

MAY 28, 2026

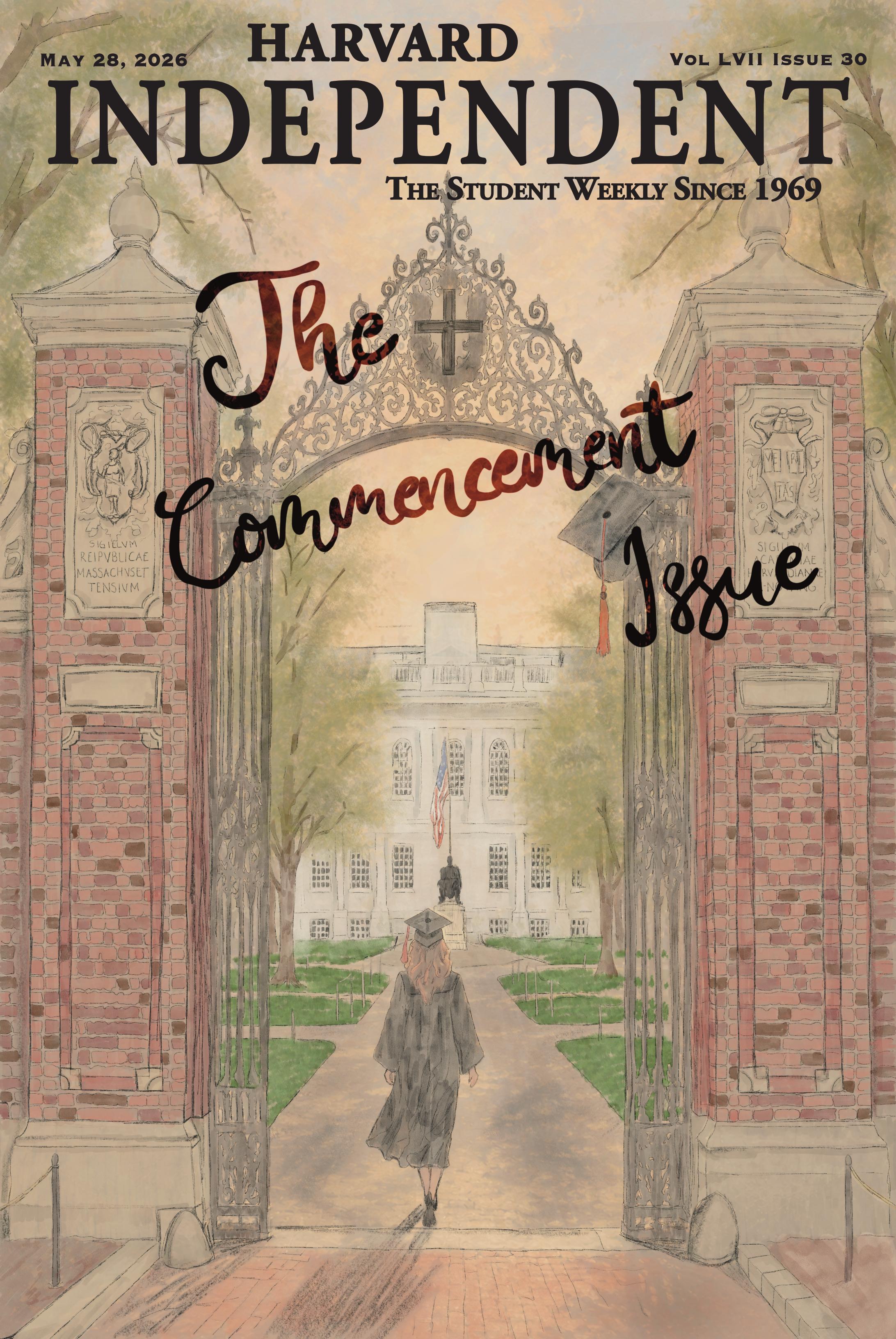
HARVARD

VOL LVII ISSUE 30

INDEPENDENT

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

The Commencement Issue



CONTENTS

3. **Dr. Jason Furman Becomes Director of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government**
by Julia Bouchut '29
4. **A Conversation with Harvard College Undergraduate Commencement Speaker Noah Eckstein**
by Rania Jones '27
5. **Money Up, Admissions Down: Harvard's Endowment Management Amidst Crisis**
by Lucy Duncan '28
6. **Harvard's Arnold Arboretum Continues to Prevent Redevelopment of Poor Clare Nuns' Monastery**
by Elle Du Pont '29
8. **A Walk in the Park**
by Mia Wilcox '28
9. **New Virus, Old Wounds**
by Aurora Charbonneau '29
10. **Appreciate Harvard Yard**
by SarahLuna Sassine '29
11. **Buddhist Monks**
by Ellie Guo '29 & Sam Park '29
12. **Congratulations Class of 2026**
by Riley Cullinan '27

14. **A Drag Path**
by Noah Basden '29
15. **Exploring Worldwide Hometowns: Battle Creek, Michigan**
by Calvin Frank '28
16. **Kitchen Sink No. 15**
by Luke Wagner '26 & Jonah Karafiol '26
18. **The New Gilded Age**
by Seyi Amosun '29
19. **Your Guide to Summer Music Festivals**
by Lucy Duncan '28
20. **New Beginnings Reading List**
by Eden Bridge-Hayes '29
21. **The Last Hurrah-ward: Ideals and Advice From a Departing Senior**
by Rohan Tyagi '29 & Aurora Charbonneau '29
22. **Who Do You Root for When There Is No Home Team?**
by Megan Legault '28
23. **A Different Side of the Derby**
by Seyi Amosun '29
24. **Setting on Harvard**
by SarahLuna Sassine '29

About the "Independent"

As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newsmagazine, the "Harvard Independent" provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The "Independent" has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

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

MASTHEAD

EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: Mia Tavares '27
Editor-in-Chief: Rania Jones '27
Vice President: Patrick Sliz '27
Managing Editor: Sara Kumar '27
Head of Design: Amelie Lima '27
Head of Finance: Meena Behringer '27

EDITORIAL BOARD

News Editor: Courtney Hines '28
Forum Editor: Mia Wilcox '28
Arts Editor: Calvin Frank '28
Sports Editor: Tyler Dang '28
Editorial Comp Director: David Daniel '28
Associate News Editor: Julia Bouchut '29
Associate Forum Editor: Cloris Shi '29
Associate Arts Editor: Ellie Guo '29
Associate Sports Editor: Megan Legault '28
Associate Editorial Comp Director: Lucy Duncan '28
Game Designer: Chau Nguyen '29
Copy Editor: Sonia Singh '29
Copy Editor: Audrey Wu '29
Copy Editor: Seyi Amosun '29

BUSINESS BOARD

Business Director: Keith Hannon '27
Associate Business Director: Sophia Gonzalez '28
Operations Director: Anya Govil '28
Advertising Director: Hudson Byrd '28
Programs Director: Whitney Ford '28
Marketing Director: Katalin Mazansky '29
Associate Operations Director: Safa Ahmad '29
Associate Programs Director: Aaron Massachi '29
Business and Multimedia Comp Director: Matthew Moore '27

MULTIMEDIA BOARD

Multimedia Director: Jordan Wasserberger '27
Website Director: Janelle Souro '28
Video & Podcast Director: Aviya Madar '29
Photo Director: Osa Unuigbe '29

DESIGN BOARD

Design Editor: Cameron Bernier '29
Design Editor: Nuala Mernin '29
Art Director: Angie Li '28
Art Director: Neshama Ryman '28
Covers Editor: Riley Cullinan '27
Covers Editor: Emma Crago '28
Merch Director & Head of InDesign Education: Kerrie Zhu '28
Design Comp Director: Trischelle Afihene '27
Design Comp Director: Mia Stewart '29

STAFF WRITERS

Abby Li '29, Adedoyin Adebayo '26, Adin Hootnick '29, Aidan Gallagher '29, Alejandro Sanchez '26, Alexandra Otto '28, Asher Meron '29, Audrey Adam '27, Aurora Charbonneau '29, Ben Kaufman '28, Brenda Li '29, Britney Ampadu '28, Caroline Stohrer '28, Claire Chung '29, Eden Bridge-Hayes '29, Elisa See '28, Ella Ricketts '28, Elle du Pont '29, Elle Huang '29, Erik Stauffer '29, Fred Klein '28, Hailey Kim '29, Heidi Heffelfinger '26, Ilana Feder '26, Ishaan Tewari '28, Jocelyne Delgado '28, Jonah Karafiol '26, Katherine Chung '29, Katherine Lam '29, Kate Oliver '26, Kayla Reifel '26, Laura Cremer '29, Layla Chaaraoui '26, Luke Wagner '26, Miriam Tsegay '29, Morgan Jay '29, Nashla Turicos '28, Natalie Cooper '28, Noah H Basden '29, Olivia Lunseth '28, Paige Cornelius '28, Philipos Alebachew '29, Pippa Lee '28, Raina Wang '28, Sidney Regelbrugge '28, Rohan Tyagi '29, Taylor Thorne '28, Téa Shouldice '29, Tilly Butterworth '28, Vivian Ye '27, Zaid Al-Ississ '28

BUSINESS & OPERATIONS STAFF

Alex Mullen '29, Alicia Moy '28, Amanda Campos '28, Amelie Zucker '28, Anika Chakravarthy '29, Anna Shao '28, Anthony Goenaga '26, Anthony Wang '29, Anusha Kadiyala '27, Ari Gold '29, Ben Kaufman '28, Breagh Bridge '27, Britney Ampadu '28, Brooklyn Sandridge '27, Caroline Bae '28, Christine Choi '29, Clara Thiele '28, Daniel Rosario '27, Denise

Pan '29, Diana Senkivskyy '28, Ella Bikoff '27, Eliza Glaeser '28, Filip Vujanic '28, Giulia Viacava '28, Grace Denious '29, Han Nguyen '27, Helen Hou '28, Isabella Andrade '27, Jackie Stjernfeldt '28, James Dyalchand-Ericson '28, Jeffery Yeo '28, John Sogutlu '28, Joshua Rodriguez Ortiz '28, Katie Merriam '26, Kyler Rno '28, Lauren Mitchell '28, Maddie Bailey '28, Malak Sannoun '28, Maria Greenland '29, Maya Eisner '29, Rhea Werner '29, Riya Hegde '29, Ryan Irving '27, Samuel Posten '29, Sara Braun '29, Sasha Cavell '29, Satvika Singh '29, Sofia Branco '28, Sophia Craiutu '29, Tomas Arroyo '27, Triscia Afihene '27, Uzochi Orji '29, Wallace Selph '29, Wessal Bakry '28, Zoe Li-Khan '29

DESIGN STAFF

Allyson Xu '28, Alma Russell '26, Annabella Burton-Boone '29, Annelise Fisher '26, Caleb Boyce '29, Cara Cronin '28, Christiana Zembrowski '28, Christie Beckley '27, Clara Lake '27, El Richards '26, Emily Pallan '27, James Foss '29, Joye Wingard '28, Justin Ma '29, Katharine Weiner '29, Kayla Le '28, Kelly Tung '27, Linden McCarl '28, Lucie Stefanoni '27, Madison Krug '27, Miranda Chao Hwan '28, Reeve Sykes '26, Sage Willey '29, Sam Park '29, SarahLuna Sassine '29, Sophia Rascoff '27

THE SUSTAINERS

The Sustainers are a group of "Independent" alumni committed to supporting our mission by funding one month of office rent each year for at least five years.

MARK SHIELDS '70
JIM VASEFF '71
DAVID SMITH '75
RANDY BUCKLIN '82
MARK PELOFSKY '84
JULIE DAM '93
WILL RECKLER '99

Dr. Jason Furman Becomes Director of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government

Furman discusses his plans for the Center and his experience with economic policy.

BY JULIA BOUCHUT '29

COn April 30, 2026, Aetna Professor of the Practice of Economic Policy Jason Furman '92 was announced as the next co-director of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, previously held by former Charles W. Eliot University Professor and Harvard University President Emeritus Larry Summers '82, who resigned from the University following the release of files detailing his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein.

Prior to joining Harvard's faculty, Furman worked in the White House for 10 years, spending two years under Clinton and eight under Obama. During his time in Washington, Furman chaired the Council of Economic Advisers.

Furman continues the precedent established by Summers, who came into the role after serving in the White House as director of the National Economic Council, as the economy stabilized from the 2008 recession. During his time as director, Summers sought to examine shifts in the global economic order, the effects of new technologies, and the outcomes of the economic crisis. In his leadership role, Furman seeks to expand the Center by bringing in more faculty from across the University, increasing undergraduate involvement, and deepening M-RCBG's focus on AI.

Furman currently leads the M-RCBG alongside Public Policy Lecturer John Haigh '82, who has served as co-director since 2011.

The M-RCBG aims to generate research and policy analysis for issues involving the public and private sectors. The Center produces policy research in four fields: enduring prosperity; energy, the environment, and technology; China and the global economy; and market capitalism.

"The through line for all of them is that you can't think about the economy without thinking about the role that businesses have in the economy and the role the government has in the economy," Furman said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent."

Each area includes several ongoing projects, dedicated to specific topics such as education policy, climate policy, and corporate responsibility. Many of the programs also have fellowships; for example, the Global Food Systems Program offers the Ray Goldberg Student Fellowship for students interested in researching food and agricultural production and policy.



In the wake of recent political tension on Harvard's campus, the Center has remained bipartisan.

"The Center operates under Harvard's institutional neutrality rules, so it does not have its own policies that it's pushing," Furman explained. "The goal would be to always have different voices, different perspectives at the table, and so it's convening a forum that better ideas would emerge from, as opposed to endorsing and pushing a specific solution."

Institutional neutrality does not mean avoiding politics; affiliates of the Center recognize the importance of international leaders in setting the tone for the public and private spheres. "We recently met together with them in Beijing to basically build mutual understanding and better bridges around a number of the most difficult issues around globalization," Furman explained. He also has interfaced with members of the Federal Reserve System and Chinese economists.

Building this network of policymakers bolsters student education, which Furman notes the Center already expands beyond the College curriculum via research. "Another thing we're trying to do is get students to just learn and carry things forward. This isn't a think tank in Washington, where your goal is to change legislation tomorrow," he said. "Our goal is as much to help students know how to do it even better in the future than we know how to do it now, and to bring more faculty onto it."

With this in mind, one of Furman's goals as director is to expand the Center to include more members from the University's various schools, to create a space where University affiliates can collaborate to address key issues. "You have these great people working on problems, but they're working in their different silos and not talking to each other," he noted.

"I want to make us a real hub where if you're interested in one of our topics and you come to a seminar we hold on it, you get somebody from the business school, someone from the economics department, someone from the Law School, all of whom are thinking about different things together in one place."

Furman also hopes to increase undergraduate involvement in the Center. He believes that the key to doing so is to make the M-RCBG exciting by offering special opportunities, such as inviting senior policymakers or hosting seminars. "Everyone at Harvard is incredibly busy; they all have tons of things they can do," he said. "I have no power over anyone except the power to create an exciting space that people want to come to and contribute to." Furthermore, as a professor in the Economics Department and co-teacher of the largest undergraduate course, ECON 10A, Furman believes he can promote the Center to his students.

Considering the rapid development and prominence of technology in recent years, Furman recognizes that the Center needs to expand opportunities in artificial intelligence research. Furman sees AI as an essential challenge of the era: while many institutions are currently studying

the field, the technology is evolving so rapidly that university research may struggle to keep up. Understanding AI demands interdisciplinary expertise, exacerbating the difficulty in developing a sufficient body of scholarship.

"You really need both economics, but also national security, and also maybe some law, maybe some technologies, computer science, etc.," he said. "Just the interdisciplinary nature of the questions, with no discipline having a monopoly on the wisdom needed to answer them, makes that topic especially challenging, and we won't be an exception to that."

Furman developed this perspective as chair of the CEA. "What I tried to do there was make something where the whole was greater than the sum of the parts that brought together the different types of people and their different talents and knowledge."

However, he finds that his time leading the CEA was different from his time leading the M-RCBG due to the government's hierarchical model. There, the council members worked directly for him, while at the Center, affiliates and faculty are working together on their own projects. "This is very much a set a table, get people excited, have things come out of it."

From his time in government, Furman also learned important lessons about developing economic policy and working with businesses. "One is you can't make any economic policy without listening to businesses, because they know about some things much more than the government does," he said. "The second is it's extremely dangerous to take everything businesses say at face value, because they're very self-interested."

Therefore, formulating economic policy requires a balance between leveraging business expertise and recognizing potentially biased information. "The best way to do that is: one, to listen; two, to be skeptical; and three, to actually know something about the topic, so that you can ask hard questions and have an ability to sort of tell right from wrong."

Over the summer, Furman intends to learn from other center directors as well as the University's faculty. Since starting as director, faculty members have already approached Furman with ideas for initiatives.

"I don't have fully worked out answers to anything, and by the way, I don't think the right thing would be to have fully worked out answers. You have to listen and learn."

JULIA BOUCHUT '29 (JULIA_BOUCHUT@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS THE ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR OF THE "HARVARD INDEPENDENT."

GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN '28

A Conversation with Harvard College Undergraduate Commencement Speaker Noah Eckstein

Noah Eckstein '26 will deliver the 2026 English Undergraduate Oration at the College's 375th commencement exercises.

BY RANIA JONES '27

Grading Senior Class Committee events and final exams for a different kind of cumulative project, the 2026 English Undergraduate Oration Speaker has had a distinct senior week experience from their peers.

Noah Eckstein '26 will deliver one of three orations by memory on Thursday, May 28, 2026, during the College's 375th commencement exercises, along with a fellow undergraduate and a graduate student, all of whom were selected by a panel of judges. Commencement will welcome over 30,000 attendees, including degree candidates, faculty, parents, alumni, and the governing boards.

Each year, the ceremony's first oration is given in Latin by a graduating senior of the College, the second is also delivered in English by a graduating senior of the College, and the final oration is given by a degree candidate from the University's graduate or professional schools.

To enter the competition from which speakers are selected, College seniors were asked to prepare a draft of an English Oration for submission by March 27, 2026. In an interview with the "Harvard Independent," Eckstein explained that the competition, in addition to requiring the writing of a complete draft, asks selected students to audition before finalists are ultimately chosen.

The College recognizes the selection of the three orators as one of the "highest honors a student can achieve" during their Harvard experience.

"[When] I got the email, I remember waking up, turning on my phone, just reading it. Like, oh, wow," he recalled. The immediate excitement and surprise he felt upon receiving the news of his selection was quickly compounded by the gravity of the honor. "There's a difference between thinking about [having to give a speech to 30,000 people] and actually realizing that you have to do it," Eckstein said.

As part of one of Harvard's oldest traditions, the Commencement orations, initially called "parts," were used by students to defend their theses. However, throughout the College's history, the topics of the orations have diversified to encompass themes related to both Harvard and its global community.

Eckstein's speech expands upon a prominent conversation on and off Harvard's campus: the necessity of open dialogue in an increasingly divided world. "Discourse seems to be a little bit on a decline, and just not even

here, but in the wider world, as everything kind of gets so noisy now these days. Everything's so loud," he explained.

Eckstein contextualized the oration's theme as a product of the graduating class of 2026's unique Harvard experience. "Our class has really sort of borne the brunt of [everything]," he expressed. As freshmen in the fall of 2022, 2026 graduating seniors at the College were among the first students to fully participate in campus life and academics after the pandemic.

Eckstein also noted the enduring cultural and political spectacle at the University—from Claudine Gay's resignation to the Department of Justice's ongoing antisemitism lawsuit against Harvard—and the subsequent changes, arguments, and debates his class has experienced.

"There's been a lot of political conflict with the world, just a lot of ideological conflict in the world, and that has certainly expressed itself on our campus," he said. "[Through] all this stress, people find different ways of coping ... [which] causes division, and so people talk about things, [have] disagreements, [form] defenses, [and express] opinions."

Sharing how his initial writing felt less like a submission to a competition and more like something he had to get off his chest, Eckstein was driven by the fact that his unique religious background, having been exposed to all three major Abrahamic religions, allows him to talk about civic discourse in an honest, vulnerable, human way. "I really wanted to ground the idea of 'we should talk more' in the story of my own family and my experiences, growing up around that culture."

Over the course of his four years in Cambridge, Eckstein has pursued dual enrollment between the College, where he studies Physics, and Berklee College of Music, where he studies Scoring for Film, TV, and Video Games. Eckstein is also concurrently pursuing his Master's in Theoretical Physics at the University. The two fields of interest, while seemingly opposite, are meaningfully related to Eckstein. "These are kind of the two sides of my life that balance each other a lot ... Keep me sane."

While May 28 will technically be Eckstein's first time delivering a speech to a large audience, he is no stranger to the stage, having played guitar for most of his life. "I've been performing since I was eight years old, but that's a little bit different," he explained. Instead, memorizing the speech has proven more intimidating for Eckstein. "I've learned to

deal with the stage fright. I've done shows. I've been in front of a couple thousand people before. 30,000 [or] 10s of thousands [are] definitely a different magnitude."

As commencement approaches, Eckstein has received a wide range of support from the College, including suggested revisions to his submission, rehearsal opportunities, and speech coaching, for which he expressed particular appreciation.

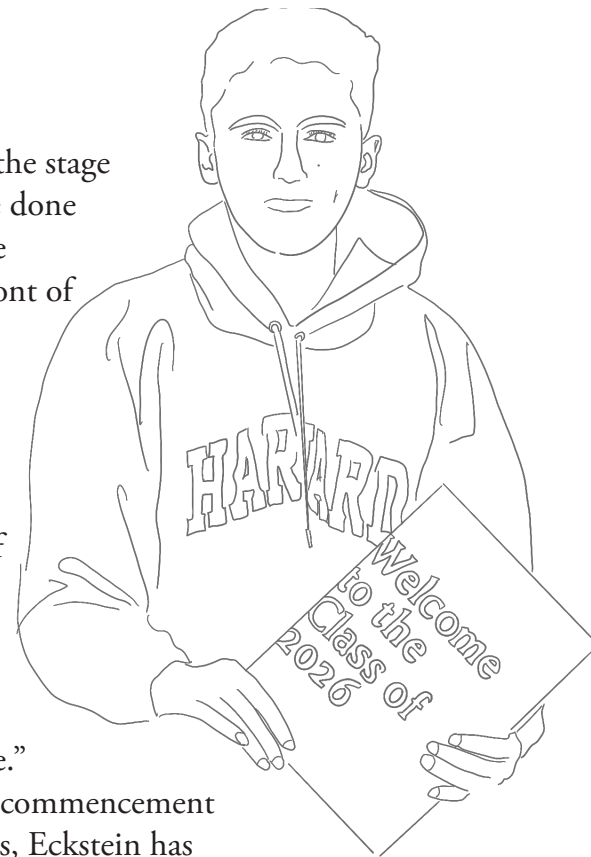
"From [selection] on, everybody in the committee was [involved], some are professors, some are administrators, some the committee," he said. "Everything in the speech is still very much up to me. I have the final say."

While his speech participates in a national conversation about the importance of dialogue and viewpoint diversity, Eckstein believes it embraces the power, not the faults, of differing opinions and perspectives. "We need to be using [our] specific diversity to address problems, and ... to find a path forward." And beyond that, he believes that his words embody Harvard's promise of a transformative undergraduate experience through both academic and social-emotional learning.

"Through all of the ups and downs and all of the insanity of being at a place like Harvard, I wouldn't miss it for the world."

RANIA JONES '27 (RJONES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE "HARVARD INDEPENDENT."

GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA '27



Money Up, Admissions Down: Harvard's Endowment Management Amidst Crisis

A list of Harvard's endowment allocation in the midst of federal attacks on University funding.

BY LUCY DUNCAN '28

In 2025, Harvard University had to completely reevaluate the way its endowment is used.

Harvard's endowment has historically sought high-return investments in order to sustain annual withdrawals for University operations. In 2025, however, shifts in the national policy landscape—namely, higher tax rates and the Trump administration's attempt to freeze federal funding—have forced Harvard's endowment to prioritize liquid assets, potentially risking long-term sustainability.

Around 80% of Harvard's endowment is held in restricted funds, meaning these dollars cannot be spent for purposes other than those for which they were donated. Of the remaining approximately \$11 billion, the majority is held in highly illiquid assets.

The Harvard Management Company follows a 5% rule for withdrawing funds—whenever possible, no more than 5% of the endowment's value is withdrawn annually. Since Harvard forecasts 5% year-over-year growth in its endowment, this rule ensures the endowment remains sustainable over the long term. Historical violations of this rule, including during the 2008 financial crisis, have resulted in the accumulation of billions in debt. To avoid depletion of endowment funds and maintain long-term sustainability, Harvard has been seeking additional investment opportunities and cutting costs whenever possible.

Research

In April of 2025, the Trump administration announced a \$2.2 billion freeze on federal grant funding to the University, much of which was dedicated to scientific research. Over the following weeks, the University was notified that more than 950 expected federal awards had been terminated by seven agencies, including the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense, totaling around \$2.4 billion.

In response, University president Alan Garber '76 and Provost John Manning launched the Research Continuity Funding program, allocating \$250 million of operating reserves to research over the 2025 and 2026 fiscal years to cover 80% of operating expenses for senior faculty, whose federal grants had been terminated while the legal battle proceeded.

Despite the freeze being ruled unconstitutional in September 2025, the hundreds of millions spent on sustaining research and the uncertainty regarding future funding have required the University to become more conservative with its endowment spending.

Tax Increases

The One Big Beautiful Bill was passed on July 4, 2025, and introduced an increase in federal endowment tax rates from 1.4% to 8% for the wealthiest institutions, more than quadrupling Harvard's forecasted annual tax payments. Harvard officials estimate that the combined impact of the

federal grant cuts, the endowment tax, and related pressures will cost the University up to \$1 billion annually.

Faculty

To avoid stretching the endowment too thin, Harvard's budget cuts began in May 2025, starting with the faculty. Merit-based raises were paused for all faculty and non-union staff university-wide. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences instituted a full hiring freeze and paused all non-essential capital projects. While senior and tenure-track faculty jobs were mostly secure, budget allocations for hiring and retaining non-tenure-track FAS faculty were cut by 25%. Enrollment in graduate programs, particularly PhD programs, dropped drastically across consecutive admissions cycles—by 75% in the sciences, 60% in the arts and humanities, and 50-70% in the social sciences. In comparison, Yale cut its enrollment in graduate programs by 13% in the humanities and social sciences and by 5% in the sciences, while Columbia proposed a 65% decrease in admissions across its Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Many key University leadership figures, including President Alan Garber, made symbolic gestures to support the institution during funding cuts. Garber voluntarily took a 25% pay cut in the 2026 fiscal year, while more than 80 faculty and staff pledged 10% of their salaries to a University support fund.

Lobbying

Beyond purely defensive measures, in 2025, Harvard spent over \$1 million on lobbying—the highest annual lobbying budget the University has used in over two decades. The aggressive pace has continued in 2026, with \$220,000 spent on lobbying in the first fiscal quarter. Lobbying focused on three main areas: restoring and protecting federal research funding, preserving visa pathways for international students, and fighting the endowment tax increase.

At the forefront of lobbying efforts was campaigning to reduce the tax increase on educational endowments to 8% from the 21% initially proposed by the House. Notably, Harvard paid \$90,000 per quarter to Ballard Partners, a lobbying firm known to have ties to Trump's inner circle.

Little information is available about the exact purpose and outcome of these payments, making it unclear whether they influenced the eventual tax-reduction victory.

Expansion

Outside the federal political climate, Harvard's endowment is still being used to continue growing and expanding the University. In 2024, Harvard submitted an Institutional Master Plan to the City of Boston Planning Department outlining proposed developments in the Allston-Brighton neighborhood. Only about half of the 358 acres of land in Allston owned by Harvard are actively used by the University. The Plan outlines how Harvard intends to further develop this land over the next 10 years and includes six projects—three new and three that were initially proposed in Harvard's 2013 Institutional Master Plan but were never realized.

Of the new projects, one involves

constructing a 200,000-square-foot Tennis and Squash Racquet Center by demolishing the existing Beren Tennis Center and replacing it with a facility that includes indoor and outdoor tennis courts, indoor squash courts, locker rooms, athletic offices, and an equipment shop. A second involves a 20,000-square-foot support building for the Mignone Rugby Field, providing the Harvard Women's Rugby Team with a training room, locker rooms, office space, and equipment storage, as well as visitor amenities, including restrooms and concessions. The third is a renovation of vacant kitchen space at 168 Western Avenue for use by Crimson Catering.

Projects being proposed a second time include a 110,000-square-foot, three-story Faculty and Administration Office for the Harvard Business School, and a renovation of Harvard's football stadium focused on preserving the building and improving accessibility and amenities. The final and largest project proposed in the Plan is the Gateway project at Barry's Corner at the intersection of Western Avenue and North Harvard Street. The new development, proposed to span 300,000 square feet and rise six to nine stories tall, would include ground-floor retail and upper-level office and administrative space.

The Institutional Master Plan was proposed prior to federal funding cuts. Despite receiving unanimous approval from the Boston Zoning Commission, it is unclear which, if any, of these projects will actually be realized in the next decade. Although preliminary budget information is not available, Harvard's 2013 Institutional Master Plan, including construction of the Science and Engineering Complex, renovations to HBS, and renovations to Soldiers Field Housing, is estimated to cost upwards of \$1.2 billion. In addition, the 2025 Plan includes a \$53 million pledge to support community development in Allston-Brighton, including housing and education.

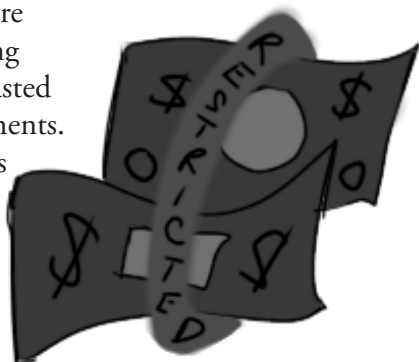
Next Steps

The future of Harvard's endowment, particularly in the context of federal legislation, remains unclear. The increase in endowment taxes outlined in the One Big Beautiful Bill will remain in effect, and research continues amid uncertainty about whether its funding will survive another political shift.

Despite the uncertainty of the past year, Harvard is entering the 2026-27 school year with its largest endowment ever. In 2025, amid federal budget cuts and changing legislation, the University's endowment increased from \$53.2 billion to \$56.9 billion and recorded higher returns than in the previous two fiscal years. In a climate where government funding remains uncertain and where changes in administration can disrupt decades of research, however, it is evident that Harvard must continue to reevaluate its endowment management strategy to maintain long-term sustainability.

LUCY DUNCAN '28 (LDUNCAN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE "HARVARD INDEPENDENT."

GRAPHIC BY MIA STEWART '29



Harvard's Arnold Arboretum Continues to Prevent Redevelopment of Poor Clare Nuns' Monastery

Harvard's Arnold Arboretum's concerns have deterred the Franciscan Monastery of St. Clare's redevelopment.

BY ELLE DU PONT '29

The Franciscan Poor Clare Nuns of Boston have been attempting to redevelop their old monastery in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, into housing since 2023. Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, the nature preserve next door, has consistently blocked these plans due to concerns about which buildings and residents would occupy the site.

On April 13, the nuns sent a letter to University President Alan Garber, hoping to resolve the issue. The sale of the redeveloped property will provide the nuns with funds to renovate their new home, and the project will provide much-needed housing in an area just outside Boston's city center.

The Franciscan Monastery of St. Clare at 920 Centre Street in Jamaica Plain was home to the Poor Clare Nuns since 1934. They recently moved to a new location at 590 Gay Street, Westwood. In December of 2023, the nuns moved out because the space was too large for their number of residents, Sister Veronica told the "Harvard Independent." The Abbess, Sister Veronica, runs the monastery's business and takes care of the sisters' needs. "It is a very stately, majestic building built specifically to be a monastery, and unfortunately, it was built to house 50 sisters, and we had dwindled down to 10," Veronica explained.

Once the religious group decided to leave, they began considering what to do with the property at 920 Centre Street. Selling the property would generate money that the nuns could use to renovate their new location. First, they approached the Arnold Arboretum about purchasing the property, which is located next to the monastery's property and has been there since 1872. The Arboretum is a preserve that houses a large collection of trees and plant species for research and documentation, and is free and open to the public every day. "At the time, they did not want to buy it," she said.

Instead, the nuns found a developer, John Holland of Sixteen Penny, a design and construction firm, who would turn part of the property into condominiums

and the other part into low-income housing for seniors. "He developed a very nice plan using a lot of ecologically friendly materials and also providing about 20% of affordable housing primarily aimed at seniors, which is greatly needed in the area," Veronica said.

However, as the developer sought permits to build in Boston, the Director of the Arboretum, William "Ned" Friedman, objected to the plan. "He thought it would be detrimental to the trees," Veronica continued. Holland elaborated, explaining that Friedman was concerned about the Arboretum's viewsheds. A viewshed is the visible area of land from a specific vantage point—in this case, the Arboretum—and refers to how the development would affect what visitors can see from the preserve.

"We tried to satisfy those concerns. We did drone surveys where we surveyed every tree on the existing arboretum and trees that are on 920 Centre Street, and we actually demonstrated to the Arboretum that there are no visual impacts from the Arboretum looking up, because the trees completely screen it," Holland told the "Harvard Independent."

Still, according to Holland, the Arboretum was unsatisfied. They continued to stress that the trees around the Arboretum weren't sufficient to screen the development, meaning that they couldn't entirely block the view of the development from the Arboretum, considering that trees are temporary and buildings are permanent. The Arnold Arboretum did not respond for comment by the time of publication.

With the nuns' goals in mind, Holland continued to adjust his construction plans several times to resolve the Arboretum's concerns. Originally, they planned to preserve the monastery's exterior while converting the interior into senior housing apartments. Still, due to the Arboretum's requests, they now plan to demolish the building and develop new condominiums completely. Their most recent iteration, a U-shaped building that maintains 50-foot setbacks on the rear and front, is still in the works and addresses

most of the Arboretum's concerns.

The monastery and the Arboretum have long had a good relationship. "We always had a friendly relationship with them. If we had problems with a tree, they would come look at a tree," Veronica said. "We would let people park in our parking area for Lilac Sunday and in the summer, because the parking in that area of Jamaica Plain is kind of limited." Recent deliberations have put a damper on these previously smooth engagements.

Veronica and Holland, however, emphasized that the Arboretum is not the only arbiter in this development: the plans have also gone through Boston's city planning process.

"I think we're entering our fourth year right now, but generally it doesn't take this long to get through the process," Holland said. "I would expect 12 months for a project like the monastery."

Other housing development projects in the Jamaica Plain and Roslindale neighborhoods have faced similar issues. At 18-22 Arboretum Road, the Arboretum, alongside other conservation groups in the area, was hesitant to support plans to replace an industrial building with multifamily housing.

The Arboretum also had comments for a project at 3841 Washington Street. "I know that there were several comments raised similar to mine that if the project was allowed to move forward that it would have viewshed impacts and it would have use impacts on the Arboretum itself," Holland said.

In public feedback on the project, Arboretum Chief of Staff Todd Washburn spoke about the likely increase in the number of visitors the Arboretum will host. Because 3841 Washington Street lacked its own public spaces,

Washburn predicted that once the residents moved in, there would be an influx of visitors to the Arboretum. “We welcome new neighbors and are glad to have new visitors to the Arboretum. But the impact will be real and will add new demands to our operations.”

Meanwhile, Holland noted silence on a different initiative led by Hebrew SeniorLife. “There’s a project at 1200 Centre Street, which was a six-story building, which had a lot more shadows and viewsheds from the Arboretum, certainly more than what 920 did. That project got no comment from the Arboretum,” Holland added. “The Hebrew SeniorLife building is a Harvard-affiliated complex.” The project, now complete, resulted in Hebrew SeniorLife building a 78-unit affordable senior housing community.

Recently, the Poor Clare nuns sent a letter to President Garber about the issue. In the letter, they noted discrepancies, including those related to Hebrew SeniorLife’s project. “What I said to him is that we were looking to sell this property, so that we can finance an addition to the monastery where we live now,” Veronica explained. “And that would [Garber] please advise [Friedman] to be more cooperative with us.”

In their letter to Garber, the nuns noted that while Friedman said this new project would have adverse effects on the Arboretum, they had lived in the space for 89 years with minimal impact on their neighbors.

They also noted that Friedman lives nearby on Moss Hill, around 15 minutes from 920 Centre Street. “We find it difficult to reconcile this rhetoric with motivations that appear to be driven by personal interest. Dr. Friedman lives on Moss Hill and has explicitly stated in a Boston Bulletin article that our project would set a “precedent for Hellenic Hill, on Moss Hill where I live.” It is unacceptable for a Harvard official to use the University’s influence to engage in NIMBY activity that protects a personal neighborhood view at the expense of much-needed housing,” the Poor Clare nuns wrote.

Garber responded. “His response was simply that he would look into the matter, and he had directed the appropriate people on his staff to do that,” Veronica said. There was little further communication.

Currently, Holland plans to meet with Friedman on May 27 to address the Arboretum’s current concerns about the height and massing of the structure. “Ned [Friedman] has said that his final concern is height and viewsheds, but neither of those can be seen from the Arboretum,” Holland added.

In an email exchange between Holland and Friedman shared with the “Harvard Independent,” Friedman expressed a willingness to cooperate with the monastery’s development. “I genuinely believe there are opportunities to create housing on this site in a way that preserves the integrity of the Arboretum, as the Conservation Protection Subdistrict was designed to do,” he said. “My hope is that we can explore a design solution that works for both your team and ours.”

A resident of the area and member of the Longfellow Area Neighborhood Association, Nate Stell, added his thoughts. Longfellow Area is within

Roslindale, the neighborhood next to Jamaica Plain.

“Where I’ve been landing more recently is that I don’t actually think the Arboretum leadership is the core problem here. I don’t agree with Ned’s position, but I don’t begrudge him advocating for what he sees as the Arboretum’s

interests,” he explained. “To the extent he is standing in the way of new housing around the Arboretum’s perimeter, it’s because the City is allowing him to do so. It’s the City’s prerogative to allow a project to proceed or die on the vine.”

The project recently passed another step with the city. “The chief planning officer, whose name is Kairo Shen, for Mayor Wu, gave the developer permission to go through the commissions to get permission to build his project, and hopefully he will be able to finish that process by the end of the summer,” Veronica added.

“The most updated project is being socialized in the neighborhood right now. We’re doing what I call the kitchen table tour. We have a scheduled public meeting on June 28 with the Jamaica Hills Association,” Holland said.

While the project is not yet complete, the nuns look forward to using the funds from the sale to improve their new monastery and support sisters in other monasteries. Many community members in Jamaica Plain are excited about the new housing it will provide.

**ELLE DU PONT '29
(EDUPONT@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WRITES
NEWS FOR THE “HARVARD
INDEPENDENT.”**

**GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA
RYMAN '28**



A Walk in the Park

The lost art of being alone.

BY MIA WILCOX '28

In T-minus 3 days, I will embark on my summer adventure to intern in Los Angeles. Living alone, 3,000 miles away from home, this will certainly be a change of pace from the past three months of the non-stop Harvard College lifestyle.

I grew up essentially an only child. While I have three half-siblings with whom I am now very close, they were already in college by the time I was old enough to remember much. Still, I found sibling-like companionship elsewhere, mostly through my cousin, who is five months older than I am. We attended the same schools and even lived in the same apartment building. So, despite not having siblings at the same stage of life as I was, I never felt lonely. And even in times when I was alone, I had no problems making up games for my dolls or drawing pictures in my solitude. But now, immersed in the constant motion of my college lifestyle and perpetual online connection, that ease with isolation feels increasingly distant.

These days, I find that solitude is a scarce commodity. I spent this year sleeping a mere five feet away from my best friend; we set up our beds to face each other diagonally so that every morning we greeted each other with groggy grunts, and every evening we whispered goodnight after hours of talking. Anytime she wasn't there, at least one of my other roommates was surely in our common room, often bringing with them an array of



characters to chat away the hours. For me, being immersed in campus life means a tight schedule filled with classes, Indy storyboards, and a never-ending social calendar. I have to actively seek alone time through walks to Boston, classes at Down Under School of Yoga, or solo movie nights tucked into bed.

During the times I have found myself unintentionally alone in my past two years away, anxiety has crept in as my undistracted mind has been infiltrated by doomsday thoughts about the uncertainties of the future or ruminations on past mistakes that make me cringe. I have forgotten how to be alone—how to fill empty hours, or simply enjoy quiet moments. Having become so accustomed to constant social stimulation, I now find it impossible to disentangle solitude from boredom; without these perpetual interactions, I find myself slipping into hours of doomscrolling, leaving me foggy-minded and ultimately unsatisfied.

In the weeks since being home from school, I have begun to rediscover the peace of being alone—something I will have to get used to for the rest of this summer.

Having had only one sit-down test at the beginning of exams, I escaped from Cambridge significantly earlier than most of my college peers. A few of my high school friends were back in the first weeks, and my mom's days were still filled with work. Having “burnt the candle on both ends” as my dad would say, up until the moment I left Quincy House's Stone Hall, I welcomed the hours to myself—free of work and free of social obligations.

The first night I spent alone, I spent my time baking my mom's chocolate cookie recipe and sitting down to watch “Cruel Intentions” uninterrupted. I also found time to crack open my “daily” journal that had been gathering dust on my shelf since February. And, best of all, I began a ritual of regular walks in my neighborhood; this is my favorite way to spend my time.

Queuing up music, an audiobook, or the newest episode of “Call Her Daddy” in my tattered Bose headphones from sophomore year of high school,

I can walk for miles that amount to hours of my day. Walking along the East River at night, I am mesmerized by the dark currents and freight ships. Walking up 59th Street or down Fifth Avenue, I am immersed in the lives of rushing tourists and Midtown finance bros out for lunch. Every day, I discover new routes and paths through the lower loop of Central Park. These walks are an exercise, literally and figuratively; not only am I consistently surpassing my 10,000 steps, but I am also forced to sit with my thoughts, or just allow myself to listen to my music and let go of my anxieties (and I can boast that I finished all three Drake albums in a single go).

Though I happily welcomed Senior Week's return to Cambridge, and the momentary return to that same rush I had been escaping, I went home all the more ready to unwind and equipped to reenter my routine of long walks, cooking, and movies.

I accepted my job, knowing that it would take me far away from the comforts of home, my parents, and my friends; I will have to be self-sufficient—cooking, working, and commuting (navigating the I-10 with very minimal driving experience will definitely be a learning experience). Being alone is a skill, one that I have fallen out of practice with since coming to college—even that transition was something I did with the comfort of eight peers from my high school. But having rediscovered the freedom of isolation, I look forward to making my summer a time of productivity, discovery, relaxation, and independence—and this time, instead of doing all this in an urban jungle, I can recharge for my junior year on the sandy shores of the Pacific.

MIA WILCOX '28
(MWILCOX@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WILL USE
HER ALONE TIME TO WORK
ON INDY ARTICLES FOR THE
SUMMER ISSUES.

GRAPHIC BY ANGIE LI '28

New Virus, Old Wounds

How every outbreak now feels like the next pandemic.

BY AURORA CHARBONNEAU '29

In recent weeks, headlines about a hantavirus outbreak linked to a cruise ship in the South Atlantic have been impossible to avoid. Public health agencies have repeatedly emphasized that the outbreak, caused by the Andes strain of hantavirus, involves a limited number of cases tied to a specific exposure rather than widespread community transmission.

In many ways, those reassurances echo the language that became familiar during the early months of COVID, when concerns about how viruses spread transformed everyday life: six-foot distancing signs covered the entrances of stores and schools, classrooms moved outdoors ... ordinary social interaction became defined by caution. Reactions to hantavirus news have varied sharply, from indifference to fear of another disruption. Against that backdrop, it is understandable that health officials have stressed that the current outbreak poses a low risk to the broader public and is not considered another COVID-19-scale event.

The news about hantavirus arrives at a strange time for Harvard undergraduates: rows of white folding chairs are beginning to appear in the Yard, crews are assembling stages and sound systems, and families are finalizing their travel plans as Harvard prepares for Commencement.

Seeing all of this—all while updates about a hantavirus flare-up across my social media feeds—I can't help but be reminded of how quickly normal life was disrupted during COVID and how incomplete it left certain things.

I find myself wondering if another pandemic were to emerge, how would we respond differently this time? Would people move faster, remembering how much was disrupted in 2020? Or instead, would we be less concerned, having watched life so quickly resume to normalcy? I honestly am not entirely sure.

This question is difficult because people experienced COVID in very different ways depending on their age, circumstances, and stage of life. As a result, reactions to news about hantavirus outbreaks also differ. To me, the biggest fault line seems generational.

Older generations do not appear to be very concerned. Many older adults seem relatively calm about this specific outbreak, especially as health officials emphasize that they're closely monitoring the situation. I think this reaction is striking when you consider that older adults bear the highest medical risk from COVID-19. In the United States, people aged 65 and older



account for a large majority of COVID-19 deaths, and infection fatality rates climb sharply with age. Even when surviving infection, older adults' lifespans are significantly reduced.

Instead, it feels like younger generations are carrying most of the anxiety. Since the outbreak was first announced, my entire social media feed has become filled with hantavirus memes or people who have "done the research" explaining their theories about what will happen next. I consistently see people posting flashbacks to how they looked in 2020; even "quarantine core" has re-emerged, with people posting videos using audios and trends that previously ruled TikTok back when lockdown first took place.

Clearly, younger generations seem to carry more of the lingering psychological aftershocks. For many within this younger population, the fear attached to the outbreak has less to do with medical risk than with the possibility of disruption itself. During formative years, many young people experienced how quickly everyday routines could disappear.

School closures, initially presented as temporary, lasted for months. At the same time, milestones, proms, graduations, performances, orientations, and senior trips were canceled, postponed, or significantly altered, creating a sense of social loss and disconnection.

Studies support the idea that this went beyond disappointment. A 2025 Gallup poll found that 45% of parents of school-age children said the pandemic negatively affected their child's social skills, and 42% said it harmed their child's mental health. A University of Michigan study also found that children in remote schools experienced more peer problems, hyperactivity, and behavioral issues than children learning in person, while parents were less likely to say their child had enough opportunities to socialize.

Clearly, the pandemic affected how we interact socially. However, what's even more interesting is that this experience also changed how many younger people respond to institutional reassurance. During COVID, timelines for returning to normalcy frequently shifted as conditions evolved, leaving many students with a

lasting sense of false hope and uncertainty around officials' predictions. Many of us were told over and over during COVID that "school will resume in two weeks," then "after break," then "next semester," only to see those dates slip away.

It makes sense that, as a result, parts of younger generations seem almost immune to reassurance regarding hantavirus, as they interpret these reassurances through memories of past disruptions. It is not only about what is being said now, but also how this similar assurance unfolded when we were younger.

It is not yet clear whether society as a whole will tend to overreact or underprepare for future diseases. Some people will almost certainly overreact if this happens again, becoming more scared and willing to take even more extreme measures than before. In contrast, others will underreact, driven by current political fatigue and convinced that the last round of shutdowns was already far too broad. I still remember how, in the early months of the pandemic, before there was a clear understanding of how the virus operated, uncertainty turned into rules that took away far more than was necessary. Schools, sporting events, and buildings were all altered in some way, despite little evidence that these policies reduced spread. Even children's playgrounds were taped off—something that felt very dystopian at the time—because people were convinced that metal or plastic surfaces would continue to hold the virus, even though later evidence showed that surface transmission was a minor route compared to airborne spread.

Those varying levels of reaction—some people ready to shrug off new threats, others bracing for the worst—should make us aware that we still have not reached consensus on a plan of action we would actually agree on if this were to happen again. That uncertainty now hangs over every new outbreak.

**AURORA CHARBONNEAU '29
(AURORACHARBONNEAU@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)
WISHES THE CLASS OF 2026
A HAPPY GRADUATION.**

GRAPHIC BY ANGIE LI '28

Appreciate Harvard Yard

A first-year's goodbye.

BY SARAH LUNA SASSINE '29

Harvard Yard is a beautiful place; it is chaotic neutral. In my head, the Yard could be compared to

Times Square—if all the billboards were replaced by engraved brick buildings, and the costumed performers replaced by squirrels (can you tell I haven't been to Times Square?). It really is a bubble, even though most days the gates are wide open, they never call my name.

Harvard Yard, composed of the Old Yard and Tercentenary Theatre, lies in the middle of the bustling streets of Cambridge. A place where, at 8:58 a.m., students drag themselves to the Science Center for 9 a.m. classes. At 9:30 a.m., a parent accompanies a toddler to daycare on a bike; at 2:46 p.m., students loiter; and at 3 p.m., the local high schoolers raid the Yard with tour groups, bikes, and dog walkers scattered throughout the day in between. It is the epicenter of the square, the stomping grounds for many, fading into the background of life for most. But once in a while, the student body needs to slow down and become the tourists themselves.

Harvard College first-years, especially, need to appreciate the Yard: they have the unique opportunity to make what seems like a bustling microcosm into a home, to incorporate its subtle intimacies into their daily routine.

To the incoming first years, appreciate the days when the gates are closed to outsiders, and the Yard will be all yours. Remember to stop, take a deep breath, look around, and look up. You are a Harvard student. You belong to this institution, and part of this Yard will always belong to you. Your complaints about scaling the Matthews Hall stairs carry the weight of decades of students; you are joining a long legacy, both its successes and its failures. Slow down and cherish the Yard's grandeur and beauty; I promise you it exists, even in the

disgusting February gray.

This moment of awe could come to you on a beautiful fall day early in the semester, on a cold walk back from a 7 p.m. final in December, or maybe it will wait until you move out, a gentle "see you later," before you pass by the Yard next fall, when it is no longer your home. In these moments around the Yard, you will feel like the world is your oyster—treasure it.

For me, this moment always came while sitting on the ledges of Widener Library, no matter the season. I've always been a balcony-type of person. Put me on a stable ledge, literally two feet off the ground, and I'll feel inspired. It is here where I—and you—will realize how small you are.

And with this, the problems you currently face no longer feel as

significant or as heavy. If this ledge finds you midday with some friends, you may insist on working outside to be performative for the tourists, but deep down, you just want to dangle your feet over the edge. If it finds you at night, you will have a long, vulnerable conversation about life, where at some point you will lean back and watch the handful of stars that twinkle through the skyglow. You will realize how intricate the carvings on the column capitals are, and from then onward, you will look up more,

appreciating the inconspicuous details of the Yard. My last ledge chat as a first-year consisted of eating a slice of Pinocchio's pizza with a friend the night before we moved out—highly recommend.

Do not forget to appreciate the "freshman canon" in whatever form this takes for you. Do the cringey weird stuff: you're only this young once—and remember, since you now have the Harvard name behind you, you will not fall into the "dumb" category, irrespective of your choices (though this is not a green light for a free-for-all). Partake in Primal Scream, or watch from afar. Climb John Harvard at four o'clock in

the morning, or do so at noon for the tourists to watch (without the rest of the tradition, of course). Walk through tourists' photographs, asserting your dominance—or if you're feeling nice, walk around. Your Yard, your rules.

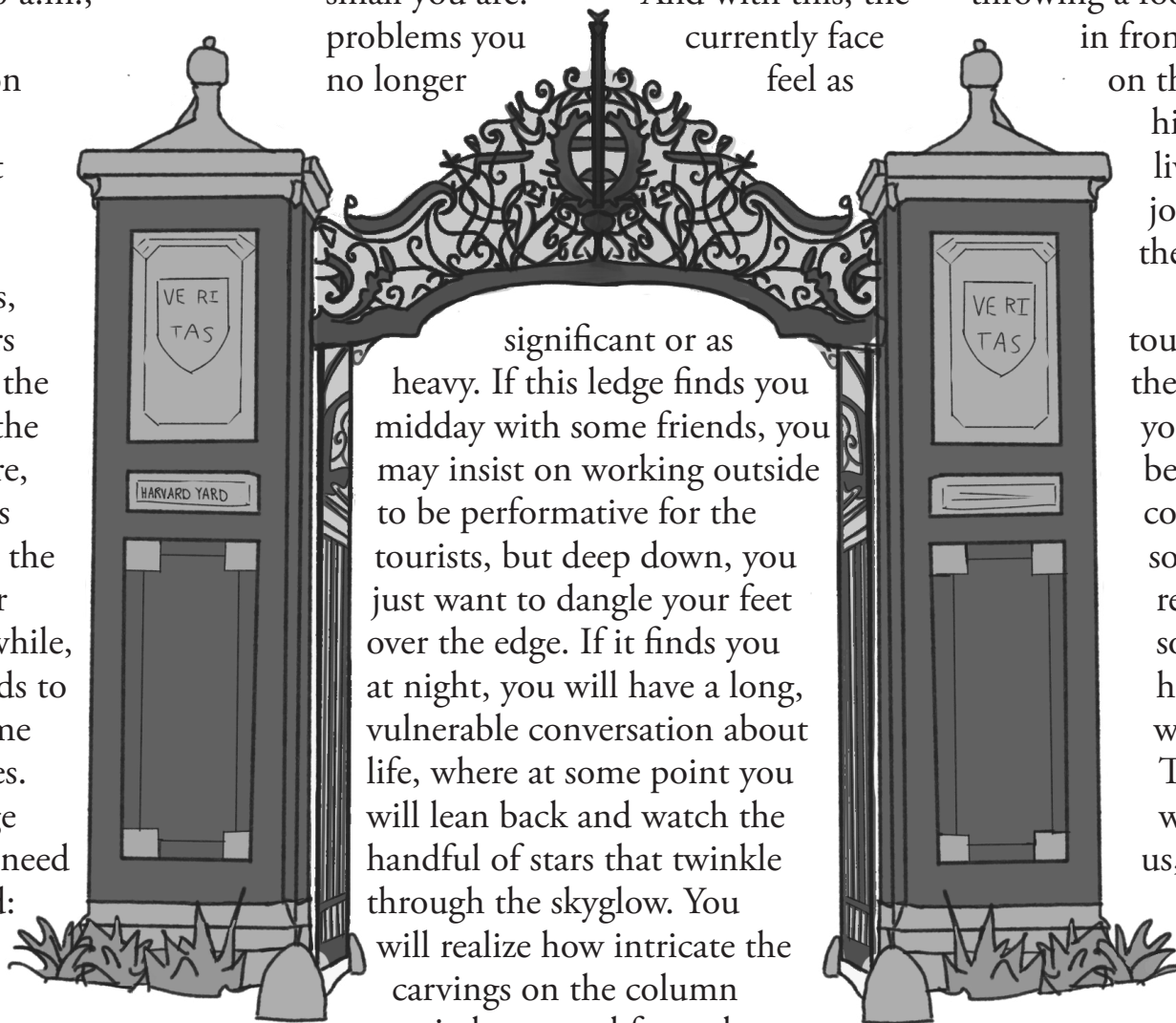
Appreciate the convenience; you might not ever live that close to your friends again. Appreciate the meet-up spot that one day formed without words, where the "Meet in 5?" text is enough to summon the group chat. Use that time to look around, and appreciate the familiar faces scattered around that slowly added up through your mealtimes at Annenberg. Appreciate the moments that feel like a university pamphlet: your friends scattered around a picnic blanket, throwing a football through the trees in front of Hollis Hall; they're on there for a reason. Feel the hidden solidarity. Even if you live in the butt of the dorm jokes (shoutout Canaday), the Yard loves you.

Appreciate the tourists. No really. Appreciate the tourist who tries to tail you as you enter a dorm because, trust, they are not committed enough to do so in the Quad. Tourists remind us that we are living someone's dream; no matter how heavy that burden is, we need to carry it proudly. The eyes of the whole world will always be on us, especially in the Yard, so embrace it. In the grand scheme of things, the mindset of a tourist is what got us here.

The tourists are nosy and insistent, so channel that energy going forward; just like a tourist, maybe one day you'll find a kind stranger who is willing to answer your questions and open up a whole new perspective.

Appreciate the seasons, find the beauty in each. As someone who grew up in Massachusetts, I find that the blessing of experiencing four seasons slowly fades into the background of life, and yet when you stop to notice them, the beauty of the world is enhanced; you are allowed to be in awe. So be silly with it.

Go up to your friend's room on the fifth floor just to watch the sunset peek



through the ever-changing colors of the fall leaves, then jump in piles of said crispy leaves before Yard Operations picks them all up. Go outside during the first snowfall, even if you have a midterm the next day. Throw lumpy snowballs at each other. Find yourself a sled (a Harvard University Dining Services tray will do), and sled down Widener until the Harvard University Police Department drives by and forces you away—or until your pants are soaking wet. Run through the first downpour of spring, the air heavy with the temptations of summer, because that feeling of potential will leave faster than your next problem set is due. Pick a tree outside your dorm window, and look at it, not through it, recognize how quickly it changes while somehow staying the same. The tree will stay rooted in the Yard for as long as the Yard continues to be, and part of you will remain with that tree.

Appreciate the waves of emotion you feel, and be grateful to be allowed to experience the spectrum. Make sure your highs are as high as they can be, high enough to wash the lows away, as there will be plenty. Be ready to get humbled, because the imposter syndrome will hit, but if you let it define you, you will get nowhere. Wallow in your sadness, maybe against Memorial Church, but eventually you have to get up and climb the metaphorical Widener steps of your Harvard journey. One day, even if you can't see it, you will reach that top edge, sit down, dangle your feet, and watch the Yard of your journey below you.

As I handed in the keys to my freshman dorm, the walk back allowed me to appreciate the beauty of the Yard one last time before it wasn't fully mine anymore. I said my goodbyes to friends I had spontaneously run into and walked towards Canaday, the setting sun beaming through the finally blooming

trees. The steps of Widener were filled with people, hopefully sitting with no care in the world, maybe dangling their feet over the edge. A girl was playing the guitar on the steps of Memorial Church, while a group of friends played frisbee nearby, with tourists walking in between. Chaotic neutral.

To the first-years who will soon live outside the Yard, do not forget to come visit. The “trek” is worthwhile.

SARAH LUNA SASSINE '29 (SSASSINE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WISHES SHE WERE WRITING THIS FROM THE TOP OF A WIDENER LIBRARY LEDGE, FEET DANGLING OFF THE EDGE.

GRAPHIC BY LINDEN MCCARL '28

Buddhist Monks

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



“Moving out of my college dorm was too difficult, so I joined to take a vow of non-possession.”





ARTS

A Drag Path

As the year draws to a close, what will your Harvard legacy be?

BY NOAH BADSEN '29

What does it mean to show one's existence? What mark can one make as proof of their time on Earth? These are broad questions with no definitive answers. Nonetheless, we ponder these questions as we age, as every moment in life seems more important than the last. It is this tension between impermanence and the need to matter that the concept of a "drag path" finds its meaning.

A drag path is a mark left behind when an object is physically dragged across a surface. The term has been popularized—mainly through TikTok—as a metaphor representing trauma and the objects left behind as a reminder of all that was lost once someone has passed away. However, for the purposes of this article, I choose to define it more closely to its original meaning—as a depiction of the desire to be remembered through the trace we leave in the world simply by having existed in it.

With commencement around the corner, I imagine some seniors are totaling up their time at Harvard: wondering if they did enough, formed enough friends, or left any semblance of a mark on the University over the course of their four years of study. To be fair, considering the storied history of this institution, it can be easy to feel insignificant amongst the roster of past giants who have walked these halls. On a campus like Harvard's, where every room, building, and cobblestone bears the names of those who came before you, building a legacy seems an impossible task. However, building a legacy has never been about statues or accolades, but about the drag paths—the small, often unnoticed things we leave for the people and places around us.

Rick Warren, the pastor and founder of the Saddleback Church, speaking at the 2024 Oral Roberts University Commencement, spoke to this message: "When people are dying, and they know their time is short, what they want in the room is not things or trophies or achievement. What they want is the people they love."

There is something important in this message that, as Harvard students, especially now in the face of deflationary grading measures, we should be attentive to. When all is said and done, no one has ever wished, on their deathbed, that they had spent

more nights in Lamont Library or skipped out on a friend's birthday to grind out another problem set. Your grades are assigned to you, your legacy, on the other hand, is built and shaped by you and the people you meet along the way.

Thinking about legacy, my mind goes to the Old Burying Ground adjacent to First Parish Cambridge, right across from Johnston Gate. Many Harvard undergraduates have walked past this graveyard without giving it much thought, but few have ventured in to visit those who rest there permanently. Admittedly, I have a special connection with the burial ground, given that last semester, I was involved in a restoration project surrounding the site and spent a lot of time among the headstones. There are half a dozen former University presidents buried there, but you wouldn't know it simply passing by—men who shaped the very institution you walk through every day, reduced to weathered stones that most people do not give a second glance.

Though the legacy of some, like Henry Dunster, Edward Holyoke '1705, and John Leverett '1680, live on in our residential housing system and street names around the Square, spare a thought for Charles Chauncy, Urian Oakes '1649, and John Rogers '1649. Their names don't ring familiar bells, their drag paths worn smooth by the very thing that weathered their stones in the first place—time.

Though their names may have been forgotten, their marks remain intertwined with the fabric of this University. Invisible to the casual eye, they remain there nonetheless. So, as you walk through Johnston Gate, whether it's on your first or last day, perhaps take a moment to cross the street, squeeze through the padlocked gate, and step inside the old burying ground. Stand amongst the stones, read the names that came before you, and make up the ones that have faded over time. And then ask oneself what mark one is leaving behind.

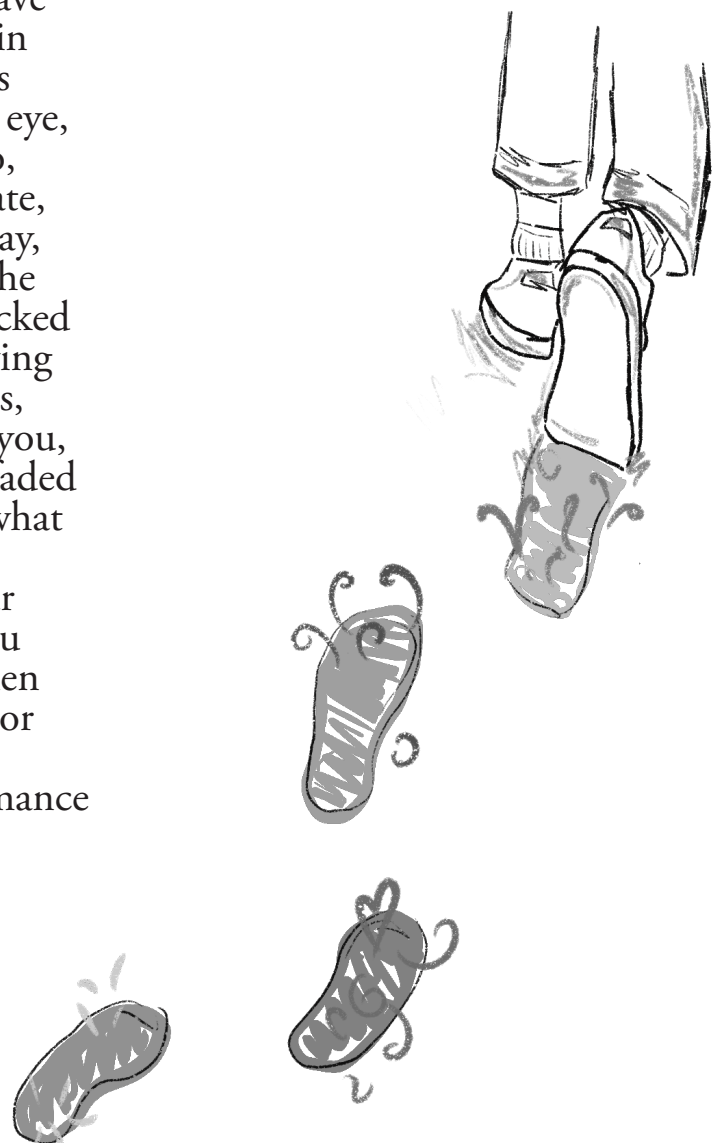
Your legacy isn't left on your GPA, but in the lonely person you stopped to befriend in lecture when you didn't have to, on the professor who remembered your name not because of your academic performance but because you showed up to office hours with genuine curiosity. In a community you were handed four

years ago, you made it a little bit brighter just by being you. That's all that matters in the end, being yourself and leaving a place better than you found it.

To the seniors, a final note. Be proud, not only of the degree, but of the drag path you have left behind. The friendships you chose to invest in when it may have been easier to stay silent and get through college on your own; those 2 a.m. conversations that turned into the most memorable experience of your life; that impromptu Joe's run just because why not. All these things add up. Every moment you choose to be a person first and a student second adds up, and one day, when you are further from this place than you probably can currently imagine, it'll be those moments—not the grades, not the accolades—that you return to. Harvard might have given you a degree, but through your friendships and actions, you gave each other something much more durable than that. Be proud of it and carry it with you. That's your legacy; that's your drag path.

**NOAH BADSEN '29
(NHBADSEN@HARVARD.
COLLEGE.EDU) HOPES
TO BE REMEMBERED FOR
LOVING HAWAIIAN ROLLS.**

**GRAPHIC BY CLARA
LAKE '27**



Exploring Worldwide Hometowns: Battle Creek, Michigan

Cereal City USA: The most historical town you've never heard of.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28

It feels like most at Harvard have a claim to a well-known city. Whether they're from urban centers, the suburbs, or somewhere within city limits, people usually hail from places like New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington D.C. But when someone asks me the quintessential getting-to-know-you question, I never have a simple answer. I'm two hours west of Detroit; three hours east of Chicago; an hour south of Grand Rapids, Michigan; three hours north of Indianapolis. To most, my hometown is the definition of the middle of nowhere.

But Battle Creek, Michigan, is somewhere.

To me, it's home. You might have heard of our claim to fame. Battle Creek is also called "Cereal City USA." The story goes that in the 1870s, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg had hired his brother, William Keith Kellogg, to work in his world-famous health spa, the Battle Creek Sanitarium. In 1898, when working in the kitchen, W.K. Kellogg had left a batch of wheat cereal dough out overnight. Despite this mistake, he decided to roll and cook the dough anyway. What came out was a delicious wheat flake that was later adapted into a corn-based cereal.

After W.K. invented flake cereal in the late 19th century, the national cereal movement began, culminating in over 80 cereal companies opening in my town at our peak. The most recognizable are Kellogg's and Post. Today, Americans are the fourth-largest consumers of breakfast cereal in the world, with the average resident consuming 160 bowls a year. This statistic is a testament to how my town has shaped the morning routines of people all over the country—and the world—even if they have never heard of the hamlet.

And do not fret; Battle Creek has a few other lesser-known claims to fame. Civil rights activist and feminist Sojourner Truth called Battle Creek home; modern floor hockey was invented here; the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with 22 million followers, was founded in Battle Creek. I could go on, but you get the point: my town of 53,000 people has quite an interesting history.

Battle Creek's heyday was well before I was born. If I talk to anyone over the age of 50, they know my hometown (likely because they read the cereal box in the morning rather than playing on their phone like us).

But like much of the Rust Belt, my town declined after the 1970s. Jobs left, and so did the people.

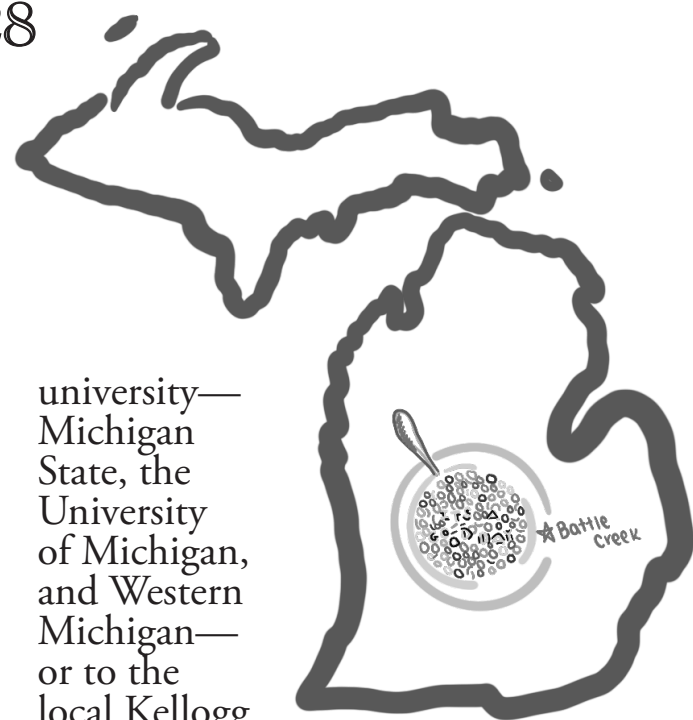
Even though many described my city as a dead town and national news sites dubbed it "the second-worst place to raise kids," I found my childhood amazing. As a kid, I remember going to "The World's Longest Breakfast Table" downtown and meeting Tony the Tiger and Toucan Sam. On the Fourth of July, I recall watching the booming Thunderbirds fly over crowds of thousands, followed by the majestic hot-air balloons at the Battle Creek Field of Flight, which is consistently ranked among the best air shows in the country.

Summers with Grandma and Grandpa consisted of trips to Binder Park Zoo to feed the giraffes. Or visits to Kingman Museum—imagine the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, but 180 times smaller. Sometimes we'd take a weekend trip to "the big city"—Detroit or Chicago—or "up north" to our cottage in Harrison, Michigan. But most of my summer was spent enjoying the amenities that my hometown had to offer.

Elementary and middle school brought watching Lakeview High School football games and playing cops and robbers into the night with friends. As nature prepared for the harsh Michigan winter, the yard featured a rainbow of leaves in the fall, which Dad raked up for us to play in before we helped bag and place them at the curb. One benefit of the cold was snow days; winters were full of days skating on the ice of Goguac Lake or skiing at the hill in the neighboring town (I say hill because we don't have mountains in Michigan).

Despite the people who criticize my "dying rust belt town," I had the quintessential American childhood, and I wouldn't replace it for the world. For me, I thought Battle Creek was the perfect size. It was big enough that I didn't know the vast majority of people who called it home, but small enough that a run to Meijer (think Walmart, but better) usually meant bumping into two or three people I knew. It had the amenities of a larger city, but the friendliness of a small Midwestern town.

Now, the college application process was definitely something Battle Creek could not really help me with. Most of my peers from my high school went to an in-state public



university—Michigan State, the University of Michigan, and Western Michigan—or to the local Kellogg Community College. All great options, and ones I applied to. But I wanted something different; to experience something far away, foreign. I threw in applications to schools all over the Midwest and the South, and a few Ivies just for fun. It ended up working out, despite my doubts; here I am today, writing for the "Harvard Independent."

As I started my college journey, many of my friends saw leaving Battle Creek as moving out and never coming back. I was a different case; I felt indebted to the childhood it had given me, the people I had met, and the education that had brought me this far—Battle Creek was, and forever will be, my hometown. Even if I never return to live, because of college, career, or life, it holds a special place in my heart. I "Believe in Battle Creek" and its future growth, whether it's home to my future family or I have to root it on from afar.

**KALVIN FRANK '28
(KFRANK@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) JUST
ENJOYED A NICE DAY ON
GOGUAC LAKE.**

**GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA
'27**

Kitchen Sink No. 15

BY LUKE WAGNER '26 AND JONAH KARAFIOL '26

I came to in a body that was only mine, the singleness foreign. For months, I had woken into crowding—the press of another attention behind my eyes, the sense of a second man already up and working before I had woken at all. That was gone. The body lay on the bunk, and the body was mine in every direction, my feet at the end of it, my hands where I had left them, my lungs pulling air in a single rhythm that did not stutter or divide. I lay still and felt the whole length of myself and the whole length was silent.

I sat up. The ward was dark at the edges and grey at the centre where the window let in the early morning. Four men were still sleeping. Two were not. The man in the bunk nearest the door was sitting upright with his blanket folded precisely on his lap, the corners matched, and he was smoothing it with both hands, running his palms from the fold to the edge and back, and the smoothing had the quality of work, of a man who has found the one task he can complete and is completing it. Across from him, the man with the horse was talking. He had not stopped. The brown horse. The field. The words came out of him steady and low, and I listened to them as I swung my legs off the bunk and put my feet on the stone. The stone was cold. The cold was memoryless, the cold of a floor that has never been warm, that does not retain the heat of the men who walk on it, that returns each morning to its own temperature regardless of what has passed over it during the night.

I looked at my hands. They were my hands. I turned them over. The knuckles, the nails bitten short, the small scar on the left thumb from a bread knife in the kitchen when I was 9, the year my father stopped speaking at meals and began eating with a newspaper beside his plate, not reading it, simply having it there as a buffer between himself and the room so the room would not ask him questions. My hands. Only mine. I closed them and opened them and the opening and closing was obedient and immediate, and the obedience was horrible, because for years there had been a lag, a negotiation, my hands arriving at their positions a half-second after I had asked them to, and the lag had been him, and now the lag was gone and the hands came when I called and I did not want them to come so quickly. I did not want to be alone in my own fists.

I went to the sink. I turned on the cold tap, the water came on clear, and I washed my face. I did not count. The counting had stopped yesterday in Whitmore's office and it had not come back, and the absence of it was like the absence of a stammer, a thing you do not miss until the sentence comes out clean and the cleanness makes you distrust the sentence. I dried my face on the towel that hung from the rail beside the basin. The towel was damp from other men's use. I hung it back.

The orderly brought the tin at six. Porridge, grey, unsalted. A cup of tea, the colour of the Thames in rain. I ate at the edge of my bunk because the day room was not open yet and the corridor was being mopped. I ate slowly. The eating was mechanical and I let it be mechanical, spoon to mouth, mouth to throat, and the body performed it without difficulty, and the ease of the performing was part of it, the body alone, competent, knowing what to do with a spoon and a cup and a morning. The problem had never been the body.

I got up. I walked to the window. It was at the end of the ward, six bunks down, set high in the wall so that, standing beneath it, you could see the sky and the top of the garden wall but not the garden itself and not the ground. A window for light, not for looking. The glass was thick and wired, and the wire made a grid of the sky. The sky through the grid was the pale grey of early May, and a bird crossed it, moving left to right, unhurried. The bird did not know I was watching it. The bird had no interest in me. The sky had no interest in me. I stood there for a long time. The man with the horse was still talking behind me and his voice and the bird and the grey sky were all part of the same thing, which was the world going about its morning, ordinary, ordinary, ordinary, without the slightest interest in whether I was in it or not.

I put my hand on the glass. The glass was cold and the cold went into my palm and up through the wrist and I held it there. On the other side the air was moving. I could see it in the clouds pulling apart at their edges, slow, and the air on my side was still, ward air, carbolic, wool, the breath of sleeping men. Between the two airs there was the

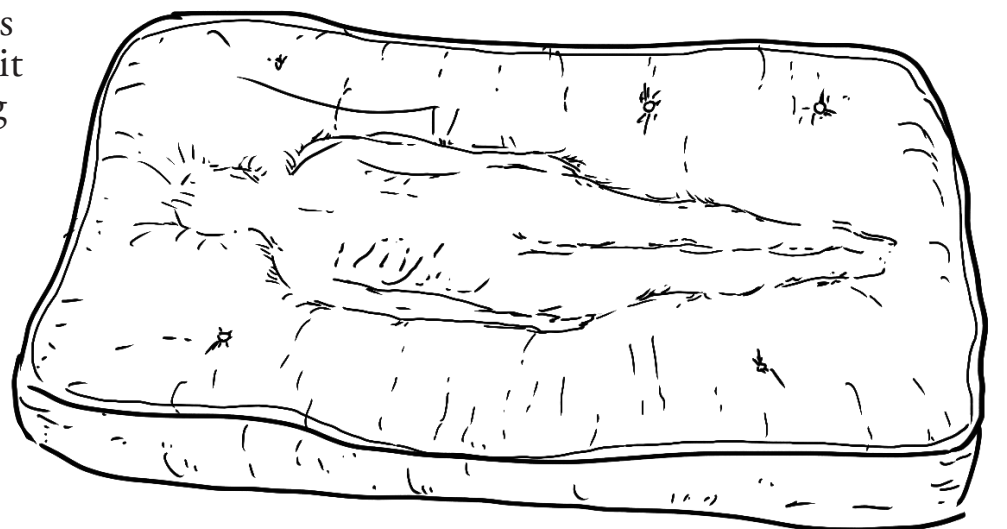
glass, and the glass was the width of my hand, and I could feel both through it, the cold moving one and the warm still one, and I held my hand there until I could not tell which cold was which.

A man behind me said something in his sleep. Not a word. A sound. The sound stopped. The sleeping continued.

I pulled my hand from the glass. There was a print where my palm had been, the moisture from my skin clouding the cold surface. I watched it fade, fingers first then the heel of the hand, and last the centre of the palm, and when the last of it was gone the glass was glass again and the sky came through it without interruption. I thought: that is what it will be like.

I went back to my bunk. I sat on the edge. The mattress beneath me held the shape of my body sleeping, a shallow trough worn into the ticking, and beside it, where the second bunk had been, there was a space, and the mattress that had been in it had been taken, and the frame was bare iron, and the iron was the colour of the taps. The man who had been folding his blanket was still folding his blanket. He had not progressed. He had not regressed. The blanket was the same blanket in the same fold and his hands were performing the same motion and his face had the same expression, which was not contentment and not distress but the flat attention of a man who has reduced the world to a single surface and is maintaining it.

I thought about Whitmore's desk. The file. The pen. The inkwell with its brass lid. The letter opener beside the inkwell, short-bladed, the handle dark wood, worn at the thumb from years of use. I had watched Whitmore open his correspondence with it, sliding the blade under the fold, the paper parting easily, and each time he did it I had looked away, not because the action disturbed me but because the action was precise, and precision in other men's hands had always made my own hands restless.



The letter opener would be there this morning when Ruddock brought me down. It would be on the desk, beside the file, unconsidered. A man does not hide his tools from his patients because he does not believe his patients are thinking about his tools.

I was thinking about his tools.

I could see the space between Whitmore's collar and his neck where the skin was loose and the pulse was visible. I had been looking at that pulse for weeks. I had not known I was looking at it until now. But Whitmore was outside. There was something between us, thin as glass. I could reach him—my hands could find him, as they had found Pell—but reaching him was not my concern. The thing I needed to reach was not outside the glass. It was in here, in this body, in this ward. It was behind my ribs, in the place where the second breath had lived. The body was the last room, and I was locked inside it, and the glass was my own skin, and on the other side of it was everything else, ordinary, ordinary, continuing, and I could press my hand against it from the inside and feel the cold of the world coming through and I could not get out. I could not get out. But I could stop the room.

Ruddock's keys in the corridor.

...

Whitmore poured the tea. I sat in the chair. The fire was lit. The desk was between us, and on the desk was the file and beside the file was the letter opener, and the opener was where it had always been, and I looked at it, and then I looked at Whitmore, and Whitmore was talking.

He was talking about the weeks ahead. He was talking about progress. He was using words I had heard him use before and the words filled the room and I let them fill it, and I drank the tea, and the tea was weak, and the fire was warm, and for a moment the room was a room where a doctor and a patient sat across a desk and spoke about the future as though the future were a place they could both go.

I waited until he was writing in the file. His head was down. The pen was moving. His left hand was flat on the desk beside the opener, holding the page steady.

I picked it up. The brass was warm. The weight of it was less than I expected, which meant I would have to be precise, which meant the body would have to do what the body knew how to do, and the body knew, and the knowledge was in my hands,

and my hands were quick and certain and alone.

Whitmore looked up. He saw my hand. His face did what his face had done when I told him I went to her room—it held still, the stillness of a man standing on something that has begun to give way beneath him.

Thomas, he said.

I was not Thomas. Thomas was the one in the chair, the one whose hands folded neatly in his lap, the one who had answered Whitmore's questions about sleep and counting and whether the room had one person in it. I was the other one. I had always been the other one. And the other one was somewhere close, somewhere behind me, somewhere in the room that Whitmore could not see because Whitmore had only ever drawn two circles on his pad, one for me and one for the other, and the second circle was empty and he had believed it, and I had let him believe it, and now I had the blade and the blade was for the other one and the other one was here. I could feel him. He was close. He was closer than he had ever been. He was pressed against the inside of my chest, curled behind my ribs, and I could feel his breathing there, the old second rhythm, faint, faint, still going, the breath that had never been mine and had never stopped.

I put the blade against my chest. I was reaching for him. I was reaching through the skin and the muscle and the bone to the place where he lived, the small dark room behind my sternum where he had slept for years, and the blade was the key, and the door was my own body, and I pushed, and the brass was dull and the body resisted and I pushed again, and the second push found the space between the ribs, and the door opened.

Whitmore's chair went back. His mouth was open. I heard him shout, and the shout had a word in it, and the word was a name, and the name was mine. Not the other one's. Mine.

I was on the floor. The stone was cold. The cold was the cold of the glass in the window, the cold of the other side. I lay on it, and the ceiling above me was white and cracked and very far away and I waited for the second breath to stop. I waited for the small rhythm behind my ribs to stutter and go quiet. I waited for him to die.

He did not die. The breath continued. It continued because the breath had always been mine, and I knew this, I had known it since yesterday in this room with the green book on the desk. I had known it and I had not known it, and now on the floor with the brass handle pointing

at the ceiling and the blood coming out around it in a slow, dark spread across the wool of the coat they gave us, I knew it again, and the knowing was different this time because this time the knowing was in the blood. The blood was mine. The breath was mine. The body on the floor was one body, and it was my body, and there was no one behind my ribs, and there never had been, and the blade had not found him because there was no one to find. I had opened the door, and the room behind it was empty, and the emptiness was me.

Whitmore was above me. His hands were on my chest, pressing around the handle, and his fingers were in the blood, and the warmth was leaving me, going out of me and into him, and I could feel the leaving, which was not violent, but quiet, the quietest thing my body had ever done.

I looked at his face. He was trying to see the bottom of me.

The ward was on the other side of the walls. The garden was on the other side of the window. The sky was on the other side of the glass. The bird had crossed it and was gone. I could feel the ordinary out there, pressing against every surface that held me in, the glass, the stone, the skin, and the ordinary did not want me and did not need me and would not miss me, and the not-missing was the last thing I felt, and it was fine. It was ordinary.

I tried to count. The numbers came. They came without hands, without water, without the porcelain. Without a sink.

One.
Two.
Three.

**WRITTEN BY LUKE
WAGNER '26
(LUKEWAGNER@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) AND
JONAH KARAFIOL '26
(JONAHKARAFIOL@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU).**

GRAPHIC BY ANGIE LI '28

The New Gilded Age

What Trump's architectural overhaul really means for American history.

BY SEYI AMOSUN '29

Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a massive Lorde fan. It's in part because of her lyricism, and in "Still Sane," the bridge repeats "Only bad people live to see / Their likeness set in stone." This line has never been more relevant than it is today.

It's no secret that the political landscape of Washington, D.C. is undergoing a massive change. Most recently, President Donald Trump launched "Operation Epic Fury" on Feb. 28, 2026, entering the ongoing conflict in the Middle East—a decision that faces congressional resistance. However, since Trump's inauguration, it's clear his actions go beyond politics and signify his larger effort to cement an unprecedented legacy.

Trump has turned his attention to the landscape of D.C. itself—specifically, the monuments that physically realize American history. Between banners bearing his face hanging from federal buildings, paving over the Rose Garden, and the gilding of the Oval Office in gold decor, America's capital is being remade.

Trump's most notable architectural undertaking began on July 31, 2025, with the announcement of new construction at the White House. The plans consisted of removing the East Wing and constructing a 90,000-square-foot ballroom in its place. It was originally stated to cost \$200 million to complete, but prices doubled as the project commenced. My evaluation of this choice extends beyond the cost: the new design is visually discordant with the rest of the historic home. It nearly dwarfs the building's main structure, offsetting the former balance between the East and West wings.

It's not like he's the first president ever to remodel "America's Home." President William Howard Taft spearheaded the remodel and expansion of the West Wing, creating the Oval Office, which is now the hub of presidential power. President Harry S. Truman bolstered the structural integrity of the historic building itself, and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy was famous for her restoration efforts and garden redesign in the '60s. First Lady Michelle Obama recently led the addition of the White House Kitchen Garden.

However, it's also true that these architectural changes come with immense uncertainty—especially regarding project finances. The majority of renovations

were carried out through congressional appropriations, which required legislative approval. Over the past 100 years, only one project has been privately funded: a \$299,000 bowling alley addition in 1973 for President Richard Nixon and his family—until now. Trump had initially suggested that he would foot the bill as his own personal contribution. Then, suddenly, the new ballroom was funded by tech and defense companies like Amazon, Apple, Palantir, Lockheed Martin, and Google. Now, Republican senators are advancing legislation to provide \$400 million for the project, straight from taxpayers' pockets.

Aside from the potential administrative issues that arise from this project—including deviating from the longstanding practice of submitting plans to the National Capital Planning Commission, which all other presidents have followed—this architectural remodel reflects the broader ideological changes afoot in the nation today.

First, his solicitation of funds from these companies is unsurprising, given that he was surrounded by some of the wealthiest tech moguls at his inauguration, including Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, and Tim Cook. But for a president who has consistently run on right-wing populist platforms, especially regarding immigration and the economy, it's fairly telling where his true loyalties lie. Coupled with the mere suggestion that taxpayers could actually foot the bill for this ballroom, his project is questionable at best, and downright deceitful at worst.

Furthermore, this construction required the demolition of the White House East Wing. His choice isn't just that of a homeowner seeking to remodel their kitchen—the White House represents the will of the people; it's a site of protest and a symbol of "what it means to be American." Trump's second term has done just that, specifically through sweeping changes to immigration policy that have deeply affected U.S. students on Harvard's campus and in other communities. His choice to change the arguably most important monument in the country signifies a momentous shift in what it truly means to be an American.

The East Wing was also home to the Office of the First Lady, as well as the official public entrance and the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden. It's been said to be a "space of female power and a female

niche in the White House," yet that very symbol of women's empowerment has been destroyed with the flourish of a pen and the swing of a wrecking ball.

I'm not one to speak for Trump on whether he intentionally demolished the East Wing, or if he even cared for its historical significance at all.

But it's rather telling that the First Lady has failed to make any significant public remarks on the destruction of her historic offices, and that her staff has been scattered amongst the various workspaces within the building.

Monuments are a means to preserve the present so we can tell a story to future generations. Our history as Americans has celebrated the most notable founders. President George Washington was honored with a monument for leading the country through its founding. President Abraham Lincoln received a memorial for preserving the union during the Civil War and helping emancipate enslaved individuals in the South. We commemorate those who bravely fought and died for America during World Wars I and II, the 9/11 tragedy, and countless other conflicts. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., one of the most famous civil rights leaders in human history, is commemorated for his fight to obtain justice, liberty, and equality.

Each represents a moment in America's history that altered the fabric of our nation and celebrates those who make our country stronger, not weaker. What does it say about our country that some are now choosing to destroy history for their own personal gain?

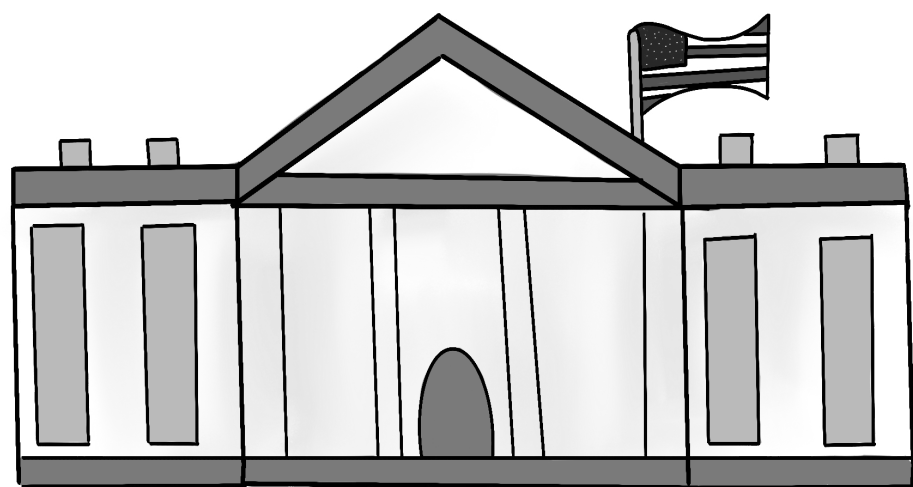
Trump has made an apparent effort to change things across Washington, not just at the residence. He has fought to temporarily close the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—the nation's cultural center and memorial to John F. Kennedy—as well as proposed a 250-foot triumphal arch near the D.C.-Arlington border, and sought to turn a municipal golf course into a "luxury" destination. He embarked on a renovation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and renamed the Kennedy Center after himself.

I won't make an overarching characterization of Trump himself, but I think Lorde reminds us that positive legacies are felt by those we leave behind. One's legacy isn't artificially created by plastering a last name on a building or erecting a gaudy arch; it's conveyed through the meaningful impact one makes on the lives of others.

It's baffling to me that the East Wing is gone. A city that I had come to love and appreciate, not just as an individual, but as an American, is changing in ways I would never have expected. Yet one thing Trump's presidency has shown me is that more can be changed than you think. As we stand at an ideological and cultural crossroads, I hope we find more moments in our future that warrant the erection of monuments celebrating our nation's collective successes.

**SEYI AMOSUN '29
(SAMOSUN@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) THINKS
LORDE SONGS ARE THE
KEY TO JUST ABOUT
EVERYTHING.**

**GRAPHIC BY CHRISTY
ZEMBROWSKI '28**



Your Guide to Summer Music Festivals

How to have the right festival experience, from start to finish.

BY LUCY DUNCAN '28

School's out, and that means it's festival season! From local indie and country festivals in my hometown to big-name events like Lollapalooza and Boston Calling, summer music festivals have been an annual tradition for me. Between seeing all your favourite artists, amazing fashion, and the adrenaline rush of dancing amongst a crowd of thousands for a weekend of live music, your first music festival should be an unforgettable experience.

But despite all the fun, festivals are exhausting and can even become dangerous. For this reason, the "Harvard Independent" compiled a guide to ensure you can have the best possible festival experience.

Traveling

If you're going to a festival out of town, getting there is the hardest part. Sometimes, flying or taking the Amtrak is the easiest bet. But often, you can find friends or Instagram mutuels who are attending the same festival and would be willing to split gas money.

Once you arrive—as long as it's a city with public transit—just buy the metro pass. Driving or Ubering to and from a festival will never be the most convenient or economical option, no matter how crowded the train seems.

Finding Lodging

I swear by youth hostels: they're relatively cheap, and you can meet other people going to the same event. The slight sacrifice in quality is worth it when you're spending all day at the grounds. However, if you prefer a bit of extra comfort, hotels are also a great option—though keep in mind that prices increase astronomically when a festival is in town. If you're going with a large group, the most affordable option will likely be an Airbnb, and as a bonus, you can make your own meals for cheap.

What I would never recommend is camping. Often more expensive than other lodging, the bonus of staying on-site is offset by the fact that, between sleeping on the ground and drunken strangers singing outside of your tent until the sun comes up, you will not get any rest.

Picking the Right Outfit

Deciding what to wear—and posting about it afterward—is one of the most fun parts of going to a festival. If you're traveling, plan your outfits well before you leave—there's nothing worse than trying to piece together a coherent outfit from miscellaneous tops and bottoms.

The first criterion is the festival's overall vibe. Depending on where the festival is, who's playing, and the festival's reputation, different styles will fit the vibe better. Coachella-goers often lean towards a boho aesthetic or full rave attire, whereas at CMA Fest, you'll see lots of denim and cowboy boots. Pinterest is my go-to for inspiration!

Unfortunately, the weather is an important factor. Look at the weather, and plan accordingly. Consider how to incorporate extra layers without ruining your outfit. Be prepared to have to change things up at the last minute.

Put the right foot forward (literally)! The single most important thing when planning an outfit is choosing appropriate

footwear. Above all else, prioritize comfort. If your ugliest pair of shoes is also the pair you can walk in the longest, wear them. Unlike a standard concert, at a music festival, you'll be standing for over 12 hours. Endurance is key. Consider water resistance—if there is any chance of rain, or of your festival turning on the misters while you're waiting for the next set to begin, make sure you have waterproof shoes!

Staying Alive

This may seem like a given. But so often, I have had friends who, after swearing they could last through the entire weekend, gave up after the first day. Even worse, every show has that person—the one you don't want to be!—who passes out halfway through the headliner. If you want to truly enjoy your festival experience, avoid burning out by staying healthy and rested.

Stay hydrated! Before you go, research the festival's specific rules on outside drinks and containers. If you can, bring a reusable water bottle and fill it whenever you get the chance. If not, splurge on a disposable bottle first thing in the morning and reuse it.

Stay nourished! If you want to save money on the overpriced food trucks in the grounds, eat as much breakfast and lunch as you can before heading in for the day. Sneak snacks in, if possible. Flirt with strangers for free meals (success may vary).

If you choose to drink, do so mindfully. When you're hot, dehydrated, and in an unfamiliar environment, your tolerance decreases more than you expect. As a rule of thumb, drink twice as much water as alcohol. Don't accept drinks from strangers or open containers.

Stay rested! Even if it means giving up barricading for your favorite artist and sitting in the shade on the lawn, don't push yourself past your limits. And if it's your first festival, skip the afterparties and get as many hours of rest as you can in between days.

Protect yourself from the elements. Apply sunscreen before you enter the grounds and throughout the day. Wear a hat and sunglasses. If the weather calls for it—even if it ruins your outfit—bring a raincoat or a sweater.

Getting Barricade

One of the coolest parts about going to festivals is getting to brag that, with just a general admission ticket, I've seen artists like Noah Kahan, Olivia Rodrigo, and Tyler, the Creator from the front row. Now, getting to the stage barricade can be a genuine battle, and I wouldn't recommend it for your first festival, but if you're feeling ambitious, here's how to do it.

Get to the grounds early. At the latest, an hour after the festival opens for general admission is best if you're hoping to see a headliner. There will always be a fangirl who's been there since 7 a.m.,

but you're just as well getting there shortly after the gates open.

Go straight to the stage. Make sure you know which stage your favorite artist is playing before arriving at the grounds, and head straight there. No time to stop for food, merch, or toilets. Many festivals have apps that will help you find the stage!

Stand your ground. Once you've entered the pit, it can feel like a bloodbath. From preteen girls to men in their 50s, it will seem like the whole world is trying to shove past you to get to the stage. If you truly want to be barricaded, don't let people push you out of the way. Stand as far forward as you can while still being respectful, and don't be afraid to use a gentle elbow.

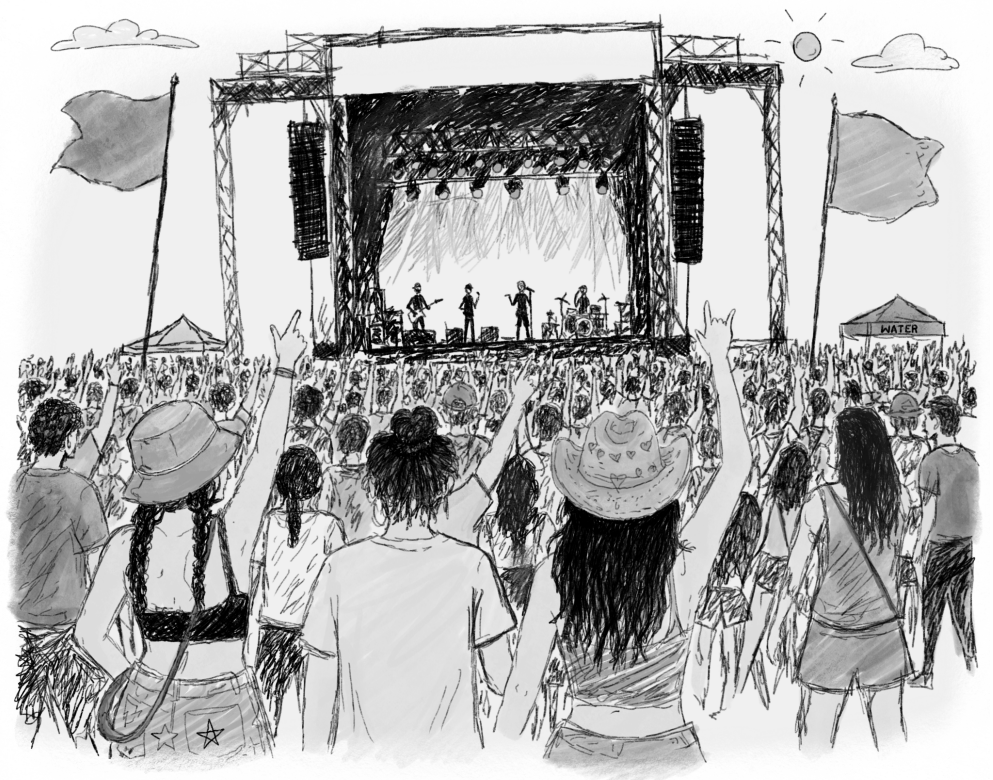
Outlast. As I mentioned before, it is critical to arrive well-rested, well-nourished, and well-hydrated. At about midday, when the sun is at its highest, people will start to pass out around you. Make sure this isn't you by preparing ahead of time, and by recognizing when it is time to leave the pit so you don't miss the show entirely. And remember, if someone goes down, clear a path for EMTs.

As people in front of you leave, fill in the gaps to slowly get closer to the stage. By the end of the night, you'll be shocked at how far forward you can move.

As a college student, going to a summer music festival is one of the best things you can experience. For relatively cheap, you can explore a new city, see dozens of artists live, test your endurance, and come out with stories to tell. If you're going to a festival this summer, ensure you make it through the full festival and get the most out of the event!

**LUCY DUNCAN '28
(LDUNCAN@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) GOT
WAITLISTED FOR
LOLLAPALOOZA THIS YEAR.**

**GRAPHIC BY CARA CRONIN
'28**



New Beginnings Reading List

Books with protagonists who get to start over.

BY EDEN BRIDGE-HAYES '29

In honor of the year's end, the "Harvard Independent" has compiled a list of books with new beginnings—meant for the seniors who are moving forward with their lives and the undergraduates who have the opportunity for another collegiate term. Whether the protagonist is young or old, spirited or resigned, each work grapples with the struggles of daily life and how to cope with them. In a world so marred by turmoil and pressure, these books impart a valuable lesson: how to look to the future rather than the past.

"Persuasion" by Jane Austen

As Jane Austen's last completed work, "Persuasion" was published posthumously just five months after the author's passing. "Persuasion" features Austen's oldest protagonist, 27-year-old Anne Elliot, as she deals with her ex-fiancé's re-entry into her social circle. Anne must confront the past she thought was behind her and navigate her new "season of bloom." To break free from her controlling family, Anne learns to make decisions for herself and choose her own happiness.

The text explores themes of renewal, perseverance, and the strength to grow into your own person rather than being swayed by others. Critics often cite the novel as having an increasingly mature, reflective tone in comparison to some of her other works, especially considering Austen's worsening health during the writing process.

"The Old Man and the Sea" by Ernest Hemingway

This Pulitzer Prize-winning novella features an old fisherman named Santiago who has gone 84 days without catching a fish. As a result, he has been shunned by his community and is perceived as woefully unlucky—a reputation that does not deter him. On the eighty-fifth day, Santiago sets out early and catches a massive marlin. The novella follows Santiago's internal monologue as he struggles to reel in this enormous fish.

Although Hemingway's writing style is quite simplistic and direct, its candor helps emphasize the struggles of daily life, without the pretense of refinement or romanticization. In the end, it does not matter if Santiago brings the marlin back to shore because his determination to catch the fish reignites his passion. In this, Hemingway explores the resilience of the human spirit, demonstrating that Santiago's triumph is within his mind, separate from public perception or the world around him.

"Mrs. Dalloway" by Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf is a modernist author known for her stream-of-

consciousness narrative technique and her feminist ideology. "Mrs. Dalloway" highlights both characteristics by focusing on the titular character, Clarissa Dalloway, and her party preparations—a daunting task for a high-society woman who wrestles with lofty public expectations. The novel follows Clarissa as she navigates encounters with significant figures from her past, ranging from her former suitor, to whom she had rejected a marriage proposal, to her daughter.

Clarissa's foil character is a World War I veteran with severe PTSD named Septimus Warren Smith. Though their character arcs are connected, they have no direct relationship, leaving readers wondering why the novel follows the two characters. However, it is only by seeing through Septimus's perspective that Clarissa feels fully able to enjoy her life, experiencing a moment of profound appreciation in light of the suffering of a man she has never met.

"Siddhartha" by Hermann Hesse

For those looking for a more spiritual tale, Hesse's "Siddhartha" is a beautifully written journey of self-discovery and religious exploration. The titular character leaves home at a young age in hopes of gaining spiritual illumination. Although he has the opportunity to speak with and become a follower of the famous Siddhartha Gautama, he resolves to forge his own path, believing it is the only way to true enlightenment.

Although not a typical spiritual journey, "Siddhartha" illustrates that we don't have to follow any one doctrine to become enlightened. Instead, everyone can learn from their own unique experiences, finding value in every instance of strife and taking something away.

"The Remains of the Day" by Kazuo Ishiguro

Ishiguro's "The Remains of the Day" is a bit bleaker than some of the other works listed, as the protagonist does not experience a "new beginning" or realization; instead, he arrives at a quiet resignation that still allows him to enjoy life. The novel begins in the wake of World War II and follows the journey of a middle-aged English butler named Mr. Stevens. Devoted to his job and intensely serious, Mr. Stevens seldom takes breaks from work. Still, his new employer encourages him to take a well-earned vacation to visit Miss Kenton, a housekeeper whom he cares for.

Similarly to "The Old Man and the Sea," much of the novel consists of Mr. Stevens' reflections on his life rather than dialogue, allowing the reader to grow alongside the character as the novel progresses. As the text progresses, Stevens' (and the readers') musings return him to

missed opportunities and the question of whether it is better to live despite having lost or to persevere on what could have been.

"Pnin" by Vladimir Nabokov

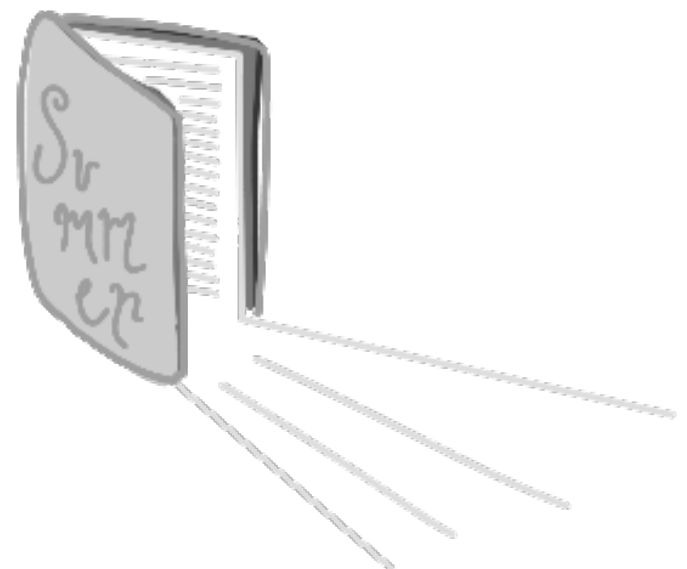
"Pnin" is my personal favorite of this list—and perhaps the least well-known. This novel follows Timofey Pnin, a Russian professor and immigrant to the United States from St. Petersburg. The novel's narrator invites you to pity, jest at, and yet respect Pnin as the novel progresses. Yes, the narrator often caricatures Pnin, exaggerating his obliviousness or depicting him as bumbling and ridiculous. Eventually, readers come to empathize with him and his hardships as an immigrant.

Despite the humiliation he endures, Pnin demonstrates the strength to ignore his peers' ridicule without internalizing it, culminating in a feat that even the narrator seems deeply moved by. The novel has an open ending, allowing readers to determine for themselves what lies ahead for Pnin and craft the future they think he deserves.

Each of these books has a special place in my heart, as they found me when I needed them most. I hope that at least one of the books on this list resonates with someone, just as they have helped me learn to navigate life. Whether their protagonists are escaping from or reconciling with their pasts, each of them learns to look to the future, living their lives rather than brooding over the past. Each book allows readers to look at life with fresh eyes—a valuable gift as we enter this new chapter of our lives.

EDEN BRIDGE-HAYES '29
(EDENBRIDGEHAYES@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)
WRITES ARTS FOR THE
"HARVARD INDEPENDENT."

GRAPHIC BY ANGIE LI '28



The Last Hurrah-yard: Ideals and Advice From a Departing Senior

A senior's final 24 hours before the gates close.

BY ROHAN TYAGI '29 & AURORA CHARBONNEAU '29

In the final days before Commencement, Harvard begins to empty. The Yard grows quieter. Suitcases rattle across brick walkways. Underclassmen disappear into summer plans, while seniors linger, moving through campus with the sense that their time on campus is nearly up.

By the time of graduation on May 28, the Class of 2026 will walk through Johnston Gate for the last time as Harvard College undergraduates—this time, not as nervous first-years arriving with duffles in hand, but as soon-to-be Harvard alums.

However, until then, seniors should take advantage of these final days, and Kerry Nguyen '26, a senior in Quincy House, is doing just that.

For many, leaving Harvard marks a departure from close-knit peers and intellectually stimulating classes. But Nguyen sees his College experience as more holistic—and we agree. For his final 24 hours on campus, Nguyen's mind turns to what most Boston residents dream of as spring turns to summer: the weather. Still, he kept his expectations reasonable, of course; nothing too specific, rather “a good 65-degree spring day.” His request is not surprising. Even though we have only been on campus for a year, we have already succumbed to the New England effect: after four years of enduring Boston's unpredictable, often unforgiving weather, 65 degrees begins to feel almost precious in West Cambridge. With a light breeze, the mid-sixties to low-seventies are warm enough to sit around Harvard Yard for hours, yet cool enough to remind you it is still New England.

But like most of us, the weather app check happens in the midst of brushing teeth and picking out a suitable outfit. What really starts Nguyen's day is a latte from Blank Street Coffee—specifically, “a latte with pistachio.”

Coffee and quality weather are usually a recipe for outdoor studying at the College (or sulking on one's way to Lamont's third floor despite the sun); however, as a senior free from classes and finals, Nguyen has the unique opportunity to take advantage of campus in novel ways. “I would love to just be on a picnic-style gathering along the Charles. A couple bottles of Prosecco, and honestly, just talking,” he said. It's a simple scene: friends by the river, talking without much direction, passing the afternoon together even when they know it will be one of their last.

I mean, who can argue with that?—though, of course, we cannot condone underage drinking, so for our readers who are not yet 21, perhaps lose the Prosecco. For Nguyen, that awareness—that college is ending—is what made senior year feel different from the years prior. “I think I just had the most fun senior year,” he said. “Hangouts with my friends became a lot more intentional.”

University friendships are inevitably formed through a mix of compatibility and

convenience: classmates seeing one another in dining halls, lecture halls, or extracurricular meetings made academically oriented time feel social. As a first-year, living in the Yard made opportunities for peer-to-peer connections. Harvard College's

House system, starting in sophomore year, opens the door to deeper relationships among a smaller cohort of undergraduates. And finally, as seniors, Nguyen stresses that all interactions are deliberate, as time is short, friendships carry more weight because they have the potential to continue beyond Cambridge. “You really think about who you really care about,” he said, “and the relationships you want to hold after college.”

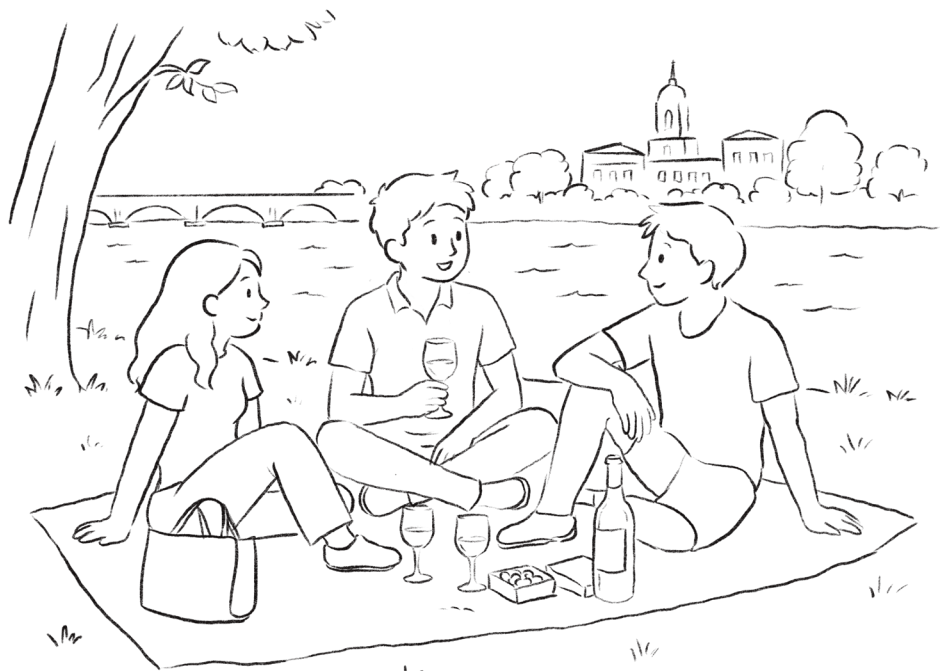
Nguyen's dream day does not end at brunch. The Square is nothing if not a melting pot of cuisines and bars, and like most students here, Nguyen has his favorite spots. Though classic American food is plentiful, Nguyen stresses that Russell House Tavern and its \$1 oyster deal are tough to beat.

And Nguyen is no fool; seafood is the perfect food before a night out, moments that become less random and increasingly meaningful as seniors. After years of experience, his night-on-the-town formula has clearly become specific:

After making the trip over the river to Blanchard's in Allston to secure its prized soju collection, the pregame begins. Kerry even has an ideal timeline, reserving 10:00 p.m. as the recommended time for a solid pregame. Ideally, this should last for an hour and a half before everyone makes their way over to a dorm function together, which eventually winds down around 12:30 a.m. for a late-night order of super nachos from El Jefe's, after which he and his friends make their way back to their Houses, ideally falling asleep by 1:30 a.m.

And though classes have ended, who are we to limit Nguyen's ideal itinerary? Professors and courses are instrumental to the Harvard College experience, and Nguyen would love to return to Vietnamese class one final time, though probably before the pregame. Language classes are known for their intense time commitment and early start times; yet, they are also a constant throughout the undergraduate years. “It reminded me a lot of home,” Nguyen said. “And also the professors are amazing.”

And when Nguyen reflects on the academic experiences that mattered most, he reflects on how his attitude



toward grades changed; he recommends that we underclassmen not stress: “The first time I got a B-plus, it lowkey destroyed me,” he said. “But I think in the end, it all works out.”

This is just 24 hours. But Nguyen's senior year was much more robust than one perfect day. He spent his senior year making the most of Harvard and its opportunities. It's advice he offers to underclassmen, too: say yes more often.

Still, a few traditions remain unfinished. The College has four key rites of passage, some of which are simpler to complete than others. “I think the easiest one is to pee on John Harvard,” he said. “But trust me,” he adds, “it's gonna happen within the next seven days.” He warns, however, that other traditions are already impossible to recover, noting primal scream as one of his biggest regrets. “I should have just sucked it up and done it,” he said. “I kind of have FOMO.”

“You should try to be a little bit more out of your comfort zone,” he continued. “This is actually the last time you see some of the greatest people you've met in the world.”

That perspective is grounded in what he values most about his time here: the people. “I found some of the greatest friends who have always supported me for the past four years.”

**ROHAN TYAGI '29
(ROHANTYAGI@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.
EDU) AND AURORA
CHARBONNEAU '29
(AURORACHARBONNEAU@
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)
ARE ALREADY TAKING
NOTES FOR THEIR SENIOR
YEAR.**

**GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA
RYMAN '28**

SPORTS

Who Do You Root for When There Is No Home Team?

Evaluating how fan culture shifts in the absence of professional sports leagues.

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

To outsiders, it is not unrealistic to draw comparisons between Boston's sports pandemonium and a herd mentality. Any outing on the Red Line can easily be transformed into a riveting game of counting how many toddlers in Red Sox paraphernalia or grown men in Bruins jerseys you can spot during the work week.

To the people of this city, both natives and transplants, the sporting tradition is impossible to ignore. Billboards, radio commercials, public transportation ads—not to mention the discounted merchandise stands that are likely the only thing more prevalent than Dunkin'—proudly wave the logos of the area's professional sports teams. Sports mark a significant source of pride and a pillar in the regional cultural identity of New England—and for good reason.

Boston has been at the forefront of modern sports history. The early popularity of sporting clubs in the city paved the way for America's success in global sports markets. The Boston Athletics Association largely defined Team USA's presence in the first modern Olympics in 1896, inspiring the iconic Boston Marathon one year later in 1897. Other clubs, such as the Oneida Football Club, were pivotal to the later success of charter organizations that were foundational to the establishment of the professional sports leagues we follow today. Since their inception, Boston's professional teams have cemented a legacy as one of the winningest cities in sports. Bringing home 40 championship titles across these elite leagues, the city proudly boasts the nickname "Tittletown."

But even outside one of the winningest cities like Boston, with its numerous titles and historic firsts, major sports cities have an inseparable relationship with their athletic industries. Sports teams—especially at the higher levels—are central to local economies, drawing in fans who boost spending, benefit hospitality, tourism, and employment, and create distinctive branding that extends a city's influence beyond its zip code.

Within these sports cities, teams also play a critical role in fostering community. Wearing the logo of the home team is an open invitation to conversation with fellow sports fans who pass you by on the street. Committed fans give not only time, money, and energy to their favorite franchises but

also generate revenue and social unity that, incidentally, benefit their favorite cities by funding philanthropic efforts and public events. Supporting local franchises means more than sporting a jersey or rooting for your favorite team—it signals loyalty to the communities behind them.

But what if, like me, you are from a state with no professional teams at all? How do you choose which teams and cities are worth your dime when choosing your own is not an option?

My typical return to New Mexico is marked by two certainties: indigestion from Hatch green chile and withdrawal from the booming sports scene of Boston. Unlike in Boston, where sports largely unify the city, here they become a divisive force.

In New Mexico, the sports market profits from division. Our "big" athletic entertainment lies along I-25—the regional Rio Grande Rivalry between the University of New Mexico and New Mexico State University that literally splits state loyalty along the North/South boundary. This rivalry is not only an athletic one but a cultural one, driven by a long history of colonization and conflicting geographic identities. Fans' arguments span from football to crime rates to whose Mexican food is better, consistently becoming so intense that physical violence breaks out during stoppages in play.

For us, this college rivalry is the closest thing we have to a professional sports league. As a Southern New Mexican, rooting for UNM would be the equivalent of a Bostonian rooting for the Yankees—utter sacrilege! However, unlike a Bostonian, we apply the rules of geographic loyalty exclusively to our collegiate teams and find them practically irrelevant when deciding which professional teams we support.

Some do choose based on proximity, turning to our neighboring states, namely Texas and Arizona. However, supporting these franchises is also a contentious decision because the patriotism for one's home state can make backing these teams feel like an act of betrayal.

Growing up in the area, you know that bringing up the Dallas Cowboys sparks a broader conversation about the likability of Texas as a whole. The state's politics, drivers, and even their portion sizes influence whether or not the franchise captures the attention of a New Mexican fan who either dies for their boys or swears them off like the plague. And as for Arizona, fans are even fewer in number, with franchises known for their post-season letdowns—a trend often regarded as a curse. After all, few remain committed to losing franchises, even fewer when it isn't even your home team.

Because proximity only plays a part in the teams we select, fanhood shifts drastically from a community-driven practice to an individualistic one. Walking into a sports bar on a Sunday, you rarely see more than five of the same NFL team jerseys. Even on the household level, Super Bowl Sundays cause squabbles between my Broncos-fan uncle and diehard Patriots-fan brother. I speculate that this pattern is

largely because, in the absence of in-person athletic events to attend, arguing with others offers a substitute form of entertainment.

While arguing is a trademark of sports fandom in general, our athletic industry is built almost entirely upon trash talk, sports betting, and deeply personal rivalries. By nature, being a sports fan in New Mexico means you need to be able to defend why you support a certain franchise. If someone asks, "Why is X your favorite team?" you cannot default to the argument "Because I'm from Y place." Be it a favorite player, team culture, that it's your parents' favorite team, or simply—as our strong inclination towards bandwagoning suggests—because the team wins a lot, selection requires justification.

Without a doubt, our sports fans exercise greater freedom in the professional teams they pick (and repick). Professional sports teams do not uphold our local communities and economies the way they do in major cities. Thus, aligning sports to personal preference becomes a morally permissible thing to do because it reflects nothing about someone's commitment to the communities they belong to. Because our social identities are almost entirely separate from our allegiances as fans, we arguably take a more holistic (albeit sporadic and bandwagon-y) approach to professional sports.

The time, money, and energy we contribute to professional teams are often sunk costs that yield no benefit to our local economies. On the occasion that fans do venture to watch their favorite team in person, travel costs alone amount to a lofty investment. So, when it comes to deciding who to support, the only real personal stake in the game is your own financial burdens, bets, and bragging rights.

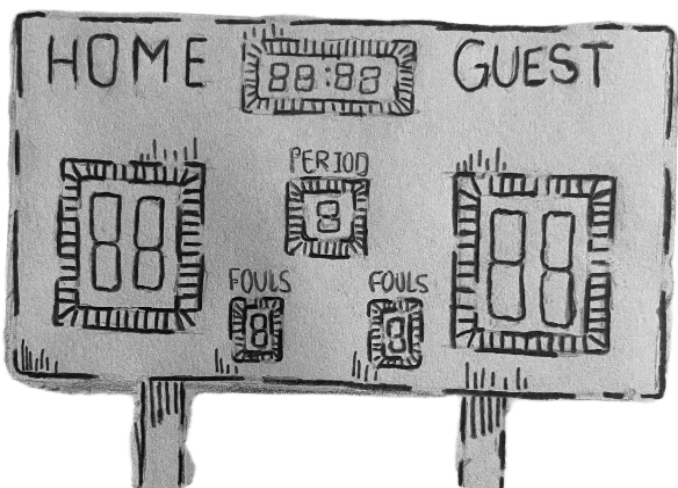
Having lived in "Tittletown" and the middle of nowhere desert where local high school rivalries get more traction than the Olympics, I can attest that there are certainly merits to both approaches to sports fandom.

Making friends in Boston is easy. All I have to do is wear my brother's hand-me-down Tom Brady jersey, and suddenly I'm rejoicing with strangers over the promising future of Drake Maye. This default sense of community is heartwarming, but I have to admit I do miss the spectacle of the divisive competitiveness back home.

Luckily, making enemies is easy in Boston, too. On days when I feel homesick, I might instead reach for a Habs hat just to stir a reaction from those grown men in Bruins jerseys on the Red Line.

**MEGAN LEGAULT '28
(MLEGAULT@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) FIGHTS
INTENSE FOMO EVERY TIME
THE CANADIENS PLAY IN
THE BELL CENTRE.**

**GRAPHIC BY JAMES FOSS
'29**



A Different Side of the Derby

How diversity underlies traditional Southern Derby culture.

BY SEYI AMOSUN '29

The Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports” is no stranger to controversy. Over the years, the Kentucky Derby has faced backlash from those who condemn the barbaric treatment of horses for entertainment. They assert that it’s an extravagant “display of wealth and greed,” simply because the patrons can. Critics go so far as to call it a “cosplay for rich people,” where bets are made to show that one has financial means. While I don’t negate these arguments, there’s another side to Derby culture that represents the progress and growth of the South and the sport itself. For a game that’s associated with the wealthy South, there is significant gender and racial diversity.

Leading Ladies

Though female spectators are now frequently seen with their fascinators and fashionable ensembles, the road to participating in the Churchill Downs festivities has been a long and difficult one.

A woman’s place in the stands was similarly contested. After the grandstands at the Downs were fully constructed, the female spectators were sequestered to a special section, away from the drinking and betting in which the men boisterously participated. The strictures of society resolutely decided that women were too ladylike and would be “spoiled” by the men’s behavior.

On the racetrack, women initially leveraged ownership of horses to find their footing in a historically male-dominated sport. In the 1904 Derby, Lasca Durnell, owner of Elwood, was the first woman to have a winning horse. Durnell set a precedent for women’s opportunities, opening the door for other women to solidify their standing in the Kentucky Derby. Throughout the rest of the 1900s, female-owned horses consistently prevailed, and this success contributed to the first female jockey being licensed in 1968 after the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

This record was still fraught with challenges. Regardless of licensing, female jockeys were not allowed to participate until 1970. And even then, Diane Crump, the first female Kentucky Derby jockey, had to be escorted by armed guards so that she could safely participate in her first race at Hialeah.

Today, women are still making strides in the Derby. On May 2, 2026, Golden Tempo won the 152nd Kentucky Derby. Not only was this an upset, as Golden Tempo came back to win after trailing for most of the race, but it was also a monumental feat for women in the equine industry—

Cherie DeVaux became the first female trainer to win the “Run for the Roses.”

DeVaux is part of a family legacy of Standardbred racing: harness racing in which the horses pull a driver in a two-wheeled cart. Growing up in a sprawling family with two sisters and seven brothers, she’s no stranger to a challenge. After being asked all week about the possibility of becoming the first female trainer to win, DeVaux finally saw that dream become a reality. “It really is an honor to be able to be that person for other women or other little girls to look up to,” DeVaux said.

DeVaux’s career has progressed immensely: beginning as a stable worker in Saratoga, N.Y., to becoming an assistant, and later an official trainer in 2018. She has earned \$36 million and competed in 299 races over her career.

Her historic win is another feather in the hat of women’s continued success in male-dominated sports. “You can dream big, and you can pivot. You can come from one place and make yourself a part of history,” she continued. DeVaux is just the second female trainer to win a Triple Crown race, the prestigious series for three-year-old Thoroughbred horses, following Jena Antonucci at the 2023 Belmont Stakes.

For an institution as integral to Southern culture as the Kentucky Derby, breaking through social barriers deserves to be celebrated and recognized. The Derby isn’t all about mint juleps and fascinators. Today, accomplishments like DeVaux’s show women’s ability to succeed in fields that have only recently become accessible to women. Add in the layers of prejudice they continue to face, and it becomes clear how momentous her win truly is.

Jockeying for Success

Beyond the female empowerment that this Derby season embodied, diversity shines through in the jockeys themselves.

Black jockeys originally dominated the sport in its early years. Following the emancipation of enslaved individuals in 1863, individuals like William “Billy” Walker, Isaac Murphy, and James “Jimmy” Winkfield became prominent jockeys in the industry. However, they were implicitly expelled from the sport with the implementation of Jim Crow laws. Their

participation in the sport has waned over time, with little representation today.

Latino jockeys have since become central to the sport. Braulio Baeza from Panama City won both the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes in 1963, paving the way for Latinos to enter the equine industry. Today, Puerto Rican José Ortiz carries on that same legacy. As the jockey who rode Golden Tempo to that historic finish line, he has steadily become one of the leading equestrians around the globe. With a 24 percent win rate in 2026 and over \$300 million earned in lifetime purse winnings, his athletic prowess positions him as a key player in the sport. Upon reaching that historic finish line, he remarked on the exceptional moment in his career. “It’s a dream come true,” he said. “This is the biggest race in the world for me, and I’m just blessed that I get to ride it almost every year, but get to win—it’s just special.”

Ortiz has won other notable races throughout his career, including several Breeders’ Cup successes, wins in each of the U.S. Triple Crown races, and two Kentucky Oaks victories.

With the diversity present in the horse racing community, it is evident that, though the status quo has its flaws, there remains a core part of the sport that celebrates inclusion and success based on individual talent and prowess. It is no longer 1904, and the olden days of racing are well behind us—it might even be time for the newest golden age of the Derby.

SEYI AMOSUN '29 (SAMOSUN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) THINKS THE SURVIVOR'S PARADE AT THE OAKS IS ONE OF THE COOLEST TRADITIONS IN AMERICAN SPORTS.

GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN '28



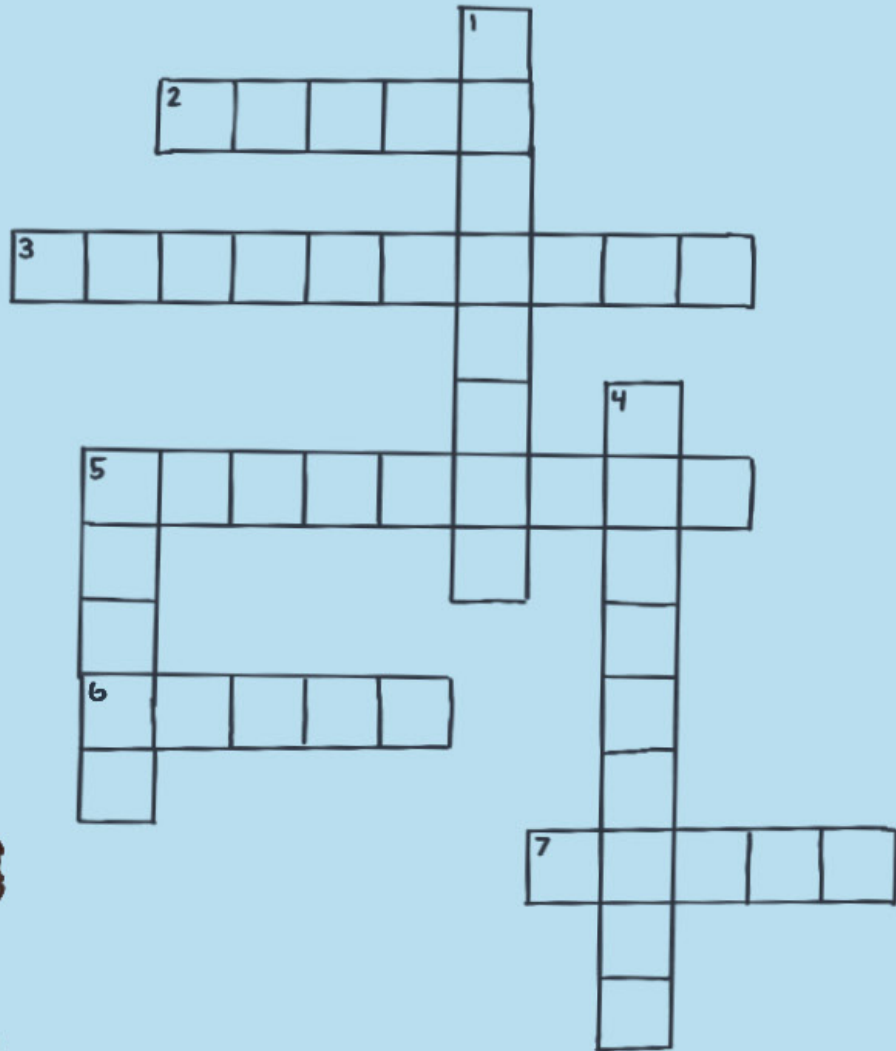
OPINIONS OF FORUM PIECES BELONG ONLY TO THE
WRITER AND DO NOT REFLECT THE VALUES
OF THE "HARVARD INDEPENDENT."

across

- 2) traditional graduation dress color
- 3) album by The Weeknd featuring the song "Escape from LA"
- 5) deserving distinction
- 6) graduating former President of the Independent, ___ Merriam
- 7) accessory for graduation for distinctions, or, taken illegally

down

- 1) church where commencement is usually held
- 4) name for school one has attended?
- 5) last name of Harvard's 2023 commencement speaker



Mia Park Tavares *Rania Jones*