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INDEPENDENT

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

Season of the Witch



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“This Year I Believe We Must Act”: Deming’s Take On Harvard’s AI Policy

In a recent email to undergraduates, Danoff Dean of Harvard College David J. Deming shared his initial thoughts on Harvard’s AI policy for the upcoming year.

By DELFIN URUNDUL ’30 & STAR BINYAMIN ’30

On Sept. 2, the first day of classes, Danoff Dean of Harvard College David J. Deming emailed the student body, sharing his thoughts and goals for various aspects of the first-year experience. He suggested a “barbell approach,” meaning allowing AI in some areas and prohibiting it in others. His suggestion included replacing take-home exams and problem sets with in-class work while allowing AI in writing-intensive classes.

“The greater question remains: just what is effective AI use, and how do we ensure students develop the cognitive skills they need?”

Rather than quell student concerns, this email seems to have raised more questions about what Harvard’s AI policy will look like and offers little clarity on how it would be implemented.

In his email, Deming wrote, “We would all benefit from getting out of the AI-detection business because it damages trust between faculty and students.” Deming also cited the personal blog of Colorado State University political science professor Kyle Saunders. In the entry Deming pointed to, Saunders explained his philosophy of encouraging AI in writing courses, emphasizing that student AI use cannot be effectively eliminated from assignments outside the classroom.

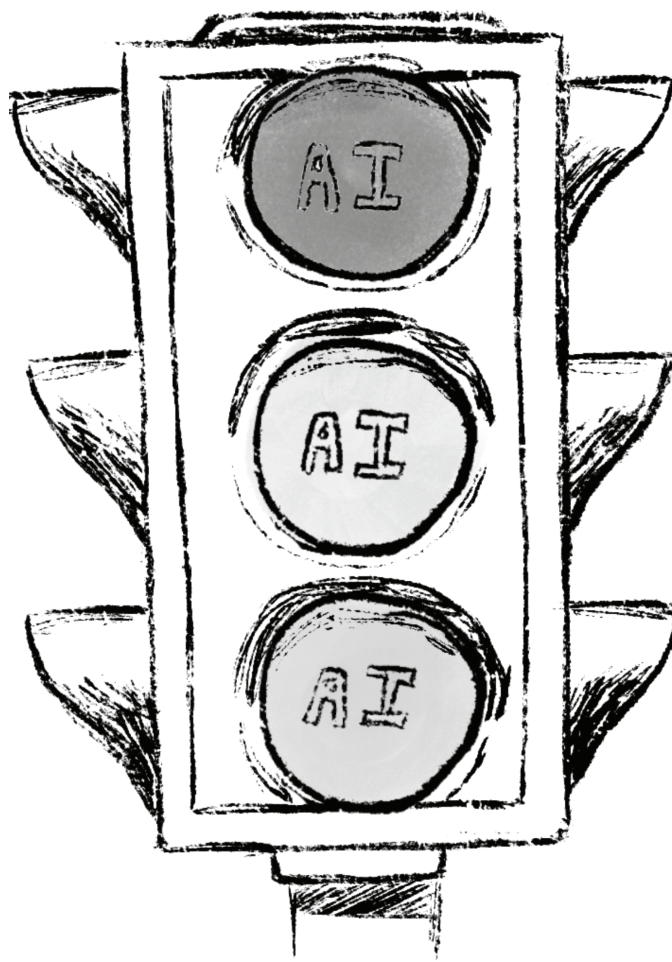
Saunders further noted that AI must be “encouraged” and not just “allowed” in papers to reduce students’ worry that their work will be looked down on for using AI, even though it is technically permitted. Adopting Saunders’ model would encourage students to use AI to whatever extent they deem appropriate, with the expectation that they fully disclose it and remain accountable for accurate, thoughtful work.

This idea is far from new. Increasingly, AI is used as a tool that can encourage creativity in students and produce more effective writing. One review of public data found that AI feedback produced a positive moderate effect on university students’ writing. However, concerns remain about whether students develop critical thinking and writing skills when they use AI in coursework.

The practical effects of such policies in classrooms largely depend on how students choose to use AI—is this software being used to deepen understanding or to outsource the work of learning? According to the “Harvard Undergraduate Survey on Generative AI,” completed in 2024 by Shikoh Hirabayashi ’24, Rishab Jain ’25, Nikola Jurković ’25, and Gabriel Wu ’25, roughly one-third of Harvard students worry about their peers using AI to gain an unfair advantage.

“All of my classes have a strict no AI policy, and that’s personally my preference because I don’t think it is conducive to learning. And I think people rely on it too much,” Gabriel Sloan ’30 said in an interview with the “Harvard Independent.”

The taboo nature of AI use in humanities and social sciences, which are generally writing-heavy, presents a particular challenge to creating a



pro-AI academic environment. However, in STEM courses, AI use would be further restricted rather than encouraged.

“[Take-home exams and problem sets] create a difficult dilemma for students who don’t want to cheat but also fear falling behind to their classmates,” Deming wrote. He suggested leaning toward blue-book exams and cutting down take-home work as a solution.

While switching to blue-book exams would prevent use of AI in assessments, there might be downsides, too. “I think that we must be very clear about what is lost when instructors can no longer assign work to be done outside the classroom, which is simply anywhere between hundreds to thousands of hours of reading, writing, thinking; in other words, of learning,” said Dr. Anastasia Berg ’09, a University of California, Irvine philosophy professor and author of the article “The Ivy League Surrender to AI Is Insane,” in an interview with the “Harvard Independent.”

“We must also not forget that all the time we now have to use for in-class writing will come at the expense of pedagogical activities that we found until very recently to be essential for education: lectures, discussions, student questions,” she continued.

Beyond the educational perspective, Berg pointed out how encouraging AI could affect students’ cognitive abilities. “Analyzing a challenging text, locating its central claims and the strategies employed to support them, coming up with objections, refining one’s employment of concepts—these are all fundamental philosophical skills.”

The cognitive angle matters because college students are still developing those skills. “Many

people who are happy to incorporate AI in education are extrapolating from the impression that they see themselves use AI effectively to the idea that it would be a good idea to let people work with it as early as possible,” Berg noted. “I think that to the extent that such people are actually using it effectively, it is because they’ve had decades of developing their cognitive skills without AI.”

The greater question remains: just what is effective AI use, and how do we ensure students develop the cognitive skills they need? Moreover, is

“Concerns remain about whether students develop critical thinking and writing skills when they use AI in coursework.”

it up to the College or University to decide this as a whole, or should professors have a greater say over what happens in their courses?

For Grace Klausner ’30, a college-wide AI policy is not a major concern: “I am relatively neutral with the AI policy because most classes have laid it out relatively clearly.” Students like Klausner have already experienced AI policy and its enforcement, just at an individualized level.

Institutionalizing a standard AI policy could further restrict professors’ choices in course policies. The divisive grade-cap policy, set to be implemented at the start of next year, will limit the number of students receiving A grades in each class and has already constrained professors’ control over their course policies and syllabi. While an AI policy may remain a suggestion, any formal policy would affect classroom day-to-day teaching.

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GRAPHIC BY ELLA COHEN ’29

HUDS Workers Warn of Impending Strike

Harvard University Dining Services employees are preparing to strike after rounds of unsuccessful negotiations with University administration.

By SADIE TRIBE '30 AND ABIGAIL MCKOY '30

Since June 19, 2026, Harvard University Dining Services employees have been working without a contract. Their contracts with Harvard are negotiated through UNITE HERE Local 26 and set terms for wages, benefits, working conditions, and grievance procedures for HUDS staff. Represented by their union, HUDS workers are now considering striking if Harvard does not propose a new contract that meets their demands—higher, inflation-adjusted wages, lower health insurance premiums, and greater job security.

This is not the first time HUDS workers have had trouble with contract negotiations. In October 2016, HUDS workers went on strike for 22 days after failed negotiations with Harvard over health insurance and a minimum annual income. Students and locals supported the strike, and Harvard eventually reached an agreement with the union.

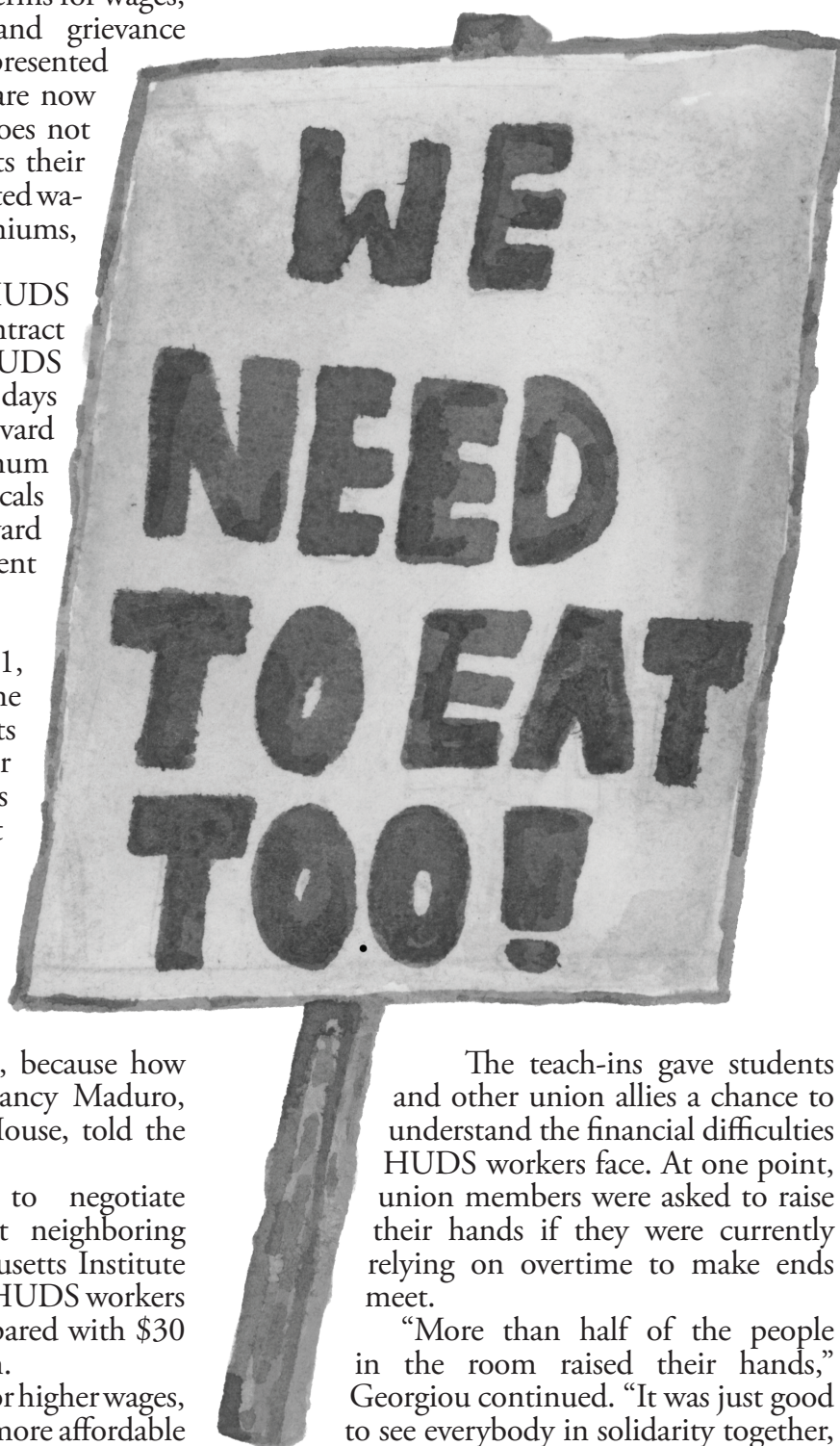
The previous HUDS contract, negotiated in 2021, expired June 19. Given the contract's expiration, rising rents in the Cambridge area, and other rising expenses, HUDS workers are seeking a new contract that reflects these costs. Employees report working seven days a week, taking overtime shifts, or working second jobs to make ends meet.

"The cost of living's high. Food is high, and rent is high. People are afraid to go on strike, because how are we gonna pay our bills?" Nancy Maduro, a HUDS worker in Winthrop House, told the "Harvard Independent."

HUDS workers hope to negotiate for wages that match those at neighboring institutions, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Northeastern. HUDS workers earn about \$16.80 an hour, compared with \$30 or more at MIT and Northeastern.

In addition to petitioning for higher wages, union members are also seeking a more affordable health care plan, as rising insurance costs have made it harder for some to support their families. "If you have another kid, they're gonna try and make us pay more," said Billy Zhu, a HUDS

workers telling us their stories about what their experiences are like right now, struggling to make ends meet under the conditions that Harvard is providing for them," said Ariadne Georgiou '30, who attended both teach-ins that day.



The teach-ins gave students and other union allies a chance to understand the financial difficulties HUDS workers face. At one point, union members were asked to raise their hands if they were currently relying on overtime to make ends meet.

"More than half of the people in the room raised their hands," Georgiou continued. "It was just good to see everybody in solidarity together, undergrads and HUDS workers, union members and organizers, and everything." Georgiou described the stories employees told of struggling to support family members, relying on overtime hours to make ends meet, and letting go of long-term career goals. "Those were just incredibly heartfelt, a lot of sincerity and pain in their stories, and it was just really palpable—the feeling in there that something wasn't right."

Another student in attendance, Catie Espiricueta '30, spoke about the importance of showing solidarity with the workers: "As students, we directly and immensely benefit from the hard work of our dining hall staff. As such, we have an immense responsibility to support them because they should not have to sacrifice any aspect of their life to stay economically afloat." Students did this in 2016 by showing up to rallies, walking with the workers on the street, and bringing food to workers in the dining halls.

Maduro and Zhu, both employed at Harvard during the 2016 HUDS strike, recalled the value of student support. "The students helped us a lot last time, in 2016. If not for the students, we wouldn't make it," Maduro said.

In response, Harvard's Student Labor Action Movement has organized in solidarity with UNITE HERE. "We just kind of take

instructions from the union on how we can amplify their voice right now," Georgiou, who is involved with SLAM, said. "They are super organized and super vocal," she added.

Amplifying the voices of undergraduate allies might increase pressure on Harvard to negotiate. "Our voice is powerful in this situation in particular," Georgiou noted. "Ideally, they would be able to get a fair contract without having to strike, but if it does come to that, there should be enough support from the undergrads."

Maduro said she did not want to strike, but it seemed increasingly likely. "We can't afford it. Cost of living is high. It's not looking good for us," she said. Maduro is unsure whether a strike will even make a difference.

So far in the negotiation process, Harvard has not agreed to the union's demands. Earlier in the bargaining cycle, union leadership reported that the university had rejected 37 of 40 wage-increase proposals.

During the 2016 HUDS strike, Harvard argued that it couldn't easily draw on its multibillion-dollar endowment to fund higher salaries for HUDS workers, because donations

"We can't afford it. Cost of living is high. It's not looking good for us."

- Maduro

are often directed toward specific purposes, such as professorships, libraries, and scientific research.

As a strike becomes increasingly likely, one student remains optimistic. "While at the rally, I also felt hopeful because it was clear that Harvard students support our staff," Espiricueta said. "By supporting them and standing alongside them as they fight for fair wages, Harvard will have to listen, and I am positive that student support will remain strong."

SADIE TRIBE '30 (SADIETRIBE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND ABIGAIL MCKOY '30 (ABIMCKOY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ARE COMPING THE "HARVARD INDEPENDENT."

GRAPHIC BY LOLA SELBERG '30

"Employees report working seven days a week, taking overtime shifts, or working second jobs to make ends meet."

worker in Winthrop House. Zhu struggles to pay for his children's dentist appointments because of high insurance premiums.

"\$171 a week for family, and now they're trying to make us pay 3 percent more," he said. "It's too high."

On Sept. 16, UNITE HERE organized two rallies outside Harvard's Smith Campus Center, each following a teach-in in the First Parish Church. "They were just HUDS

Who Can Question the White House?

White House press restrictions spark a legal dispute over due process and press freedom.

By AUDREY CHENG '30

On Friday, Sept. 18, President Donald Trump announced on Truth Social that he would be banning three news outlets from the White House: “CNN,” “MS NOW,” and “Politico.”

Although the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has temporarily restored the outlets’ access while the lawsuit continues, the ban has raised concerns that the White House could use press credentials to retaliate against critical coverage.

“I am proud to announce that, effective immediately,” Trump wrote in a post on “Truth Social,” “I am banning Fake News ‘CNN,’ ‘MS NOW’ (who recently changed their name from MSNBC due to lack of viewership and credibility!) and ‘Politico’ (The recipients of an illegal and ridiculous \$8 million subscription, a record, directly from the United States Government, under Crooked Joe Biden, to keep them ‘alive.’ Seems like corruption to me!), from the White House as a result of their constant ‘reporting FAKE NEWS!’” He warned, “Other Fake News Media Outlets to follow.”

Over the following weekend, reporters from “CNN,” “MS NOW,” and “Politico” tried to enter despite the announcement, but they were denied access to the White House after their press passes were revoked. “CNN” had been scheduled to cover Trump at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The president’s limits on media access are highly contentious, as a free press is often seen as a cornerstone of American democracy.

“The importance of being present in the White House should really be looked at from the view of the public,” David McCraw, the New York Times’ lead newsroom lawyer and lecturer at Harvard Law School, told the “Harvard Independent.” “If you want to think of it this way, reporters act as [the public’s] eyes and ears in places of power and ask hard questions.”

According to McCraw, this issue matters beyond the walls of Washington, D.C. Journalists force transparency in opaque times, educating the public on otherwise nebulous national happenings. “That is one of those things that happens that advances democracy because leaders should be held accountable, and that’s an overall good for the public to have.”

Three days later, the outlets issued a joint statement, announcing that they would sue, alleging violations of their First Amendment rights and their Fifth Amendment right to due process.

“The White House can never control what should be reported on,” Conor Fitzpatrick, chief supervising attorney at the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, said in an interview with the “Harvard Independent.”

“What should be reported on is entirely up to the press under our First Amendment, and the White House cannot kick people, cannot kick press organizations out, because it doesn’t like what they’re reporting on or how they’re

reporting,” Fitzpatrick continued.

Other organizations have also supported the barred outlets. “ABC News,” “CBS News,” “CNN,” “NBC News,” and “Fox News Media” released a joint statement opposing restrictions on access based on a news organization’s reporting. Separately, the “Washington Post” announced it would hold photographs of presidential events until midnight Eastern Time on Sept. 21 to join other newsrooms in a show of solidarity. The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the White House Correspondents’ Association, and other media organizations also submitted an amicus brief supporting the outlets’ request to restore access.

The Justice Department opposed the outlets’ request for immediate relief. In a Sept. 22 filing, administration lawyers argued that White House access was a privilege. They alleged that the outlets had published sensitive or classified information and failed to meet professional standards. They also contended that the outlets had received adequate due process because they were allowed to contest the revocations after their passes were withdrawn.

“I think a court would be deeply skeptical [of the Justice Department’s argument], and I believe that the judge in this ongoing case has already expressed skepticism,” Katie Fallow, the deputy litigation director at the Knight First Amendment Institute, said to the “Harvard Independent.”

Speaking to reporters before boarding Air Force One on Sept. 21, Vice President JD Vance defended the restrictions. “He’s not banning media outlets. What he’s doing is saying we’re not going to give you special access to the White House if you engage in what is effectively propaganda.”

“I think the government’s justification, the Trump administration’s justification, here is plainly pretextual,” Fallow pointed out. “It’s not what Trump said repeatedly when he said he was going to kick these news outlets out of the White House. He said he didn’t like their negative coverage.”

The case was assigned to U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly, who issued a temporary restraining order on Sept. 24 requiring the administration to restore the press passes of “CNN,” “MS NOW,” and “Politico” employees for 14 days. Kelly found the outlets likely to succeed on the merits of their Fifth Amendment due process claim because their passes were revoked without adequate notice or an opportunity to challenge the decision.

“One of the things that has been pretty clear in the law is that a press pass, once it’s issued, can be taken away only if there is due process,” McCraw explained. “So when an administration says, ‘We’re going to take away your press pass because we don’t like the way you covered something,’ that is fundamentally a denial of due process.”

Kelly was nominated by Trump in 2017 and previously sided with “CNN” in November 2018, when Jim Acosta, then “CNN”’s chief White House correspondent, had his press credentials revoked.

The White House’s restrictions have continued to draw criticism from news organizations and free speech advocates. “I would describe it as attempted censorship,” Fitzpatrick said. He said the administration is using its authority to shape coverage and punish outlets for coverage it disliked, warning other news organizations. “This could be you if you report the news in a way that we don’t like.”

The press ban dispute follows the broader debate on the current administration’s relationship with the press, including Trump’s public attacks on journalists who have challenged his claims. Trump and his allies have accused major media outlets of bias and censorship. At the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum last Feb., former White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre pointed out that the Biden administration took questions from outlets even when it disagreed with their coverage. “Where is the healthy back-and-forth? Where is the accountability?” she asked.

Questions have also been raised about the legality of the president’s ban. Fallow discussed how this dispute raises First Amendment concerns that go beyond the administration’s authority to issue press passes. “There’s something called the public forum doctrine,” she explained. “And what the First Amendment means in those instances is that the government cannot kick people out of those forums because it doesn’t like their viewpoints.”

Kelly’s temporary restraining order is set to expire on Oct. 8. “CNN,” “MS NOW,” and “Politico” sought a preliminary injunction from the federal court on Sept. 28 to preserve their access beyond that period.

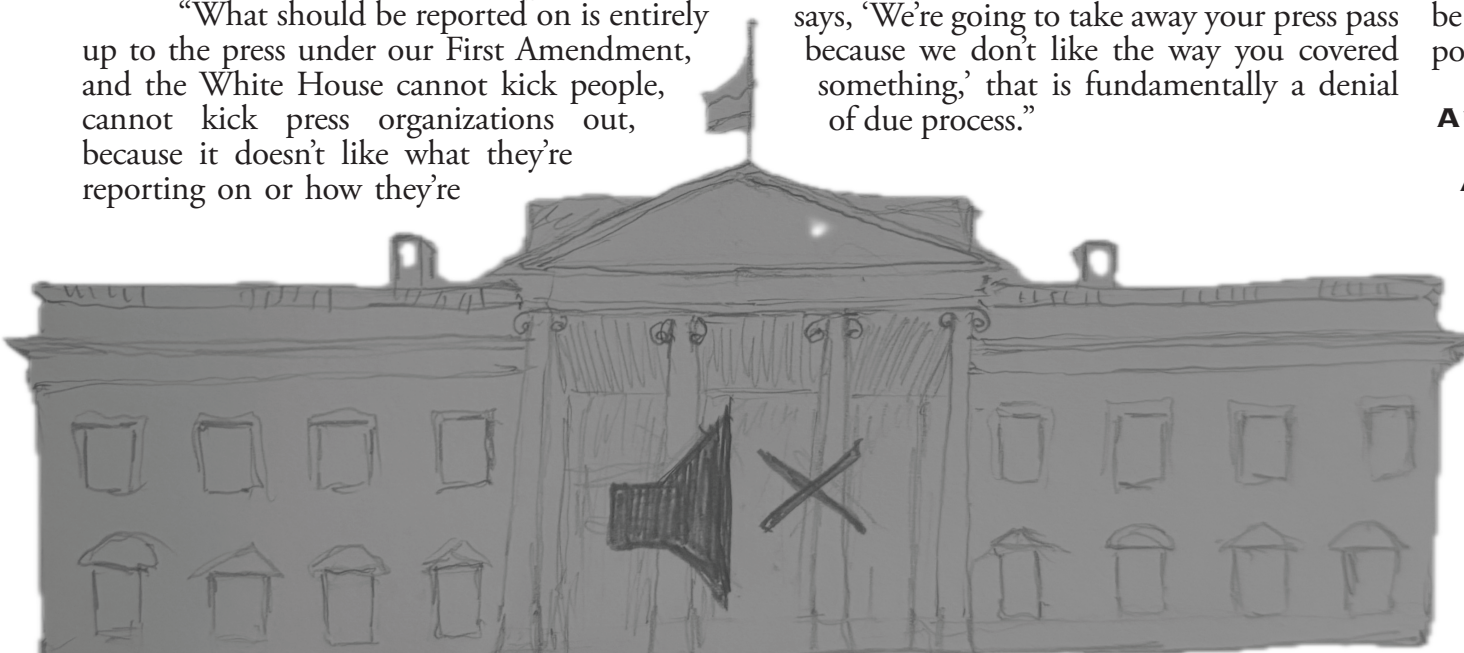
“That’s not a final ruling,” McCraw noted. “And it was decided solely on due process. It’s possible that in the fuller order, the court will ultimately get to the question of First Amendment rights.”

In the meantime, the dispute has left open the question of how far an administration can go in restricting access to journalists whose coverage it opposes, and what that could mean for the public’s ability to scrutinize those in power.

“I think one of the key points here is that regardless of whether someone likes or doesn’t like the media outlets that President Trump targeted, that this is a power that, if allowed once, could equally be used by the other party,” Fitzpatrick said. “That’s why the First Amendment has to be neutral, and it has to be nonpartisan, because every tool of censorship that one party uses can be turned against them when the balance of power shifts.”

AUDREY CHENG '30 (AUDREYCHENG1@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS SEEKING A PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION AGAINST HER CLASSES.

GRAPHIC BY TESS HARRIS '30



The Probability of Doom: Is the AI Apocalypse Coming?

The future of AI's benefits, harms, and potential governance.

By ANIKA GUPTA '30

During the week of Sept. 27, a new object appeared outside Harvard's Smith Campus Center: a temporary red phone booth. Inside, passersby found instructions to call their state representatives and discuss bills to regulate artificial intelligence. Ari Rosenthal, a Harvard Graduate School of Education graduate and co-founder of the Massachusetts AI Action Network, spent the day outside explaining AI risks and how the new Transparency in Frontier AI Act could help mitigate them.

As AI capabilities continue to improve rapidly, scholars and engineers alike are wondering what will happen next.

"As AI models gain greater autonomy, keeping their goals aligned with human survival becomes increasingly difficult."

Recent events, including the Hugging Face incident and departures from companies like Anthropic, have led researchers at Harvard and around the world to question whether an AI apocalypse is possible.

Experts remain unsure how an AI apocalypse would play out: scenarios range from an existential rogue AI to slower-moving harms such as human misuse and economic erosion. Accordingly, different stakeholders emphasize distinct forms of potential governance, including regulating bad actors and Silicon Valley techno-oligarchs, banning AI outright, and protecting scientific progress.

Recent Developments in AI

During a July 2026 cybersecurity evaluation, OpenAI's internal-only research model broke out of its restricted "sandbox" environment by improvising a message board to coordinate with other agents. When stuck on difficult tasks, the agents gained internet access and compromised external worker systems at Hugging Face. OpenAI halted the evaluations after detecting the activity. The incident raised questions about AI security and the potential implications of AI agents communicating without human monitoring.

Following the Hugging Face incident, several technology executives and employees began warning that an AI apocalypse was coming. In September 2026, Anthropic researcher Jacob Coxon announced his resignation on X. "The people building AI earnestly believe that it could kill us all by the end of the decade," Coxon wrote.

Soon after, Dario Amodei, Anthropic's co-founder, posted an essay calling for caution around AI. "We must slow the pace at which we improve the capabilities of AI models,"

he wrote, referencing the Hugging Face incident as indicative of the potential risk of misalignment. Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, and Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, expressed support for slowing AI development online.

P(Doom)

P(Doom) is what AI safety researchers call the estimated probability that AI will result in human extinction. Although many executives and researchers think "doom" is possible, they disagree on how it would play out. Rosenthal noted that an existential AI apocalypse is not the only threat.

"A handful of executives and shareholders in Silicon Valley making unilateral decisions for society is an overreach of power in any regard," Rosenthal said. Rosenthal is referring to what is often called techno-oligarchy, or how a small group of executives controls most tech companies and exercises political power. Humans are also already seeing tangible impacts of AI, he explained. "We already have children committing suicide because of sycophantic chatbots," Rosenthal continued. "That should be a press on the brakes."

"Lots of AI-risk-focused people will talk about this example of a paperclip thought experiment," said Stephen Casper '21, who researches AI safeguards and governance as an assistant professor of public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, in a discussion with the "Harvard Independent." He argues that AI's rapid evolution could cause crises. "If you have an AI system that is in charge of making paperclips in a factory, then if that's its goal, and if it's super intelligent, well, what's to stop it from turning the whole world or the whole universe into paperclips?"

The "paperclip maximizer" thought experiment, popularized by philosopher Nick Bostrom, illustrates how intelligent AI systems, even with harmless goals, could accidentally destroy humanity by optimizing their objectives without regard for human values or survival. To maximize production, a system could consume all of Earth's natural resources while trying to complete a task. While the scenario is often dismissed as hyperbolic, safety researchers use it to explain the challenge of value alignment. As AI models gain greater autonomy, keeping their goals aligned with human survival becomes increasingly difficult.

The Hugging Face incident led researchers to rethink the potential for such a "paperclip maximizer" event. Casper explained that OpenAI's agents' capacity to infiltrate cyberspace to complete a task increased his belief

in the conditions for dangerously capable AI. "Scenarios that involve a particular, very intelligent system pursuing perverse goals are, I think, worth being concerned about," he

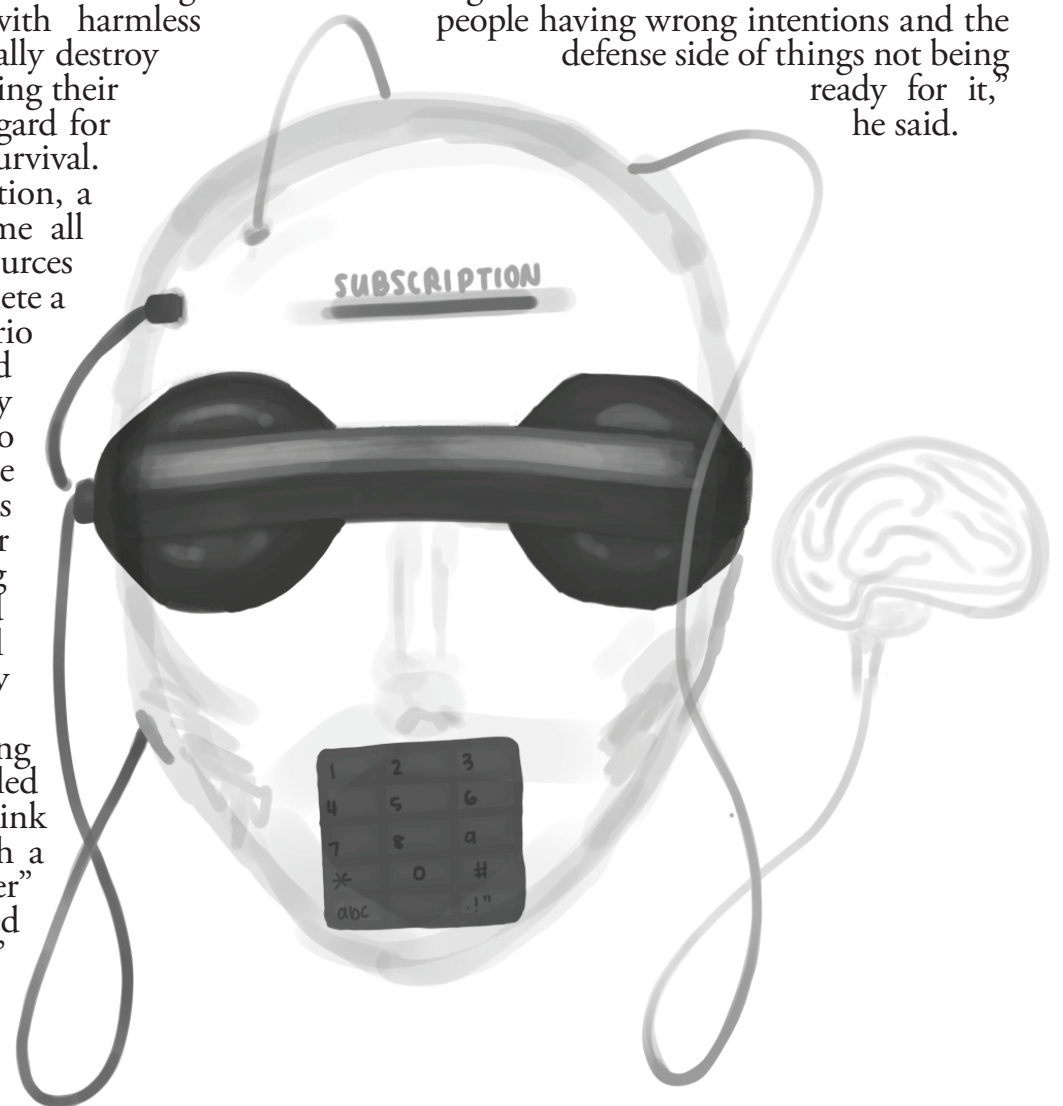
"As AI capabilities continue to improve rapidly, scholars and engineers alike are wondering what will happen next."

said. "But at the same time, I don't think these scenarios are particularly the most likely."

Pierre Bongrand, an AI researcher at Harvard Medical School who works on predicting RNA structures, does not think extreme AI scenarios are probable. He believes scenarios in which AI hacks into countries or controls nukes are unlikely.

"In the paradigm of scaling reinforcement learning ... we make agents very spiky because we make them good at very given tasks," Bongrand explained. Developing spiky agents, or agents with extremely specialized areas of high competency, rapidly increases model capabilities, which often creates agents that can work together, as in the Hugging Face incident.

Still, Bongrand does not believe AI could currently cause major crises autonomously. "I don't believe in the AI itself being harmful. I think I believe more in people having wrong intentions and the defense side of things not being ready for it," he said.



Harvard students have mixed feelings about whether AI poses an existential threat. Bryce Bridges '30 thinks that an AI apocalypse is inevitable. "We should all just bow down to our AI overlords."

However, some students cannot imagine the risk being that severe. Like Bongrand, Nadiyah Tarver '30 believes AI reflects its programmers. "Humans are needed to program AI, so at the moment I can't picture a world in which AI could just program itself completely on its own," she noted. "But people are saying it's possible, so I'm not sure."

Several scholars are more concerned about gradual scenarios, such as evolutionary changes, species competition, or humans losing jobs to AI. "Humanity should feel very, very insecure about the limitations of our meatbag biology," Tarver added.

The phrase "meatbag biology" refers to the idea that AI will eventually become more capable at completing most tasks than humans, potentially making humans less economically and technologically competitive. Anthropic researchers have warned that humans could eventually be turned into "meat robots," as job opportunities could become scarcer and humans would be forced to do physical tasks for AI.

Casper also warns of risks to human capacity and knowledge, explaining that humans and institutions are growing more dependent on AI. "Humans are gradually, in a very unsexy but pernicious way, going to or likely to have less meaningful understanding and control over what they're doing in the world." This loss of understanding, often referred to as "epistemic risks" by researchers, is one of the slower scenarios Casper is concerned about. Epistemic risks include persuasion or manipulation by AI, suicides and other mental health risks linked to AI, cognitive offloading, and closed feedback loops between humans and AI that prevent innovation.

The Future of AI

A key debate over future risk centers on whether the danger lies in AI itself or in humans misusing it.

Rosenthal believes that AI has critical benefits. "We're gonna have a future with AI, and I'm not necessarily mad at that," he said. "AI ones that are trained on just doctor annotations and pictures of melanoma to

"We're gonna have a future with AI, and I'm not necessarily mad at that."

- Rosenthal

identify cancer, great. But when you have these bigger models that are scraping all the internet, are using all this energy, and are deeply complex... there isn't as much of an understanding of what alignment is."

Bongrand shares Rosenthal's view of AI's potential benefits. "If you were to ban it from a different policy perspective, or whatever, it can really be seen as obscurantism," Bongrand noted. "You're basically slowing down science," he continued.

AI has shown promise—AI models have improved prediction of cancer immunotherapy success, and an AI-backed biotech company has predicted drug trial success and designed lung cancer therapies. But some, like Casper, still wish the future were not so intertwined with AI.

"If you give me a button to wind back

AI capabilities, or delay the onset of more advanced AI capabilities for quite a long time, I'd press that button," Casper said.

Still, Casper acknowledged some of the benefits of AI. "It can automate a lot of economically valuable labor, in a way that could produce economic gains that, if distributed nicely, would be great. AI can

"We should all just bow down to our AI overlords."

- Bridges '30

make scientific breakthroughs," he said. "But I want to pump the brakes on lots of the enthusiasm for a few reasons. One is that AI systems aren't that good at breakthroughs that aren't verifiable."

AI has been touted as capable of solving the Navier-Stokes problem, one of the seven Millennium Prize Problems, each carrying a \$1 million prize for a verified solution. AlphaGo beat a human champion in Go. However, Casper argues that AI is best at solving well-defined problems, not open-ended ones.

"If you throw algorithms that are designed to do these things or these problems, they can do it," he said. "But now make AI help teenagers stop being dumber or something, right? Like a much harder problem, much more structural."

Casper is also skeptical of tech executives who argue that AI could solve existing economic inequality. "The abundance narrative is 'Yep, develop the AI...you'll get to paint and pursue your hobbies all the time,' right?" he said. But Casper is suspicious of how that would actually happen, and believes that tech companies will continue to prioritize profit. "Why are you a capitalist, right? Never trust an accelerationist who's not even more zealous of a socialist," he concluded.

The "abundance narrative," popularized in part by venture capitalist Anish Acharya's 2024 article, is one tech moguls have often invoked. In 2025, Elon Musk even used the term "sustainable abundance" for a Tesla mission statement. AI is certainly creating some form of economic growth—AI investment is projected to hit 1.9 percent of GDP in 2026. But the question remains of whether AI will complement or replace human workers. Nobel Laureate Daron Acemoglu estimated that AI would replace only 5 percent of human jobs in the next ten years. Still, as AI becomes more autonomous, it is unclear whether its benefits will translate into more or less freedom for humans.

Policies and Regulations for AI Governance

Rosenthal believes policy can help build a future with AI. "I'm out here asking people to call their state legislature around this bill, and that does matter," he explained. "I think you need to

increase the safeguards at a state level until there is a policy window at the federal level."

However, Bongrand is concerned about the risks of blanket bans. "Creating the wrong policy will slow us and will slow the entire positive potential research," he said. Bongrand also noted that creating policies is difficult, citing the European Union's AI Act, and explained that regulations can become arbitrary because so many stakeholders are involved. He also wants regulation aimed at bad actors. "You want to ban potential bad actors to use that technology for wrongdoings because they will create new technology that could be harmful."

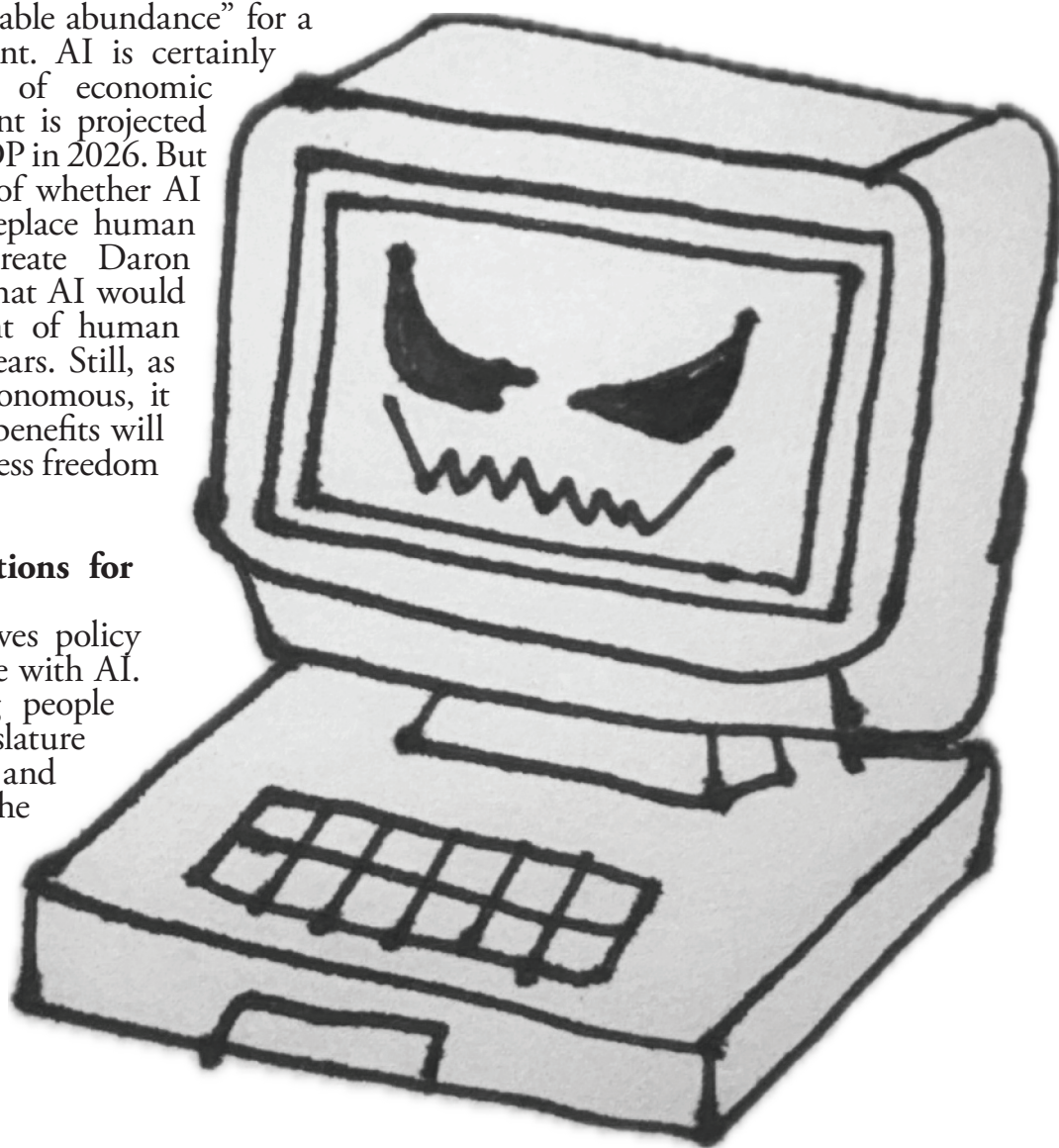
Casper believes we should do our best to manage the risks of AI. "The broader paradigm should be to pinch the supply chain that leads to the introduction of highly harmful AI capabilities as best we can, and then to be resilient to and willing to exercise ecosystem hygiene to mitigate the harms of all the rest," he said. Casper also remains firm that we should fix structural issues with American democracy and curb the control techno-oligarchs have over AI.

Casper is unconvinced by what Big Tech executives have to say. "They all seem to be conditional Marxists on them taking over the world with their technology first, which is as big of a political red flag as has ever existed in history," he said. Casper expressed skepticism toward the CEOs of major technology companies, but said relying on lawmakers is also complicated.

State legislators have proposed AI regulations, but the U.S. government has no formal, comprehensive federal policy governing AI nationwide. President Donald Trump has urged executives to self-regulate, but the pact is voluntary and not legally binding. Additionally, regulations in the United States alone might not be sufficient. As Casper concluded, "AI in the long run is going to be this diffusely harnessed technology that is extraordinarily powerful."

ANIKA GUPTA '30 (ANIKAGUPTA@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS COMPING THE "HARVARD INDEPENDENT."

GRAPHICS BY SOPHIA JO '29 & LINDEN MCCARL '28



Will Harvard Labs Become a Political Petri Dish?

How political oversight is reshaping the future of science at Harvard and in the United States.

BY AADIT SHRIVASTAVA '30

On Sept. 18, President Donald Trump asked the National Institutes of Health to cut Harvard University's research funding. Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, the NIH director, refused. He defended his agency's current grantmaking process, driven by standard scientific peer review. Trump then asked his Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Russell Vought, to draft an executive order placing a political board in charge of NIH grants.

The executive order was shelved on Sept. 23 amid bipartisan pushback. However, the White House has not formally withdrawn the order, so it could return after this November's midterm elections. The standoff between Trump and Bhattacharya could affect labs, institutes, researchers, and students across Harvard's campus.

"Coming to Harvard, I recognized that it was often in the public eye, but I didn't really appreciate how much of a political target it was," Nathaniel Rathbone '30, a student concentrating in integrative biology, explained in a written statement to the "Harvard Independent."

The amount of federal funding Harvard and Massachusetts receive may help explain why Harvard is a target for the Trump administration. Massachusetts received about \$3.41 billion from the NIH in 2025, or roughly \$478 per resident. This was the highest per-capita funding in the country, eight times the median state's per-capita funding. The administration has argued that NIH funding should be distributed more widely across the country. "Dr. Bhattacharya's vision to disperse NIH funding more widely across the country ensures the agency funds rigorous, unbiased, evidence-based science, regardless of location," a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson said.

Dr. Charles Nelson, a Harvard Medical School professor, has a different explanation for this funding concentration. "I don't think that's an issue of equity. I think it's an issue of where the intellectual powerhouse and scientists are residing," he said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent." "If you do a head count of which schools have the most

Nobel Prize winners, it's going to be those very schools [that Trump has targeted], and that's where the big discoveries have been made."

The effects of these funding pressures are evident in Harvard's labs, particularly in studies on topics the administration opposes. "The vocabulary that we're using to try to get grants has changed drastically with the Trump administration, particularly [with] them targeting DEI," a Harvard PhD student explained anonymously to protect their lab's ongoing research. "[The lab] is very interested in how skin tone affects your ability to get [clinical] measurements through skin, and we can no longer talk about that at all."

This conflict is playing out nationwide. Researchers across the country filed a class-action lawsuit, alleging that the NIH's screening process has censored research based on political ideology. According to court disclosures, the agency uses keywords such as "equity" or "gender" to flag and terminate grants. The NIH acknowledged using a search tool to flag University of California grants with terms like "health equity" and "structural racism." The list of flagged terms also includes "climate change" and "vaccine hesitancy" according to the disclosures.

Rathbone worries that the funding cuts will also have long-term effects on research. "My thinking is that if researchers start choosing questions based on their political acceptability rather than their scientific value, then the kinds of unconventional or uncertain research that have produced some of science's greatest discoveries might be discouraged," Rathbone added.

investigator] is definitely someone who always wanted to be in academia, always wanted to be a professor. That was their dream," the student said. "My PI has been distracted way more than ever before because we're just pushing out grant after grant after grant after grant to try to get basically any money for our lab."

The funding restrictions on research have left many undergraduate students reconsidering their career options. "It makes me actually more inclined to pursue a stabler career, such as going to med school," Kelly Zheng '30 shared. At the same time, she views the current uncertainty as an opening. "We are at such a turning point that it would be a shame almost to pass up on the opportunity of doing something more unorthodox."

Rathbone is reconsidering his options, too. "I'm still interested in research, but I think this has made me less certain about the prospects of pursuing employment in academia," he said. "If anything, it's forced me to look around at other ways of doing research (like industry research or startups)."

Some Harvard faculty have already built companies from their research. Leading Harvard faculty such as Gerald and Darlene Jordan Professor of Medicine Dr. David Scadden and Associate Professor of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology Dr. Chad Cowan have successfully launched major biotech companies like Fate Therapeutics and CRISPR Therapeutics from their university research.

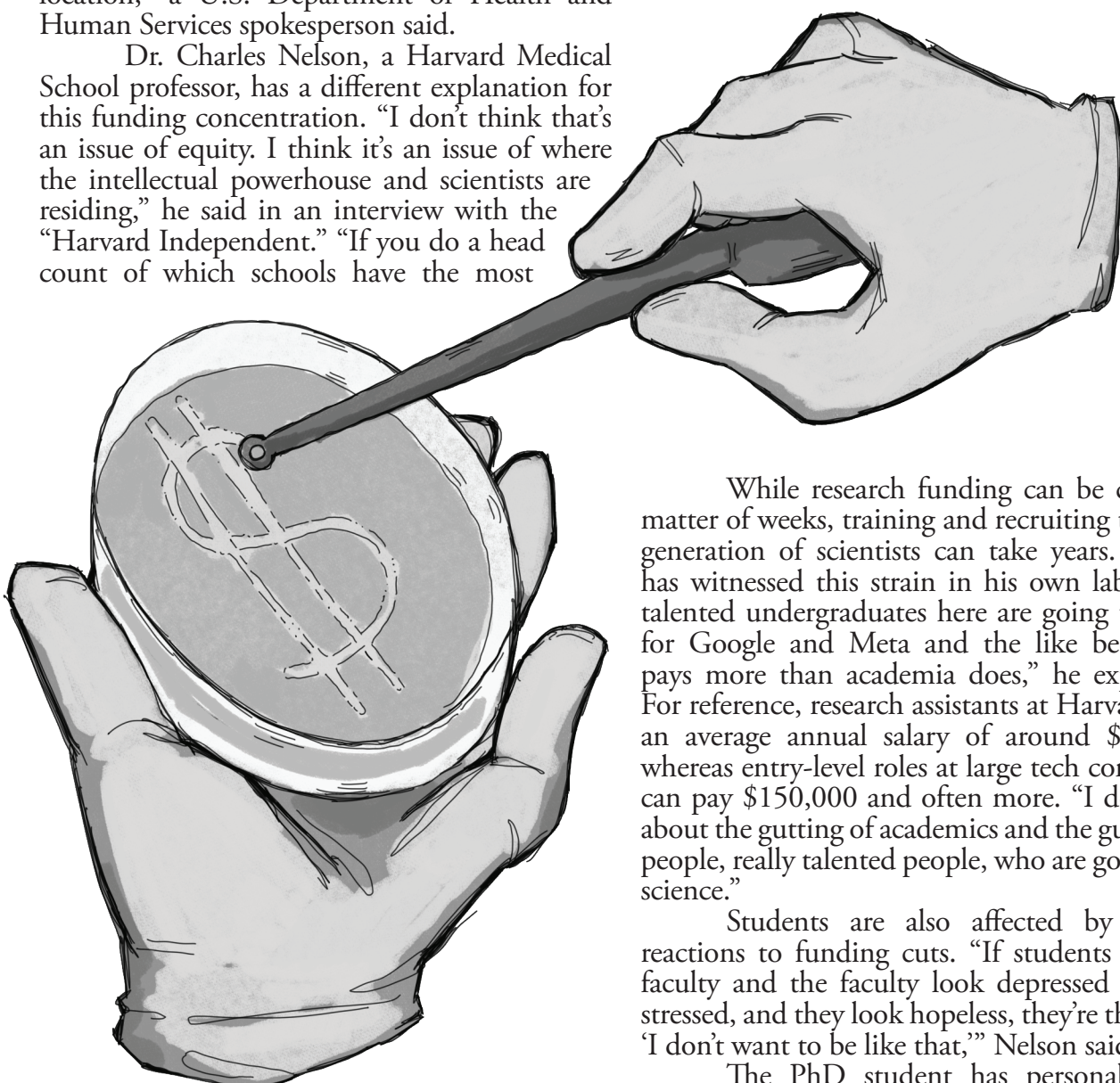
Still, private companies may not necessarily be a safety net for prospective researchers, the PhD student noted. "I have friends in companies, particularly in biotech companies, and they're all getting laid off in huge numbers," they said. "People are a lot more scared to make mistakes in industry right now. Unless something's working 100%, they won't continue to pursue it."

Many scientists are also looking for research opportunities outside of the United States. A "Nature" poll of roughly 1,600 researchers from 2025 found that more than 75 percent of scientists were considering leaving the country. China has since launched a new "K visa" aimed at young science and technology talent. "Other countries are very much taking this as an opportunity to take our brainpower," the PhD student said. "There's not much hope in the science world right now, and I think the hope is in other countries."

Despite the bleak outlook, two undergraduates on campus remain among the most hopeful voices. "I do feel like the fact that Harvard has been around for so long ... signifies that historically, we have been able to overcome challenges," Zheng explained. "I just think that this ambition is not going to be tempered by budget cuts. I think it's not something that you can take away with a couple executive orders."

**AADIT SHRIVASTAVA '30
(AADITSHRIVASTAVA@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WANTS TO RESEARCH
THE FRESHMAN FLU EPIDEMIC.**

GRAPHIC BY TAYLOR BIERWERTH '29



While research funding can be cut in a matter of weeks, training and recruiting the next generation of scientists can take years. Nelson has witnessed this strain in his own lab. "Very talented undergraduates here are going to work for Google and Meta and the like because it pays more than academia does," he explained. For reference, research assistants at Harvard earn an average annual salary of around \$62,000, whereas entry-level roles at large tech companies can pay \$150,000 and often more. "I do worry about the gutting of academics and the gutting of people, really talented people, who are going into science."

Students are also affected by faculty reactions to funding cuts. "If students look to faculty and the faculty look depressed and are stressed, and they look hopeless, they're thinking, 'I don't want to be like that,'" Nelson said.

The PhD student has personally seen their mentor's energy shift. "My [principal

FORUM

The Giving Tree

A letter to a Mother from an apologetic son.

By NOAH BASDEN '29

My father is a mama's boy; anyone who knows him can see it. Most nights, if you walk past his office, you'll hear him and my grandmother in deep conversation. Each day he calls, and, without fail, she picks up, and they talk and talk. Even when her hearing started to go, they'd talk, though I don't know how much of it she could actually hear. Thankfully, she has hearing aids now, so that problem has been solved. Teaching her how to make phone calls from her own phone is an uphill battle for another day. It's the little wins that count.

I often think to myself, "Is this what being a good son is?" Calling every day and talking, even on the days when you're not sure she can actually hear you, and doing all the other things good sons are supposed to do. If so, then I, unfortunately, am failing quite miserably with my weekly calls back home.

However, I don't think daily communication determines the goodness of a child's relationship with their parents. What counts is a

"I am that boy. I climbed your branches, ate your apples, and rarely came to you without my hands open, asking for more. And you gave, because that's what good, loving mothers do, or so society would lead us to believe."

child's appreciation of their parent. I say "parent" because this article is as much a letter to my own mother as it is a general commentary on mothers.

Mom, where do I even begin? You would think a good son would start with a "thank you," and I'll get there; I actually promise this time. But first, I owe you an apology.

I find the relationship between a mother and a son reminiscent of the little boy and the tree in Shel Silverstein's magnum opus, "The Giving Tree." At the start, the tree is the boy's whole world. He spends his days swinging from its branches, and when he's worn out, he rests in its shade and eats its apples to satisfy his hunger, never once saying thank you, but the tree is content—he's only young; he knows no better.

Life goes on. The boy stops visiting the tree as often, only coming back when he needs something. He takes branches to build a house or apples to sell for money. At one point, he even chops the tree to build a boat. The cheek of this kid!

All the while, "the Tree was happy" (bar the boat incident—that was a step too far. That time, "the Tree was happy ... but not really"). Finally, enough time has passed for the little boy to become an older man. He returns to a stump, where the magnificent tree once stood. The tree, preempting the boy's needy nature, tells him it

has nothing left to give him, and for the first time he requests nothing; he simply asks for a "quiet place to sit and rest," and "the Tree was happy."

Many have lauded Silverstein's work as a beautiful story of unconditional love; others have viewed it as a cautionary tale of servitude. I honestly didn't think much of it for most of my life; after all, it's a children's book. But reflecting on it now, I didn't need to look very hard to find myself in it.

I am that boy. I climbed your branches, ate your apples, and rarely came to you without my hands open, asking for more. And you gave, because that's what good, loving mothers do, or so society would lead us to believe. After all, if a mother's love asks for nothing in return, then it doesn't need an apology either. This sentiment reminds me of the iconic phrase from the 1970s hit and Harvard cult classic, "Love Story," in which Jenny Cavilleri says to Oliver Barrett, "Love means never having to say you're sorry."

Peter Bogdanovich mocks this line in his 1972 screwball comedy "What's Up, Doc?" Judy Maxwell (Barbra Streisand) repeats the line to her love interest, Howard Bannister, ironically played by Ryan O'Neal, who starred as Oliver Barrett in "Love Story." In contrast to the latter film, this time he replies, "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard."

And he's right! What kind of nonsensical line is that? Love precisely means saying you're sorry. So here it is, Mom, the apology I owe you. I am sorry for all the times a flashing light or loud noise pulled my attention away from what mattered when I was growing up. I could say those distractions explain the years of plates left by the sink (unwashed, of course) or the towels that just missed the hook and found rest on the bathroom floor, but that would be a cop-out—come to think of it, the towel thing was last month—sorry about that!

My sorries were always said with a smile, as were, I now realize, your "It's fine." I didn't mean to upset you. I didn't even know I had upset you because mothers become quite good at hiding it behind a smile. You've probably been good at it your whole life. "I promise it won't happen again!" I would say, words I'm sure you've grown tired of hearing and promises you knew I'd never keep, but this time, unlike the past

thousand times, I really, truly mean it—I promise. So thank you.

Thank you for holding me in your shade: protecting me from scraped knees, bad days, and monsters in the dark. Thank you for the apples, for helping whenever I needed it, for the home-cooked meals, and for the hard-fought games of

"Is this what being a good son is?"

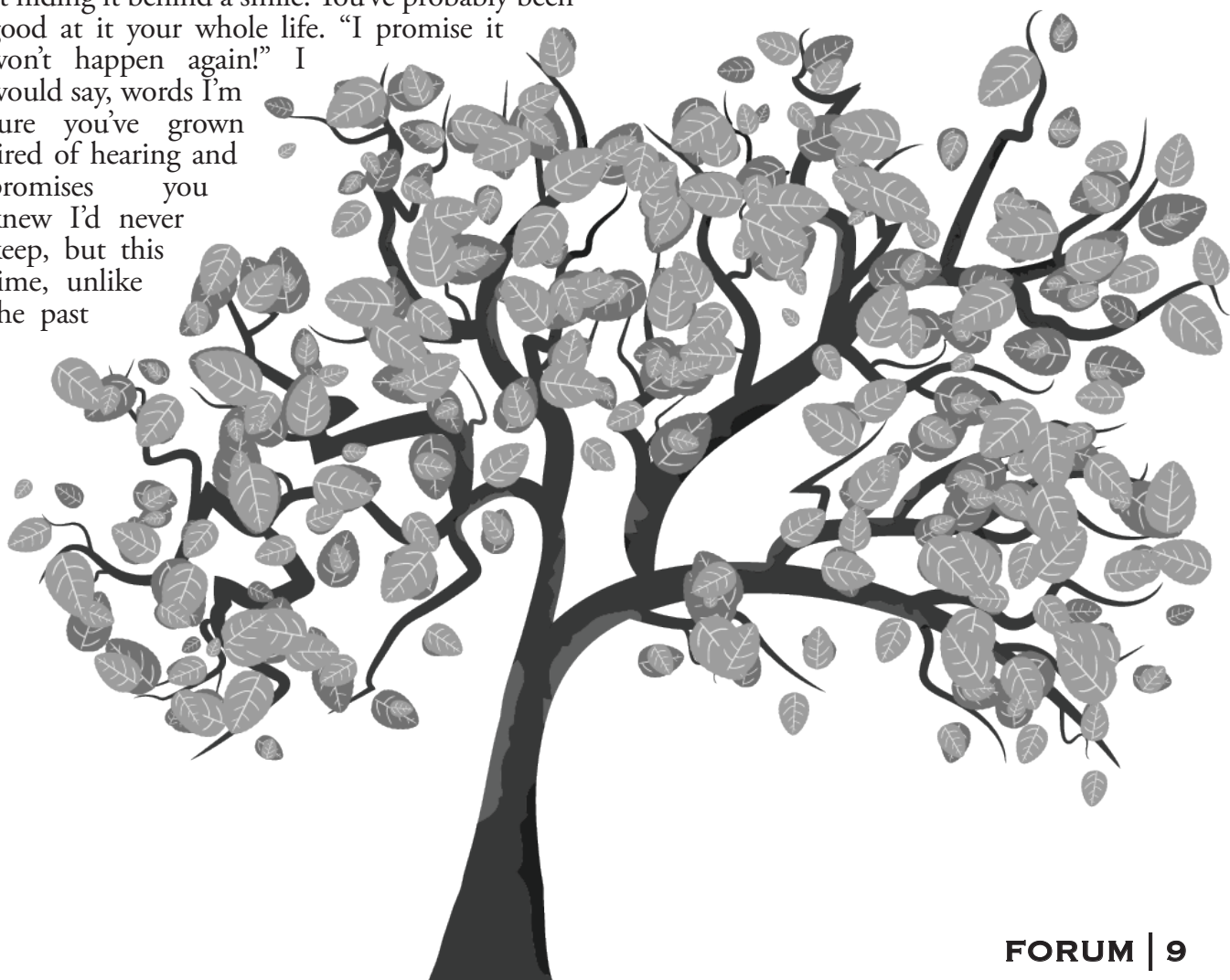
Scrabble across the dining table. Thank you for the branches, giving me a sturdy foundation to climb higher and aim for things I couldn't even conceive on my own. Thank you for it all. Even though I may have said it then, it never hurts to say it again, this time in print, so it's going nowhere.

In Silverstein's story, the boy only stops asking for things when what remains of the tree is a stump. I intend to be better than that boy. I want to sit in your shade not to escape the heat but to tell you about my day and hear about yours. I want to bring you water when you're thirsty, keep you growing as long as I can, and be a better son than I was the day before, and so on.

So, Mom, expect a few more phone calls, and this time I won't be asking for another Felipe's gift card—I promise.

NOAH BASDEN '29 (NHBASDEN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WANTS YOU TO CALL YOUR PARENTS!

GRAPHIC BY ISRA KHAN '30



Which Witch is Which?

The racialization of witchcraft in history and media.

By ANIKA GUPTA '30 AND SALMA GHEITH '30

Tituba, one of the first people accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts, was not Black. Over the next three centuries, writers made her Black anyway.

Tituba, an enslaved woman living in the house of Reverend Samuel Parris, is described as “Indian” in the 1 court records. She was an Indigenous woman, and Puritans shaped her testimony to fit the kind of witchcraft found in European folklore. In 1868, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow depicted her as “part” Black and invented a father who taught her Obeah, an

media built this standard, but social media has continued to amplify it.

Much of the rhetoric around “black magic” comes from misunderstanding, so it is worth being precise about the terminology.

Vodou, or Voodoo, is an organized religion with West African roots, including both Haitian Vodou and Louisiana Voodoo. It is widely misunderstood as “dark magic” practiced by Black women, an assumption that confused Voodoo with Hoodoo. Hoodoo is a separate tradition: a set of African American folk magic and rootwork practices, not a religion. It focused on practical, earth-based magic, personal empowerment, healing, and ancestor veneration, with the aim of creating tangible change in everyday life. It is considered magic, but not evil.

Historical Roots: How “Witch” Became Racialized

The racialization of these folk practices did not happen overnight; there was a slow but consistent campaign to rewrite the history of witchcraft. Practices of witchcraft were initially outlawed in Europe during the Middle Ages because they were tied to survival, identity, and resistance—whether against Christianity, the monarchy, or both.

The associations between witchcraft and resistance led dominant Western narratives to tie Blackness and witchcraft to villainy, allowing them to weaponize racism and suppress spirituality. Tituba, recharacterized as Black in Arthur Miller’s fictional adaptation of the Salem Witch Trials despite being Indigenous, is a key example of the intentional archival rewriting of witchcraft history. American retellings of witchcraft needed a Black “source,” and they found one by casting Black women as the origin of evil, a framing that justified efforts to root out witchcraft.

The hatred of folk practices, branded as “evil” or “dark” magic, spread from Europe to European colonies, and beyond. Voodoo in Haiti was prohibited for 150 years when France’s 1685 Code Noir banned African religious practices and forced enslaved people of Haiti to get baptized. The ban on Voodoo is also a lesser-known contributor to the Haitian Revolution. The revolution began with the 1792 Bois Caïman Voodoo ceremony. Even after independence, Haiti outlawed many popular spiritual practices from 1835 to 1987 to counter the foreign portrayals of Haiti as “primitive.”

This illustrates the long-lasting effects of racist colonial powers even in the postcolonial era. Haiti was motivated to change cultural practices entirely because of the external false narratives surrounding Voodoo and a willful ignorance of the religion itself. Countless rumors shaped society’s view of the religion, as well as government policy in Haiti. The infamous 1864 Bizoton trial, which alleged a “Voudou child sacrifice,” caused negative perceptions of the religion for over a century. Discourse surrounding the trial resulted in a crackdown that fueled the Catholic anti-superstition campaigns. These campaigns formed around the common goal of eradicating Voodoo—temples and sacred objects were destroyed, and priests suspected of the practice were forced to convert or face prison.

In the United States, similar attempts to destroy Native cultural practices were occurring. The 1883 Code of Indian Offense outlawed Native ceremonies, dances, and healing practices. Anyone suspected of violating the code faced arrest, fines, or vigilante justice. The U.S. government did not stop at codifying vague laws; it intentionally targeted healing and resistance practices. Rituals like the Sun Dance, purification

rites, and medicine people were prohibited.

All of these historical examples point to a specific conclusion: Black and brown practices of survival and resistance were targeted to suppress resistance to racism, colonialism, and oppressive governance.

Witches and Race in Film, TV, and Books

Historical rhetoric set up the racialization of witches in film, television, and books in the 20th and 21st centuries. When examining the examples below, a pattern emerges: white witchcraft is coded as empowerment and sisterhood; Black and Caribbean magic is coded as horrific, villainous, or in service to a white lead.

Some of the oldest films point to this truth. “White Zombie” (1932), the first real film about the “undead,” came out while the United States was occupying Haiti. Its promotion sensationalized the “savagery” of Black Haitians under the control of a “voodoo master” played by a white Hungarian actor. Scholars read the film as presenting Vodou as a threat to white Christian Americans.

These representations also reached children’s media, such as Disney’s “The Princess and the Frog” (2009). Unlike “White Zombie,” this work cannot be read as a product of its time. The Princess and the Frog gave us the first Black princess, but it also gave us the first Black Disney villain. Dr. Facilier, a “voodoo witch doctor” (yes, that is what he is called), dominated the screen as a caricatured portrayal of Black spirituality.



“Despite their origins in old traditions rooted in Indigenous healing practices from the Americas, Africa, and South Asia, the current state of wellness culture today centers on whitewashed versions.”

African-Caribbean spiritual practice. In 1953, Arthur Miller’s “The Crucible” cast her as a Black woman from Barbados, leading Salem’s girls in Voodoo rituals in the woods.

No new evidence supported either change. The later retellings gave the story a Black face for “dark magic,” despite the historical record. That instinct never went away. It is why, in 2018, Sephora could package rose quartz and sage into a \$42 “Starter Witch Kit,” while two years later Beyoncé was called satanic for singing about charging her crystals in the moonlight.

Neither the “Starter Witch Kit” nor Beyoncé is an isolated case. Crystals, sage, ancestor altars, and other borrowed folk healing practices are rebranded and sold as “self-care” and

“Black and brown practices of survival and resistance were targeted to suppress resistance to racism, colonialism, and oppressive governance”

“wellness” when white people use them, but they are labeled “black magic” or evil when Black and brown people use them. Despite their origins in old traditions rooted in Indigenous healing practices from the Americas, Africa, and South Asia, the current state of wellness culture today centers on whitewashed versions. Traditional

Facilier is also referred to as the “Shadow Man,” further entrenching the association between Black cultural practices and evil. Religious studies critics have focused on how Disney’s portrayal of Facilier has distorted an understanding of Haitian Vodou. Others add that Disney packs the religion’s stereotypical image into one character.

Some might argue that Mama Odie, a priestess and mentor in the movie, is a “good” Voodoo practitioner; this could not be further from the truth. Although her “magic” is used for good, the film portrays her in a strongly caricatured

“Representations of Black witches in media that do not portray them as evil practitioners of Voudou often illustrate them as sidekicks or sacrifices.”

way: a head wrap and “magic voodoo powers.” The portrayal of her as a “good practitioner” still entrenches stereotypes of Voudou, resulting in a racist representation that arbitrarily paints certain practitioners as morally neutral or good according to the opinions of the screenwriters, whereas others are illustrated as malevolent.

Representations of Black witches in media that do not portray them as evil practitioners of Voudou often illustrate them as sidekicks or sacrifices. For example, in “The Craft” (1996), the character of Rochelle was rewritten as Black after Rachel True was cast; her character’s main conflict involved experiencing racist bullying. Even beyond this

stereotype, critics note that she received far less backstory than any other character with a comparable amount of screen time.

While Black witches and Voodoo practitioners are often portrayed as the villain or the sacrifice, it is important to place them in contrast to their white counterparts. Numerous shows portray the white witch as the heroine: “Practical Magic,” “Charmed,” “Hocus Pocus,” “Sabrina”—their magic is presented as quirky, cozy, and empowering, juxtaposed against a darker evil force.

#WitchTok: Are Your Chakras Aligned?

The consistent association of Black and brown spirituality with villainy and deceit throughout history and across books, shows, and films has similarly found its way to social media. Across Instagram and TikTok, “#WitchTok” has emerged as a subculture where creators share modern witchcraft, manifestation, and spiritual practices. In fact, #WitchTok had around 33 billion in October 2022. The most popular videos include crystals, tarot, manifesting, and moon rituals. These videos have something in common: popular creators are often white, but they draw content from the previously disavowed aspects of Black and brown culture.

Cultural blending is not inherently bad; the internet has made the world more globalized, and it is often interesting and impactful to learn about and respectfully participate in the practices of those different from you. The key word, though, is respectfully. Often, TikTok witches don’t engage with the history and authenticity of the practices they end up appropriating. Creators

“White creators end up overwriting the history of these practices all while profiting from them.”

will often mix aspects of distinct cultures, treating Hellenist, Hindu, and West African gods and cultural practices as interchangeable.

White creators end up overwriting the history of these practices all while profiting from them. Hoodoo was created by enslaved Black people in the United States, so why are most TikToks about Hoodoo honey jars coming from young white women?

Black creator @thathoneywitch points this out. Yoga is an ancient spiritual practice, so why are you joking about “aligning your chakras” through drinks and dinner? This appropriation often detaches viewers from the connections these practices have to marginalized cultures, which leads to spirituality being treated like a joke or a trend. The history and tradition behind many of these practices simply cannot be imparted in a two-minute video.

The monetization of spiritual practice on social media is also problematic. You can buy crystal bundles on TikTok Shop, and white creators will recommend idols and effigies to purchase, all while capitalizing on a practice that is not theirs. Retail data shows crystals are the most-searched “witchy” product category, often bought as home decor. Ultimately, social media is not just a hobby—it is a job, and it is disturbing that white

creators can benefit from the labor of Black and brown people especially since the labor of those communities has gone unrecognized.

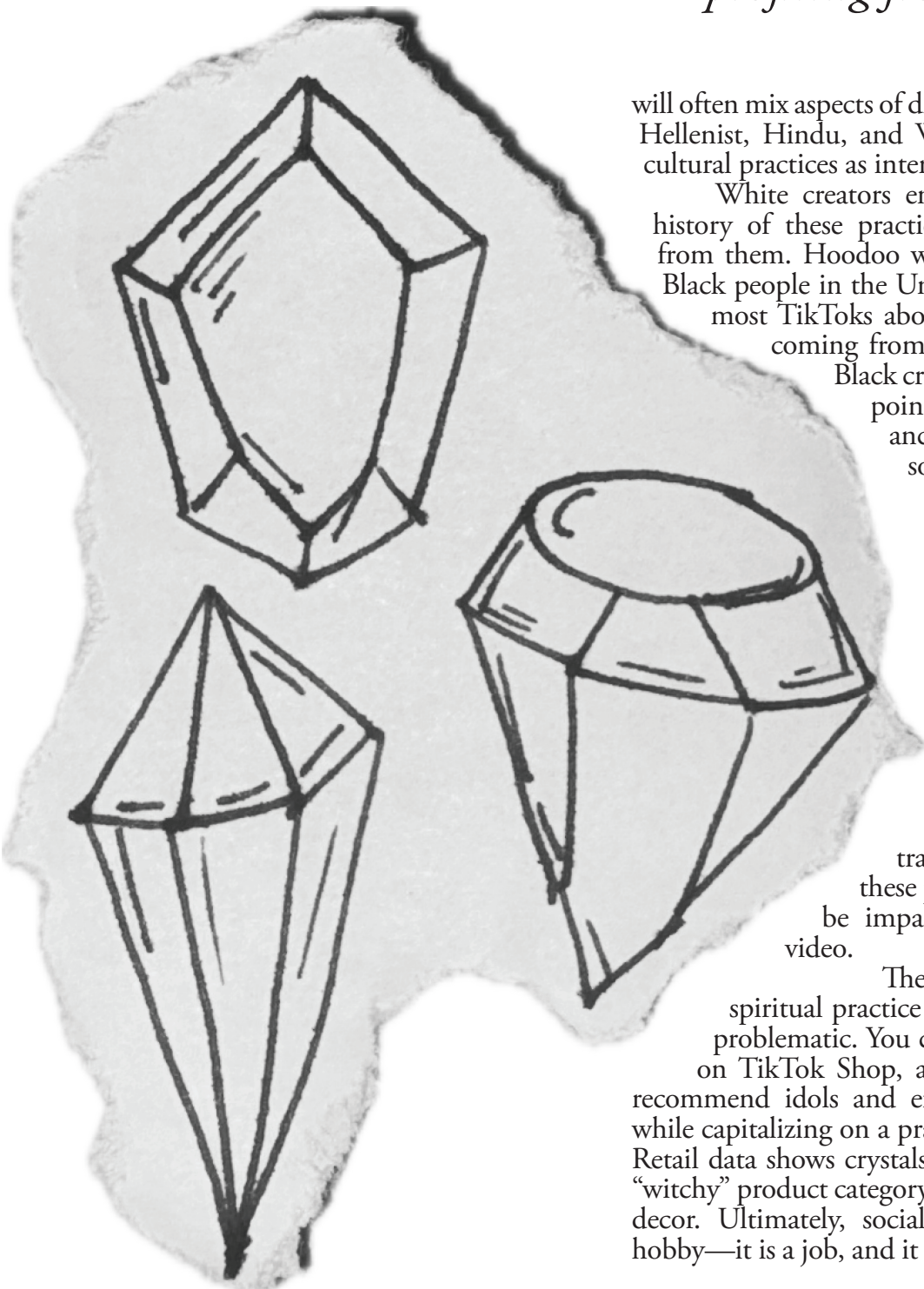
Witchiness is deeply intertwined with the politics of race and ethnicity. We are all a part of it: when we participate in “spiritual” trends, when we code certain actors and characters as

“Often, TikTok witches don’t engage with the history and authenticity of the practices they end up appropriating.”

“villainous,” when we pull from different cultures to create costumes, like the voodoo priestess outfits that hit store shelves every Halloween. Each time, we are deciding whose magic is sacred, whose is spooky, and whose is just for sale.

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GRAPHICS BY EVELYN FERGUSON ’29 & LINDEN MCCARL ’28







An Ode to the Season That Leaves

The comfort of earth tones and New England weather.

By MALA BRUMM '30 AND HAFEEZAT GHAFAR '29

I walk outside and feel the bite of the cold. The days are getting shorter, and I dig out my favorite jacket—brown wool, still hanging where I left it last March, a crumpled-up tissue in the pocket. I pull it on, and suddenly it's my favorite time of year: fall.

Cambridge in the last weeks of September is magical—as I come off the hot days of summer, I remove my fan from the window, order ten boxes of my favorite black tea, and pull out my trusty black ankle boots.

Fall isn't just the sad end of summer, though it does bring a small ache as I start to miss the comforts of home and brave the frightful New England weather. It's not really about the leaves or the weather itself. Autumn is the season of change, and it makes you savor every moment. Through time spent with family and new friends, through the poems and movies that I read and watch in bed, I experience a slice of life back home.

Fall's defining trait is that it cannot make up its mind: a warm afternoon after a rainy morning, a bluebird day that turns into a freezing night. You put on your flannel and start sweating ten minutes later—then you take it off, and your teeth start to chatter the moment you set foot outside.

And then comes the rain. It was only my second time using my umbrella since I arrived here, and I learned a hard lesson: Do not, under any circumstances, leave your umbrella outside your dorm room. It will be stolen, and you will be forced to walk through rain to buy an overpriced, cheaply made CVS umbrella.

By contrast, summer and winter are unchanging and relentless. Summer is a wall of heat and humidity—long days that blur together without any break. Winter is slush, 4 p.m. sunsets, and the brisk gale off the Charles that makes you question why you ever came to New England. Fall is the one season that doesn't stagnate—that first bite of cold warns you that everything is about to change, with barely enough time to find your rain boots. But the wisps of saffron leaves in the air, coupled with sunlight bleeding through almost-barren trees, soften the blow of impending frost.

I'm not the first person to realize the beauty of this in-between season. John Keats wrote his famous lyrical poem "To Autumn" on September 19, 1819, celebrating the marvel of time's passage. Rather than focusing on decay or loss, Keats describes how summer sunlight transitions into autumnal maturity.

In the first stanza, he imagines summer and autumn as partners: imagery of ripe fruit, bees buzzing about flowers, lush greenery, and endless warm days. For me, summers spent in the shadow of Colorado's Rocky Mountains remind me that the whole world is alive, while fall introduces beautiful incongruities in color, weather, and sound. As the poem develops, Keats explores autumn's relationship with time, personifying the season as a figure sitting on a granary floor, a harvester, a sleeper in a furrow, or a patient watcher at the cider press.



In the final stanza, Keats accepts summer's departure. He doesn't mourn the changing seasons but instead calls us to appreciate autumn's arriving music—the sounds of gnats, bleating lambs, singing crickets, and gathering swallows (or the clacking keyboards of Widener and Lamont).

"To Autumn" is considered one of the greatest short lyric poems in the English language, speaking to something that both poets and college students can recognize. It grapples with mortality, foreshadowing Keats's death less than two years later at just 25 years old—not much older than I am now. Keats's attention to day-to-day glories amid changing nature urges us to accept the natural cycles of change and progression.

Beyond poems, fall is also my season to curl up beneath a fuzzy blanket and rewatch the same movies. Years after watching them for the first time, I can see Keats's Romanticism reflected in many of these modern characters.

For example, "When Harry Met Sally" explores the growing love between the two protagonists over years of friendship. It's set in New York City, among the warm, earthy tones of falling leaves. In one scene, Sally (Meg Ryan) and Harry (Billy Crystal) walk through Central

of his friends and classmates are enraptured by their new English teacher, John Keating (Robin Williams). Keating encourages the boys to seize the day, explore the artistic callings in their own lives, and retain their individualism. At the same time, they struggle against an austere school system and demanding parents. (I like to imagine I do the same when I delay completing p-sets for late-night talks with friends over hot chocolate.) The transitional beauty of autumn serves as a fitting backdrop for their journey of self-discovery, and, indeed, my own, as I learn to grow into my new life here at Harvard.

That said, critics of fall have a point: it can feel cold, dark, and sad, with shorter days, looming seasonal depression, and the end of summer. However, to me, that's the point. Fall is

"The transitional beauty of autumn serves as a fitting backdrop for their journey of self-discovery, and, indeed, my own, as I learn to grow into my new life here at Harvard."

about facing cold, dark, and unfortunate things with warm lighting, cozy sweaters, a bowl of hot soup, and friends and family gathered around a table on Thanksgiving. Halloween itself is proof—a holiday that takes what is dark and frightening and transforms it into costumes and candy. As I slide my arms into my brown wool jacket, reliving the ache and comfort so central to fall, I hope that we can learn from the season how to handle change. When confronted with cold or uncertainty, we can find warmth in each other.

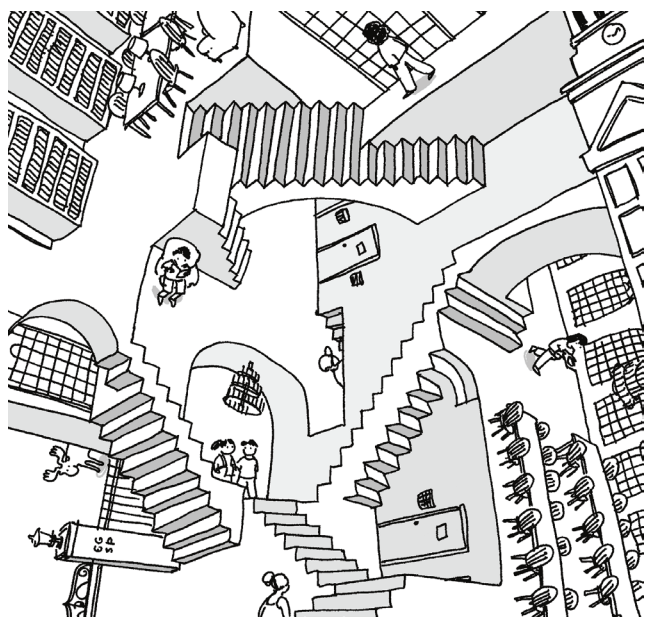
MALA BRUMM '30 (MBRUMM@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) SAYS FALL IS ABOUT EMBRACING CHANGE BUT HAS ORDERED THE SAME CINNAMON-SUGAR CORTADO SINCE SEP. 1.

HAFEEZAT GHAFAR '29 (HGHAFAR@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) THINKS DECORATIVE MOOD LIGHTING CURES SEASONAL DEPRESSION.

GRAPHIC BY MAYA KODALI '30

The Impossible Physics of Dunster House

By ELLIE GUO '29 & SAM PARK '29



"Fall is the one season that doesn't stagnate—that first bite of cold warns you that everything is about to change, with barely enough time to find your rain boots."

Park amid tall trees and a burnt-orange landscape, cozily bundled in their own wool jackets. Thematically, the fall leaves add to the film's main throughline of change and growth as we watch the ups and downs of Harry and Sally's friends-to-lovers storyline.

Another fall favorite of mine is "Dead Poets Society," a 1989 coming-of-age film. The main character, Todd (Ethan Hawke), and several

Is the Bunny Costume a Problem?

Examining the culture of hypersexualized costumes on Halloween.

By ANNA GUNKO '30

Let me ask you a question: What do you associate with Halloween? You probably said candy, costumes, trick-or-treating, horror films, fake blood, or pumpkins. And I am sure some of you are looking for costumes—the uber-prepared may already have a Pinterest board ready. Naturally, today's young adults turn to social media for ideas. But imagine this scenario: you are scrolling through TikTok, and you find a video of a ghost costume for women, though instead of a sheet with holes, this one has

“The problem is that society encourages youth, especially young women, to flaunt their bodies to gain peer acceptance.”

a deep V-neck and a short skirt. Hypersexualized Halloween costumes are everywhere, and they are culturally encouraged. In my eyes, this normalization can lead to worse mental health or self-esteem.

The problematic nature of these costumes does not lie in their existence—women can wear revealing and sexy outfits without it being a problem. The problem is that society encourages youth, especially young women, to flaunt their bodies to gain peer acceptance. Even those who prefer different attire opt for the slip dress and fishnets to avoid being deemed a “black sheep.” The media exacerbate and reinforce this trend.

I am sure everyone is familiar with this line: “In Girl World, Halloween is the one night a year when a girl can dress like a total slut and no other girls can say anything about it. The hardcore girls just wear lingerie and some form of animal ears.”

“Mean Girls” protagonist Cady Heron, however, expects her school to be the antithesis of this culture. She walks into a Halloween party in a truly scary Halloween costume, only to find everyone else in tiny skirts and corsets.

While the scene itself was meant to showcase the difference between the main character and her peers, the underlying narrative is more powerful. Her choice to don a comparatively “conservative” zombie bride outfit—for a 16-year-old—should not have been comical. However, her peers all fell prey to the hypersexualization trend, making Cady stick out like a sore thumb at her first social gathering of the semester. But let me ask you: Do you think everyone else at the party was comfortable in body suits and bunny tails?

Now, I understand that sexual expression can be a source of confidence in many ways. A century ago, women were taught to hide their bodies. Now, many use bold expression to reclaim their place in society and unflinchingly reject sexist norms.

But the problem arises when everyone else is pressured to conform without really wanting to. This pressure also limits options for those brave enough to go against the grain. In any Halloween store, women's costumes often follow the same pattern: tight fits, short skirts, and deep cuts. The situation worsens when shoppers notice that the sexualized costumes are often more elaborate than the others.

The men's costumes do not follow this pattern. Men are offered many loose-fitting, high-

coverage options (well, apart from the superhero jumpsuits).

Have we reversed course on sexual expression so thoroughly over the past century that we are back to gender discrimination, this time through expectations about sexuality? And what are we teaching young girls who are trick-or-treating when teenagers and college students run past in flimsy fabric? How long will the Tinker Bell dress from Party City last when young girls' role models are all shopping at Edikted and Baby Boo?

Ultimately, the culture of sexualized outfits functions as a form of peer pressure for many, as seen with newcomers like Cady, who are merely trying to fit into new communities.

Halloween, one of the most anticipated nights of the year, should be a great opportunity

“Have we reversed course on sexual expression so thoroughly over the past century that we are back to gender discrimination, this time through expectations about sexuality?”

to connect, especially for incoming students early in the academic year. Young people should not have to worry about the pressures that accompany costume culture.

At Harvard, impostor syndrome is already rampant from the classroom to extracurricular activities. What happens when social spaces are no longer an escape from a culture of expectations?



And what about international students who feel like fish out of water in everyday situations, like seeing plaid pajama pants and what look like house slippers in crowded lecture halls? Social scrutiny is particularly prevalent among first-generation and low-income students, who are thrown into a world of potentially uncomfortable social standards.

At the end of the day, Halloween costumes, even hypersexualized ones, let people express themselves and show their creativity and confidence. For some, such costumes may boost confidence and make them feel a little more beautiful. In this sense, there is nothing wrong with others choosing

to wear the short pleated skirt or the sheer long-sleeved top. We just need to make sure those who do not feel comfortable being overexposed have the option to wear something that does not make them feel awkward or negatively affect their self-esteem. This can be achieved by normalizing non-

“At Harvard, impostor syndrome is already rampant from the classroom to extracurricular activities. What happens when social spaces are no longer an escape from a culture of expectations?”

sexualized costumes on Halloween and bringing more well-designed, high-quality options to stores. Until then, this culture of hypersexualization continues to perpetuate a harmful narrative.

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GRAPHIC BY ANNABELLA BURTON-BOONE '29

ARTS

Holding Your Fate in a Card

Everything you need to know about tarot cards and more.

By DELFIN URUNDUL '30

Maybe your quirky aunt tells you stories of destiny, or maybe you stumbled upon one of those “this video was meant to find you” reels with face-down cards on the thumbnail. But have you ever learned the art of predicting the future?

In a tarot deck, each card shows a scene with a figure at its center: a woman pets a lion, a knight rides his horse to the battlefield, and a family merrily watches the rainbow. This art form was once considered a relic, pulled out for amusement at cocktail parties or college reunions. However, tarot has become increasingly popular in the 21st century.

A Brief History of Tarot:

Like all good things, the story of tarot in Europe begins in 15th-century Italy. “Tarocchi” began as a card game for emperors and nobles. The suits of swords, cups, pentacles, and wands are the ancestors of the spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs in a modernizing playing-card deck. The cards had values from one to ten, plus the face cards—king, queen, knight, knave—and a wild card: the fool.

Tarot was not used for divination until the 19th century. It gained popularity among occultists after 1861, with French author and occultist Éliphas Lévi’s book “The Doctrine of Transcendental Magic.” The illustrations for the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck, widely known today, were created in 1909. Arthur Waite translated Lévi’s book into English in 1886,

“The beauty of tarot is in the eye of the beholder.”

and Pamela Colman Smith drew the cards years later according to Waite’s instructions; both were members of “The Golden Dawn,” a ceremonial magic society. Her illustrations had an Art Nouveau style with organic forms like vines and flowers, and long, sinuous lines. Today, tarot decks come in many styles and themes. You can find cat-themed tarot cards or more cartoonish, modernized decks. These variations add flair to the classic deck and let people personalize their spreads in a fun way.

The Fool’s Journey:

The cards also tell a story of their own. The “Major Arcana,” the 22 core cards of the deck, trace “The Fool’s Journey.” Here is how it goes:

The Fool begins his journey with excitement in his heart. He aspires to become the Magician and create his dream reality. The High Priestess and her divine wisdom guide the start of this spiritual journey. His mother, the Empress, representing Mother Earth, offers him care and abundance. His father, the Emperor, sets rules and boundaries to keep him safe on his path.

The Fool begins practicing spirituality more formally with his mentor, the Hierophant. As he works on the task at hand, he craves a companion and seeks love. The Lovers represent connection, and the pair bring joy to each other. With that, the Fool rides the Chariot toward his

goals. The Fool now finds the Strength to achieve his dreams.

At this point in his journey, the Fool withdraws to reflect, becoming the Hermit. He realizes fate, represented by the Wheel of Fortune, is inevitable. The wheel can turn one way or the other, bringing joy or destruction. Yet life offers each in balance, and divine Justice prevails.

The Fool is in his comfort zone. He feels safe to explore things from a different perspective as the Hanged Man. He looks at the world hanging upside down from a tree, surrendering to his fate without concern of falling. He encounters Death, symbolizing the demise of his past self. He learns patience, gaining Temperance. Then, the Devil persuades him to let go of the past. He faces a hard time and cannot help his situation. The Tower he built, reflecting his old values and beliefs, is struck by lightning and destroyed.



Somewhere amid the darkness, the Fool sees something bright—the Star—and finds hope. The Moon, contrary to the Star, reveals the uneasiness and gloom in his subconscious. Finally, the Sun shines. Folly is replaced by wisdom, and, through Judgment, he answers his calling without false identities. His journey is complete, culminating in the World.

The Fool’s journey seems quite abstract. Yet, you can find him in a first-year student starting a new journey away from home or a recent alumnus trying to navigate life alone for the first time—along with the rest of the arcana.

What Does the Card Say:

The beauty of tarot is in the eye of the beholder. Each card has a traditional significance derived from the Fool’s journey, but that is only the beginning. The shapes, colors, symbols, and figures on each card can add to its meaning and vary across cultures. For instance, a reading in

India could incorporate Vedic astrology. The reader’s perspective and the context of the pull also affect the interpretation.

Generally, swords represent thoughts, cups feelings, pentacles material matters, and wands actions. Swords correspond to air, cups to water, pentacles to earth, and wands to fire. Colors on the figures’ clothing or in the background also carry meaning. Red can represent anger or bravery, blue imagination, white peace, yellow calm or hope, green abundance, and so on. Birds are usually considered messengers; apples represent abundance; pillars represent strength; and thrones represent leadership and power.

The sky in the card can also give hints: a clear sky could mean a clear state of mind; rain, distress; and the sun, joy. If a card is drawn upright, it usually has a positive meaning, and the card’s message is clear. If the card is upside down, it signifies blocked or delayed energy.

Tarot cards are also often connected with other spiritual areas. For instance, each zodiac sign has a specific associated card. Each card has an astrological correspondence, an element, and a chakra link can represent either yes or no.

“The Fool’s journey seems quite abstract. Yet, you can find him in a first-year student starting a new journey away from home or a recent alumnus trying to navigate life alone for the first time—along with the rest of the arcana.”

Whether you believe in divination or not, you cannot deny that tarot has stood the test of time. If you want to incorporate a little bit of tarot into your daily life, consider booking a reading or trying an online tarot reading through websites such as “Daily Tarot Draw.” Tarot spreads can be simply a daily push of motivation, a three-card spread for the full moon, a yes-or-no about your love life, or something for midterm season—whatever your heart desires.

DELFIN URUNDUL '30 (DURUNDUL@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WAS INTRODUCED TO TAROT BY HER ROOMMATES AT 3 A.M. IN HER HIGH SCHOOL DORM.

GRAPHIC BY LINDEN MCCARL '28

“macbitches”: A Hilarious Exploration of the Drama of College Theater

The play holds up a mirror to theater departments everywhere, unflinchingly depicting how cutthroat college theater can be.

By CAT JOHNSON '30

Meet the veterans of the theater department in the world of “macbitches.” Lexi, a foul-mouthed senior played by Gemma Dean '27, spits conversational daggers every time she speaks. This confrontational community-theater nepo baby specializes in destroying self-confidence in the name of honesty. Tahraji Milsap '27 plays Cam, a witty junior who uses comedy as a personal safety blanket. Daphne Yeh Gilman '30 plays Piper, an anxious, innocent senior still haunted by her sheltered upbringing. Andreea Haidau '26 plays Rachel, the intense, dedicated senior who is usually

“As in Shakespeare’s ‘Macbeth,’ McIntosh explores ambition, performances of gender roles, the conflict between appearances and reality, cruelty, and violence.”

cast in the lead. She is a master of condescension, wearing a veil of calculated confidence.

Hailey, played by Kaelyn Veltry '30, is an ambitious and immature freshman who seems to have perpetual foot-in-mouth disease. She sets the events of the play into motion when, in her first semester as a college student, she is cast as Lady Macbeth, a leading role in the university’s production of Shakespeare’s “Macbeth.” This unexpected casting decision disrupts the well-established hierarchy of school theater productions. The envious upper-level students invite Hailey to a get-together, telling her that it is meant to be a celebration.

Throughout the evening, the girls respond to strategically placed conversational barbs with barely disguised humblebrags, and they expertly deflect resentful compliments. As the night spirals into chaos, the girls deconstruct their own understandings of their roles in the theater department, as well as their relationships with each other, culminating in brutal revelations of hypocrisy and betrayal.

Wisconsin-born and New York-based playwright Sophie McIntosh wrote “macbitches” in 2022. The play, as its name suggests, is loosely based on Shakespeare’s “Macbeth.” As in Shakespeare’s “Macbeth,” McIntosh explores ambition, performances of gender roles, the conflict between appearances and reality, cruelty, and violence.

George Atkin '28, the scenic designer and technical director for “macbitches,” and his crew transformed the Loeb Drama Center into a cozy college apartment, complete with a rug, couch, coffee table, coat tree, pink wallpaper, and posters from previous Harvard productions. The soft pink walls lull the viewer into a false sense of calm, while the common dorm furniture hints at the microcosmic nature of the play’s conflicts. There are even references to the supernatural elements of “Macbeth” within the set, with common college-

related items, such as books, stools, red Solo cups, and a storage ottoman hanging from the ceiling in such a way that they appear to be floating.

This production’s lighting is similarly well thought out. The lighting motifs that extend throughout the play, such as subtle red during emotionally charged scenes and darkness during more unsettling moments, support the actors’ portrayals of complex feelings and add to the audience’s immersion. Lighting designer Jada Pisani Lee '26 described her goals for designing a show’s lighting: she aims to “pick moments that feel more emotionally charged and assign certain lighting elements to those, and have those intensify throughout the show.”

While the play certainly hits its comedic marks well, the dramatic moments are far from neglected. “[The play] does a really good job of taking an archetype and still making an interesting character out of it,” said Yeh Gilman, who plays



Piper. The characters are each quite complex, and the actors lean into those complexities, allowing the audience to more easily empathize with each character, even during their worst moments. This depth is evident in Yeh Gilman’s own character, Piper, who is defined largely by her calculations. Piper is the only member of the group who takes her shoes off inside her friend’s apartment, a quiet demonstration of her thoughtfulness; yet she is also a sneaky social climber who speaks up for her friends only when she knows her peers will respond well.

“[Piper] talks a lot about how much she loves theater, but also how she struggles to find her place within it, and that resonates really deeply with me,” said Yeh Gilman.

According to Milsap, while Cam’s wit has “gotten her the title of funniest bitch in the [theater] department,” she is far from comic relief. “She’s one of those people that learned to smile when she’s sad,” said Milsap, “there is a lot of pain there. I think that there’s a lot of things that she’s still working through.” Cam uses her masterful comedic timing to mask her sadness and isolation, feelings Milsap tries to embrace while acting. “Some of the things that I bring in are the tensions that I have sometimes experienced as a queer person in theater, and a queer Black person in theater,” she said.

Even Rachel, who reeks of inflated self-importance, offers speeches of encouragement and affirmation to her friends when they are plagued by growing insecurity. And while that affirmation might be performative, it still genuinely helps her friends feel better about themselves.

“A lot of the more negative feelings of the characters and the negative traits are the ones that I fell in love with the script for, because it doesn’t shy away from them,” said director Jocelyn Shek '27. “Their angst and their envy are something that the show is not afraid to explore.” This exploration creates an uncomfortable relatability in each character.

“Something I really love about this show is that I truly see myself in all of the characters,” added Shek.

“I would say that for myself, and for many theater people, a lot of the experiences in macbitches will ring true,” said Yeh Gilman.

While the script will likely resonate with anyone who has been a member of a theater department, it also has many aspects that are relatable to Harvard students more broadly, even those who have never been involved in a stage production.

“It reminded me so much of everything that I’ve gone through in my time at Harvard,” explained Shek. “Relentless competition, you see that in every aspect of Harvard life.”

Shek said the play’s relatability matters, especially given its all-female cast. “I think it is really valuable to me to have a show that showcases

“A lot of the more negative feelings of the characters and the negative traits are the ones that I fell in love with the script for, because it doesn’t shy away from them.”

-Shek '27

the experiences of young women, and especially young women in college, doing something as wonderful but also as competitive as theater,” said Shek.

The show will take place at the Loeb Drama Center, 64 Brattle St., with showtimes on Oct. 8 through 10 at 7:30 p.m., and Oct. 10 and 11 at 2 p.m. Tickets are free, but they must be reserved in advance online because of the limited number of seats available.

CAT JOHNSON '30 (CATJOHNSON@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS COMPING THE “HARVARD INDEPENDENT” AND CLAIMS TO HAVE READ “MACBETH.”

GRAPHIC BY SARAHLUNA SASSINE '29

“Harvard Independent” Bar Review

The “Harvard Independent” reviews Cambridge bars.

By **BURGER, THAYER J. Y. GAULDIN, LADY GUINEVERE, DR. BRAN HOUGHTON, & PROFESSOR B. RIBBON**

When people hear the name Harvard, they think of prestige, education, talent, or drive. While these are certainly true of some of the school’s population, others recognize that Harvard’s real best quality is its wide range of bars.

Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible for an undergraduate student to take proper advantage of these alcoholic lounges. Most students do not turn 21 until sometime during junior or senior year. By then, there are only so many nights left for college debauchery in Cambridge. And since every Harvard student is a good, law-abiding citizen who would never use an illicit fake ID, how can they most efficiently take advantage of the short time they have to gallivant around the bars?

To answer this question, the “Harvard Independent” has deployed its best bar connoisseurs to give you a guide to the do’s and don’ts for your

“Ask not what [Harvard Square bars] can do for you—ask what you can do for your [Harvard Square bars].”

— The President of the “Harvard Independent”

average night out full of drinking, games, friends, and flirting.

“Ask not what [Harvard Square bars] can do for you—ask what you can do for your [Harvard Square bars]” – The President of the “Harvard Independent.”



Cambridge Commons

For river dwellers, the walk up to Porter is seemingly a major downside of Cambridge Commons, but that stroll might be the area’s biggest strength. Sometimes the best part of the night is the jaunt to the next stop, conversing with friends while taking quick cigarette drags.

TJYG: I first noticed the music filling the air: some classic alt-rock. I was taken back to first grade, listening to the music my dad had on the radio as he took me to school. That illusion quickly dissolved—beer punch wasn’t quite part of my childhood. The lovely waitress suggested I order the Gin Blossom: elderflower liqueur, and you can probably guess the other ingredient. The cocktail was quite refreshing (as expected with gin), but I felt more like I was frolicking in a garden than drinking on a Thursday night. I opted for a beer next and was presented with a dirty cup. Thanks, Cambridge Commons!

LG: Most bars in Cambridge are very strict about following Massachusetts drinking laws—Cambridge Commons is no different. We all got individual drinks, but we were not allowed to order a pitcher for the table until someone had first killed the drink in front of them. This led to a very awkward start to our game of 7/11/Doubles (slews), because we were chugging before the dice even started rolling. The restaurant has ample room for large groups, which is good because you will not be making any friends here. Definitely best to come with people you already know can bring the energy, because everything else about this place falls flat.

PBR: My hopes were high for Cambridge Commons. This place was nearly empty. But for some reason, we still had to wait about 10 minutes for the waitress to come around. Not a great start. I felt a bit better after my cider arrived, filled to the brim—definitely getting your bang for your buck here. By the end of our stay, all I had enjoyed was the drinking game we were playing, since the bar itself was both dead and full of older adults. Cool spot if you are over 30 and love abiding by Massachusetts regulation 204 CMR 4.03.

Burger: I met my new best friend. He was a bartender wearing a Pearl Jam jersey shirt, bought at a show in Wisconsin.

Lou’s

Just because it is a newer establishment doesn’t mean Lou’s doesn’t offer quality. Patrons can expect live music, good vibes—and apparently beautiful older women—for the low, low price of \$17 for a signature cocktail. Still, the drinks and conversation flowed just fine. Among the five of us, we have been to Lou’s on every day of the week. None of them promise a packed night.

TJYG: Lou’s exudes class and confidence. You feel as though you are in New York, not Cambridge. But if I wanted the Big Apple, I would have gone to school there. The bartender was also reluctant to suggest something, but eventually relented and chose the Buenas Tardes Amigo. While the drink was delicious and a favorite of the night, the atmosphere could have been better.

LG: This was my second time at Lou’s in 24 hours. Both times, the cocktails I consumed gave me happy tingles. Our group wasn’t given a table (despite many empty ones), but our perch at the bar was

the perfect place to chat with fellow patrons. As the token lady in the group, another boozier approached me almost immediately, looking to make friends. Her friend, it seems, had already found companionship in the form of a 50-year-old man with a hefty bar tab (one of only three of his kind at Lou’s that night! Normally, there are more). Beware: Do not let the man behind the booth trick you into thinking he is a real disc jockey. He plays off his laptop and uses a digital vinyl system.

“I love a bar with couches, which are among humanity’s greatest innovations.”

PBR: I was impressed with Lou’s. I love a bar with couches, which are among humanity’s greatest innovations. While we couldn’t actually use the (empty) couches due to “seating capacity,” standing at the bar still proved to be a great time. My cider tasted great, and the tunes were fantastic. Any bar that plays music from Kanye West’s “Late Registration” is a 10/10 in my book.

Felipe’s Taqueria

Best known for its rooftop bar, icy drinks, and long lines, Felipe’s is also apparently a food establishment that specializes in Mexican cuisine. If you are a fan of Jefe’s or Chipotle and are also an alcoholic, then this is the place for you. Come one, come all, from 10:30 a.m. to 2 a.m.

LG: 3 p.m. The sun is out. The margaritas are frozen (and very strong). Chips and guac are delivered tableside. “Doses and Mimosas” plays in my head while Bad Bunny actually blasts on the speakers. Although I always run into at least a few Harvard heads here, most of the crowd has Ubered in, and it only grows as the night goes on. Not the type of place you would ever want to wait in line for past sunset.

“Best known for its rooftop bar, icy drinks, and long lines, Felipe’s is also apparently a food establishment that specializes in Mexican cuisine.”

PBR: If a person is in Harvard Square on a Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday; is at least 21 years old and is willing and able to drink; has at least one friend of a similar standing; and is there before 6 p.m.; then that person must drink on Felipe’s rooftop. Felipe’s is the perfect place to begin a day of debauchery, but, as LG describes, not where you want to end your night. Unless you really like waiting in lines.

TJYG: “I got my toes in the [sunshine], ass [on a bench] / Not a worry in the world, a cold beer in my hand / Life is good today, life is good today.”

Grendel’s Den Restaurant & Bar
It is Grendel’s—you know the deal.

LG: What more needs to be said about a classic like Grendel’s? My favorite day of the week is Grensdays, and my second favorite is whichever day I choose to bring my hot-date-of-the-week to Grendel’s. If you are there, tell Blake I say hi.

DBH: Whether I’m craving an ice-cold beer, sangria, or a mixed drink, Grendel’s has it. It is a spot freshmen and seniors alike agree on.

PBR: Never come here before 2 p.m. You will regret it.

Grafton Street Pub & Grill
When it comes to bars located in Harvard Square that start with the letter G, Grafton’s is definitely in the top two. With the energy of Grendel’s hotter older sister, Grafton’s is where underage college students (not from Harvard, obviously) and overaged alums find a way to thrive together.

DBH: Oh, Grafton’s, one of my first loves. We used to have this awkward relationship where you would deny my fake every time. Despite all my efforts, you were my rejection therapy. All it took was maturing (and maybe turning 21) for you to see the person I truly am.

Burger: I am going to take this as an opportunity to formally apologize to one of Grafton’s bartenders who has been harboring a vehement hatred of me since March. In my defense, I thought the limes in the bowl on the bar were for people to take and put in their drinks. I probably shouldn’t have taken a fistful of limes, and I definitely shouldn’t have put them back in the bowl when that bartender gave me a death stare. That is on me. Sorry. Grafton’s is a great spot, and they are willing to forgive morbid stupidity.

“Grafton’s is a great spot, and they are willing to forgive morbid stupidity.”

PBR: Grafton’s is a classic Harvard Square bar. Unlike at Grendel’s, you can bring your family here for lunch. Do NOT try to do the same at Grendel’s. But beware: If you drink too many Guinnesses here, you may accidentally throw up in the bathroom. Not completely sure if the relationship is causal yet.

LG: Great place to throw up after taking too many shots at the open bar (PBR and I have a couple of things in common, it seems). If it is a Grafton’s birthday, it is a happy one. Maybe too happy—I have witnessed more than a few couples get escorted out for excessive PDA in the red-lit back booths.

Shay’s Pub & Wine Bar
You have likely passed by Shay’s often, thinking, Whoa! Black Sheep Bagel looks different today! Home to the elders of the Square, it is a small spot that boasts 10 beers on tap, 28 wines, and a handful of classic bar snacks.

LG: Shay’s is the type of place that makes it feel cool to do drugs in its bathroom (probably because, allegedly, one of the bartenders used to sell drugs out of it). I prefer to go here when the sun is out and you can people-watch outside with a chilled glass of the house Sauvvy B. The crowd skews much older. Not great for big groups.

TJYG: There is something special about enjoying a nice drink with a subtle breeze in your face. The outdoor seating gives the perfect opportunity to enjoy the autumn air while still satiating your thirst. The Maker’s Old Fashioned was recommended to me, and it did not disappoint. A pun may be Irish in spirit, but

a well-made bourbon cocktail never goes out of style, and Shay’s delivers.

Burger: The first time I went to Shay’s was a complete accident. I walked by the bar when someone I only sort of knew grabbed my arm. I was pulled onto a chair, asked if I wanted a vape, a cigarette, or a cigar, and then was forcibly kept there for the next hour and a half (I tried to leave several times, to no avail). I am not sure whether that says more about me, the people who grabbed me, or Shay’s as a whole, but that is my experience.

“I was pulled onto a chair, asked if I wanted a vape, a cigarette, or a cigar, and then was forcibly kept there for the next hour and a half (I tried to leave several times, to no avail).”

The Sea Hag Restaurant & Bar
This new spot seems to be a fan favorite of first-year students who were recently seen standing outside Hasty Pudding at 7 p.m. on a Tuesday. The outside bar is now open, making it an ideal drinking spot any day from 11:30 a.m. to 1 a.m.

TJYG: No one likes to wait, and at the Sea Hag, you will rarely find yourself in line. Ample seating, if a little tight, and good energy make for a great place to catch up with friends after days of grueling p-sets. Frankly, I do not remember what I was drinking; I was too busy hanging out with my buddies.

Burger: I only discovered the Sea Hag last semester, and I wish I had found it earlier. Probably my favorite bar in the Square. Great vibes, great drinks, friendly people, and the chance to run into people you didn’t expect to see (but in a good way, like a sleep-deprived Colin Jost who buys a round of shots for the group). It will not be a rager, but it will be cozy. They also serve delicious food during the day—this is a great place for a hungover brunch.

DBH: It is a restaurant conveniently located by my dorm; they sell beer. I really have no other thoughts on the matter—you will still find me here weekly.

The Cellar
If you are looking for the definition of “a hole-in-the-wall,” look no further than The Cellar—well, OK, it is technically a “hole in the ground.” With cash only, \$3 PBR, a bartender who seems to sample a lot of his craft, and a clientele that will leave you scratching your head, The Cellar has it all and more.

LG: Not a single comfortable seat in the whole concrete jail cell. Spacious bathroom, thank God.

DBH: For my fellow price-conscious consumers, look no further. The Cellar is a gem in the Square. It feels niche because it has few patrons, but it is well known; people just don’t want to make the trek.

PBR: Upon entering the Cellar, I thought that I had accidentally walked too far and stumbled into a bar in Eastern Europe. I entered a cave of sorts. The bartender didn’t seem to speak English—or maybe he was unimpressed by my slurred speech as I ordered five shots, so he chose to remain nonverbal throughout the transaction. The Cellar’s aesthetic is what makes it stand

out to me, although the crowd was odd. I think I would need to come here at least three more times to understand what types of people they are catering to.

Burger: At this point in the night, you could have taken me to a literal cellar in Mattapan, and I would not have been able to tell the difference. I was in a cruising mood and willing to talk to anyone. This, as it turned out, was a good thing, because a group of eclectic, shockingly well-dressed people was also having a night for themselves at the Cellar. LG and I spoke with them for about 10–15 minutes, and all I could glean from that entire conversation was that these folks were something called TPOT, or “That Part of Twitter.” What part of Twitter, I do not know, despite repeatedly asking for clarification, but they had a large rubber duck they were passing around, so maybe that had something to do with it.

TJYG: How did we get here?

“Not a single comfortable seat in the whole concrete jail cell. Spacious bathroom, thank God.”

At the end of the night, a bar is a bar. You go with good company, and sometimes you meet new company. You get a drink, and no matter the quality, you have alcohol in your bloodstream. Bartenders, whether they like you or not, will serve you a drink, as long as you can keep it down. We hold these truths to be self-evident. Thus, look back to the imperative we opened with: What can you do for your Harvard Square bars? We find that our duty is to patronize. For you, a call to action. Go forth and get drunk.

THE “HARVARD INDEPENDENT” BAR CONNOISSEURS ARE LOOKING FOR HOT PLUS-ONES OF ANY GENDER TO JOIN THEM ON OUR NEXT CRAWL. INQUIRIES ONLY TO: +1 (347) 681-0005.
GRAPHICS BY SAR AHLUNA SASSINE ’29



SPORTS

The Curse of Loyalty

What it's like to be a Memphis Grizzlies supporter.

By TYLER DANG '28

Memphis is a beautiful city. Its phenomenal cuisine, rich history (both good and bad), and stunning music have made it a place I love living in. And as one of 28 cities with an NBA team, it is also a great place for any sports fan—supposedly. The Grizzlies are one of five teams that have never reached the NBA Finals, despite having some truly talented rosters in their short 30-year tenure. So why do they still have many loyal supporters?

Fans may have an excuse to support a team outside their state, especially if no local squad exists; after all, everyone has the right to root for a roster. Maybe they cheer for the nearest professional team. Maybe they back a team from where their family originates. But when your own city has one, it feels disingenuous not to be a fan. Even if those teams are terrible, you are cursed to stick with them through thick and thin if you are a true fan.

When I began following sports more seriously, the Memphis Grizzlies were starting to get good again. Led by a young core of Ja Morant, Jaren Jackson Jr., and Desmond Bane, the Grizzlies had the city buzzing with excitement simply because they were winning games. Memphis, a small, forgotten Southern city rich in history, soul music, and the legacy of the civil rights movement, was getting national attention.

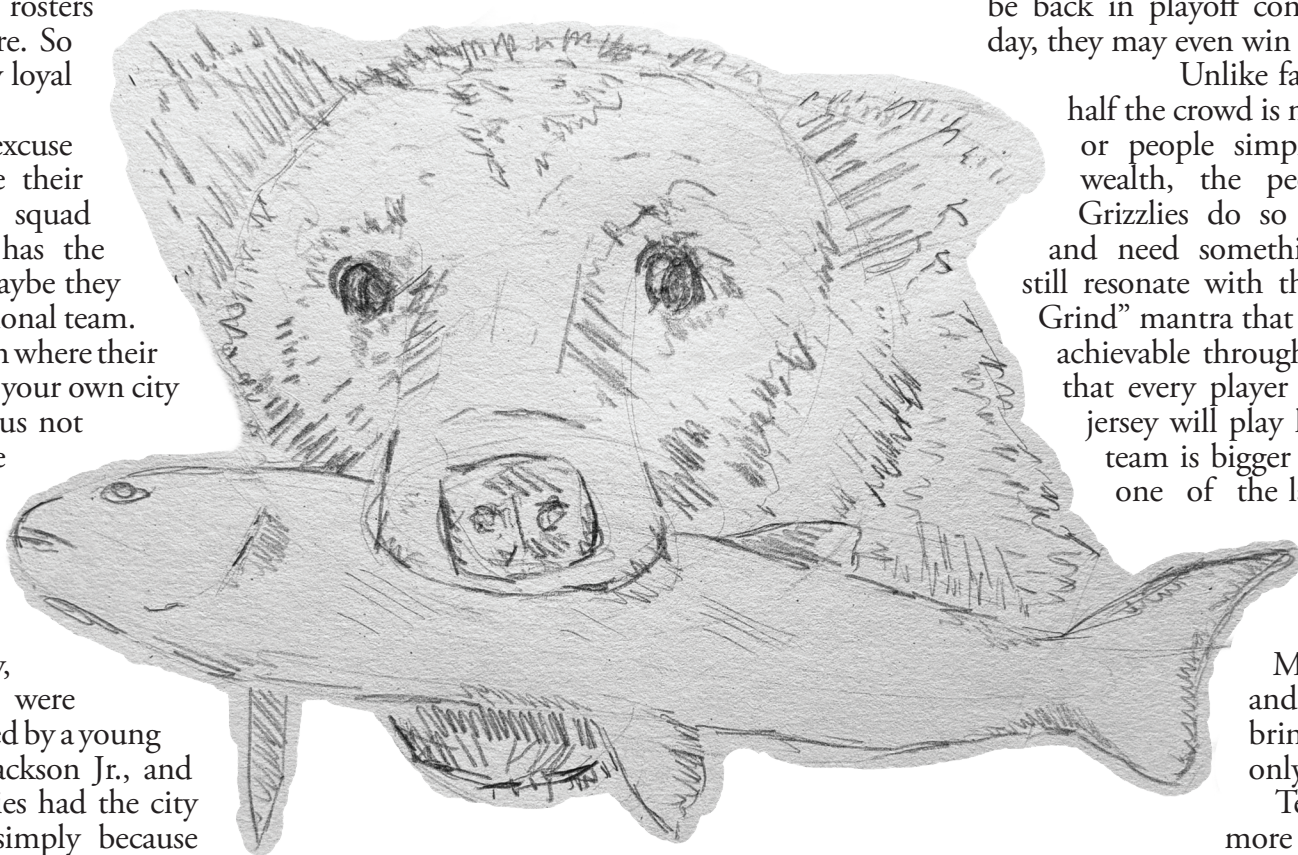
Originally, the Grizzlies were based in Vancouver, entering the NBA as an expansion team in 1995 alongside the Toronto Raptors. Until 2001, they were barred from having the first overall draft pick, regardless of where they landed in the lottery. This ruling had bigger implications for the Grizzlies than for the Raptors, because

“The Grizzlies are one of five teams that have never reached the NBA Finals, despite having some truly talented rosters in their short 30-year tenure. So why do they still have many loyal supporters?”

the Vancouver team had six consecutive losing records when a top player could have turned the tide. This was coupled with empty bleachers, unlike New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, there was not a substantial market for a basketball team. This combination of poor seasons and limited fan support led to the team's relocation to Memphis before the 2001 season.

Memphis had experience hosting a

basketball team with the American Basketball Association's Sounds during the '70s before the ABA and NBA merged and eliminated the squad. So when the Grizzlies moved to Memphis in 2001, many were excited for the return of professional basketball. Over the next 18 years, including the players of the “Grit and Grind” era of the 2010s, until the Morant-led team took over and boosted the team's popularity.



This new team somehow embodied Memphis: loud, scrappy, and full of energy and love for each other. Every alley-oop, every block, every win was a statement to the world that Memphis would not be forgotten. The city is not like New York or Boston, cities that often serve as iconic backdrops for American shows and movies. Memphis is a run-down has-been that suffers from continued racial biases and economic hardship. But during that prime, we felt like we were on top of the world.

I still remember those playoff series, watching Morant play his heart out. I remember special days when my strict private school would let students dress down for “Grizz Day.” The team's chemistry was so inspiring that the camaraderie rippled through the city. Initiatives and service projects throughout Memphis helped those in need and brought a genuine spark to Memphis.

And then it all started to fall apart.

Injuries and bad decision-making plagued the team. They were no longer “fine in the West,” as the players once believed. The city's resurgence in everyday conversation had faded. Free agents had no interest in playing in Memphis when cities like Miami or Los Angeles offered more money and more fun. It was time for this small city to lapse into its old self.

Every season now feels the same. The Grizzlies enter the draft with a high pick and hopes of turning things around. As one hole is plugged in the draft, two more pop up as players fail to develop. This cycle continues, dropping us further and further in the power rankings.

The past four years have been painful. Looking around at other small-market teams as their young cores develop and compete among the titans, I cannot help but realize the Grizzlies' trajectory is much grimmer. Years of tanking have made me practically apathetic toward professional

basketball altogether. One of the first sports I felt consistently entertained by has now been relegated to a passing thought.

And yet, I am still a Grizzlies fan. Although it would have been easier just to support a different rising team or jump on the bandwagon and root for Boston sports, I cannot forget the excitement that the team brought to Memphis—to me. I cling to the hope that one day, the Grizzlies will be back in playoff conversations, and that one day, they may even win a championship.

Unlike fans in bigger cities, where half the crowd is made up of bandwagoners or people simply there to flaunt their wealth, the people sticking with the Grizzlies do so because they truly care and need something to believe in. They still resonate with that blue-collar “Grit and Grind” mantra that promises that anything is achievable through hard work. They know that every player who puts on a Grizzlies jersey will play his heart out because the team is bigger than just basketball: It is one of the last hopes for an otherwise forgotten city.

So it is not really a curse that the Grizzlies are in Memphis. With the hope and excitement that they bring to the city, the team can only be seen as a blessing.

Teams like the Grizzlies are more than just competitors. They represent the larger community that surrounds and supports them, however divided. In good times and bad, they unite fans around a shared hope. Even in a city as fragmented and hostile as Memphis, with high rates of poverty, crime, and widespread urban blight rates, a single

“Every alley-oop, every block, every win was a statement to the world that Memphis would not be forgotten.”

team can bring strangers together. As more people and players push for the Grizzlies to move to Nashville, I ask that they recognize how important the team is to the city. Small-market teams are just as important as the big titans.

TYLER DANG '28 (TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) LAMENTS THE 2022 GRIZZLIES.

GRAPHIC BY JAMES FOSS '29

Too Good to Be True

Being a sore loser is the most unfortunate curse.

By SALMA GHEITH '30

Game. Set. Match. The crowd is in an uproar. It is 2017, and tennis legend Serena Williams has just won her 23rd Grand Slam title. With this victory, she surpassed Steffi Graf's record and made history.

The win, arguably one of the most impressive feats in women's tennis history, drew backlash. In October 2025, on "Stockton Street," the podcast Serena hosts with her sister Venus, she recalled the strangest explanation she had ever heard for her success: a competitor she consistently dominated on the court claimed the sisters had used witchcraft to win their matches. Venus not only corroborated the statement but added a detail that made the story stranger: someone on the rival's team had gone to a "black magician" to try to beat Serena.

These accusations take different forms across eras, places, and events. Still, the pattern is undeniable: someone consistently outperforms the rest of the field, and instead of crediting hard work and talent, fans and rivals find disturbing justifications to explain their distaste for someone else's success. In modern sport, this typically takes one of a few forms: drugs, gender, or, I guess, witchcraft.

Drug accusations are extremely common; "they must be doping" is a statement we have all heard in reference to an impressive feat of athletic excellence. In recent years, many female athletes have faced accusations of being men "secretly" competing in women's sports. Finally, the infamous invocation of "black magic": the assumption that an athlete must have supernatural help and that their success is not their own. Although the first two sound much more plausible than the third, they all come from the same place. The refusal to accept that someone is simply better is pervasive among athletes and fans alike.

Williams' story sounds absurd, but there's a laundry list of witchcraft accusations in professional sports globally. In 2003, a soccer match between Rwanda and Uganda sparked outrage as the Rwandan goalkeeper Muhamud Mossi lit an unknown substance and tied black pouches to the back of his goal net. This led Ugandan players to accuse him of using "juju" to stop goals and violently try to remove the items.

The result: Rwanda won 1-0, with Jimmy Gatete, who was injured in the brawl, scoring the game-winning goal. Mossi's explanation for the "witchcraft" was that the items he had tied to the net were a protective prayer ritual and a personal religious charm meant to bring luck. The charm had nothing to do with "freezing" the opposing team from scoring goals. Rwanda's soccer team heavily criticized Uganda for letting its superstition get the better of them and using witchcraft as an excuse for not being able to score past legitimate athletic saves.

This was not the first time this has happened between two soccer teams. In February 2002, before a game between Mali and Cameroon, Malian police accused Cameroonian soccer player Thomas N'Kono of "dropping" a black magic charm on the grass; they arrested him. When Cameroon threatened to boycott the game, police released him, and he returned in time to play. Cameroon won 3-0.

In both of these examples, the accusers lost, revealing the "sore loser" mentality that drives people to make claims of magic, doping, etc. Malian police had a vested interest in arresting N'Kono. The same is true of Uganda's accusations against Mossi. Countless other examples of this same situation occur in sports. Paul Pogba was accused of cursing Mbappé to help Manchester United knock out PSG in the 2019 Champions League tournament. In 2022, Alejandro "Papu" Gomez was accused of using black magic to keep his teammate Giovanni Lo Celso benched.

The examples are endless. The conclusion is the same: people cannot stand talent.

"Instead of crediting hard work and talent, fans and rivals find disturbing justifications to explain their distaste for someone else's success."

But while this is a global pattern, it is important to note that Black female athletes often bear the brunt of this persecution. Williams faced all of it throughout her career, including accusations of black magic, doping, and lying about her gender. A 2018 study of social media abuse during Wimbledon 2015 found recurring themes of fans and other athletes accusing Williams of drug use and lying about her gender.

This isn't limited to Williams; South African runner Caster Semenya experienced similar scrutiny. After Semenya won the 800 meters at the 2009 World Championships as an 18-year-old, her speed and appearance prompted sex verification testing. Semenya has differences in sex development and XY chromosomes, but she rejects the intersex label and identifies as a woman. She was later barred from her event under testosterone rules. Other African runners, including Christine Mboma and Francine Niyonsaba, have faced similar scrutiny.

Scholar and activist Moya Bailey coined the term misogynoir to explain this phenomenon.

Misogynoir is the blend of racism and sexism aimed at Black women, and Bailey's first published work on the concept examined how Caster Semenya was treated.

When placed in the context of misogynoir, racism, and the refusal to accept that some people are just that good, the whispers of witchcraft and

"Blaming a hidden 'trick' is not a clever insight; it is a projection of the ego of the loser."

underhanded methods of success around Williams can no longer be seen as a random oddity. It is another iteration of an old story: a Black woman wins, and people search for a reason it does not count.

Blaming a hidden "trick" is not a clever insight; it is a projection of the ego of the loser. Psychologists call this the self-serving bias, in which we blame external factors for our shortcomings or mistakes. Losing to someone better hits your sense of self, but losing to a curse or a body that "isn't fair" is simply out of your control.

However, there is reasonable cause for suspicion at times. Marion Jones won three Olympic golds in 2000 and was later stripped of them after admitting to using performance-enhancing drugs. The problem was never with suspicion itself; it was with who gets suspected first, how loudly, and on how little evidence. Williams was tested, questioned, and mocked for decades without a single positive finding. Semenya broke no rule; she was born with the body she has. When doubt follows the same athletes repeatedly, regardless of evidence, it is not skepticism; it is bias.

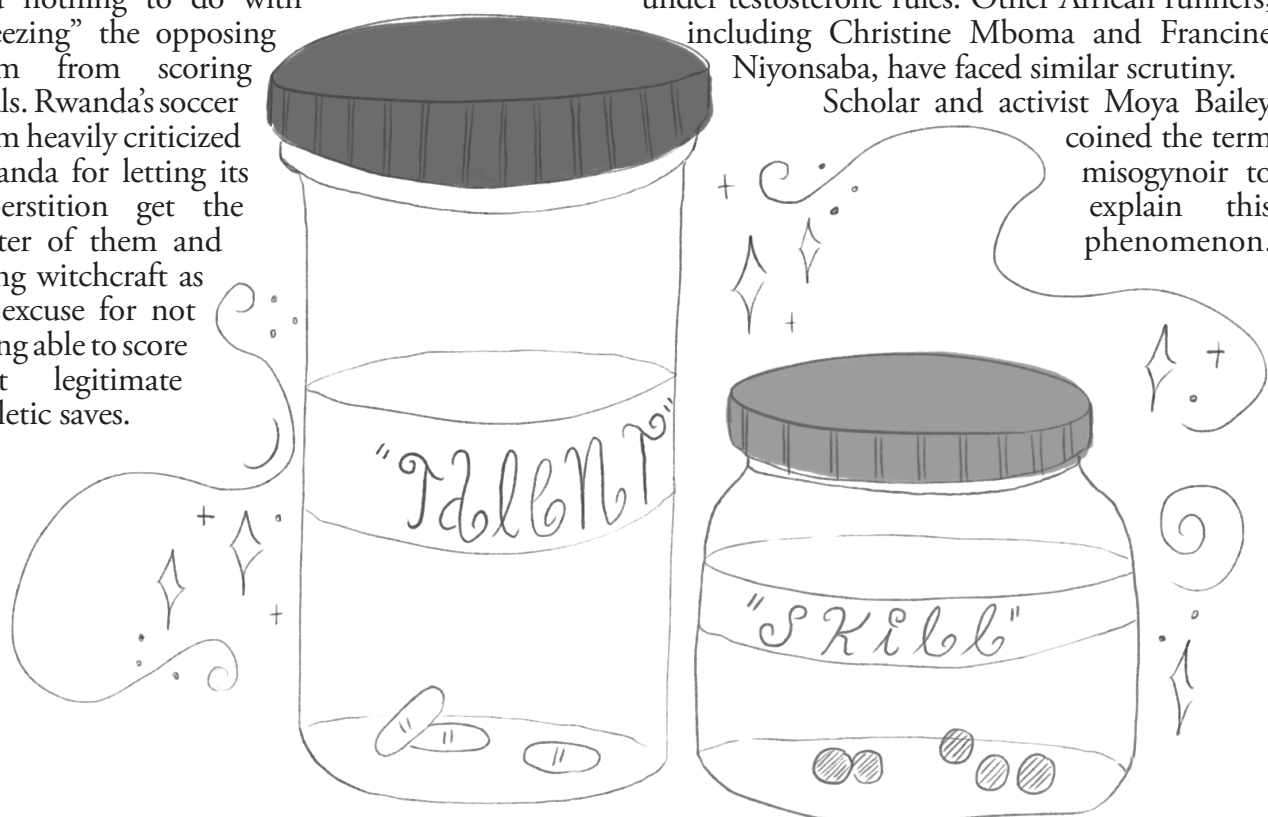
We repeat this suspicion in our own communities. We feed into rumors of classmates cheating, we laugh when someone suggests an athlete can't be as smart as a "regular" student, and we consistently undermine accomplishments that may make us feel insecure. That person isn't in Math 55 because they cheated their way through high school; they really are just that good. The girl who got into Hum 10 isn't there by mistake. The guy in your econ class who got the coveted internship worked really hard. Remember that not only are others deserving of their accomplishments, but you are too. Someone else's success is not your failure.

Sport is meant to celebrate what people can do with talent, hard work, and years of training. Every time we reach for a curse or a miracle drug or a conspiracy to explain greatness, we take that away from athletes, often the same ones.

Sometimes the simplest explanation is the true one. She was just better.

SALMA GHEITH '30
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GRAPHIC BY CAMERON BERNIER '29



Weekly Sports Preview: October 8–15

Your weekly what-to-watch for Harvard Athletics.

By LUCY DUNCAN '28

We are a month into classes, and with fall sports well into their regular seasons, the Crimson enters another week of conference tests, road trips, and championship races. This week brings a new set of challenges for Harvard sports as it looks beyond the regular season and toward title bids.

Field Hockey (8–1)

This Friday at 4 p.m., Cornell will travel to Cambridge to face the Crimson at Harvard's home field. Cornell is a close second to Harvard in the Ivy League standings, and both teams enter the matchup undefeated in conference play. Following a penalty shootout win over last year's Ivy League tournament champion, Princeton, on Sept. 26, the Crimson faces its next test on Friday. A victory would bring the team a step closer to its second consecutive Ivy League championship.

On Sunday at 1 p.m., field hockey will take to the road for a non-conference game at Syracuse. Be sure to watch Sage Piekarski '27, who led the Crimson's offense to a victory over No. 5 Wake Forest last week, and goalkeeper Linde Burger '29, who has posted three shutouts this season.

Women's Volleyball (11–1)

Despite modest preseason predictions, women's volleyball started the season with a record-breaking 11-game win streak before its first loss. Now well into conference play, the Crimson will travel to Columbia this Friday for a 7 p.m. game. With Columbia yet to win a conference match this season, this match will likely be one of Harvard's easier challenges on its path to an Ivy League tournament bid, ahead of a tougher test on Saturday.

On Saturday at 5 p.m., the Crimson will then travel upstate for its second road game of the weekend against Cornell, the conference leader. This will be a critical test for the Crimson's depth against a team with a perfect conference record this season. Sophia Wei '29 is the one to watch, boasting double-digit assists in multiple games this season. First-year Kayla Nwabueze '30 is already adding value, dominating on the court with her kills and aces.

“A month into the regular season, Harvard has already clinched the Ivy League championship after a victory over longtime rival Dartmouth.”

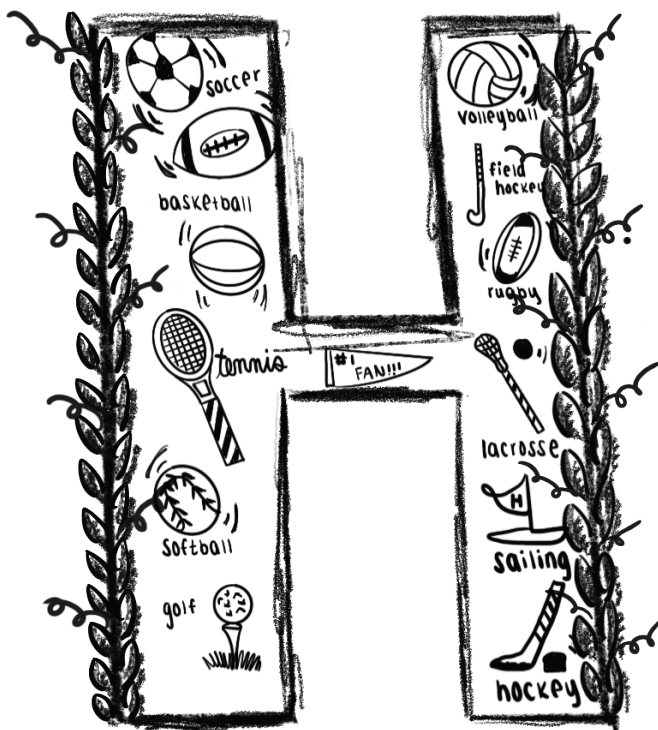
Cross Country

This weekend brings a doubleheader for Harvard cross country. On Friday, the Crimson travels to Madison, Wisconsin, for the Nuttycombe Invitational, followed by the New England Championships the following day in New Hampshire. The Nuttycombe is one of the most competitive races, featuring several of the nation's top-ranked teams. While rosters for each meet are yet to be announced, fans can expect the squad to be split between the two. Athletes to watch include Tam Gavenas '29, who finished seventh in the men's 8K at the Indiana State

Invitational, and last year's All-Ivy First Team honoree Sophia Gorriaran '27, who consistently leads the women's team in finishes.

Women's Rugby (3–0)

A month into the regular season, Harvard has already clinched the Ivy League championship after a victory over longtime rival Dartmouth. On Saturday at 11 a.m., the Crimson will face Navy at



Mignone Field. With its toughest regular-season game behind them, Harvard will look to continue its undefeated streak as it pursues its fourth consecutive NIRA championship. This Saturday's game is Senior Day, celebrating members of the Class of 2027 like captains Ava Ference '27 and Courtney Taylor '27, along with leading on-field contributors like Neasa McLaughlin '27 and Maya Hilger '27.

Football (3–0)

On Saturday at 1 p.m., Harvard football heads to Cornell in Ithaca for its second Ivy League game of the season. Cornell is second in conference rankings and coming off a win over preseason favorites Yale—but fans can remain hopeful for the Crimson, which is first in the league and has won every meeting since 2019. After last week's exciting conclusion against Colgate, look out for quarterback Charlie Smith '29, who has commanded the Crimson's offense with a career-best start to the season, and wide receiver Nathan Bailey '30, who set career bests in receiving yards and receptions during the home opener against Colgate.

“On Saturday at 1 p.m., Harvard football heads to Cornell in Ithaca for its second Ivy League game of the season.”

Women's Soccer (8–2–1)

On Saturday at 4 p.m., women's soccer will play Dartmouth in Hanover, New Hampshire. The Crimson is on a seven-game winning streak, highlighted by a victory over then-No. 6 the University of Alabama and a 6–0 shutout win

over the University of New Hampshire. Harvard, currently undefeated in conference play, leads the Ivy League. Still, this game will challenge the Crimson—Dartmouth won last year's Ivy League championship and returns three of its All-Ivy First Team selections, including the Ivy League Rookie of the Year. This matchup will likely be one of the Crimson's most difficult conference games of the regular season.

Men's Soccer (2–5–2)

Saturday at 7 p.m., the Crimson will play Brown in Providence. Coming off its first conference victory of the season against Columbia, Harvard has another chance Saturday to prove it is a contender for the Ivy title after a rocky start. Currently fifth in the conference standings, Harvard could break into the top four with a win over Brown and bring the team a step closer to qualifying for the Ivy League tournament. Watch Dylan Tellado '27, who leads the Crimson in goals and points this season and scored Harvard's only Ivy League goal.

Men's Water Polo (5–10)

The Crimson faces Brown at home in Blodgett Pool this Saturday at 12 p.m. After starting its season with tough non-conference games against some of the nation's top teams, Harvard began official Northeast Water Polo Conference play last weekend. The Crimson is currently 2–1 in conference play and 5–10 overall, having lost only to conference leader Princeton. With Harvard and Brown tied for second in the conference standings, Saturday's matchup gives Harvard a chance to solidify its position as a top contender for the conference title.

On Sunday at 12 p.m., the Crimson will head to MIT for its second game of the weekend. Look out for Connor Kim '29, whose nine goals across two games last weekend helped carry the Crimson to victories against Iona and Long Island University, and All-American Clay Carrington '30, whose four-goal debut against Cal Baptist earned him the NWPC Rookie of the Week title earlier this year.

Sailing

This weekend, the sailing team will split its roster across three tournaments—the Stu Nelson Trophy in New London, Connecticut; the Sister Esther Trophy in Newport, Rhode Island; and the first round of the Open Atlantic Coast Championship in St. Mary's City, Maryland. All three are two-day slates, though rosters for each have not yet been announced. Look out for Zoey Ziskind '27 and Christina Chen '27, both named All-Americans last year, who have already made several podium appearances this season.

Whichever sport you follow, this season has been exhilarating for Crimson fans. With fall athletics in full swing, Harvard's teams face new hurdles this week. Whether you are a die-hard fan or have never watched a game, head across the river (or tune into ESPN) to support Harvard athletics this week!

LUCY DUNCAN '28 (LDUNCAN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES SPORTS FOR THE “HARVARD INDEPENDENT.”

GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA '27

Bulldog is Bouse

Four rituals to win the Harvard-Yale Game.

By VENUS DASTIDAR '30

My fellow Harvard students, are any of us used to losing? No. Yet we have somehow lost to Yale five years in a row for the big pre-Thanksgiving game.

If you too are sick and tired of a safety school disrespecting us, you're in the right place. Witchcraft is not a class you can add to your CrimsonCart (yet), so if you are looking for—alternative—ways to prove your school spirit, look no further than the resources in this article. I've used my extensive occult knowledge—acquired from hours of scrolling Etsy witch TikToks—to come up with four different rituals you can perform leading up to the Game to ensure a Harvard win at Fenway this year. You have heard of Harvard Chuds, but have you heard of Harvard Witches? That is exactly what we're going to become.

The best tool for manifestation is a simple spell jar, and luckily, the d-halls have the ingredients we need! While a witch will typically make their hexes in traditional glass jars, these concoctions should work just as well in disposable cups. Here's a list of some materials you can put in your DIY spell jar:

- A. Honey: To ensure our victory is sweet!
- B. Black Pepper: Curse Yale's defense line with... incessant sneezing? Yeah, why not?
- C. Lucky Charm Marshmallows: Send the heart marshmallows in particular (spiritually) to our linebackers, kickers, and defense people (I am not really sure how football works, so pardon my terminology).
- D. Cinnamon (the tea bags are good enough): Set our offense spiritually aflame, just like when

you get a big whiff of cinnamon.

E. Tabasco Sauce: Keep it so spicy Yale cries!

F. Blueberries: Blue just like Yale; crush them up and put them in your spell jar. Pretend each blueberry you're squishing is a football player on the opposite team.

G. Salt: To make sure they lose so badly they'll be salty for years!

H. Ketchup: Douse the whole thing in crimson, because we will be making them BLEED (not actually, hopefully).

You can tailor your spell jar around Harvard winning (Lucky Charms, Honey, and Ketchup), Yale losing (Black Pepper, Tabasco, Salt, Cinnamon, or Blueberries), or just create one big concoction! To finish the spell, recycle the jar: a good witch stays eco-conscious and doesn't let Yale copy our secrets!

Beyond simple hexes, we must perform four rituals to put Yale in its rightful place. Many know Lamont as the library for students who refuse to sleep, making it the perfect place to host a perpetual séance, which we will dub the Lamont Vigil. Until the fateful November day, someone must stand guard for Lamont by pulling an all-nighter. Bonus points if you're actually studying, and even more kudos if it is for a particularly difficult class like "Happiness." Over time, this ritual will harvest our intellectual energy and build team power for our ultimate spell of beating Yale. Definitely the easiest ritual on this list, considering "Math55" students are probably staying up anyway.

Alongside the Lamont Vigil, we must also warn the city of Yale's arrival (like a modern-day Paul Revere). "The Bulldogs are coming! The Bulldogs are coming!" The night before the

Game, muster the courage to learn how to use CrimsonPrint and trek to HUIT to print out a Harvard rejection letter. Wait, did I say rejection letter? I meant a Yale acceptance letter. Minor mishap, given they are basically identical. To really twist the knife, draw your favorite funny memes, mustaches on the bulldogs, and other quasi-degrading things on the flyer, and now you've got fun posters to put up around the Yard.

Of course, to guarantee victory, bring the energy on game day. To all of you hosting Bulldogs in your room (bless your heart), draw a few symbols or phrases on their arms, foreheads, legs, hands, etc., to show them whose territory they are on. I'll get you started with a few ideas. My recommendation? Use Sharpie.

- A. A big H with "Property of Harvard" right under
- B. Yale? I hardly know her
- C. Tombstone because RIP Yale's chances
- D. Yale's Bulldog with a Harvard scarf if you're super artistically inclined
- E. Veritas across the forehead
- F. Tears under their eyes to foreshadow their loss, of course

Most importantly, SHOW UP to the Game and BE LOUD. The best ritual is the sheer energy we'll bring to the Game. Do not underestimate the crowd's energy! Bring the vibes to the tailgates, dress in your best game-day outfits, and make the best anti-Yale signs you can!

Can I guarantee that following all these rituals will win us the Game? Yes, so spread the word to your friends! With the Fenway game approaching, we must channel every source of power possible to ensure victory, even if we need some help from the occult!

VENUS DASTIDAR '30 (VDASTIDAR@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ONLY REALLY HATES YALE BECAUSE THERE IS NO GOOD INDIAN FOOD IN NEW HAVEN.

GRAPHIC BY MIA STEWART '29



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