thetech.com



WEATHER, p. 2 FRI: 63°F 54°F Mostly Sunny. SAT: 69°F | 46°F Partly Sunny

Volume 140, Number 36 Thursday, October 22, 2020

MIT staff to be provided 'up to two hours' of paid leave to vote

MIT Staff Against Racism starts petition to change election day into Institute-wide paid staff holiday

By Srinidhi Narayanan

MIT staff members will receive "up to two hours" of paid leave to vote on or before Election Day, Vice President for Human Resources Ramona Allen wrote in an email to faculty and staff Oct. 6. The email was in response to a circulating petition requesting that Election Day, Nov. 3, be named as an Institute-wide paid staff holiday.

The petition was started by the Committee for a Paid Election Holiday, a part of an organization called MIT Staff Against Racism.

Previously, the MIT Employee Policy Manual allowed staff members to request two hours of unpaid time for voting on Election Day. The petition writes that not providing

paid time off "discourages workers from voting." Furthermore, two hours "would barely be enough time for staff to vote in Kendall, let alone home districts farther away." The manual was updated Oct. 5 to allow for up to two hours of paid leave.

The petition points out that voting in-person on Election Day is a risk many voters will be forced to take "as they face drastically increased wait times due to shortages of poll workers." The petition cites long wait times as "one of the many racist tactics used to disenfranchise black and brown people," stating that it is therefore "especially important this year for those who are able, to not just show up to vote but to also help keep the wait times short and polls open for others by volunteering as poll workers."

The petition also writes that absentee voting is an unreliable option, citing "manipulation of the postal service, absentee ballot rejection, and selective absentee ballot mailing.

"Due to increased voter suppression and barriers to access, it is imperative that MIT, a leading institution and voice of progress, support full access to the polls. Critical shortages of poll workers, confusion and delays around absentee ballots, and the fear of contracting COVID-19 discourage already disenfranchised workers from exercising their democratic rights," the petition writes.

Election Day, Page 2



Angela Davis speaks at the first event of the DEI seminar series coordinated by the biological engineering, chemical engineering, and materials science and engineering departments Oct. 21.

MIT heads into Phase 3 of laboratory research ramp-up

Research not requiring in-person work should remain remote, the new guidelines recommend

By Jennifer Ai STAFF REPORTER

MIT transitioned to Phase 3 of the research ramp-up (RR3) for laboratory-based research Oct. 14, Maria Zuber, vice president for research, and Tyler Jacks, chair of the Research Ramp-Up Lightning Committee, wrote in an email to the MIT community Oct. 13.

RR3 removes the limit on the number of hours laboratory research personnel may work on campus, Zuber and Jacks wrote. However, they emphasize that all other restrictions from Phase 2 relating to COVID-19 safety procedures will continue to be enforced, including social distancing by six feet in static work conditions and maintaining a density of 125 square feet per person. As a result, the RR3 guidelines recommend utilizing work shifts "to prevent overcrowding."

In particular, the guidelines state that principal investigators (PIs) and Core Facilities leaders should work together to "operate a scheduling system and maintain a record of weekly work schedules." Those who do not utilize work shifts are required to "justify their plans" to the Department Monitoring and Compliance Committee (DMC).

The guidelines also state that the DMC committees must report compliance violations weekly to the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Although many restrictions have been lifted, the guidelines recommend that research not requiring in-person work should remain remote.

The guidelines also recognize that "the latest guidance from MIT" allows outdoor on-campus gatherings for users of Covid Pass "up-todate with the required testing and attestation, provided that proper physical distancing and face covering practices are observed."

No changes will be made to the existing guidelines for non-laboratory research created by the Thunder Committee, Zuber and Jacks wrote. Office space remains limited to 50% occupancy, and at least six feet of separation must be maintained in static work conditions.

Other continuing restrictions include the use of face coverings except when eating alone and when alone in a closed office. Because eating must be done alone, the guidelines recommend signup sheets for PI-controlled spaces, including public offices for scheduling meals. In addition, workers are asked to frequently wash hands and sanitize workspaces. COV-ID-19 testing must also remain up

IN SHORT

The deadline to apply for a **credit**, volunteer, or sponsored research funded UROP is Oct. 22.

Virtual Family Weekend is Oct. 23-Oct. 24.

The deadline to add an H2 halfterm subject is Oct. 30.

To register for Spring classes, all MIT students must **submit proof** of receiving a flu shot by Oct. 30.

Nominations for recent MIT graduates to the MIT Corporation are open until Oct. 30.

The deadline to nominate faculty members for the 2020 School of **Science Teaching Prizes** is Oct.

Interested in joining The Tech? Email join@tech.mit.edu.

Send news and tips to news@ tech.mit.edu.

New Vassar scheduled to open in January 2021 Burton-Conner to undergo renovations starting Spring 2021 and reopen Fall 2022;

despite delay due to COVID-19, 'the project timeline is on track,' Dean Friedrich writes

By Srinidhi Narayanan

Burton-Conner (BC) will undergo renovations starting in Spring 2021. New Vassar (NV) is scheduled to open in January.

BC was originally scheduled to undergo renovations June 2020 to August 2022. Senior Associate Dean for Housing David Friedrich wrote in a statement to The Tech that despite the delay in starting renovations, "the project timeline is on track and the building is targeted to reopen for the fall 2022

"During the fall 2020 semester, Burton Conner has served a vital purpose as support housing for members of the MIT community who test positive for COVID-19 and must isolate or who require a temporary quarantine accommodation," Friedrich wrote.

NV is scheduled to open in January 2021. Friedrich wrote that "members of the New Vassar Founders' Group convened earlier this month to continue community planning efforts for MIT's newest undergraduate residence." The NV Founders' Group includes students, staff, faculty, and the NV House Team.

BC President Sarah Aaronson '23 wrote in an email to The Tech that the BC student government "has been bringing in new first-year students through the SCUFFY [Support CommUnities For First Years] and ESC [Exploring Support Communities] programs as well as advising the plans for the upcoming renovations."

Aaronson wrote that "most of the work for planning transitions [for BC students] happened during the Spring 2020 semester. Policies such as staple groups for the switch lottery and different priorities for BC residents in the switch lottery, however, are no longer relevant because of COVID-19."

She wrote that the only ongoing anning "is working with DormCon Housing Chairs to ensure that the housing lottery for the spring is satisfactory to BC residents along with other dorm residents and students."

Aaronson also wrote that "while BC residents might rank New Vassar highly because there are more spots," NV will not function as a "swing dorm" or provide any "specific alternate service for BC residents specifically."

The Housing and Residential Services (HRS) website states that "it is important for New Vassar to have its own identity, so the community will not serve as a 'swing' dorm in the short or long term." The website writes that "being a swing dorm would be disruptive" to NV establishing "a house identity and cohesive spirit if a large number of spaces are reserved for another residence hall that functions independently from New Vassar"

Friedrich wrote that HRS "continues to work closely with members of the Burton Conner Transition Team to help preserve the residence hall's vibrant history and to support the community during the transition period."

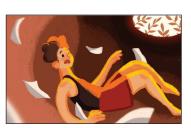
Aaronson wrote that "prior to COVID-19, BC residents were slated to have access to the Coffeehouse Lounge for most of the time to hold small floor events as well as use spaces like Lobdell for our larger, campus-wide events." Support has also come "in the form of providing storage for suite and floor belongings" as well as the digital preservation of the dorm's murals.

EUPHORIA

An intimate look at the life of a modern teenager. ARTS, p. 5

SUCCESSION

What happens if Trump refuses to leave office? OPINION, p. 4



SPOOKY SEASON

What's scarier, stress or spiders? CAMPUS LIFE,

LOST HOPE

Detained for driving while Black. CAMPUS LIFE, p. 7

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Thursday, October 22, 2020

WEATHER

Mild in Boston, Arctic outbreak in the Midwest

By Karen Li

Here in Boston, we will be seeing plenty of sunshine to cheer us up from yesterday's dreary, mid-week morning fog. Be sure to go outside to breathe some fresh air as above-normal temperatures continue to persist until the end of the week. Furthermore, take advantage of the clear skies to help relieve some eye strain from all those hours of Zooming online. The arrival of a cold front late Saturday af-

ternoon and evening will bring forth some cooler air, but little or no rain. Be sure to have a jacket ready for more fall-like temperatures on Sunday!

In the meantime, the winter storm system crossing from the Northern Rockies into the Northern Plains and Upper Midwest is expected to set records for October snowfall in multiple regions, making for dangerous travel conditions. To our dear friends in the Midwestern United States, please be safe!

Extended Forecast

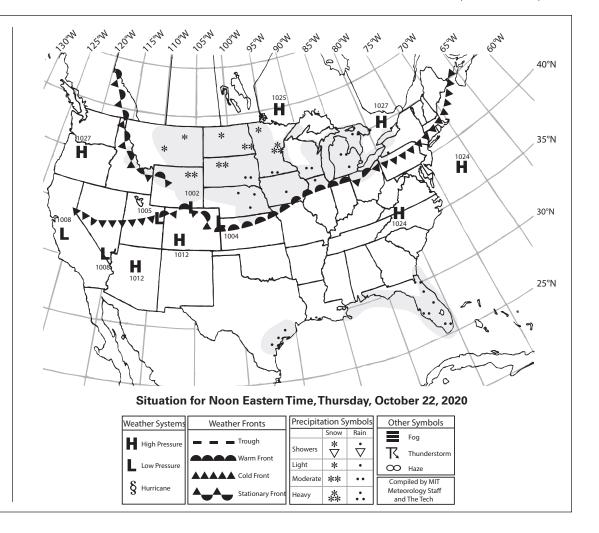
Today: Mostly sunny. High around 68°F (20°C). West wind around 6mph, east wind in the afternoon.

Tonight: Mostly cloudy. Low around 53°F (12°C). East wind around 6mph.

Tomorrow: Mostly sunny. High around 63 *F (17 *C) and low around 54°F (12°C). East wind around 9 mph.

Saturday: Partly sunny. High around 69°F (21°C) and low around 46°F (8°C). Southwest wind around 7-10 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny. High around 52°F (11°C) and low around 46°F (8°C). Northeast wind around 11 mph.



Committee for a Paid Election Holiday: two hours of paid time 'inadequate'

Election Day, from Page 1

Around 800 students, faculty, and staff have signed the petition, as of press time.

Allen wrote that while MIT is unable to name Election Day an official Institute holiday, the Employment Policy Manual has been amended to provide staff with up to two hours of paid leave for voting.

Allen said that the time may be used either for early voting or on Election Day. Employees "must request the time at least three days in advance" and "managers will approve requests where possible,

but may deny requests when staff members are needed to maintain necessary campus operations."

Allen wrote in an email to *The Tech* that "in tandem with opportunities to vote prior to Election Day in person or by mail, or during early morning or evening voting hours on Election Day itself, we believe that this gives community members flexibility to vote without sacrificing compensation."

Allen explained that "more significant changes to Institute holidays cannot be considered in isolation of the academic calendar and overall schedule of holidays and paid time off."

The Committee for a Paid Election Holiday wrote in an Oct. 8 email to faculty and staff, forwarded to *The Tech*, that they found "the proposal for two hours of paid time off to be inadequate."

The committee wrote that "two hours is simply not enough time," citing that many staff members living "far away from campus" would "not be able to fit travel and wait time into that window." The committee added that the letter "does not consider staff who live in states other than Massachusetts and might be subject to stricter voting laws."

The committee also pointed out that the letter "urges, but does

not require, supervisors to approve time off and be flexible with regards to scheduling. This policy does not protect staff whose supervisors would push back and offers no recourse. An institute-wide official holiday would protect the most vulnerable workers."

President L. Rafael Reif wrote Sept. 21 in a letter to the MIT community that he hopes all MIT community members "able to vote will find a safe way to do so."

Reif added that community members can also "support voting and help ensure a safe and healthy election." Community members can volunteer as poll workers and remind "the people around" them to vote, and students can also join MITVote, Reif wrote.

The committee referenced Reif's letter, writing that "MIT staff must have a paid day off if the administration expects staff to take these sentiments to heart. Verbally encouraging participation but not providing the means to do so is an empty gesture."

The committee acknowledged Allen's response as "an encouraging signal that our message has been heard," but that "there is still a lot of work to do and we will continue to push toward the goals outlined in our original petition."

Solution to boool from page 6

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Thursday, October 22, 2020

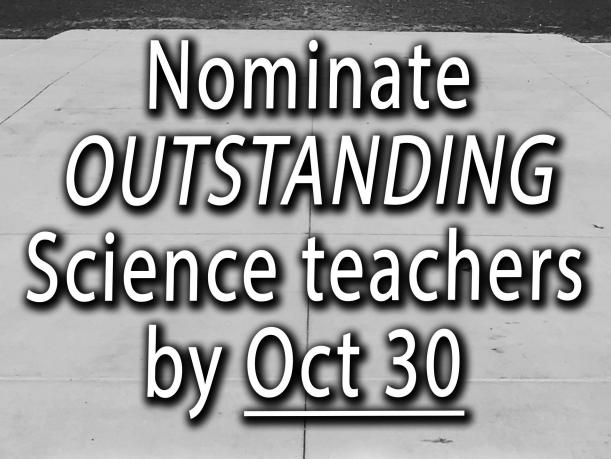
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GUEST COLUMN

Trump's refusal to concede could spark a crisis

And there may not be a legal way to resolve it

By Eli Sanchez

At this point, it's an open secret that Donald Trump is probably planning to claim victory in the 2020 election, whether or not he wins. What's worse, a large swath of the population will likely have his back either way. As with every other piece of election drama, we've become pretty numb to this. But this one's actually pretty remarkable because it has the potential to plunge the country into a crisis.

In every previous U.S. presidential election, the losers have ultimately conceded before the next president was due to be sworn in. This remarkable streak has played a central role in the U.S.'s near-perfect track record for peaceful transfers of power because, as history has demonstrated many times, multiple candidates claiming victory is the stuff of coups and civil wars. In fact, the only time in U.S. history in which multiple people claimed to be president was during the Civil War.

Widespread doubt about the outcome would beget widespread disagreement about who's president. What happens then?

I often hear that were Trump to lose the election and refuse to step down, the military would escort him out of the White House on Jan. 20, and that incredible spectacle would be the end of it. But that assumes a Biden victory would be considered legitimate, and Trump and many of his supporters have made it clear they would decry that outcome as fraudulent. Widespread doubt about the outcome would beget widespread disagreement about who's president. What happens then? Is there a plan for settling this? Or would it be a tossup, to be decided by backdoor political wrangling, or maybe even the military?

I wanted to know what plan, if any, the U.S. has for dealing with a crisis of presidential succession, and what might be coming down the pike in the next few months. Frantic Google searches didn't clarify much, so I reached out to Mark Tushnet, a professor at the Harvard Law School and a prominent constitutional law scholar, and he agreed to talk it over with me.

"The scenarios people are imagining depend on fairly close elections in a handful of important states," he told me. "If, on the morning of the election, it's clear Biden has won [enough key swing states] by quite

substantial margins, then it's going to be over. There won't be a fight."

Tushnet told me that the only meaningful way Trump could challenge the election is through a state-by-state recount. In some states, if the margin of victory falls below a certain threshold, a recount ensues automatically. But Trump could still request recounts in states where no such criteria were met, though he'd probably have to pay for them.

But it's become clear to me that an eventual crisis of presidential succession is entirely possible in the U.S.

"When the recount is done, there is an opportunity to challenge ballots one-byone," Tushnet told me. "And that can take time, depending on how many ballots there are and how extensive the challenges are."

This is where problems could crop up. The 20th Amendment to the Constitution stipulates that the next presidential administration begins on Jan. 20, roughly two and a half months after the election. If an extensive recount ensues, followed by a patchwork of state-level legal challenges to those recounts, disputes over the election may not be resolved by then. If that happens, who gets sworn in?

Professor Tushnet assured me that there wouldn't be any ambiguity as long as the margin of victory was substantially larger than the number of contested ballots. "As a political matter, no one's going to take these challenges seriously unless it's a close election," he told me. "Then we don't have to worry about [Trump] getting away with not stepping down.... The political will would be so set against him that he couldn't successfully do it."

Even if Trump does contest a Biden win, he probably doesn't command enough support from high-ranking military officials to come out on top.

Though this certainly constrains the space of potential crises, we're definitely not out of the woods. "If [the election is] close, we don't know what would happen," Tushnet said. "The U.S. has no experience with it. Ultimately, it probably would depend on what kind of signals [Trump] gets from the leadership of the U.S. military.

What are they going to command their soldiers to do?"

So, that's troubling.

At this point, I think it unlikely anything like this will happen in the coming months. An unambiguous Biden victory seems likely. And even if Trump does contest a Biden win, he probably doesn't command enough support from high-ranking military officials to come out on top, a sentiment Professor Tushnet echoed in our call.

But it's become clear to me that an eventual crisis of presidential succession is entirely possible in the U.S. What's more, I worry that Trump may increase the likelihood of it happening further down the line, as his refusal to concede may inspire future presidential aspirants. Though it's impossible to say exactly what would happen, history has made it pretty clear that governments torn by opposing claims to power generally don't herald good times for the governed, especially when the military gets involved.

History has made it pretty clear that governments torn by opposing claims to power generally don't herald good times for the governed.

I asked Professor Tushnet how we might prevent something like this. "A very large number of countries have independent election monitoring bodies," he told me. "None of them work perfectly under all conditions, but the ones that seem to have the best chance have a substantial majority of their members drawn from expert bodies, non-governmental organizations that have expertise in election administration. And there are such organizations and people around in the U.S." Such a body would be given the final word on the outcomes of elections, removing the kinds of ambiguities that could get us into serious trouble.

Tushnet is largely agnostic on how such a body should be structured, though he believes it should be permanent, as opposed to being assembled as-needed. "If it's not in place when the problem arises, then you know what the political circumstances are, and the political parties are going to try to game the design," he told me.

"Going forward, it wouldn't be a bad idea to set up one of these expert-dominated monitoring bodies," Tushnet said, a sentiment I couldn't agree with more.

Eli Sanchez is a PhD candidate in the Department of Nuclear Science and Engineering.

CORRECTIONS

An arts article in last week's issue misspelled the name of one of the directors of *All In: The Fight For Democracy*. It is Lisa Cortés, not Lisa Cortez.



OPINION POLICY

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TV REVIEW

Death of the prime time drama

Euphoria explores the new freedom of streamed series with drugs, sex, and more drugs



Euphoria

Directed by Sam Levinson

Screenplay by Ron Leshem

Starring Zendaya, Sydney Sweeney, Maude Apatow, and Hunter Schafer

Rated TV-MA

Streaming on HBO Max

By Megan Smith

Streaming has changed our expectations for TV series. Gone are the days when every house on your street was watching I Love Lucy at 8/7 central; the golden age of the generally agreeable sitcom, the neutral cop show, and the tired soap opera has given way to the chaos of modern en-

tertainment. A show made specifically to be streamed does not need broad appeal, and it doesn't have to conform to FCC standards. It doesn't have to be a way to relax after work, a family favorite, or a Saturday cartoon. *Euphoria* fully explores this new freedom: it is an uncomfortable show about drugs, sex, and the turbulent life of the modern teenager.

In the opening monologue, the viewer is thrust into the dizzying, angsty world of Rue (Zendaya). Born in the shadow of 9/11, surrounded by the ever-present eyes and cameras of her peers, and plagued by an unspecified cocktail of mental illnesses, teenage Rue falls into drug addiction. Before long, we meet the complex cast of Rue's life from her impressionable sister to her almost brotherly drug dealer. *Euphoria* has all the parts of a "normal" show about high schoolers, but a deeper inspection of every relationship reveals more below the surface.

You'll see nudity, drug use, violence, and a range of other obscenities, but none of it is gratuitous. *Euphoria*'s uncensored approach to its complex web of relationships powerfully showcases the messy reality of high school in the modern age.

The overwhelming focus of the show is Rue's relationship with substance abuse. Although the line "drugs are cool" appears a worrying amount of times throughout the series, the conclusion of the show is much more nuanced. No episode finishes without a heart wrenching revelation about how drugs have corrupted a relationship. Through this, *Euphoria* masterfully humanizes addiction without romanticizing it.

Although the show overwhelmingly concerns the troubles of high schoolers who live largely without supervision, the kids' relationships with their parents soften their harsh characterizations. It's hard to establish any character as a true villain or hero, because no character acts in a vacuum.

Lastly, the show offers empowerment in different packages for each character. Promiscuity brings Kat (Barbie Ferreira) freedom from her own self-hatred but excludes her from stable confidence. Cassie (Sydney Sweeney) takes an opposite journey, finding freedom by creating a sense of self outside of men's impressions of her. Rue uses her relationship with Jules (Hunter Schafer), at times, as a healthier alternative to drugs, but with the same level of dependency.

Further, Jules' empowerment purely embodies the freedom of streamed shows. Within the first episode, we see her bloodied from a fall on her bike, injecting her hormones with a needle, and slashing open her arm to scare off Nate at his party. Beyond that, she exists in a whirlwind of countercultural paradoxes: she presents herself in

an overwhelmingly feminine manner yet exists in online spaces for gay men. She pushes those around her to find empowerment in femininity, yet doesn't see femininity as the endpoint for her identity. In an intriguing speech, she even declares that her true goal is to "conquer femininity" and move into a realm of pure queerness. In a moment that seems to describe her better than she can describe herself, a friend proclaims "queerness is infinite!" Her character, in both expression and sex, operates for the destruction of every binary, every regimented system of identity, yet she respects how those binary identities give structure to others. None of these attributes would fall within the narrow requirements for prime time characters.

In the end, I think what truly differentiates *Euphoria* from similar media is that for every way in which it shocks the audience, there is a purpose. There is no violence for the sake of violence or sex for the sake of sex. And there are plenty of moments of sex and violence. Queer characters having relationships furthers the greater plot instead of existing purely for the shock or for queerbating. In every element — the vibrant palate, the eccentric music, the exaggeration of personalities of most of the characters — *Euphoria*'s nauseating excess is a clear reflection of the excessive, real age that we live in.

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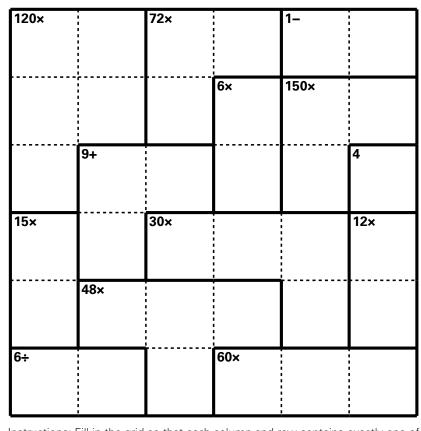
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Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

boog

Solution, page 2



Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1-6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

Getting Wetter by Fred Piscop

Solution, page 2

ACROSS

- 1 Board game instructions 6 Actress Drescher
- 10 Eject, as lava
- 14 Higher in rank
- 15 Corn Belt state
- 16 Actor Rob or Chad
- 17 Early evening hour
- 18 At any time
- 19 Was obligated to
- 20 Why a plane's oxygen mask appears
- 23 PC "cancel" key
- 24 Emulated
- 26 Sailboat pole
- 30 Israeli or Arab
- 33 "__ seeing things?"
- 36 From the largest continent
- 38 Author unknown: Abbr. 39 Dry California wine, for
- short
- 40 Breakfast bun topping
- 44 Poem of praise
- 45 Seasoning for fries
- 46 Ceramic flooring installer

- 47 Just published
- 48 Trouser leg line
- 51 Irksome person
- 52 Sofa or settee
- 54 "__ all my fault"
- 56 Prenuptial party
- 63 Generic pooch
- 66 Reebok rival
- 67 Friendly feeling 68 Dublin's land
- 69 "Sign me up!"
- 70 Core work group
- 71 Absurdly funny
- 72 E-mail folder label
- 73 Where one's lap ends

DOWN

- 1 Speak hoarsely
- 2 Ridesharing rival of Lyft
- 3 Care for very much
- 4 Days before holidays
- 5 Good judgment
- 6 Intensely competitive
- 7 Roam aimlessly 8 Impressed greatly

- 9 One voicing a documentary
- 10 Ski area
- 11 Sound like "Wham!"
- 12 Flock female
- 13 Join together
- 21 Battleship letters 22 Gift giver's prompting
- 25 Impress greatly
- 26 Georgia city
- 27 Out of the way
- 28 Muscle-bone connectors
- 29 Light brown
- 31 Stingray cousin
- 32 Ft. Wayne's state
- 34 Marathon measures
- 35 Not moving
- 37 Daytona 500 org.
- 41 Gin cocktails
- 42 Soccer spectator's cheer
- 43 Nothing, informally
- 49 Saying nothing
- 50 UFO crew
- 53 Fine black wood
- 55 Castaway's dwelling
- 57 Thin coin

20 36 37

15

18

40 41 42 44 45 48 49 50 52 53 59 |60 |61 |62 63 |64 |65 68 69 70

- 58 Similar (to)
- 59 Neighbor of Yemen
- 60 Broadly based 61 Raison d'___
- 62 Bakery loaves 63 Aladdin's hat
- 64 Nest-egg acronym

73

16

19

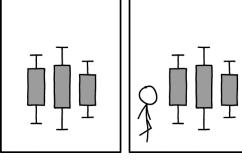
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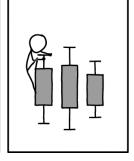
39

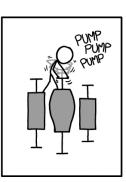
65 Loud commotion

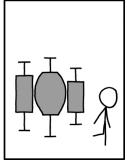


[1798] Box Plot









One night. Two stories. And an all too familiar experience.

about that night.

By Gabriella Carter

It hurts to think about that night. Such a beautiful day has forever been tainted by feelings of powerlessness and frustration, but most poignantly, a loss of hope.

We were leaving the beach on our way to try the House of Mac for the first time. I remember being so excited after linking with our other friends in the parking lot to finish off a fun day of bike riding and catching up.

Brian and I pulled out of the parking lot ahead of our friends with the GPS as our aid. I recall "Skrilla" by Kodak coming on. It was the perfect hype music for us to embark on our journey. We started rapping bar for bar and the energy was as positive as it could be after such a coming-of-age movie-like day.

A few seconds later, Brian noticed colored lights in the rearview mirror and wondered who they were for. We pulled over instantly and waited. I made a lighthearted joke referencing a similar scene from *Queen and Slim*. We laughed to mask our nerves and bask in the irony of this situation, given that we had watched the movie together earlier in the summer. If only we could've known the uncanny similarities between our encounter with the police and that of those fictitious characters.

This whole year, I have been dwelling on how fast time escaped me. With COVID-19 and impending pressure to figure out my profession, it seemed like I could never get enough of it. But in this situation, time dragged endlessly.

It took at least three minutes from the time we pulled over to get any form of correspondence from the police. I was confused as to why not a single word was said to us by anyone in the four police vehicles parked behind us.

I distinctly remember asking myself, "Aren't they supposed to ask for your license and registration first?" before we were commanded by an ominous voice to "roll the windows down and stick our hands outside of the vehicle" over the intercom. Before doing so, Brian called his mother and left her on the line. Instantly, fear festered inside of me. What happens when they see two pairs of Black hands protruding from the windows?

Officers finally approached the vehicle, and they made sure to brace the guns proudly etched on their waistlines. They never asked Brian for his license and registration. Instead, they asked him if he knew how fast he was going, and then implored him to get out of the

Once they got Brian outside toward the back left hand side of the vehicle, I couldn't hear or see their interactions. What I did see was the officer on my side of the vehicle quietly shooing innocent bystanders away telling them "there's nothing to see here." But, there was. They were looking at a young Black man getting handcuffed and put in the back of a police car within a matter of exceeds.

Alone in the car, my mind began racing. "What would happen to me if Brian gets arrested?" "What would happen to the vehicle he's driving" "What does his mom think?" "Why did they call for backup after seeing our hands out of the window?" "How can this be a routine traffic stop if those procedures weren't followed and we were treated like suspects from before they even approached the vehicle?"

It wasn't until Brian's mom spoke that I remembered she was on the phone. She asked me what was happening, and I gave her a rundown of everything I possibly could: What we did during the day, where we were going, what was happening to Brian. Hearing her voice was comforting and grounding. Even in the midst of the madness, Black mothers never fail to make anyone feel at ease

The officer who was shooing people away eventually realized that I was talking to someone and poked his head through my window. He wanted to speak to Brian's mother, so I passed him the phone. He began rambling about how there was nothing to worry about, and stated that he would call her back after the situation had been handled. I thought it was weird that he was trying so hard to get her off of the phone. I started thinking very negatively about how this could be a preventative measure so that they wouldn't have any earwitnesses on the phone or observing in the area to confirm or deny their story. I'm so disappointed in myself for not fighting for Brian's mom to stay on the phone. I felt so small in the presence of the police's unchallenged power.

After what felt like eons, the officer who put Brian in the police car came over to speak to me. He, like the other officer, kept asking who Brian was to me and whether we were under the influence. They asked those same questions in a variety of ways, just waiting for me to incriminate us. Officers love to play these mind games where they suggest you did something wrong by posing their assumptions as the truth to try to trip you up.

"Are you sure you two aren't under the influence?" They continuously probed before asking me for Brian's ID. Why would I know the whereabouts of his belongings better than Brian himself? I thought it was peculiar that they asked me for his ID before asking for my own. Brian is a fully competent human being, and just because we were riding in the vehicle together did not mean that I had the authority to search through his belongings, regardless of the circumstances. Nonetheless, I felt pressured to begin searching through his bag. I didn't want to incriminate anyone or violate Brian's personal space, so I stopped looking and suggested that the officer ask Brian himself for his ID. The main officer then left to do so, leaving me with the officer who wanted no witnesses.

The burdensome expectations of Black womanhood didn't let me feel in the situation. I was only worried about who I'd been conditioned to believe could be the only victims of police violence: the Black male. I invalidated and suppressed my own fear, confusion, and hurt because I didn't think I was the main target, hence my pain wasn't just in the wake of Brian's sense of powerlessness. It wasn't until the wee hours of the morning when I stared up at my ceiling with tears welling in my eyes that I realized the weight of the world wasn't something I could bear.

I wasn't concerned about my own well-being. In fact, I beat myself up for being negatively impacted because nothing 'happened' to me per se. I immediately embodied the nurturing role that's thrust on Black women, even when they themselves are enduring pain and trauma.

I'm everybody's scapegoat. It's crazy how someone's inspiration can also be the perfect body for defamation, humiliation, incarceration.

Carter is a member of the Princeton Class of 2022. This piece was written on August 25.

Written on Juneteenth, to myself.

By Brian Williams

I want you to understand that it isn't your fault for being alive. I hope you understand there isn't anything wrong with the way you are. This is your experience. This is real life.

You just spent your Saturday at the beach with your friends. It was a beautiful day. The sky was that summertime orange fade of colors you only see in movie scenes. It was honestly a great day. You're leaving the beach with your friend, driving down the road, playing music, and life is good. But these memories are eclipsed by what happens over the next hour.

At an intersection, you see flashing red and blue lights behind you. And at first, you question if they are even for you, what was going on? You nervously drive into the right most lane, it's your first time being pulled over.

You look over to your friend in the passenger seat and share a laugh because it seems like a scene taken right out of *Queen and Slim.*..

In the next moment, the officer yells from his speaker PA system, "WIND DOWN ALL THE WINDOWS" followed by "PUT YOUR HANDS OUTSIDE THE WINDOW" like it's a damn hostage situation. It catches you off guard. And you feel afraid.

You turn right to the passenger and share a concerned look. In no words, you both understand: "We're in danger."

As soon as your hands come back inside, you call your mom. You let her know you're being pulled over, you're scared, and things feel very weird. She stays on the phone. The atmosphere is completely different, and you're tense.

You see the officer walking to the window, playing with his holster, as if he wants you to know he's armed.

When the officer comes to your window, he accuses you of a slew of things. "Do you know the speed limit?" "Do you know you were speeding?" "Are you intoxicated?"

He doesn't ask for your name or where you're going.

You reply with "No sir, I didn't know, I don't think I could have been going that fast

You weren't detained for protesting; you were detained for driving while Black.

He then tells you to get out of the car. What? What for? What did you do? You look over to your friend worriedly then get out the car.

You're guilty until proven innocent.

The officer tells you to put your hands on top of the car, and the officer pats you down. Your pockets, your legs, down to your ankles. You're very confused.

He tells you to put your hands behind your back. Time freezes for a moment because you don't really process this. You're handcuffed within a second.

The image of the Black male. Creating fear around the Black male as criminal.

Like clockwork the officer says into his radio, "black male detained." These words strike you harder than a sucker punch. You ask him why you're being detained, and he only replies with "for your safety and mine." This makes less sense the more you think about it. And you're shaken to your core.

As the officer guides you to the back of his police cruiser, he and his partner accuse you of some other exaggerated claims. You're still in cuffs.

"Why you'd pullover without using your signal?" "Sir I was nervous—" "Are you intoxicated?" "Are there any drugs in the car?" "You know we could arrest you." "Sir, I didn't do that—"

There are more Black people controlled by the prison industrial complex than were ever enslaved.

You bite your tongue because you understand your only goal is to make it out alive. In

this moment, you've felt like you've already lost, like you're already guilty of things you didn't do. And it replays in your head again and again.

Door opens. You're placed inside. Door

And you don't question the words "tough on crime" or "war on drugs"?

You sit in the back of the police cruiser. The space is cramped, and the weight of your body pushes the handcuffs into your wrists. They hurt. It dawns on you just how powerless you are. absolutely powerless. at their mercy.

No matter how small you felt in that moment, never let them cuff your spirit. Are you going to let them break your spirit?

These thoughts race through your head: What did you do wrong? How would your parents get here if you really needed help? What are they doing to your friend that's still in the car? Is this really happening? How long will you be in here? What happens if they take you away? Who is going to protect you from them? What did you do? Are you going home tonight? You really want to go home

Once someone is convicted and sentenced, nobody really cares about them.

How do you act? You find yourself somewhere between wanting to speak up to defend yourself from the assault of accusations and remaining "cooperative" to defend yourself from the threat of a very real death.

Time goes by. You see another cruiser pull up to the scene, then leave. Bald white officer nods then drives off.

Taking Black men away from their families, disappearing them into prisons.

The police cruiser door opens, and the officer asks for your license. Your student ID falls out of your wallet, maybe the officer sees value in your life now. You don't know. You're uncuffed and walk back to your car. You're then asked for your registration. He walks to his cruiser.

A system where being rich and guilty is better than being poor and innocent.

He comes back and says, "Oh, so your name is Brian." You can only help but squint. The officer explains he could have arrested you for something you didn't do and is doing you a favor by only giving you two tickets. His attitude is completely different from earlier. His partner explains your rights: paying, traffic school, court.

You dislike how the second officer says "rights" as he looks at you. Patronizing. You bite your tongue again.

Answer carefully. Your rights depend on it.

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? [yes] [no]

But you're only focused on one thing, making it out alive. So you leave, with only one thought in your mind: Did that really just happen?

That was my first time being pulled over. I left with two tickets and small bruises on my wrists, but the biggest wound was on my mind and spirit. It was an hour long altercation but when I exited the car, I was detained within seconds. I was in the back of the police cruiser before the officer asked me for my name, license, or registration.

For those who know me, know that I'm a few weeks into turning 19, I go to MIT, and want to do everything to uplift myself and my community, and even in the absence of all that, my life matters, but to that officer I was just another "black male detained."

That is my story. As I **lived** it. And if you ask me about it, I'll smile and say I'm fine, because I don't feel like **reliving** it. As soon as I opened the front door, my mom rushed into my arms. I got to come home that night. Some of us aren't as lucky to say the same. Remember their names...

Williams is a member of the MIT Class of

WENBO'S WALKS

Down the rabbit hole

Boing

By Wenbo Wu

EDITOR

I take a deep breath and head out the door. The sky is dark. *It might rain soon*.

There's a classic problem from physics that I remember well. And that's pretty impressive, considering that it's a physics problem, of all things.

Look, I'm a chemistry, biology, and mathematics major. Physics was one of those subjects I admired, but after having taken the class and passed, I packed most of it away in a sealed and double-bolted vault in the back of my mind. I say *most*, because, well, I suppose chemistry is technically a physical science or something.

Anyhow, the problem goes like this: a person drills a hole all the way through the earth, and proceeds, as rational people do, to jump into it, hoping, just hoping that they would reach the other side of the globe somehow.

But the punchline is this: due to how gravity works and the shell theorems and whatnot, the person just ends up oscillating inside the giant tunnel they just dug themselves into, back and forth with no end, assuming no friction and all that jazz.

I sometimes think of myself as oscillating inside the earth like a mass on a spring, in a constant state of falling no matter what I do. I feel like a spider dangled over an everlasting pit of fire, held in the fingertips of the endless amount of work I have to and have yet to do.

I never quite understood Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" until now. I don't think this was the chord he meant for the sermon to strike, nor do I think that this was anywhere near his intent, but imitation is the finest form of flattery. Well, not that I'm actually flattering the sermon, which I am not.

A spider *and* a flaming pit? Quite spooky, if you ask me. As a matter of fact, that's just in time for Halloween! Yes, I realize that there's still over a week before the day actually comes, but it is in my humblest opinion that any time in October should qualify as spooky season.

As soon as the clock strikes midnight Sept. 30, it should be socially and culturally acceptable to start blasting Halloween songs at full volume. As a matter of fact, I remember working on *The Tech* at that particular moment this year, and going out of my way to play "Spooky Scary Skeletons."

Anyhow, as far as segues and transitions go, I'm not the best or the brightest. You know what else is spooky? Problem sets. Stress.

The thing is, people handle stress in different ways. Some people go work on a

hobby, others sleep. Me, well, I have hobbies... definitely. But I've often also relieved the stress of impending work by doing even more work. Then I get stressed because the next set of assignments hasn't been posted yet.

Got an assignment due two Fridays from now? I guess I better begin as soon as it's posted later this week!

As you, dear reader, may realize from that statement, I seem to hold quite an internally contradictory and ineffective coping mechanism: I'm stressed by work, so I do more work, which then makes me more stressed.

I chuckle. The entire way I handle stress is by being "productive," but in doing so I'm only being counterproductive to my sleep schedule and my very being. Oh, the irony.

I seem to be going in circles.

To clarify, I mean that last sentence literally, and by "literally," I mean "not figuratively." No, this is not a convoluted metaphor for my stress management: I *literally* just absentmindedly walked two circles around the block.

I'm not typically a super literal person, but whenever I am literal, it's gotta be serious. Can you feel the *gravity* of the situation?

Okay, okay, sorry, sorry. And sorry again for the pun. You still with me? I didn't lose any readers? Whew! I suppose the tension of *not* making the pun was just too great for me to handle.

Anyhow, I did eventually figure out that I was walking in circles, though I failed to process this consciously whatsoever. In fact, I only figured that out after doing a bit of a double-take and screaming a little when the same low-hanging tree branch nearly hit my face two separate times within the same 10-minute timespan.

The lady walking her dog in front of me turns around a little and tosses me a confused glance. The puppy yips a little, as if imitating me, but it was too cute for me to question its intent.

But Wenbo, you said that "imitation is the finest form of flattery..." Yeah, yeah, I know.

I also know there's a non-zero chance that behind those cute, cute puppy eyes, there's a potentially wicked plan to take over the world. I care not. It could take over the world if it wants to, honestly. I probably won't mind.

I open my mouth to explain myself, but then I just... don't. One of the many perks of face coverings is that nobody can see you open your mouth, about to mutter something totally incoherent and embarrassing.

I wonder what the period of one of my loops around the block is. Is it 10 minutes, or did I over or underestimate?

Sigh. The next time I truly want to worry about physics is for the MCAT, and I've still got a semester and a half until I have to take that.

I walk a bit more, maybe a block more, maybe a few, or maybe I'm just completely lost again, as I usually end up being.

The sky is starting to drizzle a little. How do I know? Well, it certainly isn't thanks to my acute perception of the rain on my skin. I simply noticed that the pavement is getting spottier and darker from the rain.

I'm quite far from my house now, perhaps a 20-minute walk at this point. Maybe it's all for the better. I let the drizzle turn into a downpour, and then, upon putting on my waterproof jacket, I let the water wash over me. I chuckle as my thoughts meander away like a river.

I haven't properly been on a walk in ages, that is, one with nothing on my mind, no work, no stress. I felt the *weight* of six classes lift from my shoulders. I feel good. I should do this more often. I mean, not the standing-inthe-rain-looking-like-a-fool part, but rather just taking walks with nothing in my head.

...And there go my thoughts. I have no more of them for this week, for they have all washed away.

And so, here I will leave you, dear reader, this time around. I spoke about the moon in the last article, the earth in this article, so next must naturally come the sun. Along those lines, here's the #deep question I want to pose to you: what does the sun symbolize to you, if anything? I'll let you know my thoughts in two weeks.



ANGELA ZHANG — THE TEC

I fell down a rabbit hole of physics problems, though unfortunately doing so helped me none with my problem sets.

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