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HARVARD

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# INDEPENDENT

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

*On Air*



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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.

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# Harvard University Dining Workers Gear Up for Contract Talks

18 months into stalled contract negotiations, HUDS staff comment on the possibility of upcoming strikes.

BY AURORA CHARBONNEAU '29 AND ROHAN TYAGI '29

*\*Editor's note: The last names of Harvard University Dining Service workers have been excluded for privacy purposes.*

As their contract with Harvard University nears its July 2026 expiration, Harvard University Dining Services workers, represented by UNITE HERE Local 26, a labor union that represents hospitality workers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, are gearing up for negotiations with the University administration over pay, healthcare, and job security. Initially, Harvard management stalled these discussions. But now, after 18 months and 32 negotiation meetings, HUDS staff have yet to secure a contract, spurring anxiety about future employment.

Harvard's campus could be significantly affected by these contract deliberations. If negotiations break down, students could face dining hall disruptions similar to the 2016 strike—leaving students with fewer food options, longer lines, limited hours, and Harvard relying on temporary hires or alternative meal setups to keep students fed. In this backdrop, workers may continue grappling with the challenge of trying to secure fair wages and stable benefits in Cambridge, one of the regions with the highest cost of living in Massachusetts.

HUDS employs about 500 full-time employees and hundreds of part-time staff who work from 7:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. to provide meals to the 6,700 students who subscribe to the University meal plan. Represented by UNITE HERE Local 26, the same union that recently won major raises at Northeastern University and Tufts University, HUDS affiliates say their pay and benefits no longer keep pace with rising living costs or at peer institutions.

Northeastern leads the local wage landscape at around \$30 per hour—as determined in 2026 under a new Local 26 contract. This is followed by Tufts workers who secured \$9.92 per hour in raises over four and a half years to reach the low \$30s. Massachusetts Institute of Technology workers, meanwhile, have faced their own fights over café closures and job security. Even as Local 26 claims MIT dining wages sit in the same general range as Harvard's, Harvard still lags behind with a \$35,000 annual minimum for full-time dining staff, or roughly \$16.80 per hour when annualized, despite summer stipends, leaving worker wages below those of their peer institutions.

For Valerie, a pantry steward and dishroom lead at Harvard's only first-year dining space, Annenberg Hall, working at Harvard is a profession as well as a home. "I was actually grandfathered in," she said to the *Independent*. "My father works at Currier House, and when he told me he got me a job here, I wanted to work with him. Everyone was really nice—the quad felt like family."

Valerie eventually found her rhythm in Annenberg's fast-paced environment. "I check in wherever I'm needed ... I gather stuff for brain break ... take out frozen items," she explained. "It's simple, but when food runs out, it's stressful."

"Typically we have a night with 1,600 students, depending on the day ... when we don't have enough [food], it's not because we don't want to put it out—it's because we really don't have any," Valerie continued, pointing to the staffing and

resource pressures that are also central to the contract fight.

Resource pressures extended beyond food and into monetary compensation. "MIT and Northeastern have a higher pay grade than us," Valerie noted. "We're trying to negotiate our healthcare, more pay, our union dues. We're trying to negotiate more money, but the University is trying to not give us more money."

At Winthrop House, where five workers sat down for a group interview, HUDS members raised the same concerns. "It's not bad pay," Isabell said, "but if you compare it to other universities in the area, we're the lowest, which makes sense because we're the richest school."

Cited by nearly every worker, healthcare costs have also become an acute source of stress. One Winthrop employee reported paying \$180 weekly—amounting to roughly \$500 monthly—for insurance. "You only have to go to the hospital if you really, really have to go," she said, highlighting the effect the increased copayment was having.

Valerie voiced a similar concern. "Health care, dental, vision—everything is expensive. So I hope that [the University] could contribute more to have us pay less than what we're paying now ... that would make a big difference." Harvard already offers subsidized medical coverage to Local 26 members through its union benefits plan, but workers still pay premiums and other out-of-pocket costs. Valerie recalled misleading promises that Harvard would cover most expenses, leaving workers with only a small copayment. "That hasn't happened," she said. "Our pay doesn't equal our outside expenses."

Beyond compensation, HUDS workers also grapple with the temporary nature of their roles. "We're only here seven and a half months out of the year," a different Winthrop staffer said, stressing that they would appreciate more permanent positions. "That's one of the things we are looking for—so we can have a job in the summer."

Others at Winthrop cited slow improvements, noting that more dining halls now remain open year-round. "It's come a long way since I started," another worker added. "We do have a lot of summer programs now, which benefits us."

While recent progress has softened worries of losing hours or being left without work, many are concerned about what a strike could mean for their livelihoods. "Some of us are afraid," Valerie admitted. "People think they might lose their jobs or need another job to cover bills. Many don't even speak English well enough to understand what's happening with the contract ... it's best to have awareness of our people right now."

When the topic of current negotiations surfaced at Winthrop, workers fell silent at first. One member got up and walked away. "We can't talk about that—we're in negotiations [with the union]," another warned her coworkers after overhearing the question. Regardless, others spoke up on the larger context of the situation, recalling the 2016 strike and student support.

In 2016, nearly 700 Harvard dining workers went on strike for 22 days across Annenberg and undergraduate residential houses, after talks stalled over wages, healthcare copays, and job security.



Students showed solidarity by signing petitions with thousands of names, attending rallies outside Massachusetts Hall, joining picket lines with signs reading "HUDS workers deserve fair pay," and publishing op-eds urging the administration to settle. While the strike forced Harvard to concede a \$35,000 minimum wage and better benefits, it cost workers weeks of lost pay and heightened job fears that linger today.

"We need you guys to help us—that's what happened ten years ago," another Winthrop worker added. "It would never happen without students protesting. If you voice what you want to happen, it's gonna happen."

Valerie agrees that solidarity matters. "It's not just one person—it's all of us," she said. "Without the union, there wouldn't be HUDS. We need everyone at the rally to show that we're united. That's how we'll get a better contract."

Valerie and her Winthrop colleagues pointed to Harvard's "Text and Tell" system, which HUDS rolled out in July 2017. The system lets students text dining hall staff about anything related to their experience in a specific dining hall. For instance, messages about Annenberg begin with "Berg" and are sent to 55744. "We always encourage y'all to text and tell what improvements you want, what you don't like," Valerie urged. "Anything—just text and tell, because y'all's voices matter more than ours."

Despite frustrations, many HUDS workers express genuine affection for Harvard and its students. "I love the Harvard community," Valerie said. "It really is like a family. But for our voice to be heard—I don't think they're trying to hear us ... I think it would be better if we all were able to come together so that we can be heard."

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CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE  
UNION'S NEGOTIATIONS.**

**GRAPHIC BY MIA STEWART '29**

# “No Crown for the Orange Clown:” Harvard Affiliates Join 180,000 Protesters in the Boston No Kings Day Protest

Harvard alumni organization Crimson Goes Blue and undergraduates explain why they attended the third No Kings Day protest.

BY ELLA RICKETTS '28

**O**n March 28, approximately 180,000 people gathered in the Boston Common, marking the nation's third No Kings Day protest. Organized by the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, Indivisible Mass Coalition, and Mass 50501, the demonstration was just one of 3,300 across the country and one of 160 in the state. Boston's rally experienced a similar turnout to the ones in St. Paul and Chicago, which each drew an estimated 200,000 protesters. Demonstrators aired grievances against the Trump administration, including recent ICE raids, executive overreach, and ongoing wars in the Middle East, to name a few.

“Since the last No Kings, we're seeing higher gas prices and groceries, all while there's an illegal war in Iran,” Sarah Parker, a national coordinator for the 50501, told reporters earlier last week. “The people of America are pissed. They are the ones demanding for no kings.”

Before the event, coordinators estimated that this iteration of No Kings Day could be the “single largest non-violent day of action in U.S. history.” In line with organizers' expectations, attendance at the Boston rally exceeded that of the October 2025 protest and lasted over two hours.

Still, despite the national turnout reaching eight million, White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson dismissed the significance of the No Kings Day protests. “The only people who care about these Trump Derangement Therapy Sessions are the journalists paid to cover them,” she said in a statement.

At the Boston protest, speakers included Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, who urged demonstrators to remain politically active and engage in civil discourse. Alongside her stood fellow top lawmakers, including U.S. Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren, as well as Representative Ayanna Pressley.

“This is why I love Massachusetts,” Healey exclaimed to the energized crowd. “For 250 years, we haven't had kings in Massachusetts, and we're not going backwards.”

Throughout the afternoon, protesters used costumes and cardboard signs to communicate their discontent, with messages ranging from somber to satirical. One read: “IKEA has better cabinets.” “This is the only orange muppet I trust to tell me about science,” another joked, accompanied by a picture of the Muppet character Beaker.

Although there was diversity in the

issues represented, immigration remained a major focal point. Marcelo Gomes da Silva, a teenager who was detained by federal agents just a year prior, spoke about the need for stable leadership free from fear. “Freedom isn't about words on paper—it's whether people actually feel safe enough to live their lives,” he said at the protest.

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell likewise reaffirmed her office's commitment to protecting immigrants from government threats. Campbell sued the Trump administration 47 times in 2025 and indicates she has no intention of relenting. “We are protecting student visas, we are protecting birthright citizenship, which will be before the Supreme Court next week, and of course, we will be there,” she added.

Conserving democracy was another recurring theme—especially among Harvard affiliates. The “Independent” spoke to members of Crimson Goes Blue, a national organization of around 3,000 Harvard alumni founded in 2019. According to Co-founder and Managing Director Lisa Ulrich '84, the organization started with the intention of helping elect Democrats but has since broadened its mission to include fighting what they characterize as authoritarianism.

Ulrich expressed worry regarding executive overreach and emphasized the need for collective action. “My biggest concern is the utter disregard for the ideals of our country and the rule of law,” she said. “It has become more urgent to show up and prove that there is a vital, committed resistance.”

Max Clau, a graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, similarly discussed the need to preserve the U.S. Constitution as he criticized the Republicans' inability to maintain checks and balances. “America's in a fight for its soul,” he explained. “We have incredible values that we have never fully lived. We have very deep shadows that we have never fully confronted.”

Both the alumni and current Harvard students articulated a sense of pride in the institution's response to conflicts with the federal government. Harvard



University has faced significant opposition from the Trump administration, most recently a March 20 lawsuit alleging that the school violates civil rights law.

Multiple students cited the legal battle with the federal government as a reason for their No Kings attendance. “I think what motivates me is, over the past year, we've seen the attacks the administration has done to Harvard and other institutions of higher education,” Henry Pahlow '28 said. “We have a role in coming out here and saying, ‘No, institutions like Harvard and education are a cause worth fighting for.’”

Pahlow was not the only one to stress the value of students taking action. Senior Tova Kaplan '26 explained that while she thinks there is a sense of skepticism on campus about the ability of protests to work, Harvard students do have the power to make change. “It's important that we don't give up in advance, that we continue to show up when it's hard,” she said. “Even if we don't see the results of our actions immediately, it all builds up to something.”

**ELLA RICKETTS '28 (ERICKETTS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WAS IMPRESSED TO LEARN THAT THERE WERE NO ARRESTS AT THE BOSTON NO KINGS PROTEST.**

**IMAGE OF ALUMNI AND STUDENT PROTESTERS, COURTESY OF DAVID RABKIN '83**

# A Move Away From “Western History?”

James Hankins leaves Harvard as professors are divided on the relevance of teaching Western history.

BY ERIK STAUFFER '29

In December 2025, Professor James Hankins announced his departure from the History department, ending his nearly four-decade tenure at Harvard. He explained his decision to leave Harvard in his viral opinion piece published in the Dec. 29 issue of “Compact,” titled “Why I’m Leaving Harvard,” in which he gave a detailed account of the pedagogical transformation that had occurred in the History department over the course of 40 years. Hankins explained that the study of Western civilizations within Harvard’s History department is being replaced by “global history.”

When Hankins began teaching in Harvard’s History department in 1985, the conservative and progressive parties were largely aligned about the ideal content of a history education—post-secondary history curricula were less shaped by political disagreement. But over time, this cohesion diverged. Now, while Hankins, alongside some Harvard University peers, believes that studying the West is necessary to “preserve it,” other History professors maintain that incorporating a greater breadth of civilizational study into such a field nuances the University’s characteristic liberal arts education.

After being promoted to Director of Undergraduate Studies for the department in 1992, Hankins moved to add a course on Western civilizations as a concentration requirement. The course was named History 10a and focused on Greece, Rome, and Early Modern Europe. Upon completing History 10a, students were then required to take History 10b. This second course pivoted to a more transnational, globally inclusive approach to historical studies. Hankins detailed that the inclusion of 10b was “chiefly a political move to get the department to approve the proposal.”

Hankins viewed the decision to make 10b an elective for concentrators as unsuccessful overall. One contributing factor was a surge in faculty hiring. “The new hires were left-leaning, though a few could be counted as disciplinary conservatives. The need to teach the history of our own civilization was not among their priorities,” he said in his December article.

In 2003, after History 10a was changed from a mandatory course to an optional one for History concentrators, student enrollment in the class significantly decreased. “As an elective, the course enrollment fell drastically and became difficult to staff,” Hankins continued.

Courses Hankins categorizes as “transnational history” expanded into the 2000s. This shift coincided with a trend of left-leaning faculty hires. “In the hands of hyper-progressive (or ‘woke’) practitioners, Western global history is often, indeed, actively anti-Western,” Hankins wrote.

Other department faculty characterize the situation differently. “The department has indeed been a world-leading center for world,

transnational, or global history since the days of Bernard Bailyn and Akira Iriye from the 1980s onward,” current History department head Professor Dan Smail wrote in a statement to the “Independent.” However, increased offerings in global history have not replaced Western history education within the department. “More than half the faculty in the History department primarily identify with European and American fields,” Smail continued.

“The teaching of subjects in Western history has changed,” Smail said. “Many faculty, for example, are now very alert to the fact that trends in the West cannot easily be thought of or explained independently of global factors.”

The growing share of non-Western studies has developed due to changing understandings of the world among scholars and, by extension, the shifting interests of the student body. “I think there’s value in learning things from different cultures or time periods ... because we live within a very specific societal construct in which we’re under the same economic and political system of most contemporary western thinkers,” Jacob Kiflu '29 said.

“By looking at thought from around the world, we can be introduced to radically different perspectives of how to understand the human condition while still being able to resonate with the greater universality of being human.”

“I did not blame the strange death of Western history on the recent politicization of the university that goes under the adjective ‘woke.’ Wokery was at most an accelerant, not what started the fire,” Hankins explained on his Substack. “The globalizers have made a more convincing case to [department deans] than we traditionalists.”

These shifts are not unique to Harvard. “Colleagues at other ‘Ivy+’ universities have reported the same phenomenon,” Hankins claimed.

To scholars like Hankins, this pattern is dangerous. Learning about the West and the traditions derived from Greco-Roman thought must be studied to uphold the foundational pillars of our civilization. “Even now there are some liberal academics

who accept what used to be a matter of



common sense: that the young, whatever their ethnic roots, should learn about the civilization that made them, the Western traditions that created the beliefs in order to understand what gave rise to the beliefs and institutions among which, sightless, they now live,” he added.

Hankins’ departure coincides with Harvard’s longstanding feud with the Trump administration. Universities like Harvard have become the targets of politicized attacks from conservatives like Trump, who are disillusioned with the nation’s educated elite. Last year, President Donald Trump declared in a Truth Social post that Harvard hires “almost all woke, Radical Left, idiots.”

Shortly after its publication, “Fox News” covered Hankins’ piece, propelling its virality. Without quoting Hankins directly, the right-leaning media giant seized on the opportunity to critique Harvard’s academic standards. “The History department, harangued by activists, has lowered academic standards and all but abandoned the Western canon and Western history alike,” “Fox News” wrote. Elon Musk retweeted a screenshot of Hankins’s piece to elucidate what he believes to be discrimination against white males in Ph.D. admissions.

Like Trump, Professor Hankins—who will continue his pedagogical career teaching at the Hamilton School of Classical and Civic Education at the University of Florida—was disillusioned with the overwhelming majority of progressive faculty at Harvard. His departure means that Harvard lost one of the few remaining voices in a small political minority.

It is not as though all professors who teach Western history are disillusioned with the departmental changes. Professor Alison Frank Johnson’s pedagogy focuses on the history of German-speaking Europe. “Adding more global history perspectives to our curriculum didn’t and doesn’t require that we take anything away,” Frank Johnson wrote in a statement to the “Independent.”

Despite her Western focus, Professor Frank Johnson believes in the importance of the study of history from all parts of the globe.

“I also appreciate colleagues who turn my attention and our students’ attention to the significance of human thought, belief systems, political movements, migration, scientific discoveries, art, cultural practices, social organizations, and every other form of activity in all of the parts of the world where people live and travel,” Professor Johnson said. “Why should these be opposed to one another?”

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“INDEPENDENT.”**

**GRAPHIC BY JAMES FOSS '29**

# Campus Reactions to Harvard's Updated Grading Policy Proposal

While the delayed implementation of the proposed “20% +4” grading cap leaves juniors unaffected, many freshmen and sophomores remain skeptical.

BY ELISA SEE '28

As students arrive on campus after spring break and dive back into midterm season, the relevance of the newly introduced Proposal for Updating Grading Policy—which suggests changes in grading, including a cap on A grades at “20% +4” of the class size—becomes increasingly salient. Students celebrated the administration's choice to delay policy implementation to the fall of 2027. Still, in an email blast shared on April 1, the Harvard Undergraduate Association's Academic Team urged students to continue to mobilize against the proposal.

“The grading policy was delayed, but the fight is far from over,” HUA Academic Team Officer Hyunsoo Lee said in an email to undergraduates.

Lee's words hint at campus opinion: the delay in enacting the proposed policy has not alleviated student frustrations or faculty apprehension. Students' concerns ranged from increased competition and negative impacts on mental health to the intentional pursuit of easier coursework, according to an HUA survey, which found that 85.4% of students strongly disapproved of the policy. This postponement also reflects a concern from University staff, who were torn on the efficacy of such a plan since Claybaugh's October 2025 memo, despite recognizing the current problems with the grading system.

The brunt of the policy now falls on the Class of 2029, given that older students will be impacted for a year or less. “I do think, especially as a pre-med first year in many pre-med heavy spheres, freshmen already think about grades when choosing classes, activities, and concentrations,” Audrey Lin '29 said to the “Independent.”

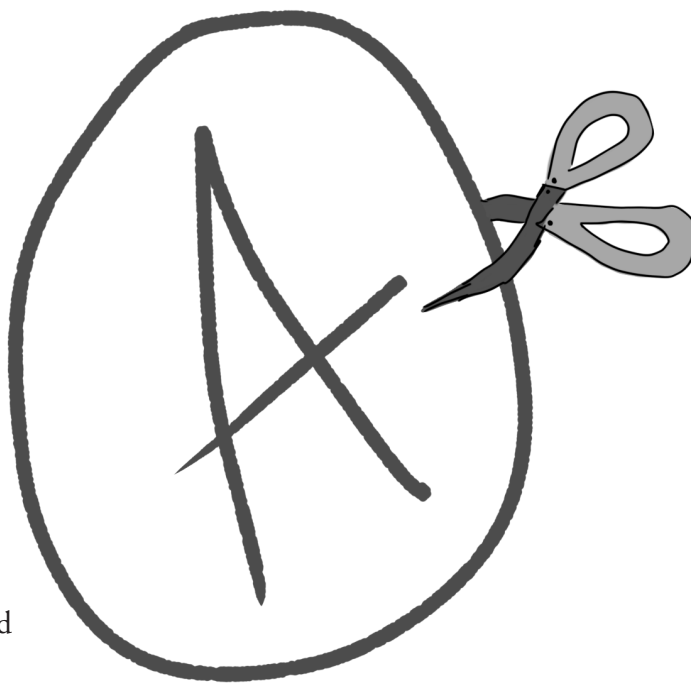
Students surveyed by the HUA expressed fears about taking fewer academic risks. Polled undergraduates were also afraid of the competitive culture that grading caps may instigate. “I'd much rather take a harder class that may hurt my GPA if I truly found it super interesting. In my experience, classes that I struggle with more end up being the most interesting,” Lin said. “I aimed to choose a school rooted in collaboration, open-mindedness, and growth, and I think this policy directly contradicts that. Coming to this school, I think we're meant to learn from each other just as often as we're meant to learn from our professors, if not more, and this policy actively discourages that.”

The University is already making changes to graduation requirements for the freshman class, with students from the class of 2029 onwards banned from taking General Education and Quantitative Reasoning with Data courses on a pass/fail basis.

But the policy has not solely been met with dissent. Some first-years agree with the goals and

methods of Claybaugh's proposal.

For Ocean Gao '29, the grading policy satisfies his primary goal of attending an academically challenging institution, as it raises the floor of performance. He believes the passage of a grade cap would not impact his overall experience, as he characterizes himself as someone who romanticizes academics. “I intend to challenge myself at Harvard,” Gao said.



However, Gao is conscious that he may be an exception, wanting to note that someone more against the policy might more accurately represent the general freshman population, as he is not as worried about the impact of GPA on his future professional prospects. “I expected the academics to be less rigorous than at a few other colleges. I was relieved upon discovering that some classes are more challenging than I thought they would be, and the difficulty depends on the students' choices,” Gao said.

“Although most of the people I have met seldom mention grades, the high number of classmates staying up late and skipping events to study demonstrates some concern about maintaining grades,” Gao added.

Professor Peter Der Manuelian, the Barbara Bell Professor of Egyptology who teaches GENED 1099 on Ancient Egypt, agrees with Gao's desire to recenter academics. “It is very difficult in the current circumstances to distinguish truly exceptional performances. Soon, ‘summa cum laude’ will mean nothing,” Der Manuelian shared with the “Independent.” But according to Der Manuelian, the administration should work to find a middle ground between academic rigor and student mental health.

“I hope there will be no outbreak of cutthroat competition among students who refuse to collaborate in class,” Der Manuelian added. “After all, most are already comfortable with a certain amount of competition.”

“I would hope that once students discover that grades of A-, B+, or even B are acceptable, that should take the pressure off of feeling that every course having to end in an A. It might actually enhance risk-taking, rather than throttle it,” Der Manuelian added.

Aran Sonnad-Joshi '27 narrowly escaped the policy as a junior. “I think that this policy generally will probably decrease intellectual exploration because students will probably focus on doing what they think they're good at rather than taking academic risks, trying something where they're much less likely to be in the top 20%,” Sonnad-Joshi said.

Sonnad-Joshi currently double-concentrates in Microbiology and Social Studies. “For me, coming to the social sciences was a pretty new thing, and I don't know if I would've made that switch sophomore year,” he said. “With the pressure of grading on pre-meds, I don't think that I necessarily would've taken the chance to try something new as a pre-med,” Sonnad-Joshi added.

However, he recognized in the long term that something had to be done, despite the initial harm it may have on students. “I think it's unfortunate, but I'm glad it's not affecting me as harshly ... a policy has to come into effect at some point, I don't think there's any way to make it so that classes are equally affected,” Sonnad-Joshi explained.

With just a month left in the semester, students continue to push for a new solution for grade inflation. Hyunsoo Lee '28 has remained at the forefront of the conversation and helped organize the HUA Academic Team's advocacy on the issue. “I think many students think that grade inflation is an issue, but clearly, most students are against this policy specifically to address the issue,” Lee said to the “Independent.”

Lee corroborated suggestions of the diverse beliefs held among faculty members regarding the proposal. “An anonymous survey of 61 professors [showed that] they seem divided on implementation issues, faculty autonomy and other spillover effects,” Lee said. On April 7, the faculty held a meeting on the policy, and will continue to debate the policy and its implementation.

“No matter what the faculty decides, it's important for students to voice their opinions,” Lee concluded.

**ELISA SEE '28 (ELISASEE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS AWAITING THE RESULTS OF THE GRADING POLICY FACULTY VOTE.**

**GRAPHIC BY MIA STEWART '29**

# FORUM

## We Were the First

And now we return to the stars in search of solutions they cannot provide.

BY NOAH BASDEN '29

**M**an was not made to inherit the stars but to be stewards of the Earth.

“We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.” These words, spoken by President John F. Kennedy in his address at Rice University in 1962, set the course for the Apollo missions in pursuit of the unknown, in defiance of the perceived impossible. Though Kennedy did not live to see the fruits of his ambition, the first human to do so, American Neil Armstrong, touched down on the moon’s surface seven years after his address.

Sixty-four years later, I cannot be the only one who was thinking back on Kennedy’s speech as the crew of the Artemis II was preparing to take off on their journey around the moon. By the time this is published, they will be well on their way to exploring space further than anyone else has ever gone before, embarking on the first human lunar flight in over half a century.

However, amidst all the excitement surrounding the launch, I ask you to rest your craned necks and focus instead on what’s been under our noses the entire time.

The world is suffering immensely, and our solution is not found in the stars. Our sustained desire to venture beyond our prescribed bounds is not, in my view, a representation of exploration but rather emblematic of a gross dereliction of duty towards the planet and the future of humanity. For decades, the unanimous opinion of the world’s leading climate change experts has pointed to the need for large-scale and immediate change if we are to survive as a species. For decades, their calls have been ignored.

Our world is literally dying, growing sicker and sicker every year. Instead of offering it the palliative it needs, we have continued to poison our oceans, destroy our rainforests, and pollute our skies all in the name of profits over people. Peter Thiel, the infamous co-founder of “PayPal” and “Palantir,” was asked in an interview if he believed humanity should endure. He paused, for far too long, before finally answering, “Yes.” The world was in uproar, and some went as far as to label him a sociopath; yet, for completely different reasons, I have found myself pausing to reflect on the same question.

The question is not whether humanity should endure—obviously, I would want it

to—but whether humanity deserves to. That is a harder question to grapple with.

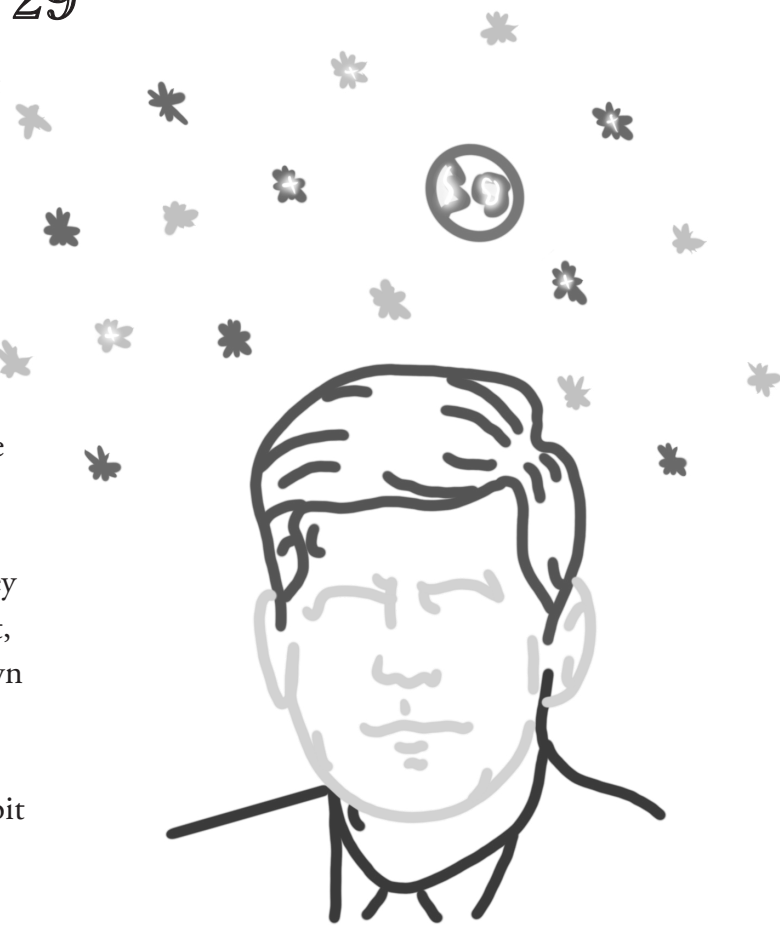
The concept of deserving on a species level is, in and of itself, complicated to dissect, primarily due to the complexity and sheer scale of a group of over 8 billion people. How can we condemn the future generations to a fate completely out of their control? A fate brought upon by people in positions of actionable power who have systematically ignored all the warning signs pointing towards a day of reckoning that they will never see. It doesn’t seem fair, and it isn’t, but through our actions today, we have shown little regard for the fate of the future.

Though I project an air of complete doom and despair, humans have a funny habit of getting out of a bind when we really need to. Take the ozone layer crisis, for example: large-scale atmospheric damage threatened to disrupt entire ecosystems and, by extension, our fundamental way of life. The world rallied and signed the Montreal Protocol in 1987 to protect the ozone layer, and 20 years later, the effort paid off. Evidence suggests that the damage is repairing itself in what can only be viewed as a win for science and the world more broadly. Despite always seeming to come out on top, the question remains: Do we deserve to keep on winning and endure?

The power of Kennedy’s words is not lost on me. His speech at Rice is so often cited as a testimony to human ambition, and it so easily could be reframed as our call to action on the climate. Kennedy spoke of going to the moon “not because [it was] easy, but because [it would be] hard.” What is harder than an unprecedented coordinated global response in pursuit of survival? Kennedy described the task of space exploration as a challenge “that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone,” but, in the case of climate change, I think willingness is not enough. There are scores of people working towards carbon neutrality and improving the climate, but it isn’t enough. This cannot merely be a cause we are “willing to accept” but one we must be “unwilling to postpone.” Climate change has been the next generation’s issue for far too long, and if we draw our line in the sand today, the choices we make will determine the destiny of generations to come.

If we cannot meet this task with the gravity it deserves, if we cannot find the so-called indomitable spirit, then the answer to the deserving question becomes clear.

Squandering our opportunity to



persevere and the consequences that come with it is not only an injustice to the future but is a punishment we will have earned.

If one views the Earth as a ship, perhaps the analogy is easier to understand. Like any great vessel, it has borne the full weight of our evolutionary journey to the present moment. All the while we’ve been poking holes into its hull, and we’ve poked one too many—the ship is taking on water. Soon it will be listing and, in the not-too-distant future, it may sink. We are the captains of this ship, and when a ship sinks, the captain goes down with it.

All is not lost.

There is still time, but the window is closing. As the crew of Artemis II goes further than any human has ever gone, I hope they look back at the Earth and see it in all its beauty. The Earth is not just another inconsequential speck in an otherwise endless abyss of darkness. It is our home, and there isn’t, for all we know, another planet like it. The chapter on humanity in the hypothetical book of everything there ever was and will be is not yet finished, and the final lines should not, and I believe won’t, be ones of passive acceptance.

**NOAH BASDEN '29  
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BELIEVE HUMANITY SHOULD  
ENDURE—JUST SO WE’RE  
CLEAR.**

**GRAPHIC BY AMELIE  
LIMA '27**

# The Power of Housecentric Fundraising

An Adams resident's perspective on the Housing Day Challenge.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28



In March 27, Harvard hosted its annual Housing Day—a fun-filled tradition of “dorm storming,” celebration, and welcoming freshmen to their residential House for their next three years. While the day is always filled with rituals and superstitions, the College added a new aspect this year: the Housing Day Challenge. This event offered alumni, community members, and parents the opportunity to donate directly to a House of their choice.

The results are in, and acknowledging my bias as a proud Adams House tenant, the day was wildly successful. The challenge drew 1,308 donations totaling \$276,740.38. Of this amount, the top three fundraisers were Adams House, which raised \$170,051.39; Lowell House, which raised \$51,310.41; and Eliot House, which raised \$11,813.29.

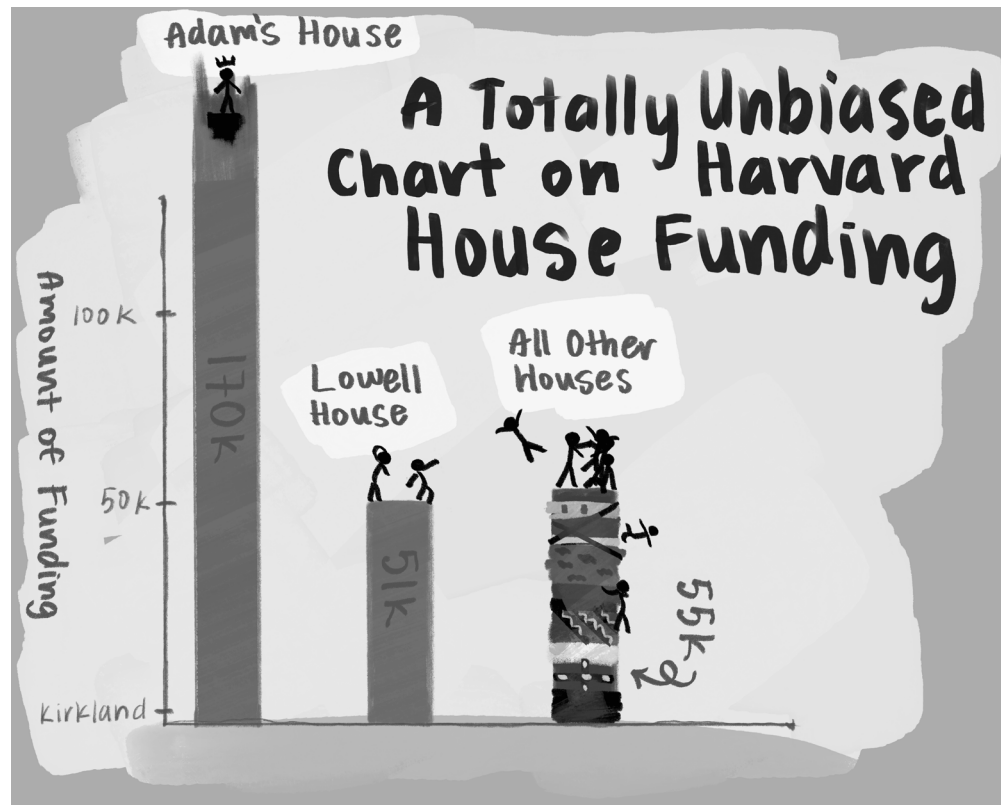
Regardless of the amount, any additional funding is cause for celebration. All of these donations are in addition to the standardized budget each House receives from the student activities fund.

This challenge works because of the strong ties between Houses and their alumni. “A sense of community can be a significant motivator to donate to a cause,” according to research from the Yale School of Management.

While many alumni certainly feel connected with the University as a whole, their Harvard College residential House is a particularly strong personal draw, being the space where they lived for three years during their College experience. This is also supported by the fact that graduates overwhelmingly believe their own House to be the best on campus. In the context of fundraising, it is natural for an Adams alumnus to want to give to their own House rather than to all 12. This is especially true for smaller donations; a \$100 donation split into \$8.33 increments is much less enticing than the full amount to a single House.

Expanding housing budgets pumps more money into inclusive spaces that benefit all affiliated students. One of the benefits that Adams has already seen is the ability to make their formal free for all students and residents in the House for the next five years.

As residents in each House fundraised,



they forged direct connections with alumni, encouraging deeper engagement with the House and its students. From here, donors can join the community to see where their donations are going and offer a helping hand to students in their career fields or areas of interest.

But the reactions to the challenge weren't all positive. In response to the results, there were critiques of the fundraising program for its potential to exacerbate “existing resource gaps.” And yes, there were certainly gaps in fundraising, with Adams raising 80 times as much as “Bouse”—I mean, Kirkland House. This vast discrepancy is, of course, not ideal. But the argument fails to take into account several factors: all Houses have a standardized fund distributed to their House Committee (which was unaffected by the results), and all Houses had the same opportunity to work with their alumni to raise funds. Many did not.

It's important to note that much of this criticism of the challenge came only after the results were released. Funding discrepancies, for lack of a better term, are more of a “sore loser” critique than a valid criticism of the operation. It undermines a lot of the work that Adams House put into its fundraising. It wasn't just handouts; as someone who worked with the committee firsthand, I saw a cohesive strategy that included multiple rounds of alumni outreach, student prizes, parent donations, and a social media blitz. Adams won outright, but it doesn't have to stay this way. If the program continues, other Houses can compete more effectively and maybe even surpass Adams in future years—though I find that doubtful.

“Don't look a gift horse in the mouth,” my grandpa used to say. In other words, don't find fault with a gift, but rather show gratitude.

This program is a great way for House committees to increase their budgets, create more positive experiences for their residents, and help students stay connected with alumni.

Beyond these reasons, the key takeaway is simple: there is no financial downside; it simply increases House budgets beyond their existing funding. So in effect, although it is a competition, there really are no losers.

In the past few months, tensions between the administration and student body have been at a high point over changes to grading, student activities fees, and other plans unpopular with undergraduates.

We've given significant negative feedback, so it's only fair that we recognize the administration's positives: this year's Housing Day Challenge was, and will hopefully continue to be, a great idea that should be sustained.

But with or without the Housing Day Challenge, my experience in Adams has already been unforgettable—and I am only a year in. The people, sense of community, and support I experience daily make me immensely grateful for this housing system. I remember anxiously waiting in my friend's Yard dorm on Housing Day 2025 after River Run, and the elation that came when Adams upperclassmen busted in the door, chanting “A-D-A-M-S. ADAMS HOUSE IS THE BEST.”

“Some people think they are in community, but they are only in proximity. True community requires commitment and openness,” philosopher and author David Spangler once said. This is exactly what Harvard has given our alumni and us: proximity that has been molded into a true community through residents' commitment and openness.

**KALVIN FRANK '28 (KFRANK@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS THANKFUL TO ALL 1,308 ALUMNI WHO SUPPORTED US.**

**GRAPHIC BY JUSTIN MA '29**

# Where Does the Spirit Go After Housing Day?

Housing Day proves that students care ... just not for long.

BY KATHERINE LAM '29

It's 8 a.m. on March 27, but it's unlike any other Friday morning in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Harvard feels like a completely different place. It's Housing Day. Upperclassmen crowd the Yard with color-coordinated outfits representing one of the twelve residential Houses. Freshmen watch from their rooms, wondering which cohort of students will knock on their doors to welcome them to their home for the next three years. At 8:30 a.m., the upperclassmen start what the College dubs the "dorm storm," a sequence of chanting, singing, and banging on freshmen suites with their housing letter.

For my friends and me, the level of enthusiasm was surreal for that early in the morning, especially because we had gotten back from River Run just two hours earlier. Still, for a brief time, school spirit and house pride felt loud and magnetic, echoing throughout the Yard.

Yet, that version of Harvard is only temporary, and that's precisely the problem. By the next week, or even the next day, the Housing Day energy had vanished. The Yard returned to its usual flow of students rushing to lectures and tourists wandering around. The same students who woke first-years on Housing Day returned to their busy routines. After my first Housing Day, it became clear to me how little school pride truly endures at the College.

Only the Harvard-Yale game comes close. Sitting on Harvard's side of the stands this past November, surrounded

by face-painted students in school colors, chanting for the football team, I realized this was one of the few times

the school actually felt unified. But similar to Housing Day, that energy was short-lived. And over time, such camaraderie starts to feel like something the student body is performing rather than naturally embracing. In other words, school spirit is something that we switch on for a few hours before returning to normal.

Housing Day makes one thing clear: Harvard doesn't completely lack school spirit—it fails to sustain it. And maybe undergraduates are just looking for spirit in the wrong places at other times of the year. What if a House feels like home not because of the loud moments on Housing Day, but through the quieter, everyday interactions that follow?

Let's backtrack. I am imagining the moment when my blocking group was dorm stormed—when upperclassmen banged on my blockmate's door in Weld Hall, chanting "Cabot" along the way. We instantly went silent, exchanging looks and joking about not opening the door. When we finally got ourselves to open it, that's when we realized that we had just been pranked. They revealed to us at the last second that we actually got Adams House. Instantly, our mood flipped. We went from being quiet to screaming and jumping up and down uncontrollably, hugging each other tight and crying happy tears. At that moment, we felt so incredibly lucky, as if everything was flawlessly falling into place.

Yet, when I returned to my room in Apley Court, things quickly returned to normal. I started to think that our House for the next three years would merely mean a residential place—an area to store my belongings and in which to eat and sleep.

Part of that might come down to where people actually feel invested. At Harvard, most students only feel attached to the communities that they actively

choose to be in. Students invest time and effort into clubs, teams, and organizations where they feel that they have a sense of agency, almost abandoning the rest.

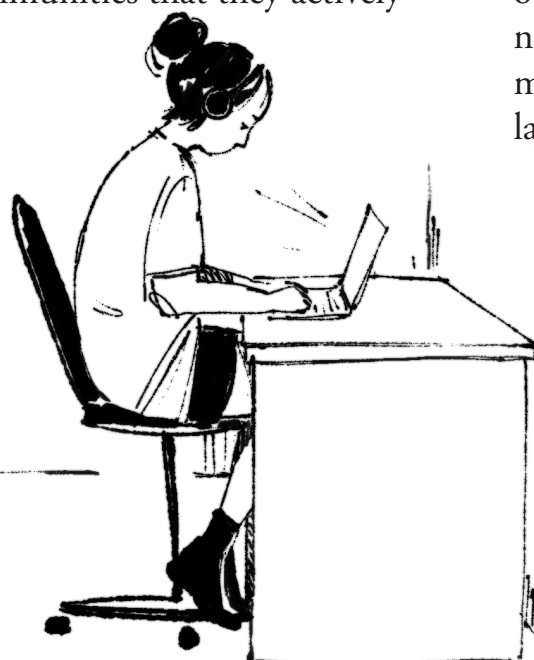
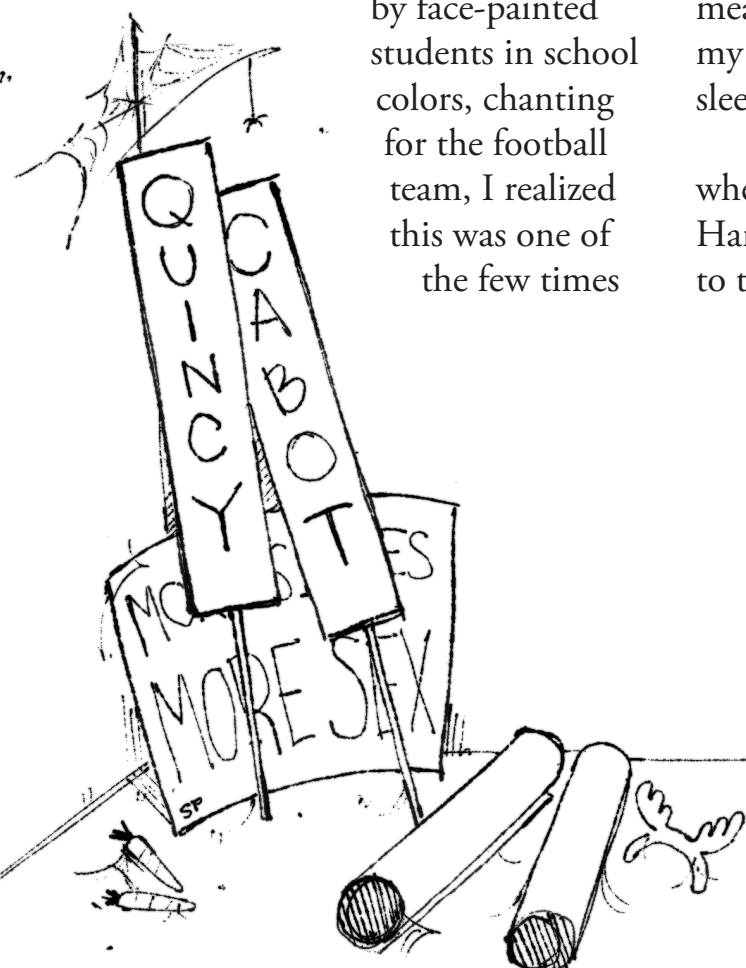
But instead of lamenting this reality, students can point to suggestions on what Harvard could be doing differently. Creating more opportunities for that kind of connection to happen regularly, not just during major events, might matter more than we think. That could mean organizing smaller, more frequent House traditions, better turnout for sports games, or even just events that make it easier for students outside their usual friend groups to show up and feel included. Events like Yardfest or the Crimson Key "Johnnies" already do this by bringing students together, and organizing more of these kinds of activities could help make that sense of connection feel more present in everyday campus life.

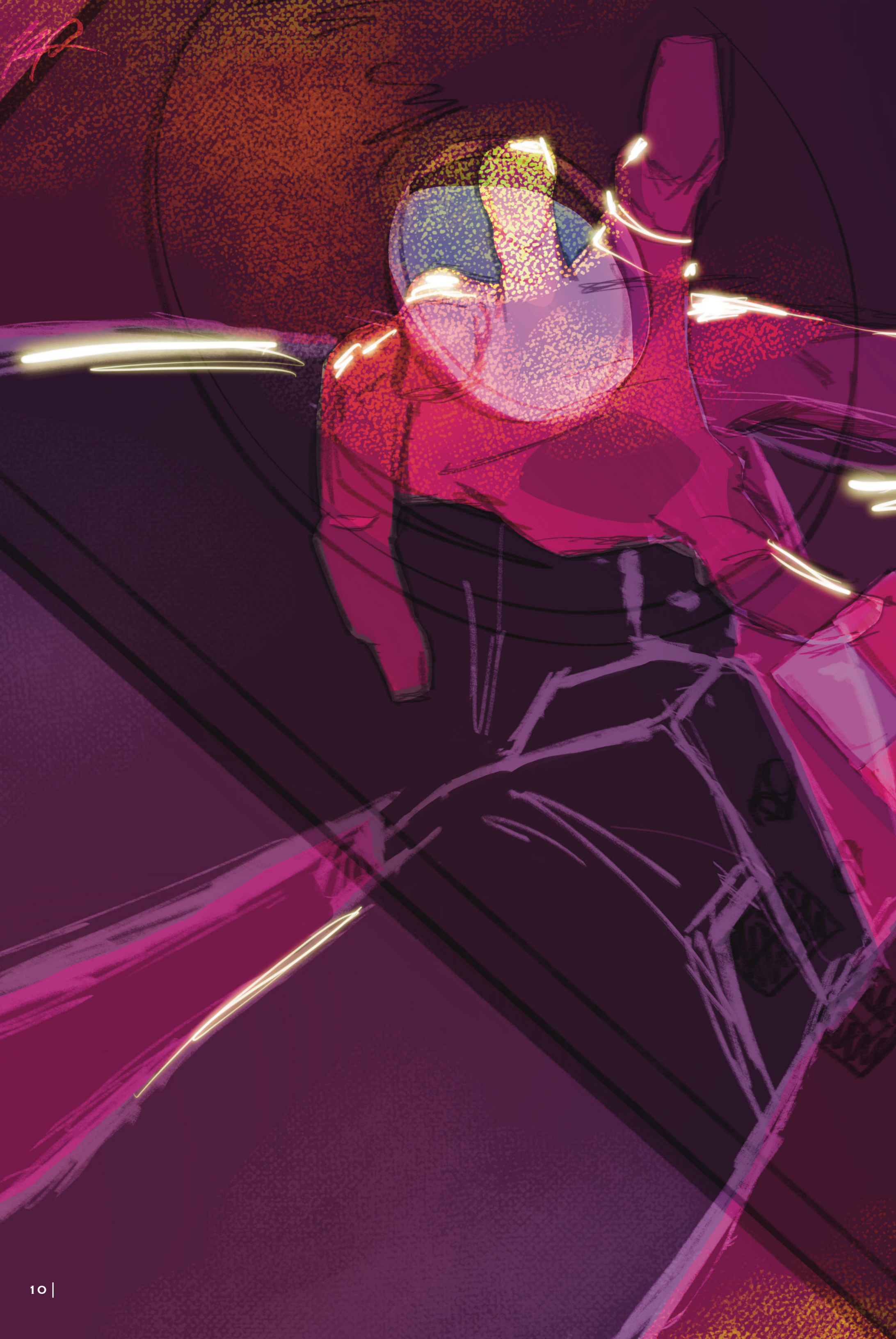
But what about those smaller moments? That gap also reflects something cultural about Harvard. Housing Day ends up shaping how we define "spirit." Loud, put-together, and impossible to ignore. Once that definition of "spirit" becomes the standard for students, however, subtler forms of community start to feel a little less significant. A single day of spectacle overshadows the small, everyday moments that make a House feel like home.

Housing Day remains one of Harvard's most popular traditions, mainly because it brings the entire school community together all at once. What makes this day so successful at building school pride is the little moments that students have with each other. A true sense of belonging isn't just created on a single morning, but is instead a result of day-to-day interactions that accumulate over time. The aim as we move forward is not to recreate Housing Day, but to create more opportunities for these moments to last.

**KATHERINE LAM '29  
(KATHERINE\_LAM@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) HAS YET TO  
FIND THAT SAME LEVEL OF  
ENTHUSIASM AT THE  
COLLEGE AGAIN.**

**GRAPHIC BY SAM PARK '29**







## Kitchen Sink No. 10

BY LUKE WAGNER '26 AND JONAH KARAFIOL '26

The ceiling had not changed. The crack ran from the corner to approximately the center of the room, branching near the light fixture into two thinner, diverging lines. My eyes had traced it so many times that I had begun to suspect it meant something—though deep down I knew it meant nothing. It was only plaster doing what plaster does when the building settles and the cold seeps into the walls and the years accumulate unnoticed until the damage is visible. By then, it is too late to do anything but look at it.

Thomas was not here. They had moved him days ago, or weeks—time does not behave in this place, it only pretends to, the way the attendants pretend to care and the doctor pretends to listen and the whole building pretends to be a hospital when it is really a container, a place where they put you when the world has decided it cannot accommodate the shape you have become. His bunk was stripped. The mattress bore the faint impression of his figure, a shallow declivity that would not survive another week. I found myself looking at it more often than I should. The sunken portrait of a man who had once been and was now removed.

I missed him—surprisingly. I had spent months resenting his breathing, his presence, his meticulous rituals, his chewing each bite 12 times, his folding the towel into quarters, the way he washed his hands as though the act of washing could reach something that soap and water had no jurisdiction over. I hated the fact of him. And now that the fact had been taken away, the room felt not empty but exposed. I felt exposed, almost as if my body had the skin pulled back, everything visible, everything too close to the surface.

...

Dr. Whitmore's office smelled of pipe tobacco and old paper, the same as always.

The fire in the grate. The bookshelves. The walled garden through the window, holding its winter

emptiness with the composure of a thing that has learned not to expect anything. I sat in the chair opposite the desk and placed my hands in my lap, deliberately, the way Thomas would have done. Thomas's mannerisms produced better outcomes in this room. The doctor preferred compliance. He mistook it for progress.

He asked how I was sleeping. I told him fine. He asked whether the dreams had returned. I told him I did not dream. He made a note, and I watched the pen move and thought about how strange it was that a man's suffering could be reduced to a mark in a book, a single gesture of the wrist, and then the page would turn and the mark would be buried under other marks, and none of it would matter.

He said he wanted to talk about the girl from the library. I said nothing. He waited. The same patience as always, which was not patience at all but a kind of professional emptiness, a refusal to fill the silence so that you would fill it yourself and give him something to write down. Thomas had spoken about her, he said. Thomas had said she was important to both of you. The word both sat in the room like a third person.

She is not something I will discuss, I said.

Whitmore watched me. His expression had changed—not the appraisal anymore but something tentative, careful, as though he had found what he was looking for and was not certain he wanted it. He set his pen down. He did not make a note. This was unusual enough that I registered it, the sudden quiet where the scratching had been, an absence louder than the sound itself.

Then he said: Tell me about your mother.

The fire shifted in the grate. A log settling into its own collapse, the soft sound of something giving way. I looked at Whitmore and found that his face had not changed, that the question had cost him nothing, that he had placed it in the room carefully, without emphasis, certain that the room would hold it. My chest tightened. Not all at once. Gradually. Finger by finger, until the hand was a fist and the fist was a different thing entirely.

I told him she died when I was seven. Then I stopped, because the fact was sufficient. The fact was what they put in the file. The fact required nothing further.

Whitmore did not write it down. He leaned back in his chair—not away from me, but into a kind of settling.

An adjustment of weight that made me understand he was not

going to let the silence do the work for him. He said Thomas had told him the same thing. The age, the winter, the illness. He said Thomas could go no further than that. But then he said something else. He said Thomas had described a voice—a woman's voice, recurring, saying a name Thomas did not recognize. No context. No scene. Just the voice, arriving and arriving, and Thomas unable to place it.

He asked if I could hear it too.

I looked at the clock on the wall and watched its hands move and thought about nothing. My chest was tight. My hands were in my lap. The clock moved, and I sat in the chair, and the room held us both, and I said nothing for what must have been a very long time.

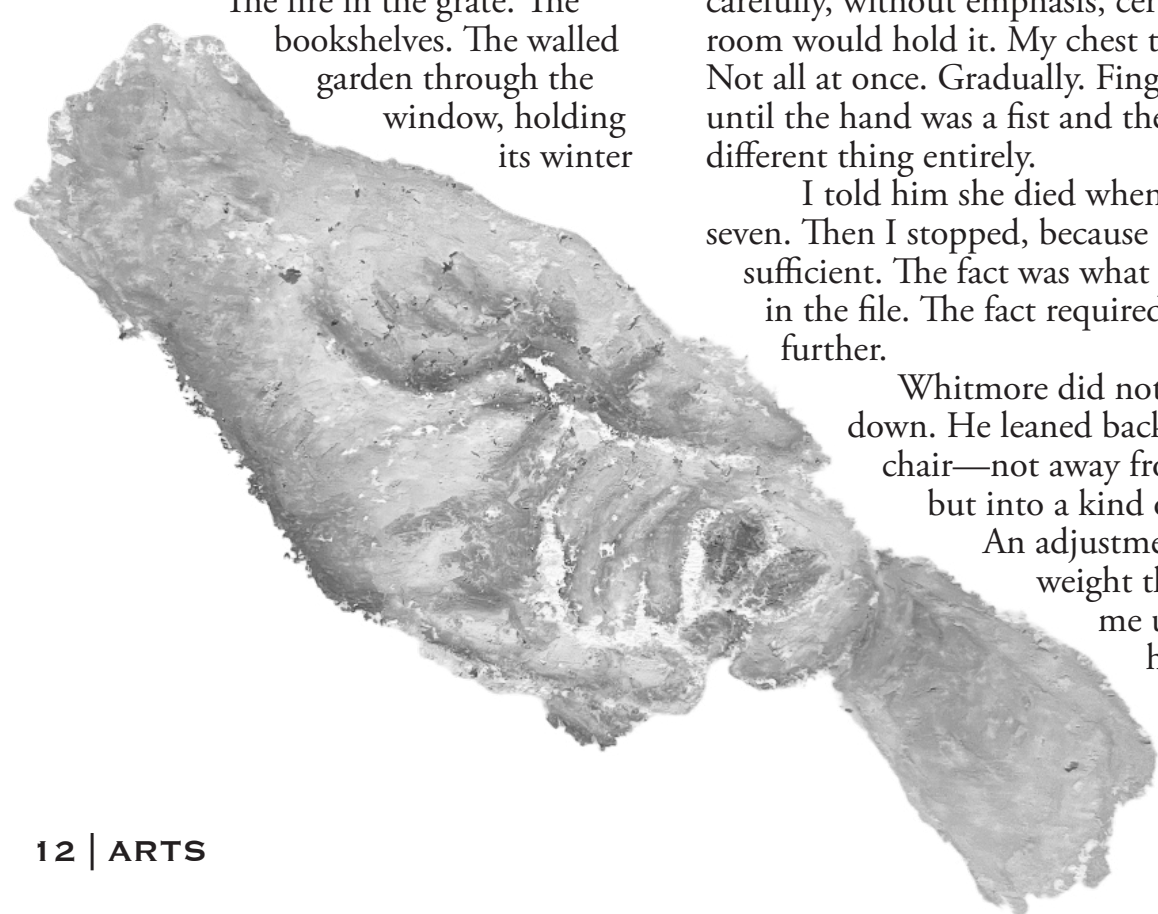
Whitmore waited. But not with a professional emptiness—rather, something nearer to patience, as though he understood that the answer to what he had asked had to travel a great distance to reach the surface.

The memory does not stop, I said. I do not know how to make it stop. Thomas—and here I paused, because I did not know what I meant to say about Thomas, only that his name had come and I had let it—Thomas does not have this problem.

I told him about the house. Not the house in Clerkenwell, not my father's house—the other house, the one before London, the one on the edge of a village whose name I could no longer say aloud because saying it made it real and I had spent years trying to make it not real. There was a garden with a wall around it, and beyond the wall a field, and beyond the field a wood where the trees grew so close together that the light could not get through. I was seven. My mother was ill. She had been ill for a long time—weeks, months, I could not have said which, because when you are seven the difference between a week and a month is not a difference of time but of endurance, and I had been enduring for as long as I could remember, which was the whole of my life, which was not very long.

The room where she was kept was upstairs. I was not supposed to go in. My father had told me this, not gently, not cruelly, only with the particular firmness of a man who believes that rules, if observed precisely enough, can prevent what they were designed to prevent. Stay downstairs. Do not go in. The doctor is with her. These instructions were clear, and I followed them as I followed all instructions—obediently, resentfully, with the growing suspicion that obedience was a trick they played on children to keep them from seeing what was actually happening.

I went in.



Not because I decided to. The distinction matters. I did not stand at the bottom of the stairs, weigh the consequences, and choose. I was downstairs, and then I was on the stairs, and then I was at the door, and then I was inside, and the sequence had no gaps, but it also had no decisions—it moved the way water moves, downhill, toward the lowest point, toward the place where everything collects.

She was in bed. The room smelled of carbolic and something else, something sweet and wrong, the smell of a body that has begun the work of leaving before the person inside it has been told. The curtains were drawn. The light was the colour of old paper. My father was not there. The doctor was not there. She was alone, and I was alone with her. The silence in the room was not the silence of peace but the silence of something that had already been decided and was merely waiting to be carried out.

I stopped. I could hear my own breathing in Whitmore's office, suddenly, the rasp of it, and I could feel the chair beneath me and the specific temperature of the room, and for a moment I was only there, only in the office, and the other room was gone and I was grateful for that, and then it came back, as it always comes back, not because I chose to return to it but because the memory does not recognise my authority to leave.

I stood at the foot of the bed. She looked at me, her eyes open but not seeing me. They were seeing something behind me, or beyond me, or inside me, something that had no shape and no name and that frightened me not because I understood it but because I could feel it—a draught from somewhere, an open window that I could not find. Her mouth moved. She said something. I heard it, and I did not hear it, and the sound of it has lived in me ever since, not as words but as a vibration, a frequency, the way a bell continues to hum after it has been struck and the sound you hear is not the original sound but its ghost.

I went to her. I took her hand. It was cold and frail, and I held it despite not knowing what holding it was supposed to do. She looked at me then. Not through me, not past me—at me. Her eyes focused, and for a moment, she was there, she was entirely there, and she said my name.

I stopped.

Not the way you stop a story, choosing the moment, placing the silence. The memory closed. It shut like a hand. I was in Whitmore's office, and I could feel the sweat on my palms and the dampness between my fingers. My hands were in my lap, and I could not remember what I had been saying or how the room in the story connected to the room I was sitting in. The fire had settled into its embers. The pen was on the desk. I breathed and did not speak.

Whitmore let the silence hold for a long time. Then he said, carefully: Thomas described what happened next. Do you want me to tell you what Thomas described, or do you want to tell me. I could not tell him. I shook my head, and the gesture cost more than anything I had said.

Whitmore spoke quietly. He said Thomas had described being found on

the floor beside the bed. The boy was sitting with his mother's hand still in his. He was not crying. He was not speaking. The father said his name, and the boy looked at him but did not respond. The doctor said his name, and the boy looked at him and did not respond.

Thomas told me, Whitmore said, that this is where his memory begins. Not before. Not the room, not the bed, not the hand. Only the floor, and the voices, and the not-answering. He said it was as though he arrived in the middle of something that had already happened, and he did not know what it was.

The room was cold. I looked at Whitmore and understood that he was holding both accounts now, Thomas's and mine, one that began where the other ended. I could tell that he was trying to press them together and that they did not fit, that the seam between them was the exact shape of what had happened in that room, and that neither of us, alone, could see it whole.

What name did she say, Whitmore asked.

My hands were pressed together in my lap, and I could feel the phantom of the washing in them, the counted seconds, the ritual that had no author anymore because its author had been taken from the room down the corridor and put somewhere I was not permitted to go, and without him the compulsion lived in me unclaimed, orphaned, a thing I performed without understanding why. Through the window, the garden held its bare branches against the grey sky, and I envied it.

She did not say Thomas, I said.

Whitmore waited.

She said a name I did not know. I was seven, and my mother was dying, and she looked at me and said a name that was not mine. I knew this the way a child knows—not with reason, not with evidence, but with the body, the way the body knows a fall before the ground arrives. She was looking at me, and she was not seeing me.

Whitmore was quiet for a very long time. Then he asked, gently, more gently than I had ever heard him: Is that when it started? The separation?

I did not answer. The question sat where he had placed it, and I could feel it there, but I could not reach it, the way you cannot reach something in a dream—your hand moves and the distance does not close.

Whitmore asked about the girl again. I told him she was not a symptom. He said he did not think she was. He asked what happened to her. I did not answer. The fire was out. The room was cold. The garden through the window held its emptiness, and I sat in the chair and breathed and did not answer, and the silence in the room was the silence of afterwards, of a thing already settled.

...

The ward is dark when I return to it. I lie on my bunk and look at the ceiling, and the crack is there, running from corner to centre, branching, diverging, holding its



shape patiently, without apology, without the need to be understood.

I close my eyes, and I am not thinking about her. I am thinking about nothing. I am thinking about the crack in the ceiling and the ward and the cold and the dark, and then she is there anyway—the girl from the library. She is shelving books. She is turning toward me. She is saying my name, and it is the right name. I did not ask for this, and I cannot make it stop. I do not want to make it stop. This is the thing I will not give Whitmore. Not the fact of her, which he already has, but this: that she called me by a name the mother never used, and I answered.

The ward breathes around me. Someone coughs. A door closes somewhere below, and the sound travels through the building the way sound travels through a body, arriving changed, stripped of its origin. Thomas's bunk is empty. The mattress holds its shallow impression in the dark, and I look at it, and I do not look away, and after a long time, I understand that I am not waiting for him to come back. I am waiting to forget that he was here.

One of us is asleep. The other is not.

**WRITTEN BY LUKE  
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**GRAPHICS BY SARAHLUNA  
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# 2000s Nostalgia and Feminism: “Mean Girls” At Harvard

Get in, loser, we’re going to the Agassiz.

BY ELLIE GUO '29

Since its release over two decades ago in 2004, “Mean Girls” has undoubtedly become a hallmark of pop culture with its iconic imagery and incredibly quotable lines. The musical adaptation made its Broadway debut in 2018, with its corresponding movie musical version hitting theaters in 2024. After making its way through many mediums, the story is now being performed on the stage of Agassiz Theater by the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club.

Performing such a well-known story comes with its challenges, but producer Lollie McKenzie '26 put her own spin on the show. At the center of the stage, a platform with two stairs leading up to it is covered in graffiti, crafted by co-scenic designers Olivia Park '27 and Anna Guerrini '29. Alongside the typical provocative imagery of vandalism, other messages read “Pit On Top,” presumably written by the band directed by Joretta Wang '29, and an apt “20% + 4,” which is sure to elicit a few laughs from students of the College.

The first big number, “It Roars,” describes how Cady Heron (Amelia Sipkin '29) moves from Kenya to Chicago. It sets up the motif of wild animals as analogous to high school students as Cady navigates the new terrain of social life. Spurned by her peers for her awkwardness, Janis and Damian befriend Cady and introduce her to the cliques of North Shore High School in the jazz number “Where Do You Belong?” On the lyric, “Here’s the sexually active band geeks,” Damian sings to the pit, and the musicians gladly return the finger to him in a hilarious moment of pit-stage interaction. During the dance break, choreographed by Leonard Wallletzky '29, the ensemble uses (suspiciously HUDS-reminiscent) lunch trays to add bursts of percussion to the music.

The fun and delight of Damian’s flamboyant number is interrupted by the ominous introduction of the Plastics. Over the years, Regina George has become the most recognizable and loved character in “Mean Girls,” despite being the main antagonist. Gabriella Medina '26 spoke to the “Independent” on her experience undertaking the role.

“I think that I am playing a very sort of sassy and messy version [of her]. I want to make people laugh as much as I can,” she said.

During “Meet the Plastics,” Regina is carried through the crowd of students while in a split, an impressive stunt representing her tight control over high school society. We are also introduced to her underlings, Gretchen Wieners (Grace Hur '28) and Karen Smith (Gabrielle Greene '27).

Cady then meets Aaron Samuels (Joao Pedro Rocha Frazao '26) in her calculus class and develops a crush. Throughout the exposition of the musical, Sipkin portrays Cady’s initial awkwardness through small gestures that bring the character to life—clenching her fists in excitement or tensely raising her knee.

The production’s commitment to the 2000s aesthetic shines through, especially in the scenes that take place in the school. The Plastics carry bedazzled pink flip phones, and their costumes’ silhouettes (designed by Lola Griffith '28) are distinctly from that era.

“It’s quite fun to be able to get back to high school for a little bit and also the 2000s and pink and capri pants and three-quarter sleeves,” McKenzie said.

The musical is inherently self-critical, as it exaggerates and mocks the tropes it employs. For

example, Karen expresses her love for dressing up on Halloween in the song “Sexy.” The choreography is perfectly over-the-top; the absurdity of social norms is further exemplified by a girl in a “sexy corn” costume. Though Karen is characterized as “stupid,” she often relays the most insightful lines in the show, such as, “This is modern feminism talking / I expect to run the world in shoes I cannot walk in.”

At the Halloween party, Cady’s dreams for Aaron are disrupted by Regina, who successfully seduces him in “Someone Gets Hurt.” Regina is lifted in the air multiple times by the male ensemble in a dramatic and heart-wrenching performance, as Cady watches from afar, devastated.

Janis and Damian concoct a plan to dethrone Regina in “Revenge Party”—by turning her friends against her and tricking her into eating Kalteen bars to make her gain weight. By the end of the first act, Cady has completely transformed—she carries a newfound confident air as she struts around the stage in a miniskirt and heels. In just over an hour, Sipkin seamlessly reduces the markers of awkwardness in her portrayal of Cady, culminating in “Fearless,” in which she sustains bright and self-assured belts.

After Cady has toppled Regina, she throws a party at her house. She becomes heavily intoxicated; in a private moment with Aaron (“More Is Better”), she admits to missing the stars in Kenya but naively believes that her current social life is more fulfilling. However, Aaron realizes that Cady has become a “mean girl” and is no longer interested in her, rejecting her advances and leaving the party.

In “World Burn,” Regina hatches a ploy to take down Cady by framing her for distributing pages of the “Burn Book” around the school, in which every student is insulted except for Cady, Gretchen, and Karen. Medina’s powerful vocals strike fear as the students throw the pages into the audience section. The male ensemble dons wigs and dresses to play the female students fighting each other—a humorous moment that simultaneously fills the stage and draws attention to the ridiculousness of the tropes in the show.

The girls eventually reconcile over a school assembly during which they make apologies to each other. Cady confronts Regina, but before the argument can escalate to a fight, Regina is suddenly hit by a bus. The screens in the theater fill with mock internet posts about the incident, including memes and a post seemingly by René Rapp, who played the role of Regina in the 2024 adaptation.

As the plot winds down, Cady confesses to having participated in writing in the Burn Book, which causes her to be suspended from school. However, her math teacher, Ms. Norbury (Rebecca Mack '27), gives her an extra credit opportunity by competing with the socially awkward Mathletes, led by Kevin G. (very aptly played by Kevin Gu '26).

The Mathletes breakdance and rap in a hilariously awful ensemble. In “Do This Thing,” Cady helps the team win the championship, unabashedly being authentic to her passion for



math while retaining her confident stance. In doing so, she redeems herself in front of Aaron, and the two share a kiss.

In the show’s finale, at the school Spring Fling, Cady is unexpectedly voted Queen of the Spring Fling but decides to share her win with the girls of her class, rejecting the social hierarchy.

Throughout the show, I noticed the attention to detail from the background actors outside the main action. I encourage audience members to pay attention to these funny side scenes that make the production unique, as well as the impressive number and speed of costume changes.

“Mean Girls” is fundamentally about feminism, as it explores the relationships between women when they are pitted against each other and the role of women in a patriarchal world.

“We also have an incredible producer team that have been looking into research in the program on ‘Mean Girls’ at Harvard and different feminist movements at Harvard over the years at Radcliffe, which is so exciting to be in the Agassiz,” McKenzie said. The Agassiz Theater is located in the former Radcliffe Yard.

However, despite the underlying commentary, McKenzie emphasizes that the show is a moment on campus for viewers to enjoy themselves in the colorful visuals and energetic dancing.

“We wanted the audience to walk away with a sense of fun and joy and nostalgia,” she concluded.

The Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club will be showing “Mean Girls” at the Agassiz Theater from April 8 to 12. Tickets can be purchased at the Harvard Box Office website.

**ELLIE GUO '29 (EGUO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS ENDLESSLY THANKFUL TO MELANIE SANCHEZ '26, PUBLICITY PRODUCER OF HRDC, FOR HER HELP IN MAKING THESE MUSICAL REVIEWS HAPPEN.**

**PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMA GREALLY '26**

# Exploration, Optimization, and the Art of Choosing Concentrations

How Harvard's culture turns intellectual curiosity into career calculus.

BY BRENDA LI '29

**H**ello everyone. I want to tell you a story about someone—someone I know, or maybe just someone you might recognize.

For convenience, I'll call this person "I." Not because this story is entirely mine, but because it's become a little too common.

So, I wanted to let you all know that after doing lots of deep intellectual reflection, countless hours of exploration, and a truly transformative journey to discover my actual interests, I will be concentrating in Economics. And maybe, if I still have time, I'll pursue a Secondary in Government.

This was not an easy decision to make, of course. When I first came to Harvard, I was actually really, really passionate about History. Like, embarrassingly passionate. I used to read for fun and had weird facts memorized. I had my opinions about the current political climate, which I voiced. But obviously, I've grown and changed a lot since then.

Now, I understand that History is important, not as a field of study, but as a personality trait. Well, almost. Something you bring up at dinners so people think you're interesting before you pivot to talking about your internship at Morgan Stanley. But anyway, here's how I made my decision.

## Step One: I explored.

I took classes across disciplines. I went to office hours. I asked myself big questions like: What do I actually care about? What gives my life meaning? What starting salary would justify my existence? What would make me look good and seem like I was doing the right thing, because that's what most people around me were doing?

## Step Two: I listened to my peers.

One person I know who was going to study Philosophy—because he was actually interested in it—is now studying Economics because he's "fascinated with decision theory," which I think is just philosophy with a spreadsheet. Another person I know who loves Art History is now concentrating in Government because she enjoys cultural policy, which I think is just Economics with feelings.

And honestly, their concentration

changes inspired me. Because if everyone else is funneling their intellectual pursuits directly into finance, who am I to resist?

## Step Three: I considered my future.

Not in a vague, existential way. But in a very normal, healthy way, where I opened LinkedIn, searched "Harvard," and blacked out for three hours. When I woke up, I had learned something important: that there are only three jobs. Consulting. Finance. Or something you have to explain.

And I just don't think I'm strong enough to explain myself.

So yes, I will be concentrating in Economics because it makes sense. And if there's one thing this experience has taught me, it is that making sense is more important than doing what I actually like. But let me be clear as well: this was entirely my choice.

No one forced me. No one said, "If you don't do Economics, you will become irrelevant and unmarketable and die alone." That would be kind of ridiculous to say. This is Harvard. We don't say things like that out loud. This might just be implied, very subtly.

And honestly, I'm also grateful for this. Before coming here, I thought choosing a concentration was only about curiosity, exploration, and maybe even joy. Now I understand that it's about optimization for most people. Why follow your interests when you can follow the market?

Speaking of which, I actually ran a quick regression on my own personality. Dependent variable: happiness. Independent variables: salary expectations, parental approval, the number of nods I get when I tell them my intended concentration, and so on.

Some people will say that this type of conforming culture is a problem, that it flattens out individuality, that it turns vibrant, curious students into slightly more polished versions of the same LinkedIn profile, but I think that's too negative. Because there is something beautiful about this. Something unifying.

We all come from different backgrounds, different countries, different interests—and yet, somehow, we all arrive at the same conclusion. That's not conformity. That's community. It's almost efficient, really. Like we've minimized

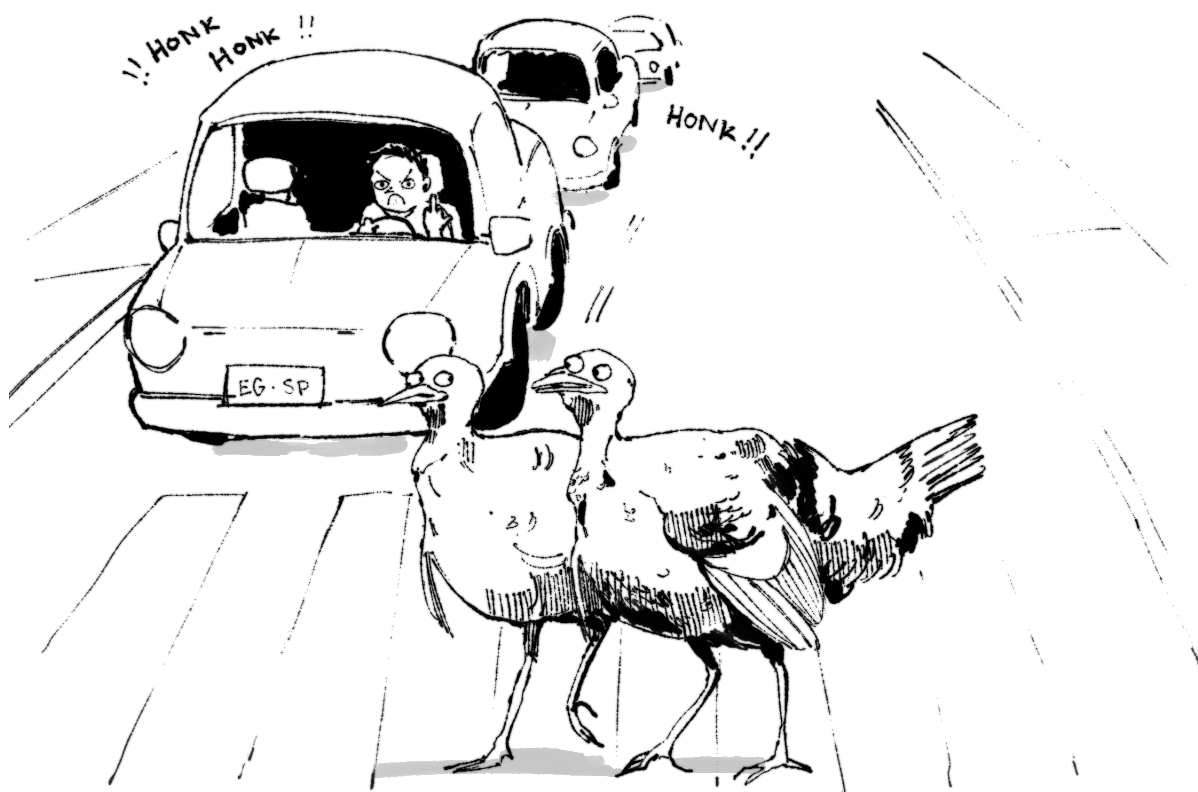
variance without even needing to coordinate. Like a perfectly competitive market, except the product is ourselves. And the equilibrium is surprisingly stable. No one really wants to deviate.

Okay, back to me. To be frank, I still engage with history. Recently, I read and learned more about the Great Depression. Which is actually super relevant, because I kind of think I'm going through one right now. But it's fine. I have a problem set due. And every time I open it, I feel something. Not passion. But something else, something colder and sharper. Something more sustainable. Something like ... market alignment?

Anyway, if someone wants to talk to me about the fall of empires or the construction of memory or literally anything that used to interest me, let me know. I'll be free after my coffee chat with a private equity firm.

**BRENDA LI '29 (BRENDALI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS COMPING THE "INDEPENDENT."**

**GRAPHIC BY ANNELISE FISHER '26**



"I love Boston—the people are so polite! They always make way for us on the road."

## City Turkeys

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY  
ELLIE GUO '29 AND  
SAM PARK '29

# On WHRB: Harvard College's Official Student-Run Radio Station

Harvard Radio Broadcasting connects Harvard to Greater Boston.

BY ELLE DU PONT '29

**W**HRB (W: East of the Mississippi River, HRB: Harvard Radio Broadcasting) 95.3 FM is Harvard's official radio station. Founded in 1940 as the Harvard Crimson Network, the station, housed in the basement of Pennypacker Hall, has been run by undergraduate students for eighty-six years, including yours truly.

WHRB's current undergraduate staff is furthering a long-standing tradition of bringing a mix of music alongside commentary for the local Cambridge community. Originally affiliated with the "Harvard Crimson," the station broke away in 1943, obtained its FM license in 1957, and merged with the station run out of Radcliffe Women's College called Radio Radcliffe in 1960. In 1995, WHRB's audience dramatically expanded to roughly the entire area within Route 495 when a new transmitter and antenna were moved to One Financial Center in downtown Boston.

"Being in WHRB has exposed me to so many new songs and genres since I'm constantly searching for lesser-known artists to play," co-general comp director of WHRB Capri Wayne '28 said. "There's a sense of exploration and discovery you get while listening to the radio that you can't really get on streaming services. Listening to the radio in the car is always how I've discovered the most new songs."

WHRB follows a similar daily music schedule so listeners can tune in to their preferred styles. Jazz music plays from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekdays, followed by classical from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m., and then the Record Hospital, WHRB's underground rock music segment, from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. On weekends, Blues and the Hillbilly Jamboree play from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m., and The Darker Side (hip-hop) airs overnight from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. News and Sports airs on Sundays at noon, following WHRB's broadcast of segments from Memorial Church's Sunday service.

Aside from regular programming, WHRB is also famous for inventing the Orgy®—derived from the word's definition as "excessive indulgence." In this case, excessive indulgence applies to one style of music. These are marathon-style broadcasts where, during Reading and Finals Week, individual DJs play programs on a specific topic, artist, or music style. Highlights include last semester's eight-hour-long Bob Marley orgy, Broadway showtunes, Bach's complete works, and more.

The Orgy's emphasis on student freedom of expression underscores the organization's fundamentally undergraduate-driven structure. WHRB's commitment to student leadership has had tangible results. "I had been going to all of these meetings and asking people, 'What organization made [people] the happiest on campus?'" WHRB News member Avani Shah-Lipman '29 said, noting that many answered the same way: WHRB, hands down.

Sure, the radio is characterized by the music it plays—WHRB recognizes this. However, live reporting is also a major part of the station. During the 1969 Harvard student occupation of University Hall, WHRB reporters were among those to interview Vietnam War

protesters and report on the ongoing political conflict. WHRB alumnus and American broadcast journalist Chris Wallace '69 actually was taken into custody by police after the protests and used his one phone call to report live from Cambridge jail, signing off with "This is Chris Wallace in custody." News at WHRB is designed to go beyond Harvard's campus, incorporating local Cambridge updates to better serve WHRB's broader audience.

"I don't do the same thing as most people on WHRB do because they mostly go on-air and news is off-air, but I got to interview my freshman seminar professor and the curator of the Glass Flowers at the Natural History Museum. So I talked about science and art in a podcast, and it went on-air a couple of months ago," Shah-Lipman expanded. WHRB News ranges from weekly headlines of local Harvard and Cambridge updates to these kinds of podcasts that do deep dives into the community. Recent shows include a piece from the Anime Convention in Boston on April 5 and an interview with an MBTA Red Line inspector.

Similarly, WHRB Sports does a lot of off-air reporting. Beyond their weekly recaps every Sunday after News, they also report on many major Harvard athletic competitions, like the Game and the Beanpot. These reports are published on the website and are done live at 1 p.m. on Sundays, providing a unique chance for Cambridge residents to get updates about local Harvard sports teams.

WHRB also hosts live events, such as a Record Hospital Fest (this year on April 11) and other regular concerts featuring local bands and artists, including many students at Harvard. This promotion of small and underground artists is one of WHRB's great advantages, for both artists and listeners.

WHRB's future remains just as bright as its storied past, remaining one of the few student-run commercial radio stations in the United States. While radio broadcasting is forecast to decline in revenue and listenership in the coming years as streaming services and other platforms for listening to music have become more popular, online radio listeners have actually increased. WHRB remains an iconic part of campus as a social institution while also providing news and entertainment to all Cambridge residents.

WHRB serves many different demographics, but a large proportion of its listeners are older. "I believe we have a lot of classical music and jazz to suit a largely older demographic," said Neeraja Kumar '27, the WHRB News director. This reflects general trends in the United States, where the demographic with the highest radio reach in the country in 2025 was men aged 55 and older. It also explains why classical music holds a 9-hour slot during prime time, and jazz is second.

The consistent interest in WHRB reflects that even though other ways of listening to music have become popular, the radio remains a staple. Radio stations, especially those that play a variety of genres, are great opportunities to discover new artists and diversify your taste in music, whether by plugging in at random moments or by regularly listening to one DJ.

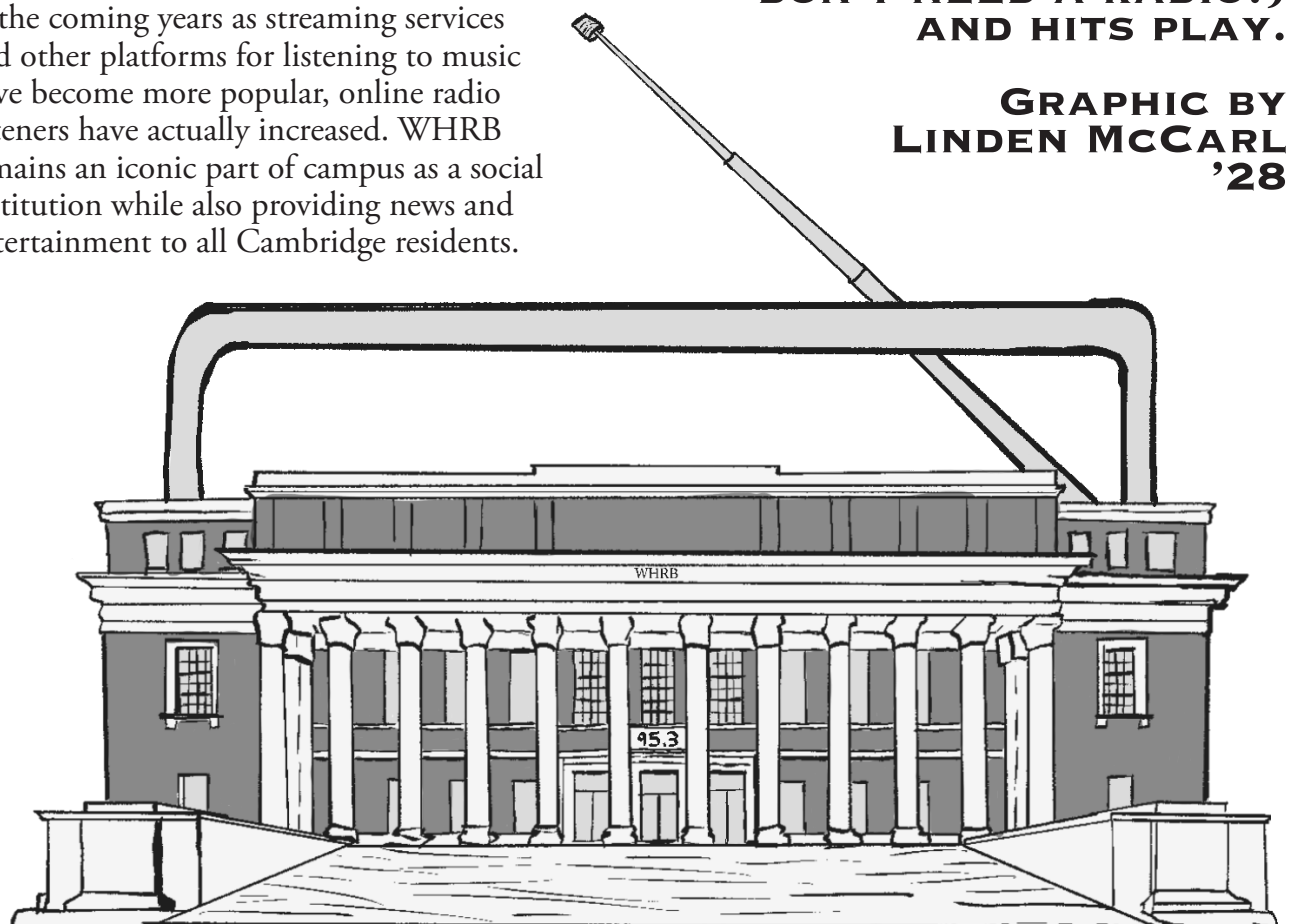
Beyond that, radio stations build community. Listeners across Boston—and even the country—tune in to WHRB together. A connection forms between Harvard students and the larger Boston community that is not always present otherwise. "Getting to take air and receive calls from listeners showing their appreciation is really cool," Wayne said.

WHRB provides a unique opportunity for students to learn new skills and expand their horizons, while also remaining a notably welcoming and accessible organization. The club occupies a unique spot in Cambridge's heart as well, bridging the gap between Harvard and the city every day as people tune in during their work and school commutes.

"It's taught me that you should seek out those spaces on campus that make you happy," Shah-Lipman concluded.

**ELLE DU PONT '29  
(EDUPONT@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) HIGHLY  
RECOMMENDS EVERYONE  
GO TO WHRB.ORG (YOU  
DON'T NEED A RADIO!)  
AND HITS PLAY.**

**GRAPHIC BY  
LINDEN MCCARL  
'28**



# Audiobooks on Our Minds

An innovative approach to a long-honored hobby.

BY ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26

Growing up, I proudly wore the title of “bookworm.” I completed every classroom reading challenge, spent my summer breaks combing through bookshelves, and my most prized possession was my public library card.

Every time my family moved, I made sure to get a replacement card (or two). I became such a prolific page-turner that my mother gave up on protesting my reading late into the night, giving me a bedside lamp that allowed me to become acquainted with Ally Carter, James Patterson, and John Green, who introduced me to Cammie Morgan, Max Ride, and Hazel Grace Lancaster.

Unfortunately, my reading habit began to wane when I entered high school. Reading for pleasure was often sacrificed for my coursework and annotating texts for my literature classes. Fortunately, I actually found many of the assigned classic and contemporary novels to be interesting. Instead of bemoaning required texts, I embraced all the life lessons I could learn from them. For example, I lost my ability to understand why people like to compare themselves to William Shakespeare’s “star-crossed lovers.”

But then came college. As a STEM concentrator, I longed for a return to reading for pleasure before bed. However, I would instead find myself up past midnight, slowly evolving into a Lamonster. As many of my peers would also come to realize, life is not just about scientific studies! But thankfully, my quantitative exploits have brought me back to audiobooks.

I was first drawn to this form of media after learning that it was included with the free online services offered by my hometown public library. With help from the app “Hoopla,” which allows users to borrow ebooks and audiobooks through partnerships with local public libraries, I could conveniently access audiobooks of great works through my phone or laptop. I still recall using it in middle school to listen to a class text at 2x speed to finish an assignment faster. Now, these narratives serve as my background noise while doing laundry, riding the shuttle, and pipetting. It’s the best way for me to return to my oldest hobby as a busy college student.

I’m not alone in this endeavor. For instance, Gabriela Rojas of Florida International University described in a “Her Campus” blog post how reading had similarly been a beloved childhood hobby that she had lost to the growing responsibilities of college life. Much like me, she turned to audiobooks to retain her adolescent passion—but now with an added convenient twist.

“What used to feel like ‘lost’

time—doing laundry, washing dishes, or cleaning my apartment—has turned into valuable reading time. I actually enjoy these chores now,” Rojas continued.

While audiobooks are a great option for collegiate bibliophiles, they are not without their critics. Some may worry that listening alone does not allow people to fully comprehend books the same way they could while reading. According to the University of Delaware, reading text requires us to decode the meanings and patterns of written symbols. Listening, however, relies on different parts of our brains, allowing us to interpret the meaning of words by examining tone and word choice in real time.

Though reading a physical text and listening exercise different parts of our brain, both are mentally invigorating, just in different ways. However, when going through more complex texts, a slower, close reading of a physical text may be helpful for comprehension. This is especially evident when compared to someone struggling to understand fast speech in real time with audiobooks. On the other hand, audiobooks make reading as a hobby more accessible to people with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, who may find themselves frustrated when grappling with written words. Multitasking (e.g., doing chores) while listening to audiobooks may reduce retention, but I still think it’s a great option for students who are short on time. Most audiobook platforms also allow users to adjust audio speed and volume to aid comfort and comprehension.

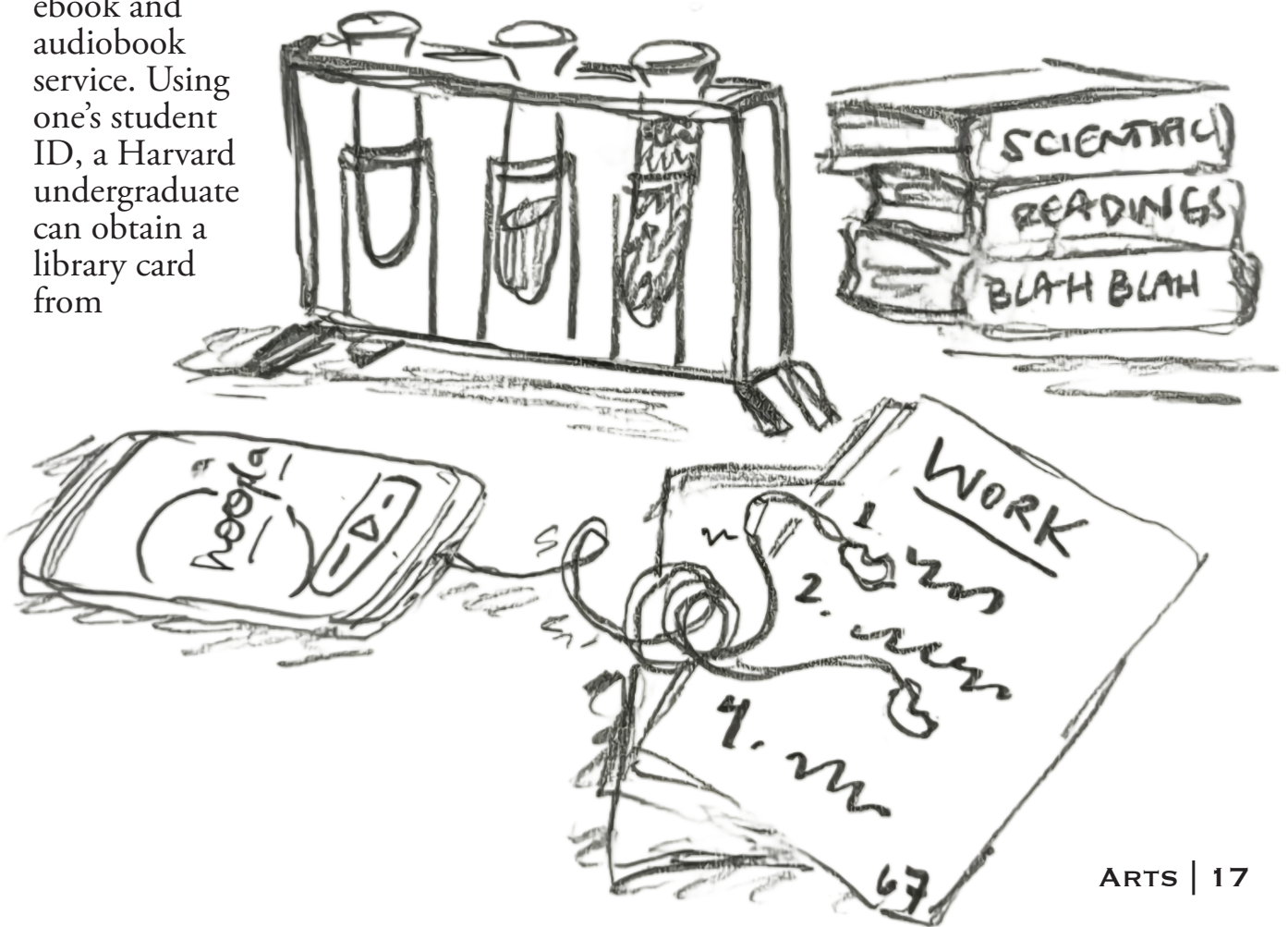
Harvard students have many convenient options for accessing audiobooks. Both the Cambridge Public Library and the Boston Public Library have partnerships with Libby, a free ebook and audiobook service. Using one’s student ID, a Harvard undergraduate can obtain a library card from

either or both libraries, granting them access to up to 20 audiobooks per month. Cambridge Public Library also partners with a similar app, “Hoopla.” Other public libraries across the nation have similar partnerships, so even postgrads can take advantage of this.

The next time scrolling through YouTube fails to give you the perfect background video for folding laundry or eating dinner, try an audiobook. You know you’ve missed it. After all, your next friends may just be Agatha Christie, Freida McFadden, or even former Mather House resident, Julia Quinn ’92. I’m sure they’d be more than happy to connect you with the fascinating Hercule Poirot, Blake Porter, and Lady Whistledown.

**ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26  
(AADEBAYO@COLLEGE.  
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PLACED A HOLD ON “GOING  
TO MEET THE MAN” BY  
JAMES BALDWIN THROUGH  
LIBBY.**

**GRAPHIC BY ANNABELLA  
BURTON-BOONE '29**



# SPORTS

## Running For Alzheimer's Disease

Maggie Chiapetta-Uberti '26 to run the Boston Marathon for her mom and Alzheimer's awareness.

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

**D**o you ever get the feeling that Harvard students live double lives? Well, you wouldn't be far off—most of them do.

Kirkland senior, Maggie Chiapetta-Uberti '26, is no exception. When she isn't rehearsing with the Harvard Opportunes, Chiapetta-Uberti advocates for Alzheimer's awareness by sharing her mother's journey on social media. As part of her advocacy, Chiapetta-Uberti is running this year's Boston Marathon for Team End ALZ to raise money and awareness for the disease.

"My mom, Lainee, is the coolest person I know," Chiapetta-Uberti said in an interview with the "Independent." "She is incredibly witty, the life of the party, and is always creating the fun in every space she enters. She has this rare ability to make people feel seen and like they belong, no matter who they are."

While most of us struggled with what felt like the catastrophes of hormonal acne or a messy Snapchat situation, a 14-year-old Chiapetta-Uberti navigated her mother's life-altering diagnosis with early-onset Alzheimer's at the age of 58.

Understandably, Chiapetta-Uberti remembers feeling as if her mother's unexpected diagnosis was not real: "I had such a fixed idea of Alzheimer's as something that only older people get, so it just didn't make sense to me that it could be happening to my mom." Still, the diagnosis reshaped her family's reality in ways they could not escape.

To give a very simple definition, Alzheimer's is a terminal neurodegenerative disease that progressively destroys a person's memory and cognition. Its impact is devastating. Even on the smallest scale, Alzheimer's hinders the daily life of those affected—and their loved ones, especially when it affects someone's mother at such a young age.

"It's funny because at the time I felt so grown and mature, but looking back, I really had no idea what that diagnosis actually meant," Chiapetta-Uberti explained. "I was trying to understand a disease I had never really thought about, while also watching someone I knew so well begin to change ... it was hard to process because it's not something temporary or something that gets better. And so that permanence made it feel even more overwhelming."

As only a freshman in high school, Chiapetta-Uberti didn't know anyone whose parents had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. In addition to coming to terms with what seemed like an impossible diagnosis, Chiapetta-Uberti said, "I remember really yearning for a sense of community and for someone who understood what this felt like."

As a result, she began attending classes, support groups, and community events with her sister, gaining that desired sense of community and strengthening her own advocacy. "I was also frustrated by how little I felt I could actually do. I wanted to understand the disease better, and I wanted

to be part of the fight against it," she said. Seeing others who were impacted by the disease come together, Chiapetta-Uberti felt motivated to start speaking out about her own experiences.

The beginning of her advocacy journey also exposed her to the stigma surrounding Alzheimer's disease. The stigma has wide-ranging effects, including delayed diagnoses, social isolation, and a reduced quality of life. Because the disease fundamentally alters aspects of a person, it also makes conversations between families and caregivers especially emotionally charged. Even Chiapetta-Uberti did not tell anyone about her mom's diagnosis until the end of her senior year of high school, a choice she regrets in retrospect, since it only further contributed to the negative perception around her mom's disease.

Now, having learned from her personal experiences how this stigma prevents discussion about Alzheimer's, Chiapetta-Uberti prioritizes breaking down the isolation she felt after her mother's diagnosis. "A big part of my advocacy is about making sure others don't feel alone and also being honest about the reality of the disease and the moments of love and connection that still exist within it," she explained.

Since coming to Harvard, Chiapetta-Uberti has expanded her connections with the Alzheimer's community while deepening her engagement through research. She joined an Alzheimer's research lab at the Genetics and Aging Research Unit, learning from leading researchers like Dr. Rudolph Tanzi. And, recently, she finalized her senior thesis in Neuroscience, where she looked at tau protein and its role in the disease progression of Alzheimer's.

Outside of developing her advocacy and knowledge of Alzheimer's disease, her mother's diagnosis forced Chiapetta-Uberti to mature in ways that she wasn't prepared for. For one, she believes that it has given her a more insightful outlook on life and the value of being present.

"I don't take time for granted in the same way anymore. I've learned to appreciate moments as they are, without always comparing them to how things used to be or worrying about what's coming next," Chiapetta-Uberti said.

"I've become more patient, more empathetic, and through meeting different people affected by this disease, I think I've become more aware of how much people can be carrying that you might not see."

With the Boston Marathon on the horizon, Chiapetta-Uberti says her shared love for running with her mom motivated her to run for Team End ALZ.

"Running has always been something that connects me to my mom," Chiapetta-Uberti said. She described her mom, Lainee, as "a beast in track and field" and that she inherited her love for running. "When I was thinking about how I wanted to show up for her and for this disease, the Boston Marathon felt like the most meaningful way to do that."

Chiapetta-Uberti has taken to social media, posting informational videos and documenting her training for the marathon. Her videos capture moments of daily life with Alzheimer's, including small moments like running laps around her mom, exchanging high fives as she takes her daily, 2.5-mile walk so that she does not get lost, or hosting a spelling bee during their morning coffee and laughing at her inability to spell words like "salad." It is moments like these that help people realize that Alzheimer's is a disease that affects real families and real people.

"This journey has been difficult but also incredibly beautiful and has helped me find a lot of meaning in being there for my mom fully and unconditionally," Chiapetta-Uberti said. "I'm so so grateful to have had this unique opportunity to run for my mom and to carry her with me every step of the way."

**MEGAN LEGAULT '28  
(MLEGAULT@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) URGES  
EVERYONE TO DONATE  
TO CHIAPETTA-UBERTI'S  
FUNDRAISER!**

**GRAPHIC BY CAMERON  
BERNIER '29**



# Seasons in Bloom

A recap of the Harvard sports that concluded this spring.

BY TYLER DANG '28

With April upon us, it's difficult to process that the 2025-26 academic year is almost over. Many Harvard teams have similarly wrapped up their seasons. With some sports falling under the radar, it's only fair to give them their flowers and recap each team's season.

## Basketball

It may be a little awkward to include basketball as a "spring" sport since the teams have been playing since the end of October, but the season truly extends through the spring. Both the men's and women's teams had phenomenal seasons: the men's team finished with a 17-12 record, while the women's team finished 18-11. Against Ivy League teams specifically, both teams also boasted winning records.

The men's team had some thrilling games throughout the season, including a tight overtime victory over Princeton and a Senior Night win over Columbia. Their season came to a close in a two-point loss in the Ivy League Semifinals to the University of Pennsylvania. We should still celebrate the amazing displays of grit and talent throughout the season.

The women's team made a deeper postseason run, making it to the Ivy League Championship game, where they eventually fell to Princeton. Still, the team was invited to the Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament, where they continued to put up strong performances. Two victories against Navy and Eastern Kentucky University put the women in the quarterfinals, but their season ended in a tough battle against the ranked Wisconsin team.

Both teams return developing talent, so stay tuned for next season.

## Fencing

Similar to basketball, the fencing teams actually started competing back in November, but just finished this March. At the Ohio State Invitational, both the men's and women's teams performed strongly against some of the best collegiate competition in the country. The women dominated with an 8-0 record as a team, and the men followed with a 7-1 record.

Continuing that success, both teams swept their three matches at the Beanpot. Both teams prevailed over Brandeis, Boston College, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. However, the teams faced adversity in January at the St. John's Super Cup. During a tough day of back-to-back bouts, the women dropped three of five matches while the men dropped four.

The teams couldn't dwell on the loss as their focus was on the Ivy League Tournament. Over a weekend of fierce bouts, the men brought back the trophy; meanwhile, the women came very close, but lost the chance to become back-to-back champions on a tiebreaker point.

Their seasons concluded a month later at the NCAA Championship. While both teams finished fourth in the team standings, individually, there were outstanding performances. Colin Heathcock '28 tied for third in men's saber. Jessica Zi Jia Guo '27 won first in women's foil, becoming a two-time NCAA Women's Foil National Champion and joining only two other students in Harvard history to win multiple titles.

## Squash

No, not the fall vegetable, the squash teams also saw their seasons come to a close in March. Both the men's and women's teams held onto winning records and a 4-2 record against

Ivy League counterparts.

The teams started hot, both going 5-0 before the College Squash Association Individual National Championships. Over the five-day tournament, many put on amazing displays, but it was Caroline Fouts '28 who stood out, battling to the championship match before falling to the first seed.

After a couple more matches, both teams geared up for the Ivy League tournament. Unfortunately, both lost in nail-biting 4-5 scores: the men fell in the championship, and the women in the semifinals. However, one final tournament remained: the CSA Team National Championships. Again, though the results were not what the teams wanted: the women lost to Princeton in the semifinals, and the men lost to Trinity in the championship match.

"This season was a lot of fun, and the team definitely grew a lot throughout the season ... I am super proud of the potential of this team, and although we didn't reach our main goal of winning Nationals, there were many other wins throughout the season!" Co-Captain Fouts said to the "Independent."

## Swimming and Diving

Another October-to-March sport, the men's and women's swimming and diving teams put on a show this season, finishing with 8-1 and 9-1 records, respectively. Both teams dominated early, with quick five-win runs, before competing in the Minnesota Invitational, where both finished third.

Their next big meet would be the Harvard-Yale-Princeton meet, where both teams would beat Yale but fall to Princeton. Just a month later, the teams competed in the Ivy League Championships, where they finished in third. Anya Mostek '26 and Nina Janmyr '26 were named the Career High Point Swimmer and Career High Point Diver for their outstanding collegiate careers.

Next came the NCAA Zone A Diving Championships, where Harvard would continue to put up strong performances. While none of the male divers qualified for the Championships in Atlanta, Janmyr clinched a spot. Alongside Janmyr, the women sent three others: Mostek, Sydney Lu '26, and Alexandra Bastone '27, and the men two: Adriano Ariotti '28 and William Mulgrew '29.

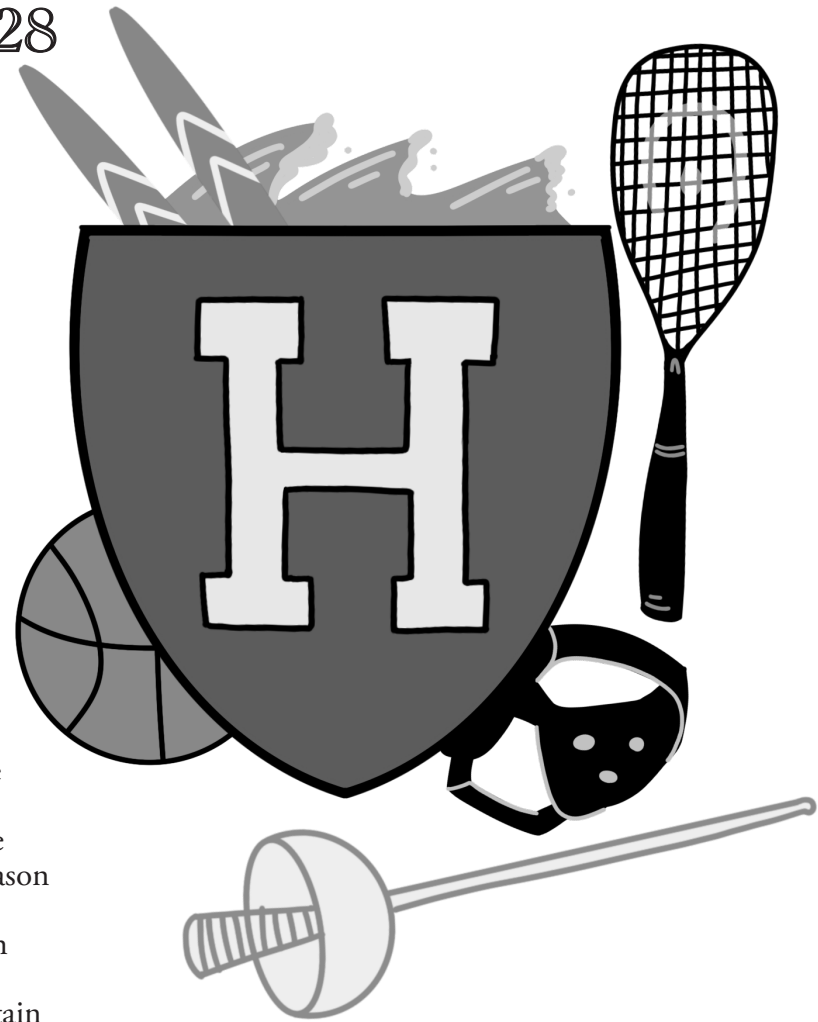
Though none medaled, they demonstrated great discipline and strength throughout the week-long tournament. For many of the women, this marks the end of their great collegiate careers—and others look to maintain this high level of performance.

## Skiing

The teams saw phenomenal individual performances throughout the season. Beginning just after the new year, they would compete in the St. Lawrence Carnival in New York for the Nordic side, followed by the Alpine section of the Colby Carnival in Maine, then back to St. Lawrence to finish Alpine, and finally returning to Colby for Nordic. Confused? Me too.

While the team did not place as a team, many individuals consistently finished in the top 30, including the "Independent's" own Clara Lake '27 and Breagh Bridge '27. Both men and women continued to compete before the March NCAA Championships in Utah.

Three skiers represented Harvard in the championships, with Luke Kearing '26, Duncan



Armstrong '28, and Meredith Schwartz '27 all qualifying. Though no one placed in the top 10, there was much to be proud of as the team looks to continue its upward momentum. Men's team captain Bennett Hutchison '28, relayed his excitement for the future of the team. "It was overall a really motivating season for the team; it really felt to me like we are on the brink of having a pretty big breakthrough," he told the "Independent."

## Wrestling

The men's wrestling team had a tough season, finishing at .500 with a 6-6 record. Beginning back in November, the team battled throughout the season against elite talent. The team emerged victorious against Princeton and Brown, but fell to other Ivy League teams. In the Ivy League Championship at the beginning of March, the team placed sixth. Still, there were standouts from the Crimson.

Senior Jimmy Harrington '26 placed fourth in his weight class to secure a spot in the NCAA Championships. In Cleveland, Harrington won his first bout against the No. 13 wrestler. While he would fall to the fourth-best-ranked in the next round, Harrington's back-to-back appearances at the big stage are impressive. Moreover, the team was awarded the D1 Team Scholar All-American Award for the wrestlers' excellence academically and athletically.

## To the Rest

Many sports are still ongoing throughout the semester or are just about to finish up. Regardless of the sport or level of success this season, we should recognize the effort, dedication, and talent it takes to even compete at Harvard. Many of these athletes continue to maintain the difficult balance of excelling in academics and athletics, which should be celebrated.

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