

Student Reporter

Club Rush at a High Spirit School



Sean Kim
Grade 11
Los Alamitos High School



Board members of MUN spent days designing posters for the Club Rush at Los Alamitos High School.

[Source: Author, Sean Kim]

Los Alamitos High School is known for housing the best quarterback in the nation and winning consecutive championships in State Choir tournaments. But it's also known for its incredible school spirit. Screaming teenagers with red paint splattered on their foreheads is a common sight at any Varsity home game. Homecoming and school dances are full parties, with DJs blasting music from speakers ten feet tall. For two years,

Los Alamitos has ranked the number one student section in the state.

Last week, I stood under the blazing sun, waving bright yellow flyers over my head and yelling towards high school students. It was not a football game; it was Club Rush at Los Alamitos High School.

Club Rush is an event where a school's student organizations and clubs gain popularity in an attempt to foster increased participation for the school year. The event takes place during lunch, and, in Los Alamitos High School, more than a hundred clubs are present each year.

When I ran my booth at Club Rush, I learned just how spirited Los Alamitos students really are. As part of the school's Model United Nations (MUN) board, I was responsible for attracting new members to the club by passing out flyers and running the MUN stand. Before the event, we prepared poster boards, globe keychains, and, of course, candy, all done to bring the most

amount of attention to the club. We posted multiple reminders through social media and added interactive elements to the website, like gifs and quick surveys, in hopes of boosting user engagement. When the time came to work the booth, I thought we were more than prepared to handle the high-spirited members of our school. I couldn't have been more wrong.

When the lunch bell rang, other MUN team members and I rushed from our fourth period to set up the table and hopefully present an attractive activity. But before we could finish, many students had already made their way to our booth. I needed to learn to multitask: market the club while setting up the table. By the time I had finally finished organizing, students had passed our undecorated booth for louder clubs. I had thought we were prepared, but our table was starting to fall behind the others. Some clubs had speakers with music, homemade brownies, and a literal robot (shocker, it was a robotics club). Every other club

seemed to embody the Los Alamitos School Spirit, while our organization seemed dull and boring. Club Rush was clearly going a little less than ideal.

However, at the end of the day, Club Rush was a definite success. There is always interest in academic clubs too, and we capitalized on the loud and brazen booths by simply moving our setup to an empty table beside a loud group. In total, around thirty students decided to sign up on the registration sheet. Judging that ten kids signed up last year, this year's Club Rush was a great opportunity for MUN to show students what the activity really was.

My experience with Club Rush is more good than bad. How I felt seeing those loud booths taking the attention from our club was a great learning opportunity for me to improve on next year. Club Rush at Los Alamitos was a thought-provoking experience. Los Alamitos really showed me what a high-spirits school was really all about.

Student Reporter

My Thoughts on Exit West by Mohsin Hamid



Seanna Kim
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When you think of the word "refugee," what do you think of? What kinds of cultures come to mind? What defines a refugee?

These are the questions I am posed with in my IB English class, where we are being asked to conduct research about a global refugee group. However, in order to understand who exactly refugees are, I have been reading *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. This novel reveals the realities and turmoil in the lives of refugees around the world, mainly focusing on Nadia and Saeed, the main couple of the story.

Initially, I realized how Hamid utilizes juxtaposition to illustrate both the desperation and growing discomfort in Nadia and Saeed's relationship. They are constantly vexed at each other, but they still provide for one another physically and emotionally. I found that



Exit West outlines the harsh realities, but also the humanity in the lives of refugees around the world.

[Source: Author, Seanna Kim]

this was parallel to how different refugees in the story maintain their cultures and humanity by building communities among the thousands of strangers they come across during their journeys. In a time where the world has turned its back, refugees must rely on each

other for strength.

Another interesting thing about *Exit West* is that Hamid never actually names the country that the war is taking place in. Readers are left to assume the setting of the story, and I realized this can reveal much about the reader, because we actually use our own implicit stereotypes to guess what country the war is taking place in. Additionally, leaving the setting's name unknown prompts the reader to focus on the present moments that Nadia and Saeed face, as their struggles aren't confined to a place, but follow them as they attempt to escape the war torn home because of the fact that they are refugees.

The last aspect of *Exit West* that stood out to me was the magic doors. Yes, magic doors. Hamid uses these mystical black doors

described as "the darkness" to illustrate escape routes for refugees. Migrants like Nadia and Saeed do not know where they are escaping to when they enter these doors, and "the passage was both like dying and like being born" states Hamid. Escaping meant that they could have a new life elsewhere, but there was also the pain of leaving behind their homes and families.

After reading *Exit West*, I've come to learn about how different the world's perception of refugees is compared to the reality of who refugees are. People often depict refugees as outcasts, but it is difficult for those who have never needed to flee their own country to fully understand the deeper values of what it means to have a home. It is crucial to learn not only the living conditions of various refugee groups, but also to understand their values as people, just like us.

Student Reporter

Football Ethics: Too Hurt to Play?



Soo Young Yoon
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Football is a game full of roughness and clashes. On September 25th, the NFL featured 14 football games, with 28 different teams going against another opponent. And, out of these 28 teams, 19 of them had at least one player injured mid-game. Injuries are very common in football, and the aftermath can get very complicated. It could lead to the team losing the game, and, if the injuries are severe, the players' whole careers and lives are put at risk.

Some of the gruesome injuries on that day happened to Mac Jones, the quarterback for the New England Patriots, spraining his ankle and having to exit the game while grimacing in pain. Other players, like the famous quarterback Tom Brady, hurt his right ring finger. But the most shocking injury case occurred when Tua Tagovailoa, the quarterback for the Miami Dolphins, was thrown to the ground. As Tagovailoa got back up and headed to the line of scrimmage next play, he instantly fell back on

the ground, losing his balance. Many suspected from his symptoms that he was suffering a concussion. Fortunately, he avoided any further injuries after that, and eventually secured a 21-19 victory. This was a huge win for the Dolphins, as they are now one of the only two teams in the whole league that are undefeated. However, this raises an important question for the whole league: is winning a game worth risking a player's whole career and possibly his life?

As a student who studies sports medicine, I am aware of the procedures that injured players must go through: they must consult with their team physician, who makes the important choice of whether or not the players should continue playing. When making such a crucial decision, many factors are considered, such as whether or not the players are in their contract year, and whether or not there is a back-up player available. But the most important factor depends on the im-



In the Sports Medicine course, we are taught how to tape sprained ankles.

[Source: Author, Soo Young Yoon]

portance of each game. When the Miami Dolphins hosted the Buffalo Bills, currently the most dominant team in the whole league, their chance of winning was dim. Therefore, losing a star quarterback like Tua Tagovailoa during the game was a nightmare. Additionally, the Dolphins defeating the Bills in their home game guaranteed the #1 ranking spot for them in their division; this was too great of an opportunity to miss. I strongly believe this is what ultimately pushed the physician to allow Tua Tagovailoa to keep playing the game.

After watching countless games over the past few years where the players are constantly putting their whole careers and lives at risk, I wondered how the players can ever rely upon their physicians to tell them the truth. Though winning each game may be great for the team organization, the chance of obtaining a severe injury outweighs any of these positive outcomes. This weekend was once again a reminder that the athletes should be aware of how the team physician can have hidden intentions that can affect their future.

Student Reporter



Tyler Kim
Grade 12
Parkview School

Examining the Morality of COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution



Traveling occurs in the greatest magnitude in years as COVID-19 control improves.
[Source: Author, Tyler Kim]

On September 15, 2022, the World Health Organization announced that the COVID-19 pandemic is ending—cases are dwindling. Biden concurs, and the general actions of Americans align with this viewpoint.

However controversial, it's undeniable that things have begun to improve in the annual pre-winter recovery. With this newfound optimism and retrospect, one can examine current and past events of the pandemic. From a philosophi-

cal viewpoint of ethics and distributive justice, did we, the people, handle the pandemic well? Now that nearly 70% of the population is vaccinated, was the allocation of those vaccines fair?

But what is justice? Aristotle believed, with notable supporters like Dr. Martin Luther King, that justice requires equal treatment of "similarly-situated" people. He developed this idea in *Nicomachean Ethics*, when he described justice as a state in which each receives what they are due.

Like many of my same-age peers, I received both vaccination doses by May 2021. While some contended that younger generations are vectors and thus deserved vaccines first, most ethical frameworks state otherwise. The elderly are more likely to pass away if they contract COVID, while the young often survive, even if they act as vectors. Thus, the vaccine distribution saved the maximum number of lives and aided those who

were most in danger, in regards to age-prioritization.

However, other problems plague resource allocation. After speaking with nurses at St. Jude Medical Center, I learned that they struggle to convince patients to receive a vaccine; offering free vaccination at hospitals still requires potential patients to leave work, pay travel fares, and fight poor weather conditions, all possible deterrents for homeless or lower-income Americans. Given that not all had a fair opportunity to receive the vaccine, *Nicomachean Ethics* and universal moral intuition would call foul play.

On a global scale, recent data has shown that African countries have less than 10% of the population vaccinated—17% of the global population only received 6% of available vaccines. While for-profit, Western biomedical companies are certainly allowed to not support Africa equally, legality does not imply morality.

As United States citizens have received multiple boosters, COVID freely incubates in the next possible epicenter, Africa. The pandemic cannot be considered over until globally contained. Thus, from the most popular frameworks of medical justice—saving the most number of lives (utilitarianism), distributing opportunity and resources equally to people in similar situations (progressivism and egalitarianism, respectively), and helping the most at-risk or disadvantaged individuals (prioritarianism)—Africa cannot be overlooked in this global, human fight.

However, it's difficult to blame leaders for events that go wrong. An optimal strategy is elusive, a sentiment that Philosopher Sir William David Ross captured: "the probability is that any act, however right it may be, will have adverse effects." But ethics provides frameworks to consider decision-making, shedding insight into what's often considered politically-charged and partisan.

Student Reporter



Annette Je
Grade 11
Redondo Union High School

What is the One Chip Challenge?

This chip is the spiciest thing I've ever eaten. The "One Chip Challenge" comes from the company Paqui, a tortilla chip brand, and made its debut in 2016. Although it has been 6 years, recently the challenge resurfaced on Tik Tok and Youtube. The chip contains two of the hottest peppers, the Carolina Reaper and Scorpion peppers, and turns the participants' tongue blue. It is placed in a black coffin shaped box with a large red skull and blue tongue.

The challenge itself is pretty simple: eat the entire chip and try not to drink anything for as long as you can. At first, I thought I would be fine. As a Korean, my diet consists of many spicy dishes, so my spice tolerance is high. In the past, I've also done the Korean Fire Noodle Challenge (*Buldak-bokkeum-myeon*) and was able to complete it. But this chip was just on another level. As I opened the package I immediately smelled the spice and felt it tingling on the insides of my nostrils. I also noticed that the chip was much bigger than a regular tortilla chip and was cov-



Our reaction after realizing how gross the Paqui chip tasted.
[Source: Author, Annette Je]

ered entirely with a blueish, blackish powder, almost to the point it looked rather green. Right before I was about to grab the chip, my friend quickly stopped me and read me the back of the chip package, "Do not eat if you are sensitive to spicy foods, allergic to peppers, nightshades, or capsaicin, or are pregnant or have any medical conditions. Keep out of reach of children." It then followed with, "After touching the chip, wash your hands with soap and do not touch your eyes or other sensitive areas. Seek medical assistance should you experience difficulty breathing, fainting, or extended nausea." This warning scared my friend and me a bit, so we chose to use napkins to hold the chip, and

rather than the whole chip I chose to eat only a quarter of it. For backup, we also made a quick trip to the vending machines and brought back two large bottles of Gatorade. Finally, on the count of three, we hit the timer and took our bites.

The spice did not hit right away. My first thought when the chip entered my mouth was that it was disgusting. My expectation was for it to taste like a Hot Cheeto or a Talki, but it tasted like sour peppercorns. Next, I noticed that the chip had the texture of a tortilla chip but was very stale and difficult to chew. Finally, after around 10 seconds, I felt it. I am not joking when I say it burned!

Rather than a quick punch of spice, it was a torturous, long, smoldering feeling. My immediate instinct was to grab for the Gatorade, but again I was reminded that this was a challenge. In the end, I made it to 3 minutes without a drink, but my friend on the other hand, who ate a bigger chunk of the chip, lasted only 1 minute and 34 seconds. Even after chugging Gatorade, I still felt the heat in my mouth, and like the package mentioned, my tongue turned blue and stayed blue for a while. While I felt fine after 30 minutes, my friend received a terrible stomach pain.

Later in the day, while researching the chip, I found that the reason why the chip was so spicy was that it had the same ingredients as pepper spray, and could cause burning in the eyes, and nose, bronchospasm, and could trigger asthma or severe coughing. I am thankful that I did not receive any of these reactions. All in all, this challenge was not amusing nor was it easy. For anyone thinking about trying this, I warn you, DON'T do it.

Student Reporter



Isleen Lee
Grade 9
Harvard-Westlake School

What It's Like Being A New Student at Harvard-Westlake School

When most people think of high school, they usually think of the bustling noise of lockers closing and chattering all around. As you suddenly transition into your freshman year of high school, you feel the need to perfect both your social and academic life. With the realization that you now only have 4 years until your college decisions will be announced, everything starts to feel so much more burdensome. You would think that it wouldn't won't be so bad if a couple of people from your middle school also are going to the same high school as you, but what if you were alone in a new school? That's me, right now.

As a new 9th grader at Harvard-Westlake School, I realized that adjusting to a new environment isn't as hard as I thought it would be. The school had a lot of great welcoming events before the academic year started to give me and the 95 other

new students a chance to experience the school's system and atmosphere. Just two weeks before the school year started, new students were given a chance to be on campus for a week, where they could utilize the library and learn more about the school with other new students. During this time, I was able to make a few friends and familiarize myself with the campus. It turned out, nearly everyone was feeling the same way as me - extremely nervous, but excited to see how they would fit in at their new school.

On the first day of 9th grade, I felt intimidated, yet curious to see what the classes would be like, what the campus would look like when it was full of students, and how my fellow classmates would be. Fast forward a little over 2 months, and I can say that adjusting to Harvard-Westlake has had a lot of ups and downs - however, there are so many people who are willing to help one get through it.



During Spirit Week, students wore the school's main colors (red, black, and white) to show school spirit!
[Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

The community is so diverse and vibrant, and you can definitely tell that the students feel comfortable in the environment. The week of September 26 - September 30 was Spirit Week, and students were able to show school spirit by dressing up as their favorite teacher, joining in on pajama day, and playing games with teachers. On October 1st, Homecoming took place on Harvard-Westlake's Upper School campus. There was food from different cultures, booths representing clubs, prizes, and sports games that were ongoing. It was my very first Homecoming, so I, along

with my friends who have also never been, was able to make many great memories. Not only was it full of fun, but it felt very surreal being with students in grades 7-12.

Those first few weeks of school weren't easy, but the deans and faculty did their best to help me and many others adjust to the new surroundings. Although I was worried that I wouldn't be able to adjust, I now know that that isn't the case. Being a student at Harvard-Westlake now brings me joy, pride, and motivation to do my best.