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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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NEWS

A Year of Cuts: Harvard and Columbia's Federal Funding Fight

Timeline of the contention between two Ivy League universities and the Trump administration.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

Over the past year, Harvard University and Columbia University have stood at the center of a high-stakes fight with the federal government. Beginning in January 2025 following President Trump's inauguration, both schools saw major funding streams frozen or pulled as the Trump administration tightened its grip on federal research expenditures. What followed: months of canceled grants, public backlash, lawsuits, and, in Columbia's case, a costly settlement to regain access to most of the \$400 million in federal research funds that had been eliminated, along with billions more in future grant eligibility. Meanwhile, Harvard remains in negotiations in both federal and Boston courts. Here is how the freeze unfolded and where things stand now.

COLUMBIA

HARVARD

2024

OCT

Columbia: Oct. 4, 2024

Columbia's annual Giving Day raises \$21.3 million—a 28.8% drop from 2022's record tidal—amid broader donor backlash over campus protests.



Harvard: October 2024

Harvard endowment donations drop by \$151M, representing one of the steepest declines in a decade. The decline came after several major donors cut ties with the University over its response to campus antisemitism and leadership turmoil following President Claudine Gay's resignation.

2025

JAN

Harvard: Jan. 27, 2025

The White House issues a memo pausing agency grants, loans, and other financial assistance to all federal agencies nationwide. In response, on Jan. 28, Harvard's research office posts guidance for its research community and later notes that the freeze memo was halted and rescinded in court. Litigation continues nonetheless over the Jan. 27 pause and related executive orders.

FEB

Harvard: Feb. 28, 2025

NIH begins terminating research grants to Harvard and its affiliated hospitals, ultimately halting more than \$110 million in funding by Apr. 1.



MAR

Columbia: Mar. 3, 2025

The federal Joint Task Force to Combat Antisemitism notifies Columbia that it will conduct a comprehensive review of the University's federal contracts and grants in light of civil rights investigations.



Columbia: Mar. 7, 2025

The Trump administration cancels \$400 million in Columbia grants and contracts; the University confirms in a same-day statement.

Columbia: Mar. 11, 2025

The NIH announces it is terminating more than \$250 million in funding to Columbia—including over 400 grants—most of them tied to Columbia's medical center. This cut represents the bulk of the \$400 million reduction announced days earlier by the federal task force.

Columbia: Apr. 9, 2025

An internal NIH email instructs staff to freeze all federal research grants to Columbia and several peer institutions—including Harvard—halting payments to current principal investigators.



APR

Harvard: Apr. 11, 2025

The Trump administration sends Harvard a sweeping letter demanding major reforms as a condition for restoring federal funding. Proposed requirements included eliminating DEI programs, adopting "merit-based" hiring and admission policies, auditing departments for "viewpoint diversity," and tightening discipline of students and faculty.



Harvard: Apr. 14, 2025

Harvard responds to the administration's letter, asserting that the government's demands contravene the First Amendment and exceed its lawful authority.

Harvard: Apr. 21-22, 2025

Harvard issues a 51 page lawsuit to the Trump administration to restore over \$2.2 billion in frozen grants (and \$60 million in multi-year contracts). Within hours, the administration escalates its response, freezing additional grant funding, threatening to revoke Harvard's tax-exempt status, and targeting the school's ability to host international students.

MAY

Columbia: May 6-7, 2025

Columbia announces 180 researcher layoffs as a result of terminated grants; this is confirmed by local and national outlets the following morning.



JUN

Columbia: Jun. 17, 2025

A federal judge dismisses a faculty-union lawsuit challenging the Columbia freezes, leaving the cuts in place. Option to appeal.



Harvard: Jun. 16-20, 2025

A federal judge in Massachusetts orders the NIH to restore hundreds of research grants the Trump administration had canceled earlier in the year. Many of the affected projects at Harvard, Columbia, and other universities focused on health disparities as well as LGBTQ+ and women's health. The ruling applied only to the grants named in the lawsuits, and the government had the option to appeal.



JUL

Columbia: Jul. 24-25, 2025

Columbia releases the terms of its settlement, including \$221 million payment and policy changes with federal funding restored following the agreement.

Columbia: Jul. 23, 2025

Columbia announces it has finalized a settlement agreement with the federal government, resolving multiple investigations and restoring access to federal research funding.

Harvard: July-August 2025

The Associated Press and the Wall Street Journal note the White House strategy in pursuing settlements with financial penalties against top universities.

Harvard continues its federal lawsuit challenging the freeze of more than \$2.2 billion in research grants, and some outlets report talks toward a settlement.

AUG

Harvard: Aug. 4, 2025

Harvard President Alan Garber '76 reportedly says he is not considering the alleged \$500 million deal with the Trump administration.



Harvard: Aug. 25, 2025

The Supreme Court rules with a 5-4 vote that the Trump administration has the authority to cancel \$780 million in NIH grants which contribute to topics disfavored by the administration: DEI, "gender ideology," and vaccine hesitancy.

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

GRAPHICS BY MADISON KRUG '27

Columbia and Harvard Students Respond to Recent University Settlements

After months of financial strain, American universities are reaching resolutions with the Trump administration, leaving students questioning their academic futures.

BY SARA KUMAR '27 AND CAROLINE STOHRER '28

Three weeks ago, Columbia University announced a \$221 million settlement with the Trump administration to resolve alleged violations of anti-discrimination laws and restore research funding. The deal followed months of tension between the federal government and higher education institutions—and may suggest that peer institutions are reaching similar agreements. With the fall semester approaching, post-secondary education students now grapple with uncertainty, especially with regard to academic autonomy.

The Settlement

Columbia has been a political flashpoint since the spring 2024 student protests in response to the Israel-Hamas war made national headlines. Members of the Republican Party have scrutinized the school's behavior in the year since, criticizing Columbia's decision to allow pro-Palestinian activists to return to campus for the 2024-2025 school year and threatening to subpoena the University if it did not comply with federal antisemitism investigations. Dissatisfaction with Columbia's response, alongside allegations of continued discrimination against Jewish students, intensified White House oversight of higher education after Trump took office.

On March 4, President Trump declared on Truth Social that “Federal Funding will STOP for any College, School, or University that allows illegal protests. Agitators will be imprisoned/or permanently sent back to the country from which they came. American students will be permanently expelled or,

depending on the crime, arrested.”

Four days later, Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested and detained Columbia graduate student and protest negotiator Mahmoud Khalil.

On March 7, the administration withdrew \$400 million in federal grants from Columbia. By May 7, the University announced the layoffs of 180 researchers,

citing fiscal instability. And on June 18, the National Institute of Health froze all grants to

the University—cuts that totaled more than \$1.2 billion.

Struggling to uphold institutional integrity with such strong financial blows, Columbia settled with the Trump administration on July 23. The University pledged to pay \$200 million to the federal government over three years and an additional \$21 million to resolve a March investigation by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission following claims of religion-based workplace harassment. Per year, these payments total around 0.01% of the University's total operating expenses, based on figures from fiscal year 2024.

As part of the agreement, most of the \$400 million initially rescinded will be restored, the NIH grants will slowly be reimbursed, and the University will regain eligibility for future federal funding. “The resolution will allow the University to move forward with clarity and focus—returning our full attention to the work of teaching, discovery, and public service,” Acting President Claire Shipman wrote in a community-wide message.

Administrators emphasize that they “carefully explored all options” before agreeing to the deal. However, while sentiment from University leadership remains largely optimistic—at least to the public eye—student sentiment wavers, spurred by months of uncertainty.

“I was disappointed but was not surprised, to say the least,” said Huang, a student at Columbia's Teachers College who declined to share his first name in an interview with the *Harvard Independent*. “It felt like a weight off my mind, for something that I expected to happen finally happened.”

Columbia has received its fair share of criticism from the student body over the past year—in contrast to Harvard University's persistent resistance to the federal government, some view Columbia as a symbol of consistent capitulation. At the University's May 2025 commencement, students booed Shipman, chanting “Free Mahmoud” in reference to Khalil's detainment and in protest of the administration's handling of federal pressure.

“On one hand, I was relieved to see that the amount was less than what many feared. But at the same time, I felt uneasy because it felt like the University was still conceding, still participating in something that, at its core, didn't feel just,” said Columbia undergraduate Rose Tuttle in an interview with the *Independent*.

Hoping to help the University community heal after a year of upheaval, Columbia framed the settlement as one that “preserves Columbia's autonomy and authority over faculty hiring,

admissions, and academic decision-making.” To the University, the next best step was to work with the Trump administration rather than against. Students disagreed.

“While Columbia has attempted to preserve certain forms of independence, such as continuing to fund research and support student initiatives, the very act of agreeing to a financial settlement undermines that claim,” Tuttle said. “It sends a message that academic institutions are subject to political coercion.”

Culturally Divisive Sentiment

Antisemitism has been central to federal investigations into higher education since Trump took office in January 2025. For instance, officials cited discrimination against Jewish students when withdrawing \$2.2 billion in multi-year research grants from Harvard on April 14.

“As a Jewish student on campus, I know that campus antisemitism has sometimes been used as justification for



saying, ‘Oh, this is why we need to crack down on student speech.’ But I firmly believe that having free expression protects everyone, including Jewish students,” Harvard College student Tova Kaplan '26 said in an interview with the *Independent*.

On July 15, Columbia announced to the University community that they would be incorporating the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism into the inner workings of their Office of Institutional Equity. This decision was a product of recommendations from the school's Antisemitism Task Force of August 2024.

“Protecting Jewish students is important, but explicitly using a definition that so closely blurs the line between political criticism of Israel and antisemitism isn't about protecting students, it's just the latest of Columbia's methods to justify its crackdown on political speech,” Columbia College student Gaia Di Mitri told the *Independent*.



In Shipman’s July message regarding the settlement, Columbia denied violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—a central accusation behind the initial federal fiscal retaliation. The settlement nonetheless includes measures to prevent any future instances of antisemitism, such as appointing a liaison to the Jewish community. Shipman framed these steps as safeguards against the “loss of future federal funding, the possibility of losing accreditation, and the potential revocation of visa status of thousands of international students.”

“The investigations into incidents of antisemitism on campus in the settlement are vaguely defined, if defined at all, and the limits to which these investigations can reach should be more clearly delineated,” Huang said. “The settlement should have had a clause about banning plain-clothed federal agents’ presence on campus unless an appropriate warrant is shown.”

Concerns over concealed federal presence on campus have intensified. On March 14, the Trump administration sent Columbia a list of demands, to which the University complied on March 21. Part of the agreement involved hiring new public safety officers with arrest powers. The settlement also requires a review of Columbia’s global programs, beginning with those in the Middle East.

International students were particularly vulnerable across peer institutions. On April 16, the federal government threatened to revoke Harvard’s certification to host foreign enrollees, spurring student protests and concerns of on-campus ICE presence.

“I think Harvard has an obligation to protect the privacy of Harvard students,” Kaplan said.

“Because the federal government can now learn about any international students’ disciplinary records upon request, we’re going to see more disappeared or deported students held in detention facilities, something that the Trump administration has already tried several times with multiple [Columbia] students,” Di Mitri said.

As of August 19, the Trump Administration has rescinded more than 6,000 student visas. And these actions affect more than just foreign affiliates.

“[The settlement] should ring warning bells to all students—not just international students or non-citizen students—that American universities are far more easily swayed by political demands than people would like to imagine, and the constitutional right to freedom of speech can be easily curtailed, even violated, if the federal government really means to ban certain speech,” Huang said.

Columbia’s Future

While the settlement closes current investigations, it nonetheless allows the Trump administration to continue monitoring Columbia and revoke funding if violations occur.

“We have agreed on a robust dispute resolution process that includes a mutually agreed upon independent monitor and arbitrator,” Shipman wrote. “The process requires that the government go through a very specific, prescribed set of steps if it believes we are not meeting the terms of the agreement.”

The question of government oversight in education now looms large. “The vagueness in the settlement, especially around the ‘conditions’ tied to the funding or accountability mechanisms, leaves too much room for interpretation and future pressure,” Tuttle said. “There should have been...clearer language around what exactly Columbia was agreeing to in terms of policy changes.”

Among the enacted “policy changes,” the act of protesting at Columbia will operate under much stricter constraints. The settlement delineates that any demonstrations in academic buildings will not be permitted, and all student participants must present University identification upon request. Any student group involved may violate anti-discriminatory conduct mandates. Moreover, within 30 days of the settlement’s implementation, Columbia must establish noncompliance reporting capabilities that offer full protection to any whistleblowers.

The resolution also gives the U.S. Assistant Attorney General permission to conduct “reasonable” audits, reviews, and investigations pursuant to Title VI policies—with oversight by a new “Resolution Monitor.” Similar mandates have been suggested across peer institutions despite resistance.

“We don’t want a DOGE-like intrusion into what professors can teach, what students can say, what research gets published, or who gets admitted to Harvard,” Kaplan said. “I think universities should be able to say things and research things that the federal government disagrees with. And that’s not a partisan thing...I just think that’s a foundational thing that has allowed America to thrive.”

Columbia’s settlement ends with an affirmation of enforcement—all involved parties agree to defend the agreement should the terms be threatened in any way.

Peer Institutions

After reading the document, fears of eroded academic freedom extend beyond Columbia. Though Shipman affirms Columbia’s institutional autonomy despite the settlement, students worry about ripple effects.

“Columbia often sets the tone for higher education more broadly,” Tuttle said. “By complying with a settlement that many view as politically motivated and lacking transparent justification, it risks normalizing government overreach into academic spaces.”

Brown University followed with its own agreement with the federal government a week later, paying \$50 million to Rhode Island workforce programs rather than Washington. The settlement similarly imposed new regulations on students, curriculum, and faculty capabilities. Most notably, the agreement forces Brown to accept federally-outlined definitions for “male” and “female” and limits the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University from performing gender reassignment surgeries on minors or prescribing such individuals cross-sex hormones.

Harvard, too, shows signs of yielding. As of July 29, Harvard said it will comply with demands from the Trump administration and submit employment information on thousands

of University affiliates. On August 4, University President Alan Garber ’76 denied speculation that a deal with the federal government may be imminent. Instead, he claimed that the institution is hoping to resolve disagreements with the Trump administration through the court system.

However, as of August 13, reports suggest that the University is nearing a \$500 million settlement with the Trump administration—one which may permit prolonged, rigorous federal oversight and scrutiny.

“We’ve seen that a lot of what the Trump administration has attempted to do to Harvard is unlawful, and when Harvard has chosen to fight that in court, we have won,” Kaplan said. “And I know it’s a scary time right now, and I sympathize with the difficult decisions that the University has to make, but I think we can’t get scared and give in to demands that are unlawful.”

Similar to Columbia students, Harvard affiliates worry about the possible precedent the University may set if they chose to capitulate to the federal government.

“If Harvard can’t resist these sort of attacks, then frankly, there’s no other institution in America that can, and that sets a really dark and dangerous precedent,” Jordan Schwartz ’27 said in an interview with the *Independent*.

The Fall 2025 semester begins after Labor Day weekend for Harvard and many of its peer institutions. Until then, students are waiting to see what these decisions mean for their upcoming year of classes, extracurriculars, and campus community.

Kaplan asserted that Harvard should not yield to outside pressures. “I think it’s incredibly important that Harvard, as President Garber said, refuses to surrender its independence and continues to take up that mantle of leadership at a time where it’s very needed.”

“It’s impossible to predict what a given semester at Harvard will hold, especially with everything going on,” Schwartz said. “So much more has happened just over the summer since the spring, but I foresee that this is far from over, no matter what happens with the settlement.”

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**GRAPHICS BY EMMA
CRAGO ’28**

Elite Universities Weigh the Costs of Settlement With the Trump Administration

Professors, researchers, and administrators from peer institutions offer thoughts on the future of American higher education.

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

After months of resistance against the federal government, Harvard University may soon reach a settlement with the Trump administration. Reports of these deliberations come just weeks after Brown University and Columbia University agreed to settlements to restore withheld federal funding.

Persistent funding cuts to post-secondary academic institutions nationwide now total between \$6.9 and \$8.2 billion. These cuts have raised concerns about the future of academic research and the role of college administrations, with institutional autonomy seemingly at odds with government oversight.

“It is a travesty,” wrote David R. Walt, Hansjörg Wyss Professor of Bioinspired Engineering at Harvard Medical School and Professor of Pathology at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, in a statement to the *Independent* regarding the funding cuts.

“Many of these advances take years to decades to accomplish, so shutting down projects wastes an enormous investment already paid for by taxpayers. It is beyond my comprehension why any leader would want to compromise the crown jewel of its educational and research ecosystem,” Walt added.

According to Harvard, federal funding halts come after 75 years of research partnerships with academic institutions. These partnerships have produced significant breakthroughs that help maintain the United States’ position as a global leader in research. Rescinding this funding, Harvard warns, will harm progress in fields including life-saving medical research

on tuberculosis, chemotherapy, pandemic preparedness, Parkinson’s disease, and Alzheimer’s disease.

“Cutting funding to Harvard and other academic institutions will delay our ability to deliver and scale these innovations, which will result in unnecessary delays in diagnosing and curing these and many other diseases, and will result in unnecessary suffering and many deaths,” Walt said.

Tensions between elite American universities and the executive branch escalated after President Donald Trump took office in January. On March 10, Trump’s administration sent letters to 60 universities, including Harvard, regarding investigations into antisemitism and Title IX violations. Since then, alleged diversity infractions have spurred funding cuts and grant rescissions on a national scale.

Minority-serving institutions are at particular risk under current circumstances. According to the Center for American Progress, more than two-thirds of all land-grant universities and nearly half of all historically Black colleges and universities are facing funding cuts under the current administration.

Additionally, changes to federal funding have impacted the 1,100 community colleges that provide education for over 6 million students nationwide, as well as tribal colleges, which rely almost entirely on federal funding. Without robust endowments needed for self sustainment, these institutions have less flexibility when it comes to settlements.

Among the throng of academic institutions affected, American Ivy League schools have become limelight cases—most notably seen via Harvard being one of the primary institutions to take legal action against the federal government, and Columbia being one of the first universities the federal government targeted.

On July 1, the University of Pennsylvania became the first Ivy League institution to reach a settlement deal. Unlike Brown and Columbia, Penn did not pay a fine to the federal government. Investigations focused largely on the University’s compliance with Title IX, specifically regarding women’s athletics and the controversial participation of transgender swimmer Lia Thomas.

On July 24, Columbia paid a \$221 million settlement—an unprecedented concession to the Trump administration.

“Today, President Donald J. Trump secured a historic settlement with Columbia University to address violations of federal civil rights laws and to restore fairness, merit, and safety in higher education,” a statement released from the White House reads.

“By securing this settlement, the Trump Administration is ensuring that Columbia upholds merit-based standards, complies with federal law, and fosters an environment of academic excellence



and safety for all students,” the statement continues.

“Before the agreement, Columbia’s entire research operation was at risk,” Howard Worman, Professor of Medicine and Pathology and Cell Biology, and University Senator at Columbia, wrote in a statement to the *Independent*. “If [Columbia] didn’t come to an agreement with the government and continued to be cut off from federal funding, it could have triggered an exodus of promising faculty, especially from the medical school.”

On July 30, Brown University agreed to a \$50 million settlement. While similar in scope, Brown’s settlement was set on different terms than that of Columbia.

Both Brown President Christina H. Paxson and Columbia Acting President Claire Shipman issued university-wide statements following the settlement decisions, outlining the terms and promising certain institutional protections.

“At its core, the agreement preserves the integrity of Brown’s academic foundation, and it enables us as a community to move forward after a period of considerable uncertainty in a way that ensures Brown will continue to be the Brown that our students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and friends have known for generations,” Paxson wrote.

Similarly, Shipman wrote: “We understand that members of our community will hold different views about this decision. We made it with care, with seriousness, and with an unwavering commitment to the mission, values, and future of Columbia University.”

Settlements have faced substantial pushback and concern from current and former students, faculty, and higher education communities at large.

“This settlement subverts our democracy and capitulates to the Trump plan to target the pillars of our democracy: the judiciary, the free press, and our education systems,” American Association of University Professors President Todd Wolfson wrote in an AAUP statement in response to Columbia’s administrative decision.

As Harvard’s legal battle with the Trump administration continues, many are pointing to the settlement cases at Brown and Columbia University to urge their administration not to follow suit. Just last month, hundreds of Harvard College students co-signed an open letter opposing a harmful settlement circulated by Harvard

Students for Freedom.

“Any deal with the White House must not involve banning any aspect of the curriculum that President Trump dislikes, firing professors, or punishing students for peaceful free speech. And it certainly must not involve turning over disciplinary records of international students, risking ideological deportation. Doing so would set a dangerous precedent for the entire country,” the statement reads.

Previously applauded for standing up to the federal government, an agreement between Harvard and the federal government may be seen as a substantial setback in the fight against government impositions on higher education. Amidst the uncertainty, the University has released several statements affirming its commitment to academic freedom and institutional integrity.

“We stand behind our thousands of outstanding faculty, postdoctoral, staff, and student researchers,” assured Harvard President Alan Garber ’76 in a University-wide issued statement on May 14. “It is crucial for this country, the economy, and humankind that this work continues.”

University affiliates have not been afraid to express public opinions regarding the funding situation and a possible settlement. In an op-ed for the *New York Times* titled “Harvard Derangement Syndrome,” Johnstone Family Professor of Psychology Steven Pinker provides commentary on how the renowned nature of Harvard naturally attracts criticism. Despite this tendency—derangement syndrome—to criticize the University, Pinker argues that current funding cuts and a potentially coerced settlement take the form of an unconstitutional punishment toward the University.

“I’m hardly an apologist for my employer when I say that the incentive now being aimed at Harvard has become unhinged,” Pinker wrote.

“I don’t think that these punishments are a consequence of negative attitudes toward Harvard,” Pinker added in a statement to the *Independent*. “The Trump administration is attempting to cripple elite universities, starting with Harvard, for the same reason they are bullying law firms, media companies, and cultural institutions: they are seen as sources of opposition to Trump.”

“Only totalitarian regimes try to manipulate private institutions to conform to their wishes,” Pinker continued. “In the

case of federal funding of research (and other provisions that the Trump administration is using to punish Harvard), there are certain violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act that entitle the government to withhold grants, but the government has to stipulate exactly what the violations are, allow the institution to reply and rectify them, and withhold funding only from the offending programs.”

In the meantime, the White House recently released a larger statement regarding federal funding on Aug. 7 “Going forward, President Trump’s appointees will review funding opportunity announcements and grant awards to verify that each grant dollar benefits Americans instead of lining grantees’ pocketbooks or furthering causes that damage America,” the top of the page reads.

Part of the announcement outlines the system of merit, which the administration hopes to rely on for college admissions and grant distribution. “President Trump signed a Presidential Memorandum to ensure funding to Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) advances U.S. interests and multiple Executive Orders to prevent taxpayer dollars from funding radical ideologies such as DEI, gender ideology, and the green new scam,” the page continued. “The Trump Administration has already terminated thousands of contracts, saving American taxpayers billions of dollars.”

“The Trump Administration will ensure that meritocracy and excellence once again characterize American higher education.” U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon added in a statement to Politico.

As the Fall 2025 semester rapidly approaches, a potential resolution between Harvard and the White House is at the forefront of the minds of University affiliates and international onlookers.

Affiliates of the University remain hopeful as faculty report conversations with President Garber denying the proposed \$500 million settlement, favoring a legal resolution.

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**GRAPHIC BY AMELIE
LIMA ’27**

Pre-Orientation Leadership Profile: FOP

A glimpse at the leadership who spearhead a week in the great outdoors for incoming Harvard College first-years.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28

On Aug. 18, pre-freshmen began moving into the Yard for one of Harvard College's six pre-orientation programs: First-Year Retreat and Experience, First-Year Arts Program, First-Year Outdoor Program, First-Year Urban Program, First-Year International Program, and Leadership Institute for the First-Year Experience. Designed to build connections between incoming students, upperclassmen, and the Harvard community, the 'pre-frosh' programming is led by sophomores, juniors, and seniors who return to campus two weeks early to help carry on these historic traditions. About two-thirds of the incoming class typically elects to apply and participate in the pre-orientation programming.

FOP began operating in 1979, bringing thousands of incoming freshmen to the forests and mountains of New England over the years. From backpacking to cabin trips or identity-based outings, FOP offers participants a range of program choices that match different skill levels and interests. Over 300 pre-freshmen participated in FOP last year alongside over 120 leaders.

Last summer, Grayson Caffrey '28 was one of these lucky so-called "FOPers." "I can't imagine a better introduction to the Harvard community," Caffrey said in an interview with the *Independent*. "The entire experience made me so excited and comfortable going into freshman fall, from the generous advice on basically every topic from my trip leaders to the shockingly close relationships I formed with the pre-frosh on my trip."

Lillie Tyrrell '28 also attested to her amazing experience on FOP 2024. "As a city kid, this was my first experience hiking [and] living in the outdoors. I learned so much thanks to the great knowledge of my trip leaders," she shared with the *Independent*. "FOP allowed me to deeply connect with my peers within a matter of days, and I truly cherish the relationships I made with the others in my group."



One of Caffrey and Tyrrell's biggest takeaways was the connection and advice that pre-frosh gain from being around their FOP leader.

Zion Dixon '26, a three-year veteran of FOP and former steering committee member, echoed this sentiment. Following an application and rigorous training process, FOP invites Harvard College upperclassmen to lead pre-frosh on this six-day hiking journey. "FOP leaders have a very incredible role... It's the first impression that a student has when they come to Harvard. And so oftentimes leaders are the first person that a student intimately gets to know and ask a lot of questions," Dixon said.

Though many FOP leaders chose to deepen their involvement in the program following personal experience as a FOPer, some do so after hearing about the experience from their first-year peer participants. "I actually didn't do FOP as a freshman, but I became a FOP trainee freshman spring," Dixon added.



"Everyone I knew who came back from campus really enjoyed FOP, and honestly, the only thing that made me a little apprehensive [about] being involved in the community was the outdoor component seemed wild to me," he continued. "I had friends who encouraged me to apply because they thought I would enjoy the leadership and community aspect of it and that I could grow more comfortable with the outdoor aspect."

FOP is organized into several different tiers. An incoming freshman participant applies to be a FOPer once applications for pre-orientation programming open in May or June. Harvard upperclassmen serve as program leaders, guiding first-years throughout the six-day outdoor expedition. The Steering Committee for FOP manages the organization and its training.

"Steering committee is a group of eight FOP leaders who basically run FOP. There's a director, but FOP is incredibly

student-run," Dixon explained. "So many of the logistics, the route planning, the gear for like FOPers and FOP leaders, the training for leaders, selections for leaders, and FOPers... all those things happen under steering committees."

Even for those less comfortable in the outdoors, FOP makes a deliberate effort to ensure the program is welcoming to every participant. FOP makes it clear in its mission statement that one of their values is the "equality and intrinsic worth of all people regardless of gender, age, race, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic or socioeconomic background."

To Dixon, inclusivity and belonging are core components of the program. "I think it's also incredible to bring people from different backgrounds [who] share stories and talk about themselves for a few days. I don't think we really have the opportunity oftentimes at Harvard, and so it really creates a space where you're forced to learn and appreciate people with differences."

With his last FOP trip officially behind him, Dixon spoke on the lasting positive influence the program has had on him. "I've become more confident in myself as a leader and myself as someone in the outdoors," he said. "I've become just very familiar with a lot of the things that can go wrong, whether it's medical scenarios, logistical scenarios, weather... I've seen a lot and heard a lot of stories, [which] allows me to provide a little bit of insight and comfort to some of the newer leaders."

First-year FOPers spent the past week hiking with 10 strangers, cut off from the Internet, cell phones, and ordinary conveniences like deodorant. Though the trip itself lasts just a week before formal orientation, FOP groups often stay connected long after. As the program's mission statement notes: "FOP should be a resource and support system throughout freshman year." For those shaped by FOP's enduring community—and for non-participants eager to get involved—students will have the chance to apply to become leaders starting in November 2025.

KALVIN FRANK '28 (KFRANK@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAD NO IDEA FOP EXISTED UNTIL HE CAME ONTO CAMPUS LAST FALL.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ZION DIXON '26 AND SARA KUMAR '27

How Stanford Has Escaped Trump's War on Higher Ed

Stanford's strategy has shielded it from Harvard's fate, but at what cost to independence?

BY GEORGE PORTEOUS

As the White House escalated its pressure campaign on Harvard and other Ivy League universities this past academic year, many of us at Stanford braced ourselves for similar scrutiny, wondering when our school would draw the Trump administration's ire.

So far, those anxieties have mostly gone unrealized. Stanford has remained outside the national spotlight, avoiding the direct funding cuts and freezes that Harvard, Columbia, Brown, and other universities have faced.

That's not to say the school has been entirely spared. Trump's endowment tax hike on wealthy private universities has triggered deep budget cuts, a hiring freeze, and hundreds of layoffs. The extensive withdrawal of research funding has been a tough blow to scientific labs. All the while, international students face constant uncertainty from abrupt changes to visa programs from the State Department.

Still, compared to the storm of cuts, investigations, and threats engulfing East Coast institutions, Stanford has largely maintained its blue-sky reputation.

This divergence in treatment is especially puzzling given the Trump administration's purported reason for targeting Harvard—antisemitism. Setting aside definitional debates over antisemitism, Harvard and Stanford saw fairly similar unrest on their campuses in response to the events of Oct. 7, 2023. At Stanford, pro-Palestinian students staged a 120-day encampment, unfurled a banner over Green Library, disrupted events, and even occupied the President's office, spraying militant graffiti across the Main Quad.

If the White House's actions toward Harvard are sincerely motivated by what it considers “an unprecedented wave of vile anti-Semitic discrimination, vandalism, and violence,” then Stanford would seem another natural target. So why hasn't it been?

The school's relative freedom from unwanted attention is not by chance, but by design. Geography offers a partial explanation. Far from the nation's capital, Stanford is simply less visible to policymakers than Ivy League schools clustered on the East Coast.

Stanford's culture is as distinct as its location. Characterized by an emphasis on science and technology, and deep alumni ties to business and tech, Stanford benefits from a less politicized image. It may seem paradoxical that many White House officials graduated from the very schools they are now hobbling. Nonetheless, Ivy League graduates' outsized representation in the federal government might actually motivate such attacks, rather than deter them, as political appointees prioritize reshaping their alma maters over other universities.

Geography and academic focus are not the sole factors at play. If they were, the University of California, Los Angeles—another West Coast school with little reputation for campus politics—wouldn't be a target of the Trump administration.

Stanford's relative immunity arises instead from its institutional positioning.

On the occasion that Stanford enters the political fray, its overall posture tends to be more

centrist—sometimes even conservative—making the institution less susceptible to caricatures of rampant leftism than elite counterparts.

The Hoover Institution at Stanford, a right-leaning think tank founded nearly 70 years ago, is home to fellows such as Niall Ferguson, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and John Cochrane, all of whom signed onto the Manhattan Institute's July statement denouncing left-wing influence in higher education.

It comes as no surprise that Harvard is reportedly considering launching a center for conservative scholarship, inspired by Hoover. Harvard hopes the establishment of such a center would satisfy the Trump administration's demand for “viewpoint diversity.”

With deep connections in Washington and the Republican Party, Stanford professors such as former Secretary of State and Director of the Hoover Institution Condoleezza Rice have also been valuable advocates for the University.

At a meeting of Stanford's Academic Council in May, it was Rice who joined University President Jonathan Levin for remarks on the state of higher education. “The United States of America will be shooting itself in the head if it does not continue the bargain between the government and research universities,” she said at the meeting.

That argument likely carries weight in Washington, where Stanford's research and teaching have contributed to U.S. defense and technology policy, producing advances in artificial intelligence and military technology. Even though Harvard's research contributes to vital scientific and medical innovation, Stanford is better positioned to claim its federal funding will help the government maintain a competitive edge over China.

Companies like Palantir, a software firm founded by Stanford alum and venture capitalist Peter Thiel, exemplify this relationship. The firm disproportionately recruits Stanford graduates and acquires startups founded by students. Palantir is also heavily contracted by the Trump administration, which appears to understand, at some level, that Stanford provides critical labor and technology to power its agenda.

Stanford's administration has been careful to uphold this positioning with the White House by proactively following government prescriptions for higher education. For example, by February of this year, content on Stanford's DEI websites had been quietly scrubbed, drawing opposition from students and faculty. This month, the DEI office was shut down altogether.

Unlike some leaders at peer schools like Princeton, President Levin and Provost Jenny Martinez have

avoided issuing public criticism of the Trump administration. An exception came in April, when Levin and Martinez defended Harvard president Alan Garber, writing that Harvard's resistance to government demands were “rooted in the American tradition of liberty.”

Despite this action, Levin and Martinez refused to sign a subsequent statement by the American Association of Colleges and Universities, in which the presidents of more than 180 colleges expressed opposition to “the unprecedented government overreach and political interference now endangering American higher education.” Facing questions over this decision, Levin told Stanford's Faculty Senate he simply dislikes open letters, preferring private lobbying and collective lawsuits.

Both Levin and Martinez also established their support for institutional neutrality well before Trump returned to office. As dean of Stanford Law School, Martinez issued a lengthy memo in 2023 defending a conservative federal judge's right to speak after law students shouted him down. And in his inaugural address last October, Levin declared that “the University's purpose is not political action or social justice. It is to create an environment in which learning thrives.”

In Stanford historian Jennifer Burns' view, those commitments proved fortuitous in the political climate that followed Trump's re-election. “They had articulated a discomfort about what was happening in higher education ahead of what was happening,” she observed in an interview for this article.

Taken together, geographic distance, conservative footholds, ties to national security, and leadership style not only help explain Stanford's relative immunity, but reflect a broader symbolic distinction between Stanford and Harvard.

As the nation's oldest university and best-known example of elite higher education, Harvard has become the Trump administration's primary target because of what it represents. Despite the government's claims, targeted actions have less to do with Harvard's handling of antisemitism and more to do with the symbolic importance of bringing the country's most prominent university to heel.

Right-wing criticism of Harvard goes back decades. Subduing the institution's resistance would be a major conservative victory years in the making, signaling that even the most powerful institution can be brought down.

Stanford tells a different story. In the American imagination, it stands less for elite political influence than frontier innovation, the tech economy, and defense initiatives.

The relative peace Stanford has enjoyed reflects the University's willingness to reinforce that image while accommodating Washington, D.C. That strategy has kept Stanford afloat so far, but it risks setting a dangerous precedent in which universities sustain themselves by deferring to power, rather than questioning it.

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GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN '28



Avoid the Building with My Family's Name

It's too late to save the Riesman Center for Harvard Hillel from moral collapse.

BY JOSEPHINE RIESMAN '08

The Riesman Center for Harvard Hillel was once my refuge.

As a struggling undergraduate, I found comfort there, and not because my family's name was chiseled into its edifice. I was welcomed at its dinners, warmed by its community, and guided by leaders who seemed to genuinely care about a better Jewish future. But today, the Riesman Center for Harvard Hillel, the building that bears my family's name, has lost its way. That is why I must urge you: do not attend or affiliate with it.

I write only for myself, but I utterly condemn the organization's refusal to put up any kind of fight against the tidal wave of genocidal racism and violent authoritarianism that has engulfed the campus, the country, and Jewish institutions around the world. Although the Riesman Center's actions and sins of inaction feel like a personal betrayal and a betrayal of my family legacy, none of that matters. The important thing is that Hillel is not protecting Jewish students. It is not protecting any students. By going along with the Trump agenda, the Riesman Center for Harvard Hillel is setting Harvard students up to be targets.

Harvard's Muslim students, international students, immigrant students, and students of color are already at dire threat. The presidential administration wants every one of these groups off of campuses; indeed, they want many of them deported or perhaps even sent to one of America's newly constructed concentration camps. By going along with a state of affairs where Jews are the one minority it's ostensibly 'not okay' to discriminate against (while open Nazis and Nazi sympathizers staff the halls of the executive branch), Harvard Hillel is making Jewish students into cogs in the machine of Trumpist oppression, whether they like it or not.

However, it wasn't always like this. My first journey to Israel/Palestine was organized through Harvard Hillel, back in the summer of 2005, and it was led by the organization's then-director Bernie Steinberg. Just a few weeks before his death and years after retiring, Bernie published an op-ed in the *Harvard Crimson* denouncing the way right-wing forces weaponize the word "antisemitism" to attack Palestinians.

"Let me speak plainly: It is not

antisemitic to demand justice for all Palestinians living in their ancestral lands," he wrote. "It is very telling that some of Israel's own supporters instead go to extraordinary lengths to utterly silence the other side. Smearing one's opponents is rarely a tactic employed by those confident that justice is on their side."

But now, Bernie is gone, and the picture on campus has changed.

Despite an early stance of resistance, Harvard's administration is now showing signs it will capitulate to the Trump administration. Hillel on campus has stayed silent and aligned with parent organization Hillel International's agenda of suppressing Palestine solidarity and uncritically supporting Israel, even as that nation-state commits internationally recognized genocide against Palestinians.

Here in the U.S., as students from non-Jewish minority groups face threats and detentions by Trumpist forces, Hillel International's CEO has offered only a tepid statement that he and his organization "understand those concerns." When Donald Trump says he's committed to taking "forceful and unprecedented steps to marshal all Federal resources to combat the explosion of antisemitism on our campuses," Hillel International believes him—or at least is happy to go along with him. Meanwhile, Rabbi Jason Rubenstein, the current director of the Riesman Center, has said nothing publicly about the recent abductions of students. He has other priorities for his days.

Just weeks ago, Rubenstein privately announced to Hillel affiliates that the Riesman Center would host an emissary from the Jewish Agency for Israel this school year. This organization aims to bridge the gap "between American Judaism and Israeli Judaism, and of humanizing the latter against the dehumanizing misrepresentations." More troubling, Rubenstein in the internal email proudly identified this emissary as "an alumnus of the elite 8200 intelligence team in the IDF"—the same unit that is currently providing intelligence data for targeted killings in Gaza and coordinating with Microsoft to surveil Palestinians.

This is only the most *recent* moral disaster within the organization.

When a Hillel-affiliated student posted flyers depicting the genocide in Gaza alongside words from Jewish liturgy, Rubenstein called the police instead of

engaging with the substance. In his public response, the word "Palestinian" appeared exactly once. The words "genocide" and "war crime" didn't appear at all.

When Harvard, under Trump's pressure, closed its DEI offices, gutted the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and ended the Israel/Palestine dialogue program, Hillel said nothing. When Harvard pulled funding for race-based affinity groups' graduation celebrations, Hillel again said nothing, silently validating the Trumpist lie that all of this is being done in the name of protecting Jews. For shame, Rabbi Rubenstein.

This silence contrasts sharply with my grandfather's example. Robert A. Riesman, Sr. '40, matriculated as a Harvard undergraduate in 1936, when Jewish quotas were still enforced. A Christian friend vouched for him in his application by writing, "He has little or none of the appearance of being a Jew."

When German Jewish lives and property were ripped asunder in November of 1938 during the Nazi-sponsored night of antisemitic terror known as *Kristallnacht*, my grandfather was in his junior year. He leapt into action, forming a student organization called the Harvard Committee for Tolerance, demanding the University hire German Jewish academics so they could escape Europe. Harvard refused, of course.

The Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel was formed in 1944, while my grandfather was serving in army intelligence and helping to plan D-Day. The Hillel was created as a direct response to the discrimination that Jewish students had faced: exclusion from clubs and societies, derisive comments from fellow students, and a lack of facilities for Jewish religious practice. Although Jews may not have been as visually distinct from WASPs as, say, Black people, surnames and rumors could tip antisemites off that a student was Jewish, and hatred could follow. My grandfather wanted none of that, so after the war, he became a fervent supporter of Harvard Hillel, donating heavily to ensure Jewish students would never face the bigotry he had endured.

Today, Jewish students don't face quotas or phrenology. But Hillel's posture leaves Jews dependent on temporary special privileges granted by an authoritarian regime. My people are deemed useful as an excuse for cracking down on other groups. *For now.*

Being made into a pet minority is never a good long-term solution for my people; indeed, that status is often followed by *final* solutions. When the white supremacists in power decide to leave us hanging in the wind, we will be hated by the Nazis for our very nature, and treated as scapegoats by the anti-fascists because we were given a privileged position in the regime. It's a grim future to imagine, but one we are rapidly careening toward.

The Riesman Center for Harvard Hillel seems content to forsake my grandfather's legacy of fighting for a Jewish future free of the fascist grip. Alas, I understand why.

They're doing it for the same reason my grandfather sacrificed much of *his own* legacy: Jewish nationalism.

As long as Trump supports Israel's endless war, no officially sanctioned Hillel is going to break with the party line and condemn fascism in Israel and the United States. Perhaps they will tepidly ask for more aid to be sent to starving Gazans, as other Jewish institutions have begun to do, but that's about it. Many of my fellow Jews are willing to learn the wrong lesson from millennia of oppression and genocide: "Never again to *us*," rather than "Never again to *anyone*."

The Riesman Center, like my fervently Zionist grandfather, lost its way by deciding that Israel's future must be built on the bones of the Palestinians. By putting Jewish fears in the forefront and utterly ignoring Jewish power and Israeli war crimes, the organization's implicit argument is that, if Israelis need to kill tens of thousands of Palestinians in order to feel safe, so be it.

But I say: enough. I know Orthodox Jewish students face challenges for religious observance outside of Hillel, but new institutions must be built. For those who are *not* religiously observant, there is no excuse for affiliating with Hillel while it refuses to condemn, let alone *do anything* about,

an active genocide. Like so many other American institutions that have failed—from churches and synagogues to courts and universities—I sincerely doubt that the Riesman Center for Harvard Hillel can be changed from within.

If we are fortunate, one day—to paraphrase the title of Omar El Akkad's new book—everyone will have "*always* been against" the fascist upheaval in Israel and the United States. Maybe not "everyone," but many more people will recognize the horror of the Gaza genocide and America's authoritarian turn. And everyone will see that the Riesman Center was on the wrong side of history. Unless it undergoes radical transformation, the institution must be avoided.

Hillel is, in fact, placing Jewish students in danger by not loudly and vehemently opposing the Trump administration's disgusting attempts to "protect" those students. As matters get worse in the United States and Israel/Palestine—and worsen they will—a silent Hillel will be a complicit Hillel. And a complicit Hillel will lead to a perception that Jews on campus are by and large fine with the Trump agenda. This will not provide such students with safety. It will very much do the opposite.

I place my hope in the campus movement for Palestinian justice, including the many Jewish students protesting the Riesman Center for Harvard Hillel—as well

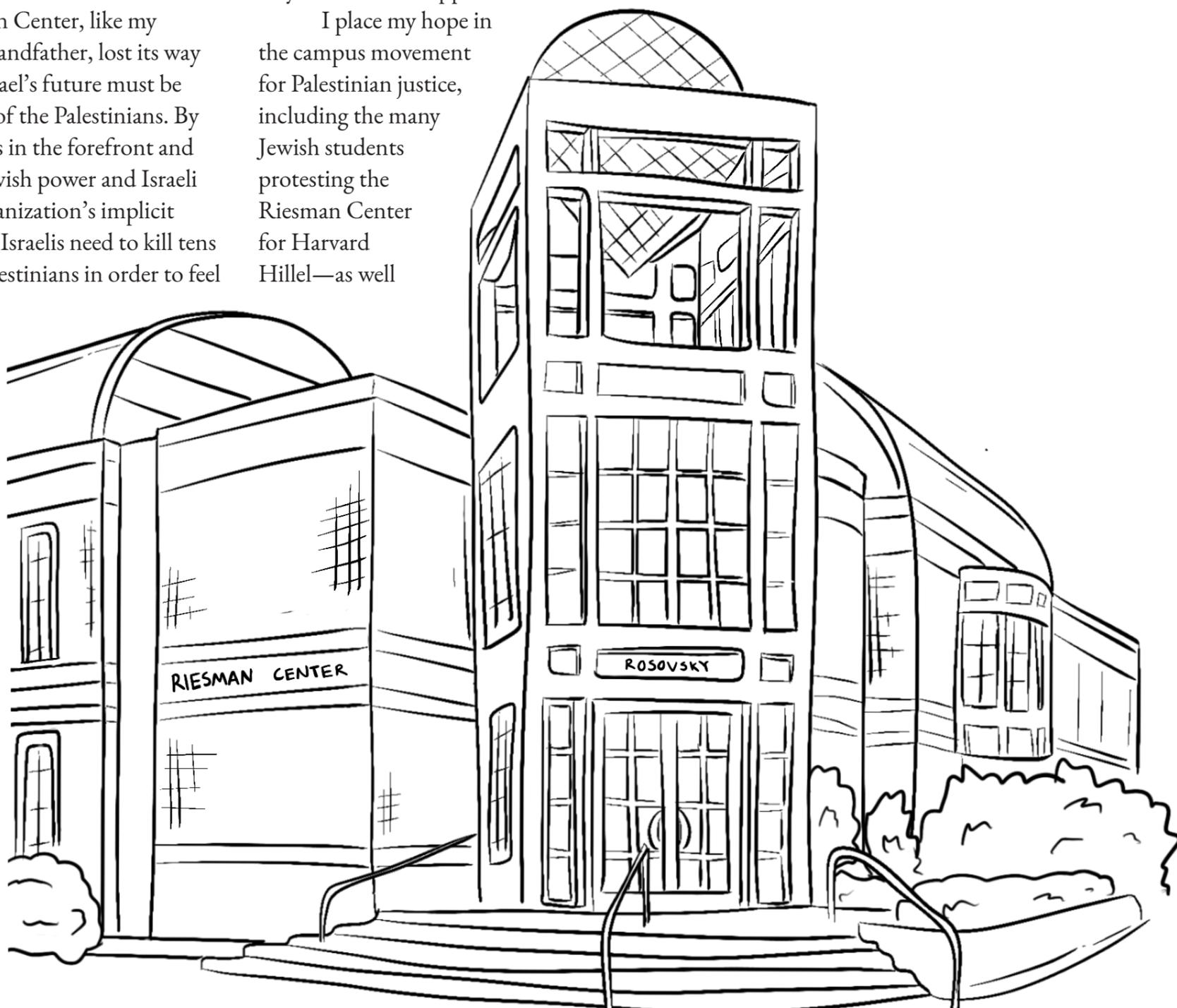
they should. I support them in that effort. Absent rapid and radical changes *right now*, before it's too late, I fear Grandpa's beloved institution will become just another tool of homegrown fascism.

I urge the Jews of Harvard to remember the words of Bernie Steinberg in that final op-ed: "Be boldly critical of Israel—not *despite* being Jewish, but *because* you are." Be just as critical of Hillel and the University. *Never again to anyone.*

Take it from a Riesman: don't be fooled by promises of "protection" that come at the expense of your peers. Such promises are as cruel as they are temporary. Stand up for yourself. Build alternatives. If we do not revolutionize Judaism and Jewishness, they will become nightmares from which we may never wake.

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GRAPHIC BY MIRANDA CHAO HWANG '28



Satisfyingly (Mostly) Sober Summer

A reflection on three days of music, lights, friends, and drugs.

BY LADY GUINEVERE

This summer, riding the high of an intoxicating spring semester, I decided to take a much-needed T-break. I stopped drinking, tossed out the substances stashed beneath my childhood bed, and committed to being the designated driver for boozy high-school reunions. But, as a reward for my sober pledge, I would allow myself one reprieve: my city's annual music festival. For the sake of anonymity, I'll call it "Heaven"—because that's exactly what it felt like.

I opted for just a three-day pass, convinced it would let me experience the music, the open air, and the substances without overexerting myself. Each day became its own experiment: a different mix of headliners, vibes, and highs. I chronicled the weekend through a variety of voice messages and rushed shorthand, in my Notes app, trying to answer my own high-induced philosophical questions about balancing living in the moment and preserving memories. I also interviewed the friends I had enjoyed my experience with. Some were sober, some were higher than me, and others were riding my same wavelength. By Monday, I felt like a changed person—or at least like a third grader who had just discovered the golden ratio.

Day One: Shrooms, Alcohol, and Two Unforgettable Artists

"Voice note for Indy article: cacophonous is the sound. I'm drunk. And I'm on shrooms. The shrooms are doing a lot... I'm feeling loose. In the sense that I could wobble, wobble, fall. And there are two nuns here."

I had not planned to start the weekend with shrooms—I wanted to ease into the intoxication and stay present for Doechii's set. But after pregaming with 99-proof shooters and Buzzballs, I let my friends convince me into microdosing half a gram. Drugs, like drinking, are best done in community. Five of us munched on fungi and chased the taste with smuggled Fireball, while others chose

either not to indulge at all or to partake in different vices.

One friend had already spent three hours at Heaven without a drink or drug. "Being here sober and solo... I learned so much about myself," she said. "The main disadvantage of being sober is [that] you get in your head a little bit more about certain things, like interacting with people. Yet everyone I talked to is so friendly, and they just want you to be yourself and they're themselves."

Another friend—drunk at the time of the interview but often sober at festivals—argued that clarity was the best way to appreciate the experience. "I enjoy it as the one who likes to take care of my friends and likes to be aware of things... [I've even] gone sober to Ushuaia in Ibiza, because you enjoy the experiences and observing interesting people and the interactions they have with others, and you actually remember those."

Satisfied with their answers and desperately needing to pee (thanks to the never-ending porta-potty line), I steered the conversation towards a question that would keep our thoughts occupied a little longer: Is it better to remember a moment clearly, or to live inside an accentuated feeling?

We discussed our perspectives at length, struggling to reach a gratifying conclusion. It is well known that people commonly attend festivals cruising on drug-induced highs—often, the music itself is the incentive for intoxication. I was once told that coke should always be done around lasers, and that R&B is best experienced stoned. But to achieve those purportedly sensational combinations of atmosphere and internal stimulation, people often sacrifice the clarity of their recollection down the line.

An experimental scientist at heart, I decided that my weekend in Heaven would be the perfect time to conduct irrefutable research. Over the next couple of days, I would experience the festival under different conditions

and document my memories, deciding whether I cherished the moments or the feelings more.

Content with my newfound resolve and swaying under the influence, I ended my voice note: "The sound is fucking cacophonous, and I'm hating it. And yet, thanks to my buzz, I might find myself to be enjoying it."

I do not remember the rest of the night.

Day Two: Sobriety and Tyler, the Creator

Hungover and hazy on the details of Doechii and John Summit's sets, I entered Heaven at noon the next day, dead sober. This would be, by far, my longest day at the festival. I explored Heaven's assortment of food stalls, solo-hopping from vendor to vendor and checking back in with my friends when I was confident I could easily find them in the crowd.

I enjoyed the artists I had really wanted to hear, taking charge as I moved through the hordes of festivalgoers and keeping track of set times. I danced for my favorite DJ, went feral for Ludacris, and pushed toward the barricade to wait for Tyler, the Creator.

We made friends, ate snacks, and tried not to pee. Sober, I felt sharper—free to savor the bass rattling my bones. I was not overwhelmed, and the dopamine flowed naturally. I remembered every second.

By the time Tyler hit the stage, my friends were scattered across stages of intoxication—rolling, crossed, plastered drunk. Their energy elevated mine, but my clearest memories are my own: moshing, screaming, and recording far too many videos I will never need to rewatch, because I can still see it all in my head.

It was, by far, the best performance of the entire weekend. The music mattered more than the substances. Rather than relying on an artificial high to rock my world, I let the tones electrify me. Writing this now, I

cherish every moment I can still play back lucidly.

Day Three: Molly, Alcohol (whoops), and Hozier

On the final day, I popped my metaphorical molly cherry—drunk by the time it hit, surrounded by lifelong friends, and taking every necessary precaution to stay safe. I was joined by a friend on my journey, and the rest of the group was well aware of how we had been having fun that day.

When I peaked, the world turned luminescent. Time blurred and played tricks on me. The quality of my fingernails dictated the hour, strangers glitched like cartoon characters, and the lights bursting from my eyelids felt kaleidoscopic while my skin smoothed. I lay in the grass for what felt like hours, and when I awoke, I realized Glass Animals was still playing the same song. I do not actually know how I spent the rest of their set. I think I took a bathroom break, grabbed some water, and rejoined the dancing with my friends. A week later, hearing their music still transports me viscerally back to that dreamscape. I do not expect that to change. I cannot play Glass Animals when I drive anymore.

After they finished, I followed my friends to an EDM set. I remember none of it. There are, however, plenty of pictures of me at that performance.

My memory semi-revived itself. My body remembered even when my brain didn't—I screamed, ran barefoot in circles, did burpees, high-fived strangers, and wriggled through the crowd only to return sprinting to my friends. At this point in the night, after I'd spent hours talking non-stop at my friends, (rather than with my friends), I had finally unlocked a new skill: speaking to strangers. This was a good thing, because I was bursting with love to share.

Overwhelmed, I grabbed my friend's phone and recorded a few voice memos while Hozier played in the background. "I feel really free to experience music in a way I've never experienced music before." And I did. I can still feel the joy, love, and gratitude that pulsed through

me. I praised music, Hozier's voice, my friends, and the crowd. My senses were so heightened that everything that brushed against me carried an extreme, almost electric quality. It was perfect.

But when I think back, I don't remember Hozier's songs. What remains is pure feeling, not detail. My friend's joke about how elated I looked while conversing with a stranger, but I can't remember a single thing I said—only the fact that I felt fulfilled by whatever ideas and emotions were exchanged.

After Heaven

Looking back, Day Three was by far the most euphoric. But Day Two, the sober day, gave me the memories that I cherish most. I still can't answer my question—moments versus feelings—a strong conclusion eludes me. The two experiences aren't really comparable, but I do think intentionality matters the most. Standing sober in a writhing crowd, but wishing you were drunk, can taint a crystal clear memory. Yet being plastered and praying that you could lock in enough to remember the details of your

favorite performance also totally harshes the vibe.

I still do not know a lot, but here is what I do: music can be magical under any condition. Do not let the stigmatization of sobriety at festivals stop you from appreciating the atmosphere with a clear head. Sometimes a single perfectly coherent memory is worth more than the highest high. Other times, take the opportunity to enjoy your friends and the love of strangers while doped. Get caught up in the blur. Take risks, and let them pay out.

Mix it up and, as always, stay safe.

AGAIN, FOR LEGAL REASONS, EVERYTHING WRITTEN BY LADY GUINEVERE IS ALWAYS AN ENTIRELY FICTITIOUS ACCOUNT, AND THE ANONYMOUS AUTHOR HAS NEVER CONSUMED ILLICIT SUBSTANCES.

GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO '28





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Thoughts from New Quincy: Dead Ends of Consensus

Harvard's culture of polish and the risk of speaking up.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26

I still remember the first time I stayed silent in section—watching the moment slip by until someone else jumped in with a safer, more polished thought. That pause felt small then, but it lingers now, as LFDOC photos flood my Instagram feed and I step into the rhythm of “last firsts.” It makes me reflect on how my time at Harvard has shaped me—not just in the obvious ways, but in the subtler ones.

Before I ever sat in a Harvard classroom, the institution was already part of my life. I grew up less than a mile from the Square, close enough that my family would walk there for dinner on weekends. I watched storefronts turn over, old favorites vanishing as new ones settled in their place. My sister even spent a summer working at Pinocchio's, back when I was still too young to make it past two slices. Harvard was familiar long before I became a student.

Arriving at Harvard, in many ways felt like an extension of high school. I studied in the same coffee shops I had frequented for years. The streets were familiar, the restaurants unchanged in memory even as the architecture shifted. The friends were new, of course, and the meals a sharp downgrade from my mom's chef-level dinners to whatever HUDS happened to be serving. Yet even as time moved forward, I felt like the same person inhabiting the same place.

That sameness extended to my mindset. In high school, I was never afraid of being wrong. I would argue points I barely understood, test out half-baked ideas, and invite my classmates to push back. Half the time I lost the argument—but that was the point. To be wrong was simply part of learning.

At Harvard, I expected more of that. I assumed that the “most intellectually curious” people in the world would also be the most open to debate, the most willing to listen. I had grown up in a family with a wide range of political ideologies and attended a high school that—while liberal—taught us how to think, not what to think. I looked forward to continuing that exploration. But the reality of Harvard did not match those expectations.

At first, I assumed the stalled moments—when ideas lingered unsaid—were simply freshman jitters: people uneasy in a new place, surrounded by brilliance, afraid of embarrassing themselves. I expected the conversations to loosen over time, but they did not. The silence isn't about nerves. It's about a lack of openness. Too often, students are not interested in real discourse—they are focused on protecting the views they already hold. Caution outweighs curiosity and prevents conversations from ever starting.

I've found myself playing devil's advocate more times than I can count—not out of conviction, but because someone had to say it. In courses like “Hist-Lit 10,” it became almost a joke: the pushback was automatic, less about belief than about keeping the gears turning. Without it, the discussion collapsed into polite nodding, each comment a variation of the last. That is not a debate. And it is not learning.

This all stems from a deeper issue: at Harvard, speaking up is not measured by whether you are right or wrong—it is measured by whether you sound impressive. The classroom often feels less like a space to test ideas and more like a stage, where the goal is to signal knowledge and virtue rather than to learn.

This culture runs through every field. In English classes, a shaky interpretation of a poem rarely gets voiced; in philosophy, students frame their questions as mini-lectures to sound sharp rather than uncertain. Even in daily conversations, people trade polished takes for half-formed thoughts. Politics exposes it most clearly. Harvard prides itself on being “nonpartisan,” but here that usually means siding with the popular opinion. That is not neutrality. It is consensus dressed up as objectivity.

Only a narrow band of liberal views feels socially safe to voice, while everything else gets censored before it even leaves someone's mouth. The result is an “acceptable liberalism”—a public script everyone can nod along to—while quieter, more complicated views retreat underground.

You feel it most in Gen Eds. In a lecture hall with a hundred people you barely know, no one wants to risk saying something that might not land. Instead of testing ideas, students pare their words down to the safest possible version—or say nothing at all.

That's not really the institution's fault. It is ours—the students. Because the most vocal voices tend to lean liberal, the culture tilts that way. Conservative students learn quickly that speaking up carries social costs, so most stop trying. The campus looks more lopsided than it is—not because those perspectives do not exist, but because they have been crowded out of the conversation.

That culture does not just make politics tense—it makes curiosity impossible. If you believe someone is wrong before you have heard them out, conversation becomes performance, not exchange. People stop asking questions, stop taking risks, stop letting others shift their views. Disagreement ceases to be a tool for learning and becomes a threat to identity.

Over my three years, I've watched the script get tighter. Freshman fall, students would still blurt out half-formed or clumsy points, feeling out the edges of debate. Now those edges are sharper, and fewer bother testing them. The cost is a quiet apathy: when people stop risking mistakes, they stop caring to push at all. Curiosity fades, and silence settles in.

And it does not stay in the classroom—those conversations spill into dining halls and dorms, where students pick apart what the more conservative voices said. The risk is not just embarrassment

in class, but being remembered afterward as the one who said the “wrong” thing.

And the cost of that silence runs deeper than debate. It flattens curiosity. It trains students to mistake performance for knowledge, agreement for truth. It rewards those who mimic the right tone and punishes those who ask the wrong question. Slowly, it hollows out what a Harvard education is meant to be. We came here to learn how to think, but too often we're only learning how to sound correct.

That's why conversations here so often feel like battles to prove who's right, rather than opportunities to discover what might be true. You can win points in section that way, but as a way of living, it's a dead end. If every exchange is about convincing, you never leave one having learned.

If I have learned anything in three years here, it's that consensus is overrated. The moments that shaped me were not when I sounded polished, but when I risked being wrong and allowed someone else's perspective to shift my own. Harvard rewards caution—careful sentences, safe opinions, the same beliefs recycled. But the real education lives in the risk: saying what you actually think, and being willing to change.

Silence and performance do not just hollow out classrooms; they hollow out people. They teach us to polish instead of question, to defend what we know instead of risking what we don't. If that follows us past Harvard—into leadership, politics, culture—it will narrow how we lead and what we imagine.

What Harvard needs most is not sharper takes but braver ones: words spoken before they are finished, an admission of not knowing, the curiosity to be vulnerable. In my final year, I want to practice that risk—speaking before the thought feels polished, admitting what I do not know—and I hope others will take that risk alongside me.

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**GRAPHIC BY KERRIE
ZHU '28**



How to Stay Abreast: Sadie's Senior Year Suggestions

Sadie is back from abroad and ready to take on her senior year.

BY SADIE KARGMAN '26

Hey Shitstains,
What a whirlwind it has been since we last spoke! For new readers, I went abroad to Paris last semester, and I won't shut up about it. I traveled across Europe, met incredible people (including Harry Styles), had my apartment robbed, and finished the term a die-hard Francophile.

So where does that leave me now? Well, one might say I'm a washed-up 22-year-old senior whose best years are behind her. My mom would just call me dramatic.

Studying abroad felt like a simulation. I played the part of an adult, managing some life responsibilities, yet my occupation was still that of a student. In contrast, Harvard—or really any college—is a glorified playground. Yes, some of my peers are curing cancer or may go on to win Nobel Peace Prizes, but in these last few years of life-limbo, I challenge everyone to enjoy the low-stakes stage, (especially seniors since it's our last chance).

You might be wondering: what's the point of this cheesy, obvious mishegoss? After my own fantastic stint in the "real world," I feel the need to be extra present on campus, to delay the inevitable senioritis. The entire Class of 2026 will probably encounter this feeling at some point. God knows I've had it since my sophomore spring. But if we come together as a school, a grade, and a community, I'm confident this year will be our best yet.

In the spirit of guiding our class forward (and serving as an inspiration to others), I am pleased to introduce "Sadie's Senior-Year Suggestions:"

Post On Sidechat At Least Once Before Graduation

Sidechat is toxic. Sidechat promotes bullying. Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Wrong. Sidechat is the best thing to ever happen to our historic campus. Period. Nothing brings the community together quite like the rush of liking (or disliking) something you relate to.

Let me provide some evidence for my statement: Does everyone remember the cheating scandal with the CEO and Head of HR of Astronomer at the Coldplay concert? That singular moment of hilarious "sin" brought together the entire internet in a time of war, famine, and injustice in our world. Sidechat is our campus's Chris Martin, and so dare I say, [cold] play on.

Be Sober at One Party

As my friends know, I am not much of a drinker. Do NOT get me wrong—I love a libation here and there—but getting shitfaced really isn't my thing. Sometimes, especially at dartsies, I do not drink.

And let me tell you with confidence: it's a wonderful, hilarious, and frightening experience. The people-watching is TOP-tier: I have witnessed

everything from small fights to America Ninja Warrior-worthy wipeouts. Besides the entertainment, I leave the function feeling crisp, fresh, and ready to take on whatever evening plans come my way.

Go on a Date

Why do so few people go on real dates at Harvard? Sharing a meal in the dining hall doesn't count. I mean the real deal—an old-fashioned: Hi, would you like to grab drinks this Thursday night?

Yes, rejection is embarrassing—God knows I've both dished and doled my fair share—but think about how awesome it is if it works out. Worst-case scenario: the "askee" is flattered by the invitation, and the asker dies of mortification for five minutes max. Personally, it was a hot-girl-date summer—so why not carry that same fun energy into the fall?

SADIE'S SENIOR YEAR SUGGESTIONS

The Holy Trinity

There are many undergrad traditions at Harvard, but the infamous four are: peeing on the John Harvard statue, running naked in the Yard for Primal Scream, hooking up in the Stacks, and jumping off of Weeks Bridge. If you do any of the four pre-grad, that's your business, as neither I, nor my editors at the *Harvard Independent*, can condone such behavior. That being said, I'm scared of heights, so I call this suggestion the Holy Trinity for a reason.

Develop a Niche Hobby

For the rest of your life, a conversation will lull and you'll be asked about your hobbies. After interning at "The Tonight Show" this summer, I learned that making side-by-side collages of people and cartoons or objects is not a hobby—even if it perfectly expresses my interests and character. So now I'm working on a new one: something I am both good at and that is conversationally interesting. Current contenders: making silly videos (spoiler alert) or taking up the mandolin.

Take a Class With Under 12 People

I'm a Romance Languages and Literatures concentrator, one of the smallest departments at Harvard. Yes, fewer people in a course means it's more obvious when you don't complete the work, but it

also means your best contributions go further in class discussions. Safe to say most of my readers are nerds and relish a unanimous round-table nod of approval from peers after a killer comment. Moreover, I think the department's classes are sized perfectly: small enough to bond, big enough to hide (and/or hide your hangover).

For example, my freshman seminar, "ENGL S-185 Wit, Irony, and Comedy," had exactly 12 students and happened to be my favorite course at Harvard. No one took the class too seriously, so we all became best friends and still text in our old groupchat.

Attend a Singular Sporting Event (Harvard-Yale/Brown do not count)

Sophomore year, a group of friends and I "tailgated" our friends' field hockey game. We drank, made posters, and marched to the field more spirited than ever. Unlike Harvard-Yale, I actually made it to the game and loved all four quarters of chant-yelling spirit. With rockstar Fiene Oerlemans '26 a captain,

I'll definitely be making it to more than one field hockey game this season, cardboard-head cutout in hand!

Become Close to a Professor

Given the particularly small size of my concentration department, I am exceptionally close with the professors and staff. They hear everything about my life: section-kid complaints, boyfriend drama, and schemes-future. These relationships mean the WORLD to me, and I know I'll be in touch, or dare I say, friends, with them forever.

When we come back for our 30th reunion, certain professors will still be around—and you'll be glad you stayed connected.

So, I challenge students from all grades to take my suggestions to heart. While my senior year has just begun, I hope the wisdom of my old age provides guidance for whatever stage you're in at Harvard, or beyond.

To the Class of 2026: We have one year of childhood left. Let's play!

Xoxo,
Sadie

**SADIE KARGMAN '26
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IS CURRENTLY A SENIOR
SHITSTAIN ON CAMPUS AND
THE HOST OF THE NEW INDY
VIDEO SERIES, "ARE YOU
ABREAST?" NEW CONTENT
DROPPING EVERY WEEK!**

GRAPHIC BY KERRIE ZHU '28

Roommate Roulette

A reflection on the Harvard freshman year housing process.

BY PIPPA LEE '28

The moment that defined my freshman year was not move-in day—it was a late July sweaty afternoon. Arriving at a babysitting gig drenched in sweat from my 30-block walk to Union Square, I had known that it was the day our freshman rooming assignments were supposed to be released. But it was already 3:50 p.m., and I was starting to get nervous. Even though I knew the impulse to constantly refresh my Gmail would not make the email appear any sooner, I could not resist.

Why have they not come out yet?

I dreaded the thought of waiting another day for the announcement. All of my friends at other colleges had known who their roommates would be for months already. They had met their future roommates for coffee and coordinated their dorms from the bed sheets to the wall art. Honestly, I was jealous. I craved having that same safety net for freshman year.

About 10 minutes later, after an intense round of “Just Dance” with the five-year-old I was babysitting, my phone began to buzz incessantly. I looked and saw multiple messages from a group chat of other incoming freshmen I had met at Visitas.

Canaday! Pennypacker! Weld! Wigglesworth!

Confused, I sifted through their messages, struggling to decode the jargon. What does Oak Yard mean? After a few minutes of skimming the hundreds of notifications, I checked my email. And there it was—the email labeled: “Your Housing Assignment.” Huge bubble letters sprawled across the screen as I clicked the message open. Welcome to Ivy Yard, Pippa! Quickly I scrolled through to see the rest of the details. There it was at last—what felt like the fate of my first year of college.

Ivy Yard, Holworthy West, three roommates, two rooms, in-suite bathroom.

A rush surged through my body, and all of a sudden, my stomach felt like it had flipped inside out. *What if I do not like my roommates? What if they are crazy? What if they do not like me?*

Now, a year out from receiving that email, I can confidently say that I could not be more grateful for my random rooming experience. When I walked into my Holworthy dorm for the first time, I expected awkwardness and forced small talk—after all, we were strangers to each other. But, within the first hour of talking to my roommates, I let out a sigh of relief. They were kind, funny, and more similar to me than



I had expected. On paper, we were all quite different—from New York, New Jersey, Georgia, and Turkey—but, at the end of the day, we were all 18-year-old girls, nervous about the next four years in this new unfamiliar environment.

Over the nine months that followed, we spent nights sprawled across the common room floor, passing around bags of Trader Joe’s Takis, venting about the latest “LS 1a” p-set, or debriefing the latest plot-twists in our social lives—ending and beginning relationships alike. We celebrated each other’s biggest victories, weathered the most deplorable of lows, and shared the mundanity of everything in between. Even though we were in differing social circles, I knew all

the characters in their stories, all the drama—and they knew mine just as well. Whenever I felt upset, there was always a hug waiting for me, tissues in hand. I owe three built-in friends to random housing, and I couldn’t have asked for a better outcome.

Despite my happy ending, this experience is just one version of the random roommate lottery. For some, it’s the beginning of enduring friendships—the kind that last a lifetime. For others, freshman year rooming becomes a crash course in patience, boundaries, and noise-canceling headphones. The truth is, the first year of college brings together people from every corner of the world. The results can be...unpredictable. I interviewed four students with varying experiences with the random roommate system, hoping to offer a glimpse into the spectrum of what Harvard students have lived through.

1. The Hot Pot

For some students, the biggest adjustment isn’t personality differences—it’s culinary ventures taking place at 2 a.m. One student recalls a particular...aromatic experience:

“I would go to bed at night, and be soundly asleep—as all Harvard students know you cannot take your sleep for granted—and I would be dreaming about the most random things...being on a beach or doing well on my finals or whatever it was... and all of a sudden, I would just have these strange aromatic experiences where the taste or the smell of Cajun, cinnamon and paprika was just under my nose.”

Turns out, it wasn’t a dream. It was her roommate, crockpotting full-blown stews at 2 a.m. Cajun stews. Cinnamon. Paprika.

Her review: “Literally, heinous behavior.”

Frankly, I’m still trying to figure out what recipe calls for both Cajun seasoning and cinnamon. That feels like a crime in at least

three states. If you think that sounds like a nightmare, don't worry—the roommate lottery is not always this foul.

2. Inseparable

Not every story is about conflict. For some students, a random room assignment turns into an instant connection.

“The process worked out better than I could have hoped. I was fortunate to genuinely connect with all three of my roommates—each truly made my first year better.”

But the real highlight? Her direct roommate, Amanda.

“We clicked right off the bat. After our long days of pre-orientation, we'd spend hours talking in our room, never running out of things to say. We lived separate lives for maybe a week before becoming inseparable. I knew she was going to be my best friend the day I was lying on the common room floor, scrolling on my phone, and she asked to join me—without a hint of judgment. We went from rotting on the floor together to hour-long study sessions to spontaneous Cane's and Crumbl runs to traveling together.”

But of course, not every pair becomes inseparable. Sometimes, what brings you closer is the shared trauma of surviving someone else's habits.

3. Stinky Socks

One student summed up their experience in two words: sensory overload.

“My freshman year roommate was [redacted], not by choice, but by the spin of the random roommate and room wheel. At first, everything was fine and clean. I thought it was going to be alright. Then the socks appeared. Pairs, singles, mystery colors scattered like breadcrumbs across the floor.”

Unfortunately, that was not even the worst of it.

“Then came the used tissues. Everywhere. On the bed, the dresser, the floor...”

The final straw? The smell.

“Imagine damp mold crossed with I don't know what,” he explained. “I bought an air purifier, thinking it'd save me or at least make it better. It didn't. Every morning, I'd wake up congested, foggy, and slightly nauseous. I didn't feel human again until after my shower and a walk

outside.”

He eventually moved in with another roommate from the suite—someone who ended up becoming one of his closest friends that year.

4. Bonding

For this student, the magic of random assignment was in the unexpected nature of the connections.

“Of course, it's a little bit scary going in, having to live with people that you've never met before, and having to spend a lot of your time with not necessarily your closest friends in the beginning. But I think that it was so rewarding and important, and I'm really happy that we have random roommates, just because I feel like I've made friendships that I probably wouldn't have made before.”

Friend groups ebb and flow throughout the year, but random roommates are always there. She described nights when the entire suite would gather by accident in the common room.

“There were five of us [in my dorm], and it was super rare that we ever ended up being in the room at the same time doing the same thing. Every once in a while, there would be times where we were all sitting at our desks in the common room and would all just start talking about our lives and our classes and various different things going on. Especially at the end of the year, we started spending more time together. We talked about different houses and what we wanted, Harvard as a whole, just reflecting on it. I feel like it was so important and impactful for all of us to just realize each other's lives were real.”

Unlike Inseparable, this girl did not end up becoming best friends with any of her four roommates—and that's okay. Not everyone is going to become best friends, but what matters is finding support systems with different people. It's easy to become caught up in your own world during your first year in college, but it's important to remember that most people around you are going through the same things, struggling with the same p-sets, and maybe even overanalyzing and re-reading the same texts.

5. The Big Gamble

Ultimately, random roommates are a gamble. All you can do is roll the dice, cross your fingers, and hope you don't end up with a roommate making crockpot stews at 2 a.m. However, for some students, like this one, the gamble truly pays off.

“I think it's a really neat way of having everyone on the same playing field in terms of getting to know people socially. So it was a lot of fun. It is, of course, a big gamble. So I had three other roommates, two of whom became some of my best friends. I've been living with them the past two years.”

He and his roommates did FOP together, which gave them the time to get to know each other before moving in.

“It was great getting to navigate the hurricane of freshman fall together. I think that really brought us closer together, and we had a lot of cool experiences, like throwing parties, figuring out what classes we wanted to take together, and comping clubs together.”

“It's fun having people in your corner when you don't really know anyone else in the first few weeks.”

I reflect back upon that sweaty July day in Union Square, refreshing my inbox like my life depended on it. I had no idea who would be on the other side of that email—or how much they would matter. A year later, I know this much: the randomness was not chaos in disguise. It was a chance. And sometimes, chances give you exactly what you didn't know you needed.

For those heading into freshman year, nervous about sharing a room, go in with an open mind—you never know who might end up becoming a lifelong friend.

PIPPA LEE '28 (PIPPALEE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS SO EXCITED TO LIVE WITH HER THREE BEST FRIENDS THIS YEAR.

GRAPHIC BY CARA CRONIN '28

The Indy Has a Book!

"The street hockey photo sent me straight back to the streets of Boston when I traveled around trying to get car dealerships, Symphony Hall, Fenway Park, etc., to advertise in the Independent. Boys would be simply walking down sidewalks and streets, alone or in groups, nonchalantly guiding small balls in lieu of hockey pucks ahead of them as if unaware of what they were doing. No wonder they excelled in hockey. While I did not get a lot of advertising from those forays into Boston, I did get to see parts of town that would have otherwise eluded me."

David R. Barr BA 1970 Advertising Director.



7-Boston and Cambridge — Four Seasons



For me coming from the Midwest, Boston gave the impression that the people running the place, and their graphics (retro even at that time), and their trolleys, were from an ancient time – the 1930s, and I liked it.

I found Boston a perfect place for outdoor photography. It has very unique features, that are not apparent at first glance. It appears cold and dark in the winter when one goes to work and returns home in the dark. The region has an average of 58% of sunny days — 65% in July and 52% in December. Chicago has a sunny day average of 54%.

However, just about every day Boston has dynamic weather. The wind is very evident and can present several seasons in a day. Also, there is a difference with sunny days in Boston and elsewhere. Georgia's 60% to 66% sunny days compared to Boston's 58% are handicapped by the fact that extreme heat and humidity (the Georgia branch bank time and temperature sign shows that temperature and humidity numbers can be the same all the way up to 100) that keep people in air-conditioned buildings and automobiles for more than a collective month in the South.

So, Bostonians will go out on any day, even the "working stiffs" at lunch time, to see sun and clouds, have a brisk breeze adding to the visual stimulation, and enjoy the day. San Francisco and Seattle may share a similar experience.

Comments:

"I have NO problem choosing [a photo from your 2021 Holiday offer]. I would like the "keep off the grass" photo of Boston Common. It strikes me as capturing the spirit of the year."

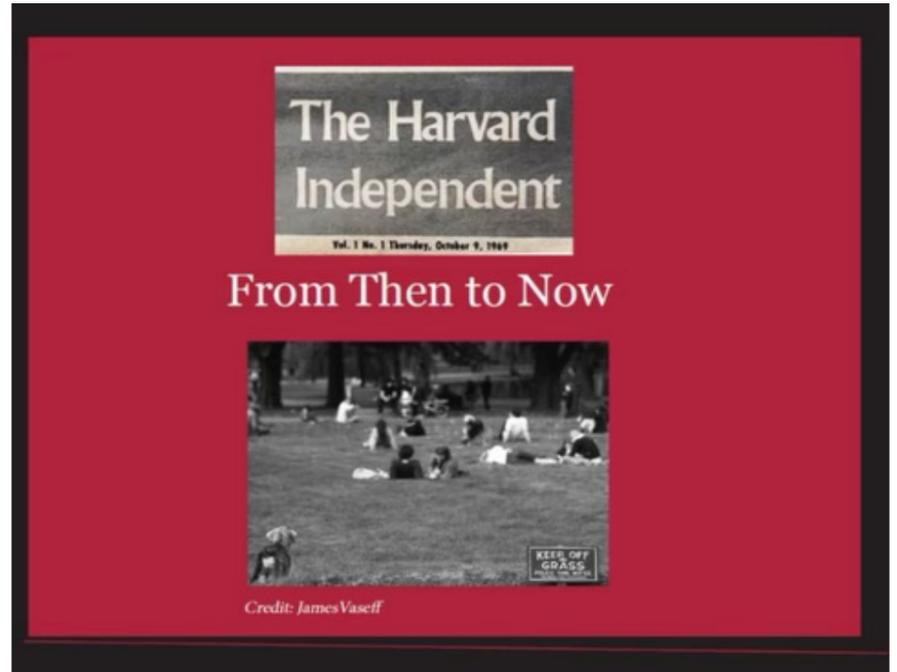
Rollie Cole, 1970 co-founder and Vice-President 1970.

Agree with Rollie that this photo captures the spirit of the times. Mark Shields, co-founder

The Boston Veterans Day parade covered from 1968 to 1970. Parades and fairs are very interesting because they are live theater with different venues. There are actors and an audience. The very nature of these activities renders all participants as actors. The marchers are the active actors, the viewers are the reacting actors. On the stage there can be roles where the actor or actress has very few lines but are the center of the story by virtue of their reactions to those around them. Most of my photos of parades and fairs have a significant number of "off stage" actors.



Comments on following page



Veterans Day

Comments:

Mark Shields of the Independent tells the story: "Harry Harwich was the printer- a conservative guy. I negotiated the contract with Harry, and he was very concerned that we would be publishing a pomographic magazine. I reassured him."

"I would like the photo of Boston Veteran's Day 1969 that has the older man (Harry Harwich's grandfather I believe) with his cap from Mattapan. It brings many Independent memories back to me and the military parade in 1969 evokes all of the emotions about the war. It is a very poignant photo. The description that you give below the photo would be wonderful to have (I will have it mounted on the back of the frame)."



Early *Harvard Independent* contributor James Vaseff has published a book, "The Harvard Independent: From Then to Now," a photographic celebration of the *Harvard Independent's* 50th anniversary. In the book you will find original Indy photography from the 60s, 70s, and onward. To support student journalism and to experience a firsthand account of Harvard and American history, purchase a copy of the book today!



Proceeds go to the Independent Foundation.



ARTS

The Literary Making of Robert Darnton

A tremendous historian's love for music and literature.

BY MARIE PRUNIÈRES

Robert Darnton '60 was educated at Oxford University (B. Phil., 1962; D. Phil., 1964), where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He served as Director of the Harvard University Library from 2007 to 2016 and now continues his research on the history of books, publishers, censors, booksellers, writers, and readers in eighteenth-century France from his office on the top floor of Widener. A fervent advocate of free public access to libraries and the knowledge they provide, Darnton earned the National Humanities Medal from President Barack Obama in 2011. In May 2025, he published "The Writer's Lot" with Harvard University Press.

Last September, Darnton welcomed me into his study at Widener Library, as he prepared to leave for Paris and revisit, in an exercise of self-criticism, a 1971 essay on Grub Street, or the marginal life of hack writers in pre-revolutionary France. We conducted our interview entirely in French. Having had the privilege of assisting him for his book "The Revolutionary Temper," I once again appreciated his immense generosity, precision, and vigor in the course of our long conversation.

Every topic was rich in references, from a symposium held in his honor in Mexico City to his long teaching experience with anthropologist Clifford Geertz, with whom he shared a "spirit of kinship." But what impressed me most this time was his love of music and literature, which radiates from his shelves. For a few hours, we discussed some of the volumes that have constituted him, as well as his impassioned research on literary life and censorship.

plunged him into the seedy world of police stations, where fictional Rameau's Nephew, one of the most famous and theatrical characters from his beloved writer Denis Diderot's novel of the same name, would have felt most at home in the 1760s. "It is written with such talent, humor, and wit," said Darnton, who enjoys the comfort of books. "I read it and reread it often."

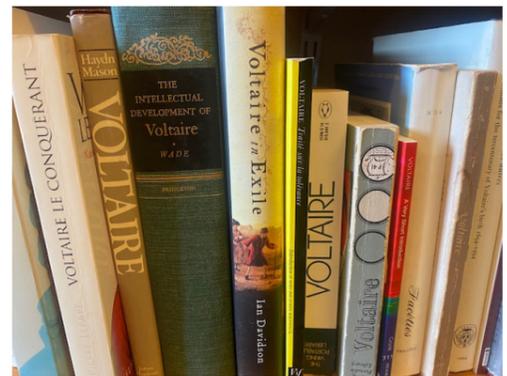
The eponymous piece is indeed a jewel of French literature, in which Diderot portrays himself as a provocative genius in a sparkling conversation with "Lui" [Him-self] about music and morality. It also emanates from one of the greatest encyclopaedists of the time, a mission that Darnton has perpetuated at Harvard through the Digital Public Library of America project.

"We want to shape [the] digital future for the public good instead of it being taken over by commercial interests," he said as he received the 2011 National Humanities Medal from President Barack Obama for his commitment to digitalizing and increasing accessibility to the humanities through the DPLA. Contemplating his wooden credenzas, this commitment only deepened his interest in printed novels, one of which, the 19th-century French classic "Illusions Perdues [Lost Illusions]," even inspired his latest book. "This work by Balzac deals a lot with conflicts and intrigues. I find that the world of lost illusions among miserable writers already existed in Paris in Diderot's time," Darnton explained.

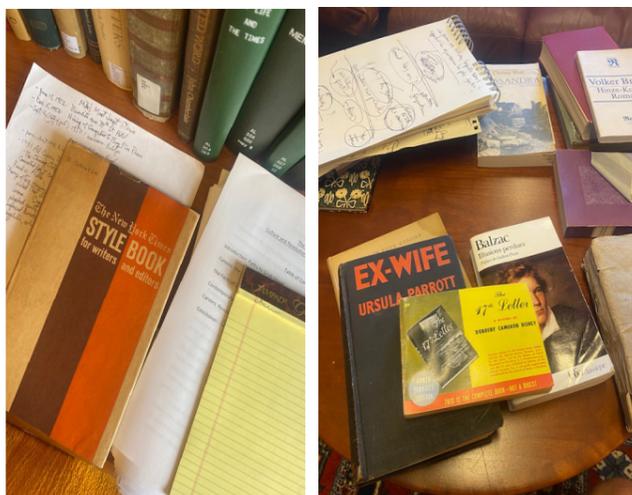
happily sat at the Byron Darnton, a pub named in honor of his father's Liberty ship that ran aground on Sanda Island. In 2005 he also visited the tavern with his brother and their two wives in the Firth of Clyde. He rather cherishes German classical compositions, meaning that the first volume I found on his shelves was of Mozart.

"Mozart fulfills my need for beauty, clarity, and inspiration," he explained. "But you know, he was also a writer! I have read his correspondence, particularly with his father. After receiving news of Voltaire's death, he wrote, 'How happy I am that this devil is dead.' That shocked me a lot because, for me, Voltaire is a kind of god."

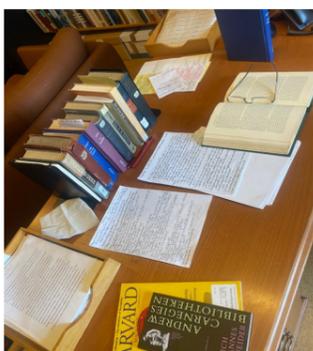
We are thus invited into Darnton's world, imbued with academic collegiality, steeped in art, and joyously populated by 18th-century friends. To the American Historical Association, he even recounts having bought an apartment by the Richelieu's site of the National Library of Paris, so as to be close to the archives, among his various historical subjects. We imagine this pied-à-terre filled with operatic melodies and symphonies coming from his window.



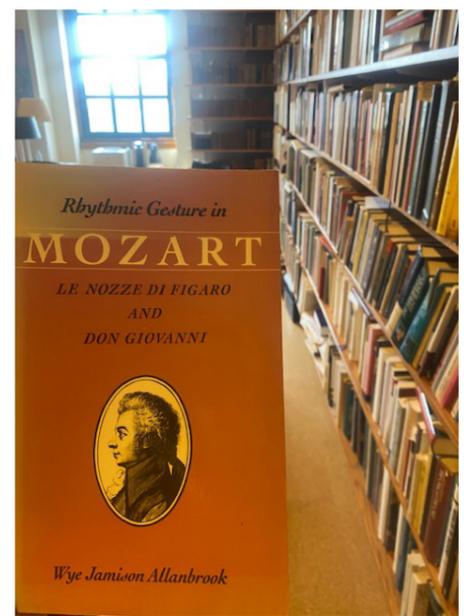
Some of Darnton's books on Voltaire in his office. © MariePrunières



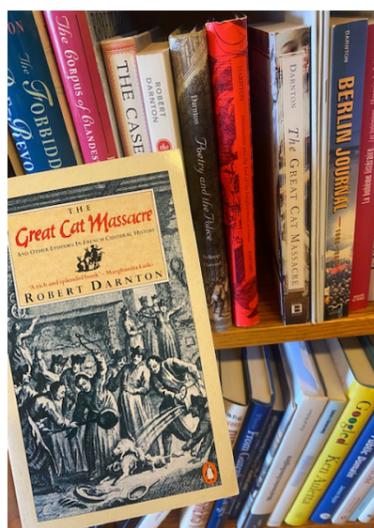
"The New York Times Style Book" and Balzac's "Illusions Perdues" on Robert Darnton's desk. © MariePrunières



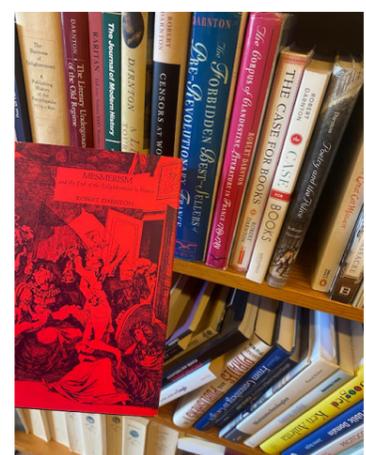
Photos of Robert Darnton's office. © MariePrunières



"Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart" from Robert Darnton's office. ©



"The Great Cat Massacre," Robert Darnton's famous bestseller, published in 1984. "I never made any money out of it," he said with a laugh. © MariePrunières



Mesmer, at the core of Robert Darnton's book "Mesmerism," was very close to Mozart's family. The first performance of the comic opera "Bastien and

Entering Darnton's office always feels like stepping onto firm ground. Yet our host writes about people like "J.P. Brissot, Police Spy," who led dangerous lives and struggled to make ends meet. His own father, reporter Byron Darnton, died covering World War II and gave his name to a Liberty ship—a tragedy that left his family with the material and moral imperative to continue journalism in his place.

Subsequently, the seventeen-year-old R. Darnton, along with his mother and Pulitzer Prize-winning brother John Darnton, joined the New York Times, an experience that conferred on him what he refers to as a taste for exactitude. His assignments

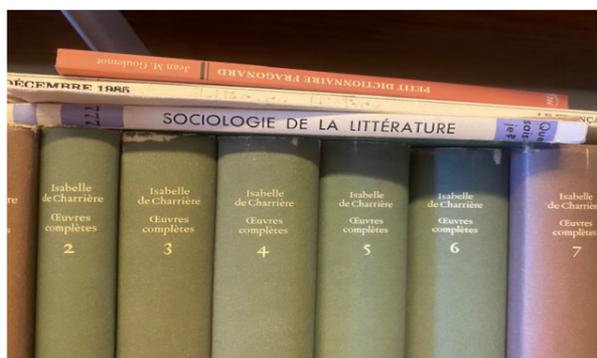
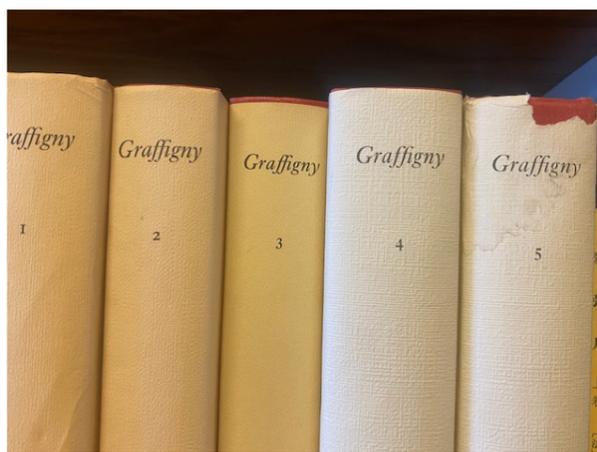
When it comes to music, Darnton admits that he is not particularly fond of rock 'n' roll, even though Pink Floyd

Bastienne” even took place in Mesmer’s gardens in Vienna, Darnton recounted. © MariePrunières

In particular, Darnton speaks with great enthusiasm of Mozart’s adaptation of Beaumarchais’ comedy, “Le Mariage de Figaro [The Marriage of Figaro].” “When Figaro recounts all the suffering he has endured, the music is incredibly powerful. I feel transported by the energy it conveys. It is more revolutionary than the play!” He further recommended “Point de Lendemain,” an intoxicating libertine text by Vivant Denon, pioneer of Egyptology at the Louvre. Its conciseness and rhythm make it one of his favorites, placing it close to Rousseau’s “Letter to d’Alembert”: “a very daring text that sparked the Age of Enlightenment, at the origin of a certain modernity.” As we might expect, the perceptions and meanings of this cultural shift are central to Darnton’s work, most recently with “The Revolutionary Temper” and “The Writer’s Lot,” in which he explores the underground literary circles, gossip, and information circuits that played a subtle role in the revolutionary ethos of 1789.

Among the multitude of 18th-century works that Darnton preserves, I eventually came across the bestsellers of Madame de Graffigny and the correspondence of Dutch aristocrat Isabelle de Charrière, who in 1764 exclaimed to her secret friend Constant d’Hermetches: “For a throne, I would not give up what occupies me in my room. If I learned nothing more, I would die of boredom amid pleasures and grandeur.”

In fact, the brilliant “Belle” felt confined by censorship in the circulation of her very letters, a subject that fascinated Darnton throughout his career. To the admiration of a vast public—I remember the investor Frederick Iseman praising him in an art deco bar in England—he devoted himself tirelessly to the study of print censorship and its practitioners, as well as to making world literature accessible to all. “Censors at Work” stands out in this regard, as it chronicles the stories of state actors who shaped literary expression under the British Raj, East Germany, and France in the 18th century, the fruit of a lifelong engagement with the arts of reading and publishing as constitutive of historical subjects. “This was never a witch hunt,” he kindly commented, but an essential part of his being a historian.

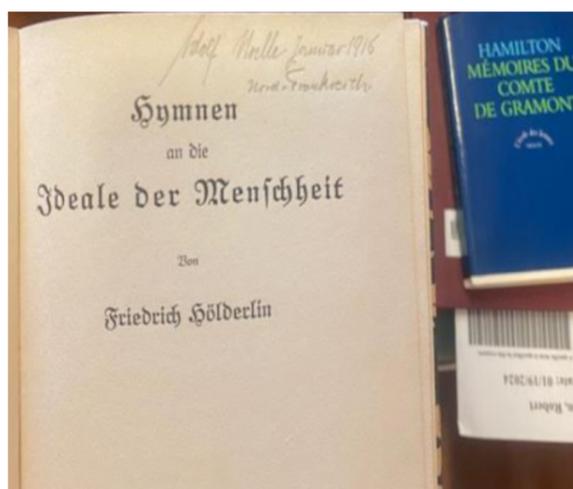


Works by Isabelle de Charrière and Madame de Graffigny. © MariePrunières

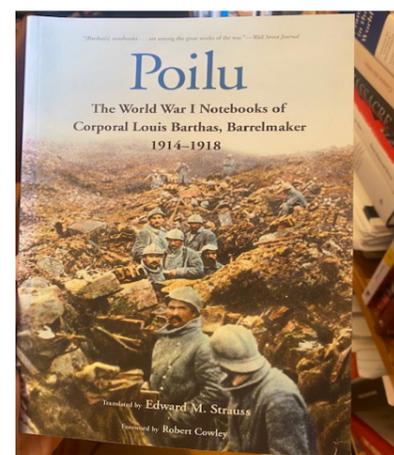
As it happens, Darnton’s passion for the history of censorship led him to make history and join the Institute for Advanced Studies in West Berlin in 1989, a few months before the fall of the Wall. This period, which marked decades of teaching at Princeton, greatly enriched his collection of East German books, such as those by Christa Wolf, now on a shelf next to Kafka, Solzhenitsyn, and Goethe.

“Under the [Communist] regime,” he recalled from discussions with former “Ossis,” who lived in the now-collapsed German Democratic Republic, East-Germany, “you were given a banned book, perhaps Kafka, perhaps Schopenhauer, perhaps Freud, and were told: you have 24 hours to read it. So you read all night long with a fascination, an intensity that you cannot imagine, perhaps as one might do today in Russia or China.”

For us today, it is a powerful testimony to the vital importance of literature for humanity, which is nowhere more poignant than in Darnton’s small volume of Hölderlin, found on the body of a World War I soldier in the trenches, and of immense value to him.



Robert Darnton’s copy of Hölderlin’s poems, found on the body of a German soldier during WWI. © MariePrunières



“Poilu,” a collection of notebooks written by a French corporal during World War I. Robert Darnton keeps several soldiers’ accounts in his library. © MariePrunières

More than a hundred years have passed since the havoc of 1914-1918 left us with this piece of poetry, and newer generations may still find it difficult to be pacifist and defend love as the highest ideal. But taking to heart Robert Darnton’s preferred books, music, and literature can shed light on our lives—not as relics of the past, but as modern revelations of the power of the human spirit to hold fast to poetry in tragedy and turmoil. Mozart and Hölderlin are accessible on our shelves without censorship, even if this freedom must be conquered over and over again; yet we seek them out precisely when we lose what was most dear to us or feel in danger of death. Those works, and all the people who care for them, are eternal cries of hope and tenderness for the beauty, courage, and truth that will endure.

In this sense, Darnton’s study embodies an immense liberty and responsibility, which he took on in an extraordinary career, paying tribute to the figures, Voltaire foremost among them, who fought to make reading accessible to the public. There is no doubt that his long familiarity with literature and the arts also contributed to his renowned kindness and benevolence, to the intelligence of his soul as much as his commitment to his field.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARIE PRUNIÈRES

To Bring, or Not to Bring

My list of takes and essentials for dorm life as a first-year at Harvard.

BY BRITNEY AMPADU '28

Just a year ago, I was scrambling to make sure I had packed everything I would need for my first year at Harvard. Despite countless checks and rearrangements of my parents' car before our drive from Hebron, KY to Cambridge, the effort proved fruitless—I had package after package of forgotten items arriving at the mailing center through November. While that's just part of the first-year experience at any school, there are several things I would tell my freshman self if I could go back in time:

DO avoid bulky and unnecessary furniture

During move-out last spring, the trash rooms were piled high with everything from picture frames to bean bag chairs and 10-drawer nightstands. While they can help make a dorm feel more homey, these amenities become a problem at the end of the school year for anyone driving or flying a long distance. Furniture items that can be stored and transported with ease are typically the better option—not only for move-out but for mid-semester room swaps if you and your suitemates make such arrangements. If possible, choose posters over framed art pieces, hanging shoe organizers over shoe racks, and collapsible drawers over sturdy chests.

DON'T forget about tools and gadgets

I was in the middle of setting up my dorm when I realized I had somehow forgotten scissors, batteries, and a screwdriver—all of which I needed to set up my fairy lights. These appliances, alongside tape, cleaning supplies, cold and allergy medications, and even a handheld steamer or lintroller, fall into that tricky category: things you will not need most days but will be a nagging inconvenience to be without when you do.

DO have a versatile wardrobe

The most common thing I heard as move-in day approached was that I would not wear any of the clothes I packed unless they were athleisure or loungewear. In reality, packing what you know you will wear is a safer option than packing an overly compact closet. Harvard's student body tends to take on a more diverse range of fashion styles, so feel free to wear what you feel most comfortable in. Additionally, relying on the same set of clothing for

interviews, nights out, and class attendance is not ideal. With events happening on and off campus throughout the year, having a few extra outfits will not hurt.

DON'T overdo outerwear

In contrast, shoes and coats are bulky and can quickly turn into annoying clutter—not just during move-out, but day-to-day. Despite packing a wide array of shoe options in anticipation of all sorts of outings, I wore the same sneakers 90% of the time. As for coats, keep in mind that Boston's beautiful autumn breeze will eventually fade into a frigid winter and then thaw into an incessantly rainy spring. A solid winter jacket, a lighter coat or sweater for slightly cool temperatures, and a sturdy umbrella or raincoat should be enough outerwear to get you through the year.



DO be mindful of cords and electronics

Often, you might find yourself needing to charge your entire Apple ecosystem for class. Similarly, you will likely find yourself plugging in every lamp and light source you brought to avoid the harsh overhead light. With that, multi-outlet extension cords are probably some of the most important items to have on hand; keeping one in a convenient spot at minimum is extremely helpful.

DON'T forget to bring a fan (or two)

Harvard's dorms lack air conditioning, a fact many students lament the first and last few weeks of the year—especially during move-in and move-out. The heat is seldom unbearable, but it can

be uncomfortable, and dorms can be stuffy even on Cambridge's coldest days. Having just a rotating tower fan will vastly improve air circulation, though I also found it helpful to bring a small desk fan.

DO stock up on snacks and quick meals

Whether it be due to joining new organizations (like the Indy!), exploring Boston, or studying, your schedule will vary widely on a day-to-day basis as you adjust to campus life. Sometimes, Harvard's dining hall hours will not align with your free time, and you won't always want to spend \$20 on a small meal. It is best to have food supplies on hand in case you cannot get to Annenberg in time.

DON'T worry about cooking utensils

On a related note, some first-year dorms do have kitchens available for use, but with every student on a full meal plan and so many restaurants in the Square, cooking is a bit of an inconvenience and can take up quite a bit of time. Pots, pans, and reusable dishes are not too useful in most cases, so leave them behind at home.

DO bring positive energy and keep an open mind

Most first-years end up with at least one roommate. Your dorm room is a shared space waiting to be shaped by the ideas of its residents. For the best experience, it is important to be accommodating, welcoming, and willing to stick to the ground rules you set together during orientation.

DON'T forget about yourself

At the end of the day, my perspectives are based on my own experiences, and each person will have a different one. For eight months, your dorm will be the place you call home. Do not be shy about adding your personal touch to the room, and do what you can to make the space your own.

**BRITNEY AMPADU '28
(BRITNEYAMPADU@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WISHES THE
CLASS OF 2029 AN AMAZING
FIRST YEAR!**

**PHOTO COURTESY OF BRITNEY
AMPADU '28**

À La Annenberg

A guide for first-years to make the best out of the macabre dining options and trivial conversations that transpire in “Berg.”

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

Ah, Annenberg Hall, the memories—and odd smells—you hold. Despite residing within the disappointing realities of the disenchanting Muggle world, the outspoken comparisons of Berg’s architecture to that of Hogwarts are not far off, as the historic hall certainly holds a palpable magic of its own.

As an undeniable landmark to the first-year experience at Harvard, it was not long ago that I struggled to make use of the social environment—and spice rack—so compassionately offered. Since meals are one of the few activities unanimously accounted for in first-year time management, Berg will inevitably become a reliable haven—or battlefield—of social life. Regardless of whichever it becomes for you, it is sure to be home to first-year nostalgia and a hoard of memories catalyzed by the trauma bonding of adjusting to the HUDS dining plan.

While I cannot claim that the food is of Michelin Star-standard, or anywhere near, it is—like most things in life—what you make of it.

You will learn quickly during your time at Harvard that innovation does not stop in the classroom; it is a way of life and way of survival in the d-halls. Utilizing every fiber of your creativity is necessary to avoid food aversion from repetitive meal plans. Thus, I pass down from the Class of 2028 to the Class of 2029 an anthological year’s worth of wisdom accumulated from meals shared with friends—your cheat code to Berg success.

-BREAKFAST-

Southwest Breakfast Bowl—ditch a plate! Grab a bowl. Fill the bottom with hash browns, eggs, and season to your liking (more like toleration) with spices from the rack at the end of the salad bar area. Recommended: garlic powder, green chile tapatio.

9 a.m. Parfaits—A STEM major classic. Running in and out of Berg? Utilize the retired



Harvard 7-minute rule to grab a plastic cup and lid, fill with Greek yogurt, and get creative! Dump in the oatmeal toppings, cereals, and, if you are feeling fancy, some berries from the Veritaffle station. Pro tip: Do not forget that cinnamon exists.

“Everything in Between” Breakfast Sandwich—avocado on one end, butter and seasoning on the other, scrambled eggs in the middle. Your choice of bagel, bread, or croissant. If cheese is available, make use of the microwaves by the sandwich bar to melt some onto the bread.

-LUNCH-

Louisa Rossano’s Caprese Panini and Salads—hailing from the great state of... you guessed it, Mass! As a former resident of Pennypacker Hall and fellow “Expos 20: Make/Do: Why Craft Matters” enrollee, I became well acquainted with Louisa’s dining preferences during our Tuesday/Thursday lunches. A classically trained opera singer, Louisa brought her Wellesley elegance to the dining hall. Press fresh mozzarella, tomato slices, and pesto sauce—available daily at the underrated sandwich bar—in between bread on the panini press. Alternatively, ditch the bread for a plate and drizzle with balsamic glaze from the salad bar to make a splendid Caprese dish!

Bonus! Louisa Rossano’s Ice Cream Affogato.

Once, when I was battling a mystery illness late in the spring semester, Louisa made me an affogato by pouring fogbuster coffee over cookies and cream ice cream on “Sundae Sunday” that certainly raised my spirits. Give it a try!

Summer Rose’s Texas Style Salad—arguably the best conversationalist I have ever witnessed in the d-hall, I had the distinct pleasure of sharing many meals—and math sections—with Summer Rose from Austin, Texas. After recovering from her habitual 6 a.m. runs in Matthews Hall and throwing on an effortless 2000s low-rise jeans look for class, she would eventually make her way to the trusted lunch salad bar. As you will come to find out, you can only eat so many salads before you get sick of them. Eventually, you have to innovate. Mix black beans, pico de gallo (if available), and red pepper from the spice rack. Toss in warm grilled chicken and rice from the grill and drizzle with your favorite salad dressing to add a cantina-esque flair to your daily greens.

Ole Reliable—iceberg lettuce. Croutons. Caesar salad dressing. Parmesan cheese. Side of fries and a Diet Coke. Can’t go wrong!

Jennifer Aniston “Friends” Salad—Reportedly, the female members of the cast of “Friends” ate the same Mediterranean salad EVERY DAY on the set of friends. If ‘90s icons Jennifer Aniston, Courtney Cox, and Lisa Kudrow ate this meal everyday for nearly a decade, it MUST be worth trying. Although I did not have the commitment to eat it everyday, my spin on this salad was a nice addition to my d-hall lunch rotation. In a bowl, throw together quinoa, garbanzo beans, tomato and herbs mix, cucumbers, cottage cheese, and the best Greek salad dressing! Seriously, try the Greek dressing!

-DINNER-

Sona Hawkins’s Wisco Mac and Cheese—straying anywhere but away from statehood cliches, I have quite literally seen Strauss Hall’s very own midwestern “ray of sunshine” and cheese-obsessed Sona Hawkins break out in dance because they had shredded parmesan at Berg. This Wisconsin girl’s d-hall trademark would certainly be incomplete without an unregulated amount of cheese. As my sole Vegetarian

friend, I can only sympathize with the limitations to Sona’s dining options. Her trick: utilize every spice on the menu! Add a healthy pinch of both salt and pepper, a few shakes of garlic powder, extra parmesan (at your discretion), a sprinkle of paprika, and mash a few croutons to mimic bread crumbs on the mac and cheese, specifically of the non-vegan variety. Optional: a few random spices as you see fit if you get bored of the above recipe. “It’s mac-n-ificent.” Sona’s words—not mine!

Megan’s New Mexico Tot’chos—I knew before leaving my beloved Southern New Mexico that one of the things I would miss most—even more than my queen-sized bed—would be the cuisine! New Mexico is world-renowned for its green chile and authentic Mexican food. Sure enough, I began to face withdrawals from good Mexican food less than a week in. On days Berg has tater tots I was lucky to have a resemblant taste of home. Although the green chile tapatio is far from my hometown’s standard, the New Mexican in me knows that if you put chile and nacho cheese on just about anything it will taste better—especially tater tots!

Micah Anderson and Matthew Cusson’s Garlic Bread—anywhere these two are, hilarity and Nicki Minaj covers are destined to follow! And yes, before you ask, they did FAP. Micah and Matthew certainly know how to spice things up. To make their signature dish, melt butter in a small bowl in the microwave, then mix in garlic powder, salt, pepper, and red pepper. Cut a dinner roll in half (long way) and toast, flat edge up, until golden brown. Dip each half, flat edge down, into the butter mixture until saturated, and add parmesan cheese to your hearts desire. Yum!

Last, but certainly not least...

-BRAIN BREAK-

Bekuo Uzo-Menkiti’s Sunrise in A Cup—Breakout Star of the Class of 2028’s first-year talent show and member of the distinguished Harvard Oppurtunes, this girl knows her drinks! Maybe it’s the need for refreshments from the constant singing, or perhaps the long walks we shared from our residence in Greenough Hall, but together we mastered drink combinations that put dehydration to shame. Our favorite, with arguably the prettiest ombre, the sunrise: 1/4 orange juice, 1/4 cranberry juice, 1/4 lemonade, and 1/4 ginger ale.

Voilà! You have a year of—save a few unpalatable—delectable discussions and meals in the beautiful stained glass wonderland that is Annenberg Hall. Treasure it, and if all else fails and none of these recipes seem suitable, there’s always Noch’s, Felipe’s. If you are anything like Independent Game Designer Fred Klein ’28, you could always count on handfuls and handfuls of arugula!

MEGAN LEGAULT '28 (MLEGUALT@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS RENOWNED AMONG FRIENDS, SECOND ONLY TO HER HAIR, FOR MAKING BERG MEALS LOOK APPETIZING.

GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO '28

SPORTS

Singles Stars and Doubles Drama: The Reimagined U.S. Open's Mixed Doubles Championship

A roundup of the mixed doubles tournament at the 2025 U.S. Open.

BY WHITNEY FORD '28

In a bold reformatting of the traditional championship, the 2025 U.S. Open aimed to bring the mixed doubles tournament to center stage (and center court) in a condensed two-day event held during Fan Week. With shortened sets and a \$1 million prize hanging in the balance, singles stars entered the field, many in their debut mixed doubles appearances, to create blockbuster matchups.

"In our initial discussions about reimagining and elevating the U.S. Open Mixed Doubles Championship, we wanted to find a way to showcase the world's best men and women competing with and against one another, and we were confident that we would be able to get the top players in the game excited about this unique opportunity," explained U.S. Tennis Association CEO and Executive Director Lew Sherr.

With the opportunity to participate in the tournament well in advance of the singles championships and a fivefold increase in prize money from 2024, the restructured event attracted the top 10 men in the world and eight of the top 10 women in the final list of entries—a level of participation unheard of in mixed doubles. Of the 25 teams entered, eight received direct entry based on combined singles ranking and eight received wild cards, bringing 16 teams to compete on the first day.

The event has been steeped in controversy since the U.S. Open announced the entry list. U.S. Open mixed doubles champions and wildcard recipients Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori called the format change a "profound injustice" and "pseudo-exhibition," as it prevented accomplished doubles specialists from challenging for a Grand Slam title. "A grand slam is neither preparation nor fun. It's years of sacrifice. When you're young, you dream of winning one, even in doubles... There's no problem putting on such an event, but above all, don't call it a grand slam." said Kristina Mladenovic, former world doubles No. 1 and nine-time Grand Slam winner.

With a format spanning just two days, the shortened tournament featured best-of-three matches with sets to four games, no-ad scoring,

tiebreakers at four-all, and a 10-point match tiebreaker in place of a third set. All matches played in the prestigious Arthur Ashe and Louis Armstrong Stadiums, unlike prior years.

Just 16 hours after her finals win in Cincinnati, Iga Swiatek and partner Casper Ruud opened Day 1, defeating Madison Keys and Frances Tiafoe in a scorching 39 minutes. Also fresh off a win against an illness-weakened Jannik Sinner in Cincinnati, Carlos Alcaraz and partner Emma Raducanu—one of the most highly anticipated match-ups of the tournament amid their romance rumors—failed to break Jessica Pegula and Jack Draper, whose superior netplay secured them the win.

In the bottom half of the draw, reigning



champions Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori showcased their expertise in their decisive win against Elena Rybakina and Taylor Fritz. Doubles specialists reigning supreme, No. 1 WTA doubles player Taylor Townsend and Ben Shelton won 50 of 85 points to defeat Amanda Anisimova and Holger Rune in 4-1, 5-4 (2). Another notable Day 1 match witnessed the only set ending in a bagel of the entire first round, with Danielle Collins and Christian Harrison defeating Belinda Bencic and Alexander Zverev after scarcely entering the draw when Jannik Sinner withdrew because of illness.

In the quarterfinals, Pegula and Draper, as well as Swiatek and Ruud, dominated the top half in one-sided matches. The bottom half, however, delivered a surprise: Collins and Harrison upset Townsend and Shelton in 46 minutes while

Errani and Vavassori defeated Muchova and Rublev.

Day 2 of the mixed doubles tournament featured back-to-back semifinals and final matches, beginning with a thrilling match between Swiatek and Ruud and Pegula and Draper. The two pairings broke the streak of 12 straight matches ending in straight sets, pushing the contest to a third-set tiebreak after a series of tense games. Swiatek and Ruud appeared on the edge of defeat, trailing 8-4, before roaring back with six straight points. Swiatek sealed the deal with what she described as "the most important volley of [her] life." In the second semifinal, Errani and Vavassori played like a well-oiled machine to defeat Collins and Harrison.

Wildcard Errani and Vavassori took center court to defend their U.S. Open title against Swiatek and Ruud, who entered as world singles Nos. 2 and 12, respectively. Unlike the low-profile atmosphere from their title match a year ago, the final took place in a sold-out Arthur Ashe Stadium with \$1 million on the line. Both sides converted three break points each, but after Swiatek and Ruud forced a tiebreak, they found themselves trailing 8-4. This time, Errani and Vavassori clinched the victory after a strategic underhand serve on match-point to become two-time U.S. Open mixed doubles champions.

While the new format of the mixed doubles tournament was a smashing success for fans, its future remains uncertain as players' opinions and tournament organizers clash. Bringing star singles players into the mix provided for an exponential increase in viewership, but at the expense of devoted doubles specialists whom organizers denied the chance to participate. Addressing the crowd during the trophy ceremony, Sara Errani drove home this final point while reacting to her win: "This one is also for the doubles players who couldn't play this tournament. This one is for them."

WHITNEY FORD '28 (WFORD@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL BE PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO MIXED DOUBLES IN THE FUTURE.

GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA '27

The T-Swift Effect: New Heights Edition

How the recent podcast episode depicted a perfect union between showbusiness and sport.

BY KATE OLIVER '26

It finally happened: Taylor Swift made her first-ever guest appearance on the “New Heights” podcast. Hosted by NFL tight end Travis Kelce and his future Hall of Fame brother, Jason Kelce, sports fans and “Swifties” alike have long awaited this momentous occasion since Taylor and Travis were first seen together in public in September 2023. Travis originally used the podcast to voice his desire to ask out Swift after failing to meet her at her July 2023 Eras Tour performance in Kansas City.

To open the episode, Jason Kelce was perhaps the first person to introduce Taylor Swift by all of her professional accolades alongside his brother’s athletic achievements, including the Chiefs’ wins during her time as Travis’s WAG. The numbers back it up: Swift sold out nearly all 53 shows across 20 NFL stadiums during her Eras tour, generating almost \$2 billion in revenue.

Outside her time as an NFL WAG, Swift has spent the past two seasons commuting between games and shows. While some may not see the parallels between a multi-continent tour and a full NFL season, the Eras tour was as much a musical feat as it was a physical one. Swift’s recovery routine resembled one of an athlete, including several techniques that are common in training rooms everywhere: acupuncture and physical therapy. Singing and dancing in high heels for nearly three hours several nights a week, Swift delivered an athletic performance that deserves applause, even if unconventional.

While she was performing, Swift dropped two re-recorded albums, “Speak Now (Taylor’s Version),” “1989 (Taylor’s Version),” and her latest, “The Tortured Poets Department.”

During her appearance on the podcast, the singer’s trademark easter eggs immediately stood out to Swifties and ultimately led to the announcement of her upcoming album, “The Life of a Showgirl.” Swift said that she wrote this album while on tour, commuting from the stage to Sweden each week to record. While a glittery orange square with teal initials “T” and “S” might not resonate

with sports fans, the best comparison would be imagining the Chiefs revealing their schedule through hidden clues about their opponents. Safe to say, the satisfaction of feeling in on a secret is a reliable constant across both sports and music fandoms.

Swift’s love for football did not begin when she started dating Travis, but her knowledge of the sport has certainly grown exponentially since. Her father is a lifelong friend of Chiefs coach Andy Reid, who personally vouched for the tight end when he tried to ask the singer out through his podcast. Once the couple started officially dating, Swift immersed herself even further in Chiefs Kingdom, spending time in the friends-and-family suite at Arrowhead. Although she may have first thought an offensive lineman for one team and a tight end for another could be on the field at the same time, her knowledge has now expanded to surpass that of even some NFL veterans.



Swift’s “Welcome to the NFL” moment certainly encapsulates the chaos of dating one of the league’s top tight ends.

Following the 2024 AFC Championship game, in which the Chiefs beat the Ravens 17-10, Swift was escorted to the field to celebrate. Swift said in the recent episode that the intensity of media coverage in that moment was unlike anything she had ever experienced before. While the couple says they didn’t discuss a potential win to avoid jinxing the result, they both cherish the memory shared together. To quote Travis, Swift “had a great rookie year” as the season ended with the Chiefs winning their fourth championship in franchise history.

Beyond the implications of this

appearance for their relationship, Swift has had a significant impact on female participation in the NFL audience. Sales figures for Kelce’s jersey sales jumped 400% after Swift’s first game day appearance. Swift shared that one of her favorite effects she has seen take course is more father-daughter pairs at games. The numbers speak for themselves: female viewership for Thursday Night Football was up 10% from the 2023 to 2024 season.

Does it matter that Taylor Swift has entered yet another male-dominated space through the “New Heights” podcast? Some may dismiss it as irrelevant—but as both a Swiftie and a lifelong sports fan, I say otherwise.

Swift refuses to love quietly. The fairytale she’s spent years singing about is now playing out in real life—and her relationship with a professional athlete in a male-dominated league has opened new pathways for boosting female viewership. As if the story weren’t sweet enough, the “Swift effect” has created new opportunities for fathers and daughters to bond—sharing the thrill of a game-winning touchdown or the joy of spotting their favorite singer in a setting far beyond her usual stage.

KATE OLIVER '26 (KOLIVER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS LOSING IT OVER THE ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT ON INSTAGRAM!

GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA '27

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VIEWS OF THE *INDEPENDENT*

back to school

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2. Best House, Fred Klein's House
3. D in HUDS
4. Dean Of Students
5. Khurana's Replacement
6. Full Fridge and En-Suite Location for Lucky Freshmen
7. Living Style With Two Dwellings

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

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