

Apr. 18, 2024

HARVARD

Vol LV Issue 23

independent

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

The Weed Issue



MASTHEAD

April 18, 2024

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The Future of Our Democracy

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders discusses the 2024 Presidential election, the Israel-Hamas war, the United States health care crisis, and other pressing issues.

BY GAURI SOOD '26 AND LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26

On April 12, Senator Bernie Sanders took the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum stage at the Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics. Institute of Politics Director Setti Warren spoke first, warning the audience to adhere to Harvard Kennedy School dissent policies and refrain from protesting—an uncommon preface for a Forum event. Former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio soon followed to introduce Senator Sanders.

“One thing people can agree with across the spectrum—democracy is threatened in the United States of America,” began de Blasio. “It’s a challenge, it’s a question.” He then spoke about Senator Sanders’ impact, stating that “[he] has shown us that things can happen that we all thought were impossible.”

Senator Sanders soon took the stage and began with a brief speech. “There is one issue that really does not get a lot of discussion...and that is, in our country today, we are moving rapidly toward an oligarchic form of society.” Senator Sanders went on to discuss the existence of major political action committees (Super PACs), private equity firms, and large corporations driving wealth inequality upward, comparing such groups to “class warfare.” He mentioned that the involvement of these outside organizations does not just result in wealth inequality; the integrity of political campaigns is also at stake. Instead of one political candidate campaigning against another, it is now “campaigns against this Super PAC versus that Super PAC.”

Sanders went on to describe the impact of large corporations, emphasizing the “increased concentration of ownership in an unprecedented way” in nearly every sector of the economy. Such corporations play a role in the media as well, which shapes “all of the issues we’re supposed to be talking about,” he said. “But somehow or another, when three people own more wealth than the bottom half of American society, is that an important issue? Guess not, I don’t hear about it too much. Do you?”

“In the past 50 years, more than 50 trillion dollars of wealth has been redistributed from the bottom 90% to the top 1%,” explained Sanders. He recalled how 60% of the American public are living from one paycheck to the next, and he connected this to his upbringing. “I know about paycheck to paycheck. I grew up in a family living paycheck to paycheck, and that means you worry every day about how you’re gonna pay the rent, how you’re gonna pay for childcare...” He emphasized that this is the root of peoples’ anger in America—the standard of living has sharply declined for hardworking citizens.

After his speech concluded, which was met with an eruption of applause from the audience, journalist and Spring 2024 IOP Resident Fellow Alison King joined Sanders and moderated the rest of the event. King’s first question for Sanders was about the 2024 presidential race; she asked for his thoughts on the effectiveness of President Joe Biden’s campaign

and concerns around Biden’s age. Sanders commented that he felt Biden’s campaigning was doing better. He was adamant in his belief that Trump should not be re-elected and that Biden is the more fit candidate for office.

“You’re the President of the United States... You don’t sit around saying ‘You come up with all these things.’ You have good staff around you, and most importantly it’s what you believe in,” Sanders explained. “He’s assembled good people around him... [and] is more than capable of being a strong president for this country.”

King and Sanders also discussed Israel and Hamas, referencing Sanders’s April 11 op-ed published in the Boston Globe. “Israel has the right to respond to Hamas. It does not have the right to go to war against the Palestinian people,” Sanders wrote in his article. “Not another nickel for the Netanyahu government if its present policies continue.”

He reiterated these sentiments in his conversation at the Forum. “[This war has] led to a horrific humanitarian disaster,” he said. “The majority of the American people—and polls show this—do not want their taxpayer dollars to go to the starvation of children in Gaza.”

“We are watching and monitoring very closely whether or not humanitarian aid is getting in. Israel says they’re going to do better. I don’t trust them,” Sanders added, referring to the widespread starvation, displacement, and threats toward aid workers occurring in Gaza. “If I had control of this situation, I would not give a nickel more to that government unless I saw a radical change of policy.”

Wrapping up their conversation, King and Sanders discussed the Senator’s new proposal for a 32-hour work week without a reduction to pay and his adamant toward improved health policies and Medicare for all. “Healthcare is not a healthcare issue. It’s a political issue. It’s an economic issue,” Sanders explained. “Is the healthcare system in America broken and dysfunctional? Raise your hand if you think it is. Raise your hand if you think it’s not,” Sanders asked the audience, in which almost the full audience raised their hands yes. Sanders then surprised the Forum with his announcement that he has not yet determined whether he plans to run for re-election for his seat in the Senate.

The discussion next moved to audience questions. Two audience members pressed Sanders on his stance on the Israel-Hamas war, with one telling him, “I first also want to express on behalf of your many supporters, you’re tiptoeing around the term ‘permanent ceasefire’ six months into this war against Gaza.”

Yet Sanders defended his role on the issue, responding that he believes he has been “consistent” in helping to lead the effort in the

Senate to end the war. “It’s important to understand and act on the horror that’s taking place right now and try to prevent it,” he said. “I’ll let the International Court of Justice

determine what institutes genocide.” Additional audience questions included ones asking Sanders about a wealth tax on billionaires and the role of nuclear energy in the future. One student asked for advice for Harvard undergraduates considering multiple career pathways, citing how Harvard has become “a hot spot for recruiting for private equity, investment banking, and other industries.”

“A lot of young people are attracted by the money, and there’s a lot of money out there for you,” Sanders responded. “And if you work for government, you’ll make a fraction. If you’re a lawyer and you work as a public defender, you’ll make starvation wages... You have to decide what to do with your life. But I would hope that many of you would choose to stand on the side of justice and not on the side of big money.”

“You are getting the best education that America can provide, and I think you need to make very fundamental decisions,” Sanders said, directly to the students of Harvard. “We are on the Titanic, and it’s going down. And you have got to decide whether or not you can play a role in preventing that destruction. We need you. We need great doctors. We need nurses. We need dentists. We need people willing to serve the people.”

Sanders concluded by requesting that Harvard students use their education and motivations to dedicate themselves to public service and improving our democracy. “I’m here to urge you with your very good education to stand on the side of working families and people who are struggling and work hard to create the kind of nation that all of us will be proud of.”



GAURI SOOD '26
(GAURISOOD@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26 (LAYLACHAARAOUI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) FOUND THIS TO BE THEIR FAVORITE FORUM SO FAR.

GRAPHIC BY SOPHIA RASCOFF '27

FORUM

It's High Time for Change

Examining the stigma around marijuana.

BY ANONYMOUS

I smoked my first joint the day after I got into Harvard. My friends had all been massive stoners for nearly two years, but considering my strict parents and highly studious nature, I was afraid that weed would stunt my academic progress. It would hurt my grades, meaning I wouldn't get into a good college, meaning I wouldn't get a good job. My life would be interminably ruined, all because of one puff of Mary Jane. Walking the streets of my big city, I was taught to turn my nose up and scoff with superiority whenever I saw or smelled anyone smoking weed. Basically, *that shit was scary*.

Weed is widely stigmatized in our society. People who smoke are oftentimes seen as lazy, stupid, or "less than." With my closest friends around me, hands shaking and internally petrified, I took my first hit of a joint in celebration of my Harvard acceptance. Within 10 minutes, I noticed my eyes itching and my mouth getting drier. The first thing I ever did while high was build a castle out of Magna Tiles. And ever since that day, I've smoked weed more days than not. In his movie *Pineapple Express*, notorious stoner Seth Rogen said it best: "Everyone likes smoking weed, they have for thousands of years and aren't going to stop anytime soon."

Weed was not always stigmatized in society. Cannabis is one of the oldest plants in medicine, with its earliest use recorded in 2737 BCE by Chinese Emperor Shen Nung as a treatment for gout, rheumatism, malaria, and poor memory. Accounts from Pliny the Elder, the most prominent Roman scientific authority of his time, describe cannabis as a useful medical tool to relieve pain. In the United States, marijuana was openly sold in pharmacies and was a popular ingredient in medicine up until the late nineteenth century. An influx of Mexican immigrants then introduced recreational marijuana use in the U.S. in the early 20th century.

Today, it seems that many people take issue with recreational marijuana use. Even in the face of scientific evidence that marijuana is no worse for the human body than a substance like alcohol, weed is treated very differently. Whereas people spend thousands of dollars collecting wine and routinely order an alcoholic beverage at every meal, talking about weed is largely considered taboo. According to Pew Research Center, 41% of Americans are opposed to marijuana legalization for recreational use. A University of Amsterdam study found that stigma around cannabis is higher

penalties for its use, and America's harsh marijuana policies compared to countries like Germany and the Netherlands correspond with drastically worse public opinion on marijuana.

American marijuana policy has a very dark history. Cannabis was legal in the U.S. until the 1930s, when Harry Anslinger, the first chair of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, came into office. Coming off of the end of prohibition, Anslinger's position was out of the spotlight, and after dismissing cannabis on record as unworthy of attention some years prior, he latched onto cannabis as a means to put himself in a position with more power.

Anslinger was known for his use of racist rhetoric and used his agenda against marijuana to target minorities. The Cato Institute writes, "He worried that allowing Blacks to use marijuana could have horrible consequences, such as encouraging their purported lust after white women. He had been told of 'colored students at the University of Minnesota partying with female students (white)...Result: pregnancy.'" His efforts were ultimately successful, and marijuana was outlawed in 1937.

It remained illegal, even after a congressional commission in the 70s recommended that "the possession of mari[j]uana for personal use no longer be an offense," and that the "casual distribution of small amounts of mari[j]uana for no remuneration, or insignificant remuneration, no longer be an offense," citing its non-addictive nature and limited potential as a gateway drug. Despite marijuana heading towards federal legalization, Anslinger's impact and the discriminatory and classist rhetoric around marijuana are still felt to this day. There are still 40,000 people in prison for weed-related crimes and, in keeping with the discriminatory history that comes with marijuana, Black people are over 3.5 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people.

Weed is very accepted at Harvard. At first, I chalked this up to college students' general willingness to experiment with different substances, but I was surprised at how uncommon weed was when I visited a friend who goes to a state school in the Midwest, especially considering the school's renowned drinking culture. Instead, the cause is more likely to be Harvard's politically left-leaning student body, as well as weed's legal status in Massachusetts along with most of the East Coast (despite the fact that it's illegal to smoke weed underage, regardless of the state). Obviously, it's harder to get weed in places where

it is illegal on a statewide level, meaning that many of these students may not have ever tried weed.

That notion would be consistent with findings related to weed use in general. According to the Pew Research Center, while only 34% of people who believe in marijuana legalization say they have never tried the substance, 71% of those who advocate against legalization say they have never tried the drug. Historical, irrational fears of marijuana might have played a large part in many of these students staying away from weed, thus exacerbating misinformation about the drug's strength and effects.

At Harvard, however, this stigma doesn't really exist. Given the privilege of being students at the most prestigious academic institution in the country juxtaposed with weed's long history of racism and classism, there are ironically a lot of stoners at Harvard. Weed has served as a great way to meet new people, especially in my first few weeks here. I've met some of my closest friends here by smoking with them late at night, whether it be after a party or a long night of studying.

There's something about being high that creates an inexplicable feeling of community—in my own experience, I've found myself to be more thoughtful and kind when I'm high. Despite the fact that during a cyph one person typically provides the weed that everyone smokes, I don't think I've ever heard anyone ask for payment in return. It's an unspoken rule that weed is meant to be shared, and stoners are just as willing to supply as they are to smoke other people's weed.

Change is definitely coming. The majority of Americans believe marijuana should be legalized, which reflects a growing recognition of its safety and benefits compared to other substances. As our society continues to evolve and more research is conducted, the historical social stigma associated with weed is likely to diminish further. Ultimately, the future of marijuana might see it regarded as no different than a glass of wine at dinner.

As we move forward, it is important to ensure that we focus not only on the economic and medical implications of marijuana legalization but also on the social justice aspects, helping rectify the historical injustices associated with marijuana prohibition. In the end, just as my perceptions on weed were changed by education and experience, society's views are changing as well. The more we discuss, research, and share experiences with weed, the quicker we can eliminate the pervasive stigma that goes hand in hand with marijuana.

THE AUTHOR, AFTER CONCLUDING THIS ARTICLE, EXITED CABOT LIBRARY AND SPARKED A JOINT ON THE SCIENCE CENTER PLAZA.

Stuck Riding the High

The dangers of regular marijuana use, and what schools can do to prevent addiction.

BY EMMIE PALFREY '27

Think of some addictive drugs. Cocaine may come to mind, along with maybe methamphetamine, alcohol, or nicotine. But if I had to guess, marijuana did not make your cut.

It is easy to understand why marijuana isn't generally thought of as a particularly dangerous drug. Its recreational usage has been legalized in most states, including Massachusetts, meaning our 21+ classmates can legally purchase cannabis products while attending this school. This legislation may also make marijuana more accessible to underage students purchasing products through dealers or distributors. Moreover, due to the legalization of medical marijuana, students 18 and over may obtain a medical marijuana card to legally purchase cannabis products. Medical marijuana is reserved for those with medical conditions for which cannabis is prescribed, while "recreational" refers to the usage of marijuana for any non-medical reason.

Similarly, in the past decades, more and more college students have opted to smoke weed; these statistics reached record highs in 2020, when 44% of college-aged adults—the highest recorded percentage since the 1980s—reported marijuana use during the year, according to the National Institutes of Health.

The legalization of medical and, in many states, recreational use of marijuana, in conjunction with the increasing levels of college users, is enough to make anyone question the severity of the drug. A National Library of Medicine (NLM) published review explains that skepticism about marijuana addiction potentially stems from its apparent lack of addictive properties. Highly addictive drugs, such as cocaine, are addictive because they produce a change in brain chemistry which causes intense pain and discomfort if the individual stops using the drug. This process is formally known as "withdrawal." However, marijuana is not generally thought of as causing extreme distress to regular users when they quit. In other words, most people think marijuana does not produce strong enough withdrawal symptoms to warrant being called an "addictive" drug.

Yet as the journal describes, the evidence is

overwhelmingly contrary. Studies in the last decade have established that using marijuana and abruptly stopping *does* cause significant withdrawal, meaning the drug contains addictive properties.

Despite the common misconception that cannabis is not an addictive drug, it can become highly addictive, and regular use can result in a substance dependence known as marijuana use disorder. Recognizing the widespread use of marijuana among youth may be a prerequisite to developing such an addiction; it is then important to understand how schools should take steps to combat underage usage.

Statistics show that roughly 1 in 10 people who smoke marijuana will develop an addiction to it. Though occasional usage is not inherently dangerous, it can turn into something much more compulsive when living without using becomes intolerable. Marijuana withdrawal is similar to other drug withdrawals; individuals may experience restlessness, irritability, sleep disruptions, physical discomfort, and a loss of appetite, according to research published by the NLM. Symptoms can last up to two weeks, making abruptly quitting seem impossible.

The age at which someone starts smoking matters too. While it is estimated that only 9% of adult users develop marijuana dependence, that statistic jumps to 17% if the person starts using the drug regularly in their teen years. Current college users who began using in high school are at a markedly high risk of developing marijuana use disorder. So if we know that marijuana is addictive and that people who begin using as young adults are more likely to develop an addiction, what's the

best way to curb underage marijuana usage?

The Partnership to End Addiction believes prevention starts at the primary and secondary school levels. They argue that using empirical data, instead of fear tactics, to educate students about the dangers of cannabis use can lower students' risk of future addiction. Moreover, they explain that it is essential to provide parents with the same materials as students to garner the involvement of the community. Peer intervention can also elicit positive responses, as youth may listen more intently to peers than adults.

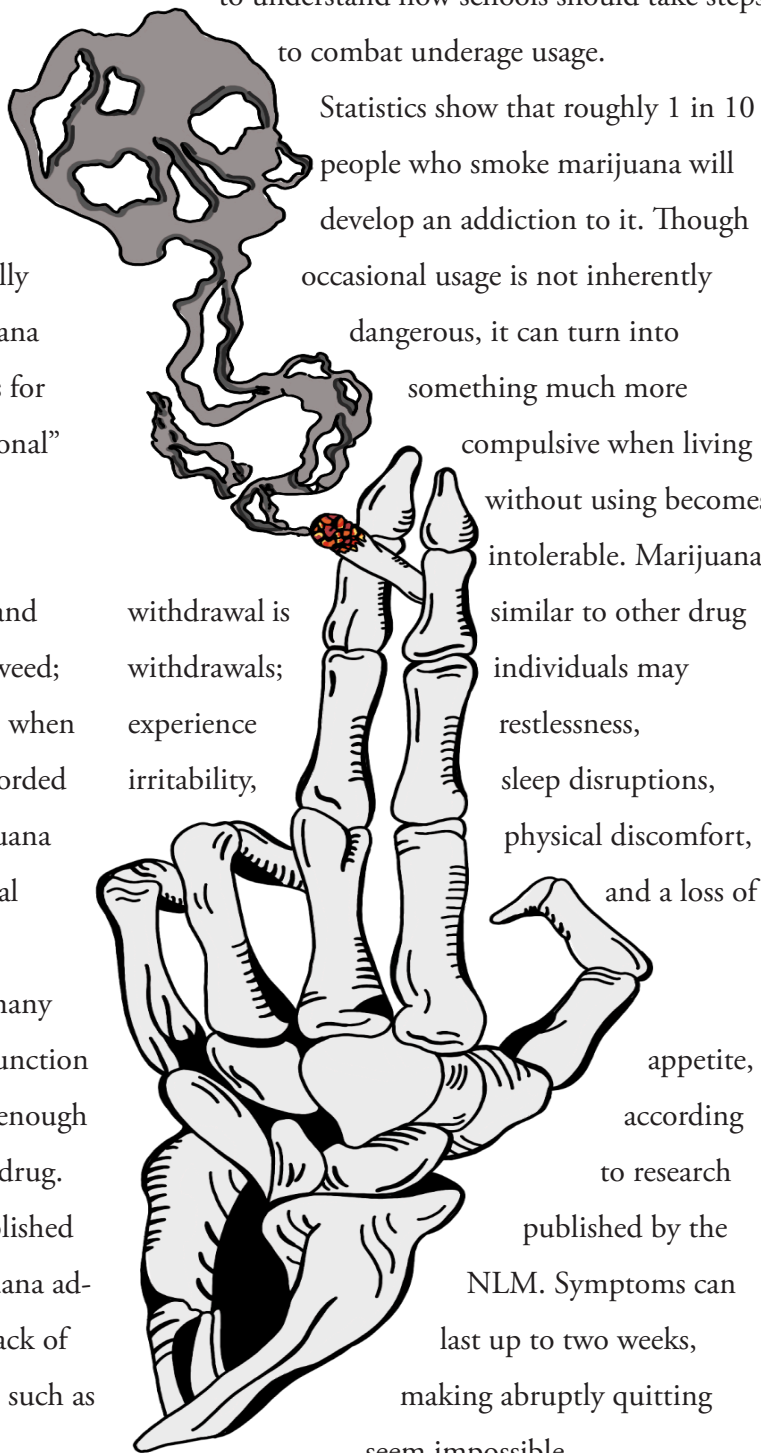
When it comes to college, the most effective option may be for institutions to focus more broadly on prevention in addition to intervention for current users. Research done on prevention programs implemented in six Minnesota colleges revealed a strong correlation between students with documented mental health issues and students who turned to substances as coping skills. As a result, it is recommended that institutions focus more on stressors that may *trigger* substance use, as opposed to the drugs themselves.

Harvard University Health Services has its very own substance use treatment and prevention program, open to all students. Though the College does not condone the use of substances on campus, students who report to University staff, such as health services or campus police, for help with substance-related issues will not be penalized, allowing students in need to seek help without stressing about disciplinary measures.

Of course, the solution to marijuana addiction isn't to start petitioning state governments to criminalize weed, or to punish students who use substances. But with school-and-community-based prevention in both primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools, I believe we can lower the number of young adults stuck in an addictive cycle of cannabis use.

EMMIE PALFREY '27 (EPALFREY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MANY WORDS THERE WERE FOR "WEED" BEFORE WRITING THIS ARTICLE.

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26 FORUM | 5



On the Size Question

A promiscuous exploration of ass, grass, and glass.

BY SIR LANCELOT AND SIR GALAHAD

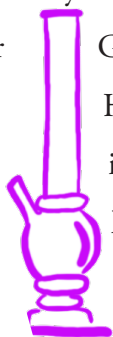
In the realm of both bongs and boners, the perennial question remains: does size truly matter? The classic rejoinders often boil down to the idea that it's not the size of the piece but the way you wield it that makes the difference. Nonetheless, we've laid our fair share of pipes and wanted to share our insights on the ins and outs of a solid sesh.

Any stoner's primary concern should be the quality of weed. You could have the longest, girthiest pipe in the world, but if your weed is the dry, crumbly backyard weed that dealers sell to oblivious high schoolers at \$50 an eighth, your high is going to blow. Find a dealer with hash you would hit, or make the trek to the dispensary for some top-shelf terps.

Assuming your weed doesn't suck, it is worth considering the quality of your glass. A \$1,200 Illadelph is going to rip better than the micro-pieces Tommy sells behind the counter. However, with the plethora of pieces available online, we wanted to delve into what matters and what is moot. What is the ideal shape and size of a piece? To answer this question, we will paint a picture of three different bongs: the bare minimum, a solid piece, and the best bong you will ever play with.

First, the bare minimum. To any green stoners, or anyone thinking of investing in a bong, the first piece you should consider is the standard beaker bong. These beauties have a wide, sturdy base that narrows into a slim shaft. The large bottom chamber stores a massive load that even seasoned stoners will have trouble swallowing, and the simple shape allows for a mess-free cleanup process. Beaker bongs without percolators can be harsh on the lungs, so we recommend a longer neck with an ice catcher that can be filled with cubes for smoother hits—somewhere between 12 and 14 inches. As for the girth, aim for five to seven millimeters for the perfect balance between dexterity and durability.

Our good friend Sir Gawain has one of these beaker bongs. His tool is a bit more modest—10 inches at most. But, what it lacks in length, it makes up for in circumference.

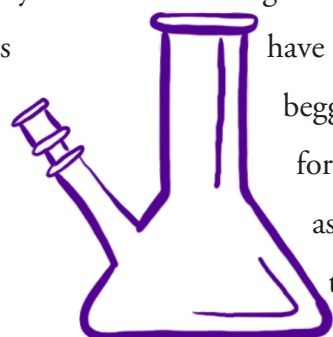


Nothing leaves me gasping for air like the shaft of Sir Gawain's pipe, and some of our fondest memories are nights spent sucking his bowl dry.

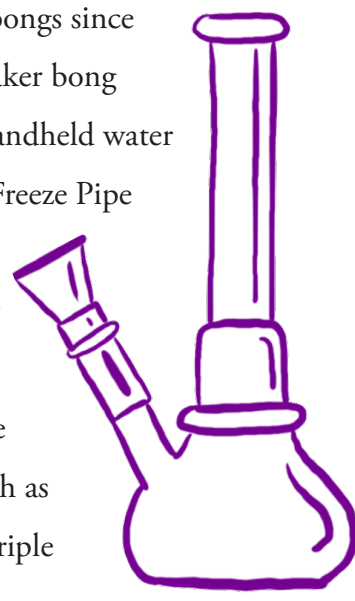
We recognize that as you first start utilizing glass, there is a learning curve; the Knights of the Round Table have broken three bongs this year alone. If you are willing to spend a little more money, you can greatly improve your smoking experience by breaking the bank a little—just make sure you have that gorilla grip.

The first addition we would recommend to the basic beaker bong is a percolator or two. Percolators cool down smoke and aid with filtration, allowing for a smoother session. For a single percolator, we recommend a showerhead perc; these contraptions have narrow tubes with a flared, slitted bottom that filters smoke. However, they take up more space than other percolators, so we would not recommend a bong with more than one or two. Instead, we like honeycomb percs—flat discs filled with small holes that almost resemble Ritz crackers. Since they are so small, a single bong could fit numerous honeycombs in a tight space (and you know we love a tight space). Additionally, you may want to consider a bong with a nail attachment and carb cap so it can double as a dab rig.

The first bong Sir Galahad ever owned was a triple showerhead perc bong. It lasted about two minutes before Sir Percival took it for a ride. He could ride a horse for certain, but something about his 16-inch member was too much for him. When Sir Galahad woke up in the morning after a night of fun, the shaft was shattered from the insides. From then on, whenever someone tugged at it, it rattled, and if you gave it a suck, your throat would throb in the morning. Sir Galahad has had other bongs since then—an eight-inch beaker bong (also great for anal), a handheld water pipe, and a three-piece Freeze Pipe Tornado Bong—but I



have never begged for more as much as that triple



showerhead perc bong made me.

Without a doubt, the best thing you can do to enhance your fun time is to invest in a freezable piece. These pipes typically disassemble into two or three pieces, one of which contains a glycerin-filled or freezable coil. After a few hours in the freezer, the pipe is ice-cold and mimics the well-known "ice in the bong" trick. The added cold allows you to inhale the smoothest smoke of all time and enjoy the hit as it maneuvers and slides down your throat—we swallow over here.

The Knights of the Round Table have recently stumbled upon Excalibur—a three-piece bong with a freezable coil that makes ripping chop feel like post-nut clarity. There's nothing the throat loves more than the smooth pull of a frozen bong. Both Sir Galahad and Sir Lancelot have posited that it is the greatest scientific discovery since the invention of the threesome.

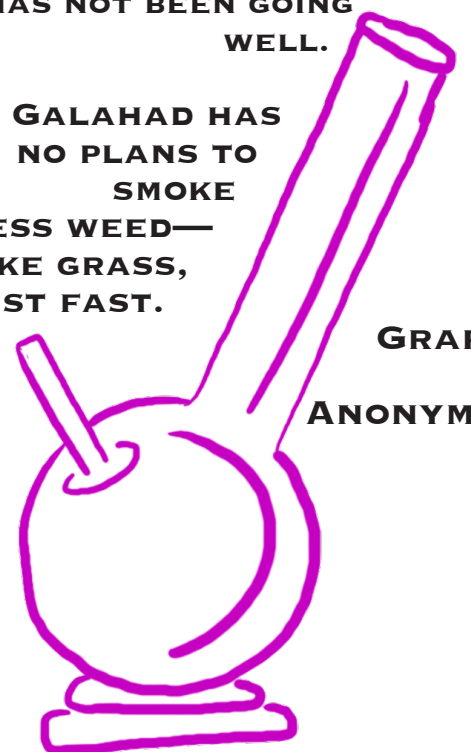
While for many, dropping hundreds of dollars on a special toy seems ridiculous, we could not disagree more. Bongs can last for hundreds of uses, making them significantly cheaper than papers and filters in the long run. As long as the shaft does not slip out of your hand, a prettier pipe is well worth the premium (we are looking at you, Sir Percival).

If you have made it this far and are still lost, walk over to the nearest smoke shop and buy the cheapest piece they have. Smoke it with friends because far more important than the grass or the glass are the Knights of the Round Table.

SIR LANCELOT IS TRYING TO SMOKE LESS WEED UNTIL HE FINISHES HIS NEXT JOUSTING MATCH, BUT THAT HAS NOT BEEN GOING WELL.

SIR GALAHAD HAS NO PLANS TO SMOKE LESS WEED—SMOKE GRASS, JOUST FAST.

GRAPHIC BY ANONYMOUS



Puff Puff No Pass

A discourse on ethical drug dealing.

Any avid smoker knows that shit adds up. No matter how much of the tab your job at the MAC or Cafe Gato Rojo covers, your blunts end up burning into your savings. Between the two of us, we've racked up a \$1200 tab with our dealer this year alone. And after we broke three bongos earlier this fall, with only three-quarters of a job between the two of us, we knew we needed a new source of income.

First, we tried cutting costs. Late last spring, we considered purchasing a pound of weed on the dark web to stockpile and share amongst our friends. We poked around on the darknet for a while, but when we became worried about the legitimacy of Vice City—one of the world's largest darknet marketplaces—we decided to place a limited test order of 100 king-size joints to the Harvard Yard Mail Center for less than a dollar apiece. They never came, and our supplier messaged us with moral reservations about shipping to a university. Our short-lived stint on the darknet died, but our dreams of buying in bulk lived on.

Earlier this year, we were offered a pound of weed by a security guard. His asking price of \$700 was attractive—we could sell half of it and cover our expenses completely. However, we questioned if we could truly move eight ounces, so we got his contact information and went back to our room to deliberate over burning incense.

Since many casual smokers only purchase a few grams at a time, selling this much weed requires a wide net. To sell eight ounces, we knew we would have to move outside of the realm of our close friends. While we had organized group buys in the past—even by up-charging a few dollars to turn a modest profit—pushing half a pound would mean selling to our friends' friends' friends. While most of our close friends are serious smokers, this would inevitably attract first-time and inexperienced users.

Many stoners are careful when smoking with new users, let alone selling to them. People do not want to be responsible for



BY SIR GWAINÉ AND
SIR GALAHAD

creating a habit for others, even if they themselves are regular smokers. Parts of the smoking community feel that first-time smokers should start this journey on their own. However, first-time smoking, like drinking, is best done with experienced users. Bad smoking experiences are all too common, whether from being unprepared or from having something laced, but these issues can be avoided if you are smoking with someone who has safe weed and can guide you through the high.

People will inevitably seek out new experiences like drinking and smoking, and when they do, it is always better to be informed rather than to blindly thrust yourself into the abyss. Yet, there exists a double standard in which society condones the support of first-time drinking but not smoking.

While some people believe that alcohol is less dangerous than weed—despite it being more addictive, dangerous, and costly—the principle is the same. Everyone loves their hometown liquor store or dive bar that never cards, but the school plug is ostracized. In both situations, a vendor decides to sell a vice to someone with relatively less exposure to it.

Countless teenagers can walk into their local Ralph's or ACME with a peeling fake ID and walk out with a handle, two thirty-racks, a twelve-pack of Twea's, and a Fireball party bucket—enough booze to have a dozen kids yacking in the bushes. Kids who lack a fake ask an older sibling or friend to use theirs, and those with neither find a middleman. With recreational weed now legal in 24 states, drug dealers enable underage smoking just as lax bartenders and older friends do with

underage drinking, allowing a workaround for age minimums for consuming weed.

Many people fondly look back at finding ways around our 21 minimum drinking age as a rite of passage. However, when weed is added to the underground substance market, society often adopts a more hypocritical stance.

So, if we generally don't oppose selling weed, why did we opt not to this time?

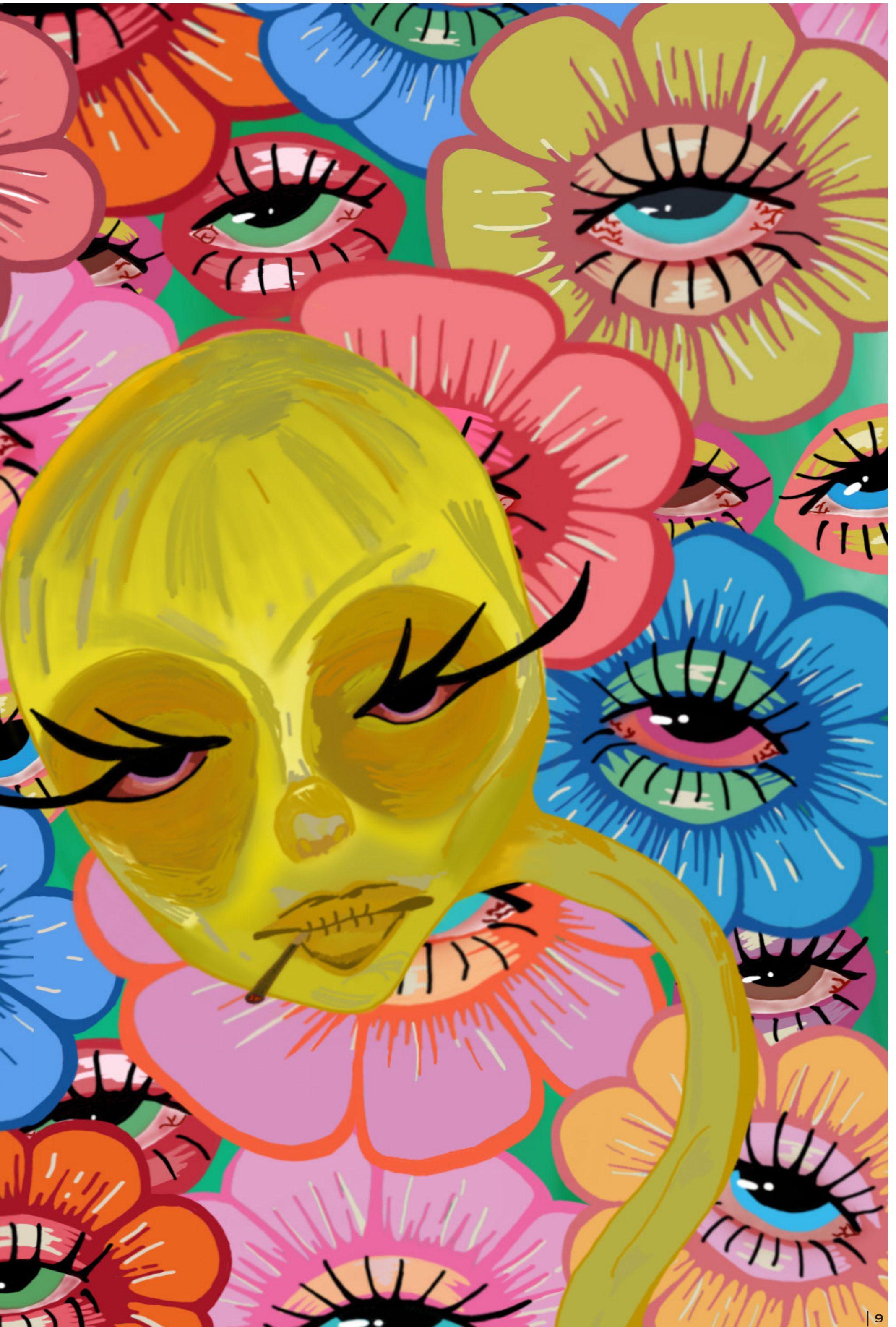
We were unable to reconcile the uncertain modes of production. Whether selling handles or joints to underage kids, providing a legal age loophole is only justifiable when you take precautions to ensure their safety. Just as a liquor store would not sell moonshine to a minor, we thought it unethical to sell weed of unknown origins to our friends' friends' friends. We could very well be providing them bottom-shelf strains or even something potentially laced.

Had this weed been from our dealer or a known source, we would have flipped it without a second thought and smoked soundly after. Instead, since both the dealer and his weed were completely foreign, we knew that distributing his product would have weighed on our consciences. Without having taken any steps to protect the well-being of our customers, we would never have been able to come to terms with supplying someone's bad trip.

And so, we slunk back to our dorms to scrape together the rest of our weed for one final bowl, uncertain of how to fund our next order.

**SIR GWAINÉ AND SIR GALAHAD
HAVE BEEN HIGH SINCE HIGH
SCHOOL.
GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27**





Ramadan Reflection

Ramadan felt different this year, in more ways than one.

BY LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26

One of the most rewarding experiences of my time at Harvard thus far has been taking advantage of the opportunity to grow closer to and understand my faith. Growing up in a mixed-religion household, my parents have always been completely supportive and helpful in understanding my beliefs. Islam was a choice I made on my own, and despite having an incredible support system in my home, that was about as far as it extended; I had few Muslim friends and had only ever met two other Arabs throughout my life. At Harvard, I was so excited to find a community of people like me that I could ask questions to, learn from, and spend time with.

That is exactly what I got. I am so lucky to have been embraced by the Arab and Muslim communities at Harvard, full of people so dedicated to their faith, culture, and the causes that matter most in our lives. I am in awe of how strong this community is, and how willing they are to make sure that everyone feels included and represented during their four years. I've always felt somewhat disconnected from my identity, but because of the people I've met, I have become encouraged to be my true self, learn about who I am, and become closer to Islam.

So this Ramadan, I made it a goal to further devote myself to my faith. I went to the mosque for the first time in a while, prayed throughout the day, and consistently volunteered and gave to charity. In the days since Ramadan ended, I've continued to build on and carry out these habits, as echoed by the sermon during Eid prayer and breakfast programming hosted by Harvard at the SOCH; Ramadan is a time to be grateful and give thanks, and we should extend these actions far after the month is over.

Yet, both I and the community that I have found solace in have been challenged in the past year more than ever. The Israel-Hamas war has left at least 33,634 Palestinians and 1,139 Israelis dead, with half of Gaza's homes damaged and over a million people displaced. Journalists, aid providers, and service workers have put their lives in extreme danger, and many have been injured or killed doing so. We are at the forefront of a dire humanitarian crisis, and calls for a ceasefire continue to fail.

The realities of this war have been painful and shocking. Every day, I see families who look like mine displaced, dying, or dead. Videos of mothers crying holding their lost children and strangers working together to retrieve bodies out of

the rubble are engraved in my memory. In Gaza, packed hospitals, sleepless nights, and a constant fear for safety are a distressing norm. I've become hopeless and lost; how can we just sit back and watch this happen, watch these conditions get consistently worse and worse, and do *nothing*?

However, these despairing circumstances are also coupled with resilience. Palestinians continue to use their faith so beautifully to guide them through this crisis. I see children playing through the rubble and people coming together to support one another through the loss of their homes and family. Throughout Ramadan, the people of Gaza prayed outside, persevering despite having no safe or lasting place of worship to go to, embracing each other along the ruins.

Student activists and organizers all across Harvard's campus hold this strength, too, organizing petitions for referendums, protests, weeks of action, meetings, and works of art to advocate for change. But our message has become



misheard; the true focus has been turned away from requests for a

ceasefire or transparency in funds and has instead shifted to the Harvard students and community members who take part in these movements or are involved in this discourse. The attention is on the messenger, **not** the message.

My community has been doxxed, threatened, and intimidated. Many have been harassed, reported, and have been left to feel ostracized by administration and unsafe on campus. Even our very own *Harvard Independent* articles have been weaponized to identify students and scare them out of their activism. But these experiences are incomparable to the circumstances in the Middle East, and the violence and heartbreak that have engulfed the region. So, we have not stopped; we will continue making strides toward a

cease in violence and hold Harvard accountable for its role.

This Ramadan, I chose to fast, and from sundown to sunrise I got to break. Yet those in Gaza do not have this choice. There is a widespread problem of starvation and famine running its course, and the efforts to provide food have been halted due to instances such as the killing of World Central Kitchen workers on April 2. This Ramadan, I chose to give, donating to important causes such as humanitarian efforts on the ground like the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. Yet for those in Gaza, giving and sharing what little resources are available is crucial to survival, and the loss of stable facilities and health services has left people to make severe sacrifices for one another.

So while this Ramadan was wonderful, it feels wrong to fully say that it was. I am beyond grateful and lucky for the people I surround myself with, my family, my education, and the position I am in to write a reflection like this. Yet while I sit comfortably, there could be a 20-year-old named Layla in Gaza who is without a home, or who lost her brother, or who was forced to stop pursuing her schooling. Both of us are praying, yet while one of us has a great community and one of the wealthiest institutions in the world behind us, the other is doing it practically alone.

In time for next Ramadan, I pray that I continue to grow closer to the incredible community that has embraced me with open arms, and that we can stay strong in our activism and see the outcomes we have been standing up for. I pray that those outside our Harvard community take a step back and pay attention to what is right; the whole world should be watching, but all eyes should not just be on us. And I will always pray for peace.

In an April 4 email, the Office of the Muslim Chaplains wrote, "As we look forward towards Eid and beyond, let's keep in mind the myriad of blessings we have which cannot be denied, and how truly precious life is. We don't know if this will be our final Ramadan, just as many last year were unaware that last year's Ramadan would be their final one." I felt the impact of these words immensely: a year ago, there was a girl in Gaza who celebrated Ramadan, just like me. Neither of us expected the violence that would have changed our lives forever, either on the frontlines or from watching from afar; yet only one of us lived to tell the story.

LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26 (LAYLACHAARAOUI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS NAMED AFTER THE NIGHT OF POWER DURING THE MONTH OF RAMADAN, OR LAYLAT AL-QADR IN ARABIC, WHERE GOD REVEALED THE BEGINNING OF THE QURAN TO MOHAMMED.

GRAPHIC BY DHATI OOMMEN '26

Munchies at the Multiplex

An ode to going to the cinema stoned.

BY ANONYMOUS

It was May of my junior year of high school, and I popped a 10mg THC gummy outside of the movie theater. At concessions, I bought a soon-to-be-needed water bottle and could tell the edible was kicking in. I sunk into my seat for *Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness*, relishing in the opening-night buzz of the audience and the lobotomized applause for the Marvel Studios intro—a sheepish ritual I gleefully partake in. The rising effects of the edible restored the same childlike wonder and zealous hype I felt as an elementary schooler going to see a Marvel movie opening weekend.

The film was, by all accounts, bad—a confounding mix of Sam Raimi’s gonzo visual style and plot elements that felt like complete corporate mandates to include. But high as a kite and semi-ironically participating in the audience’s “oohs” and “ahhs” at the many cameos, I was able to appreciate the film’s jumbled mishmash of a plot.

Edibles are my preferred consumption method of cannabis at the movies; the minimum 3-hour high is perfect for avoiding a groggy comedown during the last act of a film. I usually take somewhere between 7.5 and 15mg for a hard-hitting, long-lasting high. Going above that can have mixed results. For instance, a 20mg edible knocked me out in my comfy recliner seat minutes into a 3D showing of *Avatar: The Way of Water*. I woke up high and disoriented to a flying battle dolphin during the last act of the film with my 3D glasses still on. That same sleepiness can occur with indica-dominant strains of weed, so I’d recommend seeking out sativa for the movies. But if you find the dosage and strain that work for you, pop the edible when you arrive, and it should hit a few trailers in.

The bizarre, comically long presentation of movie trailers is a highlight of stoned theater-going. Experiencing a half-hour of these two-minute packaged doses of dopamine filled with maximum stimulus is a wonderfully dystopian way to enjoy content. Pop song needle drops, cringeworthy one-liners, and stylized editing to the beat make these the perfect high-production value, sensationalist brain-rot when you’re baked.

Vape pens are milder than edibles, and unless you hit the pen more in the auditorium (an act I surely condemn—unless you’re at an empty screening), you’ll be relatively sober after forty minutes. Smoking a joint is great for shorter movies—you’ll be blasted when you enter the theater. My first experience at the historic Brattle Theatre here in Harvard Square was the 88-minute Talking Heads concert film *Stop Making Sense*; lighting up right beforehand made the crazed musical odyssey infinitely enjoyable. But joints’ quicker comedown might make them less

optimal for a longer film (over 2 hours).

Buy more candy than you think you’ll need, especially if you’re going with similarly altered friends who you know will want some, and stick with one bottle of water for the inevitable dry mouth. There’s nothing worse than having to pee during the finale of a movie and missing the best part, an agonizing feeling only amplified when baked, so be sparing with liquids.

I cannot say how all movies currently showing in theaters would fare stoned, except *Dune: Part Two*, which might be one of the greatest films to watch high, ever. Watching it at the largest IMAX screen in New England on fast-acting sativa edibles was a nearly religious experience. For a blockbuster of its size, it is impressive how much bonkers psychedelic imagery is present, with trip sequences and ominous visions to spare. Witnessing the jaw-dropping scale of the film’s production design, which uses every possible technical element to immerse the audience, is a transformative treat that only improves with THC. A central plot element in *Dune* is spice, a universal commodity and psychedelic drug that powers space travel, which perhaps tells you what you need to know.

Some of my favorite experiences at the theater in 2023 were aided by cannabis. Last year saw vivid surrealism enter many mainstream movies, from Barbie’s candy-colored dreamworld to the acid-dipped production design of *Poor Things*. *Beau is Afraid* inhabits a nightmarish bad trip anxiety POV, and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle: Mutant Mayhem* has lots of fun with its sketchbook animation. These are all fantastic films on their own, but their sheer wonder is endlessly enhanced by weed’s psychoactive effects.

But all movies that promise a stranger-than-life, dreamy quality are not built the same. *The Boy and the Heron* lulled me to sleep after several parking lot cart rips (similar to many Wes Anderson films). Both *Wonka* and *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* were too transparent in their sanitized commercial appeal to be made better baked; weed can sometimes lead to watching movies in an overly critical and analytical way, killing suspension of disbelief and making them appear as simply actors on a set playing make-believe.

I also understand the fear of getting stoned at the theater for those less experienced with marijuana. If it’s one of your few times experimenting with weed, being trapped in a dark room with so many strangers might induce unwanted anxiety. If so, there’s nothing wrong with sparking up and enjoying movies from the comfort of your dorm, but this can sometimes be a tricky affair. For

me, that comfort makes it too easy to fall asleep, and I always end up watching the first ten minutes of a film and conking out if I’m high by myself in my room. For instance, I watched the first half of *Dazed and Confused* (which is my definite pick for the greatest movie to watch, well, dazed and confused) five separate times before finishing it.

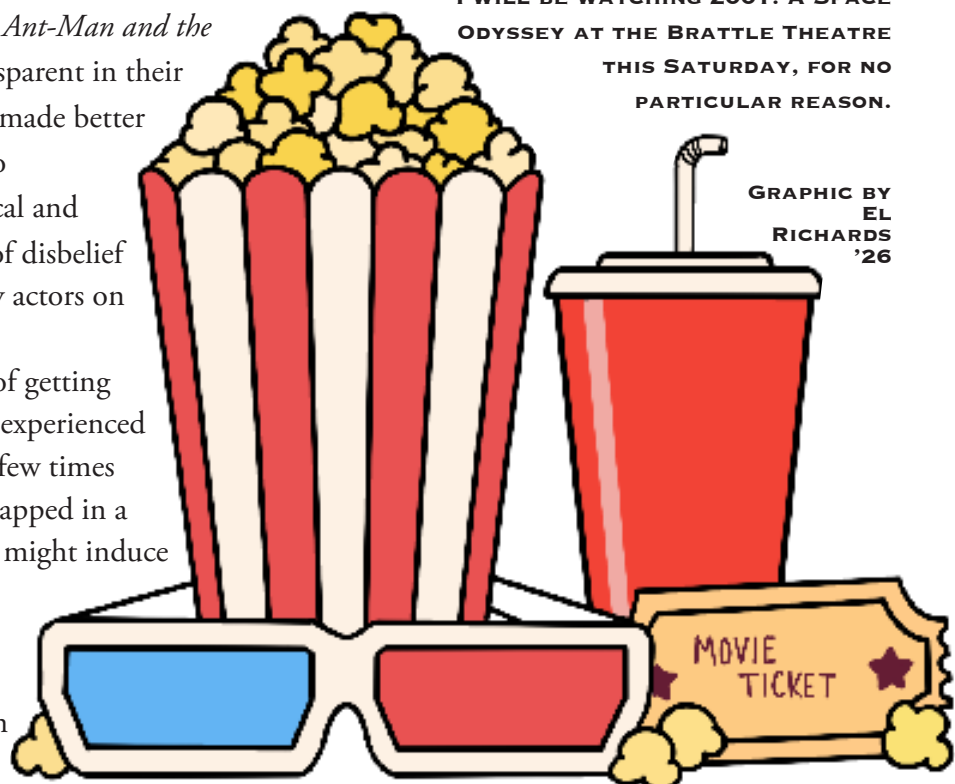
Paul Thomas Anderson’s druggy mystery comedy, *Inherent Vice*, is a more recent stoner hit, one that is worse sober because of how loosely its characters are strung together in the screwball narrative. Generally, the subgenre of Los Angeles-set neo-noir offers some of the best pot-smoking cinema. From Coen brothers classic *The Big Lebowski* to the smoke-tinged detective work in *The Long Goodbye*, or even Andrew Garfield’s disgusting conspiracy solving in *Under the Silver Lake*, these films are drenched in a Southern Californian intrigue inextricable from the reefer.

Other home-viewing recommendations include the Harold and Kumar series and anything Seth Rogen has written or starred in, although leave out the Steve Jobs biopic. TV shows *Atlanta*, *30 Rock*, *The Chef Show*, and *I Think You Should Leave* all provide appeal. *Atlanta* operates entirely on surreal dream logic, intended to be watched stoned, *30 Rock*’s humor is so dense and absurd that it loops back around to making sense high, *The Chef Show* will amplify your munchies (do not watch without food), and *I Think You Should Leave* is a loud, ridiculous time.

Ultimately, most things will be appreciable on some level when fried. Weed won’t fundamentally change anything about a film or show, it will just allow you to enter its world more thoroughly. It’s not well-suited for movies that require work on the audience’s part to piece things together, like some of Christopher Nolan’s films. But if you want to soak in the visuals, hyperfixate on random plot elements, and get lost in thought enjoying a movie with a hundred strangers, consider indulging in a different kind of gummy bear the next time you go to the theater.

I WILL BE WATCHING 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY AT THE BRATTLE THEATRE THIS SATURDAY, FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON.

GRAPHIC BY
EL
RICHARDS
'26



Those Darn Kids

The First-Year Musical has another successful year with *The Kids Are All Right*.

BY ANDREW SPIELMANN '25

Each spring, the Agassiz Theater is graced with a musical entirely created and performed by Harvard first-years. The first-year musical, affectionately known as the “froshical,” offers newcomers an exciting and unique introduction to the Harvard theater community. This year’s production, *The Kids Are All Right*, ran from April 11 to 14 and was an outstanding achievement by all those involved. It was emblematic of the humor and joy that froshicals have brought for over 25 years, leaving me feeling a great combination of giddiness and nostalgia.

The Kids Are All Right follows Sam and Jamie (played by *Independent* staffers Ryan Irving '27 and Lucas Cohen-d'Arbeloff '27), two event planners at the fictitious River Rock Hotel & Cabins, as they create a summer camp for young(ish) musicians in a bid to save the Cabins from closing down. The camp attracts a motley crew of passionate artists looking to make it in the industry, as well as celebrity instructors who help run the camp. The story weaves through the various groups of musicians as they struggle to find their voices and develop their talents.

Eventually, Sam and Jamie have a falling out over their shared crush on Dani (Leyna Blume '27), one of the camp attendees, as well as a philosophical disagreement on the purpose of music—art versus commerce. Some of the artists side with Sam, who prioritizes the love of music, and some side with Jamie, who prioritizes the need to make money. A battle of the bands ensues, but eventually, they discover that they are all better when working together.

Altogether, the show told a touching and hilarious story, with an impressively large host of nuanced, relatable characters. Accompanied by '70s-style music, with the pit visible on stage, it made for a thoroughly enjoyable couple of hours of theater. This was enhanced by wonderful design aspects. The assortment of distinct musicians and styles made for a bright, eclectic mix of costumes. Moving blocks and colorful stairs made a playground-esque set for the actors to move in, and exciting, dynamic lighting design topped it off.

The process of creating the musical started over six months ago, early in the fall semester. Each year, the previous year’s executive team chooses the new team among first-year applicants who have practically just arrived on campus. Writing and planning happen throughout the fall, and casting and rehearsals begin in the spring semester.

The book writer, Hannah Alexis '27, was one of the students selected last fall. She recalled how the idea for the musical began in a whiteboard brainstorming session when the team found themselves listening to a '70s playlist. “We were

like, why don’t we write a '70s musical? We started off with that idea,” Alexis said. “And we were like, okay, there could be a battle of the bands situation, but how do we get here?” The concept took off from there, and Alexis worked alongside lyricist Kendall Brady '27 and composers Grant Shueh '27 and Ava Della Pietra '27 to develop the musical. She described the result as “giving '70s *Camp Rock* in the best way.”

Alexis usually writes plays (without music), but took to the challenge of writing a book for a musical well. She became an expert in the specifics of each character and their influences, musical and otherwise, through watching documentaries and listening to a lot of '70s music. Eventually, she made presentations on each character to show to the rest of the team. Alexis emphasized that musicals require a balance between specificity and universality, where “we need enough specifics to understand this character and their circumstance, but not so much where it alienates an audience.” This was her biggest challenge in creating the characters and the dialogue. Ultimately, she and the rest of the team struck that balance perfectly between more basic, relatable characters and obvious homages to the likes of the band KISS.

Once the show began rehearsals, Alexis was able to see her words brought to life. “In many of the scenes, [I thought] ‘this is exactly how it was happening in my head,’ and it’s kind of crazy to see that occur in front of me,” she said. Although still around (and making rewrites in the early spring), she took more of a back seat role during the spring semester. “I think once the writer does their job, it’s like, okay, now it’s someone else’s job to bring it to life,” she said.

It was Lana Schwartz '27, the director, who was tasked with putting Alexis’ vision on stage. Schwartz is an experienced director, having directed productions Off-Broadway in New York, but the froshical still felt entirely different. “I had never directed new work, so it was a really unique experience being there from the start...and making sure that we [were] all working towards the same show and the same goal,” she said. It is typical for first-year musicals to have major adjustments even in the late stages, and Schwartz shared that it was “really fun working with a script that was still changing and still growing” during the rehearsal process.

Schwartz credited her talented team for a healthy and relatively low-stress production process. “I feel very lucky to have worked with such a capable, impressive, and talented group of artists both on the team and in the cast,” said Schwartz. “There was definitely a learning curve when we got into the theater with all of the set

pieces and props and moving parts, but I never really got too stressed about it.”

Many of the team members had never done theater before this, or at least not in the same role. The froshical is a great opportunity for first-years to get into theater, especially to jump into big roles that might otherwise be dominated by upperclassmen. Schwartz shared, “I think it’s a really important experience for anyone interested in doing Harvard theater, because it really allows you to bond with your class and allows you to experience theater.”

Irving shared his excitement over joining the froshical and playing the whimsical Sam. He acknowledged the intimidation first-years might feel about auditioning for regular productions with upperclassmen, deterring some students from participating. He said that the froshical seemed like “pretty much the exact answer to a lot of the reasons why some freshmen might feel intimidated about getting out there and getting involved.”

The whole cast, staff, and pit being in the same class year leads to an immense sense of camaraderie as they work toward a massive collective achievement. “Our first read-through, when the whole company got together, I have never laughed so much in one night at a freshman event as I did in that one night,” Irving shared. “We were just like, ‘What the heck is happening?’ Everyone’s laughing, just enjoying themselves, enjoying being together.”

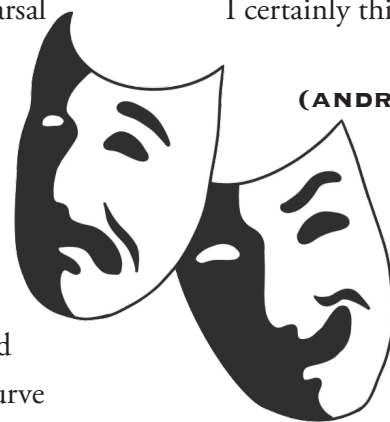
The humor made it from that first reading to the final performances, when laughter filled the space throughout. One particularly, perhaps unexpectedly, funny moment during the show was when Dani is revealed to be 23 years old during a conversation with Sam, who loudly emphasizes her age back to her, nicely clearing things up for anyone suspicious of what “young(ish)” really meant.

The fun of watching the show was enhanced by the fun that the actors, pit, and staff were having throughout the whole process, thus achieving what the froshical set out to do. “For a lot of people watching the show and in the cast, this is their introduction to theater at Harvard,” said Schwartz. “So my main goal was obviously to make a good show, but for it to be a fun experience and to create a community. And I think that we did that.”

I certainly think so too.

**ANDREW SPIELMANN '25
(ANDREWSPIELMANN@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) STILL
REMEMBERS ALL THE
SONGS FROM HIS OWN
FIRST-YEAR MUSICAL, 7
SACRILEGE STREET.**

**GRAPHIC BY REEVE
SYKES '26**



The Dreaming

BY KYA BROOKS '25

If I dismember the sky,
will the rainbow
chunks
bleed prismatic liquid?

Will I become death,
destroyer of
hallucinated worlds?

Of amorphous blobs of
color
that shapeshift and ooze.
Of pink elephants and
sea monsters deep above.

Psychedelia, teach me
dissociation.

How to lose oneself in
liminal spaces. The
whiteness of

radio static and eerie
contemporary
architecture. To float
outside
the body, inhabit the realms

of tarot cards and mystics.

House music at the
helm
of my hips, I find
razzmatazz

at kikis and rat-a-tat
in voguing dancers. I
want to grab the girl in the
reciprocal

mirror and pull myself

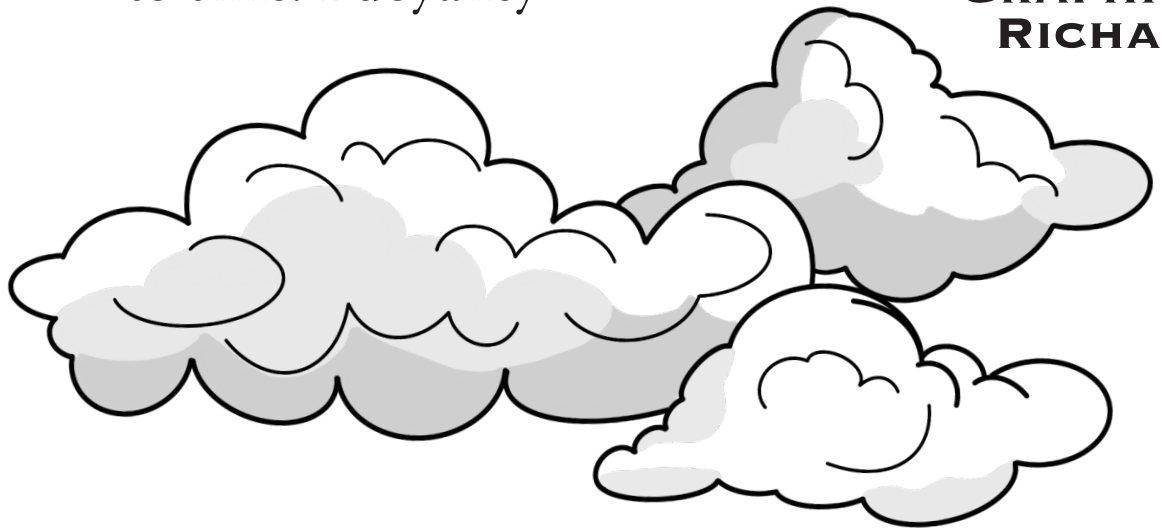
through to her
extra-dimensional pocket
in a higher plane of
existence.

Disembodied, immaterial,
unknown
to time. Buoyancy

without water
or air. To ascend, ascend,
ascend.

KYA BROOKS '25
(KYABROOKS@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WRITES
POETRY FOR THE
INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY EL
RICHARDS '26



SPORTS

From the Court to the Record Books

Celebrating the historical successes and the bright future of women's collegiate basketball.

BY VINCENT HONRUBIA '27

Creating history, the NCAA women's basketball final surpassed the men's final in viewership for the first time ever. The championship game, a fierce battle between top-seeds South Carolina and Iowa, was a fitting climax to an unprecedented season for women's basketball.

At first, it appeared that South Carolina was destined to be the final victim of Caitlin Clark's illustrious college career at the University of Iowa. With 18 points in the first quarter and a 7-point lead heading into the second, South Carolina fans were having flashbacks of last year's semi-final matchup, in which the Iowa Hawkeyes edged the unbeaten South Carolina Gamecocks 77-73.

The Hawkeyes' early lead, however, was short-lived, thanks to South Carolina's decisive second quarter, led by Kamila Cardoso and Raven Johnson. The duo's dominance on both ends of the court turned the tide, and the Gamecocks never looked back, outscoring Iowa by 10 points in the second quarter and going on to finish the game 87-75.

Cardoso dominated the paint throughout the night, with 17 rebounds and 15 points, while Johnson was tasked with locking down Clark for the duration of the game, holding her to only 12 points in the last three quarters. Johnson also had 4 steals, 5 defensive rebounds, and 2 blocks to go along with an all-around impressive defensive performance.

As the night ended, red and black confetti rained down on the perfect season for the (38-0) South Carolina Gamecocks—the cameras, however, remained on Clark as she led her team down the tunnel, falling at the final hurdle of the national championship game for a second time in a row.

While the Hawkeyes season may have ended unceremoniously, Caitlin Clark's impact on the women's game is unlike anything we have ever witnessed before. The championship game alone had 18.9 million viewers, becoming the most-watched women's college basketball game ever. The audience was greater than some of the most viewed sporting events this year, including every game of the 2023 World Series, 2023 NBA Finals, and last year's men's NCAA Basketball championship game.

The game also had the highest average viewership of any televised basketball game in the previous five years. Not to mention, the game was played in a full-capacity American Airlines Center to around 20,000 fans, with ticket prices reaching an average of \$2,900.

The championship game was the culmination of a season of broken records. Caitlin Clark became the highest-scoring NCAA basketball player, both men's and women's, ending a 50-year record set by Pete Maravich by over 300 points. But Clark was not the only woman breaking records this year, as USC freshman guard JuJu Watkins also cemented herself in NCAA history, having scored the most points in a freshman season. Clark and Watkins, along with NCAA stars Angel Reese, Paige Bueckers, Cameron Brink, Hailey Van Lith, and Kamila Cardoso, have become household names over the past year, a definitive moment of fame in women's basketball that has not been seen before.

One of the main factors for success in the women's games can be attributed to the new ruling in Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) rights. The 2021 bill allows collegiate athletes to profit from their personal brand by endorsing products, appearing in advertisements, or engaging in social media promotions. Not only have athletes been incentivized to continue their collegiate careers, but also the greater visibility and interest in the sport that NIL allows is evident at every level.

While the NIL ruling and increased popularity are elevating the women's game at a nationwide scale, as an Ivy League Division 1 school, the Harvard women's basketball team must continue to be supported by students and alumni investors to reach equivalent levels and continue competing with the best of the best. Notably, Harvard Athletics appears reluctant to conform to the new NIL rulings, which could be leading Harvard to fall behind in the recruitment and retention of elite athletes. While students are allowed to seek NIL deals individually, Harvard has yet to establish an NIL collective, which is an independent organization that fundraises money for college athletes through NIL agreement payouts. These collectives have begun to define collegiate sports, and while



Harvard has always relied on prestige, not giving athletic scholarships, for example, this philosophy may no longer be viable.

In a recent interview with the Crimson, Prashanth Kumar '21, who managed Harvard's tennis team, said, "I'm just nervous that if Harvard doesn't adapt, then we have the opportunity to lose these athletes." This interview concerns Harvard's freshman guard Malik Mack, who recently entered the transfer portal to seek more NIL and NBA visibility. Before Harvard faced Penn in Philadelphia, an NBA scout stopped by the press row and asked: "Are you here to figure out if Malik Mack will transfer? I mean, do you take \$250,000 to go play somewhere else, or do you stay for the Harvard degree?" This is the exact reasoning that elite athletes at Harvard are currently struggling with, illustrating the necessity for NIL to maintain competitive parity.

Nevertheless, strides are still being made throughout the Ivy League. This year alone, for the first time since 2016, two Ivy League women's teams have made it to the NCAA tournament. While Harvard finished third in league play and was defeated by the eventual Ivy League tournament runner-ups, Columbia, the women's team will look forward to the spring season of 2025. By embracing NIL, Harvard could level the playing field and harness the momentum of this unprecedented surge in women's basketball, securing its future at the forefront of collegiate sports and potentially returning to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2007.

VINCENT HONRUBIA '27

(VINCENTHONRUBIA@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CAN NAME MORE FEMALE NCAA BASKETBALL PLAYERS THAN MALE ONES.

GRAPHIC BY SEATTLE HICKEY '25

Indy Sportsbook: Building the Perfect Blunt Rotation

If you could pick anyone, who would you get high with?

BY ANONYMOUS

Welcome to a special edition of Indy Sportsbook where we delve into the ideal blunt rotation. From comedy giants to scientific legends to cartoon characters, choosing the perfect group to spark up with can definitely be a challenge. As such, we've grouped the candidates into a few categories and calculated odds based on how much the average Harvard student would desire to smoke with them.

To Start: The Locks

These are the names you will find in any stoner's (myself included) dream blunt rotation. They are known for their love of the leaf and are outspoken about their weed habits.

Snoop Dogg (-400): Let's get the obvious pick out of the way. As the unofficial chief ambassador of stoner culture, Snoop easily tops our list. At -400 odds, we reckon he's the closest thing to a lock for any dream blunt rotation out there. Just think about how much weed knowledge he has. The guy literally made national news when he quit smoking, only to reveal it was all a paid brand deal. There is no other human on this Earth more closely associated with weed than Snoop, and these odds definitely reflect that.

Seth Rogen (-150): A close second to Snoop, Seth Rogen has essentially made a career out of cannabis-infused humor, so much so that he actually runs his own weed company, Houseplant! From *This Is the End* to *The Interview* to *Superbad*, his movies are hilarious and are even funnier when high. He made a whole movie about weed in *Pineapple Express*, which sparked the creation of the eponymous weed strain, my personal favorite. Rogen is hilarious and is sure to bring good vibes and laughs to the rotation.

Pete Davidson (+100): With his fairly deadpan, edgy style of humor, Pete brings a bit of a different vibe to the rotation than the aforementioned figures. His odds definitely reflect his status as a slightly riskier bet due to his off-color and often unpredictable humor, which ensures an entertaining sesh.

Next: The Solid Picks

Patrick from SpongeBob (+200): The beloved pink starfish from Bikini Bottom might not be your first thought for a blunt rotation, but think about it a bit—the guy is laid-back, goofy, and talks slowly; we would not put it past him to dabble in the plant.

Oprah Winfrey (+250): While it might seem a little surprising at first, imagine how deep the conversation would get with Oprah in the rotation. Her storytelling prowess and unique ability to connect with just about anyone would bring some much-needed wholesome and profound vibes to the rotation. Plus, depending on how much she smokes, everyone might leave the sesh with a free car.

Melissa McCarthy (+400): Known for playing eccentric and exciting characters in slightly boring comedy films, Melissa would definitely keep the group guessing with her unique brand of comedy, honed through extensive improv experiences.

Ted (+500): The foul-mouthed teddy bear would bring a different brand of humor to the group—certainly one with no holds barred. His odds would definitely be more favorable if we could guarantee that he wouldn't make

a wildly off-color remark or joke that would cause others to leave the circle.

Finally: The Wild Cards

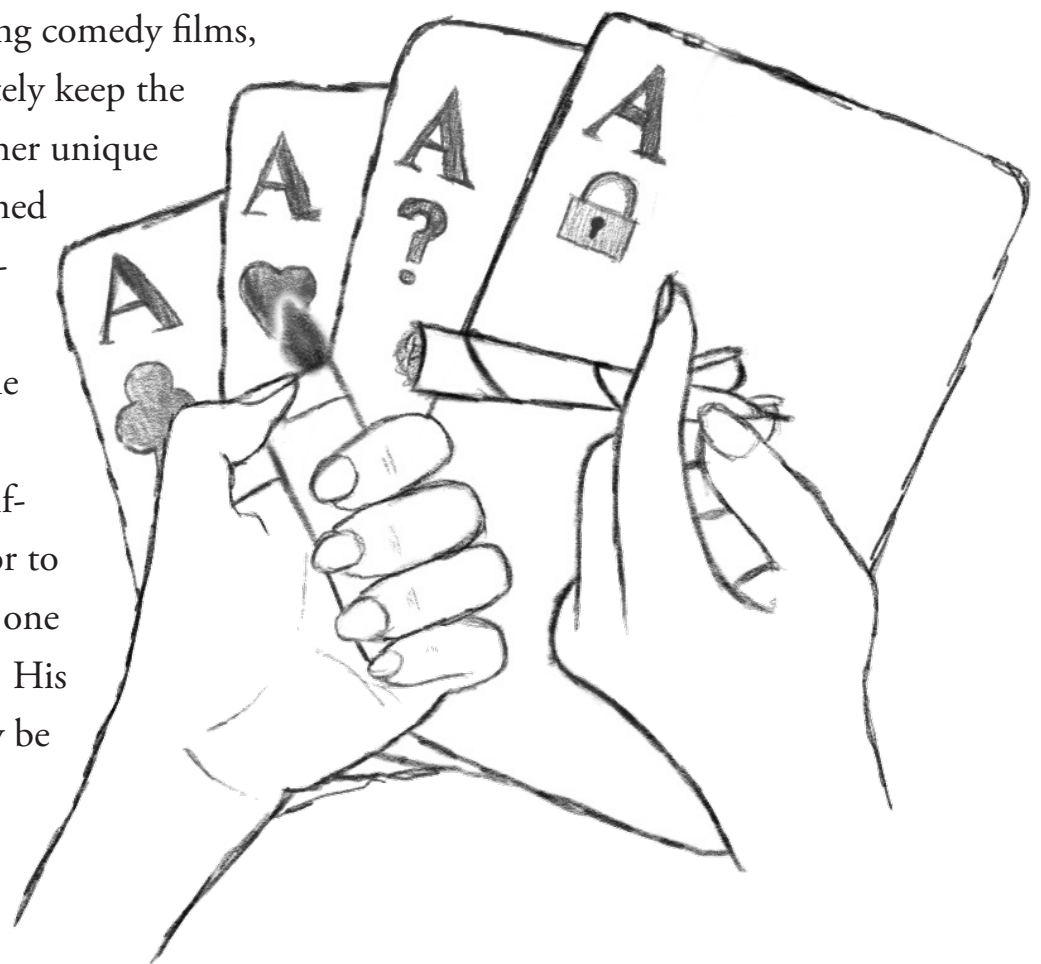
Neil DeGrasse Tyson (+700): Imagine sparking a blunt and discussing the mysteries of the universe with the most renowned astrophysicist in the world. Plus, listening to his voice serenade the other members of the rotation is a huge bonus. His odds reflect his unconventional choice, but the potential for a truly mind-blowing talk is quite high.

Shaggy and Scooby (+1000): While they might not provide much by way of intellectual conversation, they are mainly on this list for their snack game. High odds, high potential for some great munchies.

With this list, we have you covered with the best possible options for your dream blunt rotation. Next time you get high, think about how much better it would be if Snoop was right there with you.

AFTER WRITING THIS ARTICLE, WE SAT DOWN FOR OUR HUNDRETH VIEWING OF PINEAPPLE EXPRESS.

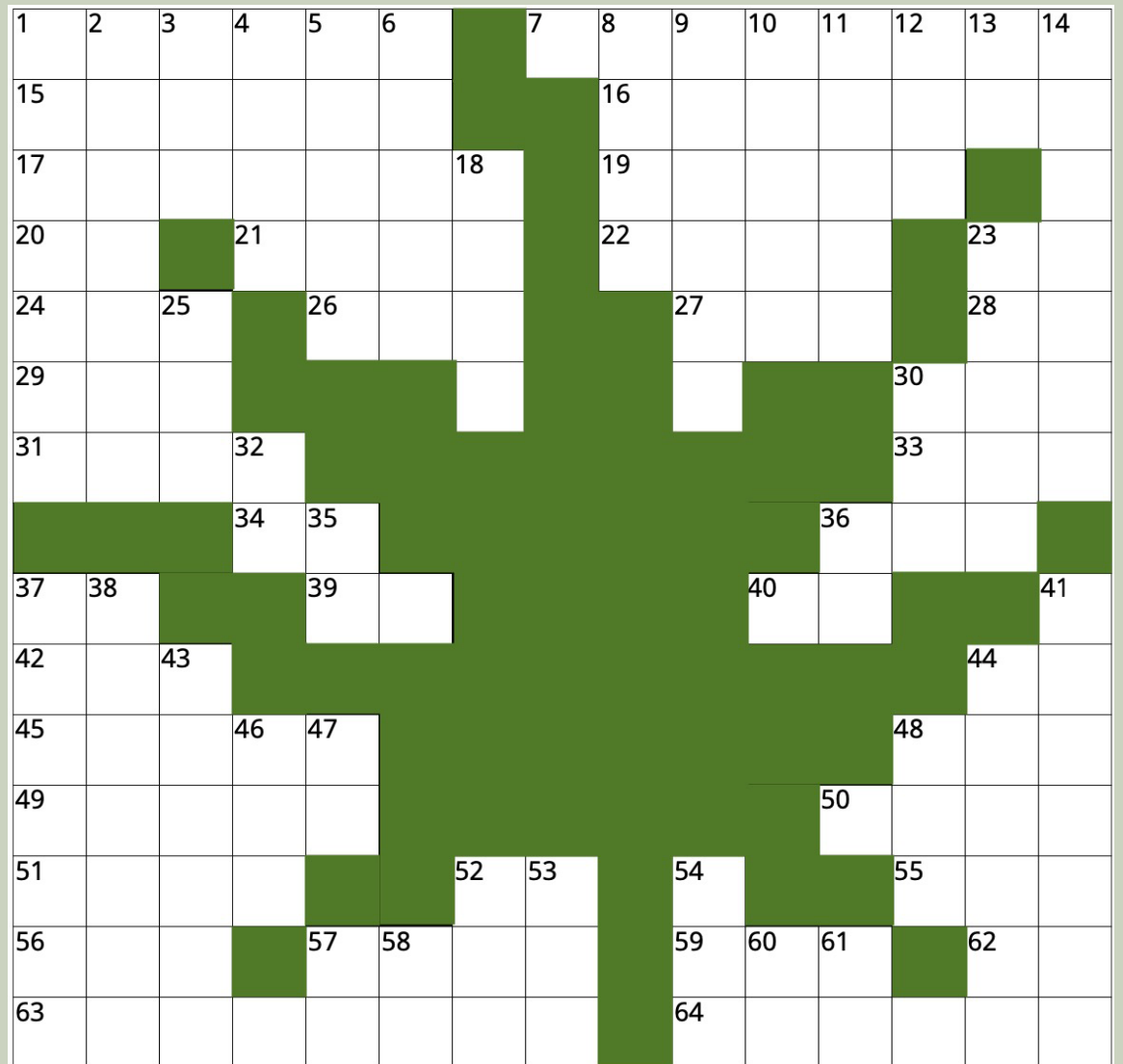
GRAPHIC BY NATALIE MENDEZ '26



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

Weed Issue

BY HAN NGUYEN '27



ACROSS

- 1 Illicit cigarette
- 7 Tallinn resident
- 15 Contaminated
- 16 Erode
- 17 Four-time Depp role
- 19 Light up
- 20 When doubled, average
- 21 Long ago
- 22 Blood pigment
- 23 To-___ list
- 24 Singer Rita
- 26 Bigger than med.
- 27 Bro's sibling
- 28 United Nations short name
- 29 Ad-___
- 30 Denomination of Boston's historic Charles Street Church: Abbr.
- 31 Relax
- 33 More, in Spanish

- 34 Special Edition short name
- 36 Possesses
- 37 "Beside"
- 39 Without, excluding
- 40 Me & you
- 42 Suffix with hotel
- 44 Information Technology short name
- 45 Butt heads
- 48 Obamacare, for short
- 49 Asia's ___ Mountains
- 50 Unopened flower
- 51 Director Nicolas
- 52 Me & you
- 55 Took a chair
- 56 Unopened flower
- 57 Zilch
- 59 Emeritus: Abbr.
- 62 "Ready, set, ___!"
- 63 "Hurry up!"
- 64 Selected

DOWN

- 1 Savory deep-fried pastry
- 2 Department stores
- 3 Clean Air Act org.
- 4 Rage
- 5 Swashbuckler Flynn
- 6 Corp. shuffle
- 8 Word after "smoke" or "makeout"
- 9 Most docile
- 10 People of south-central Mexico
- 11 Shoes with swooshes
- 12 Serpent's tail?
- 13 @

- 14 Lack of objections, in a phrase
- 18 Unwanted plant
- 23 "The Three Musketeers" author
- 25 Crunch targets
- 30 Doctors' org.
- 32 Plural ending
- 35 W__d
- 36 Element #2's symbol
- 37 Stomach settlers
- 38 Not wait to be called on in class
- 41 Begin
- 43 Like video games appropriate for all ages
- 44 Long cold spell
- 46 Droop
- 47 Short greeting
- 48 Two-time loser to DDE
- 52 Aussie college
- 53 "Ready, ____, go!"
- 54 Rainbow shape
- 57 When doubled, faux pas
- 58 Physically in contact with
- 60 Mid
- 61 Preposition expressing motion

THE *HARVARD INDEPENDENT* PUBLISHES
EVERY WEEK DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR
BY THE *HARVARD INDEPENDENT*, INC., 12
ARROW STREET CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

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