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COVER ART // DYLAN BUCKLEY DELANEY
Letter from the Editors

Dear WORD Readers,

Welcome to the 50th issue of WORD! 16 years and 100,000 printed copies later, we have finally hit our milestone issue. Let’s take a moment to thank past writers, artists, editorial teams, and advisors who have contributed to WORD, crafting issues that will forever be sources of inspiration to budding WORDies—and the readers, who decorate their living room coffee tables with the fruits of our labor. Whether you flip through our magazine or read it cover-to-cover, we thank you.

To kick off the new school year, WORDies have pieced together a fresh collection of writing and artwork to share with you. If you’re an IV veteran or just navigating moving away from home for the first time, we hope that what lies within these pages teaches you something new about the community you are a member of. Join us as we help tell the stories that surround us—there is always more to uncover and appreciate.

WORDies’ radiant illustrations and poignant works stand beautifully on their own, but it is your eyes that bring them to life.

Cheers to 50 more.

WORD Editors-in-Chief,
Isabel Cruz and Makenna Gaeta

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The Sticky Truth

Santa Barbara’s Unique Relationship to Oil

WORDS // GRANT MENOLASCINO
PHOTOGRAPHY + ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // ADAM BAGUL
WHEN LEILA NOURMAND was a freshman, double majoring in Film and Pharmacology and in the midst of the pandemic, she spent more time on the beach than at her house. When her professor claimed—over Zoom—that she had an antidote to the dark, sticky goo found on the beach, Nourmand quickly adopted the method. “Anytime I had tar on my feet I would have to suffer through this whole experience of rubbing mayonnaise to get it off,” she remembers. “It is everything you imagine it to be and so much worse.”

Isla Vista beaches are spaces familiar to residents as places to decompress and take in the view of the distant islands off the coast. However, it is almost impossible to avoid a symbol of oil everytime we enjoy our beaches. Platform Holly looms off the point, glowing at night, as trails of oil assemble at the high tide line in a nightly routine with the moon. While we tend to joke away the presence of Holly as the “Eiffel Tower of IV,” we cannot ignore our unique relationship with oil in the place we call home.

Despite popular belief, tar is, for the most part, a natural phenomenon. IV sits atop vast reserves of crude oil—a naturally occurring, unrefined petroleum product—that has resided beneath the Santa Barbara Channel for thousands of years. In some places, the pressure is so great that crude oil seeps through cracks in the ocean floor, floating to the surface, and sometimes ending up on the underside of your feet.

Unlike other communities across the US, in IV we have a sensory relationship to oil—you can feel the oil on your feet, smell the oil in the ocean breeze, and swim through oil slicks floating in the water. While we know that much of this is from natural seepage, images of waves blackened by oil and beaches littered with dead wildlife in the wake of oil disasters haunt our collective memory.

Tar balls are more than just pesky pieces of goo in need of a mayonnaise bath. Rather, they are a constant reminder of oil exploration off our shores and the remarkable history of environmental activism in our community. We cannot control the shifting nature of tectonic plates or the rearranging of underground pressures releasing more oil into the ocean through seeps, but we do have an obligation to remember why our community fought for the environmental protections we might take for granted today.

For thousands of years the native Chumash have found practical applications for the abundant deposits of tar balls. Although the smaller fragments we commonly associate with the mayonnaise method are useless, these skilled individuals manipulate the larger deposits in various ways. According to a book written by a UCSB professor, Milton Love, Chumash made canoes and baskets watertight, repaired cracked vessels and roofing, and affixed hooks and arrow points securely to their shafts using this sticky adhesive.

In the late 18th century, as the mission system expanded northward along the coast, explorers took note of the natural abundance of oil seeping from the land.
Pedro Font, a Spanish explorer, made entries in his journal about the “tar which the sea throws up found on the shores, sticking to the stones,” and how its distinct odor was perceptible. He speculated that there might be springs of tar flowing into the sea since the scent grew stronger each day, resembling the smell found on a ship or in a store stocked with tarred ship tackle and rope.

This unique sensory relationship between crude oil and people has touched the consciousness of different people through time. Today, it is particularly intertwined in the experiences of local surfers. Emma Hersh, a devoted longboarder hailing from Costa Rica and double majoring in Global and Environmental Studies, expressed her perspective. “While I’m surfing, I can see the oil, and I know it’s naturally occurring,” she said. “But then my gaze shifts to the stunning beach and mountains, and that’s when I see the oil rig.”

As Hersh explains, “Some people aren’t aware of how much of it occurs naturally, so they assume it all comes from the oil rig without connecting that the rig is there for a reason.” This tendency to shift blame solely onto offshore drilling, disregarding the natural occurrence of seepage off our coast, does not arise in isolation. It is deeply influenced by the tangible consequences associated with oil drilling in the ocean, whether we acknowledge them or not.

Unlike natural seeps, industrial extraction in deep waters comes with a host of environmental risks. Two senior scientists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, John Ferrington and Judith McDowell, point out that, “Oil seeps are generally old, sometimes ancient, so the marine plants and animals in these ecosystems have had hundreds to thousands of years to adjust and acclimate to the exposure to petroleum chemicals.” On the other hand, the production, transportation, and consumption of oil by humans often leads to the introduction of chemicals into new ecosystems. A risk-proof method of drilling and transporting oil from the sea floor does not exist. As
oil companies have sought to drill in increasingly deepwater to access these natural deposits, the likelihood of disaster inevitably rises.

Drawing from a long legacy of attempted offshoring of oil extraction, a slur of new drilling operations were built in the 1960s, with IV’s Platform Holly built in 1965. In 1969, just a year after it began to pump oil, a blowout of Platform A released an estimated four million gallons of oil into the Santa Barbara Channel and devastated ecosystems of countless species.

According to the LA Times, the explosion was so powerful that it cracked the seafloor in five places, spewing crude oil at a rate of 1,000 gallons an hour for a month before it was slowed.

Thick waves of midnight black tar washed up onto the beaches of IV, seeping into the crevices of everything in their paths. At its worst, the resulting oil slick was 660 miles in length, roughly the size of the state of California from north to south. Thousands of sea birds and animals died as a result of contamination. Photographs preserved in the archives of the UCSB Library depict the harrowing aftermath of the spill: surfers completely covered in oil, observers gazing upon beaches littered not with rocks but deceased sea lions, and seabirds coated in layers of crude oil.

As a result of the 1969 disaster, UCSB students and local residents created organizations like Get Oil Out! (GOO) and explored new ways to think about environmental issues, symbolized by the establishment of the Environmental Studies discipline at UCSB. The legacy of activism stemming from the spill of 1969 is also enshrined at the national level, with the origins of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Clean Water Act, and Earth Day owing their creation to the national movement animated by the disaster. Today there is still no fail-safe method of extraction from the seafloor. As we move forward with extraction in any capacity, risk of disaster is an inevitable calculation.

After a long summer on the oily beaches of IV, we understand how much of an inconvenience tar balls can be. The goo, slicks, and bubbles force us to adapt, whether smearing mayonnaise on our feet or scraping oil off our surfboards. Besides just invoking the purist annoyance, these symbols force us to reconcile with the disasters of the past and remind us of the activism that existed before us. Oil is a century-old industry in this area, and activists have campaigned for almost as long to shut down oil extraction because of its detrimental effects on our health and ecosystems. IV’s oily connection extends beyond our sensory experiences of tar on our feet and the scent in the air; it encompasses a responsibility to protect our environment and demand a vision for the future underpinned by the activism of the past.
PLAYLIST FOR PEDESTRIANS

If you’re not strutting to this playlist, you’re doing it wrong

ART + DESIGN // ZOE WITHERSPOON

Twilight
Anderson .Paak

CATS GROOVE
Kaelin Ellis, Tony Rosenberg

skate depot
Channel Tres

Pedestrian
Gunna

Sexy
Rae Sremmurd

Cocaine Model
ZHOU

Don’t Check Me
Larry June

Like It Is
Cozo

Just Another Day
Too $hort

Up Top
Busty and the Bass

Persuasive (with SZA)
Doezchi, SZA

Toothache
Topaz Jones
BARE FEET STOMP AGAINST the hardwood floor to the DJ’s electric beat, and a silver moon radiates through the building’s large skylight. Meanwhile, smoky trails of burnt Palo Santo pirouette across the air as dancers of all ages howl to the evening, fully embodying both the music and their own life experiences.

On the first Friday of every month, Yoga Soup, a yoga studio located in downtown Santa Barbara, holds an ecstatic dance night—a sober occasion in which participants are encouraged to fully surrender themselves to the rhythm of the music. When it comes to ecstatic dance, there isn’t any special choreography, nor is there any specific goal of attracting looks from those around you. Rather, dancers are encouraged to surpass mental blocks and move their body in its full expressive form. While the dance movements differ depending on the person, the concept of there being no “good or bad” way of dancing reigns true for every person involved.

When I first heard about Yoga Soup’s ecstatic dance night, I was both terrified and intrigued. While I love music and the concept of dancing freely, achieving this freeness has always been something that I’ve struggled with. Countless times
I’ve found myself at various concerts and shows feeling enthralled by the beat, but still hesitant to dance due to my own inner voice of judgment. As I sway my shoulders to the rhythm, thoughts like “you’re doing it wrong” or “you look silly” infiltrate my brain, inhibiting me from dancing to my fullest expression. My body is left stuck in an awkward, half-committed movement, where despite wanting to give all of myself, I am unable to surrender to the sound.

Linked to early shamanistic practices for healing and connection, dancing is innate to the human experience. But modern culture has skewed dance’s meaning, inhibiting our ability to fully tap into its magical, restorative properties. We focus so much on how we appear to others when we dance, that we forget the most important aspect of movement—the way it makes us feel.

When I attended my first ecstatic dance party, mini trampolines, used to enhance the night’s playful spirit, greeted me at the door’s opening. Meanwhile, a small box was purposefully placed at the entrance to collect phones. The event was both sober and phoneless, forcing attendees to face their uncomfortable feelings head on.

I was thirty minutes late and the party had already started. Lingering at the door, I admired the people who danced freely without the concern of others. A 70-year-old man jived to the rhythms with the vitality of his youth. He didn’t care that he was the oldest in the room. Meanwhile, a woman younger than I chaotically shook her body. With her eyes closed, she didn’t pay attention to those around her. As I watched, I thought about my own concept of freeness. I had always viewed it as an unattainable way of being that some just so happened to be lucky enough to possess. However, as the party guests continued their dancing, I realized that being free was a matter of choice... something I too could choose.

So I stepped onto the wooden-planked dance floor and began my awkward, half-committed movement. The inner voice of judgment still spoke, but my relationship to it changed. “You look stupid” and “You’re embarrassing yourself” didn’t inhibit my freedom. In fact, it only made me dance harder. And eventually, my half-committed movement became a fully committed one.

Conrad Martin, a Yoga Soup desk yogi and a regular ecstatic dance attendee, shares similar sentiment. He explains how ecstatic dance taught him how to freely be himself. “When you see people being their genuine selves it inspires you to want to do the same.”

What I found most interesting about my ecstatic dance experience was how once I moved past the insecurity of looking like an idiot, other self-doubts and insecurities unrelated to dance began to creep into my
mind. While I normally would harp over these thoughts, the ecstatic dance party opened me to a new way of dealing with them. My arms and legs stretched and contorted in irregular motions and my head bobbed unceasingly. As self-doubt and anxiety bubbled up, I was prompted to listen even more to the ways in which my body wanted to move.

Traversing across the dance floor, my thoughts eventually ceased to exist. The 70-year-old became an aqua orb and the shaking woman a pink heart.

I disappeared into a starry-rainbowed universe of love and appreciation, my body leading the way.

KiaOra Fox, a specialist in dance movement and meditation, is well-informed on dance's euphoric properties. She explained to me how dancing “creates inner stillness within the mind.” When the mind is silenced, worldly judgements, analyses, and preconceived notions are abandoned, making it easier for one to enter ethereal and psychedelic realms. We often reach for substances before we dance without realizing that dancing has the capacity to naturally create the same inner euphoria that we often associate with drugs and alcohol.

Whether its releasing trapped energy stored within the body, or getting past mental barriers, dancing is a powerful tool that catalyzes heart-opening authenticity. While my experience at Yoga Soup's ecstatic dance party made me feel more comfortable to move freely, a person can experience the power of dance wherever they are—be it the grocery store, the club, or even alone in their bedroom. It just begins with surrendering judgements and allowing your body to lead over your mind."
The **LORDS of FUNKTOWN**

the story of MindFunk

WORDS // ISABEL CRUZ
PHOTOGRAPHY + DESIGN // DYLAN BUCKLEY DELANEY
THERE ARE NO ART GALLERIES in Isla Vista, but for a moment in the spring of 2022, there was one: Open-ended Art Gallery. In an apartment off of Embarcadero del Norte, couches were pushed to the side and art was arranged skillfully above radiators and in the kitchen. Musicians lined the walkway in front of neighbors’ front doors as artists and friends squeezed onto the stairs to get a good view of it all. This is where MindFunk got their start.

The apartment was Chris Villarino’s—the guitarist of MindFunk and perhaps the catalyst of it all. Along with the help of his roommate, who headed the curation of student art, Villarino got his fellow UCSB jazz band members to join him in performing live for everyone. They had no name for their group during the first show but by the second, they became MindFunk. Villarino was joined by Emily Conway on bass, Vince Feliciano on keyboard, Bill Tran on drums, Liam Coggon and Moremi Kaplan on saxophone, Evan Asakawa on trumpet, Sri Ramamurthy on trombone, and vocalist Laura Vetuka.

But by the fifth art show, it seemed like the band would be even more short-lived than most college bands. On Villarino’s apartment walkway, they announced that it would be their last show, evoking murmurs of disappointment from the crowd, but thankfully for everyone, Jack Corliss took over on keys and Ryan Lewis stepped up to become their vocalist, allowing MindFunk to play on.

“T chose funk because I wanted people to dance,” Villarino explains. “Funk just like, it gets the people moving. I think it’s the best type of party music to have.” It’s also all of the members of MindFunk’s favorite music to play. That, and jazz obviously. The sounds of funk seem to scratch just the right itch in our brains that make us helplessly bob and sway along to the rhythm, stank faces on. For many of us, it might also remind us of home, where we grew up listening to artists like James Brown and Betty Davis when it was time to clean the house or when we got picked up from school. Funk lends plenty of space for solos and improvisation, making it especially impressive when it is performed live in front of us by our peers who we work alongside at minimum-wage jobs or see in lab for class. Suddenly they stand facing us, nine faces looking back at the countless of ours, as we reciprocate the other’s energy.

At times while on stage, the members of MindFunk almost seem as if they are not performing, and that they are instead playing in the comfort of someone’s living room. Not because they are unpolished by
any means, but because they seem so at ease. Even on a stage, slightly raised and a bit taller, they laugh as they exchange looks with one another and break out into silly dances as another member ropes them in.

With so much blatant chemistry and confidence, it almost makes sense that they only practice as a full band only two to three times a quarter. Partly because Tran, their drummer, lives in Orange County, but also probably because the band doesn’t really need to. “I think because we all have so much experience in music and being in jazz band, which is very improvisational already, we have experience with learning things in short periods of time,” Conway, the band’s bassist, says. But when they do feel the need to practice, it’s when they “wanna learn new music or when one of the songs crashes and burns,” Coggon explains.

Impressively, they can only think of one performance that didn’t go as smoothly as most of them usually do. It was at a date party and they were trying five new songs that they never rehearsed together. “We were like okay, we’re just going to run it at the gig. Everyone know your part,” Lewis jokes. But despite the inevitable hiccups, the crowd still seemed to have a good time. “IV accepts all,” Coggon adds.

Nowadays, Mindfunk doesn’t perform as much in IV as they do in downtown Santa Barbara, playing at places such as SOhO which, more than anything, offer the band a better chance to reach wider audiences than they ever could in the backyard of a college house. Stakes are higher and the attention of the crowd is not always guaranteed, but when funk classics are played with flare and charisma, it’s hard to imagine that someone in the audience could carry on with their conversation without ever giving the band a bit of attention. The sounds of the Fopp would be too strong.

It’s no question that the nine of them have musical talent that impresses and a stage presence that’s hard to turn away from, but more than anything, when MindFunk takes the stage, the love and respect they hold for each other is impossible to ignore. In the best moments, we become voyeurs to a musical love affair. “We’re all jazz musicians so we can add our own fusion, of like making something very simple much more interesting, taking it in arcs and going in different directions which is great, and I love all these people for being able to do that,” Villarino says.
AROUND THE STREETS of Isla Vista, there is one man who seems to be everywhere all at once. Capturing original photos of IV-goers in their element, street photographer Callahan Morgan has posted unforgettable college memories on the Instagram account “ivstreets.” Whether biking on Pardall with your friend on the handlebars, or promenading through The Arbor in sick cowboy boots, IVstreets is capturing it all.

IVstreets has wracked over six and a half thousand Instagram followers since it was first created in November 2022 and continues to grow. Fascinated by the prospect of being featured in his daily posts—even if by accident—followers flock to the Instagram page to investigate. And with thousands of followers, word gets around quickly of local “celebrities” that make the cut for Morgan’s daily posts.

“I’m trying hard to capture moments that I would personally want to be photographed in,” Morgan explains. “For me, photography is an exploration of humanity and connection.” Morgan’s pursuits as a street photographer aim to explore just that, commemorating the people on the ground. IVstreets thus serves as a daily, dynamic yearbook—celebrating friendships, styles, and events across campus.

“The story starts with one of my photography classes at Santa Barbara City College,” Morgan recounts. “It was an entry class and we had an assignment on shadows. I was thinking of a place with lots of interesting subjects and areas to check out shadows, and that’s what initially drew me to the campus. UCSB was a great place because there were always people around.”

With a quick deep-dive to the bottom of his page, followers can see the account’s evolution from a class project to a full-blown career in a matter of months. The account’s earlier long shadows and golden-hour backlit photography still stand as a reminder of its humble beginnings. However,
Morgan’s keen eye has now focused on the high-spirited locals’ daily adventures on campus and IV.

“What really solidified me in pursuing photography was the human element,” Morgan explains. “I kinda dove headfirst into the account because up until that point I had been deeply steeped in academia.” After dropping out of school because of personal family difficulties, Morgan has been able to use his platform as more than just a hobby. His time behind the camera has helped him work through deep personal questions, while simultaneously building an extensive portfolio and focusing on a career that truly excites him.

The content on the account today showcases a new vibrancy of student life and culture. On the local runway (The Arbor), students are photographed on their comings and goings to class and library sessions. These are the models that are celebrated on IVstreets for the variety of styles and energies inhabiting the same space. But Morgan also frequents downtown IV, daygers, band shows, UCSB cultural events, and club rallies. He’s everywhere.

“The style of the account is definitely more photojournalistic in nature,” Morgan explained. A photojournalistic style aims to communicate news through photographs, and for IVstreets, they are going for a “vibrant, celebratory feel.” The striking resonance of color and energy in his content is ever so clear with the photos he shares to Instagram daily. Breathing life into the small moments on a college campus, IVstreets captures mundane moments and transforms them into spirited memories.

“Being on IVstreets has actually had an impact on my life with meeting new people,” Diego Barba, second year Sociology major and three-time recipient of an IVstreet feature, shares. “When I introduce myself to people that I share mutuals with, they tend to bring up how they have seen me on IVstreets.” Barba additionally reflects on the experience of getting his picture taken. “I have seen IVstreets take photos of me before. It’s an interesting vibe because I never know what to do—whether to smile or just act ‘casual.’ Then there’s the question if I will be featured on the daily posts or not.”

Spending hours on the campus and streets of IV, Morgan shoots hundreds of photos in a day—ten of which make the daily post and maybe the occasional Instagram story. However, Morgan also takes the time to upload photo albums, for free, to his website, which include the hundreds of photos that may not have made the final cut.

To thousands of followers IVstreets is a shared space for celebrating campus life and IV shenanigans. However, the account’s popularity also speaks to the photojournalistic work of Callahan Morgan—capturing students’ commonplace activity and recasting these memories as beautiful moments in the college experience. The account is widely appreciated as a testament to the humanity and stories of Isla Vista in 2023.
Come for Coffee, Stay for

KOZY

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Follow @kozycraftcoffee
THE DUAL LIVES
OF UCSB
STUDENTS

PHOTOGRAPHY + DESIGN // SOPHIA CHUN
a pleasure to have in class!
AS INSIPID TIKTOK loops lull me to sleep, the painted face of Mikayla Nogueira, social media’s trendiest beauty guru, slides into view. Flaunting lush, full eyelashes, Nogueira divulges that L’Oreal’s Telescopic Lift Mascara is the culprit. I scan my eyes to the bottom of the screen where the caption “paid partnership” sits in plain sight—and then, out of curiosity, I open the comments section. “This bitch is a liar,” “Anything for a check I guess,” and “Even fake eyelashes can’t hide the ugly,” are three of the 78.5 thousand comments “canceling” Nogueira for ostensibly using false lashes in this advertisement. A scroll or two deeper, and an anonymous user deems her existence “a waste.”

I shut my phone off and let the comments reverberate through my sleepless thoughts. All of this over a fucking mascara? That night, I dream that I am Nogueira, navigating the weight of an entire city’s hatred on my shoulders.

If you’re a TikTok regular—or just the average social media user—chances are you’ve brushed paths with cancel culture. Birthed in 2014 as a social movement to dismantle the authority of corrupt public figures, cancel culture originated as a means of holding those in power accountable, boycotting and “outing” transgressions.

And at first, it did just that. High-profile stars and politicians began dropping like flies, publicly shunned for a slew of offenses come to light: sexual assault allegations, racist commentary, corrupt practices, and other stabs at the disenfranchised. The 2017 movement #Metoo empowered innumerable women to call out and cancel their abusers, deploying social media as a platform to make their voices heard in a justice system that looked the other
way. Marginalized populations latched onto the accessibility of the movement, underscoring the ease of signing up for a Twitter account to catapult discrimination into the limelight instead of being brushed to the edges of public discourse. It was a testament to the power of the Internet—and shared outrage—in cultivating tangible change.

By 2020, the days of power operating as immunity were over; no celebrity was untouchable.

But as cancel campaigns became more ubiquitous, the offenses they targeted became diluted—and the number of targets themselves greater. With platforms like TikTok, pretty much anyone can become “someone,” spontaneously amassing millions of views and followers when the stars align. The result is a sizable uptick in “micro” influencers: people who capitalize on their new following by publicizing brand deals and sponsorships. And like anyone under the public eye, the scrutiny is real, even if they may not have the celebrity resources to bounce back from mass shaming.

I’ve seen budding influencers get canceled for infractions as trivial as their clothing style, the makeup they wear, “toxic” relationship behavior, and not being “authentic” enough. These comment sections are flooded with thousands of copy-and-paste grievances decimating the reputation of the accused TikToker, many of which are personal and hateful. Death threats and doxxing—the intentional reveal of a target’s private or identifying information—are commonplace. The vitriol is so potent that I’ve forced myself to delete the app more than once.

So where do we draw the line between accountability and bullying? Between justice and mob mentality? It shouldn’t be shocking that 78.5 thousand people don’t actually care enough about a deceitful mascara advertisement to compel another human being to re-contemplate their existence. They want to belong. That’s the thing about cancel culture; when taken to an extreme, it feeds on our basic human desire to be a part of something bigger than ourselves, even if the result is ruthless bullying. The consequences for championing hate behind a screen are slim.

Perhaps its implications are felt most in the political sphere, where cancel culture breeds fear of expression instead
of tolerance. A 2022 Pew Research survey found that Democrats and Republicans are further apart ideologically today than at any time in the past 50 years. Cancel culture exacerbates this political gulf, leaving little room for meaningful dialogue and creating an environment conducive to intolerance and dogmatic philosophies.

And it's not just online. Over half of the UCSB students surveyed on College Pulse, an online survey and analytics company dedicated to understanding the attitudes of today's college students, reported self-censoring on campus. Only 28% of students said they are “not worried about damaging their reputation because someone misunderstands something they have said or done.”

“It is important to consider multiple sides of an argument, no matter how controversial or uncomfortable other sides are. Even if you don’t change your mind, you gain insight as to how people who disagree with you might think, which goes a long way in recognizing how even people who disagree with you are still human and worthy of human respect and empathy,” said a graduating UCSB student surveyed on the site.

Even former President Barack Obama weighed in on cancel culture’s dangerous lack of nuance. “The world is messy; there are ambiguities. People who do really good stuff have flaws. People who you are fighting may love their kids, and share certain things with you,” he said. “If all you’re doing is casting stones, you’re probably not going to get that far.”

Online, the threshold is low to become an “activist.” And playing the blame game is easy, cathartic, and thrilling. We get to release our anger in bursts instead of doing the painstaking political work—petitions, campaign building, networking, etc.—to make a difference.

But a world where we hold others to a moral precedent that not even we can achieve is a dangerous one. Reducing others to one moment, one mistake, or one lapse in judgment reduces the complexity of the human experience. Like the injustice the movement aims to combat, canceling an everyday person perpetuates it, disposing of individuals who deviate from majority rules instead of engaging with them through a lens of nuance and empathy.

None of this is to say that cancel culture is all bad; that perspective is just as intolerant. Disengaging with those who spew hate and condone abuse is how we give voice to the voiceless. But it is up to us to deploy it this way—as a tool and not a weapon.
PARADOXICALLY DUBBED “the best years of our lives,” while also known to be inordinately stressful, college life gives students a lot to contend with. Between midterms and finals, the looming pressure of deciding on a career, adjusting to a new social life, the pace of university learning, dating (or not), internships, research, and figuring out how health insurance works (I still don’t get it!), the average student has a lot on their plate.

Metaphorically, of course. Literally speaking, the opposite is a woeful reality for many: nationwide, an estimated 40% of college students experience food insecurity, a situation defined by the US Department of Agriculture as a “lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle.”

Walking around Isla Vista, it’s not hard to picture how this problem plays
and nutritionally incomplete foods which occupy the lower end of the price spectrum ultimately come with a hefty environmental toll. The way conventional agriculture is practiced both in the US and globally demands unsustainable levels of water and land usage, application of harmful pesticides and herbicides, and the use of fossil fuel intensive fertilizers which pollute our land and oceans. This food system is both flimsy and cruel, propped up by the exploitation of farmworkers and untenable levels of chemical inputs.

The ultimate product of these agrarian practices are the meals which often end up on the plates of those facing food insecurity, but due to irresponsible farming practices, the food produced exacerbates the issue of malnutrition and health concerns. Determined by the health of the soil it's grown in, the nutrient profile of modern fruits and vegetables have decreased as our land has been gradually razed—vitamin and mineral content in fruits and vegetables has decreased by up to 38% compared to their 1950s counterparts, according to National Geographic. Additionally, nearly 75% of non-organic produce sold in the US contain harmful residues of pesticides, as established by the Environmental Working Group in a recent study. So, even when students are able to obtain food, there is little guarantee that it won’t be harmful.

out at UC Santa Barbara, where 48% of undergraduate students experience food insecurity according to UCSB’s Basic Needs Resources—a problem expounded by Santa Barbara’s exorbitant rent and cost of living prices. You would be remiss to not find fast food here. Between the burgers, the fries, and the pizza, there is no shortage of cheap, ready-to-eat food, but fresh and healthy options are few and far between. But what makes a meal so prototypically “college student” is that it is cheap, and cheap is seldom nutritious. This is a key aspect of food insecurity that is often overlooked. College students don’t just deserve to eat, they deserve access to healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate foods.

The consequences of these circumstances can be severe and far reaching. According to American Dining Creations, students experiencing food insecurity are four to five times more likely to experience anxiety and depression than their food-secure peers; mental health can affect not just quality of life but quality of education as well. As such, food insecure students are more likely to report a lower GPA, and are subject to higher rates of dropping classes or dropping out of school entirely.

Of course, you can’t talk about food without talking about where it comes from. Many of the processed
Unfortunately, in this food system, it seems that nobody wins, save for the lined pockets of the industrial agriculture industry. On the other hand, our health, our watersheds, our local ecology, our quality of life—it all suffers. But fortunately, there are people in our community working towards solutions.

“I was walking home from class and I thought to myself, why is there no public health course? Why is there no teaching kitchen? Why do we not have these resources where we can learn how to care for ourselves and also care for our environment at the same time?” says Lily Melendez, a fourth-year Environmental Studies major. Melendez, who experienced food insecurity first-hand, sought to answer the needs of students like herself. The resulting project is a student-led seminar and lab, Sustainable Food Studies Lab (ENVS194SF), where the lecture and hands-on cooking classes give students “knowledge [that] will help dismantle the cognitive dissonance between the food that is produced and the consumer, allowing the student[s] to visualize the people, systems, economies, cultures, and environments that bring their foods to the table,” per Melendez’s syllabus.

Additional resources available to students to combat food insecurity include the Associated Students Food Bank, the Miramar Food Pantry, and the Edible Campus program, which hosts workshops on sustainable at-home gardening and environmental education, as well as stewards three gardens across IV for students to access fresh produce. There are also CALFRESH advocates, who assist students in applying for EBT benefits, and the Isla Vista Compost Collective, which in addition to converting food scraps into nutrient-rich soil to donate to community gardens, also aims to recirculate food at their quarterly donation events. Though helpful, these resources aren’t perfect—EBT, for example, does not permit the purchase of hot food, and while the food bank and food pantries are helpful, it can still be challenging for students to cook nutritious food with such limited options.

“I think it comes down to putting pressure on the university to make systemic changes,” says Ava Abeck, an employee at the A.S. Food Bank. “Asking for more funding to allow for free food events is really important... Moving towards more mutual aid as well. I think it comes down to a balance between pushing for change within the system and also branching out from it.”

Though the problems with our food system can be large and complicated, their inextricable nature also speaks to the potential for large-scale solutions, in which not only are food security needs met, but the way in which food is grown is in harmony with the farmers, the consumers, and the environment.
A good life for more people

PEOPLE
“I’VE NEVER HEARD of that before,” was about as much as I could get out of my Isla Vista neighbors on local urban myths. That is sober Isla Vista neighbors. It wasn’t until one Wine Wednesday evening, when I found myself peaking around every corner on the way home, hoping to catch a glimpse of the ghostly raccoon that would grant me good fortune for the rest of my spring quarter. I definitely needed it after my beloved blue bike was snatched by the campus bike gremlin. If only I knew blue was his favorite flavor, I would have been more careful!

Telling campfire ghost stories looks a little different in Isla Vista. Instead of a campfire, we sit around someone’s living room coffee table and instead of s’mores, we drink wine. While typically, Wine Wednesdays end in us trying to solve why he stopped texting back, this particular evening left us with some refreshing new mysteries to think about.

We all know that it’s bad luck if a black cat crosses your path, but have you heard of the lucky Isla Vista albino racoon? I’m sure your initial reaction is not far from those of my Wine Wednesday friends.

“An albino racoon?” one of my friends burst out laughing. “I haven’t heard of that, but there is a big fat racoon that haunts my house.”

“I’ve heard people domesticate racoons!” another friend generously tried to contribute.

At the start of the quarter I set off on a quest to investigate Isla Vista urban myths with high expectations. As someone that scares very easily, I braced myself for an array of spooky ghost stories that were going to cause me to triple check my door locks before bed. I figured that, with as much character and spirit that IV comes with, there were bound to be thrilling, mystical creatures not far behind.

Gathering my pen, paper, and recorder, the plan was simple: I was to ask my fellow Isla Vista neighbors to describe the craziest IV myth they’ve heard of. To my disappointment, there’s apparently more to ghost busting than a simple conversation in broad daylight. The responses I received were nothing short of a few giggles, some confused face expressions, and awkward moments of silence before the conversation quickly diverged.
Feeling a bit hopeless, I decided to give the hunt for IV urban myths a rest by attending a classic Isla Vista Wine Wednesday. Arriving at the scene, half-empty wine bottles were already dispersed around the room as friends swayed back and forth to favorite tunes. It was clear by the dancing and sing-alongs, that Wine Wednesday was in full effect. Pouring myself a glass, I began to chime in on the weekly rundowns.

Whether it was our absurd debate about the so-called albino raccoon or the bar cart we were annoyingly blocking the path to, others began to flock towards our conversation.

“Tell her about the chicken you guys saw!” someone blurted out.

“I don’t know about an albino raccoon, but I know there’s a giant chicken that lives in IV,” my friend responded. “I saw its tracks one night at sunset. I’ll show you the photos after I open this beer.” But it wasn’t long before the alleged man-sized chicken story was cut short by another proudly shared IV legend.

“I have one for you!” Another friend shouted from across the room.

Getting people to talk about IV myths had suddenly gone from nothing more than the sound of crickets to a competition of who had the most convincing story.

“There’s a lagoon monster,” the next person eagerly shared. “I know because I lost a bet and had to swim across the lagoon once during freshman year. I swear something touched my leg.”

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Around Town!
Events in IV

improvability

Start your weekend with a laugh. Join the audience of UCSB’s award-winning improvisational comedy team and be a part of their fast-paced show. Voted Best Late-Night Entertainment at UCSB! Fridays, 8pm in Embarcadero Hall. Only $3. @improvability

IV’s personal movie house screens the best of current cinema and a once-quarterly screening of The Rocky Horror Picture Show! Friday and Monday nights at the IV Theater. Free for UCSB students/$6 general admission. On Instagram @officialmagiclantern

Laughology
UCSB’s Premiere Stand-Up Comedy Club

Live stand-up comedy shows most Saturday nights in Embarcadero Hall. Always funny, always free. Showing most Saturdays at 8pm in Embarcadero Hall. Find them on Instagram: @laughologyucsb

Be The Producer

Need advice on producing your own show or performance in the wilds of Isla Vista? Anna Jensen, Director of IV ARTS, will happily help. Email akjensen@ihc.ucsb.edu
In front of you, a pambazo slides across the table. A Mexico City-style sandwich of white Telera bread now soaked red with salsa and stuffed to the brim with chorizo, lettuce, crema, and cheese. Bread so stuffed that to pick it up would seal your fate of red fingertips and a mess of ingredients falling, smearing the white plate dirty with every move. In 15 minutes your plate will be wiped clean, or almost clean, as you use bits of extra bread to wipe up the drippings, leaving behind only footprints of what was once a ripe, picture-perfect sandwich.

At Rascal’s, it is easy to forget about a critical fact surrounding the food you are eating: it’s all vegan. The creamy mayonesa smeared on your elote? It has no eggs. And the carne asada that sits on top of your sopes? It’s not real meat, but it definitely tastes like it. Owner and executive chef Dalan Moreno has followed a vegan diet for 17 years. 17 years of no animal products and slowly learning to adjust his favorite meals to better suit his lifestyle, experimenting with quick swaps like adding mushrooms in place of beef in pozole, as well as taking on more difficult tasks like creating his own vegan chicharrón.

“There are a lot of things that could be slightly changed but still have all those familiar flavor profiles that you’re used to,” Moreno tells me. His love for cooking and
his community led to where he is now, at 432 East Haley Street in downtown Santa Barbara, where authentic Mexican dishes are made vegan for everyone to enjoy.

At 15, Moreno chose to become vegan after learning about the effects of factory farming and since then, he “never went back.” He grew up in Santa Barbara, which is safe to say has no shortage of delicious food, but does have a shortage of vegan-friendly options—at least at that time. But he was surrounded by a vegan community of friends, and together they spent Friday nights cooking up delicious meals. During those dinners, the idea of one day having a restaurant of his own was conceived. “I guess I always daydreamt about it, like, ‘it would be so cool to have a vegan restaurant in Santa Barbara,’ because at that point there weren’t any,” Moreno says of Santa Barbara circa 2004. However, his dream did not come to fruition until much later after most of Moreno’s childhood friends moved away from Santa Barbara—where he stays with roots planted deep in the soil of the community that grow deeper with the conception and recent grand opening of Rascal’s Vegan.

After a few years of presenting themselves to the public through pop-ups hosted by local establishments such as Municipal Winemakers and Bibi Ji, on March 11, 2023, Rascal’s officially became an establishment of its own. Although the pop-ups gave them an opportunity to build their clientele and share their vegan creations with the community, Moreno shares that, “having our own space feels really liberating in a sense and we finally have our own sense of identity.” Over the quick course of a little over a month, Moreno worked tirelessly to prepare his restaurant for opening. No more jumping around weekend after weekend for Moreno and his team. Now, you always know where you can find them, week in, week out.

Having gathered knowledge from his family, friends, and trips to Mexico, Moreno is an untraditionally trained chef—he never went to culinary school. Instead, he learns from his community which extends beyond Santa Barbara city limits and across our southern border. For three years while managing the pop-ups, Moreno would simultaneously work construction jobs for periods of about six months at a
time, then taking three months to travel to Mexico City which he used as a “hub” for travel and cuisine, having family both in Mexico City and further north in the state of Chihuahua. While in Mexico, he would work for free to learn as much as he could, and upon arrival back in California, he would cook with friends and family putting his new knowledge into practice.

Like the pambazo torta (which is noted to be Moreno’s favorite on the menu), Moreno takes inspiration from Mexico City again in the creation of an arroz con leche milkshake, layered with whipped cream and De La Rosa crumbles—a new addition to the Rascal’s dessert menu and a product of experimentation when Moreno is not in the kitchen during working hours, which unfortunately isn’t very often. “I don’t have much free time at the moment,” he says, and understandably so. Aside from the help he receives from his team, he is the only full-time worker at the restaurant.

From the kitchen, Moreno is unable to see the smiles around the dining room, half-filled with food as they chew and chatter away, but they’re there. Whether it’s the group of 25-year-olds excited to try out the new vegan spot in town or the older Santa Barbara locals happy to see their culture being represented, people seem happy to enter a space that welcomes all, vegan or not. Just like the clientele that takes a seat at Rascal’s, the Mexican-American experience is diverse and makes space at the table for burgers and mac and cheese every now and then—all vegan of course. At Rascal’s, we are reminded that to go without animal products and its subsequent consequences of production does not make a meal any less traditional or delicious—only different. Corn will be ground, patted flat, and thrown on the stove with just as much care as our abuelas and tíos have cooking dinner in their newfound American homes, and you can be sure that it will taste just as good.
i am a giver
it runs through my veins and doesn’t stop
like the way my dad will always tell me to eat the orange
even though i know he peeled it for himself first.
if i offer him a slice of his own orange he will still refuse,
just like my grandmother told me to eat more
as if that was all she knew how to do
the words rolled off her tongue like a song.
as she sat with her weakening body
still all she could think of was me.
and even in her final year she would tell me
“take this food to my neighbor.”
i am entangled in my roots of endless love
i give it to others as if it’s all i know how to do
my mother once told me as i cried in her arms,
“you can’t expect others to love the way you do”
and i knew it was true because she’s the same way.
i come from givers
it runs through my veins and doesn’t stop,
even when i am hungry
and i have peeled myself an orange
i will still tell you to eat it first.
Quiet Longing //
JAZLYN SANCHEZ

My dad moved away from home at 18, my mom moved away from home at 27, my sister moved away when she was 16, a year later i moved too at 15.

Heavy bags packing all they can of a life that doesn’t want to be left behind, make their way through the airport terminal.

Homesickness is embedded in our skin, as if we can’t stand still we keep searching for a life that wasn’t given to us.

I’ve been here for seven years now, California is not bad, but every summer two plane tickets stare back at me through the computer screen

Round trip as always, all i can think of is the look on her face when i have to leave.

I miss you, but i dont want you to hurt when its time for me to come back.

I miss you, but i am afraid that if i go see you, i wont want to come back.

I turned 21 this year, my phone rung twice at midnight on the other end of the line my mom’s broken spanish blasting “Las mananitas” so loud, i bet the neighbors could hear her laughter echo.

I don’t remember the last time i blew the candles on my cake with my mom by my side

This feels so familiar now, crossing borders comes so natural to us.
A poem about getting older  //
CALLIE BANTA

The absolute inevitable impermanence of it all
First introductions and forgetting their name
In a blink you know them better than you know yourself
And in a moments pass becoming strangers again
Split across a canyon of memories
Patched by the bridge of a new connection
Knowing that as much as nothing matters everything is connected
Each decision being as rational as the next
Each step we take creating a new path never explored before and as equally
full of possibility and promise as the adjacent one
Knowing that time stops for no one and as we move away and find ourselves
Our families continue to live on in casual comfort with the quiet absence of
us now forever removed
A daughter who calls whenever she can
A sister who visits for your last soccer game but misses your birthday
The dissatisfaction when I say I love you because it’s simply not enough to
express that I see you
The letters my dad wrote me as a child were true
He told me life would be full of mountains to climb and valleys to fall deep
into
Places to explore and troubles to get lost in
That maps wouldn’t help in uncharted waters
And that the longer I spent worrying about tomorrow
The more of today would pass me by
Ever since I was young I have waited for love at first sight
I have longed for my chariot to bring the prince that will save me
A damsel in distress
My second half to complete me
The puzzle that I am a piece of
I obediently put on the horse blinders every little girl is gifted
To tunnel my vision to my happily ever after
Wishing to a wishing well that someday my prince will come
Wanting to be part of someone else’s world
Waiting for that someone I knew once upon a dream to awaken me
Striving to be a girl worth fighting for
I sat pretty just hoping someone would notice me from the crowd
And choose me
Only then would I know how special I am
This was the my farcical fantasy
Caught in a cage to be admired but never seen
A jester for a King, rather than his Queen
I tried to squeeze into a role I was told to play
Carefully not to shine too brightly
Because, isn’t this what love is supposed to be?
To be lucky enough to be deemed worthy through the gaze of a man?

Can you truly find love for yourself within someone else’s love for you?
I could become everything he wants
But I had never stopped to wonder what I desired
I have learned to neglect the most important relationship
With myself
Looking within I discovered a new love story
It felt like
A cold bite of fresh mozzarella on a hot summer morning
Warm soup hidden in a hand-made dumpling
The path of a brand new fountain pen sailing on a fresh piece of paper
And as free as running through the empty 3am streets
Once upon a time I fell in love
PHOTOGRAPHY // SUMMER HADDAWAY + DYLAN BUCKLEY DELANEY
From Cradle to Campus: Growing Up in the Shadow of Isla Vista

WORDS // KENNEDY HUSTON
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // AHSIA BARRIENTOS
In high school we would always go out and have bonfires at the beach and now that I’m in college it’s the same bonfire but with a new circle of people.”

Here, the weather is either slightly warmer if you’re from the north and slightly cooler if you’re coming from the south. Santa Barbara unveils tall, rigid mountains that lie parallel to a cool blue ocean. When it’s not overcast you’ll see the Channel Islands mounted in the distance and argue with your friends on whether it’s Anacapa or Santa Rosa Island you’re looking at. If you’re sitting in the right spot at the right time along East Cabrillo Boulevard you’ll see giraffes peeking their heads over the street, and if your college applications are deemed worthy, you’ll get to experience the bitter-sweet taste of Isla Vista.

Until 2019, the closest Target to Santa Barbara was in Ventura and fourth-year Communication major, Chloe Babcock explains that it was “such a treat” going as a Santa Barbara local. She recalls this as one of her fondest memories; her family would make a whole day out of it. Like Target, IV was another place she rarely found herself visiting. Other than it being the destination for wholesome events like dance recitals or infrequent visits to someone’s older sibling, IV was fairly irrelevant to her. The brief stories she heard from her high school peers about coming here on the weekends were portrayed as fun, but it never ignited a desire for her to attend school here. It wasn’t until Babcock received her acceptance letter to UCSB that she realized she just may have been growing up alongside a hidden gem her whole life. Now, a fourth year in IV, Babcock has grown an appreciation for living in a place where her neighbors are her best friends and the beach is only a few steps from her front door.

In Santa Barbara there is no Walmart, no Philz, and no Party City, but plenty of beaches speckled in tar and windy roads that end in miles of chaparral. “One second you’re swimming in a lake in the mountains then 20 minutes later you’re surfing at Campus Point,” says third-year, Environmental Studies major Theo Funk. Growing up in the San Ynez mountains, Funk spent his childhood in what he calls a “fairy land,” referring to the natural aspects this town has to offer. During high school, he frequently surfed at spots like Campus Point and Sands Beach, but eventually grew frustrated at the college students taking over his beloved sanctuary, leaving less room for the locals. Ironically, now that he lives in IV, Funk has become the college student that he once despised.

For Santa Barbara local and Fourth-year Biopsych major Zach Winner, trips to IV were also a facet of his childhood. “I would hit Freebirds while being a local fo-sho,” Winner says, along with surfing or very occasionally hitting the bluffs along Devereux Beach. But other than the infrequent visits to IV, he mostly found himself in La Mesa with the not so far-fetched impression that IV was “crusty.” Winner had a partiality for Santa Barbara’s tight-knit community that later transferred over to IV when he moved and realized what qualities make IV so sweet at its core. “You don’t need to drive anywhere unless you’re working. That’s the nice part about it, you have this tight group of friends
where you can just walk to their house and hang out with them at any given time.”

When asked about his night-life activities in high school, Winner made it clear that he and his friends steered clear from IV, describing the act of coming here to party as “gnarly,” an experience that would definitely leave a sour taste as a teenager. Despite his previous conceptions of IV, Winner is grateful to have grown up in such an intimate community and continue his college education so close to home. He seemed most proud to share the fact that “SB has the highest ratio for restaurants to people of any town in the world,” but he may need to be fact checked on that.

Brother of Zach Winner, and fourth-year Economics major Sam Winner, describes living in IV as a continuation of high school. “In high school we would always go out and have bonfires at the beach and now that I’m in college it’s the same bonfire but with a new circle of people,” he explains. As a teenager, Winner says that his parents advised him not to attend UCSB due to its party reputation, but the idea of having access to both beach and hiking destinations—coupled with the safety and quaintness of the small community—guided his college decision. “Now that I’m living here, I realized IV is not as crazy as I anticipated,” he shares.

Old furniture wearing away on the curbs, shattered glass on the asphalt, and questionable smells lingering in the air can make someone scrunch their nose of what might be a sour first impression of IV. But it seems that after immersing oneself in the environment, you might begin to embrace these peculiarities as quirks, eventually developing an appreciation for the town’s amenities. When it’s sunset you can drive 30 minutes to the mountains to catch a glimpse of the sun melting its yolk over the ocean, or ride along in your roommate’s bike basket to check on those ankle-biter waves. It’s moments like these that remind us that IV is our favorite sour candy, and it won’t be long until it gives us the worst sweet tooth.
Does It Actually End with Us?

The Pop Allure of The Dysfunctional Romance Novel Popularity

WORDS // TARA MOSTAFAVI
ILLUSTRATION + DESIGN // AHSIA BARRIENTOS
ITS POPULARITY lured me in. Its promising beginning grabbed my attention. Living vicariously through the fictional girl who craved true love like me and most other young adults, I hoped to observe what a romantic relationship should look like. Pages deep, feeling frustrated with the words—vision clouded by my tears—I stayed. Despite our critique of such books like Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us*, we can’t seem to break up with them.

The florist and the neurosurgeon. The feminine and the masculine. Lily and Ryle. The perfect young couple. Love consumes her when she’s cradled by him, when he lands a kiss on her temple. She thinks he might be the one. The end. But the bed, the place where he made love to her, turns into a war zone. A place where he pounds his fists into her head until her world goes black. Is this love?

Maybe, but it’s unhealthy. An unhealthy relationship involves “emotional or verbal physical abuse” according to “Planned Parenthood.” Physical abuse is hitting, kicking, or hurting someone. The same hands Ryle used to save children’s lives, he used to strangle her. But he has past trauma, that’s why he’s so angry. It doesn’t matter. Planned Parenthood clarifies that abuse is unjustifiable.

Although she vowed to never be treated like her mother was by her father, Lily’s love life mirrors that of her mother’s. But she loves Ryle. She thinks she can stick it through and that he’ll change. She’s married to him and pregnant with his child; she’s stuck. Leaving an abusive relationship like Lily’s can be challenging, taking “an average of seven tries before someone leaves an abusive partner for good” states Planned Parenthood.

In the hospital she fled to after being beaten by Ryle, she gives birth to his child. Seeing herself in their daughter, Lily imagines motherhood. She cannot allow her child to live the same life she did. She cannot let her child think that her relationship with Ryle is healthy. Finally, it ends with them. Lily breaks the cycle.

Hidden towards the end of the novel, Hoover’s author’s note answers the looming question: why would someone write a romance book about a love that must be avoided? Because she aims to show a type of love that is overlooked, but prevalent. Because she “wanted to write it for people who didn’t quite understand women like [Lily].” Unlike her other books created for entertainment, Hoover’s *It Ends with Us* intends to educate young people about abusive relationships and how it can be challenging for the victim to leave.

Ryle’s wishful words, “I’m supposed to be the one who protects you from the monsters. I’m not supposed to be one,” flashes across a black screen for seconds. Innumerable videos like this one crowd “BookTok”, the book community on the infamous video-sharing app, TikTok. Craving to understand the context of quotes like Ryle’s, the hundreds of
thousands of viewers of the It Ends with Us BookToks rush to possess the novel.

The J.K. Rowling of Gen Z, Colleen Hoover and her romance novels have been met with the modern-day version of pitchforks: cancel culture. The same social media platform where It Ends with Us had its claim to fame also pushes out videos hating on the book. The book’s haters are young women who warn others to avoid the book, pelting it with hypothetical tomatoes for romanticizing abuse.

Returning to the real world, how do the young women of Isla Vista feel about It Ends With Us? Aryanna Zahabi, a third-year Sociology major, experienced difficulty finishing the book. “But I think if someone’s in a similar type of relationship as [Lily], I’d tell them to read that book or recommend that one to them,” Zahabi expressed. That way, the victim of an abusive relationship can relate to Lily, gaining the courage to leave. Otherwise, Zahabi does not recommend the “traumatic” read.

According to Kailyn Saylor, a second-year Biology major, It Ends with Us is “only kind of a romance novel,” focusing more on domestic violence aspects. Saylor recommends the novel “if it was prefaced with this is a book about domestic violence.” Regardless, “I don’t think it’s ever right to say like, we should stop reading this type of book, because there’s something to gain from everything that you read.”

Contrarily, Isabella Goetschel, a first-year Global Studies and Political Science major, found it necessary that Ryle being an abuser came as a surprise to Lily—like in real intimate relationships. “I don’t think people understand what she was trying to do with the book. So they take it as like, this is really toxic. It’s a really good way for people to better understand situations that they may never experience, but they can still learn to be empathetic towards people like Lily,” Goetschel emphasized. Moving forward, Goetschel desires to read Hoover’s sequel, It Starts with Us, to take a break from unhealthy romance novels.

Only sobbing at the author’s note, Sofia Little, a first-year Global and Sociology Studies major, was not as moved by the book. She did, however, realize what she doesn’t want in a romantic relationship. “I think It Ends with Us just made me be like, ‘Oh, I cannot ever date someone like Ryle.’ I just can’t have someone who has anger issues, period.” Little explained. Little believes it was not Hoover’s intention to glamorize abuse, but to show the reality of a relationship like those closest to her: her own parents.
Despite the crowd of people online attempting to “cancel” the book, all four interviewees unanimously discovered the book on “BookTok” and would recommend it to their friends, feeling that its readers gain an enlightened perspective on relationships involving domestic violence. For the interviewees, by the end of the book, a sigh of relief accompanied a mind filled with disgust. But most importantly, the understanding of ‘love’ has been altered.

While pop culture advocates to put an end to reading books like *It Ends with Us*, young women in real-life view it as a chance to learn from bad examples. A chance to experience the pain of such a love in hopes that it will only be encountered in fiction. This novel enchants people by acting as a simulation of love and domestic violence. There may be discomfort, but it’s not real. The goal is for there to never be a relationship like Lily’s to break up in the first place, for there to never be a beginning to end. In that case, romance novels like Hoover’s—‘toxic’ or not—should continue to be read. How can we grow if we don’t know? Though the cycle of abusive relationships should stop, learning about it through a book shouldn’t have to end with us.
THE MILITARY AIRFIELD was a hive of activity, with the sound of aircraft engines roaring as planes took off and landed and personnel rushed to and fro with a sense of urgency. As a patient administration specialist in the air evacuation department of the military, I was tasked with coordinating the safe and efficient transfer of injured three soldiers.

I was entrusted with the vital responsibility of ensuring the safe and smooth transfers and hospitalization of military patients, mostly from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Germany. I was required to be vigilant and ready for alarms from the patients’ departure station and the control tower in the airfield for changes in arrival time or in patients’ medical conditions at any time. I would spend hours in the control tower, eagerly awaiting the sound of approaching planes.

On one particular day, upon hearing the arrival of an aircraft, I requested the ambulance driver to swiftly position the vehicle in the vicinity of the landing plane. I found myself in a highly charged and chaotic situation, tasked with air evacuating three injured patients from Iraq. The sound of rushing crews and medical personnel and engine noise filled the air as I sprang into action, and my heart pounded with a sense of urgency and responsibility. Upon attending to the top priority patient on my list, my attention was quickly drawn to a patient on a stretcher with an injury to his lower limbs. I introduced myself and quickly assessed his condition. His breathing was labored and shallow because of lower limb pain. One of the Air Force crews and I grabbed the stretcher and got him to the ambulance, making sure the litter was properly connected and that he was as comfortable as possible. When I checked his vital signs, he seemed satisfied and relaxed, and he thanked me repeatedly.

My focus shifted to the next patient, whom I could see was visibly distressed and agitated. He was pacing back and forth while intermittently looking up and around at the sound of the aircraft overhead and the nearby ambulance. It was evident that he was struggling to cope with the chaos of the airfield environment. I approached him in a calm and reassuring manner, introducing myself and maintaining eye contact to show that I was attentive to his needs. I made certain that he had access to any necessary medications or items that would help him feel secure during the transfer.

The third patient had a wound on his arm, and in assessing his situation, I could see that the bandage was soaked with blood, indicating that the wound was still bleeding. I quickly replaced the bandage and ensured that the patient was secure and comfortable before transferring him to the ambulance.

The sound of planes flying overhead and the shouting of military personnel added even more urgency to an already urgent situation. With each patient I loaded onto the ambulance, I felt a growing sense...
of pressure and stress. The wounded men were counting on me to get them transported safely and provide the medical attention they so desperately needed. I climbed into the ambulance and moved with precision and efficiency, rechecking each patient’s vital signs and making sure I had all the patients’ medical information in my hand. I also instructed the ambulance driver to take extra care on the way to the hospital, avoiding sudden movements or loud noises that might trigger the second patient’s anxiety. Despite the wailing siren of the ambulance, I remained focused on my patients, constantly monitoring their condition, and making the necessary adjustments to their care as we drove to the military hospital.

When we finally arrived at the hospital, I felt relieved as the patients were admitted into the emergency room for treatment. The sense of urgency and responsibility never left me, but I also felt grateful for having been able to play a role in getting the patients the care they needed. The situation had been chaotic and demanding, and I was proud to have served in the critical moment.

The sound of sirens remains a distinct memory that I carry, and it is a powerful symbol of my time in the military. My role allowed me to work closely with patients, which gave me a deep understanding of the medical field and the crucial importance of patient care. The feeling of being part of a team that worked tirelessly to save lives was an experience unlike any other. My appreciation for the medical profession grew exponentially, and I came to understand the value of the skills, knowledge, and expertise that medical professionals possess, and the immense impact they have on the lives of those in need.

My service solidified my desire to work in a medical-related profession. After leaving the military, I decided to pursue a new career in healthcare, and I am now planning to attend physical therapy school. My time in the military served as a foundation for my education and career, providing me with valuable experiences and insights that have helped me to become a compassionate and skilled healthcare professional.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jena Lee served honorably in the Army for over four years. Her military experience instilled a deep appreciation for teamwork, discipline, and effective leadership. Committed to furthering her education, at UCSB she pursued a Psychological and Brain Sciences major and graduated in June of 2023.

ABOUT THE SIERRA HOTEL: “Sierra Hotel” represents writing from participants in UCSB’s creative writing workshop for veterans and military dependents. The workshop, which began in 2012, provides the opportunity for this unique group of UCSB students to write about their military experiences as they study the craft of creative non-fiction. To read more work by UCSB student veterans and military dependents, visit Instant Separation, a Digital Journal of Military Experience from the University of California: www.instantseparation.org.
THE DISTANT CRIES of Charles Munger echo throughout his office. His underpaid assistant hands him a tissue, then another tissue, and then the entire box of them. Munger’s newspaper shakes in his quivering hand as he reads the headline, “Munger Hall plans terminated in favor of a more innovative construction—a floating dorm building with windows.”

The nation’s first floating dormitory building could be built in the lagoon. With an ever-looming housing crisis and a land shortage, new innovations must be brought forward to address such issues. The university needs to stop sinking further into the housing crisis and figure out a way to float. Buildings can have floatation systems at their bases, allowing them to rest on top of the water’s surface as floating buildings. Unlike boats, floating buildings are fixed in place and cannot move by themselves. Currently, the highly controversial Munger Hall remains the university’s solution instead. Nicknamed “Dormzilla,” VICE News discusses the controversial construction, specifying that 94% of bedrooms in Munger’s development lack windows, which aid in mood improvement and mitigating stress. Additionally, a review panel cites five necessary design alterations to address Munger’s design issues.

UCSB’s campus is unique in its landscape—or rather waterscape—and can incorporate floating dorms as an alternative architectural method. VIATechnik, a technology company, outlines the necessary water depth for...
floating homes, citing three feet as a minimum. UCSB’s lagoon reaches depths of six feet according to UCSB’s Daily Nexus; the campus lagoon could indeed support building flotation. Floating structures are not a new concept. UCSB students are quite familiar with Platform Holly, the oil rig which rests right off the coast and is fixed to the ocean floor. However, it is less known that most oil rigs are designed to float.

These constructions are evidently livable and tethered to reality, but what is their potential in regard to lagoon dormitories? A spokesperson at NLÉ, a firm with a focus on Educational Architecture, explains this reality. “Multiple regions and water bodies worldwide can be used for floating buildings with different uses including dormitory buildings.” Nathalie Mezza-Garcia, CEO of floating home consultant company Seaphia, adds that floating student housing exists in Copenhagen via repurposing shipping containers into apartments.

Floating buildings bring forth advantages that make them viable contenders for construction. Mezza-Garcia mentions that Copenhagen’s floating dorms have become iconic. “If universities have the chance to build one then they should totally go for it because it makes the school physically attractive, providing a reason for students to go there beyond courses.” The nature of floating buildings additionally enables them to be built quickly and efficiently. Components can be assembled in off-site locations such as warehouses prior to their transportation to the construction site—a process known as prefabrication. Approximately half of the construction time utilized by standard construction methods gets cut in the affair, according to The Constructor, a digital encyclopedia that provides building-specific informational resources. Quick construction is an upside for aiding in the housing crisis since this is a pertinent issue that will persist as long as it goes untreated.

Additionally, The Constructor details how floating constructions are cost-effective and reduce 20 to 30 percent of costs in comparison to standard rates. Foundational elements and other components are substituted, making for cheaper builds. Likewise, the water underneath floating buildings subdues earthquake impacts and requires less money spent on making an earthquake-resistant structure. The university would benefit from saving money, and everyone would benefit from the diminished earthquake impacts.

People are only one part of the equation though; the environmental and ecological impacts must likewise be considered. Chris Berry, the campus lagoon steward, discusses the effects of a lagoon structure on marine wildlife. “We have a few species of fish in the lagoon, which I don’t think would be affected,” he said. Berry’s concern remains with the birds as migrating and local birds utilize the lagoon. It is important that the constructed islands remain, as they are the most used lagoon areas. Less lagoon area would remain for birds if a floating dorm was taking up space, but it is not believed that a lagoon structure would frighten off birds otherwise. Berry mentions window concerns since birds can strike them and die. Windows can be made safer for birds by increasing their visibility via special windows, which are currently implemented in UCSB’s on-campus buildings.

Floating student housing can help resolve the housing crisis, regardless of its location. Perhaps floating student apartments in the Santa Barbara Harbor could house students wanting to live downtown. Let’s let the buildings float and see where they drift to. After all, both Mezza-Garcia and NLÉ representatives affirm that it would take massive efforts to sink one.
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