Dear Readers,

For some of you, this might be your first time receiving an issue of C Magazine. In the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak, school closures and the shelter-in-place order, our staff has chosen to sacrifice our usual, beloved glossy pages so that we could mail this issue to Paly students’ homes. Fortunately, this means that many members of the Paly community might be getting their first glimpse of a magazine that is typically only distributed on campus. While this has been a stressful time, we sincerely hope that this magazine serves as a bright spot in your day. We applaud our staff members for creatively navigating the challenges of working remotely in order to see this April 2020 issue through. Most of all, we are deeply appreciative of the doctors, nurses and essential workers who are putting their lives at risk in order to protect our community.

As Paly students, we are sad to have to spend this semester apart; as seniors, we’ve especially struggled to accept the fact that our time at Paly, and in this school district, is behind us. However, we are truly not apart, as we are connected both online and in spirit. As so passionate student journalists, we are beyond excited to share C Magazine with our community to help us all get through this difficult time together. To provide some normalcy, we decided to continue on with our original coverage of arts, culture and music rather than focusing on the current events that are engulfing our news and media.

Despite the cancellations of many major school events, we wanted to give students the opportunity to proudly wear and share what would have been their Prom 2020 outfits. Despite all the stress and sadness going around with the severity of this crisis, we wanted to take a moment to celebrate prom to represent the need to expand our exclusive partisan climate to differing thoughts and opinions. Created by Sam Mutz, the cover itself shows a bubble being popped, to represent the need to expand our exclusive partisan climate to differing thoughts and opinions. For the cover story, staff writers Alexa Gwyn, Sam Mutz, Atticus Scherer and Emma Stefanutti provide some normalcy, we decided to continue on with our original coverage of arts, culture and music rather than focusing on the current events that are engulfing our news and media.

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Happy reading!
Ellie Filton, Ashley Guo, Chloe Laursen and Hazel Shah
Editors-in-Chief

deanfitton, AshleyGuo, ChloeLaursen, HazelShah

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While there are the would’ves, could’ves, cancellations and uncertainties, prom is a significant high school experience that we don’t have to completely miss out on. For many, getting ready and taking photos is as much a part of prom as the dance itself. These Paly juniors and seniors brought out their would-be prom outfits to show that shelter-in-place doesn’t have to take away from the fun of prom. To our readers, we strongly encourage you stay at home and practice social distancing. In the meantime, kick back and enjoy these amazing prom outfits of 2020!

Text and design by ASHLEY GUO
Through her newly-launched brand, Reverie, fashion designer Ena Zou uses fashion as a unique art form, allowing for freedom of expression and style.

Surrounded by textiles of various colors and patterns, Paly senior Ena Zou quickly stitches fabrics together in hopes of repurposing the materials sprawled across her workspace. From old bed sheets, she sees the potential of a trendy skirt. From her father’s old pocket squares, she intends to make hand warmers for the winter. Zou sits at her sewing machine and works into the night, fueled by her commitment and a few cups of coffee.

Zou has had an interest in fashion for as long as she can remember. From a young age, she began pursuing her passion by sketching in a notebook, DIY-ing her clothes and watching fashion videos on YouTube. “I was drawn to all sorts of bright prints and designs and would go digging in my mom’s closet a little too often,” Zou said. “I was fascinated with the prints, colors, attention and detail that were put into each and every piece.”

At 10 years old, Zou was gifted her first sewing machine and began to gain a deeper understanding of the structural and artistic side of fashion. “From this point on, I spent a good amount of time sewing and altering anything I could get my hands on,” Zou said. Whether it be from her parents’ closet or a thrift store, Zou sees the underlying value of used articles of clothing or material and constantly strives to recycle and repurpose these fabrics.

Zou always dreamed of creating her own clothing line. Over the past two years, this dream slowly but surely became a reality. After emailing various clothing producers, Zou received a response from one based in Alameda, California, and they began working together to bring Zou’s vision to life. “I showed [the producer] a bunch of different sketches that I’d done in a little black book full of patterns and taped-in fabrics,” Zou said. “After looking at them, she gave me the whole overview of the process, which involved grading, marking, pattern-making and finally cutting the pieces into the actual production cycle.” After their original meeting, Zou and the producer kept in touch and met every five months to further discuss the project.
"If you find something you like, pursue and tinker with it."

Throughout these beginning stages of this process, Zou would constantly search for patterns and buy square-inch samples of fabrics online to test out different materials. Once Zou collected the fabrics she wanted her brand to feature, she gave them to the producer and the long process of the production cycle began. From one size, the samples were altered in increments to make different sizes, and Zou had to pay close attention to details that rarely would cross the minds of consumers. “I learned that there were a lot of small yet imperative aspects to clothing that I had never thought of before—I spent days thinking about the tiniest details,” Zou said. “The production cycle changed my perspective on how much attention is needed while designing simple pieces of clothing.”

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The production cycle of manufacturing the clothes ended around August of 2019, which allowed Zou to work on the other aspects of launching a brand. Using photos of her friends wearing her clothes, Zou worked on the website, and soon after, she registered for a business and sent her taxes to the state capital. Over the course of two and a half years, all while balancing the work of a busy high school student, Zou was able to successfully complete the process of creating a business. Her brand, Reverie, was officially launched at the beginning of March 2020. The style of clothing presented by Reverie reflects Zou’s own style and ongoing interest in fashion. “My type of fashion is bohemian with a lot of different prints and colors,” Zou said. “I’m into patterns, denim and funky shirts but nothing too crazy.” Through tops, skirts and bags, Reverie features various prints and unique pieces of clothing while prioritizing maximum comfort to the wearer.

The purpose of Zou’s brand directly relates to its name Reverie, meaning a daydream. “I hope to send a message of genuinely following your dreams,” Zou said. “If you find something you like, pursue and tinker with it.” For years, creating a business and fashion line was nothing more than a dream for Zou, but through hard work and determination, she was able to take her passion and make her dreams into reality.

Moving into the future, Zou hopes to expand her brand and reach more customers. “A lot of people wearing my clothes and having them in a couple of boutiques locally would be amazing,” Zou said. She recognizes, however, that there are possible struggles of juggling her brand and her future studies outside the world of fashion. “Another launch with the same pieces of different customizable tops with prints on them is the hope,” Zou said. “But making completely different patterns might be more difficult because of college.” As Zou transitions into the next stage of her life, she hopes to continue to build upon her interest in fashion and maintain this passion throughout her life.

“Follow your dreams,” Zou said. “And shop Reverie!”
The number of likes was once a key focal point of Instagram. However, that all changed with the recent launch of the Daisy Project, an initiative that targets to create a less pressurized environment by removing likes from the original Instagram program. But do likes truly influence people’s freedom and creativity with their artistic posts?

Although the Daisy Project allows only the creator to view how many likes they got on a post, creators of this new program claim that hiding likes will create an atmosphere where individuals are allowed to express their fullest creative potential without the fear of other people’s opinions. This would hopefully abolish the inevitable comparison of the quality of a post to the number of likes.

VSCO, as well as other social media platforms, never had likes as a feature of their site. Many believe that this opens to a safer environment where people feel more comfortable expressing themselves.

Mariia Pashchenke, an artist originally from Kyiv, Ukraine, allows her emotions and personal experiences to create paintings. Living in a media-filled world, Pashchenke must display her art on different platforms to target multiple types of audiences.

“There are so many things that I can’t say with words but I can show in my art. I love to draw and paint portraits because each time is a different character with my own story,” Pashchenke said. “Mostly I use VSCO, Instagram and Tumbl. Each of them is different because of people using each of them.”

For artists like Pashchenke who have a love for the arts, social media platforms such as VSCO provide an outlet where creators can freely express their visual art without the thought of how many likes a post will get obstructing one’s creative freedom.

“You don’t see how many people liked your work or how many followers you have,” Pashchenke said. “You just do what you love and share it with the world.”

Max Wolf, a photographer who constantly tests the limits for the perfect photo, has several years of experience with VSCO. He feels a distinct freedom for exploring and experimenting on VSCO due to its purpose and the design of the platform.

“I have had a great deal of success throughout the years on the VSCO platform; while I would imagine many of my select pieces have thousands of interactions and that my follower count likely matches over thousands, I do not have the numbers to support that,” Wolf said.

Wolf still does not feel the satisfaction of knowing the number of connections people make with his photos. While VSCO has proven to be an effective tool for Wolf to expand his art, Instagram is home to Wolf’s marketing side.

Although Instagram may simply be a social media outlet for many, it serves as an important platform for creators to interact with possible partners for business.

“Instagram is a masterful tool of marketing,” Wolf said. “It functions for an artist like myself as a clear and concise network for developing collaborative relationships and scouting for clients. It is likely my Instagram is visited far more than my website.”

Artists like Wolf support this new change to the like culture and find it much more beneficial, especially for those that use their social media platform for business purposes. This new program allows for these artists to “closely analyze the reception of [their] pieces on Instagram through its insight features—not in the name of gratification, not in the name of deciding which sorts of work are worth creating, but to build a strategy that ensures [their] work can expand its audience and that [they] can build a clientele and personal brand as an artist,” Wolf said.

Wolf believes that making likes private only to the creator allows the creator to get the most out of their post. Rather than conforming to the number of likes that are socially acceptable, artists could create new pieces of art without any limits.

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The essence of an arts magazine is in its design. But while the images and intricate shapes that scatter across the pages may be eye-catching and the main attraction, the artistry behind the design and fonts of the story is unexpectedly just as provoking. Different designs can call forth a range of emotions, even from a seemingly basic body text font. Decidingly simple, there is immense intricacy behind the choice of a font due to its power to set the tone of the entire story. In a study conducted by Wichita State University's Software Usability Research Laboratory, people perceived a varying array of fonts differently, labeling script fonts as "feminine" or "casual" while serif fonts were seen as "mature" or "practical." For better or for worse, an author's choice of font can impact readers' attention, the font is the base of a story that keeps audiences hooked on the content. Fonts are the ribbon that ties the entire package together.

"Depending on the kind of piece I'm working on, I go about choosing the typefaces to use considering the alternatives from both the technical and 'feeling' points of view."

Emil Steffanuti

"Designing a typeface—a really good one that can communicate something special and be technically sound—is not an easy task and definitively something only a handful of designers are, in my opinion, truly great at."

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Clearly, fonts are more complex than often perceived at first glance. Although an overall design may initially capture everything in between, a seemingly basic body text font can call forth a range of emotions, even from a seemingly basic body text font. Decidingly simple, there is immense intricacy behind the choice of a font due to its power to set the tone of the entire story. In a study conducted by Wichita State University's Software Usability Research Laboratory, people perceived a varying array of fonts differently, labeling script fonts as "feminine" or "casual" while serif fonts were seen as "mature" or "practical." For better or for worse, an author's choice of font can impact readers' attention, the font is the base of a story that keeps audiences hooked on the content. Fonts are the ribbon that ties the entire package together.
Androgynous fashion combines traditionally female and male items of clothing into a unisex outfit. In the 21st century, this neutral is growing in popularity, and the variety that comes with gender-fluid clothing allows for everyone to have a place in fashion regardless of gender identity.
As society becomes more inclusive, I see females wearing less feminine clothes and men wear less traditionally masculine clothes. Dana Toussieh

“Clothing serves as a primary means of nonverbal communication, signifying the identity—real, created and perceived—of designers and wearers.”

Michelle Tolini Finamore

...
Unexpected Love

It is crazy to think that someone could find the person they want to spend the rest of their life with in high school. How were they able to endure all of life’s challenges and still stay together for so long?

Miles was a junior in college that he heard from her again. “She was the only person I really cared about, and I said, you know what I’m done, I don’t want you to talk to me, call me, or contact me in any way, shape or form until you are ready to get married,” Miles Cohen said.

The idea of a teenager claiming to be in love may seem like an exaggeration, especially because a person’s brain is not fully developed until the age of 25. The question then stands, how can someone know who they want to spend the rest of their life with at 18 or younger? For many, it is a no-brainer—they simply are in love.

Although somewhat rare, the idea of marrying someone you met in high school is a real occurrence and is referred to as “high school sweethearts.” Cita and Miles Cohen are an example of this rare love story.

Cita and Miles Cohen are an example of this rare love story. Miles took his friend’s neighbor, Cita, to the homecoming dance when they were 14 years old. After a wonderful night dancing with one another, they decided to start a relationship. Two months later, things took an unexpected turn.

“He asked me to marry him. I was only 14!” Cita said.

At first Cita said yes, but then she became nervous about the commitment and called Miles the next day to ask if they could be “just friends.”

“Miles was a junior in college that he heard from her again. “She told me she wanted to meet and talk. ‘I hear so,’ I responded, ‘but I really don’t think I can see you until September, which is six months away,’ Miles said.

Cita then agreed to meet him six months in the future because she was determined to talk to him. Five minutes later her phone rings: “I’ve adjusted my schedule, I can see you this weekend,” Miles said.

That next weekend they met up and agreed to start things back up. After a long journey, and much time apart, they found their way back to each other, eventually getting married.

Miles and Cita’s love story is one that took its time to unravel, but for Nancy Schneider and George Putis, it was a whirlwind. These two met over 50 years ago, in the late ’60s, at Carlmont High School and are still deeply in love.

They sealed the deal in 1970 when Schneider was 18 and Putis was 19. Schneider noted that even 50 years ago, it was very uncommon for people to get married right after high school.

Although, complications with different colleges cause many high school relationships to end, Schneider and her partner find ways to overcome this. “Having lots of communication and knowing we each other to turn to through the hard times is what gets us through it all,” Schneider said.

Most agree that relationships are hard work and require commitment and work from both partners. Miles and Cita Cohen describe this partnership in terms of a tent and two poles.

“High school sweethearts will lead you to a 50-year-long marriage with the girl on the swim team. However, most agree that relationships require a lot of work such as cooperation and learning to hold oneself accountable, which may be hard for young individuals still maturing.

There are many routes to take in life, which leads to millions of unknown destinations. High school sweethearts will always be rare love stories that represent the mysteries of where life can take you.
In recent years, politics in the United States have become increasingly polarized, breeding hostility and distorting the fluid conversation which democracy thrives upon. Each party is villainized by the other; their views are dismissed as inherently wrong and used to assume individual character, often making the political minority of an area feel out of place or isolated.

Zooming in on California, it is safe to say that blue dominates most of the ballots, and at the heart of Silicon Valley, the apple does not fall far from the tree. But within this large political bubble lie some ideas that challenge those of the overwhelming majority.

At Palo Alto High School, the political scene is distinctly active with predominantly liberal students choosing to vocalize their views on current events. At the same time, however, the political climate often stifles unpopular, conservative views. Conservative students at Paly can face backlash for their stances on certain political issues, discouraging the open conversation which fuels progress and understanding.

Over her past eight years working with the Social Justice Pathway at Paly and as a US Government and Contemporary World History teacher, Caitlin Evans has witnessed first-hand the amount of social pressure that students with unpopular political opinions face. “We’ve become much more polarized than we ever have been before,” Evans said. “We definitely have students who are more moderate or conservative who have expressed to me that they feel like they can’t really voice their opinions very vocally at Paly because they will get trampled on by the general public.”

Considering the hugely liberal student demographic at Paly, it is understandable why more moderate or conservative students may feel uncomfortable expressing their views. In a survey of 111 Paly students conducted by C Magazine, approximately 80 percent of students affiliated themselves with the Democratic party, compared to a mere 8 percent of students who identified as Republicans, the remaining 12 percent defining themselves as Independent.

The pressures that come with diverging from a majority opinion are something that Evans attributes to people’s inherent desire to belong. “[When] we think that everybody else agrees with us, it’s a very safe place to be,” Evans said. “So I think that we don’t question ourselves as much.”

According to Evans, age may also play a significant role.
in the intolerance seen between differing political opinions. “Teenagers tend to be on the whole, a little black and white; it’s naturally where [they] are in development and thought process,” Evans said. “It’s very hard to see the gray areas when you’re young, and I think it’s much easier to be super polarized.”

For students, it’s often hard to provide concrete evidence for beliefs that are backed with only a couple years of life experiences. Generally, developing teenagers focus a lot of their attention on social acceptance which plays a part in the development of political beliefs. Chris Farina, an AP Psychology and history teacher at Paly, suggests that another important factor that may contribute to the divided political climate is confirmation bias.

Confirmation bias is when a person unconsciously seeks out information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs and disregards any information that may be contradictory to that. “People who already have more liberal views would look for information that confirms their pre-existing belief. Farina said. “If they did encounter information that contradicted it, they would disqualify or devalue that information; they wouldn’t weigh it equally as whatever information they found that does confirm the beliefs they have.”

Due to confirmation biases, people struggle to find flaws in their own beliefs. At the same time, it is easier for them to poke holes in the opposing viewpoint’s ideas. Jackson Bundy, an openly conservative junior at Paly, has witnessed confirmation bias in action, both inside the classroom and in public. “Last year, there were two other openly conservative people in a class with me and the teacher, more or less, wouldn’t let us talk,” Bundy said. “[The teacher] would outright shut us down, say our views were wrong, or that our ideas are false but not actually want to have a discussion.”

The push-back Bundy has faced from both students and staff regarding his political views has discouraged him from voicing his opinions and starting discussions. “I don’t really argue with people anymore because I’m at the point where I can realize when someone isn’t willing to change their mind,” Bundy said. “If there’s someone who’s willing to talk and have an open conversation without immediately going to, ‘oh, you’re racist or sexist,’ I’m perfectly open to that.”

Along with the inability to open up a productive political conversation, Bundy has noticed that people will hide or alter their views in large group scenarios. “I’ve had political discussions with a close friend and they definitely lean more conservative than I think others are led to believe,” Bundy said. “Then, when they’re in a friend group or out in public, you can tell that they seem more liberal.”

Owen Longstreth, a junior at Paly, is a democratic socialist who is vocal about his political views and leans toward the left side of the political spectrum. “It’s really about just the problems of the US economy. We have this huge problem,” Longstreth said. “We have this incredibly rich one percent that controls everything—that’s not a system that is working. At the same time, we’ve got people that can’t afford to go to college, that have outstanding medical debt.”

Longstreth has trouble seeing eye to eye with his conservative peers. “I think that conservatives, especially the far right, like to paint this whole idea that they’re persecuting people, which I think is blown out of proportion,” Longstreth said. “Conservatives just feel uncomfortable when people get mad at them for being racist.”

Working to start a peaceful conversation between both ends of the political spectrum seems like a necessary measure for some people, but to Longstreth, there does not seem to be any light at the end of the tunnel. “I think that we don’t really need to do this huge thing where you have to bridge the divide, so when I hear conservatives getting really [upset] about the fact that they want people to be more encouraging, my usual response is, ‘Maybe you shouldn’t have policies or be talking about ideas that discriminate against people,’” Longstreth said. “A lot of times, there is a disconnect between people from opposing political parties because generalizations are often made. Because of this, Longstreth finds it hard to be friends with someone who is socially conservative. “A big part of their belief is just discriminating against people,” Longstreth said. “It’s not enjoyable to be friends with someone if they’re going to constantly talk about how much they hate LGBT people or people from Latin America.”

Longstreth is extremely active in the political scene and does his best to remain composed and even-tempered; however, his views remain fixed. “I mean, I’m passionate but I always try not to be aggressive,” Longstreth said. “I judge people based on their political views. I think it says a lot about a person and how they view the world, especially conservatives.”

The political situation at Paly has deterred many people away from open conversations and has promoted a lack of diversity of political views. Students are scared to be wrong or to have their ideas considered invalid, hindering open discussion among students. However, some teachers have been taking strides to encourage people with all viewpoints to express their ideas.

As a teacher, Evans does her best to remain impartial in the classroom in order to foster an environment where students feel comfortable sharing a variety of perspectives. “It’s not my job at all to convince kids about their politics,” Evans said. “It’s my job to teach students how the system works, and how they can be active in it.”

In her classes, Evans teaches about recognizing bias and assessing the accuracy of sources. She emphasizes that we all come from different places when we talk about politics. “It’s this idea of not going into a conversation trying to convince somebody because immediately they’re going to shut down,” Evans said. “Instead we need to meet somebody as a human. It’s just a matter of different life perspectives.”

Much like Evans, there are many people in the Paly community trying to make it a safe space for everyone, regardless of where they may fall on the political spectrum. “In general, Paly is a pretty open place for people to feel safe when discussing controversial or non-local mainstream subjects,” Jerry Berkson, Paly’s assistant principal, said. However, Berkson recognizes that the tensions between conservatives and the majority liberal student body increased following Trump’s election in 2016. “I believe students who are on the other end of the political spectrum oftentimes have trouble promoting their views or are reluctant to do so,” Berkson said. “When Trump first got into office there were students who were harassed based on their beliefs. There are sometimes outliers who will take their disagreement on a subject too far, and then we [administrators] may need to step in.”

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- Owen Longstreth
Perhaps one of the most well known examples on campus of a student at Paly facing backlash for their political beliefs is Paly senior Jackson Druker. During his freshman year, Druker became notorious for the social experiment he conducted for his English final. A month after President Trump’s inauguration, Druker, who did not consider himself a conservative at the time, wore a Make America Great Again hat to school.

“I wanted to see if people who had been taught for their entire life to be accepting and tolerant of everybody could still be open minded when facing that which disgusts them during one of the most volatile times in our country,” Druker said. “I think something like a third of people were upset during this experiment occurred at Kirk’s Steakburgers. “Some people turned away when they saw us; sometimes in public, people will legitimately turn and face a wall once they make eye contact with me.”

One particularly memorable incident for Druker from that experiment occurred at Kirk’s Steakburgers. “Somebody came up to me, they took my hat off and then they ran into Kirk’s with it,” Druker said. “They threw it on the counter and threw barbecue sauce on it; my friends were dipping their fries in the barbecue sauce.”

While the incident at Kirk’s definitely stands out for Druker, it was not the only instance of backlash he faced during his social experiment. “I was also spat on, and that wasn’t fun. And I got assaulted [in the MAC], but there were no cameras. It’s like a camera blind spot,” Druker said. “That wasn’t fun either.”

Nearly three years after his experiment, Druker still faces repercussions for his act of social defiance. “Even now, I see freshmen who judge me based on what they’ve heard,” Druker said. “I have some people who turn away when they look at me. Sometimes in public, people will legitimately turn and face a wall once they make eye contact with me.”

The hatred he faced from an act as simple as wearing a hat, despite the fact that it did not fully represent his political views at the time, was enough to deter him from liberal ideologies. After the experiment, he began to align himself more with the Republican Party. Although he now considers himself more of a centrist, this has not stopped people from making assumptions about his character, delegitimizing his thoughts in favor of complete opposition.

For those living in such a largely liberal community, exposure to the ideas representing the Republican Party most often comes from the voices of alt-right extremists in the media. As a result, many students have formed a single story in their minds of what a conservative looks like, leading them to possibly assume that anyone who disagrees with the majority is a white supremacist.

These assumptions have made many conservatives at Paly feel uncomfortable about sharing their views in fear that they will be labeled in the same regard. “One day I responded to questions for 10 hours straight on my Instagram, and every single one of them was like, ‘Why do you hate transgender people? Why do you hate gay people? I don’t,’” Druker said. “Now that I’m out about siding more with the Republican Party, everybody thinks that I have all the ‘isms’ attached to me or all the ‘ists’ attached to me; it’s bizarre.”

Despite the social challenges he faced, Druker feels that his experiment was not in vain and is proud to have inspired other non-liberal students to be vocal about their opinions. “I definitely noticed that after performing the social experiment, a lot more kids were out about [their conservative views],” Druker said.

Looking forward, Druker advises people with unpopular views to continue to stay true to their opinions and speak their minds. “Just because you might say something that people don’t agree with doesn’t mean you shouldn’t speak your mind. ‘Just because you might say something that people don’t agree with doesn’t mean you shouldn’t speak their minds. ”

Pablo Tobaruela, a former Paly student with conservative views, also experienced how people with similar views were treated at school and how they were unable to express their opinions in the same way many of the liberal peers could. “Paly is not a safe place for conservatives,” Tobaruela said. “I know many people who are closeted conservatives, who share the same views I do but don’t feel that they may have the strength to openly share their views.”

Similarly to Druker, Tobaruela has had many wild assumptions made about him based solely on his political affiliation. “People have been quite unfair to me because of my views and have had unfair assumptions about me,” Tobaruela said. “I’ve been called horrible names like racist, sexist, homophobic, bigot, islamophobic, you know the whole dictionary.”

To Tobaruela, it is important that Paly as a community works toward creating an environment, not only where students of all races and genders feel tolerated, but also where students feel supported regardless of their political beliefs. He encourages students to look for those with opinions different from their own and strive to learn something new about a different perspective.

“Diversity is key and people often focus on racial diversity, sexual diversity, gender diversity, but many times they tend to forget about diversity of thoughts,” Tobaruela said. “I think that that is the most important of it all, I think we need to cherish the fact that we are different people with different views. I think we should be able to come together and sit down and allow each other to express them openly.”

“Diversity is key and people often focus on racial diversity, sexual diversity, gender diversity, but many times they tend to forget about diversity of thoughts.”

- Pablo Tobaruela

In this current political climate, it feels as though each word has the potential to be dissected, twisted or insulted, leaving people hesitant to even approach the subject. While this inaction may alleviate an immediate looming conflict, shying away from these tough, emotional conversations deepens a political divide which has bled into every aspect of society, further separating two sides that already seem unable to understand one another. Some see this disconnect as an inevitable product of fundamental differences, while others search for understanding through human connection. But regardless of how, or if, this compromise should be reached, it is clear that an inability to converse stifles progress. Challenging peers, friends and family to sit down and have an open dialogue, especially those with differing views, is not just productive or necessary—it is brave.

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If you scan the QR Code, you will be prompted to a form where you can request to speak with a Wellness and Counseling Team Member!

We are available anytime during Monday-Friday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm (If form is sent past these times it will be reviewed the next school day)

The Wellness Center looks forward to supporting you. If you have any questions or if you are having difficulty accessing this form, please email Elizabeth Spector at espector@pausd.org

(Ad paid for by a Palo Alto parent)

A Rush To Remember

While Greek life is a way for many to branch out and meet new people, the process of joining this lifestyle is more complicated than one might think.
months of planning, counseling, shopping and networking have led up to this moment. Girls line up on the front lawn, anxiously fixing their hair and makeup. Heads turn and eyes widen as the double doors swing open, revealing dozens of chanting sorority girls. Rush week has officially begun, and there is no going back.

Greek life has been a part of American culture for over 200 years and, for the most part, has remained the same, allowing a life-long sisterhood that fosters new friendships. But to join Greek life, one must complete “rush”—the week-long process students go through in order to join Greek life and find the house that they fit in best.

The standard of each person rushing is generally the same from school to school: maintain a certain GPA, pay the annual fee and participate in special Greek events. The standard of each person making decisions about 18-year-old girls after a 20-minute conversation.

The hardest part about it is you have 18-year-old girls making decisions about 18-year-old girls after a 20-minute conversation. - Kasey McGahan

To boost their chances at some of the more extreme universities when it comes to Greek life, students will bring up to four letters of recommendation for each sorority they rush. However, at these schools, multiple letters of recommendation still do not guarantee a bid, which is the official invitation to join a sorority. In addition to dossiers, consultants often help girls prepare for the small talk and the informal interviews during rush. “You literally go to this meeting, and they tell you how to talk, how to act, how to banter and what not to talk about,” McGahan said. Despite preparation, there is no way to predict your chances of obtaining a bid as the determining factors are pretty independent. “The hardest part about it is you have 18-year-old girls making decisions about 18-year-old girls after a 20-minute conversation,” McGahan said.

Texas Christian University (TCU), is one of the schools McGahan’s daughter was considering applying to. When learning about the intricate details that come along with the lead-up to rush at TCU, McGahan was resistant to the process that takes place. “Some of the things that I found interesting I guess, is for TCU, you can Google ‘rush clothing TCU,’ and it literally has a Pinterest page of what clothes you’re supposed to wear,” McGahan said. The guidelines can go as far as encouraging girls to wear specific Tory Burch sandals, an expensive designer brand.

“I was hoping to assist her daughter through it just this year. McGahan, for example, was contacted by a consultant who was hoping to assist her daughter in creating this dossier. “You would write a resume, get a headshot of yourself, and then you would ask a mom, most likely a friend’s mom, to write a letter of recommendation,” McGahan said.

To help them put this portfolio together and to gain insight into this process, McGahan, for example, was contacted by a consultant who was hoping to assist her daughter in creating this dossier. “You would write a resume, get a headshot of yourself, and then you would ask a mom, most likely a friend’s mom, to write a letter of recommendation,” McGahan said. To boost their chances at some of the more extreme universities when it comes to Greek life, students will bring up to four letters of recommendation for each sorority they rush. However, at these schools, multiple letters of recommendation still do not guarantee a bid, which is the official invitation to join a sorority. In addition to dossiers, consultants often help girls prepare for the small talk and the informal interviews during rush. “You literally go to this meeting, and they tell you how to talk, how to act, how to banter and what not to talk about,” McGahan said. Despite preparation, there is no way to predict your chances of obtaining a bid as the determining factors are pretty independent. “The hardest part about it is you have 18-year-old girls making decisions about 18-year-old girls after a 20-minute conversation,” McGahan said.

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Maddie Yen, a Palo 2019 graduate, recently went through the process of rushing as freshmen. While many girls, including Yen, choose to rush to expand their circle of friends and make a more enjoyable social college experience, the selective process can still feel awkward and overwhelming. “Each morning you would go into this room and you will get your schedule of what houses you had that day,” Yen said. “A lot of times girls would not get called back to houses that they wanted, and that energy really filled the entire room and it became extremely stressful and just awful at times.”

“While the girls rushing are held to extremely high standards, so are those who are already members in each of the houses. Kendall Mainz, a 2019 graduate of Southern Methodist University (SMU), recounts these high expectations at her school. “It’s against the rules to post a PNMs potential new member—on your Instagram or Snapchat story which in my opinion is super odd,” Mainz said. “You also aren’t allowed to have any communication with the PNMs from the start of finals week in December until when rush is over in January.”

While the rushing process is inherently stressful, it is imperative for one to keep an open mind. Mainz went into rush with her mind set on a specific sorority, but ended up getting into a different one. While at first this was hard to accept, she finds that everything worked out for the better. “Looking back I am so glad I wasn’t in that house because I realized that Theta ended up being where I belong personality-wise,” Mainz said. Likewise, Yen encourages those who plan to rush to remain genuine throughout the process. “If you go into the rush process really trying to see if you could fit in a certain house and if you could see yourself there with those people, you will end up end up where you want to be and where you will be happy,” Yen said. “For advice to potential new members going into Greek life, I would say just keep being yourself.”
With around 30 students in each grade, Foothill Middle College is an alternative to high school, giving their students an inclusive and unique form of education. Because the Middle College program is housed on the Foothill College campus, its students are able to enroll in college-level courses for college credit in addition to any required high school classes. These students are given access to all Foothill College resources but are still able to participate in activities, such as graduation or sports games, from their districted schools. Students looking for increased freedom, more flexibility and additional support find Middle College to be beneficial for them.

Stanford University junior Tia Geri found traditional high school very confining given its ultimate focus on getting into college, and opted instead to apply to Middle College. Rather than being pressured to take numerous AP courses, Middle College offered her an opportunity to explore a wide variety of classes that genuinely interested her. “I wanted [to go] somewhere with more freedom and flexibility to study in more depth what I was interested in instead of taking hard classes just for the sake of taking hard classes,” Geri said.

After graduating, Geri opted to continue her education at Foothill College. By being able to take both community college and high school courses during her time at Middle College, Geri ended up only attending Foothill College for two quarters before having enough credits to enroll as a junior at Stanford University. Taking unique classes and having the flexibility to enjoy other important experiences ultimately made Geri a more competitive applicant when it came to applying to colleges. “[Middle College students] are stronger applicants because, through MC, they get more time to explore what they’re interested in and figure out exactly what path is right for them,” Geri said.

Middle College senior Emma Stayte agrees that Middle College granted her more opportunities to explore. Throughout her time in Middle College, Stayte has been exposed to advantages that public high school does not offer. Along with being able to take online classes, an option not provided at Paly, Middle College creates an environment with more flexibility and independence. “You are able to be way more independent and find yourself by doing so,” Stayte said.

Without knowing anyone in the program initially, Stayte was concerned about making friends but quickly realized the benefits of being a part of the small, tight-knit community that Middle College fosters. “You know everyone in the whole program and can walk into class and start a conversation with anyone,” Stayte said. With small class sizes, the school is centered toward fostering a collaborative environment through group discussions and projects. As a result, there is a big social aspect to the Middle College experience. “There are impromptu trips to the beach for bonfires and hikes between classes in the hills behind Foothill,” Geri said. “We also organize formal events such as an MC prom, which was a ton of fun.”

While may seem too untraditional for many people, Middle College can be a great experience. “Middle College is really what you make of it, so if you want to get the most from the experience you have to be driven and really want to participate in something that is very different from traditional high school,” Geri said.
Humans love to compare, but when comparison turns into a competition of wagering your miseries, the game can never be won. Let the rounds begin!

“[Middle College] is a welcoming environment that allows each individual to be themselves.”
—Ilai Beth

InspirERED by his siblings’ success in the nontraditional experience, former Paly student Ilai Beth decided to apply to Middle College instead of spending his junior and senior year at a traditional high school.

Throughout the process of signing up for Middle College, Beth was lucky enough to be supported by his family. Despite having their support, however, his friends questioned his decision.

“My friends had always playfully teased me and told me that I shouldn’t go to Middle College like my older siblings, and for a while, I didn’t think I would,” Beth said. “Eventually, I decided that it was the right thing for me, and although they weren’t happy about it, I believe my friends understood that it was the right thing for me.”

Making this decision was not easy, but Beth saw Middle College as an opportunity to choose from a larger range of classes to enroll in and take initiative in his learning. “We have the opportunity to take college classes at the Foothill Community College which allows for a much wider variety of topics to look into,” Beth said.

While the most common advantages to Middle College are the access to Foothill’s student services and the ability to obtain college credit, many benefit greatly from the smaller community. “Middle college is different in the sense that it is a small group—roughly 30 in each grade—which makes it a closer group and it allows the students to create much stronger bonds with our teachers,” Beth said.

After spending a full semester in Middle College, Beth knew that it was definitely the right place for him. “I had high expectations due to the fact that both of my siblings had very positive experiences in the program, but Middle College has definitely exceeded my expectations,” Beth said.

In just a few months, Beth has gained a range of experiences and skills. “Since attending Middle College, I have definitely become more independent. Being enrolled in college classes at Foothill has taught me to keep myself in check because college teachers don’t have any way to contact your parents if you are not doing well in class,” Beth said. “It has been my responsibility to keep myself accountable and ensure that I am succeeding in all of my classes.”

While Middle College isn’t the right fit for everyone, Beth recommends it to anyone looking for an alternative to traditional education.

“If you aren’t enjoying your high school experience for whatever reason, it is a welcoming environment that allows each individual to be themselves. The smaller community allows for each student to create close bonds with each other as well as the teachers and the wide variety of college classes allow for students to explore and discover their interests,” Beth said. “I would highly recommend anyone to look into it.”
From Barbie dolls to collegiate degrees to promotions in the workplace, people relish in comparing their assets and accomplishments with those of others. While this is a natural human practice, it can become detrimental when the intensity level of one’s complaint list translates to a measure of their work ethic and success.

This game of comparing the miseries in one’s life to those of others peers has a formal name—Misery Poker—which seems to be a direct product of American culture. Even within the media which capitalizes on highlighting tragedy or the drama of cancel culture, it is evident how our interactions are becoming increasingly defined by hypercriticism.

“However, the ‘power’ effect of engaging in this way is short-lived.”

Paly students are no exception to the game, whether they are players or victims to feelings of subsequent powerlessness. Freshman Noah Boyarsky views Misery Poker as a means to compare people with one another: “Misery Poker came from a place of everyone really struggling a lot and people turning it into something they can brag about,” Boyarsky said. “But [Misery Poker] has now turned into where people start structuring their behavior like what classes they take and how many hours they sleep in order to win the game.”

Even after two students lavender about their homework assignments in a comparative way, both can still walk away feeling lonely and empty. In the midst of trying to make other people feel sorry for them, students often end up putting more pressure on themselves after hearing about the responsibilities and miseries of their peers.

Freshman Juliana Iruleggi found that Misery Poker adds a significant amount of pressure on students. “It makes students feel like they need to try harder just to get up to average or need to go through a lot more pain just to feel like everyone else,” Iruleggi said. The need to outcompete is not limited to the constraints of high school. Those who believe that success is measured by the content they can brag about, “Students feel like they need to go through a lot more pain just to get up to average or need to go through a lot more pain just to feel like everyone else,” Iruleggi said.

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In our current society, focusing on the bad appears increasingly omnipresent. However, when individuals are transparent with their emotions, they are able to make the necessary changes in order to thrive and feel content. “[The negative aspects of life] seem so in your face,” Steiner said. “Yet with a softer gaze of intention, the beauty, the positives, the gifts of life come into view.”

Round 1: School

Despite its elementary nature, people drag this comparison game out of childhood and into their adult lives and relationships where they use their evergrowing responsibilities to guilt one another.

In her work with couples, Steiner has observed that Misery Poker often results from a lack of honest communication. She has seen Misery Poker present even shortly after the early “honeymoon” phase of the relationship. The romantic feelings that were once there dissipate as the negatives of the relationship are having commitments or a family, must be responsible for their actions and reactions. In order to do so, individuals have to be vulnerable. For many, Misery Poker serves as a way to avoid such responsibility, allowing people to stray away from developing critical self-reflective and direct skills. “Using Misery Poker to avoid taking responsibility for one’s own actions, undermines the person themselves, their partner and the relationship,” Steiner said. “Cut to the chase, and with grace and integrity share what’s really going on and what is needed, i.e. I feel hurt, unheard, disempowered, scared, insecure, unloved.”

In our current society, focusing on the bad appears increasingly omnipresent. However, when individuals are transparent with their emotions, they are able to make the necessary changes in order to thrive and feel content. “[The negative aspects of life] seem so in your face,” Steiner said. “Yet with a softer gaze of intention, the beauty, the positives, the gifts of life come into view.”

Round 2: Relationships

For a relationship to thrive, there must be verbal communication about the challenges a partner is dealing with in order to make the changes needed to maintain the relationship. “It’s important to share the challenges one is experiencing, where one owns the experience and has the power to make the necessary choices and changes needed in the relationship,” Steiner said.

Additionally, when parents model these Misery Poker behaviors, their children naturally learn and follow them. Talking to elementary schoolers, Steiner has seen the ease at which young children are able to view themselves in a negative frame of mind. “My six, seven and eight-year-old clients will give me a long list of all the reasons they’re bad,” Steiner said. “I listen with a very heavy heart, and think, Where and how did this child develop this negative narrative of self at such a young age?”

Frequently, these negative perceptions directly result from the environment at home and familial norms of self-deprecation. “When the home is saturated with negative interactions then the child will most definitely be affected and will see themselves and others through this negative lens,” Steiner said.

The key to fostering a healthy relationship is having commitment in all regards, from being supportive to constructive. All members, whether in a romantic pairing or a family, must be responsible for their actions and reactions. In order to do so, individuals have to be vulnerable. For many, Misery Poker serves as a way to avoid such
Tyler, The Creator criticized the Grammy’s oppressive album genres, sparking conversation over a long-standing issue: the discrimination of black artists.

Tyler, The Creator’s pop style is way too ‘urban’ or ‘rap.’ This often categorizes his work as belonging to a genre that does not exactly conform to genre expectations—their ‘urban contemporary’ means. "The category just seems like a way to undermine black artists," Lagna said. "Nobody even knows what urban contemporary means." 

Amelia Lagna, Paly junior

While this issue of race is clearly apparent, there is also a deeper flaw in the process of genre categorization. "Art is so subjective and personal that it is impossible to put artists into these categories," Lagna said. "Music should be appreciated for what it is, not its color or genre."

"As a society we put labels on everything and we just don’t need to."

Makayla Miller, Paly senior

The Grammy’s, watched worldwide, has an immense influence on the music industry. The award show explicitly marks the success of individual artists through the award categories and heavily influences the ideology of Americans through the stereotypes reinforced by the categories. "Grouping music by black artists into their own genre is making it seem like they are incapable of fully integrating into other music genres," Lagna said. In addition to the nearly 20 million people who watch the Grammy’s, watched worldwide, has an immense influence on the music industry. The award show explicitly marks the success of individual artists through the award categories and heavily influences the ideology of Americans through the stereotypes reinforced by the categories.

"Artists have a general understanding that you need to give credit where credit is due, and a lot of the times this rule gets broken when the credit belongs to a black person."

Makayla Miller, Paly senior
The contrast between street performers and concert hall musicians could not be more obvious. Yet traditionally trained musicians have taken to the streets to raise money for global issues and change the future of busking.
A flurry of cash sprawls over the dark, wooden tables as 12 hands sort through the profits for the night. The money is carefully organized into 20-dollar stacks and readied for donation to the Australian wildfires.

Busking, a term coined to refer to all street performers, has such a gener- al meaning that it serves a multitude of purposes. For junior Mia Baldonado, busking is simultaneously a hobby and a platform for activism, allowing her to blend her passion for music while ad- vocating for issues she cares about. Bal- donado joined the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra (PACO) in fourth grade and exclusively played in formal recitals and concerts. She was trained in the classics, learning to bore precise notes with clear sound in grand concert halls.

After hearing that other musicians in her orchestra occasionally performed on the street, Baldonado and her fellow quartet members decided to take their music skills off the stage and provide music to strangers on the street. Having been trained to perform in traditional settings, the transition to performing in public took the group by surprise. “The first time I went I was really stressed be- cause I had no idea what I was doing,” Baldonado said. “But since then, it has definitely gotten less stressful.”

Baldonado has since learned to shed her previous training as a professional artist and now utilizes busking as a way to enjoy her free time with any available PACO members. “At the end of the day, these people on the streets are not there for Carnegie Hall, super profes- sional performances,” Baldonado said. “They just want to hear some music from some kids.”

Unlike traditional buskers who earn money for profit, Baldonado never in- tends to keep a penny that she earns. Instead, the group of PACO buskers decide on a worthy cause to donate the money, ranging from general causes like home- lessness to specific events like the Austra- lian wildfires. “We are so privileged that we get to play in an orchestra and have all these instruments, so busking is also a way to give back,” Baldonado said.

Like Baldonado, other students with traditional musical backgrounds have given street performing a shot. Senior Maddy Druker has been singing with the Sing Sil- icon Valley choir for several years and recently joined other high schoolers to form a band, Reverie, this past fall. Her band consists of fellow high school students in the district and was created under the impression that they would be play- ing music for the fun of it. Through her experience per- forming with both groups, Druker has seen the differences in performing styles and venues between her band and choir, noting the contrast in formality of the events. “With my band, I mostly do infor- mal performances,” Druker said. “Every Sunday we perform at the Backyard Breeze and if we mess up no one cares, it doesn’t matter; no one is paying atten- tion to us.” The weekly informal gigs at the coffee shop give Druker the chance to perform in a low-stress environment where her main focus is to have fun and sing for people without worrying about perfecting each song. “We just perform and whoever is there can choose to listen or not listen.”

On the contrary, her choir performs in big performance halls and has a rigorous rehearsal schedule. This hard work pays off, and the angelic sounds of the group’s voices echo in the open auditorium, leaving the audience in awe whenever the choir performs. “With choir, we’re in these giant ven- ews with so many people and I feel a lot more pressure to perform well because if I don’t, I’ll be letting ev- eryone else down,” Druker said.

Druker’s band performances do not draw the same kind of audience at- tention as her choir ones do, but the satis- faction of performing outweighs the con- cerns of spotty audiences. “When people come, it’s a good time because it’s always nice when people come to support you,” Druker said.

Dedicated to performing with each group, Druker enjoys singing in both for- mal and informal settings because she can offer a wide variety of tones and sounds for the listeners to enjoy. Although each ensemble requires different amounts of practice hours per week, the atten- tion and work are well rewarded by the crowds’ positive responses.

“I’m happy both in band and in choir,” Druker said. “I think [choir] makes me more happy because the music is usual- ly more polished. It sounds really beau- tiful and I can see everyone in the audi- ence enjoying it.”

However, the inevitable development of technology will skew the number of street performers because the rise in musicians on social media handles and the Internet draw attention away from the live entertainers. “I think that technology negatively influences busking and gigs because with tech you don’t need to physi- cally be there to enjoy something.”

-Maddy Druker

“It’s super rewarding to know that my work and my performance is going toward a good cause,” Baldonado said. “[Busking] brings the community together to enjoy music, or in my case, to come together to support a good cause.”

“We are so privileged that we get to play in an orchestra and have all these instruments, so busking is also a way to give back.”

—Mia Baldonado

“Technology negatively influences busking and gigs because with tech you don’t need to physically be there to enjoy something.”

—Maddy Druker
MUSIC & THE MIND

Everyone has their own music taste. Whether it’s pop, rock, country or a mix of genres, studies have shown that there is a possible correlation between your personality and the type of music you listen to.

Whether you enjoy moshing at a heavy metal concert to aggressive chords from an electric guitarist or prefer soothing acoustic notes streaming through your headphones, your music taste says a lot about how your mind works.

David Greenberg, a University of Cambridge psychologist, has quizzed thousands of people on their personalities and taste in music in efforts to gauge whether there is a correlation between the two. In Greenberg’s “Musical Preferences and the Brain” report, Greenberg states that his hypothesis had some truth to it.

“Musical preferences are linked to three broad thinking styles—also referred to as ‘brain types,’” Greenberg said in his study. “Empathizers have a strong interest in people’s thoughts and emotions. Systemizers have a strong interest in patterns, systems and the rules that govern the world. And those who score relatively equally on empathy and systemizing are classified as ‘balanced.’”

The study revealed that empathizers prefer calmer music that is more emotional and low energy such as alternative, soft rock and R&B. On the contrary, systemizers tend to prefer more complex music like heavy metal, jazz and classical genres. Those who are more balanced don’t have a taste as specific as that of systemizers and empathizers.

Greenberg’s theory for the correlation between each thinking style and music taste is that the empathizers are drawn to the emotional characteristics in a song whereas systemizers are entertained by the arrangement and format of a song.

They are focusing more on the instrumental elements, seeing how the music is mixing together”

- David Greenberg

“I almost exclusively listen to rock, but I range from southern rock, to reggae-rock, to folk-rock, to hard rock, to everything else in between.”

- Bowmen Wingard

Despite Wingard’s specific taste in rock, many people’s music tastes can evolve over time. For Paly junior Audrey Joachim, her music taste has changed dramatically. “I used to strictly listen to Taylor Swift and then turned to classical music, whereas I currently enjoy a decent variety of genres and artists,” Joachim said.

But even after the change in musical taste, Joachim doesn’t feel like she resonates with a certain personality type. “I don’t feel like I am stronger in one category or the other. I just can’t stand music that is overly-emotional,” Joachim said.

Both Wingard and Joachim have a more balanced personality type, but for others who don’t, Greenberg mentioned that there are potential impacts of his findings on the music industry.

“By knowing an individual’s thinking style, such services might in future be able to fine-tune their music recommendations to an individual.”

So, the next time you hit shuffle, consider the music you listen to. Is it detailed and technical, deep and emotional, or somewhere in between? Because there might be more to your favorite song than just its lyrics.
LET’S ADDRESS THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM