

The Mandolin

St. Francis Catholic High School

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"Spread the word."

Issue 126



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Black History Month

BY SOPHIA HENDRIX '25

St. Francis, are you ready for it? As February approaches, St. Francis's Black Student Union is preparing to make history and celebrate Black excellence through this year's theme, African Americans in the Arts. The club has been putting in immense effort and passion into the month's assembly and artistry locations on campus to ensure their culture is able to be shared with their peers.

To this day, last year's Black History Month assembly is remembered for the exceptional C.K. McClatchy High School step team, along with beautiful performances by other local artists. BSU President, Selah Burnley is working with her committee and the school's Diversity Coordinator, Dr. Haecker, to create something that will keep St. Francis's student body as engaged as last year, while also including more elements that showcase a variety of different art forms that are important to Black history. Returning this year will be the CKM step team, followed by a new addition of the Grant High School drumline, and a spoken word poet. With each performance there will be historical background information given so that everyone can properly understand the power behind what they're watching or listening to. After the assembly is over, students can admire artwork done by Black student alumni in the gym foyer. Burnley says, "We want this Black history month to highlight the achievements African Americans have had in the arts. Especially since they have been undermined in the industry for years. This means that the assembly will be a celebration of Black art and show Troubies the beauty that is African American culture."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BSU

All month long, SF students can walk through the first student-coordinated art gallery in the theater foyer that explores the influence and history of Black art. Once completely finished, the gallery will consist of a 3D mural, timeline, words from the school's Black students, and several more elements that are worth giving time to. The overall theme for the gallery is uplifting Black artists when they and their work have been silenced. Talented artists like Taylor Swift and Greta Gerwig are popular for their representation of women throughout their art, especially at St. Francis, but it is often this limited representation that can cause Black students to feel left out because it fails to speak to them in the same way it does their peers. Not seeing yourself on the screen that everyone around you praises can feel alienating.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF BSU

Student, Logan Purser '24, who helped BSU assemble the mural shared her learning experience, "Working on this is really making me realize how little African Americans are represented in the media." Representation matters and BSU is trying to introduce St. Francis to the gifted artists that go unrecognized.

Although African American culture is the structure of America's favorite art forms such as dance, music, and fashion, little credit is given where it is due. This month gives St. Francis an opportunity to grow as a community and support their fellow Troubies. Black art is beautiful and it deserves to be praised.

Mr. Mendoza Interview

BY SALEM MONJAZEB '27 & MIA BAINS '27

Recently, *The Mandolin* interviewed Mr. Mendoza to learn a little more about him. We decided to ask him some fun and candid questions to get to know our real principal. Just a disclaimer, this interview is paraphrased and not directly quoted.

Q: The first question that was asked was when did you know you wanted to work in education?

A: Mr. Mendoza realized he wanted to work in education early on. It was his 4th-grade teacher who inspired him to learn more. Every teacher since then has further inspired this goal. He did not realize that he wanted to teach at a high school level until he got to college.

Q: The next question we asked was what accomplishment are you most proud of?

A: An accomplishment that Mr. Mendoza is most proud of is coming to America and being able to speak English.



Mr. Mendoza as photographed by St. Francis Catholic High School.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dressed as Darth Vader from Star Wars, Mr. Mendoza participates in the back to school rally
COURTESY OF ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL

A: It was not until he was a bit older that he moved to the United States and learned English.

Q: We then asked what hobbies he enjoys in his free time.

A: Mr. Mendoza replied that he enjoys exercise (particularly running), traveling, and finding new places to eat. Mr. Mendoza believes that Sacramento has really good places to eat and constantly has more places to discover.

Q: Next, we inquired what goals Mr. Mendoza has for his future.

A: Mr. Mendoza replied that he wanted to continue to have St. Francis be the best school it possibly can be. He is also interested in pursuing options beyond being a principal.

Q: We wanted to get a better understanding of how Mr. Mendoza perceives himself, so we asked him what adjectives he would use to describe himself.

A: Mr. Mendoza said that some adjectives he would use to describe himself include organized, time-bound/enjoys having a tight schedule, energetic (which he needs because his day is crammed with a lot of things), meticulous, task-oriented, compassionate (especially about his students), and kind-hearted. While Mr. Mendoza is kind-hearted, he feels many people don't see this side of him. Instead, people see him as his exterior, which is partially influenced by his more than 17 years in the military. Despite this, Mr. Mendoza said his heart truly comes from a place of care and support.

Q: After that, we questioned what Mr. Mendoza would be if he were not a principal.

A: If Mr. Mendoza were not a principal, he would probably still be in the military, in the classroom teaching, or being a traveler and showing others places he cares about.

Q: Next, we asked Mr. Mendoza, what is on your bucket list?

A: Going to Ireland is something Mr. Mendoza has been wanting to check off his bucket list for a long time. He was supposed to go to Ireland, but unfortunately, his trip got deferred due to COVID-19; however, Mr. Mendoza still plans to go.

Q: Mr. Mendoza was then asked what the most exciting part about being a principal is.

A: He replied that he gets to be on campus and be behind the scenes. He gets to see the work the students do as well as the spirit they have, such as at rallies, athletic games, and theater productions. While Mr. Mendoza gets to see all the work students put in, he also gets to interact with the parents at various events St. Francis hosts throughout the year.

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A: However, there are also challenging parts of being a principal such as being the person who responds to unfortunate things that happen on campus.

Q: We then wanted to know if Mr. Mendoza had any important lessons he wanted to share.

A: Mr. Mendoza said that the biggest thing he has learned in life is you can't be afraid to take risks. Things may be scary but it is necessary to take that first step. It's okay to make mistakes but the important thing is that you learn from those mistakes. He said he has also learned to not be afraid to reach out and connect with others.

Q: Lastly, we asked what makes Mr. Mendoza the right person to be the Principal of an all-girls school.

A: Mr. Mendoza said that being a father to a daughter has helped him to be principal at an all-girls school. His daughter was a junior when he came to the school to be Principal. Additionally, he was raised in a household with three powerful sisters. Being a father and brother to women and working at St. Francis has given Mr. Mendoza insights on how to support Troubies in all of their endeavors.

Holy Rivalry: St. Francis and Christian Brothers Go Head-to-head in Basketball and Soccer

BY MERCY COLLIER '26

The Troubies kicked off 2024 with two winter matchups against Christian Brothers: Holy Hoops for girls' basketball and soccer's Holy Cup. The annual competitions between the two rivals did not disappoint.

HOLY HOOPS

The highly-anticipated "Holy Hoops" basketball face-off in mid-January between the Troubies and the Falcons ended with a stunning turnover to CB in the final seconds of the game. The 60-57 loss on the Troubies' home court followed an action-packed game that kept fans and families on their feet.

St. Francis senior Brianna McGahan scored a team-best of 18 points, and the Troubies had a 39-38 lead by the third period. In the fourth quarter, St. Francis was ahead by two points with just 15 seconds left on the clock when CB freshman Olivia Novi managed a steal.



Senior Bria McGahan vies for the rebound in the midst of a heated quarter.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL

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She passed to guard Aleyah Harmon, whose 3-pointer gave the Falcons a one-point lead. Harmon was fouled with five seconds to go, and made both free throws to win the game.

The Sacramento Bee called the game “as good of a game as there has been in the series, which dates back to 1990.”

Despite the heartbreaking finish, Troubie sophomore Lexi London was upbeat about the team’s performance.

“We gave it our all and played really well as a team,” London said. “It was still a great, fun game.”

Earlier in the day, the Troubies’ JV Gold team crushed Christian Brothers 46-28. The two teams were neck and neck early in the game, with the Troubies leading 17-15 at the half. St. Francis came back strong in the third quarter.

“We were only up by a little bit, but came together after halftime and pulled out the win,”

said Troubie sophomore Annie Swanson. “It was a really exciting game.”

St. Francis went into the fourth quarter with a 16-point lead, 34-18, before scoring another 12 points for the win. Troubie freshman Audrey Bashore scored a team-best of 14 points.

HOLY CUP

Just two weeks after Holy Hoops, the Troubies and Falcons battled once again, this time on the soccer field. The annual Holy Cup competition, hosted at Cristo Rey High's Adamson Family Sports Complex, ended in a 1-1 draw, bringing St. Francis’ undefeated streak to 13 games.

St. Francis senior Yasmin Azar was the first to score in the game and the Troubadours held on to their lead deep into the second half until the Falcons were able to score for the tie.

Ahead of the varsity game, St. Francis’ JV Gold team beat the Falcons handily 2-0. Troubie freshman Norah White scored the first goal early in the game, and thanks to her assist, sophomore Madeline Squaglia scored in the second half.



JV Gold plays against Christian Brothers during Holy Hoops

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL



Freshman Norah White celebrates a Holy Cup goal
PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL

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Meanwhile, St. Francis defender Charlotte Lippi blocked CB's first shot at a goal, and the Falcons were unable to overcome the Troubies' defense the remainder of the game.

"I thought we had a very successful game," said St. Francis sophomore Mia Nelson. "We beat CB 2-0, solidifying the 9-year streak of SF winning."

"It's rewarding to win as we work together as a team," Nelson added. "The rest of the season is going to be great."

In the Holy Cup opening game, St. Francis' JV Red hosted River City's JV team. (Christian Brothers does not have a Frosh-Soph team.) St. Francis sophomore Liv Vasques-Martin scored the first goal of the game, but the Raiders came back to win the contest 3-1.

Without a doubt, the winter matchups between the St. Francis and Christian Brothers' teams lived up to the hype that builds up before every game between these friendly rivals. As usual, the players and spectators enjoyed high-level play, great sportsmanship, and the spirited camaraderie of the Holy games.

DresSwap Review

BY OLIVIA TRAVIS '25

Have you ever found yourself struggling to find a dress for a school dance such as homecoming, spring fling, or prom? We all know the challenges one can face when online dress shopping while browsing popular websites such as Lulu's, Princess Polly, or Lucy in the Sky. First off, you pay an outrageous amount of money for a dress you'll likely wear once. Then you pray that your dress will ship on time for the dance. Once your dress finally arrives, it might not fit correctly, or it ends up looking nothing like it did online, and if you want to return the dress, that is a hassle as well. Perhaps you choose to go to the mall instead and stop by Windsor to look for a dress only to find they don't have your size, or every girl from school is there trying on the same dress as you. Luckily, student Nina Dameri has the solution to all of these problems with her creation of the non-profit organization, DresSwap.

The DresSwap is a 100% volunteer-run, zero-profit initiative where style meets sustainability and affordability. How did this non-profit organization come about? Nina Dameri states, "I actually came up with the idea from Rent the Run Way, a website where you can rent dresses for a period of time. I am really passionate about fashion and about keeping fashion sustainable, since there is so much fast fashion in the world right now, which is what motivated me to go through with my idea."



Founder of DresSwap Nina Dameri with St. Francis High School President Fadia Desmond
PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVIA TRAVIS

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The average US consumer throws away approximately 81.5 pounds of clothes annually, leading to an estimated 11.3 million tons of textile waste in America alone. Clothing swaps offer a sustainable solution to clothes shopping by reducing the demand for new clothing, keeping clothing in circulation while giving them a longer time to live, and minimizing the amount of clothing that ends up in landfills.

How does the DresSwap work? The DresSwap operates on three separate days, the first being dress drop-off day where you bring the dresses you wish to donate to the armory after school. Donating could not be easier! You simply scan the QR code provided, and fill out a Google form to photograph and tag the dress you wish to donate. Volunteers are available to help you with this process as well!

The second day is the actual dress-swapping day. You head to the armory after school and browse through the racks of stunning donated dresses and even have a chance to try them on. After attending the first dress-swap day myself, I can say it was lots of fun to check out all of the beautiful dresses on the racks and be able to come home with a few so I have a dress to wear to the upcoming dance, Snowco.

The final step to the DresSwap is the return day, where after having the opportunity to wear your gorgeous dress, you return the dress to the armory so another student will have a chance to wear it. The dress return day will be February 13th and 16th from 3-4:30 in the SF Armory for all Troubies who have participated. Thanks to Nina Dameri and her DresSwap, finding a dress has never been easier!

When will the next DresSwap be? Nina Dameri states, "I am hoping to do more DresSwap's around spring fling, prom, and homecoming and am open to student feedback." Nina received around thirty dresses after her first dress drop on January 17th, as well as volunteer help from fellow Troubies.

After the first swap day, Nina said "I am very satisfied with how the swap has gone so far and I am super thankful for everyone who donated. I am looking forward to the future and what it brings." Troubies, with that being said, check your closets for any dresses that could be donated to the next DresSwap day, and participate in the upcoming DresSwap days to keep sustainable fashion alive, and have a chance to discover new styles without the high price tag!



First DresSwap Day January 23rd, 2024
PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVIA TRAVIS

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The Golden Globes Recap 2024

CHARLIE PAUL '25

The 82nd annual Golden Globes were hosted on January 8th, 2024. The awards show was aired to mixed reviews: some joyful for the record-breaking wins of the night, others with their experience marred by questionable casting decisions.

Oppenheimer was the big winner of the night, taking home Best Picture, best director, and best actor. Barbie, a record-breaking movie directed by St. Francis' own Greta Gerwig, took home Best Song for Billie Eilish's "What Was I Made For?" as well as a new award which was given for the first time ever at this year's Golden Globes, Cinematic and Box Office Achievement. The award serves to honor popular blockbuster films, likely as an attempt to revive the popularity of the Globes by allowing more widely known films to be recognized in the awards.

Despite the record-breaking wins this year, there was a significant amount of controversy surrounding this year's award show.

Comedian Jo Koy was given the job of host just 10 days before the night of the show, and his lack of preparation time showed. His comedic monologues consisted of jokes that many called sexist, nearly entirely received by deafening silence in the room. Additionally, many criticized the lack of wins for the record-breaking Barbie. Despite its 8 nominations, it only took home only two awards, neither of which recognized director Greta Gerwig or star Margot Robbie – a decision that many attributed to sexism in the voting process.

This is not the first time the Golden Globes has been the subject of controversy. In 2021, an LA Times exposé revealed that the voting body for the awards had no African-American members, putting an immense amount of criticism on the award show itself and motivating the organizers of the Golden Globes to overhaul their voting body and expand its membership to a larger, more diverse group.

This year's Golden Globe Awards saw records broken and paths paved, as well as its fair share of controversy. Despite its mixed results, the Golden Globes is a staple of America's many beloved award shows and will certainly continue for many years to come.



The Golden Globes 2024
PHOTO COURTESY OF DISCUSSINGFILM

Plant Power Fast Food

BY KATIE NEWMAN '25

Fast food and vegan food are often thought of as opposites. One entails a quick, easy meal and the other entails limited options that can be hard to compete with the classic burger and fries combo. However, Plant Power Fast Food proves this misconception about vegan food to be wrong. This restaurant located at 1100 R Street in Sacramento, California proves that fast food can not only be vegan, but also incredibly delicious. An array of high quality burgers, fries, wraps, and milkshakes are offered that are indistinguishable from the non-vegan options we are used to seeing. The milkshakes are made with oat-based milk while the burgers are created with a blend of soy and wheat proteins that are able to mimic the texture of real meat.

Plant Power Fast Food's mission is not just to prove that vegan food can be equally as good as other food. In fact, it was founded to provide an alternative to unhealthy fast food that causes harm to the Earth's ecosystem and hurts animals. In addition to having vegan food, the restaurant also has tables and booths that are made from renewable bamboo and takeout packaging made from plants.

Plant Power Fast Food succeeds in providing delicious and eco-friendly food; however, one negative aspect of this restaurant is that the price of the food is more expensive than other traditional fast food restaurants. The price of the "Iconic Burger" is \$12.44 at Plant Power Fast Food while the price of a "Big Mac" at McDonalds is \$5.99. The difference in prices can easily be attributed to the difference in quality of the two burgers.

On the other hand, fast food restaurants are less focused on the quality of their food, and more about the fact that the food is easily accessible. Part of being easily accessible means that fast food is often inexpensive.

Although, Plant Power Fast Food fails to match up to the extremely low prices of traditional fast food restaurants, it is able to make it up with their eco-friendly business practices. Plant Power Fast Food is definitely revolutionizing the fast food industry with their environmentally conscious business model and extremely delicious food.



An assortment of vegan foods from Plant Power Fast Food!
PHOTO COURTESY OF PLANT POWER
FAST FOOD

SF 2024 Trends

BY KYRA LUERAS '27

At St Francis there's always been many trends that have come and gone. Trends at our school are much different from other schools because of our uniforms, so the trends we mostly see at SF are shoes, accessories, and jewelry. What makes a trend at SF? A trend at St. Francis usually comes from other trends going viral on the internet, and is appropriate for school! Once the trend blows up on campus, you see it everywhere. As the new year begins, with it comes many new trends, here are a few of the latest trends on campus.

Stanley cups are one of the biggest most seen trends on campus this year. Everywhere you look you are guaranteed to see someone with a Stanley. Why have Stanleys become so popular? Stanleys have become viral all over the internet this year. In years past at SF the "trend" was to have a Hydro Flask or a Yeti but this year that changed when the Stanleys grew viral. Stanleys aren't the typical for SF campus life because of the straw being exposed, and easy leakage. Despite these flaws, students still seem to love them as they are seen all over campus. Students love them because of how flattering they look, the array of colors, quality, and the popularity and trendiness of them.

Another big trend on campus this year is ribbons. The bow trend on TikTok went viral in December after the "coquette" aesthetic became popular. The trend is to tie a ribbon on an object and make a video with the song "Let the Light in" by Lana Del Rey over it. The coquette aesthetic is very pink and feminine. After this trend became popular, bows became a big thing.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMAZON

Bows are such a cute accessory and something seen all over campus recently. From being put in hair, to on shoes, and on water bottles. This is a trend I wouldn't mind seeing a little longer!

Retro Adidas shoes are making a comeback in 2024 and the Troubies are hopping on the trend. Adidas shoes have been around for much longer than our generation. Specifically in the 80's is when these shoes became popular because of their fashion influence. Since then, Adidas have been a recurring trend every couple of years. Among the Troubies, I notice that the most popular ones this year are the Adidas sambas and gazelles. They are so cute and look especially good with the uniform!

Another small thing I've noticed is that lots of Troubies are enjoying lip products. Summer Fridays lip balms, the Tower 28 lipgloss, Aqauphor, etc... are some of the most popular ones I've noticed on campus.

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These products have gone viral on TikTok, and many of the students on campus have been using them.

Ugg boots are another shoe that's popular among SF girls. While Uggs have always been around, they are seen more now than ever. Uggs were originally made for surfers for warmth. The brand was founded by an Australian surfer who loved sheepskin and wanted to share that with the world. By the 1980's Uggs became a symbol of Southern California culture, gaining popularity through surf shops along the coast. Later on in the early 2000's, they evolved from boots and slippers to stylish luxuries, seen in Vogue! They started opening Ugg retail stores in big cities, and Uggs soon became worn by many more people than just surfers.

They quickly became a staple worn by many famous icons such as Beyonce, Oprah Winfrey, and Kate Moss! Because of the popularity from the outside world, Uggs made their way to St. Francis and soon became a trend among the Troubies.



Among the Troubies, the Tasman Uggs and Ugg Ultra Mini boots are the most popular. They are super comfy and perfect for winter to keep you warm which is why Troubies love them so much.

Another big on-campus trend is gold jewelry; gold jewelry became ultra popular in 2023 for helping you achieve the “clean girl look.” It provides a timeless and polished appearance! It's a nice accessory to pair with our uniform and makes you look more put together. Gold Jewelry has been around for centuries and dates way back to ancient Egypt. Necklaces, earrings, pendants, and more, all were popular during that time. Back then, it was a way to show your social status, power, and wealth. It is crazy that it is still around today and still worn as a decorative accessory to give a rich warmth appeal. It is a way to enhance your features and add detail to your look, which is something Troubies especially love since we can't express ourselves through clothes due to uniforms, but we can through jewelry!

Another popular trend on campus (that's not part of the dress code) is puffer jackets. From Patagonia, to The North Face, to Lululemon, and more. They look super good with the uniform, and keep you warm and dry on cold and rainy days. I'm sure many Troubies can agree with me that we all hope that these will be added to the dress code eventually.

These trends all have made an impact on St. Francis students, and have become a big part of SF everyday life. I notice all of these trends are popular in general and not just on campus, but we have made them trends on campus! I personally love all of these trends and I think they will be around for a while.

Mean Girls Movie: Fetch or Flop?

BY MIA NELSON '26

Watching the iconic Mean Girls movie starring Lindsay Lohan, Tina Fey, and Rachel McAdams is a rite of passage in a teenage girl's life, so being able to see a modern day version of this fantastic film was just as special. The 2024 Mean Girls re-make featured the same classic characters and story plot. After moving from Kenya, Cady Heron learns to navigate her junior year at North Shore High, while simultaneously seeking revenge on the queen bee, Regina George. The talented cast features singer Reneé Rapp as Regina George, Angourie Rice as Cady Heron, everyone's favorite Fisher brother Christopher Briney as Aaron Samules, and the one and only Tina Fey returning for the role of Ms. Norbury.

There were multiple changes which differentiated the re-make from the original – the most drastic being the decision to make the film a musical. Essentially, the 2024 adaptation was a film version of the Broadway Musical: Mean Girls. While most people described the film as fun, campy, and artistic, others disagreed. The movie had many negative reviews claiming viewers skipped over important moments; the girls weren't as mean, or that the musical twist cannot live up to the original.

On Rotten Tomatoes, Mean Girls received a 70% on the tomatometer and a 64% audience score. The low scores of the movie lead others to believe that the movie is going to be a pain to sit through, but the comedy aspect kept us laughing.

Overall, the movie was entertaining and very lighthearted. The unexpected musical numbers kept us on our toes while the iconic lines had a modern day twist. There was also a nostalgic surprise at the end of the movie so make sure to watch carefully! The Mean Girls movie was definitely FETCH!



Mean Girls Characters (from left to right)
Cady, Regina, Damian, Janis, and Aaron
PHOTO COURTESY OF TEEN VOGUE

The Life, Death, and Rebirth of the Romantic Comedy

BY MATILDA MYERS '27

It's a story you've likely heard many times before—Person A and Person B encounter obstacles while navigating the ups and downs of love before ultimately finding happiness through a light-hearted blend of humor, misunderstandings, and romance.

This is the story of the romantic comedy, or rom-com for short, a genre that traces back hundreds of years and is still popular today. For example, classic works such as Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and many Jane Austen novels fit perfectly into the rom-com formula.

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I chose *Girl Shy* (1924) to represent the cinematic birth of this genre, as it's often associated with being the first official rom-com to appear on film. Starring silent-film superstars Harold Lloyd and Jobyna Ralston, the silver-screened romantic comedy was among the top-grossing films of its year. More importantly, it begins with a meet-cute, as is the rom-com tradition; Mary Buckingham, the young daughter of a wealthy family, loses her pomeranian while boarding a train. Harold Meadows, an amateur writer with a deathly fear of women, rescues the dog and returns it to her. Chemistry ensues, although Harold can't go more than a few sentences at a time without stammering. The two hit it off anyway. The following fifty minutes is a high-spirited rollercoaster of misunderstandings, car chases, and, of course, a happily ever after. In other words, it's a great movie. I think the humorous and romantic qualities are universal enough that even someone who doesn't enjoy rom-coms would have a great time watching it.



Girl Shy (1924) actor Harold Lloyd and actress Jobyna Ralston sharing a sweet embrace.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOVIES SILENTLY

Unfortunately, no good thing can last forever, not even when it charms the hearts of movie-goers for the better part of a century. The rom-com is no exception to this rule. The genre's decline can be traced to several causes, but most of the blame is on the rise of big-budget movies and lowered audience and critic ratings.

The unrealistic love stories and lack of diversity from the predominantly white-heterosexual formula made rom-coms a thing of the past in a rapidly changing world. Not even late 2000s hits like *The Proposal* and *The Ugly Truth* could save the romantic comedy, and by the 2010s the genre was officially dying.

It certainly didn't help that 2011's *How Do You Know* ended up being one of the biggest box office flops of the decade. The 120 million dollar rom-com, which boasted a cast of major A-list actors including Reece Witherspoon, Paul Rudd, Owen Wilson, and Jack Nicholson, made a meager 7.6 million at the box office. The movie centers on Reece Witherspoon's character, Lisa, as she navigates a love triangle between Matty, a womanizing baseball player, and George, a businessman on the hook for stock fraud. Although the movie was enjoyable, I found the plot half-baked and muddy. Even so, I don't think *How Do You Know* is any better or worse than most movies of its genre; it just didn't stand out. Not standing out isn't necessarily bad, but it becomes so when you spend over 100 million on three of the most expensive actors in Hollywood.

Despite *How Do You Know* scaring the film industry off of rom-coms for almost a decade, the genre has recently begun a resurgence. Hits like *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (2018) and *The Big Sick* (2017)

Best Way to Spend a Three-Day Weekend

BY KATHY DHALAI '27

During a three-day weekend most of us utilize this time to relax and recharge after a long week of stress and work. We'd rather not do anything at this time. But, do you realize what you could accomplish with all of your spare time? After all, time is one of the most valuable items we all have, and it should not be wasted. Here are five things you can do to make your time more effective and beneficial without wasting it.

Activity #1: Apply for a scholarship that will assist you to finance college in the future. For example, *Niche*, previously referred to as *College Prowler*, is currently offering a \$25,000 "No Essay Scholarship." The deadline is February 29, 2024, and it is available to high school, college, and graduate students of any grade level who are residents of the US.

Activity #2: acquire a fresh new skill that you find fascinating, such as photography. Begin by viewing photography videos and doing some investigating on the kinds of cameras you want to use, but the ability you want to learn is entirely dependent on you.

Activity #3: Learn a new study habit. As we all know, there are several study habits to choose from, and it might be difficult to know where to begin. Here are some great learning habits for beginners. First, the retrieval practice method. This strategy is based on the idea of recalling later. Recalling a response to an inquiry helps you learn more than looking it up in your textbook. If you exercise retrieval, you are more inclined to recall the material later. Second, the distributed practice approach is designed to inspire students to take the time for learning and not cram every detail into the day of a large exam.

This method will help you balance each study session, recall knowledge longer, unlike cramming everything in one night.

Activity #4: Journal. This may appear like an no-brainer, but writing, in my opinion, is the best thing you can do for your emotional and mental health. According to the University of Rochester medical center it, "helps you create order when your world feels like it's in chaos. You get to know yourself by revealing your most private fears, thoughts, and feelings. Look at your writing time as personal relaxation time. It's a time when you can de-stress and wind down." Journaling is not required to be done in a journal; an ordinary sheet of paper would suffice.

Activity #5: Create a vision board. This is another obvious choice that works; you may construct a vision board in whichever way you desire. For example, you might create it online using a free platform (such as Canva) or on a physical board available at Target. The purpose of creating a vision board is to help you imagine your version of success. By doing so, you put yourself in a happy mood with these images that represent success to you, giving you confidence and optimism that you have the ability to make them a reality.

To conclude, thinking thoughtfully about how to utilize your weekend in a beneficial and productive way can help you reach better success in the years to come.

Sources:

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Kin's Corner: February Book Review

BY KINNERA TIRUMALA '25

Title: The Love Hypothesis

Author: Ali Hazelwood

Pages: 383

Genre: young adult, romance

Overall Rating: 10/10

Description (Goodreads Edition): "As a third-year Ph.D. candidate, Olive Smith doesn't believe in lasting romantic relationships—but her best friend does, and that's what got her into this situation. Convincing Anh that Olive is dating and well on her way to a happily ever after was always going to take more than hand-wavy Jedi mind tricks: Scientists require proof. So, like any self-respecting biologist, Olive panics and kisses the first man she sees.

That man is none other than Adam Carlsen, a young hotshot professor—and well-known [jerk]. Which is why Olive is positively floored when Stanford's reigning lab tyrant agrees to keep her charade a secret and be her fake boyfriend. But when a big science conference goes haywire, putting Olive's career on the Bunsen burner, Adam surprises her again with his unyielding support and even more unyielding... six-pack abs.

Suddenly their little experiment feels dangerously close to combustion. And Olive discovers that the only thing more complicated than a hypothesis on love is putting her own heart under the microscope."

Love is in the air and we are back for the third edition of Kin's Corner! Yay! We made it to the new year, and with it being February and all, I thought it would befit us to review a very nice and sweet romance novel. The star of the show is *The Love Hypothesis*, and I absolutely loved this novel (see what I did there?). I'll be giving bonus points, or maybe even a valentine, to anybody who can count how many times I mention the

word "love" in this book review. Since this is the third time's a charm, you know the drill about spoilers. I'll really try this time I promise.

Readers are thrust into a world where our protagonist, Olive Smith, is trying to peel her contact lenses off in a bathroom in her university. Turns out, she's not alone in her endeavor and she's actually stumbled into the bathroom of this random guy. He walks in and ends up giving her life advice, because she's nervous about getting her Ph.D. and very much stressing out. Fast forward a couple years, and we now see Olive trying to escape her best friend who thinks she's out on a date with some guy. Olive is very much not on a date—who'd have thought?—and that's how she finds herself smooching "the first man she sees". Not one of her brightest moments, but I'm sure we can all relate to the desperation she must have felt at being caught not doing something she said she was.

Olive is quite the relatable main character. Even though she's a STEM girly through-and-through, we see that she's anxious, she makes mistakes, and is terrified of committing herself to a relationship. She's dedicated to her craft, and knows relatively what she wants and how to get there. Overall, she's an incredibly thought-out and well-written character. Out of all the books I've read, I find that she's one of my absolute favorite narrators. She's also pretty tall, and I feel like most female protagonists in the young adult genre tend to be on the shorter side (ahem *Fourth Wing*). Her narrative, though portrayed in the third person, is hilarious and real. She feels like your best friend, who also happens to be telepathically connected to you and who can project your deepest secrets onto the pages.

First off, I loved this book because the plot was centered around academics. I'm not talking about super scholarly people (although they are),

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but just people who are pursuing higher degrees of education. As someone who loves school and is thinking of staying in school until I'm old enough to have a mid-life crisis, I felt truly seen.

Academia is an incredibly tough field to pursue, and I'm glad that Hazelwood touched upon the underside of teaching. While it's fun to study and learn and research, in both the sciences and humanities, the very real truth is that you're not going to get paid much for your efforts. The workload is immense, and quite a lot of people drop out or go into the "industry" to get a better-paying job and a more stable career. When you're in research, you get paid based on what you find and how much help it is. Sometimes, experiments that have been ongoing for decades eventually succumb to the harsh reality of failure. But...there's always a bright side to learning forever and sticking with academia. The grants could flow in and your research could be fantastic, or you can meet an Adam Carlsen and fall in love amidst all the science and whatnot. Fun fact: my parents actually met while they were researching in medical school!

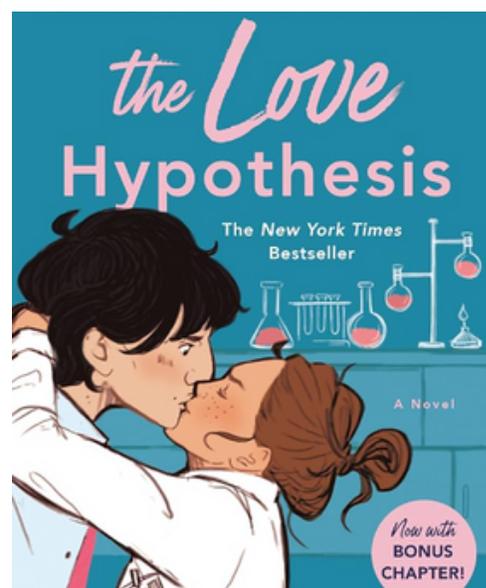
Speaking of love and Carlsen—actually we're just going to talk about Carlsen. As you probably picked up from the summary (or didn't if you weren't reading closely enough), he's a big part of this book. Now, this guy is the ultimate package: He's funny, smart, terribly attractive, really dang tall, and did I mention intelligent?

His only fatal flaw is that he's mean to people and actively terrorizes his students—you know it's bad when they run away in fear of this beautiful man. But Olive can fix him, right? I'm going to let you find the answer to that when you delve into this novel, but just know that the two lead characters totally have chemistry. BE WARNED—this book has a tiny bit of spice to it

(teachers please skim over this part thank you), so if that's not your cup of tea you can skim past it. It only covers a few pages and Hazelwood telegraphs when it's about to happen.

So if you want a funny, cute read with a dash of STEM and whole buffer solutions of romance, PLEASE pick up this book from your local store or library (I'm personally a library girl, so I get the not wanting to spend money and the horrendous wait times on Libby). I actually am not sure if we have this one in the SF library, but if you catch me in the halls I'll probably have an answer for you as to whether or not it's in stock. Or, if you've been paying close attention and been counting all the loves in this book, I'll give you a special "I love you" message just in time for Valentine's Day. And while I covered just a romance book in this edition of Kin's Corner, please go and check out some books written by Black authors during Black History month. My personal favorites are Ace of Spades, Legendborn, and The Gilded Ones. Please go and show your support, and I'll see you back again in Kin's Corner!

Au revoir my lovelies!



The Love Hypothesis by Ali Hazelwood
PHOTO COURTESY OF AMAZON

Valentine's Day Recipe

BY SOPHIA TROPPMANN '26

Prep - 25 minutes

Bake - 60 to 65 minutes

Total *includes refrigeration* - 10 hrs 5 minutes

Yields - 8 to 10 serves

Ingredients:

- 1 cup finely ground graham crackers (5 ounces; about 8 sheets)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 ¾ cups sugar
- 6 ounces raspberries (about 1 ½ cups)
- 32 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 pinch kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- Boiling water, for roasting pan

Directions:

1. Prep

Preheat oven to 350°F (177°C). Wrap the exterior of a 9-inch springform pan (including base) in a double layer of foil. Set aside.

2. Graham Cracker Crust

Stir together the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, and 2 tablespoons sugar in a medium bowl. Press crumb mixture firmly onto the bottom of the pan. Bake the crust until set, about 10 minutes and leave the pan to cool on a wire rack. Reduce the oven temperature to 325°F before moving on to the raspberry puree.

3. Raspberry Puree

Process the raspberries in a food processor until smooth, or for about 30 seconds. Then, pass the puree through a fine sieve into a small bowl and discard solids. Whisk in 2 tablespoons of sugar, and set aside.

4. Cream Cheese Filling

Using an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, mix the cream cheese on medium speed until fluffy, about 3 minutes. With mixer on low speed, add remaining 1 1/2 cups sugar in a slow, steady stream. Add the salt and vanilla and mix until well combined. To complete the filling, add the eggs, one at a time, mixing each until just combined. Be careful not to overmix.

5. Assembly

Pour the cream cheese filling over the crust. Drop raspberry sauce by the teaspoon on top, leaving approximately ½ inch to 1 inch circles. With a wooden skewer or toothpick, swirl sauce into the filling.

6. Bake

Set the cake pan inside a large, shallow roasting pan. Transfer the pan to the oven, then carefully ladle boiling water into the roasting pan to reach halfway up the sides of the cake pan. Bake for 60 to 65 minutes, until the cake is set but still slightly wobbly in the center. Enjoy!



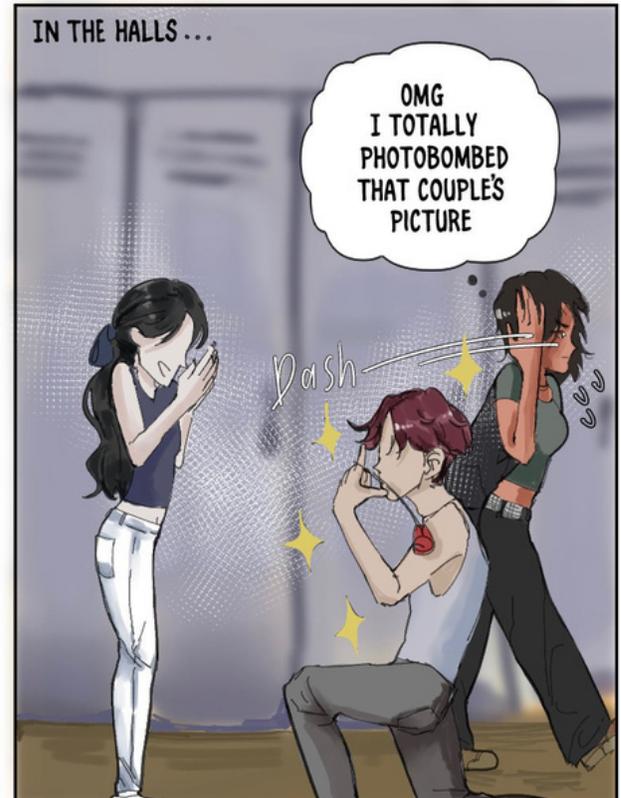
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The Symphony of Lonely Lives

BY CALLALY NGUYEN '25

A SYMPHONY OF LONELY LIVES

BY CALLALY NGUYEN







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