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THE STUDENT WEEKLY

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March 7, 2024

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From Beater to Better

Quad Bikes advances biking ease and enjoyment on campus and in Quad culture.

BY CLARA LAKE '27

Campus cruiser, beater bike, not-an-electric-scooter—the bikes Harvard students ride around campus go by many names. What they often all have in common is their various stages of disrepair. For many students, giving their bikes the Tender Loving Care they deserve rarely makes it to the top of the to-do list. Most bike shops are pricey, and students do not have time to make the trek off-campus, opting to instead risk their safety by operating a broken bike, or simply locking it and abandoning it.

After a month of brakeless cruising around campus, I hit my breaking point. I realized repairs were necessary for the longevity of not only my bike but also myself. A friend had sent me an Instagram post announcing the reopening of Quad Bikes for the spring semester. Soon after, my bike and I shared our final brakeless journey to the bike shop, and one quick service later, I was overjoyed to again experience the beautiful art of stopping without dragging my foot on the ground.

Quad Bikes has serviced the bikes of Harvard from a room in the basement of Cabot House's Eliot Hall since 2003. Cabot House is one of the three Harvard Houses in the Radcliffe Quadrangle, known as "the Quad," which is widely considered a frustratingly long distance from the Yard, the Square, and all athletic facilities.

After the shop became abandoned during the pandemic, students lost a valuable source of accessible bike maintenance on campus. Everett Sapp '23 started looking to "try to fill that void" during the summer of 2022. The bike shop was up and running when he was a freshman, and as a student in Cabot House, he had learned about Quad Bikes and understood the impact that a restored shop would have on students, after seeing his friends abandoning their unusable bikes.

"At Harvard, [biking] was just the go-to mode of transportation for me," said Sapp, a lifelong biker. "Mountain biking, road biking, gravel biking—it's definitely the most fun way to get around a place."

Sapp and his roommate, Liam McInroy '23, collaborated to reopen the shop. With the help of Cabot House Dean Ian Miller and building manager Mike Russell, they reached out to the previous managers of Quad Bikes. "We worked with them a ton and started to close out the past version of Quad Bikes," said Sapp.

Previously an independent business

providing services for both students and the community, the new vision for Quad Bikes was based on the business structure of Cabot Cafe, a student-run business in Cabot House. Sapp and McInroy applied for funding grants, and Quad Bikes was able to take off after being awarded a decent sum from the Office of Sustainability.

After receiving an installation of two new brake pads and a cable, chain lubing, and some zip ties to secure loose parts, I expected to rack up quite a bill. Since the shop opened in spring 2023, "it was all free, both the service and the equipment that we provided," said Sapp. Quad Bikes could provide gratis bike-fixing thanks to the awarded grants.

"When people would leave they'd often ask, 'Oh, how much do we owe you?' And being able to say that 'you don't owe us anything' was pretty special," said Sapp. "A lot of smiles were had because of that, and [it] made the work even more rewarding."

Since Sapp graduated in 2023, it was Julian Li '25 who witnessed my smile upon hearing that the repairs were free. Li and his roommate, Lorenzo Russotto '25, residents of Currier House in the Quad, took over the position of co-manager this year.

"My first intro to biking, or specifically bike mechanics, was just figuring out how to take care of my own little vehicle," said Li. "Going from doing a lot with bikes to doing absolutely nothing was a little daunting to me," he said. "I reached out to whatever email was listed for Quad Bikes as early as 2020 because bikes have been a huge thing for me my whole life."

Li didn't hear back for two years. When Sapp looked into reopening the shop, he looped in Li due to his prior interest. "From the get-go [we] wanted to make sure that this was something that could last well beyond us," said Sapp. Li maintains Sapp's enthusiasm for biking and the future of Quad Bikes.

"This is something that really has been built from the ground up," said Li, reflecting on how all that remains from the original shop is the space and some old tools. Now, after being open and entirely run by the co-managers for three semesters, Li believes Quad Bikes is ready to expand its staff.

For first-years freshly quaddled this Housing Day, Quad Bikes could be the special Quad community they seek. Li hopes Quad Bikes could "get them really excited about a project in a student group in the Quad that they could really make their own and be a big part of in the coming semesters and years."

"Bikes I feel like are a huge part of the

identity of the Quad," said Li. Valuable tools for any student, bikes have become necessary to decrease the commute to class for many Quad residents specifically. My blockmates said they would get bikes if we get quaddled.

Li considers the culture of biking as a redeeming quality of being in the Quad because procuring a commuter bike opens doors far beyond just Harvard's campus. "You've searched for this new way to get around campus and discover that, 'Oh my gosh,' a bike gets me everywhere," said Li. "It opens you up not just to the rest of campus but through really all of Cambridge and all the city. I regularly go downtown just to see something different, and it's what, a 15-minute bike ride."

Biking beyond the bubble, or around campus, can appeal to any student, too. "Kids on all parts of campus definitely can rely on bikes and utilize them just as much," said Sapp. The shop may soon sell refurbished abandoned bikes for low prices to students, according to Li.

As a campus bike shop, Quad Bikes sees more than your standard repairs. "College student bikes are pretty shit, right?" questioned Li. After seeing the frightful excuses for bicycles that students including myself ride, I must agree. My brother recently revealed that he had ridden my bike into the ocean and had thought the gears had completely locked up, rendering it useless. Now I understand why I was allowed to bring it to college. "Everyone's just got a beater," said Li.

Working with campus cruisers offers a unique experience for mechanics. "How you tune-up or repair a very good, taken care-of bike is very by the book," said Li. "When an old student bike comes in, things are frozen in place that haven't moved in five years, complete parts are missing." Odd fixes are exciting for mechanics, and sometimes have peculiar solutions—Li recounted standing on a table to twist a bike out of a stubborn seat post. "There isn't a rulebook, manual, or a YouTube video on how to explain because it's just like, 'How did it get to this point?'"

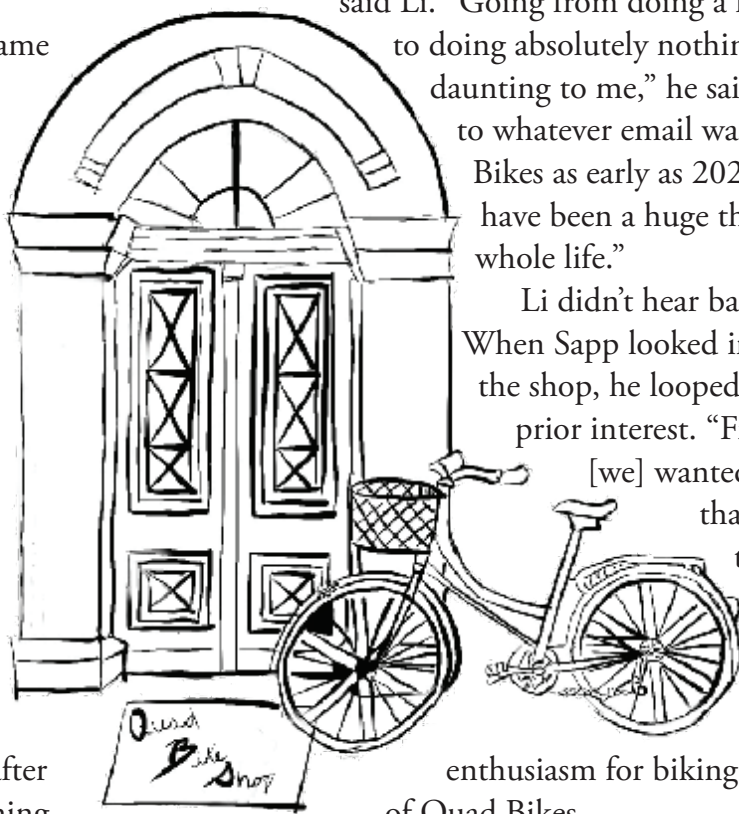
Already invaluable for students, Quad Bikes hopes to become university-integrated in the future.

"It adds a ton of value to the community in general to raise awareness of the feasibility of biking around campus," said Sapp. He envisions Quad Bikes as an accessible resource to enable students to bike safely on campus as both an enjoyable and sustainable way to get around.

Thank you, Quad Bikes, for making riding my little dilapidated vehicle much more enjoyable and safe.

CLARA LAKE '27 (CLARALAKE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ENJOYS BIKING WITH FUNCTIONING BRAKES BUT DOES NOT WANT TO BE QUADDLED.

GRAPHIC BY EMILY PALLAN '27



High On Life: Sobriety on a College Campus

Keeping it cool without the wine-coolers.

BY NATALIE FRANK '27

Harvard students hail from all corners of the world, ranging from major cities to small villages, from diverse public schools to prestigious boarding academies. No matter where they come from, however, statistics suggest most of them encounter a radically different drinking culture when they arrive.

The Crimson's survey of the Class of 2027 found that 40 percent of incoming first-year students reported never consuming alcohol before college. A common assumption is that that number drops by the end of orientation. Back in 2013, a Freshman Dean's Office study found that 70 percent of Harvard students said they did not identify as drinkers before the beginning of their first year, but 77 percent describe themselves as drinkers by the time they graduate.

But what about the students who do not start drinking after getting to college? Finding a sober Harvard student is not as easy as it may sound, and no two stories are identical. But there are discernible patterns.

The straight-edge movement is a subculture that emerged within United States punk rock music scenes in the early 1980s. Punk rock, from its inception, was a countercultural movement that challenged mainstream norms. After recreational drug use became more popular in the seventies, the straight-edge subgroup formed within the punk rock rebellion. The movement is characterized by a commitment to abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drug use. Followers of this philosophy, "straight-edges," choose to lead a lifestyle free from the influence of mind-altering substances.

While the movement initially gained traction within the punk music scene, it has since expanded into a broader social movement encompassing aspects of personal health, anti-consumerism, and being a part of counterculture. Straight-edges typically promote self-discipline and a rejection of societal norms surrounding substance use.

Of course, not every Harvard student who has decided not to drink or smoke identifies as a straight-edger. Some do not even perceive their actions as a rejection of mainstream culture. Harvard Tennis player Rohan Murali '27 says he grew up in a "doctor's family," so he knew smoking was something he "was never going to do."

"With drinking, I never really made that choice," he continued, "but it's just something I'd probably like to do later in life." Some students worry that their sobriety will exclude them from the Harvard social scene, but Murali says not to worry.

"I actually haven't really met many other people that

don't drink, but [people] are definitely cool with me not drinking," Murali said, referring to his Harvard Men's Tennis teammates and close friends. He was "surprised by the amount of alcohol and drinking [at Harvard]," and "didn't really know what to expect."

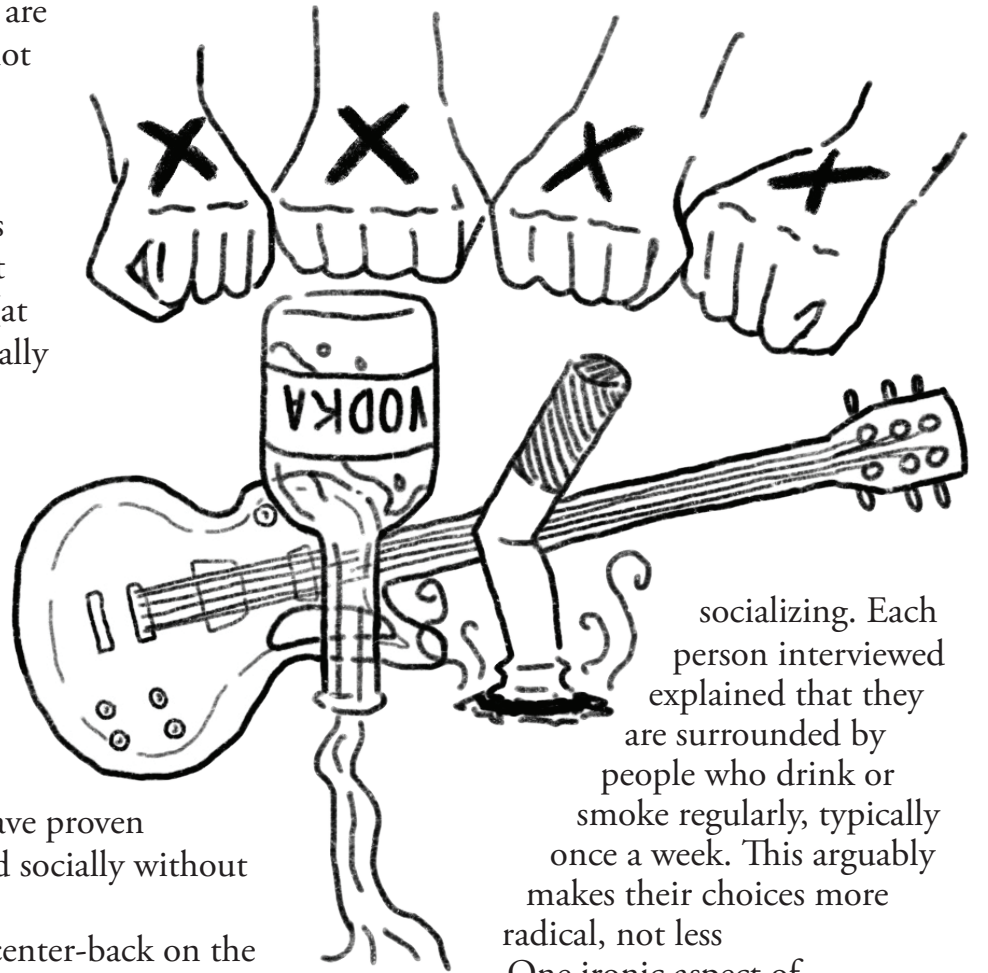
Although many athletic mixers revolve around drinking games, Murali "can still go out and have a good time," sometimes participating in the drinking games, sans alcohol. Though it is only his first year of college, other students have proven it possible to stay satisfied socially without drugs or alcohol.

Jan Riecke '25, a center-back on the Harvard Men's Soccer team, has reaped the benefits of being straight-edge beyond his freshman year. Despite growing up in Germany, where the drinking age is 16 and beer is a cultural staple, Riecke has only ever tried a sip or two of alcohol. He has never tried nicotine, marijuana, or any other recreational drugs.

Riecke is the captain of the soccer team, admired and respected by his teammates. He expressed the same sentiment as Murali about alcohol-centered team social events. "Usually there are ways to incorporate me, which still makes it fun." When talking about drinking and smoking, Riecke commented, "It feels like people think it's a big part of college culture. And I mean, maybe for some people it is... But I haven't found that it diminishes anything that I hoped to get out of college."

Nicotine remains a common recreational drug at Harvard, and marijuana use has more prominently entered the mainstream since it was legalized in Massachusetts in 2016. But, similar to alcohol, these drugs have their abstainers. ROTC member Jack Martin '26 opts for a smoke-free lifestyle, partly due to the risk of losing his financial grant for Harvard in the event of a positive drug test. "I'm on [a military] scholarship, so there is a strong incentive not to [smoke], but beyond that, it just is not something that's ever appealed to me."

The choice to abstain from drinking and smoking in college is simultaneously more and less countercultural than the straight-edge movement. While the punk rock scene is proudly countercultural, many of the sober students whom the *Independent* talked to participate in "mainstream"



socializing. Each person interviewed explained that they are surrounded by people who drink or smoke regularly, typically once a week. This arguably makes their choices more radical, not less

One ironic aspect of counterculture is that it can become its own dominant culture, just on a smaller scale. It is far easier to embrace countercultural ideals when you are surrounded by like-minded friends who share similar choices. Without the encouragement of a peer group that creates its own rules and standards, these students choose their own pathway. They do not allow themselves to succumb to peer pressure and have made their lack of substance use a part of their identity.

If reading this has made you realize that you do not want alcohol or drugs to be as big a part of your college experience, you will not be alone. Murali encourages prospective straight-edges not to worry about "[being] afraid to stand up for something that you believe in" or fitting in and belonging with a team. If the people you say "no" to are truly your friends, they will not make you feel judged or excluded for sobriety.

"Put yourself in situations where you know you can have fun without being drunk or drinking alcohol," Riecke suggested. Instead of "seeking out the people that you only really get drinks or party with," he recommends surrounding yourself with friends who you can have interesting conversations with.

"Your time is precious," Martin said. Most Harvard students are extremely aware of how little free time they have. Martin suggests you spend your time doing what you truly want to do. "I'd say to follow your intuitions," he advised. "And if you're truly being pressured, maybe those aren't the people you want to be around."

NATALIE FRANK '27 (NFRANK@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WROTE THIS WHILE SIPPING AN ICE-COLD WATER.

GRAPHIC BY DAVID LI '25

You Can't Help but Laugh

Babylon Bee CEO's HRC monologue insists that nothing is above ridicule.

BY JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27

Deep in the bowels of political social media, there is an ongoing debate about humor's role in our society. Some believe that satire and ridicule are a necessary component to ensure our society has a healthy relationship with politics. If we take everything seriously and lose the ability to laugh, we are just pushing our world closer and closer to dystopia. The argument against that idea is that there are some things that we should absolutely take seriously, and satirical media like *The Onion*, *The Babylon Bee*, and *South Park* fail to do so. Seth Dillon, CEO of *The Babylon Bee*, delivered a speech to the Harvard Republican Club (HRC) last Tuesday that fell distinctly in the camp of the former.

The first half of Dillon's remarks was an ardent celebration of Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter (now X) and subsequent policy changes to the app's terms and conditions—namely the

threatened to pull advertisements from X amidst the rise in hate speech, Musk responded simply: “go fuck yourself.”

“It's unusual—you don't really often see people saying no to Disney and their mountains of money,” said Dillon, lauding Musk's retort. “It's actually profound to see someone stand up and say they don't care, that you can try to bully me and silence me and force me to do what you want and hold money over my head, but I'm going to stand for freedom no matter what... It was insane, and it was also inspirational.”

The second half of Dillon's address was about humor and the integral role it has in America's social-political landscape. Dillon argues a few core principles of humor. First, “humor undercuts bad ideas.” The argument here is that when presented with utter ridiculousness, regardless of what side of the political aisle you are on, the

bring the nation together, and the problem lies not in the jokes being told but in people's attitudes around them. It is a clarion call that has been echoed by people across the political spectrum: the idea that we are all human, we are all equal, we all should probably take ourselves a little less seriously, and that our particular identity (race, gender, sexuality, religion) should fall second to that core principle.

We live in a world where “[people] go out of their way to be offended by everything... I don't think it's a very healthy mentality to have where you're requiring that everyone is fair game for jokes except you,” argued Dillon. “Why should you be off limits? Are we not all at some point passengers on the ship of fools? Don't we all deserve to be made fun of, at some point?”

When asked for his thoughts on free speech on college campuses, especially Harvard, Dillon gave a bleak outlook. “I'm not sure what the answer is to that. A lot of [free speech issues are] the culture and climate that's cultivated here. And that's very difficult to push back on when you don't have the numbers.” For young conservatives at Harvard, the question is not so much about one candidate or another, but rather unifying and coming together as a group to better debate in the public square.

In a conversation about the talk, HRC President and *Independent* Special Projects Director, Michael Oved, said, “Republicans are the overwhelming minority on college campuses. Vocal Republicans—those who are willing to express their perspectives publicly—are even more scarce. I hope that by hearing Seth speaking, the 100+ Harvard Republicans who turned out for the event—a record number—feel more confident in their ability to express themselves freely. At its core, that is what the Harvard Republican Club is all about: empowering and equipping young Republicans with the knowledge and courage to express their political perspectives freely and respectfully.”

Seth Dillon's remarks last week underscore how long the road is in the ongoing fight over free speech on campus and in the public square. That ideological struggle will likely come to a head this November with the 2024 presidential election. Until then, all we can do is try to find the humor.

JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27
(JWASSERBERGER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE **INDEPENDENT.**

PHOTO BY JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27



reinstating of several banned accounts (including the Bee's) and a massive change in how X polices and punishes individuals for the speech they use on the platform. Musk, a self-described “free speech absolutist,” has shifted X's policies to merely label and identify problematic conduct, rather than outright ban or suspend users who harass and spread hate. This has led to an estimated 119 percent increase in hate speech against members of the LGBTQ+ community, and an overall 6 percent increase in harassment on the platform. When Disney, Apple, and IBM

appropriate response should be to “throw back your head and laugh.” According to Dillon, “you can't reason with someone who's embraced madness. That's like trying to give medicine to a dead man. But, you can ridicule those bad ideas and show the world just how foolish they are. I think mockery of this kind is a moral imperative for the obvious reason that bad ideas taken seriously have catastrophic consequences.”

Dillon's other points in defense of humor all rest on the idea that humor is a unifying, truth-exposing force that can and should be used to

Beyond the Book

The future belongs to the humanities.

BY RANIA JONES '27

My mother's dream was to be a writer. Yet, in an immigrant household, her acceptance to NYU for English was eclipsed by the glaring pressure to pursue the medical field. She went to the University of Akron for a seven-year medical program instead.

I imagine that my mother always wondered what her life could have been if she had been given the option to pursue her dream career. I wonder if she resented this lack of autonomy. Growing up, nobody ever told me that my dreams would be incompatible with achieving success. However, after my first year at Harvard, I can't help but acknowledge that this isn't how I feel anymore.

When I think of my childhood, it looks like strawberry milk and Dr. Seuss books, stories from my diary sprawled across the kitchen counter, and ripped-out articles of personal stories and interviews from *Teen Vogue* and *Tiger Beat* clinging to my bedroom wall. While others were athletic superstars or computer science whizzes, I've always preferred the reserved solace of a good book and a pen and paper. As I've grown up, though, I've come to understand that not everyone puts those who live and breathe the humanities on the same pedestal as other passions and focus fields.

It's been hard for me to grapple with the growing pressures in the world of higher education to use my time here, especially at a university like Harvard, in a "meaningful" way. As I've begun to seriously consider concentrating in English or other fields within the humanities, I've had conversations with fellow Harvard peers and even friends who deemed my potential field of study as something that they would "look at me differently for" or that "should be paired with something more serious." Even though they know that I am a smart, capable student who earned my way into this school off of merit, what I love to do and am good at does not sustain their definition of success. But concentrating in the humanities does not mean that I am wasting the tuition and prestige here.

It's no secret that the humanities are, in a very real way, dying. In 2022, a survey conducted by *The Crimson* found that only seven percent of Harvard freshmen planned to major in the humanities, down from twenty percent in 2012, and nearly thirty

percent during the 1970s. This aversion to humanities concentrators may make sense considering that more than sixty percent of the members of the Class of 2020 planning to enter the workforce were going into tech, finance, or consulting.

In the humanities, it's easy to feel like you're not really going anywhere, which is undeniably scary. But the constructed idea that concentrating in English or the humanities will make you "poor" is deeply flawed. Just because studying the humanities may not be viewed as central at this school doesn't make it any less valuable.

Graduates of humanities degrees can often find high-paying jobs that closely align with their major. According to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, despite differences in graduates' typical earnings, the vast majority of bachelor's degree holders in every

field expressed satisfaction with their job. In 2019, the rate of satisfaction for undergraduate humanities majors (who may also have one or more advanced degrees in the humanities or another field) was 87%. The rate for bachelor's degree holders generally was 90%.

Communications director, technical writer, instructional designer, and content marketing manager are just a few of the highest-paying jobs for graduates of humanities undergraduate programs. However, humanities concentrators develop a strong set of transferable skills that are valuable across all different careers and can be seen as advantageous in some situations including critical thinking and problem-solving, effective communication, and creativity and innovation.

Over the past few years, an ever-widening gap has emerged between the values and focuses of contemporary America (the Real World) and those on college campuses (the Ivory Tower). Universities around the U.S. have begun to be critiqued for their focus solely on theoretical pursuits, potentially neglecting real-world concerns and practical applications. "Ivory Tower" institutions often prioritize academic prestige and

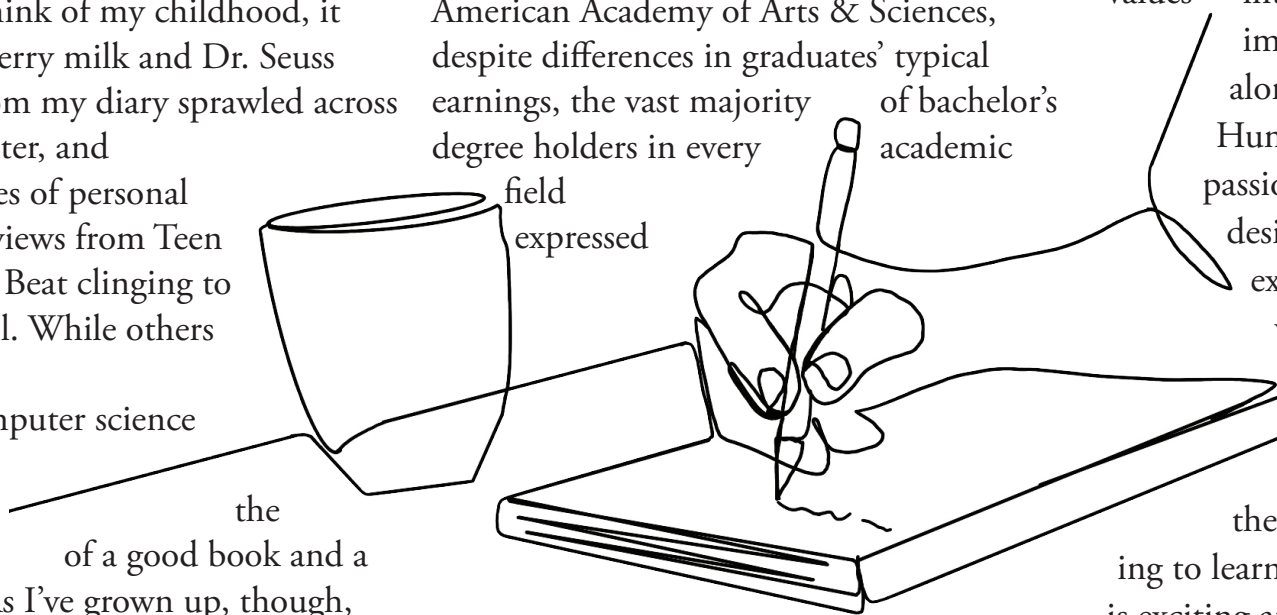
research, which can be associated with highly specialized and well-funded fields, often leading to high-paying careers. This focus creates an environment where other valuable career paths, even those with positive societal impact, receive less attention and prestige.

The culture at Harvard and similar "Ivory Tower" institutions have shifted to push students towards "high-paying" careers. The skills nurtured by the humanities can actually be a powerful tool to critique this culture. Humanities graduates can use their critical thinking and communication skills to promote a more balanced perspective on success, one that values intellectual pursuits, social impact, and personal fulfillment alongside financial goals. Humanities studies often ignite a passion for lifelong learning and a desire to understand the human experience. This intrinsic motivation can lead to careers that are personally fulfilling, even if they don't offer the highest salaries. The realm of the humanities isn't just people trying to learn something to get a job, which is exciting and magical and scary. And without sounding too broken-record-liberal-artsy, there's a true cultivation of the mind that exists within a humanities education.

In my application to Harvard, I wrote that *I hope to harness my Harvard education to learn and grow as a writer further*. While I don't know quite yet if that's the path I'll go down at this school, that's okay. I believe in the wild joy that exists within the walls of writing workshops and humanities seminars. And now, at this moment in time more than any other, when the idea of the "Ivory Tower" is slowly becoming detangled and deconstructed, there needs to be a force that continues to conjure the contemplation of critique, identity, culture, history, and language.

RANIA JONES '27 (RJONES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)'S CELEBRITY CRUSH IS JOAN DIDION.

GRAPHIC BY SOPHIA RASCOFF '27



Saved By the Bell

The classic Harvard-to-public-school-teacher pipeline.

BY EMMIE PALFREY '27

Here's this idea that it is "beneath the dignity of an Ivy League school to train teachers," points out Walter Isaacson '74, former CEO of CNN and graduate of Harvard College, quoted in an article by The Atlantic.

It's pretty normal to ask someone what their plans are after college. Most commonly, when I eavesdrop on these conversations, I hear the ubiquitous "graduate school," "finance," or "consulting." So sometimes, when I'm asked about my postgraduate hopes and dreams, I feel my heart rate climb a little as I rush to answer, "I'm not sure—probably graduate school, I think." I think.

The truth is, there has always been a part of me that aspires to follow in the footsteps of my incredible mother, and her mother before her, both of whom are and have been early elementary and high school teachers, respectively, serving diverse student bodies in the Cambridge, New York, and Chicago public school systems. And I know from personal experience that in large, underfunded, overcrowded schools, where it's easy to slip through the cracks, teachers who truly care for their students make a world of difference.

But I have yet to hear many Harvard students express interest in similarly average-paying or more commonplace careers—and so I grapple with sharing my public school teacher dream at the risk of being seen as any less ambitious than my peers. And my guess is that I'm not alone in this experience.

What's ironic is that for a career so important to the public good, teaching is not generally accepted as an A-list job or typically sought after by top graduates from prestigious universities. According to a survey by The Crimson given to the Harvard College Class of 2023, around 65 percent of respondents reported going on to work in consulting, finance, academia/research, or technology. Meanwhile, only a meager 2.8 percent report intending to go into education. The fear I have of being the only student in my class who thinks about becoming a teacher is undeniably realistic.

The Department of Education refers to teachers as "the backbone of our democracy." It goes without saying that students need engaged, well-trained instructors in order to develop quality problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. But it's more than that: teachers act as a unique kind of personal support to a child or adolescent, providing unconditional belief in the ability of a student. Receiving this kind of positive regard is developmentally essential; students perform better when their teachers genuinely assume they will succeed.

According to research done by former Harvard Professor Robert Rosenthal, teachers "give the students that they expect to succeed more time to answer questions, more specific feedback, and more approval." The success of the student, then, is at least partially dependent on the opinion of the teacher. Teachers who believe equally in the capabilities of their students are likely to produce an intelligent, successful class. Moreover, a study from Missouri University revealed that teachers who develop good relationships with their students receive better ratings on "high-impact" teaching methods from their students. Instructors with strong interpersonal skills, therefore, may be better equipped to effectively teach.

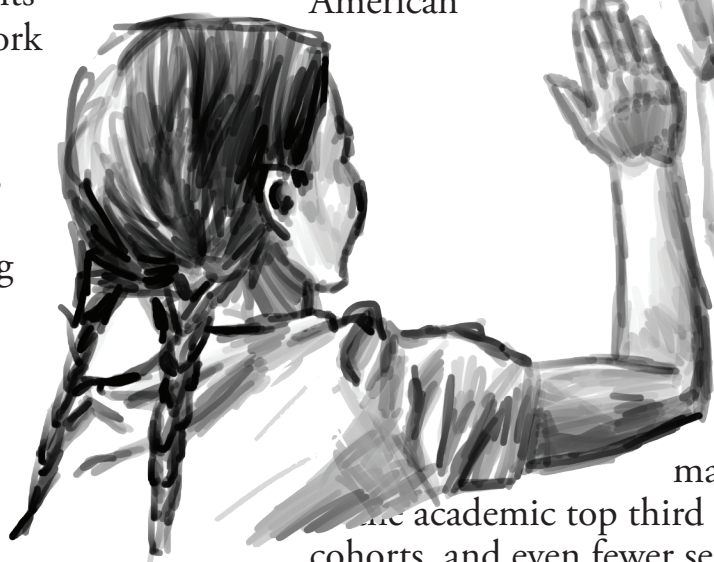
The beliefs and interactions teachers have about and with their students directly impact the educational experience of their students. It is not just the curriculum that matters—it's the instructors themselves. So to me, it seems obvious that such an important job market could benefit from students with Harvard educations.

Yet less than a quarter of American

low-income schools. And as we've seen, Harvard's undergraduates aren't rushing into teaching jobs either—or, rather, public school teaching jobs. It's not lost on me that while academia is still highly sought after, classroom teaching is viewed as distinctively lesser than professorship. So what will it take to reverse the institutional stigma pointed out by Isaacson and manifested in the statistics of our nation's current teachers?

The answer, of course, isn't for all of us to drop what we're doing and take up an education major. It's for us to remember that we owe our academic success to the teachers who shaped us—that it isn't an outrageous idea to apply an Ivy League education to a classroom setting. The success of the next generation of students is dependent on having qualified, engaged, intelligent teachers.

At a place like Harvard, it's easy to feel like the only respectable postgraduate plans involve years of graduate school, or consulting, or finance. And while there's nothing wrong with any of those fields, it's important to keep in mind that there are other options. Having aspirations that are lower paying than the average Ivy League student doesn't render them unimportant—if anything, it may encourage others with similarly diverse interests to pursue their own passions. So, be it a public school teaching job or not, I encourage you to embrace whatever is calling, knowing that the value of a career is not dependent on its salary. My mom—a kindergarten teacher—taught me that.



teachers matriculate from the academic top third of their college cohorts, and even fewer serve in l

EMMIE PALFREY '27 (EPALFREY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WROTE THIS PIECE THANKS TO THE INSTRUCTION OF MANY AMAZING ENGLISH TEACHERS.

GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27

As Big as the What? The Super Bowl!

A look behind the making of Harvard Housing Day videos.

BY SARA KUMAR '27

Barbie's Dreamhouse or Ken's Mojo Dojo Quincy House? Is it going to be "Pfoho at your front door" or the Mather gorillas? Will the Whole Foods by the Quad be your newest CVS, or is Cardullo's still the spot?

From River Run to dorm storming, if you are a first-year, you have surely been anxiously awaiting Harvard's much-anticipated Housing Day. On Housing Day, first-years discover which House out of the 12 upperclassmen communities will become their home for the next three years. This renowned tradition brings a true sense of school pride and unity to Harvard's campus. However, before the Currier Trees, Winthrop Lions, Kirkland Boars, and more can swarm the Yard, each House must undergo weeks of preparation. Likely to top the July 2023 film phenomenon "Barbenheimer," the 2024 Housing Day videos seek to offer a similarly life-changing cinematic experience, as every house is determined to convince the Class of 2027 that they are the best housing that Harvard has to offer.

Famously known for its cozy dining hall and prime river location, Eliot House residents pride themselves on their commitment to its Housing Day video, eager to flaunt their incredible home. Helen Scarboro '25, co-Housing Committee Chair, spoke on her favorite parts of Eliot, commenting, "I think community is my top priority or my favorite component of Eliot. I think everyone here is just so nice and so welcoming. That was the first thing that struck me on my own Housing Day and has definitely remained true for the past couple years." Affectionately dubbed "Domus," from Harvard Yard to the corner of the river, Eliot is filled with incredible people and staff, all of whom its housing video seeks to showcase. From the tutors to the Faculty Deans to beloved HUDS staff member Grace, as Helen emphasizes, Eliot's video truly had "so many people from different parts of the house give their skills" as so many people were all so eager and "willing to be involved."

But beyond highlighting their general robust community, Eliot's Housing Committee also sought to showcase some parts of the House that are representative of not only the amenities the dorm has to offer but also the specific student involvement in its vibrant culture. Working hard to ensure their video affectionately showcased Eliot, the Housing Committee understood their video to be a multi-step process as they first arranged a few meetings to find interested (and enthusiastic)

writers, recorders, and, of course, editors before releasing their approximate 4-minute pitch to the Harvard community.

Eliot is truly Helen's "home-away-from-home" and if you happen to have the Mastodons at your dorm Housing Day morning, Felix Chen '25, co-Housing Committee Chair, and the rest of the Domus, is "really psyched to see everyone and in the evening welcome everyone to the new house."

However, if you end up finding yourselves a little farther down the river, Harvard housing still has plenty to offer. Molly Bosworth '24, a member of the Leverett Housing Committee, is also a firm believer in the House community. From STEM night to board game night, there is never a dull evening over in Lev as the House's dining hall is always quite busy, bustling with Harvard community members all looking for a break from their academics. Eager to showcase the smiles that greet newcomers and the people that make Lev so unique, Bosworth has been involved in the making of the Housing Day videos for two years in a row.

When Bosworth was a first-year during COVID-19, Leverett instantly won her over with its Taylor Swift parody, "It's a Lev Story." Recognizing how much fun the process is when it is not taken too seriously, Molly has wanted to make Lev's videos as amusing as possible to ensure that even people who are not lucky enough to be the newest bunnies will find themselves at the House at some point.

But beyond just boasting the physical space, Bosworth thinks "the Housing Day video [doesn't] need to be the best produced—they just need to show off the house and as many people as they can and as many people as possible. And so, in the Housing Day video, we've got loads of people involved, I want to say at least 40 people... We've got people from all parts of the community, not just students but our deans in it, HUDS staff, security." Similar to Eliot, Bosworth and the rest of the Leverett Housing Committee hope to emphasize the theme of community throughout the video.

Feeling incredibly confident that no bunny or mastodon can surpass Lowell's superior blue men, Sofia Giannuzzi '25, Lowell Housing Committee Co-Chair, expressed that "it's not really hard to hype up Lowell." From art studio to the chandelier in the dining hall to the sprawling courtyard, Lowell seems to have all the glamor it needs to welcome new "Lowellians" to the community for the next four years.

Beyond the amenities, Lih Vu '25, the other Lowell Housing Committee Co-Chair,

explained that the people at Lowell truly make the house a home. "I think it is really special that people put so much effort into making this community really vibrant and really for everyone... We have so many different events for different pockets of Lowellians." From tea every Thursday at 5 p.m. with the faculty deans to Lowell speeches where students describe personal anecdotes, Lowell House works hard to ensure every member is represented and appreciated. Though Giannuzzi ensures that Lowell has a "great housing video," Lih reminds everyone that we may not see the full scope of what Lowell has to offer "through just a short video, but it is just like a preview of what we can be as a community. And obviously, we hope people show up to all of the amazing festivities on Housing Day to meet everyone in person and...just really connect with the rest of the community."

So is Kirkland on top or is there really no better House than the Q? I hope everyone was ready for the echoes of the Currier trees and eager upperclassmen to be heard from way beyond the Yard on Thursday, and may the housing odds be ever in your favor.

SARA KUMAR '27 (SJKUMAR@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS ALREADY HAVING NIGHTMARES ABOUT CRONK. GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE BECKLEY '27



"The Most Competitive Battle For Yardfest Yet"

A spotlight on this year's Battle for Yardfest winners.

BY KAITLYN HOU '27

Last Thursday, the Harvard College Events Board hosted the annual "Battle for Yardfest." According to the Dean of Students Office website, Yardfest, a Harvard College tradition, is "a giant cookout and festival-style concert. The two winning student bands from Battle for Yardfest...are granted an amazing opportunity to open for the exciting professional headliner." This year's Battle for Yardfest took place on February 29th (Leap Day) in Sanders Theatre. On such a momentous day, it was clear that something even more special would unfold this year.

From the indie-funk band Big Tuesday which ended with guitarist Ryan McCarthy '24 lying on the floor, to the rapper-DJ duo JAESCHEL (Jaeschel Acheampong '24) and Hitmaker Hundie (Nathanael Hundie '24) bringing electrifying rap to the historic Harvard building, 11 talented acts captivated the hall. The crowd found it to be an exceptionally difficult year to vote on a winner. "This was the most competitive Battle for Yardfest yet," remarked audience member Iris Hennin '26.

But despite the incredible range of talent, two sensational bands captured the hearts of audience members and won themselves spots as openers for the Yardfest celebrity performer. Beacon Street Band, who also opened for Yardfest last year, and the newly formed band Boom Boom Sauce will surely set the bar high for this year's headliner.

With Yardfest quickly approaching on April 7th, now is the perfect time to get to know these two student bands. Possessing their own distinct styles, Beacon Street and Boom Boom Sauce are both a testament to the wide-ranging talent at Harvard. In exclusive interviews, the *Independent* gained special insights into each band's story and their vision for Yardfest 2024.

Named after the band's rowing roots, Beacon Street was formed last year. Composed of Felix Kwok '25 on vocals, Owen Marcovitz '26 on guitar, Josh Brangan '26 on drums, Simon Nunayon '24 on bass, and Emil Droga '26 on keyboard, all but one are heavyweight rowers for Harvard. Nunayon explained that it is a tradition at the beginning of the year to have "the [rowing] freshmen take a boyband-esque photo in front of 251 Beacon Street." The name "Beacon Street" was thus perfect for the group of rowers.

Juggling their academic, athletic, and musical lives, being in the Harvard University Boat Club (HUBC) is a huge time commitment. The team typically practices over 20 hours a week. Nunayon, who has released original music on Spotify and is a World Rowing U23 champion, explains that he tries "to keep the two worlds separate where possible." But Brangan, who also has released his own music and is a World Rowing U19 champion,

offers another perspective. "People know us as the crew band...[so] it's an easy thing to get behind... It's something completely different that everyone can kind of enjoy," Brangan remarked. For a group that spends so much time training in the boathouse, they bring a lively vitality to the music scene.

Indeed, Beacon Street's performance at last year's Yardfest was an undeniable hit. News of Beacon Street's musical success even reached other campuses. Kwok shared that a "random friend from Yale came up...and was like, 'Oh my God, I've heard your music is going great. Beacon Street's made it.'"

With this being their second year gracing the Yardfest stage, Beacon Street is looking to bring a new energy. "This year we will have more fun with it," Brangan said. "There are so many people who are super hyped to see that we're back," Kwok added. Although the band has not decided on a setlist, they hinted that they will be playing more crowd hits. At the end of the day, Beacon Street is a group of passionate student-athletes who love music "without taking ourselves too seriously," as Nunayon stated.

While Beacon Street will be a familiar name to many Harvard students, Boom Boom Sauce is a fresh group making its debut at Yardfest. Formed this semester, the band's name was born when the members thought about "what kinds of things at Harvard we love," said vocalist Elyse Martin-Smith '25. "The one thing in the d-hall that never disappoints is the Boom Boom sauce. And then we were like that kind of fits with our energy, with our vibe."

Just like how the iconic Harvard University Dining Services (HUDS) sauce is a symphony of different flavors, the band Boom Boom Sauce draws from a diverse group of musically gifted students. In addition to Martin-Smith, Max Allison '25 on vocals, Jack Meyer '25 on guitar, Will Cooper '24 on bass, Justin O'Dwyer '24 on drums, and Timi Esan '27 on keyboard make up the rest of the band. "I think part of the cool thing about Boom Boom Sauce being a mix of flavors is that... everyone brings something unique and comes from very different musical traditions... We do some jazz stuff but also there is a lot of rock influence. Max does musical theater and Timi does tons of hip hop piano. I'm excited to blend them all together," Martin-Smith said.

At their Battle for Yardfest performance, Boom Boom Sauce chose to perform one medley, a remix of Britney Spears's "Toxic" and Maneskin's rendition of "Beggin" that

Martin-Smith arranged herself. "Everything kind of fell into place instantly, which rarely happens with bands. Elyse knew exactly what she wanted to do with the music and had a vision for everyone in mind," Meyer commented. Although their setlist is not determined, Boom Boom Sauce is thinking of playing an original song too. "When we think about our setlist...how are we going to transition between songs and genres and create new sounds with old?"

Martin-Smith said. "We'll put some Boom Boom sauce on it," Meyer added.

With a variety of musical influences ranging from Van Halen to SZA and Kendrick Lamar, Boom Boom Sauce brings a funky and energetic spin to

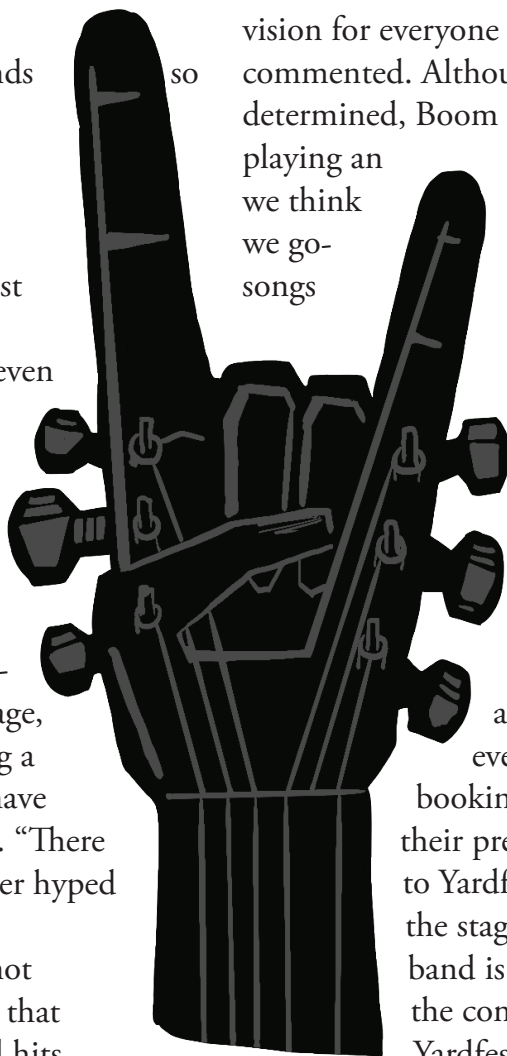
everything they do. Open for bookings, they are excited to grow their presence on campus prior to Yardfest. In terms of sharing the stage with Beacon Street, the band is ready to move away from the competitive side of Battle for Yardfest. "I'm excited to have it be celebratory for each other because

I'm rooting for so many people that were in the Battle for Yardfest that did not make it... I'm excited for that type of energy at Yardfest instead of the competitive nature that Harvard students are constantly trapped in," stated Martin-Smith.

Beacon Street and Boom Boom Sauce are "stylistically very different" according to Meyer. With each band given 30 minutes to perform, their performances will undoubtedly be a dynamic musical journey for Harvard students to experience. Although Yardfest started out as a "battle," the success and popularity of both Beacon Street and Boom Boom Sauce highlight the collaborative and welcoming environment among Harvard musicians and students alike. The countdown to April 7th starts now, as both bands look forward to sharing the stage for Yardfest 2024.

KAITLYN HOU '27 (KAITLYNHOU@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) VIEWS GUITARIST TOM MORELLO '86, WHO WON THE IVY LEAGUE BATTLE OF THE BANDS WITH NOBEL LAUREATE CAROLYN BERTOZZI '88 IN THE BAND "BORED OF EDUCATION", AS THE ULTIMATE INSPIRATION.

GRAPHIC BY ANNELISE FISHER '26



Allure Akaeze: Miss Pink Succubuss

As a multidisciplinary artist, Allure embodies counterculture and eroticism.

BY KYA BROOKS '25

We are sitting near Quincy Grille. Allure Akaeze '24 wears a raunchy cheetah-print bodysuit, colored neon pink and blue, with midriff and side cutouts. “I like showing skin, y’all,” they laugh. “It’s sexy. I like it. It makes me feel good about myself.”

As a multidisciplinary artist, Allure embodies counterculture and eroticism. They are a nonbinary femme lesbian practicing music, fashion, visual art, and performance art. On stage, they are Miss Pink Succubuss, a hyper-feminine character oozing sexual energy. This persona bleeds into their daily life.

Their Baby Phat jeans are light wash denim with vibrant blue zippers, channeling a Y2K princess aesthetic. Their peep-toe black sneaker heels reveal coquette pink socks. “I think that they’re silly, and I like silly shit,” Allure explained. Their accessories are arresting—a pink fur coat, a fluffy pink purse, and “super gaudy jewelry.” Clacky hot pink lightning bolts hang from their ears. A Betsey Johnson bunny necklace adorns their neck. On their wrist are homemade candy bracelets.

“A lot of those spaces, where people are wearing candy, have been very sweet to me,” Allure said, no pun intended. “I went to a concert, and I learned how folks will share candy with each other. They go ‘peace, love, unity.’ Then they’ll put [the bracelet] from one [wrist] to the other.”

Allure is very active in queer ballroom culture, especially the kiki scene, which is younger and more economically accessible. Kiki balls are loving and accepting spaces that are less competitive than traditional ballroom and center queer youths between 13 and 24 years old. “I walk Virgin Performance and Sex Siren. And Sex Siren is kind of akin to burlesque, except you’re battling someone. So it’s kind of like you’re dancing and stripping, and also battling someone at the same time,” they explained.

For the first time, the kiki balls allowed Allure to feel comfortable performing in a provocative style. This experience empowered them to pursue a long-standing passion for burlesque. “When I say I want to pursue burlesque, I want to do it as a job,” they declared.

As an Art, Film, and Visual Studies concentrator, they performed burlesque for their senior thesis. “For that particular scene in my thesis, I was doing burlesque and voguing and stripping,” Allure said. They joke: “That literally is going to be a part of what I’m getting graded on, so hopefully I get an A. Because if not...that’s going to be crazy. I’ll be like, ‘I stripped for you, and I’m getting a C?’ That’s crazy. That’s crazy! For free!”

“The scene had to do with my relationship to sex and sexuality and bringing it out of a personal space into a performance space because of how I was starting to do

performance work a lot more. So there’s themes regarding performance and viewership and vulnerability,” they explained.

Growing up, Allure felt pressured to be pre-med but has since forged their own artistic path at Harvard. “I’ve been super diligent about doing things that make me happy, and trying to find a way to make them work,” they said. “I feel like, if I was doing something else, I would drop out. I would just not be here, because I would not like it. And if I don’t like it, I’m not going to do it.”

Allure’s older sibling, who learned photography and taught themselves pole dancing, served as an inspiration. “They were the first queer and trans person that I was around. They were also the first person who was super experimental with their fashion and gender identity and expression, from a very young age. I remember even being a lot, lot younger, and being like: ‘When I’m older, I’m going to wear whatever I want, just like them,’” Allure recalled.

“One of the things that I was the most excited about when it came to leaving home, was being able to have full autonomy over the way that I looked. Because I did not for the



entirety of my childhood,” they disclosed. “Especially when I got older, and I realized how many ways that I could exist, I was like, ‘Oh my god.’ Nobody told me that this was an option.”

At Harvard, Allure reinvents fashion to signal their multifaceted identities and values, asking themselves the question: “As I get dressed, what do I want to say to people?”

Their style manifests as hot pink exuberance. “It’s gotten to the point where, when I don’t wear pink, people ask me if I’m okay, which I think is very funny. And honestly, they’re right. Sometimes I’m not okay when I’m not wearing pink,” they said.

Allure comparably prefers “intense,

funky makeup.” They never learned to use concealer or foundation. “I was just interested in: ‘How many colors can I put above my eyelid?’” they explained. “If you asked me to do base makeup, I would fail so miserably. But I can do my entire base makeup in pink, instead of in my skin tone, because I wanted to do a full pink face. So I’m super into stuff that’s fantastical and super colorful and almost next to drag.”

Allure frequently shaves their eyebrows and draws them in different shapes. Right now, their penciled brows are thin, charcoal lines that slant downward. This forms an angry expression, contrasting their bubbly demeanor as a sort of internal joke. “I like looking like a character, like I’m not real.”

Some may wonder if Allure’s eccentric style functions as performance art. They disagree: “A lot of it is also for myself, specifically. I think that sometimes people engage with me and my [friends] in ways that would suggest that we’re performing, but we’re not. We’re just kind of existing as ourselves, and it is different. It is non-normative, so people are like, ‘Whoa, what’s going on?’”

“I also think that I’m in a place that’s not very colorful,” they lamented, gesturing at the concrete walls around us. “If this is not going to be colorful, I will be colorful. It is also kind of commanding, and commands attention and takes up space, in a way that I like. Sometimes people will take pictures of me from across campus and be like, ‘sighting.’”

Allure finds academic nourishment in subcultural music and fashion, researching “social, cultural, and political aspects of subculture.” They admire maximalist Japanese street fashions, like Harajuku and gyaru. Their interests range from the historical intersection of punk and reggae to kink and BDSM.

They incorporate the art of Japanese decorative bondage, known as shibari, into their daily wardrobe and performance attire. “Sometimes I’ll wear it with outfits and wonder if people notice, but I have shibari rope that is hot pink,” they disclosed.

As a musician, Allure draws inspiration from musical subcultures. They rap, sing, and mix and master their own music. Last semester, they took the course AFRAMER 146X: A Black History of Electronic Dance Music, sparking an interest in house and techno. Most recently, they performed at a Hello Kitty rave.

Allure intends to pursue a long-term artistic career, centered on burlesque. They want to continue producing music and throwing underground parties to make subcultures more accessible. They hope to integrate artistry with community outreach. Most of all, they revel in pink nonconformity, finding liberating joy in conspicuous self-expression.

KYA BROOKS '25 (KYABROOKS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS MANY TABS OPEN WITH FASHION SUBCULTURES TO EXPLORE.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLURE AKAEZE '24

Review of The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

A novel experience held on the small stage at the Loeb Experimental Theater.

BY DENNY GULIA JANOVSKI '26

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee is now running at the Loeb Experimental Theater from Feb. 29 to March 8. With music and lyrics by William Finn and book by Rachel Sheinkin, Spelling Bee is a musical comedy about a group of six middle school students competing in, you guessed it, a spelling bee. Each student has their own unique personality and struggles, as well as motivations for winning the competition. Ranging from wanting to fit in, to dealing with family pressure, the audience learns more about them and watches them develop throughout the 90-minute show.

The story lacks a singular protagonist, instead opting to explore six individual characters and their experience throughout the spelling bee. Rona Lisa Peretti (Caitlin Beirne '25), the moderator, Vice Principal Douglas Panch (Max Allison '25), the word pronouncer, and Mitch Mahoney (Madison Valley '25), the “comfort counselor,” provide a sense of encouragement and humor along the way.

Chip Tolentino (Elio Kennedy-Yoon '26), last year's spelling bee champion, begins the lineup of contestants. Additional contestants in the spelling bee include Olive Ostrovsky (Roseanne Strategos '25), William Barfee (Justice Sirotek '27), Logainne Schwartz and Grubenierre (Finley McElhinney '27), Leafy Coneybear (David Peters '25), and Marcy Park (Amelia Williams '27).

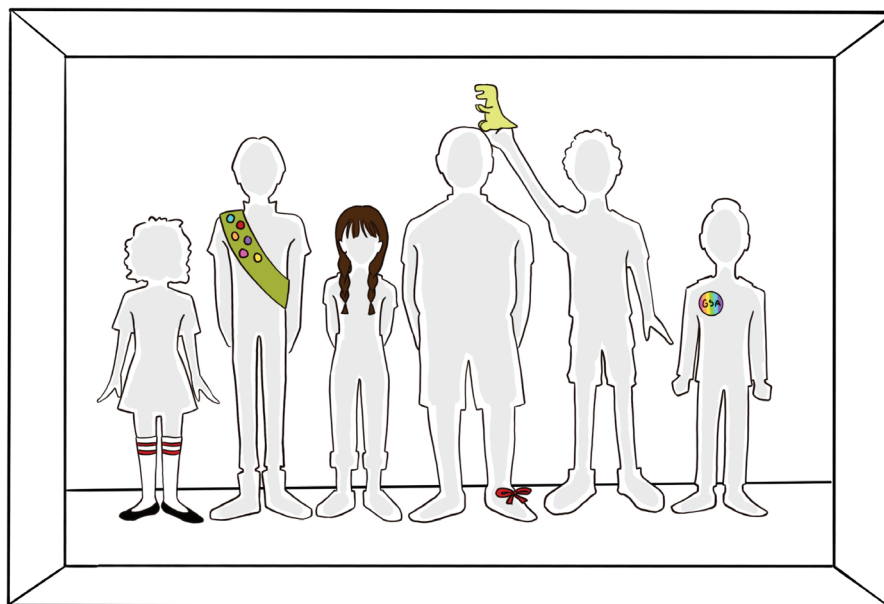
The show digresses into a variety of backstories, ultimately connecting them all to what the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee means to the students. Directed by Julia Grullon '24 and produced by Teddy Tsui-Rosen '25, Sara Rhouate '26, Luisa Shida '25, and Adam Wang '26, through a combination of comedy and

drama, this incredible production uses improv to keep the audience engaged and the plot spontaneous. At one point, four audience members are even selected to come onstage and “participate” in the spelling bee alongside the cast. This adds an engaging element and you

slowly start rooting for the audience members to spell the word correctly. When the audience member overstays their welcome by spelling too many words correctly, it's interesting to see the hilarious Allison and Beirne scrambling, improvising lines, and finding a harder word to spell. Blurring the line between performer and spectator, this break in the fourth wall ultimately enhances the experience and keeps the audience captivated.

Character development is the hallmark of the narrative, slowly revealing the layers of different vulnerabilities each character has. Olive Ostrovsky slowly gets more confident and accepting of herself as her lines get loud and Strategos's demeanor becomes assertive. The dynamic interplay between the different characters, as they navigate through the competition, catalyzes their individual transformational arcs. From discovering that true victory does not necessarily lie in the competition, to having to deal with a distraction caused by an erection, the play constantly reminds the audience of the importance of self-acceptance and embracing one's uniqueness. The show prompts audiences to question the notion of conformity and reminds them of the importance of staying true to oneself.

The Loeb “black box” Experimental Theater allows the production to unfold in an



intimate atmosphere, immersing the audience into the performance. Unlike the 550-plus-seat Loeb Proscenium Theater, the Loeb Ex is much smaller and simpler, as the audience of 50 is seated just ten feet from the actors. This proximity makes every gesture and facial

expression take on a heightened significance, facilitating a nuanced exploration of the story.

The set consisted of benches on which the actors sat and a desk for the two adults in the play. There were two wall-like backdrops with the Spelling Bee being advertised and the balcony was briefly used for one scene with Jesus. During the play, strobe lights were often used and the live band provided a lighthearted ambiance. The costumes emphasized the distinct characters and told a story in themselves—Leaf's dinosaur patches especially added to his endearing characterization. With minimal effects and technical elements during the scenes, the weight of the performance rested heavily on the actors themselves and the chemistry they shared on stage, before jumping into elaborate lighting for the numbers. As the focus shifted onto the actors, the lack of a grand stage and elaborate set design gave the actors freedom to fully inhabit their characters and draw the audience deeper into the emotional journey. Actors were able to rely on their own physicality and presence to further the story, organically allowing for moments of improv to engage with the audience. The close proximity fostered a sense of connection, making the audience feel like active participants in the unfolding narrative.

The production of the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee is a unique and unforgettable theatrical experience, where the power of the actors' performances and the intimacy of the space combine to create a truly immersive and engaging production. As the play draws to a close, the audience is left with a profound sense of connection to the characters and their experiences, ensuring a lasting impact.

DENNY GULIA JANOVSKI '26
(DGULIAJANOVSKI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES ARTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27

Incarcerated

A look into art created behind bars.

BY SOPHIA GHAFOURI '27

Behind bars, self-expression becomes a luxury. While making art can serve as a means of rehabilitation, allow for emotional release, and act as an empowering force for incarcerated individuals, the prison system all too often denies inmates the right to create. “Beyond Bars: Art from Inside”—an art show on the 10th floor of the Smith Center on March 1 featuring the work of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated artists—was one of many efforts working to change this and give these people the voice they deserve.

Stepping foot into the gallery, you are immediately inundated with a wide variety of colors, mediums, and, at the heart, stories. From taking the shape of butterflies to birds to bicycles, each piece reflects the proud identities and histories of the artists who created them.

Direction by “A.A.” depicts a woman pointing to the distant light at the end of a tunnel. The earthy blues, browns, and greens of the rest of the painting starkly contrast the woman, who is the only colorless thing on the canvas. The bright end of the tunnel is lit by the blue sky painted above it. Though the body of the woman is painted with cracks, the card beneath the painting clarifies that she does not represent weakness but instead perseverance in the face of hardship. It reads, “Look well into thyself; there is a source of strength which will always spring up if thou wilt always look there.” —Marcus Aurelius”

Counterbalance with Vagary Rhythm by “J.W.” takes the form of a butterfly, split by four different scenes painted onto its wings. “The butterfly is a smile of fluttering hope,” the artist writes in a poem below the painting. On the upper half of the left wing is a large, yellow moon that shines against the dark blue night sky behind it. “As the moon reflects the sun’s innermost light/It also reflects my individuality,” the artist continues in their poem. The scene right below features a row of trees, painted so that

looking up at them as they stretch toward the sky. “Trees and flowers are my growth upwards,” the artist adds. The third scene shows three black birds in flight, painted against a bright pink background, and the final scene shows a flower, adorned with an array of colors, against a green background. “Birds are the flight of my spirit/unwavering and free,” the artist writes in conclusion. “What is real is truly valuable.”

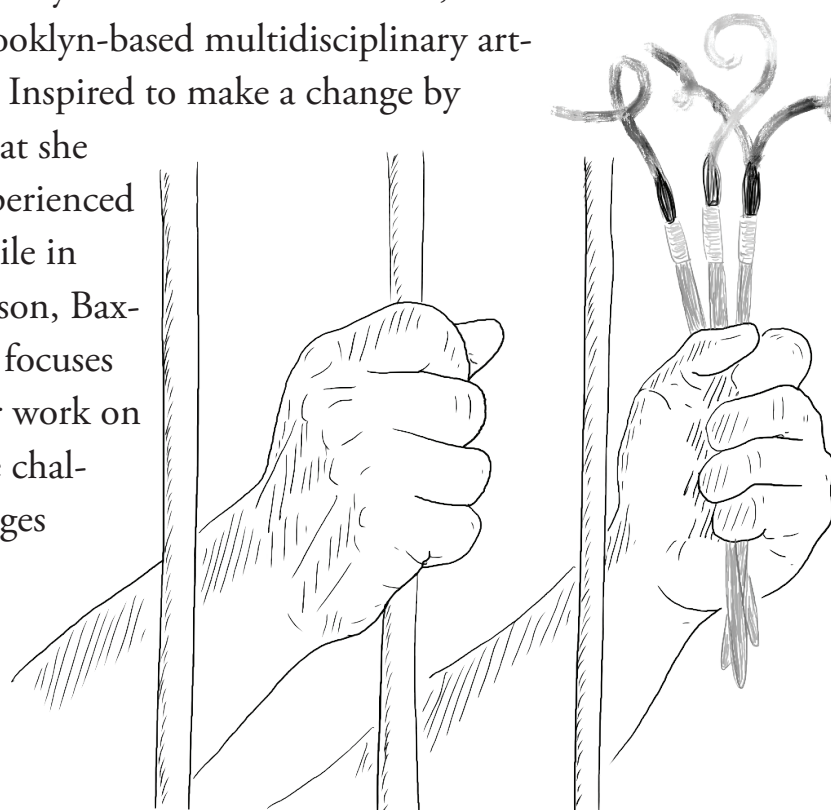
The View Outside by “K.B.” depicts the view from a ship’s porthole. The world outside the window is almost heavenly, with a deep blue lake that runs towards mountains and lush trees, set in front of a bright blue sky. “A port hole in the side of the ship allows a person to have a limited view of the outside world, that’s very much like the view you will have from a prison cell,” the artist writes below. This piece allows its viewers to gain insight into the pain and aggravation of being behind bars. “I’m on the inside looking out at a bright and beautiful world I can’t touch,” the artist continues. “[This piece] tells the frustration I feel every time I look out of that port hole because there’s so much more I want to see and experience.”

Four artists committed to restorative justice came together to help make this gallery happen, according to the pamphlet the Harvard Defenders handed out at the gallery. First is Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter, a Brooklyn-based multidisciplinary artist. Inspired to make a change by what she experienced while in prison, Baxter focuses her work on the challenges

women of color face when they enter the criminal justice system.

After spending a significant portion of his youth in Massachusetts Correctional Systems, the second artist, Eric Anderson, was inspired to join the movement as well. Though never incarcerated, the third, Mollie Hosmer-Dillard, is another artist equally as committed to restorative justice in the prison system. She is an arts educator and painter who holds painting and drawing classes for incarcerated youth and adults. Dillard additionally organizes exhibitions of her students’ work, even bringing some of their work to display at the Behind Bars gallery. Last but certainly not least, Eric Loughney is a formerly incarcerated painter whose efforts have been key to the movement for restorative justice in the prison system. As the creator of the Pyrrhic Defeat portrait project, his art “acts as a courier” for criminal justice reform efforts nationwide. He was a recipient of the 2023 Art For Justice Fellowship, one of many other recognitions.

These pieces were only a few of many featured in “Beyond Bars: Art from Inside,” yet each provides insight into the emotions, hardships, and identities of the artists. The opportunity for people to see the work and subsequently understand the stories of incarcerated individuals is a step forward in undercutting the legal and social stigmas placed on inmates. It gives voice to the identities lost in the process of mass incarceration and begins to restore the independence and agency denied to individuals by the criminal justice system.



SOPHIA GHAFOURI '27 (SGHAFOURI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CAN BARELY DRAW A STICK FIGURE.

The Discourse of Art

How the Israel-Palestine conflict on campus has manifested as protest art.

BY MEENA BEHRINGER '27

As controversy and tension from the Israel-Palestine conflict have proliferated on campus, so has art. Protest art at Harvard is nothing new—political buttons on display at the Harvard Kennedy School show how button art has been used to spread political and social messages. From installations to creative imagery, the Yard in particular has historically been a stage for such art, reaching both Harvard students and tourists alike. This art adds a new dimension to protests on campus from various perspectives, uniquely provoking emotion and response in a visual way that words cannot. It becomes both a galvanizing and peaceful means of protest.

In an environment full of hostility and tension, art provides an important method to spread a message or garner activist support. The art on campus surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict reveals just how powerful art is as a tool—diverse viewpoints can be expressed both visually and emotionally, fostering dialogue and engagement where more traditional forms of activism might falter. Art's real power lies in its emotion and the way in which it takes a message and completely reframes it. This reframing invokes discomfort and encourages action through a deeper engagement with its viewer.

For example, tables at Annenberg on Wednesday, Feb. 28 were decorated with inconspicuous pamphlets at the Spring Faculty Dinner for first-year students and their faculty guests. The pamphlets appeared to be a conversation guide for students to engage with, displaying an innocent picture of Annenberg with a floral motif on the front. The inside, however, was covered with news and facts regarding the Israel-Hamas war, intertwined with personal stories and war developments. The pamphlet asks questions, including, "Why is Harvard investing hundreds of millions, and more undisclosed investments, into Israeli apartheid and military?"

The Harvard Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) released a complementary Instagram post highlighting further questions for a conversation on the day of the dinner. This integration of news headlines, graphics, and text served to provoke students to engage with this content that they might normally not have, hidden beneath the decoy front page. The inclusion of the provoking questions and instances of violence confronts the viewer with the uncomfortable truths of the conflict, only emphasizing its emotional

response.

The PSC turned to art on a larger scale this past fall, constructing an installation in Tercentenary Theatre in November entitled "Life Under the Rubble." The exhibit sought to mourn the Palestinian lives lost in the Israel-Hamas war through six parts: "The Home," "The Hospital," "The School," "The Graveyard," "The Refugee Camp," and "The Diaspora." Viewers walked through these six domains and were confronted with images of destruction and grief. Built in the center of the Yard, the one-day installation combined facts and news with provocative imagery. The installation depicted the violence and realities of war through the destruction of everyday items, from furniture to medical supplies, to larger scenes like classrooms, tainted with red spray paint. It forces viewers to come to terms with the destruction in a visual sense as a setting of grief and reflection.

Moreover, Harvard Artists for Palestine is a new coalition on campus that aims to spread awareness and raise funds. The coalition hosted a flea market at the Harvard Advocate on March 3 to raise funds for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund and Medical Aid for Palestinians.

Recently, posters of Israeli hostages appeared around the Yard. Through their mass production and bold red to catch the viewer's eye, this protest poster art serves as an informative display and a call to action for the hostages to be released. These posters show images of Israelis taken by Hamas under a bold "KIDNAPPED" title at the top. Other posters depict babies, individuals, families, or other groups, including both names and ages of the hostages, as well as a QR code for viewers to learn more about global efforts. These posters are part of a larger collective,

#KidnappedFromIsrael, whose posters were designed by a group of Israeli artists based in New York City. Activists are placing these posters across the world, including more than 30 states in the U.S., to protest.

The campaign's website informs that it has become "one of the most widespread guerilla public artworks in history." In late January, however, these posters across campus were anonymously vandalized with strong antisemitic messages, including "Israel did 9/11" and "LIES FAKE." With their multitude, these posters consistently reminded the viewer of these hostages and conveyed the information of a tragedy with a different and more emotive perspective.

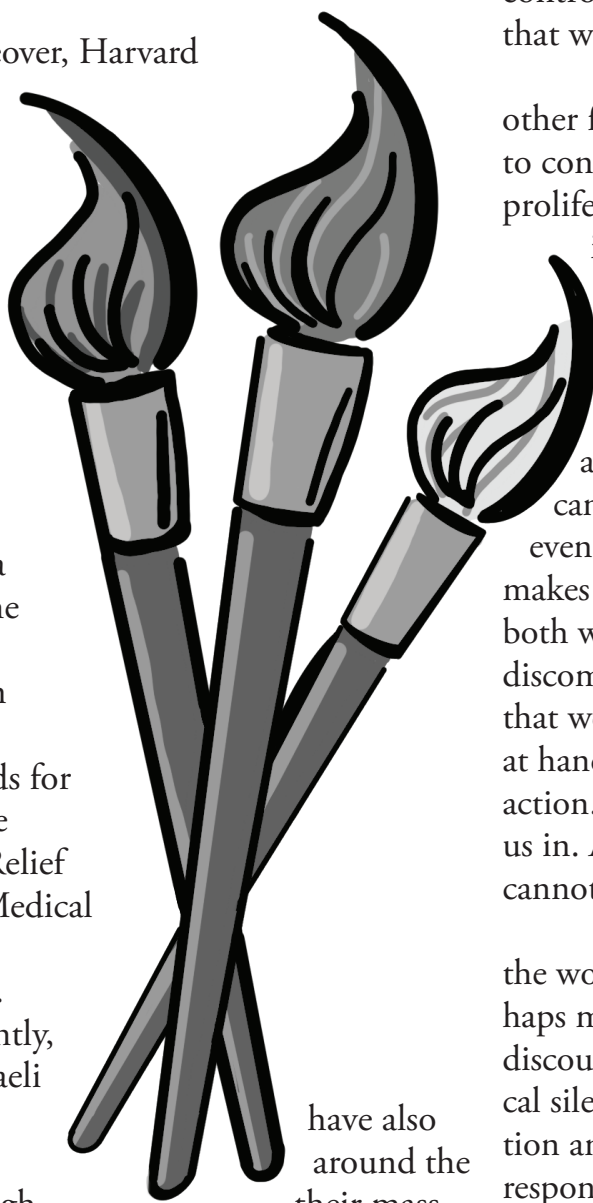
This art goes beyond traditional messaging. Art takes on a physical form, meaning that we must guide ourselves to interact with it. Our eyes are drawn to different points and remain on different aspects. While traditional words are emphasized for us at a pace we cannot control, art's room for interpretation means that we choose our engagement with it.

What further separates this art from other forms of activism is that we are forced to confront it repeatedly—its longevity and proliferation on campus make it harder to ignore. We cannot necessarily drown it out or push it away like we can traditional protests. The art intentionally shocks us, and doing so in a visual means forces us to pay attention, unlike words or chants that can be blocked out. It therefore becomes even more uncomfortable at first, which makes it effective as well as intriguing; we both want to look away and we do not. The discomfort we feel from the art signifies to us that we should feel discomfort with the issue at hand, further urging us to take action. And, it is this discomfort that pulls us in. Art catches our eye, especially when we cannot quickly walk away from it.

Art encourages conversation both with the work itself, with other people, and perhaps most importantly, with ourselves—this discourse is paramount. The inherent physical silence of art pushes an individual reflection and an individual emotional response. When words falter to articulate, art can speak instead.

The peacefulness of art is thus almost a conundrum—this form of protest incites perhaps an even greater emotional response and sense of urgency in the viewer. As both a tool and means of expression, protest art reminds us of the enduring power of creativity to ignite action that words cannot.

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GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26



Indy Sportsbook: The Oscars

Top picks for select categories in this Sunday's awards ceremony.

BY ARI DESAI '27 AND VINCENT HONRUBIA '27

Suerto Rico, Spain, Portugal, and the Caribbean. Be prepared to swipe past a sunset photo from each of these destinations on Instagram every day this week. But if you are sitting at home this Sunday night and need a good distraction from the constant reminders of your friends' sunny vacations, look no further than the 96th edition of The Academy Awards.

Before your week-long bender begins, you'll have the opportunity to bet on over 20 different categories honoring the best films of the last year. For this special edition of Indy Sportsbook, we've selected a few key nominations to share our predictions for.

2023 was a monumental year for movies, with the summer blockbuster phenomenon of Barbenheimer racking up 20 total nominations across 14 categories. Late-year festival favorites like *The Holdovers* and *Poor Things* garnered lots of love, while other festival standouts like *Asteroid City* and *May December* were ignored almost entirely.

For the night's biggest award, Best Picture, *Oppenheimer* is Fanduel Sportsbook's favorite at -3500, and we at the Indy Sportsbook couldn't agree more. With a Best Picture win for *Oppenheimer*, the Academy has an excuse to award a populist box office hit that doubles as the kind of prestige biopic the ceremony usually loves to honor. The Barbenheimer hype has resulted in so much critical and commercial success that it landed two of this year's top three Best Picture favorites in *Oppenheimer* (-3500) and *Barbie* (+1600). *Poor Things* is Fanduel's runner-up at +1300 odds, and were it up to us, would be this year's winner. Yorgos Lanthimos's surrealist film featured some of the best technical work across the board, landmark performances for its stars, and a hilarious, absurd screenplay. It was one of the boldest and most boundary-pushing of all the nominees.

Best Supporting Actor was an especially competitive category this year: Mark Ruffalo, Robert DeNiro, Robert Downey Jr., Sterling K. Brown, and Ryan Gosling's performances were all highlights of their respective films, and RDJ is currently favored to win at -2400 odds, marking another probable lock for *Oppenheimer*. His performance as Lewis Strauss was his first major role since Iron Man and is the first time the actor is receiving Oscar recognition since his transformative performance in *Tropic Thunder*. In the opinion of the Indy Sportsbook, Mark Ruffalo is the most enticing underdog at +1800 odds.

His role in *Poor Things* as a horny, cartoonish scoundrel is like nothing Ruffalo's done before and brings so many laughs to the film. Sadly, Iron Man seems to overshadow the Hulk once more.

But two of the Best Supporting Actor performances of the year come from younger actors Charles Melton and Dominic Sessa for their performances in *May December* and *The Holdovers*, respectively. Both performances were filled with emotional complexity, receiving much-deserved critical acclaim, yet failing to earn a nomination at all. Best Supporting Actress, on the other hand, is a lock for Da'Vine Joy Randolph (-2000) for her breath-taking performance in *The Holdovers*, one of the year's best.

For the Best Actor and Actress categories, biopics seem to dominate: Cillian Murphy's performance as J. Robert Oppenheimer (-1150) and Lily Gladstone's harrowing portrayal of Molly Kyle in *Killers of the Flower Moon* (-160) are the favorites in Best Actor and Actress. Very close behind Gladstone is Emma Stone's center-stage performance as Bella Baxter in *Poor Things* (+120), a show-stopping, age-bending display of Stone's acting and comedic abilities. If it was not already evident, *Poor Things* was the Indy Sportsbook's favorite film of the year. The strength of both Gladstone and Stone's performances is evident in how much closer their lines are than the top picks in every other category. Gladstone was, in many ways, the heart of *Killers of the Flower Moon*, and *Poor Things* similarly hinges entirely on how well Stone is able to sell her character's unique predicament.

Another close race between nominees is in the category of Best Animated Feature Film, between beloved superhero hit *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* (-210) and *The Boy and the Heron* (+125), featuring Hayao Miyazaki's return to Studio Ghibli after a decade. Both films featured striking animation styles that were a refreshing change from the vaguely photorealistic 3D style that Pixar popularized and Illumination made generic. In the current landscape of animated films, especially those produced by Hollywood, the

Spider-Verse films have massively pushed the envelope in daring to step outside this tired, often lazily pushed-out 3D style. The existence of *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* and this year's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem*—a major snub in our opinion—exhibit the same experimental, eye-popping combination of 2D and 3D animation, a trend that is hopefully here to stay. Studio Ghibli, on the other hand, hasn't changed its iconic hand-drawn style for decades, and it remains present in *The Boy and the Heron*, even in this age of widespread computer graphic animation.

The final category we'll cover is Best Director. Greta Gerwig's lack of a nomination for her work directing *Barbie* proved to be very controversial, with many believing the director was snubbed for a film honored in so many other categories. The Best Director category's historical lack of female nominees brought further criticism to this snub. Of the nominees, Christopher Nolan is heavily expected to win at a staggering -4000 odds. Despite arguably being Hollywood's most commercially adored auteur director, delivering decades worth of thoughtful blockbuster entertainment, he has only been nominated for *Dunkirk*, losing out to Guillermo del Toro for *The Shape of Water* in the 2018 Oscars. A win for Nolan would solidify a night of sweeps for *Oppenheimer*, which is expected to win many technical categories, like Best Cinematography, Sound, and Editing, as well as Original Score.

Last weekend's release of *Dune: Part 2* also played a major role in how nominations shaped up for the 2024 Oscars. The film was originally slated to be released in the fall of 2023, but due to last year's SAG-AFTRA strike, it was delayed to March 2024—past the eligibility date for this year's ceremony. Had the film come out on its original release date, many of those technical categories that *Oppenheimer* will sweep likely would have gone to *Dune: Part 2*, which was a stunning display of technical mastery across the board. A release date past the eligibility cutoff but before the ceremony usually bodes poorly. But 2022's *Everything Everywhere All at Once* faced the same scheduling issue and took home several Oscars, including Best Picture, the following year, so hope is not lost for *Dune: Part 2*. Be careful this week, and have fun watching *Oppenheimer* sweep the awards during this year's Oscars.

ARI DESAI '27 (ADESAI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND VINCENT HONRUBIA '27 (VINCENTHONRUBIA@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL BE FOLLOWING THEIR BETS CLOSELY ON OSCAR NIGHT.

GRAPHIC BY GABI PONIZ '26

Battles Beyond The Field

WHILE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE, CHALLENGES REMAIN FOR HARVARD STUDENT-ATHLETES WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+.

BY ROBERTO QUESADA '27

Long hours, daily practice, and pushing towards victory—that's the life of the student-athletes at Harvard, who have to balance sports with their academic workload. Yet, some athletes on campus face an additional challenge—their identity.

Historically, athletics in the U.S. have had a reputation for lagging behind other extracurriculars in terms of LGBTQ+ acceptance. It was only in 2017 that My-King Johnson and Scott Frantz became the first openly gay NCAA Division I American Football scholarship players. In American College Football, having seven openly gay players is considered historic.

A 2023 paper headed by sports researcher Meng Xiang found that LGBTQ+ athletes face many challenges relating to their identity. Much of this has to do with the fact that even if athletes find community outside of their team, sports still remain a major part of their college experience. The study finds that discrimination, as well as a perception of stigma and internalized prejudice, can create stress and mental health challenges. This desire to fit in can also cause student-athletes to stay closeted or hide their LGBTQ+ identity. Some athletes fear that coming out could hurt their relationships or standing on the team, or even make things like changing in the locker room uncomfortable.

It is no secret that Harvard has a thriving LGBTQ+ community. According to a survey by The Crimson, 12.5 percent of the Class of 2025 identifies as bisexual, and 7.1 percent

identifies as gay or lesbian. Despite its thriving LGBTQ+ community, Harvard has suffered from issues of LGBTQ+ exclusion within its sports teams. Grace Allen '24 plays volleyball and also identifies as queer. She recalled a time when she was afraid to come out to her team, in an interview with the Independent: "I remember being very nervous to tell my team that I was gay, and that wasn't because they were hostile, it was more in the casual jokes that were made sometimes." The comments, while meant to be jokes, created an exclusionary environment. "We had a teammate with long hair hookup with a guy who had long hair and our teammates were like 'Oh my gosh, I thought you were kissing a girl'...and that really stuck with me."

Allen says she came out because she felt she could not hide it anymore. When she did come out, Allen remembers teammates being very curious, asking questions that veered into uncomfortable territory. However, she believes the team has improved significantly, and she says she feels very welcome now. "I would say the team that I had my freshman year is

everyone." As of 2023, there are now more openly gay athletes on Harvard's sports teams, and there are active conversations about these issues.

While the voices revealed here show a lot of hope, the athletes who did not want to be included revealed a lot too. Finding gay male athletes that would openly interview was a challenge, as many had a fear of being made fun of or discriminated against. This creates an information gap that leaves many unanswered questions about Harvard's sports scene. Why don't all student-athletes feel comfortable coming out? Is the hesitation to come out due to internal fears or real external threats?

From discussions with athletes, it appears that each individual sport has different levels of LGBTQ+ acceptance, with some being more conservative than others. While generalizations should be taken with a grain of salt, male sports appear to be less accepting than women's sports. Allen has advice for current and prospective LGBTQ+ student-athletes. "Make sure that you are finding gay friends outside of athletics...it opens

you up to Harvard in a way that is beneficial." She said that for her, participating in theater helped her meet different people and find community.

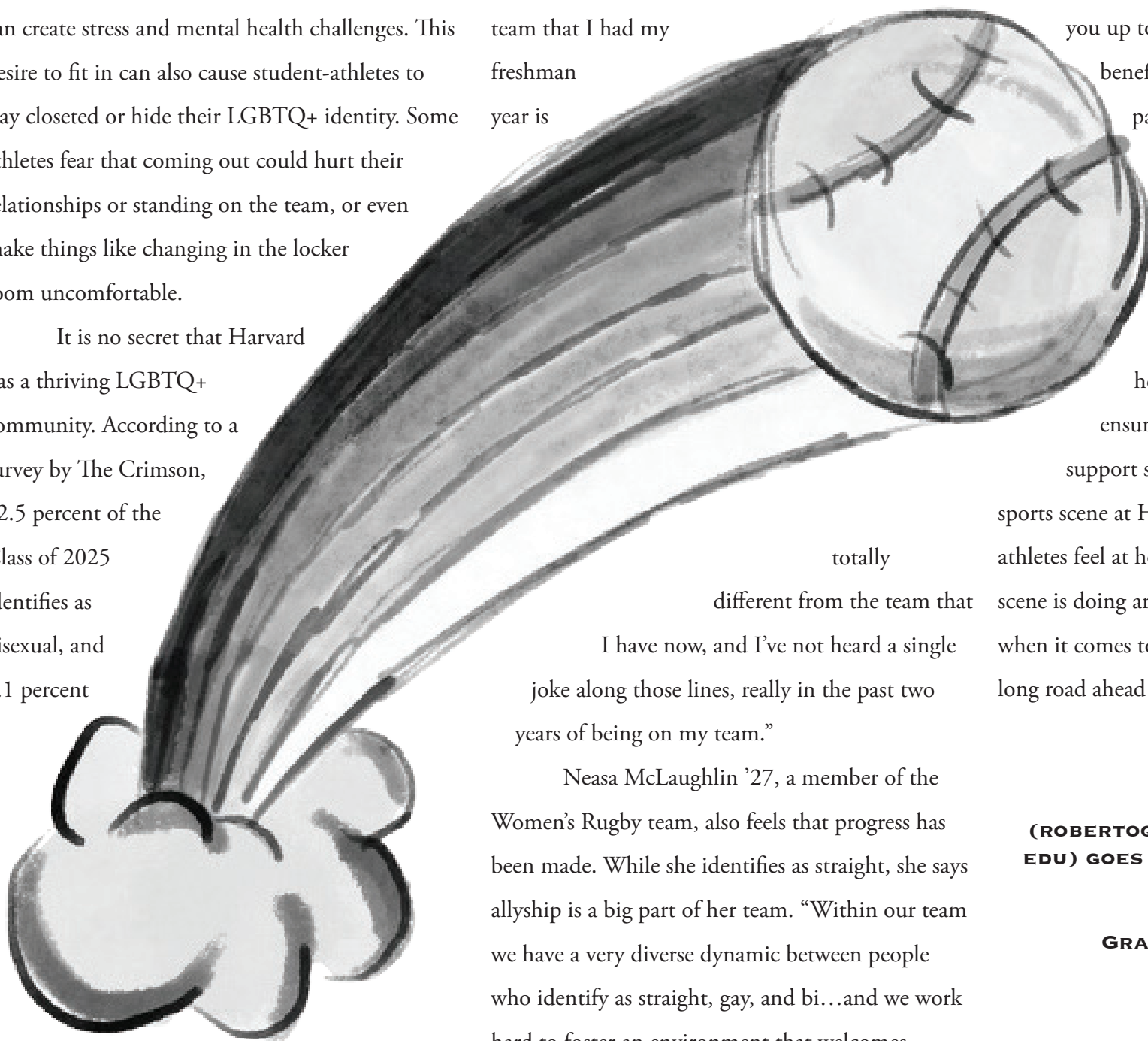
Acceptance has been found to be one of the most important factors in the mental health of LGBTQ+ people, as it ensures they can find a good social support system. Finding ways to make the sports scene at Harvard more accepting can help athletes feel at home. Overall, the Harvard sports scene is doing arguably better than ever before when it comes to LGBTQ+ issues. Still, there is a long road ahead and many stigmas to strike down.

totally different from the team that I have now, and I've not heard a single joke along those lines, really in the past two years of being on my team."

Neasa McLaughlin '27, a member of the Women's Rugby team, also feels that progress has been made. While she identifies as straight, she says allyship is a big part of her team. "Within our team we have a very diverse dynamic between people who identify as straight, gay, and bi...and we work hard to foster an environment that welcomes

**ROBERTO QUESADA '27
(ROBERTOQUESADA@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) GOES TO THE GYM (ALMOST) EVERY DAY.**

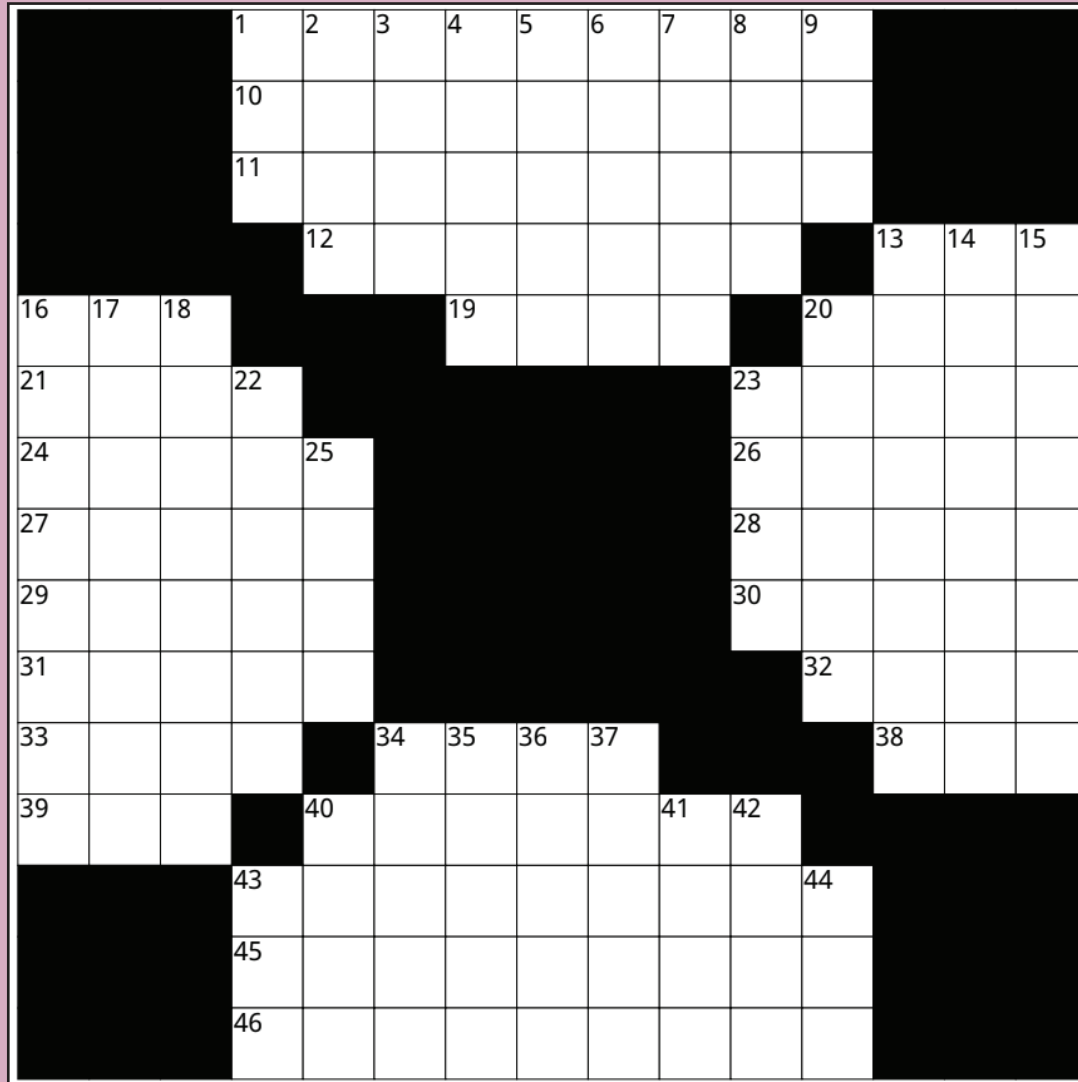
GRAPHIC BY SEATTLE HICKEY '25



OPINIONS OF FORUM PIECES BELONG ONLY TO THE WRITER AND DO NOT REFLECT THE VALUES OF THE *INDEPENDENT*.

Counterculture

BY REBECCA ACKERMAN '25



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