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ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT

As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newspaper, the *Harvard Independent* provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The *Independent* has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

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The Harvard Students who Vote Socialist

Harvard undergraduates have organized a new student group to promote the Party for Socialism and Liberation's platform and Claudia De la Cruz's presidential candidacy.

BY JULES SANDERS '28

Harvard Vote Socialist, a political organization founded on campus this September, has quickly mobilized a portion of Harvard undergraduate students to campaign for Claudia De la Cruz and Karina Garcia, the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential candidates running on the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL) ticket. The PSL, a left-wing anti-capitalist political party founded in 2004, has nominated presidential candidates in every election since 2008, with 2020 candidate Gloria La Riva garnering 0.1% of the national popular vote. Although the De la Cruz campaign is unlikely to emerge victorious in any states come Nov. 5, let alone the Electoral College, some Harvard undergraduates have thrown their support behind the PSL. In response to such encouragement, De la Cruz is planning to speak at Harvard on Oct. 26, just 10 days before the general election.

The PSL identifies capitalism as the cause of many of the woes Americans face today. "Imperialist war; deepening unemployment and poverty; deteriorating health care, housing and education; racism; discrimination and violence based on gender and sexual orientation; environmental destruction—all are inevitable products of the capitalist system itself," their website reads. The ultimate goal of the PSL is to establish a worker-led socialist government to oversee the transition from capitalism to communism in the United States through the overhaul of state institutions.

The PSL also pledges to implement guaranteed living income for the unemployed, government-sponsored health care for all, and fully funded education through college. The party

also aims to overcome historic injustices and exploitation of racial minority groups by, for instance, issuing economic reparations to Black individuals.

A few Harvard undergraduates specified their support for the PSL's domestic policy platform. Laura Cleves '28 chose to join Harvard Vote Socialist after attending a campaign launch event for De la Cruz and speaking with upperclassmen associated with the movement.

"From where I stand, the Democratic Party is too busy acquiescing to the policies and stances of a radical Republican Party to actually be considered a viable choice for left-leaning voters," she said. "When I was growing up, I was taught that Democrats believed in the same values that I did: equity, inclusion, and community. Having come of age in an incredibly volatile political climate, however, I can see that Democrats don't really care about delivering results to their constituents unless it means lining their pockets."

Cleves referenced the Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned the landmark 1973 abortion rights case *Roe v. Wade*, as a failure of Democratic leadership to effect meaningful change and to preserve institutions valued by their constituents. Although three of the six justices who ruled with the majority on *Dobbs* were appointed by former President Donald Trump, some have criticized current President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats for failing to codify *Roe* in advance. Cleves also expressed frustration with the Democratic Party's stance on environmental issues, gun control, and the Israel-Hamas war. "All I've been hearing for the past decade is empty promise after empty promise," she said.

Critics of the PSL and other parties left of the Democratic Party often cite the spoiler effect, a term used to describe third-party candidates' tendency to sap votes that would otherwise go to one of the two major parties, as a cause for concern. Cleves, however, doubts the legitimacy of such anxieties.

"I think the claim that third-party voters are wasting their votes is spurious and indicative of a herd mentality that currently dominates American politics," she explained. "Under the Constitution, American citizens have the right to vote for whatever candidate pleases them; their options are not confined to the Republican and Democratic parties."

Cleves also criticized the "lesser of two evils" argument often floated by individuals to the left of the Democratic Party in favor of voting for centrist Democratic candidates. "I think that, as long as people engage with the democratic process, that is a triumph in its own right," she opined. "If third-party candidates like Claudia and Karina manage to draw out voters who wouldn't have voted for either a Republican or a Democrat in other circumstances, I still consider that a win."

In a campus as politicized as Harvard's, with the Institute of Politics boasting over 1500 members as of September, one might think that public support for De la Cruz over Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 election would attract negative feedback. In the spaces where she has discussed her involvement with Harvard Vote Socialist, however, Cleves has not met disapproval. "I've shared news about events with fellow members of my Socialism First-Year Seminar, and my roommates are respectful and supportive of my involvement in the group," she clarified.

Amari Butler '25 became involved with the PSL following her participation in a protest following the Jan. 2023 killing of Arif Sayed Faisal by the Cambridge Police Department (CPD). CPD officer Liam McMahon fatally shot Faisal, who was experiencing a mental health crisis, after Faisal reportedly threatened McMahon with a knife. "After hearing of such a horrific event that occurred so close to our own campus, I felt compelled to join the movement, and I began organizing with the Justice for Faisal campaign," Butler said. "It was through this struggle that I first witnessed the discipline, organizational strength, and political clarity of the PSL. Not only were PSL members speaking out against police brutality, but they were connecting racist police terror to other problems in our society such as inaccessible health care, unaffordable

De la Cruz over Democratic nominee Harris on Nov. 5. "To be honest, the Democratic Party is right-wing," she said. "Kamala Harris is endorsed by top Republicans and has promised to put Republicans in her cabinet. The Democrats and Kamala Harris claim to support Black Americans, but what are their actual policies? Kamala Harris has locked up Black and brown people. She is a self-identified 'top cop.'" Butler also criticized Harris's position on conflict in the Middle East. "Kamala Harris even claims to support a ceasefire and self-determination of the Palestinian people, but then in the next breath, she says she supports Israel's right to 'defend' itself, which means Israel's supposed right to massacre Palestinians," she said.

Butler voiced concerns regarding growing complacency among Democratic voters. "I know a lot

the ballot in 19 states and has official write-in status in 23 more. In Georgia and Pennsylvania, two of the most hotly contested battlegrounds in the 2024 presidential election, judges have disqualified De la Cruz from the states' presidential ballots, and in six other states, she is neither on the ballot nor in possession of official write-in status.

Members of other American socialist groups have criticized the PSL's foreign policy. According to a 2013 article by Megan Cornish published by the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP), the PSL, despite being founded in 2004, expressed retroactive opposition to the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square against Chinese Communist Party rule and "endorses the punishing reparations the U.S.S.R. exacted from Hungary after World War II and the Soviet-backed police state that

HARVARD VOTE ²⁰ ^{***} ₂₄ SOCIALIST

housing, and inadequate education."

Butler has worked extensively with the De la Cruz campaign. "Several months ago, I petitioned with other dedicated volunteers to gather thousands of signatures to get Claudia and Karina on the ballot in Massachusetts," she stated. "Because I've been volunteering with the campaign basically since the beginning, I've also been able to work directly with the campaign manager to help Claudia's visit to Harvard next week. It may sound unusual for a college student to be doing that much with a national presidential campaign, but that's how it works when you're a people-powered movement."

Like Cleves, Butler explained why she chooses to support the PSL over the Democratic Party and plans to vote for

of people are concerned about the consequences of voting for anyone but Kamala, but what's the consequence of sending Democrats the message that they can literally be aligned with what used to be considered the far-right of the Republican Party, and they still get the votes?" she said.

"She says, 'We won't go back,' but the reality is, you can't fight fascism with centrism," Butler continued. "You fight fascism with socialism, with a people's movement in the ballot box and on the streets and in our communities."

"Hear from our Vote Socialist presidential candidate on why socialism is necessary to address the issues of working-class people," reads an Oct. 17 Instagram post advertising De la Cruz's Harvard visit. De la Cruz is on

sparked the Hungarian uprising." Luma Nichol of the FSP argued in a 2023 article that "the influence of Stalinism on PSL leads it to accept or excuse authoritarian rule in these supposedly anti-imperialist states. It sides with the brutal leader of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, who turned weapons on his own people protesting for democratic rights."

"Voting socialist sends the message that we will no longer accept breadcrumbs because we deserve so much better," Butler said. "We're building the people's movement and organizations to fight for exactly that."

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GRAPHIC BY ANNELISE FISHER '26

“We’re Not Going Back”

A profile on Harvard Students for Harris and their promotion of Kamala Harris’ 2024 presidential campaign.

BY SARA KUMAR ’27

“Personal freedoms.” “Access to education.” “Affordable healthcare.”

Three Harvard students voiced reasons for supporting Vice President Kamala Harris in the upcoming 2024 presidential election in a reel on the Harvard Students for Harris Instagram. Originally known as Harvard for Biden in 2020 and again in 2024, Harvard Students for Harris was officially rebranded by co-presidents Ethan C. Kelly ’25 and Will M. Smialek ’27 in July with two primary missions: to increase voter participation and to instill widespread support for the Harris-Walz ticket in the upcoming 2024 presidential election.

Origins

Harvard Students for Harris has been instrumental in amplifying student voices on campus. Leading the organization, Smialek and Kelly are channeling their interest in politics and passion for the Harris-Walz ticket in particular to create avenues for other students to participate in advancing this year’s Democratic campaign.

“I feel this genuine, burning passion for Democratic politics,” expressed Kelly in an interview with the *Independent* when asked about his involvement in the organization.

“A lot of it is understanding the power that you can have, even when you’re in a small blue bubble. So many kids who are in the Cambridge area just naturally assume that they don’t have a stake in the game,” Smialek added. “That misconception and that notion is just completely false.”

Joining Kelly and Smialek, Vice President of Harvard Students for Harris Liz Benecchi ’25 spoke on her regional background and politically active desires to mobilize the on-campus energy into productive work for Harris’ campaign.

“Coming from Georgia, I know personally what it’s like to have your rights taken away, to have your reproductive rights taken away, to have your voting rights restricted. And it makes me really angry, and it makes me want to do something about it,” Benecchi remarked.

Initially, Benecchi joined Harvard Students for Harris as the Swing State Director. However, Benecchi was promoted to Vice President after exhibiting her fierce commitment to guiding the American public toward the Harris-Walz

ticket.

“Your vote is your voice,” Benecchi affirmed, asserting her desire to promote ubiquitous participation this Nov. 5.

Looking to maximize resources and outreach success, Harvard Students for Harris has centered their efforts around the seven swing states: Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona, North Carolina, Georgia, and Nevada. Through out-of-state political canvassing, where the organization collaborates with partners in the region as well as phone banks, the group has made tremendous progress in advocating for the top of the Democratic ticket.

In addition to these conventional methods of political advocacy, Kelly also expressed the recent focus on online campaigning in comparison to prior elections. The Harvard Students for Harris Instagram has been active in creating a universal brand for Harris’ campaign.

Going beyond Cambridge, Harvard Students for Harris has made it their mission to not only mobilize Harvard students but also to ensure that these opportunities are extended to undergraduates and other affiliates across the Boston community. From Northeastern and Boston University to Tufts and Suffolk, their efforts have united politically-motivated Democratic students across the area.

“We are getting after it, in every sense of the term,” Smialek proudly stated when reflecting on the in-depth efforts of Harvard Students for Harris.

This Year, It’s Different

Though every presidential election is important, Smialek, Kelly, and Benecchi asserted the uniqueness of the 2024 Democratic ticket.

When asked about what attributes of Harris stood out the most, identity was an obvious, yet nonetheless key, factor for Benecchi. In her perspective, the fact that the United States may elect a woman of color in the 2024 election would be “revolutionary.”

Harris’ selfless career is also incredibly attractive to the organization’s vice president.

“She’s always been someone for the people,” Benecchi stated. While other candidates have certainly served others, Benecchi made it clear how unique it is to have someone whose entire livelihood has been geared towards bettering the lives of American citizens, especially those who are

most vulnerable.

Kelly compounded this sentiment, explaining how Harris’ middle-class background and roles as a prosecutor, senator, district attorney, law student, and more have shaped a candidate who has the life experiences the American public wants to see in their president.

“People are really inspired by Vice President Harris,” Kelly stated. Prior to Harris’ nomination, there was a large public push to “stop Donald Trump.” Although this was definitely a call to action, Kelly explained how Harris shifted the tone of this election from something of an obligation to hope for a new page in American democracy.

This echoed support for the Harris-Walz ticket has extended into student participation numbers. “It’s both them and the campaign who have really put a priority on student mobilization and young voter mobilization,” Smialek articulated.

Within Harvard Students for Harris specifically, membership quadrupled after Kamala Harris became the Democratic nominee. “I think we have a lot more students interested now than before,” Kelly said. This increase in numbers has heavily influenced the organization’s capabilities. For instance, larger canvassing efforts and more extensive phone banks are now well within reach.

“I don’t know if it would feel quite the same if it had been someone else,” Benecchi confessed. Kelly agreed, explaining that, “Kamala Harris is this new vision.”

Campaigning Successes

The many weekend canvassing efforts of Harvard Students for Harris are a testament to the organization’s hard work and Democratic party commitment. According to Benecchi, the group has already been to New Hampshire twice and Pennsylvania once. In the coming weeks, they will be returning to New Hampshire and Pennsylvania, as well as visiting Georgia and Maine.

Harvard Students for Harris canvassing trips are centered around their work with local partners. The Harvard College Democrats officially co-sponsor all of the Harvard Students for Harris events, and the two groups together work on pubbing, training attendees, and mobilizing students for on-the-ground efforts. “We

want to know what the campaign and what the resources in the field organizers on the ground need most and where they need it most because they are the experts in the matter,” Smialek articulated.

The Harvard College Democrats operate a student-run Political Action Committee, Veritas Progressives, which has been used to fundraise money from alumni and allies of the organization to ensure that all canvasses are fully funded.

During their first trip to New Hampshire on Sept. 28, Harvard Students for Harris and The Harvard College Democrats brought 30 Harvard students to encourage state residents to vote for Vice President Harris and running-mate Tim Walz. According to an internal document, the students knocked on over 1,000 doors, reaching citizens from across the political spectrum while promoting Harris’ political vision.

Their outreach didn’t stop there. Realizing how crucial New Hampshire is in this upcoming election, the groups returned to the area on Oct. 5, bringing 50 students from eight Boston-area universities. Ultimately, they were able to knock on over 1,400 doors.

A week later, they headed to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with 16 Harvard students alongside students from Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, Cornell, and other schools in the Northeast. The Harvard student volunteers were able to knock on 550 doors. Since Pennsylvania is a critical battleground for this upcoming election, the students devoted their efforts to adding political security to the Harris-Walz ticket.

These canvassing trips have been well-received and popular across campus. “People are coming up to me asking me about whatever upcoming canvases are happening, and I’m just excited to see the energy on campus. It feels super palpable and...it’s just invigorating. I’m super excited for election day,” Benecchi explained.

Yet

considering some swing states are difficult to reach in person, Harvard Students for Harris has also organized phone banks.

Recognizing the power of mobilizing the transnational student population, Harvard Students for Harris collaborated with Duke College Democrats on Sept. 30 to call into the vital swing state of North Carolina. In less than an hour, the organizations spoke to over 1,200 voters.

The organization came together once more on Oct. 18 to hold a phone bank, enabling student volunteers to call hundreds more Philadelphia residents. On Oct. 23, they hosted another phone bank for Michigan, with U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingel joining via Zoom.

However, these successes do not come without hard work and strategy.

The Process

As members of the executive board, Kelly, Smialek, and Benecchi focus on facilitating opportunities for students to have an impact in the election.

Appealing to Harvard students in particular has posed a particular challenge. “There’s so much that goes into this because we are constantly looking for how to appeal to a specific subsection of the student body,” Kelly admitted. “How do you market yourself to Harvard students so they feel...they can do things that are engaging and can actually be just generally in this position where they are having an impact on the election?”

In addition to the meticulous work of the board and its subsequent student volunteers, Harvard Students for Harris leverages their understanding of the social landscapes of the sites they visit to advance the success of their efforts.

Benecchi explained the importance of meeting voters where they are, especially when it comes to the choice of candidates and political activism.

“When I go canvassing, the first thing that I ask people is... ‘What issues matter to you?’” Benecchi commented. One of the strengths of the Democratic ticket is its ability to meet the populace on a

very intimate, human level. In

framing residents’ responses through policy while embedding her own experiences through her door-to-door interactions, Benecchi has observed how such individualized canvassing has resonated with potential voters.

“Policies mean the most when they’re affecting real people,” she explained. The key to swaying voters is not simply promoting Harris’ policies, but rather listening to what matters to each person and discussing how a candidate will advocate for that issue if elected.

Beyond personalizing their efforts to truly allow the Democratic ticket to resonate with the residents they speak to, the canvassing organizers of Harvard Students for Harris are also strategic on exactly where in each swing state they travel to.

For instance, the organization is planning a trip to Congressional District 2 in Maine due to its politically turbulent past. According to Benecchi, Maine’s Congressional District 2 was blue from 1992-2016, and finally flipped for the past two election years, with the majority of residents ultimately voting for Trump. Since Congressional District 2 gets its own electoral votes, the organization is hoping to reach out to residents and steer them toward the Harris-Walz ticket this upcoming election season.

Harvard Students for Harris recognizes that a wide proportion of disaffected voters particularly in the young generation are students who aren’t really paying attention to politics or feel like their voice is not represented by the current ruling party. “It’s our job and it’s our responsibility as students, as people who...are classmates with these people to convince them that this isn’t true,” explained Smialek.

Looking to the Future

Since Harvard Students for Harris is not an officially recognized student organization, it is only here until November 5th. Nonetheless, in the coming weeks before election day, Harvard Students for Harris remains committed to advancing the Democratic ticket. Kelly explained that “whatever people feel like they have the time and capacity to contribute to right now, that’s absolutely what we’re looking for.”

Even as students, Smialek emphasized that “we still have the power to contribute to this election, to ensure that democracy prevails and the right candidate wins.”

“This is for my future. This is for democracy,” Benecchi asserted.

SARA KUMAR '27 (SJKUMAR@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS LOOKING FORWARD TO VOTING IN HER FIRST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THIS NOVEMBER.

GRAPHIC BY GABI PONIZ '26



In The News: The Independent's 2024 Political Survey

Results from the Independent's political survey of 391 undergraduates.

BY LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26 AND NATALIE FRANK '27

For our 2024 Political Issue, the *Independent* surveyed Harvard College undergraduates on their political beliefs and feelings towards the upcoming presidential election. Over a two-day period, we received 391 varying responses. Note that all questions were anonymous and optional, so not all 391 respondents answered every question.

Demographics

The survey received an almost even split of responses between class years: 105 first-years, 99 sophomores, 83 juniors, and 102 seniors.

With respect to gender identity, the observed numbers were again balanced: 196 of the respondents identified as female, 177 of the respondents identified as male, and 13 of the respondents identified as non-binary or genderqueer. The majority of the respondents were white/Caucasian, totalling 60.9%, followed by Asian/Pacific Islander at 27.2%, Hispanic at 13.7%, and Black or African American at 10.9%. Native American, Middle Eastern, and students of other races and ethnicities also represented approximately 2% of the respondents.

Students were asked to rank their religious views from non-religious (0) to very religious (6): the most common response was a 0 with 25.8%, followed by a 1 with 21.4% and a 4 with 12.9%. Students were asked to rank their socioeconomic status from lower (1) to upper (6): most respondents were in the middle of the scale, with 30.3% answering 4, 28.8% at 5, and 14.4% at 3.

Compounding this distribution of personal identifiers, STEM, social sciences, and arts and humanities majors were all well-represented in the survey, with each category having at least 90 respondents. Social sciences was most represented at 185 students, with STEM closely behind at 180 students.

Political Activity

We began with a section on political activity to gauge students past engagements with politics and plans for this election.

87.3% of respondents noted that they are registered to vote in the United States, but 12.7% are not. 84% of students plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election, while 3.6% do not. Note that 12.4% of students are unable to or undecided.

61.4% of students have not worked on a previous political campaign, but for those who did, 121 students worked for a Democratic candidate, 18 worked for a Republican candidate, and 5 worked for a candidate of a different party.

If the 2024 presidential election were held today, 302 students would vote for Vice President and Democratic nominee, Kamala Harris, and 60 students would vote for former President and Republican nominee,

Donald Trump. 10 students indicated they would vote for a third party candidate. 79.3% of students were not able to vote in the last election, but for those who did, 12.7% voted for current President Joe Biden, 2.8% voted for Trump, and 2.8% voted for a third party candidate or chose not to vote.

Political Beliefs

Shifting from voting to a variety of political viewpoints and issues, respondents were asked a series of questions in which their answers could range from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

First, when asked if they felt as if the upcoming election was critical and high stakes, 65.3% of students strongly agreed. 74.5% of students agreed or strongly agreed that there is only one possible "good" outcome in this election. However, despite this response, 69% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that people voting for the opposite political party are "bad" people.

Then, when presented with the statement, "If a person is eligible to vote in this presidential election and chooses not to, they are being selfish and making a bad choice," student responses varied, with each option receiving at least 11.9%. A third of students agreed (4) with the statement.

The next questions addressed more specific political opinions.

32.4% of students responded neutrally (3) to the belief that Americans pay way too many taxes, followed closely by 30.3% who disagreed with the statement.

When asked if they agreed that pregnant people should have easy and safe access to an abortion, the overwhelming majority agreed or strongly agreed, coming in at 80.8%.

Similar responses were recorded for the following statement that the U.S. should have stricter gun control legislation, with 82.4% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Responses were more mixed about U.S. military spending, with 54% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the U.S. puts too much money in its military.

Opinions were similarly mixed on the subsequent question discussing if U.S. immigration laws are too severe. Answers on this subject varied, with each receiving at least 12% of votes. 2 and 3 received the highest proportion of responses.

Only 7.4% of students strongly agreed that they trust the current government on sensitive issues, while 80% of responses fell in the 2 to 4 range. 63.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed that a presidential candidate's plan for addressing conflicts outside the U.S. should play a big role in this election.

Politics at Harvard

For this section, respondents were similarly asked a series of questions about their political experiences at Harvard. Again, they could answer

in a range from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

When asked if they feel comfortable expressing their political opinions at Harvard, 54.8% of students agreed and 28.5% disagreed. 59.4% agreed or strongly agreed that Harvard is a politically polarized campus, and less than 3% strongly disagreed. Despite the previously observed majority believing that Harvard is politically polarized, 73.9% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they can have friends at Harvard who have very different political beliefs.

65.3% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that Harvard faculty push their political beliefs onto students in class. However, 19.8% agreed with the statement. When asked if they trust Harvard students and faculty to make informed, thoughtful political choices, only 8.1% of students strongly agreed. 37.8% of students agreed (4), 27.3% felt neutral (3), 17.2% disagreed (2), and 9.6% strongly disagreed. In other words, around one fourth of the Harvard undergraduate respondents have low confidence in their peers' and faculty's political choices.

Student Commentary

For the final part of our survey, we asked respondents to anonymously provide optional answers to a series of prompts. Here are some common or striking responses from each question.

"What factors are most important to you in this upcoming election?"

Women's rights, reproductive healthcare, climate and the environment, gun control, and the economy were the most frequent issues referenced by students. Many students also mentioned the Israel-Palestine conflict and their desire for demands for a ceasefire in Gaza as critical factors.

Do you think it's important to vote? Why or why not?

While many students expressed disdain for the electoral college, the majority still expressed that they believe it is very important to vote.

"Extremely important. So much is at stake. Our futures, our health, our safety, our freedom, etc. If one has the privilege to vote for one's own freedom, they should."

"It is essential to vote and childish not to. It is an immense privilege to have a voice in government. Those who don't take that voice take that privilege for granted."

"Yes, moderately so, but civics don't begin or end there. Some of the most powerful and lasting civic and societal change happens outside of the government and its bureaucratic mechanisms."

Why are you voting for the candidate that you are planning to vote for?

Students expressed their support for both the democratic and republican nominee as well as third party candidates.

“Kamala Harris supports healthcare reform, abortion access, and gun safety legislation. As a person with a chronic illness, my ability to afford necessary medication (and to even have legal access to that necessary medication) is on the line in this election. As a woman, I want to have autonomy over my body. And as a graduate of a Broward County, FL public high school, I am ardently aware of the need for more thorough gun safety legislation.”

“I just think the Kamala administration’s plans would not have as much of an impact economically on my actual experience as a citizen in the United States.”

“Although I have huge reservations about Harris’s policy in Palestine, I believe that the Biden administration has done positive things for the country in regards to inflation and I have grave concerns about Trump’s policies on abortion, housing/homelessness, queer rights, and his attitude towards democracy.”

“I am voting for Trump because he has helped promote the pro-life cause and has saved many unborn babies’ lives with his political decisions, because he actually cares about the security and safety of our nation unlike democrat politicians who allow tons of illegal immigrants to enter the country without caring about the Americans they are supposed to serve, and because he cares about improving the economy as well. A candidate that believes in God and promotes Christian, traditional values in some ways and fails in others is better than a candidate that opposes most of what that this country used to stand for and what God intends for his people.”

Do you think Harvard is a comfortable place to be during an election? Why or why not?

Generally, responses from conservative students expressed that they felt judged and uncomfortable speaking about politics on campus. Liberal students did not express the same concerns explaining that they see

Harvard as an open-minded and inclusive community.

“Absolutely not. Most students here identify as liberal, so it’s quite difficult to exist in this place as a conservative. Many (but importantly, not all) liberal students on this campus refuse to associate with conservatives, because they make assumptions on their personal values based on how the popular media portrays them. Much harmful rhetoric is perpetrated about conservatives online by liberal students on their personal social media. Word of mouth goes around, warning others that another student is a conservative. Nearly every conservative I’ve met on this campus has to hide their political identity, which is a big part of one’s identity at this age, so as not to lose social status and/or friends.”

“Yes and no. People here often shy away from difficult political conversations, which can be comfortable or not, depending on your perspective. Personally, not knowing where much of the student body stands politically makes me uncomfortable.”

“I think it is an exciting and enriching place to be as an epicenter of American political thought. I think it is an uncomfortable place to be because of the national spotlight and significance of this institution, but so far I’ve seen it manifest in the best ways in terms of the programming offered by HKS and the College.”

Is this election more important than most past presidential elections have been? Why or why not?

Most students felt this election is more important than the average election. Some students, however, did not feel confident enough about their knowledge of past presidential elections to answer.

“Yes, because this isn’t an election about differences in policy. It’s about even deeper differences in terms of what the candidate believes should be the power of the presidency and what democracy looks like.”

“Yes, because in previous elections there hasn’t been the danger of the combination of the catastrophic possibility of Donald Trump’s policies and the actual logistical apparatus to execute them.”

“Not significantly. I think the most important factor is national decline—under Trump, we raise the national temperature, but under Kamala, it’s overregulation and death by a thousand cuts. Otherwise, the economic or social climate isn’t anything we haven’t seen before.”

“Every election is important, but given Trump’s current rhetoric, I believe this one is as important as ever. A Trump presidency would likely lead the United States toward a dictatorship.”

If you could send a message to all people eligible to vote in the upcoming election, what would it be?

“Young people from just a few states can decide this election. Please do not take this opportunity to vote for granted.”

“Please do the due diligence of researching your candidate well and understanding exactly what you are voting for. Do not simply let media outlets like Fox, CNN, MSNBC, etc... sway your decision; look strictly at policies and existing numbers/data, and vote for the person you believe aligns with your values and aspirations best.”

“Engage with somebody close to you who does not hold the same political beliefs and really try to understand where they are coming from. Always good to think about the good in people that you disagree with on such polarizing issues.”

Thank you for participating in and reading the results from the *Harvard Independent’s* 2024 Political Survey. For further information on the survey and to see the other articles in this year’s edition, read The Political Issue out now!

LAYLA CHAARAOU ’26 (LAYLACHAARAOU@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND NATALIE FRANK ’27 (NFRANK@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITE NEWS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

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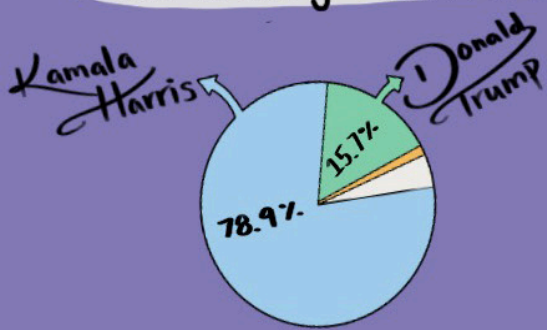
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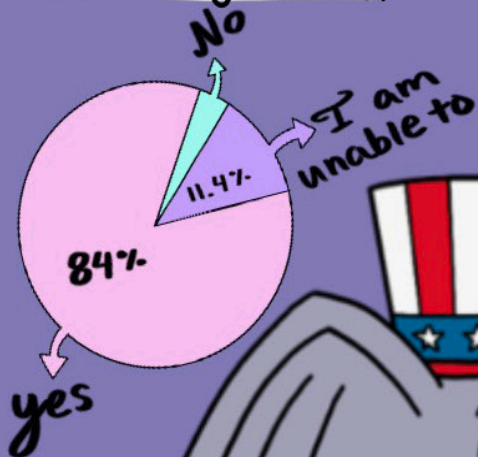
COME HAVE A WONDERFUL EVENING

Political Survey Results of 391 responses...

If the election was today, who would you vote for?

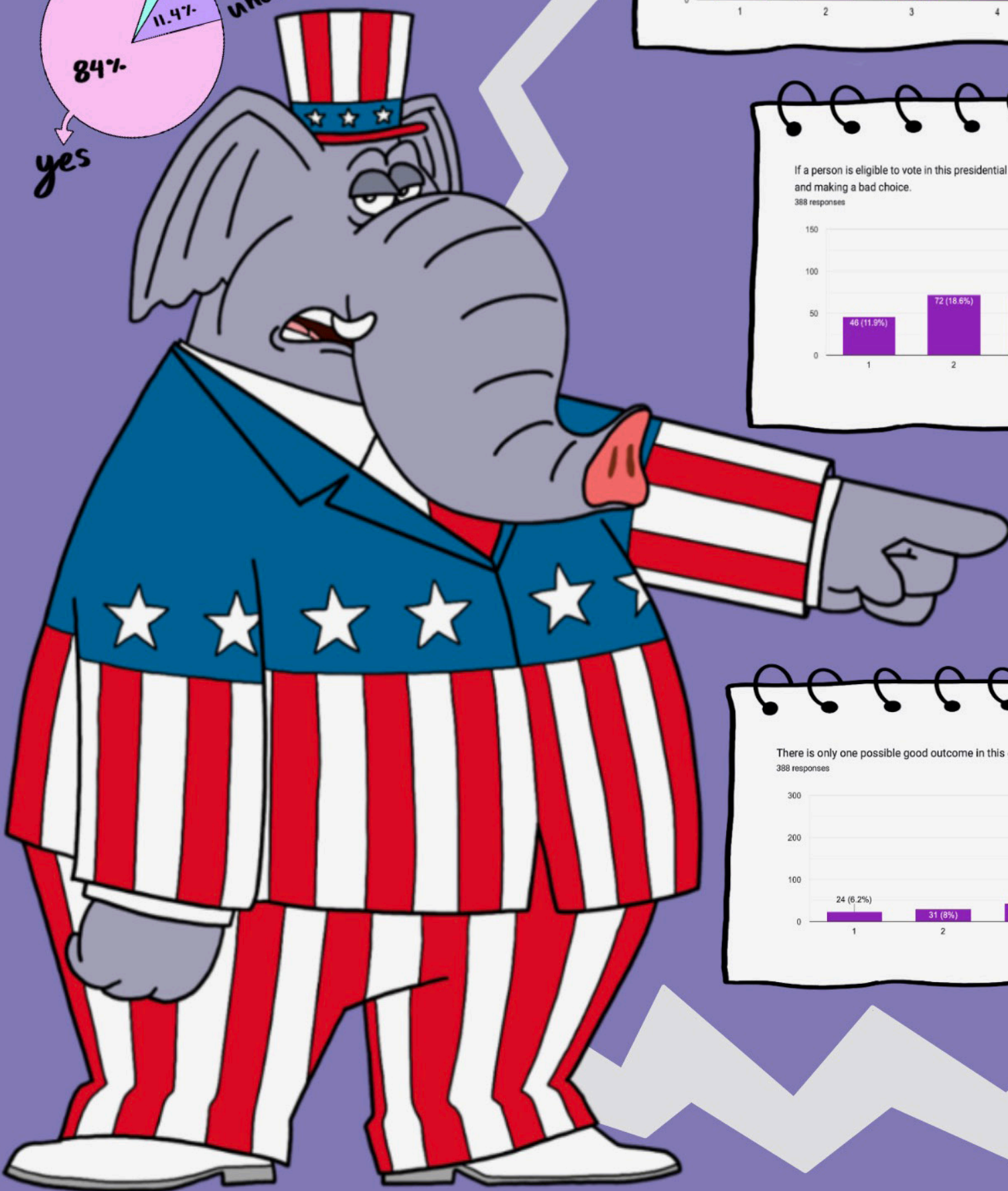
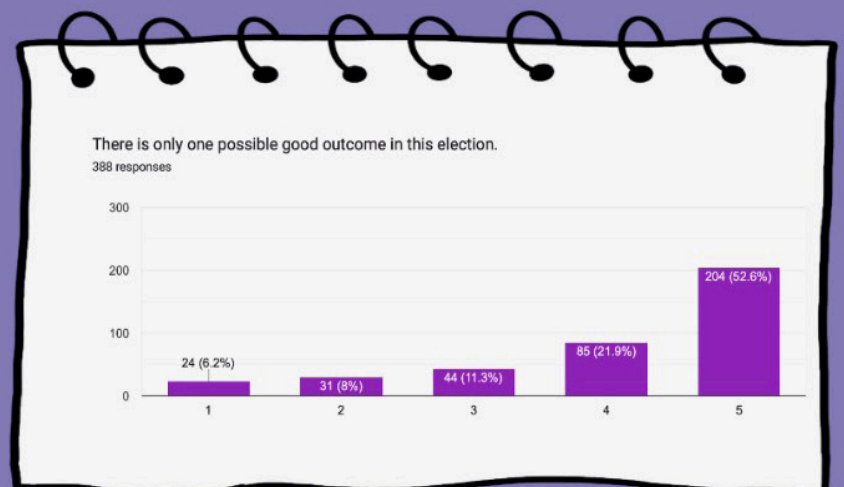
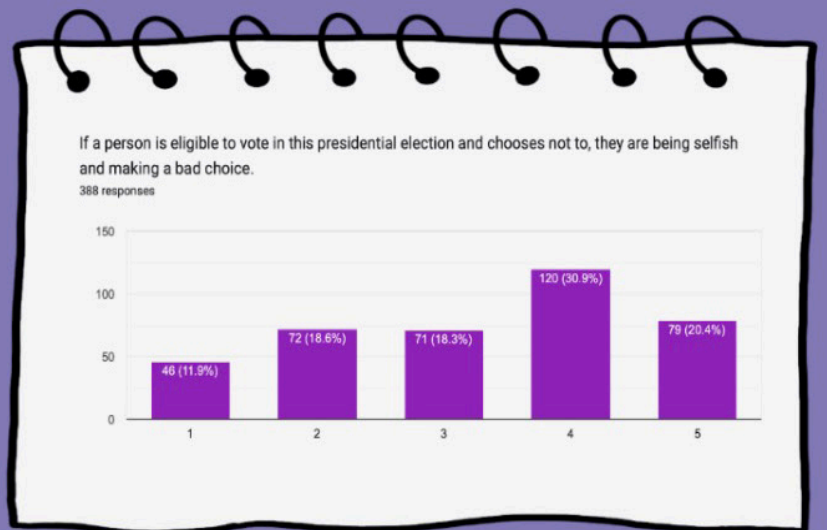
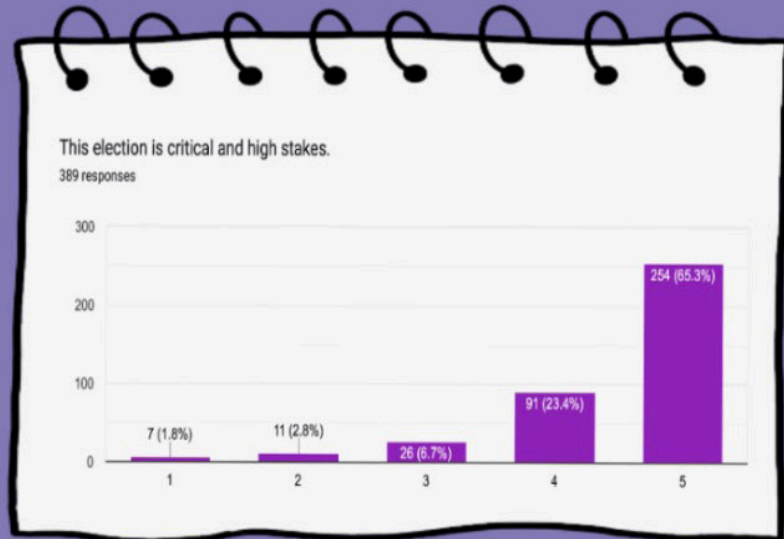


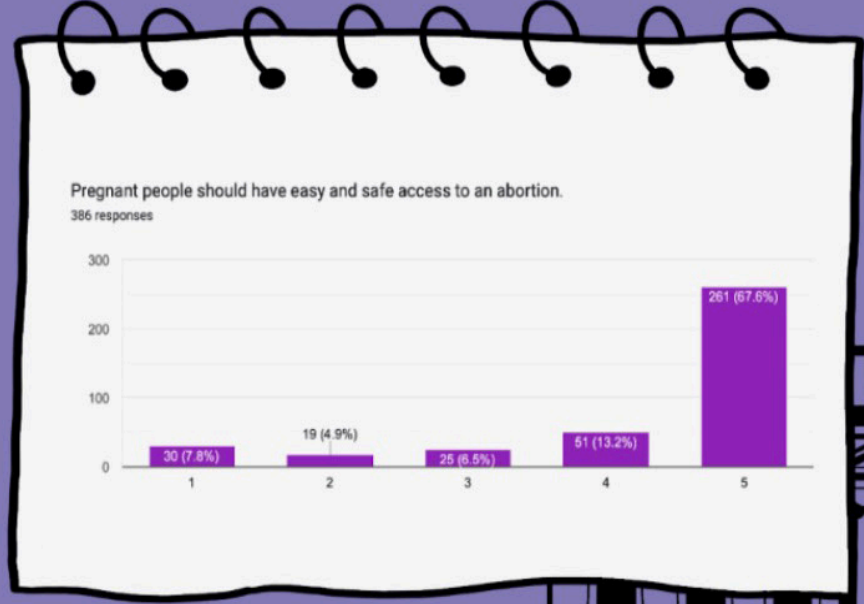
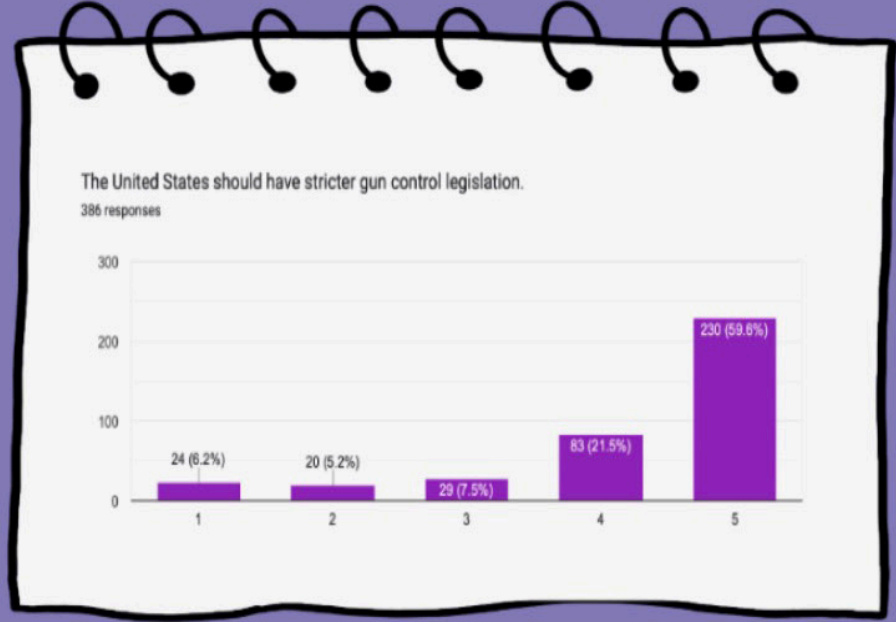
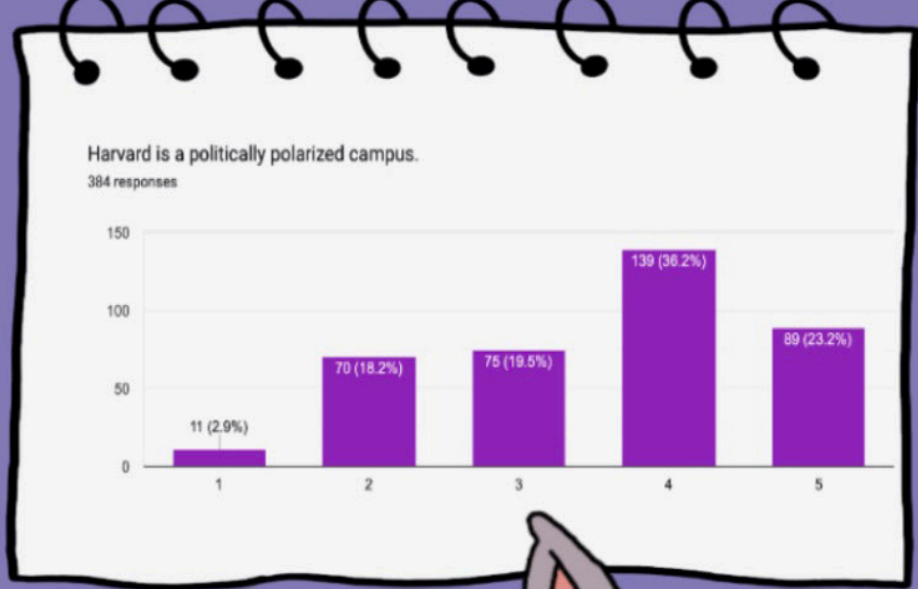
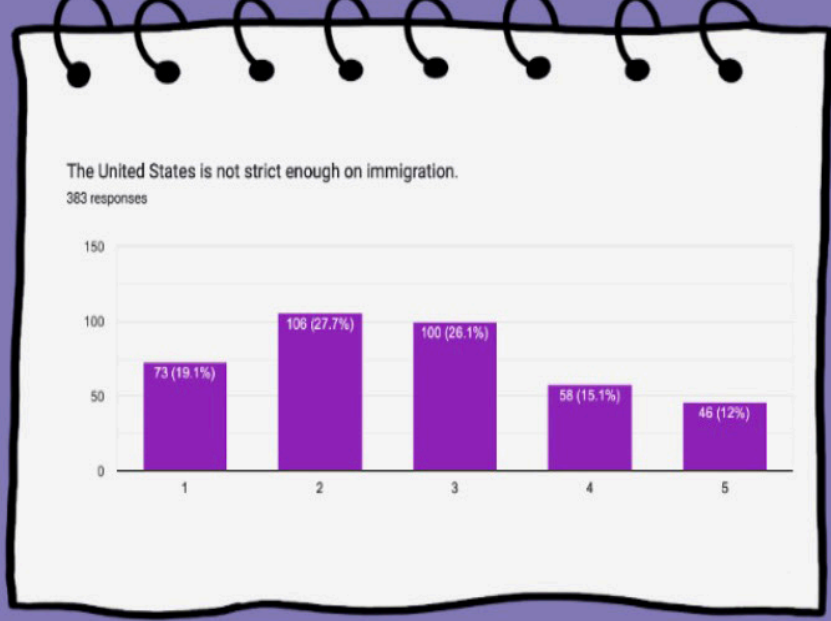
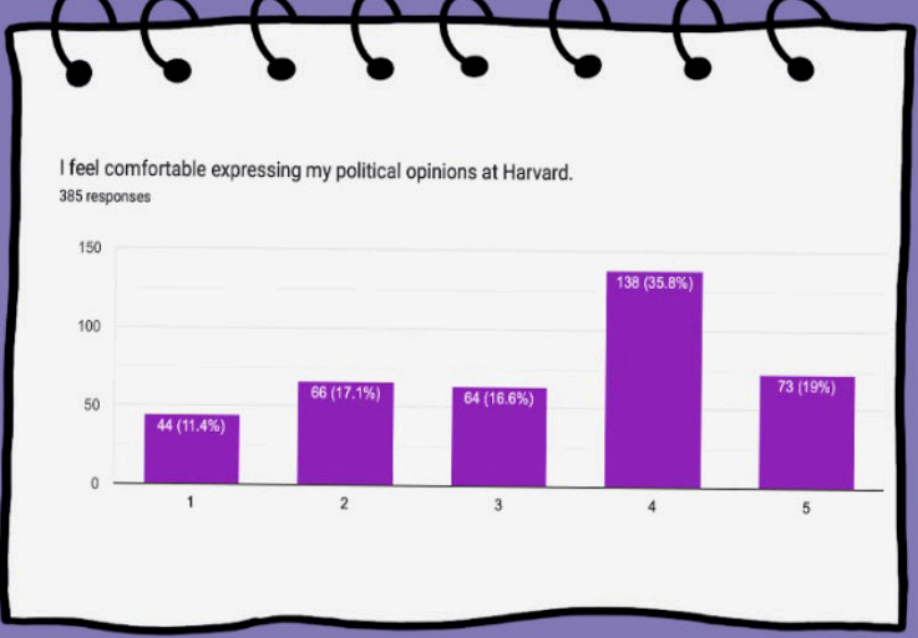
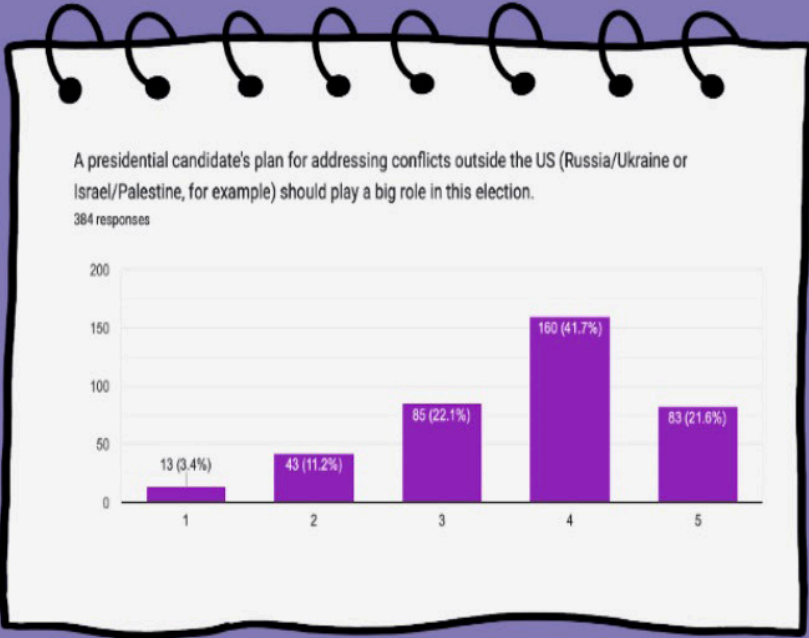
Do you plan to plan to vote in the upcoming election?



for the the following:

1: Strongly disagree → 5: Strongly agree





FORUM

From Watching The News To Living In It

The international student experience of living in the U.S. during an election period.

BY BREAGH BRIDGE '27

ensions run high every four years in every corner of the U.S. during election season. In the months leading up to the presidential election, it seems like it's all anyone talks about.

But it's not just the Americans tuning in to watch. Around the world, people are tuning in to find out who will lead the United States for the next term. The U.S. presidential election has far-reaching consequences, not just for American citizens but also for global economies, political alliances, and even cultural trends. I remember the 2016 election with former President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Hilary Clinton being a hot topic of discussion amongst my peers in my 6th-grade class in Kelowna, BC, Canada. This, in hindsight, is hilarious—we knew nothing about the details, and one hundred percent of our information came from social media—it was a case of pop culture, not a passion for politics.

The effects observed in other countries are not always felt on a daily basis by individuals. The outcome of an election impacts the lives of non-Americans, but not so directly that the results feel deeply significant to them. My perspective is that the rest of the world—to a certain degree—observes American politics as a spectacle. Every four years, it is like any good TV drama—there's a protagonist and antagonist, controversy, debate, and eventually a shocking conclusion. International students at Harvard may be highly interested in politics in their home country, and even in the U.S. as well, however, now as temporary residents of the U.S., they have to adjust to having personal ties to such a public and media-centered democracy.

This campus tends to serve as a microcosm for broader political tensions. Harvard students know all too well the canonical experience of going home for Thanksgiving to be berated by relatives about “how things are going amidst tensions on campus,” as nosy aunts and uncles like to say. These questions are only amplified for international students as we play the role of correspondent to our families at home.

For Americans on the other hand, I have found that people's identities are heavily tied to their political opinions. Politics are commonly even small talk, and Americans are proud to be so involved in their democracy. The American stereotypes run as strong as ever when it comes to politics; everything is big and loud and publicized. After all, “we exist in the context of all in which we live and what came before us,” (Kamala Harris), and in U.S. politics, that history runs deep:

of 10 people who lean Republican also have parents who lean Republican, and 9 out of 10 people who lean Democratic also have parents who lean Democratic. The inheritance of opinions is divisive, and this phenomenon is formative for culture across America. Compared to international students, Americans have a sense of normalcy in political discussions here from things as small as being used to the two-party system and knowing the history of each party. Americans have grown up hearing about the political views of anyone they associate with, and they have a multitude of data points of people's opinions on each party and how things have played out in the past, making this system easier to navigate.

Harvard, renowned for its studies of government and politics, has produced more U.S. presidents than any other university and will continue to produce world leaders. This means the learning curve of coming here not well-versed in the American political system is a steep one. As an international student living in the U.S., policy changes can impact your daily life in fundamental ways. Additionally, your awareness and appreciation for various election-related issues can deepen significantly as you navigate this new environment. We are no longer watching these issues from afar—we are living them.

Whether in class discussions, campus protests, or casual conversations, politics surround students at such a renowned university like Harvard. Our campus reflects the political tensions playing out across the country and the world. You can't leave your dorm without seeing someone protesting anything from the Israel-Hamas war to veganism. Although the Canadian politicians I have grown up watching are equally mementable, the American election is a spectacle in itself: there are opinions from both ends of the extreme broadcast even on the Harvard campus. Learning to have an opinion in a new system you didn't grow up immersed in or know the history of is intense.

All students, regardless of nationality, are navigating a complex landscape

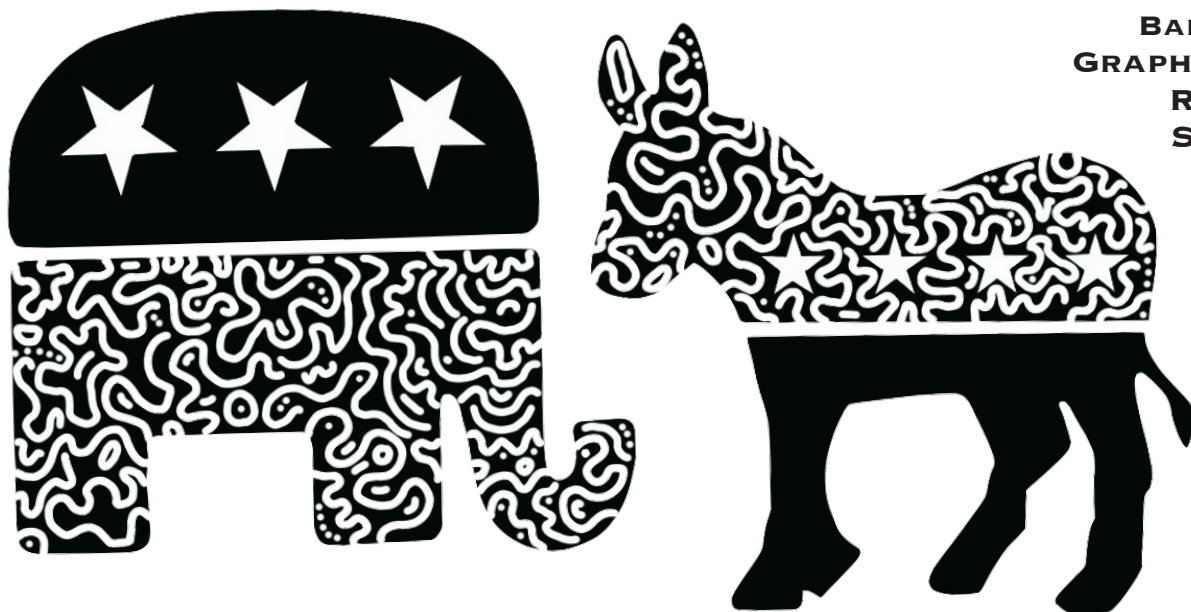
of opinions, but for international students, this part of student life is paradoxically so close and so far from home. It is a unique circumstance to call a place home for four years but not be a part of the democracy in that country. This is the case for around 25% of Harvard College students. I acknowledge that as non-taxpayers and temporary residents, international students shouldn't vote.

However, we are nevertheless affected by the outcome of elections. Policies on student visas, post-graduation work opportunities, and even admissions and campus culture are shaped by the decisions made at the highest levels of government. This makes me feel compelled to be knowledgeable about American democracy. Beyond that, the election season sheds light on ways in which the U.S. is different from my home, a fact I tend to brush off. The issues on ballots here are different than in other countries, and these issues are representative of what a nation cares about.

I enjoy the fact that election season forces you to learn a thing or two and challenge your own opinions as discussions crop up in Harvard student life. Especially this year, where it seems there is more discussion about voting for third-party candidates or people challenging what it means to support a party versus its presidential candidate. After all, democracies vary from country to country. Being from Canada, I find myself getting hung up on the fact that there are only two parties of majority to choose from in the U.S.

It is life-changing to live somewhere where democracy is so outwardly spoken about and celebrated, and international students should feel compelled to have an opinion and be informed on American politics, even if it is certainly not a subject that is top of mind for us at home. We have two countries to worry about, but there is something to learn from the publicized and polarized Great American democracy, even if it means embracing being in the Harvard spotlight.

BREAGH BRIDGE '27 (BREAGHBRIDGE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS A PROUD CANADIAN BUT ENJOYS A GOOD SINGING OF THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER. GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26



Point/Counterpoint: Should Gun Control be Made Stricter?

A discussion on gun control in the United States.

BY TYLER DANG '28 AND WILL GRAYKEN '28

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed. In an age where firearms are widespread across the nation, the Second Amendment and the conversation around gun rights remain major talking points in national debates. Proponents of gun control argue that the dangers posed by firearms outweigh any benefits from the right to bear arms, while opponents maintain the importance of self-defense and their unalienable rights.

We will examine the merits and flaws of three common arguments regarding gun control: the use of firearms for defense, the historical importance of the right to bear arms, and the economic impact of gun control.

DANG: Though relatively moderate solutions have been proposed, the right to legally own firearms should not be infringed.

GRAYKEN: Enhanced gun control presents a solution to the increasing tragedy and loss that firearms have inflicted.

Capacity to Defend

DANG: A firearm can be used in many ways to defend the owner. The most obvious way is in cases of self-defense. Though law enforcement is to manage “public safety,” it is impossible for officers to prevent every single altercation. Allowing citizens to defend themselves both prevents and deters crime, since criminals may avoid targeting individuals that they believe to be armed.

Furthermore, surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the late 90s, when extrapolated to the U.S. as a whole, imply that defensive uses of guns were far more prevalent than offensive uses. The Department of Justice’s National Crime Victimization Survey estimates about 100,000 defensive uses annually, though it’s important to note that the survey first asks whether the respondent was a victim of a crime. In 17 other studies from the late 90s, that estimate jumped to about 760,000 defensive uses. More importantly, in about 95% of these instances, the respondent simply showed their weapon, causing the attacker to back off.

Firearms can also be seen as the “great equalizer,” allowing those who may be physically overpowered the ability to defend themselves. A 2018 study found that 81% of women and 43% of men nationwide reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment and/or assault in their lifetime. And the CDC in 2000 estimated that 17.7 million women and 2.78 million men had been the victims of attempted or completed rape. Furthermore, a 2007 study concluded that 40% of women carried pepper spray or a noise maker. While both firearms

and mace have pros and cons, many argue that private ownership allows the user a better chance to defend themselves.

GRAYKEN:

Proponents of individual gun ownership seem to continually emphasize their necessity in acts of self-defense. However, the reality is that firearms are rarely used in such situations. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, only 1.1% of all the self-protective behaviors undertaken by victims of violent crime involved the use or threat of a firearm, making it the least-employed method of self-defense in America. These statistics starkly contrast with the perception, often held by pro-gun lobbyists, that guns are necessary in America as self-protective measures.

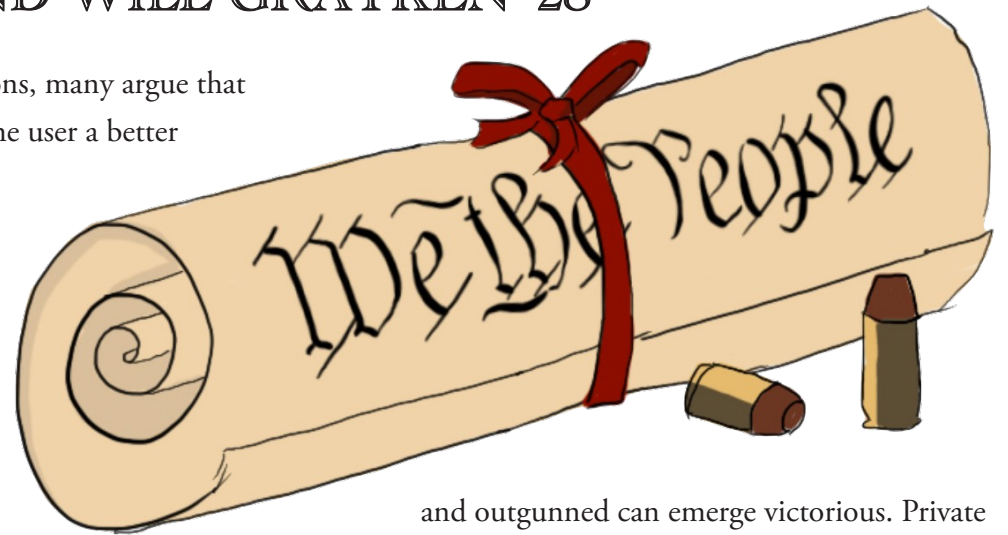
Rather than helping in these supposed acts of self-defense, handgun ownership in America has instead been attributed to a substantially heightened risk factor for suicide, such that 54% of gun-related deaths in 2021 were suicides. More civilians in the United States own firearms than in any other country, and this access to such dangerous weapons has meant that handguns are used in 75% of all suicides. It therefore seems obvious that decreasing the number of guns in circulation in America is essential to ensure the safety of its citizens.

Additionally, the idea that firearms are useful to women in cases of gender-based violence is often overstated. While theoretically, access to guns could help mitigate the anatomical disadvantages women face in physical altercations with men, particularly in cases of domestic abuse, the reality is quite different. The presence of a firearm in a household increases the likelihood of domestic disputes turning fatal. Of all women killed by intimate partners in the U.S., 55% are killed with guns, and the presence of a firearm in situations of domestic violence actually increases the risk of a fatality by 500%.

Historical Significance

DANG: Traditionally, proponents of the Second Amendment argue it defends against governmental tyranny. The American Revolutionary War could not have succeeded had the patriots not been in possession of their own firearms. Though, in a modern era of tanks and fighter jets, would private ownership of firearms even stand a chance?

The Afghan mujahideen were able to withstand the superior-armed Soviet Union’s involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War. Using guerrilla tactics, the Viet Cong outlasted U.S. forces in the Vietnam War. Even a militia outnumbered



and outgunned can emerge victorious. Private ownership also acts as a deterrent discouraging any attempts at governmental tyranny.

The current legal interpretation of the Second Amendment is worth noting. In *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), the Supreme Court made a key distinction when reading the Second Amendment: the right to bear arms is protected regardless of affiliation to state militia. *McDonald v. City of Chicago* (2010) further applied this judgment to all states.

Proponents of gun control claim that modern firearms misrepresent the intentions of the Founding Fathers. While muskets and single-shot firearms were primarily used when the Bill of Rights was written, the technology for self-loading systems (offering faster output) had already been developed. Given the rapid development of firearms during this period, it is clear that the Founding Fathers could predict, to an extent, the power that firearms might hold.

Gun control also presents a threat to all rights. Ratifying, altering, or repealing an amendment not only requires two-thirds approval from the House and Senate but also the approval of three quarters of the states. Meanwhile, passing a federal act requires only a majority of the House and Senate and presidential approval. Gun control laws can therefore be seen as a threat to individual rights, as they could be enacted without the broad consensus needed to amend the Constitution.

Naturally, the Supreme Court was established to prevent the legislative branch from overstepping its abilities, but that has not prevented legislation that has restricted the right to bear arms. If more restrictions are permitted, we might establish a precedent of slowly constricting different rights. Where is the line drawn between what the government can and cannot limit?

GRAYKEN: It is undeniable that the historical context of the Second Amendment has made contemporary gun ownership in the United States particularly contentious. However, the original context in which this Amendment was ratified is arguably not applicable today. In fact, current American firearm laws are based on “interpretations” of the Second Amendment—in a modern context, what’s to say these aren’t *misinterpretations*?

Furthermore, in its original context, the Second Amendment was intended to safeguard the right of *militias* to bear arms rather than to protect the rights of individuals to own guns. As evidence, in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, former Justice John Paul Stevens indicated in his dissent that “nothing in the Constitution protected the use of arms outside the context of a militia.” Therefore, it would seem that in America as we know it today, where the army has taken the place of militias in ensuring national security, the circulation of guns for private ownership is not necessary.

Additionally, even if the Second Amendment was indubitably clear about personal gun ownership in today’s America, it was written at a time when a typical musket used in the American Revolution could fire three rounds per minute. Compare this to a modern AR-15, which fires 45 rounds per minute with higher accuracy and greater range. It’s hard to imagine that when the Founding Fathers wrote the Second Amendment in 1791, they could have foreseen the potential mass destruction that modern firearms would bring.

Economic Considerations

DANG: Finally, the economic effects of gun control must be acknowledged. Guns are a booming industry, totaling around 340,000 jobs. Manufacturing, distribution, and retailing are all jobs created by the demand for firearms.

Beyond the number of jobs that would be lost, gun control ignores the benefits of hunting. Hunters assist in environmental control, ensuring that certain populations of wildlife do not degrade forests. Further, hunting enables some people to feed their families and help combat food insecurities. Economically, hunters are required to obtain a license, which generates revenue on the state or local level.

Not only does gun control present a cut to these benefits, but it also introduces costs in implementing buyback programs and policing the trafficking of firearms. It would cost \$7.6 billion USD to reduce the total number of handguns by 10% through buybacks. This amount does not even account for the labor costs of law enforcement or other government personnel. Furthermore, buyback programs are voluntary, and stricter

require further costs in seizing firearms from those unwilling to return their guns.

Additionally, illegal trafficking of firearms already exists, with 230,000 firearms trafficked from 2017 to 2021. In nations with firearms bans, there is still illicit trade of guns into the country. A federal ban on firearms in the U.S. would surely present the same trend, thereby increasing the number of firearms illegally trafficked both into the country and across state lines, and any attempts to curtail this trade would require increased use of taxpayer dollars.

GRAYKEN: On average, firearms kill 120 and wound an additional 200 daily in the United States. In addition to the irreparable emotional damage this inflicts on the victim’s families and loved ones, these losses are also devastating from an economic point of view. It has been estimated that the cost of gun violence in America is up to \$557 billion dollars per year. These expenditures can be attributed to ambulance rides, inpatient care, physical and mental therapy for victims traumatized by gun-related violence, and mental health disorders as a result of these traumas. As an example of this, studies have shown that victims who have sustained injuries from firearms are more likely to develop substance abuse or psychiatric disorders, which in turn places a further economic strain on the healthcare system.

In addition to the tangible monetary costs of gun violence in America, it also has an impact on the future productivity of its victims. From a practical point of view, those who have been involved in nonfatal firearm altercations are often unable to work for some period of time, which in certain cases is lifelong. For a more tangible estimation, a 2022 study found that the U.S. economy lost out on 53.77 billion dollars in wages due to gun violence.

The issue of guns in America is often centered around the issue of school shootings. In addition to the undeniable tragedy of these events, mass shootings in schools also carry a significant, often overlooked economic cost. The trauma a survivor of a school shooting undergoes cannot be underestimated: such tragedies have been linked to the reduction in the likelihood of graduating high school by 4% and college by 15%, which in turn decreases future earnings and employment rates. Finally, it has been estimated that the

security enhancements schools have had to make in response to the increasing prevalence of mass shootings have cost over 150 million dollars since 2018 alone. It’s clear that the impact of school shootings and gun violence extends beyond the emotional trauma inflicted upon its victims; it also carries substantial economic burdens.

Conclusion

DANG: While there certainly are issues regarding the private ownership of firearms, the right to bear arms should not be infringed. This right provides citizens with the ability to defend themselves or their loved ones and deters further crime. Private ownership provides certain populations the ability to “equalize” the playing field in defending themselves. Furthermore, the right to own firearms holds significant historical importance. Maintaining this right defends both against potential tyranny and further restrictions of other rights. As gun control increases, how can we be sure that other rights will not also be constricted? Finally, the economic implications of gun control introduce drawbacks that could harm more than just gun owners. With the benefits of private ownership in mind, gun control should not be expanded.

GRAYKEN: While uninfringed gun ownership in America may present some benefits, they are largely outweighed by the destruction that firearms cause yearly. Guns significantly increase the risk of suicide and domestic violence in the United States, and therefore their self-defense value is negligible. Furthermore, the original meaning of the Second Amendment, aimed at protecting militias, has been misinterpreted in a modern context to justify widespread individual ownership, despite the profound differences in weaponry between the 18th century and today. Additionally, the economic toll of gun violence-related healthcare costs, lost productivity, and the cost of school shootings underscores the urgent need for stricter gun control to promote public safety. In light of the devastating human and economic costs of gun violence in America, it has become a moral imperative that we address it.

TYLER DANG '28 (TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS NOT YET SHOT HIS EYE OUT. WILL GRAYKEN '28 (WGRAYKEN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS A BRIT CONFUSED BY THE PREVALENCE OF GUNS IN AMERICA. GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE '27

ARTS

Roses Are Red, Violets Are Blue

A Harvard Republican-Democrat romance.

BY ANONYMOUS

Kyle was petrified to come to Harvard. All of his buddies from back home were headed to Alabama, Texas A&M, and BYU. On their last night together, Kyle's friends sat him down, said a prayer for him, and reminded him to try to keep his mouth shut so he doesn't get canceled by his overly woke classmates. Before he officially left home, he hugged his mom, shook his dad's hand, and kissed his guns goodbye.

Margo, on the other hand, had dreamt of going to Harvard since she came out of the womb. Instead of watching shows like "Yo Gabba Gabba" and "Blue's Clues" as a child, she'd plop on the couch and watch CNN for hours on end. For 10th grade Halloween, while most of the girls at school were Hooters waitresses, Margo was Susan B. Anthony. Her senior year, she led the debate team to Nationals, got a 5 on her AP Environmental Science exam, and, of course, fulfilled her dream of getting into Harvard. Although she'd miss her Prius and her two cats, she couldn't wait to get on campus.

Margo was most excited for her Gen Ed this fall semester called "American Society & Public Policy." Kyle, on the other hand, got a late start to registering for classes since he wasn't aware he needed to have his COVID vaccinations up-to-date. After finally completing the vaccine exemption forms, he was able to start enrolling in classes. Unfortunately for Kyle, the only Gen Ed with openings was none other than Margo's most highly anticipated course.

On the morning of the first day of classes, Toby Keith's "American Soldier" blared through Kyle's alarm at roughly 10:00 a.m. He shot upright, coming face-to-face with the Nelk Boys "FULL SEND" tapestry hung up across from his bed. Instead of brushing his teeth, he popped in some Wintergreen Zyns. He put on his favorite blue jeans and a camouflage quarter zip and was ready to go. He had only a short walk to CGIS from his dorm in Canaday C.

Margo had been up since 7:30 a.m. She took out her favorite, freshly dry-cleaned pantsuit and put it on. The crispness of her blazer nicely contrasted her messy, bed-head curls. She spotted her colorful sticker-covered bike among the rest locked up near Pennypacker. She cycled with purpose to grab a cutesy cup of coffee and a plate of overpriced avocado toast to start the day she'd been waiting for her whole life. Before she knew it, it was time to go to class.

Kyle made his way towards the back of the large lecture hall, while Margo made herself comfortable right upfront. The first class mostly consisted of going over the syllabus. Kyle was

zoning out, thinking about how his home friends got absolutely plastered every single night this week. The most exciting thing that had happened to Kyle so far was when his shared floor bathroom was empty one night when he really had to take a shit. Kyle snapped out of his trance when the professor mentioned randomly assigned partners for an upcoming project that asked students to address a relevant political issue. Margo's eyes were glistening like a kid in a candy shop as she immediately began searching around the room, trying to sort out in her head who'd be a like-minded partner, and who would not.

As Margo whipped her body around, she accidentally knocked over her big Hydro Flask onto the ground. She bent down to get it, hoping that no one would be staring at her. Yet when she came back up, she briefly locked eyes with a rugged-looking boy wearing camo all the way in the back. She turned back to the presentation in front of her, but couldn't help but think that the mystery boy was kind of cute. She let the thought last a second and then continued to focus on the class.

Later that night, Kyle was getting in a quick workout when he received an email with the subject line, "Your Project One Assigned Partner." In the body of the message lay Margo's full name. Curious as to who this Margo girl was, Kyle found himself on Instagram typing her name into the search bar. He clicked on her profile, saw she had 12 different posts on her Instagram story—half of them political infographics—and threw his phone across the room.

Margo received the same email with Kyle's name attached. With her already busy schedule, she felt there was no time to waste and tracked down Kyle's email to send him a message. Margo too couldn't help herself from looking for Kyle's profile on Instagram. Lo and behold, it was sort-of-cute camo kid. His bio had three American flag emojis and every picture posted was of him with a fish. Margo could already feel the panic building inside her. To some relief, Kyle was a quick responder. They planned to meet in Cabot Library the following night.

Margo found Kyle sitting in a booth. They both did their classic Harvard introductions and then got to

work. Margo suggested that they choose a climate change issue, like how golf courses are destructive to the environment. Kyle took immediate offense to this as he considered himself a "pro golfer." Margo rolled her eyes. She knew they would never agree on a problem to research, and she wished she could just tell him that owning three nice polos does not make you a pro golfer. Kyle could sense her annoyance, and the tension between the two continued to rise. All of a sudden, the boofy Harvard wifi gave out in the library. Kyle suggested that they just go back to his single in Canaday C since it was closest. Margo hesitated but knew she needed to take advantage of this time to work.

Kyle let Margo into his room. All of the lights were still on and South Park was blasting on the TV at a volume you'd think Kyle should have been made deaf by. Kyle pulled out his desk chair for Margo while he sat on his bed. Despite the reek of Old Spice and farts, Margo couldn't help but find Kyle kind of... sexy. Something was changing in Kyle too. He noticed Margo's sparkling blue eyes. They were just as blue as her hair. Suddenly, Margo jumped onto Kyle's bed and the two began to ferociously make out. Political views had completely left the picture; they were just two horny freshmen in a musty dorm.

One thing led to another, and Kyle reached over to his nightstand to take out the 12-pack of Trojans he'd been anxiously waiting to open.

"Wait," said Margo. "Are those biodegradable?"

Kyle scoffed but didn't want to let her comment kill the mood. "No, I don't think so. I can just not use any if you'd prefer."

"Don't be stupid," said Margo in between sucking Kyle's neck off. "I brought my own!"

**WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY
FOR THE
INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY
ANNELISE
FISHER '26**



The Apprentice on the Big Screen

A review of the new Trump biopic.

BY ARI DESAI '27

Written by *New York* magazine journalist Gabriel Sherman and directed by Iranian-Danish filmmaker Ali Abbasi, *The Apprentice* is the so-called “origin story” of former president Donald Trump, chronicling his early days under the mentorship of lawyer Roy Cohn and his marriage with Ivana Trump. Arriving just weeks before the 2024 presidential election, the film has had a troubled path to theaters. One of its key financiers and vocal Trump supporter Dan Synder tried to prevent its release after seeing how it portrays its subject. His company Kinematics sold its stake in the film, and after its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May, no distributor would pick it up for U.S. release until Briarcliff Entertainment in August. Trump’s attorneys even sent a cease-and-desist to Abbasi and Sherman over his depiction in the film.

The film is set between 1973 and 1986, bathed in a grimy New York City aesthetic. Abbasi and cinematographer Kasper Tuxen capture it on digital cameras that emulate old 16mm film for the first half of the movie and VHS-style broadcast video for the second half. These bold visual choices remove some of the glamor of Trump’s current media depiction, putting us at ground level with him while also highlighting the plastic artifice of his rise to power. The direction is at times reminiscent of how the TV show *Succession* was shot. The two works tread in similar subject matter (powerful American financial figures and their empires) and capture it in frenzied boardroom closeups with expansive backdrops of New York City. The camera keeps the audience incredibly close to Trump for the film’s entirety, forcing us to try to see the shreds of humanity behind his morally decaying figure.

Sebastian Stan’s lead performance is the first depiction of Trump in a narrative feature film, no doubt a daunting subject given the constant media circus surrounding him. It feels particularly monumental to finally see him portrayed on the big screen right now, amidst his third presidential campaign. Rather than try to do yet another impersonation of Trump’s voice, Stan focuses more on his mannerisms and how they’re affected by the film’s shifting power dynamics. The elaborate costuming and makeup, combined with Stan’s restrained performance, allow the brief glimpses of Trump’s genuine pathos to shine through, especially in the depiction of his troubled relationship with his immediate family. Our

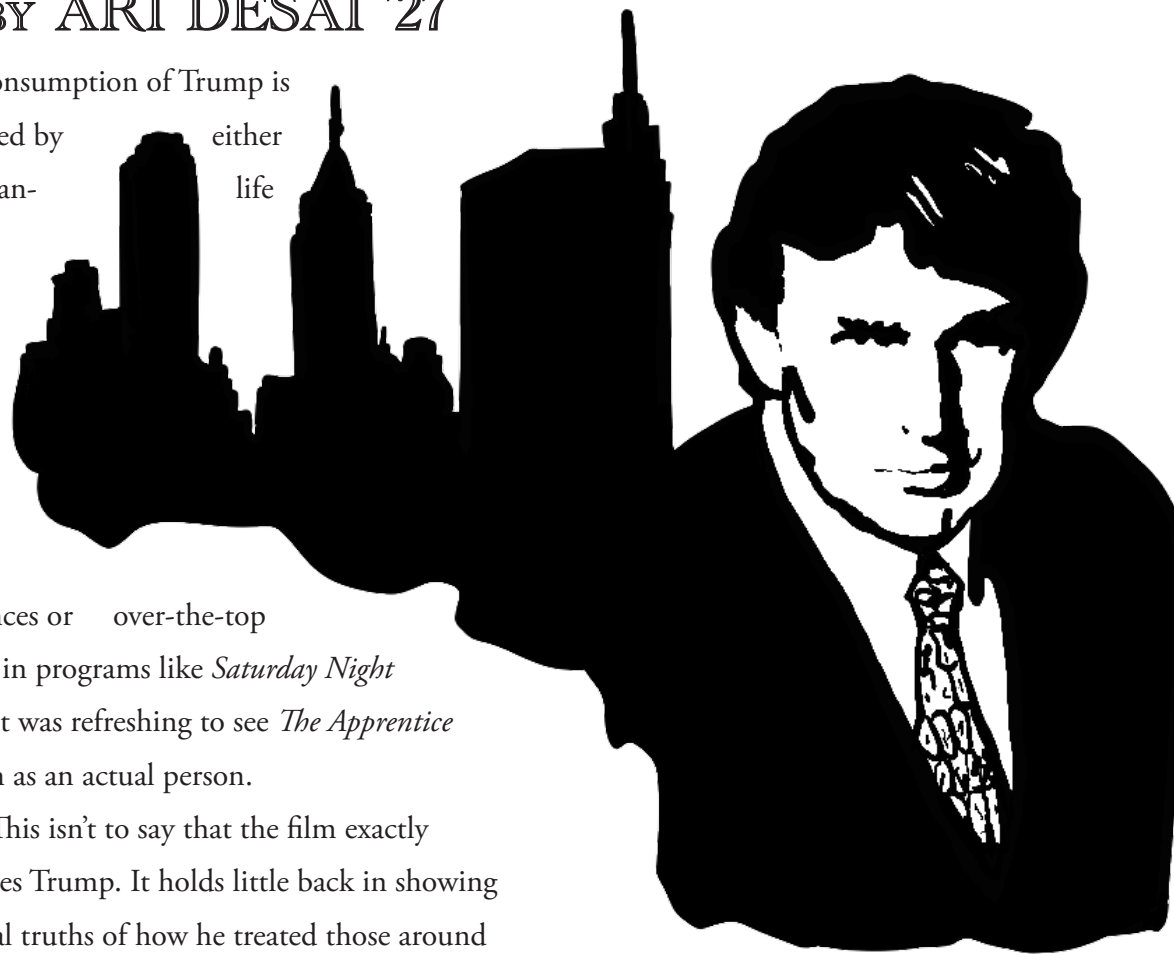
media consumption of Trump is dominated by either larger-than-life news

appearances or over-the-top parodies in programs like *Saturday Night Live*, so it was refreshing to see *The Apprentice* treat him as an actual person.

This isn’t to say that the film exactly humanizes Trump. It holds little back in showing the brutal truths of how he treated those around him and the molding of the mindset that he would come to hold as president. The film toes a tricky line between trying to earnestly understand where Trump’s character came from and acknowledging how his brash, often ugly winner-takes-all mentality developed so rapidly. For the most part, it succeeds. Its choice of period is admirable for both trying not to capture the entire life of such a mammoth figure and staying away from dramatizing recent history, like any of his presidential campaigns or even the titular reality TV show that brought him new heights of fame.

But it does feel like by the time the film arrives at its third act, its central point has been made—we have seen and understood Trump’s transformation into who he is today. After Trump comes of age under Roy Cohn’s guidance, leaving his morality and interpersonal relationships completely demolished, the film seems to go on for another half hour, and we are left to wonder why. Past this point, there’s little new said in a film that already broadly confirms its target audience’s conceptions about Donald Trump.

Where *The Apprentice* truly shines is in its portrayal of the characters surrounding its protagonist. Roy Cohn was immortalized in Tony Kushner’s AIDS-centered play *Angels in America*, which spawned many iconic performances, including a memorable turn by Al Pacino. In spite of the shadow cast by that performance, Jeremy Strong, known for playing Kendall Roy in *Succession*, is stunning in his depiction of one of the more vile figures in recent American history. He captures the dead-eyed, emotionally glazed-over lawyer not only with intensity but also with a



shocking amount of pitiful emotion. By the end of the film, Cohn is somehow one of its most sympathetic figures.

Additionally, Maria Bakalova gets the chance to sink her teeth into a dramatic role as Trump’s first wife, Ivana Trump, with whom he shared a tumultuous marriage that the film unapologetically airs out. While Bakalova was great in more comedic or minor parts in *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*, *Bodies Bodies Bodies*, and the newest *Guardians of the Galaxy* film, here, she brings a much-needed tenderness to a film populated by detestable characters. Watching her whirlwind marriage with Trump count down its death timer is compelling and heartbreaking in equal measure.

For all of the controversy that *The Apprentice* has courted, its arrival before the upcoming presidential election feels nontrivial. Sherman was known for his coverage of Trump’s rise leading up to his 2016 campaign as well as Roger Ailes’ exit from Fox News. And for the most part, he treats this narrative with a similar journalistic objectivity. Despite being overlong, *The Apprentice* generally doesn’t feel like an overly sympathetic or demonizing portrayal of the former president. It won’t necessarily change any minds on the candidate, but for its frankness and lead performances alone, it’s worth checking out.

ARI DESAI '27 (ADESAI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WAS LATE TO HIS SHOWING, SO HE WATCHED THE FIRST 10 MINUTES OF THE APPRENTICE ON AN ONLINE CAMRIP HOURS LATER.

GRAPHIC BY ANNEISE FISHER '26

SPORTS

A Successful Head of the Charles Weekend

An ecstatic blend of exceptional rowing, crowd support, and New England beauty at the world's largest regatta.

BY WILL GRAYKEN '28

C In the penultimate weekend of October in Cambridge, the air was thick with a competitive buzz, food vendors lined the Charles River, and rowing enthusiasts decked out in Vineyard Vines cheered boisterously. These unmistakable signs mean only one thing: the annual Head of the Charles Regatta (HO CR) has arrived. This Sunday marked the end of the 59th HO CR, the largest 3-day rowing event in the world. The Regatta took place from Oct. 18 to Oct. 20, featuring 11,500 athletes and an additional 400,000 spectators. The HO CR course spans three miles and features six bridges, making it a technically challenging race for the rowers and an exhilarating spectacle for those watching.

The race itself stands as a testament to the intergenerational appeal of rowing. Events at the Head of the Charles range all the way from nail-biting races between high schoolers to equally thrilling veteran races, which in the past have featured athletes as old as 91 years of age. This variety means that any two races you watch will always be different, ensuring that the Regatta remains a highly anticipated annual athletic event for many. The quintessential backdrop of vibrant New England foliage further enhances the race's allure for both spectators and competitors.

Particularly, the Regatta is cherished by Harvard students, spectators, and rowers alike, who are immersed in a thrilling showcase of talent right on their doorstep. Beyond the scope of Cambridge, however, the Head of the Charles also holds great significance internationally. This year's HO CR featured athletes from 26 countries, including Sam Woodgate '28, a rower in Harvard's heavyweight freshman eight from New Zealand.

For Woodgate, the HO CR offers a rowing experience unlike

others he has encountered back home or at other global competitions. "That's sort of what makes the Head of the Charles such an interesting race. It's just the turns, the course, and the way that we have to overtake boats in order to get a better time. You set off in 30-second intervals, so you've got to be careful where you pass and overtake people. At Weeks Bridge, you're rowing and you're drifting around a corner, so you have no sense of boat feel. The boat is really heavy and that's what makes the Head of the Charles so unique compared to other races."

Freshman Ryan Brewington '28, a rower for Harvard's lightweight club fours, expressed similar sentiments, considering the Head of the Charles to be a distinctively unique race. Furthermore, the HO CR as a "head race" lends itself to challenges, further enhanced by the tricky bends of the Charles River. These types of races are a category of regatta where, instead of boats starting at the same time and racing alongside each other throughout the race, boats are set off at slightly staggered intervals, requiring faster boats to overtake others at various points along the river, all whilst navigating challenging bridges and turns.

Brewington spoke specifically to the challenges involved in rowing a head race. "Not having competitors directly by your side, it just makes it a little bit more of a mental game. I think personally, you have to sort of pace yourself, and you have to know if you're falling off the pace by the stroke coach that's on the boat. It's more of a mental race than a physical one because the opponents aren't directly next to you." As Brewington suggested, the difficulty of the HO CR is only enhanced by the mental pressure of direct side-by-side competition.

Brewington went on to describe specific

challenges

unique to the Head of the Charles, encompassing both its terrain and format. "The Elliot Bridge is by far the most challenging part of the course for the coxswains especially. It can be a make or break point of the race for most crews just because it's such a big turn. You'll have people getting caught under the bridge, or people trying to enter the bridge with you if you've caught up to them or if they've caught up to you. It can just be a mess under Elliot Bridge."

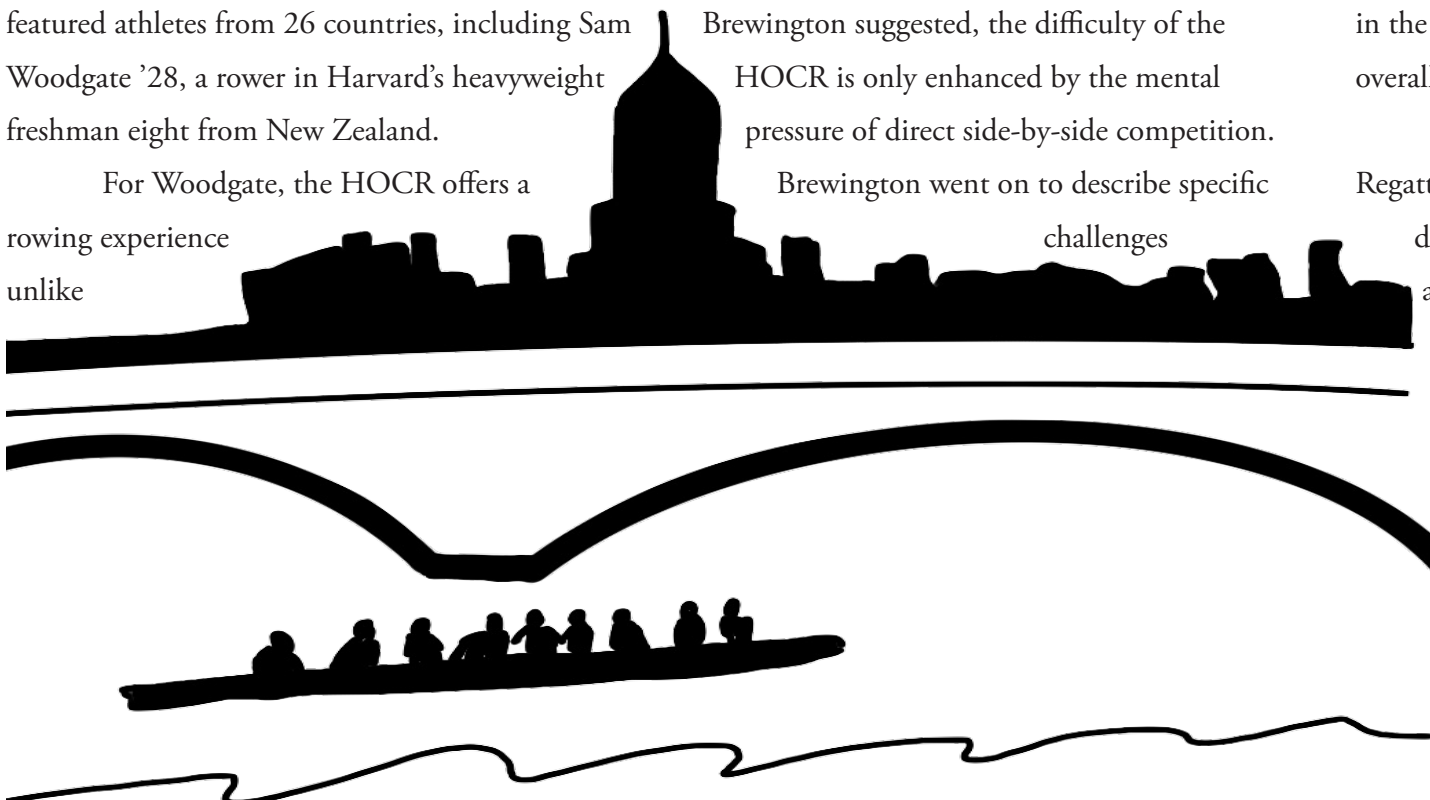
Despite the challenges articulated by both rowers, their teams delivered strong performances. Brewington's boat came 13th out of 42 boats in the Men's Club Fours division. Woodgate's boat finished 15th out of 30 boats in the Men's Championship Eights division, finishing with a faster time than the Harvard junior varsity boat, despite the fact he claimed that "nobody's really got any expectations" prior to the Regatta. Overall these were very impressive debut performances from both freshman rowers.

Coupled with the excitement of the rowers, the energy of the crowd was certainly palpable. Facilitated by the home-river advantage, Crimson spirit permeated the atmosphere, and swarms of Harvard students and alumni were clearly visible along all six bridges and concentrated around the various boathouses. In addition to the multitude of people supporting them, perhaps Harvard's rowers were also spurred on by a larger ambiance of excitement in the area, as many spectators enjoyed cooled beverages from the FALS bar by the finish line and sported HO CR merchandise. Harvard's notable performances include a third straight win in the Men's Lightweight Eight and a second place overall in the Men's Championship Eight.

All in all, the 59th Head of the Charles Regatta was a smashing success, with an impressive display of exceptional athletic performances and vibrant community spirit, which has further cemented the status of the HO CR as a beloved autumn tradition in Cambridge.

WILL GRAYKEN '28 (WGRAYKEN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS NEVER BEEN IN A ROWING BOAT BEFORE.

GRAPHIC BY SOPHIA RASCOFF '27



Sports Spotlight: Cooper Barkate

Inside the story of Harvard football's #18.

BY DENNY GULIA JANOVSKI '27

Cooper Barkate '26 didn't always envision himself playing football at the collegiate level.

Hailing from Southern California, he initially thought lacrosse would be his sport. "When I was growing up, I played lacrosse and liked it. Freshman year, I went into lacrosse season thinking I was gonna get recruited for it," he shared. However, during his freshman year of high school, everything changed. "I ended up playing football that year and got my first college offer. I thought it was more fun, so I transferred to Mater Dei and played football there."

His family's connection to the game influenced him growing up. "My dad got me into football. Ever since a young age, my whole family on my dad's side played football," Barkate recalled. Despite playing flag football for as long as he could remember, he didn't start tackle football until fifth grade. Even then, it wasn't until high school that he realized football might be a route for him as he pivoted his way into becoming a standout player at Mater Dei, one of the most well-known high school football programs in the country.

When the time came to choose a college, Barkate had multiple offers, but his decision ultimately was deeply personal. His sister had just started playing lacrosse at Harvard, and her experience gave him special insight into the school. "Seeing how unique it was for her, I wanted a similar experience," Barkate explained. That connection, along with the prestigious academics and football program, ultimately led him to Cambridge.

Since joining Harvard's football team, Barkate's role has grown significantly each season. "I'm taking on a bigger role every year, and I'm glad I'm progressing," he said.

This season, the team welcomed new head

coach Andrew Aurich, who Barkate has been excited to play under. "He's the perfect man for the job in a lot of ways—not only the discipline, but what he's done to change the program and improve on it since coming in," Barkate shared. "He's a first-time head coach, very hungry and passionate about the game—that's the energy he radiates on a day-to-day basis, and it's the kind of energy the team needs."

One of Barkate's favorite aspects of being on the Harvard football team is the tight-knit group of players. "Harvard football is a special place, and there's no bad apples."

Everyone is interesting," he said. That camaraderie is something Barkate values highly as he continues to develop on and off the field.

Looking ahead, Barkate hopes to see where football can take him, but he remains open to other possibilities. "I would play here and then see what the options are with football and beyond. I'm trying to take it as far as possible," he said. Barkate is looking to the future while continuing to live in the moment and enjoy every game this season.

When it comes to game day, no experience compares to the annual Harvard-Yale game. "It's a pretty decent-sized game;

35 to 40,000 spectators, 50,000 at Yale. A football season is week to week, so you go from playing in front of maybe 2,000 people, and then the next week, there's suddenly a lot of fans," Barkate explained. He added that Harvard Stadium itself adds to the atmosphere: "It's built like a colosseum, so it's very vertical. It feels like a quidditch match—a very interesting viewing experience for the fans."

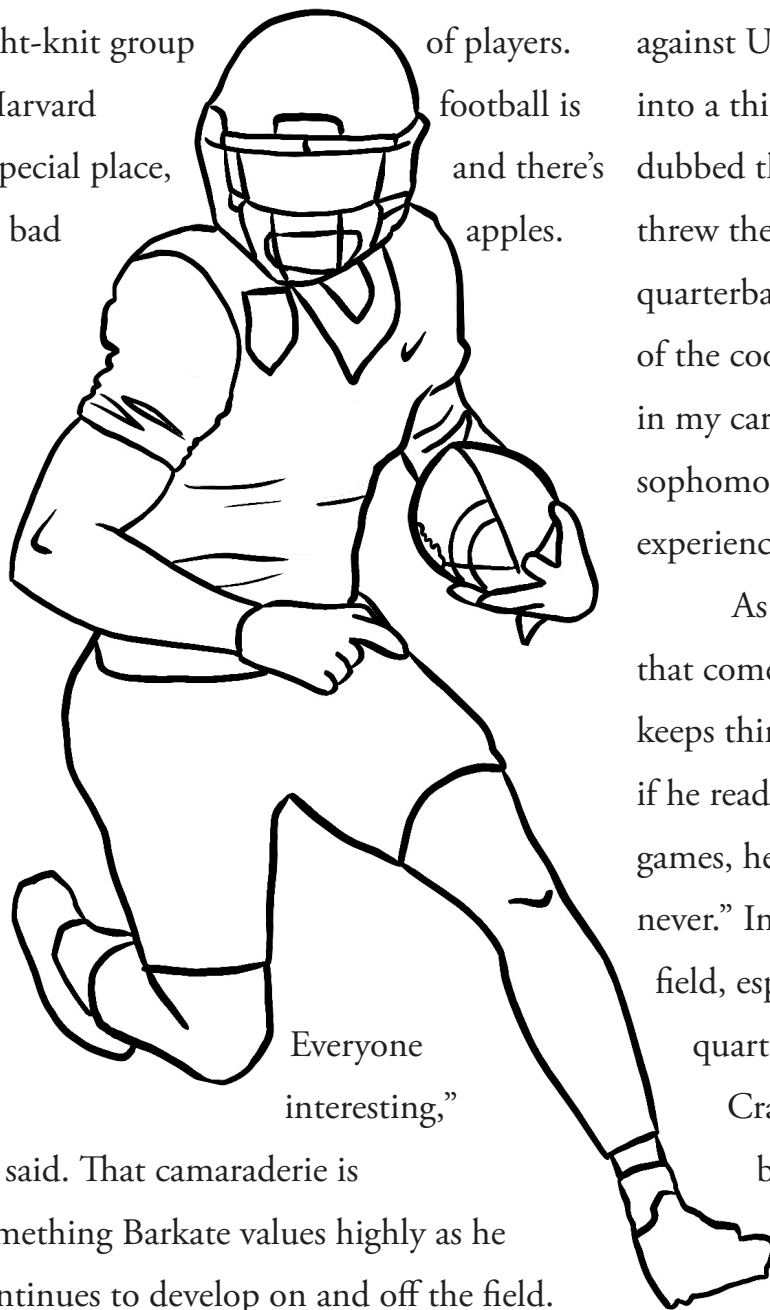
One of the standout moments of Barkate's career came in his thrilling game against UPenn last year, which stretched into a third overtime. In a unique play, dubbed the "Philly Special," Barkate threw the game-winning touchdown to quarterback Jaden Craig '26. "That was one of the coolest moments," he said. "Early in my career, I threw the touchdown as a sophomore to win the game. It was a crazy experience."

As for how he handles the attention that comes with being a key player, Barkate keeps things in perspective. When asked if he reads the Sidechat comments after games, he responded with a laugh, "No, never." Instead, his focus remains on the field, especially keeping an eye on his quarterback. "Just watch our QB, Jaden Craig—what he's gonna do. He's been balling out."

With a combination of talent, passion, and a deep connection to his team, Barkate is poised for more success both at Harvard and in his future football career, as he looks to expand on his 26 receptions for 465 yards and 6 touchdowns this season.

DENNY GULIA JANOVSKI '27
(DGULIAJANOVSKI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES SPORTS FOR **THE INDEPENDENT.**

GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27



Indy Sportsbook: Election Edition

Here are a few bets to place in class while you watch the election unfold.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26

Election time is upon us! This year, we have one for the ages: former President Donald Trump vs. Vice President Kamala Harris. As of Oct. 20, 2024, Kamala Harris has a slight edge in the most recent 538 polling data. However, on the betting stage, Donald Trump is far ahead in the lead with implied odds of around 60 percent on betting sites like Polymarket. It's anyone's race.

We like to think that the betting market is more accurate than the polls. According to Newsweek, the betting market has been around 77 percent accurate at betting the winner of the election in the last 35 years. Polls on the other hand have trouble remaining stagnant and have a lot to do with how the data is collected and interpreted. In 2016, the Huffington Post reported that Hillary Clinton had a whopping 98 percent chance of winning the election, and we all know how that turned out. In 2016, The New York Times reported that polls generally have around a six to seven percent margin of error on most polls, accounting for an error range of around 12 to 14 percent.

We are not statisticians by any means and often do not attribute much value to the polling markets. If you think about it, the election really only matters in the 7 to 10 swing states, so it's not surprising that the polls often predict just 40 states correctly, because those are "locks." For example, the odds for Massachusetts or California to be won by Kamala Harris currently sit around -15000 and -10000 respectively, and the odds for Trump to win Alabama and Kentucky are both -20000.

Like most Americans, we care about the swing states for this election: Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Georgia, North Carolina, and Arizona. (For those of us who live in Massachusetts, where the vote doesn't matter, still show up to your local firehouse to place your ballot on Nov. 5) In 2020, President Joe Biden took six of the seven swing states in his path to victory; however, this year, there is more uncertainty.

Starting with Michigan, my mom's home state, the recent polling data places this state as dead even. Trump won Michigan in 2016, while Biden won in 2020. Bovada has Trump at a slight favorite at -130, while Harris is at even odds. For this one, I think we are going against the book. Considering that Michigan will likely continue to remain blue, the even line is advantageous with good value.

Looking at Nevada, another state that is currently dead even in the polling, we again are going to go against the book. The Republicans have not won Nevada since Bush won in 2004, and we do not see the trend shifting in 2024. Nevada at +105 feels like a great pick here, and we love to exploit lines where we see fit. A little parlay with Michigan and Nevada going blue gives +310 odds and feels like surefire picks for the Democrats.

On the other hand, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin feel too close to call. Bovada has Trump favored in both states, however, the lines for either state are not great so steer clear of any bets here. While betting on Harris would provide more value, we will look at other swing states that could guarantee results.

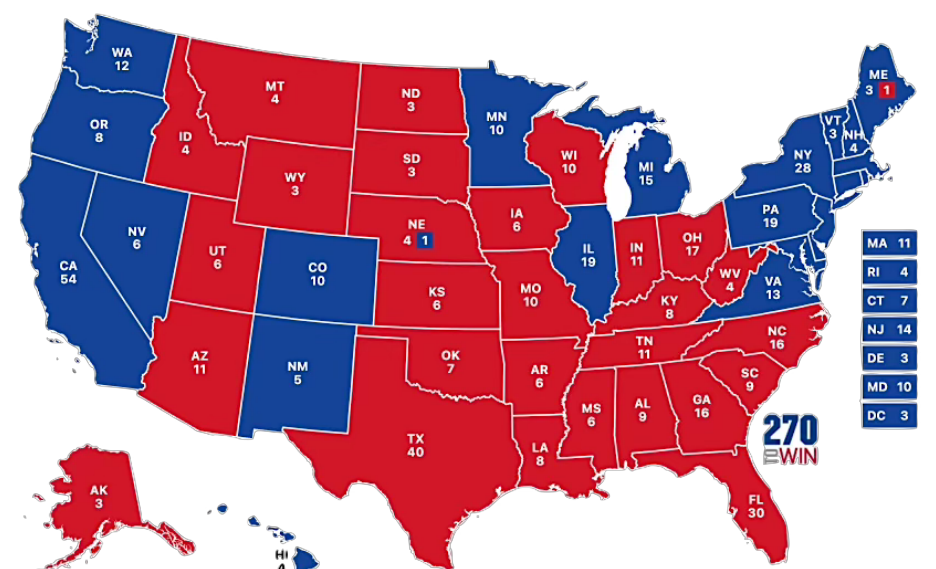
Georgia, North Carolina, and Arizona are all currently being led by Trump in the most recent polling data as well as the betting lines. We agree that it is likely that they will fall to former President Trump, considering that Georgia sits at -210 for Trump, North Carolina sits at -220, and Arizona sits at -260. Since betting on these states to win independently does not make as much sense, we think a parlay here is the way to go. By combining all three states for the Republicans, you can get

these odds for +200, which provides value for extra reward.

With that in mind, and our swing state predictions set, we believe that the 2024 Presidential Election winner will be former President Donald Trump. To be clear, we are not endorsing Trump by any means, but rather betting on who we think will win this election, and the betting odds agree with us. Currently, on Bovada, President Trump is -160. Although there is not much value to this bet, and gives former President Trump implied odds of 61 percent chance of winning, we would be remiss to not give a pick for the election. Adding Trump's win to our previous parlay would give odds of +385, which are odds we do like. Below are our filled-out predictions for every state:

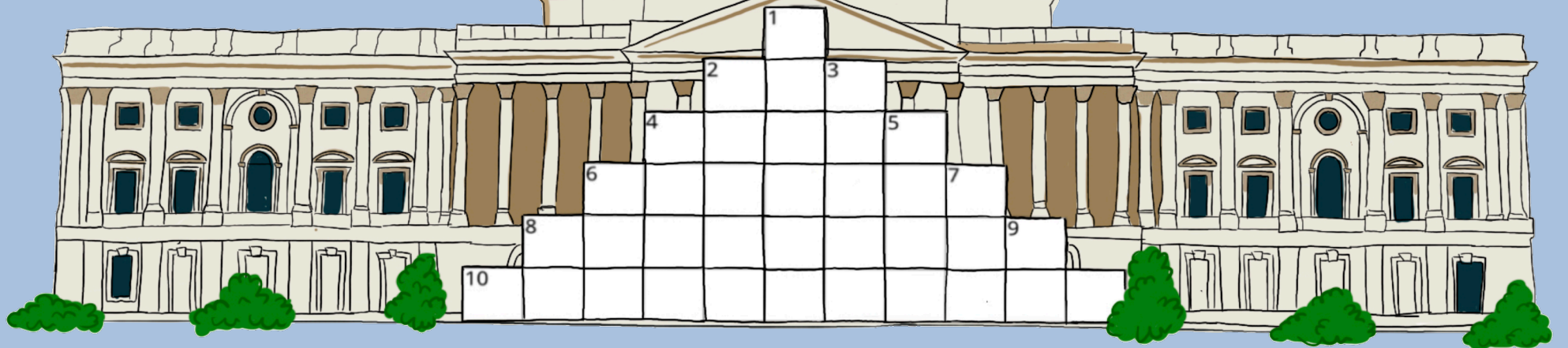
LUKE WAGNER '26 (LUKEWAGNER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS VERY EXCITED ABOUT THE ELECTION AND THINKS IT WILL BE ONE OF THE MOST TIGHTLY CONTESTED ELECTIONS IN RECENT HISTORY.

GRAPHICS BY EMILY PALLAN '27 & INDY SPORTSBOOK HEAT MAP



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Policy Pieces



BY HAN
NGUYEN '27

GRAPHIC BY CLARA
LAKE '27

ACROSS

2. Mens ____ (guilty mind)
4. Bank offerings
6. Gives an account of
8. Rule of the majority
10. Current events broadcaster

DOWN

1. Reason for a Boston party
2. Caramel-filled candies
3. Bone cavities
4. NASA vehicles
5. Candidate's goal
6. VCR button
7. Poli ____
8. The First State
9. Short greeting



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