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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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A Look Behind Closed Doors

A spotlight on peer counseling resources at Harvard.

BY TYLER DANG '28

Tucked between a common room, laundry machines, and the Office of BGLTQ, some of Harvard's most useful peer counseling resources remain hidden. While Harvard's Counseling and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) boasts a plethora of professional support, the peer counseling resources offer a private yet welcoming space free from judgment.

Harvard has six different peer counseling resources approved by CAMHS. The first is Room 13, the broadest of the six, covering topics anywhere from school concerns to substance issues. Room 13 can be found in Thayer Hall basement B-09 every night. RESPONSE deals with relationship issues and concerns of sexual assault and harassment and can be found in Lowell House EL-15, Sunday through Thursday. Harvard Eating Concerns Hotline and Outreach (ECHO) addresses concerns associated with body-image or eating and can be found in Eliot House basement T-24 on Sundays through Thursdays.

Indigo covers the intersectionality of race, gender, identity, and sexuality and can be found in Thayer Hall basement B-01, next to the Office of BGLTQ, every night. Harvard Undergraduate Group Peer Therapy (HUGPT) assists students in a group setting where each student shares their own wisdom to promote clearer communication. Contact supports issues regarding LGBTQIA+ and identity and can be found in Thayer hall Basement B-04 every night.

Beyond being peer led, these programs are unique in that they are "non-directive." This means minimal guidance or direction is given, allowing the individual to lead the conversation or problem-solving process. These programs provide a place to vent one's concerns without feeling judged or analyzed. "[We] really [try] to mirror those feeling words so that we don't maneuver the drop-in towards any sort of solution, but rather just hear their thought process," explained Annika Gagnon '25, a co-director of Contact.

What goes on behind the scenes to make these resources work? Each group is made of volunteers willing to sacrifice their

time to help others. "Every week we have an hour-long meeting with Harvard University Health Services (HUHS) and CAMHS supervisors, just to make sure everything is HIPAA compliant and that everything's up to standard," Gagnon shared. "We have a little over 20 staffers...so we try to staff people four times a month," she explained.

Despite these large time commitments, volunteering for these peer counseling groups has its benefits. Having spent three semesters with Contact, Gagnon has experienced her fair share of weekly meetings with HUHS but said these meetings often offer the opportunity for members to check in with each other. "It was really a lovely connection that I had not experienced outside of my friend group at Harvard," she said. "I joined and just completely fell in love with the community."

Beyond fostering a strong community, working for peer counseling groups offers personal development and self-discovery. This focus on self-discovery is especially important when considering challenges that many students face, like Duck Syndrome, where students glide smoothly on the surface while secretly struggling underneath. Gagnon, however, has gotten a glimpse underneath the water. "Experiencing that vulnerability kind of goes both ways... Seeing so many people being open and honest about those paddling feet, where it's not so smooth like you see above the surface, has been very gratifying," she explained. Furthermore, working with Contact has affected Gagnon's work-life balance. "Being part of Contact has allowed me to slow down and focus on quality rather than quantity in all sorts of aspects of my life, and I think it's also shown me how much I need and value strong community in my life," she revealed.

To join a peer counseling group, each applicant must go through an interview process. For Contact, the first interview aims to get to know the applicant's

counseling style. "One thing that we really value in the interview process is we'll give feedback during that first interview... Then, during the second interview, we do another mock drop-in and see how well they take that advice and implement it into their own style," Gagnon shared. The interview process concludes with a final decision made by the whole group.

Gagnon also described the strategies utilized to encourage discussion. "When a drop-in is really nervous...we try to wait—sit in the silence until it gets awkward, and then wait a beat longer," she shared. "I really think that it's okay for someone to kind of sit in and take that moment of grounding." When the drop-in does feel confident to speak, the counselors take their non-directive approach and let the drop-in control the conversation. "It's super helpful to just hear your thoughts out loud and makes it feel more organized," explained Gagnon.

Harvard's peer counseling resources provide a valuable and often underappreciated alternative to formal counseling services, offering students a private, supportive space to navigate their challenges. But further, these groups provide the opportunity to connect with peers seeking assistance, a tight-knit community, and even yourself. So, take a peek behind those doors—you might just find what you need.



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GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26

California in Cambridge

The Transition from West to East.

BY HEIDI HEFFELFINGER '26

Trading in their flip-flops and eternal sunshine for rain boots and 4 p.m. sunsets, Harvard students from California quickly learn that attending a college on the East Coast entails more than just a new campus—it's about learning a whole new lifestyle. Part of this lifestyle includes adjusting to a revised schedule, room, and curriculum along with other students, but Harvard Californians specifically must also adjust to an entirely different culture and climate.

Harvard culture departs from the often laid-back California lifestyle in a variety of ways; for one, the relentless dedication to school. "People are very focused on academics over here," said Maya Hilger '27. Where California generally adopts a "work hard, play hard" mindset, Harvard's is more focused on work than play. "The Northeast has a very 'get shit done' attitude," noted Thomas Harris '25. This mindset shift plays a significant role in the cultural differences.

These differences extend beyond academics and into everyday language. The stereotype of California surfer slang is a stereotype for a reason. "Sometimes I miss how friendly everyone is at home," commented avid surfer Hayden McJunkin '26 from Truckee, California. "People look at me funny whenever I say 'stoked.'" Although "stoked" is deeply rooted in California surfer slang, it's a versatile word that can be used by anyone to channel their inner Golden State. "I like to bestow the stoke and California vibes in my room," said Harris.

A major challenge for Californians at Harvard is the change in climate. As the sunshine fades away into winter, so do the tans and highlights that California students typically sport all year long. "The winter is tough here," noted Hilger. The stark contrast between the nearly constant pleasant weather and the frequent rain and snow storms is a lot to get used to. "No sunshine, no surfing, no beach vibes, no flip flops to class...made the move extremely challenging," said Mason Hunt '26 from Newport Beach, California. "I'd take California weather over Boston weather any day of the week."

One distinct aspect that makes this transition to rain and snow so difficult is the ease of different winter activities due to the weather. A winter evening at a California

college could easily be spent on an evening stroll or a picnic on the grass, whereas just going outside in Cambridge would require multiple layers regardless of the activity. This difference in accessibility is a key factor in making California appear to have much more going on. "There's just so much to it," Hilger commented in reference to her experience growing up in Fair Oaks, a city in Sacramento County, California. The options are seemingly



endless when you can comfortably walk outside in February wearing a t-shirt and shorts. "I took access to outdoor activities for granted," McJunkin noted. Granted, it is a lot easier to go outside without rain and snow.

Luckily, these students manage to keep their California identities alive. You can spot them tanning on the Quad lawn, constantly talking about how much better the California Mexican food is than Jefe's, and sporting their Rainbow flip-flops in 50 degree weather. "I wear flip flops to the dining hall despite the dirty looks," Hunt said. "The Massholes haven't rubbed off on me quite yet."

Additionally, a group of these students put immense effort into seeking out the ocean. They drive hours to find the best beaches in the area, spend hundreds on wetsuits and ship their surfboards out to continue surfing in the winter, and even create groups on campus to unite their fellow beach lovers. "I co-founded the Harvard Undergraduate Surf Club," explained Hunt. The Harvard Undergraduate Surf Club is perfect for bringing the surf lovers together, and the Californians are willing to travel to find waves. "I've gone on some solo surf missions up to some breaks in New Hampshire," McJunkin remarked.

The Harvard Undergraduate Surf Club is not just for California kids. It unites a larger group of students dedicated to finding waves near Boston, revealing the bigger Harvard community these California surfers become a part of as they embrace college on the East Coast. Harris, from New York City, New York and cofounder of the club with Hunt, explained his motivation for creating the club: "It was always something I really wanted to do. I've been a huge surfer since I was 10 years old...so we put in the work last winter break."

Harvard students from California additionally rely on each other to provide a sense of home. The simple fact of coming from the same state allows a sense of friendship and immediate bond between students. "Whenever I meet someone from California, it's a connection," Hilger stated.

Regardless of the severity of the Cambridge winter, many of these students have embraced the good weather Cambridge does have to offer. "I don't like much about the weather here. I will say, however, there is a period of about 3 weeks in early fall where I feel at home. Sun shining, birds chirping, and smiles gleaming. It's as good as it gets," said Hunt. Perhaps having a limited number of guaranteed sunny days makes them all the more special and treasured.

Furthermore, for somebody used to the eternal sunshine, seeing the leaves fall and the colors shift is certainly one welcome change of the East Coast. "There's definitely something special about New England fall," McJunkin commented. Everlasting sunshine can get boring, and the fall brings adventure with its changes. "One day I went and drove up kind of in the New Hampshire-Vermont area, and it was so gorgeous... The fall is really nice," said Hilger.

Given the magic of Cambridge fall, the Harvard California students are still committed to bringing their home to Harvard. In the face of the less than ideal winter weather, they find the California in Cambridge. "Most importantly, I try to be as friendly as any good Southern Californian," said Hunt.

HEIDI HEFFELFINGER '26 (HEIDIHEFFELFINGER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS A HARVARD STUDENT FROM CALIFORNIA GETTING PALER BY THE DAY.

GRAPHIC BY ALLYSON XU '28

FORUM

Harvard Admissions, It's Time to Turn to Class-Based Affirmative Action

Class-based affirmative action should have been implemented decades ago. With race-based affirmative action banned, it is now the best way forward to maintaining and increasing diversity.

BY ABRIL RODRIGUEZ DIAZ '26

Last month, Harvard's Class of 2028—the first to enroll since the ban on race-based affirmative action—began their freshman year. The past few weeks on campus have been marked by discussions following Harvard's release of the Class of 2028's racial demographics, which showed that the share of Black and brown students remained relatively stable compared to previous classes. The proportion of Hispanic students increased by 2%, the proportion of Asian students remained fixed, and the share of Black students declined by 4%.

Unlike many other colleges, such as MIT, Brown, and Tufts, which saw drastic drops in the enrollment of marginalized races, Harvard's results are a welcome surprise despite the drop in Black enrollment. However, experts urge caution in drawing conclusions as confusion around Harvard's racial demographic data circulates. This year, Harvard reported race differently than in previous years, making it difficult to determine to what extent racial demographics truly changed. Additionally, *The Harvard Crimson* also found inconsistencies in the data that was reported by Harvard.

Only one thing is certain: regardless of the state of affirmative action, students of color belong on Harvard's campus. Today, racial diversity is a cornerstone of what makes the University what it is. And despite expert predictions, the results of the Class of 2028 upheld this precedent of diversity. On paper, Harvard's preservation of racial diversity despite the challenges set forth by the ban on affirmative action is commendable. Harvard affiliates can proudly and truthfully say that campus continues to be a hub of vastly diverse races, religions, cultures, and identities.

But the reality is not as rosy. Harvard has long used racial representation to obscure its glaring lack of socioeconomic inclusion. In the almost four hundred years since its founding, Harvard continues to be a place for the wealthy. And despite how Harvard showcases its racial diversity, no amount of that can excuse its lack of commitment to socioeconomic representation.

But what do Harvard College's class demographics actually look like year-to-year? The truth is, there is not a precise answer, because Harvard does not release much information on socioeconomic data. But a 2013 study by Opportunity Insights, a research team at Harvard led by Raj Chetty, reported that Harvard had 15 times as many wealthy students as low-income students. Additionally, a 2018 study led by Richard D. Kahlenberg, a Harvard Law School graduate and researcher, found that a whopping 71% of Harvard's Black and Latino students come from families in the top 10%.

Kahlenberg has spent years advocating for class-based affirmative action. In an interview with the *Independent*, Kahlenberg expressed that he hopes that the end of affirmative action will push Harvard and other colleges to consider class-based affirmative action measures for future classes.

"Harvard and other institutions could do so much more to diversify by economic status," Kahlenberg said. "There's a lot of talent in America among low-income and working-class students that is not being tapped into, and now that the Supreme Court has outlawed the use of race in admissions, I think it's all the more important for universities to look at economic disadvantage as a way of

preserving racial diversity and expanding socioeconomic diversity."

Kahlenberg was an expert witness hired by Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) in the Supreme Court trial against Harvard. As a self-proclaimed political liberal and champion of diversity, he is, at first glance, an unlikely member of the SFFA coalition, which is headed by conservative legal activist Edward Blum, garnered high levels of support from conservatives, and was passed by a conservative majority in the Supreme Court. But Kahlenberg's decision to partake in the trial against Harvard was spurred by his belief in a different type of affirmative action—one based on class—which he hopes will garner more traction now that race-based affirmative action has been banned. "My primary concern is that universities will never pay attention to economic disadvantage in a meaningful way unless the ability to use race is removed," he emphasized.

During the trial, Dean Rakesh Khurana was asked by SFFA attorneys why Harvard's student body fails to reflect the United States' socioeconomic diversity. Khurana's response was that Harvard is "not trying to mirror the socioeconomic or income [makeup] of the United States... We're looking for talent."

I asked Mr. Kahlenberg about his thoughts on Harvard's justification for its lack of socioeconomic diversity, specifically the claim that increasing economic diversity would lower academic quality. In response, Kahlenberg referenced a simulation that he and his team ran of Harvard's Class of 2019. In the simulation, the team eliminated legacy preferences and gave an admissions boost to economically disadvantaged students.

“The result was that the SAT scores would go from the 99th percentile to the 98th,” Kahlenberg explained. “Under this scenario, you’d be admitting a lot of students who did not have access to private tutors, to the best public and private schools in America... Many of the students would have had to work to support the family during high school,” Kahlenberg emphasized. “So the fact that the class is at the 98th percentile, even though it has a lot more students who faced disadvantages in life, is really remarkable. I mean, that’s an extraordinary set of students. So I really was not convinced by Harvard’s argument.”

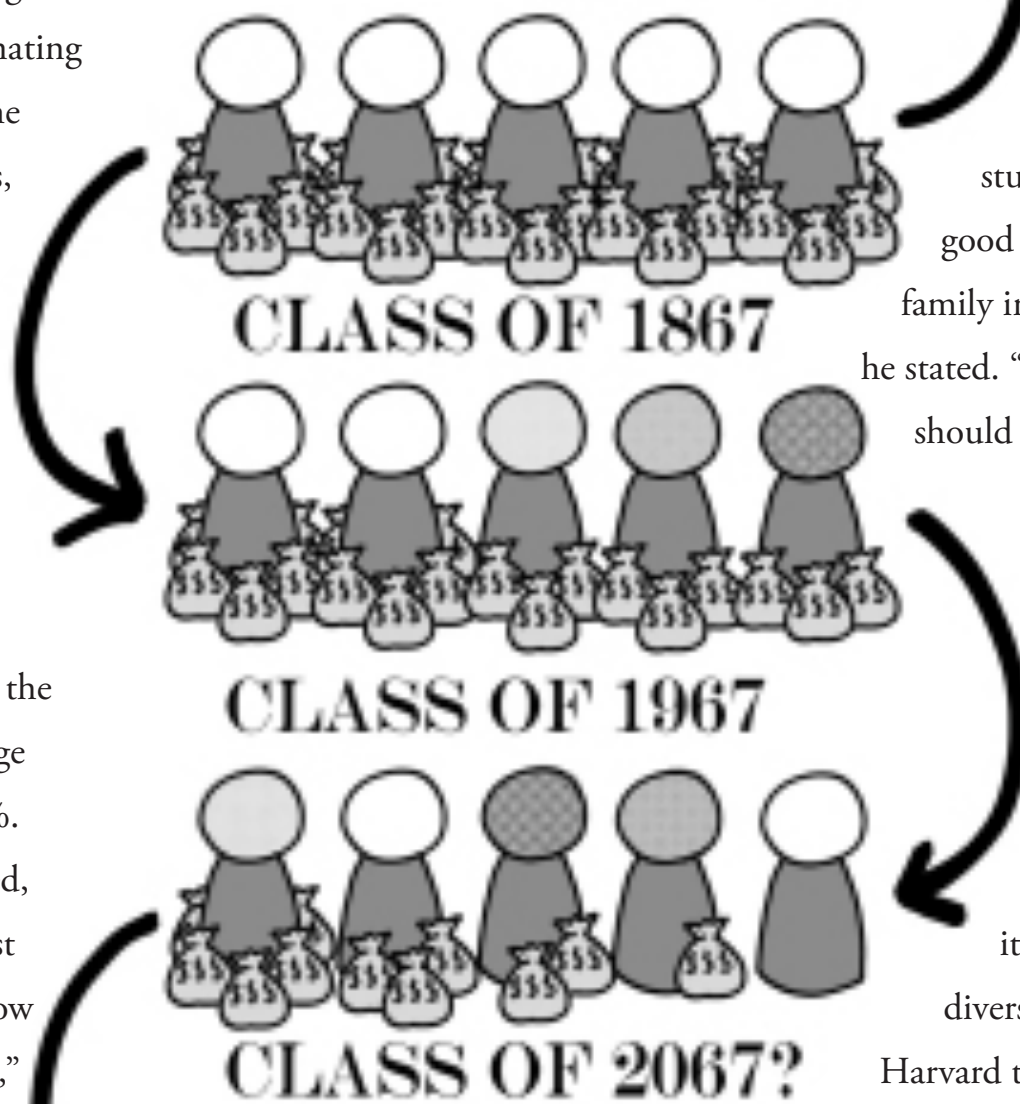
The findings from Kahlenberg’s simulation are promising: by eliminating legacy preferences and increasing the consideration of class in admissions, Harvard College’s Class of 2019 became more socioeconomically and racially diverse, while academic preparedness measures, such as the SAT, remained practically unchanged. The proportion of racial minorities increased from 28% to 30%, while the proportion of first-generation college students increased from 7% to 25%.

“When the litigation was filed, only about 7% of students were first generation college students. And now it’s closer to 20%, so that’s progress,” Kahlenberg said. But he is hoping to see that proportion increase further. Additional simulations that he conducted with Duke professor Peter S. Arcidiacono indicated that maintaining racial diversity would require Harvard to significantly boost the proportion of students from the lower two-thirds of the economic scale—from 18% to 49%.

Class-based affirmative action measures would provide an elegant solution for maintaining racial diversity while increasing socioeconomic diversity. Especially in light of the newly instated affirmative action

ban, it is perplexing as to why Harvard has yet to openly discuss the potential implementation of formalized class-based affirmative action.

The answer may lie in financial considerations. Under Harvard’s need-based financial aid policy, financial aid is awarded based on a student’s family income. The less income a student’s family makes per year, the less that student will pay to attend Harvard, with students from families making less than \$85,000 per year attending college free of charge. If Harvard were to prioritize increasing socioeconomic diversity, it would lose out on the tuition money that wealthier families would be paying.



Another reason why class-based affirmative action has not gained traction may have to do with the makeup of Harvard’s governing bodies. Notably, under Kahlenberg’s proposal, all forms of legacy admissions would be eliminated; this includes preferences for the children of Harvard alumni and faculty, as well as the elimination of the Z-list, which is a deferred admissions pool for students who must take a gap year before enrolling and favors primarily white and legacy students. The Harvard Corporation and the Board of Overseers are Harvard’s governing bodies,

which each play a role in the University’s decision-making and policy. Many of their members are Harvard alumni who come from families with histories of ties to the University.

In a similar vein, donor influence could be hindering the adoption of class-based affirmative action. Donor families contribute significantly to the University’s endowment, and eliminating legacy admissions while prioritizing lower-income applicants could risk losing the financial backing of current donors, as well as future support from their descendants.

Kahlenberg says that Harvard should be disclosing more information about the socioeconomic makeup of its student body. “I think it would be good to disclose, at the very least, the family income of students by quintile,” he stated. “I think that’s something Harvard should disclose on an annual basis.”

For too long, Harvard has masked its overwhelming wealth concentration behind its racial diversity numbers. Now that race-based affirmative action has come to an end, it is time for Harvard to finally address its deficiency in socioeconomic diversity. There is no excuse for

Harvard to continue maintaining such low proportions of economically disadvantaged students.

“I think both racial and economic diversity are important on college campuses, and places like Harvard have done the first without the second,” Kahlenberg expressed. “My hope is that over time, Harvard will draw on the talent from people across the socioeconomic spectrum, rather than have it concentrated so heavily toward those from wealthy backgrounds.”

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GRAPHIC BY EMMANUEL EFFIONG '26

Censorship: The Refuge of the Weak

Book bans deny us the freedom and education we deserve.

BY RANIA JONES '27

*N*olite te bastardes carborundorum. This mock-Latin aphorism, translated as “Don’t let the bastards grind you down,” plays a central role in Margaret Atwood’s feminist novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*, a commonly banned novel in several U.S. states including Virginia, Texas, Florida, and Oregon. As in many totalitarian societies, Atwood’s fictionalized state of Gilead forbids females from learning to read and write. This legal and social restriction enables its repressive government to more easily maintain control over them.

Unfortunately, elements of this fiction are still a reality in parts of the world. In Afghanistan, girls are forbidden from attending university and secondary school. In Guatemala, less than five percent of female students enroll in a four-year university. These are two examples of many. Denying females and minorities equal access to education allows those in power to use their resources to legitimate their own dominance.

America’s first banned book was Thomas Morton’s *New English Canaan*, a harsh critique of the Puritan settlers’ theocratic society, their treatment of Native Americans, and their rigid, moralistic social structure. Morton’s *New English Canaan* was outlawed by the Puritans, who sought to build a strict, religious society and saw Morton’s critiques as a threat to their authority.

In colonial America, books were often banned by local or religious councils who held significant power in their communities. After independence, censorship still occurred through federal or state laws.

Throughout history, powerful institutions like governments, religious organizations, and corporations have actively repressed books and authors they’ve found inflammatory, sacrilegious, or otherwise threatening to their authority. Authors often push against social and political norms, so it’s no surprise that societies push back. Whether it’s authoritarian regimes banning politically subversive works that criticize their governance, religious groups censoring texts that challenge dogma or promote secularism, or corporations suppressing narratives that expose unethical practices, there is a consistent pattern: literature that questions or undermines these dominant powers is frequently stifled.

More than 10,000 book bans were

implemented in the 2023-2024 school year, more than double than in the 2022-2023 school year. Over time, the focus of censorship has shifted significantly, moving away from suppressing religious dissent, criticisms of totalitarian regimes, or content deemed politically subversive. In recent decades, particularly in the U.S., the nature of book banning has evolved to align with modern conservative issues, including books about racial injustice, gender expression, LGBTQIA+ relationships, and history that portrays the U.S. negatively.

A large number of books are getting banned that have nothing to do with social or political problems at all, like Matthew Cherry’s *Hair Love* or Justin Richardson’s *And Tango Makes Three*. These kinds of stories are centered around lead characters that are either not white, cisgender, heterosexual, or Christian. The book banning movement has, in some cases, become a more socially acceptable way for conservatives to express overt racism, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry under the guise of protecting children or preserving traditional values. It’s clear that the censorship isn’t always about controversial content, but rather about rejecting the very existence and visibility of marginalized groups.

The theme for the 2024 Banned Books Week, an annual event that highlights the value of free and open access to information, is “Freed Between the Lines,” an observance of the freedom we find in the pages of books and the need to defend that freedom from censorship. I believe “Freed Between the Lines” means that education should be free from oppression and encourage imaginative expression. Book bans are not just affecting authors, they’re also impacting teachers and all the students who deserve improved access to high-quality education.

Since writing has the power to expose the unexpected, uncomfortable, and unknown, censorship is used as a political weapon and an instrument of social control. Politicians are writing bills that ban words and restrict speech, and are threatening to arrest teachers, administrators, and artists solely because they speak up about important topics. Libraries in small towns are being closed. Librarians are being labeled pedophiles on social media, called out by local politicians, and reported to law enforcement

officials for defending their right to provide and maintain a rich and diverse collection of books to students. They live in fear of being harassed and intimidated.



Those who censor are afraid of our

commentary

because we write to seek, reveal, and understand historical and personal tensions. We write to make sense of cultural anxieties and desires. We write to break prejudices within our society. Writing means freedom.

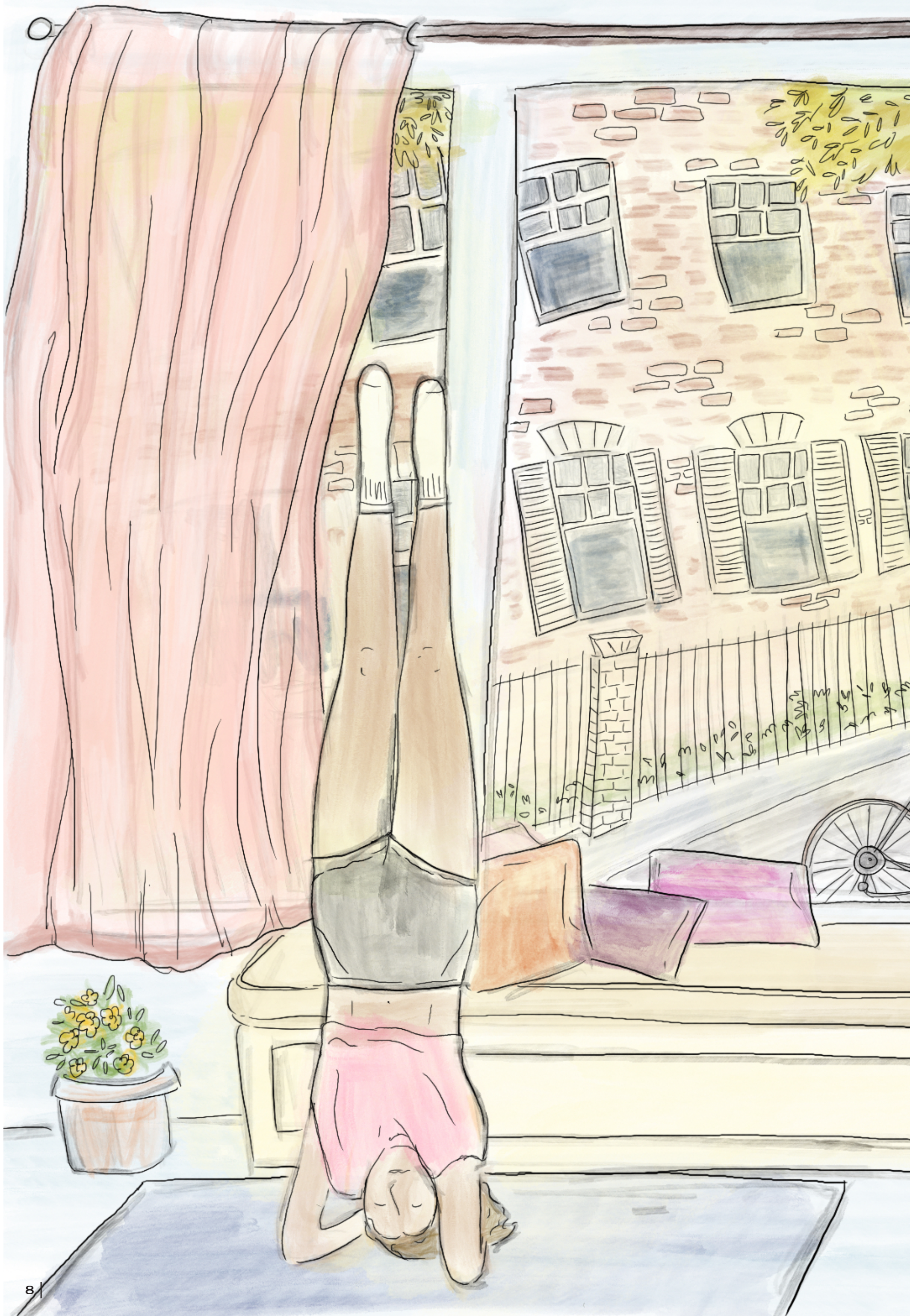
Ta-Nehisi Coates writes in his memoir, *Between the World and Me*, “I began to see discord, argument, chaos, perhaps even fear, as a kind of power. The gnawing discomfort, the chaos, and the intellectual vertigo were not in alarm. It was a beacon.”

We must continue to be unafraid of saying what society blacklists, bans, and censors, and we must remain hopeful that our discomfort will one day pave the way for open conversation. Our complex truths and experiences are what are going to change the world. Free expression isn’t just a feature of democracy; it’s a necessary prerequisite.

I find myself inclined to write about the unknown and the uncomfortable, and I am growing more interested in reading what society blacklists, bans, and censors. Do not conceal what you think because you are afraid. Seek to learn, listen to understand. Write to disrupt, read what discomforts.

RANIA JONES '27 (RJONES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS READ *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* THREE TIMES.

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26





The Sidechat Enigma

Harvard's love-hate relationship with Sidechat might have more to it than what meets the eye.

BY JULES SANDERS '28

It starts with boredom—it always does. I'm walking from Boylston to Cabot, scanning for updates on Instagram, Snapchat, and iMessage, but I have run out of content to consume. Out of the corner of my eye, I glimpse the magenta icon tucked away in the Recently Added section of my App Library. Ignoring my better instinct, I open Sidechat.

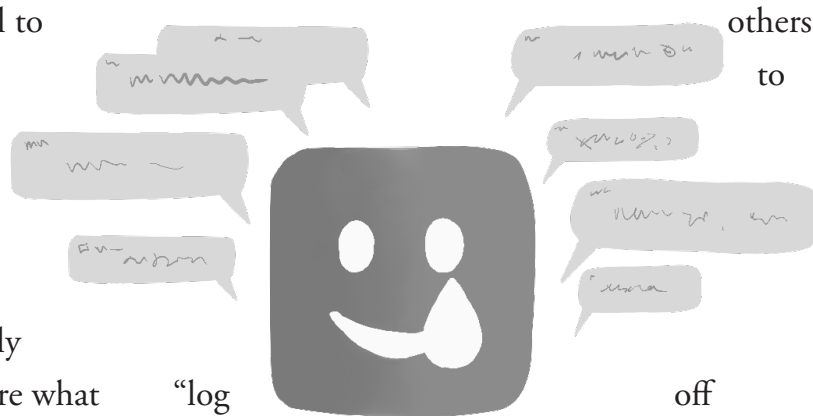
For many on campus, this experience is far too common. Launched in 2022, Sidechat is a social media app that allows students at colleges and universities to communicate anonymously in a forum open to all students as well as through individual chats, describing itself as a service “offer[ing] public forms and other interactive communications” in its Terms of Use. The rhetoric on Harvard Sidechat varies from calm and casual to negative and condemnatory. While scrolling, I came across one of the top posts of this past week: “Just waved to 2 people I know and got no response... alright bro guess ill just kms.” While superficially bleak, confessional posts like these are what I find refreshing about Sidechat, at least in moderation.

Despite the humorous tone of many of these critiques, Harvard students often take to the app to express genuinely held frustrations with facets of college life. For the past few weeks, as sophomores have undergone the process of final club accession, countless users have lamented the cryptic and unpredictable timing of rounds, while others have poked fun at the ordeal. A post on Sept. 26 with 333 net upvotes, titled “How sophomores think they look walking to punch,” was accompanied by an image of an anthropomorphized cartoon wolf tipping a top hat, which topped Harvard Sidechat's feed.

One's view of Sidechat is shaped tremendously by whether one sorts by “Top” or “New.” The highest-upvoted posts tend to be funny, clever, and easily relatable, often complaining about the changing weather or the quality of dining hall food. Sorting by ‘New,’ on the other hand, betrays a far darker image of Harvard, sometimes masked by ‘brain rot’

humor and other times not. I chuckled at a post consisting of a screenshot from Twitter reading, “Mama a social climber behind you,” a reference to a popular clip on TikTok from last month. Still, the poster likely would not have been published on Sidechat if this joke were not rooted in some truth. Other posts are much more serious: “I regret coming here. Wasn't good enough here (my advisors think so too), will probably end up unemployed because I'm not qualified for anything,” read a post with four upvotes.

Beyond self-doubt and self-deprecation, however, lies vitriol. Again, this invective ranges from light jabbing to outright condemnation. Taking advantage of the ability on Sidechat to respond to other posts, one user responded to another's reminder to



“log off sidechat and go enjoy what will probably be one of the last warm and sunny days on this campus” with “Average humanities major with no work.” The obvious culprit at play here is the dehumanization of others from a perspective behind the screen; since Sidechat posts are anonymous, there is no reputational check on people's urges to directly joke at others' expense.

The complicating factor, however, is one of Sidechat's few strict rules: no direct identification of others. To circumvent this restriction, users often hint at the identity or identities of those they aim to criticize, as they did, for example, in advance of class marshal elections in mid-September.

More recently, a screenshot list of the supposed “Top 100 Harvard Students” began to circulate on Sidechat in both forum posts and class-wide group chats. Again, due to Sidechat's strict no-identification policy, posters had to blur all the names of the students listed, meaning the image attached to each post essentially consisted of the title of the list and a series of numbers followed

by black lines. In group chats, users have sent supposed links to the list, but according to the user Orange Deciduous Tree in the Class of 2028 chat, one commonly circulated link can steal one's “[l]og in info.” Posts about the lists have attracted hundreds of commenters.

Is any of this culture of criticism warranted? There is an argument to be made that Sidechat amplifies voices critical of elitism and nepotism; such censure rarely has a platform on Harvard's campus. Some posts have condemned the exclusivity and perceived indulgence of final clubs—a top post from Sep. 23, titled “POV: You show up at Bee punch as an FGLI,” accompanied by an image of Bratz characters recoiling, raises legitimate concerns about classism in final clubs. Another raises disbelief at the fact that “some of you are going to FRANCE for the weekend for FREE? To drink wine with hot women? All because these guys want you to join your club. Oh okay.”

Every day, there are a few posts spreading positivity. “[E]very girl at harvard woke up this morning and decided to wear the most BEAUTIFUL dresses you've ever seen. Everyone is pretty today and stitched in sunshine :),” one reads.

I reach Cabot and put my phone back in my pocket. Opening Sidechat gave me not only a quick dose of serotonin but also a few new things to be anxious about over the coming years. Since I first conceptualized writing about Sidechat, my view has changed: there is something important about having a space on campus for legitimate criticism of campus culture and injustice. Although I could not relate to the post about wearing a beautiful dress, it nonetheless lifted my spirits, as I am sure it did for many others. Sidechat is an odd, strange app, but I do not think I will delete it just yet. For better or for worse, it offers an unfiltered perspective of life at Harvard difficult to grasp in even the most open of in-person discussions.

JULES SANDERS '28 (JULESSANDERS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) POSTED TWICE ABOUT LANA DEL REY NOT BEING AT THE SCIENCE CENTER IN THE HOPES THAT IT WOULD BECOME AN INSIDE JOKE ON HARVARD SIDECHAT. IT DID NOT.

GRAPHIC BY ANNEISE FISHER '26

ARTS

The Hidden Wonders of HAM at Night

Tired of boys, booze, and bonding yet? Try the Harvard Art Museums at Night, a party that attracts art lovers from all over the area.

BY RAINA WANG '28

After walking up the steps from Quincy Street, I pulled open the double-doors to the Harvard Art Museums (HAM) and a wave of music immediately poured over my ears. I wove through the traffic of people as they walked from one exhibition, through the courtyard, to another—some trailing away from the herd to explore adjacent galleries tucked into the corner. One couple pushed forward, hand-in-hand, her wearing a long brown slip dress with her hair done up, and him in a button-down and slacks. A group of friends, rocking leather jackets over cropped tanks, sat on a bench, inspecting the painting in front of them. I felt a bit underdressed in my plain tee and pants. The music, the people, and the bar in the corner of the courtyard together created a lively atmosphere, revealing a secret energy that the museum's stereotypical "silence" hides during the day. I felt like I was placed into a different world, entirely separate from campus. And so, my adventure began.

The third floor is where I chose to start, home to the museum's current special exhibition, *Made in Germany? Art and Identity in a Global Nation*. Tara Metal, the Digital Content Manager and Strategist, explained in an interview with the *Independent* that the museum curates a new special exhibition every few months. Right now, *Made in Germany?* features German art as an opportunity to explore and express the German identity. One artist, Marc Brandenburg, stood out in particular, especially since he was invited as a guest speaker that night. He spoke to a crowd of party-goers about his artistic process as a black-and-white portrait-drawer. Looking at his pieces, I felt like I was looking at the negatives of a film camera, but with one thing missing: the faces. Brandenburg's pieces struck me as very peculiar—that in an exhibition meant to explore identity, he would choose to make the faces of his subjects unclear, as if leaving the identity of the subject lying on the ground in a sleeping bag up to the viewer's interpretation. I walked away from his artwork confused, but enlightened by his artistic portrayal of a sort of shrouded identity, a technique that's left a big impression on me as a sketching hobbyist.

Metal also pointed out several fun activities the museum sets up for "At Nights," the term the staff members coined for their Harvard



Art Museums at Night event. During last week's event, the museum offered temporary tattoos designed by Brandenburg (which I did indulge in) and a scavenger hunt. In the past, they've also offered dress-up themes, such as a pink-themed At Night, and just last summer, the event was watercolor themed—I can only imagine the flowy blue dresses, lily-patterned skirts, and pastel-inspired outfits that everyone put together (although, I was reassured that there is never an official dress code). Metal explained that all these activities are designed "to get people to come here who maybe wouldn't normally come to a museum on a precious Saturday or Sunday." Looking around, I'd say the museum has done a magnificent job doing just that.

Thasfia Chowdhury, a visitor from Cambridge and a recent Brown University graduate, commented on her first time visiting the Harvard Art Museums. She said her experience was "mind expansive... A lot of the art here isn't something you see every day." We were standing in the art museum's special exhibition, tilting our heads at a living room that was on the floor. But wait—not a normal living room by any means; this living room was flipped 90 degrees on its side, with its wall on the museum floor. The floor of the room was extended vertically, stretching to the ceiling, and all its furniture—from desks and chairs to cabinets and carpets—jutted outwards towards me, creating this mind-boggling illusion that I was looking at a living room while stuck to its ceiling.

This piece, titled *Ostalgie* by Henrike Naumann, stood out to both of us as something unique—something disrupting our sense of normalcy, as all effective art should. Chowdhury interpreted Naumann's disorientation of the living room "to communicate the awkward unrest that the world sees here and there... It's such a weird parallel, because it's literally living room furniture." For that exact reason, Chowdhury finds this piece "so random, but so refreshing."

Though not even half-way through the art on the third floor, I felt it was time to explore other galleries the museum had to offer. I made my way back towards the atrium, feeling the music grow louder as I walked down to the second floor. Here, while wandering amongst

the sculptures and statues, I bumped into Chowdhury again and started conversing with her and the group of students she was with, including Northeastern students Mandy Alexander and Suyasha Ahtuluri (I paused briefly to marvel at how easy it was to make friends). "I had seen an ad on Instagram, and I dragged all my friends to come too," Ahtuluri told me. Neither Ahtuluri nor her friends study art, but they find the artwork descriptions the most compelling part of the galleries because it's a chance to learn something new. "I think it's great that it's open to the public, anyone can come in and look at art," she said. "I think the art world can sometimes be a little bit closed for people to enjoy and research and learn."

As I was walking away from them, I overheard another group of Harvard Graduate students also talking about an Instagram post that had caught their attention, which led them to the At Night. These events have certainly created an observable impact; they attract a truly diverse crowd of people, especially from outside the Harvard community, and give everyone a chance to make some new friends. Throughout the night, there were multiple times I had forgotten that the museum itself is affiliated with Harvard. So who knows, maybe we'll start seeing some of the same faces around every month. After all, that is how community is created.

The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with free admission for all visitors. If you missed September's At Night event, don't fret. However, these parties make the museum more fun, more exciting, and more energetic. It's also very well-advertised—as the Instagram posts were clearly quite effective—so it attracts a large crowd of people to the same place at the same time.

When I walked into the museum last Thursday, I unintentionally found a pocket outside of the Harvard Bubble, right at Harvard's own museum. By opening up the museum to the public, the museum curates a night that's perfect for creative minds to come together, socialize, and appreciate artwork. The HAM's At Nights have become the perfect spot for art-lovers of all ages, hailing from all over Boston, to gather and meet each other. So, sign up for the Harvard Art Museum's mailing list, keep an eye on your inbox, and get excited for their upcoming events!

RAINA WANG '28 (RAINAWANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL BE SURE TO DO HER HAIR AND MAKEUP AND PUT ON A LONG BLACK DRESS BEFORE THE NEXT POTENTIALLY HALLOWEEN-THEMED AT NIGHT.

GRAPHIC BY GABI PONIZ '26

PHOTO BY JENNY JIA '27

Let's Talk about SWEAT, Baby

Charli XCX and Troye Sivan bring queer joy, feminine rage, and a whole lot of sex to TD Garden.

BY ELLEN MOLLERUS '26

A sea of lime green and black descended on TD Garden last Saturday for the Boston stop of the SWEAT Tour, co-headlined by artists Charli XCX and Troye Sivan. While the color palette of the crowd was relatively uniform, their outfits were anything but. Fans sported everything from customized t-shirt renditions of the *BRAT* album cover and leather harnesses to slip-dresses and stilettos. Although the majority of outfits favored *BRAT*'s grungy, neon-and-black aesthetic over the sportswear and pastels associated with Troye's latest album *Something to Give Each Other*, I did see more than one person dressed as Timothee Chalamet's impression of the singer from the last season of *SNL*.

If you're wondering what a co-headlined tour means, you're not alone. Rather than performing one whole set and then the other, Troye and Charli switched off approximately every three songs. While this had the potential to be incredibly awkward, the two artists utilized multiple entrances/exits from the stage, as well as extensive camera work and video boards, to make the transitions seamless. Although the artists performed only two songs together (their 2018 collaboration "199" and the forthcoming remix of "Talk Talk,") the show was filled with playful interactions between them, like when Troye appeared in the background while Charli was filmed strutting around beneath the stage.

Troye opened the show rather aptly with "Got Me Started," the lead-off track from his most recent album. Given the memeification of Charli XCX's *BRAT* and her subsequent rise in fame over the summer, Troye may have needed to work harder to command the crowd's attention—and he did just that. He and his posse of oiled-up dancers owned every inch of the stage, putting on a deliciously queer performance. From the slow and sensual touches during "In My Room," performed on a giant, silk-covered bed, to the frenetic choreography breaks during "Dance to This," Troye and his dancers explored the full spectrum of queer love and sexuality. Even the more "vulgar" moments, like when Troye and a dancer got on all-fours and started thrusting, had a note of genuine intimacy and care that was visible even from my spot across the arena.

This choreography, along with a heavier bassline, also helped Troye reimagine some of his earlier hits to better fit the

tour's aesthetic. These changes meant that his comparatively juvenile 2018 tune "My My My!" felt just as at home in this setlist as it did on stage at Taylor Swift's Reputation Tour; it became a love letter to a younger and more insecure queer self from the singer's present place of confidence in himself and his identity. That confidence was especially evident as Troye, in signature fashion, embodied queer masculinity and sexuality throughout his set. He performed a three-song run dressed in oversized basketball shorts and a white tank top, only to reappear after Charli's turn on stage in a corset and leather pants for his gender-bending performance of "One of Your Girls." His backup dancers were active participants throughout the evening, miming sex, receiving lap dances, and even holding a mic over one of their crotches for a kneeling Troye to sing into. This culminated in an extended makeout session—with tongue—between Troye and one of the dancers at the end of "Rush."

Charli XCX, in contrast, largely chose to perform alone on stage. Her first three-song run began with a giant canopy version of the iconic *BRAT* album cover dropping over the b-stage. The audience greeted her with thunderous applause as she launched into a brief rendition of "365" featuring the tour's opener, Shygirl. Charli was able to rely more on the audience to sing along, which came in handy when she performed the versions of "Guess" and "Girl, so confusing" that feature Billie Eilish and Lorde, respectively. The crowd seemed to relish the opportunity to scream lines like "Charli likes boys, but she knows I'd hit it," and "Girl, you walk like a bitch' When I was ten, someone said that." Audience participation was encouraged again during "Apple," when the crew selected one fan to perform the viral dance to be shown on screen for the entire arena (Boston's winner was a delightfully flamboyant young man dressed in a wine-stained tank top, referencing a scene in the "360" music video.)

This overarching theme of empowerment for the crowd ran throughout her set. Songs like "Sympathy is a knife" and "Spring breakers" provided an opportunity for cathartic rage that literally shook the floor of TD Garden. Charli also encouraged the crowd to embrace their sexuality during her unapologetically explicit tracks like "Track 10" and "Vroom Vroom." The energy of Charli's performance is perhaps best summed up by the last song she performed solo

for the evening, the 2012 smash hit "I Love It," where Charli is credited as a feature on the track. While other artists in Charli's position might shy away from performing a twelve-year-old song more associated with high school dances than hardcore clubs, she sang and danced with the same enthusiasm and erratic sexiness she had all night. The audience matched Charli's energy, and together artist and fan created an incredible moment of nostalgia, self-acceptance, and reckless joy.

Although Troye and Charli's performances were quite well matched sonically, the visual differences between their sets were at times quite stark. While Troye almost always appeared with his backup dancers and occasionally set pieces as well, Charli performed alone on stage for all but around four songs throughout the evening. Especially at the beginning, Charli chose to focus more on strutting around the stage than dancing. While it was nice for the whole audience to get a little bit of face time with the artist, the lack of more intricate choreography sometimes made her performance feel too small for the cavernous atmosphere of the 19,000+ person arena. This impression was exacerbated by Troye's bigger, in both size and energy, performance. By the middle of the show, however, Charli made use of wardrobe changes and more involved choreography, both of which helped her performance feel fuller and more complete.

Despite the elaborate choreography and numerous costume changes, the SWEAT Tour never took itself too seriously. Charli admitted to a wardrobe malfunction over an auto-tuned mic, and at one point Troye was giggling so hard as he and his dancers mimed getting hot and heavy that he could barely sing. He also gave us a shoutout, telling the audience "I'm trying to find a boy from Harvard" (I'm sure volunteers were lining up in his DM's). I left TD Garden drenched in sweat, yes, but also filled with a sense of joy and community, and the overwhelming urge to make out with someone (I am also accepting volunteers in my DM's).

ELLEN MOLLERUS '26 (ELLENMOLLERUS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WOULD ALSO LIKE CHARLI TO CALL HER IF SHE'S WITH IT.

Dissolution of Unrequited Love

I can enjoy newspapers without thinking about you now.

BY ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26

Before the sun rises
The sound of bound paper striking the
door
Summons me to start a fire
To procrastinate retrieving what has been delivered
Least I risk meeting you
And recall how

If you were to churn brown sugar
Over a gas stove
While inhaling the rich, smokey molasses
Take a moment to turn
And open the kitchen window
Before the room fills with smoke
Once you turn back
You'll see the color of those
Spiked
Yet graceful eyelashes
Gently and partially eclipsing your view
Whenever you glanced below

Turn towards me
Eyes, observant of the discomforted minds of strangers
Directing a hand to a friend's shoulder
Positioned in front of the most inquisitive mind
With a voice to dance with mine in
A merry waltz

Or regretful lament for time
Are we strangers now?
I think we ought to be
A look not with malice
Nor disdain
Just cruel amusement
It throws my stomach to my feet

I once gave thanks I was out on
The right day
And right time
To meet you
Turn towards me again
Before I lose this wish to embrace
Or dreams of walking through life
Hand in hand
Respond
While I'm still yearning to see your face
And call your name

Before the tears dry from my face
And while I'm still tempted to enrobe my walls
with the scent of molasses
Just to envision those eyes again

Are we strangers now?
I think we ought to be
I used to think of you to escape from sad or boring
realities
How could I humiliate myself like this?
I suspect I wouldn't have missed much
Had I gone somewhere else that day
Or at least withheld my confession

When you feigned uncertainty
And called us friends
I should have known
We'd return to being unknown to each other

I don't know what I've learned from you yet
To make this worthwhile

The swelling that once overtook my heart
Fades with each season
There's a discomforting numbness
Before the regular rhythm resumes
Yet I can't rejoice this newfound wellness
Till my mind reminds me
We were never what I once foresaw

ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26 (AADEBAYO@
HARVARDINDEPENDENT.COM) WRITES ARTS FOR
THE INDEPENDENT.

Russell's Sprouts: Lasagna Soup

All of the layers, none of the drama.

BY ALMA RUSSELL '26



Lasagna Soup Recipe



Recipe adapted from Trisha Le on Instagram.

Ingredients:

1 lb ground beef (ground turkey)
6 garlic cloves, minced
32 oz chicken broth
1 cup heavy cream
8 oz ricotta
1 1/4 cups shredded mozzarella
1/2 cup shredded parm
1/2 lb hot Italian sausage
1/2 Vidalia onion
25 oz jar Rao's basil pasta sauce
2.5 tbsp tomato paste
Mafalda pasta or broken lasagna noodles
Fresh parsley
1 bag of spinach

Seasonings:

Dried basil (or pesto), oregano, thyme,
rosemary, garlic powder, onion powder,
red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper.

Steps:

Heat a large pot on high with a little bit of oil. Crumble meats into the pan and season with salt and pepper, stirring occasionally until browned. Chop onion and garlic, add to the pot, and saute until soft for around 3 minutes. Add in tomato paste, pasta sauce, chicken broth, dried seasonings, and a heaping pinch of salt and pepper to taste. Bring the soup base to a boil, and then add in the heavy cream and halved noodles. If the soup seems like it's lacking in liquid, you can add water or more chicken broth. Pop a lid on it and boil for about 8 minutes, or until pasta is al dente. Sprinkle in some shredded mozzarella or parmesan cheese and your bag of spinach.

Ricotta Topping:

Mix together in a bowl the ricotta, mozzarella, parmesan, salt and pepper, red pepper flakes, and chopped parsley. Ladle the soup into a bowl and add a scoop of the ricotta mixture on top. Garnish with chopped parsley, basil, parmesan, and more red pepper flakes and enjoy!

Served with an arugula salad: arugula, chopped cucumber, feta, and hearts of palm, dressing: lemon juice, olive oil, dijon, maple syrup, chopped parsley, pesto or basil, salt, and pepper.

Tips:

If you're making enough for leftovers, boil

and store your pasta separately to prevent the noodles from soaking up the broth and getting soggy.

To save on ingredient costs, grab spinach, cottage cheese (to substitute ricotta), parmesan, pasta sauce, fresh mozzarella, heavy cream, and dried seasonings from the dining hall (don't worry, we all do it).

This soup hit in all the ways a soup should: warm, noodle-heavy, creamy, filling, and reminiscent of the chilly fall days when your parents would bring you soup in bed (just me?). Personally, I find that cooking is the greatest way to nourish your mind, body, and soul, especially through fresh ingredients, mindful preparation, and the joy of being surrounded by the company of close friendships. Fostering conversation over a warm bowl of lasagna soup creates a sense of connection, comfort, and community that makes any gathering feel special.

So this week, when the d-hall lobster bisque is looking a little too orange, prioritize your wellness and try this recipe instead. Or you can always save this clipping, like the olden days, and send it home for a Thanksgiving break meal. For more recipes and meal inspiration, check out @almondsfooddiary on Instagram!

ALMA RUSSELL '26
(ALMARUSSELL@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) ACTUALLY REALLY
LIKES HER DAD'S LASAGNA
AND DOESN'T WANT TO GET IN
TROUBLE.
PHOTOS BY ALMA RUSSELL '26
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fall has officially begun, which means it's unofficially soup season! I don't know about you, but my wellness can always flip from unwell to well with a delicious home-cooked meal (and no, HUDS doesn't count). If you're looking for a kitchen, it's time to rent out Cabot H101 or hit up your super senior friend who's living off campus. Forget your mom's deep dish double-freezer burnt al dente lasagna—this soup of the day will absolutely blow you away.

SPORTS

Making the Team

The unique experience of being a Harvard varsity walk-on.

BY KATE OLIVER '26

Every individual at Harvard has a different story of how they became a student at this university. Each unique path is part of what makes the Harvard community a special place. Within the student body, there is a very specific subset that chose to modify their experience in an extremely physically demanding way: varsity walk-ons.

Walk-ons are admitted to Harvard in many cases without any form of support from the athletics department; they choose to pile on the additional workload of pursuing Division I athletics after receiving their acceptance letter. While committed student-athletes enter Harvard with a secured roster spot, walk-ons must try out for the team, and they may be restricted from using team facilities until their position is secured.

Harvard historically has had varsity programs with large novice contingents, mainly the crew teams and women's rugby. However, walk-ons are valuable members of most teams, including lacrosse, field hockey, basketball, soccer, and many other sports. Every team has a different tryout process and as a result, no two walk-ons have the same experience of formally making a varsity team.

For Eva Rankin '26, her first time playing rugby was during preseason as a first-year. She played competitive soccer in high school and had originally planned to attend the U.S. Naval Academy to continue her soccer career. However, she broke her shin senior year of high school and felt burnt out. By the time she graduated high school, she had pivoted and enrolled at Harvard. After emailing the rugby coaches, Rankin accepted an invitation to preseason as a walk-on. As she told the *Independent*, "I'm alone in this University that I'm brand new to, in this sport that I'm brand new to, and my team that I'm brand new to." By the end of preseason, Rankin had become a full-fledged member of the team and secured her roster spot.

On top of her decision to join a varsity program, Rankin is also a member of the Army ROTC program and had mandatory training in addition to her practice schedule. During the season, rugby has one of the highest time commitments with two practices each on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, in addition to more practice and games on the weekends. Rankin says that when the two commitments come into conflict, she has to "basically pick which is more important for that weekend." Yet, it works in her favor that the heaviest day of ROTC training, Wednesday, is the one day that the rugby team does not practice during the season. Even with her extremely busy schedule, Rankin could not imagine her experience at Harvard without the rugby team. "Being on the team has been the most formative element of my Harvard experience," she said.

Carly Bolton '26 had a very similar experience with the sailing team; she had never sailed competitively until joining practices at the

beginning of her sophomore year. During her first year at Harvard, she was involved with women's club soccer and did not know there were sports teams on campus that were open to walk-ons. She told the *Independent* that she was looking for "a community that has the same competitiveness" that she possessed; after reaching out to sailing and crew, she heard back from the sailing coaches and was invited to practice. Over the next three weeks, Bolton was thrown out on the Charles three times a week and shown the ropes of being a team member.

Bolton credits skippers Mitchell Callahan '26 and Justin Callahan '26 with her ability to pick up the ropes so quickly. "They were very patient about teaching the steps because it's a complicated sport which I didn't know beforehand," she explained. The Callahan twins have an accomplished sailing career but never made Bolton feel inferior for her novice status. "It's really cool to be able to experience someone who has that type of intuition built into them that's almost always accurate," she said, discussing her time spent in the boat with Mitchell. Furthermore, Bolton's experience has given her a deeper appreciation for all student-athletes at Harvard. "After coming on to the team and meeting a diverse group of people who kind of have this sense of leadership and commitment, it is very eye-opening," she said. "You realize these are very different people from what the College portrays them as."

Going into his senior year of high school, Payton Pitts '27 did not expect to be on the Harvard basketball team; in fact, he was committed to the men's basketball team at the University of Chicago. In the middle of his senior season, Pitts decommitted from UChicago and began the process of applying to 20 potential colleges for the upcoming fall. Through the chaos of the process, Pitts recalls that he "just sort of shifted the focus to my team, my high school team, and trying to make best out of what was given to me." His time with AAU basketball helped him to establish communication with the Harvard coaches, and he entered his first year at Harvard with an invitation to attend practices at the start of the year.

Pitts' time on the basketball team has been a fundamental part of his Harvard experience. From not knowing if his basketball career would be over to making the squad, he has learned so much from his teammates and coaches. Additionally, Pitts is grateful for the opportunities the team provides off the court. "Our coach really takes time away from the basketball court to expose us to things that we wouldn't normally see," he shared. Through the Breakfast Club and other opportunities, Pitts has had doors opened that he didn't even know existed. Ultimately, Pitts is grateful for his experiences and proud of his younger self for persevering through adversity. In his words, "Not really knowing what the end result would be, but knowing that if I work hard enough, I could make it



possible" made him the player he is today.

Finn Jensen '26 had been playing lacrosse since he was ten years old, but he did not know until his senior year of high school if he would be continuing his career collegiately. After his initial conversations with Coach Byrne of Harvard men's lacrosse, he decided to apply early action and pursue a preferred walk-on spot on the team. While he was not guaranteed admission, Jensen felt that "it would be a much better balance for me if I came here to play sports instead of going somewhere else and not playing." After getting in, he began attending practice in the fall of his first year during his tryout period.

Through the length of his process, Jensen noted that Mike Binkowski '23 played a huge role in keeping his head up. "It was hard to get frustrated or down when Mike's always there, basically cheering you up for two months if you ever got kind of down low," he explained. In the end, every experience that Jensen had during his two-month period made him feel like a full-fledged member of the squad when he was finally named to the roster.

Every student-athlete is faced with their own challenges and successes throughout their athletic careers. Walk-ons face the added challenge of fighting to continue their athletic career without a guarantee that they will successfully make the roster. The hard work and dedication they display are akin to any other student-athlete on this campus; their willingness to step into an unfamiliar environment when they do not technically belong is admirable. It serves as a lesson to every student on this campus that putting yourself in uncomfortable positions can lead to one of the most transformative experiences of college.

KATE OLIVER '26 (KOLIVER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) THINKS HER TEAMMATE WHO WALKED ONTO THE FIELD HOCKEY TEAM IS SUPERHUMAN. GRAPHIC BY SOPHIA RASCOFF '27

Indy Sportsbook: UFC 307 Parlay

A (risky) road to riches.

BY DREW MORRISSEY '26 AND DENNY GULIA JANOVSKI '27

“To do anything at a high level, it has to be total obsession,” legendary Irish boxer Conor McGregor once said. For this reason, we at the Indy Sportsbook have spent over 300 hours concocting a UFC parlay that will retire us from this rat race of life by the end of next week. While we have no money on this expert-level analysis, we wouldn't have spent this much time if we didn't think our predictions were both purely entertaining and soon-to-be accurate.

Not many things in life beat watching two people fight inside an octagon cage for their next paycheck. Having some money on the line adds excitement to the game. Having a lot of money on the line puts you through otherworldly highs and lows, a feeling that no drugs can match.

Through watching previous fights, Instagram reel edits of previous fights, and DMing our soon-to-be victorious fighters motivational messages, we think we've set ourselves up for success this week. We have assembled one of the sharpest, most exciting, and analytical picks for UFC 307. Although we cannot guarantee anything to hit, we love these bets more than Felipe's Super Burrito.

Kevin Holland (-155) vs Roman Dolidze
To start the first leg of the parlay, we love Kevin “Trailblazer” Holland. Holland is 31 years old with a 26-11-0 record in the UFC. He's a fundamental striker and is showing real improvement with his grappling skills. When he's in the right mode, he is an exciting fighter to watch. He floats around the octagon and lands punches with accuracy. He won his last fight four months ago via armbar submission. His opponent, Roman Polidze, also known as “The Caucasian,” is the better grappler; however, there's much left to be desired when it comes to his striking. If Holland can use his reach to keep his distance and stay off the ground, we think this is a safe bet.

Kayla Harrison (-650)
Next, we turn our attention to Kayla Harrison. Harrison is a rising star in the UFC, and this fight is a meatball for Kayla Harrison, likely to

set her up with a title fight next. She is a two time gold medalist in Judo: the first American to achieve this feat. She won her last fight in a dominant fashion, ending with a rear naked choke for the submission. Her opponent, Ketlen Vieira, is also a judo fighter with a 14-3 record. Vieira will need a miracle to beat Harrison at her own game.

Jose Aldo (+140)
Adding an underdog into the parlay, no one other than Jose Aldo would be our pick. Jose Aldo is probably the greatest featherweight fighter of all time. Known for his devastating leg kicks and powerful punches, he defended his 145 pound belt nine times between the WEC and the UFC. After losing the championship to Conor McGregor in UFC 194, he immediately won it back six months later at UFC 200.

Following losses to featherweight champions Max Holloway and Alexander Volkanovski, he dropped down to bantamweight and has since gone 4-3. His most recent win back on May 4th came as a +140 underdog in his home city of Rio de Janeiro. In that fight, Aldo showed that he still has what it takes to compete with the younger fighters, winning by unanimous decision against 30-year-old Jonathan Martinez, a rising American star. Aldo is still a top tier striker and a rounded fighter with the movement, power, and experience to take down his 31-year-old opponent Mario Bautista. Bautista has shown himself to be a dangerous grappler, but only has one win in his past six fights against a ranked opponent. If Aldo can strike like he did in his last fight and continue to defend from the takedown, he will definitely add another underdog win to his illustrious career.

Raquel Pennington (-175)
Following those fights, the main co-event features Pennington defending her bantamweight title against an opponent fresh off a two year hiatus. Juliana Peña's last fight defending her title two years ago ended in a

decided loss. Pennington is on a six fight win streak and has kept a cool head in the octagon. She's also been training in Colorado at a similar elevation to Salt Lake City, whereas Peña may have to adjust to a change in altitude, further testing her endurance. Raquel Pennington on the money line is the easy pick for this one.

Khalil Roundtree Jr. (+380)
To cap off the Sportsbook's parlay, we have a more unconventional pick. For the main event, Alex Pereira defends his title from Khalil Roundtree. The challenger is on a five fight win streak, and although his opponents have not cracked the top 10, he has shown power, speed and agility in his recent fights. Three of his past four wins ended in a KO, three of them in round two or earlier. With Pereira's tendency to keep his hands a bit low, Roundtree could be a dangerous opponent for him; we think so much more than the odds would suggest. This will also be Pereira's fourth title fight in the past year, which is certain to have taken a toll on the 37 year-old striker. We wouldn't bet the house against Pereira, but there is potentially big money to be made betting against the grain on this one.

If this parlay cashes, your \$100 will turn into roughly \$3,300. This 33xer would be equivalent to buying the S&P 500 index in 1989. Instead of affording four thirty racks of Bud Light, you will now be able to afford 132 thirty racks. That's 3,960 cans of Bud Light. Scared money don't make money.

If this doesn't work out, we have another Conor McGregor quote to solace us as we wipe away our tears. “We win some, we lose some. I will never shy away from defeat.” At the end of the day, it's clear these predictions only build us up to be better, stronger, and smarter, and that's all you can really ask for.

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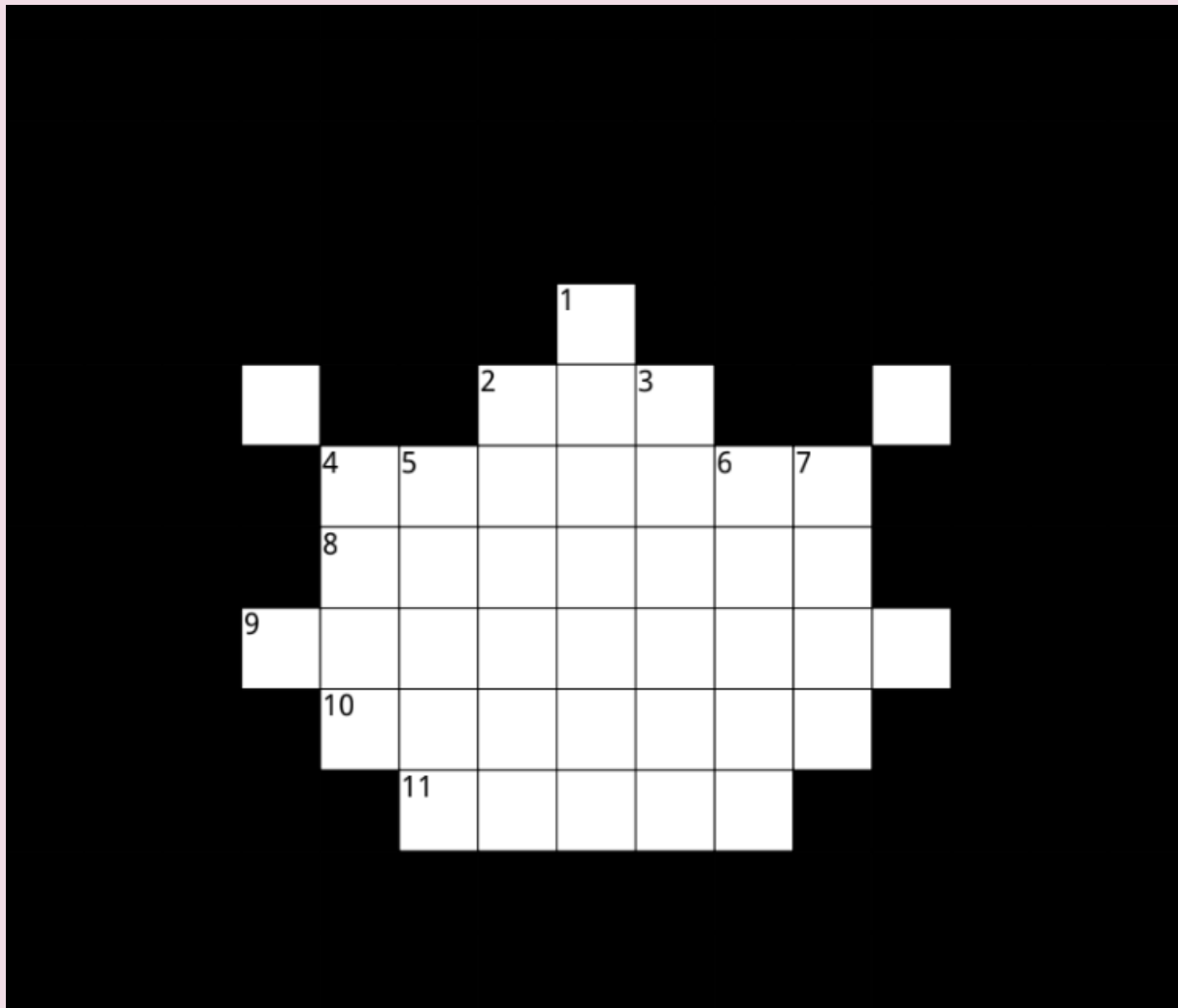
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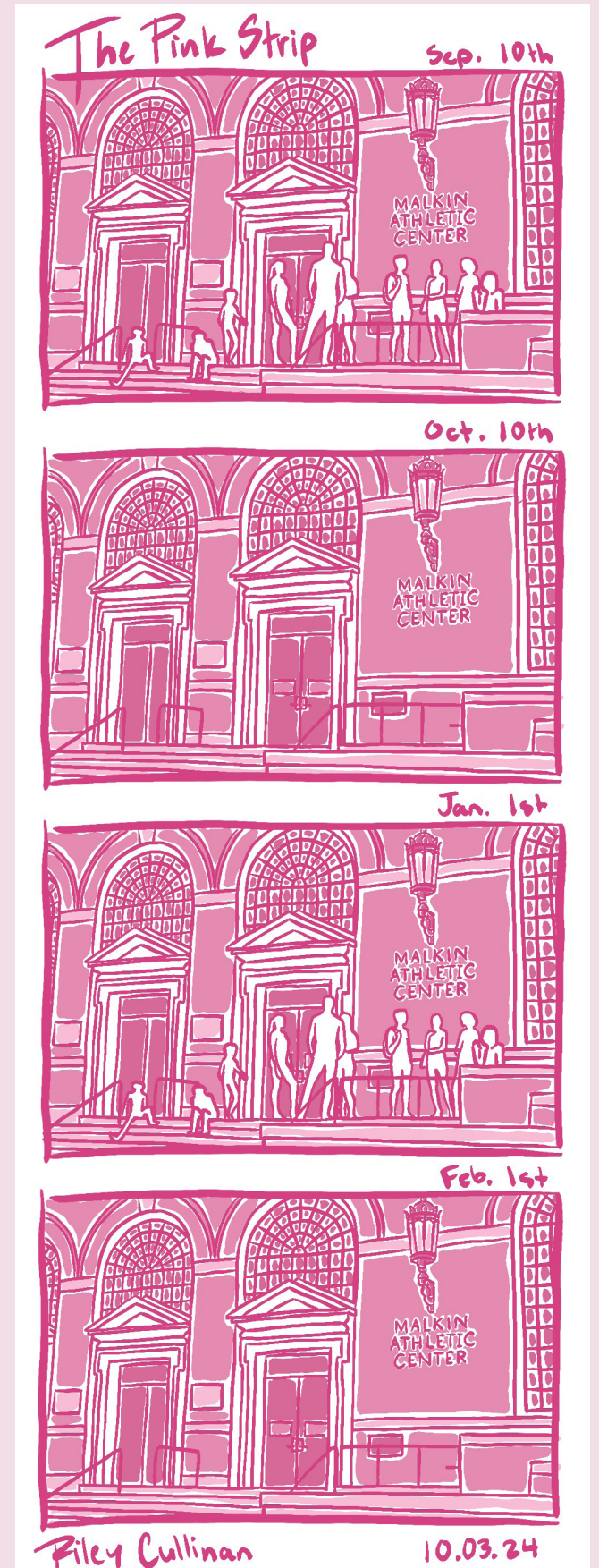


ACROSS

2. Help
4. Fans, often
8. Smallest Great Lake
9. Car starters
10. Intended
11. MS. enclosures

DOWN

1. Fitness regimen
2. Nissan sedan
3. Mock
4. Meditative practice
5. "Brokeback Mountain"
character
6. Mob scenes
7. Obstetrician's prefix for
"gram"



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