

---

# THE Grauer Gazette

---

No. 25

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

The Grauer School

---

## Where Did the Magic Go?

By Zoe Ba.

It is finally that time of year again. The time where days are marked by decorated homes, movies, hot cocoa, and ice skating at the local mall. However, with the passing of time, the holiday spirit is not nearly as exuberant as it once was during childhood. The magic of this winter season, tied to decorating cookies and family gatherings, is often laced with nostalgia. The grief we feel at being unable to achieve the same level of holiday spirit is not a reflection of the season itself, but our inability to disown the responsibilities we have grown into. At the age of five or six, academics are at most a nuisance and societal awareness is nonexistent beyond what is actively impacting us. As we grow older, our ignorance is traded for understanding and the mysterious aspect that once sheltered the holiday season slowly fades away.

The phenomenon of remembering the past better than it truly was is called “rosy retro



spection”. This occurs because our memories are not perfect records for what truly happens, they are subject to biases and idealization. In adolescence, this may mean solely remembering the joyful memories—opening presents, spending time with family, an excess of candy—rather than the tantrums or the boredom that may have occurred. Studies done by the National Library of Medicine stated that nostalgia is often a mixture of both happiness and sadness: the memory itself carries positivity, whereas, the feeling of melan-

choly is rooted in the awareness of change. As we age, it is natural for our expectations to change as well. What was once considered “magical” may now be considered “routine”, however, this does not root out the ability to partake in the festivities. There are still a multitude of ways to experience “magic”.

The Holidays are about connecting with others. Make a conscious effort to take a break from the responsibilities that may be plaguing you in order to make room for awe. Ask if local charities or events require volunteers; you could be surprised by your impact, and oftentimes giving back to others can be just as rewarding as the memories idolized from childhood. Make sure to enjoy the festivities, the times may be different (as well as the responsibilities) however, it is vital that you prioritize the time you’re given with your loved ones. Enjoy your Winter Break!

## What to Get Your Dad for Christmas

By Beatrix M.Y.

There is one thing that adds stress to the holiday season. It is an age-old tale of strife for daughters and sons across the United States. It is, of course, the penultimate question: what should I get my dad for Christmas? Moms, on average, are easier to shop for, as there are a lot more luxury products geared to women than men. So, what are dads saying, and how can you implement it under the tree in 2025?



**Funky socks.** It’s a dad joke you can wear, and it never misses. If your father is into a specific sport, take it a step further with funky sport socks, another way to show you know and understand his interests.

**Polo Shirt.** A nice, quality polo shirt goes a long way; make sure you take a stroll through his closet, find colors he likes, but don’t be too repetitive. Give him something memorable to last him a while.

**Skin Care.** Now, this gift is more geared to the girls, and it may seem weird at first—but hear me out. Girls, especially teenage girls, have a ton of interests, and there is often nothing a dad wants more than to be involved in those interests. I personally recommend a gift set from Youth To The People; it is a clean, organic brand. I gave my father one last year, and he still repurchases the products.

**100 Essential Movies Scratch-Off.** Is your dad a movie lover? This scratch-off gives your dad a choice from classic movies from the past decade. Each time he watches one, he’ll be able to scratch it off and reveal a unique mini poster.

**Sports Team Merch.** It shows you know what he likes and that you care about his interests. If you want to take it a step further, get one with yourself so you can match. Our last entry on this list comes from Steve Kaese, father of two. When I asked him what

he wanted for Christmas from his kids, he simply said, “As a dad, you don’t want anything other than time with your kids. If you were to give your dad, hey, whatever you want to do today, I’m gonna do it with you. Even if it’s things you don’t normally like to do, like sitting and watching football with him.”



Overall, your dad will love anything you get him. It truly is the thought that counts this holiday season, and the more you demonstrate your care, the more he’ll enjoy the gift.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

# Looking Ahead to the Olympics

Zoe Br.



The Olympic Torch for the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Games officially arrived in Italy on December 4, 2025. These games, hosted from February 6th to 22nd and from March 6th to 15th, will be “The most widespread Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games ever.” Continuing a tradition of winter games started in 1924 in Chamonix, France. The event has been held every four years since its introduction; however, the 1940 and 1944 games were missed due to the Second World War, with their titles being awarded to Japan and Italy, respectively. The Winter Olympics are here again with more events and more athletes than ever before.

In this year’s games, there will be 16 different events. Alpine skiing involves speed, technical, and mixed events, including downhill and slalom. Biathlon combines skiing and shooting, requiring competitors to stop at two shooting stations. Bobsleigh races include a wide variety of styles with different numbers of athletes per team; a sprint for speed is then followed by a steered descent through the course. Cross-country Skiing is split into two skiathlons, both beginning with classic technique before moving into free. Curling involves a stone being slid as close to the center as possible. Figure Skating encompasses five disciplines: men’s and women’s singles, pairs, ice dance, and the team competition; skaters

are judged on technique and artistry. Free-style Skiing is an expressive form of skiing, including seven types: moguls, dual moguls, aerials, ski cross, slopestyle, half pipe, and Big Air; these involve jumps, spins, obstacles, and stunts. Ice Hockey is a team contact sport where players score goals with pucks. Luge is the fastest sport in the Winter Olympics and covers five disciplines: women’s and men’s singles, women’s and men’s doubles, and a team relay; athletes propel themselves down a track, steering to keep themselves on the line. Nordic Combined is a combination of cross-country skiing and ski jumping, and includes a jump and a 10 km race. Short Track Speed Skating has men’s and women’s singles, women’s and men’s relay, and mixed relay; speed, precision, and excitement galore. Skeleton starts with a sprint for momentum, a mount of the sledge, and a course run guided by small body movements. Ski Jumping has all 50 athletes compete in a first jump, with 30 continuing to the second jump; there is also a men’s super team competition. Ski Mountaineering involves a multi-stage ascent and quick descent. Snowboarding covers five event types: halfpipe, parallel giant slalom, snowboard cross, Big Air, and slopestyle. Speed Skating has individual, mass start, and team pursuit, where competitors race around a 400 m track. If any of those sports sound fun to you, you can find the schedule of when to tune in on the Olympics’ website.

This year, approximately 93 countries will be participating in the Winter games. That will mean that more than 2,900 athletes are competing over the two-week period. Five general locations will be in use



for the opening and closing ceremonies and the sporting events: Milan, Cortina d’Ampezzo, Valtellina, Val di Fiemme, and Verona. The Winter Olympics are often watched less than the Summer Olympics, but the events can be just as fun. Almost four years ago, the United States sent 224 athletes to the 2022 Beijing Olympics and won 25 individual medals (nine gold, nine silver, and seven bronze). The U.S. figure skating team won gold after a Russian skater’s disqualification dropped the team in the rankings. The sport is one to watch this Olympic season, as the U.S. has dominated three of four disciplines in recent major competitions, including having the current World Champions in men’s singles, women’s singles, and ice dance.

The Paralympics, which are held in March, have six sports: Para Alpine Skiing, Para Biathlon, Para Cross-country Skiing, Para Ice Hockey, Para Snowboard, and Wheelchair Curling. These Olympics were first held in 1976 and have happened in tandem with every Winter Games since.

With the large variety of sports, everyone can find something that they enjoy watching. In a time when the world feels so divided, the Olympic Games can be a light of connection, demonstrating good sportsmanship and camaraderie between nations around the globe.

## Middle School Spelling Bee

By Zoe Br.

Last Friday (November 14th), the middle school held its annual spelling bee final. After preliminary rounds in their classes, the top three from each period competed in front of their peers. Congratulations to the new school champion, Quinn Young, and runner-up, Senna Vakili! Quinn’s



winning word was “viscosity.” She now has the opportunity to represent Grauer at the San Diego County Scripps Regional Spelling Bee. The winner of the regional bee goes on to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in D.C. Good job to everyone involved!

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

## Where's the Snow?

By Luke W.

December is here, but this December is missing something: snow. When most people think of stereotypical winter, they may think of pine trees dusted in snow; but this is not the case this year. Due to high temperatures across the West Coast, snow has been lacking. Ski resorts have had to cope with lackluster snowmaking conditions and have pushed back their opening dates by weeks. Many resorts that had hoped to open by Thanksgiving pushed their dates back. This disappointed many skiers and snowboarders who wished to get some tracks during Thanksgiving break. This relatively small delay has snow enthusiasts worried: what will the rest of the season look like?

This year is forecasted to be a weak La Niña year. This means that surface temperatures are cooler in the Pacific. This shifts the jet stream northward, dragging the storms along with it. Jet streams are what

guide storms and make them move faster or slower. The jet stream shift can explain the abundant snowfall the Canadian Rockies have been experiencing. Banff Sunshine, Lake Louise, and Whistler Blackcomb are all open and have received significant snowfall because of this shift. This isn't the main culprit for the lack of snow here, though. It plays a factor, but temperatures and pressure patterns are more important.

Temperature is also an essential factor to consider in this year's lack of snow. This fall has been increasingly warm, way warmer and drier than past falls. The rise in temperatures across the West Coast has raised the snow line. This snow line determines whether a mountain receives rain or snow. This can be catastrophic for mountains in the early or late season. This season, the higher snow levels have led to multiple rainstorms along the coast, damaging the snowpack. This has been a primary reason for the delayed openings.

Lastly, there's a high-pressure system sitting off the coast of California. A large, high-pressure system has prevented the storms from reaching the coast. It is an area in the atmosphere where the air is heavier and sinking. The sinking air makes the weather significantly drier and warmer, and overall prevents storm clouds from forming. It has been acting like a wall and storms can't pass through it, which is the main factor behind this deficit. Luckily, this is set to clear up in two weeks in December. Until then, the same dry pattern will most likely continue.

Avid mountain enthusiasts hope that this will not be the case for the rest of the season. There have been many La Niñas where snowfall has been undisturbed or even significantly increased. Keep your hopes up! My recommendation is to keep checking OpenSnow and resort cams daily, dust off your boots, and pray to the mountain gods for some pow!

## The Infamous Celebrity Serial Intruder

By Sadie S.M.

Over the Thanksgiving holiday break, fans raved over the release of the final sequel to Wicked, "Wicked: For Good". The intricate details and realistic computer-generated imagery (CGI) captured the heart-wrenching emotional story; however, the lore behind the movie did not begin with its release.

A week prior, during the Singapore Wicked Premier, a chaotic moment ensued as the cast walked the yellow carpet. A twenty-six-year-old man named Johnson Wen jumped over the barricade and charged film-star Ariana Grande with a forceful embrace. Without hesitation, co-star Cynthia Ervio lunged at the man before security could escort him away. The moment was caught on various cameras and quickly spread across the internet. Two specific reasons rose to spark society's attention: one, people speculated that Wen's attack brought up past trauma for Grande, and two, this was not the first time Wen attempted such a strike.

Back in May of 2017, Grande experienced a real-time horror when her Manchester concert was bombed in a public suicide attempt; twenty-two people died, and hundreds were injured. Since then, she has admitted to suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder while being in public. That is why when Wen attacked her, the internet was inflamed. One Instagram user even said, "Rushing a woman—any woman, let alone someone who has survived unimaginable trauma—is not a 'prank.' It's not a 'stunt.' It's not 'funny.' It's pathetic, dangerous, and shows a total lack of respect for boundaries, safety, and basic human decency." Ariana had not publicly stated her opinions on his attack, but those across social media have given their respect and condolences to her.

Additionally, Wen's aggression toward Grande was not his first public account of intruding on a celebrity. Previously, he entered the concert stages of The Weeknd, The Chainsmokers, and, most

recently, Katy Perry. However, his past of rushing is not solely filled with celebrities. He also invaded the field of the 2023 Women's FIFA World Cup final, and a year later, attempted to enter the track of the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Fortunately, unlike Wen's other attempts, he did face extreme consequences for his actions. After being detained on November 14, Wen was charged by a Singapore court with "being a public nuisance". He spent nine days in jail, and after his time ended, he returned to his home country of Australia. Now, according to the Singapore Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA), Wen is "barred from re-entering Singapore", in hopes that it will officially end his series of wicked behaviors. All of Wen's actions have resulted in poor reactions from society; however, these reactions are adding to his master plan to seek attention. Now, it is up to everyone to stop contributing to this dismay of unfortunate events and to no longer support Wen's despicable behaviors.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

## NASA's Artemis Program

By MJ C.

NASA's Artemis program is going back to the moon. Unfortunately, it is taking much longer than expected. Artemis II is going to be the first crewed mission of the Artemis missions. Three astronauts aboard will be from NASA, and one will be from Canada. They will be on the Orion spacecraft and will make a 10-day trip around the Moon before coming home. Originally, it was planned to be in 2025, but the launch has been rescheduled for April 2026. Though NASA is aiming as

early as February if everything lines up. It had been delayed because engineers discovered that the Orion capsule's heat shield acted much differently than expected during the original Artemis I mission. The outer layer, called the Avcoat, didn't vent gases the correct way when entering Earth's atmosphere. Instead of making a completely different shield (which would mean even more of a wait), NASA adjusted the reentry path to make it safer.

The company who built the Orion capsule is Lockheed Martin, and they just

finished assembling the updated version for Artemis II. It is loaded with life-support systems, new controls, and, also, a laser communication system.

Looking ahead, Artemis III will be the first lunar landing of this program. NASA plans to send astronauts to the Moon's South Pole, which is a region that has never been walked on before. But because of the same-heat shield issues, plus extra testing, that mission has been pushed to mid-2027.

## The Elaborate Venezuelan Conflict

By Sadie S.M.

A few months ago, during September, the Trump Administration made an executive decision to initiate a major military campaign. This effort was directed at the Northern South American country of Venezuela. Suspicion of extreme cocaine smuggling through Venezuelan cartels into the United States is the reason behind the military launch. However, many legal experts beg to differ, saying there is no true authority to use the military against cartels and drug traffickers, even if they are classified as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs). While news coverage is only beginning now, the conflict has spiraled out for more than two decades.

In 1998, Hugo Chávez became the president of Venezuela. One of his missions was to leverage Venezuelan oil reserves and rising prices to provide for the people. His plan worked extremely well at the start; it reduced the poverty rates by 15%. Unfortunately, over time, poor management, corruption, and military leadership led to the fall of the state-run PDVSA oil company. By 2013, the country thrived on oil exports, and when global oil prices collapsed, the economy deteriorated.

Then, later that year, Chávez died, leaving the country to Vice-President Nicolás Maduro. To compensate for the falling economy, Maduro's solution was to print vast amounts of money, leading to some of the world's worst hyperinflation. With this, voters became increasingly opposed to Maduro's rule; however, Mad-

uro was still reelected despite boycotts and protests during the 2018 presidential campaign. Weirdly enough, two weeks later, Maduro's election was deemed illegitimate, and the constituent Juan Guaidó took over in his place temporarily.



Now, this next part is where the rocky history with the United States comes in. Many countries accepted Guaidó's leadership over Maduro's, including the United States. This political separation facilitated a series of U.S. sanctions against Maduro's government, particularly within the oil industry. Despite these sanctions and other pressures, Maduro still continued to hold a steady grip on the country; eventually, he even began to implement economic and political reforms. Over time, Guaidó's international recognition began to fade, particularly after the Biden administration revoked Maduro's interim acknowledgement.

In 2024, when the next presidential election rolled around, the opposition decided to contest yet again. Maduro, unlike in his previous elections, agreed to a fair election as long as U.S. oil sanctions were relieved. Shortly, these sanctions were halted, but when evidence of election

fraud emerged, the sanctions were reimposed. After everything that ensued, Maduro was still reelected for his third term.

Now, President Donald Trump has revisited his plan of "maximum pressure" against Venezuela. During his 2016-2020 term, Trump accused Maduro of leading the Cartel de los Soles, a supposed drug trafficking and extortion network. Since then, he labeled the Cartel de los Soles an FTO, signed a secret military force directive against them, and doubled the bounty for Maduro from \$25 million to \$50 million.

Finally, everything tied back together on September 2, when Trump announced the military had struck a cocaine trafficking boat, killing eleven people. The strike did not involve the Coast Guard, as it was a sole job of the Navy, indicating its extreme levels of importance. What makes everything so concerning is that there is still a legal question around the strikes. The question of whether the people were a threat relates to whether the strike was truly lawful.

The history between Venezuela and the United States did not begin a few months ago. It has unraveled over the course of many decades, and continues to unfold before society. It is crucial to understand the full picture, but as it is a complex situation, correlating all the pieces is difficult. In the end, the United States has taken recent executive action against the leadership of Venezuela, and along the way, people's lives, cartel or not, have been lost.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

# Epstein's Alive?

By Luke W.



Trump's second term has been plagued by scandals from his past. He can't seem to escape the talk about the old friendship that he had with the deceased multimillionaire, Jeffrey Epstein. Epstein committed suicide on August 10, 2019, after potentially facing 45 years in prison. He was awaiting trial, but he was already 66. He knew that he was going to be caught, and 45 years in prison would be the rest of his life. He ended up taking his life. Many are confused about why he is being brought up now and about his relationship to the President.

It all started in June of 2025. During Elon Musk's and the President's public feud, Musk shared information about Epstein and Trump. Musk tweeted on X, "Trump is in the Epstein files." This immediately caught the media's attention and resurfaced Jeffery Epstein once again. When asked whether Trump would release the files, he would always respond by saying, "No." He never thought there was a point in sharing them with the public. This was seen as hypocritical, since a central promise of his 2024 campaign was to provide maximum transparency to the public. This began the Democratic party's push to finally release the Epstein files to the public. This act was known as the Epstein Files Transparency Act (H.R. 4405). It is a bipartisan bill sponsored by Ro Khanna (D-CA) and cosponsored by Thomas Massie (R-KY). This bill ultimately passed both the House and Senate and was signed into law by the President. In total, this was a four month process.

To understand the pushback from

Trump, one must understand his history with Epstein. They were first introduced to each other in the late 1980s. They attended many of the same elite parties in New York and Palm Beach. In 1992, Trump and Epstein spoke for the first time. Their first documented appearance is a video showing them speaking at a party at Trump's estate, Mar-a-Lago. The two can be seen attending a party, talking, and watching guests.



In 1993, Trump married his second wife, Marla Maples. Epstein attended the wedding at the Plaza Hotel in New York City. In 2002, the famous quote from Trump surfaced: "I've known Jeff for fifteen years. Terrific guy. He's a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side." Today, this has become one of the most cited quotes when it comes to Trump's involvement with Epstein. In 2004, their relationship came to an abrupt end. They had a falling out over property in Palm Beach. Epstein was then banned from Mar-A-Lago and from Trump, and his relationships were subsequently never rekindled.

Today, there is evidence suggesting that Trump may have had a closer relationship with Epstein than he suggests. First, in 1993, Trump flew on Epstein's private jet four times. This information was released during Ghislaine Maxwell's trial. Second, a photo of him and Epstein resurfaced from the year 2000 at Mar-A-Lago. Next to Trump and Epstein are Trump's fu-

ture wife, Melania Knauss, and Ghislaine Maxwell. This photo is now constantly circulated throughout the news; it has become the most prominent photo from this case. After this, the birthday book Epstein received for his 50th birthday surfaced. Many of his wealthy friends, including Bill Clinton, Alan Dershowitz, and entrepreneur Leslie Wexner, helped curate a book. Trump's signature can be seen in the book, although the White House denies he had any involvement. In the book, there is a picture of Epstein with a check signed by "DJTRUMP." The most recent development in this story was this November. Democrats released emails Epstein had sent to Ghislaine Maxwell. In one email, Epstein wrote, "I want you to realize that the dog that hasn't barked is Trump. [VICTIM] spent hours at my house with him." These emails are deeply concerning. Many wonder if all these tie Trump to the horrific crimes that were committed on Epstein's island.



Trump gave in and pushed for Republicans to pass the bill. He understood that the Democrats would have the numbers to pass the bill. When it was brought to his desk, he signed it without any cameras or media. This is abnormal for Trump, as he likes to document when he passes major legislation. The Department of Justice has 30 days to release documents regarding Epstein. At the end of the day, I hope that all individuals who participated in the crimes committed by Epstein will be brought to justice. Regardless of whether Trump is in the Epstein files or not, I hope that the truth comes to light surrounding the other individuals involved with Epstein.

# Trump vs Professional Careers

By Isabella M.

The U.S. Department of Education has proposed a change in the definition of a “professional degree.” Professional degrees are career paths that focus on practical, hands-on learning, with internships, practical training, and industry certifications in their curricula. They also often have requirements for licensure or practice. Non-professional degrees are more focused on theoretical concepts, research, and intellectual exploration. The curricula often require a thesis or capstone project. These changes will potentially reclassify careers such as nursing, architecture, and social work as non-professional. People are outraged by the idea of this and the effects it could have on our society.

The United States is already struggling with shortages of nursing/healthcare/education professionals, and these pro-

posed reclassifications will de incentivize people to pursue these careers. Specifically, these changes will affect the amount of money available for student loans for these careers, halving the current amount. Professional Degrees allow students to borrow up to \$50,000 per year (\$200,000 total), whereas Non-Professional Degree students are limited to \$20,500 per year (total of \$100,000). The intent is to force colleges and universities to lower costs as students receive fewer loans, but it is not actually included in the bill that universities must lower costs, causing concerns.

A contributing factor as to why many are so enraged is that the majority of these fields are female-dominant. The degrees potentially being reclassified include: Nursing (89% female), Physician Assistants (72% female), Physical Therapy (70% female), Occupational Therapy

(91% female), Speech-Language Pathology (95% female), Audiology (86% female), Accounting (61% female), Architecture (27% female), Educators (77%), Social Workers (84% female), Mental Health Counseling (77% female), and Art and Music Therapy (85% female). These reforms are major steps backwards from creating a gender equal workforce, and are incredibly sexist.

Advocates are raising their voices and expressing frustration. These reclassifications are already signed into law, via the ‘One Big Beautiful Bill’, and will go into effect on July 1, 2026. However, the specifics are still going through a regulatory process that has a 30-day window expected to be in early 2026, where citizens can protest this law. These reclassifications are incredibly unfair to people in these career fields, and it is important that we support them.

# What’s Behind Trump’s Call for a National Boaters’ Strike

By Zack H.

President Donald Trump’s nationwide “boater’s strike” call has quickly become one of the most unusual political strategies of the 2024-2025 season. The idea is simple: recreational boaters and fishermen should temporarily stop buying fuel, renting marina services, and purchasing equipment to protest what Trump calls the Biden administration’s “war on American boating.” The message spread rapidly across social media, but it sparked an important question: What does Trump actually want from this movement? On the surface, the strike is portrayed as an economic protest. But most experts agree the real impact on national fuel or boating-related industries would be minimal. Instead, the movement seems aimed at a very specific audience: older, suburban or coastal recreational boat owners who tend to be conservative. By focusing on boating rules, rising fuel prices, and environmental regulations, Trump places himself as the defender of a lifestyle many boaters feel is being squeezed by federal policies. In doing so, he energizes a group that is small but passionate and extremely active online.



Beyond targeting a niche demographic, Trump’s strategy highlights a larger pattern in his political approach: using cultural identity instead of traditional policy to strengthen loyalty. A boating strike does not need to change national economics to be effective. Its power comes from symbolism. Supporters feel that they are participating in a shared stand against government overreach, and that sense of unity often matters more than the protests’ actual results. This strike also shows how Trump uses social media to his advantage. The idea is simple and repeatable; Videos of boaters announcing their participation or posting about “fighting back” generate

huge engagement across Instagram, TikTok, and X. In today’s political climate, moments that go viral can be more influential than lengthy policy documents or campaign speeches.

Regardless of whether the strike achieves economic disruption, it succeeds in flooding social platforms with pro Trump content. Critics say the movement is largely a stunt. Environmental groups argue that the policies Trump opposes are meant to protect waterways and likely skipping fuel purchases for a few days is unlikely to move any markets. Still, supporters insist the strike is about sending a message, not shutting down marinas. Ultimately, Trump’s goal appears to be influenced by economics. The boaters’ strike boosts online engagement, strengthens group identity among his supporters, and gives him a cultural issue that stands out among the 2025 political landscape. Whether or not the strike changes any policy, it has already accomplished what nearly every modern political campaign wants: attention.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

# Why Teen Are Experiencing A Rise In “Hustle Culture”

By Zoe Ba.

“Hustle culture” is a term often used to describe entrepreneurs and other driven adults who experience the pressure to constantly work and achieve results. This so-called “productivity” has infiltrated the younger generations at an almost unprecedented rate. Teens are often compelled to juggle challenging academic courses alongside extracurricular activities such as sports or even part-time jobs. While ambition itself is not a new term, the intensity and expectation has experienced a dramatic increase. There are multiple factors that have contributed to this shift in societal expectations: the competitiveness of college applications, the hyper-visibility of success on social media, as well as the portrayal of “intelligent” characters by television.

Teens preparing for, or currently in the process of, college applications are most likely aware of the competitive landscape. Many feel as though academics are no longer enough and strive to push themselves beyond what is mentally comfortable



in order to even the playing field. The idea of being “well-rounded” is no longer the encompassing of the genuine interests of the student but rather a calculated compilation of activities that essentially fill the role of a “future resumé”. In addition to this, teens on social media will only be exposed to what creators want them to see. It is common knowledge that videos posted by content creators are merely a “highlight reel” of their life. Regardless of this, these videos set an expectation to work harder, live more aesthetically, and romanticize an unhealthy level of dedication. These videos

are not limited to one minute shorts, when one turns towards movies or tv-shows, it is easy to see where the romanticization originated. Characters such as Rory Gilmore from *Gilmore Girls*, Devi Vishwakumar from *Never Have I Ever*, and Alex Dunphy from *Modern Family* are common representations of the stress put onto young adults. However, these shows tend to portray the stress felt by these characters in an idealistic way that normalizes overachievement to the point of burn out.

The rise in hustle culture is more than a trend demonstrated on social media or television, it is a reflection of the pressure shaping today’s younger generations. Separating ourselves from this mentality does not come from abandoning academics altogether but prioritizing healthier habits and balance. Ultimately, everyone deserves a life outside of endless hustle that allows room to pursue their genuine interests rather than the interests of those surrounding them.

# TikTok Trends Are Reshaping the Sound of 2025

By Leyton G.

In 2025, TikTok continues to reshape the music industry more than any other platform, turning everyday users into tastemakers and helping songs explode globally within hours. The app’s algorithm rewards creativity, quick engagement, and repeat-ability, which has transformed how artists write, promote, and release music. A viral sound can launch a song from total obscurity to the top of the charts. The majority of breakout hits over the past year first gained traction on TikTok before appearing on major streaming playlists or radio rotation.

One of the biggest shifts is how the platform elevates previously unknown musicians. Artists who once relied on labels, managers, or radio stations can now break through by posting a catchy 15-second snippet from their bedroom. When users begin

turning that snippet into dances, edits, or comedy skits, streams surge, often resulting in record deals or chart placements. This has created a more consumer-driven music landscape, where talent and timing can outweigh industry connections.

TikTok has also revived older songs and introduced them to a new generation. Tracks from the early 2000s, the ’90s, and even the ’70s regularly return to the top of streaming charts after being used in viral trends. This constant recycling blurs the line between past and present, creating a culture where cross-generational music discovery happens organically.

Another noticeable change is how TikTok has influenced the structure and style of modern songs. Producers are crafting shorter, punchier introductions to hook listeners within seconds, knowing that the

first few beats determine whether a sound becomes trend-worthy. Choruses are getting catchier and more repetitive, designed to be instantly recognizable in a short-form clip. Some studios now even market themselves as specialists in “TikTok-ready” songs.

The global reach of the platform has also broadened cultural exposure. Artists from non-English-speaking countries are charting internationally after hitting TikTok’s For You page, leading to a rise in multilingual pop and genre-blending collaborations. Music in 2025 feels younger, faster, more diverse, and constantly in motion.

TikTok hasn’t just changed how music becomes popular, it has redefined what popular music sounds like. The platform continues to drive trends, elevate new voices, and reshape the industry from the ground up.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

# Doomsday Has Arrived

By MJ C.



The oarfish: a long, silver, ribbon-like deep-sea fish that can grow to be more than 30 feet. They are the longest body bony fish on Earth, and they recently have made their way to shore. Typically, they are found thousands of feet below the surface, so when one washes up on shore, it instantly becomes news around the world.

In Japanese folklore, the oarfish are known as ryūgū no tsukai, which means “messenger from the sea god.” For centuries, people have thought that they only surface when a major crisis is soon to happen, such as a tsunami or earthquake. Japan has frequent seismic activity, and some started linking the oarfish sightings to the disasters. Even today, whenever photos or videos of a beached oarfish are online, comments like “Doomsday fish!” or “Something bad is about to happen...” starts trending almost immediately.

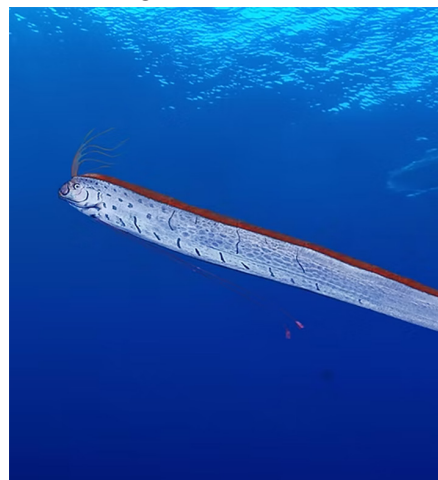
Despite their dramatic looks, they

are actually harmless. They have no teeth capable of biting humans, are not venomous, and aren’t known to attack anything larger than tiny crustaceans. Their bodies are flexible and thin, and are covered with a shiny, reflective layer that looks almost metallic. Even though they can grow to be unreasonably large, they are gentle, slow moving filter feeders.

Scientists believe that there is no proven connection between oarfish and earthquakes. Instead, they think these sightings happen when the animals are sick, injured, or pushed up by strong currents. On the other hand, some research suggests that these fish can sense the smallest of changes in pressure or vibrations before a major event, and that surfacing may be their attempt to find safety and escape danger. Even if they are not “warning” us on purpose, their surfacing helps us understand what may be happening in the deep

sea.

In a recent case in California, on November 6th, 2024, a 10-12 foot oarfish washed up on Grandview Beach, in our very own Encinitas. This was the third oarfish to hit Southern California shores since last August.



Because they live so deep, researchers rarely get to observe them alive. Almost everything we know about them comes from washed-up or dying individuals. That’s why every sighting, from Japan, to Chile, to California, is a significant moment for scientists and folklore fans alike, all over the world.

## Holiday Movies

By Isabella M.

### A Charlie Brown Christmass



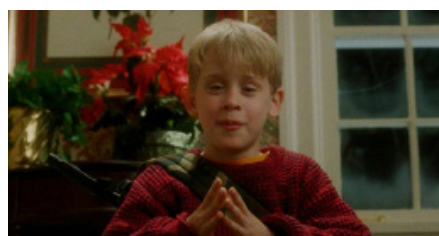
### White Christmas



### Miracle on 34th Street



### Home Alone



### The Holiday



### Die Hard



ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

# Harvard President Vs Epstein Email

By Zack H.

Harvard University has been rattled by controversy following the release of a 2014 email exchange between former president Claudine Gay and convicted sex offender, Jeffrey Epstein. The revelation, made public through recently unsealed court documents, shows Gay thanking Epstein for financial advice and suggesting she was open to continuing the conversation. Although the email predates her presidency, its sudden emergence has intensified controversy over Harvard's leadership and its handling of past relationships with Epstein. Gay, who served as Harvard's president for just six months before resigning earlier this year following unrelated plagiarism allega-

tions, announced that she is stepping back from all remaining university roles in light of the emails' release. While she has not faced accusations of criminal activity, the discovery adds to the already established public pressure and raises questions about transparency within top of the line academic institutions.

Harvard has a complicated history with Epstein, who donated millions to the university before his 2008 conviction. Several professors and administrators were later revealed to have maintained contact with him even after his status as a registered sex offender. University critics argue that the recurring connections point to a broader culture of influence where powerful donors

are granted privileges despite ethical concerns. Students and faculty are now calling for a full independent review of Harvard's past ties to Epstein. Some worry the controversy distracts from academic priorities, while others say it highlights the need for stronger oversight and a clearer ethical guideline for interactions with donors and other high societal status individuals. As Harvard attempts to move forward, the controversy serves as a reminder of the traumas Epstein continues to cast over institutions that once welcomed him for his wealth. The University has not yet announced whether it plans to make findings from their own internal review public.

# Trump's Former Spiritual Adviser Exposed: Abuse, Power, and a 40-Year Cover-Up

By Leyton G.

On March 12, 2025 Robert Preston Morris was arrested on counts of sexual relations with a child. Robert was the former "spiritual advisor" to Donald Trump and the Trump administration. In 2016, when Trump was running for president he set up an "Evangelical Executive Advisory Board," where Morris was assigned to the board to help Trump's Campaign. The board was meant to advise on, "issues important to Evangelicals and other people of faith in America."

Robert Preston Morris was born on July 29, 1961 in Marshal, Texas. Robert grew up Baptist, and graduated from Pine Tree High School, in Long View, Texas. As a teenager, Robert began preaching at a local homeless shelter, where he displayed an interest in preaching and public speaking at a young age. He was described by his family as a rebellious and strong willed child. Some of Morris's family members have claimed in interviews that he preached, "Not for the glory of God. It was for the glory of Robert." According to a 1982 article from the Longview News-Journal, Morris admitted to having been selling



drugs, while attending church regularly. Morris claims to have sold \$600 worth of drugs in a church parking lot during his Sunday school and his worship services. In that same period of time, Morris was beginning to give moral-motivational sermons to Christians and public schools about drug abuse, sex, alcohol abuse, and patriotism. Morris claims in later statements that he was "lost" and was not upholding Christian values.

Many of Morris's close family members claimed that he was preaching more for his own glory, than for the glory of God. In 2000, Morris started Gateway Church in the Dallas, Fort-Worth Area. Over time it grew into a megachurch

with tens of thousands of weekly attendees. Morris slowly began to build a national profile through writing popular Christian books. He also led a popular TV program that reached hundreds of countries, and gained recognition far beyond his local congregation. Morris rose to become one of the most prominent Evangelical figures in the U.S. Although many viewed Morris as a fundamentally good person, his dark secrets have just recently come to the light.

Cindy Clemshire, the 55 year old real-estate broker claims that the sexual abuse she endured by Robert Morris started in 1982 when she was just 12 years old. The first alleged incident occurred on Christmas night of 1982. Over the next five years, Morris continued to abuse her, with the abuse escalating to the point of attempted intercourse. Morris pleaded guilty to five counts of, "lewd or indecent acts with a child." He was given a ten year sentence, however it was suspended, meaning he will only serve six months in jail. The rest of his sentence, he will serve on probation and will have to register as as sex offender for life.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

# Overconsumption in the Beauty Industry

By Beatrix M.Y.

There has always been a surplus of products in the beauty industry. The shelves lined with pretty packages, always fully stocked, are a way to draw consumers into the store. Although it has always been an issue, there is no doubt that the growing intake of products, specifically within the makeup and skincare industry, is increasing at an alarming rate.

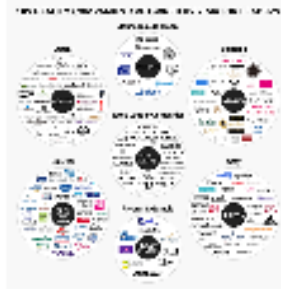


The first question to ask is why? What causes this incessant need to have it all? Well, although it may be hard to admit, it is social media. In the new age of influencers, there has been a growing marketing strategy with PR Packages. These goodie bags are sent to famous influencers in exchange for getting publicity and good reviews. In some ways, this is popular; there is no actual demand that an influencer will give the product a good review, and most of the time, they are honest. However, the issue comes into play when consumers can't separate over-manufactured perfection from reality.

The key detail about PR packages is that they contain a lot, and they are free. The excess in which these beauty influencers get these packs causes them to have a massive influx of products, and they often show off this surplus to their viewers. This can warp their perspective of what they are meant to have. It is important to denote the fact that these PR packages are completely free. These expectations are actively propelling people to the stores for things they don't need, which then causes an extreme uptick in overconsumption. No normal person has 20 bottles of foundation, and no one should.

There has been a push in online spaces for under-consumption. There are

several facets to this movement, stemming from a push to reduce spending of things such as makeup, skincare, household products, or collector items (like Labubus). The advocacy for underconsumption actually started a few years ago in 2023, with the massive, seemingly overnight, blow-up of the Stanley Quencher. After the initial interest died down, several critics discussed how unnecessary having 20 reusable water bottles was, and how it defeated the purpose of having them be reusable in the first place. Another large push for underconsumption was seen with the rising popularity of fast fashion. This movement saw a push from environmental advocates to purchase quality, long-lasting items instead of spending it on clothes that will be thrown away within the first handful of wears.



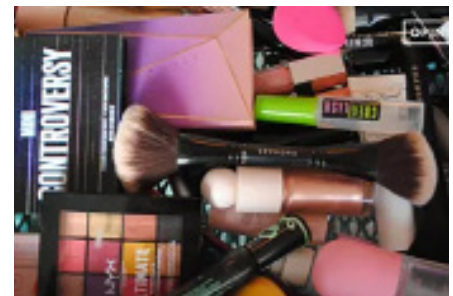
This trend has been growing steadily, and although many still continue to hold unhealthy spending habits, there is a more widespread awareness of only buying what you need. Recently, it has broken into the famously consumption-based beauty industry. It actually started with the same influencers receiving the massive PR discussed previously in the article. Many have been seen re-purposing the products they received in the packages into small goodie bags, which they then raffle off to followers for free. This is a magnificent example for all influencers to follow, and many hope that this trend will continue into the future.

There have also been several consumer-based movements to curb overconsumption, one of which is "Project Pan." Here's a question: when was the last time you ever fully used an entire beauty product? It may be hard to remember, because it doesn't happen often. Project Pan isn't an

official movement or title, but girls ranging from teens to mothers have been partaking in a challenge to use every last gram of product before buying something new, or in beauty terms, "hitting pan."

There has been one more intense trend throughout beauty communities, and it has to do with the labels. Many hypothesized that if you take the labels off all of your products, not only will your space become cleaner, but the need to focus on brand names and new things will drop. This seemed like a quick fix to a common habit, so I tried it. One week ago, I removed all the labeling from my packaging. Most came in the form of stickers, so that was easy. Other things required some light work with a nail file, and some did not want to come off. Although many people who have been extremely committed have resorted to taping over their products, I just stored the labeled products away when they weren't in use.

In all honesty, it didn't work. Although my space felt cleaner and sure, maybe I wasn't so focused on the brand I was using, but more so the product. I think there are better ways to curb spending habits. This experiment was fun and satisfying, but I believe it is only useful to those who have already begun their understanding of overconsumption and have made significant progress towards breaking spending habits.



The push to curb overconsumption in the first place is a big step in the right direction. The more people get on board, the less waste will be produced, and the more money will be saved. The steps taken in the beauty community are admirable, and the mentality around purchasing power grows stronger by the day.



ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2025

## The Team



**MJ C.**  
Co-Editor-in-Chief



**Zoe Br.**  
Co-Editor-in-Chief



**Chiara C.**  
Column Writer



**Zoe Ba.**  
Column Writer, Co-Media Executives



**Beatrix M.**  
Column Writer, Co-Media Executives



**Leyton G.**  
Entertainment Editor, Column Writer



**Luke W.**  
Politics Editor, Column Writer



**Zack H.**  
Current Events Editor, Column Writer



**Isabella M.**  
Layout Editor, Column Writer



**Sadie S.M.**  
Website Manager, Column Writer