

ASU: SPRING ELECTION
CHRISTOPHER ROBLES-GARAY RUNS UNOPPOSED FOR ASU PRESIDENCY.



GALLERY: FLOAT ON
VALLEY COLLEGE HOSTED WESTERN STATE CONFERENCE AT ITS AQUATIC CENTER.

Horseshoe theater gone with the trees



GRIFFIN O'ROURKE | VALLEY STAR

TIMBER! Environmental Construction Services workers clear felled trees with heavy machinery in front of Valley's Horseshoe theater on a warm Wednesday morning. Starting on Monday, the workers cut down all the trees in front of the derelict theater. The building is set for demolition this year, with the department moving into the long-awaited Valley Academic and Cultural Center, which will have a brand-new theater called the Main Stage Theater. Middletown is the upcoming production by the theater program and is set to play on the Campus Center's outdoor patio. The play is a light-hearted, slice of life performance about complex neighborhood relationships. The show will run from May 10-13.

- Text by Griffin O'Rourke

Catalytic security

GRIFFIN O'ROURKE
PHOTO EDITOR

In an effort to combat the theft of catalytic converters, the LAPD invited Angelenos down to a traffic division station in Panorama City to get their devices engraved with a Vehicle Identification Number. The Mission and West Valley divisions of the LAPD worked with Jon's Towing Inc, a towing company that operates an Official Police Garage, to mark hundreds of catalytic converters. The event lasted from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., and saw the first 150 reservations booked early on. Drivers lined up in the parking lot outside the station while tow trucks lifted the cars, allowing police officers access to the undercarriage. Using a laser gun, a 17-digit VIN code was engraved onto the converters. Thieves who steal these converters can be easily prosecuted if caught by police. "Right now it's an epidemic," said detective Kevin Royce, who's spent 25 years on the catalytic converter beat. "Just in the first 66 days of 2023, and in the valley alone, there were over 560 catalytic converters stolen."

Thieves target the precious metal rhodium that's used inside the "cats," which is currently \$250.78 per gram. A chaotic market caused the price of the metal to soar to \$29,800 per ounce in 2021 due to closures of mines in South Africa, but the start of 2023 saw the price plummet to \$7,500 per ounce. The parts typically contain about 1-2 grams of the metal. They also contain 3-7 grams of platinum and 2-7 grams of palladium; both of which are not as lucrative as rhodium. The rhodium is sold to scrap yards or metal recyclers for up to \$300, depending on the amount of rhodium scavenged.

"Thieves are opportunists," said Cheryl High, a Chatsworth resident who brought her Hyundai Alantra and Honda CRV with her husband. "We hope the VIN number will deter thieves who see it. It makes the job for the police much easier."

Thefts usually occur at night, where thieves take a saw to the part. Cars with low suspension are usually safe, but only in some cases. Adept thieves can remove a "cat" in as little as a minute. Some perpetrators work in teams of several people, often hitting many cars in quick succession.

"We always see notifications of catalytic converter thefts in our neighborhood," said the Chatsworth resident.

The VIN marking event is bi-annual, with the next one set in either October or November, at the LAPD's Traffic Division station in Panorama City. Other police stations across Los Angeles offer the same services for free.

Bass says city moving in the right direction

The speech addressed the city's new budget and future developments.



AVA ROSATE
STAFF WRITER

Four months into her term, Karen Bass delivered her first State of the City address last week in the Council Chamber inside City Hall, where she discussed the release of the Los Angeles county budget, an emphasis on homeless housing and an increased police budget.

"I am 127 days into my administration, and I can not declare that the state of our city is where it needs to be," Bass stated during her opening remarks. "After years of frustration, tonight, we can see a clearer path to a new Los Angeles where the state of our city will be stronger, healthier, happier and safer."

The conference's primary focus was on finding solutions to combat homelessness and future initiatives to tackle the ongoing issue. Bass highlighted initiatives being undertaken by her administration to address homelessness, including a \$250 million for Inside Safe, an outreach program that identifies and immediately houses homeless individuals. Another \$1.2 billion was allocated "to accelerate our momentum on homelessness."

The funding allocated to address homelessness will be used to purchase motel and hotel buildings, as well as substance abuse treatment beds for unhoused people with addiction issues.

Bass called on apartment owners who are not utilizing apartment vouchers to house the homeless.

"It is unacceptable that there are nearly two thousand housing vouchers that are going unused," said the Los Angeles mayor. "Another barrier that keeps Angelenos in encampments is a lack of apartments that will accept housing vouchers, so, I call on

apartment owners —please accept vouchers. Start with just one unit and let us earn your trust."

Bass's secondary concern was increasing the police force to its original numbers before July of 2020 - when nearly 1,000 police officers were laid off and the budget was cut by \$150 million. "My number one job as mayor is to keep Angelenos safe - but the unfortunate reality is that LAPD is down hundreds of officers. I'm concerned that the department's recent release of information will cause more officers to leave," Bass explained regarding the recent leak of the Los Angeles Police Department's personal information.

The 43rd mayor proposed the increase of the LAPD budget from \$87 million to \$3.24 billion to better meet the needs of reducing property crime, maintaining the downward trend in violent crime, and increasing homicide clearance rates.

The budget proposal calls for the hiring of hundreds of new officers in the next year to restore the forces numbers that have been lost in recent years. Financial incentives will be provided to new recruits and city workers who help find those recruits.

The mayor touched on topics such as metro train safety - aiming to improve ridership as well as enforcement presence. Animal shelter welfare - striving to increase adoption and spay and neuter rates, as well as climate change - addressing the recent capture of 28 billion gallons of stormwater and the development approval for a water purification facility in Van Nuys.

"I said when I took office that being elected as your mayor was the honor of a lifetime. But serving as your mayor is the true honor," Bass declared during her closing statements. "I want Angelenos to experience a new L.A. One that is affordable. This is the new Los Angeles we will build together."

SOTC- Karen Bass gave her first State of the City address earlier this month in the Council Chambers of City Hall. The mayor announced the release of the city's \$13 billion proposed budget which will allocate \$3 billion to the police budget and \$1 billion to combat homelessness.

AVA ROSATE | VALLEY STAR

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Vice presidential race: Vu vs. Bayandorian

Two Monarchs face off in the only contested race in the student government election.

"I want to improve my leadership skills and help people in general. Being a board member would make it easier to help more people."

-Trang Vu, vice presidential candidate



JEREMY RUIZ | VALLEY STAR

Candidate Trang Vu poses in the Student Union Plaza.



JEREMY RUIZ | VALLEY STAR

Candidate Norik Dominique Bayandorian poses in front of the cafeteria.

"I feel like I could really make the campus a better place for experienced and newcomer students."

-Norik Dominique Bayandorian, vice presidential candidate

MILAN RAFAELOV
STAFF WRITER

Norik Bayandorian and Trang Vu will go head-to-head for the vice president's seat — the only contested ASU position. The VP oversees the quality of the student union's stewardship while supporting the president in delegating tasks.

Trang Vu is a second-semester chemistry major with a long list of leadership roles under her belt. She has been a tu-

tor for multiple subjects, is the treasurer for the Psychology and Women Empowerment clubs, manages the Tau Alpha Epsilon Honor Club's social media and is the founder and president of the Asian club on campus.

"My primary goal is to prioritize the needs and concerns of students, especially those that are often overlooked and marginalized," Vu said in her official statement. "This means actively seeking out feedback and suggestions from all members of the Valley College community,

and working to implement policies and initiatives that address their most pressing concerns."

While Vu's list of experience in governance is a strong qualification for the seat, a question to consider is whether her many leading roles in Valley's community will leave her with enough time for the position.

Norik Bayandorian, a psychology major, is evidently passionate about unifying Valley.

"I want to make the community in LAVC feel more unified, similarly to that of a family," he said.

Bayandorian has held some leadership roles on campus, including treasurer of the Economics of Soccer Club and the Inter-Club Council rep for the Psychology Club. Bayandorian says that he understands how clubs and meetings are managed because of his contributions to helping set up club days.

Christopher Robles-Garay, who holds positions as the commissioner of health and wellness and vice president of the Economics of Soccer Club, is currently running as the only candidate

for ASU president. Robles-Garay encouraged Bayandorian and others to run for executive board positions. While political recruitment can increase the number of candidates and improve the chances of success for a group, it can also result in a lack of diversity among candidates, limiting the range of perspectives and ideas represented in government.

While both candidates could benefit from providing additional proposals for their potential terms, they agree that ASU must expand efforts that increase stu-

dent participation on club days.

Bayandorian hopes to make an ASU Discord that connects Monarchs, regardless of online or in-person enrollment, so the student body is updated for each event. In contrast, Vu wants to establish and develop deeper connections with professors and The Valley Star to distribute information quickly and more effectively.

Both candidates have their strengths and weaknesses, and now it is up to the student body to decide which one is the best fit for the role of vice president.

Low student turnout in ASU elections

AVA ROSATE
STAFF WRITER

Associated Student Union participation has remained sig-

nificantly low for decades — fluctuating between 1 percent and under 3.5 percent of the student population voting in the elections.

The highest record turnout,

dating back five years, was May of 2019, when 3.36 percent of eligible voters cast their ballot. The lowest election turnout was 1.68 percent in May 2021 when Sandra Sanchez garnered 248 votes.

The numbers have been discouraging dating back to 1985, when only one percent of the eligible student body voted. A decade later, in 1996, two percent of

the voter population turned out.

"I didn't vote in the last election because I didn't know any of the people or anything about them," said Jaime Roisman, an art and communications major. "If I was making a decision I wouldn't be making an educated one, and it seemed like there weren't easy or accessible resources to learn more about them."



CHRIS DREADSON | VALLEY STAR

HEADQUARTERS- Flowers bloom outside of the ASU Skybox.

Meet the candidates: spring's sparse crop

Juan Garcia for Treasurer



PHOTO BY SAVANNAH GREENLY

When Juan Garcia looked at last year's ASU participation, he thought it looked kind of Messi. The soccer enthusiast hopes to put his accounting knowledge to use, to change the game in student government.

What made you want to run for student government?

"I want to distribute the money evenly and to hear from the people. Certain events, I feel were overfunded and barely any students participated."

If elected, what would be your first priority?

"If elected, my first priority is to see where all the money is going to, speak with clubs, and to speak with people."

What would you like Monarchs to know about you?

"I want Monarchs to know that I'm self-disciplined and that I'm very highly motivated for this position. I work very well in teams."

Julian Serrano for Commissioner of Student Life



PHOTO BY SAVANNAH GREENLY

As a community oriented sophomore who is proud of his salvadoran heritage, Julian Serrano attends not some — but all ASU events. He decided to run after noticing thin student engagement on campus. If elected as commissioner of student life, Serrano plans to bring the heat to student life next year's ASU board.

What made you want to run for student government?

"A lack of student life to be honest. I see people, but they only come for classes, no people are hanging around."

If elected, what would be your first priority?

"My first priority would be to have the chance to create events."

What would you like Monarchs to know about you?

"I am a very relaxed person and easy to talk to. I like to have fun, that's the only reason I'm running for this position."

Ulizes Torres for Commissioner of Fine Arts



PHOTO BY SAVANNAH GREENLY

Drawing from experience as an artist, Ulizes Torres intends to cultivate creative expression on campus by hosting a slew of art days. The illustrator extracts inspiration from anime and practices his craft on a daily basis.

What made you want to run for student government?

"I usually always do art on a day to day basis, so I figured I might as well be productive and do something to make the school look nicer."

If elected, what would be your first priority?

"I would make sure to start off with an art day to see how everybody enjoys it. I'd see if anyone has any recommendations on what they want to see."

What would you like Monarchs to know about you?

"I'm typically creative, and always nice and approachable. Although I get nervous at times, I always try to be as nice as I can."

Eva Serrano Solis, Commissioner of Publicity and Social Media



PHOTO BY JEREMY RUIZ

A familiar voice for avid KVCM listeners, Eva Serrano Solis' clear communication will emanate through various social media platforms. The first generation college student wants to unite the student body in-person and virtually.

What made you want to run for student government?

"I just like communications. My major is broadcasting and communications, so it just felt like the perfect fit."

If elected, what would be your first priority?

"My priority is establishing communication with the students and social media. I want to make it [ASU's Instagram] more interactive and aesthetic."

What would you like Monarchs to know about you?

"I want them to know that I'm here for them and I'm for the people."

STUDENTS MAY CAST VOTES ON STUDENT PORTAL STARTING APRIL 24 THROUGH APRIL 30

Presidential candidate plans to unite Valley

The second-year kinesiology major is passionate about building a stronger community for Monarchs.

NATALIE METCALF
VALLEY LIFE EDITOR

Christopher Robles-Garay is no stranger to translating his leadership skills to a larger audience. The monarch takes pride in his ability to unite students as this year's only ASU presidential candidate.

The Panorama City native is Afro-Latino and his family comes from a village in Mexico called Durango. The candidate can speak five languages with Spanish being his first language. Robles-Garay has his heart set on an indigenous peoples' event, uniting all backgrounds at Valley. He is currently learning Huichol, an indigenous language from Mexico, and can also speak French and some Portuguese. Growing up, Robles-Garay translated for his family when visiting Durango. While translating, the candidate felt a connection to a leadership role.

"I believe in people, I feel

that anyone can do anything," said Robles Garay, in reference to coaching his fellow peers in the weight room. "In a leadership role, I think I do inspire some people -- I like to think I do. There are no limits for anyone."

Robles-Garay currently sits on the student union's executive board as the commissioner of health and wellness. He is in the process of creating a men's mental health workshop for students.

The first-generation college student is the vice president of the Economics for Soccer Club. During club meetings, participants discuss the worth of soccer players in the industry.

The candidate's student involvement does not stop there, as he prioritizes ASU student events on campus. The Afro-Latino plans to work closely with the commissioner of ethnic and cultural affairs to create indigenous people's events on campus. Monarch Ammy Duarte is running unopposed as the next commissioner

of ethnic and cultural affairs.

The presidential candidate plans on improving the connection between the Athletics Center and the student union. The sports enthusiast attended numerous football games last semester and would like to create student events relating to sports next year.

In a hopeful collaboration with the athletics department, he would like to encourage football players to wear their jerseys around campus on game days, incorporating more school spirit in the fall. If elected, the kinesiology major wants to contact football coach Lester Towns to promote athletics on social media.

"The people I've met and the connections I've made will definitely benefit me after Valley," said Robles-Garay. The second-year student wants to stay connected to the area, as he plans to transfer to CSUN.

The monarch encouraged his friends to join ASU, who is currently running for other exec-

utive board positions. Three of his friends are running with him for spots on the executive board. Norik Bayandorian is running for Vice President, Julian Serrano is running unopposed for commissioner of student life and Ulizes Torres is running unopposed for commissioner of fine arts.

"He [Chris] is cool and calm," said vice presidential candidate Bayandorian. "He has a lot of experience in the community and is very serious."

The kinesiology major wants to see representation on campus. He wants to make community college a more exciting place. According to Robles-Garay, this is possible through the work and planning of ASU.

"In reality, with ASU, I do have fun," said the student government candidate. "I go to events, I talk to people. My goal, in general, is to unify people -- get people out there more."



SAVANNAH GREENLY | VALLEY STAR

STUDENT LEADER - Current Associated Student Union commissioner of health of wellness Christopher Robles-Garay is running for President in the upcoming election at Valley College.

Monarchs regally pose and design at denim day

Students brought their denim back to life and learned about sexual assault awareness month in April.

JASMINE ALEJANDRE
STAFF WRITER

The Valley College Women Empowerment Club celebrated Denim Day by bringing old jeans back to life.

Monarchs were able to upcycle their denim and show it off during Denim Day Makeover. The annual day is celebrated to bring awareness to sexual assault and victim blaming.

"Denim day is important because it creates remembrance for everyone who's been sexually assaulted or experienced something similar," said Astghik Margaryan, the club president and the one who came up with the event. "We want them to take back the power and empower themselves with it."

The significance of the day dates back to 1988, when an 18-year-old was sexually assaulted by her driving instructor — who spent only one year in prison. He used her jeans as a justification for his actions, and claimed it was consensual since they were tight and would only be able to be removed with her



SAVANNAH GREENLY | VALLEY STAR

DENIM DAY - Students try on pieces from fashion designer Carolyn Wilbourn at the Denim Day Makeover

help. The next day, many women, upset and angered over the decision, wore their jeans to protest on the steps of the supreme court.

The news reached the California Senate and Assembly, and they did the same thing. Eleven years later, Patricia

Giggans, executive director of Peace Over Violence, started Denim Day. Now every April is sexual assault awareness month.

Margaryan and the club's advisor, Fatema Baldiwala, wanted to make sure the event also incorporated something for

Earth Day, which is also in April. Upcycling old denim was a way to combine both important topics.

Fashion designer Carolyn Wilbourn joined the students at Valley and showed them some of her denim designs. She runs Wilbourn Sisters Designs

with her sister Janice. They design and create clothes, as well as offer sewing classes.

"Clothes don't speak for someone or validate what they're doing. This is a day to remember those who have suffered a trauma, and to come together and empower each other."

- Marie Lemelle, a representative from Youth Women's Asso-

observed what she had created.

"Every pair of jeans and every jacket is different," said Wilbourn. "It all depends on you and your vision and how you use your imagination".

The designer showed students how to cut their denim and turn it into something new. Wilbourn explained step by step what she had done with her pieces, and how students could do the same. Students were able to wear her clothing items, as well as their own, to walk the stage and show it off. The fashion show united all Monarchs and let them have fun with the clothes.

Marie Lemelle, representative from the Young Women's Christian Association, a non-profit women's organization, was also in attendance. She talked about the history of the day and also modeled some of the items.

"Clothes don't speak for someone or validate what they're doing," said Lemelle. "This is a day to remember those who have suffered a trauma, and to come together and empower each other."

The designer brought a U-HAUL truck full of her clothes and filled up tables and racks with clothing items. She had everything from skirts to coats, and even hats and jewelry she made with old denim. Students passed her clothing around and

Transgender HIV Awareness Day distributes resources

AltaMed and The Rainbow Pride Center celebrated national trans HIV awareness day by handing out HIV test kits.

KENYA HARRIS
STAFF WRITER

The Rainbow Pride Center hosted an HIV awareness and prevention event on April 18, just in time for National Trans HIV Awareness Day.

According to the CDC, transgender people make up 2 percent of new HIV diagnosis. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about HIV and HIV Testing, and to destigmatize the process. The Rainbow Pride Center provides many services to Monarchs including academic counseling and LGBTQIA+ friendly events to the campus community.

"The Rainbow Pride Center is here to support all identities," said Natalie Guerrero, the head counselor and coordinator of the Rainbow Pride Center.

The event featured support from another organization who advocate for HIV awareness among the Latino population. The clinic AltaMed had two

employees on hand to provide free HIV Testing kits to students and advertise their services. AltaMed clinic is located in East Los Angeles and especially focused on serving the Latino population. According to a 2019 CDC statement, Latinos account for an estimated 18 percent of the US population, but 25 percent of those living in the US with HIV.

As a particularly vulnerable community, services that focus on the Latin X and trans population are more readily available than most people are aware. AltaMed also has support groups and programs for up to 18 year olds and support groups for HIV positive adults. On the day of the event, AltaMed was also offering a \$20 gift card for those who took home an HIV testing kit.

The table for the Rainbow Pride Center was right in front of a display of the Trans flags with famous Trans Americans like activist Marsha P Johnson, actor Eliot Page, actress Michaela J Rodriguez, and writer and GLAAD media award recipient

Alok Vaid Mennon. Everyone who stopped by was able to quickly find someone to interact with whether they be from AltaMed or the Rainbow Pride Center. A big part of this event was the combined presence of organizations that serve the trans, Latino, and student communities.

The HIV testing kits provided on that day were successfully given out and many Monarchs were informed about AltaMed and their services. Support and information for students was available for all students without needing to disclose their identity.

Through this event, the mental and physical health of the LGBTQIA+ campus community is shown to be important to the staff and counselors at Valley. Guerrero was present, passing out her contact info as well as Student Mental Health Education Coordinator Evelyn Pichardo. There will be additional Rainbow Pride Center events coming up this month and next for all LGBTQIA+ students and staff.



ELLI BAYATI | VALLEY STAR

DISCUSS - Faculty, including Natalie Guerrero, the counselor and coordinator from Rainbow Pride Center, Lauren Seager from George Washington University, and Milton Rodriguez, partnered for HIV prevention and awareness day. Students receive food, home HIV kits, and art. The event took place outside the Mosaic Village Unity Center at Valley College

RIGHT- Monarch Kyra Freemon dives into the pool at the women's 100-yard backstroke competing in the Western State Conference. Freemon finished in second place with a time of 1:15.83.

BELOW- Monarch Daniel Smykovsky, 19, takes on the 400-yard race, finishing 6th with a time of 5:09.59 at the 2023 Western State Conference Championships.



Nicholas



Nicholas Orozco | Valley Star

ABOVE- Monarch men's swim head coach Jim McMillan cheers on Hakop Ansuryan and Erik Yoon as they compete in a race.

RIGHT- Monarch Ethan Francis performs his individual preliminary medley relay with a time of 2:21.12 on the first day of the swim meet.





Orozco | Valley Star



Nicholas Orozco | Valley Star

LEFT- Monarch Sargis Kaputikyan competes in the men's 200-yard freestyle, finishing in third place with a time of 1:55.00.

BELOW- Monarch Lilliana Noriega smiles after finishing in first place in the women's 100-yard backstroke with a time of 1:01.70.



Chris Dreadson | Valley Star



Nicholas Orozco | Valley Star

Valley swimmers make waves

By Kevin Khachatryan, Staff Writer

As the Western State conference championship swim meet wrapped up, Valley College men's and women's teams finished with a mix of results. The 10-school swim meet on April 20 - 22, saw freshman swimmer Lilliana Noriega and the women's swim team, along with two relay teams — the 200 and 400 freestyle to go on to compete in state next week.

The competition began at 9:30 a.m., featuring events from relays to individual events. The record breaker Lilliana Noriega set another conference record for Valley College, this time in the 100 backstroke, clocking in at 01:01:70. Plunging ahead of the previous record that was set in 2019, with a time of 01:01:73.

Noriega placed in the top three twice and soaked to fourth place to close out the event. No one else from the women's team was able to compete against the other schools, as they finished under the top five, with the 19 year-old swimmer being the only consistent swimmer for the women's team.

"It's great being able to race people that are faster than me," said the 19-year old. "They push me to go faster

and drive me to do better when I get out there. It's really exciting for this to happen in my first season, and I hope to make it to state."

For the men's side, six swimmers participated in the championship, with no one capable of finishing in the top three against the tough competition. Majority of the Monarchs swimmers finished in fifth and sixth place, as Valley was unable to display energy that persisted throughout the entire day.

"When swimming with a relay team, I hope to motivate them to swim fast and have fun," said the state contender Noriega. "For individuals, I really just focus on myself and doing my best."

The final swim events were the 400 freestyle relays, with men finishing fifth and the women's team coming in at third place. The men's time was 03:24:26 and the women got a time of 03:52:04.

Valley women finished fifth with 403 points through 40 events and the men's team finished third place with 500 points.



Nicholas Orozco | Valley Star



Chris Dreadson | Valley Star

After completing the 100-yard backstroke, Lilliana Noriega gives a handshake to Lizzie Hernandez from Allen Hancock College. Noriega placed third, and will move onto the semifinals at the 2023 Western State Conference Championships at Valley College.

Personal growth workshop discusses body image

Valley College students discuss how to love their bodies in body dissatisfaction event hosted by Student Health.

KENYA HARRIS
STAFF WRITER

Valley College's Student Health Education department hosted a self-development workshop and dialogue on April 19 for staff and students.

The event was organized by Student Health Education Coordinator Evelyn Pichardo and included a group therapist lead discussion. Licensed Marriage Family Therapist Denise Velazquez and Associate Marriage and Family Therapist Lauren Rogers from Pure Hearts Therapy, facilitated the workshop to provide students and staff with a place to confront negative thought styles surrounding body image.

The workshop started to discuss body dissatisfaction attitudes with a rorschach exercise. Each audience member was directed to write down the first word that occurred to them while looking at a series of images. Monarchs were then



ELLI BAYATI | VALLEY STAR

BODYSTYLES- (L-R) Sofia Orellana and Ammy Duarte in a mental health event, listening to a lecture about unhealthy thinking styles at Valley College. The event was hosted by Student Health Education.

instructed to draw a picture of their body and write down one word to describe it. The purpose of the exercise was to help the audience notice if they had an automatic negative or posi-

tive thought about their body.

"The goal was for people to start seeing how valuable they are on the inside, instead of the outside," said Evelyn Pichardo. There was also a power-

point presentation on the social construct of body image and the external factors that shape one's concept of body image. Playing a BuzzFeed video about the ideal women's body type

throughout history, prompted a discussion about how often the ideal type has changed.

Therapists Rogers and Velazquez made sure to emphasize that body images are internal and separate from what a person sees when they look at someone. In a group discussion, presenters also addressed the forces that change or affect body image such as culture, media, the diet industry, race, trauma, peers, relationships and even activities like sports or hobbies.

According to a 2021 U.S. study, 51 percent of Americans feel pressured to have a certain body type. Presenters Velazquez and Rogers stated that an Australian study found that 74 percent of women aged 8-22 wanted to weigh less, and that only 25 percent were happy with their weight. But the pressures of beauty standards affect men, women, and nonbinary folks alike. According to the Trevor Project 2022 Survey, 87 percent of LGBTQIA+ youth experience some form of nega-

tive thoughts about their bodies. For nonbinary youth specifically, the rate jumps to 90 percent.

Body dissatisfaction includes the various kinds of disparaging and negative thoughts one has about their body. For some it's a desire to lose or gain weight, and for some it is a negative thought about their bodies.

The therapists finished the workshop with a Disney Animated short called "Reflect". (2022). The short illustrated a young, chubby ballet dancer fighting against body dysphoria by focusing on the joy dancing brings. The focus on joy and the love of dance was given as the antidote to the external pressures the dancer was feeling about their body image.

"It changes the way you feel," psychology major Ayanna Muhammad remarked about the event. "It was nice to hear everyone else's story. It changes the way we feel about ourselves."

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"AIR" explores Jordan's quest to landing with Nike

Ben Affleck reunites with Matt Damon to deliver the first all-star Oscar contender of 2024.

KEVIN KHACHATRYAN
STAFF WRITER

The Michael Jordan sneaker biopic "Air" gave audiences an inside look into how the ultimate icon landed in the shoes of Nike and how the brand became the behemoth that it is today.

At its core, "Air" is an underdog story. Viola Davis and Matt Damon lead the film into a slam dunk win. Ben Affleck returns to direct his fifth feature film, coming off "Argo" (2012), which won the Academy Award for best picture. He directed the film in addition to starring as Nike founder Phil Knight. Affleck handles the pacing and story expertly, mostly by keeping the characters engaged in conversation.

Matt Damon reunites with Affleck for their ninth feature film together. Damon plays Sonny Vaccaro, a Nike executive who wants to blow the company's entire marketing budget to sign Michael Jordan. With sales



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMAZON STUDIOS

ALL STAR - Ben Affleck stars and directs with Matt Damon in "Air" a film about the infamous Michael Jordan shoe — Nike. This is Damon and Affleck's ninth film together

down for the year, Nike has no hope in staying successful in the market, but Vaccaro decides to bet all of Nike's \$250,000 budget

on one player — rookie Jordan.

The film is set in 1984. At this point in history, a nearly bankrupt Nike was in desper-

ate need to sign a face like Jordan to pick their company up and outshine competitors like Adidas and Puma.

While no actor plays Jordan in the film, the 21 year old who left college early is seen on tapes while Vaccaro studies his moves and presence, seeking out the face of Nike. Affleck mentioned that the six-time champion is too iconic for someone else to play him. While that logic is far from air tight, with actors playing historical icons from Ghandi to Bob Dylan in recent years, Jordan's presence is not missed in the film.

With a screenplay penned by Alex Convery, dialogue in the screenplay is never dull. Discussions between each person always feel critical and intriguing to the story.

Along with Damon, the movie's second MVP is Davis, whose moving performance deepens the story and expands its emotional moments. Davis' performance shows the true character of Jordan's mother — the sacrifices she made and how responsible she was for Jordan's career. Despite the refusal from Nike, she is able to negotiate a deal where Michael

gets a global percentage from every Air Jordan shoe sold.

With the film being labeled as a drama, the tone of the film does not shy away from comedic scenes and the script stays consistent when scenes need to be more serious. Affleck does a great job to pump up audiences in an underdog crowd pleaser that stays in celebration and the entire cast leaves fans entertained.

"Air" is a crowd pleaser to fans who love sports biopic stories, with a standout ensemble cast that finds balance between the drama and comedy represented in the film. Watching how Nike grew to be the phenomenon brand and the story of legend Michael Jordan changing the culture of sports was inspirational.

VALLEY'S STARS



Worth the watch.
Playing only in theaters

Lion's lunch: A vegetarian's guide to Valley College

Campus has numerous options for those who choose to avoid meat products in their diet.



JEREMY RUIZ | VALLEY STAR
(LEFT) NO MEAT- Fries, quesadillas and falafel over rice are a few of the vegetarian items served out of the Chicaterreanean food truck at Parking Lot F in front of the Community Services Center.

NICHOLAS OROZCO | VALLEY STAR
(BELOW) MEATLESS- The Monarch Cafe at Valley College has a nice selection for veggie lovers. To the left is the Monarch Burger with grain buns, lettuce, carrots, pickle, cheese, and a beyond meat substitute. To the right is the Very Veggie Panini with sourdough bread, lettuce, tomatoes, avocado, mushrooms, bell peppers, mustard, and mayonnaise.

CASSANDRA NAVA
MANAGING EDITOR

As carnivorous lions roam Valley College, there are herbivores trying to find sufficient meals to nourish their hunger. Luckily, there are small cornucopias that plant eaters can take advantage of.

Prior to attending Valley, one would assume that the only plant-based options come from highly processed snacks in vending machines. Luckily, there are alternatives.

The school's cafeteria, or Monarch Cafe, has a plethora of options — if vegetarians enjoy Beyond Meat. Any burger can have a faux-meat patty subbed in, at an additional cost of \$1.50.

The "Monarch Burger" is a classic, with its barebones ingredients of lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, mayonnaise and mustard. The simple, yet effective, ingredient list allows the true "beyond" flavor to shine. The original price is listed at \$6.29, and with the "beyond" substitute it comes out to \$7.79.

Although the texture may take a bit to get used to, beyond patties are made of water, pea

protein and other ingredients. The grill level is reminiscent of a meat patty, as there are patterns of charred lines throughout. Adding cheese to the burger is optional, and American cheese is the way to go.

Another option in the Monarch Cafe that does not include fake versions of animal carcass is the "Very Veggie," a panini with avocado, bell peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes, lettuce, heavy mayonnaise and mustard on sourdough bread. The \$7.29 sandwich is worth every penny. The hearty, vegged-out concoction is a filling option that can rival a traditional meat-filled sandwich.

Earlier in the semester, the LACCD approved a one-year partnership with Chicaterreanean, a Mediterranean food truck. The truck, parked in Lot F Monday through Friday, offers four vegetarian options: a cheese quesadilla, falafel sandwich, falafel over rice and french fries.

For being a mediterranean joint, the falafel over rice plate fell below average. The initial flavor of the falafel was strong, but the texture was dense and mealy. There were six, dry pieces of

the "chickpea" mixture and the mysterious white sauce of either tzatziki or ranch could not save it. The bed of rice underneath offered no additional flavor.

Despite the miss on the Mediterranean staple, at least the cheese quesadilla and fries were okay. The quesadilla was thin, with a light helping of a tri-blend cheese enveloped in a buttery and flaky flour tortilla.

The fries were tasty too — if eaten within about five minutes. They were underdone, and if not consumed soon enough, would turn into a soggy mess akin to mashed potatoes.

Despite the criticism, vegetarians have a decent amount of options on campus.

If Monarchs need to grab a bite between classes, they should head to the Monarch Cafe. And if they happen to be on the southeast side of campus, they can get a quesadilla or fries from Chicaterreanean — just make sure to ask for the fries well done — and steer clear of the falafel.

THE FACTS

Chicaterreanean can be found in Parking Lot F, Mon.- Fri.



The de-evolution of the word “woke”

The wet blanket of wokeness has become conservatives’ umbrella term.

ASHER MILES
STAFF WRITER

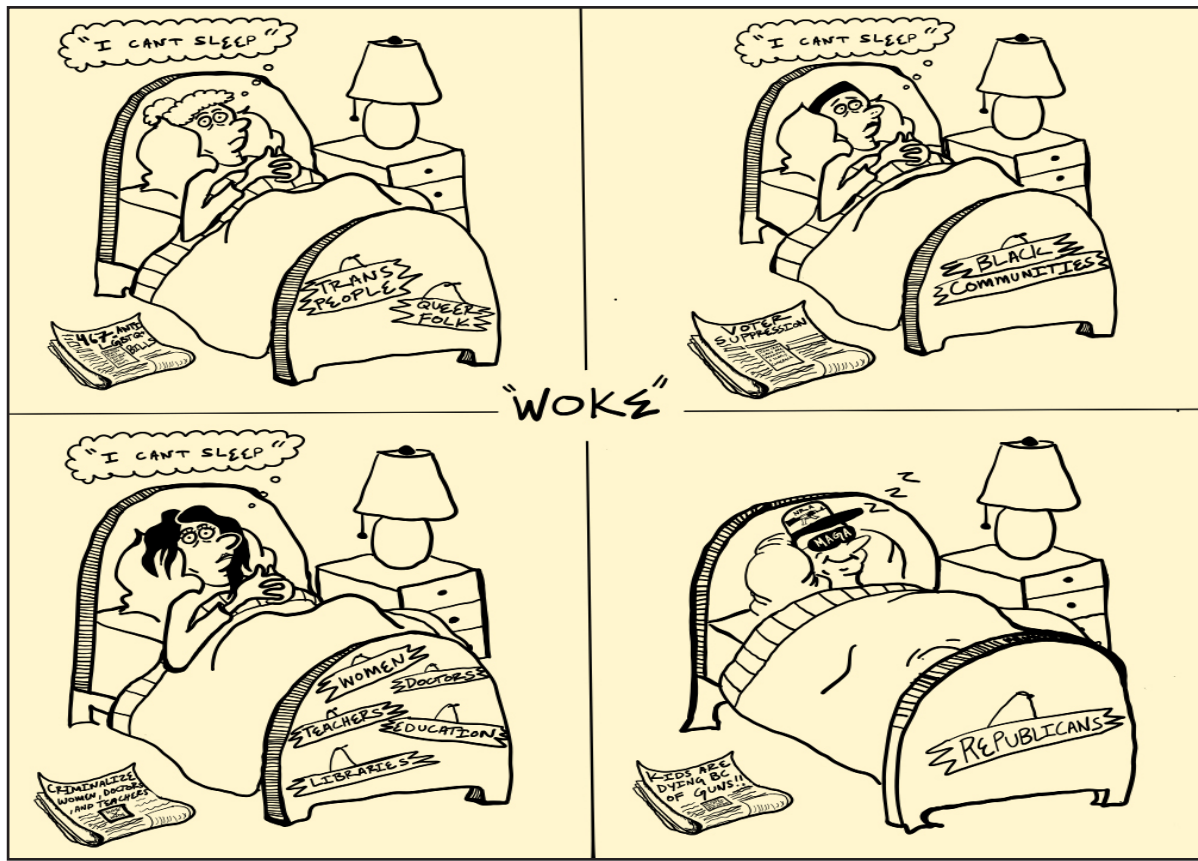
“Woke has been distorted beyond its recognition.” Credit is due, though, to the silent majority and the GOP for the transmogrification of woke. Reminiscent to how “Black Power” was rebranded by conservative masterminds in the 1960’s to scare the Jim Crow ideology into their base, woke is being used to do the same thing.

Woke has come into fashion after being popularized in American vernacular in 2014 after the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Initially, “stay woke” were cautionary words from activists of the Black Lives Matter movement that urged people to be aware of police brutality and unjust police tactics.

And yet, in Lee Atwater-like fashion, a cavalcade of conservatives have simultaneously co-opted “woke” into a maligned version of its former self while also not being able to define what it could be.

In a March interview, conservative author and commentator Bethany Mandel practically broke her brain trying to elucidate what “wokeness” is.

“So, I mean, woke is, sort of the idea that, umm ... this is going to be one of those moments that go viral,” the author said as she stammered to define the subject of her own book. “It’s sort of the understanding that we must reduce society in



WAKE UP- The once progressive term has been co-opted and weaponized by conservatives.

order to create hierarchies of oppression. It’s hard to explain in a fifteen second soundbite.”

After being lampooned for her eye-rolling interview, Mandel decided to graciously provide a somewhat comprehensive, yet elusive, definition of wokeness on her Twitter account.

“Wokeness is a radical belief system suggesting that our institutions are built around dis-

crimination, and claiming that all disparity is a result of that discrimination,” read her tweet.

Belief systems such as capitalism, patriarchy and racism are completely stitched and embedded in America’s institutions and result in inequality. In the context of America, there was a massive colonial project built on killing all Native peoples, coupled with unmerciful enslave-

ment of West Africans that then faced an elaborate and detailed legal system pitted against them.

So, when Mandel talks about institutions built around discrimination - she is not talking about a belief called “wokeness,” she is talking about history.

The inundation of the American people by the wet blanket of wokeness is the conservatives’ ultimate scapegoat.

The deluge of “wokeness” by the right allows them to obfuscate from concrete socioeconomic American problems.

Boycotts from Nike to Bud Light have emboldened American conservatives to perform their favorite song and dance. The redneck ritual of burning or shooting “stained symbol” has been underway for weeks after transwomen Dylan Mulvany received a blue-emblazoned beer with her face on it.

Kid Rock can shoot all the Bud Light cans he wants, though. The Anheuser-Busch stock is still up 9.1 percent for this year.

If conservatives spoke about how corporations cynically utilize progressive movements to enrich themselves and uphold an economic system that fundamentally oppresses those marginalized communities, then they would be correct.

Most Americans do not care if a trans woman received a beer can with her face on it, or if Nike actually donates to low-income minority neighborhoods. And neither do conservatives. By creating senseless commotion over trivial things, they can fill their airtime with frivolous chit chat instead addressing America’s problems.

Next time someone reiterates to you that “wokeness has overrun America,” ask them to define “woke”. Watch as the gish gallop scallop enunciates something nonsensical. Then, hit them with the “Sure Jan” / It works every time.



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GOT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

Letters to the editor can be submitted online at www.thevalleystarnews.com. Letters must be limited to 300 words and may be edited for content. Full name and contact information must be supplied in order for letters to be printed.

Bachelor’s for community college

Pierce College is leading the way in solving labor shortages while uplifting students.

ISAAC DEKTOR
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Offering bachelor’s degrees at community colleges is the key to filling critical gaps in the workforce while adapting to the needs of the changing job market.

Pierce College recently took a bold step in this direction by launching a biomanufacturing educational program that culminates in a four-year degree — the first bachelor’s degree to be offered at any LACCD campus.

As the U.S. experiences labor shortages in nursing, biomanufacturing and other industries, many of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, community colleges should search for ways to provide students with advanced degrees that meet the demands of the modern job market.

In 2021, when COVID-19 vaccination production was in full swing, Moderna and Pfizer reported having trouble recruiting skilled workers. As the nascent mRNA vaccines were mandated in many countries and distributed around the world, a huge demand for biomanufacturing workers emerged.

“Biotech is not just a growing industry, but a critical one, as we have seen from the innovations that helped fight against diseases like COVID,” said Congressman Brad Sherman

(D-Sherman Oaks) in a statement about Pierce’s new program.

Biomanufacturing can not be learned on the job — it requires knowledge and expertise in bioprocessing techniques as well as hands-on experience with specialized equipment — all of which requires teachers, classes and facilities. While a bachelor’s degree is not necessarily required for entry-level biomanufacturing jobs, a four-year degree, at a minimum, is mandatory for upward mobility in the industry.

Workers trained in biomanufacturing make, on average, \$20,000 more a year than bachelor’s degree holders in the United States. Training community college students in well-paying fields should be a main objective for community colleges — providing upward socioeconomic mobility to those who need it most.

“Soon, all students will be able to pursue this high-growth profession and career, and earn a bachelor’s degree at a fraction of the cost as compared to four-year institutions,” said LACCD Chancellor Francisco C. Rodriguez.

Community colleges are by and large more accessible than state universities, and they should offer lucrative careers through an efficient school-to-workplace pipeline as an option for their students.

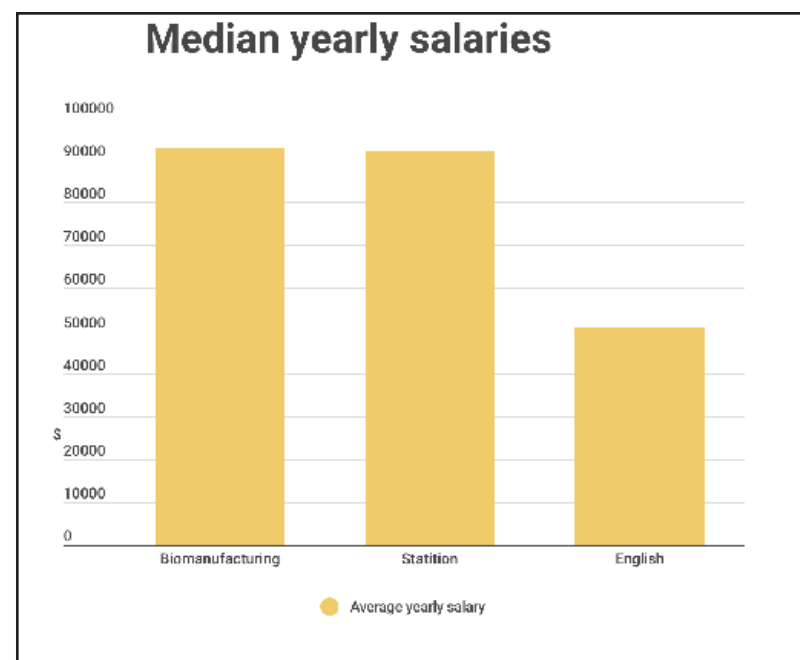
It’s a win-win; specialized jobs that are in desperate need of workers will be filled faster and community college students can reap the rewards of entering a booming industry with a high demand for labor.

It is not just biomanufacturing that needs personnel, labor shortages in many fields are on the horizon.

The Bureau of Labor estimates that 275,000 additional nurses will be needed in the next seven years. There could be a shortage of 124,000 physicians by 2034.

COVID-19 pushed hospital capacities to the limit as nurses and doctors worked overtime to keep up with patient intake. People cheered on healthcare professionals as they went to and from work. For America’s practitioners, it was a stethoscope examination that barely found a pulse.

According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, nearly 40 percent of registered nurses in 2020 held an associate’s degree. Valley College’s nursing program is known for producing a significant amount of nurses for the workforce, demonstrating a high pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses. But the healthcare system is changing rapidly, and more and more employers are



VALLEY STAR

INCOME- The graph depicts average incomes for degree holders in biomanufacturing, math and English.

requiring a bachelor’s degree.

Community colleges should look into creating similar programs to Pierce’s biomanufacturing degree so that students can achieve a four-year degree without having to uproot themselves to attend a state university but still enter specialized fields that pay well.

EDITORS NOTE

The views expressed on this page are solely those of the writer and do not reflect those of the Valley Star or those of Los Angeles Valley College.

VALLEY VIEW | How do you define WOKE?

TEXT BY JEREMY RUIZ

PHOTOS BY KAI-NIELSON SNELL



“There are positive and negative connotations to it, and I think that the positive connotation to woke is just being aware of the people around you and what they need. The negative connotation of woke is, extremism. It’s just to benefit your own ego.”

-MATTHEW WILSON-SERPICO, PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR



“You can be hyper aware in positive ways with positive outcomes, or hyper aware in a negative way where it starts being detrimental to yourself and other people. It depends on your experiences in life and what you’re going to be more aware of.”

-NAOMI ABERGEL, PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY MAJOR



“Woke to me seems like something I would describe as a slang word and I feel like there are different interpretations. I don’t think there’s one definition, but woke as in being awake, as in being in tune with the political climate around you, that’s how I would define woke.”

-EDWARD DOUGLAS MALCOLM, THEATER MAJOR



“That word has kinda changed. The original meaning was to be more aware to stuff that’s happening, events and things that are going on around you, but that word now has kind of lost its meaning because a lot of people use it as a joke.”

-ANDRES VELASQUEZ, FIRST YEAR MUSIC MAJOR

The curtain falls on an arduous season

Monarch softball finds their peak performance in their final home game.

NICHOLAS OROZCO
SPORTS EDITOR

In the final home game of the season Valley College held No.1 conference-ranked Antelope Valley to two runs, still dropping the matchup 2-0.

"I wish I had them in the fall," said head coach Andrea Contreras regarding her team and their growth. "I got them three weeks before spring season started."

Valley (3-29, 1-15 WSC) hosted Antelope Valley (25-12, 14-3 WSC) on April 20, for their final home game and sophomore night. The Monarchs honored five sophomores prior to the game with flowers and posters. The five were Melissa Orozco, Jessica Lopez, Violeta Espinoza, Isabel Ward and Lexus Freire.

Starting for the Monarchs on the rubber was Lopez, who pitched for the entire game as Ward was injured.

Lopez only allowed seven hits, walked four, struck out two and give up two runs.

Antelope Valley's runs came in the fourth inning. Sophomore Alanna Hernandez hit a single into leftfield, cashing in sophomore Savannah Cervantes. Their second run was produced by freshman Annalise Wagner with a single that scored Hernandez.

The Monarchs only tallied four hits over the seven-inning matchup. The hits came from freshmen Briana Gaskill in the first, Violeta Espinoza in the fourth, Precious Romero to lead off in the fifth and Christina Camberos in a seventh-inning two-out effort.

Valley struggled against Antelope Valley's freshman pitcher Annalise Wagner. With the



lack of hits combined with base running errors, the Monarchs struggled to advance a runner to third.

Valley would drop the final home game of the season 2-0.

After the matchup, the sophomores were greeted with posters, flowers, balloons and snacks by the coaches, friends and family on the field to commemorate their time at Valley.

"We're late bloomers, we'll always be the late bloomers," said head coach Andrea Contreras. "Coming back for next year, we're creating a new culture for seasons to come."

(Above) FINALE- After giving her sophomores flower lei's commemorating their final season with the team, head coach Andrea Contreras addresses her team of how proud she was of her team, holding the number one team in conference to two runs.

(Right) JUST-HIGH - Freshman catcher Selena Gonzalez receives a pitch from sophomore pitcher Jessica Lopez. Lopez attempted a fastball that ended up being too high as Marauder Natalie Gomez takes the pitch.

PHOTOS BY NICHOLAS OROZCO | VALLEY STAR



Monarchs fall to Vaqueros in hectic game

Flipping the momentum in their favor and tying the matchup, the Monarchs lose, 8-6.

NICHOLAS OROZCO
SPORTS EDITOR

The Valley College baseball team put up a series of comebacks on Tuesday against Glendale College, only to lose in the final frame, 8-6, failing to stop the Vaqueros from winning the conference championship.

"It showed a lot of character from these guys to come back in that position," said head coach Dave Mallas. "They knew what was on the line, conference championship. Now we want to go out and win the series by winning Thursday and Friday."

Valley College (22-16, 13-6 WSC) hosted Glendale College (28-10, 17-2 WSC) for the first game of a three-game series on Tuesday, with today's game being held at Glendale and Saturday's game at home.

"They know what was on the line, conference championship. Now we want to go out and win the series."

- Head Coach
Dave Mallas

Prior to the matchup, the Monarchs were three games back of the Vaqueros for first place, and this series will also determine where the Monarchs are seeded in playoffs.

With sophomore pitcher Danny Veloz still nursing an injury, freshman Brett Edwards took the hill following his successful outing against Antelope Valley last week.

After striking out the first batter, Edwards allowed a double to sophomore Nick Sutherland and hit the next batter. However, he left the men stranded by forcing back-to-back flyouts.

Edwards did not wait long for run support. With sophomore Tyler Olivas starting the fire with a fielder's choice and then stole second. With a full count, freshman Sean David sent a single into center, allowing Olivas to score, giving the Monarchs a 1-0 lead.

Neither team scored in the second and third innings, but Glendale would break the silence in the fourth. Freshman Jackson Benattar recorded a single, sophomore Adrian Gonzalez walked, sophomore Alec Garcia would hit into a fielder's choice. Sophomore Tommy Italia would knock in two runs from a long single into left center.

Edwards' day was done after making it out of the fourth, with reliever sophomore Josh Eigenbrodt taking the hill.

"He just keeps getting better," said Mallas about Edwards. "We're asking for three or four [innings] from him. He gave us a chance to win."

The Vaqueros would continue to pour on four more runs over the fifth and sixth innings, stringing together hits to go along with three home runs.

Valley responded with one run in the bottom half of the fifth with Olivas hitting a double down the left-field line, scoring freshman Tino Valdez.



After reaching base by a fielder's choice and stealing second, sophomore Tyler Olivas would be congratulated at home by freshman Max Aude after freshman Sean David hit a single to drive him in from second.

ASH SHAFIA | VALLEY STAR

After getting out of the sixth inning, Eigenbrodt was replaced by freshman James Coker. The left hander would come in for the seventh and eighth inning, keeping the visitors scoreless.

In the bottom of the eighth, sophomore catcher Bobby Velasco would lead off with a homerun that cleared the leftfield fence, cutting the deficit to 6-3.

Reaching base with an error from the third baseman, David would advance to second on a single from freshman Max Aude. Sophomore Will White ripped a double into left-center that advanced Aude to third and scored David. Sophomore

Elvis Park followed with a sacrifice into right-field that scored Aude, making the score 6-5.

With two outs, Valdez smoked a high fastball into left-center that scored White and knotted the game at 6-6.

"It felt great to tie it up," said the shortstop regarding his final at-bat. "It was a big hit."

The men in green would explode after the heroics, banging benches, screaming, and exchanging high-fives.

With the momentum and energy in the palm of their hands, coach Mallas called Olivas in from right field to take the bump in the ninth.

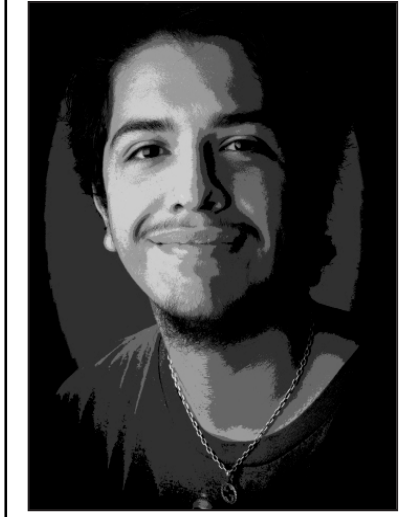
Olivas would get the first two batters out with a ground ball and a strikeout, but walked the next hitter. Gonzalez stepped up to the plate for Glendale and silenced the Monarchs with a two-run bomb over the left-field fence, giving the visitors the conference championship.

The Monarchs failed to respond in the bottom of the frame, ending the contest with a 8-6 loss.

"They're nothing special, this one stings no doubt," said Mallas.

Valley will travel to Glendale today at 2:30 p.m. for the second game of the series.

Softball saw gains in season



NICHOLAS OROZCO
SPORTS EDITOR

Valley College softball dropped its final game of the season Tuesday against LA Mission, 11-3, but the score and the team's record does not tell the entire story.

The Monarchs would finish with a record of 3-31, a shade worse than last year's squad. With this past season being Andrea Contreras' first year as head coach, she still looks to make changes to better the team.

After spending much time with the team, there are clear signs of improvement. Contreras called on assistant coaches Natalie Winokur and Leslie Arreola to help the team.

The three would transform these women who have either not played softball in years or are still learning the sport, into solid contributors.

Prior to their loss to Mission, the Monarchs faced Ventura, Glendale and Antelope Valley. Two of which are within the top 20 in the state. As of April 19, Ventura (8-21-1) is ranked 13 in the state and the Monarchs held them to two runs, but dropped the game 2-1. On the year, Ventura is ranked 16 in the total runs scored over 37 games with 223.

Valley would be consistently mercy-ruled over the season. The game against Ventura would be the first game in eight games where they would have a fighting chance to win.

Antelope Valley (29-7-1) is ranked 17 as of April 19 as well. They were ranked first in the state in home runs, cranking 39 out of the park. Valley held them to two runs on April 20.

It is clear that Contreras has a vision for this team and the team is receptive.

Last season the top hitters were Elizabeth Flores with a .338 average and Tea Carbajal who posted a .315 percentage over 30 games. This season, Briana Gaskill and Melissa Orozco were the top two hitters putting up .356 and .297 averages during their 33-game season.

Both Flores and Carbajal both had fewer at-bats than Gaskill and Orozco. The two alumni combined for 138 hits, while this year the top two collected 161 hits, a marked improvement. With more at-bats also came along more hits, Flores and Carbajal combined for 45 hits. Gaskill and Orozco combined for 53.

Three Monarchs would hit three home runs over the course of the season. Sophomore Violeta Espinoza would hit two, freshman Cristina Camberos hit one and Gaskill would hit three. While last season only one girl would hit a home run, Caitlyn Pineda.

Selena Gonzalez also has the power for the long ball as during batting practice she can hit home runs consistently.

Now able to recruit and build her team, Contreras looks to build on next season.