

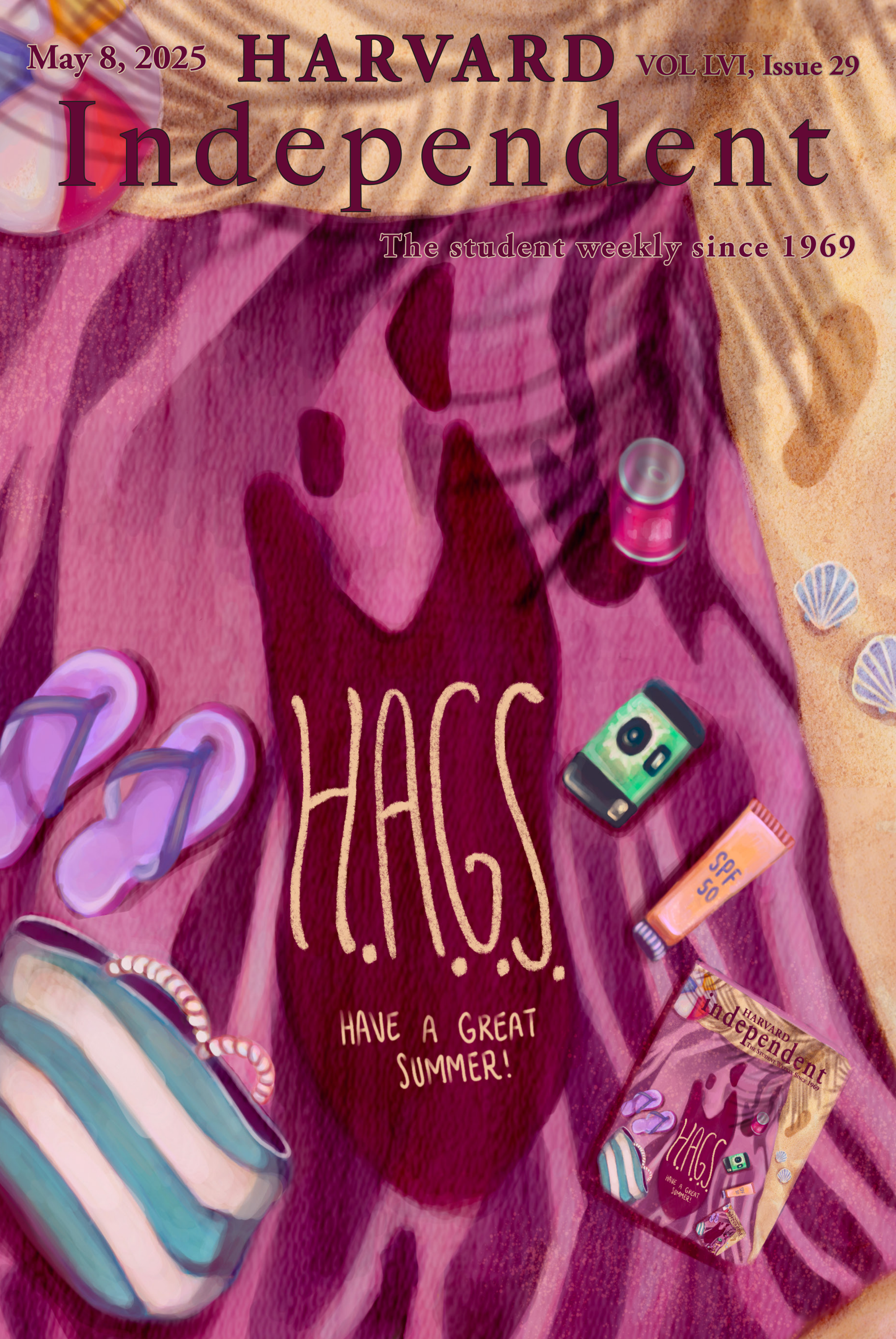
May 8, 2025

HARVARD

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# Independent

The student weekly since 1969





# CONTENTS

3. 150 Names, One Voice  
by Sara Kumar '27
4. Race, Admissions, and a New Reality After Affirmative Action  
by Nashla Turcios '28
5. 50 Aprils Later: Remembering Saigon  
by Sophia Gonzalez '28
6. Tim Walz Calls for Full Democratic Party Reset  
by Hannah Davis '25
7. Reading Between the Lines  
by Christina Shi '27
8. Where Words Are Welcome  
by Olivia Lunseth '28
9. You Need to Climb Trees  
by Aidan Fitzsimons '25
10. A Broad, Abroad: *La Finale*  
by Frances Connors '26
11. Thoughts from New Quincy: Invisible Rituals  
by Luke Wagner '26
12. Pool Day  
by Neshama Ryman '28

14. Abreast on Abroad: Letter Five  
by Sadie Kargman '26
16. A Love Letter to the Moon and to the Theater  
by Kayla Reifel '26
17. Your Summer 2025 Reading List  
by Meena Behringer '27
18. Summer Breakout  
by Clara Lake '27 and Han Nguyen '27
20. On The Job from 9 to 5  
by Adedoyin Adebayo '26
21. Floreat Domus de Eliot  
by Christina Shi '27
22. Sports Spotlight: A Crimson Crew  
by Calvin Frank '28
23. NBA Conference Semifinals Game 3 Predictions  
by Max Suprenant '26
24. Seniors, Get Featured in the *Independent's* Commencement Issue!

## 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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## 150 Names, One Voice

American higher education leaders recently signed a statement condemning recent presidential administration interference.

BY SARA KUMAR '27

noncompliance with federal anti-discrimination policies.

“A lot of these federal funds that were affected have to do with things that are actually priorities not only for Princeton University, but for the American government and indeed for this administration,” Princeton’s President Christopher Eisgruber said in an interview with NPR following the announcement.

Currie emphasized that the stakes go far beyond institutional budgets. “We believe that undergraduate research equips students with the skills, confidence, and curiosity they need to contribute meaningfully to their communities and careers,” she said.

“Especially in times of uncertainty, the research enterprise serves as a foundation for evidence-based decision making, civic engagement, and a future shaped by inquiry and innovation.”

Public universities are likewise in jeopardy. For instance, the University of California, Los Angeles, received approximately \$900 million in federal grants and contracts in FY 2024, in addition to \$200 million for overhead subsidies.

Still, leaders like Brown University President Christina Paxson, UCLA Chancellor Julio Frenk, and Eisgruber made clear that, despite their institutions’ reliance on federal dollars, they will not sacrifice their academic values.

“We will always seek effective and fair financial practices,” the statement read, “but we must reject the coercive use of public research funding.”

The names of certain other colleges and universities stood out among the 150. Although Columbia University capitulated with federal directives on March 21 after facing proposed funding cuts of \$400 million, Acting President Claire Shipman affirmed the University’s commitment to academic freedom by signing the call. Michigan State University President Kevin M. Guskiewicz—whose institution ranked fourth nationally in USAID funding in FY 2024—also signed, despite the financial risks.

“Most fundamentally, America’s colleges and universities prepare an educated citizenry to sustain our democracy,” the statement continued. “The price of abridging the defining freedoms of American

higher education will be paid by our students and our society.”

“I chose to sign the Call for Constructive Engagement because the Council on Undergraduate Research remains steadfast in its commitment to our mission, vision, and values,” Currie wrote—the mentioned principles can be found here. “These guiding principles support the advancement of inclusive, high-quality undergraduate research and affirm the importance of academic freedom, civic responsibility, and collaboration in addressing complex challenges,” she continued.

Other signatures, however, were notably absent. Johns Hopkins University’s President Ronald Daniels did not sign, despite Hopkins receiving a record \$3.4 billion in federal research funding in FY 2022—more than \$1.6 billion ahead of the University of Pennsylvania, which was the next-highest institution. Such fiscal allocations account for around 88% of the University’s total sponsored research revenue. Receiving more than \$100 million monthly in federal funding, Georgia Tech also declined to participate.

President Trump has not directly responded to this letter. However, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon recently sent a letter to Harvard President Garber confirming that the school will no longer receive new federal grants—claiming that “Harvard University has made a mockery of this country’s higher education system.” Amidst this stark adjustment in the institution’s fiscal allocations and as the larger slimmed proposed budget of FY 2026 arrives in a few months, onlookers are watching these 150 institutions and organizations to see whether their words bear the brunt of executive fiscal repercussions.

The call ends with a firm commitment to academic liberty and its association with intellectual excellence.

“On behalf of our current and future students, and all who work at and benefit from our institutions, we call for constructive engagement that improves our institutions and serves our republic,” the statement concluded.

Student engagement in such activism is similarly encouraged. “The voices of students and educators across the country matter deeply,” Currie said. “Their dedication to asking thoughtful questions, applying rigorous methods, and engaging with the world around them represents both the promise and power of research.”

“In that work, there is great hope for the future.”

**SARA KUMAR '27 (SJKUMAR@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS THE NEWS EDITOR FOR THE INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY EMILY PALLAN '27**

On April 22, over 150 American university and college presidents signed a public statement opposing federal interference in U.S. postsecondary institutions. Titled “A Call for Constructive Engagement,” the document was published following meetings convened by the American Association of Colleges and Universities and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. While some institution presidents had previously criticized the Trump administration individually, this statement marked the first coordinated, public pushback against executive orders from the U.S. higher education community.

The signatories include presidents from small liberal arts colleges like Vassar and Carleton and Ivy League universities such as Harvard, Princeton, and Brown. While Harvard has dominated headlines amid proposed budget cuts and ongoing legal scrutiny, the statement places all participating institutions in the federal spotlight—potentially inviting financial retaliation.

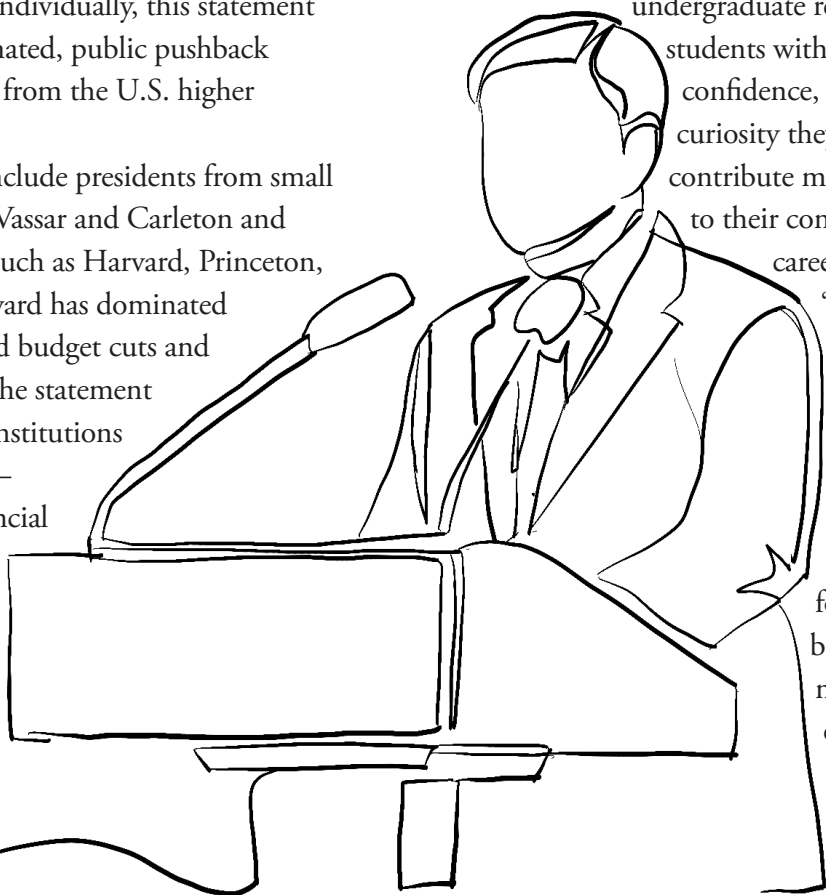
Released on May 2, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget submitted a letter to U.S. Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) outlining

Trump’s fiscal year 2026 recommendations. The proposal includes a reduction of at least \$163 billion in non-defense federal funding, targeting many programs that support higher education students. These cuts would take effect beginning Oct. 1.

“We are open to constructive reform and do not oppose legitimate government oversight. However, we must oppose undue government intrusion in the lives of those who learn, live, and work on our campuses,” the educators declared in the joint statement.

“This moment invites us as educators, students, and institutional leaders to reaffirm our shared responsibility to foster learning environments where diverse perspectives, respectful dialogue, and the pursuit of knowledge can thrive,” said Lindsay Currie, CEO of the Council on Undergraduate Research, in a statement to the *Independent*.

In FY 2024, Brown University received \$253.56 million in federally sponsored grants and contracts, amounting to roughly 19% of its total operating revenue. Yet on April 3, the Trump administration moved to freeze \$510 million in federal support following a review of the University’s response to campus antisemitism. Princeton faces similar threats: in FY 2024, the University received more than \$455 million in federal research funding. However, on April 1, the White House announced plans to suspend many of those grants, citing





# Race, Admissions, and a New Reality After Affirmative Action

Tracking the impact of the Supreme Court's landmark decision on American college admissions.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

As colleges prepare to welcome the class of 2029, students remain uncertain about the new admissions landscape following the Supreme Court's landmark decision to eliminate affirmative action in higher education. After a year of adaptation and growing uncertainty, elite institutions like Harvard and Amherst College are withholding demographic data until the fall, leaving the public to wonder whether the ruling will deepen the declines in racial diversity some schools experienced last year.

On June 29, 2023, the Supreme Court ruled in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* to strike down race-based affirmative action programs in college admissions, declaring such preferences “unconstitutional.” The group specifically argued that Harvard's use of race in admissions discriminated against Asian American applicants. The ruling left U.S. colleges and universities grappling with how to maintain a diverse student body for the class of 2028 and beyond. Nearly two years later, the opinion's effects are unevenly unfolding, with some colleges reporting notable declines in their Black and Hispanic student populations, and others observing minor, if any, demographic shifts.

In the aftermath of the decision, many American higher education institutions adjusted their admissions processes for the 2023-2024 application cycle—some, for instance, revised their application prompts to focus on students' lived experiences, offering an opportunity for applicants to discuss how their background shaped their lives.

This shift was especially evident in Harvard College's admission essays. The school previously offered three optional writing components: a 150-word response about extracurricular activities, a 150-word prompt on additional intellectual experiences, and a free-response supplement that allowed applicants to write on a topic of their choice. Following the ruling, Harvard replaced the optional supplement with five required short-answer questions, each capped at 200 words. One of the new prompts asked: “Harvard has long recognized the importance of enrolling a diverse student body. How will the life experiences that shape who you are today enable you to contribute to Harvard?”

Regardless of this shift in admission questions, the College's racial demographics still changed after the ruling. For the Class of 2028, the percentage of newly enrolled African American students fell from 15.3% to 14%, while Hispanic or Latino enrollment fell from 16% to 11.3%. In contrast, the proportion of Asian American students rose up to 37% from 29.9%. While still of note, these changes were minor in comparison to similar institutions—MIT, for instance, saw the percentage of Black students enrolled drop from 15% to 5%.

The demographics of the

Class of 2029 are still unknown. While Harvard has previously released admissions data on incoming grades in the spring, the University announced it will now publish full admissions statistics each fall after all students have enrolled.

“Due to the 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision, we are unable to access all information about Harvard's applicants, admitted students, and enrolling students, while the application review process is still underway,” Harvard stated on its admission website.

Harvard is not alone in adjusting to the Supreme Court's ruling. Amherst College, also located in Massachusetts and once known for its racially diverse student body, is now grappling with a decline in the percentage of African American students admitted in the previous admissions cycle. The share of Black or African American students dropped sharply from 11% for the Class of 2027 to 3% for the Class of 2028, while Latino representation declined from 12% to 8%. Overall, the percentage of students identifying as people of color fell from 47% to 38%. The college also saw a slight decrease in first-generation college students, from 17% to 15%, even as the percentage of Pell Grant recipients increased from 18.5% to 20%.

Amherst College also plans to withhold demographic data for the Class of 2029 until the fall. This mirrors actions being taken across other Ivy League institutions.

Meanwhile, Amherst officials have acknowledged the impact of the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling on the racial makeup of its incoming class. Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Matthew McGann expressed concern about the drop in Black students' enrollment.

“The college believes deeply in diversity and that education is best in a diverse environment, including a racially and ethnically diverse environment,” he told the Amherst Student in September. “To see those feared declines realized was a sad moment, and it's not in the best interests of what the college hopes to be.”

Amherst President Michael Elliott also described the demographic shift as “disappointing” and outlined new recruitment efforts. These include a \$400,000 grant that allowed Amherst to join the STARS College Network, a group of institutions committed to outreach in rural areas. Brown University, Yale University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, and other elite American colleges are part of STARS; Harvard is not.

While administrations at Harvard and Amherst have responded with structural changes and new outreach efforts, students on campus are also grappling with the implications of the Supreme Court's decision.

“I don't think the ruling changed how I view diversity at Harvard—I still believe everyone belongs here,” an anonymous Harvard student said in an interview with the Independent. “But it might affect

how much diversity we actually see on campus.”

She also spoke about Harvard's revised admissions prompts, which now require students to reflect more deeply about their identities and experiences.

“It definitely helped a lot as a low-income student from parents of Brazilian immigrant background,” she continued. “It helped me add a lot of context to my application, including the fact I did not have a lot of clubs I could go to or transportation growing up because of our socioeconomic status.”

For others, the Supreme Court ruling has sparked deeper reflection on what diversity actually looks like in practice—and where it's falling short.

“The ruling has made me more critical and aware of where diversity lacks on campus,” said Iyanuoluwa Shonukan '28. “I don't think affirmative action is where diversity dies on campus; however, all hands on deck are necessary to ensure Harvard remains a place where diversity is viewed as important.”

He sees this moment not as an end, but as an inflection point. “With the ending of affirmative action and the unstable political climate, the Harvard community now has the opportunity to be intentional in its mission toward embracing diversity, and I hope they take it,” he said.

Diversity on campus, according to members of the student body, can no longer be passively maintained; it has to be actively protected. For many, this means organizing, advocating, and building stronger communities of support. In the immediate aftermath of the ruling, more than 100 students, alumni, and community members gathered in Harvard Yard to protest the decision, marching through campus to express their commitment to maintaining diversity in higher education. Since then, student groups have continued to empower marginalized communities by hosting cultural events and organizing initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion and diversity.

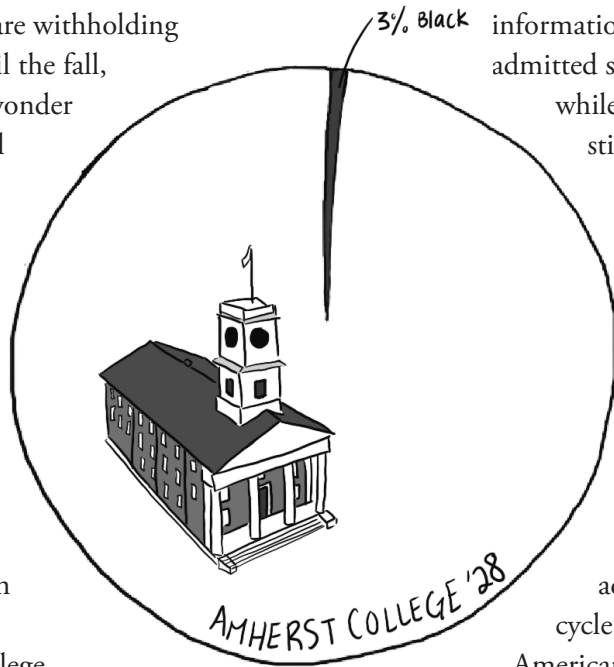
Kathryn Kyomitmaitee '26, a student organizer and advocate for affirmative action, pointed to the persistence of student-led efforts as a source of optimism.

“I am confident that future classes will continue to reflect Harvard's values on inclusion and representation. Especially given this current moment in time, with cuts on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging across the nation, there are still so many students on campus who care and are pushing back against this notion,” she said. “The culture of students here will continue to persist, and I hope the incoming classes will see this and reflect it.”

She offered advice on how students can actively support efforts to preserve campus diversity. “Be present. Whether it's in large or small ways, just being present would probably be my one recommendation. Be there for your friends who may be at the most risk now. Give them space to reflect and to open up about their worries,” she said.

**NASHLA TURCIOS '28 (NASHLATURCIOS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE '27**





# 50 Aprils Later: Remembering Saigon

Unheard narratives from Vietnamese students at Harvard.

BY SOPHIA GONZALEZ '28

**50** years ago, on April 30, the capital of South Vietnam fell to Northern Vietnamese forces, unifying the two nations under Communist Party rule. The Fall of Saigon signaled an end to one of the 20th century's most controversial and bloody wars—both at home and abroad. The deaths of over 3.4 million Vietnamese, as well as over 58,220 Americans, in the conflict have reverberated across decades. While the voices of American leaders and veterans often dominate narratives of the Vietnam War and the Fall of Saigon, the perspectives of Vietnamese people and Vietnamese Americans are frequently overlooked.

The week leading up to the Fall of Saigon, former President Gerald Ford gave a speech at Tulane University on the end of the war. He only explicitly mentioned Vietnam once, directing focus towards a more isolationist future for America, away from conflict and foreign affairs.

"Today, America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam. But it cannot be achieved by refighting a war that is finished as far as America is concerned," Ford said. "As I see it, the time has come to look forward to an agenda for the future, to unify, to bind up the Nation's wounds, and to restore its health and its optimistic self-confidence."

As Northern Vietnamese forces closed in on Saigon, tens of thousands of Vietnamese civilians and American diplomats and officials attempted to flee the surrounded city, fearing persecution. On the day of the fall, over 7,000 Americans and Vietnamese escaped. In the aftermath, more than two million fled the country, seeking safety and stability elsewhere.

"There's a massive diaspora of growth not only in the U.S., but also in France and in Germany as well, and also in Senegal and some Central African countries..."

a member of the Political, Educational, and Advocacy Team for the Harvard Vietnamese Association, in an interview with the Independent.

The HVA aims to foster awareness and appreciation of Vietnamese and Vietnamese American culture, history, and community at Harvard. With 22 board members, the organization regularly hosts events to maintain a strong presence across campus.

Trần spoke about her experiences growing up in Vietnam and her life as a Vietnamese American woman. "There are definitely Vietnamese American neighborhoods in the U.S. that strongly view April 30 as a day of mourning," she said. "In Vietnam proper, it is a day of celebration."

Trần, born after the war, lived in Vietnam until she was 11 and recalled celebrations commemorating the Fall of Saigon. "I knew it as a kid, just people calling it April 30, or the more official name, the Liberation of South Vietnam," she said. "I remember it was like a holiday."

She later moved to Portland, Ore.—a place that, according to Trần, did not have a large Vietnamese American community. Such a shift taught her about the importance of recognizing the trauma between the lived experiences of those who fled Vietnam during the war and those who stayed.

"Vietnamese people [who stayed] don't have a sense of the trauma that a lot of people who have fled Vietnam, people who became refugees [have]," she said. "They don't have that sense of how difficult it was for people who had to flee." Trần suggested that this disconnect explains the range of opinions on the fall between those who immigrated to America and those who still live in the now-communist nation.

At Harvard, Trần was struck by the different ways Vietnamese Americans learn about the war. "The majority of my peers in the Vietnamese Association are people who are born in the U.S. and have only heard about the war from their parents," she said.

"Different Vietnamese associations have different names for [April 30], and the way that they address it," she continued. According to

space for Vietnamese students. However, no official statement recognizing April 30 was issued by the HVA.

To Trần, the 50th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon is a time of reckoning and healing for all individuals affected by the war.

"It's really easy to address the American perspectives and American memories of the war," she said. "[Including] Vietnamese refugees of the war or other Vietnamese voices—even people who are anti-war actors within Vietnam—would help create a more comprehensive understanding of the war." Trần believes that this expansion of narratives in media and academia would encourage critical thinking about the roots of the conflict and its aftermath, extending beyond U.S. involvement.

For those in Vietnam, the 50th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon has resurfaced unanswered questions, heartaches, and deep points of contention. Looking for a unified path forward is difficult. Still, "Vietnamese people are optimistic about it, and [about] their relations with the U.S.," Trần said.

"[HVA] is looking forward to next year to having a Vietnamese history professor for the first time in five years, and expanding the Vietnamese language program," she continued.

"So I think right now, what does this say? What has come out of the [50th] anniversary?"

In the fall 2025 semester, Professor Uyen Nguyen will teach the 15-person seminar History 166: "Modern Vietnam: A History through its Cities," furthering engagement with the Fall of Saigon and the Vietnam War on campus.

Ultimately, the questions raised and the damage caused through U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War have no conclusive answers. "I think people should just be ready to have very deep conversations, because [the Vietnam War] has a lot of deep connotations, and people have a whole variety of deep memories attached to it," Trần said. "We should have a critical lens and think critically about the governmental levels' actions and the groups of people that were affected by it."

**SOPHIA GONZALEZ '28**  
([SOPHIA.GONZALEZ@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU](mailto:SOPHIA.GONZALEZ@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)) WRITES NEWS FOR THE **INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27**

Everyone's just working really hard to figure out how to make sense of this," said Emily Phương Trần '26,

Trần, some of these names include 'Black April,' 'Liberation of South Vietnam,' 'Reunification Day,' and simply 'April 30.' While several Asian and Asian American student organizations include Vietnamese members, HVA serves as a dedicated





# Tim Walz Calls for Full Democratic Party Reset

Governor Walz reflects on the 2024 presidential election and his hopes for the Democratic Party's future.

BY HANNAH DAVIS '25

On Monday, April 28, Minnesota Governor and 2024 Democratic Vice Presidential Candidate Tim Walz joined the Institute of Politics John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum for a conversation on the 2024 presidential election, the Democratic Party, and the state of American democracy and politics. ABC News National Political Reporter and Spring 2025 IOP fellow Brittany Shepherd moderated the discussion.

The event began with exploring Walz's role in the Harris-Walz 2024 campaign and its rocky execution.

Harris had less than two weeks to pick a running mate after Biden dropped out, leaving the Democratic Party scrambling to change directions. Walz highlighted the challenges of running a 100-day campaign against Trump, who had spent years building his platform.

"We knew what our mission was: we had about 100 days to prevent what's happening from happening," he said, regarding the Trump administration. "There's no second-place trophy. It's zero-sum."

Harvard Students for Harris was one of many political groups formed to help the Harris-Walz campaign and counteract the possible setbacks spurred by their delayed start.

"What I learned from that, candidly, was if you leave a void, Donald Trump will fill it, and so I think you've got to be in every place as often as you can in every single day of every minute to make that push back," Walz said.

Walz was one of three of Harris' running mate frontrunners, in addition to Gov. Josh Shapiro (D-PA) and Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ). Neither Harris nor America knew Walz well before the summer. Harris reportedly chose Walz because they had a strong initial bond, and she did not think his personal ambitions would overshadow her mission.

"I also was on the ticket, quite honestly, because I could code talk to white guys watching football, fixing their truck; I could put them at ease," Walz explained, referring to how, as a white, middle-aged Midwesterner, he softened the possible perceived weight of voting for a female president of color. "I was the permission structure to say, 'Look, you can do this and vote for this.'" Yet, despite the campaign's strategic choices, it was not enough to beat out the Trump campaign.

During the campaign's last few weeks, Walz saw many campaign signs focused on singular words identified with each candidate: "Trump—safety. Kamala—crime. Trump—wealth. Kamala—poverty."

Walz shared his initial reaction to these advertisements. "What are we, first graders? For Christ's sake. And then I'm like, 'Oh my God, these are pretty devastating,'" he recalled.

Ultimately, Walz attributed the campaign loss to voter turnout and broader Democratic Party failures. "There were enough people that said, on issues that were very divisive, there's no difference between the candidates, they're the same, and they stayed home," Walz said.

Walz was disappointed by the Party's inability to convey their stance on pressing national issues and the subsequent Democratic loss. "Our

policies would have created more wealth. Our policies would have helped with home ownership."

In addition to reflecting on possible reasons why the Harris-Walz ticket lost, Walz also shared the need for an evolved Democratic Party, especially considering present shortcomings.

"Why have we lost this self-identity that the Democratic Party is for personal freedom? They're for middle-class folks; they're for labor rights. How did we lose it where people didn't self-identify with that?" Walz asked. "And, how did we get to a point where people didn't feel like this was an important enough election to get out there and vote?"

"We have to fundamentally change who we are," he continued. "We win on the issues and we win on competency, and then we lose the message and we lose power."

According to a CNN poll, Trump earned only a 41% approval rating for his first 100 days in office, the lowest for any president since Eisenhower in the 1950s. Yet despite these low ratings, the Democrats have a long way to go—only 29% of registered voters have a favorable view of the Democratic Party.

However, the Democratic Party has been working to adjust. In special elections and state Supreme Court elections since the 2024 Presidential elections, Democrats launched attack ads evoking negative ties to "special government employee" Elon Musk. Drawing attention away from Trump and toward a less popular figure led to retained liberal control of Wisconsin's Supreme Court. House and Senate Democrats also filed a brief opposing Trump's effort to fire Federal Trade Commission members.

Walz maintains hope for the Democratic Party and its future. "I think we will take back the House. I am very pessimistic about the Senate," he said, looking to the 2026 midterm elections.

The Democrats lost the House in the 2022 elections and the Senate in the 2024 elections. Republicans currently control 220 of 435 House seats and 53 of 100 Senate seats. In the 2026 midterm election cycle, 13 Democratic seats and 20 Republican seats will be up for re-election. President Trump won 21 of the 33 states holding 2026 Senate elections compared to Harris's 12. Democrats will have to defend Georgia and Michigan, which Trump won in 2024.

Ultimately, despite these gradual actions, Walz emphasized the uncertainty of who will initiate the necessary wholesale change within the Democratic party and what mechanisms might spur those shifts. Walz said he would not run for President and did not see a viable front-runner for the next Democratic election right now. Instead, he emphasized the importance of uniting the Democratic Party for a party-driven election process rather than a candidate-driven election process.

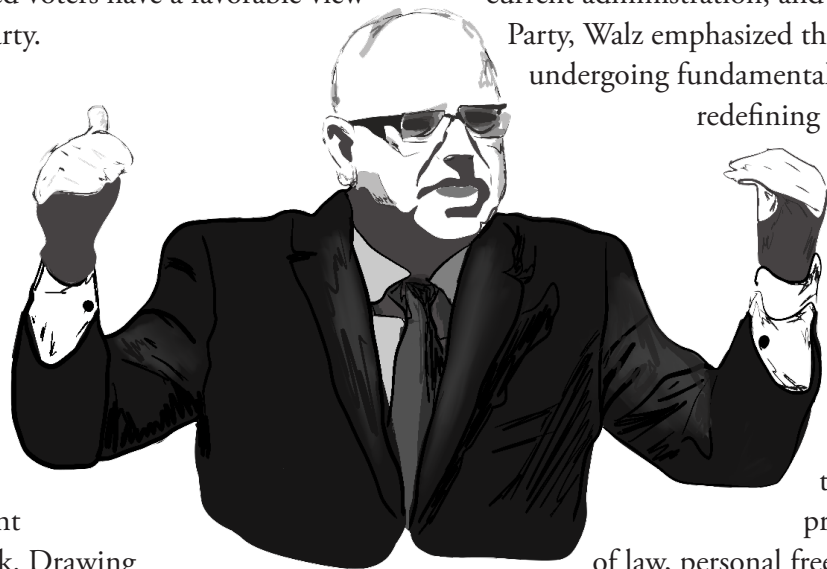
"I don't think an individual should be running. I think we collectively as a party and as elected officials should be running this campaign," he said. "I'm actually okay with challenging the status quo inside the party with new ideas and fresh ideas, but I do think once we pick a candidate, we've got to all agree that you got to go."

"I think we need to collectively run a presidential campaign without a candidate right now that builds all the infrastructure, helps us clarify this, and by the time we get to 2028, we're ready," he later explained.

Trump's prominent online presence and central role in the Republican Party, in Walz's eyes, contribute to the Democrats' need to add a counterforce.

"I don't think any one person right now, in where we're at in America, by themselves, can be the counterweight to [the Trump administration's] noise and the attention they get...you're better off to do more, to be out in every forum you can be in," Walz said.

Across his analysis of the election, the current administration, and the Democratic Party, Walz emphasized the importance of undergoing fundamental change and redefining and



reframing its values to voters.

"I want to do what I can do to help define the Democratic Party as a party that is there to protect the rule of law, personal freedoms, and the things we care about. It's my job in any small area—I don't care if it's Omaha or Wheeling, West Virginia—to make the case that there is value in what we stand for."

Since 2018, Walz has championed clean energy legislation, labor rights, and provided free school meals for students. In the months since the election, Walz has mentioned the importance of bringing Democratic-led legislation on paid family and medical leave, affordable family care, and healthcare access to middle-class voters.

Many of the Democratic Party's problems are clear, but the path forward is not. A key takeaway across each of Walz's points was the need for new voices and new messages in the Democratic Party. Walz saw the Democrats' desire for change mirror his own during the campaign season, and those sentiments still hold true during Trump's term.

"It's real. It's not performative. Folks are angry. They want to see something get done," he said.

"I think they're ready for something different."

HANNAH DAVIS '25 (HANNAHDAVIS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY ANNELISE FISHER '26



# Reading Between the Lines

Students reflect on Harvard's political messaging.

BY CHRISTINA SHI '27

Throughout late March and early April, Harvard University leadership has sent a series of emails to the institution's affiliates: "The Promise of American Higher Education," "Upholding Our Values, Defending Our University," and "Our Commitment to Community," among others. Written in response to moments of apparent national crisis, these messages raise questions about the role of University administration in shaping how students experience current events—do these carefully-composed messages truly offer reassurance, or do they simply signal symbolic engagement? Student responses across the College have offered insight into external perception of whether the school has been successful in threading a fine line between appeasing federal orders and preserving the values of the larger campus community.

Harvard has continued to release official statements to University affiliates acknowledging the gravity of these developments and their possible impact on campus. These communications aim to reflect the University's values: a commitment to democratic norms, academic freedom, and civic responsibility.

These emails have become more relevant and frequent in recent years, as Harvard's relationship with the Trump administration has been unusually turbulent. The University has become involved in legal challenges against key federal policies, notably including restrictions on international student visas and a freeze on over \$2 billion in federal research funding. Harvard filed suit against the administration, arguing that the funding freeze was unconstitutional and jeopardized the institution's research focus.

These recent judicial battles have particularly positioned the University not just as an observer of national politics but as an active participant, a reality that shapes how many recent or current students interpret the University's public statements and its broader role in American higher education.

For many students, the frequency of these statements has become part of the

backdrop of their college years. From the challenges of the 2021-2022 academic year, including the ongoing pandemic and political tensions, to the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection's aftermath, students have watched the University navigate how and when to speak out.

"I think they reflect Harvard's values because the stakes are very real, which they must have known," one anonymous senior said in an interview with the *Independent*.

"At this level, these statements matter tremendously. Harvard is an institution at the forefront of higher education. It has the opportunity to set the precedent for other universities, and it should do so

responsibly," an anonymous sophomore commented.

Others, however, question their importance amidst other opportunities to absorb the University's stance through secondhand sources—in dining halls, within group chats, or through student publications. "I really have not paid much attention," said Raphael Tourette '26. "I read the *Crimson* headlines and that's about it."

Recent campus tensions have also influenced how these messages are received.

Following the 2024 resignation of President Claudine Gay and ongoing debates around free speech and institutional neutrality, some students have reevaluated the credibility and intent behind University-wide communications. The statements issued in response to Trump-related news are now part of a broader conversation about Harvard's willingness, or reluctance, to speak forcefully on political issues.

"It's important that a university like Harvard pave the way for other schools, no matter how acclaimed or endowed, to stand up to the federal government in cases of abuse of power," Will Sullivan '28 said.

Still, students also believe the University isn't doing enough, especially considering the breadth of students now affected by Trump-era policies. "More could be done to mitigate stress and fear for students being targeted by the

Trump administration," Sullivan added.

These statements raise broader questions about which events prompt institutional responses and how those decisions shape perceptions of equity and leadership on campus. Moreover, are these statements meaningful expressions of concern or merely symbolic gestures intended to maintain the appearance of engagement?

"[I think these statements are] mostly performative, but I know the school is also trying to remain diplomatic and make everybody happy," Tourette said.

Others, however, disagree. "Had it been performative, I do not think they would have risked as much," the anonymous senior explained. "I believe that they both reflect Harvard's values and are excessively performative, perhaps for the purpose of garnering institutional support," an anonymous junior said.

Regardless of interpretation, the messages have become part of the background noise of student life, appearing alongside administrative updates and event announcements.

The language of these emails often avoids explicit criticism or partisan framing, which some interpret as an attempt to remain diplomatically neutral. Others argue that neutrality, in moments of democratic uncertainty, carries its own kind of political weight. "They have a platform and should use it," the sophomore said, "especially when the alternative is acquiescence."

Looking ahead, it remains uncertain whether the next generation of undergraduates will demand more from the administration. Moreover, as the Class of 2025 prepares to graduate, students are leaving a Harvard, which has navigated a turbulent political era through measured statements and cautious messaging.

Whether those emails offered reassurance or frustration, they likely shaped how this class experienced institutional voice—and institutional silence—at a time when both were closely scrutinized.

**CHRISTINA SHI '27 (CHRISTINASHI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WONERS IF HER LAST HARVARD EMAIL WILL ALSO BE ABOUT DONALD TRUMP.**

**GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26**





# FORUM

## Where Words Are Welcome

In a time when free expression in the classroom is under threat, some classrooms remain sanctuaries for honest dialogue.

BY OLIVIA LUNSETH '28

Harvard often presents itself as a champion of free expression in the classroom, with its official handbook stating that the University is “committed to reason and rational discourse.” And while no institution is perfect, I’ve found that in the right environment, with students and educators who genuinely value intellectual vitality, spaces at Harvard can foster unfiltered discussion.

This semester, I had the privilege of being part of one such space: Expos Studio 20, “The Successful Life.” As an Expository Writing course, it focused on analytical writing, specifically prompting students to discover and examine their ideas of success.

At the beginning of the semester, each of us wrote down our definition of success on a blank piece of paper. I wrote about wanting to enjoy whatever career I ended up having, living in the mountains so that I can go skiing every day, and being close enough to see my sister often. Everyone in the class had their unique takes—some people wanted money or fame, while others wanted equality or peace.

A few days ago, at the end of the semester, we revisited the same activity. We compared how our definitions had evolved. For me, my idea of success remained largely unchanged, still centered around happiness and a peaceful life. However, several of my peers shared how their views had transformed entirely. Through readings, discussions, and self-reflection, we all arrived at our own conclusions about what success means to us. The environment we created in class played a key role in this growth, fostering the kind of open dialogue and reflection that allowed our perspectives to shift.

Like many required courses, it brought together a wide spectrum of students from different backgrounds and interests. That diversity became the course’s greatest strength, fueling conversations that felt genuinely meaningful.

I could walk into class with a half-baked opinion and some scattered annotations and walk out ready to passionately defend a stance I hadn’t realized I held. Other days, I entered with a firm perspective only to leave with a completely different understanding because a classmate’s argument challenged me to reconsider.

An example of when my stance was challenged was when we read an excerpt from “Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work” by Matthew B. Crawford. The book is about the differing values of white- and blue-collar work. Honestly, when I first read it, I was bored and not excited. I’m pre-med, and I just kept thinking, “Well, I already know what I want to do. Why do I need to read about all these kinds of work?” But once we started discussing it in class, I realized there was

more to it than I thought. Our class talked about the roots of these different kinds of work and where the stigmas surrounding them stem from. We got into systemic issues within industries—racism, sexism, and the ethics of working for large corporations like Amazon. People disagreed, and our conversations lasted the entire class.

Unlike other required classes where readings felt like a chore and discussion was forced or awkward, this course encouraged immediate engagement. If I disagreed with something, I said so. If someone disagreed with me, they let me know. We had discussions that filled entire class periods, and no one shied away from difficult topics. I heard perspectives from across the political and ideological spectrum, and not once did I feel silenced or dismissed.

It reminded me of another space where I felt free to speak my mind: the First-Year Outdoor Program. After a week in the woods—no phones, no distractions—something remarkable happened: people started saying what they truly thought. Trail conversations veered into topics I’d normally avoid, especially politics, yet every viewpoint was heard. One topic that came up on several occasions was religion, and despite the diversity of backgrounds present, I never felt like the discussion got disrespectful. People were open to listen and learn, fueled by curiosity.

Spaces like these stand in contrast to the current atmosphere both within and beyond academia. Across the country, students and faculty members are growing increasingly wary of speaking too freely, worried their words might be misunderstood, misrepresented, or condemned. On college campuses, debates over what constitutes “appropriate” speech have become political flashpoints. Even here at Harvard, tensions are evident.

Recently, Harvard sued the Trump administration over threats to research funding and alleged violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. This action has made some students afraid to speak their minds with honesty in the classroom. I support Harvard’s decision to defend its students’ rights and its ability to shape its educational mission. I believe that by standing up for the right to research and the ability of universities to make their own decisions, Harvard is standing for a core

value of democracy: freedom.

But not everyone feels that way—when Harvard sued, to some students, it felt as if the entire University had taken a side against them. Not to mention, international students’ visas are now under threat, causing many to fear speaking up and drawing attention to themselves.

In such a charged environment, open dialogue often feels risky. The resulting silence is often self-imposed, creeping in as students begin to second-guess whether their ideas will be received in good faith. That’s why it’s essential to approach these conversations with respect—so that everyone feels safe enough to speak their mind in the classroom.

To be honest, I once regretted taking the path from Expos Studio 10 to Expos Studio 20 to fulfill my writing requirement. The studio courses have smaller class sizes—my class had 10 students—and allow you to get more feedback on your work before it is turned in compared to regular Expos classes.

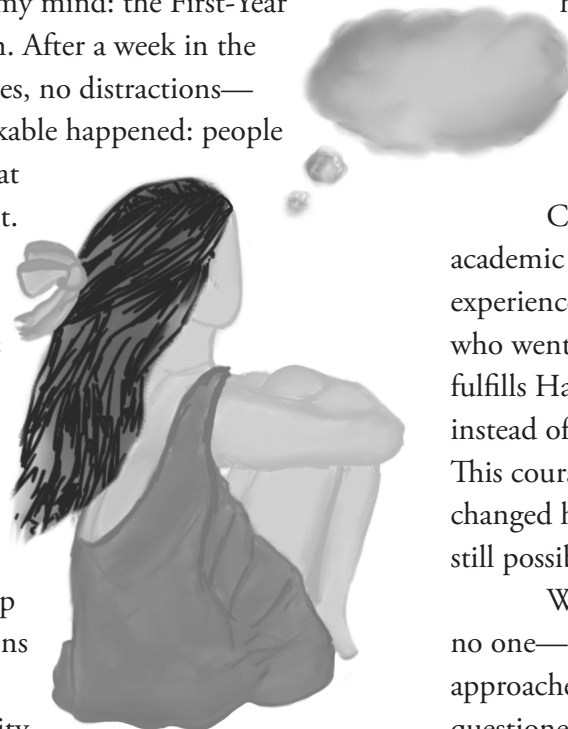
Coming from a high school with limited academic resources, I lacked formal writing experience and felt behind. I envied classmates who went straight into regular Expos 20, which fulfills Harvard’s writing requirement in one class instead of two. But now, I’m glad I took this route. This course didn’t just reshape how I write—it changed how I think about what conversations are still possible in higher education.

What made the course special was that no one—neither students nor our preceptor—approached disagreement as a threat. We questioned the readings. We questioned each other. We even questioned Harvard itself. But it never felt risky—it felt productive. That kind of dynamic doesn’t happen by accident. It takes trust, intentionality, and a shared understanding that being right is less important than being willing to engage.

As academia grows more cautious—and, in some places, more closed off—I’m reminded what a privilege it is to be part of spaces where students can speak freely, challenge one another, and grow through that process. That freedom isn’t guaranteed, and it’s not permanent. It must be protected—by students who speak up, by faculty who foster it, by classmates who choose to listen with an open mind, and by institutions that choose dialogue over defensiveness.

**OLIVIA LUNSETH '28 (OLIVIALUNSETH@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) LOVES FEELING FREE TO PITCH ANYTHING WITHOUT JUDGMENT DURING STORYBOARD.**

**GRAPHIC BY GIULIA VIACAVA '28**





# You Need to Climb Trees

The sixth ‘Treetise,’ my series of essays about the benefits of climbing trees on Harvard’s campus and beyond.

BY AIDAN FITZSIMONS ’25

When was the last time you climbed a tree? If the answer is more than a few months ago, then you need to read this. It’s a matter of utmost importance. Your courage and whimsy depend on it.

Climbing trees is medicine for your mental health. If you ever feel sad, overwhelmed, burnt out, depressed, anxious, confused—climb a tree. It’s that simple. Climbing trees scratches an evolutionary itch embedded deep in our primate DNA, older by millions of years than our lives on the ground. You don’t need a daily dose—just one climb a month provides longer-lasting benefits than any prescription drug I’ve tried.

So many of our modern mental health struggles stem from a mismatch between what our bodies evolved to desire and what we actually spend our time doing. There’s a tension between our ancient genes and the rapidly evolving cultural memes we must now adapt to. Our social structures—beautiful and empowering as they can be—oversatisfy some of our needs while starving others. We’re left feeling like something’s missing. Luckily, memes are incredibly adaptable; I write this column so we can learn anew how to climb trees.

Treeclimbing empowers us with a primal sense of *competence*. Like every living thing, we need to feel capable of navigating our physical environment—able to escape predators into a safe tree, nourish ourselves by finding tasty fruit, and move through the world with confidence, strength, and a sense of belonging. Trees were the first home we adapted to move through, and when you climb into an easy tree, ancestral memories will instantly flood your muscles. Your hands and feet will know what to do. You’ll pull yourself up, higher and higher, four-limbed and alive.

Good starter trees around Harvard Yard include the Emerson Tree (subject of my *First Treetise*, “The Best Tree in Harvard Yard,” which launched this column on Harvard tree-climbing in 2018), the Dawn Redwoods by Robinson Hall (subject of my *Fifth Treetise*, “Dawn Redwoods,” this past fall), and the lovely tree in the center of Canaday courtyard. One of my favorite evenings this fall featured all three; the security guard who’d asked me to get down from the first couldn’t see me in the leaves of the next. Or maybe, at least, he pretended. Safe in the tree, surrounded by flaming fall leaves, listening to the dialogue between the wind and the branches, I thought and thought as evening deepened through blue and everything melted into one shadow. One good long think, high in a tree, can be the highlight of your week, more empowering than days in a gym or a library—and more cheerful, more simple.

Competence and courage grow from a healthy dose of danger. Treeclimbing is perfect: as long as you’re aware and present with your body and the tree, you will not fall. Just lock in. In all my years, I’ve never fallen out of a tree. Looking down from a high limb thrills you with a sense of trust in your own ability to carry yourself and defy gravity.

This rising thrill engenders the courage necessary for climbing higher still.

We, who’ve grown up in an unprecedentedly safety-obsessed society, need the challenge of treeclimbing. I don’t want you to be safe; I want you to be skillful. Our whole lives, risk-averse systems have tamed most environments in advance of our arrival. We stay on the beaten paths. But climbing a tree, holding the weight of your own body aloft—this individualizes. You, alone, survive or die, a single self in a physical environment. There are no paths, peoples, signs. You adapt not to the merely human world, but to the world beneath and above it.

Treeclimbing is individualizing, yet it’s also a symbol of belonging. Before the campfire, the tree was where we were home together. The tree is the tribe. To be honest, I’ve always struggled with belonging at Harvard. First I was too young, then I was too old, and I pretty much ignored a decade’s worth of therapy debt the whole time. I think a lot of people here, at a school that lets us in just to show us thousands of magic locked doors, struggle with belonging. But when you’re perched in a tree, friends walk by. They chat. They smile in the spring sunlight, cross the green behind Sever, and swing themselves up into your tree. The tribe always comes home.

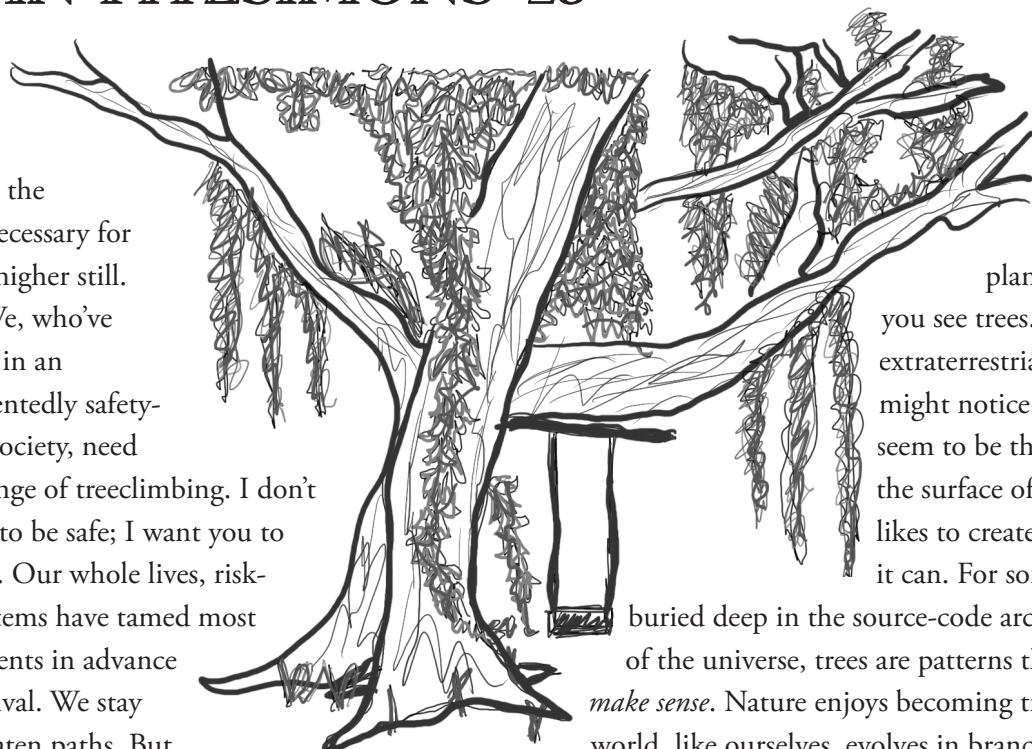
Trees teach us *withness*. Sitting on a branch, leaning into a living trunk, you feel you’re truly *with* that tree in a way you can’t be with bricks. You relate with a living thing. On some level, the tree knows you’re there. And on some level, you trust it, as family, to hold you. You’re both changing, both staying the same. You adapt, together. Maybe it’s good to be reminded of this. Maybe the whole world works more like this than we think.

In a tree, we are children again. Treeclimbing is an essential form of play; it taps into a native sense of simian whimsy. We’re all just kids climbing trees, exploring a new world together. Climbing with friends reactivates the inner layers of ourselves—like tree rings receiving water—three, six, nine years old again. In a tree, we are innocent, unabused, unlimited. No violence has ever touched our skins. We are free. We are the joy of the world seeing itself for the first time.

Climbing trees gives us perspective.

From a new angle, we see the world more clearly—often in ways we couldn’t have imagined from the ground. Even a low perch in a small tree can shift our understanding of a place we thought we knew. By zooming out from the physical world, we train a deeper cognitive muscle that lets us gain perspective on our ideas, perspective on ourselves.

When the camera pans out, rising above



planet Earth, you see trees. An extraterrestrial observer might notice that trees seem to be the shape that the surface of the Earth likes to create as often as it can. For some reason, buried deep in the source-code architecture of the universe, trees are patterns that just *make sense*. Nature enjoys becoming trees. The world, like ourselves, evolves in branches—rivers threading toward the ocean, dendrites reaching across synapses from one neuron to the next, the fractal, fern-like burns on the skin of someone who survives a lightning strike.

I’d bet that the world of ideas is tree-shaped, too. Veritas over time, the branching disciplines, the trunk-like consiliences—it’s a tree of trees of trees. Reality is arborescent.

So take a walk, and climb a new tree. This summer, you’ll find all kinds—if you keep your eyes open. Even here, on Harvard’s campus, there are dozens of excellent climbable trees to discover. Harvard may not want you to climb (they prune the lower branches of most trees to make them inaccessible). But in the rare case a security guard tells you to come down, don’t worry—it’s chill, they’re just doing their job. You can climb down with a smile, obligingly, and laugh at how silly it is to tell a primate to get out of a tree for their own safety. Later, you can climb right back up.

These are our trees, and we should climb them. Harvard, hemmed in by a larger system based on a flawed notion of liability, should continue to unofficially look the other way; we must be free to take our own risks. But if the day comes when they must choose, I hope they protect our right to climb. I have nightmares of Harvard cutting the lower limbs off the Emerson Tree; this would be a tragic crime. The spirit of Ralph Waldo Emerson doesn’t live in the brick hall that bears his name—it lives in the tree growing free beside it. Cut those branches, and Harvard cuts its own trunk. The true Harvard would fall.

But luckily, the trees are still here. We still have strength in our legs, scratches on our arms, and sap on our palms. We were born to climb.

**AIDAN FITZSIMONS ’20-’25 (AIDAN\_FITZSIMONS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL BE IN THE EMERSON TREE AT 5 P.M. ON MAY 15TH.**

**GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA ’27**



# A Broad, Abroad: La Finale

My final thoughts and reflections on my semester in Europe.

BY FRANCES CONNORS '26

The other day, sipping on a macchiato while struggling to finish my art history final paper in a café near the Sorbonne, I overheard two abroad Americans chatting. They were discussing their excitement to return to the States—eager to see friends and family, ready to be home. As I listened to them rationalize why they were ready to leave France, I realized I couldn't relate. I didn't want this semester to end—and I still don't.

But end it must, and with it, this column.

Living in Paris has just felt right. Sure, the lighter workload and abundance of free time helped, but more than anything, the day-to-day rhythm here suits me. America's convenience culture, where comfort and efficiency reign, isn't my style. I appreciate the slower, more intentional pace of life here—one filled with socializing, wandering, and travel.

Take laundry, for example. In the United States, over 80% of households use a dryer, but in France, I've grown to love hanging my clothes up piece by piece like the 65% of the French population that don't own a dryer. Unlike some of my classmates, I'm not eager to return to electric drying—it's okay to have to wait for things. It's better for my clothing and postpones my least favorite chore: folding laundry. I've already been perusing dorm-friendly drying racks online for the fall (yes, I recognize that online shopping is buying into convenience culture).

Drying methods aside, I've also loved the way French people style their clothing. While I hate to admit that I didn't become the Parisian-chic fashion icon I thought I would—I blame limited suitcase space and an overused travel fund—I do think my style has improved marginally. Or at least, my accessory game has, thanks to my newfound love for silk scarves. Parisians always look their best, no matter the occasion. I once saw a girl at run club put on a floor-length trench coat and cinch it with a western-style belt after running six miles. It was a peak function meets fashion moment, and a testament to the French commitment to style over convenience. There's intentionality behind every outfit choice. I'm not sure if I'm ready to return to a world of athleisure and sweatpants in the United States.

Still, while I like to think I'll resist American convenience culture when I'm back, in practice, I hesitate to make such bold promises. On a visit to see my friend at St. Andrew's in Scotland, I had my first iced latte in months (I was in the UK, so I'm technically not breaking my no-iced-coffee-in-the-EU pact). I took it to-go, and its delicious creaminess made me reconsider my espousal to

straight espresso for the past four months. Maybe Europe's refusal to put milk in coffee after 12 p.m. is a little bit of overkill. I still think a good espresso should be enjoyed sitting down and without milk, but don't be surprised if you see me reach for oat milk when I'm back to my HUDS iced coffees.

Half the reason I became an espresso snob this semester was because I like hanging out with people. Café culture is one of my favorite things about Paris. Chilling in a café or on a terrace has been a go-to way to see friends here, so I've consumed a lot of espresso as the obligatory "sitting fee." Meals also aren't eaten alone at desks, and coffee is rarely taken to go. They're both enjoyed with friends and coworkers at cafés. Even though longer breaks cut into productivity—it's worth it to slow down and build those ever-important connections with friends.



That's been the biggest realization of all: how much I value community. Time and time again, I come back to the same thing—community. I found myself spending a lot more time alone this semester compared to at Harvard, where my friends live a five-minute walk instead of a thirty-minute metro ride away. While I'm grateful for the reflective solitude I had, it also made me appreciate getting to spend time with people even more. I realized that strong relationships and community matter a lot to me. Paris's love of long meals and aperitifs reminds me that this city values it as well. A solid group of friends makes the good times better and the bad times bearable.

At the beginning of the semester, I saw this firsthand. A tough long-distance breakup forced me to lean on new friends and old ones alike. That openness helped me navigate heartbreak and grow from it, and I became so much closer to my friends on account of my vulnerability.

Community also made my wins sweeter. Last weekend, I ran my first 10k in Nice, France. Though I ran alone, seeing my

study abroad friends cheering at the finish line made the moment even more meaningful. Their excitement amplified my own, and it felt amazing to have people there to celebrate with me.

As I've come to discover the importance of community to me, it's also shifted the way I value and think about travel. While I still value adventure, I've come to appreciate the ways that travel can bring you closer to friends and family. Many of my weekend trips have been to visit friends living around Europe, and save for my one solo adventure, all the rest have been with friends from my program or back home. Each shared trip has let me learn new things about friends and create new memories.

In high school, I dreamed of being a full-time travel influencer or spending two years backpacking after college. Now, I've realized that having a community back home is more valuable to me than seeing every country in the world. While travel and community are not mutually exclusive, full-time wanderlust can hinder your ability to maintain relationships.

This semester, I think I struck a good balance—pursuing adventure while building community. One of the things I have loved about Europe is how accessible travel is. Weekend getaways are economically feasible, and weekday life leaves room for friends. One weekend, my host parents took a romantic getaway to Florence, revealing that not just study-abroad students enjoy Easy-Jet plane ticket deals—it's a European thing.

It's hard to say where I'll end up living in the future. New York is a strong contender, but I won't write off a stint in Europe just yet. No matter where I end up, parts of my Parisian lifestyle will certainly make their way into my future. Perhaps espressos will be evenly spiced with iced coffee as my go-to café order, and a drying rack will replace my drying machine. But beyond these small details, this semester has also shifted my larger views on life. I've realized how important friends and family are, and I want to prioritize spending more time with the people who mean the most to me. Even if American work culture leaves me with slightly less free time, I will continue to take the lessons from Paris and find time to build community and see the world, one adventure at a time.

**FRANCES CONNORS '26**  
(MARYFRANCESCONNORS@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) HAS THOROUGHLY  
ENJOYED BEING A FOREIGN  
CORRESPONDENT FOR THE *INDY* THIS  
SEMESTER.

GRAPHIC BY SEATTLE HICKEY '25



# Thoughts from New Quincy: Invisible Rituals

The quiet power.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26

Each day begins the same way: a diagonal cut across Plympton Street near the Harvard Book Store, my head quickly snapping sideways to check for oncoming cars. From there, I pass beneath the iron gate by Wigglesworth C—its outline etched into muscle memory—as I make my way through the Yard. These gestures aren't calculated, but they aren't accidental either. They mark the start of the day—small motions shaped more by environment than intention.

Michel de Certeau, the French scholar and cultural theorist, writes in “The Practice of Everyday Life:” “The ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below,’ below the thresholds at which visibility begins.” At Harvard, that threshold feels sharply drawn. Campus life unfolds like a curated exhibition—grand libraries, manicured lawns, engraved stone—everything deliberately placed, precisely meaningful. Yet my morning ritual plays out beneath that formal structure, responding to subtle cues embedded in the landscape, and directing my movements in ways I barely notice.

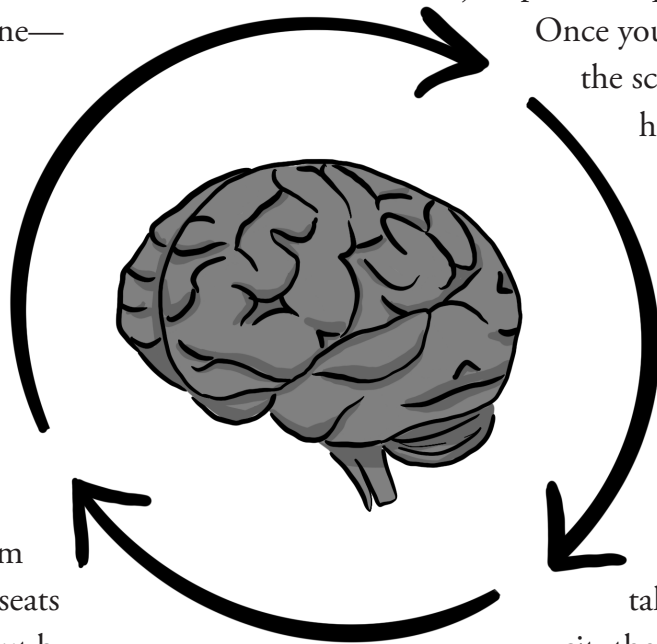
In the dining hall, rituals take shape. Students form invisible boundaries, choosing seats at tables marked not by signs but by repetition and silent consensus. Meals become choreographies—familiar nods, predictable silences, and unspoken agreements about when to rise and leave. De Certeau calls these routines “ways of operating” within spaces structured by power. They aren't explicit acts of complacency, but they reveal how deeply institutions shape even our smallest gestures.

These practices reveal the mechanics of subtle influence. The more we repeat them, the more natural they feel—until we stop noticing them altogether. In retracing the same steps, we sustain a system that organizes campus life into legible rhythms, soft rules, and silent maps.

Power pulses through sound—or its absence. The hush of the Lamont basement, the careful clatter of silverware in the dining halls, the measured pace of footsteps across the Science Center Plaza—all suggest a kind of script. Quiet here isn't just decorum; it's performance. It signals discipline, status, control. We learn when to lower our voices, when to pause, and when not to be heard at all.

These norms don't just govern movement or silence—they discipline the body more intimately. We learn how to look engaged without seeming eager, how to stay composed when cold-called in section, how to signal seriousness through posture, tone, restraint. Even emotion becomes stylized. The institution doesn't dictate how we feel, but it teaches us how to appear: controlled, articulate, self-contained.

De Certeau writes that “everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others.” At Harvard, perhaps we unconsciously internalize institutional expectations, adapting to the rhythms and rituals the environment demands. My habits—crossing Mass Ave diagonally, passing through the Wigglesworth gate, stepping around the loose brick near the Yard—aren't just personal quirks.



Once you begin to see the script, it becomes harder to move freely. You start to wonder: if these choices aren't really mine, what else have I mistaken for autonomy? The routes I take, the way I sit, the moments I stay

silent—how much is authored by the institution? Awareness doesn't always offer escape. Sometimes, it just sharpens the outline of the cage.

This realization unsettles more than routine. It raises deeper questions about what is visible and what isn't, what is legible and what is ignored. Who decides which behaviors feel natural? What values get encoded in the rituals we repeat without thinking? Visibility, after all, is never neutral. It's curated, enforced, and inherited.

And yet, these habits persist for a reason. They offer comfort and continuity, anchoring us in spaces too complex to navigate consciously at every moment. Our rituals stabilize us—not just emotionally but socially—by mirroring the expectations already etched in our environment. Institutions don't just impose order; they shape instinct.

These reflections reach far beyond Harvard. Cities, offices, and public transit systems all operate on invisible scripts that shape how we move, speak, and belong. Think

of the unspoken rules on a crowded subway: how people instinctively avoid eye contact, the way commuters arrange themselves to take up minimal space, or how everyone knows to let others exit before boarding. In workplaces, routines form around coffee machines, meeting etiquette, or how email sign-offs subtly signal hierarchy.

The more familiar these scripts become, the harder they are to question. Recognizing how they differ across contexts can help us see not just how power operates here, but how environments shape behavior in ways that might seem invisible until they are disrupted.

That's why the small, unnoticed choices matter. Because they scale. A student who learns to anticipate authority becomes a worker who doesn't question protocol. A ritual learned in one space becomes a reflex in another. These scripts follow us not because we remember them, but because we forget they were ever learned.

Tomorrow morning, I'll walk past that brick again. Maybe I'll step on it deliberately, just to see if the world shifts. Or maybe I won't. Either way, in that small decision lies a universe of quiet meaning—hidden in plain sight.

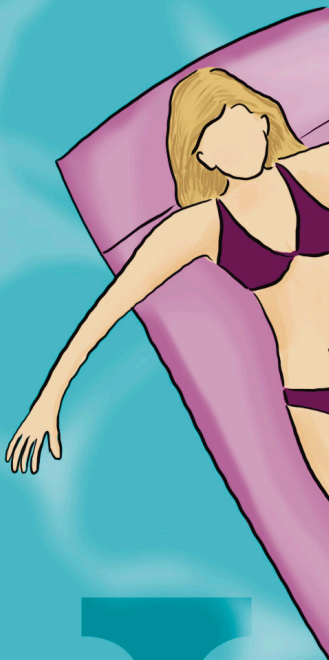
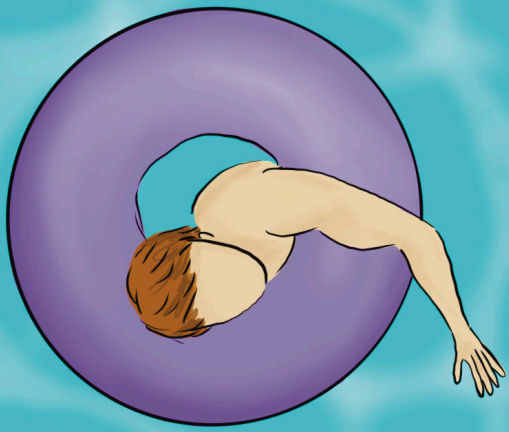
Becoming aware of these scripts feels both unsettling and liberating. There's a strange comfort in realizing that my habits, once thought personal, are part of something much larger, crafted by the institution and absorbed almost unconsciously. Yet, with that awareness comes a sense of dislocation. I feel both aware and implicated, caught between seeing the script and living within it.

De Certeau, ever attuned to the unseen, would suggest that noticing these subtle rituals is the first step toward understanding the structures that shape our lives. Perhaps recognizing the quiet choreography of our routines doesn't grant us freedom, but it does offer a clearer sense of where we stand—and how we might choose to move.

**LUKE WAGNER '26 (LUKEWAGNER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27**





INN







PLAY



# Abreast on Abroad: Letter Five

Sadie Kargman addresses her favorite “Unforscream” instances from abroad.

BY SADIE KARGMAN '26

*C*oucou Mes Chéries,

Ça va? I simply cannot believe my time abroad is ending in a mere two weeks. Complete and utter denial is setting in.

While studying abroad was definitely not a spontaneous decision, if you told me a year ago that I'd be taking weekend trips to Mallorca, I would've laughed in your face... and then bought what you were selling.

But honestly, the absolute best parts of this experience have been the unplanned, unforeseen moments. In this week's letter, “The Unforscream,” I'll take you through some of my life-altering abroad highlights, all of which fall in the “sponty” (spontaneous) or “YOLO” (I am not going to spell this out) categories.

*It is important to preface this letter that technically everything I've done in my time abroad has been “on a whim,” considering the fact that I normally plan my life months, if not years, in advance #TypeA #StickUpMyAss #IPromiseI'mFun.*

## 1. “Tiger Tuesday”

Also known as “TT,” Tiger Tuesday isn't just a moment or a memory—it's a *lifestyle*. As we all know (much to my dismay), very few Harvard students take the leap to study abroad. That being said, instead of going abroad with my entire school or sorority, I landed at Charles de Gaulle with not a friend in sight. I could have had no friends. I could have made “Emily in Paris” look popular. But lucky for me, I not only made friends, but friends I know I will keep forever #EyesMisting.

Anywhosedolf, said group of friends and I all individually maneuvered to have no Tuesday nor Friday classes #ATreasure #Priorities and found ourselves at a local bar called *Tiger* one fateful Tuesday night. Tiger Tuesday just kinda stuck. As a result, we spent almost every Tuesday traveling to a nearby town in France, soaking up the culture and thanking the gods we were studying and living in Paris proper.

With little to no information about where I was going, I would hop aboard a train and follow my friends to their destination of choice #Follower.

*I cannot reiterate this enough: It was profound how Type B I was this semester, and frankly, it was not even that Type B.*

In addition to the magical memories and skills I cultivated—like making Moutarde and Chantilly Crème—there is something so magical about wandering around a random place and doing whatever you want—adult “Free Will” is lit.

So while the premise of each trip was only semi-spontaneous, Tiger Tuesday will go down as some of my favorite “Type B Shi” with my favorite “Type B.P.” (people).

## 2. “The Da Vinci Code” Cosplay

If you know anything about me and my mom (my best friend), you know crazy shit happens to us all the time. One could call it luck, fate, good genes (jk!), but more pragmatically, I just think crazy attracts crazy.

In any case, two of my most memorable experiences from abroad happened with dear ol' Jilly, one of which was worthy enough to make Tom Hanks' return to the “Da Vinci Code” Franchise.

Picture this: You studied abroad in Paris and went to the Louvre with your mom when she visited. It's cultural, it's wholesome, it's demure. What could go wrong?

We started the day by busting into the student-group entrance because the TSA security for the regular museum entrance is JFK before Spring Break. Hades. We sweet-talked our way downstairs and went to the Fashion Exhibit (mediocre, go to Dolce & Gabbana instead).

After we tore through the exhibition and waved to the mummies on our way out #MummiesandMummy, I decided to try and find a “shortcut” to avoid the masses. Even though my French is good, *apparently* I have trouble deciphering signs for EMERGENCY EXIT versus a normal one. Charming.

We proceeded to traverse through two big metal doors into a corridor with two more big metal doors. The first doors locked behind us. Absolutely no problem, we went through the third big set of doors, laughing in claustrophobia. We then found ourselves in a GINORMOUS empty gallery with empty frames. A single museum staff member was

casually changing a lightbulb.

We rushed over to him, pleading we were sorry in French, convinced security would hunt us down in seconds. Instead of scolding us, or asking us to leave, *or* telling us *how* to leave, he said, “I don't care, I just work here.”

*Here*, as in the Louvre. *THE Louvre*. 'Ight.

After taking numerous sneaky photos because, duh, I found another exit door. Perfect. We go through and find more big metal doors, and whaddya know it? The doors lock in front and behind us.

My mom and I were going into cardiac arrest. Instead of remaining calm, as the parent in the situation, my mom pushed the big red button that says “Sortie.” There was flashing, an alarm, and what sounded like the opening of a vault—aka gears turning and a big unlocking sound. The metal doors opened, and we found stone steps leading to daylight. By Jove! Salvation!

We ascended from the bowels of The Louvre to be situated DIRECTLY in front of the I.M. Pei Pyramid. To add to the *what the actual fuck* moment, there was a small crowd gathered with dumbfounded expressions. An artsy Frenchman with a face tat approached us in disbelief and stated in the thickest French accent, “I 'ave lived ere my ole life and I 'ave never seen this...those tunnels are *normalement* for Macron or the army or earthquake.” Lit.

Despite this entire story, we are two smart ladies, and thought it best to skedaddle before our luck ran out and a special-ops team descended.

## 3. Everyone's a Paid Actor

Paris is one of the most international cities in the world. I have met people from down the block where I grew up, and people from Uzbekistan. However, sometimes you just need your *best friends*. For Spring Break, some of my friends from Harvard decided to cross the pond and see why I decided to leave them for five months. I loved showing them my “Little Life” in Paris, and—as I've made clear—planning fun things is my love language. When the trip ended, I did cry—but then I pulled myself together and shifted my focus to the next adventure: dinner, a museum, anything but school.

That was until I was on a break between



classes and decided to grab a nearby coffee with friends. The SECOND I left the building, a man came up to me with an enormous bouquet of fresh pink flowers and went, “Do you know a Sadie Kargman in there? I have flowers for her.” Um, *hello?* Paid actor.

Being the coolest and chilliest person in the world, I accepted the flowers in front of my friends and found they were a thank you gift for hosting Spring Break—shoutout Jade. In any case, between the divine intervention—regarding the timing and having witnesses—and carrying a bouquet around Paris, it was safe to say this unforeseen moment made me a main character.

4. Marilyn The Magic Water Maker

On arguably my favorite trip of my time abroad, Lisbon, my boyfriend and I got super lucky with the weather. It was 75 degrees and sunny, immediately curing my seasonal depression from chilly Paris. After an incredible lunch, earrings purchase, and seaside promenade, we decided to have some drinks and bask in the sun.

However, when we sat down, there were two vocally-confident (loud) American women next to us. One of them, Marilyn, was talking about her ex-husband, whose family was in the Mob, and how she was one of sixteen brothers and sisters or something. I mean, they were practically *begging* us to eavesdrop. After minute 27 of this conversation, the two ladies dove into the complex topic of astrology and how “one’s chart is ever changing.” K.

*It’s not that I’m a non-believer, it’s more that I’m just a skeptic. I’m a New Yorker after all.*

When the friend went to the bathroom, I obviously struck up a conversation with Marilyn and found out that not only does she produce and sell *Magic Water*, she is also my next-door neighbor in New York. That’s like not a thing. I’ll say someone is my neighbor, and that just means they live on the island of

Manhattan. Marilyn lives on my *block*. I got her number if anyone needs a professional energy healer.

5. Harry Styles Paid for My Cab

I really can’t afford to come up with a more clever title for this one because I can’t detract from this moment. I was in Berlin, with my mom, of course, and pulled up to our hotel in a cab. My mom got out and whispered to me to look up. Who did I see standing outside of our cab but Harry-Motherfucking-Styles.



“Do you mind if I jump in there?,” he said in reference to our taxi. Um, I BEG you to breathe the same air I breathed, so no, I didn’t mind.

However, by the grace of god, the driver’s credit card machine was not working, and my mom and I did not have euros. Charmed Part Two. Harry (first name basis, obv) offered to pay, whipping out a wad of cash big enough to startle Al Pacino, himself. Harry then dropped said cash on the ground—“Blimey!”—and proceeded to hand me ten euros. Chivalry. Isn’t. Dead. People. It’s just hanging out with Harry!

My mom found ten U.S. dollars in her purse and insisted that Harry take it. “No, it’s okay, really. I am not going to the U.S. anytime soon.” To which my mom jabbed, “We don’t blame you.” Harry chuckled. Harry Styles *chuckled* at my mother. She’s always been funny, but now it’s official.

So just like that, I hop out, Harry and his friends (not famous) hop in, and I peaked in life. All within five minutes. Arguably *the best* five minutes of my existence.

Until.

Two days later, I decided to work out and take a schvitz in the hotel sauna because #Bougie #Duh. Who did I fucking see but my best friend Harry Styles. Unfortunately, I only saw him from afar and did not interact, because even rockstars should enjoy the spa in peace.

That’s it. That’s all she wrote. But

Harry, if you ever read this, you’re a real good chap, ya know?

...

So my dearest little Shitstains, while I will forever be a Type A baddie, studying abroad has proven that the best moments in life are truly serendipitous. I hope you enjoyed my recount of everything from day-trips to stalking celebrities.

Signing off in One Direction,  
Sadie (Watermelon Sugar) Kargman

**SADIE KARGMAN ’26**  
**(SADIEKARGMAN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS CURRENTLY STARRING AS**  
**YOUR FAVORITE SHITSTAIN IN PARIS.**

**GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO ’28**



# A Love Letter to the Moon and to the Theater

HRDC's whimsical production of "The Old Man and the Old Moon" blended theatrical modes into a night of unforgettable theatre.

BY KAYLA REIFEL '26

This past weekend, the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club put up a sparkling example of theatre at its best in the Loeb Experimental Theater. One of the semester's final theater productions, HRDC's production of PigPen Theatre Co.'s "The Old Man and the Old Moon," was near-perfect. Directed by Ria Cuéllar-Koh '26, the show was light-hearted in tone yet serious in artistic heft and impressive in execution.

Audiences filed into a well-crafted set that resembled a deconstructed boat. Glass bottles lined shelves and sat stacked under the eaves of the wooden platforms. Ropes hung in parabolas across the black curtains that serve as the "walls" of the Loeb Ex. A wooden ladder leaned against the back of the ship, and next to it, a flickering projection of the moon that looked straight out of an old-timey film like Méliès' "A Trip to the Moon." The moon's projections—designed by show actor Yirennny Cordero '25—waxed and waned with the progression of the narrative, serving as a beautiful visual through-line.

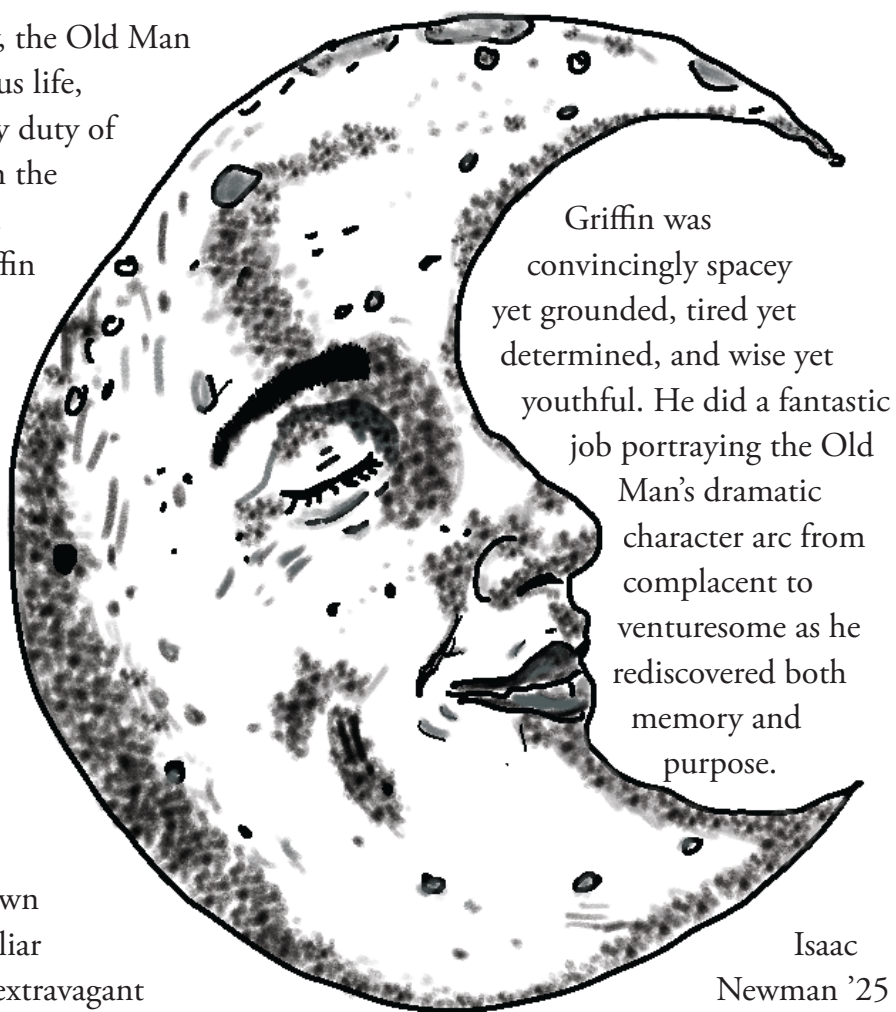
At the start of the play, the Old Man appeared to lead a monotonous life, diligently performing his daily duty of filling the moon with light. In the first scene, hunch-backed and tired, the Old Man (Jack Griffin '25) climbed up the ladder at the back of the set with a bucket of "liquid light." He poured light into the moon to top it off, and the moon's projection shifted, reflecting the changing amount of light as if the moon were a spherical basin for liquid.

But the Old Man's journey really began when his wife, portrayed by Yirennny Cordero '25, was drawn away to sea by a strange, familiar melody. He embarked on an extravagant journey to find the Old Woman, eventually finding passage aboard a ship by pretending to be legendary sailor Pericles Llewellyn McWallander, revered by the ship's crew and thought to be dead. The Old Man convinced his newfound crew to sail West under the guise of reaching a promised land—the City of Light. Really, the Old Man just sought to find his lost wife. Thus began a

fun, magical maritime adventure.

It was apparent from the beginning that this production would be a captivating blend of different types of performing arts—and it did not disappoint. Folksy song and dance numbers, puppetry (shadow, sock, and milk carton!), projections, and standard book script intertwined perfectly. Spoken scenes transitioned seamlessly into pleasant, fluid choreography by Adrienne Chan '25, which shifted into scenes told entirely through shadow puppetry. A white sheet hung off one of the makeshift ship's wooden poles, which actors pulled taut to a second wooden pole for shadow puppet scenes, shining a flashlight through the sheet, illuminating the silhouettes of cut-out figures.

The show was well-cast—each actor's performance was unique in its own right, yet equally high in quality. Griffin brought an appropriate steadiness to his portrayal of the Old Man, beautifully balancing the character's dichotomous, yet coexistent qualities.



Griffin was convincingly spacey yet grounded, tired yet determined, and wise yet youthful. He did a fantastic job portraying the Old Man's dramatic character arc from complacent to venturesome as he rediscovered both memory and purpose.

Isaac Newman '25 brought a thrilling theatricality to his character Matheson—almost over-the-top but never quite tipping too far, his energetic portrayal of the narrator/first-mate-turned-captain brought fun exposition to many scenes.

Jesse Hernandez '25 demonstrated his multifaceted aptitude for acting, vocals, and puppetry in his portrayal of Mabelu, a sailor

with a special bond to a dog. Hernandez simultaneously portrayed both Mabelu and his beloved dog, a puppet constructed out of a milk carton and a mop head. Somehow, likely due largely to Hernandez's impressive acting, the milk-dog was very believable—it was even kind of cute, cocking its head in amusement and barking. John Rhee '27 and Independent staff member Frederick Lionel Klein '28 rounded out the cast wonderfully, each uniquely delightful in their characters, contributing to the joyous energy of the rowdy bunch of sailors.

The rest of the cast exhibited equally impressive performances. Elio Kennedy-Yoon '25 brought perfect "spirited-young-lad" energy to his character Llewellyn. Yirennny Cordero '25 was highly versatile—warm and sweet as the Old Woman and a bundle of energy as her other characters, like the jovial sailor Cookie and the spunky aviator Bartley.

The direction and staging were consistently delightful and thorough. Director Cuéllar-Koh made substantial use of the set's platforms, ladder, and the architecture of the theater itself. In one scene, characters were in a hot-air balloon, cleverly depicted by actors standing on the balcony of the Loeb Ex, with light pointed directly up at them. The pacing and flow of the dialogue were fantastic—not too rushed but not too slow. There was a giddy, joyous energy throughout the performance, which can only partly be credited to the script. A large amount of the energy certainly stemmed from the fantastic direction by Cuéllar-Koh and natural chemistry between the actors.

It was clear that actors had their own fun too—in one scene, a member of the orchestra pit, Derek Yuan '25, acted as a bar patron. Actors jokingly called Yuan by his real name in the scene. The creative team also took a less serious approach at times—during a cartoonish fight scene, red, white, and blue lights spun and danced around. It was clear that these designers had their fun with the show while bringing the full force of their technical and acting experience to the production.

The technical elements of the production were masterfully done. Lighting designers Em Barnes '25 and PK/Lauren Byunn-Rieder '25 silhouetted the set and the actors in beautiful shades of blue, reminiscent of the night sky and a stormy sea. Warm whites



lit up the actors’ faces as if they were singing and dancing to the soft glow of lanterns in a ship’s underbelly. Upon the Old Man’s arrival in the city of lights, a soft blue glow emanated from under the wooden platforms, illuminating the stacked glass bottles under the platforms in a way that made the stage itself look as if it had become the city of lights. Barnes and Byunn-Rieder managed to make the small, intimate space of the Loeb Ex feel both liminal and limitless, transporting audience members into a lovely dream far from Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The lighting and sound design complemented each other well. A particular moment that exhibited lovely technical harmony was when the Old Man found himself trapped in the belly of a giant fish. A dramatic shadow puppet montage portrayed the Old Man’s ship getting caught in a nasty storm. His fate was left briefly undetermined until the following scene revealed that he had been swallowed by a giant fish. Actors were lit by almost cartoonish shades of pink and green, which perfectly evoked the comical, outlandish

interior of a fish’s stomach. Underneath the dialogue of the scene, a soft, rather uncomfortable dripping sound of sorts played, making one feel as if they were genuinely being assaulted by drops of piscine stomach secretion.

This production was unique in that its cast and crew were composed largely of seniors. This show was thus a last hurrah for many of its contributors. This was evident in both the honed expertise on display and the bittersweet atmosphere of the show.

The seniors involved in the production expressed gratitude and happiness toward their last show. In her program note, choreographer Chan bid farewell to HRDC. “I am so fortunate to have landed here for my senior spring: doing what I love with those I love. I am forever grateful to have called Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club home for these past years,” she wrote.

Actress and projections designer Cordero expressed a similar sentiment in an interview with the Independent.

“I really enjoyed working on this show because it felt like the level of silliness really matched my energy this semester,” Cordero said. “It was a great experience to work again with people I met during my freshman year while doing

the first-year musical. This show was the perfect amount of unserious that allowed us to just have fun; I love to laugh, and this show let me do that unapologetically.”

HRDC’s production of “The Old Man and the Old Moon” was a breath of fresh air. The show was heartfelt, but not to an unpleasant extent—it was tender and loving without veering into the realm of the sickly sweet. The sappiness was perfectly dosed, like sliding into a warm bath after a long day, or taking that first bite of the perfect third bowl of porridge. “The Old Man and the Old Moon” was a love letter to the art of theater itself. It reminded its audience members of the power of a good show—its ability to transport us beyond the four walls of the theater and into a beautiful waking dream.

**KAYLA REIFEL ’26 (KAYLAREIFEL@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) LOVES THE MOON ALMOST AS MUCH AS SHE LOVES THE THEATER.**

**GRAPHIC BY KATIE MERRIAM ’26**

# Your Summer 2025 Reading List

Ideas for what to read this summer—curated by the *Independent*.

BY MEENA BEHRINGER ’27

/// **“Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow” by Gabrielle Zevin ’00**

A beautiful novel that explores the depths of friendship over decades between two childhood friends, Sadie and Sam, who begin creating video games together alongside Marx, Sam’s college roommate. The novel is partially set in Cambridge—Sam and Marx go to Harvard, and Sadie attends MIT. The characters grapple with the consequences of ambition, love, and tragedy. Readers are driven to examine how relationships—both platonic and romantic—develop and are influenced by creativity and imagination.

**“Husbands & Lovers” by Beatriz Williams**

A historical-fiction novel that follows two women, Mallory Dunne and Hannah Ainsworth, over different time periods and continents. Mallory’s story takes place in present-day New England, whereas Hannah’s is set in the 1950s in Cairo; both women reckon with love, secrets, and identity across generations. The two women’s stories, interconnected through a family heirloom, intertwine when Mallory’s son needs a kidney transplant.

**“Careless People” by Sarah Wynn-Williams**

A once-secret memoir by Wynn-Williams, former director of public policy at Facebook, reveals the shocking reality of life inside the company under power-hungry leadership. Drawing on her seven years at the firm (2011-2017), she recounts her direct experience working with Mark Zuckerberg and other top executives, offering the reader a front-row seat to the company’s tumultuous journey growing into a massive success.

**“The White Album” by Joan Didion**

A collection of personal essays that examines American cultural life in the 1960s from Didion’s perspective, largely centered around her home state of California. The essays span a broad range of topics, commenting on the political and cultural upheavals of the time, such as the Manson murders, the Black Panther trials, and the rise of the second-wave feminist movement.

**“Dream Count” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

A story of four women—Chiamaka, Zikora, Omelogor, and Kadiatou—who immigrate to the United States; three of them come from Nigeria and one from Guinea. Their lives become interconnected as they wade through the complexities of life and love. The story centers around Chiamaka, a Nigerian writer who recounts her formative experiences and relationships during the pandemic; her cousin, Omelogor, who works in finance; Zikora, a lawyer who wrestles with a betrayal; and her housekeeper, Kadiatou, who is raising her daughter. In Adichie’s first release in over a decade, the fibers of the four women’s stories weave together in this reflective exploration of human emotions.

**“The Picture of Dorian Gray” by Oscar Wilde**

A 19th-century classic that reveals the danger of vanity and obsession over beauty in a witty and enthralling style. The novel follows the handsome Dorian Gray, whose portrait is painted by Basil Hallward. He sells his soul for eternal youth and beauty under the influence of Lord Henry Wotton in a Faustian bargain—the fantastical portrait visually reflects his real, aging

inner state as he remains beautiful, sparking chaos and driving Dorian into immense inner turmoil.

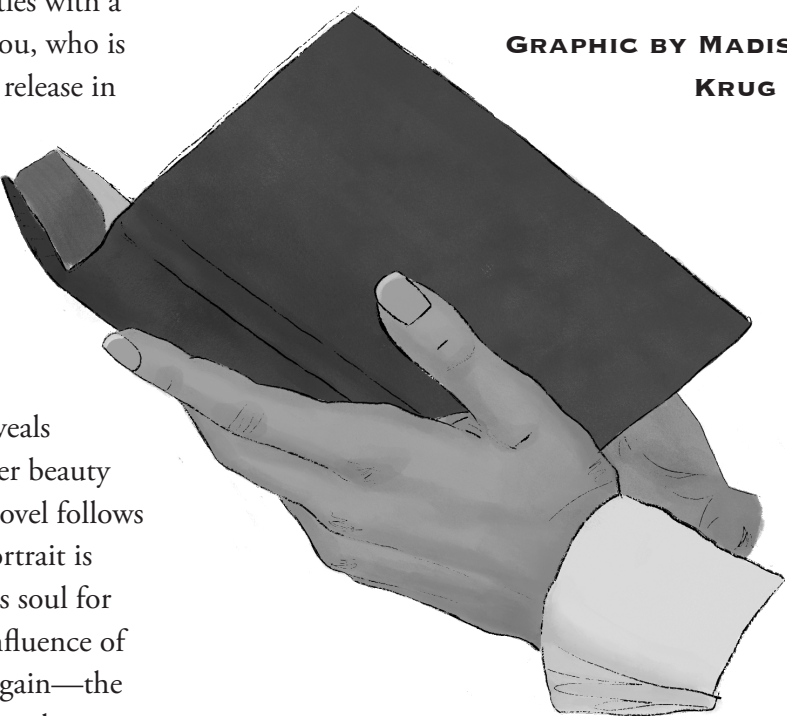
**“Atmosphere” by Taylor Jenkins Reid**

An upcoming release about the fictional Joan Goodwin, one of the first female astronomers during the NASA Space Shuttle Program. In 1981, Joan joins a group of female scientists going to space. At the training center, she finds herself part of a complicated and thrilling story after meeting an exceptional group of fellow astronauts. This book comes out on June 3.

Find these titles at the Harvard Bookstore right in the Square or at your nearest local bookstore.

**MEENA BEHRINGER ’27 (MEENABEHRINGER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES ARTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY MADISON KRUG ’27**





# Summer Links

By Clara Lake '27

Each cloud contains two words—  
one at the top and one at the bottom.  
Find the word that fits in the middle,  
completing two separate two-word  
phrases: one with the top word and  
one with the bottom word.

BEACH  
\_\_\_\_\_  
GAME

PICNIC  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CASE

SUN  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DOOR

FIRE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SWATTER



			1	2	3	4	
							6
		5					
	7	8					
9							
10					11		



Sudoku



# Summer Breakout



By Han Nguyen '27  
Design by Clara Lake '27

Across

- 1. Frank of rainbow unicorn fame
- 5. Presario PC brand
- 7. List with sub categories?
- 9. "M\*A\*S\*H" star
- 10. Catches some rays
- 11. News article intro

Down

- 1. Pork cuts
- 2. "\_\_\_ Be" (Black Eyed Peas hit)
- 3. Be in a bee
- 4. "Storage Wars" network
- 5. Extended family
- 6. Pforzheimer, Currier, Cabot
- 7. Slangy pronoun
- 8. She, in Lisbon



# On The Job from 9 to 5

Harvard's production of the musical "9 to 5" gifted its audiences with laughs and inspiration.

BY ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26

On the opening night of "9 to 5: The Musical," a large audience gathered in Agassiz Theater to watch Harvard's musical adaptation of the famous 1980 movie. Patricia Resnick and Colin Higgins wrote the original screenplay, which Resnick later adapted into a book (script) with country star Dolly Parton, who also provided the soundtrack and lyrics. The show, which first opened on Broadway in 2009, tells the stories of three women—Violet, Doralee, and Judy—who became unlikely friends in a misogynistic 1970s corporate workplace.

The Harvard edition of this production ran from May 1 to May 4, 2025. The show delighted audiences with its mix of country and pop-style music. Riley Jackson '27 and Mia Schenenga '27 co-directed and music directed the production, which starred *Independent* Design Editor Riley Cullinan '27 as Violet, Chelsea Bohn-Pozniak '27 as Doralee, and Grace Hawkins '28 as Judy. Like many adaptations before it, Harvard's production of "9 to 5" brought to life the story of three women who take a stand for workers' rights, showcasing the strength of solidarity and offering an empowering look at women's experiences in the workplace.

The show began with a prerecorded video of Dolly Parton introducing the show on screens adjacent to the Agassiz stage. The first character viewers were introduced to was Cullinan's Violet, a widow and single mom. Like many women of her time, Violet felt overlooked and undervalued for the hard work she put into her job. After more than 15 years of service, she was passed up for a promotion due to her boss Hart's (portrayed by Max Allison '25) belief that only a male employee could hold respect in a managerial position. Violet's frustration with this reasoning was all too familiar to women navigating male-dominated spaces.

Bohn-Pozniak's Doralee was a Texan woman with a bubbly personality and a can-do attitude. At the beginning of the musical, Doralee was socially ostracized by the other women who judged her harshly for her Barbie-like appearance. Doralee earnestly wanted to make friends and was tired of being judged for her looks. During her solo, "Backwoods Barbie," she conveyed Doralee's persistent optimism and strength. Doralee's beauty was met with noticeable contempt from her female coworkers, though it was

simply a reflection of her own self-expression and never meant for anyone's approval but her own. Rather than serving as a weapon to divide women in the workplace, her beauty should have been seen as a source of empowerment.

Judy, a recent divorcee and former housewife, was thrust into the uncomfortable reality of entering the workforce. Her struggle with low self-esteem was clear in the uncertainty and nervousness in Hawkins' voice. As the story unfolded, Judy spoke and moved with increasing purpose and confidence, especially evident when she took an active role in the plan to kidnap Hart. Empowered by her newfound independence and confidence, she eventually wrote "Life Without Dick"—a pointed nod to her adulterous ex-husband, coincidentally named Dick (Ben Arthurs '27).

One of the show's most memorable moments came from a heartfelt interaction between Doralee and her husband, Dwayne, played by Jared Reuben '26. When Doralee confided in him about her struggles connecting with the other women in the office, he reassured her with a reminder of their Texan spirit: "We never quit." Another strong partnership was between Violet and a junior accountant named Joe, portrayed by Arthur Câmara '28. Using his forensic accounting skills, Joe uncovered that Hart was embezzling from the company—a discovery the three women used to blackmail Hart and preserve the improved conditions they had created. These moments highlighted a key message of the show: when men and women work together as equals, real progress—in relationships and in the workplace—is possible.

It would be remiss not to spotlight a crowd favorite—Roz, played by Chloe Chao '27. As Hart's loyal informant, Roz conspires with him to manipulate the three leads, helping him convince them they've accidentally killed him after Violet fears she's slipped rat poison into his coffee instead of sweetener. Chao's elaborate dancing in the number "5 to 9" made Roz's infatuation with Hart unmistakable, as she comically lamented not being able to see him outside of work hours. The audience erupted with laughter when Roz led a

brigade of women with matching bob wigs in a unified dance.

Once the three leads became aware of their shared struggles, they formed a strong bond and worked together to champion progressive workplace reforms—efforts that led to Violet's promotion to CEO and Hart's ironic "promotion" to an executive role in Bolivia, where he was ultimately kidnapped again.

The zany events of the musical were brought to life by a lively, well-coordinated orchestra, led by Jackson, Schenenga, and music director Preston Bushnell '26. The pit's performance drove the plot forward, enriching each scene to complement the actors. Additional team members included choreographers Paola Lee-Vega '26 and Benjamin Walter '26, stage manager Megan Degenhardt '26, technical producer Haley Stark '25, and the entire production crew, whose contributions ensured the show's success.

"9 to 5: The Musical" resonates with the struggles of workers both today and at the time of the original film's release. More than just entertaining, it offered students a powerful reminder of the ongoing fight for women's rights and workers' rights—issues that remain as relevant as ever.

**ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26 (AADEBAYO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CONSIDERS BEING A CORPORATE EMPLOYEE OR A COUNTRY SINGER TO BE GOOD ALTERNATIVE CAREER CHOICES.**

GRAPHIC BY ANNA SHAO '28





# Floreat Domus de Eliot

A tribute to the spaces that made Eliot House feel like home.

BY CHRISTINA SHI '27

This summer, Eliot House will begin to undergo a major transformation, forcing all of us proud residents to relocate to overflow housing for the next couple of years. While the community and people will still be here (thankfully), it's hard not to feel a little sentimental about leaving the building itself behind. Eliot is more than just its creaky doors and old windows (which are finally getting the upgrade they deserve)—it's been the backdrop to countless weird and wonderful memories. As a rising junior, I will never return to living in the house. Here are some of the things I'll miss most about it:

## The Dining Hall

Eliot's iconic dining hall is stunning, especially when the sun shines through the windows during golden hour. As someone who lives in the I-entryway, I'm even more attached to the d-hall since it is just two floors below me—no jacket or snow boots are needed to get food during the cold winter months. I've easily spent entire days camped out at a table doing homework between meals. And of course, Eliot enhanced dinner—truly the only time HUDS goes all out. I'll never forget the baked brie.

## Backswipe Privilege

Eliot's five-minute walk to diving practice meant I never had to wake up as early as some of my teammates who trekked across campus. Even better, I could completely avoid the chaos of JFK Street—especially during rush hour—which was a true lifesaver.

## Courtyard Culture

Rotting, tanning, gossiping, eating, working—there's something about wasting a whole afternoon lying in the Eliot courtyard that's been one of the best parts of college life, especially on nice weather days. Whether it is reading for class or just people-watching with an iced coffee, the courtyard always delivers.

## Fête

Speaking of the courtyard: Fête, Eliot's annual spring formal and long-time house tradition, won't be the same. Unlike other house formals, Fête is open only to Eliot residents and their invited plus ones. Running back to your room mid-Fête to pee or grab more drinks is an underrated luxury. We'll still hold Fête at another venue during the construction, but it won't capture the magic of celebrating in Eliot's iconic courtyard.

## Close to Class, Closer to Coffee

Eliot's location is one of its quiet advantages—just a short walk to class and practice, but more importantly, right next to essentials like Dunkin', Nine Tastes, and Black Sheep. And being just steps from the river? It's something you take for granted—until you no longer can.

## The Tunnel Murals

And while we're talking about tunnels, I have to mention the tunnel murals. There's something so weird and chaotic and wonderful about seeing all the random murals students have painted over the years. Overflow housing might have newer, cleaner walls, but I'll miss reading "Drake won" every time I go down to do laundry.

## The Grille

Honestly, I think the Grille is kind of gross. The floors are weirdly sticky, the tables are always a little greasy, and the grungy lighting is harsh. But when it's late, you're starving, and the mozzarella sticks and curly fries are hitting? Nothing else compares. And shoutout to Stein, Eliot's bi-weekly pub night held in the Grille, which somehow manages to feel both underwhelming and comforting. Whether you're grabbing a sad sangria or late-night fries, it's one of those low-effort, high-vibe parts of Eliot that we'll inevitably miss more than we expect to.

## The Architecture

Of course, the architecture deserves some love, too. No offense to the Prescotts or Ridgley, two of our new temporary homes, but they can't compare to Eliot's fancy-looking gates, the brick, or the archways. I'm even going to miss the random tourists taking photos of Eliot like it's a national monument.

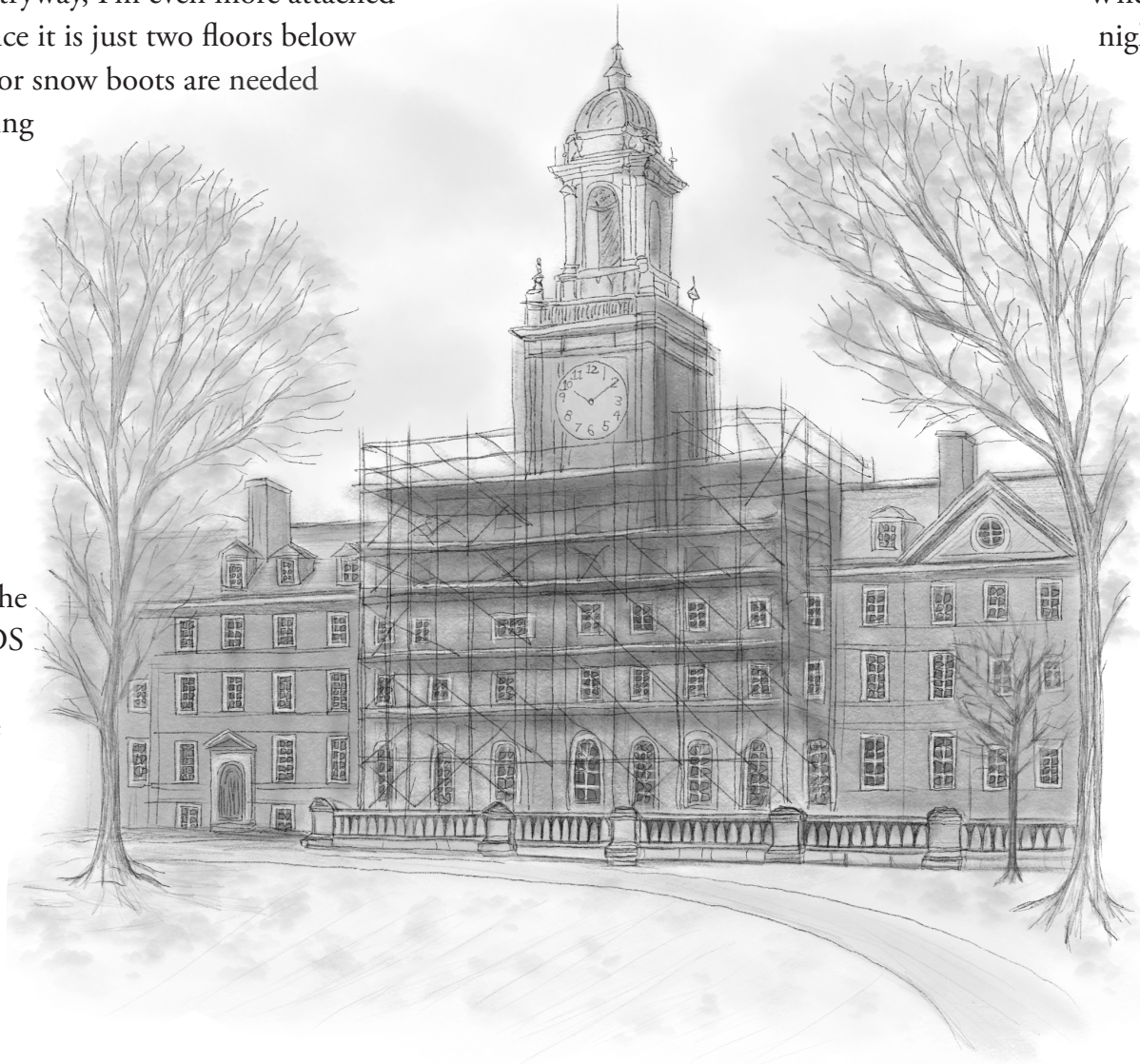
## The View from the Tower (Even If I Only Went Up Once)

Sure, I only made the climb once—but that one time, standing at the top and taking in the full view of the river, courtyard, and campus spread out before me, was a true peak Harvard moment.

At the end of the day, it's not just the building that makes Eliot what it is—it's the people, the energy, and the community. While the next couple of years will look a little different, the heart of Eliot isn't going anywhere (I'll still be mourning my five-minute walk to morning practice).

**CHRISTINA SHI '27 (CHRISTINASHI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS DEFINITELY LOOKING FORWARD TO EATING AT THE INN NEXT YEAR...**

**GRAPHIC BY CARA CRONIN '28**



## The Library

I guess I'll even miss the library. I'm not going to pretend I enjoyed writing papers or cranking out p-sets, but at least the Eliot library was a nice place to suffer through it all.

## Tunnel Season

The tunnels under Eliot were one of the most elite parts of the building, especially in the winter. No snow boots, no frozen hair—just a peaceful walk from your entryway to the dining hall to the laundry room to the library, all without ever stepping outside.



# SPORTS

## A Crimson Crew

Meet Harvard Sailing in the midst of their outstanding 2024-25 season.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28

The Spring 2025 season has been another for the history books for Harvard Sailing. The co-ed squad won the Intercollegiate Sailing Association National Championship on April 24. The women's team followed this with a third-place finish on April 27 at the Women's ICSA National Championship. Heading into the Open Fleet National Championships, the No. 1-ranked co-ed team earned the top seed, and the No. 4-ranked women's team earned the fifth seed.

Sailing is often misunderstood, with many people holding misconceptions about the sport. "I feel like you think 50-year-old, rich individuals at a yacht club, puttering around on a big boat on a joy cruise," said Amelie Zucker '28, a crewmember on the women's team. "I'd say it's both physically taxing and also one of the most mentally challenging sports, too."

"[There's] the strategic and tactical part of sailing: playing the shifts, understanding current, understanding how everything will affect your boat's speed...no one really understands that part of sailing," added fellow crewmember Kate Danielson '28. "The fact that the wind is different on every single part of the course is not something that a regular person would think of."

The team, also known as a crew, is organized into a co-ed and women's team, with some overlapping members, that compete at races, called regattas. Sailors will race in boats of two people, with multiple crafts per team depending on the race. Each boat is operated by a skipper, who steers and makes strategic decisions, and a crewmember, who handles the more physical and mechanical tasks.

The team's success this season has been anchored not only on the water but also by strong leadership on land. Captains Mitchell Callahan '26 and Kennedy Leehealey '26 have guided the team over the past year, creating a supportive and competitive environment. Mitchell's

brother, former captain Justin Callahan '26, has also played a key role with his standout performances. "Justin Callahan is the best college skipper in the country," Danielson commented.

Justin Callahan recently received the New England Intercollegiate Sailing Association's Open Skipper of the Year award. The honor is given to the best captain or "master" of a ship determined by the candidates' records.

Cordelia Burn '25 was awarded the NEISA Sportswoman-of-the-Year honor for her success as a crewmember and skipper across the season. Multiple other team members also won NEISA first and second team placement, which honors top skippers and crewmembers for success during the season.

Despite all of his achievements, Justin Callahan's favorite part of sailing isn't his wins, but rather who he gets to do it with.

"Sailing with your twin brother, and in my opinion, competing alongside next to him, is something that's

always the most valuable

thing to me in sport... Anytime we get to do it by each other's side, that's something that's really special for us," he said.

"Our coaching staff has really cultivated a culture that is very inviting and is very resourceful and helpful when it comes to balancing a heavy academic course load and also trying to compete and practice five to six days a week," Justin added.

The team can credit a lot of its success to the leadership of their

teammates, but also acknowledges the tight-knit environment that brings the team closer together. "We have a pretty small group of guys. There are six guys on our team, versus like 20 girls. So I'm pretty close with a good portion of the team," said Harrison Strom '28.

Looking to the Open Championships at the end of May, which will conclude the sailing season, the team sees even more untapped potential. "Just keep improving. I feel there's a really good energy on the team right now. We are all very motivated, all with our goals. [Everyone is] working really hard," said Davidson. "Winning Nationals would be good too."

Justin Callahan shared a similar perspective on future goals. "I don't think it's necessarily results-oriented. I think it's more of just maximizing the full potential of myself, teammates, coaches, and really just working towards a common goal, just trying to get 1% better every day," he said.

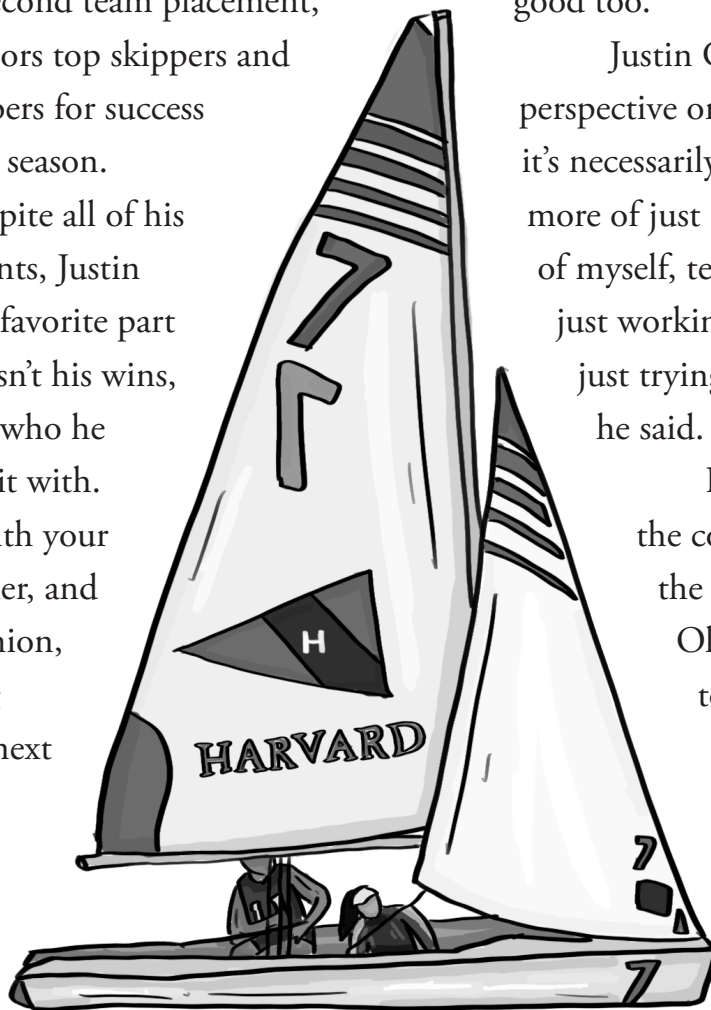
But Justin has goals beyond the collegiate waters. "I plan on, at the moment, hopefully, doing an Olympic campaign and trying to go to the Olympics for sailing," he said. "So I'll be doing some training for that over the summer."

Watch out for Harvard Sailing as they compete at the Open Championship from

May 20 through May 30. The team looks to defend its championship title from last year.

**KALVIN FRANK '28 (KFRANK@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS NEVER BEEN ON A SAILBOAT BUT NOW WANTS TO TRY OUT FOR THE SAILING TEAM.**

**GRAPHIC BY MIRANDA CHAO HWANG '28**





# NBA Conference Semifinals Game 3 Predictions

Who will advance further? *The Independent* looks at pivotal matchups in the NBA playoffs.

BY MAX SURPRENANT '26

As the NBA playoffs move into the conference semifinals, we at the *Independent* recommend you save money on tickets at your hometown arena and opt instead for a comfortable couch near the TV. For the first time in league history, all four of the visiting teams stole Game 1—an East-to-West upset that humbled three 60-win heavyweights: the Oklahoma City Thunder (#1 in the Western Conference), the Cleveland Cavaliers (#1 in the Eastern Conference), and the Boston Celtics (#2 in the Eastern Conference).

Game 2s wrap this week, but this weekend is the time to tune in and see where the series momentum will go. Of the 463 playoff series in which a team led 2-0, that team went on to win the series 92.7% of the time. In best-of-seven series that are tied 1-1, the winner of Game 3 has gone on to win the series 80% of the time. All this to say that by Sunday, we'll have a decent sense of Conference Finals matchups. For now, here are our weekend picks:

### Game 3: Indiana Pacers

The Indiana Pacers' squad has quickly taken a two-game lead against the Cleveland Cavaliers, despite strong shooting performances by Donovan Mitchell. Playoff Pacers might be back and gunning for another shot at the Celtics. The Pacers are red-hot and don't seem to be slowing down. In Game 1, all five starters scored in double figures. Tyrese Haliburton and Andrew Nembhard have been hyper-efficient from the field and behind the arc.

In Game 2, the Pacers rallied back from a 20-point deficit on the back of Haliburton and his game-sealing three. Don't expect the Cavs to go down easy, but if Donovan Mitchell's dominant 33 points and subsequent 48 points couldn't secure a single win, it will be difficult to stall a young, streaky Indiana team that had a taste of championship basketball in 2024. The Pacers have likely learned from last year's Game 3 losses in the first and second rounds and will look to forge ahead at home.

### Game 3: Oklahoma City Thunder

Out West, the unconventional start to the second round has stalled or shaken some of the league's most celebrated storylines. OKC's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the runaway favorite for the 2024-25 MVP, against the reigning MVP, Denver's Nikola Jokić, has

been the matchup to watch. On Monday, the Serbian reasserted his dominance with a 42-point, 22-rebound masterclass—the first 40-20 playoff line since Shaq in 2001—again reminding fans why he's the three-time former MVP.

The Nuggets are once again looking to Nikola Jokić to lead them to a finals appearance. If he didn't have enough on his shoulders, they've also left him to functionally fill a coaching role after firing head coach Mike Malone right before the playoffs. While Jokić has proven capable thus far, it's likely unsustainable for three consecutive games.

By Game 3, expect the Thunder to make some defensive adjustments, working to keep Chet Holmgren out of foul trouble and focused on the big man. Jokić will lean on Jamal Murray and Aaron Gordon, who will face Lu Dort's stifling on-ball defense. When Jokić isn't running the offense, OKC will have an easier time pushing the pace and getting SGA baskets in transition.

### Game 3: Boston Celtics

In the East, the reigning champions, the Boston Celtics, lost Game 1 to a scrappy New York Knicks who willed a 20-point comeback through the fourth quarter and into overtime. Boston, heavily favored to win it all and known for their elite three-point shooting, bricked a franchise record of 45 threes.

With their high-volume perimeter shooting, two off nights are in the budget. Despite breaking record lows, the Celtics still held a comfortable lead over the Knicks through three quarters. Boston, which lost just one game in the first and second rounds last year and went 4-0 against New York in the regular season this year, is likely unfazed. Despite their loss in Game 2, have faith in the reigning NBA Champions.

As the series stretches, trust Boston's deep bench to carry them over the hump and keep up the energy. Even if the shooting percentages don't immediately improve, expect the Celtics' physicality to pick up and for Joe Mazulla to run more systems and less isolation

ball through Jaylen Brown and Jason Tatum. If Kristaps Porzingis can get open looks and some momentum, the Knicks' defense will have a handful in Game 3.

### Game 3: Golden State Warriors

Anthony Edwards will need to pick up the offensive slack for Minnesota if he wants to resume his systematic dethroning of the biggest names in basketball: Kevin Durant, LeBron James, and now potentially Steph Curry. The newly nick-named "King-Slayer" started slow against the Golden State Warriors, who lost Curry to a strained hamstring in the first half.

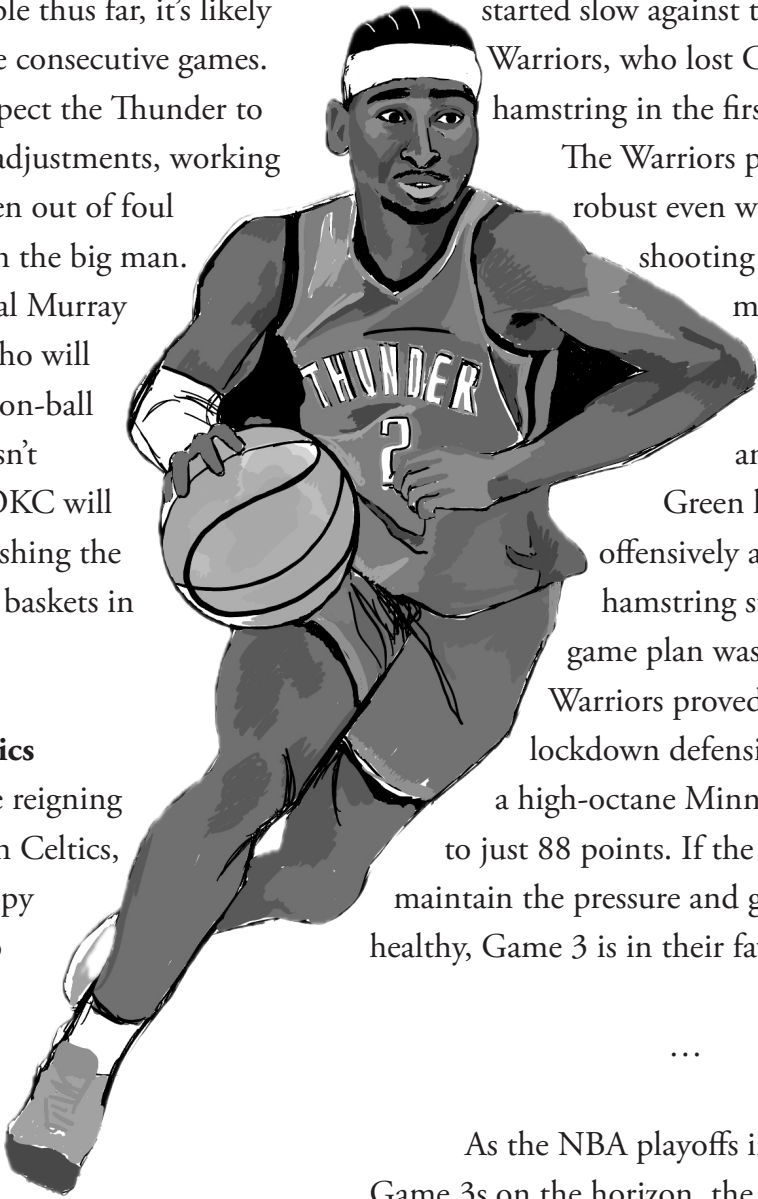
The Warriors proved surprisingly robust even without their shooting leader for most of Game 1. Buddy Hield, Jimmy Butler, and Draymond Green held their own offensively after Curry's hamstring strain. Steve Kerr's game plan was flawless, and the Warriors proved themselves as a lockdown defensive force, holding a high-octane Minnesota offense to just 88 points. If the Warriors can maintain the pressure and get Curry back healthy, Game 3 is in their favor.

...

As the NBA playoffs intensify with Game 3s on the horizon, the next few days will offer crucial insights into which teams are poised to advance to the conference finals. With several series at a pivotal 1-1 tie, each game could shift momentum as the winner of Game 3 often takes control of the series. Whether it's the young Pacers continuing their hot streak or Jokić's efforts to keep the Nuggets afloat, one thing is certain: the road to the NBA Finals is as unpredictable and thrilling as ever.

MAX SURPRENANT '26  
(MSURPRENANT@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES SPORTS FOR THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY LUCIE STEFANONI '27





# HEY SENIORS!

COVER ART BY KAYLA LE '28  
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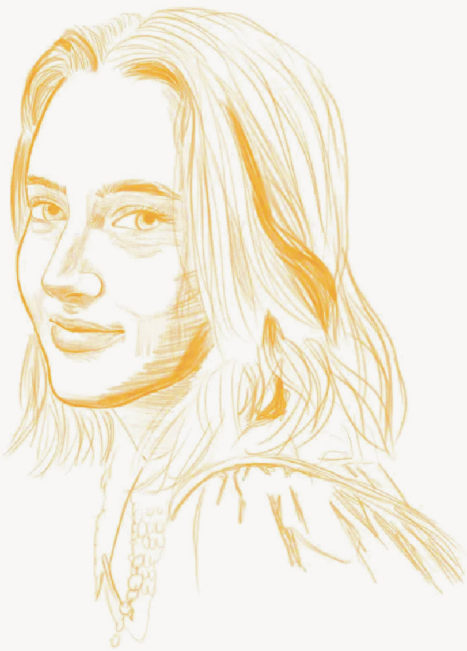
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you step into this next chapter, know that  
I will always be cheering you on.

*With love,  
Mom*



*You did it, Zayid!*

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