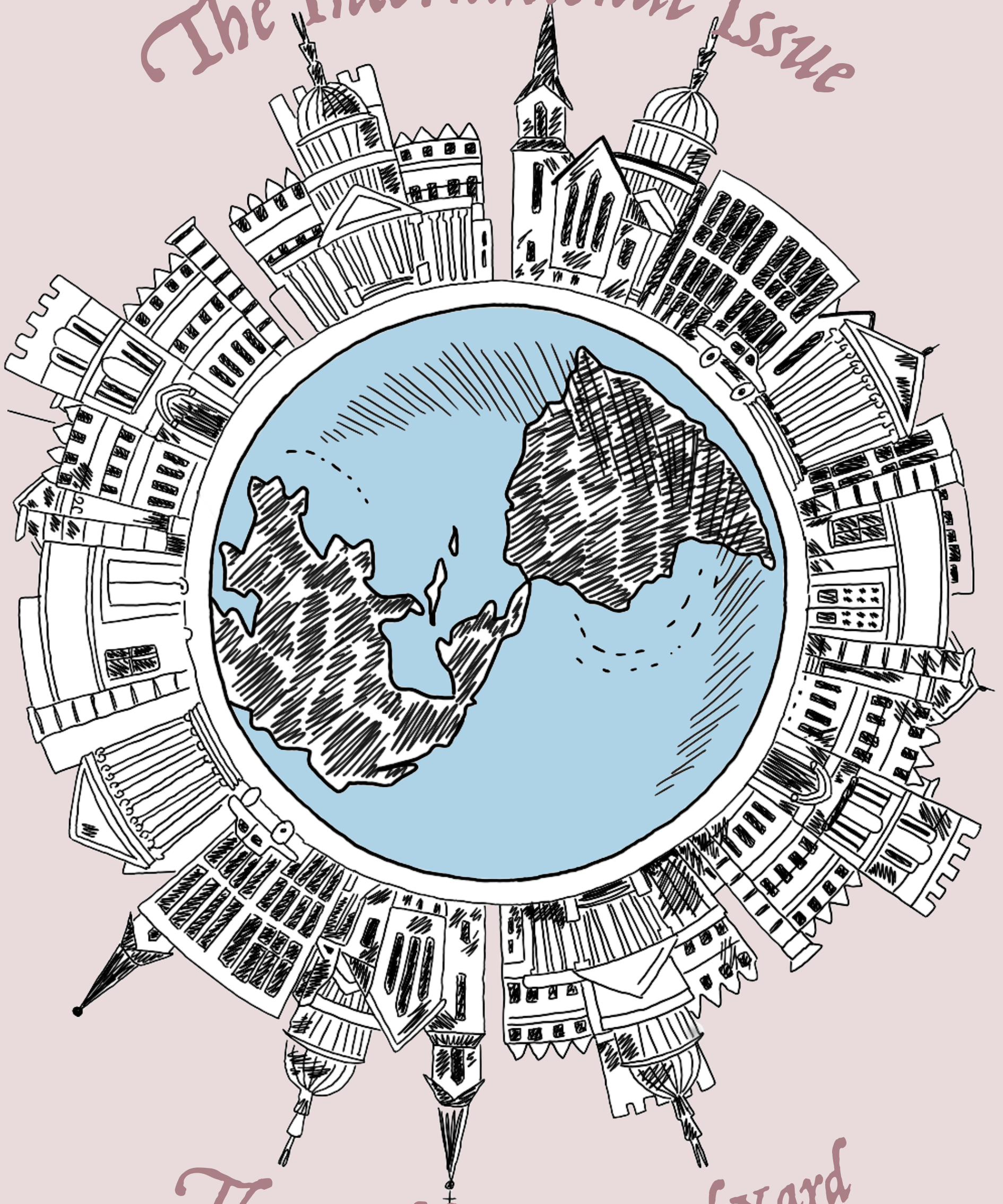


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CONTENTS

3 HARVARD ARMY VET HEADS TO UKRAINE

BY HANNAH FRAZER '25

4 FROM MILITARY DRAFTS TO ROUGH DRAFTS

BY MARY CIPPERMAN '25

5 WHEN GEOPOLITICS ENTER THE YARD

BY KATE DEGROOT '24

6 "THE BEST PARTIES I'VE GONE TO ARE RUN BY THE LATINO ORGANIZATIONS"

BY LAUREN KIM '25 AND REINA PIMENTEL '25

7 AN INTERNATIONAL TAKE ON THE FIRST YEAR OF HARVARD

BY LAUREN KIM '25 AND REINA PIMENTEL '25

10 THE ANTI-AMERICAN DREAM

BY MARBELLA MARLO '24

11 A MODEST PROPOSAL

BY THUCYDIDES

12 THE ACCOUNT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATHLETE

BY KATRINA GEIERSBACH '25

13 THE ART OF THE CON

BY ARIEL BECK '25

14 A MOVING ART GALLERY

BY KAYLA REIFEL '25

15 IT'S GOING DOWN

BY PETER LASKIN '23

HARVARD ARMY VET HEADS TO UKRAINE

A Harvard sophomore volunteers on the frontlines

BY HANNAH FRAZER '25

While student protests have flooded Harvard Yard in support of Ukraine over the past few weeks, Sebastian Mandell '24 decided to take action on the Ukrainian border. Leaving his academics behind in Cambridge, Mandell relocated to assist in medical combat training for the Ukrainian forces. In an attempt to familiarize himself with the local culture, he volunteered to work for Global Surgical Medical Support Group (GSMSG), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated

to night tracking news reports, and had completely lost all focus," he said. "It became clear that if I didn't do something I'd regret it for the rest of my life." Though this is his first time working with GSMSG, Mandell has nearly a decade of experience working as a combat medic in the United States Army.

"The veteran community is uniquely poised for this situation... [we] have that unique window into healthcare that's specifically related to trauma due to combat, as well as working with foreign governments and populations," Mandell said.

Mandell praises Ukraine's national unity. "One thing that is remarkably different is the social political climate," he said. "In many other countries, there's often been a very decentralized and competitive political hierarchy where the government isn't functional and there's incredible amounts of corruption and competing power struggles.

Here in Ukraine, the general population, military, and government are visibly united and functioning against all odds together."

Working in hospitals, repurposed classrooms or community centers, and sometimes even on the field, Mandell has found that "each day has a new curve ball. The only certainty I've found is that whatever was expected the night before would be very different the next morning when I woke up... We've worked with civilians, military, volunteers, and government officials," said Mandell.

Mandell shared a message to Americans at home who want to aid those suffering abroad. "I think my biggest message to the US and Harvard is: find ways to be of good service," he said. "Many people want to be leaders, but they don't realize how the only good leaders are people who listen to others and use their power to serve the people beneath them.



If you can't detach from your own illusions of grandeur, you can't listen without being defensive. And if you can't listen, you're not a leader. You're just the asshole at the top of the hill."

We hope for the safe return of volunteers like Mandell, who disrupted their lives in order to serve others an ocean away. We pray for Ukrainians as they aim to rebuild their lives amid constant violence and fight for their freedom and sovereignty from Russia.



Sebastian Mandell '24 comped the Independent this spring.

Hannah Frazer '25 (hannahfrazer@college.harvard.edu) stands with Ukraine.

Photos taken from the Ukrainian border by members of the Global Surgical Medical Support Group.



to training host nations in combat medicine and providing vital medical supplies and support.

Within the first four days of the Russian invasion of Kyiv, Mandell knew he must get to the frontlines. "I was up all



Harvard students are no strangers to challenge, but military rigor is unlike the usual academic, social, and physical tests required for admission to the college. Three percent of Harvard's student body either served in the military prior to attendance or enrolled as part of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program. Yet the experiences of these students are often overlooked, despite the excellence they contribute to Harvard's student body.

For Sean Zehnder '25, military service is mandatory for all men in his home country of Switzerland. Zehnder took a year to fulfill his national duties upon receiving an offer from Harvard. He explains that many people (about fifty percent) find ways out of the military requirement, but that he wanted to serve, even as a teenager. "There's this whole process that you start when you're sixteen or seventeen. They show you all the troops. Then, there's physical and intelligence tests," Zehnder says.

Zehnder's path through the military was far from easy. Not only did he join with less preparation than most troops, but he joined one of the most intense military cohorts available to him. He elaborates: "I only turned eighteen after I graduated, and you have to be eighteen to go to Draft Day. So I had to rush that process. Therefore, I was very late. Usually, your draft date is at least one year before you would actually go, but for me it was three months, so there were no spots for me in most groups. The

only spots that were left were the Special Forces," which Zehnder explains are the equivalent of the Marine Corps in the United States.

American students have also felt this compulsion to serve their country. Emilie Kalkus '25 explains why she dedicated her young adulthood to serve the U.S.: "I'm from a military family. It's just kind of expected that that's what you do. I can't really explain it. Every single generation since the American Revolution in my family has had someone in the United States Army, and my siblings weren't gonna do it, so it's me."

The ROTC program trains students through a variety of physical and intellectual courses. The program consists of physical training three times per week, a military history class in the spring, a fundamentals of the Army course in the fall, and training at MIT on military basics, such as tactical combat and calling airstrikes. Following the program, students typically serve four years of active duty. Some join the U.S. forces

long-term.

Nick Ige '25 chose this latter path. After completing the ROTC program, Ige joined the Army as an infantryman in 2011. He says that "the job description is to get close with, engage with, and destroy the enemy." Upon graduating from infantry school, he went to airborne school before becoming a more elite infantryman. "I deployed with them and was sent to my first unit which was called the 82nd airborne," one of the more famous units within the U.S. Army, he says.

Ige's journey challenged him physically and mentally. As part of a special forces team for nine months, he explains: "We didn't have running water. We didn't have electricity. We basically just camped for nine months and did active patrols and defended our base in case we got attacked. I was in the conventional army for another three years, infantryman to a sniper reconnaissance team leader." To top off his career, Ige competed in a best ranger competition, which he describes as an "iron maiden but for the Army."

But even at the end of his time in the world's premier direct action raid force, Ige knew he needed a change.

"I had a lack of empathy," he says. "I realized that I was getting extremely comfortable with violence." As a result, Ige decided to pause his service and attend college. At Harvard, he studies among not only international veterans like Zehnder and budding officers like Kalkus, but also a plethora of students with no military experience and no understanding of the life-or-death challenges he once faced.

Now, Ige wonders whether he will return to the military after school. "I'm trying to figure out if I miss the familiarity of it all," he says, "or if I want to push on and change something new?"

Mary Cipperman '25 (mcipperman@college.harvard.edu) ran a 5k a couple of times and hates scary movies.

Graphic by Seattle Hickey '25

FROM MILITARY DRAFTS TO ROUGH DRAFTS

On the three percent that serve

BY MARY CIPPERMAN '25



WHEN GEOPOLITICS ENTER THE YARD

How do Harvard cultural clubs decide when to talk about contentious conflicts?

BY KATE DE GROOTE '24

Harvard undergraduates hail from nearly 100 countries. Additionally, many American students have immigrant parents and strong ties to their cultural heritage. With such a variety of cultural backgrounds, students have created over 50 cultural organizations, from the Polish Society to the Caribbean Club, and everything in between.

However, where there is cultural diversity, there is also political diversity, and many geopolitical conflicts can breed division within these organizations.

This is especially true for groups that aim to bring together many different cultures, such as the South Asian Association (SAA). “We are an organization that brings together students from many different cultural, religious, and often political backgrounds,” said Fez Zafar '24, the current co-social chair of SAA. Being Punjabi himself, Zafar referenced the longstanding geopolitical conflict between India and Pakistan as a potential source of disagreement among those of other South Asian cultural backgrounds.

However, political disagreement does not prevent students from bonding over shared cultural heritage. For Zafar, the prime example of how SAA sows seeds of connection is through Ghungroo, the annual performance of cultural dances, songs, and skits that celebrates cultural diversity across South Asia. As Zafar said, “Ghungroo operates as a strong vehicle at Harvard, not only for students to... have a glimpse or perspective of the many nuances of South Asia, but it also allows them to directly participate, for example, by dancing in the styles of Nepal, which is something you have very little opportunity to do otherwise.”

For other geopolitical conflicts, like those between China and Taiwan, discussions can sometimes end in more tension than resolution. According to Derek Hwang '24, co-president of the Taiwanese Cultural

Society, “We constantly get asked about our position on Chinese politics. We have a very strict policy of no political talk, in a way. We usually have a lot of keynote speakers from Taiwan, and sometimes they're government officials or associated with independence movements or any side of Taiwanese politics, and we talk to them and say we're

conflicts or greater Chinese politics, but instead on issues facing Asian-Americans here in the United States through letters, policy, and volunteering. “For a lot of Asian-Americans, geopolitical issues are not as important as the issues we face in our everyday life, so those larger geopolitical issues are a little further removed from us,” Poon said. He defers to other organizations, such as Harvard College China Forum, to tackle these types of conversations.

However, some organizations find the cultural and the political to be inextricably linked, such as the Palestinian Solidarity Committee, which is currently in the midst of “Israel Apartheid Week.” A cultural-political dynamic also persists in the South Asian Women's Collective, whose mission is to facilitate conversations surrounding gender and decolonization.

Zafar said SAA wouldn't be opposed to geopolitical discussions if they were ever needed, but by prioritizing celebrating culture, the club facilitates bonds that transcend political beliefs and do more good in the long-term.

Hwang emphasized community building as his primary goal: “we try not to talk about politics too much, because even people from

Taiwan have very different views.

This is a safe place for people to come together and celebrate Taiwanese culture.”



strictly a cultural organization... We make it clear that anyone with any political standpoints can join the club. There are other places and clubs at Harvard to have political discussions.”

The Chinese Student Association (CSA) takes a slightly different approach. Vice president Christopher Poon '24 pointed to their Education and Politics Committee as the center of CSA's activism. This activism does not focus on geopolitical

Kate De Groote '24 (katedegroote@college.harvard.edu) writes for the Independent.

Graphic by Isabel Eddy '24

"THE BEST PARTIES I'VE GONE TO ARE RUN BY THE LATINO ORGANIZATIONS"

International students on adjusting to American college life

BY LAUREN KIM '25 AND REINA PIMENTEL '25

Building Basement, promising a red, black and white color scheme and a night filled with "Food and Dazzle." The event, which served gyoza, empanadas, pizza, and guacamole, aimed to include aspects of many different cultures. Afterward, several students in attendance went to a party hosted by The Harvard Organization for Latin America (HOLA), another opportunity for internationals to meet students from their home countries.

Both Alejandro Escobar '25 from Colombia and Nayeli Cardozo '25 from Argentina expressed that the parties they most enjoyed on campus were those run by Latin American societies.

"I had an English teacher who told me, 'Oh my god, when you go to the U.S. you are going to be so popular because Americans don't know how to party. They don't know how to socialize. They haven't had a drink in their entire life,'" said Alejandro Escobar '25, who is from Colombia. "So I came in with low expectations. They were exceeded, but not by much."

Meanwhile, Hwang's experience living in Korea has made him appreciate the parties that Harvard does put on, even if they aren't entirely satisfying.

"It's hard to throw parties in Seoul. You can't jump up and down in apartments because the people below or next door will get mad. It's harder to throw parties in Korea. If you wanted to party, you would go to a club."

Though generally disappointed by the underwhelming nature of Harvard parties, students like Hwang have learned to find fun on restless nights through other types of social activities. "Things with friends are fun—getting a few friends together on Friday night and playing a game."

Other students were disappointed by the social scene in ways they didn't expect.

"I didn't have a lot of expectations. I

thought that people at Harvard would just devote their lives to study. But people here lead lives that are more well-rounded than I expected," said Jimena Luque '25 from Peru. "I've got to say, though, a lot of Harvard's social scene seems to be racially segregated. One of the reasons I chose Harvard was to experience other races and ethnicities, and I was disappointed to find the social scene doesn't really facilitate that."

Like Hwang, Luque has found fun and camaraderie outside of parties. She accredits her three suitemates as well as her two dance groups, Candela and Asian American Dance Troupe, for helping her find a support system on campus. "You really connect beyond whatever activity you're doing. They've played a big part in making my transition to American college life so smooth," she explained.

International students' preconceptions of life in the States came from a variety of sources. While some expressed having hearing advice from adult figures and stories of their friends' experiences during gap years, many students found they were highly influenced by the media, especially movies.

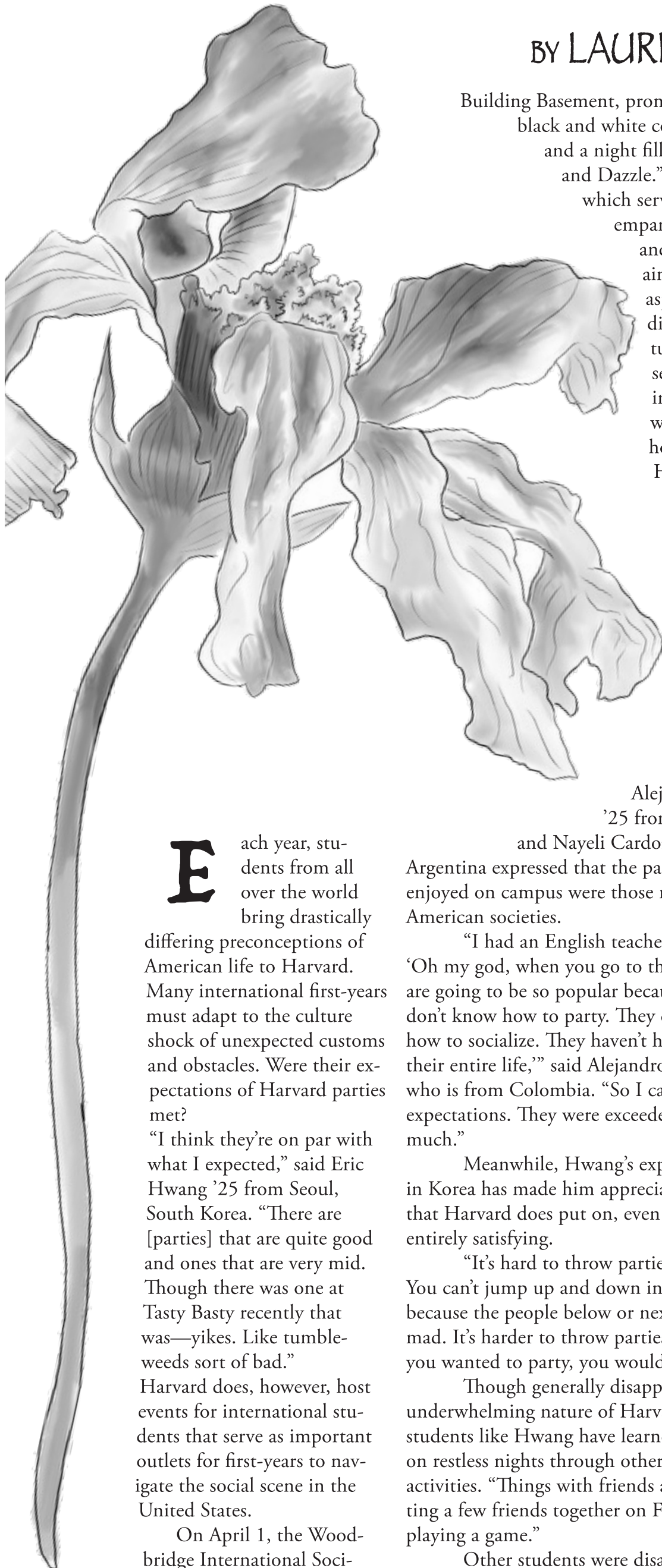
"I've watched all these movies about Americans, and my friends ask if the parties [are] really like that," said Joel Runevic '25, who is from the United Kingdom. While he and his friends knew such movies were exaggerated versions of reality, they compared their experiences at Harvard to stereotypes of high school films which presented American parties as intense raves. The discrepancies between the fictional world "wasn't necessarily a bad thing," Runevic said.

He found the major difference between the American and British party scenes was the legal drinking age. "I think it's seen in the U.S. like it's more cool to drink, whereas in the U.K., the drinking age is 18, so people drink a lot more often and are more open about it," he noted. As a result, this drinking age affects students' awareness of their drinking limits.

The creative outlets that international students find or create as they navigate Harvard's social scene call Americans to evaluate their own partying habits. Can we reimagine the party scene at Harvard to be more fun and inviting? Can we pull successful aspects of party scenes from around the world to better what we have now?

Reina Pimentel '25 and Lauren Kim '25 write for the Independent.

Graphic by Candace Gardner '25



Each year, students from all over the world bring drastically differing preconceptions of American life to Harvard. Many international first-years must adapt to the culture shock of unexpected customs and obstacles. Were their expectations of Harvard parties met? "I think they're on par with what I expected," said Eric Hwang '25 from Seoul, South Korea. "There are [parties] that are quite good and ones that are very mid. Though there was one at Tasty Basti recently that was—yikes. Like tumbleweeds sort of bad." Harvard does, however, host events for international students that serve as important outlets for first-years to navigate the social scene in the United States.

On April 1, the Woodbridge International Society held their Spring Rose Formal at the Northwest

AN INTERNATIONAL TAKE ON THE FIRST YEAR AT HARVARD

Expectations versus the reality

BY LAUREN KIM '25 AND REINA PIMENTEL '25

Among the 2,320 students in the Class of 2025, 15.6% come from outside the United States. Moving from high school to college is a momentous transition for everyone, but going through this change in a foreign country requires adjusting to new foods, academics, and cultural dynamics. Five students reflect on their transition to campus this year.

Nayeli Cardozo '25 is the only student from Argentina in the Class of 2025. She spent her entire life there, and first visited the United States for a summer program at the University of California.

Joel Runevic '25 is from the United Kingdom. His parents are from Lithuania and moved to the U.K. before he was born. He has visited his family in the U.S. a couple times before coming to Harvard in the fall.

Alejandro Escobar '25 is from Columbia. His first experience in the United States was during his gap year before Harvard.

Eric Hwang '25 was born in Redwood City, California and moved to South Korea with his family in eighth grade. He has continuously lived in Korea until he came to Harvard in the fall.

Jimena Luque '25 was born in the U.S. but moved to Peru as early as she can remember. She occasionally visited the States on vacation until she came to Harvard in the fall.

What have been your preconceptions on American food?

Cardozo: "American food is greasy and fat-

ty. And in movies I've seen that Americans eat bacon and eggs for breakfast, which is something we usually don't do in Argentina. We have one McDonalds where I live, but it's not really a fast food place."

Escobar: "We had burger places, but I wouldn't necessarily say they were American. And of course, we had the big food chains, but I have a hard time defining American food."

Runevic: "We had hamburgers and corn-dogs and stuff. English food is not too great. The only reason it's good is because it's multicultural."

Hwang: "There are a lot of good American restaurants in Korea, but their food doesn't quite hit the same. I don't know, you idealize American food while you're at home."

Luque: "Peru has the best food internationally. It's the richness of the flavor and the fact that you can get amazing, nutritionally-rich meals for low prices. I didn't think American food was going to be that great compared to Peru's, and I was right."

How is Harvard food?

Cardozo: "I like dining hall food most days. I really like going out to eat. Dumping House is my favorite."

Escobar: "I would give [Harvard Square] an eight or nine because I think there's a lot of options, and it's very international. If I'm craving sushi, there's a good sushi place. If I'm craving burgers, there's a good burger place."

Runevic: "I'm really appreciative of the food at Harvard. I know they have to cook for 2,000 plus students and have to consider things like allergies and customs."

Hwang: "Berg has gotten better. That being said, I've lost weight since I've gotten here. Berg food makes me eat less."

Luque: "Peruvian food is better, but I do appreciate the HUDs staff for their efforts to provide students with enough nutrition. I also love how in Boston you can try a variety of different cuisines, which is something I couldn't do

as much back home."

How was the academic transition?

Cardozo: "I expected everyone to be focused on their work and very competitive, and maybe yes, we have those people here, but luckily I haven't met them yet. I've only met people who have been very uplifting and helpful."

Escobar: "I expected there to be less work on the weekends and a separation between social life and academic life."

Hwang: "It's actually easier than I thought it would be. It's just that our high school was super super grindy, a lot of work. Certainly, conceptually things have gotten harder, the workload is just lighter."

Luque: "Adapting to a new level of education that assumes that you've had prior experience is hard. Some Harvard classes like LS50 are designed to teach you stuff from the start. I love classes like that here—classes that assume no prior knowledge."

How was the overall college transition?

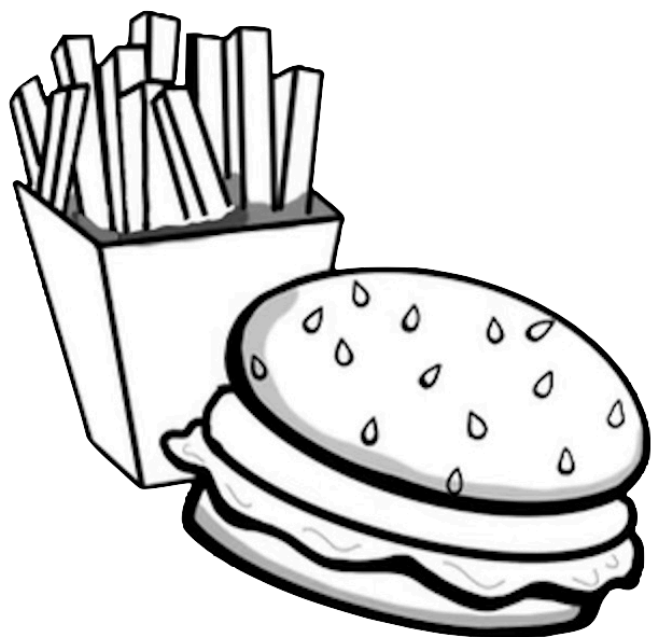
Cardozo: "I was concerned about coming here as an international student, but I met really good friends from the international community and my roommates have been a great support for me. They are all from America. They have all welcomed me and I feel like I got exposed to really good people."

Hwang: "Not that hard. My transition was pretty fun and smooth. I've always considered myself way more American than Korean. Culturally, there wasn't a huge gap. I didn't feel like I was coming to a different culture. I am an intense extrovert."

Luque: "It wasn't too bad. Maintaining contact with family back home helped a lot. Also, good relationships with your roommates, as well as clubs. Candela and ADDT [student dance troupes] have played a big part in making my transition smooth."

Reina Pimentel '25 and Lauren Kim '25
write for the Independent.

Graphic by Isabel Eddy '24



Illustrations by Piper Tingleaf '24





THE ANTI-AMERICAN DREAM

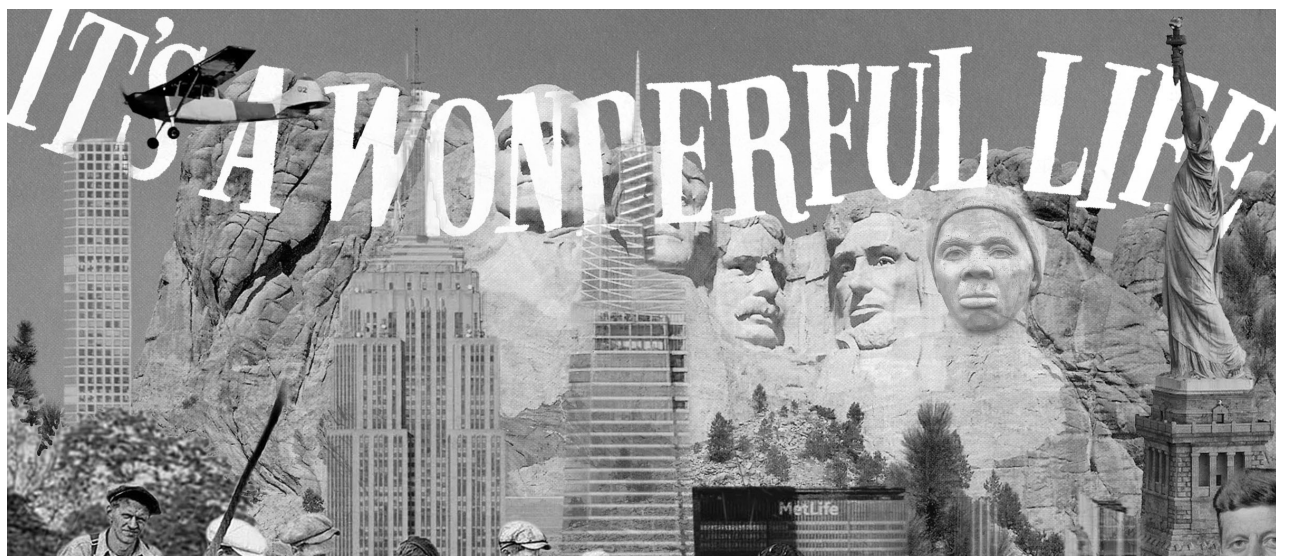
Do we really have choices in the “land of opportunity”?

The American public school system boasts the traditional American classics of *Of Mice and Men*, *The Great Gatsby*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the overtold fables of Cinderella, Annie—all featuring romanticized protagonists who just so happened to reach success from humble beginnings.

This idea of building a better life out of thin air defines America. Foreigners and Americans alike expect our country to be a place of disregarding previous economic and social structure and truly striving for something *better*. The Founding Father even started this country for the sake of exploring America’s limitless mecca of opportunities in the 1400s.

But to perceive the United States as a factory for success, inputting individuals from all backgrounds and outputting financial independence, ignores a much darker reality. A simple Google search of the United States’ social mobility compared to the rest of the world highlights our socioeconomic rigidity: Despite overshadowing China’s, the world’s second largest economy’s GDP last year by almost \$8 trillion, the United States pathetically ranks #27 in social mobility, a measurement of an individual’s socioeconomic status in relation to their parents.

Yet as students and citizens, we will continue to paint the United States and the educational



had heard of it, and I think that is very true of most Bulgarians.”

“The major problem of education in Bulgaria is that it is not modernized and it doesn’t address the contemporary needs of technology, society, and so on,” Ivanov notes, explaining why American education represents something much larger than itself. “For Bulgarians, there is a very conflicting sentiment that people have of going abroad. Bulgaria has a very nationalistic culture, but most people also understand the lack of resources we have in terms of education.”

Like Zeisberg, Ivanov decided to go to Harvard for its opportunity to choose. With such a wide variety of course and concentration offerings, the university allows its students to explore their academ-

BY MARBELLA MARLO '24

out going down a rabbit hole of wondering why the American economy values certain industries more than others. To put it into perspective, 10% of the class of 2021 planned on pursuing work in academia, and 5% planned on working in public service or non-profits. The 25% of students that did plan on working in health or education expected to earn less than \$30,000 in their first year on the job, compared to technology graduates’ \$110,000.

It’s true, Harvard does give us the opportunity to choose. Spend hours on *My.Harvard* searching for classes and you will only scratch the surface of the depth of knowledge at our fingertips. But this choice comes with a loaded consequence, one that deters so many people from truly achieving what they dreamed of just years before. It’s hard to engage in volunteer work or unpaid academic research when an opportunity for a summer finance internship with a \$15,000 reward is being thrown at you.

Conor Burns '25 from Warrenpoint, Ireland claims America is “a place of endless opportunity, the land where dreams are made.” But perhaps this choice exists only in theory, as it does not truly materialize in the freedom it flaunts. We have the opportunity to choose, but not without repercussions. *Choose to go medical school, but just know that you will be making \$90,000 less than your peers at Goldman. You can reach your dreams of playing professional soccer, you just will likely make around minimum wage while doing it.*

If John Steinbeck and F. Scott Fitzgerald argued that the United States, and in this case, Harvard, present the opportunity for financial glory. In this view, the American Dream is real; anybody, regardless of their status at birth, can achieve their dreams, whatever they may be. Yet the reality is we don’t really have a choice; these options are limited by cultural pressures and financial incentives. Certain decisions will result in drastic outcomes that ultimately override any freedom we have of what we dream of. Achieving something better isn’t the same as achieving the best in America.

Marbella Marlo (mmarlo@college.harvard.edu)’s parents desperately want her to go into finance.

Graphic by Alma Russell '25



institutions within it as infallibly auspicious. In the class of 2025, Harvard received 362 international students, compared to Yale’s 250 and Stanford’s 240. As a school, we have traditionally been a hub for international attraction, and we will continue to do so as long as academic institutions perpetuate their legitimacy.

Benjamin Zeisberg '23 speaks about the difference between the opportunities that Harvard presented him versus those in his home of Hamburg, Germany.

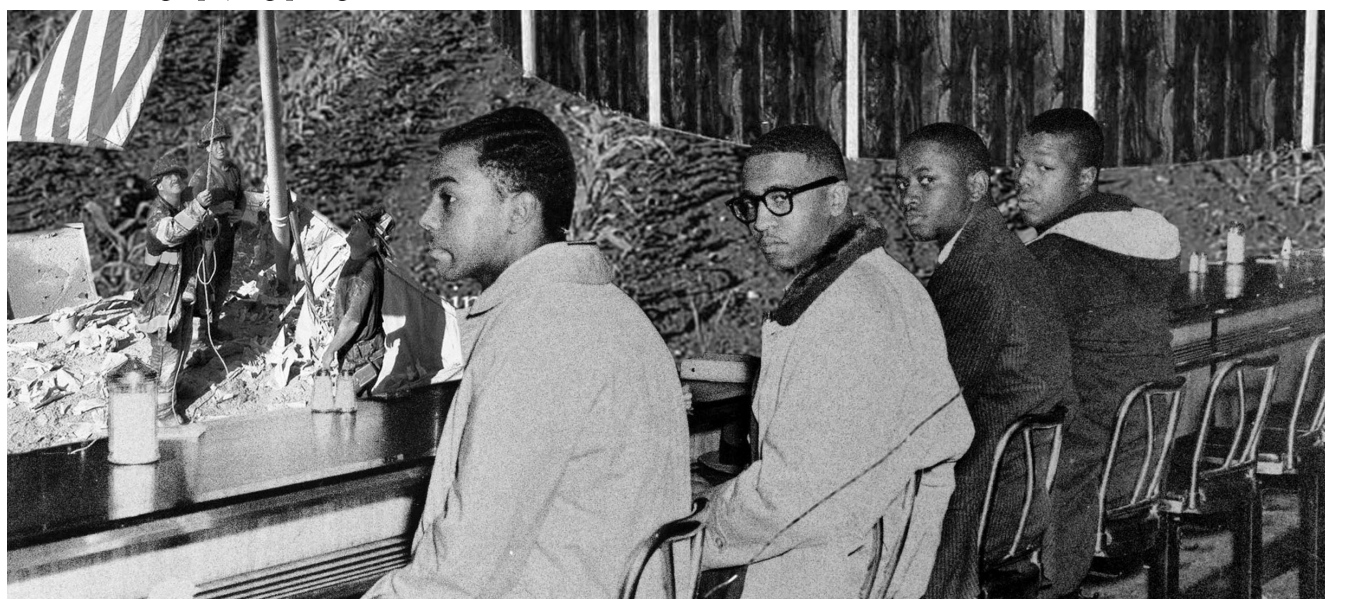
“Harvard offers a combination of two things: One, I can row at an extremely high level. And two: I can take classes with the best professors,” Zeisberg notes, alluding to Harvard’s obviously advanced level of academics and athletics. American universities are also culturally distinct. “The way we live here is very unique,” he continues. “[In Germany], we don’t have community living. We aren’t randomly assigned roommates freshman year, whom we ultimately have to learn to be friends with. Everyone lives off campus, and you only really go to college to do studies. No college rowing, no college sports, these things don’t exist,” Zeisberg says. “You also don’t really have time to decide what path you want to take. You go to school having already applied for a major, and you are forced to stick with it for the rest of your time at school.”

Georgi Ivanov '25 from Sofia, Bulgaria recounts how his “parents didn’t know where Harvard was they thought it was in the UK. But they

ic options before committing to one particular path. It boasts over 3,700 course offerings, covering over 50 undergraduate fields of study. Endless clubs, organizations, and (theoretically) student backgrounds contribute to a culture at this school where dreams, in theory, come true.

So why, if Harvard and its unmatched endowment, can fund so many resources for students to explore different fields of study and options for professional development, does it breed uniformity? The Class of 202 reported graduating almost 60% of its class into only three industries: finance, consulting, and technology. Yet the selling point for so many international students is the opportunity that Harvard presents to *choose*.

It’s difficult to discuss the growing popularity of the few high paying postgraduate industries with-



A MODEST PROPOSAL

Harvard's lotteries could be a force for good: a satire

BY THUCYDIDES

Every Housing Day, the same controversies arise. *We hate the quad. We are wrong to hate the quad. We want to block with athletes, singer-songwriters, linking groups, or pure strangers.* Harvard's housing lottery has become a stunning demonstration of the human urge to find patterns in randomness. With only a few slight changes, though, Harvard could have a peerless barometer of residential life, while providing a much-needed leg-up to first generation low-income and similarly disadvantaged students.

First, blocking groups should not be assigned to housing at random. Instead, they should rank all twelve Houses in order of preference. Groups will then be ranked by average financial aid received per member, with highest being prioritized, and something like the Expository Writing course lottery will take place: every group gets the House they most prefer that has not already been filled by higher-pri-

held, and each House gets to see who is actually going to live there.

In short, housing assignments become a commodity, and the value of that commodity is then used to supplement financial aid.

Everyone benefits. Harvard gets a way to measure the true value that students place on each House, which could then be used to prioritize maintenance and renovation, redirect funding, or even encourage a few people to quit ringing their anger-inducingly loud bells at all hours. Lower-income students, meanwhile, get not only aid but also agency: whether they want superior housing or the extra money that they could get by selling their places is entirely up to them. The wealthy get the chance to buy their way into the best housing, thereby no longer having to risk forgetting the extent to which they are superior to the rest of us, and the rest of us get the fun of watching the latest proto-plutocrat drop \$10k on what is still, in

like Housing Day paying better, which could then be spent to purchase higher seats in others or trading them on an open market. Harvard Financial Analysts Club and Harvard College Consulting Group could design the exchange, and *The Crimson* could report the price every day, which would be nice for them since reporting stock prices is something that real newspapers do.

Economics is the largest concentration at Harvard College, and Harvard Business School is right across the Charles River, but we have somehow sleepwalked into having an administration that allows something as crucial as housing to be determined by randomness. This cannot stand. Half of Harvard's students say that it should be designed to help its poorest members; the other half say that it should teach its richest to get even richer. Taking control of lotteries will be an inestimable boost to both.



ority students. The most desirable housing will initially go to the students who, off campus, have the deck most stacked against them.

These preliminary housing assignments would be distributed without the public fanfare seen in the current lottery. They would be confidential, which is crucial for what follows: anyone can either choose to keep their assignment or to put it up for auction on an anonymous platform run by Harvard. The auction winners and their respective sellers would trade their housing assignments. (If our administration thought this proposal was too expensive to run pro bono, they could take, say, 5% of each winning bid.). After a week, Housing Day is

the end, only a slightly better room in a college dorm. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors, rather than first-years, are now the ones surprised on Housing Day, which means three years of exciting mystery rather than just one.

If this system proved to work in practice, it could easily be extended to other lotteries on campus: Expos, sections, and even room assignments. All are chances to balance out a little of the inequality inherent in our world today. Or, we could bring all of them together into one unified scheme by creating a "medium of lottery exchange." Students could earn credits by taking a lower seat than their assigned position in some lotteries, with more dramatic ones

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) enjoys writing under a pseudonym.

Graphic by Candace Gardner '25

THE ACCOUNT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATHLETE

Three student athletes on learning to love Harvard

BY KATRINA GEIERSBACH '25

2,527. 5,523. 5,545.

For student athletes Kristiján Gunnarsson '25, Habiba Eldafrawy '25, and Elianne Sacher '24, these numbers are the respective mileage calculations from Cambridge to their homes in Iceland, Egypt, and Israel.

Not only are these three students capable of moving their entire lives across the world, but they also are expected to balance Harvard's rigorous academics with the commitment of being Division 1 athletes. Embracing the United States' foreign culture and customs only adds to the stress, yet international students make up almost a quarter of the student body.

Soccer player Gunnarsson, squash player Eldafrawy, and rugby player Sacher all reached one of the top athletic collegiate programs in the world.

Sacher explains her distinct transition from secondary school and to college. She is three years older than most of her peers. "In Israel, we serve in the military straight out of high school. I served for 3 years. I used to play rugby casually on the weekends, but eventually I became more serious. Now here

I am, playing at the top collegiate Rugby

team in the country."

Eldafrawy notes that one of the hardest parts of coming to Harvard was her inability to connect with people outside of her team before entering her freshman year, having never visited campus before move-in day. "I would have liked a visit," Eldafrawy notes. "It was hard to picture myself here, and I didn't reach out to anyone outside of my team

beforehand." The squash team helped ease the transition by serving as an immediate, built-in friend group.

Gunnarsson had a similar experience being unable to visit campus due to the pandemic. "First time I came here it was a shock, for sure," he said. "Coming in, I could research as much as I wanted [about the school], but it was hard to imagine real life here before coming." Gunnarsson was shocked by the inclement Cambridge weather. He recalls sleeping on a towel on his bed for the first three weeks of school due to lack

of air conditioning in dorms and waiting for a comforter to arrive.

Despite the challenges they have faced, all three students expressed that they have grown to love the campus and culture of Harvard. The College has offered them an incredible opportunity to explore stellar academics, meet people completely unlike them from across the globe, and immerse themselves in a new environment.

When asked if they'd do things differently if given a second chance, they agreed with Eldafrawy: "At first, during those few couple of weeks, I yearned to be back home constantly. But now? No. I wouldn't change a single thing. I love my life here."

In discussing American conventions, Gunnarsson noted that Americans are "the kings and queens of small talk." He joked that his fellow students often "never stop talking." Sacher emphasized differences in humor: "no one around here seems to understand my sarcasm. Of course, there's a language barrier. But my humor and sarcasm are a personal hardship. Everyone here has to learn to take things with a grain of salt. Our cultures are distinct, so that's a hardship I've felt has translated into almost everything."

Yet the athletes laughed that they themselves are becoming more "American" each day.

"Blending cultures is a beautiful thing," said Eldafrawy. "Coming to Harvard has shaped me to be the well-rounded, experienced, and open-minded individual that I am today."

Katrina Geiersbach '25 (katrinageiersbach@college.harvard.edu) is a rower from Chicago and still thinks the food back home is better than HUDS.

Graphic by Alma Russell '25



THE ART OF THE CON

How Jessica Pressler Invented Anna

BY ARIEL BECK '25

Americans have an obsession with people who scam and falsify their identity, one of the most successful examples being Anna Sorokin, or her alias, Anna Delvey. The Russian-born 31-year-old deceived New York's elite from 2013 to 2017 and swindled \$275,000 from renowned financial institutions.

Journalist Jessica Pressler revealed how Sorokin exploited Manhattan in her bombshell May 2018 article for *The Cut*, *How Anna Delvey Tricked New York's Party People*, which later served as the basis for the Netflix mini-series *Inventing Anna*. In the Harvard Expository Writing course *Art of the Con* taught by Professor Ian Shank, Pressler discussed her experience writing the profile during a virtual class visit.

In his course, Shank reveals the influence con artists have on American lifestyle and pinpoints our culture's fascination with these impersonators. While Sorokin committed serious financial crimes, she manipulated social media and the zeitgeist in ways many students can relate to. Shank says: "At a place as competitive as Harvard—where students can and do transform themselves in a matter of years into versions of themselves that would've seemed inconceivable beforehand—I think this story speaks well to just how hard it is to hold onto your values while also striving to become the best version of yourself that you can."

After hearing Sorokin's story from a New York courthouse photographer, Pressler was impressed "by the level of people [Sorokin dealt] with, including the big law firms and financial institutions, who typically bargain with insiders, not 26-year-old nobodies." When Sorokin was held at Rikers Island for theft of services and grand larceny, Pressler contacted her for a personal call.

During her first visit, Pressler was in awe of Sorokin's disposition, describing her as "very sweet and polite... with a deadpan sense of humor." Yet Pressler claimed that "one could also view [her optimism] as a red flag," considering "how well the 26-year-old handled being locked up in one of the most notorious prisons in America."

To begin her journey into Sorokin's story, Pressler began tracking down Sorokin's victims, which proved more difficult than anticipated. People seemed reluctant to divulge details of their participation in the receiving end of Sorokin's schemes. The few people who didn't abruptly hang up the phone gave limited if any details. According to Pressler,

"they would try to downplay their relationship with Anna." Some would even try to convince Pressler that she should be focusing on something more significant for her career, which only magnified the elusiveness of the story. After persistent outreach, Pressler was able to set up meetings with two important figures in Sorokin's schemes: Neff, a close friend of Sorokin's and the concierge at the 11 Howard Hotel, and 'Pharma Bro' Martin Shkreli, one of Anna's so-called "dear friends."

don't think [Sorokin] ever told me anything overtly untrue; however, she would omit certain pertinent information sometimes." Sorokin would say, "I asked Rob, the CEO of Blade, if I could get a jet to fly to the Berkshire Hathaway conference..." disregarding that she promised him a wire transfer that never arrived.

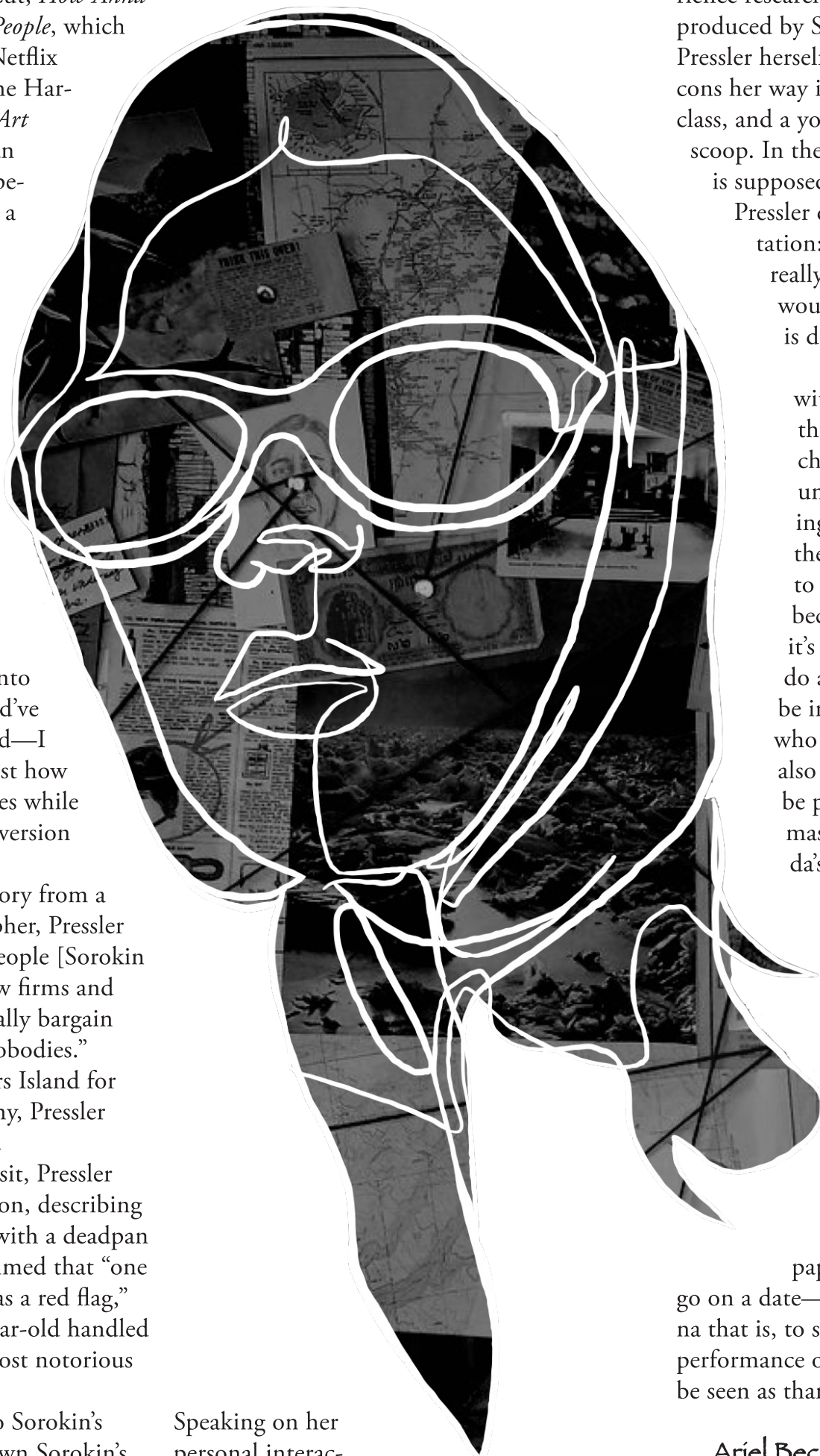
After her profile gained popularity, Pressler was approached by Netflix about the possibility of a mini-series based on her experience researching Sorokin. *Inventing Anna*, produced by Shonda Rhimes and based on Pressler herself, tells the story of Sorokin as she cons her way into New York City's elite social class, and a young reporter desperate for the scoop. In the series, protagonist Vivian Kent is supposedly based on Pressler; however, Pressler describes this as a loose interpretation: "The character in the show isn't really me. She does and says things I would never do or say, the timeline is different."

During an initial conversation with Rhimes, it was decided that there wouldn't be a journalist as a character in the show. However, understanding the appeal of having a character as the tour guide of the story, Pressler says "I was happy to kind of give myself over to it, because it only seemed fair, since it's basically what I ask subjects to do all the time. And it was nice to be in the same boat as the people who had been in my story, who were also characters in the show, and not be perceived as some kind of puppet master. It was like, 'We're all Shonda's puppets now.'"

The story of Anna Sorokin is not just about one unique girl, but about how social media and the art of performance can shape a false version of ourselves. "An uncomfortable fact of life is that we are, in small ways, always conning ourselves and others," says Shank. "Every time we write a

paper—or interview for a job, or go on a date—we're putting forward a persona that is, to some degree, artificial; more a performance of the person we'd like to be or be seen as than who we truly are."

Ariel Beck '25 (arielbeck@college.harvard.edu) has never been conned... that she knows of.



Speaking on her personal interactions with Sorokin, Pressler commented: "I came to appreciate [Sorokin's] truthfulness. Because of her situation, I was always very careful not to take anything she said as fact, but looking back, while other people lied, I

Graphic by Alma Russell '25

A MOVING ART GALLERY

Harvard Ballet Company's production *On Exhibition* is a blend of the visual and moving arts

BY KAYLA REIFEL '25

Harvard Ballet Company's spring production *On Exhibition* created a moving, breathing art museum this past weekend on the Loeb mainstage. Dancers embodied works of visual art, dissolving barriers between static and mobile spheres of art.

On Exhibition opened with 'self portrayal,' a number choreographed by producer Amy Benedetto '23. Dancers ran on stage holding pictures of themselves, admiring their self portraits and dancing with them. Benedetto cites the piece as one of her personal favorite parts of the show. "At the very end we all place our portraits on [the easels], symbolizing the confidence to show off your artwork and to show off yourself. I just love that moment," she says.

Each number in the show was based on a distinct work of visual art. Director Nina Montalbano explains, "We focused on collaboration with student artists. We wanted our show to be reminiscent of a museum gallery, hence the name *On Exhibition*." Producer Caroline Cooper '23 credits the physical and visual hybrid of the show for its uniqueness. "I loved the aspect of adding visual art to dance. Many never think about how visual art can add into movement so I think combining those turned out really beautiful."

Each semester HBC tries to work with one or two guest choreographers. This semester, they collaborated with renowned Filipino choreographer Francisco Gella, who choreographed a flagship piece of the performance, 'Still Hungry.'

Based on a



drawing of the same name by Harvard student Ava Salzman '23, the piece was visually stunning and a fan favorite. "Everybody loves this piece," says one of its male soloists Carter Hayes '25.

Gella speaks briefly on his process of converting the work of static art to a work of movement. "I interviewed Ava... she was telling me about how everywhere we inhabit is built with this contradiction- between monstrosity and beauty, between composition and decomposition." This helped me craft all the juxtapositions you saw within the piece," he says. In particular, one of the notable and extremely unique juxtapositions within the piece was Gella's choice to put half the dancers in bare feet and half in pointe shoes. "Normally you put everybody in socks/ bare feet or in pointe, but I found this juxtaposition between contemporary and ballet to be interesting because [juxtaposition] is what Ava cited as the inspiration for her art."

Francisco Gella immigrated to the United States from the Philippines when he was eleven years old, and often his Filipino roots will emerge in his works. "I didn't start dancing until I was nineteen, but I always had this love of movement." Gella says. "My Filipino heritage comes out in certain folkloric influences. I learned some folkloric dances when I was younger, and some of those rhythms inadvertently come out in sequences I choreograph."

Gella notes that his background also gives him a unique perspective on music. "Some people will only hear the harmony of the artist's voice. I hear the undercurrent of the beat. For me there's a tendency to look at music in a way that goes back to my island roots. Certain island folkloric movement signatures end up inherently showing up in my work without me even thinking about it."

'Still Hungry,' while certainly dark and gothic like Salzman's drawing, felt welcoming and comforting—like a celebration of movement and life, in line with Gella's description of his roots. "The one thing about my people is that there's a sense of warmth, welcoming, and a love of life, that is inherent even with our catholic upbringing," he said. "Even if the work is dark, it makes you feel warmth and love."

For director Montalbano, *On Exhibition* didn't feel disjointed, but rather as if you were walking through an art gallery, letting your eyes glide from one piece to the next. Each dance numberpiece transported viewers somewhere new—auditorily and visually. A subsequent number, 'Coastline,' choreographed by Talia DeLeo '25 and based on Chris Bushe's painting, *Rocks, Sand, and Sea Spray, Saligo Bay*, effectively took audience members to the sea. Dancers' movements were reminiscent of ocean waves, blue lights rippled across the stage, and ocean sound effects wove in and out of the music. 'Coastline' brings both the serenity and expressiveness in Chris Bushe's painting to life through dance, and demonstrates the ways in which visual art and ballet can be used together to reflect personal experiences and create connections," writes DeLeo.

Although Gella enjoys success and recognition in the dance world, his experience as an openly gay and non-white choreographer in the dance world has not been without struggle. He said, "If you look at the ballet world, it is very much led by white men. If you're not white, you have to fight for your voice to get heard." Gella speaks on how critical the support he received from men-

tors of color during streaks of constant rejection was. Gella talks about a specific moment when his mentor, ballerina Joan Myers Brown, said to him: "Francisco, you're going to get a lot of 'no's.' When the funding runs out, the person of color is the first person they cut out. Do you love what you do?" she asked him. "Yes," Gella responded. "Then that's all you need," Myers affirmed. Now



ninety years old, Myers is a living legend in the dance world. She used to take dance class in the basement in New York City, listening to the dance teacher and the music through the pipes.

Gella now passes this advice onto his mentees. "The one thing I tell my students, no matter what ethnicity they are, is to allow your love for the craft to drive you," he says. Harvard Ballet Company dancers certainly internalized this advice. Gella, audience members, and all of HBC were struck by the dedication the entire company gave *On Exhibition* to ensure its success on stage.

HBC's Amy Benedetto '23 and Caroline Cooper '23 put together their finale number, 'Company Moment,' in a single week. Accompanied by the Brattle Street Chamber Players, they transformed Edgar Degas's statue *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* into a dance number featuring every single HBC member. *On Exhibition* was a kaleidoscope of every form of art blending together, orbiting around an explosive love of life.

Kayla Reifel '25 (kaylareifel@college.harvard.edu) has never even been able to do the splits.

Graphic by Alma Russell '25

IT'S GOING DOWN

A three part series

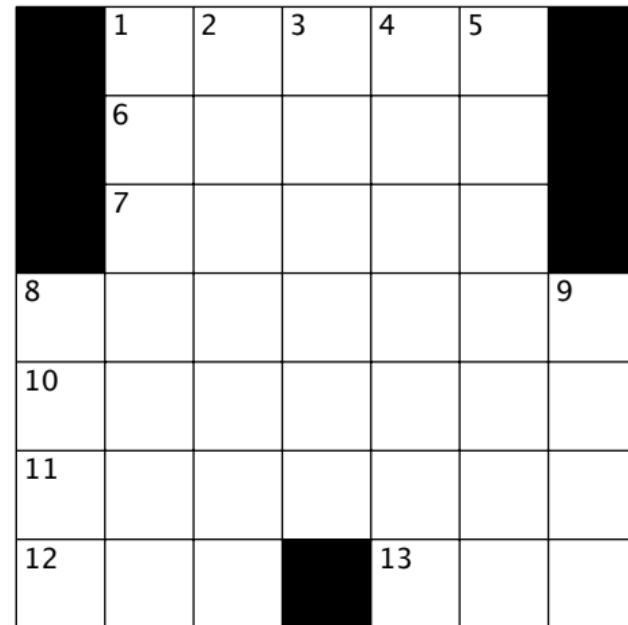
BY PETER LASKIN '23

Part 1:

ACROSS

1. Pinnacles
6. From the Emerald Isle
7. Hash-browns-like Swiss national dish
8. Be nonjudgemental?
10. Icing ornamentation
11. Columnist Dowd
12. Fuel additive: abbr.
13. Dakar to Freetown dir.

2. "Consummately wrongfoot" on the basketball court, per Urban Dictionary
3. Honorific for Rogers or Mxyzptlk
4. They might feature in a contest of wills
5. What many Iranis are
8. "A Farewell to ___" (Hemingway novel)
9. Hawaiian goose that sounds like a dance move



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DOWN

1. Way to get around a bayou

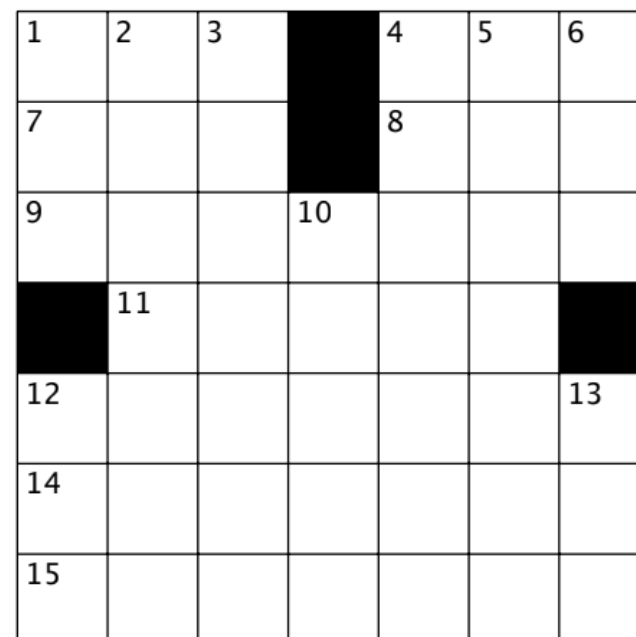
Part 2:

ACROSS

1. Chapel Hill sch.
4. Global finance grp.
7. Producer: abbr.
8. Nintendo avatar
9. Coming to a halt
11. River ending in Lyon
12. Behave like opposites
14. Shinkansen venue
15. Many teachers, during exam season

DOWN

1. Nervous interjections
2. Pro Bowler, probably
3. Country that looks like it's eating Bosnia
4. "That's incredible!"
5. Ore transporter
6. Mediterranean fruit
10. ___-building (fiction author's consideration)



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12. Messi's country, at the Olympics
13. Texts of appreciation

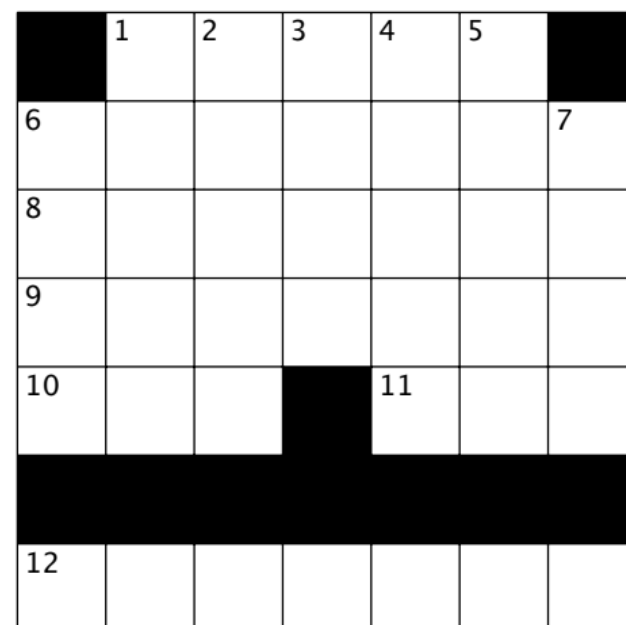
Part 3:

ACROSS

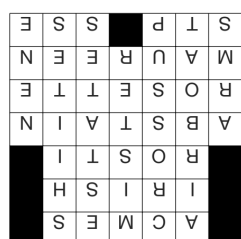
1. Three out of four in Asia
6. DNA has two
8. Get rusty, chemically
9. Unfold, as plans or a plant
10. Tail for a Gator?
11. Explosive letters
12. Artist hidden across the center column of these three puzzles

DOWN

1. Puzzled
2. Greek salad ingredient
3. Expansive
4. Pedestalize
5. Give away, as a secret
6. Journalist Kotb
7. Month after Aug.



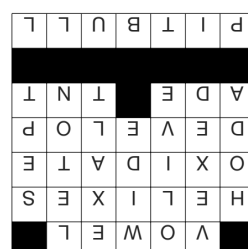
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It's Goin' Down #1



It's Goin' Down #2



It's Goin' Down #3

COVER ARTWORK & DESIGN

BY PIPER TINGLEAF '24

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BUT
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*Ash Chilton
Mary Julia Koch*