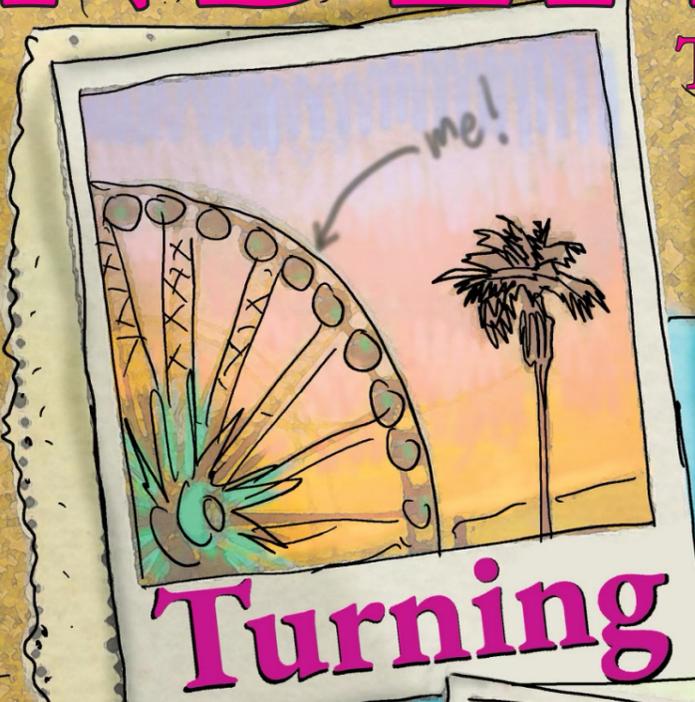


INDEPENDENT

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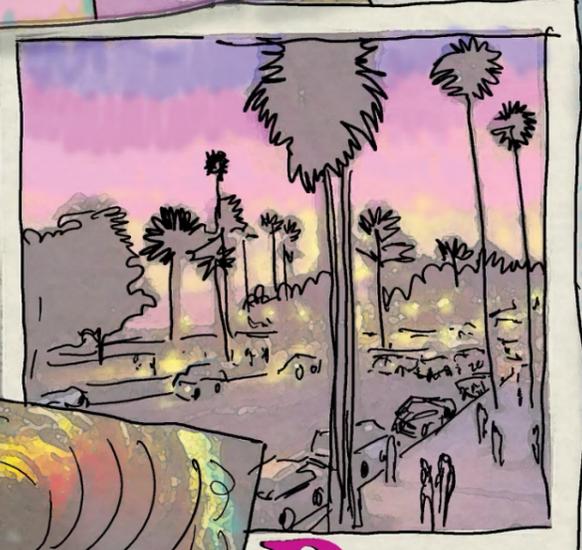
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my new fave!

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About the Independent

As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newsmagazine, 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.

For general or business inquiries, contact president@harvardindependent.com. Address Letters to the Editor, op-eds, or comments regarding content to editorinchief@harvardindependent.com. To subscribe to bi-weekly mailed print issues, email subscriptions@harvardindependent.com.

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The Next Chapter

Our first letter as Editor-in-Chief and President, looking ahead to the extraordinary adventure ahead.

BY RANIA JONES '27 & MIA TAVARES '27

Anyone who knows the two of us knows the *Harvard Independent*. They know where we are every Monday night, how we start our Thursday mornings, and what we are texting, calling, and brainstorming about at all hours of the day.

To say that the Indy is woven into the fabric of our college experiences would be an understatement. The foundation of our friendship and our identities at this school are tied intricately to each other and this wonderful, wonderful publication.

We joined the Indy in just our second week at Harvard, before we truly knew each other or the school. Since those first few days on 12 Arrow St., we have written articles together; traded title-pun ideas about Cynthia Erivo; brainstormed wild pitches for the Sex Issue over dinner in the Lowell House dining hall; and collected Indy Issues, lighters, and merch for our common room.

While we each connected with the organization in very different ways, we have also remained entirely united.

If you had told freshman year us, bright-eyed (and terrified) to approach Noah Tavares '24 and Marbella Marlo '24—Editor-in-Chief and President of the *Independent* in 2023—at the Club Fair, that we would be the next President and Editor-in-Chief, we probably would have laughed, thought for a moment, and then yelled at you for jinxing it.

To be granted this honor and responsibility has been our joint dream from the moment we first saw our names in print all those years ago, and we are beyond grateful to step into the very big shoes left before us—by former *Independent* Editor-in-Chiefs and Presidents Katie Merriam '26, Layla Chaaroui '26, Eliza Kimball '25, Andrew Spielmann '25, and countless others.

From, Rania—I knew about the *Independent* within an hour of being accepted to Harvard; former business staff member Alex Carlin '26 forwarded me the link to the publication and invited me to a party being thrown over Harvard's admitted students weekend. Over "Visitas," in the basement of Tasty Burger with the Weed Issue in hand, I truly knew that the Indy would become my home.

Since then, I have written over 35 articles; edited across all four editorial boards; interviewed professors, alumni, and students; designed merch, illustrations, and comp posters; and shown up for this organization no matter the task or time.

I believe in the *Independent*—in the work we do and what we stand to represent. And this belief for me goes beyond a mere appreciation for journalism. It embodies a deep-seated conviction in the power of expression and truth. To me, the Indy serves as a reminder that writing changes people, and writing what everyone else is afraid to change a culture.

This paper has given me more than I could have ever anticipated: my two best friends and

roommates, mentors, challenges, successes, and a space to call home on this campus.

Whether I am writing a personal essay about fortune, luck, and a nutty tarot card reader, reporting on breaking news, interviewing Harvard alumni, students, and creatives, or defending the humanities in an op-ed, I remain in this space for two reasons—I love to write, and the Indy's mission is why I love to write.

In our current political and cultural climate, I know that leading this publication will require resilience and flexibility, perhaps more than ever. Bravery and courage have become prerequisites for writing what we think and how we feel. But I am here to have the hard conversations and to make the difficult decisions. This is what a newsroom requires to succeed—meeting a moment with grace, sorting the chaos, and delivering without hesitation.

As Editor-in-Chief, above all, I promise to preserve and embolden our commitment to disruptive, daring journalism. The *Independent* has always been and will continue to be an arena



for fearless, provocative writing at this school and beyond.

From, Mia—My journey with the *Independent* has been unconventional, to say the least. I wrote my first ever article before attending a single introductory meeting, all because I had refused to stop hounding my brother (then-President of the Indy) about covering what I believed was the most important news on campus—an imposter freshman. Realizing that no one else had the passion (or time) to tackle this likely flop of a story, he placed me in a group chat where I was told that my draft would be due in three days.

I had an Indy piece due before I had a chance to complete a single Harvard assignment, which felt entirely right. Yet even before my work was published, I had fallen in love with the thrill of journalism. Soon after, I fell in love with the Indy and its people, who were there to celebrate with me when the supposed 'flop' article ended up going viral in both the Harvard and non-Harvard communities.

Now three years in, I have worked across three of the four boards on the Indy, which is entirely unusual. My first semester was spent learning the ropes of the Editorial board, writing articles, and agonizing over both the Associated Press and *Independent* style guides. Then, during my year-long tenure as Video Director, I worked to legitimize the Indy as a source of both print and digital journalism, with our media eventually amassing over four million views. Thanks to this entertainment success, the Indy was able to establish our Multi-Media Board.

During this past year, as Business Director, I helped distribute over 50,000 print copies of our issues, run journalism programs for high schoolers, and spearheaded the launch of the Indy Shop amongst other avenues to involve the Indy in campus life.

During my time with the Indy, we have developed immensely in size and in scope. As an organization, we have been tasked with representing the authentic Harvard student voice and experience across all of our outputs, whether through our paper, podcasts, programs, events, or even scattered posters. I have devoted my past 2.5 years at the Indy to becoming intimately familiar with every aspect of the organization in order to understand how each piece best fits, thrives, and grows together.

Still, no matter my role or contributions, I have continued to write. The Indy is first and foremost a publication. As President, I feel it is my duty to ensure that we leverage every possible opportunity and resource available to us to succeed in that mission.

Whether it is the physical printing of weekly issues, shipping subscriptions worldwide, selling merch and ads, or filming video series with College Deans, our business endeavours exist to maintain the Indy as a preeminent beacon of culture at Harvard. As such, I intend to advance and enhance the *Harvard Independent's* entire legacy in every way that I can.

Together, as we take this extraordinary organization under our wing and guide it through this next year, we are reminded of our transience in its institutional tradition—the Indy's distinctive edge, its mosaic of student voices and perspectives, and its fundamental commitment to art, writing, and ideas that belong to the counterculture in which this paper was conceived. Over the next year at the *Independent*, we hope our leadership is characterized by the audacity to try, spectacularly fail, and ultimately succeed, over and over again.

RANIA JONES '27 (RJONES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND MIA TAVARES '27 (MIATAVARES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) COULD NOT BE MORE EXCITED TO GET STARTED.

GRAPHIC BY ANNELISE FISHER '26

Political Bias In and Out of Harvard Classrooms: A “Systematic” Problem

Harvard students grapple with the University’s political climate after Tejas Billa ’28 appears in *Fox News* critiquing political bias.

BY JULIA BOUCHUT ’29 AND CLAIRE CHUNG ’29



In Jan. 19, Harvard College student Tejas Billa ’28 was featured in a *Fox News* article, where he contributed a video interview, discussing how Harvard professors’ political biases have impacted classroom environments. Billa spoke in response to commentary from University president Alan Garber ’76 on classroom neutrality on the “Identity/Crisis Podcast,” which focuses on exploring issues that affect Jewish communities.

The January *Fox News* piece emphasizes how Harvard’s left-leaning political biases have negatively affected students, particularly in the context of the Israel-Hamas war, which has been the source of considerable tension on campus. Still, not all students agreed with Billa’s thoughts, instead describing experiences where a range of political beliefs are welcomed.

In his interview with *Fox News*, Billa explained that political bias is a systemic issue on campus, even influencing how students choose classes. While Billa recognizes that higher education favors liberal views, he said this new widespread political bias limits students’ education. “It’s absolutely isolating students,” he shared.

“Conservatives will intentionally avoid taking certain courses, especially social science, because they won’t feel comfortable or have the opportunity to voice their opinions,” *Fox News* reported.

Billa’s commentary created a stir on Harvard College’s campus, as many undergraduates expressed dissent for the sophomore’s statements. “I do think that there’s organizations and areas on campus that everyone can go to to feel supported,” Sarina Harjani ’29 said in an interview with the *Independent*. “For example, I think that the Institute of Politics does a really good job of fostering this type of environment because it is a non-partisan organization.”

However, other students noted that Billa’s comments sometimes resonated. In GENED1092: American Society and Public Policy, student Olivia Kim ’28 shared that professors Theda Skocpol and Mary Waters made a conscious effort to teach the material in a nonpartisan way. “They did explain that the U.S. gives more social provisions in some ways that people might think, so that was good of them to be pretty nonpartisan,” Kim said.

Still, Kim felt that the course leaned left overall. While most students were still able to speak freely in class discussions, she noted that “maybe for the [conservative] minority of the students taking the course, it might have been a little bit limiting for them in sections.”

The classroom bias extends to how professors teach the Israel-Hamas war, Billa explained. Harvard has recently faced increased scrutiny amidst concerns about antisemitism on campus and both political and financial pressures from the Trump administration.

With increased media attention resulting from Harvard and the Trump administration, Nylah King-Boyd ’28 has noticed an escalation in outside scrutiny on Harvard. For example, a recent *New York Times* article called out Harvard students for obtaining high grades while remaining unengaged in class. “This whole recentering on academics sort of thing is definitely being brought upon by pressure from the outside, people are just saying Harvard students are lazy and we don’t do anything,” King-Boyd said.

This pressure from the Trump administration has led to effects beyond the classroom. “I’m in a club called Girl Up, which is the Harvard chapter of this nationwide organization focused on women’s advocacy, and we worked really closely with the Women’s Center last year, and they were amazing,” said Kim. As of July 2025, the Women’s Center has shut down, eliminating the club’s former meeting space. Additionally, the Center and the Office of BGLTQ Student Life were combined and relocated to the Thayer Hall basement. “That’s just really unfair, because the Trump administration, first of all, didn’t specifically say ‘You have to close down these centers and consolidate them,’” Kim said. “And two, they offer a lot more limited support for their students.”

On Jan. 19, 2024, Garber issued two presidential task forces: the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias and the Presidential Task Force on Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias. Both an attempt to navigate the increased reports of antisemitic, anti-Islamic, and anti-Arab actions following Oct. 7, 2023.

In the Final Report by the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli, the Task Force found that students reported experiencing “politicized instruction,” in which certain antisemitic and anti-Israeli ideas were normalized, though these occurred less frequently than other acts of antisemitism.

“While reported less frequently, the third category—politicized instruction that mainstreams and normalizes antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias—was especially concerning,” the Presidential Task Force wrote. “It often occurs in the context of instruction about Israel/Palestine, a subject of considerable student interest, but one with a shortage, in our view, of high-quality offerings meeting Harvard’s standard for intellectual excellence,” they wrote. The frequency of these events, and similar ones, were not provided in the report.

According to Billa, this report on “politicized instruction” shows that political bias is systemic at Harvard. “We had this Religion and Public Life program... they said it was taught in a case study format, and for the last eight years, they have been focused on Israel and Palestine as the only case study,” he said. “They haven’t switched, they haven’t even considered switching, and they’ve taught that from only one side.”

In contrast, other students noted professorial efforts to avoid political bias in the classroom. “Our classroom had a lot of healthy debate from both sides, and [my professor] fostered an environment where that debate was encouraged in that class, so the flow of the class wasn’t solely dictated by his own political beliefs,”

said Ellyce Butuyan ’29, referring to a Government class where the professor explicitly stated his beliefs leaned conservative.

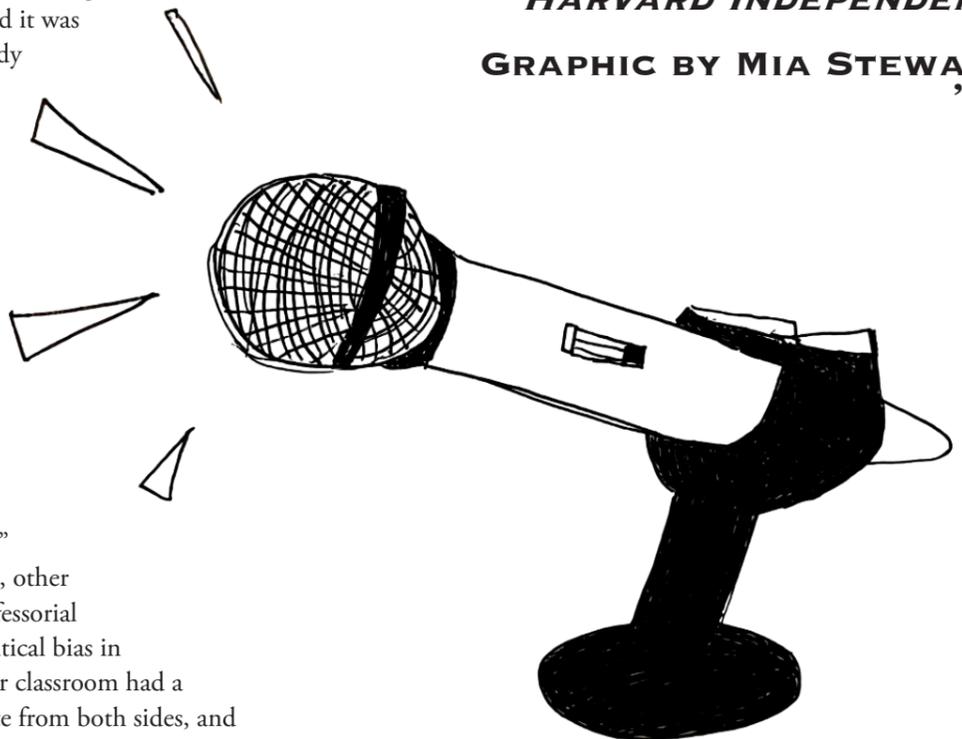
In contrast to Butuyan’s experience, Billa claimed that professors have rescheduled classes to allow students to attend left-wing protests. According to the Final Report, a student filed a report when a professor in the Harvard Chan School rescheduled class seemingly to allow students to attend the “Palestine Solidarity Global Strike” on Oct. 20, 2023. “This student reported feeling ‘disheartened, isolated, and scared’ as a result,” the Task Force noted.

“I definitely think that professors do try to create an environment where everyone can be heard, and try to maybe keep their own political views out of the conversation, especially in some of the writing classes that I’ve taken,” said King-Boyd. As an Applied Math concentrator, she noted having few political conversations in the classroom. Still, since Harvard promotes intellectual vitality, it is important that professors, like students, feel comfortable sharing their political views in class, King-Boyd noted. “It also helps just facilitate conversations, if professors do put themselves out there and want to share their opinions.”

Harjani emphasized transparency in the classroom to help foster productive discussion. Some of her professors shared their political beliefs with the class at the beginning of the semester. She explained that, by making an effort to encourage students to share their viewpoints, professors can ensure that classes are balanced and inclusive. “I felt that they were being very honest with us about their beliefs, their opinions. But it was never the case where I felt as though any of my professors were trying to influence us to believe the same things that they believed.”

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**GRAPHIC BY MIA STEWART
’29**



A Candid Conversation with Dean Deming

Danoff Dean David Deming hosted an open question forum for students on Jan. 27.

BY COURTNEY HINES '28

Danoff Dean of Harvard College David J. Deming hosted an open student forum on Jan. 27 in the Lowell House Junior Common Room. Approximately 30 attendees guided the conversation around subjects including recent funding cuts to college student services as a result of Harvard's endowment tax, the College's push for grade deflation, Deming's perspective on Charlie Kirk's passing, and the incoming Hazing Report's effect on the College's undergraduate handbook.

Artificial Intelligence

Deming assumed the role of Danoff Dean in July 2025, succeeding Rakesh Khurana to become the current chief administrator for undergraduate academic and student life. As an economist, Deming specializes in studies on education and skill development's effect on long-term life and labor market outcomes.

This research has informed his views on artificial intelligence as Harvard continues to form new policies surrounding AI usage in the classroom; most professors discourage generative AI in their courses. In a Dec. 2025 interview published in *Time*, Deming emphasized that while AI automates routine tasks, skills like decision-making, adaptability, teamwork, and social intelligence will become more important because they cannot easily be automated.

One attendee was still skeptical of this analysis and prompted Deming to elaborate on AI's place in the College. "Do you think that the meaning of education and what we should all be getting from Harvard is changing?" the student asked. "No, I don't, actually," Deming replied.

"When things are changing really quickly, and the world is likely going to be really different in the future than it is today, that's actually when a liberal arts education is more important," Deming explained. "We're teaching you a very general-purpose toolkit that is meant to survive multiple technological evolutions."

Endowment Tax

As Danoff Dean, Deming holds the responsibility to oversee undergraduate academic life and advance public legitimacy to secure more philanthropic funding for the University. This informs his push to improve Harvard's reputation and secure new donors amid growing bipartisan pressure on elite universities and subsequent funding losses.

In 2025, Congress passed a sweeping tax and spending package that raised the federal excise tax on university endowment investment income from 1.4% to as high as 8%. Harvard's endowment—the largest in the United States—will fall into the highest tax bracket under the new law, a shift that university leaders have warned could reduce funds available for financial aid, research, and core academic programs.

"Three years ago, the Massachusetts State Legislature advanced pretty seriously a proposal to tax [Harvard's] endowment. And this is a heavily Democratic legislature. And now, we have an actual increase in the endowment tax passed by a Republican Congress," Deming explained.

"And so what that tells you is that, sure, the heat has turned up on Harvard now, but it's not like we can just ride this out. We have to be able to make the case that we provide value to the public and that we are the kind of institution that is in the interest of the public to support."

In the wake of the University's financial losses, one attendee noted granular changes in the University's



finances, including \$2 cuts to TAs' hourly salaries and removing free coffee to visitors at the SEC. Generally, the University has made cuts across schools, including SEAS laying off 25% of its unionized clerical and technical staff and the college letting go of nearly a dozen faculty and lecturers in Oct. 2025.

"I wouldn't underestimate the impact of the endowment tax," Deming said. Robert I. Goldman Professor of Economics and Faculty Dean of Lowell House David Laibson '88 was present for the discussion and interjected to share that the endowment tax created a \$100 million hole in Harvard's budget. "Just for the FAS," Laibson said.

One student asked Deming if he expected any greater changes in the near future. "I'm very hopeful we won't have to make fundamental changes," Deming responded.

Grade Deflation

Deming also took time to address concerns over grade deflation at the College. In Jan. 2026, Dean of Undergraduate Education Amanda Claybaugh '01 addressed Faculty of Arts and Science instructors, reporting that the share of flat A-grades fell from 60.2% in the 2024-2025 school year to 53.4% in the fall. This decline reflects attempts by the College to encourage stricter academic measures, detailed in a 25-page report released by Claybaugh in Oct. 2025.

Despite student dissent, Deming justified the College's push to decrease flat A's awarded to students. "In a decentralized way over time, various pressures have led to people starting to award more and more A's every year," he said. "In the last 12 years or so, we've gone from a college that awards roughly 35% straight A's to a college where we're awarding 60% straight A's."

"You may not think this is in your interest, but I promise you it is," Deming continued.

"Conversations with employers and with graduate school admissions directors have led us to believe that the grading system we have here is common knowledge to them, and it's actually harming you," he said. "For example, medical schools feel like they can't make distinctions between students at Harvard anymore because there are so many A's."

Hazing Report and Handbook Changes

Deming also discussed changes in student life beyond academics. In response to the federal

Stop Campus Hazing Act passed by Congress in late 2024, the College began requiring all student group leaders to attend federally mandated hazing prevention training. Congress now expects campuses to compile reports on organizations involved in hazing incidents, strengthening its anti-hazing policies and prevention programs.

"We are planning to review the language in the Student Handbook to make sure it's consistent with the law," Deming said.

Political Tension On Campus

Several attendees posed questions related to the Israel-Hamas war, referencing students' grief of the ongoing casualties in Gaza and dialogue on campus for Harvard to divest from Israel.

One student questioned Deming's unwillingness to comment on the war. "You mentioned earlier that the issue of divestment from Israel is outside of your purview, which to me feels [like] a bit of a double standard, given your comments last fall on the killing of Charlie Kirk—which I feel is equally outside your purview, or, by another logic, equally within it," the student said. "These are both issues—the killing of Charlie Kirk, divestment related to the killing of Palestinians—that students care about."

The student referenced Deming's comments from Sep. 2025, when he condemned the murder of Charlie Kirk and pledged to support and protect conservative students on campus at a gathering of Republican and right-leaning student groups.

"I disagree with the juxtaposition of the Charlie Kirk thing," Deming said. "All I did in that case was say to students who were grieving the death of Charlie Kirk—somebody who they felt was a mentor—I just expressed in a personal sense that I know they're grieving and I'm here to support them personally."

Following the forum with Deming, one attendee reflected on these statements in an anonymous interview with the *Independent*.

"[Deming] has an inability to stake a claim on certain things, and I think that does destroy the image that you want to put out as someone who's really willing to listen to students," they said. "I don't understand the response that grieving Palestinians is ultimately political such that [Deming] couldn't make a statement about grieving Palestinians."

"It seems to me that [he does] think that Palestinians and their lives are a political issue, thus that [he] can't comment on them but for some reason [can comment on] Charlie Kirk," they continued.

At the end of the discussion, Deming added that there will be other opportunities to discuss still-present concerns with him: "I will make the time to hear students out who have particular points of view, and take their views seriously, and communicate their views appropriately to people who need to hear it."

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GRAPHIC BY ANGIE LI '28

The End of the Old Order

Why Europe must begin to reevaluate and turn a page on its relationship with America.

BY NOAH BASDEN '29

In a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney '87 proclaimed that the “old order is not coming back.” In the face of President Donald Trump’s consistent challenges to multilateralism, trade threats to allies, and the more recent open questioning of European sovereignty—as it pertains to Greenland—truer words have not been spoken. It appears that the age of European dependency on the U.S. is over as American politics pulls further away from its allies and looks increasingly inward.

Since the end of the Second World War, Europe has enjoyed a special working relationship with the U.S., one that has become increasingly fragile under the Trump administration. Now more than ever, Europe must act decisively to secure its own strategic independence before its dependence on America becomes a fatal weakness.

Trump’s most recent crusade, which aims to bring Greenland under U.S. control, is a stark warning to Europe that delaying a reassessment of its strategic autonomy is no longer feasible. Tensions have momentarily subsided with the announcement of a “framework of a future deal with respect to Greenland.” However, the mere fact that a supposed European ally threatened its own constituents with a potential 10% import tax speaks to the fragility of transatlantic trust and the future of U.S.-European relations.

Though many have labelled NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte as the “Trump Whisperer,” this latest development of a potential “framework” amounts to nothing more than appeasement, rewarding intimidation rather than principled diplomacy. It is a telling sign that Aaja Larsen, one of only two Greenlandic MPs in the Danish Parliament, was not consulted in these negotiations, writing on Facebook: “NATO in no way has the right to negotiate anything on its own about us from Greenland while bypassing us. Nothing about us, without us.”

Furthermore, Polish President Donalnd Tusk tweeted on Jan. 20: “Appeasement is always a sign of weakness. Europe cannot afford to be weak—neither against its enemies, nor ally. Appeasement means no results, only humiliation. European assertiveness and self-confidence have become the need of the moment.” Europeans know the consequences of appeasement far too well; it was only 88 years ago that Neville Chamberlain returned from Germany, following the Munich agreement, ceding former Czechoslovakia to the Nazis. Upon his return, Chamberlain declared that he had forged a “peace for our time.” Less than a year later, German troops invaded Poland, catalyzing the Second World War.

This is not to liken Trump to Hitler, nor to imply that I believe the U.S. would have taken Greenland by force—something Trump had already ruled out—but rather, to posit that intimidation can no longer be rewarded with obedience. The Trump administration prefers diktats to diplomacy and, therefore, it is not a surprise that leaders

from 27 European countries have gathered for an emergency summit to discuss the future of the transatlantic relationship. An essential question is being asked of Europe: how to respond when, in the words of French President Emmanuel Macron, “we are not respected, and when the rules of the game are not respected.”

On the topic of disrespect, Trump, in a *Fox News* interview last week, claimed that troops from allied nations “stayed a little back, a little off the frontlines” in reference to the war in Afghanistan. Not only is this blatantly disrespectful to the more than a thousand coalition troops who gave their lives in the conflict, but it is also especially offensive to the Danish. In Afghanistan and Iraq, Danes lost 52 of their soldiers, 43 of those in Afghanistan, which was a higher per capita loss of life compared to the U.S. during the conflict.

The transatlantic relationship has, from its inception, been fundamentally unequal. It should come as no surprise that Trump treats European nations as dependents, not as equals, when for decades European leaders have relied on Washington to underwrite their defensive shortcomings. Trump is the first to question this status quo through action. In doing so, he has soured the special relationship that is not so special anymore. There is a need for European countries to transform the decades-old rhetoric of strategic autonomy into a sustained military and economic vision for a world without the American safety net.

For Europe to go alone is a daunting and unprecedented prospect. So too is the idea that the American president would bully and threaten their closest allies—now no longer an abstraction, but a harsh reality.

Trump, in the same *Fox News* interview, questioned whether NATO allies would come through to the U.S.’ aid in times of need. In case the President needs a reminder, the only time Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that an attack on one NATO member is considered an attack on all, has ever been invoked was in response to 9/11. European allies answered the call without question. A more uncomfortable question on the minds of Europeans today runs in the reverse direction. In the current political climate, would the U.S. do the same for them? The credibility of American guarantees can no longer be taken for granted. This weakens the foundations of NATO and is yet another reason why Europe must prepare to go alone.

In contrast to President Volodymyr Zelensky’s recent comments at Davos,

in which he stated, “Europe will always be reacting—catching up with new dangers and attacks,” Europe must be proactive in creating tangible strategic autonomy. That means each country, especially wealthier countries like the United Kingdom, must pull its weight in defense spending. It means a whole host of other economic and military changes, far above my expertise, have to occur to create an autonomous, capable Europe.

I fear that the European political will is not where it needs to be. It must be found. Years from now I think it is safe to say historians will look unfavourably on the Trump administrations. They may also look at Europe and either scratch their heads at their hesitation, or praise their willingness to venture into the unknown. I can only hope that common sense prevails, but in today’s political landscape, common sense does not seem so common anymore.

Europe must turn a page and move to re-establish itself on the world stage, demanding the respect it deserves. Respect is not given but earned, and steps must be taken to show our allies and enemies that Europe is capable of defending itself. The time is now. As Russia continues its conflict in Ukraine and the Americans pull away, Europe can no longer afford to stand in the middle, unequipped and unprepared for what the future holds.

**NOAH BASDEN '29
(NHBASDEN@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) HOPES HIS
IGLOO AIRBNB IN GREENLAND
STILL RETAINS ITS VALUE.**

**GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA
RYMAN '28**



The Nature of Change

Ruminations on winter from a Southern Californian.

BY ELLIE GUO '29

When I landed at Los Angeles International Airport this past December, I immediately noticed the way that Southern California *smelled*. As the automatic doors slid open with a hiss, I was hit with a wave of nostalgia—as well as a literal wave of hot, dry air. Growing up in the Greater Los Angeles area, I am well acquainted with this wind. It gives me nosebleeds in the summer, static shock on my clothes in the winter, and perpetually dry skin. Yet, it was ineffably pleasant. As the sun bore down on me and I itched to take off my sweater, I realized I missed the air that I had never noticed before—smelling so nice, so clean, so much like home.

Over the next four weeks of winter break, the daily high temperature reached the 80s—although this does not happen often in early January, this heat was certainly not unprecedented. Cloudless skies shone above me as I took walks along the coast and in the hills. I listened to a lot of The Beach Boys and even regained a bit of a tan.

As winter break came to an end, I began to dread returning to a sun hidden behind thick clouds and brutal snowstorms back on campus. Putting on my winter coat that I had not touched in weeks, I was reminded of what my father's cousin told me after hearing I had been accepted to Harvard. She lived in Cambridge for seven years while getting her undergraduate and doctoral degrees from the University. Having grown up in Florida, she felt homesick and miserable during Massachusetts winters. She warned me not to take seasonal depression lightly.

After returning home from my first semester at the College, I finally understood what she meant. Without being aware of it, I had slipped into a monotonous and gloomy routine at school. These past few weeks in California have made me happier, although the relaxed nature of an academic break is a confounding factor. Going outside is easy and soothing; I do not have to put on a hundred layers or worry about my hands going numb from the cold; it is not pitch dark a few short hours after lunch; I am not constantly chasing daylight hours. Life feels like *life*, not a fight for survival.

A vitamin D supplement cannot replicate the feeling of sunlight on skin.

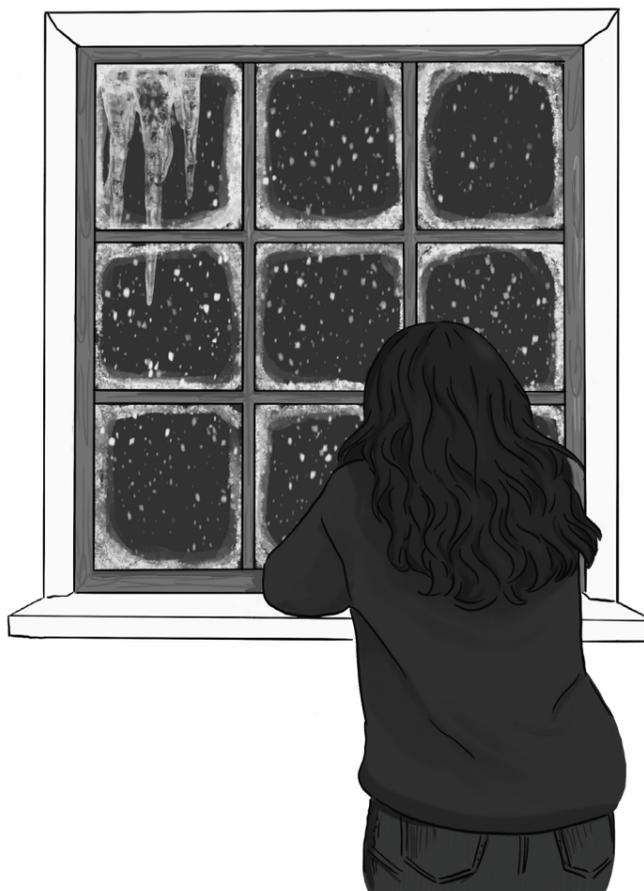
Maximizing sunlight hours cannot replace the feeling of grass under bare feet.

But years of living in indefinitely agreeable weather had denied me the experience of seeing change before my eyes. I grew up, changing into multiple iterations of myself, while my surroundings stayed stagnant.

I used to perceive change only through comparison: “It’s not as hot as last week,” “I’m taller than I was six months ago,” and “I like who I am more than who I was last year.”

Of course, change is incremental. People do not grow taller overnight, nor do they completely revamp their interests, personality, and values in the blink of an eye. Time has to elapse in order for us to determine whether or not something has changed. If the rate of change is distance over time, we cannot observe change if time equals zero.

However, watching the weather change in Cambridge, I came to realize



how small that denominator can be—how change can occur imperceptibly. I watched as the days slowly slipped into autumn, then winter. The first yellow leaves were almost unnoticeable. Warmer colors crept into my peripheral vision and receded just as slowly as they came. Rain became a wintry mix. The only suddenness was the first snow, but even that accumulated, snowflake after snowflake, while we were sleeping.

As the seasons changed before me, a lot of things began to make sense, like the

jazz standard “Autumn Leaves,” which I always thought was cheesy and overdramatic. Contrary to the vibrancy of stereotypical fall colors, I realized that autumn was indeed a time of mourning and heartbreak. I used to think that “Here Comes the Sun” was the most overplayed and overrated Beatles song, but after a month of 4:30 p.m. sunsets, I am sorry that I ever took the sun for granted.

When the skies become gray and frost covers the ground, our bodies change accordingly—circadian rhythms shift and serotonin levels drop. Undeniably, seasonal depression is more than just being in a bad mood; it is a physical reaction. However, the parallels between weather phenomena controlled by the Earth and the emotions controlled by our brains console me. Feeling melancholy during the winter is universal—people around me, people from centuries ago, trees, clouds, and the sun—we all experience it.

Living in four seasons has compelled me to be more conscious of my surroundings and of myself. Throughout the fall semester, I gradually acquired the sense that, day by day, I was changing ever so slightly. While the heat of home is nostalgic and comforting, it is also a physical reminder of the many previous iterations of myself that I left behind without realizing.

Seasonal depression, though miserable in the moment, reminds me that humans are inextricably a part of nature, despite trying to convince ourselves that we are not. In art from all eras and cultures, humans link their emotions to the fluctuations of the seasons and the mannerisms of nature. We construct skyscrapers, monuments, computers, vehicles that run on dinosaur bones—but we cannot conquer our minds in the same way we have conquered the landscape. When the trees lose their color, we cannot help but lose our color, too.

ELLIE GUO '29 (EGUO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS HAPPY TO BE BACK IN NEW ENGLAND.

GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN '28

Redefining “New Year” Energy

Rethinking our New Year’s Resolutions through nature’s calendar.

BY TILLY BUTTERWORTH '28

Hard work is constantly redefined at Harvard as the student body perpetually sets new milestones, surmounts challenges, and beats records once thought impossible. The vein of ambition running through our Cambridge campus confirms that many students undoubtedly have even more personal, extravagant, and demanding targets for the new year. Whether this looks like taking on even more classes, joining new clubs, waking up earlier to exercise, or staying up later to read, these New Year’s resolutions are often accompanied by stress or strain.

New Year’s resolutions are meant to push us out of our comfort zones and transform our habits. In order to maximize the success and enjoyment we hope to gain from new resolutions, we should consider the times at which we start them. For many, these early winter months symbolize slowing down and resting, rather than embracing new beginnings and experiencing rapid growth.

This year, instead of trying to employ my usual New Year’s resolution tradition—which typically fails within the first three weeks—I decided to try a different method to help me focus on successfully starting new habits and ending old ones. On the night of the winter solstice, Dec. 21, 2025, I wrote out 13 targets I hoped would happen in the new year. Each night until Jan. 1, 2026, I set a note on fire. On New Year’s Day, I opened the final target, which became the single goal I chose to focus on for the year ahead. The rest were left for the universe to control, offering both a sense of hope and a quiet reminder of my ambitions.

This activity was not only enjoyable—since I did it with my mum—but it also reshaped my perspective on how I want to approach future ambitions. Beginning this process on the winter solstice made it feel more connected to the natural world; as the days grew longer, the ritual became a symbol of growth, renewal, and progression.

When we think of New Year’s resolutions, we think of them as mechanisms to create idealised versions of ourselves. They are commonly portrayed as being healthy, exciting, and transformable. However, they also create a looming possibility of failure if we do not complete or achieve them, making the New Year feel less like a clean slate and more like a guilty conscience.

The issue with setting personal goals at the beginning of a significant shift in time—at the start of a whole new year—is that if you do not meet those targets, your outlook on the rest of the year is soiled, and you are left with a sense of utter failure. If we try to better understand the intent behind these personal goals and the time at which we start them, we can become more successful in completing them.

The New Year falls during a time when most Americans are hunkered down, trying to survive freezing wind chills and snowstorms. The energy of the Earth suggests that we

should do as nature around us does: hibernate until lighter and warmer days. Whether it is the frozen Charles or sunsets at 4:30 p.m., everything seems to lie dormant in January. Humans are meant to do

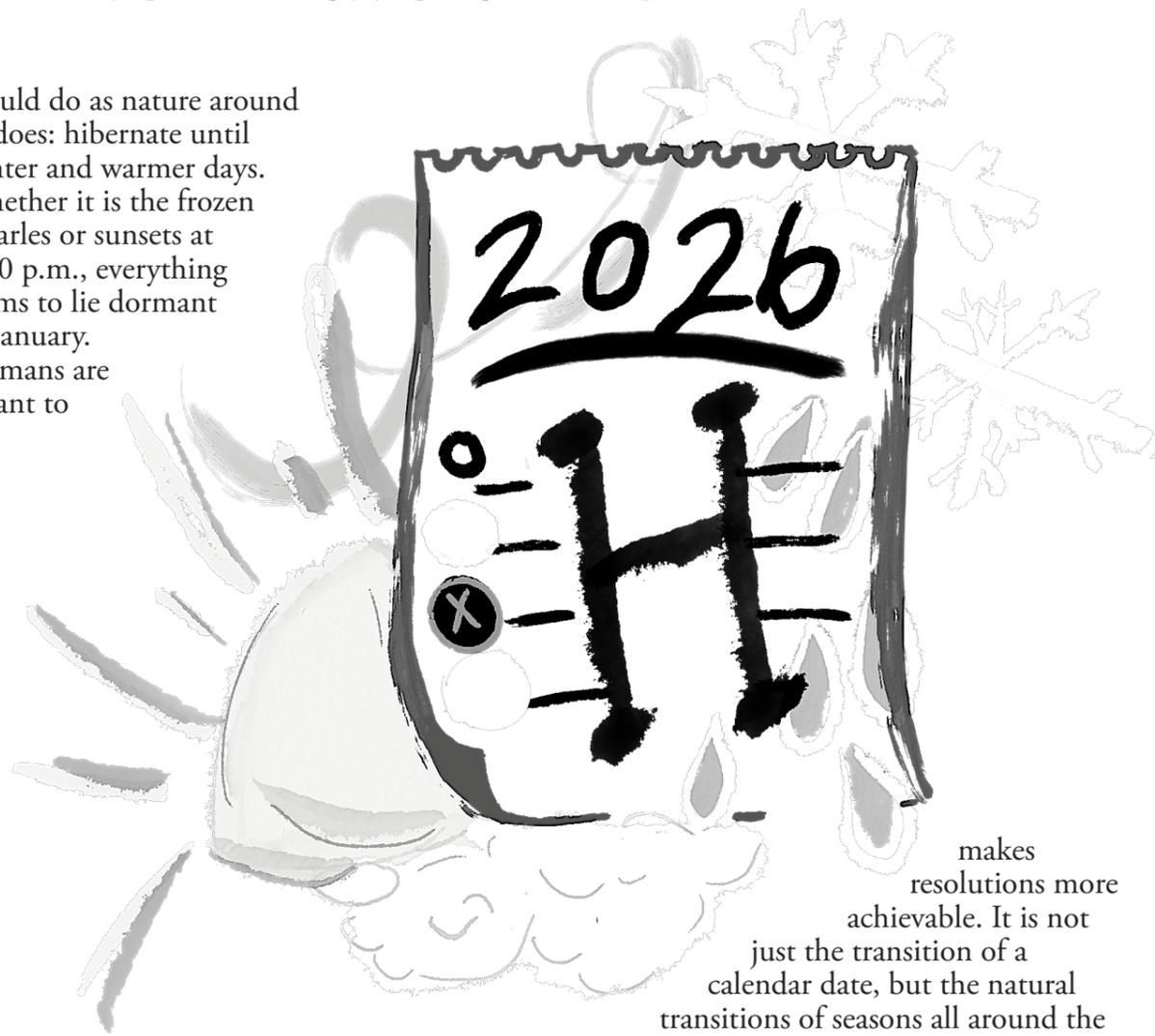
the same.

Taking a long afternoon nap on a snowy weekday is not as shameful as high-powered resolution culture portrays it to be. We should take the natural cycles of the Earth as a signal that January is a hard month of survival, and that forcing ourselves to wake up early, overwork, or exercise excessively is more demanding than we realize during this natural hibernation month.

It seems appropriate to pair new resolutions with the concepts of new life, growth, and transition. Spring embodies all these aspects, therefore making it a far more appealing time to try resolutions. The meteorological spring officially starts on March 1 in the United States, signaling the transition from the three coldest months to the three warmest months of the year. It would not be so ridiculous to suggest starting our New Year’s resolutions when spring begins. Our bodies are tuned to the rotation of the earth, and the shift could naturally aid our new targets and personal ambitions.

This idea of celebrating the New Year at a different time is not a contemporary concept. Pagans celebrate the natural cycles and changes of the earth by placing their holy days on significant shifts connected to the Earth and seasons. Imbolc, a significant Celtic celebration, is set for Feb. 1, a marker of the first signs of spring and honoring the goddess Brigid. The celebration upholds themes of renewal and a return to light and inspiration. This year, the Chinese Lunar New Year takes place on Tuesday, Feb. 17. The Year of the Horse ushers in strength, momentum, and forward motion, all symbols of progress and ambition.

The timing of both these celebrations, along with many other worldwide celebrations of new life and beginnings,



makes resolutions more achievable. It is not just the transition of a calendar date, but the natural transitions of seasons all around the world.

Starting the new semester with fresh goals, rules, and targets for ourselves reinforces our determination as students to always strive for improvement. However, this should not mean starving our bodies and minds of what they need during this time of year. Rather than seeing the beginning of 2026 as a time for arduous targets, we should focus on how our bodies are connected with the earth and understand that the time for change and development need not always be on Jan. 1.

New Year’s resolutions are not always meant to be easy, but they should be rewarding and helpful to our ways of life. We should start the new year by being kinder to ourselves and by doing things we enjoy. Encouraging uplifting emotions through our resolutions is ultimately what we want out of them. It is important that we avoid putting restrictive rules on ourselves during harsher natural seasons when we already feel drained and in need of self-care. There are always opportunities to set new goals or change our habits, and it makes sense to do this in tune with the natural periods of growth, warmth, and new life in the Earth’s cycles. Start new resolutions when the times feel right and more natural for you.

TILLY BUTTERWORTH '28 (MBUTTERWORTH@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS CHALLENGING HERSELF TO TAKE MORE NAPS THIS WINTER.

GRAPHIC BY ANGIE LI '28

The New 2016?

Making nostalgia a trend.

BY PAIGE CORNELIUS '28

While many spent their winter break watching home videos on DVD players or sorting through old photo albums, this private nostalgia transitioned to public social media this new year. On Jan. 1, 2026, Instagram feeds were suddenly filled with the long-forgotten dog-ear Snapchat filter, quirky poses in front of Los Angeles' iconic pink wings, and neon Triangle bikinis with black lining. It all looks... familiar?

As time moves forward, the internet seems to be travelling backwards, insisting that "2026 is the New 2016." For years, social media has curated a "vibe" that people seem eager to recreate in the real world—one defined by low stakes and casual self-expression rather than polish or performance. With this, 2016 has now become less of a decade past and more of a feeling, representing a seemingly simpler time.

2016 belonged to a pre-pandemic world, before digital algorithms dictated taste, and before the line between burnout and productivity turned hazy. Truthfully, many of the Gen Zers attempting to relive this bygone era probably barely remember it—current college freshmen were only in second grade. Still, these internet trendsetters are desperate to recreate the past.

But the appeal of 2016 goes beyond specific trends or historical moments. Rather, it acts as an emotional shorthand representing a time before social media required the heightened self-awareness and strategic posts of today's online climate. Perhaps this reveals a greater cultural trend. As a society, people are striving to return to an internet that felt communal instead of polarizing—blurry posts, unfiltered moments, and inside jokes posted for viewership from friends. There was little need to appear cohesive or impressive, and feigned "wellness" or "productivity" content was scarce.

This nostalgia has not appeared out of coincidence. Social uncertainty in the United States has been on the rise for almost a century, recently amplified by COVID-19 and election tensions. Political polarization, economic instability, and a media environment built on monetization has forced a societal change. Looking back to a time before social media was an algorithmic platform for comparison is less about wanting the past back and more about needing relief from the present. As online political discourse has become increasingly dominant, the same platforms once used for escape now amplify anxiety and division, pushing people to seek comfort not in civic engagement but in the illusion of a simpler past.

At the same time, the structure of the internet encourages this backwards glance. Platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok easily allow content to resurface. Trends no longer move forward linearly, but instead recycle through

algorithms that favor familiarity over novelty. We've seen it with low rise jeans and headbands, and now an entire year. What emerges is not a replica of the past, but a filtered version of it, detached from its original context.

This loop creates an illusion that people are desperate to believe. Posts are reminiscent of an era that felt lighter, but what is being recreated is not the experience of 2016 itself. While feeds are once again filled with side parts, users are still crying over an unsatisfactory number of likes. Though the intent may be pure, the trend inherently adds to the distrust and insincerity it is trying to get away from.

Yet the desire to believe in this illusion is not naive, it is simply human. In an online setting that allows for disengagement through nostalgia, the relief that comes from these posts is real. Posting something unserious or outdated can feel comforting because it reintroduces familiarity into an environment with constant change. Humans are drawn to what feels recognizable, especially during periods of uncertainty, and the aesthetics of 2016 offer a shared cultural memory that feels safe to return to.

However, as difficult it is to separate social media from reality, 2026 can never truly be the new 2016. The political, social, and personal context that shapes the present cannot be undone. Nostalgia can gesture backward, but it cannot erase the conditions that made the past feel different in the first place.

This transition is visible for us as students, now on college campuses instead of lower and middle schools. In a space defined by achievement like Harvard, the longing for 2016 reflects a desire for lighter expectations. The resurgence of 2016 aesthetics can feel like a break from pressure, which is beneficial in theory. Still, it is a shallow attempt at an escape.

Posting an unserious photo may offer momentary relief, but ultimately fails in challenging the systems that demand such optimization.

The trend declaring that "2026 is the New 2016" reveals more about the present than the past. The resurgence of 2016 aesthetics signals a collective yearning for connection and simplicity. While this year will never truly mirror such a time, the desire to believe it could speak volumes about what we have lost over the past ten years.

Over the past ten years, people have increasingly been expected to exist as a brand. Where the internet once allowed people to be combinations of interests and moods, it now asks us to flatten ourselves into named identities. Authenticity is diminished when people are curating their content for an audience rather than living authentically. Human nature is too complex to be reduced to labels like "granola" or "emo." Watching people compress themselves into stereotypes should sadden us enough to inspire a shift.

True change does not come from posting an outdated filter, but from embracing people's dualities and true self. The challenge, then, is not to resurrect the past, but to build a culture that no longer needs to escape into it.

**PAIGE CORNELIUS '28
(PAIGECORNELIUS@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)
AGREES THAT A CULTURAL
RESET IS OVERDUE.**

**GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE
'27**



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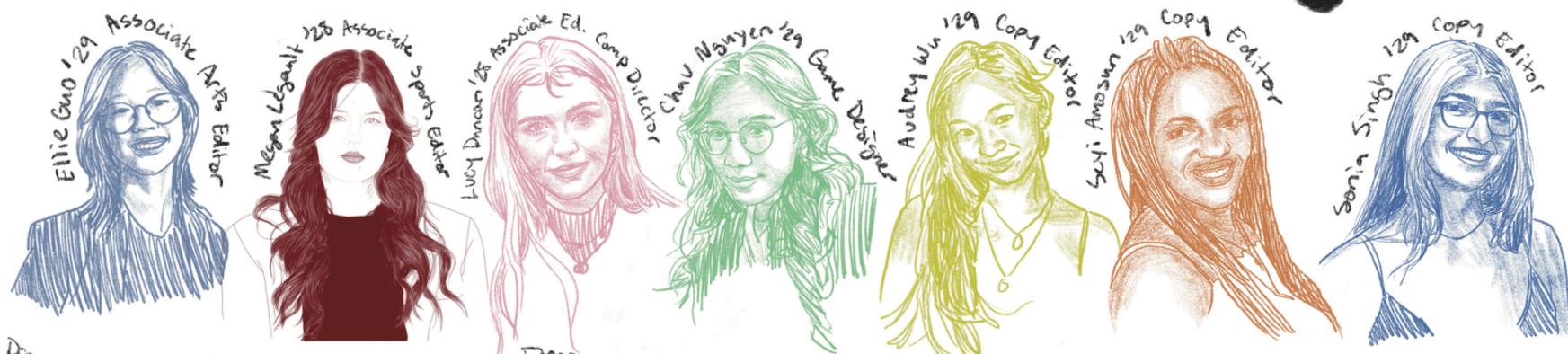
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The Rot and Guilt of Winter Break

A firsthand account about the paradox of feeling unproductive in a time of rest.

BY AIDEN GALLAGHER '29

As the fall semester came to a close last December and exams piled up, it felt as though the world was crashing down. But there was one light at the end of the tunnel: Harvard's January Term. Better known as J-Term, this period consisted of a luxurious six-week break with no homework, tests, or student organization commitments. I imagined my first J-Term as a time filled with family and friends, traveling, or working for a fraction of what I had just paid in tuition. As a first-year student, the concept of moving from secondary school's standard two weeks of winter break to Harvard College's six sounded blissful.

In the weeks leading up to this mid-December recess, I discussed the holiday with an upperclassman—how long and enjoyable it seemed. While he agreed that having a hiatus this long seemed gratifying, he was the first to introduce me to the term “winter break rot”: feeling like a corpse as the weeks pass. Winter break rot, as I would discover, was less about rest gone wrong, and more about the uneasy guilt of freedom without structure.

Now, having been through my first college winter break, I can attest to the truth of the term. In the frenzy of the last weeks of the semester, I kept my rest plans light, thinking I would finally be able to resume my life back home. This decision catalyzed the rot, not through laziness, but by stripping away the structure that had told me exactly who I was supposed to be every day for the past four months.

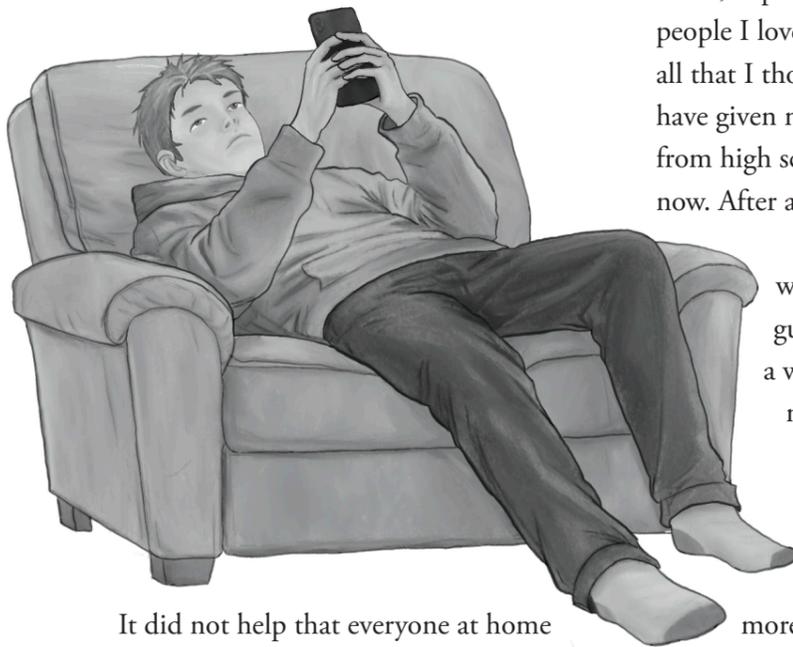
At Harvard, even on days when I didn't feel motivated, I still had places to be. Rest felt earned because it came after something—a paper, a practice, a long day of socializing. At home, there was none of that. The only thing that “needed” to happen is whatever I decided needed to happen. That kind of freedom sounds amazing until it becomes reality. The days became wide open, and instead of feeling like an opportunity, it started to feel like a prison—a blank with no clear way to fill.

As time passed, the guilt set in. That was the part no one mentions when they joke about rotting. It is not just lounging around; it is the feeling of wasting time, wasting the chance to rest properly, and wasting the money paid to be in school by not doing something “productive,” even though the whole point of the hiatus is to not be productive for once. Somehow, I managed to feel guilty about something I was told to do. Spending time on social media, binge-watching TV, and sleeping late started to feel like crimes against myself.

A big part of it, I think, comes back to the “split life” problem. When I am at school, I live like a college student. I make my own decisions and schedule, my friends are close by, and my identity

is built around the routines I have created there. But when I come home, it is like stepping back into an old version of myself that I have outgrown. My room is the same, my town is the same, my parents are the same, but I am not exactly the same.

Back at home, this independence did not disappear, but its meaning did. The same tasks felt mundane rather than intentional. My parents still ran the household. Meals appeared whether or not I planned them. The structure existed without my input. I was too independent to feel fully at home, but not independent enough to feel like I was not home. That in-between space was and remains odd. I wanted to feel productive, but the usual markers of productivity no longer felt earned. The guilt is not about doing nothing; it is about not knowing what counts as doing something anymore.



It did not help that everyone at home still had their lives running full speed. My parents worked. Siblings had their own schedules. Friends from high school were scattered. In high school, days off meant everyone was on the same calendar. But, being back at the same time did not mean living that same life now. So even when I tried to make plans, half the time it felt like trying to coordinate a reunion tour with people who have already moved on.

I found myself missing the smallest parts of college life—the things I did not even appreciate while I was there. Sitting in a lounge doing nothing with friends, just existing in the same space. The comfort of background noise, of people living their lives. At home, quiet is not always peaceful. Sometimes, quiet is just empty. And when the quiet stretches on, it becomes easier to do nothing at all, to rot. What starts as boredom turns into days spent waiting for something to happen, and that passivity is what makes the guilt sink in. I am aware that I chose not to fill the time, and that awareness makes the stillness feel like failure instead of rest.

So after having my gym session for the day, I questioned what to do. Trying to find something to fill the blank page with, something to point to so

that I could say I did something today. Anything to spend less time doomscrolling. What made it worse was that the rot did not even feel restful. I was not choosing to relax; I was avoiding the discomfort of deciding how to spend my time. The longer I stayed in that in-between state, the more aware I became of it, and that awareness is where the guilt lay. I was not exhausted enough to deserve rest, but I was not motivated enough to do anything else.

But somewhere in the middle of break, I realized the goal did not need to be the complete elimination of the rot. The goal was to keep it from swallowing the entire six weeks. Looking back, I did more to feel proud about than guilty: mountain biking, skiing, playing hours of games with my 94-year-old grandmother, and hiking with my family.

While these moments did not fill the entire break, I spent time doing what I love with the people I love. This gap between semesters was not all that I thought it would be, but such is life. I have given myself a chance to sample bits of myself from high school and realize I am a different person now. After all, is that not the point of college?

So, while I definitely had days where I scrolled too much and felt guilty for it, I cannot say this break was a waste. I got to be home in a way I will not always get to be. The guilt does not mean I failed at break, just that I am learning what freedom looks like without built-in structure.

I am heading back to campus more rested than I want to admit, more grateful than expected, and with a better understanding that, while the rot is very real, it does not define the whole break.

**AIDEN GALLAGHER '29
(AIDENGALLAGHER@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS
SAD TO LEAVE HIS DOG AT
HOME, BUT SO READY TO
BE BACK AT SCHOOL WITH
FRIENDS.**

GRAPHIC BY CARA CRONIN '28

Cerulean Pages in a New Year

Musings on time and the self unchanged.

BY LAURA CREMER '29

*M*y love for art
has been fouled
by the resurgence of you,
imaginary being.
if i keep it quiet, like the old
terrains of my soul,
i might have found that love
was carried long ago.

i question your name with
such a zeal,
caress your tears as if i could
keep
who you once were told would
grow.
hold them in my palms, as if
they might stay.
only, we were kids then,
now forged into false adults.

i understand you may not
behave,
forget who you were meant to
be,
but in a new blue, i thought
maybe and
just maybe, you'd be back to
being you.

despondent at your manners,
ardently waiting for your
answers,
i am hopeful, but you are
callous.
you once were dotting,
do you remember?
now your malice rags my
bearing.

you claim to be unquenched,
scornful, spurned,

i am rejected by you,
and i rejected you by myself.
surrounded by ragged boughs,
i am steeped in poison.
breathing air that tastes wrong,
there is nothing i would crave
more,
than ripping the roots of our
core,
begging to be cleansed.

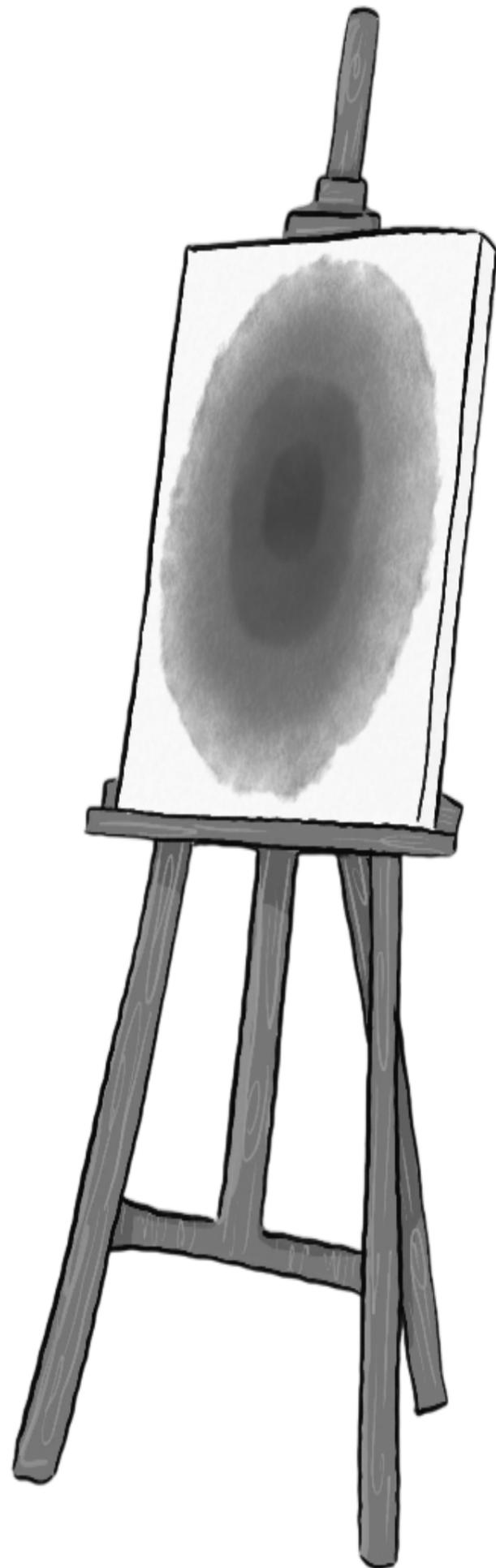
new time, liquid cerulean
covered by the same haze,
renamed.
open canvas, strokes of color.
pages waiting, never quite
turning.

i am still here.
you were, once.
we resemble ourselves,

we never returned.

**LAURA CREMER '29
(LAURAPEREZCREMER@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.
EDU) REMAINS
BETWEEN PAGES
(AGAIN).**

**GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA
RYMAN '28**



Spring Arts Events Round Up

What to look forward to in the Harvard fine arts and theater scene this semester.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28

With a diverse student body and numerous museums and organizations, Harvard is blessed with high-quality performing and fine arts events year-round. For Harvard affiliates, events that people would pay good money to see are usually free or discounted. Below are some events coming to the Boston art scene in Spring 2026.

Theater:

With four Harvard College theater troupes running shows this spring, the season is sure to be busy. To start, the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club has a lineup of 12 shows it is producing. From popular hits like “Mean Girls” and Harvard staples like the annual “First Year Musical,” the shows are sure to excite and please audiences throughout the year. Information can be found online, but most performances take place in March and April. Students should expect ticket prices to be \$10, and the location varies by show.

Hasty Pudding Theatricals is showcasing their 177th musical comedy “Saloon Tunes,” entirely written and composed by a team of Harvard students. The show features an outlaw, ROBIN YABLIND, and his lesser-known sidekick, WYATT AINTME, as they go on an adventure with an unsuccessful gold heist, and a goal to get WYATT a wanted sign. The show will be hosted in Farkas Hall from Feb. 6 to March 8, before continuing to the rest of their tour in New York City and Bermuda.

The American Repertory Theater, which hosts professional theater shows at the Loeb, is running two shows this semester. “Wonder,” based on the novel and film of the same name, is currently ongoing, running until Feb. 15. The show follows a young boy named Auggie and his experiences as he begins going to school, navigating change, identity, and what it means to belong. ART will later host “Black Swan,” which runs from May 26 through June 28. “Black Swan” is a stage adaptation of a 2010 film about a ballerina fighting for the lead role in “Swan Lake.” The ballerina spirals as she faces the pressure of the situation.

The Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players have yet to announce their spring show on its website.

Museums:

Some of the most underappreciated parts of the Harvard campus are the 11+ museums we walk past daily. Each museum hosts professional curators and caretakers and typically offers free admission. Many host special exhibits throughout the year, so, beyond the amazing permanent attractions, here is what students can look forward to in the spring.

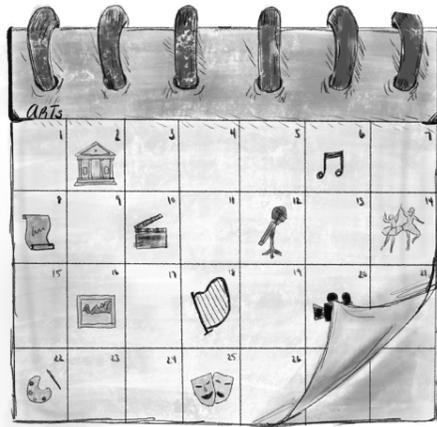
The Harvard Art Museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) are hosting two special exhibits in the spring. The first, “Critical Printing,” is running from Jan. 24 to May 10. The exhibit will offer a small collection of prints to “generate experimental thinking.” The second exhibit will be “Celtic Art Through The Ages,” from March 26 to Aug. 2, which will explore the world of people who have been labeled “Celts,” from 800 BCE to the present, through art.

Not to be outdone, the Carper Center for Visual Arts will be hosting two special exhibits: “Signal and Strata” and “Cosmos Falling.” Both run from Feb. 5 to April 5. According to the website preview, “Signals and Strata” combines media to pay homage to the Andean landscape, while “Cosmos Falling” features works by various artists on the theme of, as the name

implies, the wondrous expanse of space.

At MetaLabs, “Data Twist” is running through Aug. 2026. It is an interactive art exhibit that “invites people to discover their togetherness in difference through movement, rather than division.” The participatory art exhibition uses survey data and the game Twister (referred to as the “data twist” on the website) to spark public discourse.

The Graduate School of Design Art Museum has three exhibits running this spring: “Rational Form Making,” Feb. 8 to Mar. 15; “Cores and Peripheries: Designing Cities in Transition,” Jan. 27 to Mar. 22; and “Designers of Mountain and Water: Alternative Landscapes for a Changing Climate,” Jan. 20 to May 15. These exhibits examine works created by students studying architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture.



The Alain Locke Gallery of African & African American Art is continuing its viewing of “Renaissance, Race, and Representation in the Harmon and Harriet Kelley Collection of African American Art” through June 6. The Kelley family collection features works from artists such as Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson, and Jacob Lawrence, and seeks to feature African American Art that “reads like a ‘who’s who’ of landmark works.”

Out of Harvard’s five science and history museums, there are two particularly special exhibits. The natural history museum is featuring “Swimming with Sharks” until Nov. 8. As the name suggests, the attraction focuses on the fascinating sea creatures that share its name. The Peabody Museum is hosting “Castaway: The Afterlife of Plastics” until April 26, which examines plastics found on a beach in Australia and how the natural world interacts with them.

A Cappella/Singing:

With over 10 different groups on campus, many of the a cappella groups are offering spring performances to showcase their pipes. Most of the groups have not yet announced their on-campus spring concert dates on their websites. However, the Pitches, Callbacks, and Veritones will perform on Apr. 3 at 6 p.m. in Sanders Theater for a Harvard A Cappella Jam. Keep an eye out for the rest, because each group typically hosts one or two joint concerts with other groups in the spring.

The Harvard Glee Club finds itself in a similar boat with no official concerts announced yet.

The Harvard College Opera is performing “Le Nozze di Figaro” in Agassiz Theater from Jan. 28 to Feb. 1. Viewers can expect an Italian-language opera

with English subtitles.

Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum spring concert takes place on Mar. 6 at 8 p.m., along with an additional Arts Fest showing at 8 on May 1, both in Sanders Theater.

Orchestra/Bands:

For its instrumentally talented students and community members, Harvard hosts numerous concerts in the spring.

One of the most popular, the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, has two performances planned for March 7 and May 2 at 8 p.m. For those interested in attending, tickets cost \$25, but Harvard students are able to view the show for free.

The Bach Society Orchestra has concerts on Feb. 27, and Apr. 18 at 8 p.m. in Paine Hall. The Mozart Society Orchestra is putting together its spring concert on Apr. 25 at 8 p.m. in Paine Hall. The Harvard Wind Ensemble gathers in Lowell Lecture Hall for showings on Feb. 27 and Apr. 17, both at 8 p.m.

For those interested in semi-professional performances, Harvard also hosts non-student groups. The Boston Chamber Music Society has four concerts in Sanders Theater on Feb. 15, Mar. 8, Apr. 12, and May 10, all at 3 p.m. Normal ticket prices can reach \$79, but student tickets cost \$9 and are only \$6 at the door (subject to availability).

The Kendall Square orchestra hosts two concerts in Sanders on Mar. 13 and May 15. Students get tickets for 80% off at \$10 (\$15 at the door).

Arts Fest:

Happening Apr. 30 to May 3, Harvard annually hosts the Arts Fest to celebrate the vibrant community of creativity existing on the campus. The festival features performances, showcases, and opportunities for students to create their own art throughout the four days.

Dance:

With over 25 dance groups on campus, from Harvard Ballet Company to the Asian American Dance Troupe, there is plenty to look forward to.

AADT will hold its annual eastbound spring concert, although the dates have not been announced.

Harvard Ghungaroo—which celebrates South Asian culture through dance, music, art, and more—will take place on Feb. 19-21.

Many groups have not yet announced their 2026 spring shows on their websites, so follow along with their Instagrams or websites to stay up to date.

These are just some of the excellent viewing opportunities we have on campus. While I inevitably missed some arts-related events in this roundup, make sure to check the Indy arts section for reviews of these events and more. We can’t wait to bring you the finest coverage for one of Harvard’s finest qualities: the fine arts.

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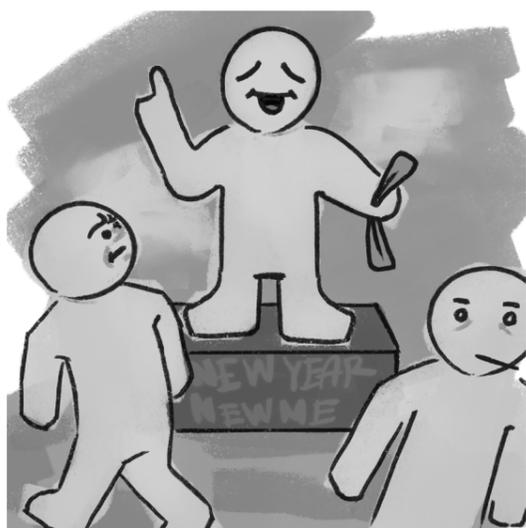
GRAPHIC BY TRISCHELLE
AFIHENE '27

My Goals for the New Year

A typical Harvard student's resolutions.

BY THAYER J. Y. GAULDIN

With the new year, everyone has different immediate traditions. Some eat grapes under tables. Others must find a partner to kiss at midnight. For me, I make a list of resolutions to work on over the year. These goals allow me to become a better person in smaller, more manageable increments. To help all the lovely readers of the Independent, I have listed some of these resolutions to inspire some of your own.



Prioritize Sleep

According to GENED1038: Sleep, getting rest, believe it or not, is important. It helps build one's memory and is essential for maintaining good health. This semester, I aim to put sleep at the top of my to-do list. But to make room for more sleep, I must focus less on other time-consuming activities. So, in the interest of prioritizing sleep, I have decided to ignore studying.

Studying and attending classes actively decreases my mental health, and for what—to better understand how shocks in a foreign market affect the domestic economy? Just impose a tariff and pray that it figures itself out. Maybe school helps in understanding all those boring biological functions in pursuit of medical school, but I doubt any doctor of psychology needs to understand the Krebs Cycle. And anyway, who needs good grades when I can get a solid eight hours of sleep!?

Secure Double Legacy

While many universities, such as the

University of California system, have long ignored legacy status in admissions, other schools, including Harvard, still take it into consideration—unless the big ol' "L" on the top of many students' admission files stands for "loser," which may be true relative to the academics at Yale. This semester, I hope to secure double legacy status and ensure that my child has the best chance of attending Harvard too! According to the best romantic comedies, finding love simply requires persistence. So to hell with a good personality or good looks or being a good person, I am just going to be a good stalker!

Deviate from the Consulting Pipeline

"HUCG or CBE?" Probably the most repeated question on Harvard's Sidechat—besides the incessant hookup posts—naturally refers to consulting. While many enter Harvard with pre-planned career aspirations in politics or medicine, a sizable number of students eventually fall for the promises of consulting. What exactly is consulting? Consulting is the "business of giving expert advice," and who could be more of an expert in technology than an 18-year-old first-year student studying History and Literature from Kansas?

This semester, I will not fall victim to the enticing consulting pipeline. Why spend my semester doing the unpaid drudgery of pre-professional consulting clubs in hopes of a better shot at achieving the prestigious MBB, where I'd continue slogging through slide work? Money—who needs financial security! Instead, I will seek a meaningful job that enables me to make the most significant contribution to society. Perhaps I will try my hand at investment banking.

Volunteer on Campus

The Phillips Brooks House Association is the primary student service organization on campus, enabling all Harvard undergraduates to dedicate

time to giving back to the community. Volunteering offers students an avenue to step outside their own routines and contribute meaningfully to campus life with purpose and service. This semester, I, too, wish to give back to the community. That's why I will be volunteering with the Harvard Psychedelics Club.

With each new semester, stress is sure to build from hours spent on papers or from figuring out which career path one wants to follow. What better way to relieve that stress than to take copious amounts of drugs and hallucinate until you find the meaning of life? As a volunteer, I pledge to spend every waking hour ensuring that all undergraduates have access—no, are forced to consume hallucinogens free of charge. Extra samples given during exam season!

Even though my resolutions seem lofty and ambitious, your own resolutions can be much simpler. Prioritizing sleep and a double legacy are indeed challenging and will require my full effort and attention, which thus makes me better than anyone with easier resolutions. However, "lead a successful startup," or "write a critically-acclaimed thesis," or even "solve world hunger" are all aspirations that I suppose can earn some respect—just not as much as my resolutions garner.

I hope that in pursuing these objectives, I become a better and happier person and that next year, I can repeat the process and improve myself even further. Who knows—maybe my next set of resolutions will include securing triple legacy (maybe that means a polygamous relationship?).

**THAYER J. Y. GAULDIN
DEFINITELY WON'T FORGET
THESE RESOLUTIONS BY
FEBRUARY.**

GRAPHIC BY JUSTIN MA '29

Kitchen Sink No. 1

BY LUKE WAGNER '26 AND JONAH KARAFIOL '26

I woke up, and my shoulder was sore. Not sore—throbbing. A deep ache in the muscle where they'd injected the medication yesterday. Or was it this morning? Time moves strangely here. Above me, I could hear Thomas breathing. He was already awake. He's always awake before me, which he mentions constantly, as if being awake first proves something, as if consciousness were a moral achievement. The room smelled of carbolic soap and boiled cabbage and something else underneath—sweat, fear, the particular staleness of air that's been recycled too many times—the asylum smell.

I should get up. There's a routine here, and if you break it, they notice, they write things down, everything is evidence here. Everything means something. The nurses prefer you punctual.

Thomas climbed down from his bunk already dressed, his jacket buttoned correctly, his hair combed back in neat rows. He's meticulous about these things. He believes presentation matters, that if he maintains the proper appearance, then eventually someone will realize there's been a mistake, that he doesn't belong here, which is absurd because we all belong here, or none of us do. What's the difference really? He told me I'd been talking in my sleep again, saying something about the library. But I don't remember. I imagined driving him back between the bunks, breaking that precise composure piece by piece until there was nothing left of him but something blocking my way.

The attendant came with breakfast. Two tin trays. Porridge, grey and lukewarm. Thomas thanked him. The attendant grunted and left. Attendants rarely look at patients directly. They move through the ward with the same routines, the same hours, the same locked doors, only on the other side of the keys. Maybe they're the crazy ones. We ate in silence. Thomas ate the way he dressed: methodically, chewing each bite exactly twelve times. Twelve times. Every time. I wanted to ask him why, what he thought twelve chews would accomplish that eleven couldn't, but I didn't because I knew he'd have an answer. Thomas always has answers, reasonable-sounding ones that make me feel like I'm the one who doesn't understand basic principles of existence.

Thomas mentioned that Dr. Whitmore wants to see me today. He said the doctor told him yesterday, during his session. This bothers me. The idea of them discussing me, of Thomas knowing

my schedule. But everything here is public. I asked what he'd told the doctor about me. Thomas set down his spoon and looked at me with that expression—patient, condescending, amused. He said the doctor only asked if I was sleeping well, and he'd mentioned I talk in my sleep sometimes. Of course I do. When I sleep, no one is listening to write it down. Or maybe they are. Maybe that's when they listen most carefully.

After breakfast was exercise period. The courtyard is small. Thirty paces long, twenty wide. High stone walls. A few scraggly trees that seemed to have never fully grown. Thomas walked ahead. He always walks ahead. Quick, purposeful strides, as if there's anywhere to go. The air was cold. October air. Or November? I can't remember what month it is. Time here doesn't follow normal rules. Days last forever. Weeks vanish.

Oxbridge feels very far away. But also very close. Sometimes I can barely remember it. Other times it presses in on me with such clarity I can smell the must of old books, hear the chapel bells. Had it been autumn when I arrived? Or spring? I'd arrived in October, I'm certain of that, October 1910, but which October? The first one or the second one? The chronology keeps shifting, refusing to stay fixed, and maybe that's the real problem, not that I can't remember but that I remember too many versions and they're all equal and equally alike.



There was a bird on one of the branches. Small, brown, ordinary. It flew away. Over the wall. Gone. The bird could leave! Just like that! But where would I go even if I could leave? Back to Oxbridge? Impossible. Home? I barely remember home. London is a blur of streets and noise and my father's disappointed face. There's nowhere to go. Which means being trapped here is the same as being free, really, if you think about it, though Thomas would say that's exactly the kind of

reasoning that proves I belong here.

Thomas called out that they were going back inside. I hadn't heard the bell. But others were filing inside, so it must be time. It's always time for something here; never time for nothing.

The office was warmer than the rest of the building. A fire in the grate. Bookshelves. A desk with papers arranged in neat stacks. Dr. Whitmore sat behind the desk, writing something. He's about fifty, clean-shaven, with iron-grey hair and spectacles.

He told me to sit without looking up. I sat while he finished writing. When he was done, he set down his pen and studied me. Assessing. Clinical. Like I'm a specimen under glass. He asked how I was feeling today, and I said fine because what else was I supposed to say? That my arm hurt from yesterday's injection? That Thomas won't stop watching me? That I can't remember what month it is? So I said fine, and he repeated it back to me. Fine. No complaints? No complaints, I said. Dr. Whitmore made a note.

He mentioned the sleep-talking. Of course he had reported me. I thought back to our conversation. Thomas reports everything. He observes and catalogues and reports, always trying to build his case that he's the reliable one, the sane one. I told the doctor I don't remember talking in my sleep, and he said that's the nature of sleep-talking; you rarely remember.

Then how do you know it happened? I asked. Because Thomas heard you. Thomas says a lot of things, I said, which is true. Thomas says so many things. Endless things. Most of them are about me. Most of them are wrong, or warped, or twisted to make him look better.

Dr. Whitmore leaned back in his chair and told me I don't trust Thomas. Would you? I asked. Would you trust someone who reports everything you do? He's concerned about you, the doctor said. No, I said. He's concerned about himself. He wants to make himself look better by making me look worse.

That's an interesting interpretation, Dr. Whitmore said. It's the truth, I said. But he just made another note. Another mark in his little book. Every statement is evidence. Every word is data for their theories about what's wrong with you, why you're here, whether you're improving or deteriorating.

Then, he said, let's talk about Oxbridge, and my chest tightened. I didn't want to talk about Oxbridge. Talking about Oxbridge means remembering, and I've worked very hard to stop remembering, to push it all down into some sealed chamber in my mind where it can't hurt me. He asked what I studied there, and I told him Greek tragedy. Sophocles primarily. Oedipus Rex. Medea. Did I enjoy it? What a strange word. Enjoy. Had I enjoyed it? I'd been good at it. I'd understood the texts in a way the other students didn't. I could see the patterns, the parallels, the inevitability of fate—but had I enjoyed it? That's a different question entirely. It was challenging, I said. Which seemed safe. Noncommittal.

Thomas studied the same subject, he said. You were in the same lectures. You must have known each other well. Not really, I said, which was true. Or partially true. We'd known each other but not well. We'd been aware of each other. There had been some kind of competition or rivalry, though it's hard to remember exactly. The timeline keeps shifting. Sometimes I remember meeting Thomas in the first week. Sometimes I remember not meeting him until December. Sometimes I can't remember meeting him at all. Only suddenly becoming aware of his presence.

Thomas says you were friends, Dr. Whitmore said. Thomas is mistaken, I told him. Or you are. I didn't answer. There was no good answer. Either I admitted my memory is faulty, or I accused Thomas of lying. Either way, Dr. Whitmore would make a note. Add it to his file. Use it as evidence of something.

Did something happen at Oxbridge? he asked. Something that upset you? Everything happened at Oxbridge. Nothing happened at Oxbridge. It had been the best time of my life. It had been unbearable. I'd been happy there. I'd been miserable. All of these things are true simultaneously, which makes none of them true, which makes the whole question meaningless. I don't know what you mean, I said.

The reason you're here, he said. Do you remember why you're here? Of course I remember. I'd been brought here after—after—. There had been something. An incident. A misunderstanding. Something to do with the library? Or the rooms? Or someone had said something, and I'd responded, and somehow it had all gone wrong. Spiraled out of control. There was a misunderstanding, I said. What kind of misunderstanding? I don't remember exactly. Try. But I couldn't. The harder I tried to remember, the more it receded, like trying to grab smoke.

There had been accusations. Questions. Men in uniforms. Someone in authority was asking me things that I'd tried to explain, but the words came out wrong. Nonsensical even to my own ears. I was upset, I said finally. I said things I shouldn't have said. What things? I don't remember.

Dr. Whitmore was quiet for a long

moment. Then he said very gently: Do you remember the girl? The girl. Something lurched in my chest. Fear. Guilt. Grief. All of them at once, crushing the air from my lungs. What girl? I said blankly. The girl from the library. I don't know what you're talking about. Thomas says—Thomas is a liar. The words came out too loudly. Too sharp. Dr. Whitmore's expression didn't change, but I saw him glance toward the door. Calculating whether he needed to call for assistance.

I forced myself to breathe. To calm down. To present the appearance of rationality, even though everything inside me was screaming. I'm sorry, I said. Thomas says a lot of things that aren't true. He confuses things. I can't be held responsible for his delusions. His delusions, the doctor repeated. Yes. Another note. Damn him. Damn his notes and his gentle voice and his spectacles and his warm fire while the rest of us freeze in our stone cells. I think that's enough for today, he said.

I stood up too quickly. The room tilted. I had to grip the back of the chair to steady myself. He asked if I was alright. Fine, I said. Just stood up too fast. The medication can cause dizziness. Make sure you're drinking enough water, he said. I nodded and left.

In the hallway, Thomas was waiting. He'd been waiting outside the entire time. Listening probably. He asked how my session went. Fine, I said. He asked about Oxbridge, didn't he? That's none of your business. He asked me about it, too. Yesterday. He wanted to know about the girl. There was no girl. There was. You know there was. I didn't answer. We walked back to our room in silence. His absolute conviction that he knows what happened, and I'm just too broken or too cowardly to admit it.

...

At dinner, I couldn't eat. The food looked wrong. Smelled wrong. Everything was suspicious. Contaminated. But Thomas ate normally. He's always eating normally. Chewing. Stopping. Chewing again. I tried not to watch but I did anyway, my eyes dragged back to his mouth like it was a metronome I couldn't shut off. One, two—no, that wasn't right, start again—one, two, three, four—he swallowed too early, or maybe I lost count, I always lose count, but he never does. Twelve. It's always twelve. I'm sure of it. How can he eat when nothing makes sense? When you can't trust your own memories or perceptions? He told me I should eat because I need to keep my strength up. He said I was getting agitated. I'm not agitated, I said. But I was. I could feel it rising in me like a fever. The anger. The frustration. The feeling that everyone is lying. Everyone is conspiring. Everyone is trying to convince me that I'm insane when really I'm the only one who can see clearly.

The girl. Why do they keep asking about the girl? There's something there. Some memory is trying to surface. A face. A voice. Someone is in the library shelving books. Looking up when I entered. Smiling. No. That's not right.

I told Thomas I needed to lie down. Back in the room, I climbed into my bunk. Above me, I could hear him settling in. That scraping sound as he shifts his weight. Every sound he makes grates on me. His breathing. His presence. His mere existence in the same space I'm trying to occupy. My mind was racing. Thoughts tumbling over each other. Fragmenting. Reassembling into the wrong patterns. The girl had smiled. I remember that. She'd directed me to the classical texts. Shelf D-47. Homer. Virgil. Ovid. Which one of us had spoken to her first? Which one had she smiled at?

My heart was beating too fast. The walls were too close. The air was too thick. I sat up breathing hard. Thomas told me to lie down. I can't. You're going to get in trouble. I can't breathe. You're breathing fine, you're just panicking. How do you know what I'm feeling? I've seen you like this before—you work yourself up, and then you lose control. I was standing now. When had I stood up? I didn't remember deciding to stand. Pacing. Three steps to the wall. Turn. Three steps back.

The room was too small. Impossibly small. A cage. Thomas told me to sit down. He'd climbed down from his bunk. He was standing between me and the door. Get out of my way. Where are you going to go? Anywhere. I need—what did I need? Air. Space. Truth. Answers. Move, I said. No. Move! I pushed him. Or tried to. He pushed back. We were grappling. Struggling. My hands on his shoulders, his hands on my chest, both of us breathing hard. And I realized with strange clarity that we were the same height. The same build. That pushing him was like pushing against a mirror.

The door opened. Attendants. Multiple attendants. They must have heard the noise. The scuffle. Pulling me back. Forcing me down. Someone's knee between my shoulder blades. My face against the cold floor. The smell of carbolic soap. Hold still. The needle. I saw it coming. The sting in my arm. The burn spreading. Chemical warmth flowing through my veins. My thoughts slowing. Softening. The edges blurring.

Above me: Thomas's face. Looking down. Concerned or satisfied or both. It's alright, he was saying. He just gets like this sometimes—

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GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26

SPORTS

Fall '25 Recap of Indy Sports Coverage

Brought to you by the Sports Editors of the *Harvard Independent*.

BY TYLER DANG '28 AND MEGAN LEGAULT '28

Let's face the facts: Harvard rarely makes national headlines for its sports culture. Aside from the one obvious exception—"The Game"—realistically, the average Harvard student would seldom find themselves on the other side of the Charles River. However, that does not mean Harvard College lacks a sports culture entirely.

For Harvard sports enthusiasts, even if they are few and far between, being a student puts them at the center of excellent athletic entertainment. Whether that be through our proximity to Boston, a city with arguably one of the most flourishing professional sports scenes, or simply by looking within the gates of our campus, Crimson students make fortunate sports fans. Luckily, for lifelong sports fans and newcomers alike, the *Independent* continues to cover niche storylines across professional and college sports.

The 2025 Winter Catalog

This past semester featured a wide variety of articles, including Sports Spotlights, event highlights, a weekly Fantasy Football roundup, and more personal messages. Readers of the *Independent* were given a deep dive into the lives of members of the Sailing, Golf, Women's Rugby, Women's Field Hockey, and Men's Basketball teams. Alongside these features, authors covered the Evening of Champions, Head of the Charles Regatta, and other notable sporting events.

One feature covered senior guard and captain Chandler Piggé '26, who helped Team USA secure a silver medal at the 2025 FISU Summer World University Games 3x3 tournament. Piggé spoke to the *Independent* about his athletic journey, from growing up on military bases to representing his country and school on the global stage. The senior captain is averaging a career-high 13.4 points as the basketball team currently sits at 10-9, earning the second seed in the Ivy League.

On a more personal level, former Sports Editor and senior Kate Oliver '26 finished the semester with a love letter to her sport, Field Hockey, after the women's team reached the semifinals in their historic season. And while the senior's athletic career at Harvard has come to an end, the rest of the team has already

started to prepare for their next season.

In fact, many fall-only sports are already looking ahead, including the football team, which ended its season with a playoff appearance. One of the biggest setbacks for the team has been the transfer portal, as many players, like quarterback Jaden Craig '25, have left the Crimson. While Craig has graduated from Harvard College, other former players are transferring for better opportunities in bigger markets, raising the question of whether the transfer portal benefits or damages college football.



Speaking of football, almost every issue this past semester featured a Fantasy Roundup, offering readers an engaging way to keep up with the NFL. Six Harvard-named fantasy teams competed for the imaginary trophy, with "First and Lowell" winning it all. With the Super Bowl contenders decided, fans wait to see whether Drake Maye and the Patriots can bring Boston another championship or if Sam Darnold and the Seahawks will take revenge for 2015.

The 2026 Spring Docket

While all the previously mentioned sports have been covered in the *Independent*, many teams have been competing over the break or are beginning to play. Many athletes, like those on the Track and Field team, had their winter breaks cut short to train on campus. Others, like the Fencing teams or Skiing teams, participated in tournaments throughout December and January.

The Women's Skiing team, in particular, had a standout weekend at the Colby

Carnival with four Nordic athletes finishing in the top 30. However, a slight aside in this article does not do their performance nor the team justice. With the Winter Olympics just around the corner, expect ample coverage of the Harvard alumni participating or coaching, as well as overarching narratives throughout the events.

While the Fall semester features some high-profile sports, many continue into or begin in the Spring semester. Readers can look forward to learning more about Men's and Women's Basketball, Fencing, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Crew, Sailing, Skiing, Softball, Baseball, Squash, Tennis, Track and Field, Water Polo, Swimming, and Men's Wrestling. Moreover, there are many professional sports with extensive—and sometimes confusing—playoff formats, and we can't wait to cover the pros too.

For this upcoming semester, expect Sports Spotlights and Indy Sportsbook to continue making regular appearances in issues. With the Spotlights, we hope to highlight the work and dedication that each athlete puts into their sport, regardless of its popularity on campus. Meanwhile, the Sportsbook provides an engaging yet simple way to understand the stakes for any game or event. Furthermore, the *Independent* will continue to provide insights into the most interesting storylines emerging at both the collegiate and professional levels.

The final box score is important, but sports are not merely athletes competing against each other: they're a way for everyone, from competitors to fans, to demonstrate their personalities and connect with one another. So while the *Harvard Independent's* Sports Section will always strive to highlight the success of our athletes and teams, we hope to foster greater connections and interest in the sports themselves.

**TYLER DANG '28
(TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.
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FORWARD TO LEARNING MORE
ABOUT HOCKEY.
MEGAN LEGAULT '28
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HARVARD.EDU) IS LOOKING
FORWARD TO TEACHING THE
SPORTS EDITOR MORE ABOUT
HOCKEY.**

GRAPHIC BY KERRIE ZHU '28

Potluck: Harvard Women's Ice Hockey Named Beanpot Champions

After coming close to winning the Belpot trophy abroad, Harvard Women's Ice Hockey climbs the Beanpot Champion title at TD Garden in Boston.

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

Practically unnoticeable to an untrained eye, under the bright LED lights of TD Garden, the difference between red and crimson becomes unavoidable.

The stands, especially those immediately adjacent to the ice's penalty box, were dominated by a red sea of vibrant (one could say eyesore) Boston University Terrier hockey jerseys. As the sound of percussion and windpipe instruments reverberated around the oval-shaped arena, one could not ignore the looming presence of the BU Marching Band. Naturally sporting matching hockey jerseys, their presence made the Harvard University Band's absence all the more noticeable and painful for the few Crimson fans sprinkled throughout the audience.

The Beanpot Championship is one of the most momentous occasions for collegiate hockey. Each year, the men's and women's hockey teams of rival schools—Harvard, Boston College, BU, and Northeastern—go head-to-head to determine the dominant team in arguably the biggest hot spot for collegiate hockey stars: the city of Boston, that is. This year, Harvard women's hockey faced BU in the championship of the historic tournament.

On paper, the two teams were well matched heading into the Beanpot Championship. In fact, the game seemed to be a duplicate of the Friendship Series Championship in Belfast, Ireland, which took place earlier this month. After defeating the Crimson 3-2, the Terriers claimed the Belpot trophy on Jan. 3. Back on the familiar territory of TD Garden, the Crimson had an opportunity to reclaim the championship title from BU.

As is the case with all sports, "on paper" is practically useless in terms of prediction. By nature, sports are beautiful because they are unpredictable. If we evaluate more subjective measures such as off-ice energy and pizzazz, BU seemed to have it all. From the moment their players took the ice, a professional hype video was displayed on a suspended jumbotron, flags waved, and pre-rehearsed cheers erupted from the stands. All the while, Harvard provided a typical display of our lackluster sports culture.

"Playing against a team with a high-spirited student body makes the atmosphere more competitive," Harvard goalie Ainsley Tuffy '28 said to the Independent. "You can feel the energy, and personally, I enjoy it."

"Although our team would love to see more Harvard students attend, the groups of people, both friends and family, who come to support us make the Harvard presence felt," said Tuffy.

I myself could not hold back a cheeky grin as I watched sophomore

saxophonist Zeb Jewell-Alibhai '28 run down the tunnel wearing an infamous crimson-and-white H sweater for the playing of the national anthem. His flawless rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," embellished by a demonstration of circular breathing technique, was the perfect opening for what Harvard athletics tends to embody: a classy, unexpected, silencer.

Harvard's Gwynn Lapp '27 opened the scoring early with her first goal of the season, just shy of 90 seconds into regulation play. A tripping penalty against the Crimson led to a two-minute power play for the Terriers, during which they leveled the score.

As the second period progressed, Harvard drew four penalties, repeatedly giving BU a one-man advantage as the Terriers drew none. Luckily, Harvard's penalty kill has been one of the team's strengths this season and they were able to hold off the Terriers. BU kept constant pressure on the Crimson throughout regulation play, excelling at getting pucks in their offensive zone and delivering more shots on goal—46 as compared to the Crimson's 13.

Nevertheless, the third period came to a close with an even score of 1-1, forcing the game into overtime. With the drastic difference in shots, Harvard taking the game to overtime can be attributed to Tuffy's outstanding goaltending for the Crimson, who totaled 46 saves, earning the Beanpot MVP title.

As the puck danced back and forth across the ice in overtime, a moment of pure magic seemed to unfold in front of the audience. A breakaway suddenly formed, and who better to have the puck than freshman Carla McSweeney '29—fittingly nicknamed by her team "McClutch" for her ability to capitalize in high-stakes moments just like the one at hand. As she approached the net, McSweeney was tripped, earning a rare one-on-one penalty shot.

"Before Carla took the penalty shot in overtime, she was at the faceoff dot, I was in the net, and we gave each other a nod," Tuffy said. With this subtle gesture of encouragement, McSweeney glided down the ice, burying the puck and securing the Beanpot Championship for her teammates. "When she shot the puck, and she turned to celebrate, I don't think I have ever skated so fast to hug her."

While the Beanpot victory for the Crimson was certainly a sweet one, there was something undeniably profound about the evening at TD Garden. During intermissions, local women's youth hockey players took the place of Harvard and BU on the ice. As these adorable players skated circles around the Bruins' ice, one could not help but notice the number of young hockey players in attendance. With every

changing camera angle on the jumbotron, another team of young female athletes seemed to appear in attendance.

Many fans wore black T-shirts with white letters that read, "Everyone watches women's sports."

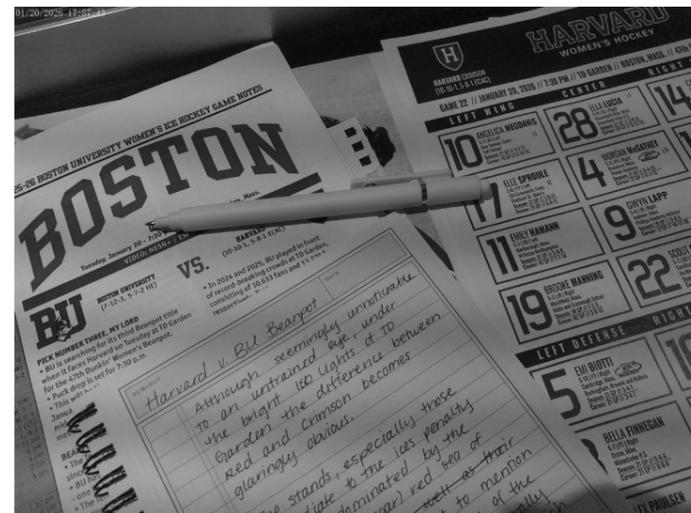
"Growing up a little girl from Boston watching the Beanpot from the stands and now having the opportunity to play in it myself is incredibly meaningful," Tuffy said. "Seeing so many young female hockey players in attendance makes that experience even more special, because I remember being that kid, looking up to the players on the ice and dreaming of one day being in their position."

With the third season of the Professional Women's Hockey League underway, women's hockey players now have the opportunity to aspire to not only compete at the collegiate level but also as professionals. The unprecedented growth of women's hockey and its viewership is paving the way for the future of the sport, something that could certainly be felt by those in attendance at this year's Beanpot.

"Representation matters so much when young girls can see women succeeding at the highest level; it makes their own dreams feel more real and attainable," Tuffy said. "I feel grateful to be part of this moment in women's hockey and to contribute, even in small ways, to inspiring the next generation. Hopefully, some of the kids in the stands today will be the ones on the Garden ice tomorrow."

MEGAN LEGAULT '28 (MLEGAULT@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) GOT MADE FUN OF BY THE NORTHEASTERN MASCOT IN THE MEDIA ELEVATOR AT TD GARDEN.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEGAN LEGAULT '28



COVER ART BY AMELIE LIMA '27

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