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PREPOSTEROUS PAY GAP

While TikTok may seem like the perfect platform for all creators to present their best content, recent controversies may say otherwise. Read further to learn more about the pay gap on TikTok.

Compiled by Sean Warren, ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, article by Jessica Chin, STAFF WRITER, and photos courtesy of Google

With never-ending content and the chance for all creators to go viral, TikTok seems like the perfect platform for everyone to get their taste of fame. By offering a unique, personalized way to view and create content, the platform has transformed into a hub of creativity. Yet, TikTok may not be as inclusive as it seems, especially when comparing paychecks.

By renegade-dancing their way to billions of views and likes, the D'Amelio sisters and Addison Rae were recently named the highest paid creators by Forbes. Yet, the very creator of the renegade dance, Jalaiah Harmon, was not included on the list, along with all other Black creators. More recently, Dreyia Mac's "Own Brand Freestyle" was "remixed" by a white creator who switched out words from the verse and blew up from its extreme popularity. Occurrences similar to these have repeatedly taken place on TikTok, all following the same narrative: white creators plagiarizing and leeching off the ideas of a Black creator. Though meaning to objectively name the top earning TikTokers, Forbes unintentionally highlighted an ugly pattern where white creators profit from the content of Black creators. Getting exposure, opportunities and brand deals,

white creators easily exceed any success Black creators experience on the app. While Black creators are creating some of the most viral trends, they are not earning nearly as much money or recognition.

Upon Forbes' publishing of the article, concern rippled through internet communities, with many individuals sharing the anger from seeing Black creators having to fight for space on a platform so easily accessed by white creators. However, TikTok has previously attempted to fix the situation, launching the Black Creatives incubator program back in 2021. Focused on nurturing and developing Black creators and music artists, it was refreshing to see initiative being taken. However, though the incubator program attempts to help and establish more Black creators, the issue does not revolve around numbers or the quality of content. Instead, the main issue centers around how Black creators are being unfairly treated by brands and companies, constantly having to fight for space within an app that should have always had a place for them.

As if matters couldn't get worse, the problems extend further when sponsors offer Black creators significantly lower salaries. Brittany Bright, creator and

founder of The Influencer League, brings insight to how brands target Black creators with huge followings to offer deceptively low rate estimates, causing these same creators to then lower their expectations for what they should be receiving. The racial discrimination is a toxic cycle that continually lowers the price brands expect to pay and encourages Black creators to devalue their own content. Not only are Black creators being manipulated by brands and companies, but they have to constantly fight for the protection of their intellectual property. As it is, every other month Black TikTokers have to publicize how another white creator has not credited them for their content. The constant plagiarism discourages Black creators to keep producing content, making it increasingly difficult for these figures to go viral, gain recognition or receive a salary equal to that of their white counterparts.

Disparity between pay and popularity will persist as long as companies refuse to recognize the value of Black creators. But it's important to remember that the problem is not only contained to one app or a few companies. Rather, it's a seemingly endless pattern in all social media, a harmful precedent that is echoed on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and more.

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Read into Oracle's take on the metaverse: are we prepared for the effects of this new virtual sphere?



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It's time for a menstruation makeover! Learn about the period journey and a few products that are redefining period power.



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Elegant, exquisite choreography with a beautiful tale to be told—check out Fan Gao, a Chinese folk dancer.



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Pacific Symphony hosts Lantern Festival to celebrate Lunar New Year

Attendees at the festival will have the opportunity to decorate the concert hall venue with their own lantern designs.

By Brianna Vu
STAFF WRITER

Celebrating the year of the tiger, Pacific Symphony and South Coast Chinese Cultural Center will hold a musical lantern festival at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall Feb. 26.

In an effort to represent the cultural diversity of Lunar New Year, the event will feature dance performances by the Korean American Youth Performing artists, a Vietnamese dance and a traditional dragon dance from the University of California, Irvine. As their seventh festival, Pacific Symphony will continue their free admission to the event on a first-come, first-served basis.

As a family-friendly event, the Lantern Festival takes place on the 15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar. According to traditional Asian culture, Lunar New Year is a time period when farmers can rest from their work in the fields and spend time with their family. The Lantern Festival is an annual festivity that many Chinese families have partaken in for over 2,000 years, Broadway World Los Angeles writer A.A. Cristi said. "Even though the exact origin



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF PACIFIC SYMPHONY WEBSITE

TREMENDOUS TIGER YEAR: *In an effort to showcase cultural diversity, the Lantern Festival will include various performances from different countries that celebrate the Lunar New Year, including the Chinese dragon dance.*

dates are unknown, it is said that the history of the Lantern Festival may go as far back as the Han Dynasty," Cristi said. "The act of lighting and appreciating lanterns is a way for people to let go of the burdens of their old selves and express their best wishes for themselves and their families for the future."

Decorated with flowers and a variety of floating lanterns, the interior design of the concert

hall will represent the return of spring and the reunion of family. Through the assistance of Bowers Museum, children will also have the opportunity to create their own lantern with colored markers to take home or display at the festival.

In order to compensate for last year's online event, the festival will feature an assortment of musical performances and interactive activities. Similar

to previous years, families can participate in cultural activities such as calligraphy, riddle-solving, Chinese knotting classes and Taiwanese puppet shows. Pacific Symphony will also include performances by the Irvine Chinese Choir String Ensemble, a demonstration of tai chi and a traditional lion dance as an Asian tradition.

Through the continuation of this event, the organizations

strive to inspire, engage and serve members of Orange County through musical displays of the Asian culture, Pacific Symphony President John Forsythe said.

"Through this partnership, we are thrilled to celebrate a wonderful cultural tradition," Forsythe said. "Our mission for the lantern festival is to illuminate the human spirit and when we're all together, enjoying the arts, that is what we experience."

Student Speaker Contest

By Jamie Lee
STAFF WRITER

The Leo Club held a Student Speaker Contest at Hope International University after school Feb. 7.

As the club's largest event, Leo Club invited all Warriors to compete against each other for the first round. During the competition, students prepared a ten-minute impromptu speech for the judges panel. All students delivered speeches that revolved around the theme of the power of kindness.

After students completed their speeches, the judges assigned a score out of ten points based on content and clarity. Of the ten Warriors who entered the contest, sophomore Ariana Perez won the competition.

Perez earned the opportunity to compete at the zone-level contest where she will compete against Leo Club members from various high schools within the county.

Along with 35 clubs across the state, the Warrior Leo club works with the Multiple District 4 California Lions which oversees the seven zones of Orange, San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties. After the zone level event, the winners will join the members of clubs within the district to compete at the district level May 2.

After the contest, the club rewarded each participant with prizes including gift cards and cash. As the level of the contest proceeds, the students will have the opportunity to win more significant awards. The Lions Student Speakers Committee will award a scholarship of \$21,000 to the winner of the final round of competition.

In addition to volunteer opportunities, the club provides its members with a platform to practice their speech skills, President Mishty Dhekiyal said.

"The club hopes that the event gives Warriors some experience in public speaking and helps them re-furnish some skills that they're looking to work on," Dhekiyal said. "The board hopes to give the members a chance to participate in academic events along with volunteer services."



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF GOOGLE



Operation Smile

By Neya Jakan
STAFF WRITER

Encouraging students to express gratitude, Operation Smile club initiated a share-your-smile project in late January.

In order to spread positivity around campus, Warriors pasted messages that made them smile onto posters that will be available for the rest of the school year. In preparation for the activity, club members designed the posters during lunch and placed them in the library for students to participate.

Founded this year, Operation Smile club aims to raise funds for children with cleft lip and cleft palate in areas of poverty around the world. In an attempt to inform students about such issues, club members added a section about cleft lip and palate on the posters of the project.

According to President Maydha Kanchrakuntla, the board hopes to reduce stress among the Warrior

population. The goal of the project is to promote positive thinking on campus, Kanchrakuntla said.

"The purpose of this project is to create a more light-hearted environment because sometimes it can be stressful and overwhelming for a lot of students," Kanchrakuntla said. "Seeing something that made someone else smile could make [other students] smile and make the campus happier."

Given their economic condition, many children in underprivileged areas suffer from untreated cleft lip and cleft palate conditions, Kanchrakuntla said.

"We are raising awareness [through] short blurbs on the poster about what the club is doing and what we are raising funds for," Kanchrakuntla said. "Hopefully, we can get more people to join and help us in our mission."

College Board announces new digital format of SAT

Effective 2024, College Board's new digital SAT will reduce testing time from three to two hours.

By Erin Jang
STAFF WRITER

College Board announced modifications to the SAT's official format Jan. 25.

In an effort to increase efficiency, the new SAT test will be online with the length reduced from three to two hours. The test will consist of fewer problems to provide students more time to answer each question. College Board will officially implement the changes by 2024.

For safety precautions, College Board issued an online SAT exam in 2021. Based on the company's survey, teachers and proctors commented that digital tests were easier to administer compared to the traditional paper exams. With the digitization of exams, College Board will send score notifications in a few days compared to a few weeks.

In the new format, the passages in the reading section will be shorter and have one question each. The excerpts in the reading section will also cover a broader range of topics. For the math section, College Board will allow students to use a calculator during the entire section.

Despite the use of an online format, test takers will continue to need to take the exam at a

DIGITAL SAT

- Starting 2024 SAT will be shorter and take place online
- The test will be reduced from three to two hours long
- Math portion will be all calculator
- Reading sections will have shorter passages with one question each

GRAPHIC BY DAVID LEE

school or an official test center. Students can use their personal laptop or one provided by their school. In case students do not have the appropriate technology, College Board plans to provide a device on test day.

Besides the official SAT, the changes will also affect the Preliminary SAT, or the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, by 2024. For both exams, the scoring system will continue to follow the same scale. SAT Suite will preserve the College Board National Recognition Programs,

which aim to create college pathways for students who are historically underrepresented.

According to College Board, the digital exams allow for an easier and faster preparation process. Educators will not have to package, sort and ship the test materials while schools will have more flexibility with testing schedules, College Board said.

"The changes will also make the SAT more secure," College Board said. "Going digital allows every student to receive a unique test form, so it will be practically

impossible to share answers."

According to a recent survey, approximately 80% of the students preferred the online test as it was less stressful, Vice President of College Readiness Assessments at College Board Priscilla Rodriguez said.

"The digital SAT will be easier to take, easier to give, and more relevant," Rodriguez said. "We are not simply putting the current SAT on a digital platform. We are taking full advantage of what delivering an assessment digitally makes possible."

CLUB CORNER

Astronomy Club

Expanding Warriors' knowledge about the universe, Astronomy Club encourages a non-competitive environment in which members learn, observe and analyze astronomical concepts with their peers who share their passion for astronomy. During their bi-weekly meetings on Tuesdays, members discuss stars, planets, the solar system and astronomical phenomena.

Blockchain Club

In an effort to familiarize students with cryptocurrency, Blockchain Club strives to create a space for students to learn the basics of this novel field as well as various security protocols associated with usage of cryptocurrency. Board members also lead discussions about the process of cryptocurrency mining. The club holds weekly after school meetings on Mondays in room 527.

G.I.V.E Club

With the motto of "Give, inspire, volunteer, educate," GIVE Club provides free music and academic tutor support for underprivileged students through grades one to eight. Members participate in weekly volunteer sessions through Zoom or at the Fullerton Boys and Girls Club. Warriors also have the opportunity to participate in their online benefit concerts and various local service projects. The club holds lunch meetings every Friday in Room 314.

Humanity First Club

As an internationally-recognized relief agency, Humanity First Club provides immediate aid to those in need across the globe. Members of the club aim to serve economically-disadvantaged individuals and families in disaster-struck areas along with various marginalized communities. Students can earn volunteer hours during their meetings every other Thursday in Room 1001.

Teaching International English Club

Founded this school year, TIE Club is dedicated to teaching English to young students around the world. Through the volunteer experience, board members hope to augment the intercultural experience of Warriors and broaden the scope of their perspectives. Students have the options to contribute as a teacher or as a curriculum writer.

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Enthusiastic Educator!

Education Specialist Morgann Teeter kept her students engaged during online school by starting a Harry Potter book club outside of the classroom.

Compiled by Diya Patel, NEWS EDITOR, article by Kaelyn Kwon, STAFF WRITER, cartoon by Kaila Perlas, CARTOON, photos courtesy of Google



Warrior education specialist Morgann Teeter received a Class Act recognition from Good Morning America Feb. 3.

In partnership with the company Babylist, GMA presented Teeter with a \$2,000 gift to store Five Below and a \$10,000 college fund contribution for Teeter's expected child. As a part of their monthly program, GMA's Class Act segment spotlights educators who go beyond expected contributions for their students.

As a special education teacher since 2016, Teeter teaches students with moderate to severe disabilities. Before joining the Warriors, she taught English Composition and American Sign Language at University of California, Irvine.

In the future, Teeter plans to use the reward money to buy classroom materials and fidget toys, such as popits, water beads and slime. Teeter also will use the extra funds to buy equipment for new classmates instead of waiting for the school's mail order.

In order to highlight her efforts to engage students, GMA focused

on Teeter's Harry Potter book club over Zoom. Each Monday, Teeter read a chapter of the book after school for interested students. In addition, the club watched the first film and created Harry Potter-themed crafts, such as trading cards and wands.

According to Teeter, she learned to be more creative and adapt to a new teaching style in order to connect with students. During distance learning, each subject lasted 30 minutes, so making students feel involved while completely online was a challenge, Teeter said.

"[Before the pandemic,] I did not use a lot of technology in my classroom since many of my students spent a lot of free time on their devices," Teeter said. "Having fun activities and opportunities like the Harry Potter club was a positive thing for a lot of the students who came."

Due to fine motor disabilities, some students were unable to use their technology, such as chromebooks and video calls. In order to help students adjust to the new circumstances, Teeter explained various applications to the

families, parent Carla Spielman said.

"My son can get frustrated when his communication device isn't working properly," Spielman said. "But Morgann has handled everything with such grace and love. I don't think my son suffered for one day, and I know it's because Morgann was there. It has just been a terrific experience working with her."

Currently, Teeter continues to hold the Harry Potter book club once a week. The club continues to be an opportunity for students to connect with each other outside of the classroom setting, Teeter said.

"To me, teaching is helping students realize that they can [achieve their goals]," Teeter said. "I have students that come in and know they have a harder time with academics, and that can be a very defeatist thing. I really think my job is to motivate students and help them realize that they can do it."



TROY WORD SEARCH!

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3. business
4. cambridge
5. computer science
6. cybersecurity
7. english
8. flower mural
9. history
10. ib diploma
11. ilium
12. library
13. mathematics
14. njrotc
15. omnia
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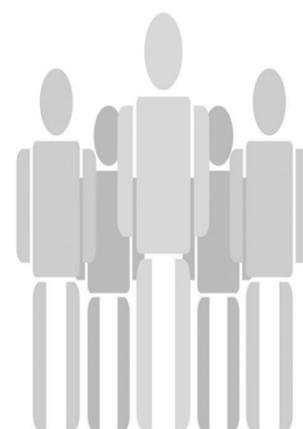
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HUGE AUDIENCE



COLLEGE COMMITTED

While the class of 2022 scholars gradually wrap up their college applications, the athletes of 2022 finalize their agreements to play on the collegiate level. Read more to learn about the Warriors who announced their commitments on signing day!

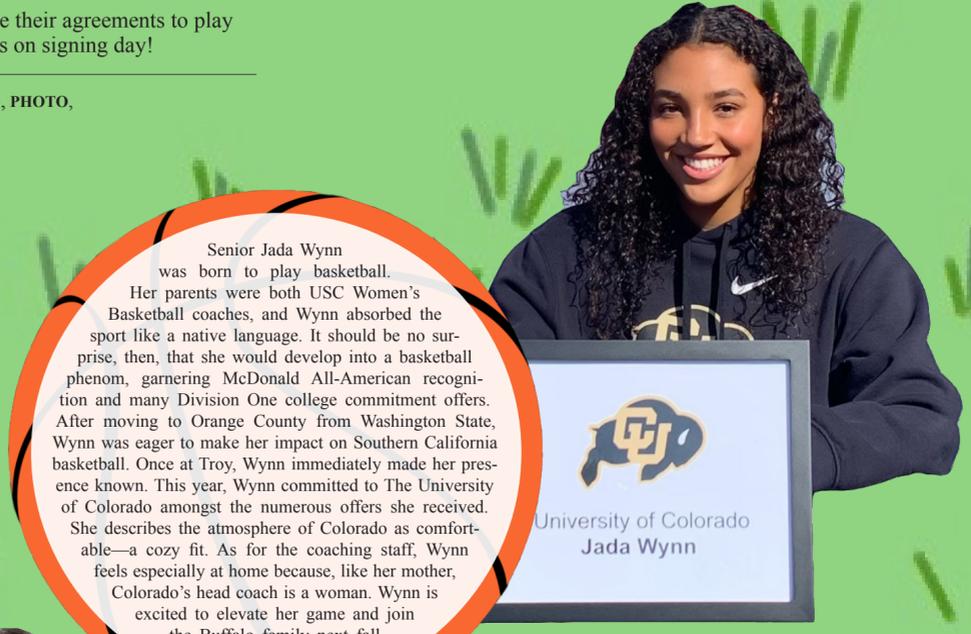
Compiled by Jacqueline Liu, SPORTS EDITOR, cartoons by Kaila Perlas, CARTOON, photos by Tiffany Vo, PHOTO, pictures courtesy of Google



Senior Nathan Tseng has an unrivaled passion for golf. From as early as six years old, Tseng has learned the ins and outs of golf. Tseng's dad played an integral role in his athletic development, encouraging him to compete in many high-level tournaments beginning at a young age. While many would shy away from the fierce competition typical of boys golf, Tseng embraces it with refreshing alacrity. This fearlessness elevated his game, allowing him to climb to the rank of 250 in the nation. He garnered much interest from colleges with boys golf Division One programs, and ultimately signed to the University of California San Diego. UCSD's formidable golf program and abundance of beautiful courses led Tseng to commit. In college, he looks forward to playing better competition, hoping to improve enough to earn a spot in the Professional Golf Association qualifiers in the future.



Dedicated to the mastery of golf since the young age of four, senior Gabriella "Gabby" Kano, a two-time holder of the MVP title in the Troy girls golf team, is a gifted athlete whose talents have garnered interest from several colleges with Division One golf programs. As a rising alumnus of Troy's varsity golf team, Kano played an integral role in the success of the program, helping the team reach CIF state competition twice during her tenure. Impressed by her strong performances and elite skills, the University of Nevada Reno was among the colleges that reached out with the intention of securing her signature. The school's consistently great weather, knowledgeable coaches and variety of golfing facilities greatly appealed to Kano, prompting her to accept the offer. As a future member of the Wolf Pack, Kano is excited to work on her craft and compete on the collegiate level.



Senior Jada Wynn was born to play basketball. Her parents were both USC Women's Basketball coaches, and Wynn absorbed the sport like a native language. It should be no surprise, then, that she would develop into a basketball phenom, garnering McDonald All-American recognition and many Division One college commitment offers. After moving to Orange County from Washington State, Wynn was eager to make her impact on Southern California basketball. Once at Troy, Wynn immediately made her presence known. This year, Wynn committed to The University of Colorado amongst the numerous offers she received. She describes the atmosphere of Colorado as comfortable—a cozy fit. As for the coaching staff, Wynn feels especially at home because, like her mother, Colorado's head coach is a woman. Wynn is excited to elevate her game and join the Buffalo family next fall in Colorado.



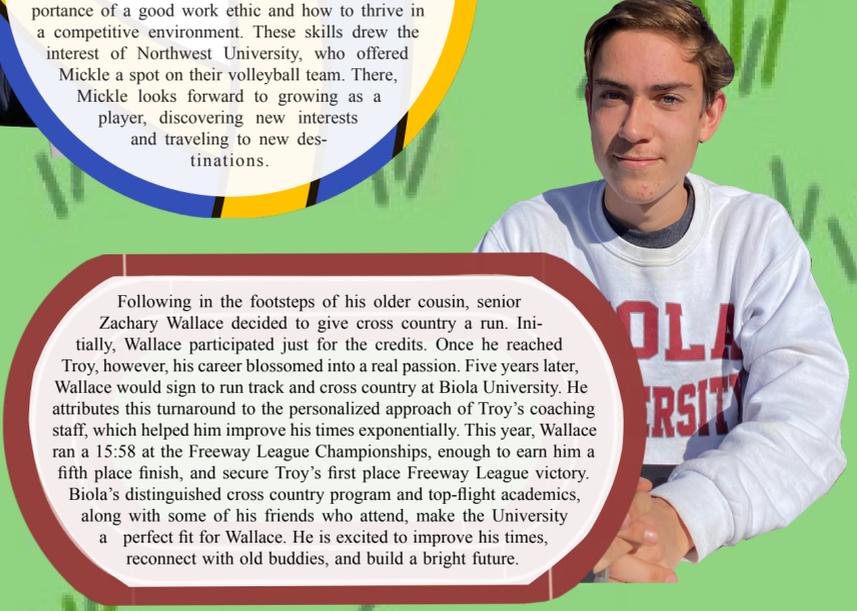
To basketball star Aliyah Gonzalez, dribbling is as natural as walking. Gonzalez first picked up basketball at age seven and she's been hooked ever since. In middle school, she participated in a variety of prestigious club teams where she met several teammates who recruited her to play for Troy. Once here, Gonzalez had a breakthrough season her sophomore year, when she led a memorable CIF campaign. After a solid four years at Troy, college coaches took interest in Gonzales. Unfortunately, she tore her ACL this year, which prematurely ended her senior season and made colleges hesitant to offer her. It would be Hope International University that finally gave her a shot to play basketball at the next level. She looks forward to playing in college, hoping to rehabilitate back to full health by next season and seize the opportunity that HIU gave her.



The current Troy record-holder for the most threes in a single game with nine triples, senior Isabella "Bella" Pearson, will continue her record-setting play at Westmont College. Pearson fell in love with basketball in the fourth grade, setting aside her gymnastics and running endeavors to focus solely on the sport. Her passion continued to grow until she reached high school, where she joined Troy's varsity girls basketball team. As a member of varsity, Pearson honed her skills by training and playing in high-level competitions, which she believes was critical for her development as a player. Pearson is proud to reap the benefits of her hard work as she joins the Westmont Warrior family and looks forward to building relationships with her new teammates.



Senior Kaitlyn Mickle first discovered the joy of volleyball ten years ago when she visited the local YMCA on a whim. Fast forward to today, she has now committed to play for Northwest University in Washington. To get to her current level, Mickle has spent the last four years in high school developing her skills and showcasing her talents on Troy's varsity team as well as her club team, Proplay. Her time at Troy taught her the importance of a good work ethic and how to thrive in a competitive environment. These skills drew the interest of Northwest University, who offered Mickle a spot on their volleyball team. There, Mickle looks forward to growing as a player, discovering new interests and traveling to new destinations.



Following in the footsteps of his older cousin, senior Zachary Wallace decided to give cross country a run. Initially, Wallace participated just for the credits. Once he reached Troy, however, his career blossomed into a real passion. Five years later, Wallace would sign to run track and cross country at Biola University. He attributes this turnaround to the personalized approach of Troy's coaching staff, which helped him improve his times exponentially. This year, Wallace ran a 15:58 at the Freeway League Championships, enough to earn him a fifth place finish, and secure Troy's first place Freeway League victory. Biola's distinguished cross country program and top-flight academics, along with some of his friends who attend, make the University a perfect fit for Wallace. He is excited to improve his times, reconnect with old buddies, and build a bright future.

Overpriced summer programs for high school students are overwhelmingly overrated

By Mai Omoto
STAFF WRITER



High-end summer programs come with an even higher price tag.

As many summer programs release application forms for their pre-collegiate programs, thousands of high school students nationwide will spend the next few months trying to secure a position. Hundreds of colleges, including Stanford University and Harvard University, offer summer programs to high school students. Because of the rigorous curriculums, many students assume that these programs will greatly benefit their college applications; however, these costly programs are not as impressive as they may initially seem.

Colleges often use their names to inflate the prices of their summer programs. Harvard University hosts a seven-week program that offers college credit to students from 10th to 12th grade. This program offers a variety of lectures and offers enrichment activities such as college counseling Q&A sessions. However, this program costs \$13,200, excluding the \$75 application fee and \$200 health insurance fee. This program is extremely overpriced and, like all other summer

programs, certainly does not guarantee admission to the university.

The exorbitant costs of these summer programs will put many families in great financial strain. According to the 2019 United States Census Bureau, the average household income is \$79,900. This means that this Harvard summer program constitutes nearly 17% of a family's income. While students may apply for financial aid, this funding rarely covers the entire cost. Educational opportunities should be equally accessible to all students, but these expensive programs cater toward those who are privileged enough to be able to afford them.

Summer programs take advantage of students' insecurities regarding their college applications and attempt to leech excessive amounts of money from families. According to a Brown University administrator, the school's summer program profited \$6 million in 2015. With only 30% of this revenue used for expenses, it is clear that summer programs are widely overpriced.

Contrary to popular belief, participation in a college's summer program does not increase the chance of admission into the school. A former admissions officer for the University of Pennsylvania reported that students who demonstrate

"academic adequacy" and can afford the tuition are likely to be accepted into the summer program. Because of the large admissions numbers, the likelihood of impressing an admissions officer with this experience decreases.

A cheaper alternative that gives similar experiences would be summer classes at a local community college. The price is far more reasonable and still allows students to explore courses not offered at the high school level. If students put less emphasis on college names and more on learning opportunities, they will have greater freedom to explore their interests at a more reasonable price.

There is no doubt that these programs present students with opportunities that are not usually

SUMMER COLLEGE PROGRAMS *for high schoolers*

Stanford \$1,149-\$4,649
The World's #1 STEM Camp
Open to children and students who want to work with software and hardware. Located in Palo Alto, Calif.

Harvard \$3,500-\$13,200
+\$75 application fee
High school students are given the opportunity to experience college. They are offered college classes, participation in social events, and dorming.

UCLA \$1,049-\$4,549
UCLA offers a variety of college classes including Abnormal Psychology, Criminal Psychology, Film, 3D Design & Painting, Fashion Design, Forensic Science, etc.

GRAPHIC BY DANIELA KRISTEN HERRERA

offered in high school. However, these programs are certainly not necessary to be admitted into one's dream college. Students looking to pad their resumes should look into other opportunities to pursue their passions and make the most of their summers.

A supreme problem: the Supreme Court confirmation process corrupted by politics

By Manal Ahmed
STAFF WRITER



The Supreme Court is no longer immune to the growing clutches of politics.

Liberal Justice Stephen Breyer confirmed Jan. 26 that he will retire from his 28-year-old tenure on the Supreme Court of the United States. With a Democratic president in office, it is certain that a new liberal judge will replace Breyer, preserving the balance of political voices in the Court. Generally, the decision to replace a justice is believed to be monumental and

game-changing. However, in reality, Breyer's decision to retire will not affect current landmark cases and will instead reveal how politics have corrupted the judicial nomination process.

Breyer's decision to retire during President Biden's term blatantly showcases the political corruption in the SCOTUS.

The decision to retire seems preempted by new political efforts urging older justices to step down so younger justices may take their positions.

This political move intends to avoid the

mistake that late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg made. The former liberal justice could have retired during President Barack Obama's term, but she stayed on the Court and passed away during her 27th year in 2020. This allowed former President Trump to fill her spot with a conservative judge, increasing the disparity between the conservative majority and liberal minority.

Breyer's retirement itself means little for the current landmark cases, as most important court decisions will have already been made by the end of his term. Even with Breyer's replacement, the overwhelming conservative majority will still hold, prefacing a future of mostly right-leaning political SCOTUS decisions.

National abortion laws are currently being reconsidered by the Supreme Court. Historically, conservatives have opposed women's abortion rights due to religious and ethical reasons. This gives

reason to believe that the current majorly conservative SCOTUS will overrule *Roe v. Wade*, which guarantees abortion rights in the United States. The outcome of this issue, which will affect millions of women's reproductive rights, has essentially already been decided, and it would

not have changed regardless of Justice Breyer's retirement.

Biden's selection process for the incoming new justice will not promote racial diversity and gender equality like he promises, but instead generate backlash against him. The President stated that his selection pool of candidates would consist of solely Black female judges. There is no doubt that Biden's selected candidates are qualified and ready for the position. However their political standing and career achievements are not placed at the forefront, and their efforts are shrouded by their appearances.

Although this practice will expand the diversity of the Supreme Court, as Biden promised during his 2020 presidential campaign, it suggests that these Black female individuals are unable to earn a position based on solely their merit and must rely on their gender or racial identities. The current backlash against this selection process only seeks to further divide and cause controversy, undermining the entire purpose of the selection process for the new justice.

Breyer's retirement comes at a time of great political division. Ultimately, his retirement changes little in regards to future decisions and instead reveals the infiltration of politics in our justice system.

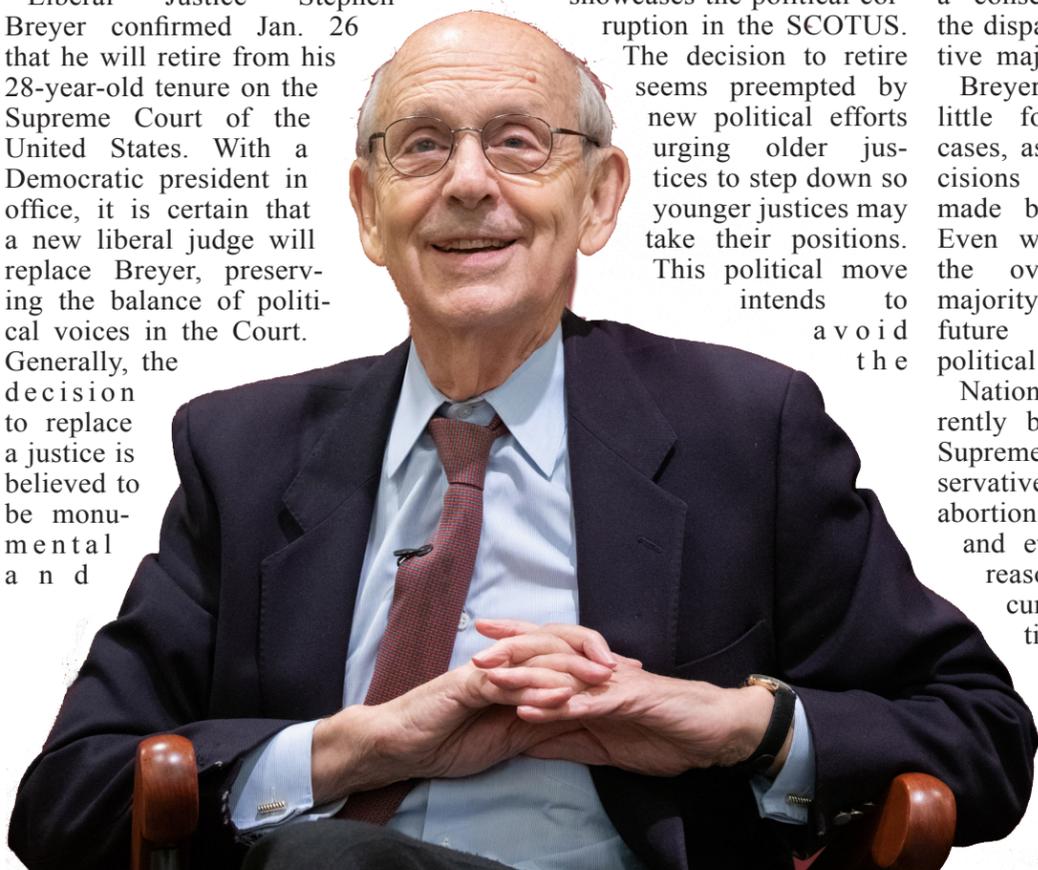


PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE

Correcting the discriminatory justice system: Closing down correctional facilities benefits all

By Audrey Na
STAFF WRITER



Correctional facilities need to be locked up for good. The California government plans to close two correctional facilities by July: the Deuel Vocational Institution in San Joaquin County, which closed Sept. 30, and the California Correctional Center in Susanville, Calif. which will be closed by June. For over 50 years, thousands of residents in Susanville have depended on the CCC for employment. However, residents should not have to rely on a corrupt justice system for financial security. Although the abrupt closure of the CCC may result in less job opportunities, it is a step in the right direction and will help address the abusive nature of the prison system.

Prisons may benefit small rural towns whose residents are in need of jobs, but the money saved from prison closures would benefit communities more. The California Legislative Analyst's Office states that closing the CCC could save Californians \$173 million per year. The saved money could be spent on social services and healthcare for residents. These programs, which are vital to

towns, would support struggling communities and improve the quality of life for many.

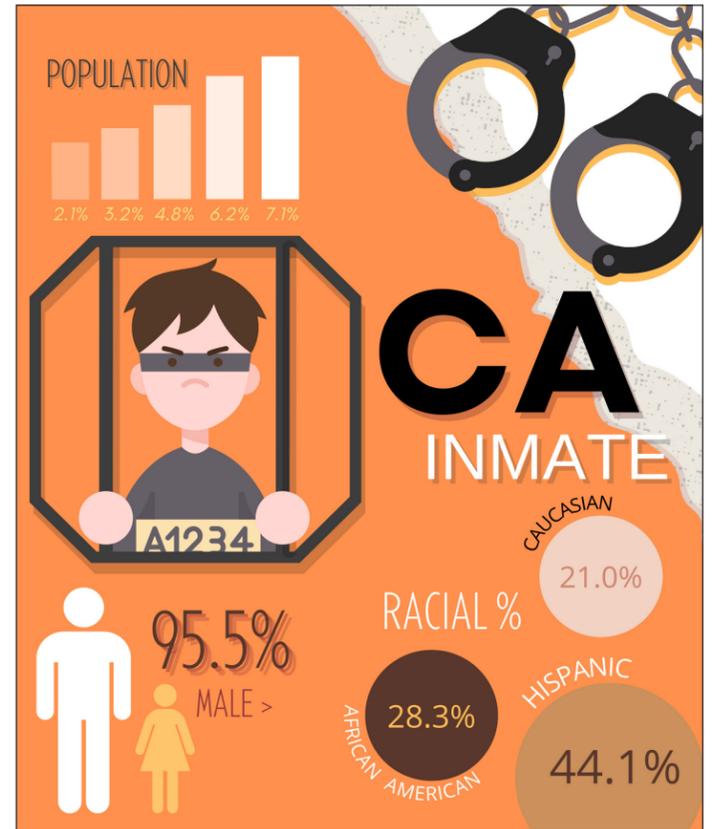
Not to mention, prisons operate on a justice system that disproportionately affects people of color. According to the Sentencing Project, Black adults are 5.9 times more likely to be imprisoned than white adults, while Hispanic adults are 3.1 times more likely. This statistic suggests that people are more likely to commit crimes; however, they are unjustly convicted more often due to the over-policing of their neighborhoods. Mass incarceration due to racial prejudice must be addressed. With the closure of these facilities, the government can start taking measures to reform the system.

Additionally, the high-stress environment within these correctional facilities offers little support for struggling workers. A 2011 study from National Institute of Corrections author Caterina Spinaris showed that 34% of correctional officers are susceptible to developing post-traumatic stress disorder, compared to 14% of military officers. On top of this, correctional officers are often in a state of hyper-vigilance, which can lead to depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. This statistic is unacceptable and horrifying—

mental health should not be sacrificed for a paycheck.

Moreover, prison environments are especially detrimental for inmates. The National Library of Medicine found that incarceration is heavily associated with mental health disorders, such as depression, bipolar disorder, and dysthymia. Inmates who suffer from these disorders also have a higher risk of substance abuse and impulse control once they are released from prison. An institution that clearly harms the mental state of those inside does not deserve to have its doors open.

Small towns that rely on prison economies need to recognize that these institutions create unhealthy



GRAPHIC BY DANIELA KRISTEN HERRERA

environments for both inmates and staff. Prisons are meant to protect citizens and improve communities, yet, they have instead become institutions of abuse. It is time that a number of correctional institutions close, for the betterment of both inmates and workers.

mark my words

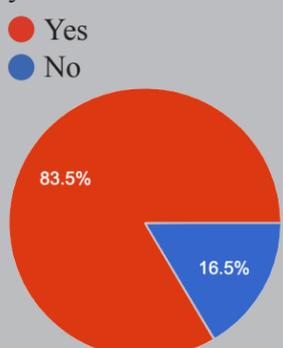
Warriors speak out on campus issues

Read what our Warriors have to say regarding the current coronavirus policies at Troy.

“An extended break or absence should not have to involve getting a rundown of days or weeks-worth of material in one afternoon.”
- Anonymous sophomore

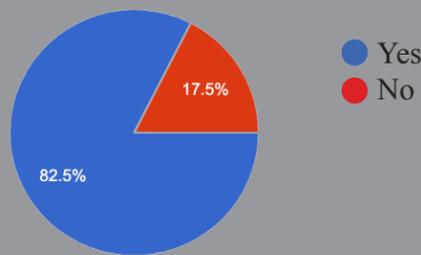
“The only reason I wear a mask is because it’s school policy. It is a rule that is not negotiable and I, in other words, am forced to. Again, I see no need to wear one.”
- Joshua Williams, junior

If FJUHS D no longer requires masks, would you still wear one?



“Living with grandparents, therefore for their safety and mine I will continue to wear masks.”
- Kyle Yang, senior

Should online Zoom classes be available for students who cannot come to class because they have tested positive for COVID-19?



“However, [offering online classes] may incentivize children to just stay at home and not bother coming to school.”
- Joshua Kim, freshman

“It is simply unfair to punish students for not being able to attend by forcing them to make up work on their own.”
- James Lopez, sophomore

“Troy’s classes are notoriously difficult and fast paced, causing many students to take the risk of infecting others to save their grade.”
- Anonymous junior

“After more than two years of this pandemic, I feel naked without a mask.”
- Zoey Bahng, freshman

“I have heard and seen multiple people wearing their masks improperly during class time. I feel as though teachers could, in some way, better enforce the mask mandate. Although many places are getting rid of their mask mandate, I think that wearing a mask should be enforced even more nowadays. I also think another rule should be that everyone should be vaccinated, if anyone isn’t vaccinated already.”

- Anonymous freshman

The metaverse is a new virtual frontier that is more dangerous than we may think

By Brian Woo
STAFF WRITER



The metaverse seems one step away from becoming a reality to the general public.

The metaverse is a young and still developing entity that will connect the digital and physical worlds and is often portrayed as a revolutionary development

in our interaction with technology. Despite the potential of the metaverse and the advancements

“The metaverse can worsen issues including cyberbullying, loneliness, negative body images and depression.”

it can propel, it is a widely undiscovered territory and thus must be approached with caution.

The effects of the metaverse on mental health are unknown and need to be addressed in the near future. Issues including cyberbullying, loneliness, negative body images and depression are common throughout the internet and the metaverse can make these mental issues worse. The nonprofit organization Mental Health America states that adolescents who struggle with internet addiction often suffer from other problems such as alcohol and substance abuse, depression, suicidal ideation, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and schizophrenia. Currently, the metaverse does not offer adequate protection to the increasing mental health issues. With no apparent way to prevent or help mental health

issues, the metaverse must be approached with wariness.

Additionally, in the virtual world, minors are regularly exposed to unsolicited sexual content, racist and violent language and other forms of harassment. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2018 indicated that 59 percent of American teens have experienced cyberbullying online. Cyber-harassment has evidently been a persistent issue on the Internet, and measures should

be taken to address this in the metaverse. Without any current measures in the metaverse to address the issue of

cyberbullying, it is clear that virtual detriments mental health will only be exacerbated by the mataverse.

The real world and the virtual world should be left distinct. The creators of the metaverse must address the need for physical care, as being too immersed in the virtual world can potentially harm users. One extreme case in September of 2005 is a man who died after playing 50 consecutive hours of battle game simulations. Humans still need to exercise and eat to maintain their health, but if the real world overlaps with the virtual one, it will become more difficult to respond to the physical body’s demands.

Although the metaverse is intended to benefit all people it is apparent that it will serve as only a business opportunity for big tech companies. With the introduction of the



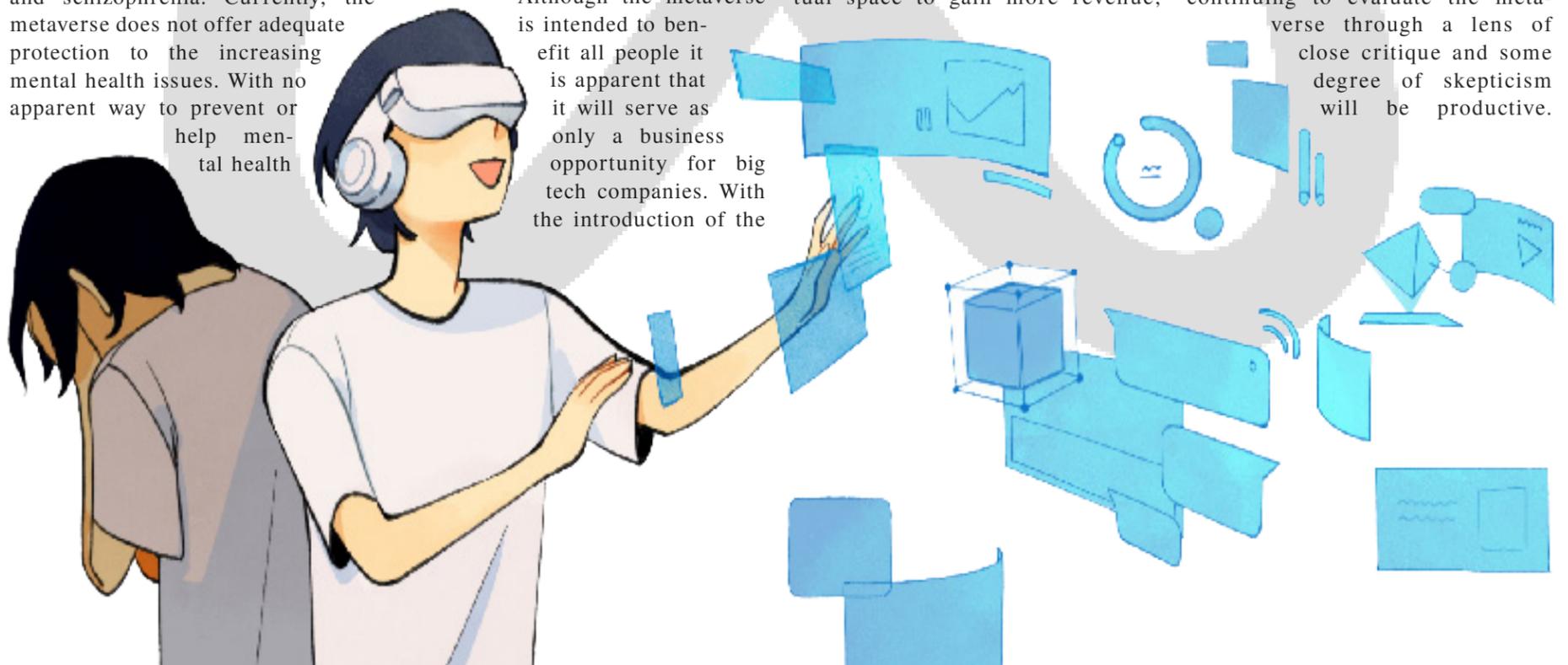
IMAGE COURTESY OF GOOGLE

metaverse, businesses are pushing out new initiatives advocating for investment in the digital world. Some examples include Nvidia’s Omniverse Enterprise, Meta’s Horizon Workrooms, and Microsoft’s Mesh. Forbes also points out that the metaverse is expected to hit a net worth of \$800 billion by 2024 and reach 1 billion people by 2030.

From this substantial economic opportunity, it is not difficult to identify that the metaverse is driven more by profit than driven by a desire to benefit human society as a whole. By capitalizing on the virtual space to gain more revenue,

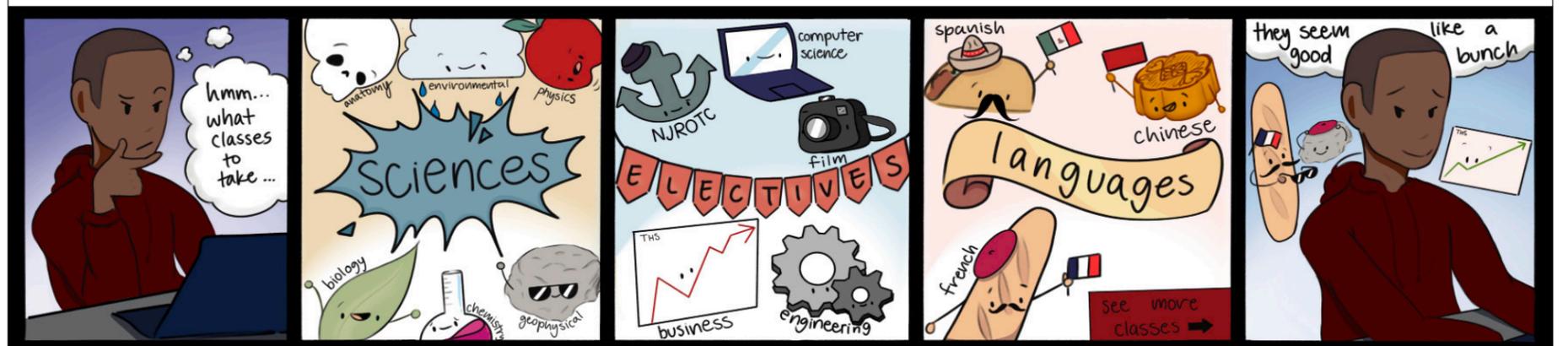
metaverse developers are not putting their users first. The profit-prioritized nature of the metaverse calls into question the extent of trust to which the general public can put in this new virtual sphere.

Especially as an uncharted virtual territory, the metaverse requires great caution in its establishment. As exciting as the development of the metaverse may seem, the public should remain wary of the potential dangers with the metaverse. We may not be ready for the new virtual waters as it stands now, but continuing to evaluate the metaverse through a lens of close critique and some degree of skepticism will be productive.



CARTOON BY PEARLYOON

Scheduling Season by Kaila Perlas



GO WITH THE FLOW

Let's not wait till that time of the month to talk about the bloody truth. Read more to learn about the menstrual makeover that will redefine period power.

Compiled by Isabelle Liang, ENTERTAINMENT AND LIFESTYLE EDITOR, article by Kira Chen, STAFF WRITER, cartoons by Kirsten Dingson, CARTOON, photos courtesy of Google



FEBRUARY

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

Half of the world has a period, yet no one wants to talk about it. Though menstruation is a shared experience for all females, it remains one of society's most euphemized concerns, and it is up to our generation to shatter its stigma.

Shrouded in taboos and misconceptions, our cultural narratives are perpetuated by the way periods have been presented in mass media. When menstruation appears on screen, events often drip in drama, depicting the process as being catastrophic and women as irrational. Girls are taught the art of concealment at an early age through hiding tampons covering up stains. In developing nations, less than a quarter of menstruators have access to adequate restroom facilities and supplies. Menstruation shouldn't impede woman's progress. With awareness, we can help correct misinformation and lift the shame from the shoulders of those who menstruate.

Period symptoms have a history of making it difficult for girls to maintain their everyday routines. Mood swings and exhaustion are not easily visible and few

women have the chance to discuss their menstrual cycles with friends as they believe their experiences are just a part of normal life. Emojis play a crucial role in this generation's digital vocabulary, and what better way to tear stigma by communicating through text? The blood drop emoji—dubbed the period emoji—has sent ripples in mainstream media through one message: periods are not shameful. While the addition of a small icon may seem like an unnoticeable change, representation in emoji form promotes accessible conversation around the natural occurrence. A period emoji encourages girls to be more open with their problems, and while it won't solve all problems, it is certainly a step in the right direction.

There is new blood in the period industry. Leading the way to sustainability, NatraCare is the world's first producer of cotton tampons. The plastic-free company offers a wide array of biodegradable products free from perfumes and chlorine, ensuring that there are no harsh chemicals rubbing against people's skin. Finding stylish yet safe products can be as pain-

ful as period cramps—Blume changes that. The subscription service provides a pick-and-mix package where consumers can choose complementary goods such as essential oils for cramps and face sprays for hot sweats. Through their cohesive line of products, Blume's comprehensive approach allows girls to feel heard and empowered in this isolating time. Everything about August's image can be summed up in a drop. The company caters to our media-centered lifestyle by offering a medically-verified page where girls can engage in a period inclusive community. With each purchase, August donates menstrual products to underserved schools so that teens have the necessary supplies to maintain proper hygiene. From gory to glory, this new generation of products are no longer hiding in the back, they are on full display.

Young people are not afraid to get their hands dirty when tackling menstruation. Through increasing education and candid conversations, periods may one day no longer be a taboo but a celebration for the natural experience that it is. Menstruation is powerful and we should embrace it. Period.



Powerhouse Period Products



The mission of August is to give back. For every amount purchased from August by companies, the same amount is stocked in under-served schools.



Blume wants to destigmatize periods and set a new standard for being healthy by approaching periods with the message of empowerment and self-care.



NatraCare stresses products that are natural and effective. All products are made from organic cotton and come with plastic-free packaging that is biodegradable.



Dancing Dreamscape

Stories are not always told with words: they can be brought to life through delicate twists, elegant twirls and a swish of vibrant red silks. Read more about Fan Gao and her Chinese folk dancing below!

Compiled by Coco Gong, **FEATURE EDITOR**, article by Mary Kim, **STAFF WRITER**, and photos courtesy of Fan Gao and Google

A heartbeat of silence. The flash of a spotlight followed by a chorus of warbling voices. The heavy beat of drums, and then, with a precise flick of her wrist, junior Fan Gao waves an arc of vibrant red silk above her head. Concentrating on every motion, she immerses herself into the melody of the music, moving in elegant unity with her teammates. Merging traditional Chinese aesthetics with modern dancing techniques, Gao gracefully performs the Chinese Handkerchief dance, an ode to her culture. Her prowess is twofold; first, a physical mastery of the moves, and second, her emotional connection to the dance. Gao's precise movements are a reflection of hours of arduous practice, while her animated facial expressions imbue the personality of the dance. A meaningful, yet wordless communication, her Chinese folk choreographies are one of many avenues of culture.

Her journey began as a little girl attending her first dance lesson, toddling around the studio with its crystal mirrors and polished floors. 15 years later, she has received first place awards at various competitions around the country, like Double-Platinum at the Showstopper. Since her

first encounter with Chinese folk dancing, Gao has told countless tales of history. Every dance with its swirling props and colorful costumes is an interpretation of popular dance styles developed during the Han Dynasty and passed down over thousands of years. Focusing on directing power through the body, her controlled hand gestures and twirls offer a dazzling glimpse into this complex and ancient civilization.

"[It] tells a story, an ancient Chinese story," Gao said. "I hope they [the audience] can learn Chinese culture from the dances."

Beneath the surface level artistry, an intense emotional aspect lies in cultural dancing. Many folk styles deviate from the stereotypical dance, with the Chinese proverb 'metal and silk' accurately communicating the feeling of these performances. While smooth and beautiful on the outside, like silk, each dance also requires internal determination and discipline, like metal. This represents many storylines Gao portrays, one of her favorites being the legend of a girl waiting for her husband to return home from war. Set in ancient China, Gao relays the fear of losing a loved one with anguished and woe-filled facial expressions while si-

multaneously maintaining perfect form, each motion flowing to the next. Thousands of years of stories are represented in a few minutes of dance, a praiseworthy feat.

"When I dance, I try to express the feeling [of the dance]," Gao said. "Chinese folk dances have a lot of cultural backgrounds, it's very different from American dance."

With flawless turns and poised pivots under her belt, Gao is a master of rhythmic Chinese maneuvers. Nonetheless, no matter how effortless she appears, these skills have taken years of training to master. After grueling hours of rigorous stretching and flexibility exercises, Gao trains with hard-earned stamina yet still performs with a sparkling smile on her face. Absorbing the thunderous applause after each performance, Gao affirms the audience of her skillful talent and brings a colorful routine that fits perfectly with each touching tale. Every dance paints a picture of grace and strength, an earnest testament of her mental and physical flexibility.

"Hard work always pays off every single time," Gao said. "Push through, although it might be hard sometimes, the outcome is definitely worth it."



FLAWLESS FORM: Junior Fan Gao's effortless pose is the result of countless hours of hard work and perseverance.