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MASTHEAD

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COLLECTED BY KATE TUNNELL '24
EDITED BY CARLI COOPERSTEIN '24

Oh, I don't believe in God anymore.

That makes sense.

Suddenly, the size of my left wrist became more interesting than our conversation. I gripped it in a chokehold for a few moments.

What?

My eyes didn't leave my hand.

But, I wish I did.

I drew in a sharp inhale. The words left a bitter taste in my mouth like I had just squashed a bug on my tongue and swallowed. My therapist waited for my eyes to meet hers, letting the ticking of the clock grow louder. For me, having patience and being silent was like holding my breath. I could only last for a few moments. I looked up, knowing what she'd ask.

Why is that so bad?

I shrugged, wondering the same damn thing even though it felt so obvious.

If you could guess.

My eyes flickered anxiously to my father. He reassured me with nods as his mother dug through her purse for her "gift." He could only last a few moments before he snatched the purse and pulled out a sharp steel band, holding it up to the hot Orange County sun. I recognized this gleaming never-ending loop. Everyone in their family wore one except for me, the youngest daughter. While I knew it as the "weapon" that always cut me, their family knew it as the kara—the steel band, recognized in all religions, representing one's ever-lasting, unbreakable bond with God.

Put it on! Put it on her!

I looked over at my quiet mother. She had her arms crossed against her chest. It was the first time I noticed how bare her wrists were. I didn't realize my grandmother's raising my hand until I felt the cold steel touching the top of my fingers. I flinched, and immediately, her grin melted into a disappointed frown.

Put it on.

My father gave me a look—never with me—and easily slid the kara onto my wrist. I tugged and squeezed, believing if anyone could bend this metal, it'd be me. My father quickly shut me down, taking my wrist away.

Never take this off.

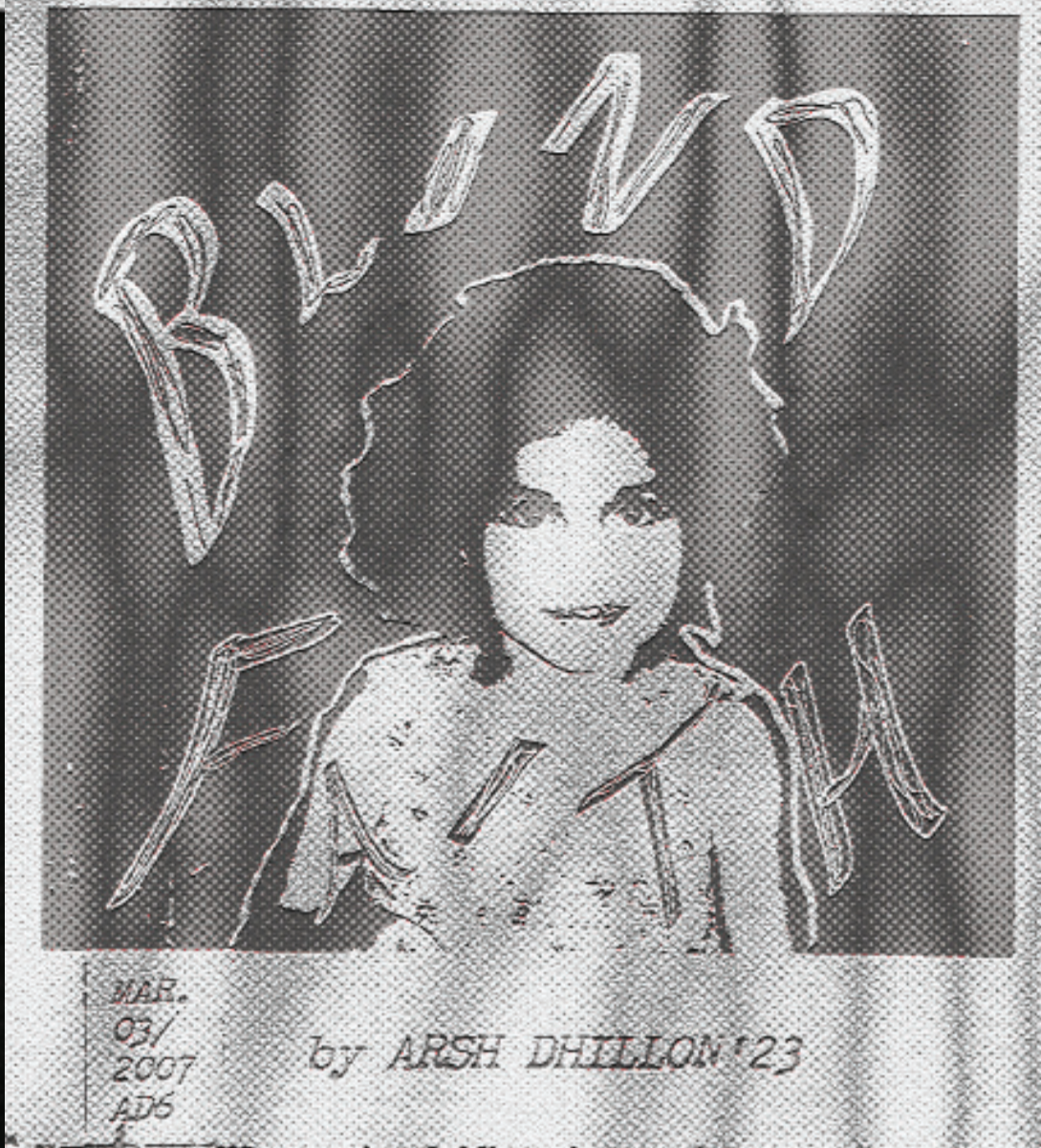
What if I want to?

He laughed as if what I asked was ridiculous.

My wrist will grow.

Bigger than this?

He raised the band, my dead arm rising with it. That was a lot of empty space.



What about her?

I searched for my mother as I whined, but she was already disappearing indoors.

Listen to me.

My father's command hung in the dry air as I stared into the house. Where did she go? He turned my chin towards him, and my eyes fixed themselves on the steel band.

You won't take this off.

I nodded, snapping my head back to the house. I was determined to find her now, but my father had other plans. He held onto the kara, pulling me back and lifting me to the sky. He'd spin me around, throw me into the air, and catch me with his calloused hands. He'd wrestle me to the ground and let out belting laughter as I, at the age of six, attempted to fight back against his sturdy six-foot-four frame. Despite knowing I'd never win, I played his game, for I liked how he took up so much room, how real he felt. Yet, while I grew, he never made space for me to breathe. Soon, his pulls on my wrist left me red and raw, his laughs turned into flinching roars, and his playful wrestles became wheezing fights for life. I realized I might never outgrow his twenty-four-hour games, for there was no one else who sounded or felt like him.

I only believed in God out of necessity. When you can't see hope, you have to create it, right?

She furrows her brows at me for a moment; something about what I said, or what she expected me to say, was off. I press instead of changing directions.

I mean how else was I supposed to survive?

No, no, that makes sense. It's very common. When did you stop?

When he was gone.

Your father or God?

My father. I try not to see God as a he anymore.

She raises her eyebrows at this, understanding now what wasn't sitting well. A few moments pass as I wait for her to ask what I'm already supposed to know.

Did you ever?

He's not coming back.

Her commanding whisper led to the flood of my sisters' cries. I kept my dry eyes on the edge of our coffee table. In a moment, the door slammed shut, hushing all noise behind the connecting walls. I loosened my grip of the table to give my now-bent, bare wrists a break and turned to my right.

The afternoon sun cast a dull pale light over her. She wore a college sweatshirt and old yoga pants. She had high

cheekbones and straight blonde hair that framed her square jaw. She was young. There were dark circles underneath her green eyes. I looked at her for the first time as my mother, the woman who eluded him with silence. She was the one to whom I had given my blind faith. There was no tenderness between us, mother and daughter. We were far too tired, weary, and hardened for intimacy. We shared no words. Yet, just from the sight of her, I believed she was real, grounded. As her presence settled over me, so did my disbelief in God.

When I took a breath, she left. I was alone now in our apartment's silent living room. For the first time, my feet sunk into the floor and my shoulders drooped. I stared out of the living room window, looking for nothing, and I liked how quiet it was, how much space I filled.

I've never experienced that feeling again. Not even come close.

But you don't believe in God anymore, so—

I know. Maybe I made the wrong decision.

A bit harsh to judge the decisions your ten-year-old self made.

Maybe I should believe again.

She's not convinced.

Why is faith in God the solution?

Even in a new home, my city's early morning light still brought the same image: my mother eating dry cereal at the kitchen counter, basked in that soft yellow glow. She and I always woke up early, bursting out of bed, in an excited relief to leave the dark. This was my first morning back for winter break.

I slid into the living room, peeking into the kitchen. The comfort of consistency suddenly vanished as I turned to my right and saw her in the midst of a prayer. Her eyes were closed, surrounded by the smoke from the lit incense. I barely processed the image before my mouth interrupted the silence.

What the hell are you doing?

Her eyes snapped open. She glared at me but wouldn't dare to respond. Her words with God weren't finished yet. I turned my back to her, waiting for the ring of a bell. The sound conjured memories of my grandmother. She always caught me watching her as the sun rose. Her hums and bounces and bells entranced me. Entering her room of prayer, I listened to her stories about sacrifice: what do you love so much, you'd kill it to save the sun, the world? At first, the stories brought fear, but slowly, I desired to be the bravest, the most willing, the most loved.

After she finished, I opened my mouth to apologize, knowing my gut reaction was something I still had to train, but she was ready for it.

Don't insult my God.

Her growl was laced with fear as if she had psyched herself out from rehearsing too often. A smirk crept onto my lips, but I caught it before it showed: there was no need to push on pressure points. She continued.

He's the reason we're here. He saved--

My face scrunched up into a mixture of disgust and anger. I laughed.

Your God never did anything for you. You're the reason we're here.

As a child, I prayed and believed in her, that one day she'd run off with me and my sisters to the rising sun. We would leave the night forever, and she would know of the sacrifice I had no choice but to make: silence. As a child, I believed she was perfect, so she saw me and she heard me and she knew.

Three years later, I realized I was slowly choking, as if I had survived drowning in an ocean only to die from the puddle left in my lungs. I stood under a dull, fluorescent light in a gray, darkening stairwell. I had asked for privacy as I was far too embarrassed not knowing how I would react once I spoke. We were on the phone together. She would have to hear me as I could never look her in the eyes and actually *speak*, not create noise to keep the peace, but cut through the air with revelations.

I took a breath and told my mother what he did to me. After, I immediately

dropped to the ground to catch my breath, my aching lungs almost empty at last. She waited until my mind settled, so I remembered her presence.

Are you sure?

It took me several moments to process her question, to understand she didn't know. While I said the truth as a revelation, I hoped



it'd be noise. I hoped I could hear, even create, the lie from her response. I had prepared myself to fight, to ensure she couldn't deny the truth. But, this question did not even reveal an ignorant turning of the eye. She was always prepared; she could not lie, or veer away from her gut, in a state of shock. She never heard or saw or knew. Instead, my mother had thrown her blind faith into my silence, my grins as my father spun me around in the air. The "sacrifice" I made had always been a manipulation tactic, his weapon against me, but I knew this. I just could not feel it was true, that what I kept secret was never for the "greater good" of my sisters and mother; rather, it was to protect

him.

What filled me then was far worse than water: rage, hot and red anger with no one, nowhere, to take it. This balloon sitting at the bottom of my stomach had been inflating since I was a child, so I desperately wanted to forgive, to pop this tumor-like ball my past lived in, but did I have anyone to blame? My father was a ghost of the past, the thing that I forgot was still living. My mother, though, was here, but up until this moment I had made the mistake of believing she was perfect, all-knowing. Would forgiveness even change anything for me?

It's a lot easier to be angry at God than at him or her or anyone really.

You want closure.

I open my mouth to react, but I didn't need to continue. She had caught up to me. She gave me a weak smile, recognizing the growing pains of becoming a woman who wanted to take control of her own story. That in order for me to do so, I had to grieve instead of forgive. I had to believe in the only one who knew me, who I couldn't tune out or turn away from, who could simultaneously be imperfect and all-knowing. Instead of throwing blindly, I had to willingly place my faith in me.

I returned the weak smile. The fatigue settled in my body, and I pressed my back against the plush armchair as the ticking clock filled my ears like a slow heartbeat teaching me the rhythm to breathe.

Arsh Dhillon '23 (asekhon@college.harvard.edu) is the President of the Independent.

Graphic by Arsh Dhillon '23

Photo by Rivers Sheehan '23

Jim

&

RIVERS

ASSIGN. 1

CONTACT SHEET

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1969/70

2019/20

Today, cameras flood Harvard campus. Whether it's with a passerby's iPhone, a tourist's DSLR, or an Indyite's newfound vintage 35mm camera, we constantly capture moments with the flick of a shutter. In 1969 when one of the founders of the *Independent*, Jim Vassef '71 was photographing Harvard and its community, the making and sharing images was a special process, nothing like the ubiquity it has become today.

That said, ever since the first daguerreotypes, there have been and will always be people who love making images with whatever tool they have on-hand and wherever they find something that catches their eye. Some might call it obsessive, but to photographers, image-makers, like Jim and I, it's our natural way of processing, moving through this world.

In this series, I paired my own images with those of the *Independent*'s founder, Jim Vassef '71, handing them over to be displayed on a contact sheet. Jim's photographs utilize black and white analog format while mine use both analog and digital, black and white and color. We both made photographs around Harvard campus, the square, and Boston, and many images may feature similar places or events. However, because of the time jump, the photographs offer stark comparisons of what the world looked like then and now.

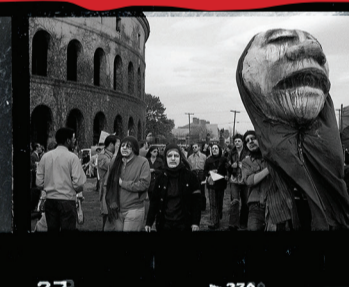
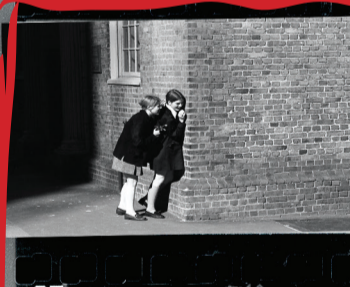
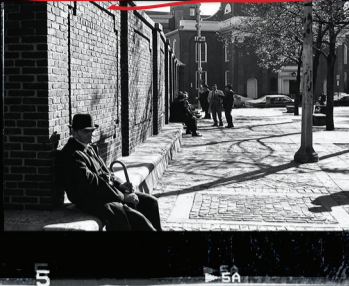
Notice iPhones instead of newspapers (18 & 24), new popularized styles of fashion and building designs, and masks as a mark of the global pandemic where there was not one before. I still see some of the same expressions, gestures, and gatherings, all which make Harvard and its surrounding environs more than just a place. The people who inhabit these images, spaces, decades apart, cultivate life and energy. They are not only the reason many of us yearn to return here, to home, but also the reason we, who are here, now notice a certain emptiness while the larger campus community remains far away.

Rivers Sheehan '23 (rivers_sheehan@college.harvard.edu)
sees the world in technicolor.

J.V
R.S
6/70
19/20

Need A
Guide?

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Of Harvard Bondage

What, Exactly, Harvard and Its Executives Hold in Private Prisons

BY CADE WILLIAMS '23

Alabama has recently made national headlines as the future home of two CoreCivic mega-prisons. CoreCivic is the leading constructor and owner of private prisons and detention centers in the United States. Each of the top five owners of CoreCivic has links to Harvard University via employed alumni, and two of those five employ high-ranking executives who also serve as Harvard faculty members.

The company has 116 facilities located throughout the U.S. and plans to construct two more in Alabama following a deal signed by Governor Kay Ivey on February 1. According to its website, CoreCivic is a “socially responsible organization,” “committed to providing high quality, compassionate treatment to all those in our care.” The company cites its dedication to protecting incarcerated people’s rights and providing opportunities for them to participate in reentry programs. It claims to improve communities by providing “strong, active corporate citizenship” and job opportunities to the communities in which its prisons operate.

The practicalities are more complicated. CoreCivic, formerly the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), has a storied history of abuse, neglect, and violence. The CCA was founded in 1983 and was first investigated for malpractice in 1998. A report from that investigation describes a CCA facility: “in a pattern of flawed security attributable to both corporate and institutional management deficiencies, NEOCC failed to accomplish the basic mission of correctional safety.” It also outlines a lack of work and educational programs, a low level of communication between staff and incarcerated individuals, and the systemic use of “unnecessarily harsh and humiliating procedures” during a period that followed two murders at the CCA prison.

The CCA rebranded to CoreCivic in 2016. The company adopted the slogan, “Better the public good,” and set up a sleek new website. Abuses continued within their facilities. A 2020 report from the Tennessean discusses various issues at CoreCivic-owned prisons in the state of Tennessee dating back to at least 2016. The report includes allegations about violence and sexual abuse, gang activity, understaffing, use of excessive force, and medical neglect. Another report from the Associated Press in January 2021 describes an ongoing lawsuit in Georgia, which argues that CoreCivic fails to protect individuals incarcerated in their facilities from COVID-19. And detainees at various

ICE detention centers operated by CoreCivic have also alleged that they have experienced abuse at the hands of CoreCivic staff.

Given the negative track record of private prisons, why might people invest in them? In a recent article, investment advisor Dane Bowler analyzes the financial risks associated with investing in CoreCivic. He acknowledges that COVID-19 negatively impacted CoreCivic’s profits, as “inmate populations generally dropped,” and “every aspect of caring for detainees became a bit more difficult and a bit more expensive.” Bowler also draws attention to President Joe Biden’s campaign promises. He swore to end federal government contracts with the private prison industry and articulated the public’s growing distrust of the industry. But despite the political risks associated with investing in CoreCivic, Bowler concludes that investments will still turn a profit: “I think CXW is overly cheap and the risks are overemphasized. Reward to risk looks quite favorable at this price.”

One of the economic incentives for investing in the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) is that it tends to continue to make money even when the economy at large is not doing well. During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses, gyms, car dealerships, and restaurants have shut down and gone out of business—but prisons haven’t. Prisons essentially have a captive workforce in the form of incarcerated individuals who are paid little to nothing for their labor. Thus, even in global pandemics and economic recessions, prisons continue to turn profits. In the third quarter of 2020 alone, CoreCivic’s revenue totaled \$468.3 million. CoreCivic CEO Damon Hininger reportedly makes a yearly salary of \$5.3 million. And according to CNN, the top five owners of CoreCivic own shares that total a combined value of close to \$290 million. Two of those top five owners, namely the Vanguard Group and Arrowstreet Capital LP, have high-ranking executives who also serve as Harvard faculty members.

Before looking into the investments in CoreCivic held by the Vanguard Group and Arrowstreet Capital, it is important to clarify the sources for the information presented. All the financial information in this article is public knowledge, and the investments the *Independent* analyzes are made by companies, not individuals. The individuals below are included for their associations with Harvard as former and active faculty members.

Dr. André Perold is the George Gund Professor of Finance and Banking Emeritus at Harvard Business School. After teaching at the University for over thirty years, Perold left his full-time job at the University in 2011 to found HighVista strategies and still serves as the company’s Chief Investment Officer. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Vanguard Group, an investment management company aimed at “long-term investors looking to pair a buy-and-hold strategy with the lowest-cost offerings,” according to an article from NerdWallet. On its website, Vanguard proclaims its core values are integrity, focus, and stewardship. The last of those three values has inspired several community service initiatives ranging from improving community gardens to investing in local schools and communities. “In the end,” the website reads, “it’s not about us at all. Simply put, serving our communities is the right thing to do.” Vanguard states that they have a formal procedure to “identify and monitor portfolio companies whose direct involvement in crimes against humanity or patterns of egregious abuses of human rights would warrant engagement or potential divestment.” CoreCivic, in Vanguard’s eyes, does not fit that profile. CNN describes Vanguard as the second-largest owner of CoreCivic. The company holds over 13.5 million shares, equivalent to a total value of a little over \$97 million. The *Independent* spoke to the Vanguard Group’s Public Relations Office about the company’s investments in CoreCivic and whether the Biden administration’s decision to ban private contracts for federal prisons would affect investments.

“Private prisons make up a very modest portion of Vanguard funds’ portfolios and are largely held in index funds,” replied Vanguard representative Alyssa Thornton. “Vanguard’s index funds are compelled to hold the securities listed in the underlying benchmark; third-party index providers have full discretion over the composition (i.e., securities listed) of the benchmark index. Should the securities of an underlying index change, our funds would follow suit.” Between January and February 2021, Vanguard sold 5.2 million of its shares in CoreCivic.

When the *Independent* reached out to Dr. Perold for further comments on the Vanguard Group’s investments in CoreCivic, he did not respond.

Dr. John Campbell is the Morton L. and Carole S. Olshan Professor of Economics at Harvard College. He has been teaching at the College

since 1994 and served as the Chair of the Economics Department from 2009-2012. In 1999, Campbell and colleagues Peter Rathjens and Bruce Clark founded Arrowstreet Capital LP, the fourth-highest investor in CoreCivic. Campbell still serves as a Research Partner for the trust fund.

In contrast to the Vanguard Group, Arrowstreet Capital makes no assertions about community stewardship. “We align our interests with those of our clients,” the About Us page on their website reads, “and strive to meet and exceed client investment objectives and service expectations.” Arrowstreet Capital currently holds 2.8 million shares in CoreCivic, which are valued at \$20.5 million. The trust fund is also increasing its investments in CoreCivic, having purchased 827,346 shares in the opening months of 2021. When contacted for further comments on Arrowstreet Capital LP’s investments in CoreCivic, neither Dr. Campbell nor an Arrowstreet representative responded.

The University’s connections to CoreCivic

comment on individual investments.”

The Harvard Prison Divestment Coalition (HPDC), a Harvard-based prison abolition group, claims that the University has multiple other financial holdings in the PIC in addition to the one admittedly small and indirect investment in CoreCivic. Derek Walsh ’23, a representative of the organization, stated, “HPDC exists because students recognize the significant role that Harvard has played, since the founding in 1636 up until now, in slavery and now the Prison Industrial Complex.” The group’s primary goal is to advocate for divestment from “companies that directly feed into the Prison Industrial Complex and the incarceration of Black and brown individuals who are disproportionately represented in prisons.” Along with advocating for divestment, HPDC emphasizes the importance of disclosure. “Being a school with the motto Veritas, meaning truth, I think it’s hypocritical that they don’t expose the truth about where they put their money,” said

include communication, monitoring, commissary, healthcare, transportation, and financial transactions. As public opinion has turned against private prison construction, companies that previously focused on construction have started expanding into these other forms of privatization. “They are trying to come up with new ways to make money from the same population, and then pitching it in ways that are attractive to politicians interested in surface-level reforms,” Highsmith explained. One such company is CoreCivic, which has recently begun expanding into realms such as “electronic monitoring, supervisory centers, and residential reentry programming.”

Despite the negative scrutiny private prison companies like CoreCivic have received since President Biden’s announcement, they are still moving forward with construction plans. On Monday, February 1, 2021, Governor Kay Ivey of Alabama signed a deal with CoreCivic to build two



do not stop at companies affiliated with faculty and alumni. Harvard University is itself indirectly invested in CoreCivic through an iShares ETF. The ETF in which Harvard Management Company (HMC) invests is the top mutual fund invested in CoreCivic, with about 7.7 million shares valued at nearly \$51 million. BlackRock Fund Advisors manages iShares funds and holds the highest number of shares in CoreCivic. Harvard invests around \$3.5 million into the iShares-managed small-cap ETF. Of that amount, only 0.09%, or about \$3,100, goes to CoreCivic. Harvard also invests in two Vanguard-operated funds and two additional BlackRock-operated funds, though these have no direct ties to CoreCivic. When the *Independent* reached out to the Harvard Management Company for more information on Harvard’s investment in this particular ETF, Patrick McKiernan, Director of Communications, responded, “HMC does not

Walsh. “We want to know what they contribute to.”

In October 2019, HPDC released a report demonstrating Harvard’s involvement in the PIC. In this report, HPDC asserts, “Harvard has at least \$3 million worth of holdings in the PIC across a variety of sectors.” These sectors include “federal, state, and local governments; weapons manufacturers; bail bondsmen; analytics and surveillance technology manufacturers; financiers; pharmaceutical corporations; telecommunications companies; and police and guard unions.”

Brian Highsmith is a Ph.D. student in Government and Social Policy at Harvard University who has extensively researched prison privatization in realms other than prison construction. “Nearly every function in our criminal punishment system has been privatized in some form, by some jurisdiction,” he told the *Independent*. Some examples of this non-construction privatization

new mega-prisons, costing the state \$3 billion over the next 30 years. Governor Ivey cited “the failing state of the [Alabama Department of Corrections’s] existing infrastructure and that the Department already is faced with more than \$1 billion in deferred maintenance costs alone.” Thus, he claimed, “pursuing new construction without raising taxes or incurring debt is the fiscally sound and responsible decision.”

Disclosure: the author of this article is involved with Alabama Students Against Prisons and Harvard Prison Divestment Coalition. This article does not represent the views of ASAP or HPDC and was written with the goal of objectivity.

Cade Williams ’23 (cadewilliams@college.harvard.edu) is the Associate Editor of the Independent.

Graphic by Arsh Dhillon ’23

No New Prisons

Why new prisons, public or private, only serve to perpetuate a broken system.

BY CADE WILLIAMS '23

In the previous piece, I detailed the connections between Harvard University and its affiliates to CoreCivic, the leading constructor and owner of private prisons in the United States. The article explored the particularities of private prison investment in light of documented abuses at CoreCivic facilities. But I want to dig a little deeper. What are the ethical issues at stake in constructing new prisons? How do we solve a problem that shouldn't exist in the first place? Experts offer a variety of perspectives.

Both the public and private prison systems have had their fair share of documented abuses. "Saying that private prisons are worse than public prisons neglects to mention that public prisons are terrible," explained Dr. Anna Gunderson, a political scientist and professor at Louisiana State University. "Holding them up as this yardstick for private prisons to live up to" is problematic, she said. "It's not the case that they're bastions of rehabilitation and private prisons are not."

In Alabama, abusive practices in public prisons caused Governor Kay Ivey to seek a private prison deal in the first place. In December of 2020, the Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against the state over Alabama prisons' unconstitutionality. The lawsuit alleges that Alabama has failed to protect incarcerated people from violence and sexual abuse and that Alabama prisons subject incarcerated individuals to unsafe and unsanitary living conditions, including "excessive force at the hands of prison staff." Just like in private prisons, abuses at public prisons continue into the present. In early February 2021, for example, incarcerated activist Kinetik Justice and two other individuals were beaten by prison guards at Donaldson Correctional Facility and had to be airlifted to the hospital at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Some scholars argue that even more prison privatization could result in a greater degree of accountability and transparency regarding incidents of abuse. "It might be the case that the activist concern against privatization has it all backward," said Dr. Daniel D'Amico, economist and Associate Director of the Political Theory Project at Brown University. "We could imagine a world in which the incentives of competitive private businesses would be better arranged for accountability and transparency than public administration." D'Amico cites the German carceral system, which has a much lower incarcerated population relative to the U.S. and a greater degree of privatization.

While more privatization might, in theory, lead to greater accountability and transparency, it's not clear whether that would be the outcome in practice. I posed Dr. D'Amico's hypothetical to Gunderson. "The main drawback of an argument like that," she replied, "is that the hesitance to privatization is so strong that I just don't think that we would get to that point where people might think that it would help with accountability. [...] People are moving away from privatization as a policy, and they don't want to necessarily increase their use of privatization." Policymakers often see prison privatization as a question of economics. Governor Ivey justified her mega-prison deal to Alabama taxpayers on the basis of high maintenance costs. "Pursuing new construction without raising taxes or incurring debt is the fiscally sound and responsible decision," she claimed.

Arguments centered on fiscal responsibility and profitability may result from the negotiation tactics of companies like CoreCivic. "Beginning in the 1980s, private prisons began pitching themselves to states as a way to control costs," explained Brian Highsmith, a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University. "But the supposed savings that result from outsourcing are not achieved via efficient

services in service provision. The cost of those functions has not fallen—it has simply been shifted onto the individuals processed through the legal system and their loved ones." Thus, profit comes at the expense of those incarcerated and their families.

D'Amico objected to the assertion that private prisons provide a unique ethical conundrum for profiting on incarcerated people. "The catchphrase that you hear is profiting off of other people's punishment, profiting off of other people's misery," stated D'Amico. "It's not clear that public officers don't do similarly." Highsmith, however, sees ethical issues in private prisons, as "the basic business model of these corporations is to extract wealth from already vulnerable communities."

It's also possible that the point of Governor Ivey's plan was never to save money or to profit off of people who are incarcerated but instead to deflect blame from the state of Alabama to privately-owned companies. Much of Dr. Gunderson's work centers around an investigation of why states choose to privatize their prisons in the first place. "Contrary to popular wisdom," she said, "I don't find that some of these common determinants like partisanship or economics or unionization play a significant role in shaping states' aggregate level of privatization." Instead, she believes privatization is fueled by an "incentive to remove accountability for whatever happens within these prisons and allow the state government to pass the buck on what happens within prisons which is, of course, a lot of bad stuff."

Critics of Governor Ivey's plan claim that new mega-prisons fail to address the issues with Alabama prisons described in the DOJ lawsuit and earlier reports. Many argue that they will not solve the root problem of overcrowding. In an op-ed for AL.com, Alabama State Auditor Jim Zeigler writes, "Like moving into a new house to save a broken marriage, new buildings will do nothing to address the real problem: failed leadership." Grassroots opposition to Governor Ivey's CoreCivic deal is still growing even though the plan has already been signed. Recently, Regions Bank elected to withdraw its financial support from CoreCivic after Alabama Students Against Prisons (ASAP) staged a protest at the bank's Birmingham location. ASAP and other community groups continue to oppose the plan by organizing protests and contacting local legislators, businesses, and community leaders.

D'Amico believes that private prisons are less of a cause of the mass incarceration crisis in America and more of its symptom. "If it's true that privatization is a coping strategy to deal with the challenges of prison excess," D'Amico advances, "then the question becomes, what causes prison excess?" In his eyes, the answer to this question is multifaceted, but it partially comes down to "an overzealous criminal legislature, that we have too many things that are illegal." Gunderson agrees that the issues with our current legal system are complicated and numerous. "What aren't the most pressing issues with our legal system?" she said. "It's such a complex set of institutions that all rely on each other."

Because the mass incarceration crisis is such a complex issue within an even more complex web of institutions and policies, there's no silver bullet solution. However, people of various political backgrounds agree that building new prisons does little more than kick the problem down the road. "Our incarceration rate is already so high that I'm not sure how new prisons would solve anything," stated Gunderson. Highsmith made a similar point: "The alternative advocates are seeking is not public prisons; the alternative is to end our oppressive system of mass punishment and social control." He added, "Mass incarceration is a po-

litical choice, not some naturally-occurring phenomenon."

If building new prisons is a band-aid solution for a much deeper problem, then the question becomes: what should we be doing to remove the need for new prisons? Gunderson believes "the solution lies in a multi-pronged reform approach from police reform to prosecutorial reform, sentencing reform, all of that I think should be a higher priority than building new prisons." D'Amico also advised a multi-pronged solution that focuses on providing economic opportunity, promoting human capital development in the education system, and de-incentivizing hawkish prosecution tactics. "If you had more vibrant and prosperous cities," he concluded, "then I would assume there would be less crime and therefore less punitive responses to crime."

Until the underlying causes that contribute to the mass incarceration crisis in the U.S. are addressed, companies like CoreCivic will continue to build new prisons, and the incarcerated population will continue to grow. However, companies like Vanguard, Arrowstreet, and Harvard do not have to continue to invest in these companies and fund this non-solution to a massive problem. But Dr. D'Amico would caution against "symbolic" divestment movements, arguing that "every time you divest, every time you sell a stock, there's someone else who's interested in buying."

Walsh agrees that divestment, especially from Harvard's standpoint, is symbolic to a certain degree, but that does not mean that divestment is not worth pursuing. "We need to set an example," advocates Walsh. "Harvard alone won't solve it. It needs to be a mass effort by institutions across the country, but there needs to be [...] a precedent set in order for mass action to occur against the Prison Industrial Complex and those companies that support it."

The jury is still out on the ideal solution for the mass incarceration crisis. Nevertheless, from Libertarian economists to prison abolitionists, many agree that new prisons, public or private, do nothing more than exacerbate a problem already ruining millions of Americans' lives.

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**"What
should
we be doing
to remove
the need
for new
prisons?"**

The Lone

Grid State

A crisis reveals flaws in the way Texas handles its electrical grid

BY CHRISTIAN BROWDER '23

As a winter storm descended upon the central United States, one state proved itself unfit to handle itself amid the low temperatures: Texas. The Lone Star state's inability to function in the wake of inclement weather is not a fault of its people; rather, it is a product of self-isolation and deregulation.

To understand why Texas's electrical grid failed is to understand the state's atypical energy grid management organization: the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, or ERCOT. The agency is self-defined as a "membership-based 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation," and such corporations qualify for tax-exemptions by operating "primarily to further the common good and general welfare of the people of the community." Texas's energy grid has not always been overseen by a nonprofit, however. In line with the state's secessionist inclinations, ERCOT formed in 1970 from a collection of Texas utility companies. Their shared objective was to remain free from federal regulation, which, in this particular scenario, is only avoidable if a company is engaged in purely intrastate commerce. With rules for exemption in mind, the band of utilities all signed an agreement of mandatory self-isolation, which satiated their appetite for independence and bound them under the governance of a new bureaucratic layer—ERCOT.

Notably, this move to form an independent energy grid was spurred in part by the increasing interconnectivity of energy grids nationwide—a trend set into motion by post-war policies. As the rest of the nation was striving to build an interconnected and reliable grid, Texas saw isolation and deregulation as their required means to achieve those same goals. Unfortunately, as Dallas Judge Clay Jenkins reminds us, "bad policy predictably always leads to very bad results." Emphasis should be placed on the plurality of bad results because ERCOT has historically exposed many of its shortcomings.

Of the grid's flaws, the one proving most damning to ERCOT's public image is their tunnel vision. In times of crisis, there will undoubtedly be public uproar if companies are unprepared to handle the situation. Unsurprisingly, the reason companies are perpetually unprepared is likely because they owe no accountability.

To see how this effect plays out, one needs to look no further than Texas's last temperature-induced grid failure, which occurred in 2011. After an investigation into the matter, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation found that Texas was "reactive as opposed to being proactive," in their grid management. The report reads, "The lack of any state, regional, or Reliability Standards that directly require

generators to perform winterization left winter-readiness dependent on plant or corporate choices." This observation affirms the consequences of corporate deregulation—when faced with the option of preparation/winterization, ERCOT chose to abstain. When utility companies hold such drastic privileges, the general public will almost always reap the ramifications in one way or another, such as Texas did in 2011. But the issue runs deep.

Even after massive outcry, federal condemnation, and appeals for reform, ERCOT did not take steps to properly winterize the facilities they manage. Though they may not own every power plant they govern, they are mandated to "maintain electric system reliability"—an obligation that the 2021 power outages revealed was too intensive for ERCOT to fulfill. Twice in the past decade has ERCOT proven itself untrustworthy, yet it is the sole entity managing over 90% of the state's power demands. One could imagine that such an unreliable grid would be forced to fix itself or suffer from reduced business in a free market; but in a state that prides itself on a laissez-faire approach to the electric industry, ERCOT holds a monopoly over 26 million of their Texan customers.

Another of ERCOT's flaws has been particularly inflamed by the past month's crisis: self-isolation. The move to establish an intrastate Texas power grid was justified by the reasoning that without the constraints of regulation, Texas businesses could provide power better than their federal neighbors. In normal times, it is easy for consumers to not feel the difference between a regulated and deregulated energy industry—after all, your lights will probably come on either way. The issue arises when tides of normalcy recede, and crises unfold.

The most visible implication of isolationist policy is that it severs one's ties to the outside world. Such action is analogous to rejecting a life-preserver while drowning. There exists another more obscured yet equally potent effect: the creation of feedback loops. These feedback loops can exacerbate existing problems and create new ones. An excellent example of this is ERCOT's handling of its most recent power outages, which played out as follows:

When the cold temperatures first hit, two things happened: demand for electricity increased, while electricity output decreased. More demand comes from the heating of now-frozen homes, and the now-frozen-over energy producers reduce the amount of electricity available. As these two values rise and fall, respectively, the generators still operating are increasingly strained. Often, these generators become overloaded and fail, which in turn redistributes the pre-existing demand onto a now smaller quantity of

generators. A feedback loop has formed, and it can be disastrous. According to ERCOT officials, the entire grid was minutes away from fully collapsing during the midst of the crisis, which could have taken "weeks" to restore.

Though a state-wide blackout was avoided, millions of Texans were faced with extended outages, leading to the deaths of an undetermined, though large, amount of people. As if the isolation was not lethal enough for Texas residents, ERCOT's wholesale model of electricity distribution also revealed its potential for destruction during the storm. For Texans whose lights stayed on—barring those who pay at a predetermined, fixed-rate—avoiding market manipulation became an impossible task. Though ERCOT claims to operate "primarily to further the common good and general welfare of the people," it allowed extreme price-gouging to occur. Consequently, there are now countless families, business owners, etc. faced with electricity bills in the tens of thousands of dollars. Not only does isolation leave Texans with no alternatives and no lifelines when in need, but it also leaves Texans vulnerable to some of the most unethical business practices imaginable amid life-threatening circumstances.

The Texas 2021 power outage is a tale yet to be told in full. Thus far, it is clear that reform is needed, and cross-aisle collaboration should occur to make that happen. The extent of proposed reform is undefined at present, although calls for ERCOT's absorption into federal jurisdiction are gaining traction. Already, ERCOT is under legal scrutiny and investigations, both of which will try to find an entity to blame for the failure. We should be slow to find a singular perpetrator; this was an event caused not by any individual but by a lack of regulation. We should work to hold energy industries accountable. Perhaps it is time to set aside resistance to interconnection and instead embrace cooperation to ensure a better and safer future for everyone.

Christian Browder '23 (christian-browder@college.harvard.edu) wonders why his home state's corporations always say, "yee haw" but not, "how are you doing? Is there any way we can better ourselves?"

Illustration by Yasmine Bazos '24

Shmurda is Free

The Emancipation
of
Bobby Shmurda

"WHY THEY WANT TO PIN A FELLY ON ME? I AIN'T DID NOTHING." Bobby Shmurda, WASH THE CASE AWAY

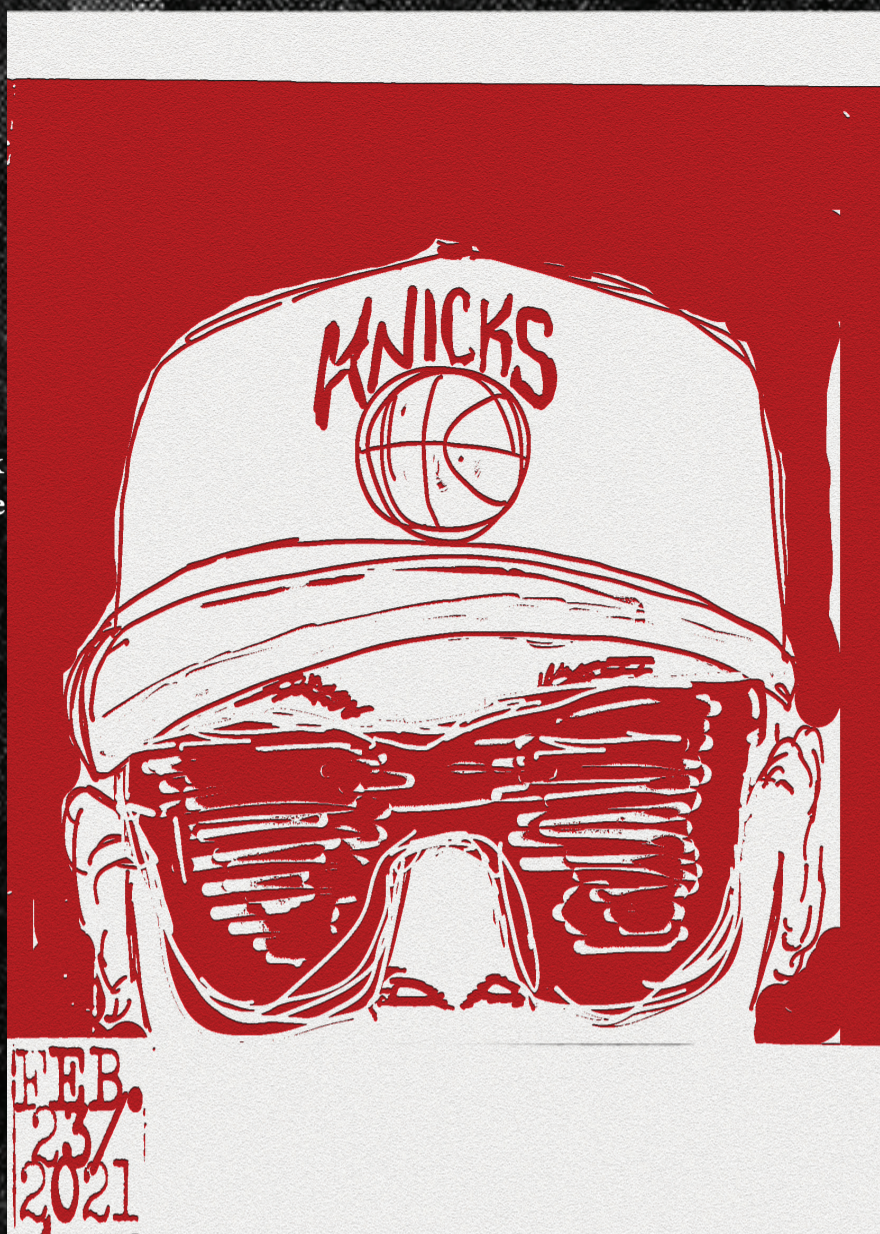
If you didn't know Bobby Shmurda by name, you knew him by voice. In his 2014 breakout single, "Hot N**** (Hot Boy)," Shmurda proudly declared he had "been selling crack like since the 5th grade." Shmurda's song hit #6 on the Billboard Hot 100, despite being called "anti-melodic" by a New York Times critic. Its music video, filmed in Shmurda's home in Brooklyn, took the internet and charts by storm. Like Faulkner's writing, Shmurda's songs felt like a singular stream of consciousness, thoroughly breaking with hook-heavy songs that were mainstays on the charts.

But why do I write about Shmurda in the past tense? After all, a LinkedIn profile under his name shows that he's graduating from Harvard in 2026. But as quickly as he rocketed to fame, problems emerged. Shmurda spent the past seven years in prison, and was released on February 23rd, 2021, on the condition of serving the rest of his sentence under parole supervision.

To know Shmurda now, you must know his story. In 2012, after signing a multi-million dollar record deal with Epic Records, Shmurda formed the label GS9. Both his audition tape for the record label and the formation of his own label tell the story of racism and greed: Shmurda's fame drew the attention of powerful people who wanted their slice of the pie.

The leaked tape of Shmurda's audition is mesmerizing and horrific, like a car crash you can't peel your eyes off of, or a scene in the film "Get Out." A black man dances in front of an almost all-white audience. He delivers an all-time great performance, but is rewarded by nods of recording executives who, with blank faces, have no idea the greatness they are witnessing. It's tragic because the setting forces Shmurda to become the minstrel despite his true rule of the bard. The 808 bumping, chain-flying, hat-spinning, and table-jumping secure Shmurda his record deal, but the cost is confinement in a box of profitability. Like Io, Shmurda was transformed into a heifer to be milked by the global recording industry.

The deal with Epic Records allowed Shmurda to start his label, GS9. Problems rose to the surface immediately, for GS9 is an acronym already used by the street fraternity "G Stone Crips." It seems here that the paradox of Shmurda's music rears its head: he is a rapper, but his specific sub-genre is clearly drill—a music style originating



in Chicago that spread to poor urban centers across the world and grew distinctive roots in New York. Drill rappers reject the veneer of glamour imposed by mainstream hip-hop, and instead address the reality of their experiences. That's why listening to drill from different cities reveals the truth of subjugated existence better than any book or documentary. Shmurda's music appeals to his audience because it shouldn't be anything but the truth.

As a listener of his songs, I believe in the truths they convey. I believe Shmurda's father was a victim of rigged New York City courts; I believe Shmurda sold crack in the Flatbush; I believe Shmurda has killed; and so, I believe his music contains some unique sublime truth inaccessible to me. The NYPD believes Shmurda. They proceed to indict him on 69 counts including "charges of Conspiracy and substantive charges of Murder, Attempted Murder, Assault, Attempted Assault, Weapons Possession, Criminal Use of a Firearm, Reckless Endangerment, Narcotics Sales and Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia."

Shmurda's label acquired the best defense team, led by Alex Spiro, Harvard Law '08. Mr. Spiro explained to me that Shmurda's case represented a broader flaw in the judicial system: "young people are not treated fairly by the criminal justice system. That is particularly the case for people in Bobby's circumstances." Despite the money and the fame, the courts used tactics against Shmurda that are used against thousands

of potentially innocent (and typically Black and Brown) Americans every year: denying bail. The unfair hand of justice affects the pre-trial rights of the accused, making it hard to properly prepare for trial and giving prosecutors leverage when constructing plea deals. Prosecutors used this leverage to force Shmurda to concede and prevent the case from going to trial.

Spiro returned to Shmurda's music. "I didn't think it was fair that some of his words were being used against him," he said. When I asked about this unfairness, Spiro intimated that Shmurda's words were "hyperbolic for entertainment and not based in reality." But as our conversation continued, his tone flipped. Instead of implying Shmurda's music was fictional, Spiro began to justify it: "I think people should be able to use their creative energy and let it out any way they want," he said. "Kids in the intercity are often without parents, often without dads, and need outlets. If music provides that outlet, I think it should be encouraged, not criminalized." These questions of aesthetics and creativity transcend legal questions of guilt. If Shmurda was exaggerating, his music is worthless, but if he was telling the truth, he is a criminal.

Regardless, Shmurda took a deal and served a seven-year sentence. He was freed last week. Now the legend of the inventor of the "Shmoney" dance can continue. While the world awaits a full-length project, Shmurda's path to now is important for the next generation of artists, for he blazed a trail that many others will walk. The most coveted throne in the rap game—"The King of New York"—was once Shmurda's, and now it's up for grabs. Will the next King learn the tragic history of the throne and avoid its traps?

The King is dead, the King is returned, long live the King. His loyal subjects await.

Noah Tavares '24 (noah-tavares@college.harvard.edu) is not a construction worker, but he likes drill.

Illustration by
Yasmine Bazos '24

COUNTER/POINT:

Cancelling Spring Sports

Rationalizing the Ivy League's decision

BY OLIVER ADLER '24

On February 18, 2021, the Ivy League Council of Presidents announced that the Ivy League “would not conduct conference seasons or conference postseason events in any spring sports.” If public health conditions “significantly improve and if permitted by an institution, local non-conference competition may be allowed,” according to the joint statement released by the Council.

As a varsity student-athlete at Harvard, hearing the news of the Ivy League’s decision to cancel intraconference athletics for the spring semester was very difficult. I feel for my teammates, especially those seniors who had risked their athletic eligibility to return to Harvard this year with the hopes of one more time wearing the crimson H. However, there are a few ways to rationalize this decision, even outside of the very real concerns of spreading COVID-19.

Though student-athletes should not suffer on account of the financial status of Ivy League athletic departments, the monetary costs for sponsoring a spring season must be weighed against the benefits. Without travel for away-games and other expenses, the price of running athletic programs during the pandemic are certainly lower than usual. However, this spring, athletics will not have the typical revenue—or any revenue—to cover its prevailing expenses. The Ivy League’s statement did not detail the possibility of spectators at any local competitions that may occur, but the odds are low they would be allowed; and even if they are, it’s unlikely that socially-distanced spectatorship would generate sufficient revenue to offset the financial risks of running competitions this season.

Further evidence of these challenges lie in the now-disrupted relationships between particular teams. Many spring sports, such as my own Track & Field, produce few dollars for Harvard Athletics, so their costs are usually covered by sports like football, basketball, and baseball. This same dynamic was brought up across the NCAA last fall, as many athletes learned that the fate of their seasons depended on the status of football, which can in some cases cover large portions of an athletic department’s costs. Since these typically lucrative sports were not so lucrative this year, they are unable to help subsidize the operations of Harvard Athletics.

Like the rest of Ivy League colleges, Harvard differs from schools in other conferences because of its large endowment from alumni and others connected to the College



and its teams. Despite these endowments, athletic programs in the Ivy League are not immune to financial difficulties. In June 2020, Brown University cut eleven of its athletic teams. In July, Dartmouth College eliminated five of its sports, including its men’s and women’s swimming and diving programs. Though Dartmouth eventually reinstated all five teams, Brown only revived a handful of the teams they had eliminated. The administrations made these cuts before the start of the 2020-2021 school year, in which Ivy League sports have gone through an additional two seasons without creating any revenue. As it currently stands, Harvard has not indicated any consideration of cutting athletic programs due to the pandemic. But if any financial difficulties existed, participating in competitions this spring would only exacerbate potential problems.

In addition to the financial strains that could result from competing this year, there are logistical issues to only authorizing one out of the three seasons this academic year. The College’s December 2020 decision to invite seniors and juniors to campus in the Spring, as well as students who petitioned for housing based on environmental needs, offered no accommodation for athletes. While some student-athletes have decided to live near campus this semester, those living outside of Harvard’s housing cannot practice with their teammates housed by Harvard College. Student-athletes living outside of campus are also prohibited from seeing their coaches in-person. As a result, Harvard would find it difficult to organize team competitions given the limit-

ed number of athletes on campus.

In a January email to student-athletes, Athletic Director Erin McDermott explained Harvard and the Ivy League’s guidelines for spring sports. He shut down any possibility of a change in policy that would grant off-campus athletes a chance to compete, stating, “only students in residence on campus will be allowed to participate.” This decision, combined with Harvard’s strict standards for housing, has resulted in low numbers of team members in the Cambridge area. Indeed, some teams do not even have enough athletes to compete in their respective sports, much less the necessary reserves to complete an entire event.

There’s no getting around the fact that Harvard’s student-athletes have suffered from this decision, particularly juniors and seniors nearing the end of their time at Harvard. Student-athletes came in hoping they would compete this spring. While there is still a chance of local competition to occur, Harvard’s consistently conservative response to COVID-19 makes the inception of this competition seem like a slim possibility.

However, not all hope is lost. As a precursor (and perhaps a harbinger) to the decision to cancel Ivy League competitions, the conference made an uplifting announcement on February 12: it will allow current fourth-year seniors an opportunity to compete in conference athletics for the 2021-2022 year if they enroll as graduate students at their respective institutions. Although the announcement of this exception came after most of the deadlines to apply to graduate schools had passed, this opportunity may give some athletes another chance to compete in the future. The Ivy League needed to cancel athletics this semester—but placing sports on hold now might just save them later.

Oliver Adler '24 (oliveradler@college.harvard.edu) promises that he wants athletes to compete.

Illustration by Ellie Hamilton '23

“The cancellation of athletics is undoubtedly a hard pill to swallow, but placing sports on hold now might just save them later.”

COUNTER/POINT:

Cancelling Spring Sports

The Ivy League took a step too far

BY WILL GOLDSMITH '24

The Ivy League's recent decision to cancel spring sports has doused the hopes of student-athletes, who have now been unable to compete for four athletics seasons due to the coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 continues to be a potent disruptor in the lives of student-athletes.

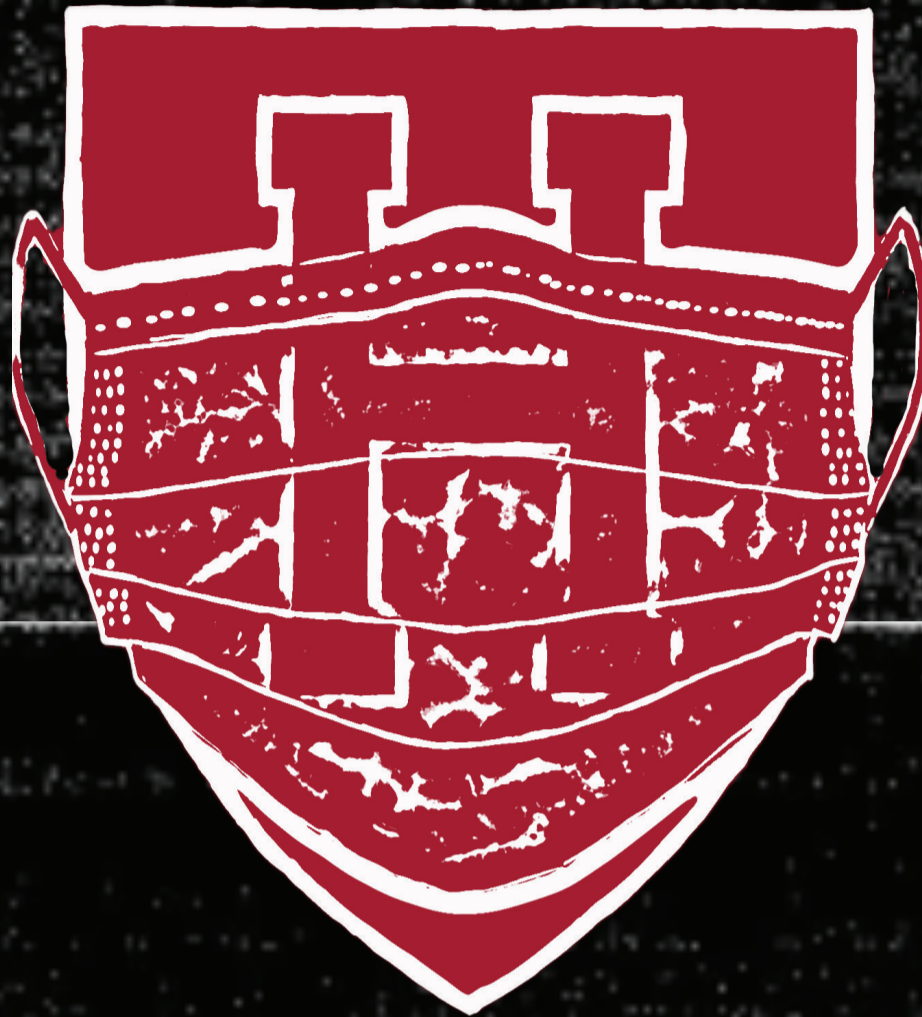
The gathering, sweating, and physical contact inherent to athletic competition certainly are potentially dangerous vectors of disease. However, the prevalence of COVID-19 is presently diminishing across the country. "The seven-day average of new cases in the United States has fallen by 74 percent since their January peak, hospitalizations have gone down by 58 percent, and deaths have dropped by 42 percent," writes Alexis Madragal for *The Atlantic*.

In addition to the declining threat of catching the disease, the centrality of college sports in the lives of student-athletes makes the Ivy League's decision distinctly unfair. Practices and competitions are not merely secondary activities; many individuals commit to attending Harvard, for example, precisely because of Harvard's athletic opportunities. Additionally, many student-athletes train and practice for substantial periods of time in preparation for athletic competition. The Ivy League's cancellation of the spring season has disempowered athletes from reaping the fruits of their labor.

"As a college athlete, you put all this time in during the off-season in the weight room [...] to get better. It's really frustrating to not be able to play games and see all the hard work pay off," said Jake Berger '24, a shortstop on Harvard's baseball team, who still hopes to compete in the spring.

Despite its disappointing nature, the absence of a spring season was expected by some student-athletes. "I didn't come to campus in the fall or the spring with any expectations of competition," said Maia Ramsden '24, an athlete on Harvard's Track & Field Team.

While the decision may not have been surprising, it represents a profound and unfortunate continuation of COVID-19-related impediments for college students. The pandemic has radically transformed the college experiences of millions of athletes and nonathletes alike. Harvard students have had particularly unique college experiences stained with stringent social-distancing guidelines. First-years on campus in the fall,



for instance, were not allowed to socialize indoors.

These restrictions posed significant challenges for Harvard seniors, who were not invited to campus in the fall. The class lost their hopes for a cohesive and exhilarating final year socializing together in Cambridge. For seniors who represent Harvard as student-athletes, the Ivy League's decision compounds their COVID-19-related disappointments and further diminishes the vibrancy of a pivotal year in their college experience.

"I especially sympathize with the seniors," said first-year Jaeschel Acheampong '24, another member of the Track & Field Team, regarding the loss of spring sports. "Last season ended abruptly, and it must be extremely tough for them not to have a season now. To be honest, the plan is to go crazy [with training now] so that the next time we compete it's like we never left."

This decision has, of course, affected those at other colleges as well. Student-athletes across the Ivy League are grappling with the absence of their seasons. "I was extremely disappointed about the cancellation," said squash player William Ezratty, a sophomore at Princeton. "Many of my friends on the Squash team are concerned about maintaining their skills without having a season."

While detracting from the experiences of student-athletes, the communal void of sports affects non-athletes, too. Indeed, many non-athletes enjoy viewing athletic

competitions that feature their classmates. "Being able to watch sporting events on campus with classmates adds to the sense of community so pivotal to Harvard's culture. It's a shame that our students, especially first-years, lost the chance to be a part of the athletic traditions that bring our school together," said Bryce Hilton '24. At their core, sports are about uniting teammates and bridging the gap between spectators and competitors.

While the risks of COVID-19 merit overwhelming caution—and while the pandemic is still very much a part of current life—the abandonment of spring sports represents an overstep. The Ivy League must take public health guidelines seriously, but gratuitous cancellations of athletic events chip away at the experiences of student-athletes and the very fabric of campus communities.

Will Goldsmith '24 (willgoldsmith@college.harvard.edu) writes Sports for the Independent.

Illustration by Ellie Hamilton '23

"The Ivy League's cancellation of the spring season has disempowered athletes from reaping the fruits of their labor."

CEEC'ing Arrangement



HGSU-UAW develops infrastructure to handle individual grievances

BY MICHAEL KIELSTRA '22

For the first months of its existence, the Harvard Graduate Student Union, HGSU-UAW, had a simple goal in mind. “What do we want?” members of the union members chanted, placards raised high around the John Harvard statue. “A contract! When do we want it? Now!” On July 1, 2020, “Now” finally arrived, and the new contract, in which the Harvard administration recognized HGSU-UAW as “the exclusive bargaining representative” for graduate students, came into force.

Once HGSU achieved this goal, one might have expected them to fade into the background of Harvard’s landscape. However, their work was just beginning. As training materials for HGSU stewards state, “The contract is not a static document. It evolves through application, enforcement, interpretation, and negotiation.” HGSU may have successfully bargained on behalf of its workers as a group, but now it had to represent them, one by one, in individual cases.

Article 6 of the current HGSU-UAW contract defines a multi-step grievance procedure. First, those with the grievance “are encouraged, but not required, to discuss the problems with the immediate supervisor or faculty member to whom they report.” Should this fail, the union may file a formal Step One grievance, which could escalate to Step Two, involving administrators at the level of school Deans. Step Three, should it prove necessary, is independent arbitration. To help individuals navigate this process, HGSU-UAW inaugurated the Contract Enforcement and Education Committee, otherwise known as CEEC.

The idea of CEEC was popular among the union from its first meeting. “The previous bargaining committee sent out an email to people who were active and who were supportive of the union causes, and they notified us about this idea to start this grievance committee,” Boryana Hadzhiyska, a third-year Ph.D. student in astrophysics and one of CEEC’s three co-chairs, told the Independent. “We had about 70 people show up to the initial meeting, just discussing what this grievance committee would be like [and] gauging interest.” At this meeting, Hadzhiyska, Hadzhiyska, along with Maya Anjur-Dietrich, a sixth-year Ph.D. student in applied physics and HGSU’s sergeant-at-arms, and Lewis Picard, a third-year Ph.D. student also in applied physics, volunteered as co-chairs. As the committee took shape over the following months, the process to join became more formalized, and grievance officers now undergo a training process that involves both theory and supervised practice. Such training has become necessary as the group’s responsibilities have swelled: by late February, the committee had received over 170 requests for help.

Of these requests, Hadzhiyska said that they “have resolved a large majority [...] in favor of the student workers.” They have had particular success with

compensation cases: Anjur-Dietrich could not recall one they have lost, out of the over thirty they accepted. She attributed this to the contract’s precise language regarding compensation: “[Article 20] is laid out particularly clearly, in such a way that there’s little room for misinterpretation, unless it’s willful misinterpretation.” In general, Hadzhiyska said, “The parts of the contract that have been laid out very clearly have been more easy to win than in cases where there is more room for interpretation and the administrators themselves are unsure.” Encouragingly, the most straightforward cases are often the most easily resolved.

Hadzhiyska’s comment about administrative misunderstanding touches on a surprising truth about CEEC’s work: the vast majority of it is done informally, in the “encouraged, but not required” phase before Step One. CEEC members refer to this as “Step Zero,” and so far only five cases have had to move beyond it. Hadzhiyska said she was “quite astonished to see how many administrators [...] have been willing to engage with us and try to genuinely help the student worker, and have just needed this nudge from us.”

While she did acknowledge that “obviously there are outliers to this,” and Anjur-Dietrich warned that “it really depends on the department,” CEEC has found many Harvard staff to be more confused than malicious. Part of this is because, as Hadzhiyska claimed, “[Departmental administrators] are not really receiving any help from the administrators above them, the top Harvard administrators, [so] they might be a little bit more confused, especially if the contract is not very clear.” She gave the example of appointment letters, documents formally laying out items such as responsibilities and pay, which all graduate workers must receive according to the contract. “Administrators are still struggling with creating these because there is no structure coming from above that helps them with templates and so on,” said Hadzhiyska. Having a contract for graduate students is new for everybody, not just HGSU, so the “Education” role of CEEC is often more powerful than the “Enforcement.”

When Step Zero fails, the outcomes are different. “In terms of filing the formal agreements procedure, the atmosphere is decidedly chillier,” said Anjur-Dietrich. “We have not filed a single Step One that has been resolved in any way other than going all the way to arbitration.” (Step Three involves arbitration, but also pre-arbitration procedures and preparation, and one grievance has been resolved in that stage. It is still accurate to say that all resolved Step One grievances have at some point required the beginning of an arbitration process.) Part of this may be due to HGSU’s reluctance to get involved in formal grievances over trivial matters. Anjur-Dietrich said that “Filing a Step One grievance is seen as something that we take quite seriously,” so

it would make sense that only the most significant issues enter the grievance process at all. This is the system working as designed: most things are handled quickly and easily, but formal procedures are available for the worst disagreements.

Certain grievances are serious yet do not involve Step One: those which the contract does not touch. The current contract, for example, lacks harassment and discrimination protections. CEEC’s job is much more difficult in these cases, as the committee has no automatic power. “I guess that [Step] Zero, we can always follow,” said Hadzhiyska, “but we can’t follow One, Two, and Three.” The solution is to get involved, not as a union committee bringing a union grievance, but as a group that happens to be composed of union members. Hadzhiyska explained, “We can say, well, ‘Would you like us to serve as your representatives?’ And if that person agrees to that, then we have the legal right to sit in on any meetings with the grievant [...] to send out emails on their behalf, or to correspond in some way with the University, of course after having gained approval from that student worker.” Neither Hadzhiyska nor Anjur-Dietrich was particularly happy about this solution, but they seemed to feel that it was better than reaching no solution at all. Certainly, they and the rest of CEEC do not think that the contract must strictly limit their roles when helping student workers.

CEEC’s steward training materials also emphasized that “Even non-grievable issues are really important,” but in this case, it was for a different reason: they show “what we need to fight for.” After eight months of working under last year’s contract, HGSU-UAW is ready to begin negotiating for its next one, and CEEC’s grievance data will be crucial in this process. “What we can learn from this year is both what are the strengths and what are weaknesses of this contract,” explained Anjur-Dietrich. “We’ve already identified a lot of areas where we have grievances come in, but we don’t have the contractual basis to protect people.” HGSU-UAW can pinpoint “what rights should be strengthened, what language should we change, what language shouldn’t change because we’ve been able to successfully grieve and win those cases, and what isn’t in the contract that, for example, has come up in a remote working environment, which the bargaining committee of a year and a half ago couldn’t have imagined,” said Anjur-Dietrich. “All of these things change the way that we think about what the contract is.” In the end, CEEC and the contract work hand-in-hand, and that is not a bad thing: the ultimate grievance procedure, after all, is to demand to rewrite the laws under which you grieve.

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) would like his voice to be heard.



Ellie Hamilton '23

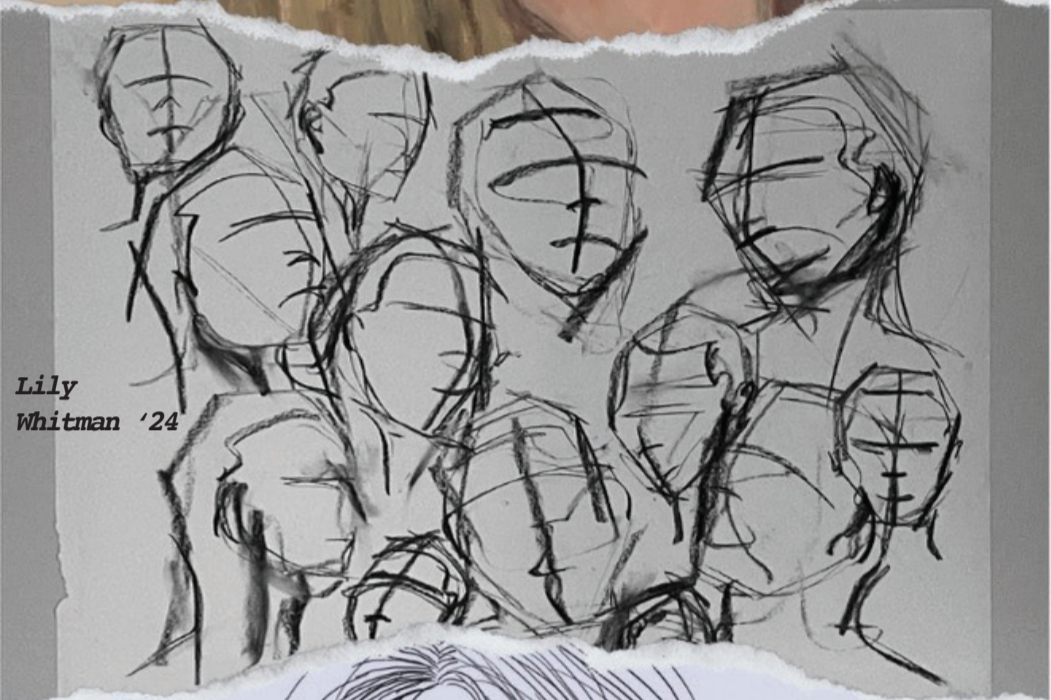


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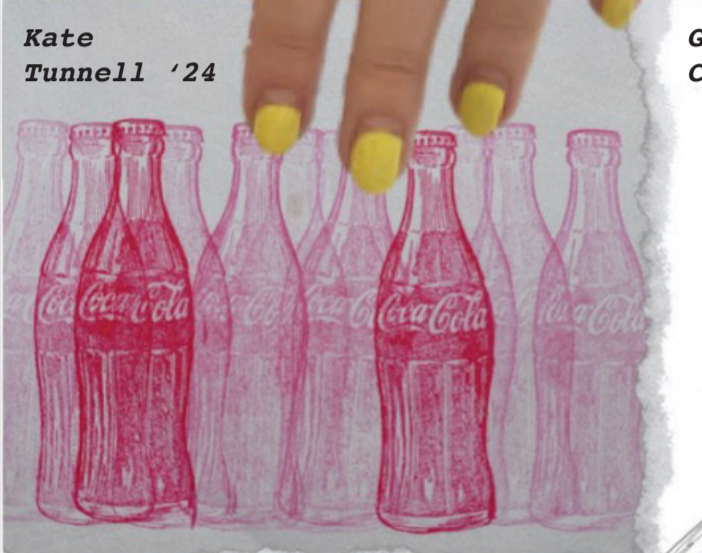
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Unintentional



Grace Coolidge '24

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Exposing the unfinished, yet complete creative process

Collected by
Kate Tunnell '24
Edited by
Carli Cooperstein '24

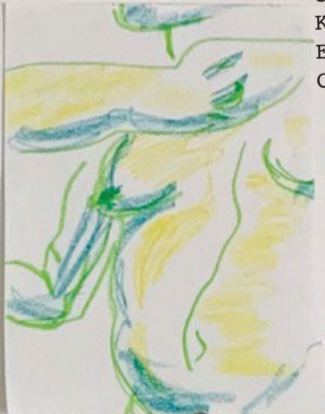


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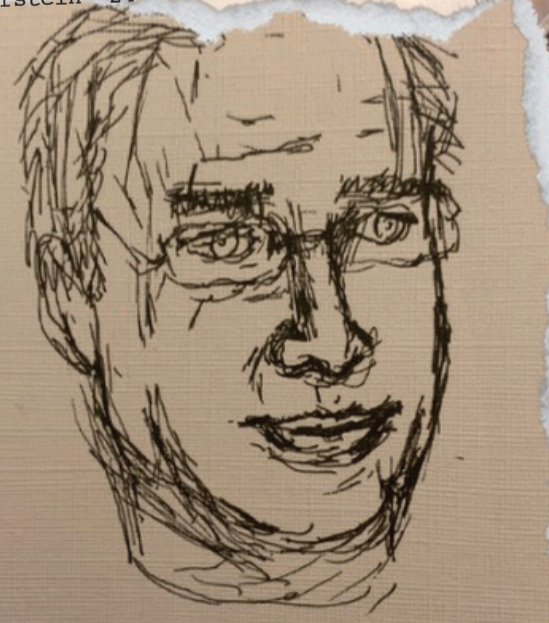
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THE AMERICAN LOBSTER ranges from Nova Scotia to the Gulf of Mexico. It is a crustacean, not a mollusk. Its body is divided into three main parts: the head, the thorax, and the abdomen. The head is equipped with small teeth for crushing shells. Its four pairs of walking legs bear small pincers. The two pairs of large claws are used for crushing and tearing. The tiny, oarlike swimmerets, most positioned far back, shoot the lobster backward. When suddenly forward, shoots the lobster backward. When "in berry" and illegal for capture. Slender feelers give...



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Quarantine



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