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# THE BATTLE FOR BREAKFAST

*HARVARD TOOK AWAY HOT BREAKFAST IN ALL BUT TWO HOUSES. NOW, STUDENTS AND STAFF TOGETHER ARE FIGHTING BACK*

BY LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26

After more than a decade without universal hot breakfast across dining halls, students and staff are taking a stand. Armed with a petition of over 2,000 student signatures, and backed by unionized Harvard University Dining Hall workers and Harvard Student Labor Action Movement (SLAM), members of the Harvard community are ready to put up a fight: they want hot breakfast, now.

“Harvard is struggling to provide basic needs: hot morning meals to all students in all Houses. Why?” asked first-year Samaga Pokharel '26. “What’s even the point of having a bloated endowment if they can’t even feed their students right? What’s even the point of the large endowment if they don’t care about their essential workers? Schools with much lower endowment are rapidly listening to campus voices and changing their policies as fast as possible, so what’s taking a school like Harvard long?”

Budget cuts across Harvard’s programs in 2009 ended hot breakfast offerings in dining halls. Over a decade later, they have yet to be reintroduced. As a result, long breakfast lines of students willing to make the trek fill Quincy House and Annenberg every morning, often overwhelming dining hall staff and placing increasing pressure on already limited hot breakfast items. Other students choose to skip breakfast altogether and do not sit down for a free meal until lunch or dinner.

“I signed this petition because I want the option to have a normal breakfast in the morning close by,” stated Cole Yellin '25, a resident of Adams House. “I think it’s ridiculous at a school where unlimited dining plans are required to not even provide a decent breakfast. Right now, hot breakfast is far and students won’t go out of their way most mornings for food, so they end up not eating breakfast, which isn’t healthy.”

Picture this. You wake up after a long night of studying, ready to start your day. It’s 10am. Realizing you have some time to spare, you head down the steps of your House and enter your dining hall. The smell of pancakes, eggs, sausages, home fries, and the waffle machine is overwhelming. You fill your plate, grab yourself a cup of coffee, and enjoy a warm breakfast.

Yet for most students, this reality does not exist.

Having hot breakfast in every House might reduce strain on dining hall staff. “For the workers, it would likely help them not have to deal with an overflow of students in one House. Also, they wouldn’t have to monitor the items so closely

not in early mornings.”

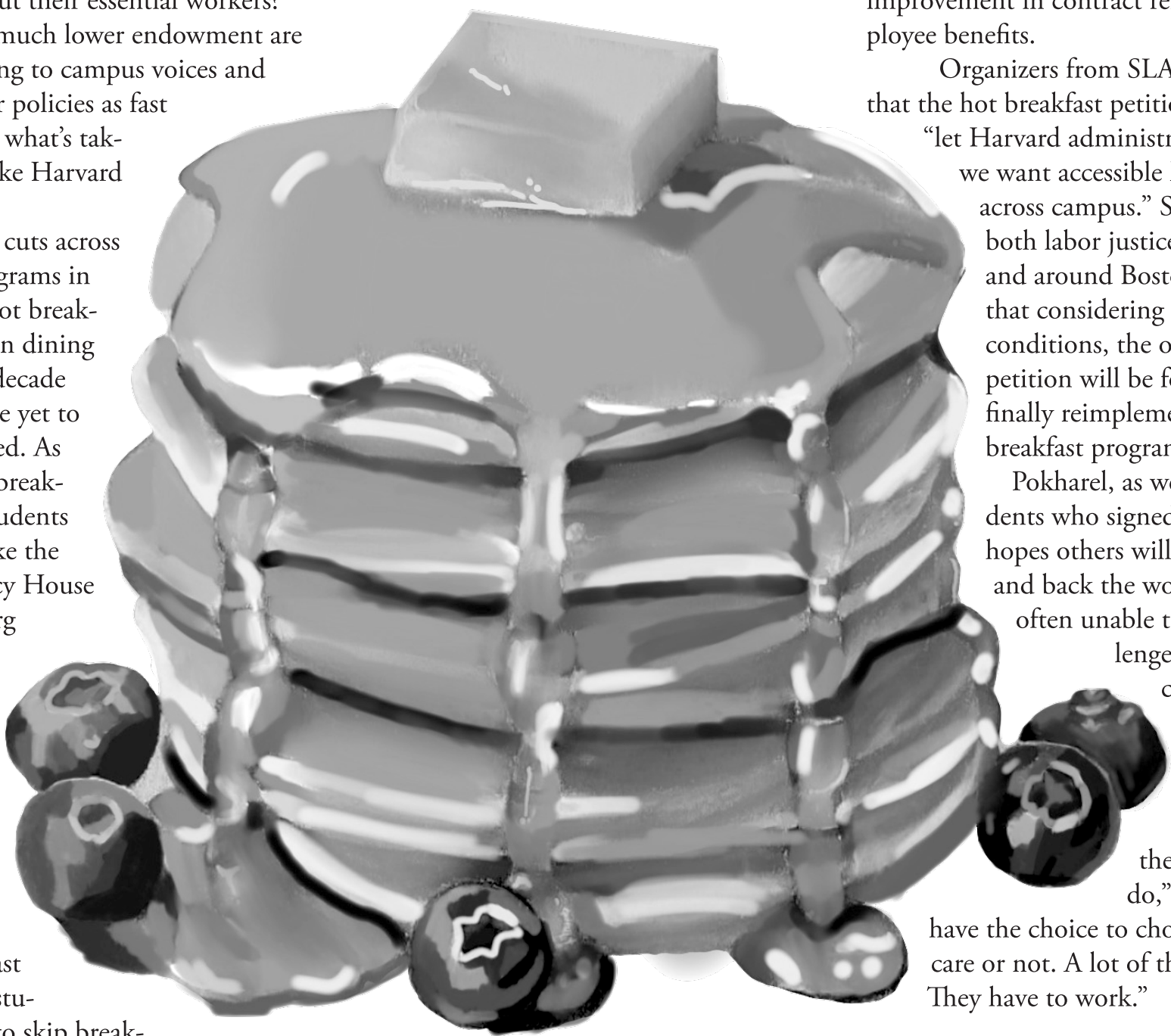
In addition to the student-led petition, a worker’s petition undersigned by HUDS Local 26 members is also collecting signatures urging Harvard to reimplement the full hot breakfast program. “This campaign is organized in solidarity with UNITE HERE Local 26, the union of Harvard dining hall workers. Our demands have the support and approval of Local 26 shop stewards,” reads an October 28th email sent to students that details the petition.

Harvard SLAM has also initiated protests for union groups on campus such as the Harvard Graduate Students Union-United Automobile Workers and for custodians and security guards, seeking improvement in contract renewals and employee benefits.

Organizers from SLAM explained that the hot breakfast petition functions to “let Harvard administration know that we want accessible hot breakfast across campus.” SLAM fights for both labor justice in Harvard and around Boston, and hopes that considering the current conditions, the outcome of the petition will be for Harvard to finally reimplement the full hot breakfast program.

Pokharel, as well as most students who signed the petition, hopes others will get on board and back the workers who are often unable to actively challenge their working conditions.

“Signing the petition was the least I could do, it’s the least we all can do,” she said. “We have the choice to choose whether to care or not. A lot of the workers don’t. They have to work.”



because there would be more variety for people to choose from,” Yellin speculated.

Pokharel cited her parents, who work in the food industry, as a reason to sign the petition. “The workers at Quincy and Annenberg have lives, too. Whenever I see them being overworked in the mornings, I think of my parents,” she stated. “They are human, too. Workers at Annenberg or Quincy don’t need to be over-swamped with students from all Houses, especially

**LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26 (LAY-LACHAARAOUI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HOPES HER FUTURE HOUSE WILL HAVE HOT BREAKFAST IN THE MORNINGS.**

**GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26**



# A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING KHURANA'S COURT

## STUDENTS FOR FAIR ADMISSIONS vs. HARVARD

BY CHARLES STEINBAUM '24

Correction: In the teaser for this piece, I incorrectly referred to the “nine” apex predators of the American legal trophic pyramid, otherwise known as the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. There are in fact only eight. As aforementioned, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson is a guppy, for now. But these things have a habit of changing.

Last time around, I proved that the undisputed Shark of The Court is Brett Kavanaugh. No need to revisit (or worse, relitigate) that one. It's written, it's published – it may even be admissible in court. So for argument's sake, let's call it precedence. I even told Susan Collins it's settled law. *Sharks will be sharks, right?* Always have been. Always will be. She knows that.

After all, we can't blame Senator Collins. Confirming Kavanaugh was an “honest mistake.” We all make those, but with varying implications, of course. I make a mistake and I'm blacklisted from the Spee. Senator Collins makes a mistake and abortion is banned in 13 states. Oops. Bygones be bygones... and enough about that. We're not here to discuss abortion bans, the politics of the Spee, or the eating habits of aquatic species. We're here because Harvard is waging perhaps the most consequential legal battle of its 386 year lifetime. And make no mistake: the altruistic Harvard Corporation®, LLC isn't fighting for itself. It's fighting for *us*. And our nation. It's fighting for the Sandellian good.

Regrettably, King Khurana and Barrister Bacow are limited in this new domain.

The Supreme Court cares not for our fancy titles and bloodlines – that's Old World. This court is different, innovative, and just. This court thoughtfully considers the facts of cases, meticulously evaluates relevant legal arguments, constantly questions their own assumptions, and then—only then—issues its decision. Why six of them always align with the political right is only a mere coincidence. Question that and reveal your sheer ignorance. The court is like modern art: they tell you there's underlying sophistication and nuance, but then you realize that the white-canvas-with-blue-line was thrown together in a Brooklyn attic-studio by some turtlenecked artist who thinks he's the reincarnation of Steve Jobs.

In addition to better understanding the dynamics of our Supreme Court, I learned three things about the justices (robed god-kings) on my trip: First, “Rusty” Neil Gorsuch wasn't popular in college. He revealed this much when he ranted about rowers, squash players, and legacies. Second, Clarence Thomas doesn't “have a clue what [diversity] means.” Maybe he should check out a dictionary. And Amy Coney Barrett does this thing where she leads lawyers (gladiators) along with hypotheticals (easy opponents) only to flip their own logic against them (uno reverse) and obliterate their points (ego death).

But the lawyers themselves were pretty damn hilarious too. Mr. Cameron “Chuck” Norris, who represented Students for Fair Admissions, roasted Dartmouth when he said that the SFFA admissions plan

(which would bring the average admitted Harvard student from the 99th percentile of test scores to the 98th percentile) would be like “moving Harvard [down] from Harvard... to Dartmouth.” And on the Harvard side, it was hardly frankfurter Mr. Seth Waxman's first rodeo; from all his babbling you would have thought he was a justice. But good ol' Roberts reminded him of his station when he went on a ramblin': “Justice—Justice Alito would like to ask you a question.” This was surely a calculated move by Mr. Waxman, and he knows his true audience: the Crimson's two courtroom reporters.

But as the resident Connecticut Yankee in this timeline, I'm not here to tell you about what happened. If you want to hear that, go read the Crimson. I'm here to tell you about *what's going to happen*. That's right, Oracle of Omaha – there's a new sheriff in town. And you're probably not gonna like it. But you know that whole thing about not shooting the messenger:

Harvard is going to lose.

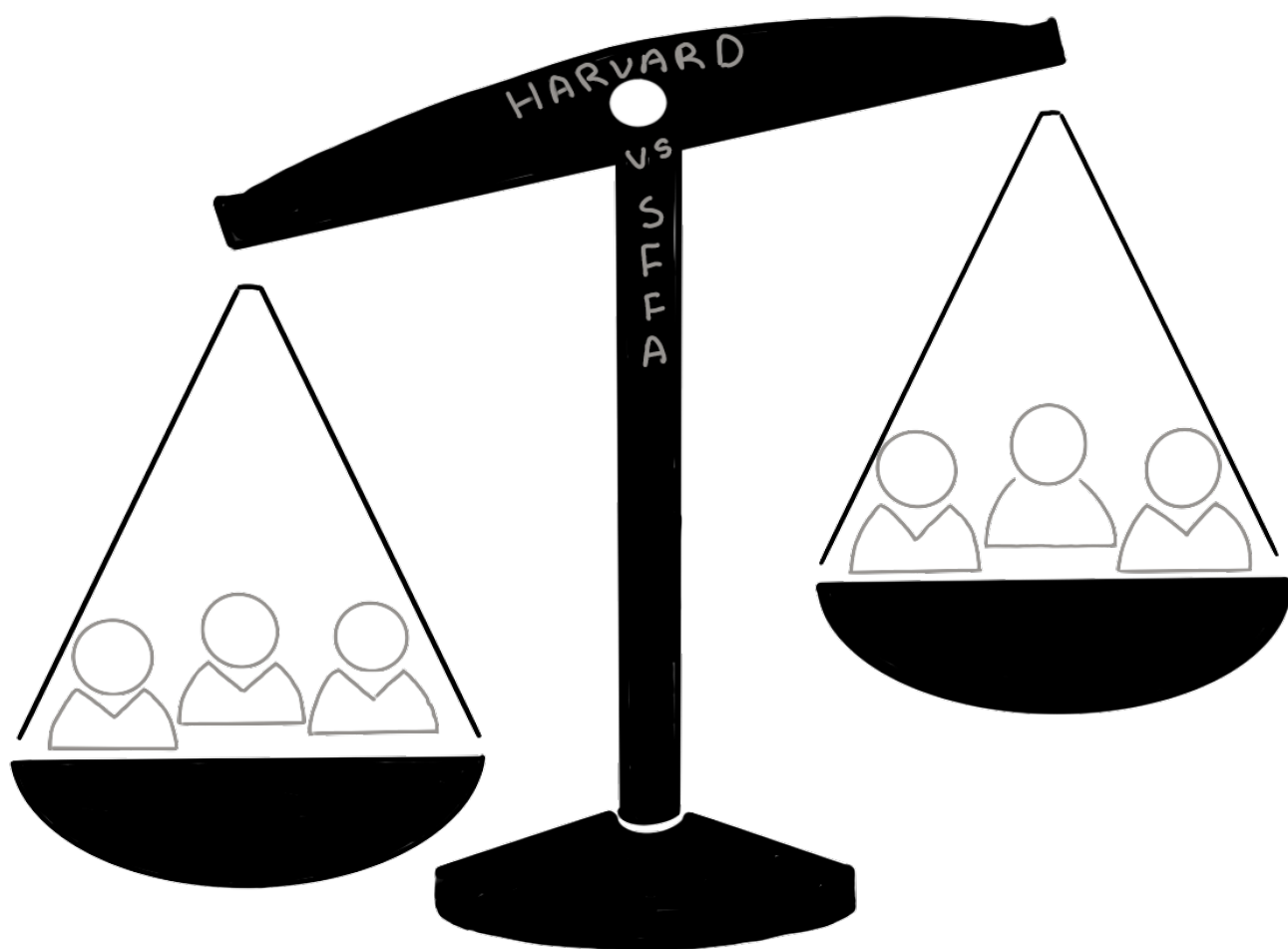
The writing's on the wall: a six-to-two decision—an edict, they may say—authored by the Shark (the guppy recuses). But like that time we lost to Yale, 16-17 (in overtime), Harvard fought valiantly until the bitter end. The 10,000 men may have left angry and annoyed, but they were thirsty for revenge.

This time, Harvard may have met its match: the soft-spoken litigious Longhorn lawyer Mr. Edward Blum carefully selected every aspect of this arena for battle. He chose the time (October 31st, 2022), place (Supreme Court), and weather conditions (a 6-3 court). He looks pretty friendly too, but don't let that fool you: he's a shifty, poisonous arachnid—and he's been this way for a while. He's even responsible for gutting major parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Just gonna go out on a limb and guess he's not one of the good guys.

But hey, there's always next time. The balance of this court ebbs and flows. Let's check back in 2050. Maybe then King Khurana's court will have fewer Sharks and more Connecticut Yankees.

*It is so ordered.*

CHARLES STEINBAUM '24 (CSTEINBAUM@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)  
WRITES FORUM FOR THE INDEPENDENT.





# UNCANCELED: ROLAND FRYER RETURNS TO “ECONOMICS IN ACTION”

*WHILE HARVARD WELCOMES ROLAND FRYER BACK, UNDERGRADUATES FEEL MISLED BY THE LACK OF TRANSPARENCY OF HIS CONTROVERSIAL PAST*

BY CARLY BRAIL '26

Harvard Economics Professor Roland Fryer is famous for pushing limits. He was a part of an early wave of economists that pioneered the use of economic methods to enact real world change, striving to improve public school programs in inner cities. In 2019, Fryer was suspended due to allegations of sexually harassing five employees at Harvard University throughout his tenure. He has returned to campus to teach both undergraduate and graduate courses, though he is barred from holding supervisory or advisory roles for the next two years. His return to campus has left some Harvard students questioning their institution's priorities.

In 2019, multiple publicized university investigations found that he engaged in “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature,” towards employees in in-person conversation as well as text messages. During his suspensions, he was required to undergo 18 months of executive coaching before returning to the University in July 2021. This fall, he is teaching “Econ 1021: Using Markets to Solve Social Problems.”

At age 30, he became the youngest tenured Black professor at Harvard, after graduating in 2.5 years on a full scholarship at the University of Texas Arlington and earning his doctorate at Penn State. He won the MacArthur Genius Grant in 2011 and the prestigious John Bates Clark Medal in 2015, an award that signals the recipient is on the path to a Nobel Prize. Roland Fryer is truly a great economist who has continuously fought against the racial achievement gap and educational inequalities. But he is also deeply problematic.

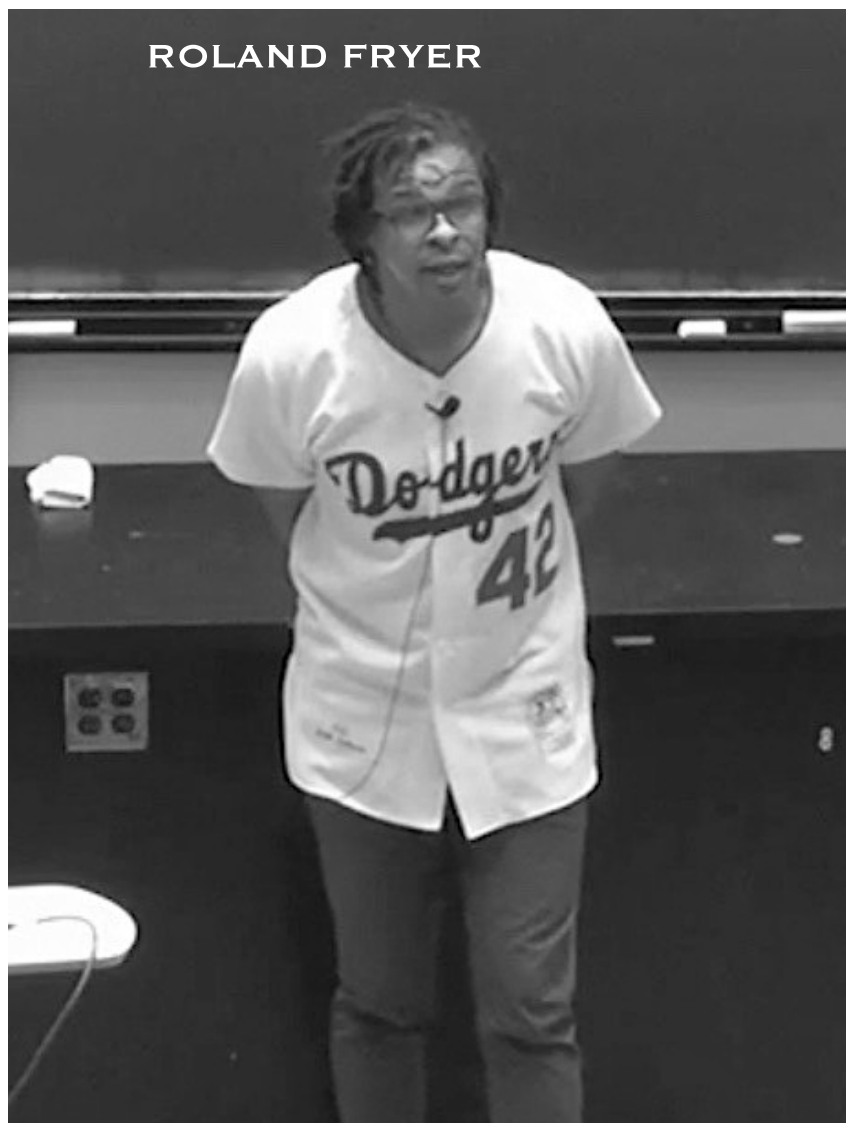
Many students were shocked that Introduction to Economics professors David Laibson and Jason Furman chose him to be one of the six speakers for the series, “Economics in Action,” in which professors with diverging viewpoints give a 30-minute presentation followed by a 10-minute question and answer period.

This year was Fryer's second in a row presenting, a rare feat for any of the speakers. In his opening remarks, he stated that he wanted to do a great job tonight to hope-

fully be invited back next year for the third time.

Throughout the talk, Fryer was charismatic and entertaining; he continuously joked whether sending his daughter to hip-hop lessons at her private school in Westin, Massachusetts was really a good thing. His background as a hobby stand-up comedy performer shone through, helping highlight his truly groundbreaking work.

The content of his talk detailed his decades-long effort to improve under-performing public schools in inner cities. Focusing on improving the Houston Public Schools, Fryer introduced five reforms characterizing high performing private



schools: such as attentive teachers and longer in-school hours. With his applied research methods, he was able to isolate what made a school “good,” then used those lessons to improve severely under-performing schools throughout the nation. This early research set him apart in the field, and ultimately won him a slew of rewards demonstrative of his trajectory.

Fryer did not delve into his more controversial research. In his June 2019 article in *The Journal of Political Economy*, he argued that the police did not express implicit bias because the increased number of African American shootings compared

to those of white people was just a result of each culture's relative crime rates. In an analysis of the Houston Police Department, he found that “on the most extreme use of force—officer-involved shootings—we find no racial differences either in the raw data or when contextual factors are taken into account.”

While well-educated Harvard Economics students may have been aware of these findings, Laibson and Furman did not give a disclaimer about Fryer's history of controversy, nor did they delve into his suspension in their usually comprehensive introductions. Indeed, many students were oblivious of Fryer's past.

When asked her opinions on the lecture, Mina Raj '26 said, “Fryer was incredibly charismatic and inspiring, really demonstrating what it means to apply economic research to the real world.” Yet she was shocked that Furman and Laibson would bring him onto the stage without giving at least a brief disclaimer, even though Harvard seems to deem him no threat to students or employees.

Alex Carlin '26, who knew of Fryer's past before the talk, was also shocked that “Laibson and Furman would invite a controversial figure without mentioning his past.”

Harvard prides itself on being an open forum for ideas at all ends of the political spectrum, where students and professors can explore different viewpoints without being criticized by the majority. In fact, several Harvard professors have signed on to the recently created University of Austin in support of its mission for free speech.

Roland Fryer has every right to pursue his arguments to further his studies of the economy. But when these arguments are contentious enough to provoke backlash, and when the person sharing them has had troubling allegations in their past, students should be better informed, as budding economists striving to learn more information about their world.

**CARLY BRAIL '26 (CARLYBRAIL@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES FORUM FOR THE INDEPENDENT.**



# OVERFLOW HOUSING

*HARVARD'S TEMPORARY SOLUTION TO STUDENT HOUSING LOOKS INCREASINGLY PERMANENT.*

BY RYAN GOLEMME '23

The housing process is a hallmark of the Harvard experience, connecting students to a new community that will remain constant for three years. But many sophomores are now getting shuffled into side buildings with separate communities, forced into the college's ever-growing overflow housing.

To accommodate the large number of students in the Class of 2026, every House—except the largest, Leverett—is overflowing into additional buildings this year, including several Houses requiring additional space for the first time.

The Dewolfe buildings (Mather, Quincy, Dunster), the Prescott buildings (Kirkland and Eliot), Hampden (Adams), and the Harvard Inn (Adams) are now mainstays of dorm life. Ridgely (Lowell) and Fairfax (Winthrop), located on



traditional dorms, including full kitchens and air conditioning units. The Inn features a full lobby, carpeted floors, and one of the most modern designs among student housing.

from this tradition only a month prior to move-in. Carina Myteveli, the Director of Housing and Residential Operations for Harvard College, stated that integrating these students is up to each individual House. The Houses “have been planning carefully for their expanded physical footprint in terms of programming, housing assignments, and community-building projects,” she said. “They are eager to work with and to hear from students about their experiences in these spaces.”

As the University continues cycling through renovations on each House with more modern amenities and increased space, large sections of the old Houses are closed off, necessitating more buildings to house the remaining students. The current renovations of Adams House and Randolph Hall, which have been ongoing since 2019, have forced several Adams students to relocate to overflow housing for the past few years.



top of many Cambridge storefronts, will also be occupied. The Cronkhite Center (Cabot, Currier, Pforzheimer)—formerly a graduate student dorm that was converted into a Covid-19 ward during the pandemic—is Harvard's newest overflow destination.

Although overflow students are still considered House members, they remain physically separated from their peers, especially for those already distant from the primary part of campus in Quad dorms. Each overflow building tends to form its own distinct community, much smaller than that of the main House. Some even have amenities not present in their corresponding Houses. DeWolfe's suites are

Yet the ultimate separation from the physical House undercuts one of Harvard's main selling points: its close-knit upperclassmen communities, with students often notified of their exclusion







Myteveli also cited increased gap years due to Covid-19 as a factor behind the currently large class sizes. “These students, approximately 300, returned to campus at the same time, in addition to the incoming First-Year class,” she said. “This created an usually large class that will be going through the Houses in the next three years.”

However, Harvard’s admissions policies have also contributed to the increased housing demand. An increase in applicants and fewer available admitted spots have led to a lower acceptance rate in recent years, yet the College still struggles with larger-than-expected class sizes. Even before the rapid increase in Covid-induced deferrals, the rate of students accepting their admittances was rising, with the last few years of attendance rates higher than most of Harvard history.

The Harvard Gazette highlighted the yield for the Class of ’26 as “historically strong” due to the wide range of opportunities and programs drawing in more people. Harvard’s recent finan-

cial aid and first-generation recruitment initiatives ease the decision to accept for many. While these incentives have helped individual students, they have also led to difficulties with securing accommodation.



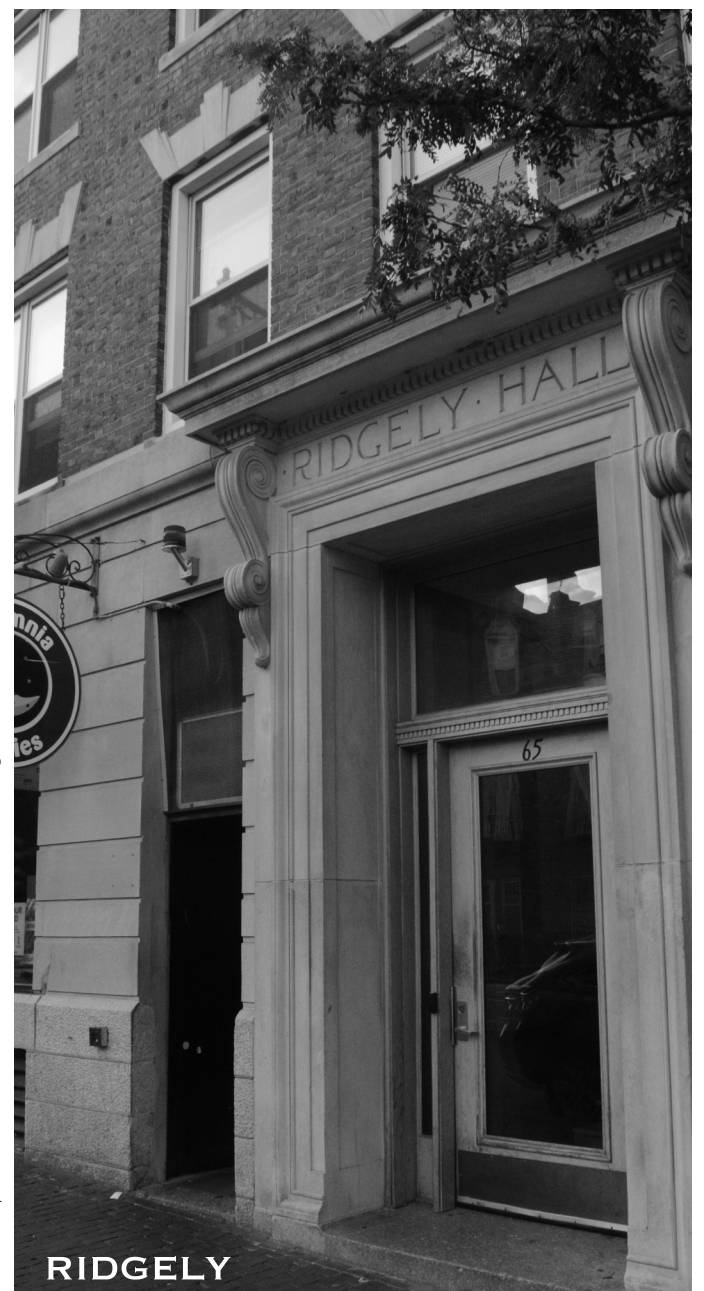
Harvard must scramble each year to provide necessary amenities as these larger classes progress into higher grades. Some former renovation-induced displacement housing from 2021 was converted into general overflow housing for the larger Class of 2025, many of whom deferred enrollment in 2020, representing the first freshman class on campus after the pandemic hiatus. First-year proctors reported feeling increased stress and burnout as they struggled to manage and mentor so many assigned students.

If Harvard’s yield rates continue to rise as many more students apply to the school, overflow housing may have to adapt into something more permanent to handle the increase in students. Myteveli says that while Harvard is not looking to add more facilities or change its approach, any new additions “will depend on our housing needs given House Renewal and the size of future first year classes.” Harvard has added Houses to its system before,

and the renovations have been able to diminish some of the demand. As it stands now, overflow housing operates as an increasing quasi-House for many students compared to the temporary arrangement as it was pitched years ago.

Next year, the Class of 2027 may require even more overflow housing if class size trends continue. In the meantime, students will adapt to their new separate enclaves, while the University continues to expand its increasingly permanent solution to accommodate them, one converted building at a time.

**RYAN GOLEMME '23 (RYANGO-LEMME@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU), WHO GOT THE EXACT SAME ROOM TWO YEARS IN A ROW, WRITES NEWS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.**





# THE STORIES OF OUR TATTOOS

*"I FEEL LIKE I'M ONE OF THOSE DOODLE BEARS WHERE YOU JUST PUT SHIT ON FOR FUN."*

BY MADDY TUNNELL '26

Everyone knows the first-year college essentials: a fan, quality hangers, maybe even a handle of vodka bought by your mom. But as the stigma around tattoos is diminishing more and more, some students are also coming to campus with fresh body ink.

If you ask Seth Rose '26 if you should



to the U.S., and I left Florida to come here."

In keeping with her family's tradition of honoring their relationships, Sanchez also has "a gladiola and a sunflower for my great grandma and my great aunt," a small collection including the word "love," a small heart, and her cat, plus an image of Snoopy, her favorite cartoon as a child.

"I feel like there are some I know I am going to keep forever, and there are some I know I will eventually get something else to replace it with," Sanchez said. "For me, I think of my tattoos as memories, or moments I have had in the past, not necessarily something I always want to keep on my body permanently." She believes in the "just go for it" approach to body art.

Kevin Fischetto '26 has a similar outlook. At 18, he got the word 'grit' tattooed across his stomach after an ice climbing accident in Montana. "I

too is a matching piece with a friend from the military. "It's a shark, and mine says 'no bubbles' and his says 'no troubles.'" He explained this tattoo came from a phrase they shared when doing combat diving in the military. "You want to be stealthy," he said. "You don't want bubbles because you don't want the enemy to see you."

Fischetto's adventure plans do not end at tattoos. He and Nick Ige '25 aspire to be the first Harvard students to climb the tallest mountains in all seven continents, which he plans to subsequently have memorialized on his body. Fischetto's ink is a map of his experiences, he explained, which he hopes will change and grow as he does.

Not all tatted Harvard students have professional tattoos. Some have opted for the at-home, "stick-and-poke" variety.

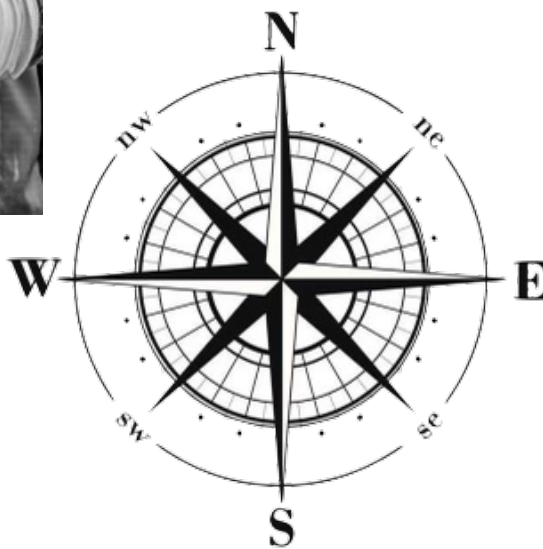
"I was on the floor of my dorm room with all my friends and they poked me," said El Richards '26, who has two triangles on her hip she acquired from a kit on Amazon. "It hurt so badly because mine is on my hip and my friends had to hold me down. It was the funniest thing ever. I thought I was going to die."

Isabelle Behring '26 does not look back on her stick-and-poke as fondly. She purchased Indian ink and needles with her best friend Isabella at 16, and the plan was to give each other matching tattoos of the letter 'I,' but the tattoos came out as dots. "I hate it," she expressed. "I'm getting it tattooed over this year, I think."

Yet Richards has no regrets. "It was such a good memory, and we all still have them," she said. "We were bored, it was Covid-19, and we wanted something to remember our little group."

Indeed, tattoos may be as much about the time you got them as they are about the design itself. As Fischetto articulated, "one can look back at that moment in time and reflect on why you got them, and what place you were at in life."

**MADDY TUNNELL '26 (MADDYTUNNELL@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS FOUR TATTOOS AND TALKS ABOUT THEM TOO MUCH.**



get a tattoo, he will tell you to "send it."

Rose received his first ink—a quotation on his left forearm and an intricate compass rose—while serving in the United States Marine Corps in Japan before college and has a vision for more tattoos. "The plan is to turn it into a map that's going to be a sleeve," he said, explaining that he was limited by the Marines' regulations on tattoos. "This is 1 millimeter within the regulations," he said, gesturing to his tattoo. "I have 1 millimeter to spare."

Rose has a light-hearted view of tattoos. "Pretty much, it's just for kicks," he said.

Maddy McKenzie '26 tattoo of a butterfly on her bicep is more meaningful. "I wanted it for a while, and then one day was like, 'man, I'm gonna go get it,'" she said of her visit to the tattoo parlor after graduating high school. "The butterfly is meaningful because my great grandmother passed away, and any time we see a butterfly we like to say it's her," she said. "She always thought that angels were butterflies."

McKenzie also has the roman numeral of her lucky number, eight, on the inside of her left wrist. Her future tattoo aspirations include a medusa on her right shoulder, a sun and moon on each shoulder, and "the way the solar system looked on my sister's birthday," she added. "I feel like I'm one of those doodle bears where you just put shit on for fun."

Butterflies seem to be a theme. On her 18th birthday, Melanie Sanchez '26 got three flying up her right arm. "My grandma likes to call my mom, my sister, and I the three butterflies because we all flew away from home," she explained. "My mom went from Bolivia to the

fell like 30 feet. I messed up my knees, my ankle, and ended up having to leave my gear behind. On the way back we got caught in a blizzard and we got lost. We ended up being out there for like 23 hours total, so it was a very difficult moment, and we definitely needed to persevere through it. I have learned a lot from that experience," he said, looking at his tattoo. "So 'grit' is pretty self-explanatory."

Fischetto's second tattoo is a bust of the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, on his upper arm, which he received while going through the three-year selection process for special operations in the U.S. military. He explained Aurelius was a big proponent of stoicism, "a philosophy in which you recognize what is in your control and what is not, and you focus on things in your control."

Also inspired by his time serving in special operations is a quotation by the poet Charles Bukowski on his forearm: "find what you love and let it kill you."

Fischetto's final tat-





# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA VS. NEW ENGLAND: A SATIRE

*A CALIFORNIAN'S HONEST TAKE ON CAMBRIDGE CULTURE.*

BY RYAN MCCARTHY '24

New England: the most wonderful place I have ever lived. With its rich history, changing seasons, and endless caches of toll roads and strip malls, it really is the only place I could see myself living upon graduating Harvard. How could a born-again northerner like me ever return to the dregs of SoCal?

Personally, the largest selling factor is New England's unprecedented history. It's as old as shit. In my free time, I often take part in tours of old buildings! There really is nowhere I feel safer than the decaying outdoor wooden staircases built by 13-year-old alcoholic Irish kids in the 1850s. But the colonial architecture goes beyond quaint, charming looks. The insulation in my bare brick wall works rigorously to keep room temperatures an impressive 1 degree warmer than the ongoing blizzard outside.

Not to mention, "seasons" exist here. Every morning I'm met with the thrill of uncertainty of whether I'll need my winter coat. In Southern California, the only noticeable differences between summer and winter are the holiday decorations people smother all over their boats or the inflatable snowmen that my neighbors think will turn their front yards into

a Hallmark postcard.

But in Boston, there's nothing I love more than witnessing the slow death of the trees or the beautiful transition of white snow into a gray slush. On my first snow day during my freshman year, I could not believe how much fun it was to try to ride my bike or skateboard in the snow. It's also way more convenient when you add a layer of ice onto Cambridge's already uneven streets. Who wants to commute on a smooth surface?

Another one of my favorite things about the East Coast, and especially Harvard, is how much the students here value their education. Freshman year I was greeted by several students who were kind enough to introduce themselves by the high schools they went to. I had never heard of these epic institutions like "Exeter" and "Groton," but it truly comforted me, knowing that I was surrounded by people who cared about learning just as much as I did. When it came time for me to flaunt my high school alma mater, my friends all (understandably so) immediately felt inferior to me. They had never heard of CDM High School. I mean who has? It's so exclusive and small and only graduates the most promising leaders of tomor-

row.

Everyone here must have ugly feet. As someone who grew up wearing exclusively Rainbow sandals, it was a massive shift to see people sporting close-toed shoes all the time. I unfortunately learned the hard way that Rainbows are not as versatile as I had previously thought, given that I've once had to run my feet under hot water for 15 minutes to return any feeling to my toes after wearing them on my snowy walk to morning practice.

But footwear is not the only thing people wear differently on the East Coast. Never in my entire life had I seen someone wear a long-sleeve button-down shirt to class than on my first day at Harvard when half of my classes looked like they were pulled out of a Vineyard Vines catalog. Rolling in with my possibly stained white t-shirt and beach shorts, I felt like I had entered some alternate universe.

As much as I might miss the authentic Mexican and seafood from Southern California, I must say I am impressed by New England and Harvard's cuisine creativity. I hadn't realized how versatile "lobster" was as a flavor, or why I would ever seek any other midnight snack than whole wheat Brain Break bagels and shredded lettuce and carrots.

The biggest difference between Southern California and New England is the culture. New England is a "work hard, play hard" environment that I had never experienced, coming from one of the most laid-back areas of the world. In Southern California, in the rare occurrence when we aren't hanging out on someone's boat or in someone's garage, we would go to a local bar with cheap fake IDs to people-watch our high school classmates.

But Cambridge, and especially Boston, is so much better. The excitement of spending \$30 on an Uber across the River to see if our fake IDs will grant us watered-down gin and tonics, and the myriad people I meet in the hour-long line for a margarita pitcher at Felipe's, are second to nothing.

But being 3,000 miles from home truly shows you how much you value the best parts of your childhood and where you grew up. While my move to the East Coast was dramatic, it showed me that experiencing different cultures can shape you into a better person and make you appreciate your life back home even more.

**RYAN MCCARTHY '24 (RYANMCCARTHY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CAN STILL BE SEEN WEARING RAINBOW FLIP FLOPS EVERYWHERE HE GOES.**

**GRAPHIC BY SEATTLE HICKEY '25**





# AMERICAN DRAG

A NEW EXHIBIT AT THE HOUGHTON LIBRARY EXPLORES THE HISTORY OF DRAG

MATTHEW SHUM '24

Packing tens of thousands of fans into a convention hall is a feat typically reserved for spectacular conventions where new Marvel movies or Lego sets are announced. In 2019, RuPaul's DragCon New York City proved the exception by bringing in over 100,000 fans of drag, reaffirming beyond a doubt that drag's cultural force is well and truly alive in the modern day. Hundreds of queens walked the floor in an event featuring discussions led by Whoopi Goldberg and even an appeal to voting from Elizabeth Warren. Events like this convention, alongside RuPaul's eponymous Emmy-winning *RuPaul's Drag Race*, have enshrined drag's place as a bonafide pop culture phenomenon.



magazine demonstrating drag's increasing audience.

Literature in general presents a fascinating archive of perspectives on drag, especially when written for the community rather than about it. On display was the premiere issue of *My Comrade*, a zine meant to document the exploding popularity of drag in New York City in the 1990s. The magazine featured drag icons like RuPaul and Lady Bunny and was meant to spotlight the gay community during the AIDS epidemic, when stigma and discrimination were widespread. As the magazine's creator Linda Simpson told *Dazed*, "I wanted to do something that would be reflective of the images—but the times were so dark that I wanted to do something upbeat and defiant."

At Harvard's Houghton Library, the rich history of drag in the United States is currently on display.

"American Drag" traces drag from its Victorian origins through the postwar boom, counterculture movement, and explosion of popularity in the mid-90s. Running from September 6th to January 6th, 2023, the exhibit presents archival posters and photos that highlight the American audience's shifting appetite for drag along with the art form's evolution as cultural perceptions on gender and sexuality have changed.

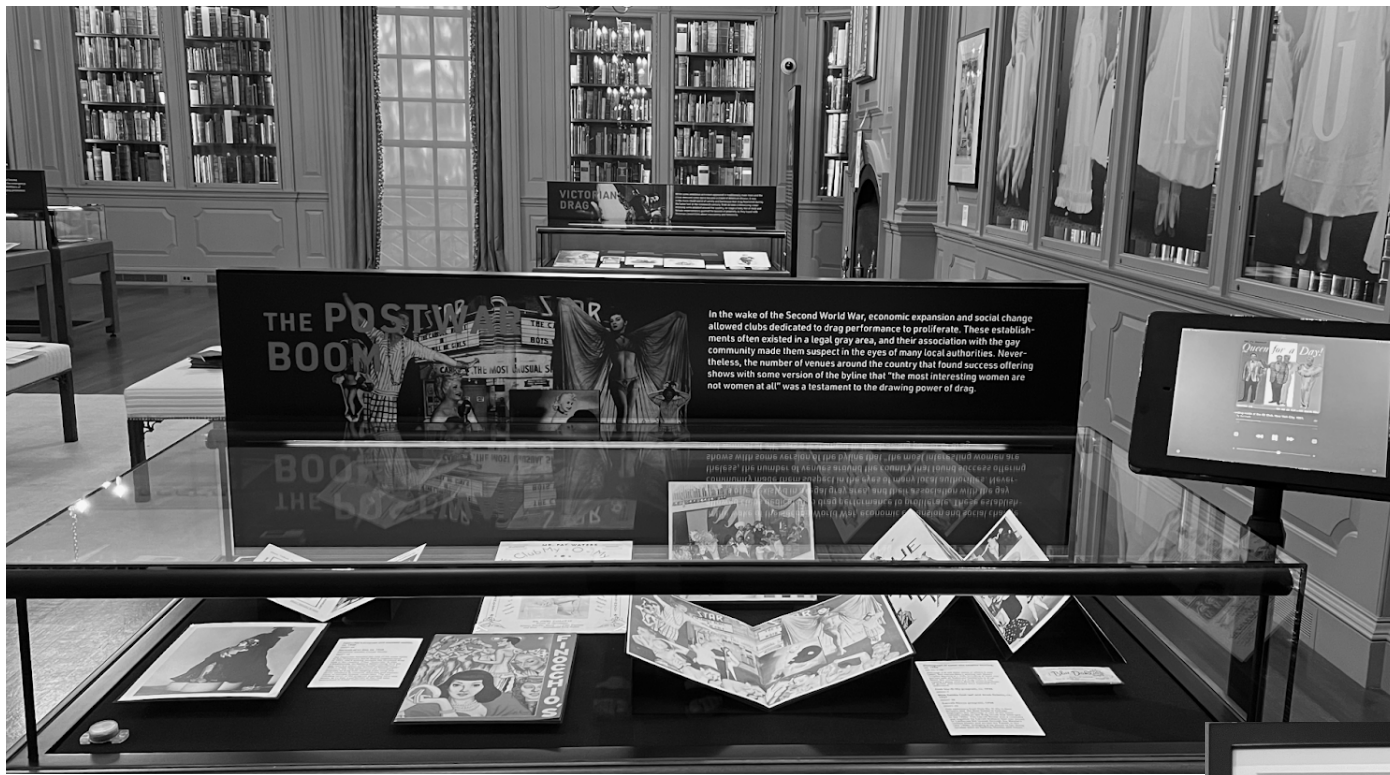
Harvard has its own unique relationship with drag. The Hasty Pudding Institute, founded in 1795 and today the country's oldest collegiate theatrical company, has a long tradition of drag performances as part of its annual show. In the 1980,

Adams House student for his sexuality, the House put on a Drag Ball (later renamed to Drag Night) which has since become an annual tradition, giving students an opportunity to express themselves freely. The exhibition includes a Hasty Pudding Theatricals score from 1910 with a cover image of a student in drag.

Each of eight stations around the room display a different "era" of drag. Seen here from the section on "Counter-cultural Drag" are three editions of *Female Mimics*, a nationally published







shutting down her performances and tried organizing rallies and getting help from the ACLU in vain.

“American Drag” presents a broad view of the perceptions and acceptance of drag, particularly in the last decade. Yet the exhibit fails to provide greater context to the intersectionality inherent in drag culture. Presenting the history of drag as a series of transitions between increasing periods of cultural acceptance is to miss the labor that generations of drag queens and activists had to put in to achieve where we are today, along with how far we still have to go.

The exhibit also incorporates recordings of drag performances, including a performance of Ty Bennett’s *Queen for a Day* (1961) which is among the best preserved representations of a high-class drag act from this era.

Along the walls are posters from various performances, movies, and documentaries featuring drag and its history, including from the groundbreaking 1968 documentary *The Queen*, which followed drag queens participating in the 1967 Miss All-America

within drag and has continued on into modern LGBTQ+ culture.

The exhibit successfully presents and contrasts the stories of Sir Lady Java and Burma Taylor, two popular drag queens active in the 1960s and 70s who faced considerably different reactions to their performances. Sir Lady Java, who is Black, faced discriminatory and selective enforcements by the Los Angeles Police Department in



**MATTHEW SHUM '24 (MSHUM@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WANTS TO CHECK OUT HOUGHTON LIBRARY'S BOOKS BOUND IN HUMAN SKIN.**

Camp Beauty Contest. The documentary (which is available on Netflix) has been heralded for its look into the lives of these performers who routinely faced discrimination and arrest.

At times, the exhibit falls short in its reckoning with divisions in and around the drag movement, particularly on the basis of race. A pivotal scene in *The Queen* comes when Crystal LaBeija, who is Black, walks off the stage and accuses the organizers of fixing the competition for a white contestant named Rachel Harlow. In a scene so memorable that it’s been featured on a Frank Ocean track, LaBeija tells the organizers, “This is why all the true beauties didn’t come.” LaBeija would go on to found her own ball for Black queens and the House of LaBeija, which spawned its own subculture





# THE HARVARD DJs: TELLING A STORY THROUGH SOUND

*"IT'S NOT THE EQUIPMENT THAT MAKES THE PLAYER, IT'S THE PLAYER THAT MAKES THE PLAYER."*

BY CLARA CORCORAN '25

Let's get this party started! As electronic music takes over the Harvard party scene, student DJs are rising in popularity on campus and in the broader Boston community.

Three leading Harvard DJs reveal that their success is not just a matter of hitting the right sounds or accessing the right parties. Rather, their ability to seamlessly guide an audience through a series of emotions and beats suggests that on Harvard's campus, the art of mixing is also an art of storytelling.

was interest for the music I played." Soon, Serafini found himself consistently DJing at sports team mixers and parties at The Hasty Pudding Club. As a sophomore, Serafini began playing at final clubs and as a junior, at The Grand nightclub in Boston.

"People think that DJing is something easy and that it's something where you can go be up there on stage, press some buttons, and somehow good music will come and people will have fun," Serafini said. "But that's absolutely not true, and it's all about preparation and work-

lie at the crux of what it means to be a successful DJ. Serafini "needs to understand the people" to create a narrative for the specific audience at each show.

The idea of storytelling and creative expression is fundamental to Serafini's experience in the DJ world. Serafini finds a tradeoff between responding to the audience's wishes and incorporating his personal take on the music. "The most important thing is earning the trust of the people, so if you are able to kind of do a tradeoff between tracks that makes everyone have a good time plus your own style, that's what I try to do," he said, explaining that he seeks to expose his audience to new music while simultaneously sensing their enjoyment and accommodating their tastes.

Serafini feels a sense of accomplishment in bringing an Italian influence into his DJ world at Harvard and a sense of pride in "changing the [musical] culture." Serafini contends that "coming from Italy gives you a broad perspective on genres" and that he feels happy that he "can bring this to the table as well."

"It's not the equipment that makes the player, it's the player that makes the player," Serafini expressed.

**Andrew de Souza '23 — "de SOUZ"** De Souza noticed a lack of cultural diversity in the music played at Harvard, and that "a lot of marginalized communities [did] not feel represented in the music they heard at [Harvard] parties." For de Souza, noticing this lack of musical representation emboldened him to counteract such a discrepancy.



## **Fabrizio Serafini '24 — "DJ Fabrizio"**

When Fabrizio Serafini '24 arrived at Harvard from Palermo, Italy, he assumed that in "coming to the states, on campus there would have already been DJs." He said, "I expected the music genre would have been different, so I didn't necessarily think that I would have DJed as much." However, Serafini quickly found this was not the case.

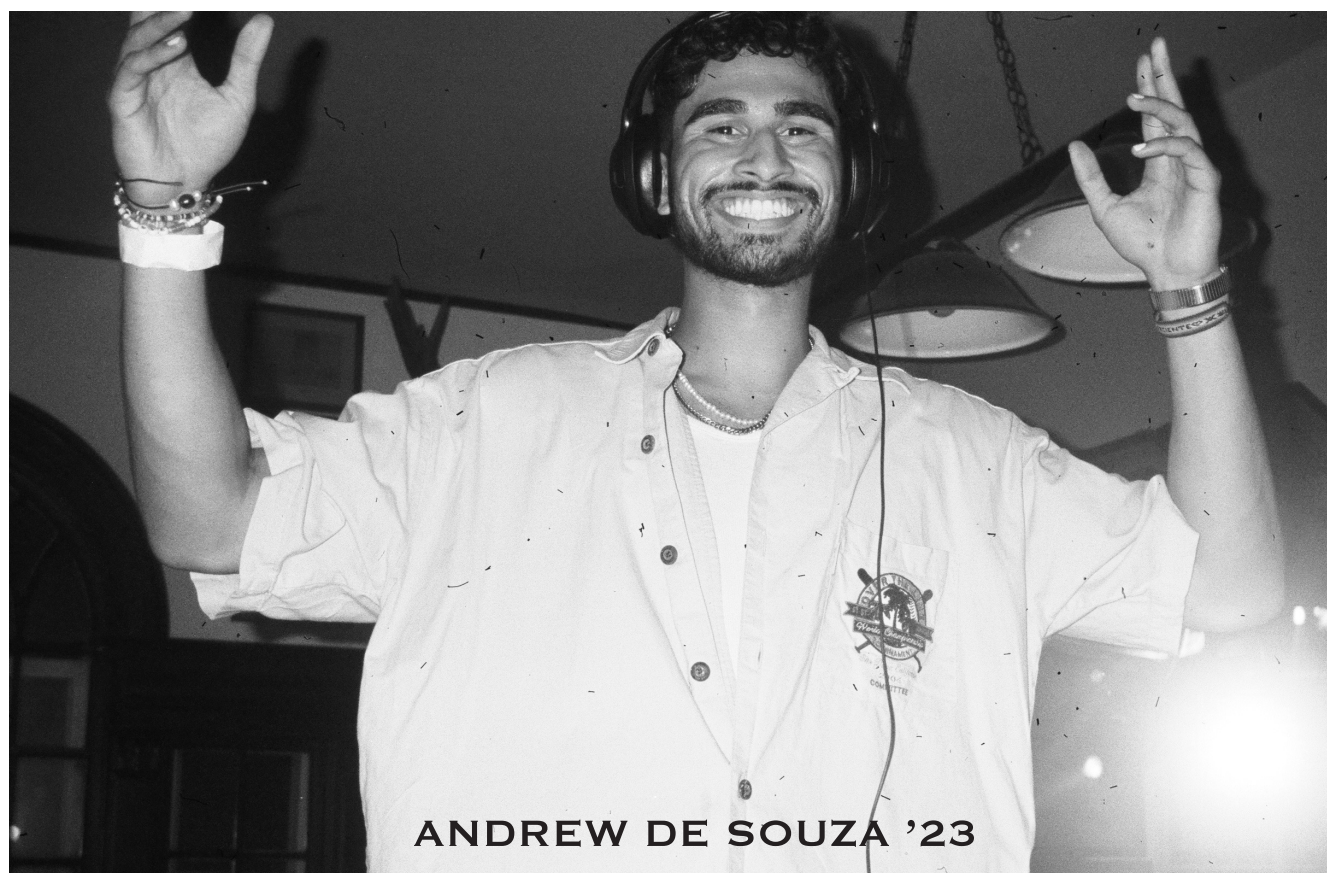
During his first year at Harvard, most parties he attended depended on Spotify playlists. "The music quality, most importantly, was very, very low. People had no taste and were not aware of what it means to actually have a good experience with music," Serafini said.

With that realization, Serafini's experience as a Harvard DJ began. His first show freshman year at Lowell's annual rave-themed party, Glowell, earned him enthusiastic reviews. "It was a good feeling," Serafini said. "I liked it because I was like, wow, it means I can play also

here in the states, and there

ing yourself, preparing your library... Stage presence is for sure important because you need to understand the people and what type of music they like... because every party is like a narrative."

The years of time spent developing one's sound and learning to read a crowd





Like Serafini, de Souza works to cater each of his sets to his audience and cites this as one of the primary challenges that DJs face.

De Souza played on the rugby team during his first three years at Harvard, however, after getting injured during his senior year, was faced with more time than ever to focus on music. During the winter of 2022, de Souza began to learn how to produce music more professionally.

When asked how he transitioned from music production generally into the realm of DJing, de Souza recalled how his current roommate spontaneously showed him the basics of mixing one night last spring and the enthusiasm that fostered in him for the craft.

Over the following summer, de Souza participated in a Masterclass by Questlove, a musician and producer who emphasized the storytelling component of DJing, something that greatly influenced de Souza's own approach to mixing. Then, while working at a consulting firm over the summer, de Souza DJed formally for the first time at a company event. Such an experience quickly revealed to de Souza that "every event that you DJ has a different vibe" and that gauging these differences is one of the hardest skills for beginners to master.

This fall, de Souza DJed a friend's birthday which quickly "snowballed into more and more." de Souza now plays at a variety of events ranging from Finals Clubs to more intimate events with close friends. De Souza said, "I'm a very social person but also very introverted." The role of a DJ allows him to be a part of these social settings while also having the platform to read people's energies and to alter his performance accordingly. Though "People are constantly perceiving you," said de Souza, oftentimes the audience really just wants to "feel like they're in the know."

"Inherently you are judging your own performance based off [the audience's] reception," de Souza said, an effort that takes time and confidence to internalize. "There are moments when you're DJing when everything else disappears... You've gotten people into a zone that is magical."

#### **Jeff Basta '23 — "Kotier"**

Jeff Basta '23 said, "Half of the art of DJing is reading the crowd and making adjustments in real time," a fact that makes the prep work of a DJ all the more layered. For more formal events, Basta uses lengthy playlists which allow him to select the perfect song from a previous-

ly narrowed list. In contrast, his sets at Harvard parties are primarily unplanned. Basta said that he typically has a "rough idea of how I want my set to go [and an] energy arc I know I want." He measured the success of a DJ on their ability to act spontaneously based off of the energy of the event.

Basta began playing piano at a very young age and eventually became interested in DJing and electronic music during middle school. Basta started out playing small events like middle school dances after learning the technical skills required to mix from YouTube videos.

After transferring from the University of Michigan at the end of his freshman year, Basta found DJs "pretty in demand" upon his arrival at Harvard, and that there was little to no DJ community on campus. Now a prominent DJ at final clubs and other private events, Basta said, "once the word is out that you're a decent DJ, people start to reach out."

Basta has extended his performances onto public stages, playing at The Grand in Boston and at NOTO, a club in Philadelphia and the largest show he's ever played. Remembering the packed environment and the 1,000 people in attendance, Basta said, "I didn't even know how to be around people," a testament to the time and practice it takes to hone one's skills and comfort in the DJ world.

There is a key component of trusting yourself during a set that is a fundamental part of performing as a DJ. "Usually once you get into the swing of [a set], muscle memory takes over, and you kind of stop thinking about it," Basta said.

Like de Souza, he finds that the real technicality of DJing is managing the social variables rather than strictly mixing beats. Basta explained the ability to sense timing and push a crowd lie at the heart of the craft.

Looking past graduation, Basta plans to pursue music production full time and is currently making primarily melodic house. Check out Kotier on Spotify!

\*\*\*

Creating a narrative on stage is no small undertaking. Sharing a part of yourself while simultaneously recognizing the needs of your crowd takes time and interpersonal skills that are often overlooked. As these three DJs exemplify, success lies not simply in the songs that are played, but in the bond that is formed between performer and crowd.

**CLARA CORCORAN '25 (CLARA-CORCORAN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS LOOKING FOR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HER NOVEMBER PLAYLIST.**





# ACAPELLA OR ACA-HELL-A?

## THE INTENSE REALITY OF ACAPELLA AUDITIONS AT HARVARD

BY SACHI LAUMAS '26

Next time someone asks you what the Harvard “rush” process is like, don’t think Cambridge Alphi Phi or final club punch. Think eight crazy-talented groups of Harvard students hand-selected through a week-long process semi-affectionately called “Hell Week.” Think acapella. Replace bid day with Final Night, socializing with singing, and you have Harvard’s high-intensity, high-reward acapella rush process.

Students compete to join eight groups in total, ranging from the Harvard Krokodiloes (an all-male group that specializes in jazz and is also the oldest of the groups) to the Opportunes (a co-ed group that sings pop and recently released an EP on Spotify).

The groups specialize in a variety of musical styles, with three focusing on jazz and the other five specializing in contemporary music. Most groups rehearse for around ten hours a week, with the time commitment increasing around performances and annual tours. The audition process to join a group is that weekly schedule on steroids.

Hell Week takes place the second week of each semester—if you’re auditioning for a group, it is when your classes and everything else takes a backseat and acapella takes center stage. Groups host four nights of auditions, up to ten hours a day. Each morning, auditioners learn which groups called them back for more auditions and find out which songs they must audition with that same night. They spend the day preparing, and each night, they return to auditions and perform.

Outside of auditions, each auditioner is paired with a “buddy” in each group. Potential members are encouraged to meet with their buddy outside of auditions for advice and guidance through the process, as well as to get to know the group better. And on Final Night, the culmination of Hell Week, the auditioners and groups rank each other in a matching process that is all too familiar to fans of ‘Bama rush’ Tik Tok. During Hell Week, acapella becomes a full-time job for the auditioners and current members.

Most who went through the process, whether they ended up joining a group, felt the overwhelm of the process sink in from the start. A first-year who auditioned this year but did not make it to Final Night said the groups expected you to “prioritize that above everything else.” She felt that she “couldn’t do it all at once,” and felt pressure to drop other commitments and comps to

dedicate more time to

ARTS | 14 acapella.

The acapella groups demand a lot from their auditioners, perhaps a way of preparing them for what’s to come if they join a group. At the same time, the process creates a pressure that may exclude students who want to pursue other commitments, thus narrowing the audition pool.

Students described the pressure to meet the groups’ high standards as intense. “There was no room to mess up,” said Gauri Sood ’26, who did not join a group this year. She explained that the groups did not present any overt messages of pressure, but those auditioning knew who they were up against—an abundance of singing and musical talent on Harvard’s campus.

Liza de Figueiredo ’26, who joined the Harvard Lowkeys this semester, said she spent an unimaginable amount of time on acapella during Hell Week, estimating she spent around seven hours of each day meeting with members from the groups, learning new songs, and performing at auditions. Despite the high time commitment of the week, she emphasized that the process “bonded us together, running back and forth from auditions.” She made fast friends through the week and found enjoyment in the process itself.

Although the process is time-consuming and stressful, those who auditioned felt it measured their ability fairly. Because each auditioner is given the same songs to choose from and the same amount of time to learn them, the process ensures auditioners are given equal chances to display their talent and skill. As de Figueiredo ’26 said: “because everyone was put under the same time crunch, it was a pretty even playing field.”

Yet the innately competitive nature of the process inevitably excludes students. The groups only accept one or two new members each year, keeping their membership small. Though this supports the close-knit culture that the members of the groups value, it also excludes those who want to partake in competitive collegiate acapella during their time at Harvard.

The first-year who auditioned this year shared, “it was my first awakening that even though you’re in Harvard, Harvard is still all about maintaining that elitism.”

**SACHI LAUMAS '26 (SLAUMAS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) LOVES TO SING, BUT REALLY ISN'T THAT GOOD.**

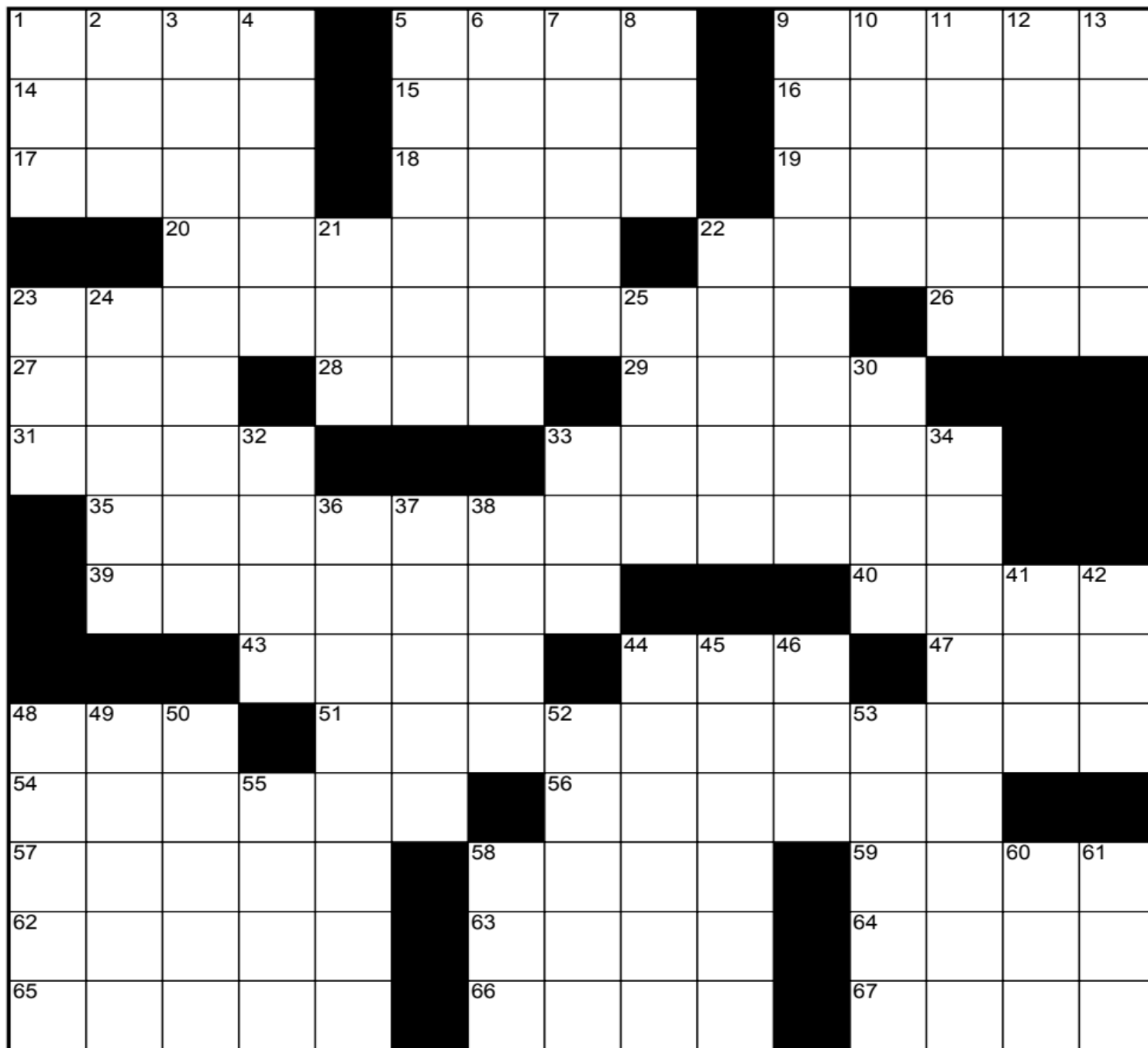
**GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26**





# THE LONG RUN

BY BECCA ACKERMAN '25



- 45 Gung-ho
- 46 Sailor
- 48 Finish second
- 49 "Tenant wanted"
- 50 Wee bit
- 52 She took a gap year before attending Harvard in 2017
- 53 Latin lover's phrase
- 55 Of the dawn
- 58 Poem of praise
- 60 Tweets to an audience of one, for short
- 61 Ming of the NBA

BECCA ACKERMAN '25

## ACROSS

- 1 Purina rival
- 5 Sharp taste
- 9 Country for 20- and 54-Across
- 14 Demeanor
- 15 Mrs. Zeus
- 16 Do great in a race
- 17 24-karat
- 18 Eve's grandson
- 19 Absorbent cloth
- 20 51-Across winner
- 22 "I Am \_\_\_\_" (best-selling 2013 autobiography)
- 23 Element of fear
- 26 Scores of Lions, maybe?
- 27 Yodeler's mountain
- 28 NFL linemen
- 29 Pupil's surroundings
- 31 Aspirin target
- 33 First part of an act
- 35 Starting borough for 51-Across
- 39 Linguistic term for a word that's almost the same as another word, like "affect" and "effect"
- 40 "In case you don't have

- time for all that" abbr.
- 43 Cleveland NBAers
- 44 Subway inhabitants
- 47 Vichy water
- 48 Qt. fractions
- 51 20- and 54-Across won it this year
- 54 51-Across winner
- 56 "\_\_\_ Doria"
- 57 Standoffish
- 58 Quaint, quaintly
- 59 Artist Warhol
- 62 French film award
- 63 "Runaround Sue" singer
- 64 Molly, initially
- 65 Word form for "nationality"
- 66 New York river
- 67 \_\_\_ buco

## DOWN

- 1 Rev (up)
- 2 Lucy of "Kung Fu Panda"
- 3 A head
- 4 Like 60 Minutes, e.g.
- 5 Disney's 2016 Roald Dahl movie

- 6 Trojan War hero
- 7 Pre-Annapolis campus org.
- 8 Good, to Gen Z
- 9 Two-time Olympic gold medal skater Witt
- 10 "Green" sci.
- 11 Unpracticed in
- 12 Triangular road sign
- 13 World book
- 21 Always
- 22 Gourmet mushroom
- 23 Easy mark
- 24 Hold
- 25 Spasms
- 30 Dispatched
- 32 Antidrug cop
- 33 Imitation, for short
- 34 Devil's tools, it's said
- 36 Like a pendulum's swing
- 37 Susan Hedgepeth, on stage
- 38 Coastal counterpart to L.A. Fitness
- 41 Chinese "way"
- 42 Compete in a sprint
- 44 Unknown people, slangily





COVER PHOTO BY DUMEBI ADIGWE '23

LAYOUT BY PIPER TINGLEAF '24

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