

CHRISTINE CHANG**Boggling
Broadcast**

Adapting to a new economy

It's been said that when the economy suffers, fast food franchises are the first ones to smile. In a time of tight budgets and dwindling jobs, families have increasingly chosen to treat themselves with cheap fast food rather than formal dining. So sure enough, when I biked to Burger King the other day, I opened the door to find a long line of customers clutching the same mail-in coupon book I'd tucked safely in my pocket. For the sake of buy-one-get-one-free deals, I, along with several families lined up at Burger King, ventured into the land of heart disease, cholesterol, cancer and obesity as a means of staying massively full for few dollars.

Until recently, however, I was vaguely aware of how the economic recession is taking its toll on American consumers. I had the naive notion that the financial meltdown was simply a hoax covered up with drama. While articles deemed the recession tantamount to the Great Depression, I saw images of my mother boiling leather scraps for supper and scoffed at the absurdity.

But in spite of my illusions, the recession is really happening. The Labor Department has reported record unemployment rates in the last few months. Stock points have fallen relentlessly, and continue to decrease. Bailouts are passed to no avail, bolstering morale that is desperate and artlessly engineered. Small companies are losing business and closing down retail sales continue to decline. People are scrambling to find jobs that will pay for bills; others have given up.

The current recession is a complicated story, but the bottom line is, it's affecting everyone—the retired who are relying on savings, the middle-aged still raising kids, the young adults scavenging jobs, and eager students applying to college.

So while high-schoolers aren't exposed to the "real world" quite yet, the recession still concerns us one way or another. We're adolescents approaching adulthood, and as students, we'll have to adapt to the economy. We'll have to "go with the flow" of the situation, which might mean cutting back on excessive expenses, working toward a definitive goal, or taking the initiative to explore and plan our careers early. By being aware of the crisis and doing what we can to adjust our lives accordingly, we'll be more perceptive people when we finally come face to face with a bigger world.

Adapting to the economy might sound intimidating, but in truth, it's nothing new. We've done it all our lives, just on a smaller scale, because adapting is how we survive. Naturally, it was through recognizing the changes in our surroundings, adjusting, and fitting in that we really learned to grow up in a constantly changing world. When we moved to a new school, we learned to play by its rules. When we picked up a new instrument, we learned to hone our skills through practice and practice and practice. And now, when we're faced with a faltering economy, we'll learn to become skilled at planning ahead and managing budgets.

There's no telling when the global economy will resurge. However long it lasts, the recession will be a period tweaking habits, making commitments, and most importantly, gaining the patience and determination to see it through. Seeing as the economy is hardly predictable, it might be a long wait until the recession ends.

But while we're waiting... have a fry.