



63rd Grammys proves engaging but snubs many artists.



Class of 2013 alumna works to abolish death penalty.



Pandemic safety protocols hang over football season.



THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

Friday, April 9, 2021

Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

Vol. 61, No. 6

SOLIDARITY against fear

BY SelinaChen, ShreyaRallabandi & CarolynWang

"Pig," "Stupid and Chinese," "Asian and Chinese same s---" and "Mind Ur business b----" are messages freshman Minh Do, who is half-Vietnamese and half-Chinese, received on Instagram when he tried to refute a user by the handle of Seba who claimed that China manufactured the coronavirus.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community have risen dramatically to nearly 3,800 incidents over the course of roughly a year during the pandemic as opposed to

last year's count of about 2,600, with the most significant one being the shooting at Atlanta, Ga. that killed eight women, six of whom were Asian. This and subsequent tragedies, including the murder of an 84-year-old Thai immigrant in San Francisco and the assault of a 26-year-old Asian woman in San Jose, prompted a call for change from the Saratoga community.

At the state level, new pieces of legislation have been introduced to combat and better track hate

>> AAPI on pg. 6



Over 1,000 people gathered in front of City Hall on March 27 for a rally against anti-AAPI racism.

Graphic by SELINA CHEN

A step closer to normal: school begins hybrid mode

BY NicoleLu & EstherLuan

When junior Jaime Fernandez da Ponte stepped onto campus on March 24 during Phase 3A of the district's reopening plan, he first noticed the yellow Screener19 posters plastered all over the school, reminding him to complete his daily COVID-19 health screener on his mobile phone before entering his classroom.

In the coming weeks, other students who return to campus will find themselves facing

similar rules. As the school prepares to enter Phase 3B beginning after spring break, staff and students alike are continuing to prepare for a campus that will look and feel very different.

Beginning on April 12, a group called Cohort A will be attending two in-person classes per week on Mondays and Tuesdays, with Cohort B attending class on Thursdays and Fridays. Each cohort comprises around eight to 10 students per class on average.

On the days when cohorts are expected to stay at home, they will be attending class

online, while Cohort R is the group of students opting out of in-person learning completely. Wednesday advisory periods will continue to remain online for at least the month of April but may become actual class days starting in early May as the district tries to gradually step up reopening and increase the number of students on campus.

Passing periods have been shortened to 10 minutes and academic and mental health support such as office hours, CASSY and tutoring will remain the same as usual.

While COVID-19 safety measures such

as Screener19, designated restrooms and cohort grouping will remain the same as they were in Phase 3A, administrators are looking to implement new procedures such as e-hall passes and parent volunteers for Zoom rooms.

One of the major developments includes new e-hall passes that will replace the laminated signs and sandals from last year. The administration plans to hold a training session using these new virtual passes in

>> PHASE 3B on pg. 4

Officers plan senior prom

BY AnoukYeh

After losing their junior prom to the pandemic last year, the senior class office has begun discussing the details of senior prom to bring this revered high school experience to their class.

ASB president Cynthia Zhang said senior prom will take place on the upper field from afternoon to night time on an upcoming Saturday night. The upper field will house several stations, including a food station, a casino station and

multiple surprise stations. To accommodate social distancing requirements, all attending students will be required to sign up to be in cohorts of approximately 25 people.

While the on-campus, outdoor prom setting is ideal for social distancing requirements, Zhang said that the deviation from a rented prom venue has led to a few struggles for senior class officers.

Zhang pointed out that since the

>> PROM on pg. 5

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newsbriefs

Returning to hybrid elicits mixed reactions from students

Results from the March 15 survey indicated that roughly 50 percent of students will be returning to school for Phase 3B, with the remaining either choosing to remain remote due to health concerns or because they prefer remote education over in-person education.

The series of Google Forms surveyed students' decisions to either return to campus or remain remote during the Phase 3B re-opening, beginning on April 12.

The survey's main purpose was to assess the reasons families chose to remain remote, help determine the size of cohorts for the master schedule of Phase 3B and to make sure classrooms did not exceed the county guidelines for social distancing.

It also revealed that roughly 7 percent of students say they don't want to return to school regardless of how safe the county is, even if the county returned to the yellow tier with minimal risk.

"I'm not returning because I do not trust the student body following protocols off campus, let alone on campus," junior Noora Fayad said. "Students already openly hang out with each other without social distancing or wearing a mask."

In order to address such safety concerns, Mohnike said that the school has implemented many different policies to ensure the best transition for students from remote learning with regards to both safety and education. Whether students choose to remain at home or in person, the school has put in the necessary measures to make student education as accessible as possible, she said.

— Ethan Lin

Juniors scheduled to take SBAC testing

All juniors are slated to take the Smarter Balanced Consortium (SBAC) test asynchronously on Wednesday, April 21, according to assistant principal Brian Thompson.

Many districts and educators across the state argued against administering it this year, but state education officials went ahead with a version of the test.

The SBAC test, usually consisting of an English and Language Arts section and a mathematics section, is a 7-8 hour test administered to grades 3 through 8 and 11th grade as a standardized measurement of academic proficiency.

Both ELA and math sections for the SBAC will have a multiple choice portion and a performance task portion. The latter will entail research and writing for the ELA portion and require students to demonstrate problem solving skills and critical thinking for math.

In a usual year, the test would be administered in-person with students on Chromebooks or school-administered devices instead of the remote format being used this year. Although it will be remote, there will still be proctors administering the test, likely in the form of non-teaching staff. The length of the test has also been cut in half, with the total testing time being shortened to 3-4 hours.

More updates on testing will be announced after spring break, Thompson said.

— Allen Luo

Falcon Focus



Senior Fabian Alvarado walks down the field to hug his mother on the football team's senior night on March 27.

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Phase 3A | Physics teacher Kirk Davis walks a cohort of students through a class experiment on March 24. The Wednesday cohorts were designed to help students and staff gradually adapt to a hybrid setting.

Students begin getting vaccinated for COVID-19

BY AtrayDesai

On March 23, at a Stockton vaccine clinic, senior Wilson Fung filled out his name, address, contact information and medical insurance number before handing the form to the passing registrar to verify his identity. He waited.

Finally, with all his information confirmed, the mobile vaccination station worker gave him his Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. With the jab, Fung breathed a sigh of relief — his herculean efforts to find a vaccine appointment had finally paid off and he could safely return to work at his food service job at TeaTop. He was one of roughly 25 percent of American who had gotten at least one dose as of March 23.

His herculean efforts to find a vaccine appointment had finally paid off.

"I got my vaccine up at Stockton because they had a number of extra doses and sent out a sign-up for anyone over 16 to make appointments," Fung said. That day, his entire family received the vaccine, including his parents, older sister and younger brother sophomore Andy, who just turned 16.

With the recent easing of vaccine prerequisites and President Biden's new goal of 200 million vaccine doses in 100 days, the vaccine rollout has slowly but surely ramped up.

According to California Department of Public Health guidelines released on March 25, every Californian age 50 or older will become eligible for COVID-19 vaccines beginning April 1 and every Californian 16 and older beginning April 15.

As of March 15, only students

with serious health or developmental conditions, essential workers or COVID-19 vaccine clinic volunteers were eligible for vaccination. Some students who fit these criteria are slowly getting vaccinated.



Fung

Of the 40 students who responded to a poll sent in the school Facebook group, 29 plan to or know someone who will get vaccinated and 5 students have already gotten vaccinated.

Junior Amarangana Tyagi scheduled an appointment online and will get her first dose in late April or May.

At first, Tyagi didn't think she was eligible, but after her employer informed her that she was considered a health-care worker due to her occupation as a lifeguard, she started to look for appointments.

However, not everyone has been as lucky to find appointments as Tyagi.

Junior Samantha Wiesner is eligible to get the vaccine because of her job as a restaurant worker, but she has struggled to find an appointment due to her age: only the Pfizer vaccine has been approved for her age group (16-18) and most vaccination sites don't have systems set up for minors.

"Getting an appointment has been a nightmare."

JUNIOR Samantha Wiesner

"Getting an appointment has been a nightmare," Wiesner said. "It has required going online and calling vaccination sites daily."

Although Wiesner may be low risk, she said getting vaccinated is important because she is "around both customers and employees who are at higher risks of illness."

Ultimately, Wiesner succeeded in making an appointment to receive the shot on March 29 at Levi's Stadium.

Another student, sophomore Anand Agarwal, said his entire family has already received their first dose through walk-ins, but Agarwal hasn't received the vaccine himself. The reason: Most sites offer the Moderna vaccine, which has not been approved for teens.

Nonetheless, if Agarwal gets the opportunity, he will take the Pfizer vaccine, he said.

Other students have received the vaccine due to health concerns. Junior Maanvi Chawla has Type 1 diabetes, making her eligible for the vaccine.

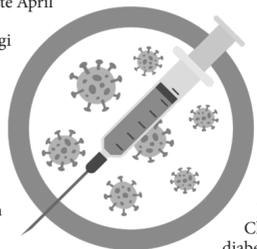
Chawla had an easier time finding an appointment than some teens.

"My mom found the [California Vaccine Scheduling] website that allowed me to schedule an appointment for about a week later," she said. She got her first dose on March 25.

The final group of students who have gotten vaccinated have done so through walk-ins.

At the end of each day, many pharmacies and vaccination sites have leftover doses from no-show appointments. Considering the limited shelf life of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, workers sometimes administer them to those without appointments — even though they may not fall under stringent state guidelines — rather than let the vaccines go to waste.

"If you have the opportunity to get the vaccine, please do so. Every shot is one step closer to going back to normal," Fung said. ♦



Courtesy of CANVA

Deputies look into groping incident

BY SelinaChen

School officials are reviewing security camera footage in an effort to get leads on an attempted groping of a female student who was jogging near campus around 5:30 p.m. on March 26.

The student was described as being safe after the incident, and no suspects have been arrested.

Principal Greg Louie sent an email detailing the incident later that evening. In the email, Louie said that the victim had been jogging on Herriman Avenue around Jerries Drive when "a white, family-style minivan with 3-5 male teenagers approached. One of the male individuals exited the van and attempted to grope the female student."

"It was definitely a random attack, but our deputies are very vigilant and are continuing to do patrols in the area," Thomson said. "Saratoga is a safe community, so there is no need for people to panic, although we also would like to tell residents to be on the lookout for anything suspicious."

"It was definitely a random attack, but our deputies are very vigilant."

DEPUTY Marie Molnar

According to sheriff's deputy Marie Molnar, the school's resources officer, the incident is being investigated. However, she said much of the information must be kept confidential because the investigation is ongoing as of April 1.

On the school's part, assistant principal Brian Thompson is working with the technology team to pull up security camera footage of the parking lot for that date and time.

Thompson could not talk about the exact location and coverage of the cameras on campus, but he said that there are a total of over 50 cameras monitoring all entrances and exits across the school.

While the footage may not have enough clarity to identify the minivan's license plates, it could help discern the model of the vehicle if the minivan was on campus earlier that day.

The victim declined to comment until a later time.

At this point, the sheriff's office does not have any special advice for residents because such incidents are rare in the area, Molnar said.

To prevent similar incidents, Thompson urges students to be aware of their surroundings both on and off-campus and "avoid getting lost in the world of electronics." Additionally, he recommends students walk with partners in public venues as a precaution.

"Safety on campus is our job as educators, and we take it seriously," he said.

Note: Please contact deputy Stockholm with any information on the case by calling the sheriff office's non-emergency number: (408) 299-2311. ♦

>> facts&figures

- 73 Every 73 seconds an American is sexually assaulted.
- 63 63,000 children a year are victims of sexual abuse.
- 15 15 percent of perpetrators are age 17 or younger.
- 8 8 percent of sexual assaults occur on school property.

Courtesy of RAJIN

School	Active COVID-19 Cases		Current Positivity Rate	Current Quarantines**	
	Students*	Staff		Students	Staff
Argonaut	1	0	0.28%	11	3
Foothill	0	0	0.00%	0	0
Redwood	0	1	0.12%	0	1
Saratoga	0	0	0.00%	0	0
District Office, Facilities, Multi-site Staff	0	0	0.00%	0	0

Courtesy of SUSD

Updated on March 29, the table shows active COVID-19 rates and cases in the Saratoga Union School District.

Argonaut student cohort sent home due to COVID-19 case

BY VirajReddi & LiliShoshani

As students in a fifth-grade classroom at Argonaut Elementary began packing up at the end of the school day on March 29, principal Karen Van Putten walked into the busy classroom and spoke quietly to teacher Matthew Gregory.

As their discussion intensified, Van Putten and Gregory announced to the group that their classmate had tested positive for COVID-19 and the entire cohort, made up of 11 students and three staff members, would need to quarantine and temporarily resume distance learning.

The school emailed the families with students in the cohort and provided further instructions. Parents were told to schedule a COVID-19 test regardless of their child's symptoms, take a COVID-19 test themselves and provide the test results with the school. In addition, they were asked to quarantine their child until April 4 and monitor their child's symptoms for 14 days until April 7.

This small COVID-19 outbreak is a reminder of the likely setbacks against a still highly contagious virus that continues through the U.S. population. Schools all over the country have had similar experiences as they transition to bringing students back to in-person settings.

While the cohort was sent

home and immediately quarantined, Argonaut did not release the information to the larger school community about the outbreak in the fifth-grade classroom.

Van Putten referred questions about the outbreak to the human resources director of the school district, Kym Imai. Imai said the school is following Santa Clara County Public Health protocol, but did not provide further information due to confidentiality reasons.

According to the county protocol, a school must close only under the following circumstances: 1) Within a 14-day period, an outbreak has occurred in 25 percent or more stable groups in the school or 2) at least three outbreaks have occurred in the school and more than 5 percent of the school population is infected. Because Argonaut's case did not fall into either category, in-person school continued with only the affected cohort being sent home.

Vihaan Reddi, a fifth-grade student in the affected cohort (as well as the younger brother of one of this story's reporters), felt that despite the positive COVID-19 test of his classmate, he still felt safe about returning to school assuming everyone tested negative and continued following the safety guidelines.

"Everyone kind of expected that there would be a positive test sometime," he said. "This was the

first one that happened, and they did the best they could and handled it fine."

Despite the risks, after a month of in-person school, he thinks returning to in-person school was worth it, as he has found it much easier to learn when the teacher is present to help.

In addition, he believes the social interactions with his classmates have improved his morale through a difficult year.

His mother, Anitha Reddi, stated that while the case was concerning, they had anticipated this kind of outcome happening and considered it a necessary risk.

"Even knowing this risk, we wanted to continue doing in-person school, and it'll probably keep happening as more people go back," she said.

Both Vihaan and Anitha Reddi found the school's response to the incident appropriate.

While it's not perfect, they look forward to returning to in-person learning, and many educators agree despite the occasional positive test.

"I have seen the impact of distance learning on kids first hand, and I want my own children back in the classroom," Argonaut teacher Kelly Kannberg, who also returned to teach in-person learning, said. "My own 10 students that have come back to in-person learning seem so happy and are benefiting socially." ♦

New AP test schedule changes receive mixed reactions

BY AllenLuo & AariaThomas

The administration recently announced that the majority of AP tests will occur from May 18 to May 27 for Administration 2, meaning that most calculation-based classes — like AP Physics 1 and 2, AP Chemistry and AP Calculus AB and BC — will be held in-person, while others — like AP U.S. History and AP Computer Science — will be online.

AP Statistics teacher Jennifer Mantle said she has been aware all year that the AP tests would be no different from past years, so she has taught the full curriculum as usual.

Mantle said that she was able to teach her students this year similarly to previous years to make sure they are prepared for the multiple-choice and free-response sections of the exam.

In distance learning, AP Statistics students take notes on recorded lectures for

part of their homework and practice problems in class. Mantle anticipates finishing the curriculum around spring break and spending the rest of the time before the exam reviewing key concepts taught during class.

"Second semester always has an element of review for the exam that the first semester doesn't," Mantle said. "For AP Stats, the exam date is only a week later [due to Administration 2] so that builds in one more week of review."

Still, because of the disconnect online learning causes, Mantle said she is less able than usual to judge how well students learn the material and the effort they put in. Having open resource exams gives students a variety of sources to use on assignments which "makes it difficult to say how much students really know."

The recent changes have elicited mixed reactions from students. Some think the new schedule with Administration 2 is

flawed and would prefer a safer option.

"I would have liked the third administration since many of my APs are science and mathematics, which have to be taken on campus," said senior Aileen Liao. "In my situation, the second administration feels similar to the first because more than half of my exams cannot be virtual. My family has been extremely cautious during this year and we have limited our actions, so I would rather not take the risk of an in-person exam."

There is an option for students like Liao who are reluctant to come on campus to take math and science exams to take them virtually from their house.

However, not all students share these concerns. Junior Anthony Zheng said he thinks the pandemic is at a stage where it wouldn't be too risky to have in-person testing, especially with the introduction of vaccines and the reduced rate of cases.

Other students are satisfied with the choice for Administration 2 because it

gives them more time to study without interfering with finals or summer break.

Administration 3 would have set the majority of tests after the last week of school in June, meaning that studying for finals and AP tests would take place simultaneously.

"Moving the majority of AP exams to be in Administration 2 is definitely an appropriate move," junior Gavin Chang said. "The dates for the tests are just right and allow more time for the school to prepare themselves for in-person testing."

Although the new schedule has produced both positive and negative feelings, Administration 2 still largely rests on the ability of the county to move into the orange tier in coming weeks and stay there.

"Hopefully, we will be able to take our AP tests soon," said Zheng. "I would like to finish them quickly, and having them in-person means that we might be able to return to school and normalcy soon." ♦



PHASE 3B

continued from pg. 1

April with the purposes of minimizing physical contact, increasing efficiency and tracking students' whereabouts.

"The hall pass would be what we would play with in 3B so that students and staff get a chance to use it and see if it's something we want to adopt for next year," Louie said. "A program like this is a good opportunity for us to see how we can best support our staff and students while being energy-efficient, because we're not going to be using paper and physical objects."

Perhaps the biggest challenge for teachers will be simulcasting their in-person classes to students tuning in on Zoom or Google

Meets.

The general purpose of simulcasting is having teachers use the same technology as in remote learning, only in an in-person environment. To prevent any issues with Zoom waiting rooms and questions, the administration is currently looking for parent volunteers to act as Zoom hosts.

Spanish teacher Sarah Voorhees, who has been simulcasting for her Period 1 AP Spanish class since March 8, has witnessed the enhanced academic experience for in-person students, especially when it comes to studying world languages.

For language classes especially, Voorhees said that the transition to phase 3B would help returning students immensely. While remote and in-person students will

learn the same material, Voorhees is concerned about students' unequal level of speaking practice.

"You can present vocabulary, grammar and culture, but you can't replicate the in-person conversations using that vocabulary and grammar to talk about culture on Zoom," Voorhees said.

Senior Kimball Small, a student in Voorhees's AP Spanish class, has found in-person learning particularly effective. It allows foreign language students like him to more readily apply language practice, as they can engage in conversation with peers and interact organically with teachers using the language.

"We play more games in class that help us practice speaking the language," Small said. "It's a nice change considering how difficult it is to learn and practice speaking a

language online."

Students like Small who come to school in-person are able to interactively learn under the instruction of their teacher, making Phase 3B a much-anticipated and needed change for foreign language classes.

While some students are eager to return to school for 3B for a better learning experience, others, including Fernandez da Ponte, are more hesitant. In particular, he is concerned about how the school will manage the "sudden influx of students" and the potential difficulty of "keeping track of those that do not follow precautions as accurately as is necessary."

Nevertheless, Fernandez da Ponte is excited to return to a traditional classroom experience with more opportunities for per-

sonal interactions among teachers.

"At least within my friend group, everyone seems pretty optimistic about returning to school," he said. "I think that many of them are also tired of online school and want a more personal academic experience."

As 3B draws closer, Louie is also hopeful about the coming weeks and months.

"It's really nice to walk around campus and to see students again," Louie said. "Teachers really appreciate that interaction, even if there are just a few students in the room. We are going to be as flexible as we can to support our students. Hopefully we can get through the semester with no health incidents, no health issues, and ultimately get into August with things being pretty close to normal." ♦

togatalks

What are your thoughts on returning to school in phase 3B?

"Knowing that everything will be different is scary, but I'm excited to meet my teachers."



sophomore Anjini Mani

"I was forced by my parents to return; hopefully the district can maintain safety guidelines well."



sophomore Brandon Ngo

"I'm kinda bummed because of cohorts, but I'm looking forward to talking to some new people."



junior Lily Yang

Tours ease stress on freshmen coming to campus

BY AvaniKongetira & AudreyMah

After spending almost an entire school year in a virtual setting, roughly half of the Class of 2024 trickled onto campus recently — some of them for the first time — in walking tours designed to ease their transition.

Campus tours, organized by administrators and held March 17-19, gave freshmen returning for Phases 3A and 3B a chance to familiarize themselves with the campus and COVID-19 precautions.

Link Crew and leadership students led more than 150 freshmen in groups of eight or fewer through the different parts of campus, reminding them of expectations regarding mask-wearing, social distancing and the school's new one-way traffic map.

Sophomore Anand Agrawal, who led a campus tour, used his personal experiences to draw interest from the freshmen.

"The freshmen weren't too interactive," he said. "But I do think it'll stay with them and help ease them back on campus."

Freshman Jay Lim said the campus tour allowed him to see what the campus was really like for the first time, which felt strange after nearly a year of high school.

He added the tour helped him feel more comfortable about being on the campus in the future.

Lim is looking forward to in-person school due to the benefits that come with physically being in a classroom.

"I think in-person school is important because you'll be able to directly talk to your teachers about questions and problems you may have after class, and you can see your classmates during group work and projects," Lim said.

For her part, freshman Chloe Lee said she is excited to have more of a normal high school experience.

"I think social interaction is important in school life, and because of having classes through Zoom, it has been awkward and hard to make friends," Lee said. "I am also excited to be a part of school spirit and events because it will make me happy, which will be helpful since I feel tired and unmotivated these days."

Still, Lee said she feels nervous about returning to in-person learning because of the ongoing pandemic.

For freshman Naina Tallak, going in-person for school means shifting her mindset and routines.



Juniors Nadini Desai and Alexander Yang lead a group of freshmen on a tour on March 17.

According to Tallak, going to school in person requires more discipline.

"You can't just slack off and go on your phone during class anymore, which encourages us to pay more attention and retain the information," Tallak said.

Although online school may have made for a less stressful transition into high school, Tallak said learning on campus will

help her understand class material better and offer a welcome change of pace.

"Going on the campus tour felt calming and less confining than my bedroom where I spend most of my day working," Tallak said. "I think it would be good for myself to have some freedom to roam outside in between classes, and I think that a change of environment will help motivate me more." ♦

Teachers weigh pros and cons of hybrid education

Math teacher PJ Yim

It doesn't matter if we're extremely careful in the Purple Tier if we're forced to be exposed. Even if it's orange tier, it's actually just as dangerous, so arguing about orange versus purple is nonsense. We've actually had teachers who lost a number of relatives to COVID-19, so I worry for them because chances are they are probably more vulnerable. For teenagers or younger kids, it seems to have less of an effect, but that doesn't make it any less scary.

For a vast majority of my honors kids, online is fine, but there are kids who have a hard time connecting and learning from this image on a screen. Watching my videos versus me explaining the same thing on Zoom feels different. But can you imagine what it feels like if I'm a live person, and I could actually read your face better? When your face is a small square on a screen, it's hard for me to read your face. And there's something about sitting there in the same space and communicating that brings your attention to a different level.



Yim

Science teacher Kirk Davis

Waiting about three weeks after the first shot would make me feel comfortable that the protection against infection is pretty high. I would prefer if all students were able to return, but that is not realistic at this point. The hybrid model will present its own set of challenges, but that will probably be the only way to get some kids back on campus before we are very close to the end of the year. My guess is that even if we were allowed to have 100 percent of students back, a significant percentage would choose to stay remote, so in effect, we would be in hybrid in any case.

One benefit is that the teachers (and many students) are used to the remote model, so it would be easier for many teachers since we have prepared remote materials and lesson plans for the last part of the year. It will take everyone a little while to get used to the hybrid model and figuring out what we can and can't do and what will work best. The downside is that the kids who would benefit from in-person instruction and the interpersonal connections won't get that.



Davis

French teacher Elaine Haggerty

I've always felt, and I think most other teachers agree, that as long as we can get vaccinated, let's go back to school. All I can think of now is all the things that we could do if we were in class. I definitely want to go back.

For my French students, it's going to be much more practice with listening to and speaking French because the stuff that we do online is just not enough. I can put them in the breakout rooms, but not everybody talks very much if I'm not there. I call on people individually in classes, but it's just one person out of 30 kids that can talk at a time. In class, we could be doing things like sondages where people are circulating and everybody's talking the whole time, or we can even go outside to do those to be a little more safely. Or we could do activities where people are working one-on-one so that everybody's talking. It's just gonna be much more French input that they get now.



Haggerty

— Aaria Thomas

PROM

continued from pg. 1

event is taking place outdoors at night, a good amount of the prom budget will have to be allocated toward heaters. Zaman said that due to these changes, the senior class office is trying to make this year's senior prom tickets cheaper than previous years' tickets.

Additionally, since the school is in a residential area, the senior class officers need to take potential noise complaints from nearby houses into consideration.

Zaman said the senior class originally contemplated replacing the traditional dance floor with a silent disco, in which all attendees would receive their own set of wireless headphones that would be synced to a large music system. However, after receiving negative student feedback regarding the disco, the senior class officers decided to scrap the idea and instead focus on planning a prom "that's more focused on the food and games instead of a traditional dancing prom."

Zaman said they are planning on implementing different carnival games and redirecting the funding originally allocated for the silent disco into purchasing inflatable bounce houses.

While many are excited for the opportunity to attend prom for the first time, others, like senior Urmila Vudali, still have their doubts. Vudali said that, with the new changes and accommodations taking place, she isn't sure whether or not she and her friends will still be attending.

"Many of us aren't sure if we are going to go, but we see it as our last chance to have something resembling the senior experience," she said. "I just hope that, whether we go or not, we can still take pictures in dresses." ♦



Graphic by ANOUK YEH

Students to attend speech national tournament

BY SelinaChen

Even at 10 p.m., the atmosphere in the 300-person Zoom meeting was tense on March 20.

That's because winners were being announced at the California Coast District Qualifiers award ceremony, the culmination of a grueling speech and debate tournament in which competitors battled for four spots to go to Nationals.

Finalists, all of whom had their cameras on, turned them off upon getting called from lowest to highest in rank. One by one, students' Zoom tiles went black.

The last screen still on for program oral interpretation belonged to junior Anouk Yeh. She not only qualified for the National Tournament but had done so as first seed.

Two other students also qualified: sophomore Shreya Rallabandi placed second in original oratory and junior Selina Chen automatically qualified in informative speaking after making semifinals at Nationals last year.

"The success of our team this year is entirely due to the creativity, originality and dedication of the individual students," coach Erick Rector said. "They're the ones that have put together speeches that are inventive, highly relevant and well-orchestrated, and they should get all the credit." Rector even had to put up with good-

natured joking and pleading from members who said he had promised to shave his head if a certain number of them qualified. (The "dispute" remains unsettled and his head is still unshaved.)

The success at national qualifiers came two weeks after the Coast Forensics League state qualifiers on March 7 in which freshman Cameron Nguyen qualified in original prose and poetry and Yeh and Chen qualified in their respective events to California States. Additionally, freshman Esabella Fung placed as sixth alternate in original advocacy, an event where students need to advocate for a specific piece of legislation.

Fung's speech advocated for the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will ensure a fair interpretation of the Equal Pay Act so that all genders receive the same wages. She prepared for the tournaments by looking at judges' feedback, she said.

"I was extremely nervous going into the final round," Fung said, "but it was a fruitful experience to watch the other competitors and learn how they use gestures and tone to make speeches more engaging."

At nationals qualifiers, sophomore Arnav Garg also advanced to the final round in Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD).

Garg said that he wasn't expecting much out of the tournament because LD draws a distinction between "lay debate," which focuses on persuasion, and "circuit debate,"



FALCON // SELINA CHEN

The Junior Girls Dance perform in front of the BNB officers on March 21 while junior Olivia Kinoshita gets her film equipment ready.

Gupta didn't expect because she thought that people would opt out because of the cohort rule and the irregular performance and practices. She attributes this positive change to the fact that people had more free time to do and try different things.

When the grade was cleared to practice in person, their spirits were lifted.

She stated that the biggest obstacle this year was having two different casts rather than one since choreographing and planning formations for smaller casts is always harder. Because of COVID-19, the rules stated that each grade needed to have two casts for their girls and boys dances if the casts exceeded 15 people.

As the state of COVID-19 in the county kept changing, ICAC officers and performers had to be flexible since many of the performance's logistics remained to be seen, said Gupta.

"Things like whether we had

in-person practices and how we were going to perform were all unknown [before the county went to red tier], but it ended up working out pretty smoothly," Gupta said.

Despite all this, Gupta said that the grade is still having fun and bonding together. Her favorite memory from BnB this year is when the grade organized a game of Fugitive with all the other sophomore casts and each cast showed the other their dances.

"It was the first time it felt like last year's BnB, and getting to see everyone in person, especially at night, was super fun and refreshing," Gupta said.

Despite all the changes, the officers and performers remain hopeful that everyone who watches the show will feel the vibrance and fun of BnB, even in this abnormal year.

"Historically, one of the best things about Bombay in the Bay is how it brought the entire community together for a night of celebrating Indian culture while helping a worthy cause," Shandilya said. "This year, we hope the show maintains that community atmosphere in a safe way." ♦

Sophomore Shreya Rallabandi and juniors Selina Chen and Anouk Yeh reconvene after qualifying to the 2021 National Speech and Debate Tournament.

AAPI

continued from pg. 1

crimes, including House Resolution 23, a bill introduced in February by 28th District's Assemblymember Evan Low along with 67 co-authors. Rallies in the South Bay have occurred in recent weeks and crowds are getting larger and louder, Low said in an interview with The Falcon.

Even so, fear is prevalent.

"I feel oppressed"

The online attacks directed at Do were due to his active role on social media trying to debunk myths surrounding Asian Americans. He said that although he's just an ordinary citizen, he has been reposting stories with the message that these issues are real and must be addressed.

Do acknowledged he's not overly worried for his safety within Saratoga because of its large Asian population. Even so, he has taken precautions.

"I set up a shortcut on my phone so that if I say 'Siri, help me,' my phone will call my parents, send them my location and start live streaming a video recording from its camera," Do said. Do also bought pepper spray for protection from potential threats.

He knows from WeChat groups that many Asian Americans are even considering buying firearms for self-defense. But within his family, Do's 70-year-old grandmother is simply staying home.

"We need to take action"

In an interview with The Falcon, Saratoga mayor Yan Zhao said that her own 87-year-old mother is also afraid to walk outside after hearing stories and seeing video of anti-Asian hate crimes.

"As the mayor, if I'm afraid of walking down the street in my own city, then how do I tell my residents that our city is safe?" she asked.

Although no anti-Asian hate crimes have been reported in Saratoga, she thinks that victims tend not to speak up about it. Asian Americans traditionally keep their heads down and avoid making a fuss, she said.

"When I was canvassing in my campaign for city council, this gentleman told me 'I'd only vote for someone who's white' and shut the door in my face," Zhao said. "Back then, I kept quiet and walked away."

Now, however, Zhao feels compelled to speak out, which is why she decided to organize a rally on March 27 in front of Saratoga City Hall along with the mayors of Cupertino, Campbell, Los Gatos and Monte Sereno.

An engineer by trade, Zhao never expected that she'd be the one to organize a big anti-hate rally, but things had gotten so bad that her anger and grief made her feel that she had to take action. At least 1,000 people made their voices heard that day.

"People are united regardless of our political differences," she said. "It's sad that it takes such dire circumstances for this to happen, but it's a good thing that we put aside our difference to fight for our basic human rights."

"Are they just doing this as if it's a trend?"

Junior Maya Vasudev, who is of mixed Tai Dam (a Laotian minority), Indian and Caucasian descent, initially felt that the school administration's response to AAPI attacks was lacking. She saw them promote the Living Room Conversations meeting and emails telling students to go to CASSY for help if they need it. They didn't do anything until so many people were talking about it, she said.

However, she felt better after learning

that some administrators, including principal Greg Louie and assistant principal Matt Torrens, attended the Saratoga rally in solidarity with the Asian American community.

Vasudev also pointed to a large influx of performative social media activism that has been surrounding the movement.

Vasudev finds such activism largely ineffective. "I've seen a couple people who just post a blanket statement to stop AAPI hate, and that's it," she said. She acknowledges that there are still ways that people who can effectively use social media for substantive activism, such as reposting and donating to hate crime victims' GoFundMe pages.

Even so, Vasudev said that the common assumption is that they're posting because it's trendy to do so.

"I'm disappointed, but am I surprised? Not really. There's always going to be people who are going to pretend like they care for clout, profit or money," Vasudev said.

When asked "how can I be a better ally?" by people who have reposted infographics on their social media, she responds by telling them to seek external resources, put in an effort to read about the history of AAPI hate and listen to the marginalized groups affected while maintaining their platform.

"For me, spreading awareness about an issue is like the bare minimum," Vasudev said. "Listen to what minorities are saying and give them the means to do so."

"Where have you been for years?"

Although instances of anti-Asian hate crimes have increased due to the coronavirus and the hatred stoked by former President Trump and his allies, many Asian Americans have expressed that anti-Asian sentiment has been festering in the nation for centuries. Chemistry Honors teacher Kathy Nakamatsu recalled her elementary school days when her classmates would come up to her and say "Hi-yah!" or do the Karate Chop.

She remembered a teaching job interview in which she asked the principal whether they had gang problems, only to be told by the principal, in a matter-of-fact way, that while the community didn't have gangs, they had white supremacists.

"I told her I was a bit nervous about that," Nakamatsu said. "[The principal] said 'don't worry, if they see your name on their class list, they'll just ask to be removed from the class, and we'll do it.'"

Years later she still sees signs of racism.

terment camps during World War II. Her mother, now 83, has also experienced harassment in recent months.

"This guy rode by on a bike and hollered, 'Are you a ch-nk?'" Nakamatsu said. "She just ignored it, but then he circled around and came back to ask her again, 'I said, are you a ch-nk?'" She said. "No, I'm Japanese, and luckily, he went away. It scared us because what if he had continued? What if he hadn't gone away?"

While Nakamatsu believes it would be helpful if the administration did more to address anti-Asian sentiment within the school community, she understands that their hands are full with the school's reopening. She believes that in a typical year without a pandemic at its forefront, the administration would be able to handle the AAPI situation differently.

Additionally, she said not every teacher would be comfortable if asked to talk about it in class.

"I struggle with bringing social-emotional learning into my classroom, so I'd be very nervous," she said. "But my door is always open if you want to talk about it."

"I hope students feel comfortable talking about these issues."

On Thursday morning after the Atlanta shooting, English 11 Honors and Creative Writing teacher Amy Keys opened up a Jamboard with her students with a warm-up question: "What do you know about the history of Asian American immigration and how do you feel about Atlanta?"

After her students shared reactions, they talked about history behind the American Dream, Angel Island and Asian immigration since the 1800s. She shared poems about immigrants' experience at Angel Island.

"It seemed to me that there was a real receptiveness and eagerness to talk about it," she said about her lesson that day. "I saw kindness between students and a lot of nodding. It felt like a lot of solidarity between Asian and non-Asian students."

Afterward, several students privately emailed Keys to express their gratitude for having the chance to talk about the topic in class. Although Keys wishes she could talk to her students in person, she noted that she had learned a lot from her students and col-

"I lived and breathed the model minority myth."

Guidance counselor Alinna Satake remembers being 7 years old and watching her younger siblings play around a department store — climbing and running like all kids do — when two older white women remarked that they should go back to China, a place Satake had never seen in her life.

She recalled that she started yelling at her siblings, berating them for getting in trouble — and for being noticed.

"You never forget the first time someone tells you to go back to where you came from," Satake said.

Satake, a Saratoga High alumna, was born in the U.S. to immigrant parents. Like others of her generation, she was taught to keep her head down, work hard and never question authorities. If something went wrong, her parents assumed she was at fault. This made her less inclined to believe the attacks are widespread.

"I wondered what they did to catch attention," Satake said. "I was blaming the victim and trying to rationalize for myself."

A recent incident that underscored the challenges facing the community right now was that of Xiao Zhen Zie, the 76-year-old Asian grandmother living in San Francisco. In early March, Zie was punched in the face but she "came after the dude who attacked her with a two-by-four and whipped the daylight out of him," Satake said.

Satake felt personally connected to this because Zie speaks Taishanese, the same as Satake's grandmother. After hearing Zie's story, Satake began challenging the model minority myth because she didn't want her kids to grow up the same way.

It is difficult, however, because she is never sure if she's being oversensitive.

"When you've been raised to think a certain way, you don't recognize racism and microaggressions because you're 'dying by a thousand cuts,'" she said.

On top of that, Satake said that being a woman makes her situation "a double whammy." In situations where she feels patronized, such as being cut off in a meeting, she wrestles with the uncertainty of whether the man is a jerk, if he's asserting his male privilege or if it's because of her skin color.

According to Stop AAPI Hate, an organization tracking anti-Asian hate in the U.S., women experienced more than twice the amount of anti-Asian violence than men between March 2020 and March 2021.

The rising anti-Asian sentiment directly impacts Satake's family. Especially for her mother, who is "going bonkers" about finally being able to go shopping after being vaccinated, Satake is walking the line between trying to not make her mother feel stymied while telling her that it may not be safe to go out.

"It's heartbreaking when my daughter asked if we're safe here when we went on a walk in Cupertino," Satake said. As she spoke, tears streamed down her cheeks.

To Satake, the way to stop anti-Asian racism is through more active steps, such as hiring more Asian American teachers so that children have role models who look like them, or making the effort to pronounce minority names correctly.

"There's nothing that makes me cringe more than a bunch of people saying, 'Oh, I stand by the Asians,'" she said. "What does that mean? Are you disrupting microaggressions and taking active steps to be educated? That work starts with me, recognizing how I myself have contributed to that problem, and I would really love for all of us to pause and think about it." ♦



From left to right: junior Maya Vasudev, teacher Kathy Nakamatsu, mayor Yan Zhao, counselor Alinna Satake, teacher Amy Keys, and freshman Minh Do.

During the early stages of the pandemic, Nakamatsu and her husband, world-renowned concert pianist Jon Nakamatsu, were walking down the street in their Campbell neighborhood when a man in a car rode by and yelled, "Go home to China."

This kind of overt racism is deeply painful for her because of the racism her parents experienced as children in the 1940s. Both of their families were sent to Japanese in-

leagues who shared their perspectives about growing up Asian American.

Keys said she has started reading more about anti-Asian racism, especially about its intersection with misogyny, to educate herself of the historical context.

"My advice to students is to try and recognize microaggressions on a smaller scale and discuss it before, not after, it turns into a brutal attack," she said.

"I feel dehumanized when I see injustice against AAPIs; it's a huge hit to my identity."

junior **Grace Hsu**

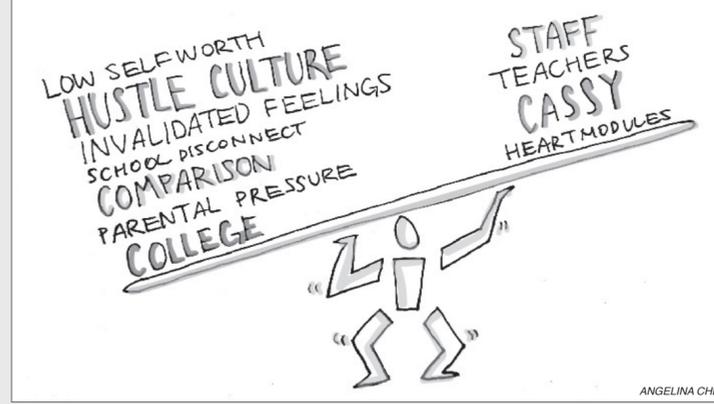
"Not knowing how safe you are when you're not at home is rattling, to say the least."

sophomore **Lucas Dennis**

"It's easier to hate people than systems, so Asian Americans became a prime target."

junior **Emma Foley**

Let's address our mental health crisis



ANGELINA CHEN

Like most competitive Bay Area schools, our school has always seen mental health problems among students, particularly as they relate to academic pressure.

Throughout recent years, the district has taken notable measures to support students' mental and emotional well-being — increasing CASSY's presence on campus by moving it to the student center, hosting events like Breaking Down the Walls, implementing the HAERT modules during Wednesday advisory, etc.

Yet the WASC re-accreditation six years ago identified student mental health as one of our primary areas of growth, and the re-accreditation last year arrived at the same conclusion. Echoing their concerns, this past year, the number of parent calls to CASSY increased by an astonishing 700 percent.

While this number is clearly correlated with the unusual stresses of the pandemic, online learning and the social and political crises of 2020, declining mental health among students has already been becoming more than a mere issue.

It is becoming a crisis. And it is becoming a crisis because as a community, we have failed to properly address the deep-rooted issues that require work not just from the district, but from parents and students alike.

To fully understand the depth and complexity of this problem, it's important to first examine the way many students have felt and why. As a disclaimer, what follows is simply based on what I've felt and noticed from my peers throughout my 12 years of attending Saratoga schools.

Causes
On one level, you have the issues that come with vesting your self-image in academics and college admissions — a process that wears the facade of a meritocracy, exacerbating both the pressures students feel as they're applying to college and the crushing sense of disappointment that comes when they receive less than ideal results.

Parental and peer pressures worsen these feelings and can also contribute to a student placing unhealthy expectations on themselves.

Because of a combination of parental and peer pressure and the college admissions mania, some students come to believe that the number of difficult classes and activities they cram onto their plate represents their value as people. But this isn't all there is to the problem. Students generally feel heavy discomfort surrounding conversations about mental health even though so many of us struggle with such issues.

From what I've seen, in large part, this discomfort arises from external influences that can twist the idea of mental wellness. Parental pressures may drive students to invalidate their struggles or treat mental well-being as a mere price they have to pay for academic success and admissions to top colleges.

Students may also compare themselves to peers who seem to "have it all together," which not only increases their lack of

self-worth but also causes them to invalidate their own feelings, convincing themselves they're just "weak" for feeling stressed and low.

What's so difficult about addressing these feelings is that they culminate over a lifetime. When they are constantly surrounded by forces that reinforce these pressures, they internalize all of these toxic ideas.

It's no wonder, then, that despite their good intentions, the district's measures have largely failed — they're band-aids slapped over long-standing wounds that go far deeper than any one program or combination of programs can solve.

The 2018 Breaking Down the Walls event, for example, undoubtedly helped students be vulnerable with their peers, but within a few days, any effects of those experiences rapidly faded as students lacked the guidance and drive to continue fostering an open, emotionally honest environment. As another example, the HAERT modules present the valuable advice and insights. But the modules, designed in a simple video-quiz format, present information in an impersonal way, making it difficult for students to truly internalize the lessons.

By high school, it's not as if students aren't aware of the ways they can take care of their mental health, though the HAERT modules do present quite a variety of coping methods.

Solutions
Rather, students don't feel the need to and don't understand how to adjust their mindsets and implement these changes in their lives because they've never truly viewed their mental health as a top priority.

This is where the administrators, teachers, parents and students themselves all have to step in. From what I've seen, many students feel a disconnect between themselves and the school when it comes to the latter's attempts at supporting student mental health. Part of this stems from the fact that the school officials' actions sometimes fail to line up with their words. While they

claim to care about students' mental and emotional well-being, they continue greenlighting classes like AP Physics C, leaving students to wonder whether they truly care about relieving academic pressure.

More importantly, the administration and staff should put greater effort into fostering a climate of genuine compassion on campus.

This year, I've been fortunate to see many of my teachers actively checking in on their students' mental health and reiterating that they're there to support their students. If this trend continues, it can play a surprisingly large role in helping students remember that their mental and emotional health matter.

In the end, however, there's only so much teachers and staff can — and should — do.

Much of the burden of creating a mentally healthier climate falls onto the shoulders of parents and students themselves.

Take, for example, the opening of new courses. Although the administration can and should exercise their discretion in deciding whether to open AP courses, without student and parent pressure for more AP opportunities, the school wouldn't have even considered opening these classes.

Students and parents, then, need to consider what they truly value: the college admissions mania or mental and emotional well-being? Granted, these two options aren't mutually exclusive; although difficult, it's entirely possible to work hard and shoot for top colleges while taking care of yourself and recognizing that your worth isn't vested in the university you attend. But until we start treating mental health as a real option, we can't learn to let these two goals coexist.

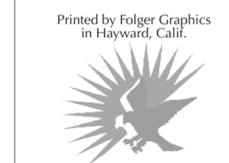
To do this, parents need to play a more active role in creating safe spaces for their children to express how they feel. Many parents talk to each other about their children's accomplishments and proceed to tell their own children about how so-and-so's child has started a nonprofit or taken 12 APs. Although parents may have no malintent, from a child's perspective, listening to what other people are doing can create additional pressure.

Creating a safe space also includes more active interactions between parents and their students. From my experience, having my mother regularly check in on me and let me know when she's concerned about me helps me feel cared for and more comfortable discussing my worries. Still, because students typically interact with each other more often than they do with their parents, they too have to take on a more active role in fostering a supportive climate with their peers. Saratoga High may not be as notoriously cutthroat as other Bay Area schools like Monta Vista, Palo Alto or Gunn, but there is an undoubtedly competitive climate that can sometimes become more toxic than productive. Simple acts like checking in on a friend can show that you care for them, make them feel less alone and remind them of the significance of their mental and emotional well-being. And above all, students should take it upon themselves to practice self-compassion, to take breaks when they feel overwhelmed, that they are not inferior to their peers just because they "accomplish" less, that they have the qualities to succeed and find joy in life. Addressing student mental health is clearly a complex issue. Until we all begin to genuinely acknowledge its breadth and depth and foster a more compassionate environment, mental health problems will remain a perpetual cloud hanging over the school. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editor-in-chiefs Andy Chen Anouk Yeh	Opinion Editors Harshini Velchamy Tiffany Wang	Writer Kaitlyn Tsai
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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 28-0 in favor of the article.



Not your model minority: A time to stand together for Asian Americans against hate

BY EstherLuan

At 2 in the morning on Saturday, March 27, I sat at the dining table with my mom, craft supplies scattered all around us.

An anti-hate rally was scheduled for later in the morning and we still had dozens of signs left to make. Besides the scratch of permanent markers on cardboard, we worked in silence. I watched her tired but determined face as she finished one poster and pulled out another, printing a clear message in dark blue sharpie.

"We Are Not Your Model Minority," the message read.

The past few weeks have been a painful time for the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. For hundreds of years, we have seen discrimination against us disregarded and our voices as a political constituency ignored.

However, the recent rise in visible hate incidents against us and attention brought to them by the media has served as a rallying point for our diverse and often infighting community.

And when we are united, lasting change is possible: in shifting the perception of our community in the media, in changing public policy and in supporting and understanding our own community.

It's a proud and individualistic sentiment — if law-abiding Asian Americans could toil and climb to success in American society, then other races should be able to as well, an uncle would say, watching news channels broadcast the looting and riots of June 2020.

This transient feeling of superiority, the

belief that Asian Americans have somehow risen above racial discrimination through being model citizens, shatters under the realization that we are only accepted as long as it is convenient — something that has been made clear in recent weeks with the massive influx of reported hate incidents against Asian Americans.

A shooting in Atlanta on March 16 killed eight people and six Asian women. Attacks and hate incidents against Asian men and women, particularly the elderly, are being reported at unprecedented levels after the former President referred to the virus itself repeatedly with pejoratives like "Kung-flu" and "China Virus."

The Asian American way has always been quiet acceptance of the reality of discrimination against us and an attempt to raise ourselves above it without stirring trouble.

The issue is that we in communities like Saratoga represent a small and exceptionally privileged sector of the Asian American community. The reality is that many other Asian Americans live in difficult circumstances.

These AAPI, often living in close-knit ethnic communities and working low-wage jobs just like the Asian women massacred at the massage parlors in Atlanta, often face little to no social mobility and similar issues to Black and Latino communities despite being burdened by the reputation of the model minority.

These less-privileged communities must constantly face struggles that we have the privilege of distancing ourselves from: living in dilapidated areas prone to violence from people looking for someone to blame,



Two Asian girls stand in solidarity during the Saratoga #StopAsianHate rally in the morning of March 27 at the Saratoga City Hall, advocating against the escalating racial hate crimes.

working in cultural businesses like markets, stores and parlors that are an easy and vulnerable target, and in some cases, even failing to report hate incidents that have happened to them.

In the Asian American community, there is great disparity in opinion on the existence and perpetuation of racism both generationally and across different backgrounds and ethnicities.

However, recent incidents have made it clear across generational and cultural boundaries that discrimination and hate against Asian Americans still very much ex-

ist, just less visibly for those who are protected by materialistic privilege.

While the pandemic has brought the tensions against Asian Americans to a head and resulted in saddening incidents and violence, we as a community now have the opportunity to take a clear and united stand — across generations and circumstances — against violence and racism.

Once we are united in the pursuit of a common goal with the support of other POC communities, we will have a social and political voice to harness.

We will no longer be silent. ♦

Black History Month should be a mandatory curriculum

BY BenjaminLi & AllenLuo

After a Utah charter school for elementary and junior high students allowed parents to opt their children out of Black History Month curriculum, a public outcry reversed the school's decision on Feb. 8.

Micah Hirokawa, the director of Maria Montessori Academy, told The New York Times that parents who had initially asked for the option to withdraw their children also canceled their requests, and the school had full participation in the activities for the month.

The resurgence of white supremacy that came with former President Donald Trump's time in office has made this event one of many in a worrying series of acts. Black history, an integral part of U.S. history, should be taught at all schools as a foundational part of U.S. history, regardless of outside complaints or criticism.

Although the decision was reversed, the fact that there were parents who pushed the request to opt their children out of this education further emphasizes the necessity of this curriculum. Even the decision to allow this option sets a precedent: Black history could be ignored and be seen as purely "optional."

North Ogden, Utah, is predominantly white, with only 3 out of the 322 students at Maria Montessori Academy being Black.

With less than a 1 percent Black student population, the vast majority of families at the school are not forced to confront the reality of historic and omnipresent racism. They may not even realize it exists. This

ignorance likely led parents to request to withdraw their children from the program, claiming that they didn't see the point of it. Children should not be in the dark about such an important topic, especially with the current state of issues. Although many try to push the idea that America is near perfection, without understanding its history and deep-rooted problems, future generations cannot push the nation to progress.

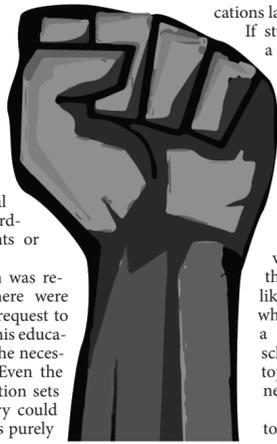
Children's education also greatly impacts their worldview. Neglecting to teach them about the history of race relations in America would have harmful ramifications later on in their lives.

If students do not receive a complete education of American history, they may graduate with harmful misconceptions or without the full scope of Black history knowledge required to continue dismantling systemic racism.

Their parents are the very manifestation of this; their education was likely based in a time where segregation was a recent memory, and school did not cover the topic as in-depth as was needed.

Hiding parts of history due to their darker nature will only lead to these systemic issues growing more prevalent over time.

Only by learning about and understanding what causes society to be so split can the country come together and fix it. The start to solving systemic racism and other race-related issues is learning how they came to be, and how they were inadequately addressed over time. ♦



Graphic by SINA SALEHI

Penn. teacher rightfully punished after Capitol riots

BY KavitaSundaram

Was a public school teacher protesting before the insurrection at the Capitol on Jan. 6 a mere exercise in freedom of speech or something far more sinister and deserving of punishment?

That was the question facing the Allentown School District in Pennsylvania. Their answer: They suspended the teacher.

When middle school social studies teacher Jason Moorehead posted pictures on social media of him attending the Trump rally before the riots on Jan. 6, parents and other members of the community were outraged. While he posted some relatively harmless contents of him wearing a MAGA hat and "doing his civic duty," they were not received well.

The ability to share endless information to anyone in the world in a matter of seconds is a privilege that must be used with caution.

While Moorehead's extremist and distastefully timed actions provide adequate cause for suspension and an investigation into his participation in the riots, the true extent of his actions is debatable.

The line between expressing political views and attending a violent riot seems to blur when the president himself condones said violent riot. Additionally, Moorhead insists that he did not actually go to or enter the Capitol building, but only attended the political rally beforehand several blocks away.

If this is true, then Moorehead's suspension might appear severe. In fact, Moorehead said that because of the incident, he

had been forced to call the police and take safety measures in his own home to protect himself. He also said he has received multiple letters of death threats.

While these circumstances are unfortunate and possibly dangerous, they aren't a result of the school district's actions, which were reasonable for the given situation. Since many of Moorehead's social media posts pointed toward his attendance at the violent riots, the schools took action to appease the community, make time for investigation and not jump to conclusions.

Regardless of whether Moorehead actually attended the riots, the school district took justified action to set an example for other members of the community regarding the proper conduct in an inflamed political climate where even a spark of tension can lead to violence.

While the outcome of the investigation has not been published yet, if Moorehead's involvement is proven to be purely at the rallies and not at the riots, he should be given his job back.

Despite his beliefs being controversial, as long as they are not directly correlated with violence, they are protected by his First Amendment rights.

All the same, Moorehead's consequences only enforce the reality that social media platforms are morphing from casual sites to share information into serious places where nothing is forgotten. The ability to share endless information to anyone in the world in a matter of seconds is a privilege that must be used with caution.

Social media encourages impulsive thinking by allowing people to publicize their thoughts in an instant. This, in turn, encourages rash decision making and influences impressionable people to think the same way.

Regardless of Moorehead's actual involvement in the riots, his distasteful social media photos led to the district taking adequate consequences. ♦

Group projects are the key to success online

BY AnjaliNuggehalli

In a world where participating in class requires the intimidating task of unmuting on Zoom, many students are understandably hesitant to contribute their thoughts in front of their peers.

Nevertheless, participation seems to be one of the most important factors in determining grades this year, even for traditional lecture-based courses such as math and science. Rather than the typical heavy-weighted test and quiz category, the majority of grade weighting often rests on participation.

Whether it is how much a student shares their ideas in a Socratic Seminar or talks the class through a textbook problem in calculus, teachers are far more attentive to how much their students are involved in their class than in a traditional classroom.

While it is understandable that many teachers believe heavily weighted tests are not suitable for virtual learning, increasing the importance of participation is also not an effective solution. Instead, teachers can measure students' abilities in a variety of areas through more frequent group project assignments.

Through projects, students are required to participate with their group members and share ideas. If a student doesn't carry their weight, peer evaluations make it easy for teachers to evaluate participation.

For students who fall short with their contributions, they will see it reflected in their overall grade and thus improve their perfor-

mance for future projects.

It is also practically impossible to cheat on projects; this is because they demand creativity and do not have a single "right" answer.

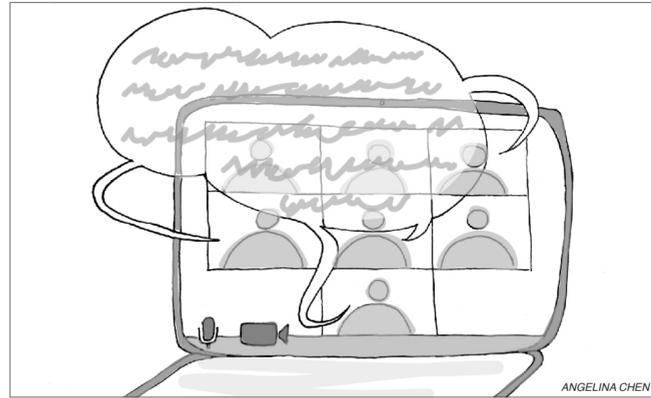
Instead of mustering the courage to un-mute in a class of 30 people, smaller group projects allow students to feel more comfortable and encouraged to speak with each other.

Although meeting in-person remains a challenge for group projects, organizing meetings via Zoom maintains an interactive setting while also allowing students more flexibility for meeting times. For example, students can virtually meet at 10 p.m. on a Wednesday night from their own houses and still have the opportunity to collaborate on a shared project.

Projects also reduce the pressure students put on themselves for exams. While many teachers have reduced the weighting of tests in online mode, others have maintained the significance that tests play in their students' overall grades. But logging onto a test that is worth 80 percent of a student's grade while sitting at a bedroom desk does not encourage success.

Allocating more weight on projects would be a much needed sense of relief for students, especially those who already suffer from crippling test anxiety.

Projects allow students to work on their own time, while still being required to meet deadlines and show masters of key skills and knowledge. They are allowed the opportu-



ANGELINA CHEN

nity to reflect on what they have learned to produce a final product that encompasses quality and effort. Rather than tests that often result in a scribble of rushed work to ultimately find a final answer, projects focus on the process to reach the final step.

In a time where students spend most of their days alone, staring into the harsh light of their laptop, group projects are a much-needed opportunity for students to collaborate with their peers. Beyond demanding an intense delving into the class's material, projects also require students to practice their communication and collaboration

skills. Earning straight A's through acing quizzes and tests or being the most outspoken participant in a group discussion deserves recognition, but these grade categories only cater to a certain type of student.

Others may flourish in smaller group project environments where they are allowed time to put care into their work and absorb the taught material. Whether it is taking the role of the leader, researcher or artist, projects allow for a more well-rounded education that allows every student a chance for success. ♦

Enduring the effects of second-semester syndrome

BY JasonCheng

It's almost been a year of online learning. In many ways, our daily habits over Zoom have completely changed from where we were around this time in 2020, but one thing still remains certain: the dreaded second-semester experience.

In terms of hours, the school year is equally split into the first and second semesters, yet the latter seems to drag on for longer than it actually does.

Of course, there's no such thing as a "longer half," but it sure does feel that way, especially since second semester does span across an additional month.

The breaks between six-week grading periods and those scattered throughout the months contribute to this effect. While it's important to take breaks every now and then, they add up to an entire extra month in school.

These breaks are somewhat disturbing to the routine I've had to build up in the previous six weeks. I can never truly adapt to one schedule without having to flip-flop between school days and breaks.

Moreover, by the time summer break

is around the corner, the sunny weather matches the spirited morale that spreads throughout the school, and this type of weather contributes to a student's elevated motivation and energy.

For me, trying to wake up to a gloomy, cloudy sky rather than sunshine makes me want to stay in bed and feel unproductive overall.

Second semester starting in January means that we start off with gloominess — not the most attractive prospect for all my night owls just returning from break. The first six-week period back is the toughest transition period for me, and it's only the beginning of a prolonged second semester.

But it's not all about timing. First semester is a time to settle into our new classes and grow accustomed to the new environments. Everything is brand new, and we're getting a fresh start to the new school year.

But by the time second semester rolls around, there's nothing new when we come back from winter break. It's the same classes, same teachers and same classmates. This monotony contributes to the perception of an elongated semester.

To make things worse, second-semester material is usually more difficult than first-semester content. Because students have a clear understanding of our teachers' policies by this time of year, grading also becomes less lenient.

Especially in a distance-learning context, school has begun to feel repetitive and draining. With essentially the same routines as before, it's easy to lose focus or motivation at any point in time.

Personally, my motivation has practically halved ever since the semester started. It's been a much larger struggle to push myself to do homework on a daily basis. Many of us

have begun to feel burned out.

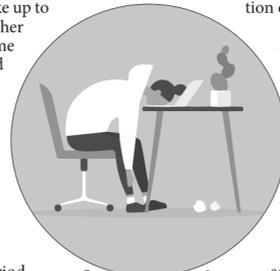
To counter this ordeal, I've built up a daily routine, scheduling out what I want to accomplish each day. In a way, I can stay on track with all the activities I'm juggling while saving time to relax and pursue some hobbies.

Motivation is key at this time of year. It's important to stay healthy and focused; sleep and social activity are crucial to a successful second semester, and we should stay mindful of our health at all times.

Not to mention, we've lost countless hours that we would normally spend on in-person social activity. We've had to cope with a secluded reality that isn't what human beings are built for, and we've learned to cherish the little moments in times like these.

In the end, the rewards of completing second semester are second to none, and as the pandemic fades (we hope), we can treat ourselves to a summer break of social activity to end our misery.

It's natural to see second semester as a grueling experience, especially in current circumstances, but our mindset has to be that it's going to get better from here. ♦



Graphic by TIFFANY WANG

Lowell's lottery system is necessary but ineffective

BY KavitaSundaram

San Francisco is well known for its lottery-based public school system, which aims to eliminate educational inequality by randomly selecting students to attend various schools, instead of using a basis of location as is typical elsewhere.

Not every public school in San Francisco, however, follows this model. Lowell High School has held a prestigious reputation for years due to its separate admissions criteria. The school has accepted students based on merit, which has led to controversy regarding the ethics of the admissions process.

Since Lowell's admission process emphasizes test scores and ac-

ademic performance, it feeds into the systemic racism and classism that plague the school system. Students who get into Lowell are overwhelmingly from private schools and disproportionately Asian and white. The system doesn't give equal opportunity to students who must work to support their families or face circumstances that affect their grades.

While 50 percent of high school students in San Francisco are low-income, the San Francisco Chronicle said Lowell's student body is 33 percent low income. The school has a meager 45 Black students — 2 percent of its 2,900 students.

While the community has criticized the school on this issue for many years, the district has only recently taken action. After Black

students at Lowell began rallying for a lottery admissions system, the district passed the proposal in early February.

Combined with Lowell's history of imbalanced admissions and the economic inequality in San Francisco, this is a step that should have been taken years ago. The lack of diversity creates a hostile environment for Black students. Many students have spoken about facing racism from their peers, including slurs and bullying.

On Jan. 21, students in an anti-racism class at Lowell were exposed to anti-Semitic and anti-Black hate speech. A class-wide presentation was interrupted by racist slander and porn. While the school attributes this instance to third-party hackers, many stu-

dents believe racist classmates were behind the posts.

Switching to the lottery admissions system would take strides in curbing racism at Lowell. That being said, whether the San Francisco lottery system effectively mitigates education inequality remains uncertain. Although the system does diversify the student body of public schools, it also indirectly results in higher attendance rates for private schools, only exacerbating the economic gaps in the school systems. Inequality thus becomes a problem not among public schools, but between private and public schools.

In fact, a whopping 33 percent of San Francisco students attend private schools. This is a direct result of the lottery system in place,

which simply means wealthy parents most often bypass public schools for private schools.

Along with this, many people of color and lower income students statistically do not benefit as much from lottery school systems, since they are often bused to schools miles away. According to JPAL, having to drive long distances in order to get to school can undermine academic success.

For these reasons, the only true solution to educational inequality would be to have good schools evenly dispersed among communities, regardless of housing prices and racial makeup. While this goal has many hurdles that could take many years to overcome, it should be the end goal for the educational equality movement. ♦

Lockdowns in the U.S. should be mandated

by Ethan Lin

When the pandemic struck, much of the world shut down. From small businesses to even public schools, much of public life came to a standstill. Although not everyone has faced the virus directly, COVID-19 has forced everyone to adapt to new safety measures.

With the number of coronavirus cases fluctuating every few months in the U.S., however, many have questioned the effectiveness of these lockdowns.

On paper, lockdowns seem to be the best way to prevent transmission of the virus. According to a study by a team of Austrian scientists, governments that implemented lockdowns have drastically reduced the number of infections — under the condition that the majority of people adhere to these containment conditions.

As long as 90 percent of the population follows lockdown guidelines, lockdowns can be very effective.

Therein lies the issue.

Americans generally have a strong sense of individuality and believe in their rights as citizens. As a result, many refuse to follow government regulations, rendering lockdown measures ineffective.

Although lockdowns have been proven to work in countries such as Taiwan, where people have seen a total of only 960 cases — 928 of which have recovered — the U.S. still struggles to lower its high infection rate.

To make lockdowns more effective, the federal government should first appeal to American patriotism, framing protecting public health as a service for the nation. Advertisements and PSAs, much like the ones seen on social media about new Congress propositions, can also help reiterate the importance of adhering to lockdown guidelines.

Given the current divided political climate; however, making all Americans adhere to these guidelines can be difficult, with Red states such as Texas, Mississippi, and Wyoming completely opening everything up, abandoning any mode of social distanc-

ing or mask-wearing, while Blue states continue to remain cautious because 60,000 to 70,000 people are still getting infected daily. Choosing to open everything up, like what the Texas governor did, is reckless and risks thousands of lives when the U.S. is at the cusp of beating the virus.

As of mid-March, roughly 10 percent of the public is vaccinated, but even with 3 million people vaccinated daily, issues regarding virus variants coming from Brazil are especially concerning, as the vaccines appear to be only somewhat effective against those strains.

The race between variants and vaccines can only be solved with social distancing and mask-wearing, so all Americans, no matter their political affiliation, must recognize the importance of following these guidelines to improve the health and safety of those around them.

Still, certain political figures, like the ex-president, blatantly disregard these measures and turned the issue into a political one. This is problematic as the government should recognize they are role models for the American people and must reorganize themselves if they want people to follow lockdown guidelines.

The government should also mitigate the huge economic costs that come with being in lockdown. Those who cannot work at home should either be under special guidelines that allow them to go out for work or receive some financial benefit that will help their situation.

Recently, Democrats in the House and Senate passed a \$1.9 trillion stimulus relief package to aid lower and middle-income Americans and extend unemployment insurance: a step in the right direction for providing help to those in need.

Some have pointed out that implementing mandatory rules like lockdowns only prompts people to go against these regulations, thus leading to more harm than good.

Although this may be true, according to Frontiers in Public Health, as long as 90 percent of the population follows lockdown guidelines, lockdowns can be very effective.

The government should consider changing the way they approach setting up and promoting lockdown guidelines. Until such measures are taken to reinforce these lockdown measures, Americans will continue to remain doubtful of lockdowns and the infection rates will continue to fluctuate. ♦



HARSHINI VELCHAMY

Lying for vaccinations diverts needed supplies

by AllenLuo

With California moving to allow vaccinations for all citizens by mid-April, the California Public Health Department has implemented an eligibility system due to a limited number of available vaccinations — but this system has proved prone to abuse.

Those who are classified as high risk for a COVID-19 infection, including healthcare workers, people over the age of 65 and people with medical conditions that put them at risk, are currently eligible to have their vaccinations under the guidelines.

Due to the unclear nature of the eligibility system, however, some have taken advantage of it and received early vaccinations by blatantly lying and stating that they are healthcare workers, caretakers or living with a high-risk patient.

For example, some lie about their status as an essential worker in order to bypass the system by borrowing IDs from friends.

This is clearly unethical and immoral, and strengthened security checks should be put into place to prevent it.

When someone who is normally ineligible for the vaccine lies and takes up a spot that would be filled by someone who actually needs it, it diverts time and resources away from those who are at high-risk.

Since the amount of vaccines is currently limited, each dose used on an ineligible patient results in more time a high-risk patient has to wait, putting them at more risk to contract the virus.

Currently, the lack of vaccination back-

ground checks is due to potential complications that come with requiring people to upload information to the internet. Because much of the high-risk population is older, and the majority are not very technologically savvy, many who are eligible for the vaccine may have issues or won't know how to upload papers or an ID.

However, there is an easy solution to this. Requiring ID and checking for eligibility when administering the vaccine, especially for those that are registered as a healthcare worker, would be a simple and effective way to guard against potentially ineligible patients.

No one should have problems with bringing an ID — a driver's license or passport would suffice for most, and for healthcare workers, carrying an ID should be standard.

If someone is caught being ineligible, harsher penalties, like a fine, should be enforced. Although discipline is important, if pharmacies or vaccine administering facilities find that someone is ineligible, they could be relegated to the end of the day in case there are leftover vaccines that would otherwise be thrown away.

For unused vaccines, specific time slots could be set up, even for those ineligible, on a first-come first-serve basis.

For the sake of an efficient normalization process, the eligibility system should be followed in order to maintain the smoothest possible transition without any more unnecessary deaths. Those who are lying about their eligibility are certainly not doing anyone any favors. ♦

togatalks

Do you think public schools should require vaccines for students?

"They should be mandatory so that students can safely participate in school activities without the risk."

sophomore Alexandria Pak



"I don't think it should be required because it might cause people to lie in order to get the vaccine."

junior Justin Hao



"Vaccines should be encouraged but not required as it might cause unnecessary backlash."

senior Isabelle Lee



College vloggers offer good alternative for in-person visits

by Neeti Badve

The traditional order of the college application process is to apply, hear results, visit and decide, yet for the second year in a row, seniors cannot take campus tours or even safely fly to the school they potentially commit to.

Colleges have adapted to this by offering virtual tours and admissions sessions, trying to replace that integral part of the decision process in any way they can. Unfortunately, these methods still don't give students that feeling they're supposed to have when they find the campus that is "the one."

It's hard to visualize the com-

munity, walks from dorms to dining halls and overall surroundings from virtual tours. That's why I have resorted to watching student YouTube vloggers.

Being able to watch "Day in a Life" videos or "Pros and Cons" assessments from college students really helps me get a sense of what my time at that college could be like.

I find myself trying to visualize myself in the same situations as them, on the same walks to lectures or going to the same gym, all of which would be part of my daily routine at that college.

Not only do these students take their viewers along to their classes or show them their home-

work routine, but they also end up showing areas beyond the campus, like what their favorite ice cream shop is or where the best grocery store is.

Beyond watching the students' everyday lives, I find it really beneficial to search for videos that provide further insight into what your regular experiences at that college would be like, be that watching a student sign up for classes or listening to them discuss the pros and cons of all the dorms and dining halls.

While websites like Niche and Reddit are great resources that do present student opinions, they are lacking that visual aspect. I also personally find it harder to find

negative reviews on Niche, and many ranked aspects seem biased toward the schools. It is also harder to compare colleges with the same Niche "grades" because it makes two completely different institutions seem much more equal than they actually are.

These websites are great for a general overview, but it's hard to truly understand a college based on one- or two-sentence comments.

While there is no real replacement for walking onto a campus and being able to tour it, picturing yourself living the lives of students already at the school is a great place to start seeing if it's the right fit for you. ♦



Graphic by TIFFANY WANG

The Saratoga Falcon

April 9, 2021

lifestyles II

Sunright Tea Studio: Costly but great boba



Reporters beam as they taste-test their boba drinks out in the sunshine.

by Apurva Chakravarthy & Anjali Nuggehalli

On one beautiful Wednesday afternoon, we decided to try the new boba place Sunright Tea Studio in Cupertino.

This chain already had many popular locations in California, so we took on the daunting assignment of testing whether the drinks met the high praise we heard.

The drive should have taken us around 15 minutes, but considering the fact that 1.) Apurva can't drive on the highway and 2.) Anjali can't navigate to save her life, we ended up arriving at the store 35 minutes later.

The ordering process was quick and efficient. After waiting in a short line, we were able to order by ourselves on a tablet with a full menu. While self-ordering was a unique experience, it was a lot more time-consuming than ver-

bally saying our order. Selecting just four drinks took around five minutes, but we still appreciated the COVID-safe system.

Before paying, we put in a phone number on a tablet so that they could text us when our drinks were ready. We then waited inside our car until the drinks were made, which took around five minutes.

The menu is impressively extensive, and there were lots of toppings and changes we could choose from, from red bean to fresh taro.

For non-dairy drinkers, do not fear! Every drink can be made with oat milk for 50 cents more. There are also 12 different toppings to choose from, but we decided to stick with boba and lychee jelly.

We ended up ordering three drinks: the Sunright boba milk tea with lychee jelly (\$4.65), the Panda milk tea with boba (\$4.65) and the Strawberry Matcha Latte with

boba (\$4.95).

Every drink came out perfectly with the right amount of sweetness and boba. Even at 100 percent sweetness, no drink was overwhelmingly sweet, and the boba was a perfect texture between soft and hard.

Although we were a little apprehensive about trying the Strawberry Matcha Latte, it ended up being our favorite drink. We recommend asking for light ice in your order to maintain the refreshing taste of the drink.

While the drinks were not cheap, Sunright Tea Studio offered good value for its combination of ambiance and quality.

In the end, we rated this experience a 5 out of 5 Falcons! If you are craving some refreshing boba,

make sure you actually know where you are going. Then head on over to Sunright Tea Studio for a refreshing splurge. ♦



Graphic by JOANN ZHANG

Chuckit! dog ball: the best indoor toy

by Shaan Sridhar

Dogs love chasing and playing with balls. I'm not quite sure why, but any type of ball fascinates them beyond belief.

Just look at my dog, Emmett. If you put a ball in front of his face, he'll forget about everything else going on around him.

Emmet is a sheepadoodle — half sheepdog and half poodle. He's 5 years old and loves to run around my yard, pounce on his toys and beg for food when he's not supposed to.

Emmet can't talk or express his feelings, but I truly believe the Chuckit! ball is one of his favorite toys ever.

If you ask my family, we would say he's the best dog in the world.

But like most dogs, he's not very smart. A prime example of this is the way he shoves his toy balls underneath our furniture, only to cry when he can't get it out.

As you might predict, it gets pretty frustrating to keep getting up from your seat to rescue your dog's toys.

So for Christmas, we decided to get him a new ball that made both him and my

family happy: the Chuckit! indoor ball.

At face value, it looks like just another dog toy. But this ball has so much more to offer.

At 4.7 inches in diameter, it's large enough to prevent itself from rolling under furniture while also small enough to play with inside the house.

It's softer and made with a yarn-type material, making it indoor-friendly and not posing a threat to your floors and furniture.

It's also compatible with other Chuckit! products like the indoor ball launcher.

Emmet can't talk or express his feelings, but I believe the Chuckit! ball is one of his favorite toys ever.

He grabs it in his mouth and trots around the house with it all the time. He throws and bounces it around with glee. He sometimes even puts it on his little bed and sleeps with it.

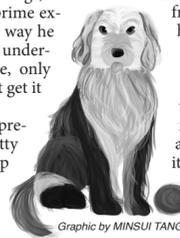
Of course, Emmett still tries to shove it under furniture.

Occasionally he's successful, but most of the time, he's spared from the despair of losing his toy, and I'm spared having to get up from a comfortable spot on the couch.

The Chuckit! ball has truly saved my family so many annoying situations, and at \$7.09 on Petco.com, it's a steal.

If you have a dog and don't already have this ball, you're missing out.

I highly recommend that all families who have medium-sized dogs get this dog ball — you won't regret it! ♦



Graphic by MINJUI TANG

Gluttonous duo ranks six kinds of Girl Scout cookies

by Andy Chen & Tiffany Wang

With the passing of Chinese New Year and some extra money on hand, we thought that it'd be a great idea to spend upwards of \$30 purchasing and rating every type of girl scout cookie we could get our hands on, because why not?

We started off strong with Tagalongs, Andy's favorite.

Consisting of a layer of peanut butter surrounded by a smooth coating of chocolate, this flavorful and crunchy cookie — which helps Girl Scouts with decision making, according to their official website — was an easy decision to make for our best-tasting cookie.

The only downside to Tagalongs is that each \$5 box only contains 15 cookies, so those looking for quantity over quality should turn to other cookies, like Do-si-dos, instead.

While Do-si-dos, like Tagalongs, are peanut butter flavored, they use oatmeal instead of rich chocolate as an exterior.

If you actually like oatmeal, Do-si-dos may be a better option because there are 20 relatively large-sized cookies in each box. But, because neither of us are particularly fond of oatmeal, we skipped over our box of Do-si-dos in favor of even more Tagalongs.

After (too) quickly devouring our supply of Tagalongs, we turned to Samoas to satisfy our still-empty stomachs.

More accurately, Tiffany turned to Samoas to satisfy her empty stomach, citing the cook-

ie's sweet caramel and coconut flavor combination and how "foods with holes always taste better."

Andy, on the other hand, wanted to spit out the singular Samoa he tried.

For Andy, the sweetness of the cookie was too much to handle; one may be fine, but any more is too many.

Trefoils earn a B-grade for basic, boring but buttery shortbread.

If you have a sweet tooth, Samoas are probably a perfect fit, but if you're more in the mood for something sour, try Lemonades instead.

Despite replacing Savannah Smiles, which Girl Scouts removed from circulation two years ago despite their alliterative S-tier status, Lemonades are still a solid choice.

Half shortbread and half lemony icing, these cookies pack a satisfying crunch and a tangy punch.

We approached the end of our taste test with Trefoils, which we gave a B-grade for basic, boring but buttery shortbread.

We came to the consensus that purchasing a whole box wasn't worth the \$5, but if someone were to offer us a

couple Trefoils, we'd be happy to snack on them.

Saving the best for last, we finally arrived at Thin Mints.

Not much needs to be said about these — with 32 cookies per box and the perfect mix of chocolate and mint flavoring, Thin Mints are undoubtedly the most bang-for-your-buck cookie on the market.

Whether eaten plain, with a side of milk or frozen over, Thin Mints are our crowned king of the cookies.

At the end of the day, taste is subjective, so feel free to purchase as many of whichever kind of Girl Scout cookies you enjoy — although we would highly recommend loading up on Thin Mints and Tagalongs rather than Trefoils.

Just make sure to exercise later. ♦



Graphic by JOANN ZHANG

Homemade picnic prevails

kitty
cat-vita

Kavita Sundaram



After seeing hundreds of aesthetic TikTok videos where people venture to the beach or any gorgeous destination with friends, consume bougie foods and drinks and jam to Harry Styles, I was enraged. Not by the Harry Styles, but by the way, they ate cake.

Eating cake with wine glasses. As a self-proclaimed food connoisseur, I must point out all the flaws in this trend. Overly large servings, cake crumbs all over the place, dirty glasses smeared with frosting and a misshapen cake left looking extremely unappealing. Cute in a video, but a guaranteed failure in reality.

I sought to try it out myself, just to prove how awful it was.

My plan was simple: I made a cute cake, as well as some more food, and planned a picnic with a friend.

The cake was

chocolaty, decadent and complete with decorations, frosting and all. It was the highlight of the show. But disaster struck before I could even get to the picnic.

Unbeknownst to me, my family decided to help themselves to my cake, taking not one slice, not two — but the entire cake. I was left empty-handed and unprepared.

In retrospect, this might have been a blessing in disguise — I was saved from having to eat cake with a wine glass.

With no trendy cake, I decided to make some more different trendy foods. I spent about an hour carefully assembling a charcuterie board (with homemade butter), only to realize I had to transport it and painstakingly took it apart once more.

After persevering these challenges, however, I reformed my board at the picnic. The end product was a beautiful board with assorted fruits, breads and nuts. Still, it tragically lacked the most essential aspect of a charcuterie board: cheese. I had unwittingly made an extra trip to the grocery store, only to forget to buy one of the most crucial ingredients.

I also brought along some iced coffee, homemade coffee granola and a bowl of yogurt. The collection made

for a vibrant spread on a picnic blanket. Very Pinterest-y — I know.

Overall, the experience was great. Although I had a few mishaps, the simplicity of eating food outdoors was an exquisite break from the mundanity of quarantine. And setting out with the intention of creating an anon-trend experience definitely made me feel way cooler than I actually am.

Making the food was fun, eating the food was even better and not having to eat cake with a wine glass might have been the best part.



Aesthetic picnic: not as easy as it looks

capr-
yea(p) sun

Stephanie Sun and Mina Yeap



Since quarantine started, many of us have been suffocated at home. Turning to TikTok, we found entertainment in trends such as whipped coffee and cloud bread which had taken over our "For You" pages. When the two of us saw the picnic trend, we had to try it.

Though preparing a meal for our four-person picnic looked easy, it was not. Our friends' love and hate for different foods led to many complications; for one, while our friend Tony Guo loves fruit, Martin Xu basically hates them. After a few days of deliberation, we ended up with a menu everyone could agree on: sushi, focaccia, chocolate-covered strawberries, pink lemonade, cake

and a charcuterie board, which seemed to be a staple in most TikTok clips.

At the grocery store, however, we changed the menu.

Originally, we planned on buying all our picnic dishes, but no one told us how costly it would end up being. The chocolate-covered strawberries and the charcuterie board were more than half our budget of \$60. Since we still needed to buy other foods, we turned to homemade chocolate-covered strawberries and our own version of a charcuterie board instead.

After getting to Azule Park, a place easily accessible to anyone living in or near Saratoga, we found a shady spot under a tree and started setting up. After setting our picnic blanket, a plastic tarp found at the last minute, we attempted to arrange the food in an appealing way.

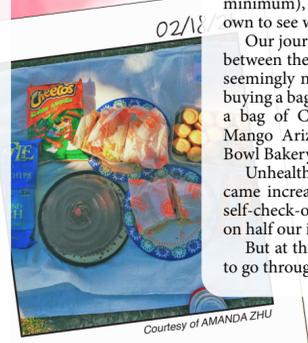
Of course, following the trend, we had to try splitting our cake with wine glasses. As simple as the idea seems, it made a huge mess. We wouldn't recommend it.

While the original point of the wine glasses was to make it easier to scoop out the cake, cutting through the layers was much more difficult than it looked. Scooping out cake spread frosting and crumbs everywhere, and the wine glasses ended up covered in frosting and were impossible to clean with the paper napkins we brought during the picnic.

It was also slightly frustrating to eat the cake out of the glasses since the layers were mushed together and it looked pretty unappetizing.

Despite the disappointing result, the cake and the rest of the food still tasted great, and we really enjoyed talking and playing a few rounds of makeshift badminton on the grass. We recommend bringing a board game or some badminton rackets so you can still stay socially distant while spending time with friends.

As much work as the whole process was, we recommend giving it a try, although maybe without the wine glasses.



The perfect picnicking weather

a-mah-
zing

Audrey Mah



I glanced out the window and groaned. The sky had clouded over, and I watched as tiny sprinkles of rain dotted the back patio just 20 minutes before I was to meet up with some friends for the first time in months for a picnic. Our meticulous planning, as it seemed, had been in vain.

But lo and behold, the gray skies brightened, and the thrumming of raindrops against the kitchen skylight faded.

I quickly texted my friends to bring an umbrella and packed an old, disintegrating-as-we-speak tarp that my dad found in the garage to lay beneath our picnic blankets before heading over to Wilson Park in Cupertino to meet my friends.

We had agreed in advance to bring only the essentials: picnic blankets, a few snacks, a few craft supplies and a full-sized chocolate cake from Trader Joe's.

Somehow, "the essentials" had added up; I tee-

tered across the park lawn, lugging three large tote bags.

After at least 15 minutes of struggling to unfold the tarp, lay blankets on top and set up the food, we plopped down at the center and admired our work.

The grass was still damp and scattered with charming white daisies. The overcast afternoon had brightened, and the brisk morning air brought an energy and liveliness to the picturesque scene. Fortunately, we all dressed very warmly, and our many layers of clothing protected us from the chill.

True to the TikTok picnic formula that we drew inspiration from, we had packed an attractive spread: a charcuterie board complete with cheese, nuts, grapes and cured meats; a platter of heart-shaped macarons and pink glazed doughnuts; an irresponsibly-sized chocolate cake and a set of wine glasses.

Recently, a trend of using wine glasses to cut and serve cake has grown extremely popular among picnickers on TikTok. This seemingly easy method eliminates the need for bringing plates and cake servers, and the prospect of sticking a wine glass straight through a cake was thrilling in its rebellious simplicity.

But after the reckless-seeming excitement of plunging the wine glass into the cake, we were faced with an immediate di-

lemma: What next?

How on earth are you supposed to flip the glass right side up again?

I held my breath and, with a quick twist, lifted the glass — and, miraculously, the cake. Success! I let out a delighted cheer.

The edge of the wine glass scooped up the cake easily, and the semi-circle of cake fell neatly into the bottom of the glass.

Eating from the cup proved only slightly more difficult than eating from a plate because of the inward curve of the wine glass, but the novelty of eating cake with plastic forks from a fancy glass made the experience all the more enjoyable — think eating ice cream for breakfast or pancakes for dinner. The only negative aspect was that the wine glass method left a thick, messy coat of frosting and cake crumbs along one side of the glass.

Even with the few complications we faced, it was a truly lovely afternoon spent in the park with people I love.

But when we got up to pack and leave, we found that our butts were all wet; the ancient tarp that I brought hadn't been waterproof!



TikTok-themed picnics are overrated

zhu should guo
on a picnic

Justin Guo and Amanda Zhu



After seeing viral TikToks of people going on aesthetic picnics (which, as far as we could tell, usually consisted of cake, chips, sodas and pastries as a bare minimum), we decided to arrange a picnic of our own to see why the trend was so popular.

Our journey began with us pacing back and forth between the aisles at Safeway, where after an hour of seemingly never-ending deliberation, we wound up buying a bag of Kettle Brand Farmstand Ranch chips, a bag of Cheddar Jalapeno Cheetos, two Mucho Mango Arizona teas, a chocolate cake and Sugar Bowl Bakery Duet Bites.

Unhealthy? Yes. Disgusting? Absolutely. That became increasingly clear the longer we stood at the self-check-out aisle, struggling to find the barcodes on half our items.

But at this point, we were in so deep that we had to go through with it for the sake of the story.

Fortunately, all the TikTok videos we saw did seem to have, you know, some form of actual food present — such as sushi or sandwiches.

As such, we settled on sandwiches from a nearby Togo's before making our way to the fields of Argonaut Elementary School.

But before eating, of course, we had to first take an aesthetic picture of our picnic setup.

This seemingly simple task actually ended up being one of the hardest parts of this entire adventure. The wind kept blowing away our picnic tarp, so while one of us was holding down the edges of the sheet, the other was frantically scrambling to take a semi-decent photo.

Once that was done, we unwrapped our food and started eating. Unfortunately, though, as both of us could have predicted, the actual meal was awful.

Individually, each of the foods we bought would have been great, because they each have their own distinct taste and flavor. However, it turns out that eating salty chips in between bites of dry sourdough bread while trying to wash it all down with a swig of obnoxiously tangy Arizona tea doesn't make for a great eating experience.

And because all the food was processed, we were feeling icky and heavy, and ready to call it quits not even halfway through our sandwiches.

Before we could do that, however, there was one last thing we had to do.

For context, a big part of the TikTok trend involves people eating cake with wine glasses. They turn the glasses upside down to scoop out their piece of cake to apparently increase the aesthetic factor — which really doesn't make much sense, considering that they just end up slaughtering both the cake and the wine glass.

The two of us deliberated on whether we should follow the trend — truly, we did — but ultimately could not bring ourselves to commit such a heinous act. It just felt wrong, on principle.

At the end of the picnic, we agreed that we would never take part in an activity like this again.

While it was a good bonding experience and gave us a chance to catch up with each other, the cost it had on our physical well-being was too high to justify repeating.

If there was any big takeaway that the two of us learned from the experience, it's that we should be extremely worried about the next generation of teenagers if they are actively choosing to have picnics like this (especially if they eat cake with wine glasses).

Maybe it's just us, but we would much rather prefer having a typical balanced meal with rice and vegetables.

Entertaining 63rd Grammys still snubs artists

BY Apurva **Chakravarthy**

On March 14, celebrities and the public alike watched the 63rd Grammys from home, breaking from the usual grandiose affair. According to the Hollywood Reporter, the Staples Center, which normally serves as the venue for the annual awards show, was instead used as a backdrop for an open-air tent that had an outdoor stage, socially distanced tables and masked guests.

Many people applauded the Recording Academy, the organization that hosts the Grammys, for managing to host an in-person event while following CDC and state COVID-19 guidelines.

The event also saw many historic wins. After winning her 28th Grammy for her R&B performance of “Black Parade,” Beyoncé is now the female artist to hold the most Grammys. Her other awards for the night included Best Rap Performance and Best Rap Song for “Savage.”

Taylor Swift took home the biggest award of the night, Album of the Year, for “Folklore.” Previously, she had won for “Fearless” and “1989.” She is the only woman ever to win this Grammy three times, and this award has put her on a level with greats like Frank Sinatra, Stevie Wonder and Paul Simon.

Other notable moments included Billie Eilish getting Record of the Year for the second year straight with “everything i wanted” and Harry Styles getting his first Grammy

for Best Solo Pop Performance for “Watermelon Sugar.”

But like most other award shows, the 63rd Grammys endured criticism before and after the event.

Immediately after nominations were announced, the Weeknd, who released his chart-topping album “After Hours” in March 2020, tweeted his distaste at the fact his album received no nominations despite its popularity.

“The Grammys remain corrupt,” he said. “You owe me, my fans and the industry transparency.”

According to Cosmopolitan, the Weeknd’s single “Blinding Lights” made history as the first song ever to be on the Billboard’s top 10 list for a year. “Blinding Lights” was also his closing song when he performed the Halftime Show for this year’s Super Bowl.

Given how well liked his album was, it is understandable the Weeknd would be upset his album received zero nominations. In a statement to The New York Times, The Weeknd said he would stop submitting music for Grammy nominations due to his experiences this award cycle.

While the Weeknd’s situation is unfortunate, his predicament is not unique. Artists of color, most notably Drake, Kanye West and Frank Ocean, have long criticized the Recording Academy for not giving them the credit they deserve on their work.

Other famous artists took to Twitter to voice their frustrations at the Gram-



Courtesy of TRIBUNE MEDIA

Taylor Swift receives the Album of the Year award for her album “Folklore,” making her the first woman ever to receive three awards in this prestigious category.

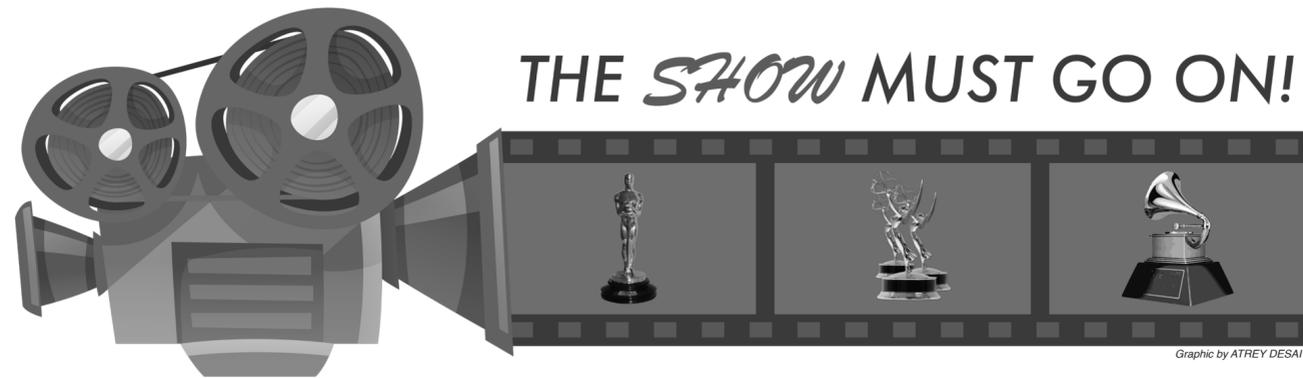
mys. Singer Zayn Malik insinuated that the Grammys would only award and nominate singers who vocally supported and helped the Recording Academy. Rapper Nicki Minaj also recounted how in 2012, a white male band, Bon Iver, received the Best New Artist award despite her incredible success and fame that year.

These situations and many more show how the Grammys, like many other award shows in America, does not adequately recognize people of color for their accomplish-

ments despite calls for change from people.

While the Recording Academy did a great job organizing a pandemic-safe show, and it was enjoyable to watch so many heartfelt acceptance speeches, the Academy snubbing these deserving artists put a damper on the whole event.

In the next few years, the Grammys will have to fundamentally change its outlook on music and nominations processes if it truly wants to be a diverse and representative awards show. ♦



Graphic by ATREY DESAI

Disappointing film nominations show increased need for diversity

BY Vinay **Gollamudi**
& Hannah **Lee**

The Television Academy and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences claimed in an interview with CNN that they would make an effort to be more inclusive and “bolster diversity” with their nominations in their awards ceremonies. But seeing the lineup of this year’s nominees, it seems like the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) still has a long way to go to keep their promise.

Two of the most anticipated film award shows this year, the Golden Globes and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards, revealed the disappointing lack of racial and gender diversity in Hollywood that remains a seemingly perennial problem, even after calls to increase diversity increased. Neither show broke records in BIPOC or gender representation.

Still, at the SAG Awards, viewers witnessed a more inclusive lineup compared with other film awards in terms of recognizing BIPOC actors. Variety Magazine said 28 percent of the 2021 SAG Awards nominees are BIPOC whereas only 18.6 percent of Golden Globes nominees are BIPOC.

While the little yet welcome improvement is good news for Hollywood, the number of male nominees at the SAG Awards overwhelmingly shadowed the number of actresses. According to Goldderby Magazine, out of the 48 actors recognized across the five nominated casts, only 10 were women.

Out of the 48 actors recognized across the five nominated casts, only 10 were women.

As for the Golden Globes, the overall inclusivity for BIPOC performers hasn’t been on a consistent incline. In the past 20 years minority actors won awards include 2005, 2007, 2010, 2012 and 2017.

Viewers were especially disappointed when they saw the HFPA failed to nominate any highly anticipated BIPOC-led films, such as Spike Lee’s “Da 5 Bloods,” in the drama, musical and comedy categories. Even Sia’s “Music,” which received intense backlash for its inappropriate casting and offensive stereotypes of neurodivergent

people, was nominated twice.

“It almost feels like we shouldn’t even be expecting anything else from the Hollywood industry anymore,” sophomore Emily Lu said. “It’s just constantly disappointing when films don’t take up the opportunity to recognize nor have a diverse lineup when it’s something that would obviously receive praise.”

Although nominations for the Golden Globes film category were disappointing this year, three female directors — two of whom are women of color — did receive nominations: Regina King for her film “One Night in Miami,” Emerald Fennell for “Promising Young Woman” and Chloe Zhao for “Nomadland.”

This marks the first time a woman has been nominated for best director at the Golden Globes since 2014 and the first time more than one woman has been nominated for this category in one year.

Zhao is also the first Asian American woman to be nominated in the category, while King is the second Black woman to be nominated after Ava DuVernay for “Selma” in 2014.

While this marks a new record in Golden Globes history and



Courtesy of SUNDANCE INSTITUTE

Featuring “The Walking Dead” star Steven Yeun, “Minari” falls in controversy at the Golden Globes for not being nominated as an American film.

should be celebrated, it shouldn’t be the standard. Three nominations is still underwhelming, and many advocate that the public should continue to encourage more nominations and exposure for BIPOC and women in the film industry. “As a teenage girl myself, it’s nice to finally see some strong female leads in Hollywood these days,” Lu said. “But it’s disappointing to see them go underappreciated and not given the recognition they deserve from such renown film award shows.”

Leslie Odom Jr. from “One Night in Miami” and Daniel Kaluuya from “Judas and the Black Messiah” were the only BIPOC representatives. In an interview with Variety Magazine, ♦

Odom Jr. and Kaluuya expressed their increasing disappointment in the lack of a consistent incline in ethnic diversity. “We’ve grown accustomed to a high bar of excellence from Regina King, but it’s strange because she is decades into her career, but it feels as if she’s just getting started,” Odom Jr. said. While the SAG awards, Golden Globes and other award shows still have a long way to go to being fully inclusive, it’s still good to see some acknowledgement rather than none at all. All of the problems regarding diversity in the film industry will take time to fix, so viewers should continue pressing the organizations to widen their too often narrow blinders. ♦

Catan: a perfectly fun and witty board game to play with family and friends

BY Andy **Chen**

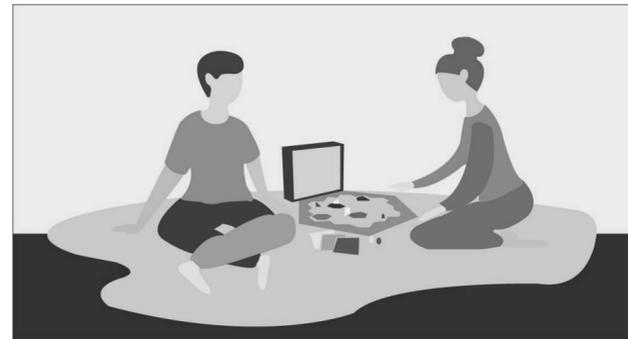
Regardless of how much work an individual family member may have, every family has one activity they’ll make time for. As I grew up, playing board games — especially the Settlers of Catan — took center stage every Friday night in the Chen household, no matter how busy we were.

My oldest sister, Yining, introduced me and my other sister, Megan, to Catan when I was in second grade. Since Yining is 12 years older than I am and 10 years older than Megan, board games were a parent-approved way for everyone in the family to have fun playing with one another, despite differences in age.

When Yining went to college, she took the weekly board game nights with her, and I realized how much playing Catan with our family meant to me. Megan and I grew to treasure holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving when Yining came home for a few weeks and we played Catan almost every night; even now, the tradition of Christmas-night-Catan lives on in our household.

To me, Catan’s a great game to play in any setting: Not only is it easy for beginners to pick up, but it also offers incredible depth for more dedicated players.

In Catan, players must build roads and settlements next to resource tiles, with each tile producing one of five resources whenever its respective dice is rolled. Resources can be used to build more settlements, as long as they’re connected by roads; upgrade existing settlements into cities to gain more resources; and purchase



development cards with special effects. To win, a player must reach 10 victory points, with each settlement counting as one point and each city counting as two points.

Catan mixes the exhilarating nature of Monopoly’s random chance with a significant level of skill expression; every action has a tradeoff, as players must decide which subgoals they want to prioritize. Players may also trade resources with an internal bank as well as with other players. Trading with others allows for various levels of bluffing and strategizing. Players must decide whether achieving a goal is worth allowing another player to potentially achieve their goals.

These minor subtleties make every game unique, especially since the board’s 19 tiles can be placed in any combination. Combined with the skill and luck involved

in a game, Catan serves as a great game to play in any setting, regardless of how laid-back or competitive the players are.

In my family, Yining and I are generally hypercompetitive and play to win, whereas Megan plays more so to have chaotic fun — for example, she’ll often purchase sub-optimal cards that attack other players just to throw a wrench in things. Since she prefers hindering others rather than moving herself closer to victory, she naturally wins the least percentage of games, but she has the most fun.

Even now, we continue to play online, despite Megan going to college in New York amid a global pandemic.

Regardless of whether the game is played competitively or for fun, with or without expansions, Catan is always an adventure. ♦

My mom’s childhood books uncover a new world

BY Neeti **Badve**

After my elementary school-aged mind had exhausted the “Harry Potter,” “The Maze Runner” and “The Hunger Games” series, my mom decided to take matters into her own hands and introduce me to what she called “the real literature” of her childhood.

This meant British books written in the 1930s and 1940s, like “The Famous Five” and “The Secret Seven,” both written by Enid Blyton, and “Nancy Drew,” written by many authors under the singular name of Carolyn Keene. All of these were children’s adventure novels whose inclusion of detectives added to their allure, which I rediscovered in quarantine.

When I first sat down to read these books, I didn’t know what to think. These books were set in the real world, not a dystopian fantasy land, and I missed that aspect. I missed being transported to another universe because until then, I thought that’s what books were supposed to do — take you out of the real world.

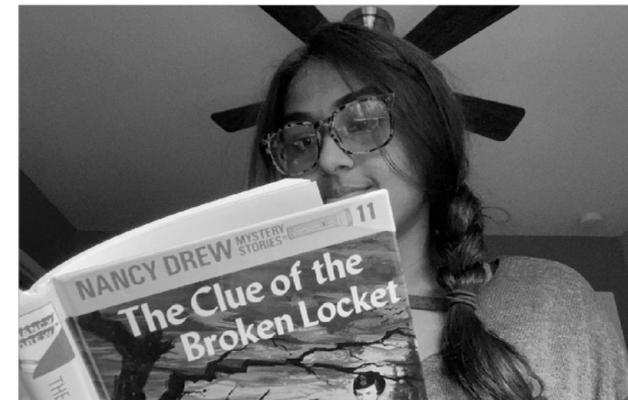
But as I kept reading, I was surprised by the hidden layers that could be uncovered in the real world. I started looking for distinct objects, like pretty pins or obscure charms, in my daily life, telling myself they poten-



tially were the key to solving a great mystery.

Both “The Famous Five” and “The Secret Seven” series have similar plotlines, though the characters themselves are completely unrelated.

“The Secret Seven” stories take place during the school time, as the characters try to solve mysteries during day school. Their Secret Seven Society includes the leader, Peter;



FALCON // NEETI BADVE

his sister Janet; Jack, Peter’s best friend and fellow schoolmates Pam, Barbara, Colin and George. The society is very organized, and all the children are clever, always looking for clues around their school.

“The Famous Five” stories take place during the children’s school holidays, after they have returned home from their respective boarding schools.

The Five comprises of siblings Julian, Dick and Anne, their cousin Georgina, who prefers to be called George, and Timmy, George’s faithful dog.

Julian is the oldest and most mature, while Dick is mischievous yet dependable. Being the youngest of the group, Anne is the most frightened, but Georgina’s feistiness balances her out.

My personal favorite is “Five Go to Smuggler’s Top,” where the children are forced to stay with an estranged uncle after a tree falls on their house, but the relative is kidnapped.

The house they stay at has secret underground passageways and hidden tunnels, where they find clues as to where he could be, and I always imagined myself navigating the maze of tunnels by myself.

The “Nancy Drew” series follows young female detective Nancy Drew as she en-

counters puzzles and mysteries in her daily life. Many times she is accompanied by her family members or best friends Ned, Bess and George.

The mysteries are more bizarre than any Blyton series, with hieroglyphs, ghosts, seances, amulets, notes with clues and more.

Out of the three series, my favorite by far was “Nancy Drew.” It meant a lot to me to have an intelligent, resourceful and independent female main character, and I wanted to analyze the world just like her.

Although I did enjoy “The Secret Seven,” I appreciated “The Famous Five” more. The five detectives in the series were much more developed and had more progression in the novels.

The best part about all of these books is that they can still be enjoyed at any age. They are timeless classics. It didn’t matter if I was reading them 70 years after they were first written because they focused more on human nature rather than the culture of the time period.

So if you’re hoping to gain a new perspective of the world without the facade of magic and dystopia, you should definitely give these books a try; after all, the world is full of mystery. ♦

‘Born a Crime’: Trevor Noah’s fun memoir is an emotional rollercoaster

BY Avani **Kongetira**

When I picked up Trevor Noah’s “Born a Crime,” I planned on simply skimming through a couple of chapters and going to bed. But after I began to read, there was no stopping me. It was only in the early morning that I finally extracted myself from Noah’s memories, having turned the last page.

Noah’s hilarious yet inspiring autobiography transported me to his childhood in South Africa during the end of apartheid. He reflects on his adolescent self using astounding wit, despite the countless struggles he faced.

The title alludes to the apartheid law that forbids sexual relations between Europeans and non-Europeans. Due to his illegal parentage — his Black mother and white father — Noah was quite literally “born a crime.”

Whether it’s getting thrown out of a moving car or burning a cursed turd, Noah brings his sense of humor to everything he shares, making his memoir one of the most enjoyable ones I’ve read.

Growing up during the collapse of apartheid meant that danger was always around the corner. The Zulu and Xhosa, the two dominant ethnic groups in South Africa, clashed constantly in violent and bloody disputes.

When Noah, his Xhosa mother and his baby brother hitched a ride with an aggressive Zulu man, they soon realized their lives were in serious jeopardy. Trapped in a moving vehicle with two sleeping children, his mother’s only option was to jump. They narrowly escaped, but with their lives.

Noah’s mother, Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah, is truly fascinating. Her bold, stubborn personality is what makes her so endearing.

Noah also writes about his struggle to fit in as a mixed-race child. During and after apartheid, people were divided into groups based on their race. He was first exposed to the reality of segregation in grade school, where “groups moved in color patterns.”

Though he chose to associate with his Black classmates most of the time, his skin color influenced the way he was treated, even when it came to his own family. While his grandmother had no problems disciplining his fully Black cousins, she never laid a hand on Noah because, in her mind, he was white.

He was too Black to associate with other mixed students and too poor to hang out with the white kids.

Still, he found a way around being the outsider by opening up and floating from group to group. This method saved him from being an outcast, but he still felt alone.

Noah makes his traumatic experiences candid and comedic while maintaining the gravity of each situation. It’s heartening to know that a man who has endured so much can still look at the world through a positive lens.

“Born a Crime” published in 2016, is not the kind of book one can simply forget about. The stories of growing up amidst poverty and violence cannot be forgotten. But most of all, the book embodies the idea that life can change for the better, even for a boy whose very existence was a crime. ♦

Second-semester seniors explore new hobbies

By KaashaMinocha

The summer after her freshman year, when senior Karen Lei saw her friend skateboarding, she longed to try the activity herself. But with going to school every day, she never found the time — until recently.

When the college application season ended, Lei finally began skateboarding. She started in the first week of January, getting comfortable riding downhill.

Since then, with the help of YouTube videos, she has started to learn several tricks, like the Ollie, where the rider and board leap into the air without the use of the rider's hands.

Lei enjoys practicing on a blacktop or somewhere without many cracks in the ground, so she often goes to Foothill Elementary to practice. Even so, learning tricks has been a task of its own.

"Learning several tricks has taught me that you need repetition, repetition and then some falling," Lei said. "It definitely takes time and a lot of patience. For some tricks, it might take a couple of months. For others, it may even take years."

Aside from teaching her to be patient and persistent, skateboarding has provided Lei with a welcome outlet for her stress.

"I'm someone who likes to stay active, and exercising is how I like to de-stress and escape from academics," Lei said. "Skateboarding is definitely a good way to get outside and get some fresh air and physical activity instead of sitting at my desk all day."

When she loses her second-semester senior status, Lei hopes to skateboard on her college's campus.

Senior Irika Katiyar, on the other hand, has picked up a less physically demanding activity: knitting. She started her knitting journey during winter break, after finding



Courtesy of KAREN LEI

Senior Karen Lei takes in the scenery as she rides her skateboard around her neighborhood.

inspiration from her grandmother.

Katiyar taught herself how to knit by watching YouTube videos. So far, she has made several mini bags and a big tote bag, and she hopes to crochet a blanket soon.

"Knitting has allowed me to not dwell too much on what I'm missing in senior year," Katiyar said. "It is calming and forces me to stop working and just relax."

While Lei and Katiyar have developed new hobbies, senior Francesca Fernandes has been working on intertwining two of her favorite hobbies. On top of learning how

to play piano and sing at the same time, she has been working on her songwriting. After finishing college applications, Fernandes thought of how she would lose her current accompaniment when she sings in college.

With the extra time of second-semester senior year, Fernandes's piano teacher has been teaching her to play piano and sing together.

Fernandes has been focusing on technical singing expertise such as correct breath support and enunciating consonants. She tries to practice every day, working on clas-

sical pieces such as "Think of Me" from The Phantom of the Opera and "The Man I Love" by composer George Gershwin. She said if she can master these pieces, pop music will be easier.

Fernandes said singing and playing piano serves as a stress outlet. She enjoys the independence from doing both activities because she doesn't have to rely on anyone else when she performs.

"Knitting has allowed me to not dwell too much on what I'm missing in senior year. It is calming and forces me to stop working and just relax."

SENIOR Irika Katiyar

Fernandes has also picked up songwriting again, which she started in eighth grade but set aside because of the demands of high school. She now composes pop-inspired pieces.

"I enjoy the freedom I get by writing my own songs because when singing someone else's song, I can't just get rid of certain parts [that I don't like or are difficult]," Fernandes said.

In college, Fernandes hopes to make an EP — a smaller, more informal version of an album — for her own songs.

"I've learned that I should never inhibit myself from anything because I never thought I would be able to control my singing so meticulously and play complicated piano pieces at the same time, but now I can," Fernandes said. ♦

Students and staff adjust to increased use of cellphones

By EstherLuan & AnoukYeh

Junior Bella Lin stared blankly at her computer screen as her teacher continued to lecture. Despite paying attention for the last hour and a half, Lin still didn't understand the concept her teacher was explaining in class. Confused, Lin pulled out her phone and texted a classmate through Facebook Messenger, receiving an in-depth reply in minutes.

This means of fast in-class communication with other students is one of the benefits that Lin points out in regards to having cell phones readily accessible during online classes.

During the past semester of virtual school, both teachers and students have noticed a dramatic increase in student phone usage during class.

Some students have managed to curtail the temptation of in-class phone use, while others have used it to their advantage.

One clue, said junior Rashmi Edamula, is that she can often "see people in class looking downwards at something, most likely their phones."

In response, many teachers have implemented methods to prevent phone use in class. For instance, math teacher PJ Yim can usually tell if a student isn't paying attention through their body language and facial expressions.

Junior Ashley Ko, who is in Yim's sixth-period Calculus AB class, said that Yim will usually check in or call on specific students if he catches them randomly smiling in class.

Yim's line of reasoning, she said, is that if people are concentrating on math, they shouldn't be smiling.

"Sometimes, [when he catches people talking], Mr. Yim stares at his monitor and pauses for a while and then goes back to lecturing," Ko said.

Most of the time, however, Ko said that Yim will use other tactics to incentivize students into paying attention — such as making jokes.

"I think it's interesting how instead of passive aggressively calling people out [for being on their phones], he makes a targeted joke in a way that makes students want to pay attention and not be the joke," Ko said.

However, other teachers have responded differently. English teacher Erick Rector said that, although he knows that students are using their phones in class, he hasn't tried to stop it because he trusts them to make the correct decisions for themselves.

"I can definitely tell when a student is on their phone be-

cause of their head position or if they haven't been contributing a lot," he said.

Rector said that, while he doesn't have any explicit policies, he does try to call on students when they're not paying attention to "round their attention" back to the Zoom classroom.

"Overall, I think there should be a sense of trust between students and teachers, so I just try my best to keep my class engaging," Rector said.

Similarly, while Biology teacher Cheryl Lenz has noticed instances of students using cell phones or viewing other tabs during class, she has not implemented countermeasures because she believes that it is each student's responsibility to manage their own distractions.

"I don't believe there is a solution to this issue [on a teacher's part]," Lenz said. "Students will distract themselves inside or outside of school. Some do not have the ability to maintain focus, especially online."

Edamula agrees that it shouldn't be a teacher's responsibility to dictate phone usage.

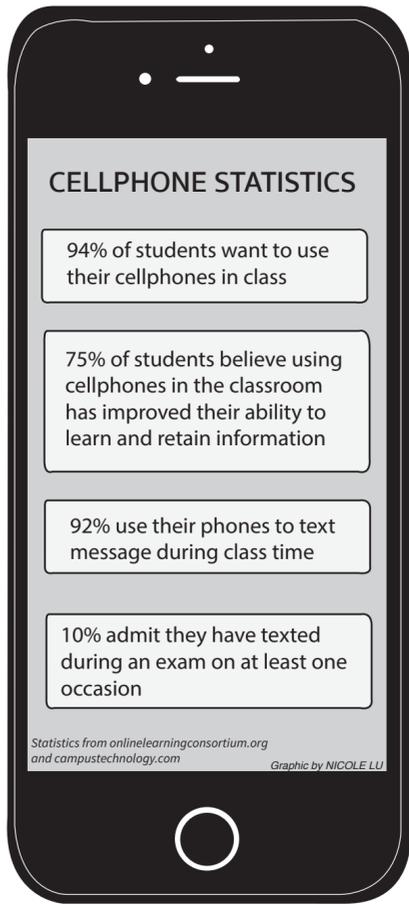
"I don't believe there is a solution to this issue [on a teacher's part]. Students will distract themselves inside or outside of school. Some do not have the ability to maintain focus, especially online."

TEACHER Cheryl Lenz

While Edamula sees the benefit of having access to a cellphone while in class, she said that it is "definitely harder" to pay attention, especially when her phone is right next to her and ringing with notifications.

Both Edamula and Lin said that they believe the majority of their on-the-phone peers are not playing games or watching videos, but, rather, texting other classmates to "make up for the lack of interaction in virtual classrooms," Lin said.

"I actually don't think having phones readily accessible in class has affected class in a dramatic way," Lin said. "It probably helps us more than it hurts us in many situations." ♦



Students and teachers reflect on year in quarantine

By HowardShu

Freshman Simarya Ahuja:
Q: How have your classes changed since the start of the shutdown last March?

A: Most of my teachers utilize breakout rooms almost every time we meet, which makes me feel less like I'm aimlessly staring at a screen all day. However, some of my teachers rarely use breakout rooms, so I feel like I've had less of a connection with my peers in those classes.

Not having as much social interaction has definitely made me feel less motivated to pay attention in class because online school is boring without sharing laughs with my classmates whenever our teachers say something funny or whenever some students bring their on-point comedy and positive vibes to every class.

Q: How have your attitudes and work ethic shifted since the start of the shutdown?

A: My attitude and mindset have definitely taken a negative turn since the pandemic hit in the sense that I feel more tired during online classes as compared to in-person learning, which has led me to feel less motivated to pay attention and more tempted to listen to music or text my friends.

However, as the new school year started, I found myself wanting to pay attention more because I kept telling myself that schoolwork and grades matter more in high school than they did when I was at Redwood. It took a lot of willpower at first to not multitask, but slowly I was able to pay more attention in class.

Freshman Ryan Lin:

Q: How have your classes changed since the start of the shutdown last March?

A: I think that even though we're doing online learning, I am still learning a lot. My overall experience of being in class has changed because during in-person learning, when we do group work, people actually talk. During online learning, when we go to breakout rooms for our group work, nobody really talks. We just do the work in silence.

Q: What have the positive and negative aspects of the shutdown been? What do you miss about being in-person?

A: I have more time with family and more time to do things. I play golf, which is still open, so I can still meet people and talk to them, and I don't really feel isolated. I miss traveling though. I used to travel a lot, but now I can't really go anywhere without having to quarantine. I visit my grandparents in Taiwan every year, but now I can't go see them.

It's also hard to connect with teachers because you have to email them, and you can't just walk up to them and ask them your questions.

I've heard about interesting things like clubs in high school, but I can't really experience them.

Sophomore Caden Lee:

Q: What have the positive and negative aspects of the shutdown been? What do you miss about being in-person?

A: I think that at first it was kind of hard to do stuff on my own all the time and not see people in person, but now that I look back, I feel like I learned a lot about myself and how to work like to not get tired out and give breaks to myself.

Q: How have your attitudes and work ethic shifted since the start of the shutdown?

A: I'm definitely working more

dent while working. My level of understanding started out pretty bad, but I got used to online lectures.

Chemistry teacher Kathryn Nakamatsu:

Q: How have your classes changed since the start of the shutdown last March?

A: The content hasn't changed too much. With each chapter, Ms. Lenz and I may have removed one or two things that we thought were not as important for [students] to know... In terms of structure, I would normally lecture in class more.

This year, students are listening to recorded lectures before class, and then I use guided practice and/or warmups to see how well they understood the lecture. That's different and something that I will probably continue to do post-pandemic.

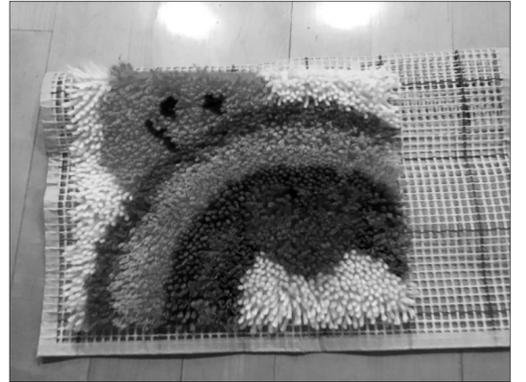
The experience is completely different. I miss seeing groups working collaboratively on labs and problem sets in class. While students are doing that in their breakout rooms, I don't get to watch it unless I pop into their breakout room.

Q: What have the positive and negative aspects of the shutdown been? What do you miss about being in-person?

A: I am unusual in that I am pretty comfortable with shutdown and kind of a homebody. I don't mind being at home. In normal years, I usually travel all summer because my husband performs at festivals. Last summer was my first summer at home for 13 years, and it was a little sad.

Q: How have your attitudes and work ethic shifted since the start of the shutdown?

A: I'm definitely working more



Courtesy of KATHRYN NAKAMATSU

Chemistry teacher Kathryn Nakamatsu's ongoing projects and hobbies during quarantine include knitting and assembling puzzles.

this year. With everything online, it's hard to escape work. Doing a lot of new labs meant more work and having to put a lot of my stuff online; I'm a paper-and-pencil kind of teacher.

When we shut down in March, I was working from home and could easily work 12 hour days. I had to put a stop to that. That's one of the reasons I teach from my classroom. It helps to physically shut the door and leave work at work. ♦

'Gatsby' challenges juniors to examine society's excesses

By AnjaliNugehalli

As junior Vignav Ramesh listened to his classmates' lively debate, he contemplated the prompt, "Is Gatsby really great?" during a Socratic seminar on "The Great Gatsby" in mid-February.

The seven English 11 Honors classes kicked off the spring semester by studying "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, a classic with social commentary on the American Dream. The novel revolves around businessman Nick Carraway, who moves to the extravagant "Eggs" of Long Island where he observes the superficial and morally questionable nature of 1920s aristocracy.

"The plot was intriguing, but what I enjoyed the most about the Great Gatsby was the depth of character development," Ramesh said. "Seeing American society in the 1920s through Nick Carraway's constant analysis of Gatsby's actions was very entertaining."

The Gatsby curriculum focused on studying the interactions between various characters to draw conclusions on America's rigid social stratification and the disillusionment surrounding the American Dream. The three English 11 Honors teachers — Marcos Cortez, Amy Keys and Natasha Ritchie — also had students track various motifs such as clothing, money and references to light and color.

Cortez said the novel offers students valuable lessons.

"Through studying 'Gatsby,' I hope that students grew to understand that divisions within a society are based upon more than socioeconomic," Cortez said. "The entire

idea behind the American Dream — that you'll make it if you work hard enough — isn't true. The game is rigged."

Along with in-class discussions and small-group activities regarding specific chapters and themes, the 'Gatsby' unit concluded with a final Socratic seminar in which students shared their perspectives on topics that went beyond the novel.

Compared with previous Socratic seminars from the first semester, Cortez saw a dramatic increase in the amount of preparedness and insight among his students.

"Doing a Socratic seminar on Zoom is definitely a challenge, but I think the benefits outweigh the difficulties as students get closer to the depth of analysis that I expect," Cortez said. "It brings ideas out into the world and demands that students are able to articulate their critical thinking."

To conclude the unit, students responded to a prompt pertaining to American identity and the American Dream in a timed in-class essay. The students were not given the prompts beforehand and had to outline ideas and select text citations quickly.

Cortez saw a dramatic increase in the amount of preparedness and insight among his students.

Cortez said there are significant benefits to the in-class essay, namely that the time crunch of these assessments helps prevent academic dishonesty.



Graphic by SHAAN SRIDHAR

"The skill of meeting a tight deadline goes further than this class and is going to be largely relevant in students' college and career search," Cortez said. "I think learning to manage stress in order to be able to think individually and adjust to various circumstances is a lifelong skill."

Many students valued the "Gatsby" unit because it ventured beyond traditional questions regarding the American Dream and focused on issues such as modern-day class antagonism.

Through a range of outside material such as "America's 'We' Problem" by Robert Reich, which illustrated the danger of wealth

consolidation, and "The Great Gatsby and the American Dream" by Sarah Churchill, which revealed the corrupt nature of higher education, the Great Gatsby curriculum provided a multidimensional account of the foundation of American society.

"We see classist practices across the United States, from working-class citizens' inability to vote in presidential elections to the COVID-19's disproportionate impact on homeless encampments that sit a few miles from the Apple Headquarters," Ramesh said. "I think these are difficult, sometimes uncomfortable topics that future students need to grapple with." ♦

DEATH PENALTY



Graphic by JOANN ZHANG

CLASS OF 2013 ALUMNA ASHWINI VELCHAMY CONDUCTS ANTI-CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WORK IN LOUISIANA

By ApurvaChakravarthy

In the spring of 2011, class of 2013 alumna Ashwini Velchamy, then a reporter on The Saratoga Falcon, signed up to write an opinion story on the death penalty.

As part of the writing process, Velchamy started researching the arguments for and against capital punishment. Although she wasn't sure of it then, this research would spark a passion to help abolish the death penalty and lead to her current job in public interest law. (She also volunteered to be the mock trial team's attorney coach and has been coaching the team from remote through Zoom this year.)

The death penalty has long been a disputed method of punishment. Critics argue that there are fundamental flaws in the system that cannot be fixed with mere reform.

She received a dual degree in Computer Science and Economics from American University in 2017 and graduated from Columbia Law School in 2020. Velchamy now works as a legal fellow on death penalty work in New Orleans.

As a legal fellow and a barred attorney in Louisiana, Velchamy conducts legal research and helps with investigations, which often include going into neighborhoods to interview key witnesses in cases.

This year has been tumultuous in terms of the death penalty, as the Trump administration and former Attorney General William Barr ended a 17-year federal death penalty hiatus by ex-

cuting 13 people, the most recent being a man named Dustin Higgs on Jan. 6.

In the 1980s and 90s, clear majorities favored the death penalty, but results have become less clear in recent years.

Now, according to a Gallup study from October 2019, for the first time in 34 years, more Americans said that life imprisonment with no parole is a better punishment for murder than the death penalty is.

Velchamy hopes states and the federal government will eventually abolish the death penalty.

"It's a weird thing in that we are trying to make our jobs no longer exist," Velchamy said. "The goal is to be out of a job, the sooner, the better."

The U.S. is among the 30 percent of the world's countries that have not abolished capital punishment in law or practice, according to deathpenaltyinfo.org.

It is also one of the few developed countries that still maintains this practice.

Velchamy called the death penalty "racist, classist, arbitrary, ineffective and inaccurate."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) states three main reasons for opposition to the death penalty: It disproportionately targets marginalized groups, wastes taxpayer dollars and too often sentences innocent people to death.

According to prisonpolicy.org, although Black people are 12 percent of the population, they have made up 36 percent of all those executed since 1976. If a defendant is Black, the



Ashwini Velchamy delivers her commencement speech at American University's 2017 graduation ceremony.

odds of them receiving a death sentence are nearly four times higher than if they were white.

HG.org also found that it is almost 10 times cheaper to keep someone in prison for life than to execute them.

Each state's death penalty system has a system for appeals, and these appeals cost millions of dollars.

HG.org estimates that it costs between \$50 to \$90 million to execute someone rather than keeping them in prison for life for a far cheaper price tag.

Even more alarming, a 2014 study by the National Academy of Sciences reported that 4.1 percent of inmates on death row didn't commit the crimes they've been convicted of doing. Although these inmates may have their sentences reduced to life in prison, a lack of resources means that their cases often aren't furthered to the point where the inmates would be officially proven innocent and freed.

Although these reasons have fueled Velchamy's opposition to the death penalty, she cited a more fundamental moral reason for wanting the death penalty abolished.

"It's the killing of a human being by the state," Velchamy said. "Even if it weren't all of those things, it would still not be OK for

the government to kill its people. We shouldn't need a reason not to execute someone."

Although it wasn't until law school that Velchamy decided she officially wanted to work in this field, she realized that she was interested in this work from a very young age.

After learning more about the death penalty in high school, in college, Velchamy worked at a couple of prisoner's rights organizations such as the Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. In law school, she spent her first summer working at the ACLU's Capital Project in Durham, N.C., an experience that solidified her decision to work in prison litigation and capital work. She spent the rest of law school focusing on that area before working on the death penalty in Louisiana after graduating.

According to Time, up to 100 people are involved in any execution, including the family of the one being executed, the victim's family, reporters, lawyers and religious figures.

According to Velchamy, there are many ways to abolish the death penalty.

Either the Supreme Court could rule the death penalty unconstitutional, or states and the federal government would have to individually outlaw the death penalty in their own area of jurisdiction.

Since the likelihood of the Supreme Court ruling the death penalty unconstitutional is slim, even if President Biden outlawed federal executions his first day in office, it still would not stop every execution.

"That's why there's a lot of abolition movements within states, and there's a federal movement as well," Velchamy said. "But if the Supreme Court decided that the death penalty was unconstitutional, then no one could execute anyone."

She identified the first step to helping fix the system as envisioning a criminal justice system that is not driven primarily by punishment.

"We can't imagine a world without prisons because we can't imagine a world without punishment," Velchamy said. "This makes it so we're willing to forgive all of our prisons' flaws because we can't see beyond it." ◆



Graphic by SHREYA RALLABANDI

2020 // MOVED TO LOUISIANA to conduct investigations and pursue legal work

2020 // FINISHED GRADUATE STUDIES at Columbia Law School and earned her Juris Doctor degree

2018 // WORKED ON ACLU CAPITAL PROJECT and helped conduct investigations with interviews and client representation

2017 // GRADUATED FROM AMERICAN UNIVERSITY with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Economics.

2012 // FALCON ARTICLE SPARKS INTEREST IN DEATH PENALTY Velchamy followed One Goh for her article, "Death should not be a punishment"

Graphic by SHREYA RALLABANDI

Court rulings define extent of student free speech

By StephanieSun & MartinXu

When 13-year-old Mary Beth Tinker arrived at Harding Junior High School on Dec. 16, 1965, she had no idea the events that would transpire that day would result in one of the largest Supreme Court cases on freedom of speech for students.

Not long after class started, Tinker was called into the principal's office, asked to remove an armband protesting the Vietnam War. She was then suspended for her protests.

"The main factor in taking the case to court was feeling that the rule against our wearing the black armbands to mourn for the dead on both sides of the Vietnam War and to support a Christmas truce wasn't fair," Tinker, now 69, told The Falcon.

The Tinker family filed a lawsuit against the Des Moines school district, but lower courts upheld the school district's decision. Eventually, the case was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. On Feb. 24, 1969, the court ruled 7-2 in favor of the students, saying students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the school-house gate."

In the U.S., free speech is regarded as one of the pillars of democracy. The First Amendment protects people's right to freedom of religion and expression from any government intervention.

Over the years, multiple court cases have posed questions about the limits of free speech involving students and essentially asking how free they are to speak in a school setting. Here are some of the results of those cases.

Can students wear controversial clothing without fear of punishment?

Dress codes are usually implemented by schools to promote safety, a better school image and learning. Although the Supreme Court has never explicitly addressed dress codes, it usually sides with the schools according to Middle Tennessee State University.

However, cases such as the Tinker vs. Des Moines case prove that students still have some control over freedom of expression through clothes.

According to principal Greg Louie, the California Education Code says that as long as students are not expressing absurd messages or creating a dangerous and disruptive environment for other students, they have the freedom to express themselves through clothing.

"Students are prohibited from expression that is obscene, libelous, or slanderous," Louie said. "Students are also prohibited from expressing themselves in a way that creates a 'clear and present danger of unlawful acts on school premises or the violation of lawful school regulations, or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.' I also think expression needs to be considerate of the rights of others."

Sophomore Ashley Belshe favors wide but not unlimited freedoms when it comes to how students dress.

"I want to wear anything I want to school," Belshe said. "But I can see how people could be bothered by other people's clothing, and clothing with offensive messages shouldn't be allowed sometimes."

Can students be critical of the principal, staff or administration?

Currently, schools are able to pun-

ish students for speech that disrupts the educational process by disrespecting teachers and administrators. In the case Poling v. Murphy, the Sixth Circuit ruled against a student who made fun of an administrator's stutter.

"The US Supreme Court essentially says that students 'do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech and expression' when at school," Louie said. "I obviously support the US Supreme Court's decision and interpretation of the Constitution. But ideally, it is done in a way that is intended for productive change, rather than something 'obscene, libelous, or slanderous.'"

Can students say anything they want at school without fear of punishment?

Belshe said she believes students should be able to express themselves freely without fear of consequences at school.

"I don't think the school should be able to punish students who are simply stating their opinions or feelings," Belshe said.

In December, a high school freshman in Pennsylvania used profane language to express her frustration about not making her school's varsity cheerleading team, which led to her suspension from cheerleading for a year.

Because of this incident, the student sued her school district, winning at the district court level, but the case escalated to the Supreme Court in January.

Despite these free speech-friendly rulings by some lower courts, the Supreme Court has often cut back on students' First Amendment rights since the Tinker case.

Sophomore Arshi Chawla said that she wants students' First Amendment rights to be protected but believes hate speech should merit consequences.

"In a school setting, it's possible to regulate hate speech, but I think not giving people power over their ability to ex-

press themselves can also lead to problems," Chawla said. One example of the blurred line when dealing with free speech is the occasional rescinding of college admissions when students engage in hateful speech.

Following the death of George Floyd, at least a dozen colleges revoked admissions to their incoming students over racist comments online.

In one case, an incoming student at Cornell had his admission rescinded after videos surfaced of him using a racial slur. The student was removed from the football team and later expelled under the university policy that "reserves the right to revoke an offer of admission under certain circumstances, and at any time."

Information from FREEDOM FORUM INSTITUTE

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Still, public universities may face legal consequences for disciplining students based on racist or sexist comments, which raises questions as to how much protection the First Amendment grants individuals.

Currently, hate speech, or any form of expression where speakers intend to discriminate against a group, is protected under the First Amendment. Hate speech can only be criminalized when it directly encourages criminal activity or consists of specific threats of violence directed at a person or group.

"I think not giving people power over their ability to express themselves can also lead to problems."

SOPHOMORE Arshi Chawla

However, many believe hate speech should be more controlled, especially in schools.

"When speech targets a certain group of people or individuals in a negative way, it becomes hate speech and that shouldn't be allowed," Chawla said. "However, it's really difficult to enforce these rules because it is relative, and that can lead to a lot of different interpretations of what free speech and hate speech is."

Reflecting on her own case a half-century later, Tinker said the famous case that involves her family set the right precedent. "I think the standard set by the Tinker ruling is reasonable," Tinker said. "The speech in question should not substantially

Prohibited Behavior:

- Expression that is obscene, libelous, or slanderous
- Clear and presented danger of unlawful acts on premises or violation of lawful school regulations
- Threats, harrasment, profanity, and disruption

disrupt school or impinge on the rights of others, but this is very much open to interpretation. So there is no clear-cut line."

According to the Freedom Forum Institute, school officials must prove they can reasonably predict a substantial disruption as a result of a student's speech before censoring speech.

The Saratoga High student handbook states that threats, harassment, profanity and disruption can all lead to up to a 5-day suspension for a first offense.

Tinker said she believes there are two ways for schools to combat hate speech: a legal approach and a preventive approach, with the latter being a more effective long-term solution.

"It would involve anti-racist, anti-bias curricula at all levels of K-12 education, led by administrators, teachers, and students," she said.

While many still debate the degree of freedom of speech that should be allowed in schools and in virtual spaces such as social media, the justice system is slowly navigating the issue one case at a time, and Tinker hopes the long arc of history will go in the right direction.

"What we have in the U.S. is a sort of 'sliding scale' for free expression for students. Students at whiter, higher income schools generally have more free-speech rights," she said. "I hope there will be more support for free speech in school, and that it should be equally accessible by all students, regardless of wealth, race, ethnicity, and gender." ◆



All Graphics by ESTHER LUAN

Class of 2019 alumni manage time on school work and athletic careers

BY Apurva **Chakravarthy**

As Class of 2019 alumna Sasha Pickard stepped on the field for her first collegiate game, one that pitted the Crimson Tide against the University of Arkansas, her past decade of her hard work had finally paid off — she was a D1 athlete.

In 2018, the fall of her senior year, Pickard committed to Alabama's women's soccer team as a center back, the same position she played in high school.

Outside of high school, Pickard also played for the Mountain View Los Altos (MVL) Soccer Club, a member club of the Elite Clubs National League (ECNL).

Since then, she said she has greatly enjoyed playing at Alabama.

Despite the demands of the sport both on and off the field, she said the experience is “so rewarding” and enjoys being “a part of such a great athletics program.”

Since joining the team, Pickard has improved tremendously as an athlete. According to the University of Alabama Roster, Pickard began her freshman season in 2018 playing around 14-39 minutes in each game. Now, in her sophomore season, in recent games she has played 90-93 minutes of each game. In her two years, she has also scored three goals.

The transition to college athletics was initially very difficult for Pickard as she had to learn how to juggle school work with a demanding practice and game schedule.

The team traveled once a week, and since they left a day before their game, Pickard would miss two out of five school days.

Even with the pandemic, the Alabama soccer team has a full spring schedule, playing 9 total games.

“I had to work a lot on my time management and communication with my professors, but the athletics program helps a lot

by requiring weekly study hours and having other resources available,” Pickard said.

She said playing for the school team prepared her to play at the collegiate level because high school soccer helped her become a “tougher player” who could meet the physical demands of the Southern Eastern Conference (SEC).

Class of 2019 alumna Ria Jobalia, a D1 fencer at New York University (NYU), also said the school prepared her well for college athletics since competing in high school fencing helped her learn time management skills that have become essential in college.

“In high school, all I really had time for was homework and fencing, and I had to get good at figuring out the most effective ways to study in the little amount of time that I had,” she said.

Jobalia said she has cherished her experience at NYU so far because of the many close friends she has made on the fencing team.

She enjoys traveling together for meets, a welcome change from high school, where meets were individual.

“Fencing at these college meets has been really fun because you get to watch your teammates fence and vice versa, so you can all support each other and help each other do better,” Jobalia said.

Just like most college athletes, Jobalia had to overcome the learning curve that came with the intensity of both college classes and college athletics.

She has often had a lot of homework or a midterm the day after a meet, but has found that reaching to professors for adjustments or support helps her manage her workload.

Jobalia said her favorite memory from NYU occurred last season when she won several bouts against fencers she had previously lost to. In that moment, she realized how much progress she had made.



Courtesy of RIA JOBALIA

Class of 2019 alumna Ria Jobalia spars with a fencer from Columbia University at a college tournament on November 14, 2019 as she progresses through her fencing journey.

She won most of these bouts in “sudden death” overtime: One player receives random priority, and if no one scores a touch during the game, the player with priority wins the bout.

After a 6-hour drive back to campus, she and her teammates were exhausted and decided to order Taco Bell.

“It was undoubtedly the best tasting Taco Bell I have had,” Jobalia said.

Jobalia advised athletes seeking recruitment to stick with a sport if they truly love to play. Although time management may be difficult, she said it won't be a new experi-

ence to most Saratoga athletes.

“There's no better college experience than playing your favorite sport with your friends,” Jobalia said.

Pickard said prospective athletes should reach out to coaches as soon as possible, join a travel team and attend showcases to meet recruiters.

Most importantly, she said it's crucial to find a school that the athlete really loves.

“It's student-athlete, not athlete-student — your priority should be finding a place that meets all of your academic, social and athletic expectations,” Pickard said. ♦

other seniors, Zhou's high school athletics career fell short.

Zhou's mother is a health care worker who works with elderly patients, and Zhou knew that she wouldn't be able to participate on the team under any circumstances.

“I was devastated, as I had grown to love the sport over the past three years and had formed such strong bonds with Coach (Danny) Moon and my teammates,” Zhou said. “I was really looking forward to my final season, and I miss that positive energy so much.”

Although Zhou did discover a passion for running through joining cross country, the spirit of the team was what encouraged her to give her full effort to each practice and apply for a captain position.

According to Zhou, coach Moon continuously reinforced his philosophy that joining cross country was not necessarily to win and be the fastest person on the track, but to find a genuine love for running. This fostered an incredibly supportive environment where each runner pushed the team to its full potential, Zhou said.

Although Zhou will not be pursuing cross country in college, she cherishes the opportunity she had to discover a new passion and explore new friendships in such an uplifting atmosphere.

“Everyone genuinely loved coming to each practice, and despite missing out on my final year, I'm so grateful for the amazing teammates and memories along the way,” she said. ♦

Cross country captain misses out on final season

BY Anjali **Nuggehalli**

As senior Jessie Zhou jogged around her neighborhood last fall, she couldn't help but feel a sense of nostalgia. She thought back to insufferably hot September days when she and her teammates would sprawl out on the football field after an intense cross country workout. Zhou joined the team during her freshman year, when her mother “forced” her to sign up in order to avoid taking P.E.

“I didn't think I'd enjoy the sport at all because I was never much of a runner, and I was almost certain that I would drop out,” Zhou said. “However, the atmosphere drew me in, convincing me to do cross country for all four years of high school.”

Zhou's teammates noticed her enthusi-

asm for the sport and voted her for captain during her junior year, extending to the end of her senior year.

“Despite missing out on my final year, I'm so grateful for the amazing teammates and memories along the way.”

SENIOR Jessie Zhou

When the pandemic hit, however, Zhou knew that her captain role would end earlier than she had anticipated. Like countless

Long-time athlete forced to choose between sports

BY Avani **Kongetira**

Exhausted and sore, senior Gwen Oberhauser made her way off the upper field. For a week, she had been attending two practices a day — one for field hockey and one for girls' soccer — for a total of four hours each day.

Before COVID-19, she was able to play the sports she loves in separate seasons: field hockey in the fall and soccer during winter. Due to the pandemic, however, both field hockey and soccer are in Season 2.

At first, she pushed herself to play both sports, but after a week

of attending two training sessions per day, she felt “overwhelmed” and realized she would only be able to choose one sport to play.

Oberhauser began soccer at 5 years old and began playing competitively when she was 9. In high school, she picked up field hockey due to its resemblance to soccer. She plays the same position —

outside defense — for both sports.

Although she has played soccer for longer, Oberhauser chose to stick with hockey, mostly because she felt she had more of a leadership role and thus a larger impact on the team.

While the field hockey team does not have captains, Oberhauser feels she fills that role alongside junior Olivia Kinoshita.

Because the soccer team has

more seniors, Oberhauser said her duty as a role model is more valuable on the field hockey team.

“As hard as it was to give up the sport I've been playing since I was little, I have tons of fun with my field hockey team, and I'm glad I will get my senior season,” Oberhauser said.

The girls' soccer coach, Ben Maxwell, has been extremely supportive of her, Oberhauser said. Additionally, while her teammates are disappointed that Oberhauser won't be playing soccer this year, they understand her choice.

“I know how much Gwen loves field hockey, and it must've been a hard decision,” said junior Raina Hirekatur, who has played on the girls' soccer team alongside Oberhauser for the past two seasons.

Despite not being able to play both field hockey and soccer, Oberhauser is grateful that, at the very least, she's back on the field playing a sport in her senior year.

“I will miss soccer for sure,” Oberhauser said. “But I wish the soccer team the best going forward and cherish the memories I made on that team.” ♦

FOOTBALL

Football team tackles season head on amidst COVID-19 safety concerns and regulations

BY Andy **Chen**
& Jason **Cheng**

Resting from an injury, junior wide receiver Parsa Hashemi watched as members of Homestead High School's varsity football team positioned themselves in a defensive line against the attacking Falcons. The short scrimmage, played on March 12 on Homestead's upper field, ended 12-6 in favor of Homestead.

Although unofficial, the scrimmage marked the first time the Falcons have played against an opposing team since the season began on Feb. 26.

Currently, the Falcons are 1-1 after a 58-21 loss against Gunn High School on March 19 and a 27-20 win against Los Altos High School on March 27. Their next game will take place on April 3 against Cupertino High School, and games will continue on a weekly basis until their last game against Monta Vista High School on April 17.

The team adheres to social distancing norms whenever possible, but on the field, players practice and compete maskless. While the league has mandated some safety protocols like requiring teams to disinfect balls whenever they go out-of-bounds, practices and games generally resemble their pre-COVID-19 counterparts, head football coach Tim Lugo said.

According to Lugo, the team has two main goals this season: celebrating current seniors' contributions to the team over the past four years and preparing current ju-



TALISMAN // ISABEL LEE

Running back senior Tyler Chafin-Price runs the ball down the field on March 27 in a game against Los Altos High School. The Falcons won 27-20 to place their record at 1 - 1 currently.

niors for the fall season.

While sports teams traditionally hold senior nights during their last home game, the football team instead elected to host their senior night during their first home game on March 27.

“They've waited a long time for this moment,” Lugo said. “There's no guarantee that we're going to play the entire season, so I wanted to recognize the seniors during the first [home] game and let their parents walk

out with them — do it the right way.”

Regarding games, players may invite up to four immediate family members to watch each game as per the league's COVID-19 safety guidelines; other students will have to watch online through an official National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) live stream. Cheerleaders will be permitted on the sidelines, and the dance team may perform during halftime.

The lack of an in-person crowd would

normally discourage athletes, but this year, the team is just happy to play, Lugo said.

“Ideally, the team would like to have the stands full and all their friends cheering for them, but I think everybody kind of gets where we're at right now,” Lugo said. “We're just very thankful to have family be able to come, so we're not playing for nobody.”

Other than the coronavirus, Lugo's biggest fear this season is injury. In a normal year, an athlete could get injured and still be ready to play the following season, but because football has been delayed to spring this year, Lugo fears that injured athletes won't be able to play in the fall.

His fears are exacerbated by the departure of trainer Liz Alves, who left the athletic department earlier this year but continues to teach Health. The school has been unable to fill Alves' position due to the turbulent nature of sports during the pandemic.

“Luckily, unlike a lot of other schools, the district has allowed us to lift weights since August, so our guys' bodies are ready for football season,” Lugo said. “I'd be horrified to play the season if we hadn't been able to lift weights, but I'm still concerned about nagging muscle injuries.”

Even in the face of potential injury and the pandemic, the team is looking forward to a fun and competitive year.

“We're going to try to play the best we can each week, really enjoy each other and really appreciate the opportunity given to us by the state,” Lugo said. “We're going to make the most of it.” ♦

BOYS' WATER POLO

Boys' water polo adapts after unexpected passing of coach

BY Ethan **Lin**
& Allen **Luo**

As junior Byron Jin approached the school pool for practice on Monday,

March 29, he looked at the pool gate with excitement. From his car, he could hear the distant sounds of water splashing, teammates throwing balls, and people shouting. Jin eagerly ran through the pool gate, greeting his teammates, many of which he had not met for nearly a year.

Like other players, he found the walk to the pool was a bittersweet moment. The pool deck was surrounded by memorials reminding him of former coach Jerome Chung, who died on the morning of March 4 at age 37 for unknown causes.

“We are all still doing our best to adapt to the new coaching and the new season.”

JUNIOR Daniel Jiang

With the recent passing of head coach Chung, a gap has been left in the coaching staff for the team. To fill the spot left by Chung, special education teacher Courtney Crase-Delp, a former SHS player and coach of the sport, agreed to fill the role.

“The main focus of the season will be to build up water polo skills, improve individually and as a team and establish camaraderie between players,” Crase told The Falcon.

She said the passing of Chung was sudden for everyone, so the team is supporting each other even as they continue to grieve his loss.

“It's a bit hard having to transition to a new coach since Coach Chung was a huge

part of our last season,” said junior Daniel Jiang. “However, we're all still doing our best to adapt to the new coaching and the new season.”

Following many delays due to safety restrictions imposed by the county, the district has allowed the boys' season to run from March 29 to May 27. Due to the shortened season, the schedule this year will follow a double round-robin schedule, with each team in the league playing each other twice. Like other sports, there will be no CCS or league tournaments and spectators during matches will be limited. The team will have its first match on April 14 against Los Gatos.

Players have been conditioning and working on ball work during practices to strengthen their individual skills and get back into shape after quarantine.

“In practice, we mainly focus on our individual handling of the ball,” Jin said. “We do things like swimming with the ball and passing to each other. We also work on our overall fitness with conditioning drills like squats or swimming without kicking.”

For example, a typical practice could start with a 200-yard swim and 200-yard free kick. After, the team will do legwork, consisting of exercises like “egg beaters,” a workout that requires players to move their legs underneath the water in quick circular motions that work on reinforcing the quadriceps muscles. Then, the team will transition into more technical ballwork, including passing, with penalties like push-ups for dropping a pass.

For the boys on the team, being able to return and practice in-person again has been a refreshing experience and change of events from the usual remote learning.

“Going to water polo again allowed me to hang out with friends that I haven't seen in many months,” Jiang said. “It's a step toward finally returning back to normal life, which is great.” ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS

Players reflect on successful season despite challenges

BY Esther **Luan**

The last time the girls' tennis team walked off the courts in the fall of 2019, players never would have guessed that the next time they would play would be during the spring of 2021. But there they were in February and March, breathing heavily through masks during intense matches as they tried to capture a feeling of normalcy that was lost during the pandemic.

Despite the pandemic-related challenges leading up to the season's start that complicated training and shortened the length of the season, the girls' tennis team had a much more successful run than expected, according to senior Juhi Patel, who co-captained the team with senior Amanda Zhu. The varsity team went 6-6 and finished fourth in the league, following Monta Vista, Mountain View and Palo Alto.

“[The team's success] was a welcome surprise,” Patel said. “We only had three returning varsity players from last year, so we didn't really know what to expect coming in.”

Patel attributes the team's success to their ability to communicate on strategy.

“The upperclassmen who were on the team last year already knew what to expect,” Patel said. “We helped each other out by discussing each opponent we had beforehand.”

Furthermore, skilled new underclassmen were important to the team's success, Patel said. Vital singles players on the team this year included juniors Peixuan He and Naisha Agrawal, as well as freshman Sabrina Manea. Manea had played club tennis for two years prior to joining and reflected on what she considered a fulfilling season.

“Playing with different people of different ages was new and gave me more experience,” Manea said. “It was surprisingly easy to have a fun time while improving, especially with COVID making our matches more relaxed.”

While Patel had a much better experience than expected playing for and co-captaining the team this year, the expectation she had harbored for her own trajectory this year was greatly affected by COVID.

Patel considered aiming for recruitment during her junior year but decided against it after the onset of the pandemic, as she had other commitments and wasn't certain that she would be able to maintain her rank given the reduced number of matches.

However, Patel still felt that the unique circumstances and requirement of a mask provided a way to improve her stamina.

“Especially for my first two matches, I was out of breath a lot [because of the mask], but I think they actually helped me improve a lot by the end of the season because it made everything harder endurance-wise,” Patel said. “I'd say I'm probably more fit now.”

Although she is no longer considering recruitment, Patel is still planning to play club tennis in college and may try to walk on to her college's school team depending on the athletic division of the school.

Patel is satisfied with the outcome of the season, but regrets that she was not able to bond more with new underclassmen teammates because of the circumstances.

Team morale was lower because the girls weren't able to hype each other up through traditions like high-fives, especially in doubles, and Patel said that not being able to see the faces of the new underclassmen during practice made it difficult to become close.

However, Patel believes the team did exceptionally well considering her initial evaluation of the season.

“We made our best effort to maintain good team morale and improve,” she said. “Even though I wish I could have gotten to know the underclassmen better, I'm proud of the hard work we all put in and what we accomplished.” ♦



Oberhauser



Patel



SOFTBALL TEAM WORKS TO REBUILD SKILLS AFTER LOSING NINE SENIORS TO GRADUATION

Head Coach: Mike Davey
Last year's record: N/A (season canceled due to COVID-19)
Recap: Last year's season was canceled due to COVID-19

Key Matchups: April 23 against Gunn High School

Star Players: Senior shortstop and pitcher Bela Chauhan, junior pitcher Morgan Curtis

Key losses to graduation: Seniors Hannah Beine, Ella Parr and Natalie Tarbox

League: SCVAL El Camino League

Prognosis: Following the cancellation of last year's season, the softball team is looking to rebuild and further emphasize skill work.

Currently, the team holds one and a half hour optional practices on the softball field on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Practices have mainly been focused on fielding, batting drills and team work. "Practices are going well but the turnout is light," head coach Mike Davey said.

"We're mostly doing skill work in preparation for the season since the girls have experienced an extended layoff."

After losing nine seniors to graduation, the team will not have enough players to form a JV team and will likely have all 12 players form a singular varsity team.

"We lost nine seniors last year, and our leadoff and starting center fielder also transferred at the beginning of the semester," Davey said. "You can imagine that will hurt us quite a bit."

Due to low participation, players that have little to no experience playing softball will be starting on the varsity team.

"We have a wide variety of skill levels, but the strongest players have been very patient with the newer girls, and the less skilled girls are improving quickly," Davey said.

According to senior shortstop and pitcher Bela Chauhan, the team has also had to adjust to playing while wearing masks and social distancing. Despite these changes, Chauhan is still



Sophomore Lily Guzman fields a ground ball during a preseason practice. The team is working on fielding, batting drills and team work to prepare for their upcoming season.

optimistic about the season and the team dynamic.

"This season, we are hoping to have fun and grow as a team," Chauhan said. "I'm

really excited to see our progress at the end of the season." ♦

— Stephanie Sun

BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM HOPES TO SET THE PACE IN LEAGUE

Head Coach: Patrick Judge

Last year's record: 8-4

Recap: The team's season was cut short by a first round loss in CCS to Jefferson High School.

Key Matchups: Los Gatos, Lynbrook

Star Players: Seniors Tyler Chu, Cameron King, Nathan Oh and juniors Giulio Morini-Bianzino, Som Teymour

Key losses to graduation: Leo Cao, Siva Sambasivam

League: El Camino League

Prognosis: With a projected roster of mostly returning juniors and seniors after only losing two starters to graduation, the boys' basketball team has a singular, focused goal heading into the season: winning out their league.

"We have the upper hand going into games this year because we've had the opportunity to develop chemistry and practice with each other more," senior shooting guard Cameron King said. "Our strength

is definitely our team's shooting, but we still need to work on consistency and taking care of the ball."

While the pandemic initially stifled the boys' rhythm going into the off-season last year, the team has been working hard to prepare for the upcoming season. In addition to individual skill work throughout the past year, the boys completed conditioning training in pods on the football field over the summer.

The team was cleared to practice together on the outdoor sports courts in

January. While they currently still practice outdoors, the team hosted their first indoor practice and is hoping to host their first league game against Wilcox on April 21.

"Having a senior season means a lot to me," senior point guard Tyler Chu said. "I've been on varsity since freshman year, and my whole high school career I've been told that this is the year for us to win it all." ♦

— Justin Guo and Ben Li

BASEBALL TEAM SAVORS RETURNING TO THE DIAMOND AFTER LAST SEASON

Head Coach: Sean Hodson and Craig Walsh

Last year's record: 0-5-0

Recap: The pandemic cut the team's season short, resulting in a poor record that didn't reflect the successes or failures of the team.

Key Matchups: Milpitas (April 27), Gunn (May 11)

Star Players: Senior shortstop Ryan Gilligan, senior pitcher Philbert Fan

Key losses to graduation: Mihir Bettadapur, Ryan Walb, Peyton Stokes and Nik

Sridhar League: El Camino

Prognosis: The theme for the season is to play ball again.

"I think playing games again will be a big relief for these kids," head coach Sean Hodson said.

Hodson said about 20 players signed up to play, making it likely there will only be only a varsity team instead of varsity and JV.

The team will play its first game on

April 24 against Gunn. They will play 15 games. Practices started April 1.

The team will also be making some changes to adhere to all COVID-19 safety protocols, such as wearing masks near people and social distancing.

Hodson said that while the team had some logistical issues with social distancing inside dugouts and getting transportation to games, the safety of players would not be compro-

missed. "We are under protocols which are always being changed," he said. "So we are following whatever the rules are on any particular day."

Despite increased restrictions, senior Ryan Gilligan, one of the team's star players, said he was glad baseball is back.

"I'm very excited to go back to baseball and hopefully compete for a league championship," he said. ♦

— Shaan Sridhar

BOYS' LACROSSE TEAM ADAPTS TO LOW NUMBERS AND INTENSE TRAININGS

Head Coach: Jeff Roper

Last year's record: N/A (season canceled due to COVID-19)

Recap: Last year's season was canceled due to COVID-19

Key Matchups: N/A

Star Players: Seniors Josh Roper, Kimball Small, juniors Kendal Jarvis, Nathan Zaragoza, Ed Greene, Matt Horvath

Key losses to graduation: Seniors Chase Satterfield, Skylar Van Cruynigen, George Troyer, Alvaro Fernandez

League: SCVAL — El Camino League

Prognosis: After not playing last season due to

the pandemic, the team is gearing up for returning to competitive play in Season 3. Head Coach Jeff Roper has also organized optional training on Tuesdays and Fridays to get his team ready for their first away game vs Hillsdale on April 23.

The team's primary obstacle is the low number of returning players and key additions, primarily due to potential players already committing to other sports such as football and soccer that are — because of the delayed fall season — occurring at the same time as lacrosse.

"All the sports are pretty close to each other this year, so I'm not really sure how

the team chemistry is going to be without the presence of past players," Zaragoza said. "It's going to be an interesting adjustment period."

The team's primary obstacle is the low number of returning players and key additions.

Varsity attack Ed Greene, a junior, also

acknowledged that many of the players are going into the season out of shape after not playing for almost a year.

Greene hopes that through optional practices and individual training, players will be prepared for the physicality of athletes from competing schools and have an overall successful season.

"This season is definitely going to be a challenge, but I think if all of us come together, we can have a really successful record," Greene said. "I'm just really excited to get out and play again." ♦

— Anjali Nugehalli

Playing on the biggest stage in the world behind closed doors

BY Jason Cheng & Vinay Gollamudi

After a three-month wait, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions League has finally returned, much to the delight of soccer fans around the world. A single-elimination-based tournament, the Champions League (UCL) is a gripping clash between the best soccer teams in Europe.

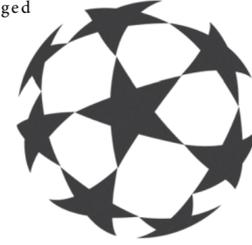
Essentially, the UCL consists of two major stages: the group stage and the knockout phase.

The group stage was played in the latter months of 2020, involving eight groups with four teams each that faced off in a round-robin tournament. The top two teams from each group then advanced to the knockouts, which are currently being played through May 29.

In turn, each match up of the knockouts, whether it be the Round of 16 or the quarterfinals, is set by a random draw. Teams play a home and away game, with the aggregate score deciding who moves on. Ties are broken by away goals — the team who scores more goals away from home advances. The group stage featured riveting matches between top teams throughout Europe. A group containing both Juventus FC and FC Barcelona marked a potential final battle between the two greatest soccer players of the current era: Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi. The two clubs finished first and second in their group, respectively, to little surprise.

Fans have coined the toughest group this year — Manchester United from England, RB Leipzig from Germany and Paris Saint-Germain from France — as the "group of death." In the final deciding game between

Manchester United and RB Leipzig, RB Leipzig narrowly escaped with a 3-2 victory, officially knocking Manchester United out in a fan-favorite upset. More upsets raised eyebrows in other groups; the current league leaders in Italy, Inter Milan, finished dead last in their group, edged out



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

by German underdogs Borussia Mönchengladbach.

Overall, the group stages ended with only a few surprises, leaving fans with a three-month break until the UCL returned. The knockout stages have returned with a bang, with many fans believing this year is the dawn of a new era.

Fueled by 22-year-old superstar Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick, Paris Saint-Germain

sunk Messi's Barcelona's European dreams in a passing of the torch to the new generation.

On another front, Ronaldo's Juventus sulked to a 2-1 defeat to Portuguese underdogs FC Porto while German giant Dortmund's rising star Erling Haaland netted two goals in a thrashing of Sevilla from Spain.

Many fans believe that these recent performances have sparked a new rivalry for the next decade: Mbappe vs. Haaland.

For us, last year's champions Bayern Munich are the favorites to secure the title. Star center-forward Robert Lewandowski is on track to break the goal-scoring records in the Bundesliga, Germany's soccer league, and the team is in fine form at the moment.

It won't be an easy ride, though. English league leaders Manchester City are on a 20-game winning streak in all competitions — yet, their failure to ever reach the semifinals of the UCL still leaves us skeptical of whether this will be their year.

Of course, we have to take into account Atlanta BC, a dark horse similar to Dutch club AFC Ajax or RB Leipzig recently. With Atlanta only one goal down to Real Madrid, it's entirely possible that these underdogs will come out on top of the strong playing field this year.

This is just the beginning. Based on the history of this unpredictable competition, it's safe to say that the second legs of each match up could offer some memorable comebacks and historic results.

Despite the empty stadiums due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fans across the world will impatiently wait at home to discover the team that claims the title as the best soccer team in Europe. ♦

Athletes inspire students off the court

BY Jason Cheng & Vinay Gollamudi

Despite pro athletes' impressive play in their sports, their actions off the playing field are often what truly makes them role models to fans across the globe.

Mental Health Awareness: DeMar DeRozan, Dak Prescott and Kevin Love

NBA Star DeMar DeRozan of the San Antonio Spurs is part of a growing group of athletes who try to bring attention to mental health struggles.

DeRozan grew up in Compton, California, and played basketball for the University of Southern California.

As a child, DeRozan frequently witnessed violence. In addition, his mother suffered from Lupus, a disease that can affect almost every part of the body, and DeRozan has since worked with organizations like Lupus Canada to raise awareness of the disease.

DeRozan also supported Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott after he opened up about his struggle with depression.

While sports media personalities like Skip Bayless, criticized Prescott, DeRozan supported Dak, as he tweeted "Shoutout to Dak! Real strength is shown through vulnerability."

Freshman Samik Pattanayak also respects Prescott's decision, saying, "Narratives like Bayless's are so common that it was re-



NBA superstar LeBron James gives a speech at the opening of his I Promise School for underprivileged children in Akron, Ohio. The school provided children with a stable environment outside of their home.

freshing to see the whole community get behind Dak."

Cleveland Cavaliers forward Kevin Love has also spoken publicly about his struggles with mental health after suffering an injury in 2012.

"My identity was gone," Love said in an article for the Players' Tribune. "All I was left with was me and my mind. My social anxiety was so bad that I never even left my apartment."

As a result of these and other players' actions, the NBA instituted new rules starting in the 2019 season.

These included a mandate that each team required at least one mental health professional on their staff.

"I think it's great that the NBA values the input of its play-

ers," sophomore Anirudh Iyer said. "It's inspiring that DeRozan and Love were able to create concrete change within the NBA."

LeBron James: I Promise School

In 2018, NBA star LeBron James opened the I Promise School for underprivileged children in his hometown of Akron, Ohio.

The school originally opened to third and fourth graders and placed an emphasis on giving children a stable environment outside of their home.

James himself struggled to get a good education, revealing in a 2018 tweet that he missed 83 days of school in the fourth grade.

"I walked those streets and it was just like, 'There's no way I'm going to be able to get out of this situation,'" James said in an interview with Cleveland.com. "I had dreams and mentors and they allowed me to become who I am today."

Despite his status as one of the greatest basketball players to step on the court, LeBron's off-court actions are what endear him to many of his fans.

"Everyone talks about LeBron's longevity as an elite player," Iyer said. "But for me, he has one of the greatest stories off the court. He came from an underprivileged community and is giving back to that same community now. I think that's exactly what superstar athletes should be doing." ♦

Sports events are still risky

BY Kavita Sundaram

As states begin to re-open different events, one major cause for worry is the rehosting of sports events. Sports — many of which are played and watched indoors — regularly conflict with CDC health guidelines and could contribute to yet more COVID-19 surges.

Many past sporting events, although they have attempted to adhere to CDC health guidelines, have acted as superspreaders for the virus. Since sporting events haven't always required coronavirus testing as a prerequisite, sporting events often spread the virus through asymptomatic patients. This transmission is often more harmful than day-to-day transmissions, as far more people are exposed to the virus, and these people, in turn, expose it to hoards of others.

In fact, many NBA and NHL games in 2020 caused the number of coronavirus deaths to increase by 9 percent in the surrounding areas. Even for sporting events that do their best to maintain safe conditions, holding these events isn't worth the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

In February, the Super Bowl took place in Tampa, Florida, where nearly 22,000 people attended live. With such numbers attending the event, the game was speculated to cause coronavirus surges around the region and even beyond, as many viewers flew in to watch the game.

Due to the Super Bowl's heavy safety measures, however, the game did not result in any large surges of coronavirus. The stadium was filled to only 20 percent capacity, face mask-wearing fans sat in pods of two to three, 7,500 onlookers were vaccinated and the game was held outdoors.

The Super Bowl went to even greater lengths to ensure safety for the half-time show, which featured dancers flown in from across the country. The 1,072 performers in the half-time show were tested multiple times and even wore masks in the eventual show.

Due to all of these extensive safety precautions, few coronavirus cases were ever traced to the Super Bowl. In total, the event only resulted directly in 57 coronavirus cases.

While this number is low, it proves that there is little means to completely prevent the spread of the virus, especially when not every league has the vast resources available to the NFL.

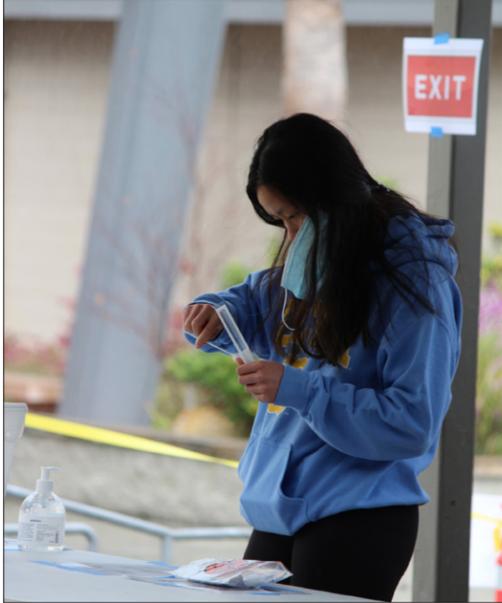
Since most sporting events do not have the same budget as the Super Bowl, testing every attendee is not an option. Even though leagues can practice social distancing and masking, the intermixing of onlookers from different regions can drastically increase the spread of COVID-19.

Additionally, the recent decline of coronavirus restrictions, such as Texas removing its mask mandate in March, may further increase the risk of coronavirus. Many sports teams have expressed interest in allowing fans back into stadiums, and this, combined with a premature removal of the mask mandate, could cause extreme surges in cases nationwide.

Instead, most teams, especially those that compete indoors, should continue to host games for fans to watch online only. Sports events can still be enjoyable for fans online, and the safety of viewers should be a priority.

Although the Super Bowl may have been relatively safe, teams should generally delay organizing these events until conditions are safer to prioritize their fans' safety over money. ♦

snapshots



FALCON // SELINA CHEN



Courtesy of Takashi Morifusa



FALCON // SELINA CHEN



FALCON // SELINA CHEN

Junior Jordyn Sin swabs for a COVID-19 test in preparation for the recently started girls' volleyball season.

Families and athletes gather at the football bleachers to listen to Marion Chung speak, commemorating the life of her late husband and water polo coach Jerome Chung on March 28.

Biology teacher Lisa Cochrum demonstrates lab equipment use to three students on March 23.

Senior quarterback Grant Petters looks for a pass against Los Altos on March 19. Falcons won 27-20.

Butterfly knife proves to be a stress-relieving skill toy

bill of rights

Bill Yuan



Winter break rolled around, so it was time for me to learn another useless skill. Naturally, I asked for a butterfly knife trainer for Christmas.

A butterfly knife, traditionally called a balisong, is a folding knife with two handles that rotate around the blade, which conceal the blade in a groove within the handles. Because of its flippy nature, people have come up with tricks to open, close and flourish the knife.

A balisong is still a knife, and carrying one around is illegal and flipping it can be dangerous. Surprisingly enough, I did not want to run that risk, so I got a balisong trainer with a dull blade. The trainer I got

costs around \$30, making it an excellent option for beginners.

The first few tricks I learned were the fundamentals: the simple and standard open, the fan close and the wrist pass. These didn't take me long to master, and I was able to land them in a few tries. However, some of the tricks involving spinning the knife were much trickier to perform consistently.

These spinning tricks, including the zen rollover, the index rollover and the simple aerial, involve letting go of the knife, allowing it to spin freely, then catching it again. Practicing these tricks required more precision and getting used to the momentum of the knife.

I never really dedicated much time to practice flipping, but I realized that the balisong is a good fidgeting toy. I found my-

self flipping my balisong aimlessly walking around the house, in my room, or even in class, repeating the few tricks I knew.

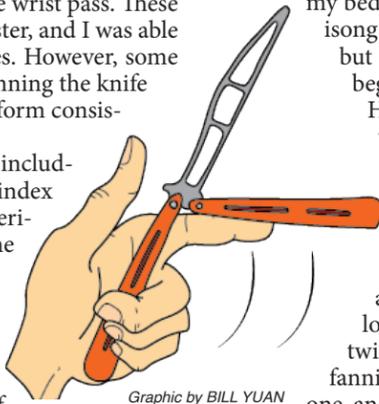
Normally I would practice flipping over my bed, as to not damage the balisong or the floor when I drop it, but as I got more confident, I began practicing wherever. However, not being able to land an index rollover 100% of the time meant that the hardwood floor under my desk took a beating.

I eventually got good at one somewhat cool-looking combo—the basic swirl into zen rollover and fanning. I wanted to show anyone and everyone my newly acquired skill, even though nobody seemed to care. On my more stressful days, I found that practicing these tricks was a good way to clear my head. Repeating a trick over and

over really got my mind off things, and was something that I really needed during the second semester of junior year. Feeling the momentum of the knife flow smoothly as you flip it and then cleanly catching it is the most satisfying thing ever.

Though the time hasn't come yet, I've also looked for balisongs for when I graduate from my starter. More premium balisongs can cost anywhere from \$200 to \$1,000. After seeing others flip these knives in videos, the elegant design and satisfying "clang" makes me really tempted to dump some more money into another useless hobby.

Although carrying an actual balisong is illegal in California, making this an even more useless skill than others I've picked up such as lock picking or leathercraft, balisong flipping is definitely a hobby I will keep around. That way, if I happen to be traveling with a balisong and need to defend myself, I'm sure as hell gonna do a behind-the-8-ball flip before fending off my attacker with my nonexistent knife-fighting skills. ♦



Graphic by BILL YUAN

How to be funny: The scientific method

nid to be funny

Nidhi Mathihalli



The other day, I sent some of my friends a well-thought out joke. But instead of responding with the "HAHAHAHA" text that I was expecting, I got a measly "haha."

While having a brain fart trying to figure out what could have caused this monstrosity, I realized that my jokes and sense of humor have grown exponentially worse during quarantine. Since I'm a self-proclaimed comedian, this was my worst nightmare.

But I have learned two things throughout my life: One, always make sure that you are adding sugar instead of salt while baking, and two, never give up, unless people start throwing food at you.

So with this second life lesson in my noggin, I embarked on a journey to recover my humor, using a method so sacred that every science teacher I have ever had has mentioned it at least a couple of times. Of course, I'm talking about the scientific method.

Step 1: Ask a question

The first step of the scientific method is to pose the question for the experiment. It's also my favorite part, because like most high schoolers, I prefer the parts that take the least amount of time.

So, after spending ages trying to figure out how to properly word this question, I decided on: "How does Nidhi achieve the

goal of having an impeccable sense of humor?" That was easy, so next step.

Step 2: Research and hypothesis

Research was by far my favorite part of the experiment. Anyone who saw my YouTube recommendation would see a bunch of Joana Ceddia, John Mulaney and The Kardashians, because we all know that the Kardashians are the funniest comedians of all time.

So after watching hours of Joanna Ceddia talk about our lord and savior, Shrek, I was ready to proceed. I had all that I needed: jokes, puns and a mixed sense of humor. It was time to move on to the next step: creating a hypothesis.

In the end, I came up with this beauty: If I use puns, memes and funny experiences, then I can muster a big and hopefully positive response from my amigos.

Step 3: Experiment and analysis

I decided to begin my experiment with a pun. After looking for a good pun for a while, by which I mean searching up "puns" and clicking on the first link that showed up, I was able to start my experiment.

I texted my friends, who are also my test subjects, the first pun: Never trust an atom, they make up everything! One minute later, the first person responded with, "I'll keep that in mind." Not the response I was looking for but nevertheless, I trudged on sending more puns.

I soon realized I might have sent a bit too many puns, because the responses went from "Nidhi is a bit crazy but that's normal" to "OMG NIDHI IS GOING CRAZY DO YOU THINK SHE WAS KIDNAPPED AND FORCED TO

WRITE THESE????!?!?!?"

Next, I implemented Phase 2 of the experiment: memes. Similar to the puns, I gathered a couple of memes and as a big fan of "Community," a sitcom about a group of friends at community college, I chose to have all of my memes centered around it. If you have not watched "Community," we cannot be friends, and that's a fact.

Anyway, after sending my friends the famous donut scene meme from "Community," I patiently waited, but sadly, though, nobody responded. I guess "Community" memes are over.

The third and final part of the experiment was funny experiences.

Now this I am a master at. I might not be super punny or be up-to-date with the best shows, but I for sure can make an experience funny. I told my friends about the infamous time that my traveling companions and I got lost in Texas, which garnered lots of discussion with my test subjects, who pondered about how they had gotten lost in Costco and Singapore airports. This was all obviously due to my funny retelling of my Texas tale. Finally, a win!

Step 4: Conclusion

After analyzing my various forms of humor, this experiment has proven that the best way to be funny, in a sense, is to be yourself.

That being said, if you don't think you are funny, I have a solution: Watch "Community" and "Keeping Up With The Kardashians." No, I'm not sponsored by them, but Kim Kardashian is truly the best comedian you will ever see. ♦

topten

WORST DAYS OF THE WEEK
"Happy (Late) April Fools' Day!"

- 10 **Saturday.** No school and no school the next day. Objectively the best day of the week.
- 9 **Sunday.** Procrastinators, get to work.
- 8 **Wednesday.** Asynchronous Wednesdays = a day off (except for that pile of undone homework).
- 7 **Friday.** Gotta get down. Looking forward to the weekend.
- 6 **Tuesday.** British people: "It's Chewsday innit."
- 5 **ZenDAYa.** Everyone you know has a crush on her.
- 4 **Michael Faraday** "was an English scientist who contributed to the study of electromagnetism and electrochemistry" (Wikipedia). His law is highly endorsed by Mr. Weller.
- 3 **.14159265358979 day.** Eat pie on pi day.
- 2 **Daylight savings.** Why do we even do Daylight Savings? Daylight Savings day is more useless than teachers' breakout room norms.
- 1 **Monday.** "Happy Monday, if that's not an oxymoron." - Mrs. Battey

- Andy Chen and Bill Yuan