

The background of the cover is a photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, a student with a backpack is walking away from the camera on a paved path. To the right, there is a large, dark, abstract sculpture on a pedestal. The path is lined with green bushes and trees. In the background, there are more trees, a building, and a blue sky with white clouds. The title 'TRIPLE A TRIBUNE' is overlaid on the image in large, white, sans-serif font. The word 'TRIPLE' is at the top, 'A' is in the middle, and 'TRIBUNE' is at the bottom. The 'A' is significantly larger than the other letters.

# TRIPLE A TRIBUNE

Academy for Advanced Academics

**SECOND EDITION**

*November & December 2023*

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Adrian Gonzalez  
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**Mariana Medina  
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# Note from the Editors

*Mariana Medina and Lulu Perez*

## *Disclosure on Behalf of TAT*

Hello there! To preface, this isn't an article. Rather, this page is meant to serve a few purposes, **one of which is to note that any and all information, claims, and ideas provided within these issues do not reflect the opinions or statements of Academy for Advanced Academics, including faculty and administration.** However, we do take full pride in opening the door to the voices of our writers, devoting full effort to the accuracy and courtesy of our content.

As such, aligning with the premises of AAA and SAS, our goal is to elevate the concept of a school newsletter, and provide the freedom to write with genuine purpose. In an environment dominated by grades, ranks, façades, and performances, we have always felt that a space for free expression is paramount, as small as it may be. Throughout our time in school, we've found that there is no better way to discover oneself than to write at the heart and mind's will, hence, the existence of TAT. Including developed articles based on professional research, personal musings, and general pop culture, we strive to empower students beyond solely academic responsibility.

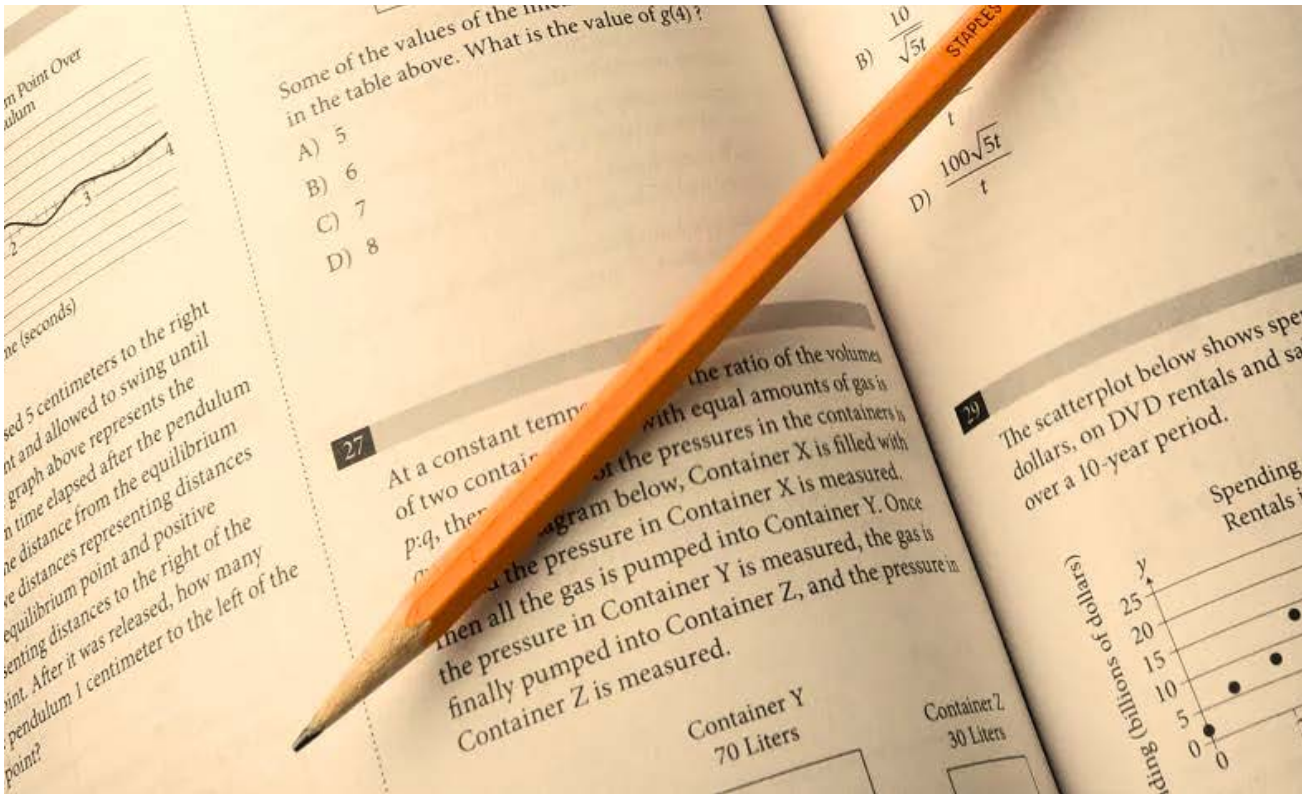
We would also like to take a moment to thank *all* of our members for dedicating an impressive amount of adherence to this project. Being part of such a rigorous program, writing full-fledged, eloquent articles (in a timely manner) is more than the extra mile, so for that, all of you are amazing.

*Monologue aside, we hope you enjoy this issue of the Triple A Tribune!*

# THE SAT

*Iris Mogul*

## ILLUSIONS OF NEUTRALITY

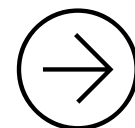


In Research

### SAT's Discriminative Bias

In the midst of the recent Supreme Court decision that struck down affirmative action in college admissions, it is important to take a more critical look at the boxes that must be ticked on application forms. Opponents of affirmative action fall victim to the illusion that the measures used to determine applicants' abilities are completely objective. Many of us at AAA know what it's like to be frustrated when looking at our dream school's average SAT score for admission. We need ridiculously high scores to get into highly-acclaimed schools, but some of us are just bad test takers. The thing is, being a "good" test taker proves to be about more than just merit.

“  
It's no wonder the  
SAT fuels racial  
inequality,  
considering where it  
started.



### Example Verbal Questions Considered in Screening

Examples taken from research by Jay Rosner and William C. Kidder

<p>The actor's bearing on stage seemed ____; her movements were natural and her technique ____.</p> <p>a. unremitting...blasé b. fluid...tentative c. unstudied...contrived d. eclectic...uniform e. grandiose...controlled</p>	<p>The dance company rejects ____, preferring to present only ____ dances in a manner that underscores their traditional appeal.</p> <p>a. invention...emergent b. fidelity...long-maligned c. ceremony...ritualistic d. innovation...time-honored e. custom...ancient</p>
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Above are two similar SAT questions that were considered in 1998. The left column had 8% more Black students answering correctly than white students. The right column had 24% more white students answering correctly than Black students.

Guess which question got thrown out and which one made it to the public on test day? (Rosner & Kidder, 2002).

When looking at research about score results and test questions themselves, the true racial bias of the SAT is unmasked. According to the Brookings Institute,

“Among top scorers—those scoring between 750 and 800—60 percent are Asian and 33 percent are white, compared to 5 percent Latino and 2 percent black.”

There are several reasons for this disparity, none of which have anything to do with “native intelligence”. The most obvious explanation is **access to resources**. Nowadays, taking the SAT is not just a matter of going to a testing center and answering reading comprehension and cumulative math questions. There are overpriced tutors, repeat test-takers, 504 plans, and more.

Beyond resource disparities, there has been evidence that in the past, a certain racial bias has been embedded in the test itself. Each question on the SAT goes through a pre-screening process before it is placed in front of students to be scored. Research highlights that so-called “Black questions” (questions that Black students excel in compared to white students) have been more frequently removed than all others from the final test that is given to students.

It's no wonder the SAT fuels racial inequality, considering where it started. Carl Brigham invented and released the first-ever Scholastic Aptitude Test in 1926. He was deeply involved in the eugenics movement at the time, which was powered by belief in the biological hierarchy of races. In addition to this, he came down hard on racial integration in schools, “American intelligence is declining, and will proceed with an accelerating rate as the racial admixture becomes more and more extensive” (National Education Association).

Quite the beginning.

So many ambitious high schoolers across the world apply to college in the United States, so admission boards have to decide who to accept somehow. Thus, we are left with one critical question. What are the alternatives to the SAT?

Although bias is inevitable, it could be diminished if those writing SAT questions came from **diverse backgrounds with a multitude of views**.

Test creators must commit to preventing “Black questions” from being cut, as they were in 1998. Keeping in mind that every aspect of the college application process contains advantages and disadvantages based on applicants' resources, the solution will never be straightforward. I believe students' backgrounds should play an important role in college admissions in order to truly level the playing field. For this reason, it seems to me that the recent SCOTUS ruling on affirmative action only increases the many injustices in the world of education.

# ART & LITERATURE



## Of Mothers and Monsters

*Adrian Gonzalez*

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Shelley's pains and passions are deeply intertwined with the book's narrative. Themes within *Frankenstein* are not subtle, revolving around creation, loss, and moral responsibility. Mary Shelley's life was firmly marked with grief, death, and loss, seeing as that she lost her mother, her children, and as marked by her creations, herself. Mary would later become a lover to a married man, Percy Shelley, which she would elope to France with.

Upon her return to England in 1814, Mary was pregnant with a girl. Her daughter would be born prematurely, dying soon after. Months later, she gave birth to a baby boy. Mary's emotional wounds would hardly heal, with her son having dying of malaria not even a year later. As if by some sort of divine cruelty, Mary gave birth to a third child, who passed of dysentery weeks after being born. Transformed by her life-long grief, she would go on to publish *Frankenstein* around this time.

In her diary, Mary recounts a dream she had a week after the death of her first daughter:

**“...my little baby came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. [I] awake and find no baby.”**



*Illustrated by Bernie Wrightson*

Mary's most famous composition follows Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist obsessed with indulging in the secrets to life itself. His curiosity would cause him to bring about a living amalgamation of organic parts which was not quite man, not quite animal. Victor is frightened by his creation, fleeing at the sight of it. As such, he rejects his now inherent obligation to care for his creation and be responsible for him, just as he would have been for a child.

From this point on, the creature continuously journeys, shifting from hiding place to hiding place. He is quickly drowned with the idea that the world wants nothing to do with him, as they scream at the sight of him and hurl stones as he staggers past. Out of spite and raw resent, the creature kills various people throughout the book. Would Mary still have loved her children, had they been monstrously reanimated? It is likely, since strong maternal love hardly has any bounds. However, would the rest of the world have accepted such a child, such a creature renewed by a flame? It is equally likely that they would not, as people fear what they cannot understand. Is it then cruel to revive the baby, if it is to live a life of ostracization and great suffering? *Frankenstein* offers an answer with its conclusion, which is an ending better read than summarized.

# Now Showing:

Adrian Gonzalez



## “Execution is Everything”

Recently, David Fincher debuted his first film since *Mank* (2020), which received two Oscars. This follows such films as *Fight Club* (1999) and *The Social Network* (2010). The question is, does Fincher still have it? It’s up for debate in *The Killer*. *The Killer* follows a hitman with a vendetta against his employers. Some scenes are brilliant, while others are awkward and overstay their welcome. Fincher's direction has not undergone any groundbreaking change, he's still a technical genius who knows where to put the camera and how to move it. Similarly, the sound design is intricate and not a far cry from his older masterworks.

## *The Killer* (2023) – David Fincher

**Starring:** Michael Fassbender, Tilda Swinton, Charles Parnell

**Genre:** Thriller, Crime

All of the best parts of Fincher's movies are here, but the story had weak stakes. When Michael Fassbender's character isn't monologuing or plotting his next murder, the weight of his character not having any strong emotional or physical motive makes the movie drag at points. Yet, I still found myself enjoying it. Fassbender's character is dryly charming, and the offbeat montage and sequence does make the film a lot less predictable.

It almost feels like a caricature of a Fincher movie, which pokes fun at its own clichés simply by failing itself. Or maybe I'm just trying to cope. I would not recommend this as an introduction to Fincher's work, but it's a fun watch nonetheless. This movie had the same air as *Zodiac* (2007), a Fincher film I recommend far more. **6.9/10**



# Recommendations

## From Us!

Adrian Gonzalez

### “In a Sentimental Mood” (2023) in *Chet On Poetry* - Chet Baker

Chet Baker died in 1988 after accidentally falling off his hotel balcony while under the influence of cocaine and heroin. This 2023 release is his last recorded album he worked on while in Rome. It contains original songs, but also renditions of jazz standards with his own takes or even poetry readings:

*“It was, love it, that was all—That was asked.”*

Chet spent most of his life heartbroken, touring with no real place to call home while facing financial insecurity and substance abuse issues. Chet’s music highlights his desperation for love, while his reality reflects his inability to attain it. Despite his short life, Chet has solidified his name with West Coast jazz legends like Stan Getz, Buddy Collette, and Gerry Mulligan.



### *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) - Valerie Faris & Jonathan Dayton



This cult classic follows the eccentric Hoover family traveling to California to a beauty pageant for their youngest, Olive (Abigail Breslin). The family has their quirks; Uncle Frank (Steve Carrel) is the world’s top Proust scholar who recently failed to take his own life, and is the brother of Sheryl (Toni Collete), an overwhelmed mother. She is married to Richard (Greg Kinnear), an aspiring motivational speaker obsessed with winning. Their son, Dwanye (Paul Dano), has recently taken a vow of silence until he becomes a test pilot for the U.S. Air Force and is an avid believer in the philosophy of Freidrich Nietzsche. Grandpa Edwin is a retired womanizer pushed out of his retirement home for abusing heroin, and simply wants to be there for his granddaughter.

*“A family on the verge of a breakdown.”*

The film is a “dark comedy” with bleak moments that border on depressing. However, this approach to storytelling works, not simply because it’s written well enough to be twisted into comedy, but because it serves to make the characters more human. Thus, seeing as that each individual character is so flawed, we don’t instantly turn against them because we inherently feel for them. Watching *Little Miss Sunshine* truly does feel like sitting through a family tearing one another apart, yet learning to love each other along the process. The concept of the storyline is complemented by charming, unique directing that somewhat reminded me of Wes Anderson’s *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001).

*(Note from the editor: I would trust Adrian’s taste. Although pretentious, “Letterboxd Warriors” tend to have a talent for this sort of thing). -Mari*

# Where's Mars Argo?

Mariana Medina

As the face of the angelically haunting “Mars Argo” character, **Brittany Sheets** suddenly appeared within public sights in 2009 and disappeared just as quickly in 2014. Better known for her career in music, whom the likes of which have resurfaced on mediums like Tiktok and Instagram, begun in 2009 with a fatal acquaintance on then-popular social network, MySpace. Meeting and later going on to date a man by the name of Corey Mixer, Sheets signed herself away to years of playing, and truly becoming, a doll-like, rather disturbingly juvenile character.

Acting as her “director,” Mixer turned Brittany into an internet-bred character, adopting a softened version of the “babydoll” style. Characterized by Sheets’ angelic voice, unsettling presence, and emotionally raw lyrics, the project quickly became an internet phenomenon.

Songs like “Using You,” “Wasting Away,” and “Wet Cigarette,” accompanied by just as artful music videos, truly encompass the effect “Mars Argo” would go on to have on the modern alternative scene. For the following reason, her grand impact isn’t a truly recognized one.

From one moment to the next, Sheets and all of Mars Argo’s music had been wiped entirely from the internet’s reach. A stretch of niche fame, gone in an instant, was revived years later within the likes of “Poppy” (Moriah Rose Pereira). Recognizable for her peculiar Internet presence, as well as eerie similarity to Sheets, “Poppy” was the new, unlucky “girlfriend” to Corey Mixer. Unlike theories from many fans, Mars Argo’s disappearance was triggered by a failing, presumably abusive relationship between Sheets and Mixer.

As soon as Pereira and Mixer began to release music under the “Poppy” character, similarities revealed themselves effortlessly. Sheets, now living out of the spotlight, quickly noticed Mixer’s intention to create and profit off the same “innocent, girlish” character

that once started with Mars Argo. Enraged, Sheets initiated a lawsuit against both Mixer and Pereira for copyright infringement, as well as domestic violence. Search up Mars Argo and Poppy—simply looking at each woman side by side proves the merit behind Sheets’ initiative to sue. Even then, the case was called off following an agreement from both parties, likely at the loss of Sheets. Moving forward in time, both Pereira and Sheets create music on their own, far away and separate from the obviously toxic, and rather creepy, likes of Corey Mixer.





# DISNEY DOWNFALL

Disney just recently celebrated their 100-year anniversary by releasing an animated movie called *Wish* on November 22, 2023 with negative to mediocre reception.

*Is that old magic fading?*

(Opinion)

*Abigail Elesppe*

Disney's first-ever animated film was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), and it was a massive hit. Since then, Disney has been known to create amazing films with deftly emotional storylines like *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1996), and not to mention iconic soundtracks like that of *The Little Mermaid* (1989), or stunning visuals as seen in *Coco* (2017).

Evidently, Disney is capable of creating beautiful, iconic films. In recent years, however, the company hasn't been meeting such standards by a long shot. Don't get me wrong, movies like *Encanto* (2021) were an overall fun experience to watch (visually, soundtrack-wise, etc.) but something was, without a doubt, lacking.

*Moana* (2016) and *Zootopia* (2016) were both results of a slight change in pace of Disney's storytelling, seeming to be a refreshing new moon. Disappointingly, *Wish* fell into a lazy, cash-reaching plot line that proved itself to be painfully obvious.

Conflicts in the film are shallow, little to no character development takes place, nor is there some sort of tangible message to ponder once the film comes to a relieving close.

Considering that *Wish* was caught in the midst of the Writer's Strike, its shortcomings can almost be deemed understandable. However, aside from its sloppy look to its sub-par soundtrack, its thoughtless plot was likely the last straw for many.

*Of course, I was not the only one to notice such faults.*

Overall, the movie felt very rushed. Looking further into initial concepts for the film, you can actually find a real gold mine. We could have been looking at Disney's first shots at villain couple tropes, unique protagonist concepts, a meaningful storyline, etc. But, of course, this was scrapped in favor of creating a more marketable and profitable movie.

This is rather unfortunate as well, seeing as that so many people were excited for this film. In the face of Disney branching out to make their brand more inclusive and having the main character be a woman of color, this is, quite honestly, a disservice. Consequently, because of all its downfalls, this 100-year anniversary film just felt like a mediocre, lazy film created to profit off of short-lived merchandise and anyone who drags their kids to the theater for a few hours.



*The film's protagonist, "Asha"*

**"*Wish* feels soulless at times, but the film is a step in the right direction for Disney Animation Studios, as the company acknowledges they have fresh characters, not merely sequels, even if the characters retread classic storylines." - Anonymous (*Rotten Tomatoes*, 2024)**

**"On one level, the total artistic failure of *Wish* is reassuring because it shows there are occasions when vast amounts of money and supposed expertise really don't make a difference." - Anonymous (*Rotten Tomatoes*, 2023)**

(Note from the editor: I haven't seen *Wish*, but after reading this and the paramount level of bad reviews the film has, I wouldn't bother. Unless you have a tantruming, snotting toddler that can't process what a bad movie is yet, don't even give it the time of day; not to mention your money. -Mari)



*The film's antagonist, "King Magnifico"*

**(Opinion)**

# *Friedrich Nietzsche: An Introduction*

*Ignacio Arnaiz*

***“All great things must first wear terrifying and monstrous masks in order to inscribe themselves in the heart of humanity.”***

**- Friedrich Nietzsche**

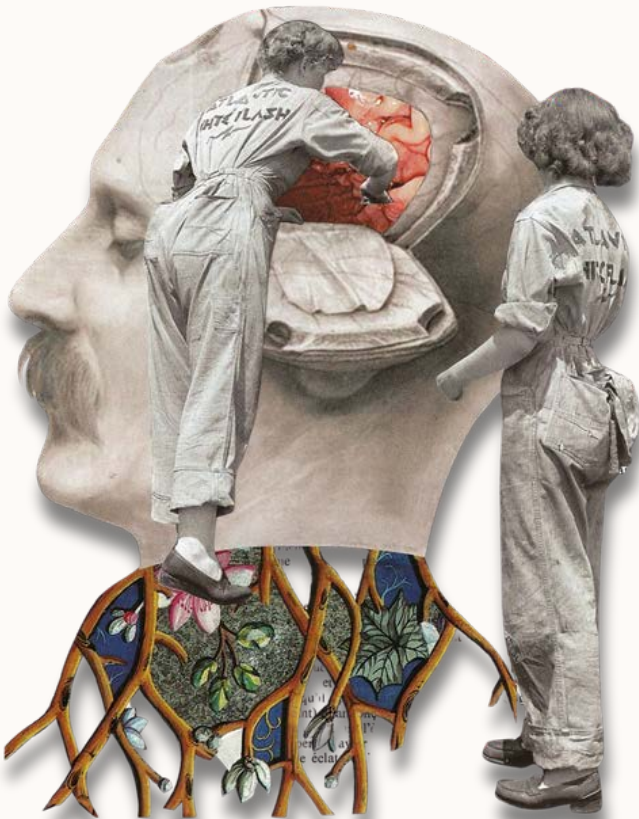
Observing the nature of morality as a river that was meant to continue flowing, Nietzsche’s path to greatness involved tearing down old values, even if it meant being perceived as “polluted” or “hideous” to the rest of the world. Without context, the intrinsic message sounds something along the lines of “be true to yourself.” However, with the context from *Beyond Good and Evil*, it becomes clear Nietzsche is exposing what he thought were horrors of Plato’s obsession with truth, reason, and the dialectical method. Nietzsche had two problems with reason and the truth: they were not absolute and any attempts to consider them so would create a person who was not capable of thinking for themselves. To seek the truth and its reasoning would not only make a person seek to justify what they think they know to be true, which they claim is true, but de-value the individual as nothing more than a storehouse for information labeled “knowledge.”



*Design by Renée Bolinger*

Additionally, the problem he saw with the truth was that it was never objective, but rather a perception of what is known within the scope of that person’s mind and, like morals, could be destroyed and built back up. However, this process could only take place if the will – or desire – to power was strong enough in a person that they should be able to break away from the “herd morality” that he believed was the result of mixing the established morality with democratic ideals.

To take part in this process, Nietzsche believed that seeking out new moral values and truths with experience, rather than arguments and dialectical thought, were the key to tearing down the old society to make something better – even if it should be seen as evil. To him, even the evil in someone could be their best, and an experience of this “best” was worth more to him than the imaginary discussions in Plato’s Republic. Every part of the human experience, from the irrationalities of dreams to the rationality of education, could be seen as necessary for this will to power, which he called life itself, to take its shape in a person.



# “Unsolicited Reflection From the Ring”

*Grace Duty*

*Grace Duty is a junior at AAA. She, as have many others, has been faced with the lofty quagmires of life. The following composition is a musing take on loss and sentiments of ilk, opening itself to the sights of all. At the end of the day, we all experience life in all its ugly charm.*

“I don’t like the word ‘loss’ so much as the idea of not naming it at all.”

I don’t think that “loss” is the right word to describe anything so life-changing and transitional. “Loss” could be the same word you use to describe losing your keys, your wallet, or anything similarly trivial (to me, at least. My wallet is trivial to me, as it’s completely empty). I’m an advocate for not saying anything. Words meddle with the situation; they purposefully stare right through the thin veil of hidden fears and tear it right down the middle, from top to bottom.

Not enough words are out there for me to convey the extent of the effect that “loss” has. The kind of loss that’s irreversible. The kind that no amount of searching can help you recover. And nothing hurts so much as sympathy (that’s often similarly misnamed, and should really be called pity). Then, within these intricacies— of not saying anything, not threatening my fragile state at all— are hopes and searches just as contradictory. Imagine: amidst all the turmoil and chaos, I can see in my mind’s eye a daring flame, hoping for something greater.

Why would I ever feel compelled to imagine that?

And why did I think that people would bother reading this?

**Both are questions I don’t have the answer to.**



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“I read a book once that described Life as a fighter in the ring, knocking you down over and over.”



Photograph by H. Armstrong Roberts

I walked by two Jehovah's Witnesses and their pamphlet stand this morning. I watched them standing patiently, and as I passed them, I prepared for what I expected to be some sort of barrage of questions— prodding ones, religious ones. Instead they said nothing at all. I watched them from afar, how they waited so patiently. It would then occur to me that they were trusting in a God that would stir someone's heart to go to them. And that level of trust in the invisible was curious to me.

I always assumed that the people often labeled as religious fanatics or overzealous church members— the kind to stand in the streets, with their pamphlets and their answers— were currently living perfect lives that enabled them to be so zealous. Maybe the worst part of his week had been that time when he lost his keys. *But maybe not.* Maybe the young man on the corner was in more pain than I was. Clearly not— the look on his face was more pleasant than I would expect— but perhaps that wasn't because of his circumstances.

Maybe he and I had gone through the things that tear out your heart and render you incapable of walking for fear of falling and never getting up, but I had stayed down, and he had gotten up. Maybe he was in the midst of fighting for something I couldn't understand, and I was still on my knees. I reread that book several times, because the image was so visceral that I could almost taste the blood and feel the sting of the blows as I imagined Life knocking me down. Now that it had, I reread that book and noticed the second part of that description. The part where you had to get up, every day, and throw a few punches back. You had to kick and punch as hard as you could, until Life was down and out just as much as you were, but at least you were living again. And you were fighting for something. I wanted to fight for something. No one could understand why I read that book so many times.

Maybe my problem is that I haven't read The Book in a while. Maybe I don't have that blind, beautiful trust in the unknown. I wish I did; maybe it could've reignited my will to fight for something. When all people have to say is that I have a million excuses to feel this way, I know that something's off. Because that response usually elicits tears from my eyes. It invites me to sit in the pain and pretend that I'm the only one feeling this way. Though it still hurts, and there's still a void, I know I've had my time of mourning. I've sulked around for months on end, crying and feeling like Life was always going to keep me on my knees. But in all honesty, my knees hurt; just a bit. I feel like I wasn't made to stay this way.

I've paid my respects, and I've loved who I've lost more than I could explain, but I've failed to recognize that this is definitely not what they would've wanted for my life. And that sounds cliché, which is why I've avoided coming to that conclusion, but hey, it's cliché for a reason.

Despite the doubts and confusion, I do believe I have a purpose. I do believe in something greater than the tangible. And I do believe in fragile, unexplainable hopes. So maybe, I do know why I thought someone might want to read this. I don't think I'm the only one to ever come to this conclusion. But I do know that when you're fighting, your vision narrows and all you see is the hurt. I think that there are so many good people watching, cheering us on. Willing to step into the ring and make us feel we're not alone, and that we're worth fighting for.

That meager flame of a hope is what I'm holding on to.

# Field Day!

December 20th, 2023

## CLUB FAIR:

- Medical Club
- Music and Arts Club
- Key Club



Limbo!



Three-legged Race!



Baton Race!



Key Club!



# Writer Bios!



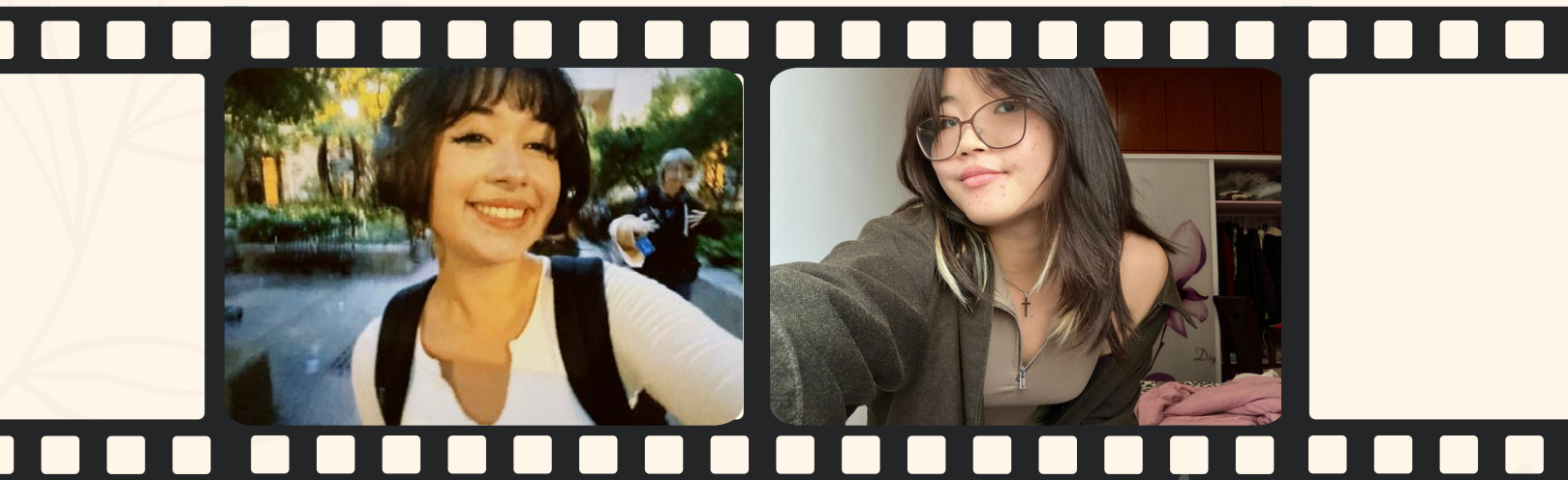
**Abigail Elespe** is currently a junior representative in SGA and one of the lovely writers for the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune! Abigail loves to draw and play video games on the Nintendo Switch and 3DS.

**Ignacio Arnaiz** is a senior pursuing a forensic science major with interests in philosophy and music. His favorite genres are shoegaze and hyperpop. Ignacio's favorite book is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche.

**Iris Mogul** is an ambitious junior who is passionate about community engagement, reading, writing, and music. She aspires to be an investigative journalist committed to storytelling for social change. Iris also leads her own Banned Books Club, a group dedicated to discussing literature dampened by society's blinding demands. Her favorite authors include Octavia Butler, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison.

**Grace Duty** is a junior writer for the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune. She has a particular interest in photography, most notably for capturing modern subjects with vintage cameras. In her downtime, Grace also enjoys reading, writing, and generally all forms of literature. As per Grace herself, she loves "finding unique stories within the busy everyday of taking [way] too many classes and cracking too many jokes about it."

**Adrian Gonzalez** is a senior at AAA hoping to earn a BFA. An unofficial but avid film critic, Adrian's passion lies within making and appreciating a large array of visual arts. He may also be considered Chet Baker's biggest fan ever. One of Adrian's favorite books is *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley.



**Mariana Medina** is a junior majoring in political science and dedicates the better part of her time to causes for educational equity. She works with a number of non-profit organizations, and hopes to earn a JD, further pursuing a career in academia. Her favorite books include *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf, *Cien Años de Soledad* by Gabriel Garcia Márquez (*she loves to share that Márquez and her grandfather were on a first-name basis*), and *Lighthouse* by Terrance Hayes. Mariana is a head editor, graphic designer, and founder of the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune.

**Lulu Perez** is a pre-med senior by day, visual artist by night. When she's not painting, she's either experimenting on new recipes or working out. Her favorite authors are Robert Green and Bill Watterson (yes, of course comics count). Lulu is a head editor for both Radix and TAT, co-graphic designer, and took a strongly notable role in the founding of the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune.

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