

HARVARD
independent
THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

Aug. 26, 2021

Issue 08

*Welcome
Back!*



The Found Generation Roars into the 20's

MASTHEAD

August 26, 2021

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The Sustainers are a group of Independent alumni committed to supporting our mission by funding one month of office rent each year for at least five years.

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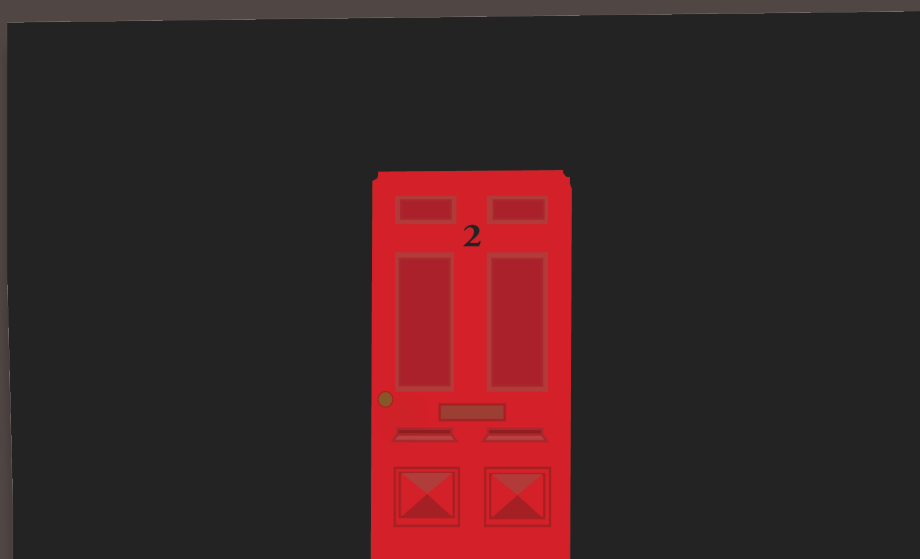
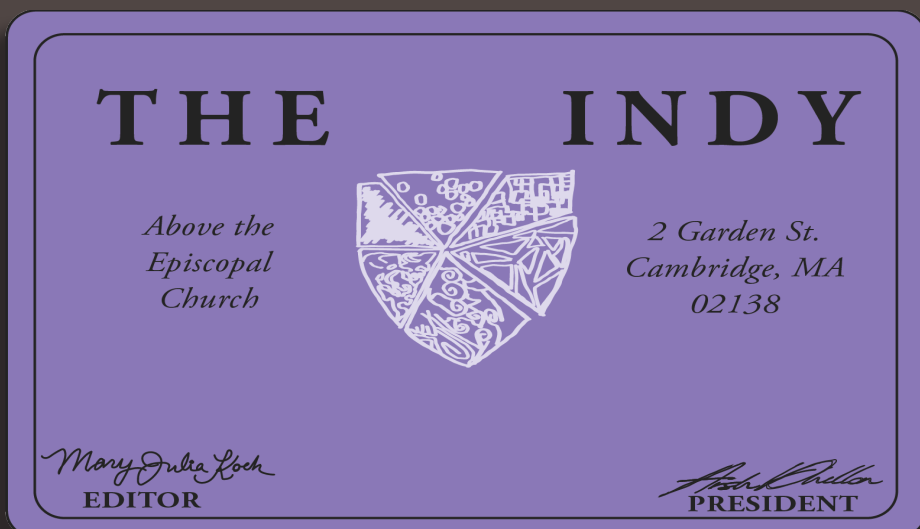
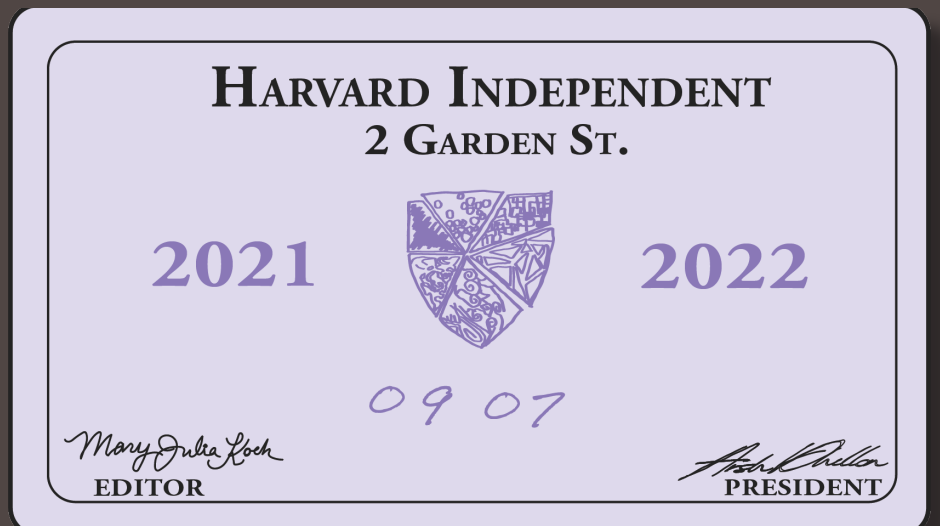
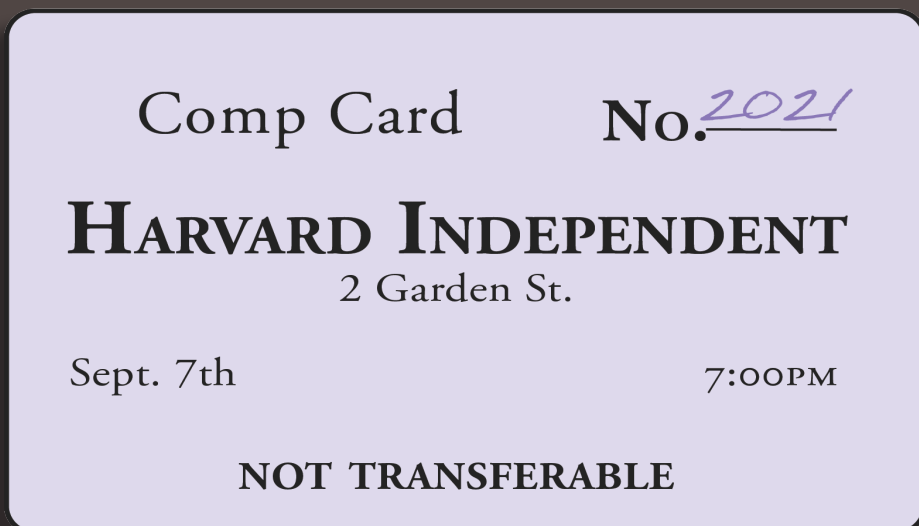
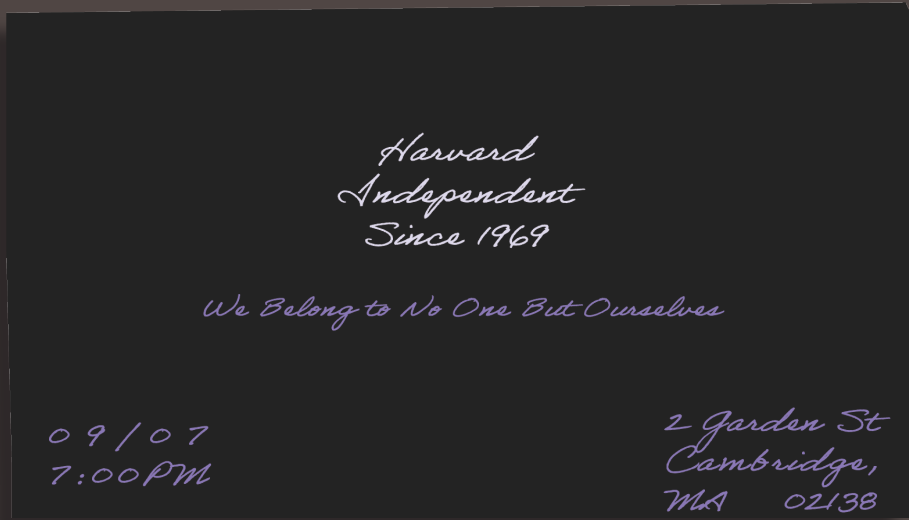
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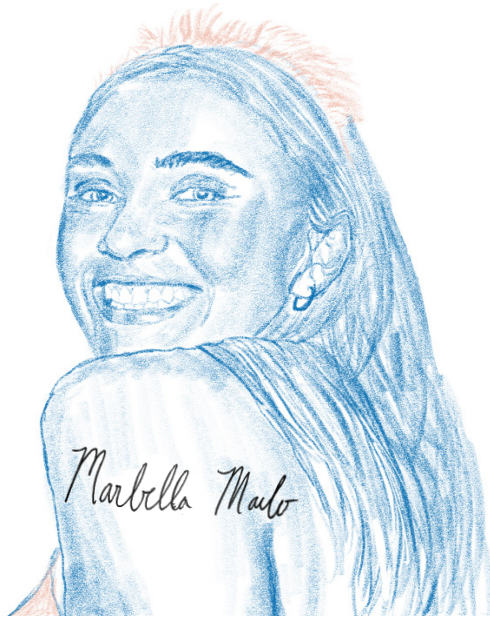
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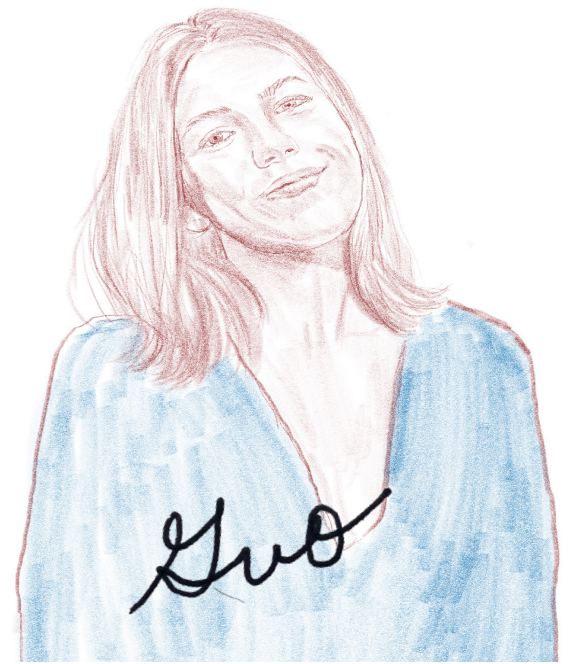




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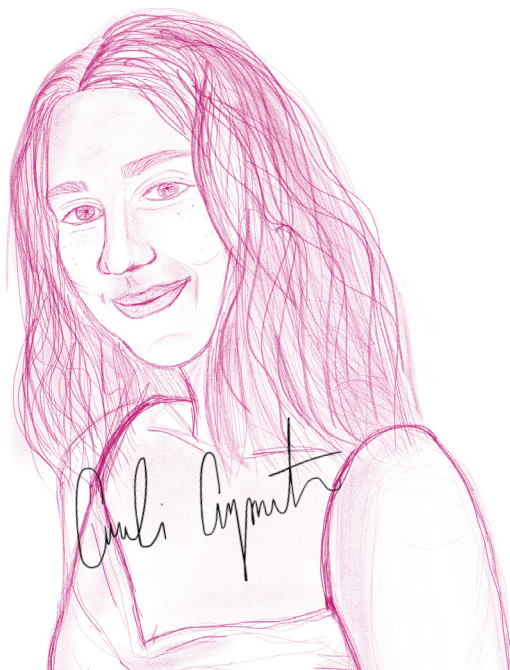
*An Official Announcement by President Arsh Dhillon '23 &
Editor-in-Chief Mary Julia Koch '23:*

WELCOME TO EXEC, FRESH MEAT!

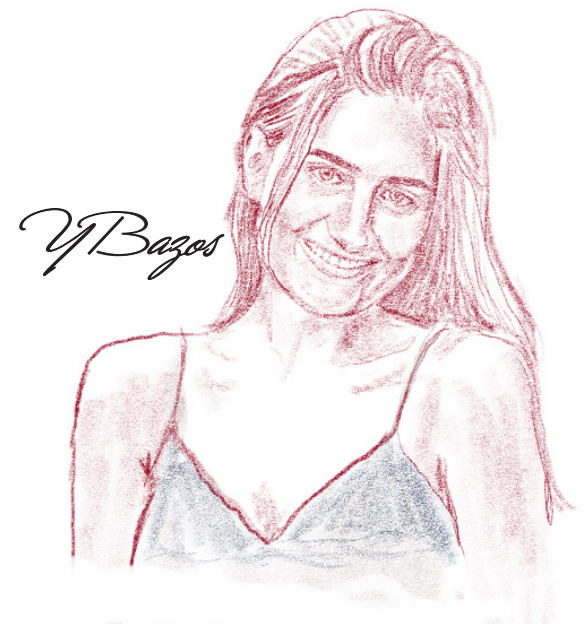
Portraits by Illustrators Ellie Hamilton '23 & Lucy Hamilton '22



Kate Tunnell '24
Media Director



Carli Cooperstein '24
Operations Director



Yasmine Bazos '24
Outreach Director

They refused to lose an entire year to virtual education. They refused to relinquish precious college time to the whims of a microbe they could not control. They refused to let the pandemic get in the way of their ambitions. So instead, they used the pandemic to pursue them.

Last year, many Harvard College students did something radical: they chose to pause their college education. More than 20 percent of students did not enroll in the fall of 2021, many of whom extended this leave of absence to the entire academic year. They filled their time by travelling, interning, or even building a company. Some students found such success that they are not returning to campus this fall.

Why did students choose to unenroll in classes? What did they do with this time? Most importantly, what have they learned? Hear it from them in their own words.

(The responses have been lightly edited for the sake of brevity and clarity.)

Natalie Melas-Kyriazi '24

I was scared that if I did take classes I would not have learned as much as I could have if I waited a year. I did not feel in any rush to graduate, and I also felt that the friends I would make on campus in that year in person would be worth the wait. The second reason is that I was heavily considering taking a gap year in between high school and Harvard, so time off was already an appealing decision.

My brother and I are Greek citizens so we were able to travel to Europe and see our family during the year. In September 2020, we traveled to Germany and then to England. I stayed in London and lived with 6 other Harvard girls for all of the first semester. My uncle had known someone from his work who could set up an interview for me with Imperial College London's Big Data Analytics Unit. I got COVID-19 during winter break, so during the second semester I felt more comfortable traveling more frequently. I lived in Boston and Hawaii, road tripped around the west coast of the US, went back home to New York, and then returned to Europe.

Luke Bradley '24

The decision to take a gap year was tough, but ultimately came down to a desire to get what I perceived to be the full value of the Harvard experience. I think I was in a fortunate position to make that choice, knowing that postponing my graduation date by a year was something my family and I could handle.

Once I became fully vaccinated, I was able to make up for a lot of the traveling I'd been missing out on. I was able to take a few trips at that point, culminating in a nearly two month trip to Spain. I did this trip alone, partially to make up for two cancelled summer abroad programs that I had signed up for with the College.

This travel experience and really the entire gap year has reinvigorated my academic interests. I've decided on a concentration change [from some combination of Psychology and Economics to Social Studies], and made a resolution to choose my courses based on interest and passion rather than convenience.

Aurelia Balkanski '24

As much as I would've loved to contin-

ue classes at Harvard as normal this past year, it would be a lie to admit I didn't learn so much from this time off. I am so thankful to have had another year at home with my family, but beyond that I think my job experience showed me there are so many online opportunities I didn't see. The irony is not lost on me that I took the year off from Zoom school only to work an online job, but this was so different from any class I could've taken at Harvard, I can't help but feel I learned things school could never teach me.

If there's one thing that I wish for myself going back it's that I will take all the random classes I feared would be a "waste of my time" because they didn't cater to what I think I want to concentrate in (Astrophysics). I have three years left and I intend to fill them to the brim.

Jake Laddis '24

I chose to enroll in classes for the fall 2020 semester, naively hoping that I would be captivated by online courses. I switched my concentration to computer science and took on a heavy course load.

Before heading back home for winter break, I found myself speaking with my neighbor in Allston, who floated the idea that I get my real estate license and work at his firm. I got

my license, interviewed at a brokerage, and all of a sudden I was a licensed real estate agent in Boston.

One day, I saw a fellow Harvard student's snapchat story: "Tech Startup Looking for MA Licensed Real Estate Agents." In my interview the next day, the CEO sold me on the idea of turning the real estate industry into a gig-economy (like Uber driver for real estate agents), while automating the apartment searching and leasing process for renters. All of a sudden, I found myself as a marketing intern working at a coworking space on Newbury Street for Nobeel. My experience as a real estate agent and a Harvard computer science student allowed me to get more involved in building the actual website and operations software of the company. A month and a half after starting, I was promoted to Chief Product Manager. I am now responsible for leading a quickly growing team of 12+ engineers and designers in building our company's different products.

Moritz Pail '24-25

I am planning to extend my leave of absence this fall to continue working on my startup, Fizz, with my friend and co-founder, Carlo

Köbe '24. Fizz is a debit card for US college students that helps them save money on campus and builds credit in an easy, safe, and transparent way. We came up with it because getting a credit card, building a credit score, and saving money are all problems we encountered before.

Noah Evers '24

At Flow [his startup], we optimize coffee to help people think better. I have a research background in cognitive science and had been conducting [research and development] for a year and a half before the pandemic began. At that point, I had created a prototype for myself—in my own Harvard dorm room, in fact!—where I could eliminate the side effects of coffee (i.e., no jitters, anxiety, or crash). My prototype was all I was drinking, and I had totally stopped consuming regular coffee, which I had once loved. I thought, "If I like this product so much and want to think better just like everyone else, maybe I should turn this into a business."

I was also motivated to pursue this venture because I had just discovered research that would allow me to radically improve coffee's psychological effects, such as doubling the absorption of the caffeine molecules by the body and enabling coffee to significantly stimulate neurogenesis. I brought my classmate, Catherine Beddingfield '23 on as a co-founder, and we started working on it more and more when school went online. I probably wouldn't have had enough time to develop the company if not for COVID-19.

What I learned during this time is that I will spend most of my life working, so always doing something that I love is essential. I've also learned that the world is not fixed in its offerings, and if you want something that doesn't exist today, you can build it. I have realized that college is such a magical moment of life where I can just learn for learning's sake.

Mia Johansson '23

I love the in-person experience at Harvard so much, I didn't want to miss out an entire year of that. I also saw my website, TeenMagazine.com, as a huge opportunity so I thought that I would benefit so much more from that. It was just more of a question of whether I could support myself financially or not doing this, and I was able to earn money and make it work. I could be excited, then, growing this rather than just focusing on everything that I've lost.

Once the pandemic hit, student-journalists had so much more free time to write for the magazine. And I thought of that as an opportunity to grow it and also provide an extracurricular and community that didn't need to be in the classroom. My background is in computer science, so when I came home and quarantined, I sat down and programmed this. We have an editor team now of around 30 writers and our writer team is 650 or so. The majority of them are juniors and seniors in high school, and they're from all over the country and world. Before the pandemic, it was maybe a few articles per month that would be published. Now it's around five articles per day.

Mary Julia Koch '23 (mkoch@college.harvard.edu) is the Editor-in-Chief of the Independent

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23



GO BIG* OR GO HOME

**Loudly*

BY ARSH DHILLON '23

She carefully approached us in the way one does when they do not know how to tell their ridiculous story.

I was catching up with her roommates—not in the “what have you been up to?” way, more like they were a certain number of drinks ahead of me, and to keep up, I had to stop being able to taste.

During this time, after being isolated or in too tiny of a bubble for a year, no one “caught up” with each other. Catching up with someone felt like a pause in life. Those months were the first time in my life when I preferred talking and playing over what people call “conversations of substance.” I simply just wanted to fuck around.

“So, we’re being evicted,” she said, elongating each vowel. “We all have to leave.”

It was something about noise level and crying babies. The moment she said that, four guys, one of them carrying a speaker three-quarters of the size of his body, rolled into the apartment. He let out a huge grunt of relief as he placed the speaker on the floor. We were many flights of stairs up. I stifled a laugh, knowing what was going to happen next.

Instead of worrying about the eviction, my friend and her roommates looked afraid, in disbelief, giddy, and excited all at once. I am positive we all did. They gathered the entire group, and instead of people trying to head off on their own, everyone piped in to offer their apartments for all of us to migrate to. We were collectively down—even the boy who knew he would have to carry that speaker downstairs. He was actually so down that everyone ended up in his and his roommates’ dark, color-changing basement thirty minutes later.

I struggle to remember the full details on how we got there. The only clear moments for me are running and jumping

down the flights of stairs, seeing confused friends entering the apartment as we were leaving, yelling out our destination’s address, and jumping into a car at the last moment, snuggling my body onto the floor of it. During that car ride, I remember screaming the lyrics to “Superbass.”

When we arrived, we stayed in the car for one more song—“TiK ToK.” On nights like those, somehow, I transport back to 2010, an incredibly corny, beautiful time. Everyone in the basement, our new home, became a friend. Every voice was shot, every body was equally drenched in sweat, bumping against each other. The energy was higher than a thirteen-year-old superfan who was given *Believe* concert tickets for Christmas in 2011.

A couple hours later, we sprinted out of the house and into another Uber, heading to another home, another basement that drenched us in a deep, smoky red. My two hours there felt like ten minutes. When my in-body experience ended, I realized where I was, and I realized that there were only ten people left. The exhaustion hit everyone at the same time. We piled into cars, on the laps of each other, and quietly went back to our respective apartments. I have a picture on my phone of a silhouette against the car window, the blurry Boston skyline in the background.

To describe this memory in one word, I would use *presence*. Around those people, in those

spaces, I felt completely with them, taking up all the space I am meant to occupy. We filled that entire night up to its brink, and when it was over, I did not wish that it would never stop. It was completely enough.

When I am old and filled with Botox and asked about my time in college, while I may not remember the details, I will picture these moments, especially this particular night, as ones of joy, chaos, excess, adrenaline, carelessness, selfishness, privilege, and youth. This time will glitter and shine, like gold.

We are constantly bombarded with social, academic, extracurricular, and work pressures. For the past five years, work has taken over my life, and of course, I still had fun, but did I ever just relax? Did I live completely in my body during these “fun moments?” Did I take the time to find what makes me happy? Did I know what I wanted to do and be? I indulged in what I thought mattered for my future and what could correct my past but never what mattered to me in that particular moment of life.

Over this year, and I know this seems intuitive, I found out I deserve fun and rest—not just in the social realm but in every other part of life. What is the point of having access to such a ridiculously resource-rich institution if I do not learn, explore, and experiment with happiness?

We are taught to believe that what brings us happiness could only ever be a hobby, that what we do for a living could never bring us the richness and vibrancy of gold. Because of this, we push our desires—whatever makes work feel like it is not work—far away, almost out of the fear that if we attempt them, we will never be able to create a fake sense of happiness in anything else. Taking that step, however, was the greatest, scariest thing in my life. I still feel those social expectations surrounding what I should do, but I no longer feel lost; rather, found. I believe our generation will experience this after realizing most of what we have been taught to believe about life is bullshit. We do not have to seek. We must reject, wiping away all that clouds our right path.

Take heart, indulge the child within us, live life in our bubble to an excess, for what we know now more than ever before is that time will consume and haunt us if we refuse to be fucking down.

Arsh Dhillon '23 (asakhon@college.harvard.edu) is the Head of Design and the President of the Independent.

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23





We moved from Nigeria to England in 2001, mere months after I was born. My parents immigrated, taking with them three young children (and an incredible resolve), in search of increased opportunity and stability. I often explain how I was raised in a traditional Nigerian household, entrenched in Nigerian culture, morals, and rules—it just happened to be situated within a very white and middle class neighborhood in the north of England.

Being a Black, female immigrant has meant I have always battled with belonging. Growing up, I wasn't like the typical white kids who predominated my classes and dictated the norm, but I also differed from the few other POC kids whose families had lived in the United Kingdom for generations and were surrounded by communities of culture. This understandably led to a perpetual identity crisis and I quickly chose to dissociate from my surroundings, instead locating my being in an ethic of hard work. In many ways, I've always felt like an international student, away from home, learning how to thrive in a foreign environment, determined to make something of myself. Maybe that is why it was so easy for me to pack up and move across the Atlantic for a chance to tough it out and see what I could produce.

In the fall of 2019, I embraced a new life within Harvard Yard. I arrived bright-eyed and full of energy, looking to finally find my place in the land of opportunity. It's not that I believed America was without fault; I knew all too well of the long and continued history of struggle and pain in the United States. Still, I had bought into the American dream, donned my visa-status with pride, and fought my way to Harvard. Like many international students, I believed that once I graduated from these hallowed halls I would be unstoppable. I believed that if I could find my feet at the best University in the world then along the way I would also find myself.

I had not quite 'found myself' by March 15th, 2020, when instead I showed up at a deserted Logan International Airport, heading back to England for the indefinite future. COVID-19 had thrown everything into disarray. I boarded my long flight back to Europe with another international friend, and as we watched sad movies on our under-sized screens and sobbed together on the empty plane, I worried about what this all meant for my American adventures in self-discovery. I did not know then that I would not see campus or the life I had begun to curate here until the next year.

For much of my time back in England, I was in strict lockdown. Being stuck in my small Yorkshire town trig-

gered memories of a previous life categorised by loneliness and a need to escape. I became extremely anxious, consistently refreshing the CDC's website on travel policies, tracking the pandemic death count, and desperately planning my return to campus. The whiplash of being back in Britain was not something I had prepared for, and only then did I begin to realize how misguided it was to situate my hopes of belonging along the cobbled streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

I sank into a slow, burning depression fuelled by my refusal to accept where I was. For 10 months I lived on Eastern Standard Time and ignored my family around me; I existed on Zoom more than I existed in reality; and longed to be back at Harvard. But public health experts dictated a shut-in, and I was shut out. Helpless, I watched as America went on without me. It was there, from the outside looking in, that I was forced to turn a critical lens on the rosey facade I had constructed.

The truth of the matter is that as the pandemic escalated, Harvard would not protect me, and the U.S. gladly pushed me away. I, alongside many internationals, had been banned by the U.S. government from entering North America with no indication as to when I could return. When making plans for the fall of 2020, international students were an afterthought that the University seemed

"I cannot help but wonder if the sacrifices I made to be here will even be worth it. Did I cage myself to a life in the fast lane, with no time to worry about feeling at home?"

to not consider in their calculations. Foreign first-years were given the very worst hand. We were made to choose between a digital college experience divorced from the thing we all claim is the best part of Harvard—its community—and taking the year off, wondering what could have been and what was to come.

Like the rest of my sophomore class, I was not invited to return to campus that fall, and chose to fiercely advocate to enroll in Harvard's Study Away program. In the fall planning announcements released last August, the University hadn't considered how international students stuck in distant time zones would manage a full year of online learning. I began a frantic search for solutions. After corresponding with the Harvard International Office and the tutors at St. Catherine's College at the University of Oxford (who were willing to accept late applications from a number of desperate Harvard Brits), I was able to study at Oxford instead of committing to a prolonged virtual reality from home.

While I attempted to navigate this unfamiliar environment, the Harvard administration did not check in on me and therefore did not notice as I slowly began to drown, left alone at a locked-down Oxford. I was exhausted and drained from the previous summer of 2020 when America imploded at the hands of police brutality, racial disparity, and institutionalised suffering. I felt disillusioned as I saw people, just like me all across the

world, marginalised and discarded by the systems of capitalism which profited from their downfall.

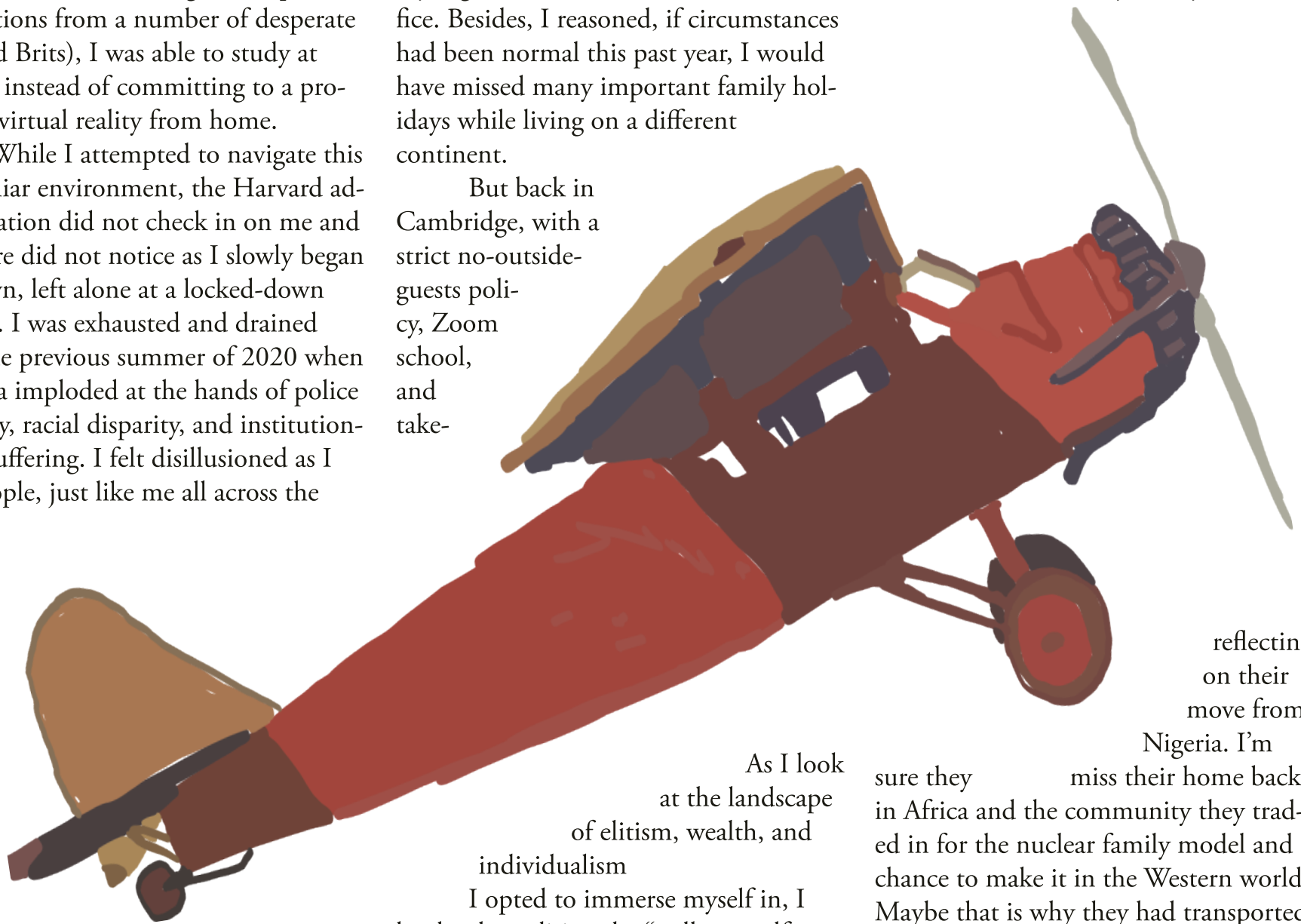
During a year of both experiencing and observing many hardships, I became acutely aware of how unwelcome I was in both British and American society. This realization made me question why I had thought Harvard was a place I could ever belong.

On January 26th, 2021, I flew back to Boston. The U.S. amended its travel ban to allow those with pre-existing student or work visas, alongside a negative COVID-19 test, to return to the country. With this slight rule change in place, Harvard allowed me to re-enroll and pay the spring semester's tuition, room and board. I was so grateful to finally be back in the dorms that missing my sister's 22nd birthday on the day of my flight seemed like a worthwhile sacrifice. Besides, I reasoned, if circumstances had been normal this past year, I would have missed many important family holidays while living on a different continent.

But back in Cambridge, with a strict no-outside-guests policy, Zoom school, and take-

away meals eaten alone in my Dunster House suite, I did not feel at home. Living under the administration's constant surveillance with nothing but the bone structures of college life left me feeling institutionalised and longing for my sisters' jokes and familiarity.

Since I returned to Harvard's campus six months ago, I have not left. Students have come and gone, COVID-19 restrictions have steadily eased, and the air around me is now one of anticipation for a 'normal' return in the fall. Yet trepidation builds as the virus mutates and cases rise once again. News of earthquakes, terrorism, and mass shootings suggest continued turmoil across the globe. This summer I wasn't able to return to England due to disruptive travel quarantine periods and an underlying concern of increasing the risk of infection to my family. Instead,



I took three Harvard research positions, grieved the death of my maternal grandmother thousands of miles away from my own mother, and missed more birthdays. Somedays I am able to feel like I have finally settled in and know my place at Harvard. Other days I feel terrified and unsupported; I miss my family and regret treating them with disdain. As a result of the pandemic, my relationship with the U.S. has irrevocably changed, and my status as an international student now rests heavily on my mind.

As I look at the landscape of elitism, wealth, and individualism

I opted to immerse myself in, I loathe the politics, the "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality, and the selfishness of it all. The label "international" is no longer one I wear with pride. Instead, it reminds me that I chose to leave behind everything I knew and take the financially and logistically irresponsible path of going to school an ocean away. I cannot help but wonder if the sacrifices I made to be here will even be worth it.

Did I cage myself into a life in the fast lane, with no time to worry about feeling at home? I wonder if my parents ask themselves this same question when

reflecting on their move from Nigeria. I'm sure they miss their home back in Africa and the community they traded in for the nuclear family model and a chance to make it in the Western world. Maybe that is why they had transported as much Nigerian culture over with them and made sure that my sisters and I knew we were not like the other kids in our small English town.

All I know is that I am here now and I cannot let my time here go to waste—somehow I have to find a way to bring my summed experience along with me, and make wherever I am feel like home.

Achele Agada '23 (oagada@harvard.edu) longs for home.

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23



MASK

Harvard's messaging on campus life this fall has students reining in their excitement about a return to college normalcy

CONFUSION

BY OLIVER ADLER '24



Following a year's worth of abnormality in academic experience, students' anticipation of a more normal school year—or of their first taste of traditional Harvard life—is approaching a fever pitch. After a summer of waiting, many students' questions about the re-

turn to campus were answered **in theory**. In an email from Dean of Students Katherine O'Dair on August 18, students were informed that classes will be held 100% in-person, dining will occur in the dining hall, and social gatherings will be permitted. Yet students continue to have concerns about the implementation of Harvard's guidance on restrictions this fall semester.

Harvard University Health Services (HUHS) has not sacrificed its mission to keep people safe by loosening restrictions. When asked about the University's approach in the upcoming semester, a Harvard University and HUHS spokesperson referred to comments made by the Director of HUHS Dr. Giang Nguyen in an email sent to Harvard staff on July 28. The biggest concern for HUHS at this time is the rise in COVID-19 cases as a result of the Delta variant of the virus. "We have to watch it very carefully," said Nguyen. "The Delta variant might slip through the vaccine from time to time, and if that happens it could potentially spread in our community, as it could in any other."

Nguyen also announced that the University would continue its indoor mask mandate. "Masks are another highly effective way to protect ourselves, colleagues, and our loved ones. For that reason, the University will continue to require masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status," he said.

After removing its mask mandate for the fully vaccinated in May, the CDC reinstated its mask mandate in July on account of the increase in cases caused by the Delta variant. Harvard had long before required that all students and faculty members get vaccinated before their return to campus in the fall semester, at one point giving hope that Harvard might return to pre-pandemic normalcy in the fall. Yet, in the wake of new CDC guidance, when questioned on how Harvard's vaccination rates might aid in predicting the return to normalcy on campus, HUHS spokesperson Jason Newton did not have a comment.

Though guidance from Dean O'Dair's August 18 announcement cleared up many of

students' biggest questions, concerns about the actual implementation of these factors remain. Constantine Tsibouris '24 lived on campus for both semesters last year. He thought by the end of the spring, Harvard started to operate more like one would expect a college to on a daily basis.



"All summer I visualized eating in a dining hall or going to full classrooms," he said. But Harvard's ambiguity on its messages for the statuses of both dining halls and classroom and its indoor mask mandate continuation have tapered Tsibouris' expecta-



tions. "The thing for me is not knowing what's going to happen with dining or classes. My expectations coming out of the year after being vaccinated were high. The indoor mask mandate makes me think the things I was expecting will no longer happen," Tsibouris said. "If we're having indoor masks, why should I expect anything else is happening? I wish they'd come out and say conclusively what they will or won't do...the more they wait, the more I expect them to drop a bomb when we get there."

Brad Campbell '24, a Computer Science concentrator at the College who spent last semester living in his home state, has a statistical view of Harvard's approach to the fall semester. "According to the CDC, 'As of August 2, 2021, more than 164 million people in the United States had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.' Of those people, there had been 1,507 deaths. Of that amount, 316 were classified as 'asymptomatic or [a death] not related to COVID-19,'" Campbell said. "So, in total, 0.0007% of fully vaccinated individuals have died from COVID-19. According to the National Safety Council, the odds of dying by

lightning strike is 1 in 138,849. This also represents a figure of 0.0007%."

Sameer Das '23-24 feels that Harvard's restrictions will inevitably trample on what makes the college great. Das said that "The "magic" of Harvard, for me, came from the serendipitous interactions and events that I found myself in on a daily basis while on campus," Das said. "A major reason I took a gap year was because I felt that missing a quarter of those experiences would be glossing over a core part of my limited time here at Harvard."

Yet, there are some students who remain hopeful that Harvard will fulfill its commitment to offer a transformative set of academic and life experiences. Jake Benoit '24's work in socially distanced Harvard laboratory this summer made him more optimistic about the return to campus this fall. "I feel like there will be a very sudden shift in the college going from this type of low-density environment to returning to bringing everyone back to campus," Benoit said. "Granted I am only seeing one part of the college working in a lab, but I do trust that Harvard has thought out all its logistics for bringing kids back without losing control of the situation."

Many questions remain unanswered about what life will look like at Harvard. As the school and its students prepare for the return to campus this fall, the excitement and apprehension are equally high. On that front, Das might have put it best: "That special part of Harvard just seems a bit more fleeting after events in the past year, but I think it'll force me to have a greater appreciation for whatever I can get at this point—and maybe that's all for the better."

Oliver Adler '24 (oliveradler@harvard.edu) hopes you have a nice day.



Design by Arsh Dhillon '23



We Are Social Animals

A CONVERSATION WITH HAPPINESS EXPERT TAL BEN-SHAHAR

BY GRACE VON OISTE '24

Where can a college student find happiness? In a classroom, on the river at sunset, or at a dinner table in Annenberg, a Harvard student might reply. For the students who had to learn remotely this past year, countless opportunities for happiness await them with the return to in-person education this fall. Harvard professor and happiness expert Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar believes that students have a tremendous opportunity to become not only happier, but also more appreciative this fall.

During the early months of the pandemic, research shows that signs of teens' mental health actually started to improve, according to Ben-Shahar. But as the pandemic progressed, mental health among teens began to decline and has been ever since. "Today, we have unprecedented levels of anxiety and depression," Ben-Shahar said. "We are social animals."

Virtual interactions are in no way substitutes for face-to-face interactions. "The number one predictor of happiness is the time we spend with friends and colleagues," Ben-Shahar said. He emphasized the importance of friendship, referencing a quote of Francis Bacon: "friendship doubles joy and cuts grief in half."

Ben-Shahar understands the importance of friendship for Harvard students, having graduated from the college himself with a B.A. in philosophy and psychology. He recalls his fondest moments at Harvard were those spent talking with people in the dining halls. When he returned as a faculty member and resident tutor in Leverett House, he again cherished the time spent with fellow members of the Harvard community.

After receiving his B.A. in philosophy and psychology from Harvard College, Ben-Shahar returned to Harvard to obtain a PhD in Organizational Behavior, an interdisciplinary study largely focused on the way people behave in groups. He brought two classes to the College: Positive Psychology and The Psychology of Leadership. These became two of the largest and most sought-after classes in Harvard's history.

When Ben-Shahar was teaching at Harvard, he would ask his students if they knew what PTSD was. The majority of students replied yes—it means Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Then, he would ask his students if they knew what PTG was. Very few

of them knew that it stood for Post Traumatic Growth, which is twice as likely to occur than PTSD in some cases. "Things don't necessarily happen for the best, but some people are able to make the best out of things that happen," Ben-Shahar said. "That's our challenge now."

A positive effect of the pandemic is that people today are more appreciative and grateful for basic necessities. According to studies, New Yorkers followed a similar pattern after 9/11: they became kinder, more empathetic, and more generous after the tragedy, said Ben-Shahar. But when psychologists re-tested these characteristics a year later, they found that New Yorkers had returned to the way they were before 9/11. Ben-Shahar's hope is that people's current state of appreciation actually lasts with the return of in-person activity: "The million-dollar question in the

"Even if you are in one of the most wonderful places in the world, you will have difficulties and hardships... And you will experience anxiety and sadness. These are natural human emotions. The paradox is that when we accept and embrace these emotions, rather than reject them, that is when they do not overstay."

ultimate currency, the currency of happiness, is *will we sustain this level of appreciation?*"

With the return to campus this fall, Harvard students have a tremendous opportunity for PTG. Ben-Shahar offers advice based on what he considers the five most fundamental elements of happiness: spiritual, physical, intellectual, relational and emotional.

For spiritual well-being, Ben-Shahar recommends taking a small amount of time each day to breathe, listen to a piece of music, or set time aside for an "island of sanity," as he described it. To maintain physical health, Ben-Shahar urges students to exercise every day. "I cannot overemphasize how important exercise is for not only physical health, but also mental health," he said.

Students can advance their intellectual well-being by indulging in academic life at Harvard. "You are in the most amazing place in the world. Celebrate that. Explore." Ben-Shahar also encourages students to invest in their re-

lationships. you will Harvard: spend with when you with people, technology

"This is what remember about it is the time you other people. And spend this time switch off," he said. Finally, for our emotional well-being, Ben-Shahar recommends students

pay attention to how they feel. "Even if you are in one of the most wonderful places in the world, you will have difficulties and hardships," he said. "And you will experience anxiety and sadness and frustration and fear. These are natural human emotions. The paradox is that when we accept and embrace these emotions, rather than reject them, that is when they do not overstay their welcome."

Where does the role of an educator come into play in a happy return to campus? Ben-Shahar believes in servant leadership, a philosophy developed by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s which articulates that service is crucial to being a good leader. "Extraordinary leadership is what we need now as we go through extraordinary times," he said, citing the example of Nelson Mandela, who referred to himself as his people's "servant" when he came out of prison in 1990.

Servant leaders are skilled at listening to others, said Ben-Shahar. "This is what I hope will be a part of the Harvard experience that you are returning to... Whether it's professors and faculty or fellow students, I hope that we will really listen to each other."

After over a year of hardship and uncertainty, students will finally resume access to the friendships, professors, academics and facilities that define Harvard. But students will be able to do more than just pick up where they left off—they will have the opportunity to become happier.

Grace von Oiste '24 (gvonoista@harvard.edu) writes News for the Independent.

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23

FRENCH KISSING

Exploring the performative, consensually violent nature of sexuality

BY ARSH DHILLON '23

I want a guy to slap the shit out of me.

I know, *ok*. I know. Just let it sit there for a moment.

I did not realize what I wanted until a close friend expressed the same sentiment. Usually, whenever I heard about consensual acts of violence during hookups, I repulsed and worried. The idea of someone slapping, hitting, or choking my loved ones boiled my blood. I struggled to see the appeal because even if it has a scientific explanation behind it, even if it were consensual, the violence could far too easily traumatize one's body, and consequently, their mind. The problem mainly lies in our society aggressively sucking at asking and giving consent. After hearing my friend's sentiment, however, my subconscious did not instinctually ring its release-the-thera-

LIFE

py-militia alarm. What happened was far more troubling—the inner me ecstatically agreed as if I had always enjoyed, wanted, violence in the bedroom. Suddenly, pleasure and relief replaced the long-standing anger and claustrophobia.

In this past year, I have noticed I am not the only one to experience changes in their hookup appetites. Once my community of college students could somewhat socialize again, we quenched our social thirst by cutting out the foreplay and getting straight to—“*real talk*.” Whether it was through a drunken conversation or after watching a film/tv scene depicting consensual violence, I continually heard people, even ones who I thought would spend their lives in missionary position, reveal that they wanted someone to throw them around, slam them against a wall, hit them, choke them, bruise them, dig talon-like nails in their back, and generally roughhouse them. The drunk ones expressed their desires with depravity and passion like their cores were exorcising poison. The sober tv-watching ones did it in a self-conscious whisper, just loud enough for friends to validate them.

From college students, this is perfectly normal. We are at a life stage where most seize the opportunity to explore the depths of sexuality. The exploration gradually takes place over these four years. For us, though, we have not even had enough time in our safe college bubble to explore, and for students like me, we only have a year and change left. So instead, like ripping out a deeply-rooted, young sapling from the dirt, we indulged our unconscious desires and embraced what

we may have previously believed to be “vanilla” or “taboo.”

We personified the expression: *Life is short*. But then added, *So fuck them*.

The shift was more in overall attitude rather than immediate action. Out of all the people who similarly expressed my desire, I only know of two who engaged in rough sexual acts. To excuse their inaction, some stated a lack of opportunity to ask their sexual partner while others expressed a lack of sexual partners due to either geographical isolation because of COVID or too tiny, too familiar of a pool to choose from. Disappointingly, I also was not one of those two actors. I was far too busy thinking about what my therapist (if I still had one) would say to me if I enthusiastically said I wanted to get hit: *Let's—unpack this one, Arsh*.

I could easily visualize the concerned, confused frown indenting into her forehead as her hands hesitantly juggled the weight of my mental health, but I struggled to hear her follow-up question. I sought out a friend who has similar life experiences rather than a professional specializing in trauma—obviously because college students know best.

My friend did not ask me a question. She just said, “Same.” We used silence to converse, reading each other's thoughts over FaceTime: *Are we entering our “risky sexual behavior” phase that psychologists predicted?*

IS

If so, thank god, I have been waiting.

“I'm happy,” I said. She smiled, “Same.” The scary thing was that we both meant what we said. She continued, “Whenever I tell people what I've been doing, they keep asking me if I'm okay, but—I'm fine.” It might be strange to read how feeling “okay” or “happy” could cause someone to mistrust themselves, but what some do not understand is that experiencing any kind of abuse makes you constantly question yourself: *Am I just like them? Am I capable of doing what they did?*

Self-mistrust breeds fear. Healing breeds fear. Positive emotions breed fear. She and I have gotten so used to questioning ourselves, we do not, outwardly, mind anymore. It is all about asking the right questions: *Am I happy, or is this just a toxic way of coping? Am I actually fine, or are my empathetic friends seeing something I am not?*

Depending on the situation or the context, the answers constantly change, but to make life harder for me, my answer at that

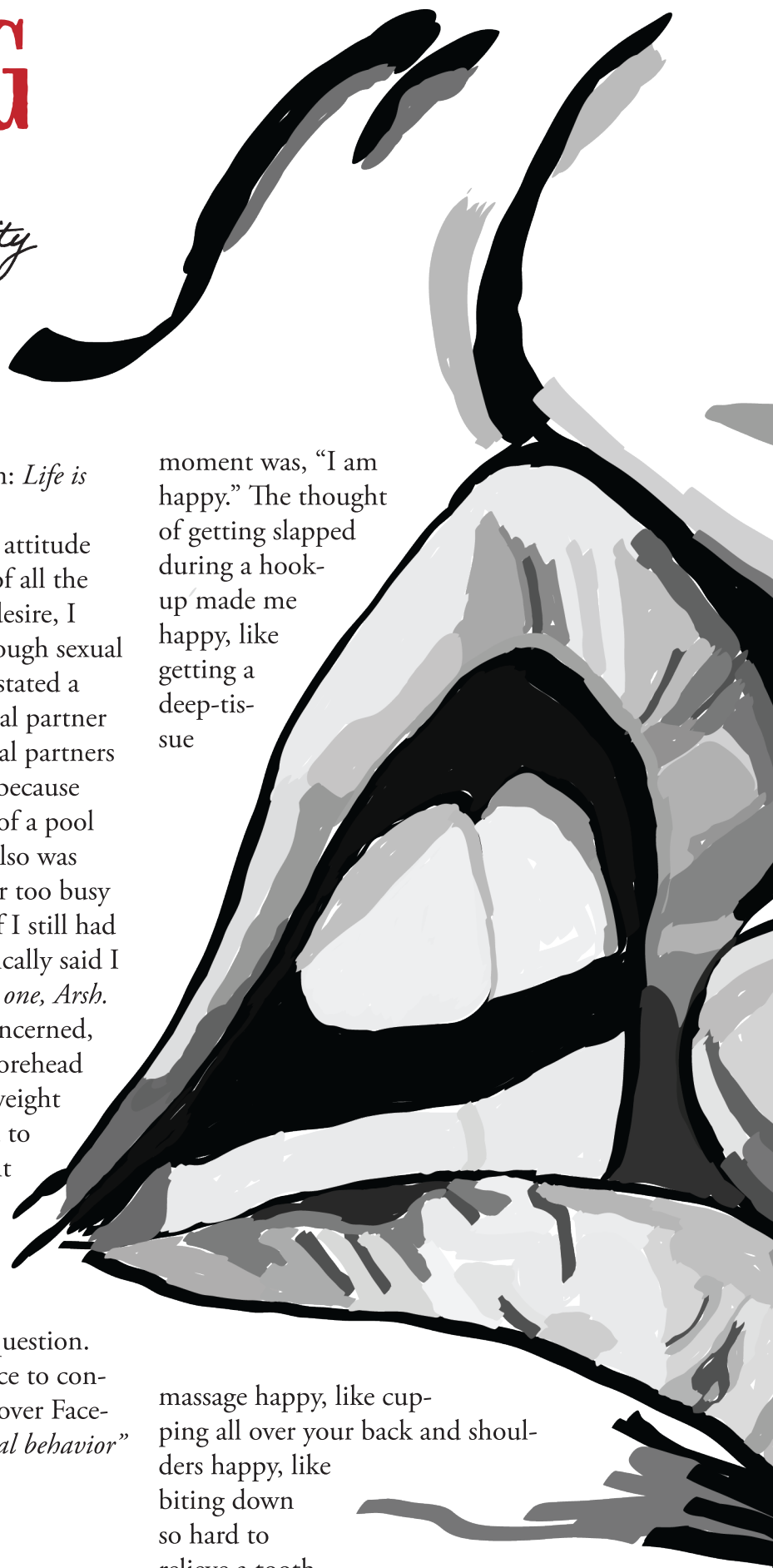
moment was, “I am happy.” The thought of getting slapped during a hookup made me happy, like getting a deep-tissue

massage happy, like cupping all over your back and shoulders happy, like biting down so hard to relieve a toothache happy.

Our conversation ended quickly: she had to clean her apartment for incoming guests. After I got off the phone, I did that thing we, straight, cis-women, do when life chooses the worst timing to get hard: we get out the Swiffer-Sweeper; we brew coffee or tea at inappropriate times of day; we cook a random collection of foods in a non-stick pan; we empty and fill the dishwasher; we decide to flip through the *Architectural Digest* or *Vanity Fair* laying on our coffee tables; we suddenly get out of bed at midnight and onto our Pelotons for

SHORT

thirty minutes; we sign up for Rumble or Orange Theory because SoulCycle just doesn't get us going anymore; we tend to the garden; we air-dry our clothes or beat them against rocks; we churn butter; we roll-up our sleeves and help the midwife. My poison was bringing out the Dirt Devil. You do not know pleasure until



you dip your feet into a clean rug.

The vacuum blocked out the noisy filters of my subconscious. I imagined a slap; it cooled like menthol-infused lidocaine. A wall-slam replaced a chiropractor. Choking felt like hands digging into tense shoulders. Clawing nails felt like scratching at a mosquito bite. Pain was not just a form of pleasure—it *was* pleasure. However, I could not help but notice a few things. All of these imagined feelings ultimately led to relief—not in-the-moment relief; rather, relief

from something external, outside of the intimate domain. These moments felt practiced, like it was known how to make a slap feel like lidocaine

instead of a dizzying, burning sting. Lastly, I realized I knew these feelings; they had been there before, just not in a sexual way.

When I was younger, I loved violent sports. Initially, in the leagues I played in, rules did not restrict girls from engaging in violence.

In a controlled fashion, we released any anger we had to

constantly hold inside of ourselves. When the rules archaically embraced the notion that

So

girls could not play violently, we learned how and when to secretly engage in violence without facing a penalty. To maintain its sting, the violence became quiet and intimate, only done in close-quarters. As it is commonly described, we “played dirty,” yet the greater physical intimacy did not become more personable. My body

memorized the feelings of being tripped while running full speed and crashing onto a hardwood floor, spraining and squishing my fingers, sweaty bodies crushing me to the ground, colliding skulls, elbows railing my ribs, long nails reddening my neck, all the air getting knocked out of my diaphragm, and the taste of a dirty and sweaty hand shoving my lip into my teeth. Yet, I have no recollection of their names or their faces—only of what their bodies did to me.

Memorizing this physical pain did not lead to any fear of it happening again. I know these feelings so well only because I felt them so often. We consented to this violence. We knew how hard and where to hit so that someone could get back up and continue to enjoy playing this game and the next. Only amateurs or assholes caused pain that crossed the line. And, there was something extremely gratifying about still performing well after getting hit, for what is greater than overcoming adversity with resilience? What else provides that necessary adrenaline boost from a crowd cheering and clapping once you stand back up even though on the inside, you know you are completely fine? Who receives the most validation, attention after the game?

To remember a person as a physical action instead of a being reminded me of what it feels like to hookup with a guy to whom I was not sexually or emotionally attracted. In these rare situations, intimacy becomes a surface-level interaction, only about what you show and look like and how well you perform. The lack of a shared rhythm results from two people agreeing to intimacy so that they can independently feel something in the presence of another.

To desperately want to feel something has been universally shared this past year and a half. Emotionally and mentally, I was spent—not just from the heightened and sudden grief, isolation, and anxiety but

FUCK

also from masking all those aforementioned emotions. What we have collectively experienced is violence. Yet, my skill in subconsciously masking and adapting emotions to the extent that I do not even realize I have been affected is exceptional, resumé-worthy.

Life is hard. It has been fucking harder during the pandemic. No longer able to dictate and mask that inner violence, I unknowingly, gradually made the choice to externalize it not for what it is but for what I wanted it to be. Sexual intimacy is a simultaneous relinquishment and taking of power. It is a reality in which we feel what it is like to live in someone else’s body, to taste their essence, drinking in their genetic makeup. I wanted to feel powerful while ridding my body of its anger, grief, and anxiety. I wanted to decide when and how I processed this violence. I wanted this process to take place in a separate domain that I could leave and return to at my will. I wanted to revel in my conditioned guilt and shame and tell him exactly what I wanted.

But I never did.

And it was fucking killing me.

I was afraid. If I felt out of practice, so did the guy, probably. Trial-and-error in rough hookups can be incredibly harmful even with proper communication and aftercare. We are young, and doing something we have been socially conditioned to believe is wrong will lead to mistakes. What if the “heat of the moment” led to a concussion, a deep bruise, or a bloody nose (I mean, hot, but also boo! bad!)? What if it triggered harmful memories during or even afterwards? What if I was completely wrong about what I wanted? What if the feeling did not provide me any relief? What if he also wanted me to act violently towards him? I could *never* reciprocate; is that fucked up? I thought about what my older mentors, the ones who put in so much love and effort to help me process my past, would think, and it made me gag from embarrassment.

The funny part is that I knew I was not out of practice, I knew how to handle all those what ifs, I knew it was okay if I did not feel comfortable reciprocating violence, and I knew that if somehow my older mentors learned what I was doing, they would just hope I was safe.

Ultimately, I did not feel ready—what I knew did not align with how I felt. The continuity of our bodies and minds leads to belief, which then leads to action. We cannot act un-

THEM.

less we believe it will benefit us. Yes, we self-destructively act all the time, but even then, we know, if just for a second, it will be gratifying.

Today, I believe in the benefit of my new attitude towards intimacy, and whether I take action, does not really matter to me. What changed over these past blurry, few months is somewhat of a mystery, but I am too tired to investigate. And more importantly, I am exhausted from feeling tired, from feeling like in order to heal, I have to constantly question myself, process my emotions, allot free time for self-care (whatever the fuck that means), or justify my thoughts.

Today, I stepped out onto my balcony. I could feel the dirt staining, seeping into the cracks of my feet. I crouched and stared at the floor. No matter what anyone did, dirt would always replace dirt. It could never be clean nor was it supposed to be. So I spat on it.

Arsh Dhillon '23 (asekhon@harvard.edu) claims to be the Andy's Sexpert

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23



LONESOME LIBRARIES

COVID-19 pushes Harvard's libraries from physical books, for a while

By
**MICHAEL
KIELSTRA '22**

The sheer scale of Harvard can often astonish. The endowment tops forty billion dollars. The University's real estate holdings in Boston and Cambridge alone comprise over four-thousand acres. And the library's collections, spread across mile after mile of shelving—57 in Widener alone—come to over 17 million volumes, each one purchased, processed, and then made available to students. During the pandemic, with students away from campus, the question arose of what to do with each of these assets, most notably the books. Libraries are meant to enable patrons to enter the building and leave with physical books, but while Harvard's population was scattered across the world, this was no longer an option.

For the first few months after campus de-densification in March of 2020, the entirety of the Harvard library system, like many of the school's other institutions, was entirely shut down. Only in June of 2020 could students once again access certain collections through contactless pickup or the Scan and Deliver service, in which librarians scan requested documents and email them to students. Although it took nearly four months to re-grant the students and teachers access to library books, Anna Burgess, Harvard Library spokesperson, says the transition online went very quickly. "When our library leaders were planning our transition off campus, their priority was the safety of the Harvard community, including library staff," she says. The delay of services until June was the result, in large part, of needing to determine protocols by which sufficient staff could return to campus to actually run them.

Once they did return, digital library services were immediately popular with students. The Ask a Librarian service connects students to librarians via live chat or asynchronous email support tickets. There was only a negligible increase in the number of tickets submitted in March 2020-March 2021 over the number submitted in March 2019-March 2020, but the number of live chats more than doubled, from 3004 to 8231. Scan and Deliver use within Harvard similarly doubled, from 12603 requests fulfilled in July 2019-June 2020 to 24202 fulfilled in July 2020-June 2021. Later on, even more esoteric services were widely used. Remote microfilm viewing, in which a library worker will operate a microfilm viewer live on camera on a researcher's behalf, has attracted 175 appointments since its launch in February 2021.

At the same time, librarians were working on a number of remote offerings designed not to emulate the experience of browsing the stacks but to provide value digitally on their own terms. This is not a new initiative for Harvard libraries: in

early 2020, when Corona was nothing but a beer, Lamont Library held a competition for posters with the slogan, "Libraries aren't just about books. Check this out." Puns aside, this ethos translated well to the remote era. A July 2020 Lamont newsletter offered consultations with librarians on "digital tools," on "What's newly available online," and on "Syllabus substitutions," replacing hard-to-find physical texts with online readings.

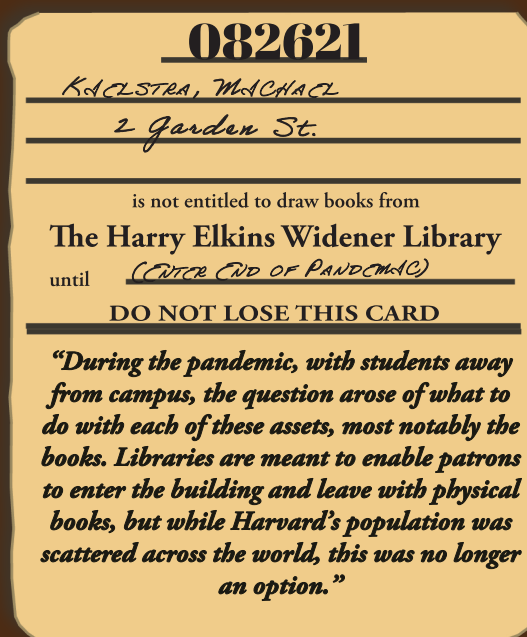
In cases where this could not be done, digital course reserves were implemented: library staff would, at a professor's request, scan entire books and make them available online to students in the relevant courses for three-hour periods. This initiative was quite successful, garnering over 129 million views of over 2000 items since September

Trust ETAS is in no way specific to it. Any member library that expects to have to close its physical buildings for more than 48 hours can activate ETAS. Similarly, ending access to ETAS is independent of the end of the pandemic. As Burgess explains, "The agreement with HathiTrust is specifically because our stacks are closed. As soon as the stacks reopen, there will no longer be an emergency need for access to these materials, and therefore they won't be available online through HathiTrust anymore." A library's reasons for opening or closing their stacks are their own, and all that matters to ETAS is that they have done so.

The price of access to this system, split as it is among over 60 member institutions, is surprisingly small. HathiTrust membership fees are assessed on a per-volume basis, with each scanned and archived item having some associated charge based on how many libraries carry copies. While HathiTrust does not disclose how much Harvard has paid for their copyrighted volumes, the total cost of access to public domain work currently comes to \$10,559 per annum. The average total fee for libraries in "Tier 3," the highest tier of membership and that to which Harvard belongs, is about \$47,000.

The picture, then, is one of an organization which has successfully (and affordably) moved away from the printed page, but only temporarily. In the spring of 2021, the library piloted a book mailing service, with limits that were generous to say the least: each parcel could contain up to ten un-digitizable items, and users could have up to a hundred total checked out at any time. (Returning books by mail had been possible even in the spring of 2020.) Even before that, in the fall of 2021, Cabot Library made study spaces available to those students who were on campus and being regularly tested by the University.

The pandemic has forced a shift away from thinking in terms of tangible objects, but such a shift is mostly temporary. While lessons have been learned and useful new initiatives will continue, the tradition of getting books from the library will return as soon as it is safe.



2020, and Burgess confirmed that it will remain an option even once the pandemic is over.

The use of scanned books was not restricted to course reserves. Many students who searched for materials on HOLLIS from home will have seen "View Online" buttons attached to many of their search results, even those which appear to be entirely physical. These buttons link students to a website run by HathiTrust, an association of academic and research libraries which, since 2008, has maintained a repository of over 13.7 million scanned volumes.

Only 6,885,245 of these volumes are in the public domain; the others are normally available only through a search function, and large chunks of text cannot be displayed, in order to avoid copyright violation. During the pandemic, however, HathiTrust created an Emergency Temporary Access System (ETAS), by which libraries can make the scans available to patrons in their entirety. This has been wildly popular: since April 2020, Harvard personnel have used it around 246000 times, accessing around 115000 titles

Although inspired by COVID-19, Hathi-

At least one person has said to me, "I'm not in love with Michael Kielstra '22 (mkielstra@college.harvard.edu), but I'd like to be in libraries with him."

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23

SHOWTIME

*What in-person theater means to us
after a year away from the stage*

BY CARLI COOPERSTEIN '24

The art of performance has fundamentally changed over the past year and a half. Though COVID-19 forced artists to reimagine theatrics through a digital lens, the essential, electric quality of performance has been missing since Broadway went dark in March 2020. As we return in the fall, performance is starting to spark back up in vibrant and innovative ways. Yet a glaring question remains: will theater reach its full brilliance, or will audience members and performers once again be left in the dark?

Connection drives performance, and during an era marked by physical isolation, it has been hard to replicate the joys of theatergoing through a digital screen. But the pivot to remote programming allowed dramatic artists to do what they do best: get creative. Theatermakers pushed ahead with innovative solutions to remedy the disconnectedness of our everyday lives. Robert Duffley, editor and assistant dramaturg of the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) in Cambridge, says that the shift “encouraged us to keep finding new ways to expand the reach of the work that we’re doing.” By publishing content online rather than performing in person, the team at the A.R.T. grew their craft in exciting ways.

One program that gained popularity during the pandemic was “table work.” By setting up a dialogue between the cast and creative teams of a show, viewers and team members alike developed a deeper understanding of the script. Another virtual program hosted by the A.R.T. was a magic show called *The Conjuror’s Club*, which allowed viewers to experience magic up close. “[Digital performance] is a type of artistry that certainly grew a lot over the past year,” says Duffley, “and I think it’s going to remain part of artists’ palette in years going forward.”

Despite the impressive ways in which theater went online during the pandemic, performance is fundamentally unsuited for digital translation. Remember the unpredictability of live performance: seeing the actors’ movements unfold in real time, hearing the billowing sound of voices hitting the ceiling, and realizing the capacity for imperfection makes viewers feel uniquely connected to the performers. Not only do these qualities keep storylines fresh and exciting, they make this medium feel human and thus relatable to the audience.

Public Relations Director at the A.R.T. Rebecca Curtiss defines theater simply as “watching life,” which, as the pandem-

ic has shown, can be both entirely unpredictable and shockingly beautiful. Nothing can be edited on stage; when done right, emotion is conveyed in a manner as stirring as it is in-person. “Every live performance is different,” Curtiss continues, “and that’s because of the dynamic with the audience. That electricity is hard to match when we’re watching through a screen.”

The intimacy between the audience, the performers, and their environment makes theater much more emotionally stirring than any film. The red velvet seats, the crooning of violins tuning in the orchestra pit, the pre-show chatter over playbills—all this sets the stage for the immersive theater experience that is to follow. Once the lights dim and the

“Remember the unpredictability of live performance: seeing the actors’ movements unfold in real time, hearing the billowing sound of voices hitting the ceiling, and realizing the capacity for imperfection makes viewers feel uniquely connected to the performers.”

curtain goes up, a profound sense of interconnectedness between audience members personalizes viewer experience. For Angel Hoyang ’22, student performer and board member of the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club [HRDC], the most important element of connection to the audience is “breathing the same air—or kind of, through masks!—as the performers do.”

How will performance look this fall? Due to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s indoor mask advisory and the vulnerability of unvaccinated populations to the Delta variant, Harvard theatres will require masks this fall. “[HRDC] does not have access to our usual main big venues for COVID-19 reasons, but we do still have two wonderful theaters, the Loeb Ex and the Agassiz theater,” Hoyang says.

At the A.R.T., Curtiss reports that audiences will be returning to the theater at full capacity, and while masks will be required, the theater has no plans for social distancing. Arriving at this fall plan has been the result of a longstanding collaboration with the T.H. Chan School of Public Health’s Healthy Buildings Program.

Together with Dr. Joseph Allen, the A.R.T. developed the “Roadmap for Recovery and Resilience” publication, which kept audiences up to date with the science and recommendations for theater venues during the pandemic.

As for the performances coming this fall, the A.R.T. will be presenting *Ayodele Casel: Chasing Magic* at the Loeb Drama Center starting on September 25th. Other events to look forward to this fall include *Macbeth in Stride* and a new rendition of the Tony Award-winning musical *1776*. In addition to programming at the Loeb, the theater has worked with an extensive creative team to present The Arboretum Experience at Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum outside Boston. Starting on August 21st, this multi-media event will incorporate four different plays in audio form that take place in the arboretum and can be listened to as guests walk through the space, as well as guided movement maps that allow visitors to experience the arboretum through choreography and meditation.

At HRDC, though the full season has not yet been announced, shows are being lined up for the fall return. In addition to a return to in-person programming, HRDC hopes to ramp up performance energy by including new production techniques and making full use of special effects. Working in collaboration with the first-year musical team from last year on some new projects, the HRDC is excited to help new students get acquainted with performance at Harvard. Those interested in joining this student organization can attend workshops and learn more about the audition process at their event entitled “Doing Theater at Harvard,” which will take place on Saturday, September 4th from 12-6pm. The event will be “a great opportunity for everyone who has done theater before to be reintegrated into campus since we’ve all been away from the theater for so long,” Hoyang says.

As shows reopen this fall, it is time for performance to step back into the spotlight.

Carli Cooperstein '24 (carlicoopers-stein@harvard.edu) is the Operations Director of the Independent

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23

WHAT'S NEW?

NOTEWORTHY BUSINESSES & ART EXHIBITS BEYOND THE GATES OF HARVARD

by KATETUNNELL '24 & GOGO TAUBMAN '24

As students return to a near-normal college scene this fall, many will scramble to immerse themselves in Harvard activities and classes. But they will also have the opportunity to experience one of the most defining aspects of leaving home for college: the chance to live in a different city, state or country. In the midst of the noise on campus this fall, enjoy the place you now get to experience in-person: Cambridge!

The city of Cambridge is a wonder. Artists, musicians and scholars thrive. Quirky, eclectic shops line the streets, and each observant student will likely collect their own list of favorites.

This fall, entrepreneurs who have hibernated during the pandemic will emerge with renewed stamina. While pandemic-induced financial strain has forced many Cambridge businesses to keep their doors shut, the num-

ber of new businesses has grown. The end of 2020 saw an all-time high of business openings across the United States, and quarterly rates are set to hit an all-time high in the coming months, with over half a million applications filled just this past June.

So, you may ask: *What's new in the area? Where do I need to be?* Fear not, there is much to explore for first-time Cambridge-wanderers and the senior class alike.

Starlight Square—84 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA

The designers of Starlight Square wanted to create “to create a square in the Square, a civic commons in the heart of the city,” the website reads. They turned a physical parking lot into an outdoor space for the arts suitable for social distancing. This “Cultural District” offers performances, art shows, film screenings, yoga,

dance, farmers markets, among other seasonal events. The atmosphere of the Square is young and hip with printed mesh murals comprising the exterior.

Perhaps their most exciting feature is “Poppportunity.” On Saturday and Sunday afternoons, Starlight Square welcomes a variety of entrepreneurs to set up farmers market-style stands around the Square. The initiative is an opportunity for budding businesses to share their products, such as Ninawaze Zero-Waste clothing, the garden store Wesleaf Plants, and MadebyCarola home decor. Stop by to purchase a one-of-a-kind up-cycled bedside table or a dorm-friendly succulent.

Starlight
84 Bishop Allen Drive
Cambridge, MA 02139
Poppportunity
Sat-Sun 12-6pm

“The end of 2020 saw an all-time high of business openings across the United States, and quarterly rates are set to hit an all-time high in the coming months, with over half a million applications filled just this past June.”

Summer Shack—One Bennett Street, Cambridge, MA

On August 5th, Summer Shack, a well-known local seafood restaurant, opened their Harvard Square pop-up in front of the Charles Hotel. If you are looking to enjoy the warm summer evenings in Cambridge with some fresh New England lobster, take a seat at one of their tables. Summer Shack will be sharing the open-air space with the Charles Hotel and the Harvard Square Farmers Market until late October.

Summer Shack
One Bennett Street, Cambridge, MA
Wed-Fri 10-4pm, Sat-Sun 12pm - 10pm

Cicada Coffee Bar—106 Prospect Street

This past spring, Vietnamese chef Vinh Le opened Cicada Coffee bar. Besides sweet Vietnamese coffee drinks, the cafe also offers specialty noodle dishes and bahn-mi sandwiches. While the food and drink is impeccable and unique, the star of the small joint is the decor and intentional use of space. Cicada offers a place for visitors to engage with each other and the kitchen at the same time. With only a bar to separate the two, the atmosphere is lively and communal. Vinh is almost always there whipping up some concoction such as the Caphe Trung, a creamy yolk froth with traditional Vietnamese coffee or espresso. Visit

Cicada to enjoy the company of both the Cambridge community and Vinh himself, a fantastic conversation partner. And stay tuned—Vinh is rumored to be starting an “evening program” featuring neon lights and a recently renovated back garden.

Cicada Coffee Bar
106 Prospect Street,
Cambridge, MA
Tues-Sun 8-3pm

Cleenland—89A Norfolk Street

Concerned about society's cumulative waste? Want to reduce your carbon footprint? Cleenland is a personal and home-care supplies store filled with non-toxic potions for everything from moisturizing skin to bleaching clothes. This shop sells body products for every skin and hair type, committed to their goal of inclusivity. While they offer products like bar shampoos and conditioners, Cleenland also provides refillable containers for liquid products such as dish soap. Their beeswax food-wraps in particular would appeal to a college student lacking plastic bags. Visit the store to learn about how your individual efforts *can* make a difference.

Cleenland
89A Norfolk Street
Cambridge, MA
Mon 3-7pm, Thurs-Fri 3-7pm, Sat-Sun 12-7pm

Menya Jiro Boston—57 John F Kennedy St, Cambridge, MA

This renowned New York ramen chain debuted in Harvard Square on July 14th. One of three planned spots in the Boston area, Menya Jiro in the Square promises to serve authentic Japanese noodles to college students and Cambridge locals. The restaurant started in Japan, and only expanded to the US in 2016. Menya Jiro has stirred excitement in various restaurant guides and is sure to be a hotspot during the fall semester.

Menya Jiro
57 John F Kennedy St
Cambridge, MA 02138
11am-10pm
(617) 945-1002

Other notable openings:
Zuzu's Petals – Wine and cheese
204 Hampshire St, Cambridge
Nu Do Society – Udon noodles
125 River St., Cambridge

A bustling art scene is also reawakening as Massachusetts has relaxed its social distancing regulations. Those eager to venture across the river can enjoy Boston's major art museums and galleries, which offer several new and notable exhibitions this fall.

Harvard Art Museums—32 Quincy St, Cambridge, MA

More than a year after closing due to the pandemic, the Harvard Art Museums will reopen on September 4th, offering “Free Sundays,” where visitors who book advance reservations are offered free admission. The Museums’ three galleries offer significant shows. Notably, the University Research Gallery’s *States of Play: Prints from Rembrandt to Delsarte* unveils how artists move through the art of printmaking as they rework and refine their images. In addition to Rembrandt and Louis Delsarte, this show features Pablo Picasso, Paul Signac, and Edvard Munch, among other artists.

In addition, the University Teaching Gallery will show *A Colloquium in the Visual Arts*, whose works will be studied by the class Humanities 20. Each week, the students will participate in an intensive lecture on the history and content of one of the pieces, followed by “looking labs” in the gallery, where they learn to

engage deeply with the artwork while using it to ask questions about human culture.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum—25 Evans Way, Boston, MA

Isabella Stewart Gardner is a pillar of the Boston art scene, known for its significant works of American, European, and Asian art and its unsolved 1990 heist. The museum recently opened *Titian: Women, Myth and Power*, which explores Renaissance painter Titian’s six “painted poetries,” works which are now reunited for the first time in over four centuries. The exhibition also features responses to these paintings by contemporary artists. Barbara Kruger’s *Body Language* probes the onlooker to reflect on the historical concept of a gaze and its relevance in the present day; meanwhile, Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelly’s short film response to Titian’s *Rape of Europa* gives voice to the character Europa.

The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)—25 Harbor Shore Dr, Boston, MA

The ICA Boston is another must-see museum with a plethora of interesting exhibitions. *Virgil Abloh: ‘Figures of Speech’* is the first museum exhibition devoted to the work of Off-White Clothing founder Virgil Abloh. Open until September 26th, the show highlights Abloh’s career and his many collaborative projects with other artists. Another noteworthy exhibition is the ICA’s newest addition, *The Worlds We Make: Selections from the ICA Collection*, which explores how artists have dreamed new visions of the world.

Lastly, make sure to visit the ICA Watershed before it closes on September 6th. Located within the Boston Harbor Shipyard and Marina, this summer space features Boston-based artist Stephen Hamilton’s project on the West African tradition of indigo dyeing, along with Dominican artist Firelei Báez’s largest sculptural installation to date.



Krakow Witkin Gallery & Robert Klein Gallery—10 Newbury St & 38 Newbury St, Boston, MA

Both of these galleries offer compelling art shows this fall. The minimalist gallery Krakow Witkin showcases minimalist and conceptual art. On September 18th, the gallery will unveil a solo show for painter Kay Rosen, whose contemporary text-based art is world-renowned.

Robert Klein Gallery, one of the world’s most prestigious fine photography galleries, has two exhibitions open now until October 10th.

The first showcases the work of Italian photographer Mario Giacomelli and runs concurrently with a retrospective of Giacomelli at Los Angeles’s Getty Museum. The second exhibition highlights the work of acclaimed Swedish wildlife photographer and activist Björn Persson.

Now with just a taste of what’s new in Cambridge and Boston, you have the opportunity to add to the provided list. Email the *Independent* writers below with findings that the whole Harvard community deserves to know.

Happy discovering!

Kate Tunnell '24 (ktunnell@harvard.edu) supports local businesses and is the Media Director of the Independent.

Gogo Taubman '24 (gtaubman@college.harvard.edu) writes for the Independent.

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23

HARVARD AT

THE OLYMPICS

Two Alumni discuss rowing for Team USA in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games

BY ANNIE COLLOREDO-MANSFELD '23

Sixteen Harvard students and graduates competed at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. Of those sixteen athletes, nine of them competed in rowing events. The U.S. Rowing Team did not win any medals at the Olympic regatta for the first time in history; however, the representation of younger rowers, especially from Harvard, looks promising for the 2024 Games in Paris, France.

Two Olympic rowers, Liam Corrigan '19 from Old Lyme, Connecticut, and Conor Harrity '18 from Weston, Massachusetts, spoke to the *Independent* about their journey from Harvard Men's Heavyweight Rowing team to the U.S. Olympic team. Hear how they went from wearing crimson to wearing red, white, and blue.

(The responses have been lightly edited for the sake of brevity and clarity.)

How did Harvard impact your ambitions?

LC: The caliber of rowing at Harvard is very high as one of the top schools in the world. Rowers from around the world go to American schools, particularly Harvard, to row. Being in that kind of program helped me develop a lot, and rowing with other guys who also had aspirations of going to the Olympics definitely set me on a path. There are five male rowers on the US team from Harvard, and then two guys on the Australian team and one guy on the Estonian team. That is really pretty remarkable!

CH: Harvard has a pretty tremendous coaching staff. Charlie has over 30 years of experience just coaching at Harvard, and has coached guys that have gone on to the national and olympic teams. The teammates also have a lot of international experience, so seeing them compete internationally and competing on a similar level with them in college definitely made it seem like a possibility.

Were the Olympics always a goal?

LC: Not at first. As I got better, I did the Junior World Championships, and in college I did the Under 23 World Championships (U-23). In college, I realized the Olympic team was a possibility when I began rowing with recent Olympians. Towards the end of college, I was pretty set on trying to at least go to the training camp after graduation. I was one of the youngest guys, so I did the U-23s that summer in 2019, and then went to the Olympic training center in Oakland, where you train every day with the coach that selects the team.

CH: Yes, they were always a goal, especially when I first started rowing. There's actually a video that my high school did back in the spring of 2011 when I was a sophomore. In that interview, I said one day I would love to row in the Olympics. Shortly after I made the Olympic team, my high school coach sent me that video.

Did you start training immediately after graduation? What was the process for getting on the



team?

CH: I moved out to the training center in June of 2018 shortly after graduation and after the Harvard vs. Yale race. I was immediately thrown into the mix with some of the eights+ selections [for eight-person shells with coxswains], and that summer, along with Alexander Richard '18, we made the team from the class of 2018. We were thrilled.

How did the one-year set back due to COVID-19 impact your training, mentally and physically?

LC: In the first month when everything was shut down, it was tough mentally. By May 2020, we were all able to be rowing in singles, so we got the same if not better physical benefit, and we were able to improve our technical skills. I was living with two other guys and training in a pod, and I was able to see other people. I also think that being slightly younger, it was good to have a little bit of time to develop more physically, even for just one year.

CH: That was pretty challenging. We had just come back from a camp right before the Olympics had been delayed, where I had been peaking mentally and physically for what would have been three months of Olympic selection. We then went into lockdown in the Bay Area, and then found out the games had been postponed. I moved back to Boston to spend time with my family and try to row on the Charles. Physically, I could still train and had some other guys in Boston that I could train with, but the thought of training for another year after I had been so prepared mentally to race at the end of July 2020 was difficult.

How did COVID-19 impact your experience while there? Did it impact race day?

LC: Everything was super well-organized, and super well-run, and obviously a lot of the procedures were affected by COVID-19, so I couldn't go to other events. By the final event I definitely did not sleep much the night before, and it was definitely disappointing to not get a medal, especially because we were so close. We were a second behind silver and maybe two seconds from gold.

CH: It is difficult to say because I don't have another Olympic experience to compare it to, but overall I had a fantastic experience, which is a huge credit to the Tokyo organizing committee and volunteers. They were super welcoming and really excited to see us. The only thing was the mask-wearing, which at this point, I think we are all very used to, and the daily testing, that was something that we were used to as well from before we got vaccinated. So it really wasn't a huge impediment on what we were doing day-to-day in the village and at the course.

Now that the Olympics are over, what is next for you?

LC: I am going to Oxford next year to do a one-year masters program in finance, and row as well. As long as I can make the boat, it should be a pretty high standard of rowing. It hopefully shouldn't be too much of a drop-off from training on the Olympic eight. After that, I am very likely to come back to Paris for the 2024 Olympics because it is honestly a lot of fun rowing and training and being on a team, and I think I still have a little more progression to do. I think I can get better, and I want to have some really good results internationally.

CH: I have decided to take a significant amount of time away from rowing. The Tokyo Olympics were probably my only Olympic Games. I am looking forward to working again and moving onto the next chapter of my life. I would like to pay back the support of my parents and spend time with them because they have certainly been a huge support system for me.

What advice would you have for current athletes at Harvard who are aspiring to go to the Olympics?

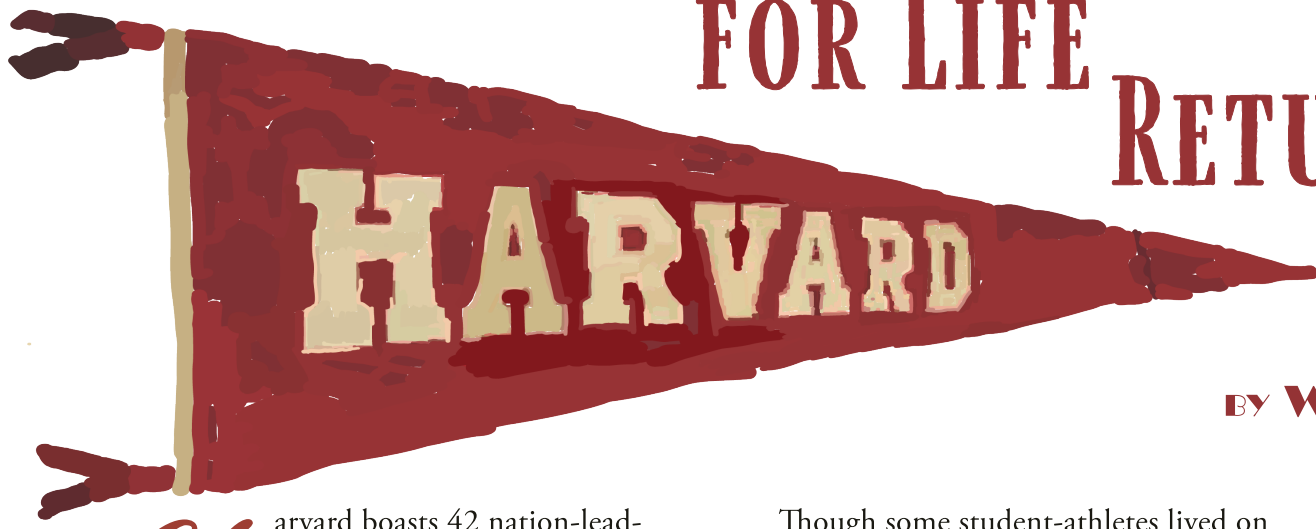
LC: You have a lot of resources at Harvard, specifically on the men's crew team. I would make the most of their knowledge.

CH: I think they should absolutely give it a shot. The Olympics are a once in a lifetime experience, and I think that at Harvard, you can get to that level and be competitive with athletes from schools with top athletic programs. If you look at guys on the national level, Harvard athletes can definitely make a big impact for team USA.

Annie Colloredo-Mansfeld '23 (acollore-domansfeld@college.harvard.edu) is a staff writer for the Independent.

Designed by Arsh Dhillon '23

THE TEAM FOR LIFE RETURNS



*Welcome Back,
Harvard Athletics*

BY WILL GOLDSMITH '24

Harvard boasts 42 nation-leading Division I intercollegiate sports teams. Roughly one-fifth of undergraduates are varsity athletes, and almost 80% participate in some form of athletics on campus. This fall, after 17 months without Ivy League athletics, The Crimson will once again participate in competitions. Despite the prolonged absence of competition and on-campus training, many student-athletes have developed a heightened appreciation for their sports—and are eager to get back to playing.

“I think teams have done a terrific job in supporting each other through the pandemic and they have been connected and productive in many ways,” said Harvard Athletic Director Erin McDermott. “I’m proud of how they pulled together and adapted, as athletes must at all times to excel and thrive, when facing change and challenge.”

Difficulties will doubtlessly emerge for Crimson teams this fall. Players must return to what they call “game shape,” a level of endurance and overall fitness that enables competing at a high level.

“Preparation for competition will need to be managed more gradually,” said McDermott. “Student-athletes will need to physically acclimate back into muscle memory, endurance, strength and conditioning levels that are appropriate and optimal for competition.”

Though some student-athletes lived on campus during parts of last year and were able to access Harvard trainers and facilities, the majority remained at home. “Most have not been able to engage in strength and conditioning or sport training with coaches for all this time,” said McDermott. “Even if able to train individually last year, there is nothing that can simulate team activity or competition.”

However, the significant amount of time student-athletes spent away from their tight-knit teams has not undermined their commitment to them. Virtual activities were not as conducive to the formation of team connections as in-person engagements, but they did enable students to retain a semblance of contact with one another last year.

“The pandemic definitely affected the Harvard Athletics community in unforeseen ways,” said Taylor Fasnacht '24. “Luckily the women’s soccer team was able to be proactive through [virtual] weekly team meetings where we analyzed film, established our team values, and formed strong relationships with one another through a wide variety of activities.”

Women’s lacrosse player Chloe Provenzano '24 also echoed a spirit of camaraderie. She says she is “excited to build our team culture and to get to know the incoming class of girls on the team.”

Most of all, student-athletes are resolute in

their desire to represent Harvard once again. “Although the team has been away from Cambridge over the last calendar year, the camaraderie amongst the group has strengthened, as well as the group’s desire to claim an Ivy League pennant,” said Fernando Docters '21, a member of the men’s soccer team. “It won’t be an easy feat, but the group is excited to take the Ivy League by storm, because for us, we know we can do it.”

“I’m most looking forward to playing in games again,” said Provenzano. Fasnacht agrees: “We are all super excited to compete this fall and could not be more ready to fight for the Ivy League title,” she said.

Last year’s circumstances certainly weighed on Crimson athletes; sports are, of course, communal endeavors. Meanwhile, the current surge of the Delta variant of COVID-19 is prompting questions about the future of The Crimson. But with the University’s plans for athletic competition still in place, the 2021-2022 school year rings out with an air of hopefulness and dynamism—and at last, a little normalcy.

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

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23

The Fall Roundup!

BY OLIVER ADLER '24

| SPORT | MATCH-UP | SIGNIFICANCE |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Football | Sat. 9/18 at Georgetown | As the team coach Tim Murphy said of the season-opener at the end of July, “We have a long way to go and a short time to get there.” Georgetown will have two more games under their belt than Harvard by the time the two teams meet. |
| Men’s Soccer | Tue. 9/14 vs. Northeastern | The home-opener for men’s soccer against crosstown rival Northeastern will be available for streaming on ESPN+. |
| Women’s Soccer | Sat. 9/25 vs. Penn | This match is the first in an eight-game stretch where seven of the women’s soccer team’s opponents are Ivy League teams. |
| Women’s Tennis | ITA Northeast Regional Championships (Oct.) | This first championship event is one of the few competitions scheduled for both teams, and the regional championship is likely the event to circle on the calendar for most tennis teams who will be participating. |
| Women’s Volleyball | Fri. 9/3 vs. Marist (Harvard Invitational) | Playing host to an invitational always raises the stakes for a matchup, but particularly for a season-opener. |
| Women’s Rugby | Fri. 9/3 vs. Mount St. Mary’s | This kickoff competition is one of only a handful of regular season matches for Women’s Rugby. |
| Women’s Openweight Rowing | Head of the Charles (Cambridge, MA; Oct. 23-24) | Home-field advantage comes with added pressure at the world’s largest two-day rowing event. Expect to see hundreds of thousands of spectators lining the Charles River while 11,000 collegiate athletes from around the world board the boats. |
| Women’s Lightweight Rowing | | |
| Men’s Openweight Rowing | | |
| Men’s Lightweight Rowing | | |
| Men’s Cross Country | Fri. 10/15 at Nuttycombe Wisconsin Invitational | Nuttycombe will serve as a pre-test of the best for the team that finished 15th at the NCAA National Championships in 2019. |
| Women’s Cross Country | Fri. 10/15 at Nuttycombe Wisconsin Invitational | After winning the NCAA Northeast Regional Championships and finishing 31st at the National Championships in 2019, this team will once again face the nation’s best from Arkansas, North Carolina State, and Stanford. |

The Shoe of The Summer

NIKE X SIG ZANE ACG DESCHÜTZ SANDAL

BY NOAH TAVARES '24



This summer, one pair of shoes changed my life: the “Nike x Sig Zane ACG Deschütz+” sandal. The name is a mouthful, but after saying it over a hundred times it rolls off the tongue. So without further ado, the Arts Editor of the *Harvard Independent* declares the “Nike x Sig Zane ACG Deschütz+” the inaugural *Shoe of the Summer*.

What does it mean to be the *Shoe of the Summer*? This year, summer was about rebirth and reflection after a tumultuous year and a half. A shoe for this summer had to be technically freeing and comforting but also stylistically new and refreshing. For Harvard students, the shoe has to be able to stand up to Cambridge’s muggy heat and historic cobblestone. It is no surprise then that our shoe is a product of an exciting collaboration between Nike and Sig Zane, a clothing brand based in Hilo, Hawaii. I sat down with Kuhao Zane, designer of the shoe for Sig Zane, to learn about how his Hawaiian heritage influenced his design style.

I stumbled upon this shoe by accident. On the Nike SNKR application, this pair of Deschütz stands out between Nike SBs and Jordans. Introduced in 1992 as an anti-fashion sandal for the outdoors, the Nike ACG team revived it for summer 2020 as the pandemic drove people to nature. A competitive offering to Texas and Birkenstocks, the shoe instantly became a cult favorite as the refreshed rubber sole with Nike Air technology rivals the comfort of the Adidas Boost midsole. I wore these open-toed sandals playing pickup basketball, hiking through forests, climbing through castles, and out at night.

While the shoe itself provides the comfort and performance characteristic of Nike, the detail of its design adds so much more. Delicate ornamentation covers the shoe, from the cross-foot flap, to the ankle strap and the inside of the heel cap.

The most remarkable single feature on the Deschütz is its subtle black floral upper. (Kuhao is

credited by Dale Hope, the expert on the Aloha shirt, as the man who invented the black-on-black Aloha shirt.) Even more striking is the remarkable color scheme throughout the shoe. What might be superficially described as camouflage, is actually the exact opposite; the colors are inspired by the O’hiu, a flower critical to feeding the aquifers of the Big Island in Hawaii. “I found the colors by bringing Pantone swatches into the forest,” Kuhao said.

The connection between functionality, aesthetics, and culture is distinct to Kuhao’s style. Kuhao Zane started off by designing Aloha t-shirts in high school. His father, Sig Zane, revolutionized Aloha shirts by focusing his design ethos on Hawaiian plants. At a party in Hilo, Sig witnessed the *hula ai hā’a*, a hula dance carried down across six generations. “My father was trans-



“To understand Kuhao’s design process is to understand his culture. The Nike x Sig Zane ACG Deschütz+ shoe is not just an aesthetic, it’s a product of need.”



formed,” Kuhao said. “He decided to dedicate himself to answering the question: if Aloha shirts are important to Hawaii and if these native plants are important to hula and Hawaiian culture, why don’t Aloha shirts have these native flowers on them?”

Sig educated himself on Hawaiian history and practices, even quitting his real estate job when he discovered a particular sale would kill local medicinal plants. While he drew every design on paper, Kuhao, only in high school at the time, began designing the t-shirts on his computer. Hence, the Sig Zane brand was born.

Kuhao grew into a highly technical designer with a unique cultural understanding. Inspired by a psychology class where he learned of the interpretation of shapes, Kuhao decided to study graphic design at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising. His process, he said, is “kind of going back into that psychology of design and how it affects consumers and how we can educate consumers with the right amount of storytelling narrative and content.”

Kuhao later rejoined the Sig Zane company, leading it from designing Aloha shirts to collaborating with brands like Tiffany’s and Nike. It is now one of the few world-renowned design houses from the Pacific Islands.

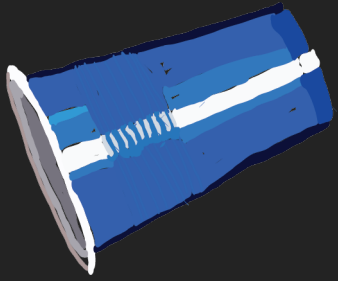
To understand Kuhao’s design process is to understand his culture. The Nike x Sig Zane ACG Deschütz+ shoe is not just an aesthetic, it’s a product of need. The need is to protect Hawaii’s natural resources and the result is a meticulously-designed shoe reflecting that very message. This design philosophy comes naturally to Kuhao; it is based on his own life, having inherited seven generations worth of hula tradition. When asked to give advice to Harvard students, Kuhao said, “don’t focus so much on just the aesthetic of things, but try to implement your own personal experiences.”

Now when I wear these sandals, I think about moving purposefully, guided by my own knowledge and experience. This summer was once in a lifetime. I’m glad I had the Deschütz on my feet for it.

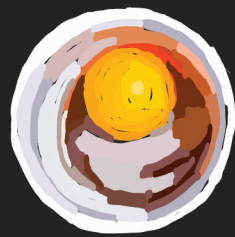
Noah Tavares '24 (noaktavares@college.harvard.edu) is a sandal guy now. Be prepared to see his toes.

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23





TABLES FOR



TWENTY-FOUR



It goes without saying that the next nine months at Harvard will look different than any year before. The uncertainty that lies in attending college classes during a pandemic has forced students to drastically compromise their paths in their academic and professional lives. The Class of 2024 has experienced a year of unprecedented novelty. Although a considerable number of students were able to live on campus for the fall semester, only a fraction of first-years lived on or near Harvard facilities in the spring, yielding a challenge to form human connections with their peers away from Zoom meetings.

Whether to even *enroll* in courses this past year has been a common debate among the class. For foreign or far-away students, a combination of financial and logistical challenges discouraged spring enrollment, as it came without the benefit of living near other peers. And for the students who *did* choose to enroll and move on or near campus this past year, this close proximity to others is what largely justified a second semester of online learning.

"I have no regrets about [enrolling] because it gave me the opportunity to live elsewhere and experience new things while still taking classes at Harvard. I was able to spend time meeting new people, exploring a region I had never lived before, and have the time of my life all while enrolled, which is something that normally wouldn't happen unless one takes a gap semester," Hunter Gallo '24, who took classes and lived with other Harvard students in Oxford, Mississippi. "This year, I'm looking forward to living with my close friends and finally experiencing everything Harvard has to offer, despite the fact that I'm very concerned this once again may become a locked down semester."

Riley Kunz '24, a player on the football team, also enrolled in classes the whole year. "I would have regretted enrolling if not for sports. Having my teammates as a social circle that I saw every day definitely helped with all the social restrictions," he says.

Socialization appears to have been the most rewarding factor for students who enrolled. "I was really glad to be with friends and stay in my social class," says Elsie Halvorsen '24, who also enrolled in classes all year. Will McQuiston '24, who made the same decision, says, "anything was better than a gap year in isolation."



The common theme in positive reviews towards online enrollment is understandably and visibly attributed towards the friendships made in doing so—not in the quality of educational experiences. For students who took classes from home or strictly followed Harvard's COVID-19 restrictions, the decision to enroll proved much less rewarding.

Samantha Galvin '24 states that she did in fact regret her decision about enrolling, especially during the first semester. "I got put in a tiny dorm, and it was hard to meet people considering Harvard literally did not plan anything that wasn't virtual. All the virtual events and classes really did not seem worth it to me."

Galvin believes many students' disappointment in their academic experiences will have lasting repercussions. "I think people were really checked out last year. No matter how good the online classes were, or how encouraging professors tried to be, it simply was not the same as real classes," she says. "I think a lot of kids have lost interest in what they used to be passionate about, in school

The Class of 2024 hits the restart button

BY **MARBELLA MARLO '24**

and in their extracurricular activities. It will be interesting to see if people check back in quickly, or if it will be a permanent change."

Kunz sides with Galvin's argument in the challenges that online classes posed this past year. "I think the year of online learning made it much harder to learn. I found myself much more distracted with Zoom classes and at times wished it was possible to actually meet with my professors and TF's rather than have virtual office hours," he says.

Many students will have to relearn tasks that used to feel second nature, says Halvorsen. "It is actually going to be a bit of a challenge to get back into full participation and studying for classes, as well as having so much less time simply because there is a lot more going on," which, she adds, might not be a bad thing.

The extended period of a virtual education will also have consequences on socializing, as the Class of 2024 enters their sophomore year. As first-years, many of these students living on or near campus formed friendships by sneaking behind the College's uncompromising guidelines to socialize in groups in person. For some, going against the rules for the sake of friendship may have justified a year's worth of tuition and time; for others, this was not worth the risk of potentially jeopardizing their academic standings or Housing statuses.

As a result of this divergence in behavior, Gallo expects "a social divide between those who continued semi-normal activity during the pandemic and those who did not and likely still will have qualms about doing so." Kunz says, "it was also mostly be incredibly difficult to make lasting friendships outside of the people we saw regularly, namely, roommates and teammates."

Galvin reasons that people put their social lives ahead of academics because they were deprived of a complete college experience. "I think people feel really disconnected from the idea of Harvard," she says. "Harvard to us just means the friends that we met, since there was not really a physical network for us to attach ourselves to."

This fall, Harvard plans on shifting back to the distinguished experiences that make it so special: renowned lectures, intimate discussions, sporting events, social gatherings, and the life-changing conversations that can only truly take place face-to-face. "I hope that Harvard begins to feel more like a school, where we are supported by a network of staff and administrators, and not like a giant swimming pool we were just tossed into the deep end of and told to cling on to the nearest person," Galvin says.

Among the Class of 2024, the void of classroom setting interactions was evidently replaced by the desperate yet ultimately fulfilling relationships—whether formed virtually or (secretly) in-person. How will the introduction of traditional Harvard social events and physical classrooms impact these friendships? How will students' perception of Harvard change? Only time will tell what this next school year will look like, socially, academically, and through the lens of history, as almost half of Harvard's undergraduate student body walks through campus for the first time.



Marbella Marlo '24 (mmarlo@college.harvard.edu) is the Managing Editor of the Independent.

Design by Arsh Dhillon '23



Postcards: A Bloody Mary Cack



FOR YOUR TRAVELS
The Morning After



By Gogo Taubman '24



THE WEIGHT OF GOLD

*As we return to socializing,
let's not forget how to sit still*

BY MARY JULIA
KOCH '23

At the end of World War I and the pandemic of 1918, Harvard students rejoiced. The woes of the war—in which 11,319 Harvard alumni, undergraduates, and faculty fought—and the grip of influenza—which infected 258 students in one year—finally lifted from the shoulders of the undergraduate body. Campus quarantine periods ended, distancing guidelines subsided, and masks were no longer donned. Beyond the gates of Harvard, technology proliferated, the stock market soared, and a culture of decadence flourished. The Roaring Twenties began.

A century later, we find ourselves in a similar historical moment—or rather, yearning to approach it. The pandemic has taken many tolls, and people dream of indulging in all they have sacrificed this past year and a half. Yale sociologist and physician Nicholas Christakis imagines that once COVID-19 recedes from the U.S. landscape, “People will relentlessly seek out social interactions in nightclubs, in restaurants, in bars, in sporting events and musical concerts and political rallies. We might see some sexual licentiousness,” he says. “We’ll be living in a changed world.”

Harvard students ache for this changed world. Though COVID-19 mutations continue to delay the prospects of a “post-pandemic” era, the return to campus this fall rings with excitement. “This year, I’m looking forward to living with my close friends and finally experiencing everything Harvard has to offer,” said Hunter Gallo ’24, one if many who is eager to socialize again. “I have three years left and I intend to fill them to the brim,” said Aurelia Balkanski ’24. With good reason, students yearn to enter the Roaring Twenties of the 2020’s.

But a counterargument to the prevailing spirit of exuberance deserves some recognition.

What is lost when (or if) we return to in-person life? Will we sacrifice the peaceful solitude granted by the pandemic for the thrill of socialization, as students did a century ago?

“Life is not plot, it’s in the details,” wrote author Jodi Picoult. College life typically feels like it’s *all* details, gnawing at us daily and renewing in new forms—meetings to attend, appointments to schedule, agendas to fulfill, checklists to complete.

The pandemic provided a reprieve from this chaos. We didn’t have to run between classes or clutter our weekends with social activity. Our schedules exhaled with emptiness, and our minds had extra room to sit and speculate. For the first time for many of us, we no longer had to constantly be *getting things done*.

This felt unnatural. Us college students have been trained to prioritize productivity over stillness, quick rewards over patience. In our competitive world, the details clearly matter—they’re worth gold. Harvard admissions seeks applicants with the right grades and test scores; employers seek students with high GPAs and test scores. We spend our days mining and polishing these pieces of gold because they increase our odds of future success. But what’s the weight of all that gold? Doesn’t it bear down on us eventually? Doesn’t it get in the way of the *plot*?

Perhaps we need to rethink the current notion of productivity. “When you press the pause button on a machine, it stops. But when you press the pause button on human beings they start,” says columnist and businessman Dov Seidman in the 2016 book *Thank You for Being Late*. “You start to reflect, you start to rethink your assumptions, you start to reimagine what is possi-

ble and, most importantly, you start to reconnect with your most deeply held beliefs. Once you’ve done that, begin to reimagine a better path.”

Like other students who continued to take classes this past year, I discovered newfound space for stillness in my every day. I filled this with by sleeping more, walking about in nature, letting my mind scale mountains of my own creation. That led to more creative writing, more reading, the discovery of new hobbies and the return to those I had previously forgotten. I thought of 17th century philosopher Blaise Pascal: “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone,” he wrote. The pandemic taught me to sit quietly—and though I didn’t enjoy the occasional bouts of boredom, I learned that there’s a subtle power in stillness.

The pandemic’s disruption of normal life in many ways increased productivity. Freer or more flexible schedules afforded many students an opportunity to think deeply and indulge their creativity. Those who pressed pause on their college careers to take a leave of absence pressed play on so much else—they created companies, built magazines, explored the landscape of the US from a car window. Clearly, they *were* productive. But they only achieved this success once the fast-paced tempo of college life relaxed, and the pressures of making deadlines and getting good grades subsided.

Pausing also granted perspective. “In each pause I hear the call,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson in his 1904 essay, *Walden*. As a result of the pandemic, students express intent and clarity toward their remaining time at Harvard—perhaps they’ve heard their call. “I look forward to returning to Harvard where I will engage with faculty, courses, and fellow students guided by my intellectual curiosity, rather than a preconceived notion of what one ought to do careerwise,” said Jake Laddis ’24, who took last spring off and remained unenrolled this fall as he works for a real estate startup. Noah Evers ’24 came to a similar realization after taking the year off to build his own startup: “I have realized that college is such a magical moment of life where I can just learn for learning’s sake.” With a renewed appreciation for education, it appears, these students will focus less on the details and more on the purpose of their plot.

The pandemic is far from over, and for many, the Roaring 2020’s is still just a dream. It remains to be seen whether parallels will continue to be drawn between our current decade and that of a century ago, or if the paths of history and the present day will instead diverge. What is certain, however, is that for all the horrors, losses, and disappointments of this pandemic, we’ve gained something that could only glide into our realm of vision once the checklists disappeared from our eyelids at night. As we enter this fall, let’s balance our drive for high-speed socializing with the sacredness of slowing down and sitting still. Gold weighs tons; your shoulders deserve a break.

Mary Julia Koch '23 (mkocho@college.harvard.edu) wants you to take a deep breath, right now.

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Ash Chellon
Mary Julia Koch