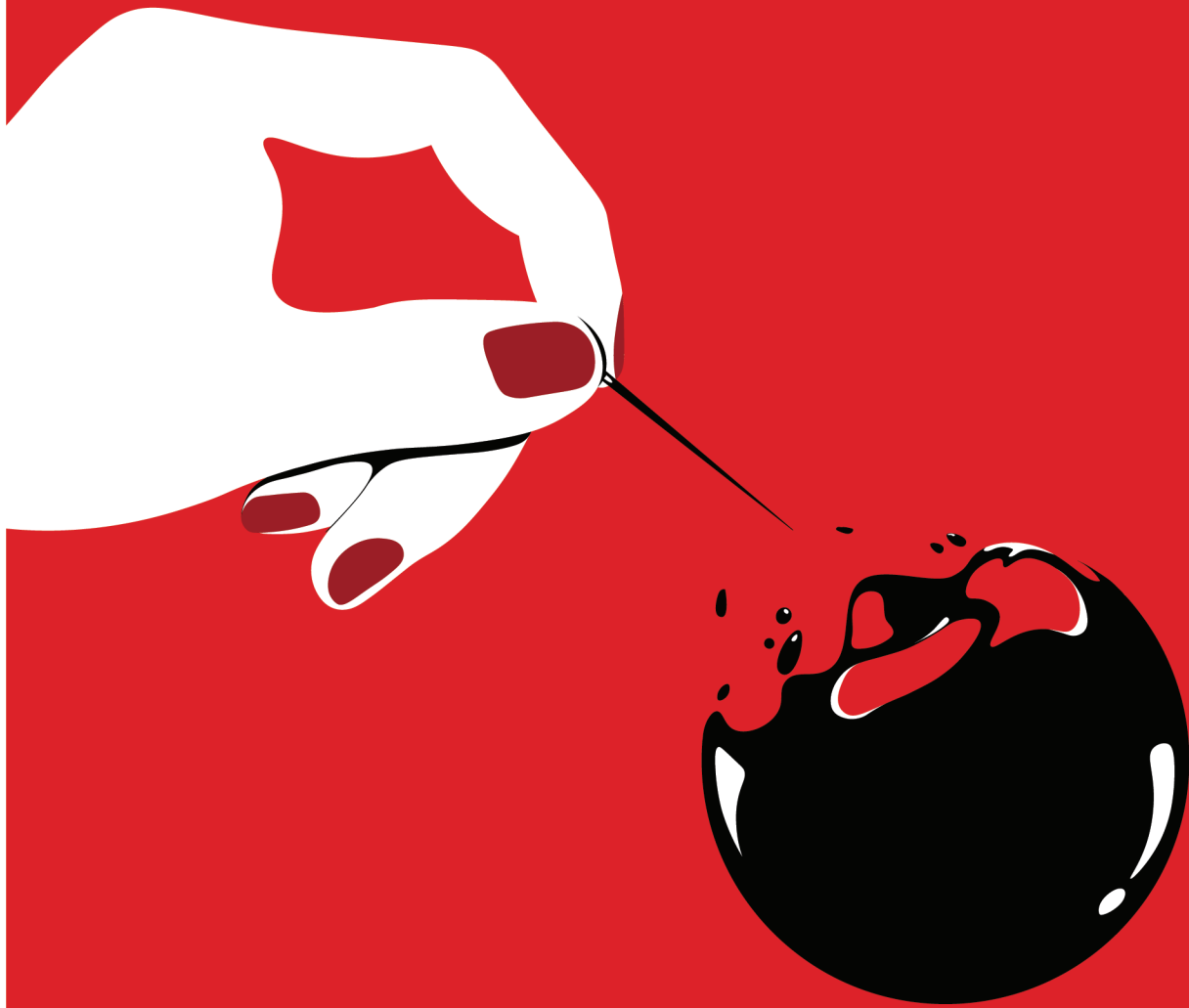


C MAGAZINE

POPPING THE POLITICAL BUBBLE

P.24



APRIL 2020

ARTS & CULTURE
PALO ALTO HIGH SCHOOL

C MAGAZINE

April 2020 • Volume 8, Edition 5

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. So as 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 for the iconic milestone it is in many students’ lives. While we know this does not begin to compare with the memories and traditions that students have lost, we do hope that this lookbook will bring a smile and moment of happiness to our readers.

We are currently in the midst of a monumental year, not only with the tragedies we have faced so far in 2020 but also with a presidential election. Living in Palo Alto, we may feel like we are in a bubble; while it may feel safe and protected, not everyone is given the luxury of feeling that they can freely express their opinions. For the cover story, staff writers Alexa Gwyn, Sam Mutz, Atticus Scherer and Emma Stefanutti expose the polarized political atmosphere within Paly. In interviews with current students and alumni on all sides of the political spectrum, this feature sheds light on the importance of recognizing diversity in thought and political opinion in our community. 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.

Our featured artist for this issue is Paly senior Ena Zou. Staff writers Samantha Feldmeier and Sophie Jacob take readers on Zou’s journey as a budding fashion designer. Providing a unique perspective on the challenges of juggling school with starting a new fashion line, Zou proudly presents Reverie, her clothing line that features bohemian pieces with fun prints in a message that encourages people to follow their dreams.

Through this unprecedented time, the production of our fifth issue has been a bittersweet task for our 2019-2020 leadership team. We are sad to say goodbye to our roles as editors and leaders in the magazine that taught us so much, yet we are so excited to see where our new leadership team takes the magazine in the future. Thank you for staying with us through our journey this school year and giving us the chance to learn and grow with such a supportive audience.

Happy reading!

Ellie Fitton, Ashley Guo, Chloe Laursen and Hazel Shah

Editors-in-Chief

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Publication Policy

C Magazine, an arts and culture magazine published by the students in Palo Alto High School's Magazine Journalism class, is a designated open forum for student expression and discussion of issues of concern to its readership. C Magazine is distributed to its readers and the student body at no cost.

Printing & Distribution

C Magazine is printed 6 times a year in October, November, December, February, April and May by aPrintis in Pleasanton, CA. C Magazine is distributed on campus and mailed to sponsors by Palo Alto High School. For this fifth issue of volume eight, C Magazine is printed by Folger Graphics in Hayward, CA and mailed to every student's home by the Paly Parent Teacher Student Association. All C Magazine stories are available on cmagazine.org.

Advertising

The staff publishes advertisements with signed contracts, providing they are not deemed by the staff inappropriate for the magazine's audience. For more information about advertising with C Magazine, please contact business managers Karina Kadakia and Fiza Usman at businesscmagazine@gmail.com.

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The C Magazine staff welcomes letters to the editors but reserve the right to edit all submissions for length, grammar, potential libel, invasion of privacy and obscenity. Send all letters to eicscmagazine@gmail.com or to 50 Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303.

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Dejo Alnajjar

2020 PROM WHAT WE WOULD'VE WORN

While there are the would've, could've, 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 that 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



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Ena Zou

fashion designer

Reverie 

Text by SOPHIE JACOB and SAMANTHA FELDMEIER • Design by ASHLEY GUO
Photos by NATALIE SCHILLING

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 bedsheets, 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."

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 interests in fashion and maintain this passion throughout her life.

"Follow your dreams," Zou said. "And shop Reverie!"

"Follow your dreams.
And shop Reverie!"

UNLIKED ART



INSTAGRAM RECENTLY INTRODUCED A LIKE-FREE CULTURE, PROMOTING A CREATIVE AND LESS RESTRICTING ENVIRONMENT. HOWEVER, THIS RAISES THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THIS SOLUTION TRULY RESOLVES THE ISSUE OF ARTISTS CREATING ART FOR LIKES AND NOT FOR THEMSELVES.

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 Tumblr. 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 fol-

Text by FAITH CHOW and SUKHMEN SAHOTA
Design by SUKHMEN SAHOTA
Artwork courtesy of MARIIA PASHCHENKE and MAX WOLF



lower 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.

"Let's just be ourselves and make art with passion," Pashchenke said. "The number of likes and followers changes every day, but our art is going to stay with us forever."



Behind the Lines

Whether it's a movie title, a billboard or a logo, there lies a deeper meaning within different typefaces. Choosing a font that best enhances a design relies on much more than one may think.

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. Deceptively 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’ initial perception of their work.

Emil Stefanutti, a graphic designer and CEO of a tech company based in Silicon Valley, acknowledges typography to be one of the most critical aspects in any design, requiring as much thought as any other art piece. In order to choose the perfect embellishment, a designer must consider the goal of the design. “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,” Stefanutti said.

On the technical side, designers consider audience statistics, legibility, medium—web, print, or other media—and the final product format. Paying attention to these details easily helps eliminate and

narrow down the list of potential fonts.

The more artistic aspect of typography involves understanding what exactly the story is intended to articulate and how the audience should feel while reading it. What exactly do designers hope to portray to grasp the true essence of the

“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

proper fonts for a story.

“Understanding the scope of your work from a technical perspective and then finding clarity on what you need to express and how you want your work to feel will get you almost there,” Stefanutti said.

In some scenarios, the perfect font doesn't exist. So, designers choose to make their own. Because of the lengthy process of starting from scratch as well as the surplus of pre-existing fonts floating across the internet, however, it is quite rare that one will choose this route.

“Designing a typeface—a really good one that can truly 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," Stefanutti said.

Although all designers approach this concept differently, the process usually involves constructing every character by hand and often takes multiple tries to make sure that everything remains cohesive. As surprising as it is, writing by hand is the fastest way to achieve the best results.

Graphic design is a division of art that takes into even greater consideration the weight a certain font or text holds. Those who enjoy the craft apply it to other aspects of their lives, and in the case of Stefanutti, who was enamored with the digital art form from a young age, he still looks at his work through the lens of a designer.

“On a daily basis I rely on my design skills to collaborate with my team on user interface design, corporate identity, on-line and printed marketing materials and corporate presentations which we give to clients, partners and investors all the time,” Steffanutti said. “More importantly, I apply design thinking to everything I do at work, from product to finance and everything in between.”

Clearly, fonts are more complex than often perceived at first glance. Although an overall design may initially capture 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.



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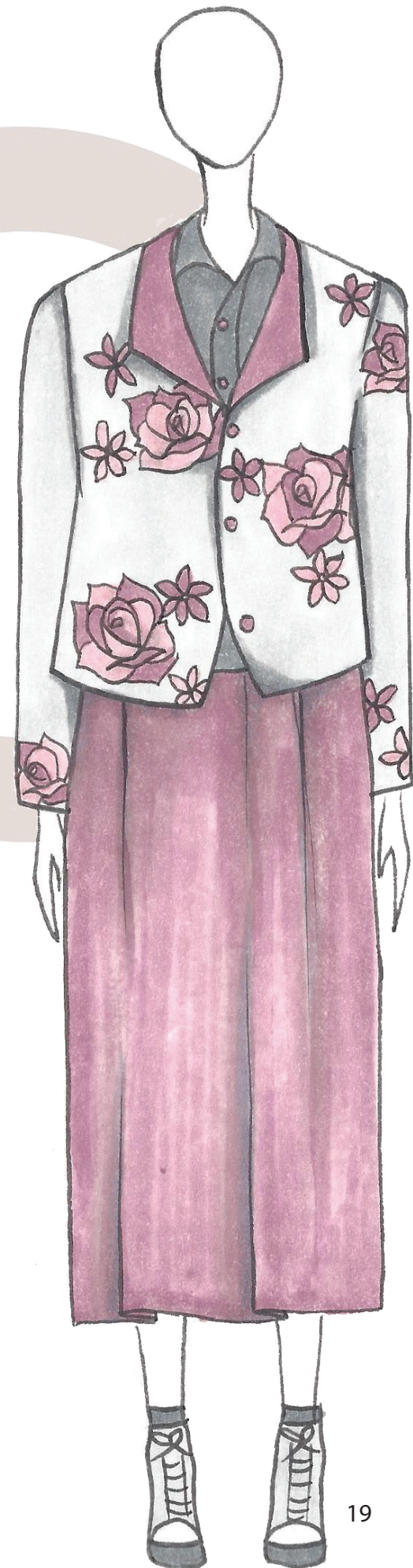


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Fa(s/he)ion

Androgynous fashion combines traditionally female and male items of clothing into a uni-sex 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.



Text and design by SOPHIA BAGINSKIS and ELLEN CHUNG
Art by ELLEN CHUNG

Figures such as David Bowie, Freddie Mercury, Tilda Swinton, Annie Lennox and Prince all have one thing in common: their androgynous style. Even if you are no Elton John, fashion can give many a way to make a routine lifestyle more exciting. Some view fashion as an important form of expression, and their often unique style choices are a defining characteristic to their personality. Many people who wear androgynous fashion, whether intentionally or not, can often create a bold impression, making many fashion-forward dressers chase this eye-catching look.

Though it's difficult to pin down its exact origin, the birth of mainstream "gender-fluid fashion" is often attributed to public figures experimenting with gender expression in the limelight. Musician Elvis Presley was one of the first to bring

"As society becomes more inclusive I see females wearing less feminine clothes and men wear less traditionally masculine clothes."

Dana Toussieh

it to the world of rock and roll with his liking for bedazzled bubble-gum pink jumpsuits, floral prints, and crop-tops. Other stars followed, such as David Bowie with his radiant spandex catsuits, and Mick Jagger, who famously performed once in white dress-like attire. In a perspective piece for the Museum of Fine

Arts Boston's exhibit, "Gender-Bending Fashion," Curator of Fashion Arts, Michelle Tolini Finamore, comments on the essential role these figures have played in the emergence of androgynous fashion. "Individual stories are essential, bringing to light wearers and designers who have pushed against established norms to disrupt commonly held assumptions about gender dress" Finamore said.

Many people follow fashion standards set by the media, so after a rise in unisex fashion among the stars, androgynous looks became more common among the general population.

Paly sophomore Dana Toussieh believes that social media has a heavy impact on style especially amongst teens. "Seeing [androgynous fashion] in the media is normalizing it to me," Toussieh said. "What people see in the media is

reflected [by] their own personal image."

LGBTQIA+ and feminist movements brought new light to methods of combating pressing issues through the lens of fashion. "Although clothing is usually constructed with a particular gender in mind, it is the social discourse around fashion that actually imbues it with gendered meaning," Finamore said. "Gender-bending sartorial choices may be a reflection of gender identity or of sexuality, yet each individual's narrative is uniquely theirs."

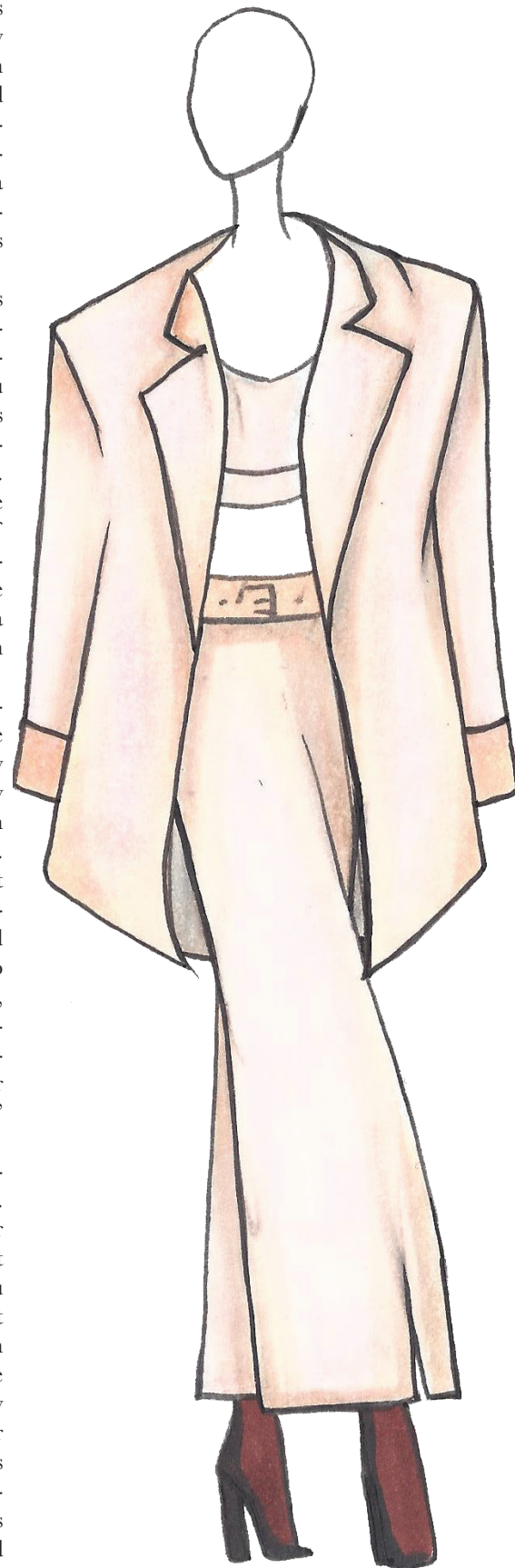
For many, androgynous fashion has opened doors for increasing open self expression, free from constraints of dominant gender roles and expectations. "You can express yourself without the barriers of gender stereotypes," Paly senior Jasmine Gao said. "Fashion is a form of art. Gender stereotypes are a huge obstacle

in expressing yourself through fashion because as a society, we are prone to dress a certain way based on our gender."

Androgynous fashion is now much more wide-spread not only among non-binary people, but also with cisgender people. Growing up in the 21st century with extremely different cultural

norms has allowed many young kids to have a free range of their fashion pieces, regardless of their gender. "As society becomes more inclusive I see females wearing less feminine clothes and men wear less traditionally masculine clothes," Toussieh said.

Clothing choices are often personal and reflect a person's self expression. "The way you are perceived is your fashion. People judge you about what you wear, so they can characterize you and your personality based upon what you wear," Toussieh said. Fashion can be a great outlet of expression and one of the few ways people can outwardly demonstrate their personality in a matter of glances. Androgynous fashion gives many an outlet to put forth their personality and style. For others, androgynous fashion gives people a place of safety and



an option they don't always get in other aspects of their life. "I feel like androgynous fashion makes me feel included in fashion in general," Gao said.

Feminist movements have played a big part in androgynous fashion. Many feminists wear androgynous fashion as a step in not conforming to gender roles and stereotypes as well as a tool to convey a message.

"The public emergence of women in pants stretches back to the 1850s, when Amelia Bloomer, a women's rights activist, recommended that women wear pants as everyday dress to free them from their restrictive hoop

skirts and corsetry," Finamore said. In the past, many women in male-dominated industries have adopted androgynous fashion as a method of rapidizing their success. To them, wearing more masculine clothing allowed them to fit in with their male-counterparts. Feminist and local businesswoman Debbie W., recognizes that women's workplace fashion has shifted over the years to be less about what women thought men wanted them to wear and more about women making fashion choices for themselves. "Early in my career, I wore a suit jacket because men were wearing suit jackets," Debbie said. "Today, women have more choices about what to wear at work."

Rad Hourani, a Canadian designer, is a leading designer in the androgynous fashion scene and the first to present a unisex couture show. Through his use of photography, film, sculpture, sound and fashion, Hourani expresses his emphasis on individuality. In his art, Hourani strives to create a freer way of life. Born in Syria, Hourani moved to Montreal and took on a job as an art director before moving to Paris to explore the art of photography and video. Soon after, he designed the first gender neutral ready to wear collection by any designer and launched his brand. Inspired by his boundless youth, he looked to his background of no teachers and no boundaries to start designing and pursuing art. With a focus on indi-

viduality over conformity and the ability to create ourselves to who we want to be, Hourani continues to design genderless, ageless and timeless fashion.

Additionally, the brand NotEqual and its creator Fabio Costa seek to push the boundaries of unisex fashion. Born in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, Costa is greatly influenced by his grandmother, who is a seamstress. From once only being able to explore fashion and design by draping bedsheets around himself, he has now attended the Universidade FUMEC, FIT and PRAT and won the second place spot in the tenth season of "Project Runway."

With his line NotEqual, Costa continues to delve into avant-garde genderless designs by draping each piece to ensure each piece is distinct. His focus on expression of personality and identity through fashion is representative of androgynous fashion, pushing for increasing freedom of expression and breaking down of boundaries.

The efforts of brands, designers and consumers are pushing androgynous fashion to continue to provide more freedom of expression, helping fashionistas break free from restrictive gender roles and expectations. "Contemporary designers and the wearers of their work are proposing that style is rooted in one's own definition of personal identity and gender expression rather than solely the public perception of one's identity," Finamore said.

As brands and designers push for more acceptance and inclusivity in the realm of couture, streetwear brands and individuals encourage androgynous fashion

to be more accepted into everyday fashion. With these efforts combined, unisex clothing will continue to gain acceptance in our ever-evolving society, and reflect its inner cultural shifts. "Clothing serves as a primary means of nonverbal communication signifying the identity—real created and perceived—of designers and wearers," Finamore said. "Fashion can provide insight into broader societal shifts, touching on issues of gender expression and identity, sexuality, race, class, pop culture, activism and social justice."



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?

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 are simply 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.

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 she then became nervous about the commitment and called Miles the next day to ask if they could be "just friends."

"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.

For the next three years, there was no communication between the two of them. They both graduated high school, Miles in 1958 and Cita in 1959. It wasn't until

Nancy Schneider & George Putis



Miles was a junior in college that he heard from her again.

"Somehow she got my phone number. She told me she wanted to meet and talk. 'I'd love to,' 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.

"He was on the football team and I was a swimmer. He saw me swimming once and said, 'oh, I've got to meet her, I've got to go on a date with her,'" Schneider said. The rest is history.

When they first started dating in high school, there was no plan of marriage in the future. For them it was just a normal high school relationship, as they were still so young. However, their strong love and empathy for one another was notable from the beginning.

"One time when he walked me to



Cita & Miles Cohen

biology, I looked at him and I felt something. Like you know, people say this is baloney, but I swear to God as I looked at him, and I felt like a zing, I felt like he would always be the one," Schneider said.

That moment everything changed for Schneider; she realized that she was going to spend the rest of her life with Putis. They dated on and off for the majority of high school, not being apart for more than six months, as they always found their way back to one another.

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.

However, according to Schneider, both she and Putis were still growing as individuals. "We had a lot of things in common, like music, food and places we wanted to go," Schneider said. "We really supported each other's career and our accomplishments. Working on those together, we just complemented each other."

Although Putis and Schneider were able to stay together through college, it wasn't always easy. "Kids go off to different colleges, and they have a lot of trouble keeping in touch with each other, and I think kids want to experiment a little bit more and have other relationships," Schneider said. However, they were always able to work things through problems and find growth within the relationship.

Text and design by LINDSEY MCCORMICK and LIBBY SPIER

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

"You hold up your pole and I'll hold up my pole and we'll all be fine," Cita Cohen said.

One thing they were both able to agree on, was what it takes to be a part of a successful relationship. "We think a relationship is based first on mutual respect, similar values, having a good sense of humor and honesty. Honesty is critical," Cita and Miles said.

Although they were able to reconnect after high school, Cita talks about how she wasn't ready to make a decision like marriage in high school. "I felt like I had to date different people and see what my reaction would be to different people. I wasn't ready to settle down or even be committed," Cita said.

Maddie Mendes is a former Woodside High School student and is currently a freshman in college at Cal Poly. To this day she is still involved in a romantic relationship from high school. She never sought out dating someone in high school and found her current boyfriend while she was going through a tough time.

Although, complications with different colleges cause many high school relationships to end, Mendes and her partner find ways to overcome this. "Having lots of communication and knowing we have each other to turn to through the hard times is what gets us through it all," Mendes said. This has helped them remain confident in their relationship regardless of the distance.

The success of

a long-lasting relationship is not dependent on a type of person, but the goals of the person. Mendes says that she has seen many people in lasting relationships, and all those involved do not necessarily bear similar qualities. "[There is] a certain mindset you need to have where you want the relationship and are committed to one person," Mendes said. She believes 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.

The idea of marriage is not something that scares Mendes. "Many of my family members got married to their high school sweetheart so I find it very sentimental for someone to be in a relationship that lasts so long," Mendes said.

High school romances can be complicated, confusing and challenging, but they can also be beautiful, eye opening and life changing. They may take you down a path that leads you to a 50-year-long marriage with the girl on the swim team. However, one thing is certain: as time progresses, so will relationships and their dynamics.

There are many routes to take in life, which lead to millions of unknown destinations. High school sweethearts will always be rare love stories that represent the mysteries of where life can take you.

"One time when he walked me to biology, I looked at him and I felt something. Like you know, people say this is baloney, but I swear to God as I looked at him, and I felt like a zing."

- Nancy Schneider



Cita & Miles Cohen on their wedding day

Majority Rules

Amidst an overwhelming liberal majority, the political landscape of Palo Alto High School rarely brings alternative views to light.



Text and design by ALEXA GWYN, SAM MUTZ, ATTICUS SCHERER and EMMA STEFANUTTI
Art by FRIDA RIVERA



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 as 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 debts.”

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 persecut-

“I judge people based on their political views. I think it says a lot about a person and how they view the world.”

- Owen Longstreth



ed, 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, hin-

dering 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.”

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 disgusted them during one of the most volatile times in our country," Druker said. "I think something like a third of people were chill with it, but two-thirds of Paly were like, 'not okay, not okay.'"

The byproduct of his experiment was "social suicide," according to Druker. "It's awful. I wasn't even in my friend group anymore," Druker said. "Everybody remembers, even people who weren't at school [that year]. They all knew about it, even if I didn't tell them."

One particularly memorable incident for Druker from that experiment occurred at Kirk's Steakhouses. "Someone 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 ground, and they poured barbecue sauce on it; my friends were dipping their french 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 transgenders? 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

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



say it," Druker said. "That's just going to make the problem that we have worse."

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

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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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. While the standards are widely upheld across the country, it is common for certain schools to take the rushing process to the next level, especially for girls.

With the growth in the number of students at universities, the process of vying to get into sororities has become much more competitive. Gaining a spot in the sorority of your choice has become increasingly more demanding. In some cases, this can cause the whirlwind of rush to trickle down into life prior to even arriving at a university. Kasey McGahan, an Auburn University alumna living in Atlanta, has seen first-hand how rush can begin

months before the first day of recruitment, starting as early as the fall of high school senior year. McGahan not only went through rush herself during her time at Auburn, but she also helped her daughter through it just this year.

Today, many students are encouraged to put together a portfolio containing a resume of community service, teamwork, leadership, academics and letters of recommendation to further bolster their rush application. Some students even go to the

great lengths of hiring a consultant 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] rec,” 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.

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.

Maddie Yen, a Paly 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 PNM—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

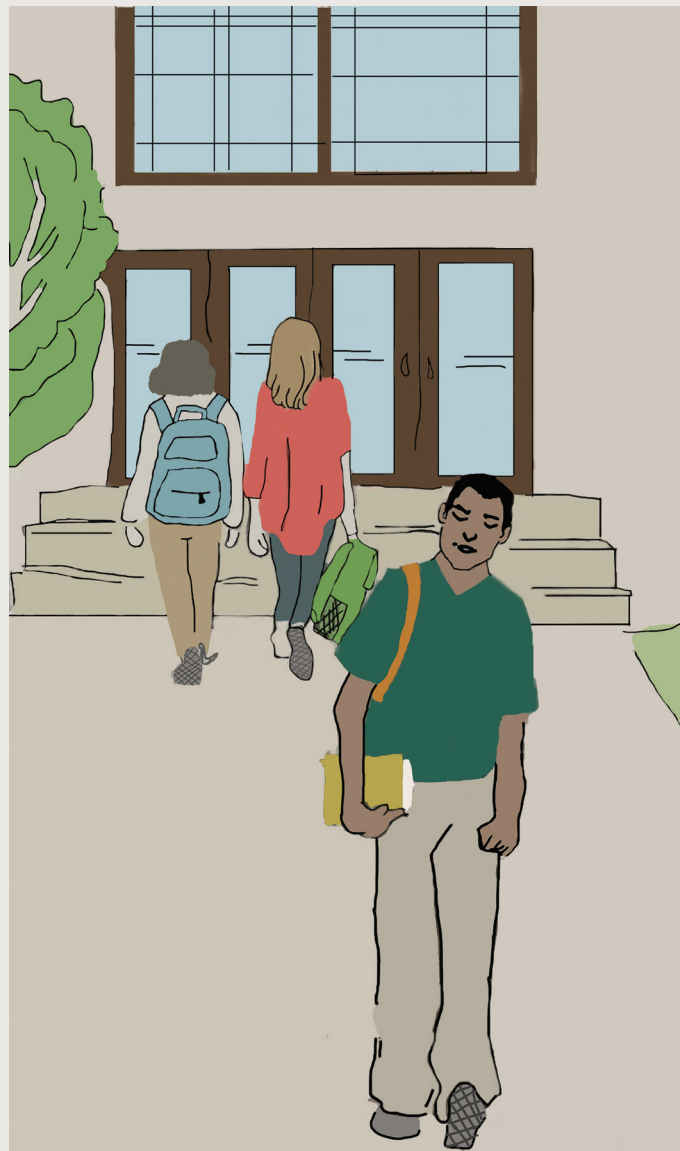
throughout the process. “If you go into the rush process really trying to see if you could fit in a certain house and if you could see yourself there with those people, you will end up where you want to be and where you will be happy,” Yen said. “For advice to potential new members going into Greek life, I would say just keep being yourself.”

“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

“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.”
- Maddie Yen



An Alternative Path

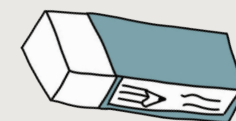
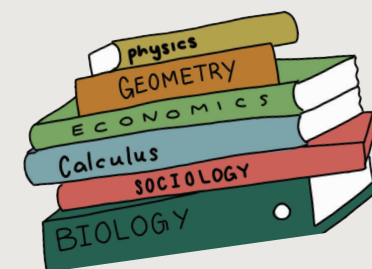


Despite the pressure on high school students to follow the traditional path of a 4-year college, some opt to transfer into programs such as Foothills Middle College for educational freedom, flexibility and exploration.

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.



“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.”

— Tia Geri



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.

Inspired 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."

"[Middle College] is a welcoming environment that allows each individual to be themselves."

—Ilai Beth



MISERY POKER

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!



Text and design by DUNYA MOSTAGHIMI and MAHATI SUBRAMANIAM
Art by ELLEN CHUNG and DUNYA MOSTAGHIMI





ROUND 1: SCHOOL

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 their peers has an official 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.

According to Rena Steiner, a licensed family and marriage counselor, people manifest their desire to be

seen and heard by listing the negative aspects of their life. "It catches people's attention; it allows one to feel power over another when one's vying stories of misery," Reiner said. "However, the 'power' effect of engaging in this way is short-lived."

Paly students are no exception to the game, whether they are players of power 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 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 lament 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 often end up choosing to attend colleges and enter career paths that are more reputable.

Junior Lindsay Aldous believes that Misery Poker detracts from the learning experience that school is supposed to provide. "The Paly culture developed by Misery Poker is focused on the work you are doing instead of the things you are learning," Aldous said. Students thus take hard classes for the sake of the game and not for a true passion to pursue the subject. This continues on into creating a lifestyle where one's ability to brag trumps all else.

"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."

— Juliana Iruleggi

I HAVE THREE TESTS, TENNIS LESSONS AND VOLUNTEERING TOMORROW!

YOU THINK THAT'S BAD! AS IF...



ROUND 2: RELATIONSHIPS

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 couples now focus on their needs and expectations of the relationship.

"There seems to be a lot of fear in the vulnerability. Instead, couples banter back and forth with their lists of how each has suffered in the relationship, trying to prove to the other who has had it worse," Steiner said. "Underneath the banter, there is usually a need that is not being met, and oftentimes than not it is the person themselves who needs to meet that need not the other person."

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

"[The negative aspects of life] seem so in your face yet with a softer gaze of intention, the beauty, the positives, the gifts of life come into view."

— Rena Steiner

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 people," 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?'" Oftentimes, 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.

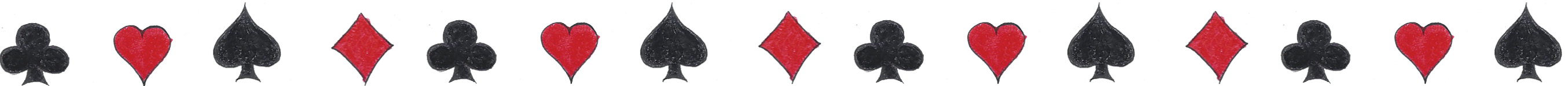
For many, Misery Poker serves as a way to avoid such

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."

YOU DO THE DISHES BECAUSE I WORKED ALL DAY!

WELL, I HAD TO WATCH THE KIDS.



Tyler, The Creator criticized the Grammy's oppressive album genres, sparking conversation over a long-standing issue: the discrimination of black artists.

IN THE SHADOWS

A red and hot-pink striped shirt emerges from the roaring crowd and saunters down the aisle in disbelief. Hands stretch from the audience, eager to congratulate the artist as he leaps onto the stage and accepts the quintessential gold gramophone trophy. Tyler, the Creator's acceptance speech at the Grammy Awards was filled with heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported him in his musical journey. However, after the official ceremony, he revealed his conflicted position over his success in the urban contemporary category.

He explained how when artists of color create genre-bending music—music that does not exactly conform to genre expectations—their work is often categorized as “urban” or “rap.” This often results in the music industry segregating artists at the most prestigious musical award ceremony. “A black artist who sings in a pop style is way

more likely to be considered as an R&B or rap artist, and that's why that urban contemporary genre exists,” Paly junior, Amelia Lagna said.

The Grammy's, watched by nearly 20 million people worldwide, has an immense influence on the music industry. The award show explicitly ranks the success of musical artists through the award winners and subtly influences the ideology of Americans through the stereotypes reinforced by the outcomes. “Grouping music by black artists into their own genre is like segregation,” Lagna said. “It makes it seem like they are incapable of fully integrating [into other music genres].”

In addition to the ways the Grammy's fuel stereotypes that span across the nation, they also affect the success of the individual artist. Being a Grammy award-winning artist helps any artist gain traction in the music industry, but there are categories that are significantly more prestigious,

“Nobody even knows what urban contemporary means. The category just seems like a way to undermine black artists.”

Amelia Lagna, Paly junior

“As a society we put labels on everything and we just don't need to.”

Makayla Miller, Paly senior

ly recognized in the music industry, reinforced by the model set by the Grammy's. There are, however, people who recognize these faults and have taken great strides towards an equal platform of respect. In our very own backyard, Blackfest is an annual festival run by Stanford students with the intention of showcasing black artists.

Blackfest is an event run by Stanford University's Black Family Gathering Committee, a group of students “impassioned by black art, music and culture and who embark on a yearly endeavor to share those values with the entire university community—both interracial and cross culturally,” according to their website.

Blackfest is a prime example of the steps society can take towards making social change as retribution for discriminated artists; however, many feel that there is still more that needs to be done if we want to enter an age where the respect of an artist is defined by more merit than the color of their skin.

Many Paly students have identified this injustice in our society. Among our 100+ clubs, Black Scholars Unit-

ed (BSU) is dedicated to promoting a space where students can build connections and bring awareness to black culture. Paly senior and BSU president Makayla Miller, appreciates Blackfest's initiative to highlight black artists and bring equal recognition for their accomplishments. “Blackfest creates positive change in that it shows people what we are capable of,” Miller said. “Blackfest isn't this event where we are throwing our blackness in people's faces. We are more so saying, ‘Hey, this is what we can do, this is what we can create, and you are welcome to join us, but know that we made this.’”

Miller also recently founded BSU's step team. Step, a synchronized percussive performance, largely evolved from traditional African dances but was widely popularized by African American fraternities and sororities in the late '60s. Stepping is now a rite of passage for Greek life pledges and a quintessential marker of black artistic expression. “I step because it's a way for me to feel more connected with my culture and I just feel really good, powerful, when I step” Miller said.

Because step is an art form widely claimed by African Americans, it retains recognition as a defining factor of black culture. However, not all forms of expression are appreciated in the same way. “Most of what we

see today in the media—trending dances, music, art, etc.—was made or inspired by black people and our culture, though oftentimes we are not the faces that get to represent them,” Miller said.

The representation of black artists both at specific events, such as the Grammy's, and their artistic recognition, in general, are both products of a fundamental flaw in our society. People become too focused on the fact that separated groups of people are unequal instead of questioning the labels separating us in the first place, especially when it comes to the color of our skin. “I hope black artists will be recognized in the future as simply that: artists,” Miller said. “As a society we put labels on everything as we just don't need to. 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.”

“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



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Busking in the Spotlight



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.

Text and design by KAILEE CORRELL, KIMI LILLIOS and RACHAEL VONDERHAAR • Art by KIMI LILLIOS

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 general 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 advocating for issues she cares about. Baldonado 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 bow 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 because 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 professional performances,” Baldonado said. “They just want to hear some music from some kids.”

Unlike traditional buskers who earn money for profit, Baldonado never intends 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 homelessness to specific events like the Australian 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 iSing Silicon 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 playing music for the fun of it. Through her experience performing 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 informal performances,” Druker said. “Every Sunday we perform at the Backyard Brew and if we mess up no one cares, it doesn’t matter; no one is paying attention 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.”

“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

Donate to the Australian Wildfires

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 venues with so many people and I feel a lot more pressure to perform well because if I don’t, I’ll be letting everyone else down,” Druker said.

Druker’s band performances do not draw the same kind of audience attention as her choir ones do, but the satisfaction of performing outweighs the concerns 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 formal 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 attention 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 usually more polished. It sounds really beautiful and I can see everyone in the audience 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 physically be there to enjoy something,” Druker said. “Instead you can go on your phone and watch a youtube video or something else rather than go see something live.”

Along with the rise of influencer platforms, there are changes in lifestyles that

reflect in the kinds of potential audiences out on the streets. With people rushing around, their primary focus is not on the music that is floating down the street, but instead, their next destination.

“People are a lot busier and when they’re out, they’re out with a purpose,” Druker said. “When there wasn’t as much technology, people would just go out to hang out, so they would have more time to watch people [busking].”

Nevertheless, music is music and buskers bring a bit of happiness into the days of passersby. The soft sounds of acoustic instruments and angelic voices, or string quartet, showcase the training and skills of young musicians. For these musicians who have spent countless hours honing their technique, busking provides an outlet to have fun with music and allows them to explore their capabilities.

Whether buskers perform to donate their proceeds to a charity or divide it among themselves, street performing has always enhanced the experience of passing spectators. “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.”

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

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

- *David Greenberg*

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.

"[Systemizers] are focusing more on the instrumental elements and seeing how

"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*

the music is mixing together," Greenberg's study said. "It's almost like a musical puzzle that they're putting together."

Paly junior Bowmen Wingard has a specific taste for rock music and classifies himself as both an empathizer and a systemizer. "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," Wingard said. "I think I am both an empathizer and a systemizer because some songs I listen to for the meaning and some I listen to because I like how they sound."

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.

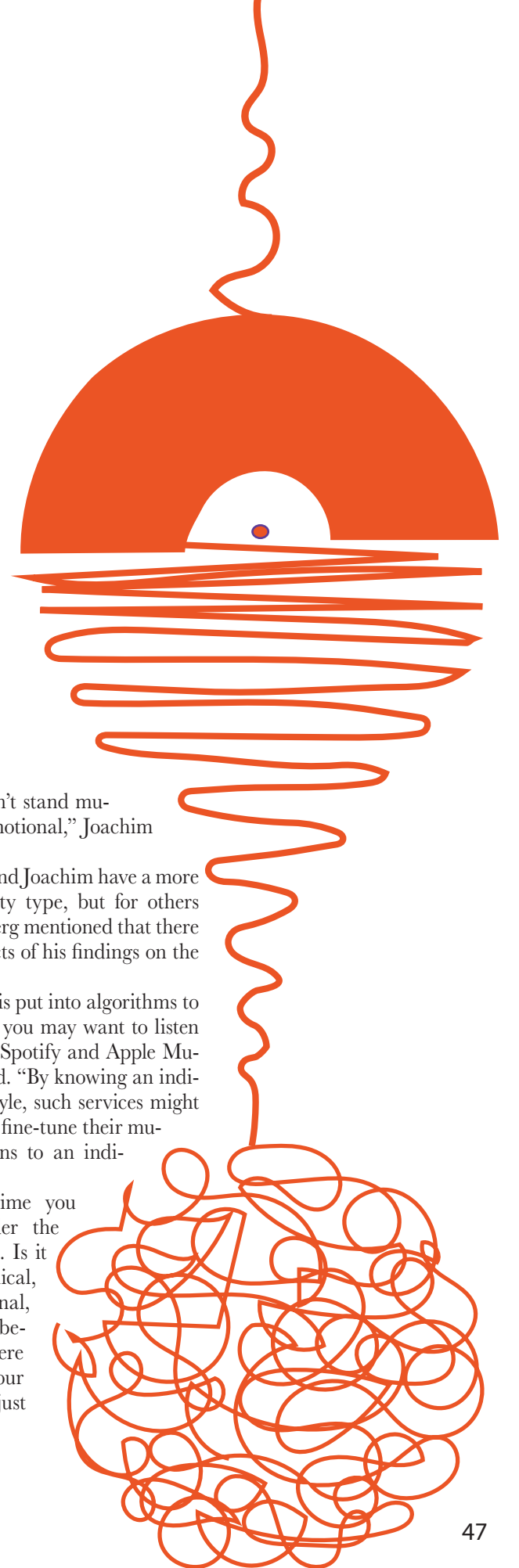
But even after the change in musical taste, Joachim doesn't feel like she resonates with a certain personality type. "I don't feel like I am stronger in one category or

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.

"A lot of money is put into algorithms to choose what music you may want to listen to, for example on Spotify and Apple Music," Greenberg said. "By knowing an individual's thinking style, such services might in future be able to fine-tune their music recommendations to an individual."

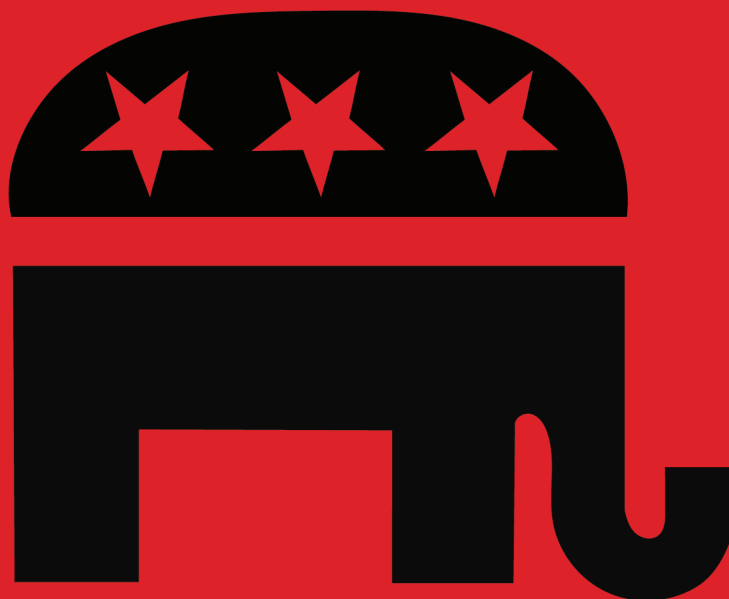
So, the next time you hit shuffle, consider the music you listen to. Is it detailed and technical, deep and emotional, or somewhere in between? Because there might be more to your favorite song than just its lyrics.



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LET'S ADDRESS THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



VOLUME 8 ISSUE 5