood went to Indigenous characters. By having little representation in society, Native Americans are unable to show their culture, instead being misrepresented by false narratives and stereotypes.

"A lot of Americans, for a long time and still nowadays, they have [had] this image of [Native Americans] as ... just stereotypes, as if they're trying to return to the land," Sterry said.

Similarly, rather than erasing Thanksgiving's history, Americans should confront the violence and mistreatment that its traditional narrative often overlooks. Ignoring this history would further diminish Native American representation and erase the experiences that hundreds of thousands of people had.

"I don't think we should remove [Thanksgiving] from [the country's] history," Sterry said. "We have to be educated about the historical mistreatment of Native Americans."

However, recognizing Thanksgiving's history is not the same as celebrating the holiday itself. What began as an escape from tyranny ultimately contributed to the creation of a society that persecuted hundreds of thousands of people. Rather than celebrating a holiday rooted in the starvation, displacement, disease and systematic destruction of Native American cultures, Americans should use its history as an opportunity to acknowledge the harm that European settlers inflicted on the Indigenous communities.

DEATH PENALTY

INTRODUCTION

On Nov. 5, Gov. Gavin Newsom commuted the sentences of all 548 death row inmates in California to life sentences without possibility for parole; no inmate has been executed since 2006 due to lawsuits and concerns about how executions would take place. In an open letter released by the Governor's Office, he stated that "state-sanctioned killing is incompatible with California's values" and that "two classes of murder victims" should not be created.

The death penalty, otherwise known as capital punishment, is the execution of a person ordered by a court of law as a punishment for committing a severe crime. In the U.S., the death penalty is reserved almost exclusively for murder, and everyone currently on death row was previously convicted of a crime where someone died. Although non-fatal crimes like rape were once punishable by death, the Supreme Court ruled in 2008 (Kennedy v. Louisiana) that an individual cannot be executed unless a death occurred.

Legal in 27 states, the death penalty is one of the most controversial topics in law. All European and American countries except for Belarus and the U.S. have abolished capital punishment. The U.S. was one of 17 countries to carry out an execution in 2025, according to Amnesty International.

"[The death penalty] shouldn't exist at all," said freshman Adele McCloskey. "It would be better if people had life in prison with no option of bail or getting out on good behavior. Killing people, even if they did do terrible things, shouldn't be a power that the government [has]."

Previously, in March 2019, Newsom officially issued a moratorium on capital punishment. His recent clemency action has reduced the national death row population by 28%, representing the largest mass commutations in modern American history. Though it doesn't repeal the death penalty in California, which voters have previously voted to keep on the books, it exercises the governor's clemency authority.

"[Newsom has] effectively [banned] the death penalty," said Modern World History Scott Bondurant. "If the end result is nobody's being executed, good. Even if it's not changing the law completely and trying to ban it, because it's probably not politically popular enough for us to push it."

Currently, there are around 1,388 inmates in the U.S. on death row according to the Death Penalty Information Center. From 1990 to 2023, people sentenced to death row waited an average of 279 months before execution, according to Statista.

5th century In English law, which influenced much of American law, capital punishment was legal

18th century 222 crimes could result in the death penalty; crimes punishable by death in the American colonies ranged from burglary to witchcraft to murder

1790s A movement against the death penalty caused most of the northern states to reduce the number of crimes punishable by death

1911 Kansas abolished the death penalty, later followed by eight other states

1950-60s A new movement led to more states banning the death penalty

1972 The Supreme Court ruled in Furman v. Georgia and two other decisions that the arbitrary application of capital punishment was unconstitutional. As a result, five southern states amended their death penalty laws to adhere to the ruling

1976 Gregg v. Georgia, Jurek v. Texas and Proffitt v. Florida established that capital punishment itself was neither cruel nor unusual, a conclusion that justices came to after finding that capital capital punishment prevented crime

2008 Kennedy v. Louisiana: the Supreme Court ruled an individual cannot be executed unless a death occurred

2017-21 In Trump's first term, his administration ended a 17-year-old informal federal moratorium on capital punishment, carrying out 13 executions in the last six months of his term

2019 On Mar. 13, Newsom issued Executive Order N-09-19, which declared a moratorium on the death penalty in California

Copy: Allinah Zhan, Ellie Blakely, Helen McCloskey, Luke Trimble
Layout: Allinah Zhan

PRO

DETER FUTURE CRIME

Convicted criminals must be prevented from escaping or committing other crimes, and a sufficiently severe punishment may also deter prospective perpetrators.

Such a course of action may increase the safety and wellness of the nation.

"Taking criminals off the streets [and ensuring they can't get on them again] would make it so that there's less crime," said senior Carlos Cristerna. "Some people look up to people who commit crimes, if those people [are dead and cannot rejoin] the community [and] influence anyone, the next generation won't have as many people who wanna be criminals."

Donald Trump has been a strong proponent for the death penalty across his two terms. On Jan. 20, 2025, the first day of Trump's second term, he signed Executive Order 14164, "Restoring the Death Penalty and Protecting Public Safety," which lifts the federal execution moratorium, mandates capital punishment for certain crimes and reviews past commutations, among other items.

VICTIM CLOSURE

Victims' families — sometimes referred to as covictims — deserve proper emotional closure and finality.

These families are often asked to testify in the perpetrator's trial and sentencing about the impact that the murder has had on their lives, and whether they support the use of the death penalty against the murderer.

This can be seen in the case of Christa Pike, an inmate on death row in Tennessee convicted of murder and torture of a classmate in 1995. The victim's mother, May Martinez, told the press that "they should kill [Pike] right away," reflecting the desire for vengeance shared by many murder victims' families.

However, experts have cast doubt on the claim that murderers' execution brings closure, arguing that there is no evidence to support this psychological impact. A 2012 study published in the Marquette Law Review comparing the experiences of victims' families in states with and without the death penalty found that families in the non-death penalty state had "higher levels of physical, psychological and behavioral health."

RETRIBUTION

People who commit capital crimes deserve to be put to death as retribution for their actions.

Some supporters believe that those who commit crimes must suffer to feel the consequences of acting immorally.

"The death penalty is too hated on, and people are too conservative about using it," Cristerna said. "For any major crimes like terrorism, murder, rape, the death penalty should be used [because] there is no way to justify any of those. Treat people how you want to be treated."

Proponents of the death penalty often argue from the principle of retributive justice — the idea that punishment must fit the severity of the crime, traditionally summarized by the phrase "an eye for an eye."

"I agree with [the death penalty] because if you do something so horrendous, say premeditated murder, [and] it was an absolute fact that you did it, I agree with 'an eye for an eye,'" said sophomore Seanan Young. "If you kill someone, then it's not cruel or unusual to do the same thing back to you."

CON

DETERRENCE IS INEFFECTIVE

Capital punishment hasn't been proven to effectively deter crime.

Economist Isaac Ehrlich's study concluded that from 1933 to 1969, an increase in death penalty convictions led to a decrease in murders. However, a study from econometricians Michael McAleer and Michael Veall found that since death penalty deterrence was measured across different states, there was a "fragility of inferences" in determining that capital punishment decreased extreme crimes.

"If the idea is, 'It's such a severe punishment; if people know the penalty is death, maybe they will think twice about doing whatever major felony they were going to commit,' it doesn't actually do that," Bondurant said. "Violent crime rates [and] murder rates are higher in [states] with the death penalty. It doesn't actually stop people from doing the crime."

Amnesty International argues that since most crimes are "spur-of-the-moment" decisions, people committing violent crimes are unlikely to consider the consequences.

PROBLEMATIC ETHICS

There are numerous ethical issues surrounding human rights and innocence.

Historically, innocent people have been sentenced to death row. Since 1973, DNA testing has been used to prove 203 inmates on death row to be innocent, and a Stanford study estimates that 4.1% of inmates on death row should be proven not guilty. DNA testing of convicted offenders is legal in 48 states, including California.

"You either spare the horrible criminal that got the 'punishment,' or you don't give the innocent being falsely accused a second chance," said senior Elizaveta Model. "They either don't get what they deserve, what families of victims [want], or you don't give them a second chance for someone else's mistake, so you punish them for someone else's mistake."

Some people who support the abolition of the death penalty believe that a life sentence is a more severe and fitting punishment for capital crimes compared to the death penalty.

"It's worse to have to live your whole life more isolated and in a prison," McCloskey said. "If you did something really terrible, it feels like cheating your punishment if you get to die because you don't have to [think] about what you did or [have] regrets you have to live your life with. Obviously you should be locked up and kept safe and other people should be kept safe from you if you did terrible things, but I don't think killing people is the answer."

RACE, INCOME AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Historically, Black and Hispanic inmates have disproportionately outnumbered white inmates convicted of capital punishment, which opponents of the death penalty attribute to racial bias. This can be seen in the forced labor system in many prisons, which led to a higher number of Black people being imprisoned in the U.S. overall.

"This is a trend from Reconstruction," Model said. "When the Emancipation Proclamation and [the] amendments [were] passed, [there was an] exception [for] slave labor in prisons. People … didn't want to give [slavery] up. In the southern states, they passed harsh laws on different activities that [were] more prominent in Black neighborhoods or among Black people in their culture. When there was a war on drugs, everybody was using drugs. For very expensive drugs that only white elites could get, you would just pay a fine, and you're free to go. But something like [smoking] two grams of marijuana, even in legal states, [would get you in prison]. And who was smoking weed? [People in poor] Black neighborhoods."

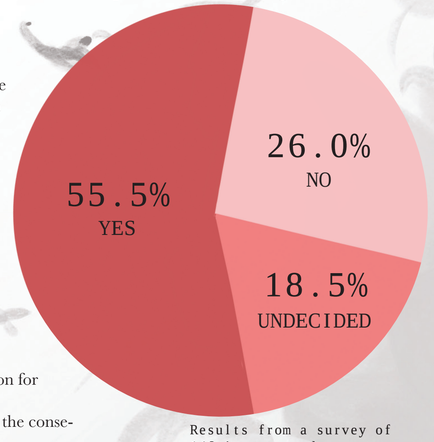
Opponents also believe that economic barriers lead to most people on death row being below the poverty line. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, people convicted often cannot afford legal counsel beyond the free counsel that must be made available to them under the law.

Though people can be exempt from capital punishment in some states and from death row if they are considered mentally incompetent, critics say most people with mental illness are disadvantaged by the legal process and are more likely to be given capital punishment. From 2000 to 2015, 43% of inmates executed per the death penalty had a mental illness.

PRO
Deter future crime
Victim closure
Retribution

CON
Ineffective deterrence
Problematic Ethics
Race, Income, Mental Illness

POLL: Should the death penalty be legal?



Results from a survey of 146 Aragon students



Current Events

On Sept. 30, Pike, a first-degree murder convict, survived her execution attempt in Tennessee. She received two doses of pentobarbital, the drug used in lethal injections, a dose that is not known to have ever failed to kill anyone before.

"You can't fail to kill someone," Young said. "If you think killing someone is cruel and unusual punishment, try trying to kill them and then failing, and then having to do it again."

On Oct. 8, public officials from the Pentagon announced that the execution of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan would be broadcast live on the internet, which would have made it the first public execution in the U.S. in nearly a century had it not been cancelled following backlash.

"Public execution should never even have been considered," said sophomore Sebastien Battles. "It shows our people and our country as barbaric, which is not who we are."

Previously, on Nov. 5, 2009, Hasan perpetrated the mass shooting at Fort Hood in Texas, possibly out of opposition to military deployments and self-radicalized Islamic extremism. He was convicted at a 2013 court martial for 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder, sentencing him to death.

53% of death row inmates are Black and Hispanic, while they make up a third of the U.S. population (Center for American Progress).

41% of people convicted of capital punishment are Black, while 14% of Americans are Black (Prison Policy Initiative).

The most common methods of execution in the US are

- Lethal injection
- Nitrogen gas
- Electrocution
- Firing squad

Raven Chacon's "New Work"

Roy Kong
FEATURES WRITER

Two aerial maps, the same but different, face each other, telling overlapping stories of tragedy. Eerie but welcoming, Raven Chacon's new exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art displays his scenography craftsmanship in an abyss of film and noise on the sixth floor. His video, "The Naming of Names," along with a spatialized recording of wordless noise guides viewers through the seven screens of footage that surrounds the room.

Best known as a composer and installation artist, Chacon was the first Native American to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music and has released over 80 music pieces across a 24-year-long career. He unveiled his exhibit at the SFMOMA on Oct. 24 and the artwork will be on display until Nov. 7, 2027.

Chacon, being raised on Navajo Nation — the largest Native American reservation in the United States — looks to highlight the erased history of Indigenous people and culture. He furthers the experience by using subtitles from "The Martian Chronicles," by Ray Bradbury, a science fiction novel and TV miniseries that warned against humanity attempting to colonize Mars. Enhanced by tourist clips to the U.S. from the 1950s and 60s, Chacon compares human settlement to the settlement of colonials on Native land, and the renaming of landmarks and territories.

Chacon's Diné, or Navajo culture, is shown through the ideas he conveys, revealing the message hidden behind the voiceless noise and contextless video. Each of his pieces and installments play a meaningful part in telling his unseen perspective on the Navajo land.

"It was like putting a puzzle together in a way where I didn't understand right away," said viewer Rylan Croft Lofgren. "I had to keep watching more to really start to understand ... Especially towards the end, where it was this realization of what [the exhibit] really was. It was almost enlightening because the music changed, where it gave me a little bit more sense of comfort versus the beginning."

The exhibit's medium uses a dim room with projections on each wall, some walls with multiple. In the middle of the room is a round ottoman, assisting the frequent turning of attention that viewers will have. Across the room from each other sit two topographical drawings of a canyon on Navajo Nation and a valley on Mars. They are layered and inverted to further relate his comparison of Mars and Ray Bradbury's novel to the Navajo Nation land and what happened to its people.

"[The exhibit] definitely immerses you," Lofgren said. "I really enjoy exhibits like those, just because it really puts me in the position of almost being there, versus just a regular screen and audio."

The exhibit uses special audio made by Chacon, which are field recordings and electronic music that he orchestrated specifically for the video used to further immerse the viewer in his scenery. The sound is intentionally used to direct the viewer to different screens at specific times. This adds an even deeper sense of reality, as if audiences are present inside of Chacon's work.

"I thought the piece was a little haunting because it was very quiet and there's not much noise," said viewer Nick Mata. "[With this exhibit], you're constantly thinking in your head, but you're left with a lot of quietness right after [it ends]."

The excellent usage of subtitles and mixed media in the "New Work" exhibit further highlights the realities of Navajo history with subtle, yet impactful commentary.

"[My favorite part] was when I started to actually understand the message [of the exhibit]," Lofgren said. "I like the wordplay that [Chacon] uses, especially when it starts showing all the civilizations and artifacts."

This exhibit's intensely in-depth and intricate story does an exceptional job at fabricating a fresh and new perspective on the traumatic story of Indigenous people in the U.S. It serves as a somber and harsh exhibit, requiring one to formulate a theme from pieces. And although many merely glance in or leave with more questions than before, the viewers who do understand it appreciate Chacon's message on a larger scale.

Chacon's "New Work" exhibit at the SFMOMA deserves four out of five stars due remarkability, synchronization of many moving pieces and truths and revelations. The SFMOMA is a great place to explore the not-so modern history of the Navajo land by Raven Chacon.

OUR OUTLOOK:




ROY KONG






COURTESY OF LLOUD CO. AND RCA RECORDS

"Press Play" album

Addie Rose
FEATURES WRITER

On Oct. 23, BLACKPINK member, LISA, released her six-track extended play "Press Play." LISA created her image as a member of the South Korean girl group BLACKPINK, one of the best-selling girl groups of all time. Although not her first solo project, this EP explores her identity more deeply than her debut single album, "LALISA," and her first full-length album, "Alter Ego."

"This EP is about my journey from my roots to where I am right now today," LISA said in an interview with Jimmy Fallon. "There's a lot of Thai [elements] in the song, as well [as] in the EP."

The album marks an attempt to connect to her Thai identity and cultural roots with her music, while also continuing to include her typical pop-song sound through cultural references, lyrics and production choices.

"It explains more how she came from Thailand," said junior Dylan Soo Hoo. "As well as how she got into music ... She [explained] how it was hard for her [to join a] K-pop group with no Korean skills at all. And of course, how she's sacrificed so much for it."

The EP opens up with the single "SaWaDiKa," which was released on Sep. 3. Meaning "hello" in Thai, the title reflects her goal of incorporating Thai culture into her music. She also introduces her confidence through rapid-fire rap verses, heavy bass and an energetic chorus. Its focus on success and luxury maintains the bold image that has defined much of her solo music, as first introduced with her 2021 single "MONEY." "SaWaDiKa" also debuted at number 69 on the Billboard Hot 100, marking her highest debut on the chart as a solo artist.

The following tracks, "V12" and "Cobra" are consistent with the EP's overall energy, but differ with their sound. "V12" references engines that are often found in luxury vehicles, adding to the image of sports cars evoked by the track's bass instrumental and laid-back vocals. In turn, "Cobra" is an example of dance-pop which uses sharp percussion and a repetitive hook to create a track built around rhythm.

The next song, "Tarantino," named after the famous American filmmaker Quentin Tarantino and accompanied by a music video, marks the EP's turning point towards cinematic storytelling. "Tarantino" acts as a central piece for the EP, while the other tracks explore different sounds and moods rather than following one consistent storyline.

"[The EP] doesn't feel like one cohesive piece," said senior Francez Santos. "There's [a bit] more of an overarching umbrella with Tarantino, but the other songs [diverge], rather than all of them coming together. But that's what makes this [album] so memorable."

The fifth song, "Cut U Off" uses a more assertive approach, emphasizing leaving someone behind whose presence is not needed anymore. A recognizable melody of whistles starts the song, followed by layers of vocals and strong rhythm. Moreover, it relates to "Tarantino" with regard to cinematic elements, thus connecting the two central songs in the EP.

"Sweat," the final track of the EP, takes a more rhythmic direction, introducing elements of yoga and breathing into life. It represents a more relaxing track, contrasting the previous, more aggressive tracks throughout the album. However, due to its simple lyrics and repetitive rhythm, it becomes much less interesting to listen to than the first track of the EP.

Through all of its six songs, "Press Play" highlights LISA's versatility when it comes to moving from one genre to another within the framework of being confident about what she is doing.

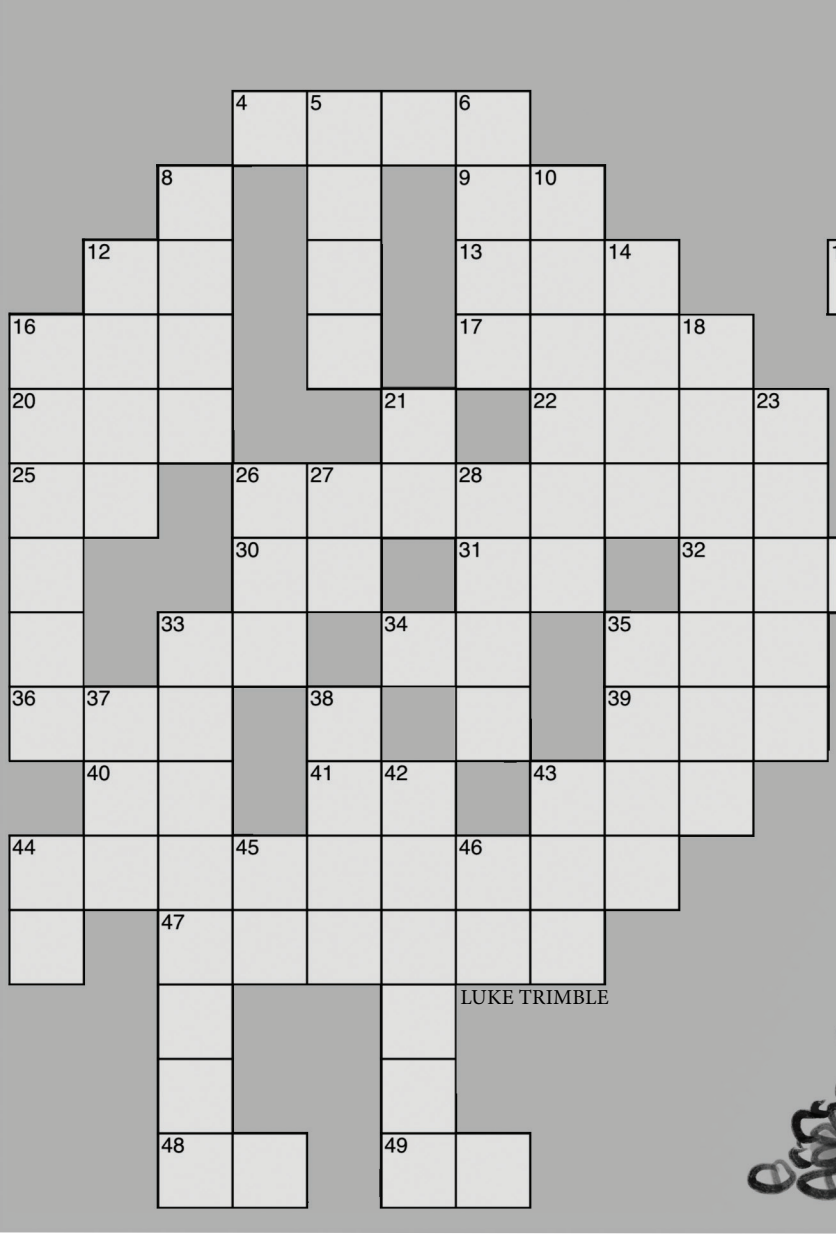
"She's better as a solo artist," said freshman Samantha Gonzalez. "[I'm] not saying that she's bad in BLACKPINK, but she actually expresses herself more [in Press Play]."

However, the EP reaches its peak when LISA's lyrics and sound align with the goal of her album — honoring her Thai culture — especially during "SaWaDiKa," which focuses on her ethnic identity rather than simply referencing it.

Thus, "Press Play" brings more clarity to the connection to LISA's origin and global career, continuing the development of her solo identity. With only six tracks, "Press Play" leaves room for LISA to explore her identity further in future releases, earning this EP a rating of three and a half out of five stars.

OUR OUTLOOK:

GOBBLE till you WOBBLE



LUKE TRIMBLE

ACROSS
1. Ahoy matey
4. Name of a captain obsessed with whales
7. Sheep sound
9. Original (abbr.)
11. High-performance subsidiary of car brand Mercedes-Benz (abbr.)
12. What gold is on the periodic table
13. Knight's title
15. Rides down a hill
16. Something that is yet to be decided (abbr.)
17. Escape, for short
19. John Lennon's wife
20. Where to stream Game of Thrones
22. Apple tablet
24. Record
25. Battery denomination
26. ____ so fast! (3 words)
29. When your native language isn't English
30. Morning hour
31. What silver is on the periodic table
32. ____ carte
33. The Land of 10,000 lakes (abbr.)
34. One with a PhD (abbr.)
35. Name of a blood vessel imaging machine
36. Merchandise ID
39. Half a score
40. Millisecond (abbr.)
41. The title of a two letter horror movie
43. Quarterback's mistake
44. What Alvin & Co. are
47. Paid by a credit card
48. Negative reply
49. Sup

DOWN
1. Ear-shaped seashell
2. Type of noodles
3. 1988 Aerosmith hit 5 Digital break-in
6. Name of a speaker & headphones company
8. Japanese martial art
10. Associated with 16D, a November holiday
12. "Waterloo" artists
14. Completely absorbed
16. Associated with 10D, a November holiday
18. Spot for shows
21. "____ that hurt!"
23. The artist of "Like a Rolling Stone"
26. Author Fleming
27. Legal protection for a name (abbr.)
28. British nobleman
33. 23D and members of 12D are examples of this
35. Peaks: (abbr.)
37. ____ / ____ (Metric MPH)
38. Peruvian capital
42. Eaten on 16D 10D
43. What is the nickname of the 34th president
44. Alongside prefix
45. Acidity scale
46. What one billionth of a gram is (abbr.)

Solutions:
bit.ly/NovCrossword26

Family Reunions



MI NGUYEN

Internet lifespan

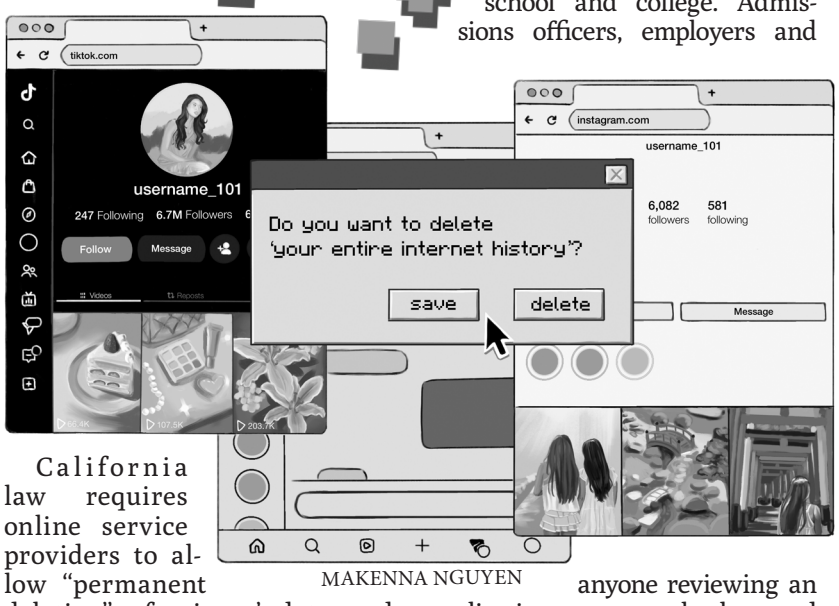
Renee Ren
NEWS WRITER

Look anyone up and see what pops up. Maybe it's a social media account, collections of random photos or even websites they were briefly mentioned in. So much information can be pulled from just one Google search.

As people's usage of social media has grown, sayings like "the internet is forever" have become increasingly relevant. Debates around the lifespan of the internet have emerged with the evolution of the web, raising questions about whether content can be permanently deleted and how it instigates fear of one's private information existing elsewhere.

For example, before a user unsends a message, the message receiver may screenshot those messages or photos, which can be edited and used without the owner's permission.

"Taking [content] off [the internet] doesn't mean that it's not [still around]," said sophomore Kylie Huang. "You can't take something out of someone's memory, that's for sure."



MAKENNA NGUYEN

California law requires online service providers to allow "permanent deletion" of minors' data and activity. This law can help ease some fears, but it does not protect all minors' internet privacy. Due to the permanence of social media, some feel pressured when posting, as they fear they will later regret what they shared and be unable to change or completely erase it from their internet presence.

"If someone sees your social media, they see what you're showing to the world as your identity," said sophomore Luna Pérez-Passamani. "I try not to have regrets [but] nowadays everything is ... scrutinized. So you have to be very careful with what you put out because otherwise, people are just gonna use it as fuel to either hate or make fun of you."

When people post on social media, it's shown to all their followers, even if the account is private. Often, a wide audience of people can access the information, making posts actually somewhat public. Some students combat this by using spam accounts, available to only their closer friends.

"[Spam accounts are] pretty private so I don't think your data will be leaked," said sophomore Vienna Liu. "I don't think your data will ever be leaked in general because there's really no reason to [leak your data] unless you're [posting about criminal behavior]."

Hesitancy towards posting and expressing opinions on non-spam accounts is common, especially as the content one posts is stored in their digital footprint. This is accessible by anyone who can access the internet.

"People go into deep dives [into other people's information online]," said sophomore Charlie Quinn. "I met someone like that before. [He] knew everything. I didn't know [him], but apparently he found my entire schedule. He might have not even been in the school, but he said that he was ... I've been fine since, but it was weird."

Additionally, because cybersecurity is not typically a topic of discussion among teenagers, posters' awareness of what their internet presence is can dull over time.

"[Digital footprints] might be underemphasized because they're not in everyday conversation," said junior Joshua Wu. "I haven't thought about it [digital footprints] in probably a year because it's just not brought up. It's not something that people talk about."

Digital footprints may become more prevalent as people leave high school and college. Admissions officers, employers and anyone reviewing an application may run background checks on potential candidates with a simple LinkedIn or Instagram search of a name.

"If you search up someone's name, there are all these background check websites that take ... your social media, your address, your phone number, everything," Perez-Passamani said. "It's like a phone book from the '80s, but it's for everyone in the world and anyone can access it."

What pops up could become part of the first impression, even before the interview itself. When unprofessional photos, ideas and statements come up in this process, interviewers may form an unfavorable impression of the candidate.

"People change," Perez-Passamani said. "It's not often that people change, but it does happen. And if their whole past is just on the internet, that sucks, especially if it's something you don't want to think about [anymore]."

Looking back on their past, many may feel that they wish to hide content that they've shared publicly. However present one is on the internet and social media, the lifespan of media on the internet affects everyone in some way.



Brewers vs. Rays: World Series

Albert Feng
SPORTS WRITER

In the 2026 MLB World Series, the Milwaukee Brewers and the Tampa Bay Rays squared off in a best of 7 matchup. The Brewers came out as the 4-1 champions with a blowout win.

This World Series was especially unique, as both teams had never won a World Series, and both teams had the best record in their respective league. Both teams are also ranked top five in the MLB Pipeline Farm System Rankings, with payrolls near the bottom of the league.

Coming into the series, Aragon's community seemed split between the Rays and Brewers. The Rays demonstrated better pitching abilities while the Brewers had a high powered offense.

"Honestly, I thought the Rays were gonna win," said senior Santiago Corona. "Their pitching staff is good, and I thought they were gonna strike out the Brewers a lot, but it didn't happen."

Freshman Keval Bhuta highlighted some key players on the Rays' lineup.

"I got the Rays winning the World Series," Bhuta said. "They have a strong pitching staff consisting of Drew Rasmussen, Griffin Jax and Nick Martinez, and a bunch of other guys that can perform, and overall just a strong bullpen too."

Despite the support for the Rays, the Brewers still had plenty of reason to feel confident heading into the series, as they won 103 games in the regular season and finished with the best overall record in MLB history.

"I paid a little bit more attention to [the Brewers]," said JV baseball head coach Tom Mori. "I liked the way they played baseball, so I thought they had the advantage coming in."

The Brewers also had great offense, leading the MLB in batting average, on-base percentage and hits. They were also second in total runs scored, trailing the Cubs by just 18 total runs.

"The Brewers just had more hitters on their team," said junior Emilio Mora. "The Rays were a better defensive team, but the Brewers had better hitters, [so they could] get on base."

The Brewers jumped out to an early series lead, narrowly winning the first two games by scores of 3-2 and 5-4. These victories were powered by clutch hitting from Jackson Chourio and William Contreras, along with an impressive pitching performance from the Brewers' bullpen which allowed just one run across ten innings throughout these first two games.

For the third game, down 2-0, and playing in front of their home fans, the Rays weren't much better, as they were blown out 10-1 while giving up 16 hits.

The fourth game, though, provided a chance for the Rays to turn things around. Both teams traded punches through the first 5 innings, tying the game 2-2. From there, relief pitchers from both teams put forth their best, keeping the game tied at 2-2 and sending it into extra innings. The Brewers finally broke through in the twelfth inning, when rookie Cooper Pratt hit a home run on a hanging sweeper from Ian Seymour. On the brink of elimination and with their home crowd behind them, the Rays rallied in the bottom half of the inning to score two runs off of a fielding error after getting four singles in a row. They walked it off in a dramatic fashion, winning Game 4 4-3.

However, fueled by strong pitching from Misiorowski and the Brewers' bullpen, the Brewers went on to win Game 5 4-1, ending the Series.

After the conclusion of the final game, catcher William Contreras was voted MVP of the Series. Contreras batted .381 with 4 RBIs over the course of the World Series.

"He was a good hitter," Mora said. "He gave them good opportunities, and he's a good all around player. He's the best catcher in the league right now."

Overall, some viewers enjoyed this pairing.

"It was a pretty good matchup," Corona said. "They both deserved to go against each other, and they were both really good during the regular season."

The next MLB season is scheduled to begin March 24, 2027.



Opinion: athletes should not be above the law

Deven Shahani
SPORTS WRITER

The treatment of athletes as compared to ordinary people in the eyes of the law has brought up controversy for years; however, being successful in sports should not give someone an advantage when it comes to following the law.

The debate over athletes' special treatment in courtrooms has existed for years, with OJ Simpson's case being a well-known example of the connection between celebrity status and the justice system.

Simpson was a star National Football League and University of Southern California football running back. He won the Heisman Trophy in 1968 and led the nation in rushing yards. He became the center of national attention when he was accused of murdering his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman, in 1994. Although he was acquitted in the 1995 criminal trial, he was later found responsible for their deaths in a separate civil case.

"Simpson was such a famous and beloved football player," said Greg Moretti, Biology and Advanced Placement Environmental Science teacher. "That that could have influenced the jury to think, 'well, he couldn't have possibly done this.'"

Simpson's infamy generated an abundance of media exposure and a deeply divided public opinion over his guilt, raising questions as to whether an athlete's fame can lead to them being treated any differently under the law.

Professional athletes are citizens like everyone else and should follow the same laws. Being famous or talented at a sport does not give someone the right to avoid consequences for their actions.

"Athletes are [not] above the law because [they] happen to make a living off of sports," said junior Jaiden Ou. "We all need to live under the same laws and expectations otherwise our country and government will no longer work."

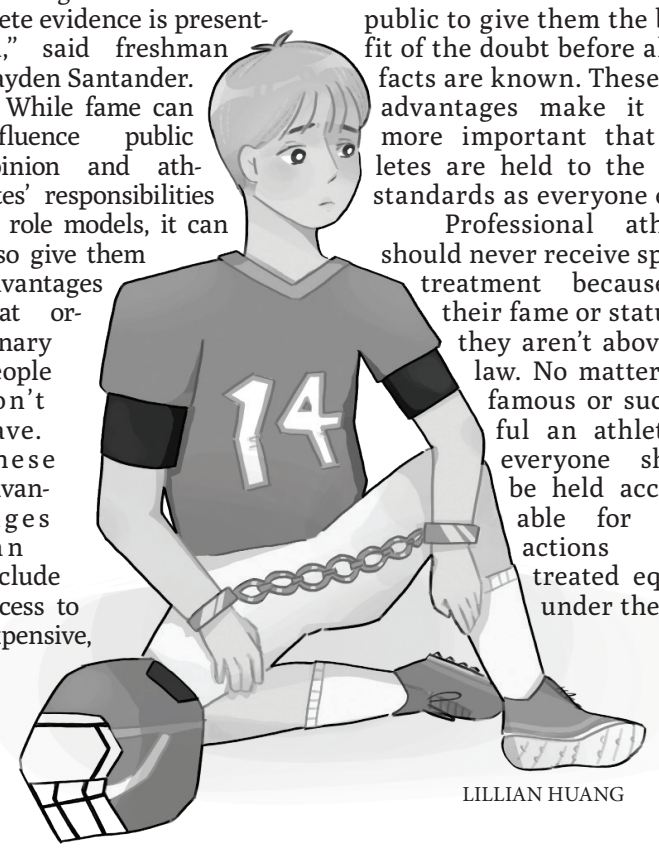
Beyond following the same laws as everyone else, athletes must consider the influence they have on younger generations. Professional athletes have millions of young fans who look up to them as role models.

"Holding professional athletes accountable teaches younger generations that everyone should take responsibility for their actions, no matter how famous or successful they are," said sophomore Gabby Vasquez Orozco. "It shows that making mistakes has consequences, and that people should learn from them."

Another issue is how an athlete's status can influence public perception. Fans may defend their favorite players because they admire them or do not want to believe they did something wrong.

"If my favorite athlete committed a crime I definitely wouldn't believe any accusations against them until concrete evidence is presented," said freshman Kayden Santander.

While fame can influence public opinion and athletes' responsibilities as role models, it can also give them advantages that ordinary people don't have. These advantages can include access to expensive, top-tier lawyers and connections to powerful people who can influence their cases. Their fame can also lead the public to give them the benefit of the doubt before all the facts are known. These vital advantages make it even more important that athletes are held to the same standards as everyone else.



LILLIAN HUANG

Professional athletes should never receive special treatment because of their fame or status, as they aren't above the law. No matter how famous or successful an athlete is, everyone should be held accountable for their actions and treated equally under the law.

Golden State Valkyries win WNBA Finals

Emmy Teufel
SPORTS WRITER

On Oct. 31, the Golden State Valkyries defeated the Atlanta Dream in the Women's National Basketball Association Finals to capture their first championship in only their second year of existence. Golden State entered the Finals with a record of 32-12, while Atlanta had a record of 30-14. In the regular season, the teams played each other 3 times, where the Valkyries had a clean 3-0 sweep.

"[The Valkyries' win has] gathered so much well-deserved support, which is hard to find in women's sports," said freshman Lilly Lewis.

Both teams have important players who could decide the outcome of the series. For the Golden State Valkyries, Gabby Williams is one of the team's biggest strengths, averaging 14.4 points per game and for her defensive versatility. On the other side, the Atlanta Dream relied on Angel Reese, who averaged 16.4 PPG and is known for her elite rebounding skills both on offense and defense.

"I do feel like Williams is the star of the [Valkyries], but like there's not just one star and everybody plays together, and everybody wants to win, no matter who's on the court," said math teacher Denise Morones.

Williams' 16-point second quarter led the Valkyries past Reese and the Dream for a 68-64 Game 1 win, as she locked down the win with a 6-for-6 fourth quarter at the free-throw line.

"I've been to regular games during the season, but this one was just a different atmosphere," said instructional aid Kristie Hala'ufia, who attended in person to Game 1 of the WNBA Finals. "[It was] super positive, extremely loud and just a lot of fun with great competition to watch."

In Game 2, the Valkyries took advantage of the homecourt game early, but the Dream's offense scored 21 points in the second quarter alone to build a double-digit lead. Despite holding the Dream to just 9 points in the third quarter, Atlanta maintained control until the final buzzer to win 79-65.

In Game 3, the Dream took advantage of homecourt momentum to build an early 7-point lead and hold a 46-40 edge at halftime. Golden State caught up after halftime, but Atlanta quickly responded to extend their lead to 14 points in the third quarter and continued their run through the fourth quarter to win 96-71.



Chase Center celebrates after the Valkyries' Game 7 win.
COURTESY OF KRISTIE HALA'UFIA

With the losses stacking up, Valkyries fans were starting to worry, especially after how well they played in Game 1.

"I went to Game 1 of the finals at Chase Center and it was a pretty disappointing game in the beginning, but then we pulled through at the end and had a comeback to win the game," said freshman Ashlyn Chin. "[But some of the other games] we [didn't really] pull through like we did that game."

Facing a 2-1 series deficit in Game 4, the Valkyries put Tiffany Hayes into the starting lineup and dominated early, building a 26-point halftime lead. Despite Atlanta mounting an aggressive second-half comeback, Golden State's defense held on for a 67-62 victory.

In Game 5, tied 2-2 and back in the Bay, Veronica Burton helped the Valkyries build an early lead before Reese just barely pushed the Dream ahead 31-30 by halftime. Williams and Kiah Stokes spearheaded a second-half run by using sharp ball movement and lockdown defense to secure a 64-55 victory.

"[Game 5] was really fun to watch, they looked really good," said math teacher Rafael Montelongo. "They seem to be really poised and so it's just nice to see that they're having fun too."

The Dream exploded early with 22 points in the first 6:30 in Game 6, pushed by back-to-back triples from Jordin Canada, completely catching the Valkyries flat-footed. Atlanta's defense silenced Golden State's rhythm in the second quarter and maintained control through the second half, fending off a late Valkyries press to win the game 80-69.

After tying the series 3-3, Golden State won the deciding Game 7 68-63. The Valkyries opened with a record-setting five-minute defensive shutout, where Atlanta remained absolutely scoreless, but the Dream then rallied to take a 30-24 lead by halftime. Williams then took over for Golden State's offense in the third quarter, scoring 11 points to cut the gap down to two. Tied 55-55 in the fourth, Williams hit key three-pointers to spark a 7-0 run, leading the Valkyries to the deciding victory.

Though the fans enjoyed watching they couldn't help but comment on the seemingly unpreparedness of the WNBA and the poor timing.

"It's unfair that the time was moved," said freshman Lillian Kerwin. "A finals game should get more publicity than a regular season game for the NBA. I feel like [the WNBA] is getting treated as secondary [to the NBA]."

One of the biggest examples of disorganization from the WNBA that fans point to was the Game 6 venue change, where the league had to scramble to move the game from the Dream's regular home venue, the Gateway Center, which holds about 3,500 people, to the 17,000-seat State Farm Arena. But the State Farm Arena was already booked for a regular season Atlanta Hawks NBA game that evening, causing the game to be moved all the way up to 12:30 p.m., the middle of a school and work day. Afterwards, the Dream ownership released a letter revealing they had warned WNBA leadership two months in advance about this exact scheduling conflict, but leadership didn't listen.

"It's disappointing to see that they're not supporting the teams as much, or the league," Montelongo said. "But it has been nice to see the support that the Valkyries are getting in San Francisco."

Regardless of the heavy backlash, both teams still showed the importance of teamwork, strong defense and performing under pressure, ending with the Golden State Valkyries winning the series 4-3.

"Even though the Valkyries are an expansion team, I feel like they'll do really well next season," said junior Brandon Grant. "I hope that they can defend their championship and win again next year, that would honestly be the best."

With their first WNBA title in their second season, the Golden State Valkyries have solidified their spot in sports history.

Girls tennis reaches CCS

Adya Tewari
SPORTS WRITER

Aragon girls tennis played their first Central Coast Section match on Nov. 10, as the Outlook was going to print.

Prior to CCS, the team (13-0 league) defeated the Carlmont Scots 5-2 during their senior night on Oct. 20. With their win, they secured the Peninsula Athletic League Division championship and an automatic bid into the CCS tournament, marking Aragon's first PAL championship title in 31 years.


IAN WANG

The matchup against Carlmont carried extra significance as the Dons looked to avenge their previous years' losses against the Scots, who had won the previous three PAL titles. The Dons had already beaten Carlmont earlier in the season, which snapped the Scots' 53-match winning streak, but they needed another win to secure the outright PAL championship.

"We were excited to prove ourselves to them, and deep down we knew we were strong enough to beat them," said junior Allison Newman. "We had to get past the self doubt of losing to them in the past in order to play confidently."

Aragon's singles lineup swept all four singles matches, with each winning in straight sets. Freshman Mia Lo won her No. 1 singles match 6-0, 6-0. Senior Shanay Biouk followed with a 6-0, 6-1 victory at No. 2, while junior Ella Teng won 6-2, 6-1 at No. 3. Completing the sweep was freshman Emma Teng at No. 4, winning 6-0, 6-0.

The Dons picked up their fifth win in the No. 1 doubles match, with Newman and senior Jessa Williams winning 6-4, 6-0.

The victory at doubles was particularly meaningful for the pair, who had played together for the last three years.

"It was the last league match I played with my inspiration and role model, Jessa, since she is a senior," Newman said. "It was a great finish for us to beat them together, which made winning even more special."

Carlmont secured its two wins at No. 2 and No. 3 doubles, but the Scots' efforts were not enough to prevent Aragon from claiming the championship.

The team's success throughout the season also came from the team environment.

"We have genuinely improved because each player on our team pushed one another and made everyone want to push even more and harder," Biouk said.

For seniors, the senior night win was especially important because it was a reflection of the team's chemistry and support throughout the season.

"The team is doing well at contributing and pulling through," Williams said. "We all worked together to secure the win for our team."

The team also created an environment that emphasized improvement and confidence.

"This season we all played every match to win," Biouk said. "We didn't play not to lose, and there is a difference. We were more confident."

Collaboration and team chemistry played a big role as well for players.

"The emphasis on improvement, teamwork and fun allows our team to win our matches not only for ourselves but more importantly for our team as a whole," Newman said.

With the PAL Bay Division title secured, Aragon's team now turns its attention to the CCS tournament, looking to carry its undefeated streak into the postseason.

AARON LEE



The seven seniors pose for a photo. BRANDON HO

Girls water polo 9-8 victory

Sabina Gulati
SPORTS WRITER

On Nov. 7, Aragon's girls water polo team fell 9-22 to the Palo Alto Vikings in the quarterfinals of Central Coast Section playoffs.

Prior to CCS playoffs, the team clinched a senior night home win against Woodside on Oct. 19 with a score of 9-8. Going into the match, the team expected a challenge.

"Woodside is a tough team [and] one of our closest competitors," said senior co-captain Elizabeth Yuan. "We beat them in overtime in our last game, so we want to keep that momentum going ... I'm expecting overtime again."

Aragon remained focused on a clear game plan.

"Our goal was to play our game," said head coach Rachel Downall. "We know that we are a strong, fast team and when we communicate well, we can be very successful."

Although Aragon won the opening sprint for possession, Woodside built a quick 2-0 lead with an early goal and a rebounded penalty shot. Meanwhile, several of Aragon's initial shots drifted wide.

"One of the biggest challenges we faced was not getting to warm up because it was senior night," said senior Kira Partridge. "That really affected our shooting percentages in the first quarter, so we [had to] adapt."

With just 15 seconds left in the first quarter, junior co-captain Akira Snyder converted a penalty shot to put Aragon on the board.

"First quarter, we weren't the first ones to score, but we kept our calm, kept our composure," Downall said. "We never let off the gas, and that showed in the end result."

Early in the second quarter, Woodside extended their lead to 3-1. However, Partridge quickly answered by scoring a rebound off junior Amara Garcia's crossbar shot.

Not long after, Partridge passed to senior co-captain Emily Troy, who found the back of the net to tie up the score, 3-3.

"We had a lot of strong passes and assists throughout the game," Partridge said. "We were always looking for the open player. If someone was really good at getting open, we would get the ball to them."

After several back-and-forth goals from both teams caused the lead to change hands repeatedly, Aragon held off a late attack from Woodside to maintain a 5-5 tie at the end of the first half.

"We were tied for most of the game ... it was just a really close game overall," said junior co-captain Siena Chen. "But we were able to push through throughout the whole game and never give up."

Play slowed at the start of the third quarter, and it took four minutes before Woodside opened the scoring with a long-range shot. That goal would prove to be their only one of the quarter.

"The third quarter was where we really stopped them from scoring," Downall said. "It was where we continued to solidify that we [were] the dominant team."

After two more goals from Aragon and several saves from junior goalkeeper Naomi Dulac, Aragon led 7-6.

Entering the final seven minutes of the match, the team came out ready to play as Garcia sent a long-range shot past the Woodside goalkeeper's fingertips and into the net. Then, with just over five minutes remaining, Woodside called a timeout and capitalized immediately with a goal that cut Aragon's lead to 8-7.

Aragon quickly countered as Partridge scored her second goal of the night, securing a two-point lead with only two minutes left on the clock.

"We [put] the right players in the specific positions that play to their strengths," Chen said. "[Partridge] is a good shooter, so she stays at the top so she can shoot on the outside. We've gotten so much more cohesive ... we've been able to communicate with each other better and make better plays throughout the season."

Still, Woodside fought to the end, repeatedly attacking Aragon's defense but scoring only once. With ten seconds left, Woodside launched one final attack, but Aragon blocked the shot as the final buzzer sounded to seal a 9-8 victory.

Looking forward, the team reflects on their prospects as they enter the postseason.

"Our main focus is trying to make [California Coastal Section playoffs] and place in the top three [of] the [Peninsula Athletic] League," Partridge said. "We're such a capable team, and we have great things going for us. If we keep the intensity up, we can go even farther."


NAOKI YOSHIMURA

Cross country advances to CCS Championships

Dhruv Gourineni
SPORTS WRITER

On Oct. 31, Aragon's cross country team participated in the Peninsula Athletic League Championships at the Crystal Springs Cross Country Course.

The cross country team has been preparing a long time for this meet, attending three PALs and three invitationals prior.


The boys varsity cross country team poses for a photo. AIDAN KASTEN

"We've been running for many months, [including] running over the summer," said sophomore frosh-soph runner Tate Broussard. "[We've had] practices every day, [we've been] working really hard and ... [we're] making sure that we are at our peak for championships."

Varsity teams that placed within the top half of their heat at this meet would qualify for Central Coast Section Championships, which includes teams from all over the Bay Area. Both girls and boys varsity made CCS last year.

On the day of the meet, the frosh-soph boys placed sixth out of 13 teams, the JV boys placed second out of 10 and the JV girls did not have a full team and were unable to place.

"I couldn't have asked for a better team to run my senior year with," said senior captain and JV runner Louis Riviere. "I'm so grateful to all of them. They've been so incredibly supportive and fun and just amazing to hang out with, and amazing to run the workouts with."

The team worked hard throughout the season, and the results in their championship meet demonstrated that.

"Shout out [to] the whole team," said co-head coach Denise Fournier. "For all the work that they put in this season, for their dedication to the sport, because it's a grueling sport, [with] many, many miles. So, I am really proud of all the effort that they have put in."

The girls varsity team placed seventh out of 13 teams, which counts as the top half of the teams, and barely made CCS. They beat Mills by a single point, which allowed them to qualify.

"There are a lot of teams that are very good in our league," Fournier said. "And our teams stepped up. We had an injury in the varsity girls, and the rest of the team just picked up the slack and took off and helped us qualify for CCS ... That was pretty amazing."

The varsity boys placed eighth in their heat, which qualified them for CCS as they were in the top half of 16.

"It's critical to qualify for CCS," said junior and varsity runner Isaac Albert. "So it's really a highlight of the season ... We're going to be really training hard to do as best as we can at CCS. Realistically, it's gonna be very difficult because CCS is a really competitive race."



Placing in the top three at CCS would qualify the team for California Interscholastic Federation State Championships. However, even if they are not able to make it to the state championships this year, the team has strong potential for improvement in future seasons.

"We got a pretty solid team," said junior captain and varsity runner Alex Yoshino. "We have a lot of depth in the middle ground, so [if] we put in the work over the summer ... we should be pretty good, and, hopefully, good enough to make a run at state."

Many runners credit their success to the team for motivating them to do better and run faster.

"[The team has] been pretty good," said sophomore varsity runner Matias Fernandez. "They're supportive. Every race, you can hear them ... cheering for you and yelling for you. And that makes you go faster."

As both boys and girls varsity cross country teams reached their goal of qualifying for CCS, they are looking ahead to the championships on Nov. 14 at Crystal Springs.

Girls volleyball defeats Burlingame to win CCS

Riley Wideman
SPORTS WRITER

On Nov. 7, Aragon varsity girls volleyball defeated Burlingame in CCS finals to win the CCS champion title. They played the first California Interscholastic Federation State Championship game on Nov. 10 against Placer High School, after the Outlook went to print.

Earlier in the season, the girls volleyball team wasted no time against Carlmont on Oct. 22, delivering a victory after three straight sets for the team's senior night.

Senior outside hitter Catey Robertson had a total of 22 kills, with junior right side hitter Poppy McKenzie following with 17 kills and senior setter Devyn Lee had 31 assists throughout the game.

When asked before the game about Aragon's performance, head coach Annette Gennaro pointed to consistency.

"Volleyball is a game of mistakes," Gennaro said. "So [they] just need to play [their] game."

Their consistency showed up in their past game records with similar kill ratios and assists as well as overall digs and aces, which lined up with their performance against Carlmont.

The team has had a strong hold on their league, according to MaxPreps, with a record of 9-2. Their performance is led by many different players such as Robertson with 289 kills this season and McKenzie with 269, while Lee leads the team with 565 assists and junior outside hitter Emilia Kunkel leads the team with 321 digs.


Coaches Annette Gennaro and Dean Hala'ufia speak during a team huddle. JACKIE WONG

The game started off strong, with Aragon scoring the first point of the first set. Each point got them closer to taking the first set. The crowd was filled with cheers and row after row containing posters saying, "we heart #20" and "we love our seniors." Aragon kept getting kill after kill, with Robertson, McKenzie and sophomore middle hitter Tate Nisa being the main hitters of the set. Lee had assists that kept Aragon competing until they took the first set, 25-21.

Going into the second set, the energy was high from both the audience and the players.

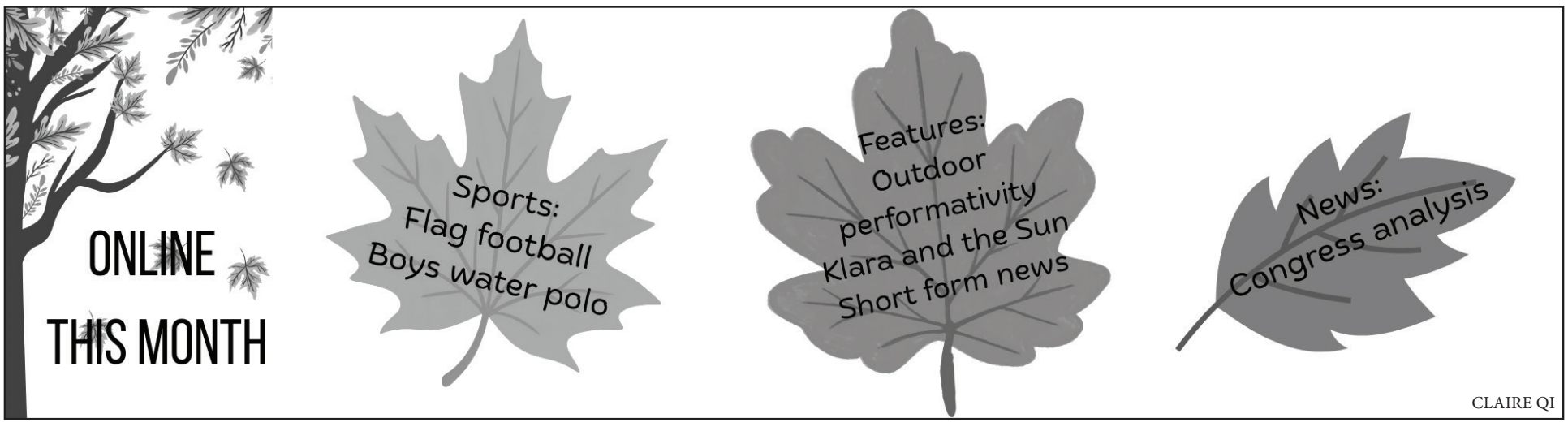
Aragon continued to conquer Carlmont each set through more blocks and digs, with senior libero Claire Richards and Kunkel helping their team with each dig they got. Once more, Lee and Kunkel both led the team in service aces, allowing them to take the second set, 25-18.

Entering the final set of the match, Aragon was in control. McKenzie, Nisa and Robertson kept getting kill after kill, creating a bigger gap between Aragon and Carlmont. Richards had two crucial saves that allowed Aragon to stay ahead. By the end Aragon had a 15 point lead, and their final point was earned by Robertson with a kill, ending the third set, 25-10, and the match 3-0.

At the end of the match, the audience exploded in cheers and after a quick group photo, the team jumped into the pool to celebrate their streak of wins.

With a strong conclusion to the team's senior night and one of the last games of their season, the Dons were ranked first in their league and fourth in division two Central Coast Section. Even with an overall record of 23-9 and a league record of 12-2, they still met challenges.

"You're always going to face tough times, but if you learn to find the good that's out there, your outlook is better," Gennaro said.



CLAIRE QI

ATHLETES OF THE FALL SEASON

Reporting by sports editors Claire Dong, Luke Trimble, Claire Qi
Photos by photo staffers Aidan Kasten, Haley Lau, Jeffrey Liu, Jackie Wong

KIERAN MOORHEAD



"He represents part of the team's future. He's a really good player. He acts as a backbone, from giving rides near the start of the season to always showing up at team dinner and helping everyone."
Gabriel Asadov, junior and varsity water polo player

73 GOALS THIS SEASON

BEN HENDERSON



"He's a very reliable teammate. Whenever we need him to clutch up, he's always there, making game-winning plays, getting interveptions and getting those yards that we need to score a touchdown."
Miguel Gonzalez Flores, sophomore and varsity football player

5 TOUCHDOWNS
45 RECEPTIONS, 696 YARDS

JESSA WILLIAMS



"She helped us get this title, and she was there at the start when we were not as good as we are now. So she's made quite a journey."
Dave Owdom, varsity girls tennis co-head coach

NO. 1 DOUBLES
1ST TEAM ALL LEAGUE

AUTUMN OGAWA



"Autumn was a really big grounding force for our team. She was really helpful coaching other players, giving specific advice and not letting things get to their heads."
Advika Singh, senior and varsity captain

ARAGON CO-MVP
36 ALL TIME LOW

POPPY MCKENZIE



"She's a really positive role model on our team ... [It has been a] very successful [season]. She's been a huge part of that."
Annette Gennaro, varsity girls volleyball head coach

PAL BAY CO-MVP
1,000 ALL TIME KILLS

ARIEL OGAWA



"She was a really supportive teammate ... there were times when she was sure to remind me to do like certain things on the course like my golf etiquette whenever I was having a hard time."
Charlie Liu, junior and varsity golfer

10TH IN PAL
ARAGON CO-MVP

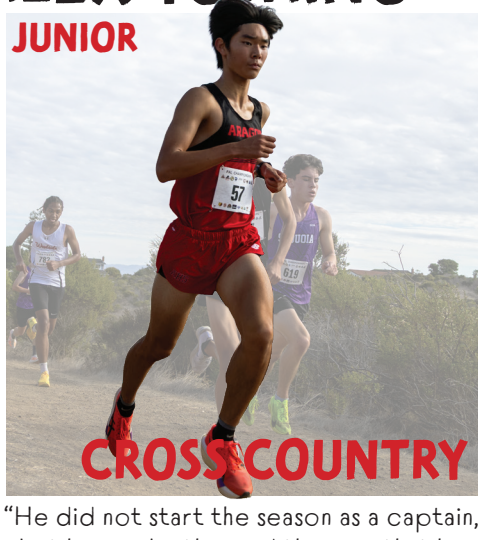
EVA FELIX



"She's taught me a lot about the game and I've learned so much from her. She's been a great mentor to me."
Samantha Lim, sophomore and varsity flag football player

LED TEAM IN RECEPTIONS AND INTERCEPTIONS

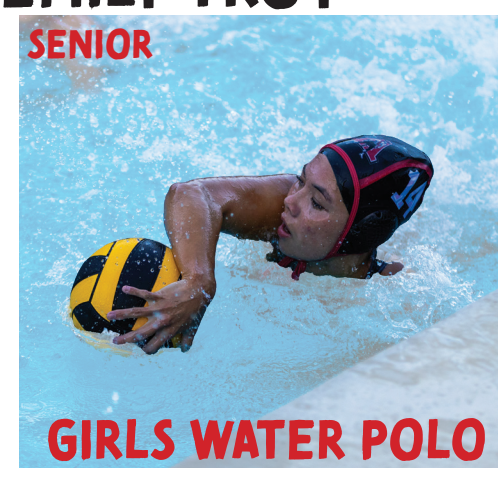
ALEX YOSHINO



"He did not start the season as a captain, but his work ethic and the way that he encourages others and pushes them to be their best promoted him to be a captain."
Denise Fouriner, cross country co-head coach

MEDALED AT EVERY INVITATIONAL RACE THIS SEASON

EMILY TROY



"She is just a strong presence in the water, has a great attitude, and not only pushes herself, but her teammates to just excel in the water."
Rachel Downall, varsity boys water polo head coach

TEAM TOP SCORER
92 GOALS THIS SEASON