Student fights rare form of cancer; community, family band together

Katelyn Sweigart
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Delaney Lemus completed her first year at Cal Poly as an agriculture business major without knowing she wouldn’t be returning back in the fall. Up to the point, she was very active and athletic. She was a very happy person, always joking around, and before recent events, enjoyed playing volleyball and hanging out at the beach with her friends, her father Luis Lemus, Jr. said. But Delaney is one of the many college-aged young adults who find themselves battling cancer while attempting to get a start on life.

According to the LIVESTRONG Young Adult Alliance, a program started by the Lance Armstrong Foundation, there has been no improvement in survival rates for young adults since 1975. This is also complicated by whether they are put into adult or pediatric care — in the world of cancer research, the term “young adult” encompasses anyone from 15 to 39 years old, with about 70,000 cases each year.

Resources for young adults with cancer can be found over the Internet, from the National Coalition for Cancer Care, which provides financial support for college students going through treatment. Each focuses on the under-represented young adult cancer patients and survivors, helping them get through not being able to go to school, to work or to live the life they dreamed of — before cancer reared its ugly head.

For Delaney, there were no signs of the cancer at first. She was very active but complained about back pains and couldn’t run much before getting sick. There was also the tiny lump in her abdomen. Her parents finally took her to see a doctor. In August 2009, the tests revealed she had a rare form of childhood cancer in the kidneys. It came as a total surprise to her father.

“The only thing I know about cancer is it’s bad,” Lemus said.

She had a rare form of cancer called Wilms’ tumor. There are only about 500 new cases each year of Wilms’ tumors, which accounts for five percent of all childhood cancers, according to the American Cancer Society.

The cause is not from the environment or her lifestyle, and it could not be prevented. What sets her apart is that the average age of a child diagnosed with Wilms’ tumor is 3, and it becomes less common as the child ages. Delaney was 19 when she found out.

“She was getting her education and just trying to get a good start in life,” Lemus said.

They took her to the University of California, San Francisco Benioff Children’s Hospital, where she had the tumor and her

see Cancer, page 2

Anti same-sex marriage act declared unconstitutional

Alicia Freeman
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President Obama declared section three of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional, claiming classifications based on sexual orientation should be subject to a more heightened standard of scrutiny.

DOMA was passed in 1996, shortly before the national election and rumors that Hawaii might legalize same-sex marriages. The first section simply defines the name of the act, while the second section specifies states do not have to recognize same-sex marriages finalized in other states. These two sections have not been under scrutiny or faced the amount of lawsuits as the third, which defines marriage as a legal union between a person of the opposite sex.

However, with President Obama’s statement about the constitutionality of the section, cases in the future may have different outcomes because the administration will no longer assert its constitutionality in court, according to Attorney General Eric Holder’s statement. Yet, the declaration does not repeal DOMA — it just signifies its constitutionality.

Nutrition sophomore Maura Adams said the act was unconstitutional, and it should be repealed.

“I believe a lot in the separation of church and state,” Adams said. “It says in the Bible that (it is wrong), but what it says in the Bible shouldn’t make laws.”

Adams isn’t alone. Berkeley Johnson, the chaplain for the Canterbury Club, an Episcopal, LGBT inclusive and theologically progressive college and young adult ministry, according to its website, said he also believes in the separation between church and state, especially with the
We’re melting pots. So why isn’t that a part of the pot?

— Kerry Pacheco
Cuesta Community College student

"The arc of history tends to curve forward. So why isn’t that a part of the pot?"

Johnson said the act was passed based on moral and religious reasons rather than on lawful reasons. In fact, Johnson said if another religious group besides Christianity came into power and passed laws based on their religious morals, the "conservative Christians" would be the first to cry for separation of church and state.

"They’re free from any oppressive government control. I’m sure of religion, and religions have their religious morals, the "conservative Christians" would be the first to cry for separation of church and state," Johnson said.

However, Johnson said he felt people are always evolving in their way of thinking about same-sex marriage, along with other past issues such as civil rights, women’s suffrage and slavery. In fact, Johnson said scripture was used as rationale for many of the country’s past social issues.

"In scripture, you have a flat earth; you have slavery being an accepted part of society; you have women as property of their husbands," Johnson said. "And you have a process of evolution in the Bible, an evolving understanding within the scripture that things change over time, so that it’s very hard to pick those passages out if you’re not using the same standard for other passages."

Johnson said those who use scripture as evidence against homoerusal-ity, which he called "proof texting," do not consider the totality or underlying message of the scripture. The Canterbury Club, with the help of To See Our Hope on Christ released by the Episcopal Church, holds Bible study in order to look at the Bible in a safe place without proof texting and appreciate it as a total work.

"We don’t take a passage of scripture and pull it out from its original context and use that to exclude and condemn people," Johnson said. "We have to look at the totality of the scripture and look for those overarching themes."

With that, Pacheco said that though she understood the other point of view against same-sex marriage, she felt America must evolve and learn to accept same-sex marriage just as it has accepted many diverse issues before.

"We’re melting pots," Pacheco said. "So, why isn’t that a part of the pot?"

Johnson also said that different religious groups have different views on same-sex marriage, and she believes that Americans should do their part since every little bit helps.

"I just hope somehow they can help her," Wilson said. "It’s got to be really hard for her and her family."
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Obama defends public employees’ rights

Michael Muskal
LOS ANGELES TIMES

President Barack Obama on Monday waded into the labor standoff in Wisconsin and warned that the rights of public employees should not be infringed upon.

Speaking to the National Governors Association, Obama noted that many states as well as the federal government face tough economic choices. But the president, who has been criticized by some labor allies for not speaking out more forcefully on the Wisconsin situation, noted the fight between Wisconsin’s public unions and the Republican administration in Madison.

"I don't think it does anybody any good when public employees are denigrated or vilified or their rights are infringed upon," Obama said in televised remarks. "We need to attract the best and brightest to public service. These times demand it."

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker has proposed increasing the amount of money that public employees would have to pay to receive both health care and pension benefits. The Republican governor has also sought to limit collective bargaining rights for most public employees.

The plans, which have passed the Wisconsin Assembly, are stalled in the state Senate, whose 14 Democrats have fled to Illinois, making it impossible to have a quorum.

On Monday, Walker gave the Democrats 24 hours to return. He said that if his proposals weren’t passed, the state would be unable to finance part of its debt, leading to some layoffs.

"Now they have one day to return to work before the state loses out on the chance to refinance debt, saving taxpayers $165 million this fiscal year," Walker’s spokesman Cullen Werwie said. "Failure to return to work and cast their votes will lead to more painful and aggressive spending cuts in the very near future."

Initially, Obama had questioned Walker’s proposal to curb collective bargaining, saying in a television interview that "generally seems like more of an assault on unions."

Some Democratic allies had also urged Obama to make good on his campaign comments in 2007 that he would picket if workers were denied their right to organized and collectively bargain.

But the White House last week argued that Obama could speak forcefully on the issue without having to join the demonstrations himself, which have been going on for more than two weeks.

As he has in the past, Obama distinguished between the need to cut budgets and deficits and putting the onus on public employee unions to carry the financial load. Facing his own budget battles in the forthcoming weeks, Obama again called for shared sacrifice on the state and federal levels to achieve savings.
Libyan refugees fleeing from increasing violence

Jeffrey Fleishman
David Zucchino
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Fighting between rebels and government loyalists in Libyan cities intensified Monday as the United Nations reported that more than 100,000 refugees had fled from Libya into Tunisia and Egypt over the last week to escape the bloodshed that had drawn international condemnation.

Rebels in the city of Misrata, about 120 miles east of the capital of Tripoli, reportedly shot down a government plane and pushed back an offensive by forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi to retake the city. In Zawiya, about 30 miles east of Tripoli, government forces surrounded rebels but had not forced them to retreat.

The fighting across Libya came as international concern over days of bloodshed deepened. Catherine Ashton, foreign policy chief for the European Union, said: "What is going on in Libya — the massive violence against these peaceful demonstrators — shocks our conscience. It should spring us into action."

French Prime Minister Francois Fillon said his country was dispatching planes carrying doctors and medical supplies to the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi. Meanwhile, the United Nations warned of a worsening humanitarian crisis as refugees, many of them migrant workers, fled Libya into Tunisia and Egypt over the last week to escape the bloodshed that had drawn international condemnation.

"We call upon the international community to respond quickly and generously to enable these governments to cope with this humanitarian emergency," said Antonio Guterres, the United Nations high commissioner for refugees.

On Sunday, Zawiya, a city of 210,000 just 30 miles west of Tripoli, was shaping up to be a potential focal point for clashes as anti-government forces surrounded the outskirts of Tripoli, Ben Ali said. But the vast majority of men have not left since leaving Benghazi over the last several days, other officials said.

Most of the fighters are impassioned young men eager to play a role in deposing Gadhafi, who has ruled for 41 years. A few are soldiers who defected from Gadhafi’s army, Ben Ali said, adding that leaders of the rebellion don’t fully trust them.

Inside Tripoli, the situation was grim. Two-hour lines awaited people seeking bread or fuel. Officials made it absolutely impossible to enunciate any view against the government, a sobbing 62-year-old businessman said by phone.

The Gadhafi government attempted to appease the uprising with an announcement on state television Sunday that $400 grants would be distributed to each Libyan family as part of the "beginning of the redistribution of oil wealth to Libyans." But long lines of people at the banks were turned away, residents said.

Efforts by foreign governments inside Libya were isolated and aimed at bringing relief to their own citizens. Germany said it performed secret rescues, when planes ferried more than 100 people from a private runway; its foreign minister announced Sunday the British said they again used three aircraft at multiple locations in the eastern Libyan desert to spirit away an additional 150 Britons. A similar, earlier operation also was successful.

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On Sunday, Zawiya, a city of 210,000 just 30 miles west of Tripoli, was shaping up to be a potential focal point for clashes as anti-government forces with tanks and antiaircraft guns massed throughout the city center, and Gadhafi forces surrounded the outskirts with tanks and military checkpoints, residents said.

From the east, small bands of armed men traveled in the direction of the capital from Benghazi.

The developments in Libya occurred as the wave of unrest continued Sunday throughout North Africa and the Middle East, enveloping the usually sleepy Gulf sultanate of Oman, where government forces were blamed for at least two protesters’ deaths.

But the world’s attention remained focused on Libya as military and civilian leaders in Benghazi, the city that gave birth to the uprising, said they had no immediate plans to send large groups of fighters to Tripoli to assist other rebels besieging the capital. Instead, individual fighters have gone on their own.

Khaled ben Ali, an organizer of the provisional government in Benghazi, where the eastern uprising against Gadhafi erupted Feb. 17, said Sunday that a total of about 300 men were traveling in small groups in private cars, with little or no coordination among them or with protesters in Tripoli.

At a Benghazi army barracks, rebels collected weapons — including anti-aircraft guns and Kalashnikov rifles — taken from Gadhafi loyalists. There was continuous talk about going to Tripoli, but no serious effort had been mobilized, air force Col. Ahmed Omar said.

"Our bodies are here, but our hearts are in Tripoli," he said. "We are thinking, the idea has been there since the first day Benghazi was liberated, trying to get to Tripoli."

A few men planned the provisional government center in Benghazi’s central courthouse Sunday to report that they had arrived on the eastern outskirts of Tripoli, Ben Ali said. But the vast majority of men have not been heard from since leaving Benghazi over the last several days, other officials said.

Most of the fighters are impassioned young men eager to play a role in defeating Gadhafi, who has ruled for 41 years. A few are soldiers who defected from Gadhafi’s army, Ben Ali said, adding that leaders of the rebellion don’t fully trust them.

Inside Tripoli, the situation was grim. Two-hour lines awaited people seeking bread or fuel. Official forces melted away to be replaced by young men or teenagers who were armed by Gadhafi, giving the city a sense of wild unpredictability.

"The city is controlled by these mad dogs. They make it absolutely impossible to enunciate any view against the government," a sobbing 62-year-old businessman said by phone.

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Hey, we’ve got a real news feed too.
Learn to accommodate sweet potatoes into your daily diet

Heather Backwood is a food science junior and Mustang Daily food columnist.

Wake up to a sweet note this week. No, I'm not talking about your roommate's off-pitch songs coming from the shower — I am talking about waking up to a delicious bowl of sweet potato oatmeal.

That's right — this versatile tuber is not just for Grandma's Thanksgiving pie anymore. It is time to welcome this root into the world of everyday eating.

The sweet potato is native to Central America and is a scrumptious component of the traditional dish picarones, a pumpkin and sweet potato doughnut. Columbus and his expedition members were the first Europeans to eat sweet potatoes. They brought them back from the New World, and they eventually made their way to all corners of the earth. Even our first president grew these sweet roots on his Mount Vernon, Va. farm.

Currently, just over 90 percent of the sweet potato crops grown worldwide are produced in Asia — and it is the sixth principal world food crop.

The sweet potato's growing requirements are not too stringent — they will grow in almost any soil condition, as well as a variety of harsh environments. This makes it a great crop for all places; however, the nutritional value and health benefits of the sweet potato make it the perfect food for all people. The Center for Science in the Public Interest, an organization promoting a healthier American diet, lists the sweet potato as one of the ten best foods to consume.

Sweet potatoes are excellent sources of beta-carotene, which the body can convert to vitamin A. They also have a good source of vitamin C, potassium, fiber and contribute a small amount of your daily calorie intake. As with some other vegetables, the sweet potato can be prepared and eaten in a certain way to obtain the most nutritional benefits.

Luckily, my college cooking favorite, microwaving, is one successful way to maintain the most nutrients. Pop the sweet potato in the microwave.
Charlie Sheen makes headlines with crazed actions

Mary McNamara
LOS ANGELES TIMES

So now we know.

If you are the star of a hit comedy on CBS, you can keep your job in spite of accusations of threatening your pregnant second wife, holding a knife to your third wife’s throat on Christmas Day, and indulging in cocaine-fueled weekends during which your bizarre behavior causes your female companion to fear for her life.

But say mean things about Chuck Lorre and You Are Toast.

It is difficult to feel anything but relief regarding CBS’ recent decision to officially halt production of its hit comedy “Two and a Half Men.” A crazed Charlie Sheen once again took to the radio airwaves this week, this time to denounce the show’s creator, whom the writer trumped the performer, perhaps because Lorre also produces “Mike and Molly.”

Within hours, CBS and Warner Bros. finally put their foot down; for once, the writer trumped the performer’s dramatic equivalent of Joe Montana and in a couple of years, the franchise will be so solid it can afford a spin-off.

If actors arc not employees, than perhaps the most disturbing aspect to the Charlie Sheen story is the lack of public reaction. Even after the Christmas Day attack on his wife, there were no calls to boycott the show, none of the moral outrage levelled against other public figures who have sinned far less egregiously. Threats to cancel NBC’s “Chuck” got more people in an uproar than the sight of a troubled man implanting a multimedia entertainment package delivered daily into our homes.

And that’s not Sheen’s problem. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Sheen story is the lack of public reaction. Even after the Christmas Day attack on his wife, there were no calls to boycott the show, none of the moral outrage levelled against other public figures who have sinned far less egregiously. Threats to cancel NBC’s “Chuck” got more people in an uproar than the sight of a troubled man implanting a multimedia entertainment package delivered daily into our homes.

It’s as if we expect this sort of behavior, from Sheen in particular, and actors in general, as if we consider the self-destructive behavior of an ill-fated few to be part of the multimedia entertainment package delivered daily into our homes.

That’s all on us.

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Within hours, CBS and Warner Bros. finally put their foot down; for once, the writer trumped the performer, perhaps because Lorre also produces “Mike and Molly.”

But it’s equally difficult to feel much sympathy for the network or the studio. Having spent years in a dysfunctional, co-dependent marriage with Sheen, they have, apparently, done little to prepare for a moment that the rest of the world has seen coming for quite a while now. We’ve haven’t seen these kind of meltdowns since the Heidi Fleiss years.

Of course, these are the same folks who, after Sheen was arrested and charged with felony menacing and third-degree assault for the 2009 Christmas Day incident (he later pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault as part of a plea bargain), later described the situation as “very personal and very private.” And Lorre, before a gathering of the Television Critics Association after the arrest, treated it largely as a joke, telling journalists that it was burnout as usual on set because “Charlie is a consummate pro. He shows up and he delivers.” A few months later, Sheen renewed his contract for two years in a deal that brought him roughly $1.8 million per episode.

Threaten your wife with a deadly weapon and become one of the highest-paid actors on television. Meanwhile, no one appears to be interested in actually promoting the future of “Two and a Half Men,” the highest-rated comedy on television. Even taking the most restrictive contracts into account, surely Lorre and his writers are clever enough to figure out an “Operation: Off the Rails” story line in which a vibrant and distracting new character is introduced more moments after Sheen’s Charlie Harper has gone on an “unexpected and indefinite leave of absence” (in a case similar to Joe Montana’s retirement). As Mandy Patinkin proved when he simply failed to show up for work on “Criminal Minds” a few years ago, one big-name performer does not a show make — call in the comedic equivalent of Joe Montana and in a couple of years, the franchise will be so solid it can afford a spin-off.

In a way, Charlie Sheen explains it all. Every junkie/alcoholic/sex addict who ever bounced in and out of rehab, every assault/soliciting/handgun possession charge that has been dodged or bargained down by a celebrity, every set shut down caused by a star’s drug/alcohol/ exhaustion/hulkie syndrome/personal issues. In Hollywood, it’s still making money, it ain’t broke.

Still, you can’t blame CBS or Warner Bros.; it isn’t a network’s job to tough love a star into rehab, and if every star with demons was fired, more than one show would go show on hiatus.

The real problem is that no one quite knows how to deal with stars like Sheen because we’re not quite sure how to classify people who generate that kind of money. Although they are paid for services rendered, they are not “employees.” Employees must adhere to certain rules and standards — it’s hard to imagine the VP of international marketing at CBS getting away with the cocaine-fueled weekends and the cowering prostitute, or even the star of a slightly less successful show.

If actors are not employees, than perhaps the most disturbing aspect to the Charlie Sheen story is the lack of public reaction. Even after the Christmas Day attack on his wife, there were no calls to boycott the show, none of the moral outrage levelled against other public figures who have sinned far less egregiously. Threats to cancel NBC’s “Chuck” got more people in an uproar than the sight of a troubled man implanting a multimedia entertainment package delivered daily into our homes.

And that’s all on us.
Sweet Potatoes

continued from page 6

the microwave, and in just a few minutes you can mix the warm flesh with a little pineapple, applesauce or coconut milk to make the perfect study break snack.

Other successful ways to maintain nutrient benefits are steaming and roasting. Boiling is successful at softening the flesh, but studies have shown boiling is more likely to reduce the amount of anthocyanin (antioxidant) content and thus provide less nutrient benefits.

When preparing the sweet potatoes to cook, keep in mind that the bright color of the potato’s flesh will undergo oxidation and darken after contact with air. Therefore, they should be cooked immediately after cutting. If that isn’t possible, you can place them in a bowl completely covered by water or water mixed with pineapple juice to prevent browning.

When eating these tubers, you can increase your body’s absorption of the beta-carotene by pairing them with 3 to 5 grams of fat. This can easily be accomplished by adding a small amount of olive oil or butter to your cooked potatoes. Consuming sweet potatoes with other foods (such as meats, carbs, etc.) in a meal can also provide the fat necessary for the best uptake of beta-carotene.

When selecting from the market, look for sweet potatoes free from cracks and soft spots. Avoid choosing any potatoes that are displayed in the refrigerated produce sections since colder temperature negatively alter the potato’s flavor characteristics. After you bring your tubers home, make sure you store them in a cool, dark, ventilated place for up to 10 days.

What a sweet song the sweet potato sings to not only our stomachs, but our taste buds and health as well. Breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack — it doesn’t matter what time of day, these sweet taters can easily be added to any meal to add a punch of nutrients in their own subtle sweet way.

Here are the third most preferred flavor in the world, preceded only by vanilla and chocolate.

Simple Sweet Potato Oatmeal

1/2 c. cooked oats
1 medium sweet potato
1/2 banana, sliced
2 Tbs. maple syrup
1 tsp. cinnamon

Peel sweet potato in microwave to cook. Remove cooked flesh from skin, mash and place in a bowl. Immediately place maple syrup in the potatoes (which should be hot enough to melt the syrup). Add orange juice and cinnamon. Mix until well blended. Combine cooked oats and stir until consistently mixed. Garnish with remaining banana and maple syrup. Serve warm. Add any extra toppings you prefer (including dried/fresh fruits or more milk). Enjoy.

When it comes to its most prestigious awards show, the most excelled statuettes went to films that espouse conservative values. "The King’s Speech," which won four Oscars, including the climactic one for best picture, is profoundly conservative film, paying tribute to King George VI, an aristocratic English monarch who, bumbled by a humiliating stutter, develops a deep friendship with a commoner, his speech therapist.

The film portrays the king as a man of noble oblige — he sacrifices for the common good by willingly assuming the heavy mantle of leadership, even if it will expose his most embarrassing flaw. He is, in other words, resolutely Old School. Could a movie be any more richly conservative in its values than that? And yet "The King’s Speech," from David Seidler, its writer, to Colin Firth, its leading man, to Harvey Weinstein, the studio chief who masterminded its Oscar campaign, was brought into the world by a host of ardent liberals.

The same can be said for "The Social Network," which won three Oscars last night and was the season’s other prime best picture contender. Even though it is set in the raucous air of Harvard, “Social Network” is far from a liberal critique of capitalism. It’s a thoroughly pro-business film that celebrates the rise of Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg, who for all his new media hip veneer is just as much of a cunning, ambitious, thoroughly cold-blooded entrepreneur as a gasp — Rupert Murdoch.

Yet the film was written by Aaron Sorkin, a flaming liberal who spends much of his time online hurling poison darts at Sarah Palin. And the film was financed and distributed by Sony Pictures, whose co-chairmen, Amy Pascal and Michael Lynton, are both outspoken advocates for various Hollywood progressive causes.

This is hardly a fluke. Just last year, the academy gave its best picture honor to “The Hurt Locker,” which many conservatives praised as a pro-military film, and not just because director Kathryn Bigelow, accepting her Oscar for best director, dedicated the film to “the women and men of the military who risk their lives every day in Iraq and Afghanistan.” That was hardly surprising, given that the film’s bomb-disposal experts were portrayed as being selfless, heroic and full of masculine cool.

Since the arrival of the “Easy Rider” generation in the late 1960s, Hollywood has been a bastion of liberalism. But the argument conservatives make — that the industry is just a club of pampered rich kids and Ivy League elitists who spurn movies without the requisite liberal credentials — doesn’t hold water, especially not at Oscar time.

If you study Oscar history, you see liberal Hollywood has often rewarded films promoting conservative values. That pattern dates as far back as 1971, during the height of the Vietnam War, when “Paris,” a stirring salute to World War II’s most indomitable military man, not only won best picture, but beat out “MASSH,” a defiantly anticwar comedy. The same thing happened in 1979, when “The Deer Hunter,” an evocative portrait of Vietnam war refugees, went on to fend for themselves in Vietnam war picture over the openly anticwar “Coming Home,” which co-starred antiwar activists Jon Voight and Jane Fonda.

So why does liberal Hollywood often pay its highest tribute to films with such conservative themes? First of all, because people are making movies not about politics, but about entertainment, and that means making sure to address everything that makes people laugh — tap-dancing on a stage or hurling poison darts at Sarah Palin. And the film was financed and distributed by Sony Pictures, whose co-chairmen, Amy Pascal and Michael Lynton, are both outspoken advocates for various Hollywood progressive causes.

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Eric Baldwin is an electrical engineering senior and Mustang Daily libertarian columnist.

Whatever unions may be or do, they are a fine topic for bitter arguments. If you want to divide a family, a region or an entire nation, bring up labor unions.

Unions are based on beliefs about the working world of the type that are broad and deep. To be neutral on the topic of unions, is to be neutral on many of the greatest questions of our age: What are human rights? What is ownership? What is the proper relationship between human beings?

Historically, unions organized workers to act as a unit to pursue two primary objectives: to collectively negotiate with employers and to pursue orchestrated political activism internally as well as externally — usually of a socialist bent.

The central divisive idea behind the trade union is the idea of worker exploitation.

Unions are workers exploited? History has its share of abuses, ranging from cheating the illiterate to using fear to impose an unjust agreement for mutual benefit is not simply be easily rectified.

The central divisive idea behind the trade union is the idea of worker exploitation. More education is available for a broad and deep. To be neutral on the topic of unions, is to be neutral on many of the greatest questions of our age: What are human rights? What is ownership? What is the proper relationship between human beings?

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Basketball
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other," Grunow said. "It doesn't look like five individual players; it looks like one team."

The team's 12-3 Big West record is also encouraging for Grunow.

"A few losses a season are totally OK," Grunow said. "They're still going to make it to the playoffs, and they're going to get back into the swing of things for the season."

Cal Poly will host the first round of the Big West Tournament at Mott Gym, on Tuesday, March 8. Cal Poly is in a great position coming into the home stretch, head coach Faith Mimnaugh said. The team still holds the first seed and has a chance to win the Big West Championship for the first time ever.

"We're shooting for the big-time here," Mimnaugh said.

Mimnaugh, who has been coach for 14 years, said she is especially eager to see the team win because she's witnessed how far women's basketball has come.

"It's been quite a journey," Mimnaugh said. "From having this progress into making the tournament to potentially being first seed."

Whether or not the Mustangs are the first seed still depends on their performance down the stretch. The Mustangs have earned at least a share of the Big West title, but will win the championship outright if they defeat UC Santa Barbara this weekend.

"Everybody wants to win," Mimnaugh said. "I can't guarantee that we're going to win but we're going to prepare to win."

That doesn't mean winning will be easy, Clancy said. Competition is fierce among all nine Big West teams.

"Anybody can beat any team on any given night," Clancy said. "They can beat us, we can beat them."

Clancy especially wants to see the women's basketball team win because she's in her last season with the team. She envisions the team's own banner in Mott Gym marking Cal Poly women's basketball's first championship victory in the Big West.

"Everybody always says we're trying not to think too far ahead, but for those few seconds that I do, I would love to hang a banner in Mott Gym," Clancy said.

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Everybody wants to win, I can't guarantee that we're going to win, but we're going to prepare to win.
— Faith Mimnaugh
Cal Poly women's basketball coach

Guard Jonae Ervin returned to the court last weekend after missing two games with a torn meniscus. Ervin scored 13 points in her return against Cal State Fullerton.

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Women’s basketball aims to avoid late-season misfortunes

Victoria Billings
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The Cal Poly women's basketball team (16-10, 12-3 Big West) remains optimistic about its chances in the upcoming Big West tournament, despite two recent losses to Cal State Northridge and UC Riverside.

The losses mirror the team’s end-of-season performance last year, when it lost the top seed in the Big West Conference after losing two of its last three games — only to be knocked out of the tournament in the first round.

Guard Rachel Clancy said those parallels between last season and this year’s are unrealistic. The team held on to the top seed with a record of 10-3 despite the losses, in which last year’s team dropped to the second seed before the tournament.

"From my perspective, we haven't lost three of the last five," Clancy said. "We've won 10 of the last 13."

The two losses don’t mark a streak of bad luck, Clancy said. They are results of a knee injury and a case of pneumonia to two players off the court.

The players’ absences meant the rest of the team had to fill the open spots. Many of the players were worn out because they couldn’t take a breather when they needed it, Clancy said.

Player fatigue took its toll when Cal Poly lost to Northridge, which was 3-22 and at the bottom of the Big West at the time of the loss.

"Northridge went down to the last second," Clancy said.

The Mustangs lost by eight to UC Riverside. The reason: points from the free-throw line, Clancy said.

The missing players will be back in upcoming games, and Clancy said this is good news as the Big West Tournament approaches. The first tournament game is March 8. Only time will tell if the tournament will be a repeat of last year’s late losses and doesn’t want to see the team suffer the same fate.

"I got to know the team last year really well and that was the heartbreaker because I knew how much the girls wanted it," Grunow said.

Grunow attended many of the team’s practices last season and said the losses came from a lack of team unity, not talent. This season won’t be a repeat of last year because of the strong group dynamic this time around, Grunow said.

"They have really good camaraderie and a good court sense with each other."

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The all-new Noodle Bar at Sage features such favorites as Phở, an intensely flavorful noodle soup. And the best part? $5.50 for a large, steaming bowl.

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