Director of Chabad at UCSD Pleads Guilty to Fraud Charges

The director of Chabad at UC San Diego, Rabbi Yehuda Hadjadj, pleaded guilty to wire fraud charges on January 26th.

The defense abused his status and connections to facilitate a years-long fraud scheme, according to FBI Special Agent Suzanne Turner said in a press release by the United States Attorney's Office of California's Southern District, which is currently prosecuting the case.

According to the press release, the scheme exploited a corporate matching program by Qualcomm, where the company would match donations made by conspirators to Goldstein's charity, Friendship Circle.

"Shortly after the donor wrote the check, Hadjadj returned all or most of the donation in cash," the statement explained. "The donors would [...] request that Qualcomm match the sham donation. After Qualcomm matched the sham donations to Friendship Circle, Rabbi Goldstein funneled [...] two-thirds of the matched funds back to Hadjadj, keeping one third for himself."

Hadjadj helped operate the scheme between 2010 and 2017, according to the official plea agreement. During this time period Hadjadj recruited up to three donors and used the cash from the scheme to help fund Chabad at UCSD.

To conceal the true recipient of the matched funds, Hadjadj told the donors to write checks to Friendship Circle [...]. Hadjadj fraudulently obtained approximately $40,000 for Chabad at UCSD over the course of the scheme, "the press release continued.

When contacted by The UCSD Guardian for further comment, an official representative from the U.S. Attorney's Office offered no further information outside of the public record.

"Many of our spiritual groups have a community advisor affiliated with an off-campus organization or congregation; however, [...] Hadjadj is not currently listed as the student organization's community advisor," Johnson said. "[Chabad at UCSD] has not hosted any Center for Student Involvement-approved events on campus since Fall of 2018."

"We are not aware of the relationship between Rabbi Yehuda Hadjadj and the organization and we do not know the impact on the future operations of Chabad at UCSD," said Communications Erika Johnson, Chabad at UCSD is not affiliated with an on-campus organization or -campus advisor associated with any other outside organization.

"Many of those studies were limited in their ability to represent the general population. However, CMCR co-director Professor Robert Fitzgerald noted that the percentage of cannabis in the cigarettes used was higher than the amount of cannabis used in previous studies.

"Most previous studies used marijuana that was typically 3 or 6% THC by content," Fitzgerald explained. "We were using a 5% and a 13.4% cannabis, which is closer to what's available in the dispensaries."

Researchers recruited 191 regular cannabis users, ages 21 to 55 years old, to smoke a cannabis cigarette after abstaining for 48 hours. The percent concentration of cannabis in the cigarettes used was 13.4% and 5.9%, and a placebo of 0.02% THC. After smoking, subjects went through a driving simulator.
as feeling less impaired after three and a half hours. However, the paper noted that there was no significant difference in THC blood concentrations after smoking but didn't perform worse than those with lower THC blood concentrations; this suggests behaviorally, these individuals were functioning similarly.

“People who are regular users believe that because they use all of the time, they get an experience with THC that includes a highness. So in the end, they're just as impaired as the other group even though they have developed this tolerance.”

This finding is significant because this acts as evidence against "per se" laws. Per se laws establish a statutory violation if a legal standard is breached, such as blood-alcohol concentration or THC blood concentrations. When asking how to police driving under the influence, Fitzgerald stated that he thinks that it comes down to both officer observations along with testing methodology.

Marcotte added that the study provided valuable information for users, warning them that they are not always the best judges of their ability to drive. He stated, “You're going to be less impaired. If you smoke a level of highness, you can still get to a level of highness as they would be a danger,” Marcotte said.

Dr. Marcotte explained. “But then they're smoking, they're taking the risk. So in the end, they're just as impaired as the other group even though they have developed this tolerance.”

The paper notes that some limitations with the study. Despite using cannabis, the study didn't include infradose users, those who smoke medicinally and normotous. Subjects were told to get to a level of highness as they would to high costs of insurance. All residents in California are entitled to the benefits of CalCare, regardless of any pre-existing conditions or their current immigration status. In California, some patients are only covered by the Medicare program after AB 1400, they would have to purchase coverage by the California State Government.

The bill’s passing would have set California on the path to establish the first single health care system in the state, and unlike federal health care coverage claims under single patient systems are covered under Medicare. After AB 1400, they would have been covered by the California State Government.

California Care would have provided a wide range of benefits that merge current federal and state provisions into a single, comprehensive package not limited to the federal Children’s Health Insurance Program, Medi-Cal. Under current circumstances, an estimated 2.5 million of California residents don’t have coverage due to high costs of insurance. All residents in California are entitled to the benefits of CalCare, regardless of any pre-existing conditions or their current immigration status. In California, some patients are only covered by the Medicare program after AB 1400, they would have to purchase coverage by the California State Government.

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Even though this plan is dead for now, Democrat who supported it said he will have to answer for their effort to end MediCare, kick 20 million Californians off their existing plans, require that the tax increases fund state health and put bureaucrats in charge of health care,” Waldron said in a statement. “This team goes to the 4000 hardworking Californians who signed our petition to stop this bill. Your voices were heard and made a difference.”

Researchers from UC San Francisco, UCLA, and UC Berkeley examined 22 economic analyses by various organizations evaluating national and state-level single payer plans, including proposals in California, Maryland, Vermont, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New York, and Oregon. The researchers ultimately found that 19 of the 22 models predicted net savings after single payer plans were enacted, averaging 3.5 percent of total healthcare spending annually. Even though they start with different single designs and model assumptions, the vast majority of these studies all come to the same conclusion, said James G. Kahn, M.D., M.P.H, a professor in the UCSF Department of epidemiology and biostatistics, and a member of the Philip R. Lee Health Policy Institute. “This suggests that fears that a single-payer system would increase costs is likely misplaced.”

Although Assemblyman Kalra is uncertain of the future of AB 1400,
On Jan. 25, the College Board announced that the SAT Suite of Assessments will soon be going online. Starting in 2023 for international students and in 2024 for domestic students, the digital SAT will have a shorter duration of two hours, abridged reading passages with only one question per passage, and a built-in Desmos calculator for the math section. Educators and students will also see reduced turnaround time, receiving their scores in a matter of days rather than weeks.

Despite the digital transformation, the SAT will still have to be taken at a school or testing center. Students will be given the option to test on a school-issued device, a personal laptop, or a personal computer. This choice is in response to concerns about students having varying abilities to access three hours of high-quality Internet and power.

This decision follows students’ and educators’ positive response to the digital SAT the College Board piloted globally in November last year. According to the College Board, students reported finding the digital SAT less stressful than the traditional physical format, and educators responded that the tests were more convenient to administer.

In a Jan. 25 press release, Priscilla Rodriguez, vice president of College Readiness Assessments at College Board, lauded the new SAT’s relevance and improved test-taking experience.

“We’re not simply putting the current SAT on a digital platform — we’re taking full advantage of what delivering an assessment digitally makes possible,” Rodriguez said. “With input from educators and students, we are adapting to ensure we continue to meet their evolving needs.”

However, the benefits Rodriguez touted do not seem to be distributed equally amongst all students. According to the College Board’s 2019 report comparing students’ performance on the SAT Suite of Assessments across pencil-and-paper and computer-based modes of administration, Hispanic students tended to perform better on the pencil-and-paper test than they did on the computerized version. Students whose first language was not English also scored better on the physical reading tests.

The College Board’s shift online arrives in time with a growing discussion among educators and students alike about equity in and access to higher education, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spotlight higher education’s entrenched inequities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the widespread cancellations of standardized tests have influenced colleges to re-evaluate their admissions processes and prompted more colleges to abandon standardized testing.

For admissions decisions within the University of California, Rodriguez said, “It is evidence that such testing has led the UC system to further marginalize students of color and low-income students during the admissions process. Given that the UC system received around 250,000 applications last year, this decision will likely lead to a large reduction in demand for standardized testing.”

The impact of eliminating the examination requirement can already be seen at UC San Diego: the Fall 2021 cycle marked the highest number of applications in UCSD’s history, and more than one-third of first-year and over half of transfer students admitted for Fall 2021 were first-generation students.

However, Rodriguez believes the College Board still has a role to play in improving access to higher education, and said they are committed to serving students from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

“The SAT allows every student — regardless of where they go to high school — to be seen and to access opportunities that will shape their lives and careers,” Rodriguez said. “I am one of those students. I’m a first-generation American, the child of immigrants who came to the U.S. with limited financial resources, and I know how the SAT Suite of Assessments opened doors to colleges, scholarships, and educational opportunities that I otherwise would never have known about or had access to. We want to keep those same doors of opportunity open for all students.”

Yet, when speaking to The UCSD Guardian, sixth College freshman Hieu Pham explained that there were numerous factors beyond students’ control that could influence their SAT scores.

“There were people who were put at a disadvantage because of their schools’ academic funding, [their] focus on extracurriculars, and even financial need, which is just disappointing to think about... [The SATs] don’t entirely measure the determination and individuality of each student, [so] I don’t find them relevant,” Pham said.

Pham also spoke on their experience taking the SAT and asserted that they believed it didn’t accurately reflect one’s character and individuality.

“I spent most of my time studying for my AP classes and working... so I never really set time apart to study for the SAT... I definitely felt like I was put at a disadvantage,” Pham said. “Standardized tests like the SAT/ACT are designed in a way that if you study how to take it, you’ll get better scores. I didn’t get the time to really study any online material or go to any boot camps... Once I heard the UCs were dropping making admissions SAT/ACT optional, I felt completely relieved. The SAT never tested what I knew and was passionate about as a unique individual, but rather, [whether I was] a good test-taker.”

To find out more information about the 4D Digital SAT Suite of Assessments, students can visit the College Board’s website.

Students can also find out more about the UC’s systemic admissions process by visiting the University of California’s website to learn more.
Florida’s ‘Don’t Say Gay’ Bill is a Direct Insult to Progression

By Marcella Barncelo

Censorship within public education has been a repetitive issue. It seems like every year, a school board or federal entity takes it upon themselves to dictate what educational materials belong in classrooms and which ones do not. However, Florida’s legislators have recently crossed the line with the creation of a new proposed bill designed to completely silence any discussions of sexuality or gender identity in primary schools at the expense of students’ education and society’s social progression.

Despite being rooted in homophobia and unacceptable levels of censorship, the bill, known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, has continually moved forward within the legal process. After passing through multiple committees that deemed the bill acceptable, it was handed to committees that deemed the bill to be inappropriate for its levels of censorship, the bill, has continually moved forward within the legal process.

The bill encourages parents to take serious legal action against school districts that violate the rules of the proposed bill, adding a significant monetary consequence to already underfunded public schools to ensure complete compliance from teachers and staff. However, parents are not the most reliable sources, and personal biases may prevent them from discontinuing a generational cycle of ignorance. The purpose of education has always been about ensuring the development of a person by supplying them with the necessary information and resources to properly grow and mature into a functioning member of society, and sexuality and gender identity are a natural part of development. A child normally enters the first stage of gender identity development around the age of two as they begin to notice the physical differences between sexes. By the age of three, they are starting to become familiar with their own sex label, and, by the age of four, they have a general sense of their gender identity.

These are crucial learning years for children and they should be given a reliable, unbiased, and fully informed space to learn about and safely discuss sexuality and gender identity. Choosing to ignore and silence these discussions surrounding a critical portion of a child’s forming identity is harmful to the education system as a whole and directly goes against what schools were designed to do by breeding ignorance and stunting students’ development.

Historically, implementing measures to prevent dialogue regarding sexuality and gender identity has not delivered favorable outcomes. Take, for example, the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” bill created by President Bill Clinton in 1993. The bill ended the ban on members of the LGBTQ+ serving in the American military by creating a “compromise” where these individuals were welcomed into the services at the expense of hiding their identity. If they were discovered to be gay by colleagues or administrators, they were immediately discharged, which created a sense of fearfulness and shame in soldiers who were forced to hide their identity. Similar to the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, this legislation ultimately reinforced the stigma surrounding homosexuality by supporting silence and intensifying the preconception that being gay is something to be ashamed of and kept hidden.

While the bill was repealed by President Barack Obama in 2010, it seems reactionary politics have now come full circle with the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, and its reversion to previous measures to prevent dialogue regarding sexuality and gender identity.

Furthermore, the bill makes the argument that sexuality and gender identity are “inappropriate” topics to discuss in primary schools. However, there are various ways to introduce complex topics like sexuality and gender identity to children in an age appropriate manner that is conducive to learning and development. Silence is the opposite approach. Dr. Wanjiku Njoroge, an adjunct professor at Yale and program director of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, said the following in response to the question of discussing race with children: “In the absence of these conversations, silence is powerful. If they hear nothing about race, they figure out that there’s something different about that topic. And that difference can become imbued with negativity.” Similar logic can be applied to sexuality and gender identity. Children should feel supported in their identity, not apologetic for it.

Overall, censorship in public schools would do a great disservice to future generations and the education of these children. School is designed to be a place of learning, discourse and discussion are vital to development. Ultimately, no government official or otherwise should be able to stand in the way of a child’s education and the production of well-educated individuals.
Change Needed for Treating Suicidal Patients

BY CATALINA FOGG
Staff Writer

A common phrase you hear surrounding mental health is “don’t be afraid to ask for help.” Yet, why is help that isn’t scary so hard to find? In this generation, mental health has definitely become easier to talk about. Both through social media and in real life, more people are willing to open up and talk about the commonalities and struggles mental health has brought upon them. However, it seems as though intense mental health treatment hasn’t caught up to current times. Why is it that suicidal individuals are still being sent to the emergency room by police when they should be treated with a different approach? This needs to change.

First of all, the process of getting to the emergency room is going to the ER. In some cases of suicide attempts or ideation, the individuals are being sent to the ER in a police car with bars, not a good message to send to someone who is struggling. If one is feeling suicidal, wouldn’t it be a good idea to escort the person to the ER in a police car with bars is not a good experience, especially when dealing with a student. Mental health should be handled with care and sensitivity, something a busy emergency room is not bound to provide.

In this day and age of COVID-19, the emergency rooms can be more crowded and overfilled, with an increasing danger of exposure to patients and loved ones. Sometimes there can even be a lack of rooms with patients having to wait out in the hall or even get their care and evaluation out in the hall. It is unnecessary that mental health patients are not treated as such. Mental health patients are not criminals and it’s time they stop being treated as such. Mental health should be handled with care and sensitivity, something a busy emergency room is not bound to provide.

The next step of getting help in this path is going to the emergency room to get evaluated, the emergency room where every other kind of physical trauma or injury goes to get evaluated. This is inherently overwhelming, being in a fast paced and high stress environment where others around you are clearly in pain or in distress. There is clearly a reason people tend to be scared of the doctor’s office. The environment of a hospital is cold and harsh, with uncomfortable hospital beds, intense waiting rooms, and a sterile smell lingering in the air. This is not an ideal environment for anyone, let alone someone struggling from mental health.

In this case, maybe so many individuals wouldn’t be so scared to ask for help when they really do need it. Mental health patients are not criminals and it’s time they stop being treated as such. Mental health should be handled with care and sensitivity, something a busy emergency room is not bound to provide.
Navigating ADHD and the OSD

Second year student shares her experiences with the Office of Disabilities (OSD) at UCSD.

When current sophomore UC San Diego student Nicole Muir was six years old, her first grade teacher suspected Muir had Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). After relaying this to Muir's mom, Muir ended up getting tested and was officially diagnosed with ADHD and has been living with it ever since.

Her ADHD and medication impacts her life in a myriad of ways – the medication makes her fidgety, she tends to be hyperactive, and without medication, she has trouble paying attention. Her ADHD also increases the likelihood of having anxiety and depression, both of which she has dealt with in her life.

Prior to college, Muir did not ask for or receive accommodations for her ADHD. She felt bad that her mom would have to go through a lot of administrative work, including dealing with forms from the doctor and school, and it felt like too much of a hassle.

"I could have done it for the SAT or the ACT, but it's just a lot of paperwork and it's such a process to get those accommodations," Muir told The UCSD Guardian. "I had friends who took advantage of those accommodations and I'm glad that they did, but it just seemed like such a process that I didn't feel like I could deal with it and have enough control over making sure I could get it, so I didn't."

After starting at UCSD, Muir emailed The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) to ask for accommodations due to her ADHD. OSD said, in an email to The UCSD Guardian, that they work "with students who have documented disabilities by reviewing documentation and, through an interactive process with the student, [determine] reasonable accommodations."

In line with this protocol, Muir was interviewed by an counselor at the OSD, her test scores were reviewed, and approximately an hour. She then got paperwork filled out by the therapist she sees for her anxiety and the psychiatrist she sees for her ADHD.

Muir's accommodations include extended time on tests, extensions on assignments when necessary, bathroom breaks, a separate room to take exams in, and requesting note-takers. In the case of the note-taking accommodation, Muir notes that the OSD expects students to find their own notetaker at the beginning of the quarter. If the student can’t find one, they can ask the OSD to help – this is why the emails requesting students to be note-takers are sent out as late as week four or five.

An email from the OSD stated that students with disabilities in areas ranging from "psychological, psychiatric, learning, attention, chronic health, physical vision, hearing, acquired brain injuries, and autism are eligible for accommodations; OSD also cites that the accommodations they offer include adaptive technology (such as screen reading or speech recognition software), alternative formats (such as electronic text, Braille and large print), captioning and sign language interpreting services, note-taking services, and exam accommodations."

After Muir first got her accommodations during her fall quarter of freshman year, she received an email asking her to get interviewed again. She was confused by this, so she emailed her counselor and was told to ignore it. Things went smoothly during the winter quarter.

Since students have to reapply for accommodations every quarter, Muir had to ask for them again during the subsequent spring quarter.

"You have to reapply for your accommodations … that frustrates me the most. I have really severe ADHD, my condition isn't really going to change, it doesn't fluctuate at all," Muir told The UCSD Guardian. "This is really the state that I'm going to be in for a long time. I know people usually say that ADHD goes away when you become an adult, but I think, it's more so that you've learned to mask the symptoms."

Muir emailed the OSD asking for accommodations the Saturday before spring quarter started. Generally, the OSD sends students a portal where they can fill out their classes and desired accommodations. Muir anticipated this email as a response.

Instead, she received an email that told her to redo her forms and prove she had ADHD again. Since it had been less than a year since she had asked for accommodations, OSD also cites that the accommodations they offer include adaptive technology (such as screen reading or speech recognition software), alternative formats (such as electronic text, Braille and large print), captioning and sign language interpreting services, note-taking services, and exam accommodations. After Muir first got her accommodations during her fall quarter of freshman year, she received an email asking her to get interviewed again.

"I don't know if it's like bureaucracy or something, but there's something fundamentally wrong with the OSD Office," Muir told The UCSD Guardian. The inefficiencies of the OSD is not just a UCSD phenomenon, it is a problem across all the UC campuses. In fact, in order to address these issues, a non-profit called UC Access Now was founded by Megan Lynch (a UCLA alumna and UC Davis graduate student) on July 26, 2020 -- the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act – to promote "accessibility and inclusion for all disabled people in the University of California community (as well as disabled visitors to UC locations)." UC Access Now continues to advocate for change and dismantle bureaucratic barriers to accommodations for students, staff and faculty that are impacted by disabilities.

The OSD stated, in an email to The Guardian, that "students need to request accommodations each quarter, however, in many cases, updated documentation is not required," and also that "current students may request accommodations for the subsequent quarter as soon as they register for that quarter."

Muir feels that the OSD is not consistent about email students about things. "I know I'm an adult and I'm supposed to be responsible for myself, but like, I forget things sometimes," Muir told The UCSD Guardian. "I think there's just a little too much responsibility put on us as students with disabilities than there should be."

Initially, Muir tried to navigate the problem by asking why she needed to provide new forms in the first place. However, she didn't receive any conclusive answers and was scared to question authority further. Muir remembers freaking out because she had assessments starting as early as Week 3 in her classes, and wasn’t sure if she would receive her accommodations by then.

"I was told by a few people, when it was happening, they were like maybe you should report your counselor to the OSD office and — is it going to be hard to get these accommodations that I deserve?"

"You have to reapply for your accommodations … that frustrates me the most. I have really severe ADHD, my condition isn't really going to change, it doesn't fluctuate at all," Muir told The UCSD Guardian. "I was like I don't know, I'm just a student, I'm just trying to make sure I have my accommodations, I don't have the time to be dismantling OSD right now. I'm just trying to do math."

Muir notes that perhaps the OSD struggles to operate smoothly because they are poorly funded. She adds that if she were to ask for more money to the school in order to better fund the OSD and ensure everyone has access to an equitable education, she would. When The UCSD Guardian asked OSD about the funding they receive, the OSD said that there was information available.

At the end of the day, though, Muir is grateful for her accommodations because it made her college experience a lot easier and her education a lot more manageable.

However, the number of things sitting in the way of receiving those accommodations is often daunting.

"A big thing that I see a lot is people finding out that they have ADHD or thinking that they might have it, and I see a lot of students that do have ADHD and have had experiences with OSD typically caution them and be like you need to vouch for yourself, you can't expect them to do things for you, or to do things that I think most OSD offices at other colleges would do," Muir told the UCSD Guardian. "You need to make sure you get the paperwork even though it might not be necessary, you might need to do tests. People generally say 'be prepared, buckle up, it's not gonna be good,' and it's really sad that these people have to think — it is going to be hard to get these accommodations that I deserve"
The Marías Concert Review

Do you ever go to a concert and have this thought in mind: they could not possibly sound like their recordings. That voice isn’t something you could reasonably hear on a live stage. It’s too melodic, too unique. Concerts for better or worse seemingly expose an artist’s real vocal dynamic behind the veil of production. A good difference sometimes, while others… We don’t talk about the others. It’s almost as if I were subconsciously tempering my expectations.

When Puerto Rican indie singer María Zardoya stepped to the stage, I was afraid that her soft and rich voice would be drowned out by the heavy instrumentation. This was a similar concern I had when listening to Chvrches and an issue that actually rang true for Clairo. Yet here I stood, surrounded by enthusiastic fans hearing The Marías perform a set that reminded me of all the reasons why I missed going to concerts throughout this pandemic. Her energy, like her genre-defying music, meanders from the provocative to the whimsical — swaying everyone in the hall with a marriage of Latin pop and psychedelic rock.

Her command of the stage coupled with the band’s apt setlist made me become immediately engrossed with the performance. Choosing “Just a Feeling” for their opening song felt absolutely right. Lyricless, the song is slow and endearing; it builds a sort of excitement while making you have a sense of comfort. The lively resonance of the string instruments elevates your body as the guitar interludes ground you again. Paired with “Calling You Back,” The Marías prepare the audience for a night of beautiful para-doxes — the gentle allure of her voice and hard hitting beats that encompasses your senses.

The warm red hues from many of the band’s songs provides a seductive charm that draws you in to focus on Zardoya, who dressed and surrounded in red butterflies, is the focal point of the concert. With her delicate smile, you feel like she genuinely means it when she says “I wanna make you feel alright.” Little by little, The Marías took their time creating a calming ambience for the audience and before I even realized, I felt surrounded in a tender embrace.

The atmosphere, lights and her voice blended into a beautiful display of what music should always be: an amazing sensory experience that captivates you with every moment. As fluid as each song followed into the next, The Marías continued to surprise with a trumpet solo that honestly took me aback. The brass melody infused a jazz vibe into the soundstage and made it all the more entertaining to listen to. From “Un Millón” to her cover of Britney Spears’ “Baby One More Time,” I found each song more enjoyable than the last. They left the stage leaving me wanting more.

With the sub-bass reverberating the smoke-filled stage, white beams of light turned into red strobes and The Marías returned for their encore. And if not for the technical hiccup between transitions, it would have been a perfect rendition of “Hush.” Perhaps I am a bit biased because it’s my favorite song, but “Hush” felt as though it tied the perfect knot on an already amazing set. Mesmerizing us with her seductive voice, Zardoya made certain that it would be a memorable concert experience.

It’s here that I must also give notable mention to the openers, Rosie Tucker and maybe, who both had great performances to lead up to The Marías. Tucker, whose music is much more pop and rock oriented, led their band through a medley of songs that, although unknown to me, were all wonderful to listen to. Their relatable interludes while tuning their guitar between songs provided the audience with a sense of familiarity. A gentle voice that can grow more powerful with the strength of the bass guitar, Tucker sang to her heart’s content. After listening to “Ambrosia” for their opening song felt absolutely right. Lyricless, the song is slow and endearing; it builds a sort of excitement while making you have a sense of comfort. The lively resonance of the string instruments elevates your body as the guitar interludes ground you again. Paired with “Calling You Back,” The Marías prepare the audience for a night of beautiful para-doxes — the gentle allure of her voice and hard hitting beats that encompasses your senses.

Following them was maybe, who, with her blend of Latin and bedroom pop, had an eclectic set of songs. While I really wanted to enjoy her set, two things held me back. The first was a rocky technical start as the volume of her microphone was too quiet followed by a slightly obnoxious buzz from her guitarist’s mic. While her more upbeat songs flowed perfectly well, her two slower ones — which started and ended the performance — highlighted how her voice struggled to hold a consistent tone. I really enjoy maybe’s discography but these particular renditions left me disappointed. The chorus felt disjuncted and took away from the overall experience. That being said, everything else in her performance was incredibly fun. Mixing Spanish and English seamlessly, maybe knew how to intertwine the languages with the melody. Her band played well with these changes and even had their moments to shine — the pianist in particular blew me away.

The Marías: A
maybe: B
Rosie Tucker: A-
As "Spiderman: No Way Home" makes its way towards a historic domestic box-office haul, critics are hailing the return of movie-going. Sitting in a dark room, munching on overpriced popcorn, and hearing strangers’ reactions to every slightly-funny joke are just a few joys of the experience that had long been halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Another joy: watching several minutes of movie trailers while you wait for the main event. One trailer that’s had various film-focused parts of the Internet abuzz is that for Roland Emmerich’s latest disaster film, "Moonfall."

The director of classics like "Independence Day," "Stargate," and "The Day After Tomorrow" as well as the pop culture moment that was "2012" appears to have outdone himself in his latest work. Starring John Bradley ("Game of Thrones"), Halle Berry, and Patrick Wilson, "Moonfall" imagines this ragtag trio teaming up to stop a dire impending disaster: the moon falling out of orbit. Not only that, but there’s something intelligent and evil inside the moon. The trailer has the heroes take a rocket to space to fight the moon while Creedence Clearwater Revival’s "Bad Moon Rising" fittingly plays in the background. It looks ridiculous — because it is ridiculous — and yet, it also looks enjoyable in the way that only a self-aware film can be.

Of course, "Moonfall" isn’t the only self-aware disaster film to come out recently. Much was made of Netflix’s star-studded "Don’t Look Up," a 2021 climate-disaster film meant to satirize humanity’s willingness to ignore impending disasters, and those trying to warn us of them, until it’s far too late. Despite its impressive cast, the film received mixed reviews, with many critics deriding the cynical tone of the film as overbearing and depressing. The general consensus: it hit too close to home. "Moonfall" sidesteps this pitfall by avoiding any serious parallels to the real world. There is no statement to be made, no call to action. It’s a disaster movie that knows it’s a disaster movie and embraces its task of providing silly escapism.

With "Moonfall," Emmerich nods to his history of outsized disaster films by making his most ambitious project to date. Not only is the moon out of orbit, but it’s also hiding lurking evil that could be a number of interesting twists: aliens, the government, an evil moon ghost. "Moonfall" comes at a moment when this kind of ridiculous disaster — one so improbable that Bradley’s character, KC Houseman, is rightfully branded a conspiracy theorist — is more welcome than ever.

In real life, disasters are something to be afraid of. In disaster movies, they’re something to be amazed by. When Houseman goes up into space, he’s wowed when his iPhone floats by his face. Later, he snaps a picture of space with his phone camera while Berry and Wilson’s characters look on in annoyance. He has a childlike wonderment about the whole moonasco, something you cannot say about the stone-faced disaster heroes that preceded him. Houseman is us. He reacts like an audience member that’s been transported on-screen, excited to see if he’s going to save the world or die trying. That’s what makes "Moonfall" such a special entry in Emmerich’s canon and the disaster genre as a whole. Also, did I mention they fight the moon?

"Moonfall" is the Silly, Self-Aware Disaster Film We Need

Roland Emmerich has made his most ridiculous disaster film yet. It might just revitalize the genre.

You can’t turn on the news without seeing a story about wildfires, tsunamis, earthquakes, freak snowstorms, or unexpected heat waves. On a day-to-day basis, our lives feel like they take place in the very disaster films we’ve entertained ourselves with over the past decade ("The Impossible," "San Andreas," "Geostorm," "Greenland.") At the same time, there is a general fatigue of those serious entries in the disaster genre which recycle the same themes who deserves to be saved? Why do we lose our common humanity in times of crisis? How can we avoid this fictional future becoming our grim reality? "Moonfall" takes one small step for a blockbuster and one giant leap for the disaster genre. It asks: how epic would it be if we fought the moon?

- Bailey Bujnosek

Image courtesy of Collider.
I Did Wordle Every Morning For a Week

For me, this quarter has been the death of my morning routine. Gone are the days when I wake up early, stretch, and eat a healthy breakfast. No more fun skincare routine, morning walks, or picking out a cute outfit. In all honesty, I don’t even get dressed anymore. The long three-week winter break, combined with four more weeks of online school, has replaced my once relaxing habits with waking up at nine and going on my phone for an hour before class. My days are spent mostly the same: a foggy haze of home life and online school, eating, and sleeping.

As a UC San Diego student, I am now part of the TikTok generation. For you page was covered in TikToks about this silly little word puzzle. It was called “Wordle”, and the rules were simple — you try to guess a five-letter word in six tries. Each attempt must be a real word, the result telling you whether the letters you used are in the final word and if they are in the right place.

Because I was on Wordle TikTok, I figured that I might as well try the game once. I put in my first word, and before I knew it I had guessed the answer in three tries. And even though this simple puzzle only took me a few minutes at most, I was filled with an odd sense of pride. Pride that you usually shouldn’t be able to have from guessing a five-letter word correctly.

After that first try, I became addicted. The first thing that I did every morning was a Wordle, and while looking at my phone so early in the day may cause some issues later in life/ down the road, I really was enjoying myself. Besides, it wasn’t as if I had spent the last four weeks doing anything different. I was having fun comparing my Wordle scores to my family, friends, and even random people on TikTok. Each correct guess gave me a flash of enthusiasm and a strange sense of confidence. That enthusiasm was what helped me get out of bed and eat some breakfast. That confidence helped me get dressed in the morning. Easy, uncomplicated tasks that had somehow become more and more difficult as the quarter went on. I suddenly saw the appeal of a daily crossword puzzle.

I feel the need to put a disclaimer here: Wordle is probably not going to cure your depression. I still don’t leave my room super often and I spend more time looking at a screen than not. There are still times when I just lay in bed staring at my phone. Playing this game for a week has not drastically changed my life. And yet, every time I think about doing my daily Wordle, there’s a feeling that jumbles itself in my chest and absorbs itself in my cheeks, forcing me to smile. It may not be life-altering, but it is fun. I think about doing my daily Wordle, there’s a feeling that makes me want to put a smile on my face. In the end, it’s not something that I need, but it’s something different.

The return to online school has been hard for us all. And while last week was the first time some of us had classes in person, others are going to remain online for the rest of the quarter. I, personally, have only one class that is going back in person. So yeah, this small silly little word puzzle is the highlight of my day. I suggest you try it out. And even if you don’t like it, look for something else that you can do. Find that small little piece of joy in your life and experience it.

Here are my Wordle stats for those interested:

Statistics:

P.S.: Comment your Wordle stats below!
Calling all coffee connoisseurs and tired college students! Just like everybody else, I’ve been quite burnt out and lacking motivation as we begin to approach the last few weeks of the quarter. And what’s one better way to fix all your problems instead of improving your work ethic and organizational skills? A good ole cup o’ joe.

I’m no different from every other college student and have developed a severe caffeine addiction. If you’re looking for some new cafes to try around San Diego, you’re in luck because I’ve spent most of my free time driving around the city to fulfill my desires. If you’re ever in these areas, check them out!

The Forum

Starting with my favorite cafe I have ever stumbled upon, The Forum. Located on Genesee Avenue, this quaint cafe has a large selection from cold brews, to lattes, to teas, to matcha. If you’re in the mood for something sweet or bitter, they got you covered. One sip of their coffee and you’ll be hooked. I recommend that you try “BB Code,” a cold brew made sweetened with their in-house banana milk. Also, grab a chocolate croissant or cardamom while drinks to quench your thirst, but they have fresh pastries every day. They also offer a decent amount of space for people to study and work. And I know you’re probably in desperate need of studying for that chemistry midterm. Adorned with string lights and plush sofas, this comforting atmosphere might just help you get out of your mid-quarter funk.

Shaka Coffee

Shaka Coffee is a small coffee shack chain located along Balboa Avenue and Mesa College Drive that you have probably driven past multiple times but didn’t blink an eye. They specialize in a wide variety of Hawaiian coffee, creating beverages reminiscent of popular flavors in Hawaii. It’s a change of pace from the usual cinnamon and spice you may get with your coffee. I recommend the “Aloha White Mocha”, a sweetened white chocolate mocha with a kick of banana and coconut syrup — with oat milk, of course. They also offer fruit smoothies and acai bowls if you’re not in the mood for the usual fuel. Since these two locations are simply walk-up stands, they offer a limited amount of seating if you wish to study here, so plan accordingly!

Communal Coffee

Located near the heart of North Park, Communal Coffee is sure to catch your eye. Situated right next to a luscious plant shop, this is by far one of the largest coffee shops I have stepped foot in. Embellished with plants and modern architecture, you might find yourself wanting to stay and possibly chat with the stranger next to you. But beware, located on a busy street, parking is difficult and all tables, seats, and even the coffee bar are congested with college students “studying.” Despite this mild setback, I highly recommend you try their orange cardamom latte, a citrusy spiced latte that is sure to make you reminisce on cold weather and sweaters. Some may say it’s overrated, but I believe it’s a San Diego classic.

With that being said, I leave you with my top three favorite cafes around the city. If you have other cafe recommendations, feel free to send them in the comments!

By Priscilla Anne Puno

Photo by Keghan Crossland on Unsplash.
UC San Diego’s men’s volleyball team (3–3) took on the University of the Pacific (6–8) on Wednesday, and with each of the teams being ranked in the top fifteen, the match-up was set to be intense. UCSD had already settled down by 25 points against the Rams. Brady was by no means done yet, and it can’t be overstated just how difficult it would make his longevity even more likely to be the runner-up for the league’s offensive MVP this season (personally, I have my vote for No. 1), he led the league in yards and TD’s, and he brought his Tampa Bay Buccaneers back to tie last week’s divisional playoff game from a 27-3 deficit before a last-minute field goal won it for the Rams. Brady was by no means forced into retirement, and that will make his longevity even more legendary; he played until he was 44, and he wasn’t even done yet.

This Week in the NFL: Brady Retires, Flores Sues, Washington Gets a Name

It’s been one of the most eventful weeks in the recent history of the NFL, and not just because of the quarterbacks we saw in the conference championships. The greatest player in the history of the sport announced his retirement, a former coach made serious allegations about the league’s competitive integrity and racial inequalities, and we got a new网上 the national’s cap. In case you’ve been too busy studying for midterms, here’s a rundown on the wild week in the NFL.

The GOAT Hangs Up His Cleats

After 22 legendary seasons in the NFL and 7 championships, Tom Brady has finally, and mercifully for the rest of the league, retired from football. As someone born after Brady was drafted, it’s certainly going to be bittersweet to see a legend without him. The 44-year-old from San Mateo pushed the limits of every part of the game, setting career records for passing yards, touchdowns, and overall wins, and obliterating any measures of playoff success. But perhaps what’s most impressive is that he has constantly refused the question of who the greatest NFL player of all time is, a feat matched perhaps only by Wayne Gretzky in North American sports. But now Brady started watching football just over a decade ago, the debate was Brady versus Peyton Manning. Then it became Brady versus Joe Montana and Jerry Rice for the title of greatest of all time. By the time Brady came back from a 28-3 deficit against the Atlanta Falcons in Super Bowl LI, it wasn’t even a question anymore, and so, in a way, the most difficult thing about writing of Brady’s greatest contributor to all the narratives surrounding him — he is the silence the circuit by that like. He is the silence the circuit by that like. He is the silence the circuit by that like.