Volume 140, Number 40

Thursday, November 19, 2020

# MIT schools launch diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

# MIT to release final version of first DEI plan February or March 2021

By Daisy Wang and Kerri Lu

MIT is drafting its first diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plan and intends to release a final version by February or March 2021, Institute Community and Equity Officer John Dozier said in an interview with *The* 

Dozier said that MIT has had a long history with keeping DEI in mind at all levels of decision making.

The plan, in effect for the next five years, focuses on many aspects of DEI, including research into the various identities of students, staff, postdocs, and faculty; addressing challenges of equity and disparities in outcome; and engagement with the wider community to help everyone understand each other's differences, Dozier said. Community feedback can be submitted through the plan's website.

Melissa Nobles, dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS), wrote in an

email to The Tech that DEI "has always been a priority for the School, both with internal decisions and efforts to share expertise." Each academic unit is asked to ensure that diversity plays a key role in its overall

MIT is "fortunate" to have faculty who are "some of the leading scholars on these subjects," Nobles wrote, adding that these faculty members guide students by teaching and contributing to public discourse through their research and writing.

Nobles wrote that "given recent events," several SHASS departments have "initiated both critical examinations of current curriculum and explorations of new research projects in order to broaden and deepen the study of these subjects."

Lori LoTurco, director of communications for the School of Engineering (SoE), wrote in an email to The Tech that an SoE DEI Committee, formed in September and

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Fall foliage lands on the grass surrounding the student center as Thanksgiving vacation nears.

# IAP grading to be A, B, C, D/NE, F/ NE, without PE/NE option

Sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students will receive A, B, C, D/NE, and F/NE grades on Independent Activities Period (IAP) subjects. Unlike in the fall term, students will not be able to have a subject graded on PE/NE

Rick Danheiser, chair of the faculty and the Academic Policy and Regulations Team, wrote in an email to the MIT community Nov. 16 that the fall term PE/NE option was "introduced to address stress during the fall semester when students are registering for a full complement of classes" but "is not necessary in

IAP when students are limited to 12 units of subjects for credit."

However, juniors, seniors, and graduate students will be able to use the regular junior, senior, and graduate P/D/F grading options during IAP. First years will receive P/NR grades in IAP, as in previous years.

All IAP classes will be conducted remotely.

As in the fall, grades of NE will not appear on students' external transcripts, but students assigned a D grade may choose to accept the grade to fulfill a graduation requirement.

- Kerri Lu

# Students returning to their Spring 2020 dorms given lottery priority

Former Burton Conner or fraternity, sorority, or independent living group residents to be given second priority in housing assignments; all assignments to be released by Nov. 20

By Nicole Chan

Housing and Residential Services (HRS) will prioritize spring dorm placements for students who prefer to return to the dorm they lived in during Spring 2020. Students who lived in Burton Conner or a fraternity, sorority, or independent living group (FSILG) in Spring 2020 will have second priority. Housing assignments will be released by the end of November

All students living on campus next semester, including first-year students, were allowed to choose "staple groups" of up to eight students in their dorm assignment preferences. Staple groups differ from pods, which are groups of up to six students living in the same dorm who may interact with each other without social distancing.

Director of House Operations Rich Hilton wrote in a Nov. 6 email to undergraduates that staple groups are "guaranteed placement in the same building together" and "may be formed regardless of class year."

Hilton wrote in an email to The *Tech* that dorm assignment priority

will be given to individuals or staple groups in which over 50% of group members are seeking to return to the dorm they lived in during Spring

Dormitory Council (DormCon) Housing Chair Emily Caragay '22 wrote in an email to The Tech that second priority will be given to Burton Conner and FSILG residents, and third priority will be given to students who lived off-campus as of

"First years whose groups do not fall into the above categories will be placed last in this priority order, reflective of a standard semester," Caragay wrote. "Additionally, a portion of each dorm will be set aside for first-years, to guarantee every dorm receives some first-years."

Hilton wrote that HRS is working to "balance the density and distribution of residents, including first years, across all ten houses (including New Vassar)."

DormCon President Sarah Edwards '21 wrote in an email to The Tech that DormCon advocated for first years to have staple groups after hearing from "a number of first years" that stapling with other students was "really important to

DormCon has been "working closely with MIT Housing to ensure that the housing application, timeline, and assignment process is as tailored to student needs as possible," Edwards wrote. This collaboration spans over topics such as "the building assignment system, the switch lottery, pods, opening safe and tions for SHARP students."

Edwards wrote that the staple group system "was adapted from the previous system used during FYRE [First Year Residence Exchange] and the fall/spring dorm transfer lotteries, where 4 students could staple together." This fall, "it was expanded to 8 with the understanding that it was very important this year in particular for students to live in the same building as their close friends."

MIT community members wishing to learn more about information or policies regarding the spring semester may visit the Division of Student Life Spring 2021 FAQs.

# IN SHORT

**Building placements for Spring** 2021 will be shared with undergraduates Nov. 20. The building switch lottery application will be open Nov. 20-Dec. 10.

Students currently living on campus are expected to move out by Nov. 22 at 12:00 p.m. unless they have been granted a pre-approved extension.

Thanksgiving vacation will take place from Nov. 21-Nov. 29.

The last day to drop a half-term subject offered in the second half of the term is Nov. 30.

Pre-registration for the spring and IAP begins Dec. 1.

Undergraduate registration for IAP physical education classes opens Dec. 2.

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

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

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**WEATHER** 

# A mild Thanksgiving

### By Renbin Liu and Masha Geogdzhayeva

As seniors get ready to bid farewell to the MIT campus, they will be facing relatively calm weather for the rest of the week. With cold weather leaving us behind, we will see some moderately above-average temperature in Boston for the rest of this week. While you may be busy packing, take some time and appreciate the nice weather in the coming days. For those of you who will be going home, note that most of the South and the Midwest will

see above-average temperature during the Thanksgiving break.

A bit of weather trivia for your Thanksgiving table talk: Hurricane Iota, which hit Nicaragua this week, is the latest category five hurricane to ever be recorded. The only other November Cat-5 ever seen occurred back in 1932. This November is also the first on record to experience two Cat-3+ storms. Overall, this Atlantic hurricane season has been a record setter, with the most named storms ever (30 so far), and the second-most hurricanes (13). Here's to hoping Iota will be the last this year.

### **Extended Forecast**

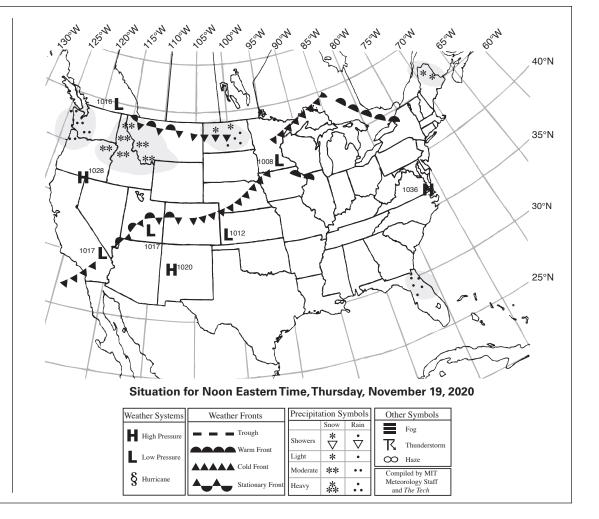
**Today:** Sunny. High of around 42°F (6°C). Southwest winds of up to 15 mph.

Tonight: Partly cloudy. Warming to around 45°F (7°C). Breezy with winds up to 20 mph.

**Tomorrow**: Mostly sunny. High of around 56°F (13°C). Southwest winds of up to 17 mph.

Saturday: Mostly sunny. High of around 51°F (11°C). West winds up to 10 mph.

**Sunday:** Mostly cloudy. High of around 48°F (9°C). East to southeast winds of up to 8 mph.



# Spicer: admin do not listen to student feedback but treat it as 'a checkbox'

DEI, from Page 1

led by Professor Dan Hastings PhD '80, "will report out annually to the Engineering Council and will work closely with Departmental DEI officers" to ensure continued progress on a welcoming environment at all levels of the SoE. The School has also collaborated with the Institute Community and Equity Office (ICEO) to expand access to unconscious bias training.

Several departments across MIT have launched DEI initiatives over the summer and fall. Many of these departments have created DEI committees and plan to hire a diversity and equity officer.

The Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) department created a DEI committee, chaired by the newly-appointed faculty equity officers Fredo Durand and Leslie Kolodziejski.

Durand and Kolodziejski wrote in an email to *The Tech* that EECS is hiring a full-time diversity officer, reforming the department's faculty search "to include known best practices (focusing in particular on rubric scoring)," sponsoring students to "attend conferences that promote diversity in EECS," and running "optional in-person training programs" for faculty and students. Additionally, MIT Tools for Honing Resilience and Inspiring Voices of Empowerment's Graduate Application Assistance Program pairs graduate school applicants from underrepresented groups with current EECS graduate students.

The mechanical engineering department and EECS departments both participate in existing DEI initiatives such as the Rising Stars workshop for women graduate students and the Women's Technology Program for high school students. MechE created a DEI task force this summer and is hiring a departmental Community and Equity Officer.

Biological engineering (BE) department head Angela Belcher wrote in a department-wide email Oct. 16 that BE created a DEI task force, is hiring a diversity and equity officer, and is "working with IDHR and MindHandHeart to create resources and trainings."

The BE, chemical engineering, and materials science and engineering departments launched a DEI speaker series this fall, with activist and scholar Angela Davis as the inaugural speaker. Over 2,000 members of the MIT community attended the Oct. 21 webcast O&A with Davis.

The School of Science's DEI webpage includes links to the community value statements for each department in the school. The page also promotes departmental affinity groups, including Biology Diversity Community, Women in Chemistry, Chemistry Alliance for Diversity and Inclusion, Women in Course 12, EAPS Diversity Council, Women in Math, African American Mathematicians, and Women in Physics.

In June, the math department faced criticisms for its perceived lack of diversity and inclusion. The department has since launched a website for students to find problem set partners in math classes, as well as a student-led math Discord server, as efforts to promote inclusivity.

David Spicer '23, chair of the Undergraduate Association (UA)

Community and Diversity group, said in an interview with *The Tech* that over the summer, many departments put forth diversity statements and assigned teams for specific DEI initiatives. He said that while these actions are a step in the right direction, he "would like to see [departments] use the current events-oriented approach to guide the discussion toward more structural change.

The UA Community and Diversity group is currently focusing on expanding the idea of diversity: "When one talks about diversity, the biggest two are ethnicity and race. But there are so many more areas to cover. Diversity is a very broad term and includes a lot of communities," Spicer said. Spicer's work, specifically, focuses on the intersection of students with disabilities and race; he hopes that prioritizing an intersectional viewpoint puts "all the layers of one's identity together to really advocate on their behalf."

Spicer said that the work for MIT is far from over. He gives credit to the Institute for recognizing issues, but is hesitant to give credit to MIT

for actually addressing the issues. He said that "it's not so much that [administrators] listened to students, and more that it's a checkbox for them. I would like to see more accountability when it comes to listening to student input and taking action. Admin should give more credit to students in general."

Moving forward, Dozier said that he wants the community to be more engaged. MIT community members need to "continue to challenge ourselves in both the formal and informal ways we're interacting. Who is sitting around our lunch tables, and who is not? We need to ask ourselves the critical questions. Are we doing good work if we aren't listening to the voices we need to be listening to?"

Dozier said that "we want to make sure we are honoring our commitments and that relies on transparency." He adds that students should "continue to help us as an administration on how to best serve MIT. The work that we've been doing needs to continue to be done. These are important issues that require all of our attention constantly."

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# Solution to Staple

from page

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# **Solution to Pasta**



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## **GUEST COLUMN**

# It's time to connect ourselves with our planet

The importance of planetary health at MIT

By Melissa Stok and Melody Wu

If there's anything the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us among the other disasters of 2020, it's that we are deeply connected as a society and depend on each other for our own survival. We'd like to highlight another connection that runs deep beyond our human one: our well-being and its connection with nature, the environment, and our planet.

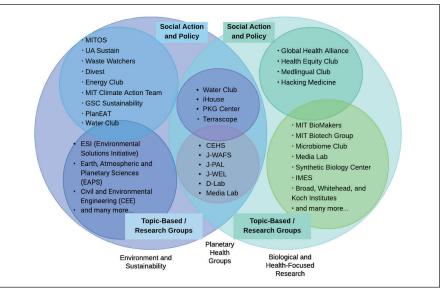
Planetary health focuses on understanding the human health implications of the rapid transformation of our earth's ecosystems due to anthropogenic changes in our environment. This emerging, transdisciplinary field illustrates the reliance of human well-being on that of the planet, exploring climate change, environmental degradation, and the prevalence of human health issues through a new lens.

Understanding the connections between these two very related areas of study can aid in the development of targeted solutions that will prioritize not only the health of humans but also that of the environment. It can also help us better understand the urgency of our current climate situation and the present impacts it has had on us already. As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are inadequately equipped to mitigate the effects of climate change on our health, proving that we have two options: act now to limit future impacts on our population, or succumb to the consequences of our actions.

# We must think more about planetary health here at MIT, and develop technologies within a planetary health mindset.

Let's take a look at some prime examples of the way MIT students and the community are already using a planetary health lens. Taking note of both research and social action circles within the categories of sustainability and health-focused work, we see substantial overlap between the environment and human health, particularly for student organizations.

Cutting-edge technologies in the fields and groups presented above can be applied



COURTESY OF MELODY WU AND MELISSA STOK

**Environment and sustainability** and biological and health-focused research intersect through planetary health efforts.

not only for increasing accessibility and effectiveness of medical therapeutics and diagnostics, but also as potential solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and plastic waste. Examining food systems and security, we see the intersection of globally increasing access to nutritious foods and decreasing our consumption of foods requiring large amounts of land and pollution credits.

Let's take a closer look at one particular group: Terrascope. A bustling community at MIT with a focus on thinking about complex (often global) environmental challenges, Terrascope involves projects within planetary health domains. From Preparing the World for Climate Change to Water Security in the Navajo Nation to Resilience and Recovery: Preparing for Major Storms in Puerto Rico to this year's The Birds and the Bees: The Everyday Biodiversity Crisis — each year's focus really considers the intersection of environmental challenges and their respective social contexts, revealing complexities beyond just the technical.

Although MIT does not yet have any groups dedicated specifically to "planetary health" research or work, we can see how many of these group's missions fall within the principles of planetary health work. We recognize that these are only a few ways we have seen planetary health in our own sphere of MIT, but there are many

more ways in which planetary health can be integrated in many communities here at MIT. The lists and figures above are by no means exhaustive; many other groups combat issues that fall under the planetary health realm, from racial justice to gender equity. We hope that this conveys the **growing connection** between (1) human well-being and (2) the environment as it relates to the work conducted here at MIT. As a result, we *must* think more about planetary health here at MIT, and develop technologies within a planetary health mindset.

# How can you incorporate planetary health into your MIT experience?

You can find several resources in a supplementary MIT Climate Portal article, including:

- A second figure outlining planetary health topics and their respective MIT groups
- A list of classes related to planetary health
- The Planetary Health Alliance, a growing consortium of over 200 universities, NGOs, research institutes, and governmental entities around the world looking to address global environmental change and its health impacts

Melissa Stok '23 studies materials science and engineering. Melody Wu '22 studies biological engineering and is a Planetary Health Alliance Campus Ambassador.

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# ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS AI

### **THEATER REVIEW**

# 'Twas a dark and stormy audio play

An MIT production of *Macbeth* that's full of sound and fury, signifying the sweeping power of art adapted to the pandemic

### Macbeth

Written by William Shakespeare

**Produced by Nelson Niu** 

The MIT Shakespeare Ensemble/YouTube

Premiered Oct. 31, available online

### By Disha Trivedi

A bloody dagger drips. Wind swirls on the battlements. A madman's fit, a witch's cackle, a soon-to-be-queen summoning the spirits: such are the sounds that strut the stage of this interpretation of the Scottish play. *Macbeth*, we meet again — in thunder, lightning, and in rain. With theaters shut across the world, the MIT Shakespeare Ensemble's production of the Bard's tragedy is a welcome auditory experience.

The cast members exhibit voice acting that snaps and crackles with character. Shakespeare's text begins with witches upon the heath to meet *Macbeth*, yet this version transports us to the imagined walls of Macbeth's castle, where Lennox (Tiffany Trinh) and the Old Man (Sarah Pertsemlidis) unspool the tale of Duncan's army like a story shared on a dark and stormy night. These smaller parts, sometimes cut from other versions, frame the nature of the play.

"Tis unnatural," the Old Man says in sepulchral tones, setting the scene for the strange sounds to come. Yet while the auditory form gives the production room to play, most characterization remains true to form. As with many interpretations, Macbeth is a referendum on masculinity. Fear tinges Macbeth's (Nelson Niu) voice as softspoken yet ruthless Lady Macbeth (Andres Molano) questions his mettle when he balks at murder. She later quietly chides him for a public display of guilt: "Art thou a man?"

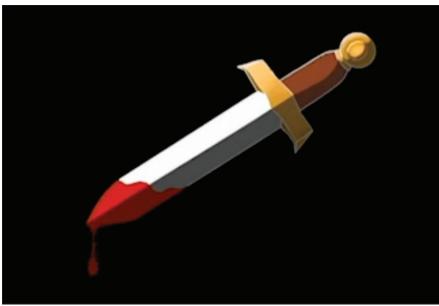
Yet Niu's Macbeth captured subtle hints of regret, calm, and weariness. Starting in a lordly, condescending voice as he learns of his promotion to Thane of Cawdor, he shifts to a thoughtful, soft-voiced aside that trembles as he considers murdering the king. He's a compelling lead — and it helps that his voice sounds a bit like Lin-Manuel Miranda's. As the play progresses, Macbeth walks a fine line between public strength and private guilt that ultimately manifests as constant, subtle rage. His asides retain the earlier thoughtfulness till the famed "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" soliloquy. There, his voice shakes with scorn for the world, perhaps even for himself.

In contrast, Macduff (Sarah Pertsemlidis) learns of his family's murder and sits within his grief to "feel it as a man." Yet even Macduff bends his grief to revenge, laughing contemptuously while crossing swords with Macbeth. The men of this version of *Macbeth* ultimately transmute all painful emotions into rage and violence.

The auditory form allows for creative freedom elsewhere. Like the dagger that Macbeth sees in his mind's eye, the sound editing fills and frames the scenes so that we can see these characters. As Lady Macbeth calls the spirits to aid in her ambitions, chirping birdsong transforms to sinister ravens that swoop and caw around her. Macbeth's whispered asides seem whispered right into our ears as others speak in the audio's background. The sound of dripping blood falls in sync with the dripping dagger GIF on the production's YouTube link. After a messenger delivers bad news to Macbeth, we hear the messenger choke and gasp, as if an enraged Macbeth had seized his neck.

Such sounds are at their most imaginative in conjuring up the witches (Cherry Wang, Raquel Garcia, Hope Fu). Drums and thunder set the stage for the witches to chant, "Double, double, toil and trouble." As the liquid boils, their voices circle the audio field from left, right, and center. It's as if I, the listener, am in the cauldron at their center, simmering as they cackle, chant, and caw. This interpretation deviates little from traditional depiction of the witches as warts-and-all interlopers who literally stir the pot, but in that moment, I felt the fourth wall break. The upside of having no stage is that anywhere is the stage. Anyone could be on it, including a reviewer who thinks that they, like the witches, are only here to watch and maybe stir the pot.

Elsewhere in the play, each witch staggers their dialogue in the round, creating a



COURTESY OF THE MIT SHAKESPEARE ENSEMBL

**The MIT Shakespeare Ensemble's audio production** of *Macbeth* featured the bloody knife wielded by the Scottish play's titular character.

cacophony that's mischievous, even magical. More moments meld sound and staging in this way. I won't give them all away, but suffice to say that the play's klaxons and creepy-voiced apparitions are well-worth the listen.

Clocking in at under an hour-anda-half, the production rearranged the Bard's original text to create an altered, quicker narrative. While fan favorites like the drunken porter ended up with fewer lines, these changes deftly convey the weight of haunting regret. After skipping past the play's original placement of Macbeth sending men to kill Macduff's family, a sleepwalking Lady Macbeth whispers, "where is [Lady Macduff] now?"

Echoing, her question transitions to the sound of Lady Macduff (Raquel Garcia) and her sweet-voiced son (Cherry Wang) being killed on Macbeth's orders. Here, the dialogue bears the scratchy, nostalgic quality of old Hollywood audio. Overlaid with Lady Macbeth's soft gasps, this narrative change suggests a clear reason for the lady's guilt-ridden sleepwalks: her husband murdered women and children. As the one who urged him to take up a dagger and kill the king, she set in motion a path that ends up harming innocents.

For the most part, this new narrative works well. Yet for the uninitiated, it's disorienting at first. After a brief intro from the scene-stealing Old Man, the play begins with Duncan's murder. Then trumpeted fanfare sounds, and we jump to earlier in Shakespeare's: a battlefield, where Duncan is victorious in war and definitely alive. I found myself reaching for my copy of *Macbeth* to orient myself.

While this Shakespearean tragedy is performed amid the tragedy of closed theaters, this production is not just the audio version of a play spoken on a stage. Rather, it draws creative power from its medium. Overall, it evoked suspenseful fiction podcasts, like *The Magnus Archives* and *Welcome to Night Vale*, as much as past productions, which range from Fassbender and Cotillard's warlike period drama to McKellan and Dench's modern classic.

So immerse yourself in the MIT Shake-speare Ensemble's dark and stormy sounds. When the sky hangs heavy with clouds, when the wind trembles in the trees, when thunder shakes the air — listen to this production of *Macbeth*. Grab a cup of your favorite brew, settle by a window that frames the approach of winter, and absorb this auditory drama of murder, masculinity, and



# The rise of Rina Sawayama's pop dynasty

SAWAYAMA spins past woes into pop gold

# **SAWAYAMA**

Rina Sawayama Dirty Hit April 17, 2020

### By Kelly Fang

Following her 2017 EP, RINA, Rina Sawayama continues to stun fans three years later with the release of her self-titled debut album SAWAYAMA. Lauded as one of the best pop albums of the year by music critics and dubbed "phenomenal" by Elton John, SAWAYAMA masterfully renders pop as a medium for both socio-political commentary and personal narrative. It is pop perfection: oozing with the cultish Y2K vibes reminiscent of Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears but also the modern eccentricity of Lady Gaga. SAWAYAMA, additionally, merges the happy-go-luckiness of pop with the aggressive angst of Korn metal and Evanescence goth. In its production, Sawayama drew inspiration from a variety of musical genres including nu metal, arena rock, and early 2000s iconic pop, innovatively working with different sounds and ultimately forging a voice uniquely hers to give the full-length album an edge that is simultaneously nostalgic and futuristic.

Returning as an evolved artist, Sawayama attempts to use her new album to convey the overarching themes of identity and relationships, knitting her tracks into a cohesive story of her life narrated by strong vocals. Her theatrical opening track, "Dynasty," speaks to the inheritance of intergenerational pain; a solemn organ note overlaid with a proclamation of suffering dramatically unwinds into a rock sensation in which soaring high notes are accompanied by a killer guitar solo. The Niigata-born but London-raised singer navigated a turbulent childhood de-

fined by the struggles of assimilation and a dysfunctional family struck with problems of "money and infidelity." Sawayama boldy sings that she will "take the throne this time," reclaiming control of her life's narrative from her mother and father. The song ends, parting from the listener with an invitation to the rest of the album: "won't you break the chain with me?" The strong opening, with all of its grandeur, introduces themes prevalent throughout the rest of the album and commands the attention of the listener.

SAWAYAMA illustrates the complexity of relationships through varying styles and perspectives. Sawayama fondly recounts tales of teenage mischief in "Paradisin," a glitchy, bubblegum pop track garbled with Japanese arcade effects to replicate the adventurous, video game-like experience of evading a disapproving mother like a player would avoid a final boss. Told from the point of view of a teenage Sawayama to her mother, the track drips with adolescent attitude and conveys the tense relationship between Sawayama and her mother. The "leave me alone, Mom!" sentiment of the lyrics and its upbeat spirit make for a perfect teenage anthem or 80s television show opening. In an equally nostalgic track, Sawayama's electro-ballad "Bad Friend" captures the regrets of failed friendships as she recalls the details of an indelible, karaoke night out with her friends. Even so, SAWAYAMA validates the comfort and solidarity found in these relationships with the more acoustic "Chosen Family," whose set of soothing vocals imagines a safe space within the album for the listener.

Sawayama also stylishly explores her complicated relationship with cultural identity, lyrically embodying the alienating experience of being both Japanese and English but never belonging fully to either of her roots. In "Akasaka Sad," she looks back on feeling unhappy and displaced despite staying at her favorite Tokyo hotel, drawing strong connections to "Dynasty" by alluding to the cursed nature of the Sawayama name in the intoxicating alliteration of its chorus "Akasaka sad / 'Cause I'm a sucker,

sucker, so I suffer / Akasaka Sawayama / Just like my mother." Sawayama also cites this lifelong struggle as a contributor to her mental illness, representing the irreconcilable rift between her two selves with the physical distance between London and Akasaka.

Even still, Sawayama finds herself protective of Japanese culture, criticizing herself, among others, for exploiting it for artistic merit. Her love letter to Japanese culture, 'Tokyo Love Hotel," personifies Japanese culture as a victim of one night stands, that is of superficial appropriation: "They don't know you like I know you, no, they don't / Use you for one night and then away they go." The track, though also questioning the integrity of Sawayama herself, expresses her rekindled connection with her Japanese half following years of assimilation. Her love for Japan is serious; she doesn't want to "check into the Tokyo Love Hotel," instead asserting what others see as a fleeting fascination as her home and world.

SAWAYAMA's most jarring track, "STFU!" is a big middle finger to casual racism. The black sheep of the album, dedicated to "any minority who has experienced microaggressions," is a 2000s pop and nu metal fusion of a caustic, justified rage. The track opens with a ringing resembling that of the famous Kill Bill sirens, then furiously hurls the listener into an explosion of maniacal laughter. Throughout the song, twinkling instrumentals alternate with the threatening thunderings of a bass as Sawayama's vocals switch between sweet but sinister whispering and vicious screaming.

Sawayama's criticisms of consumerism take on a less confrontational form in "XS," whose bursts of metal guitar stabs flaring up between 2000s R&B beats reflect the chaos of a capitalist driven world. The hyper tempo, addictive repetition, and danceable rhythm is undeniably Britney-esque, but the biting lyrics criticize the immaterial industry of pop she represents. The track is as entertainingly meta and woke as it is infectious, mocking songs that glorify opulence and

condemning those complacent in the acceleration of wealth inequality and climate change, an issue sung more about in "Fuck This World (Interlude)."

Female empowerment track and club fashion banger, "Comme des Garçons (Like the Boys)," is unapologetically confident. In a groovy power move, Sawayama lyrically channels her inner diva and struts through a list of luxury brands and big cities in which she holds influence. With a hypnotic chant, she claims herself to be confident "like the boys" as techno beats bounce away in the background. Likewise, Sawayama shows herself self-love and dismisses her haters in epic stadium rock track "Who's Gonna Save U Now," which samples an audience cheering her name and features impressive key changes. On the other hand, the more thematically and musically generic "Love Me 4 Me," reflects on her difficult journey of selflove while referencing RuPaul's Drag Race.

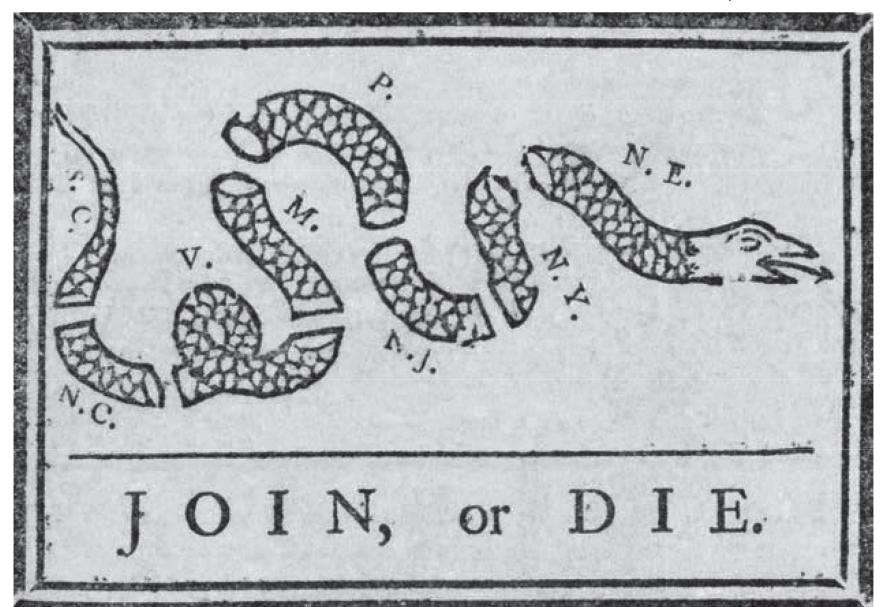
SAWAYAMA comes full circle with the grand finale track "Snakeskin," whose vocals fall nothing short of haunting from beginning to end. What begins as a few piano notes in the first few seconds quickly picks up in tempo and at some point interpolates the *Final Fantasy* Victory Fanfare. Sawayama grapples with the reality in which she sheds her emotional trauma, like snakeskin, and commercializes it for consumption. The album concludes with a Beethoven sample and the faint cackling of a recorded conversation between Sawayama and her mother.

With the exception of a few lackluster tracks, *SAWAYAMA* is sublime. What others might perceive as derivative and dissonant is, in fact, deliberateness and intention. Each track feels curated with care, their intros and outros rightfully setting the tone of her story and leaving the listener hungry for more. Her lyricism is playfully serious and intensely vulnerable, its visions brought to life by a perfectly executing range of shining vocals. Ultimately, Sawayama's genre-bending debut is artistically intelligent, doing her story justice with all its glitter and grit.

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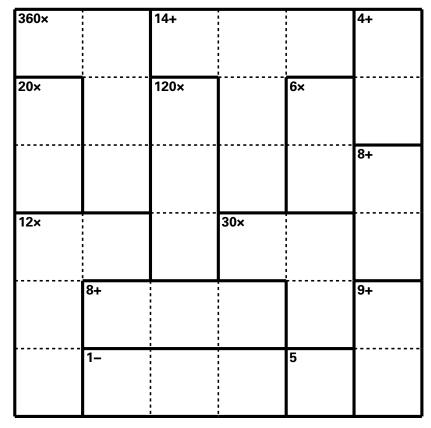
# **Staple**

Solution, page 3

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|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
|            |   | 1 |   | 8 | 2 | 5 |            |
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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.

# **Paper Clip**



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.

# Pasta Toppings by Gail Grabowski

### **ACROSS**

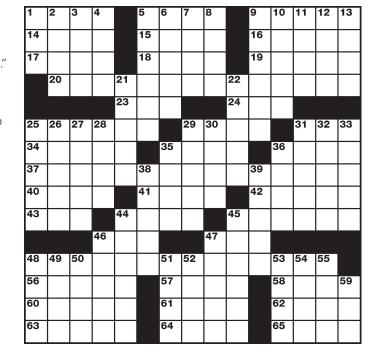
- 1 Expressway exit
- **5** Minor quarrel
- 9 Grab, as a fly ball
- 14 "That makes sense"
- **15** Angler's enticement device 16 Sound of a sneeze
- **17** Bottom of a pedestal
- 18 One of the Great Lakes
- 19 Parts of a stairway
- 20 Sprinkled-on white dairy product
- 23 Day before a holiday
- 24 Was in first place
- 25 Paper fastener
- 29 Settled, as a bill 31 Merit badge org.
- **34** Phone call starter
- 35 Showery forecast
- 36 "Guided" vacation
- **37** Slices of two zesty bulbs
- 40 "Please reply" letters
- **41** Neckwear with knots
- 42 Foamy espresso beverage
- 43 Golfer's peg
- 44 Offer at retail

- **45** Ran out, as a subscription
- 46 Air quality org.
- 47 Total of numbers added
- 48 Sliced, uncooked fungi
- 56 Tenant's contract **57** Relax in the tub
- **58** Be dressed in
- 60 "Between" prefix for
- national or view
- **61** Roof overhang
- 62 Toy building-block brand
- 63 Old West search party
- **64** Went quickly
- 65 Beef meal in a slow cooker

### DOWN

- 1 "Baby back" barbecue bit
- 2 "Without delay," in a memo
- **3** Flat-topped Southwestern
- 4 Jury member
- 5 Shirt's arm
- **6** Handbag 7 Opera solo
- 8 Adolescent **9** Redeemed, as a paycheck

- 10 Performed in a film
  - 11 "My country, tis of \_
  - **12** Police officers, informally
  - **13** Fire hydrant attachment
  - **21** Honeydew or cantaloupe
  - 22 Stick (to), as wet paper to glass
  - 25 Brief in duration
  - 26 Feeling nervous 27 Full of energy
  - **28** Raindrop sound
  - 29 Group of experts
  - **30** Lends a hand
  - 31 Flashes of lightning
  - 32 Multi-room hotel offering
  - **33** Shaped like a rainbow
  - 35 Stairway's banister
  - **36** Ensnare
  - **38** Vapor from a teakettle
  - 39 San Antonio attraction to "remember"
  - 44 Globe's shape
  - **45** Waited in hiding
  - 46 Three letters in "discuss"
  - 47 Remove one's beard
  - 48 Do a somersault

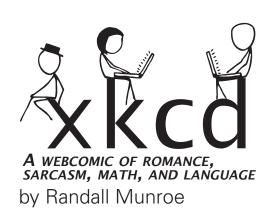


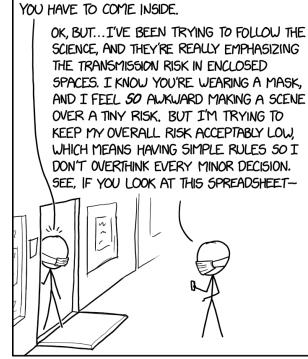
- **49** Nevada gambling city 50 Has breakfast or dinner
- 51 Takes advantage of 52 Cake to wash with
- **53** Birds that hoot 54 Be introduced to
- 55 Wise person
- 59 Propel a canoe

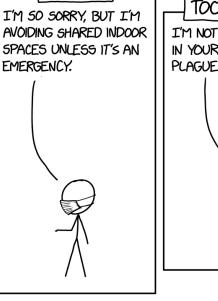
# [2346] COVID Risk Comfort Zone

TOO INDIRECT

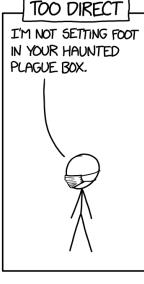
WAYS TO SAY NO WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU TO DO SOMETHING OUTSIDE YOUR COVID RISK COMFORT ZONE:







DIRECT



# I love you

# You are sweet when you want to be

By Wenbo Wu

EDITOR

Dear corn,

I just wanted to say I love you. You're the best fruit a human can ever ask for, and the greatest abomination of a plant to be ever produced. You, you sustain me in my endeavors like no other. You inspire me to make bread, to make cornbread, the life, the spirit, and the best food one could ever produce.

I love cornbread. It goes well with most things, and it also goes well alone. It tastes good in any setting: on a platter, on a dinner table, on a floor. I mean, that is, on a platter which is on a dinner table which is on a floor, not that the cornbread is directly on the floor. When I said cornbread goes well with most things, floor particles are definitely not included in that particular category.

In fact, floor particles are one of the things that go well with no things, residing in a class of its own.

Teosinte, widely-regarded corn ancestor? Lame. With its closed kernels, one could've never quite foretold the image of its future. But then, on one fateful day, someone believed in you. Believed so deeply in you that they turned the most useless looking weed into the most succulent crop.

And the memories rush back to me, corn. You can be sweet when you want to

be, but also waxy at other times. No matter the form you take, you are irresistible. I remember biting into my first cob of waxy corn, and my future mapped before my eyes. I found my identity in you, in those delicious kernels of corn.

I still crave that waxy corn, but unfortunately as far as I am aware, it fails to exist in the confines of most, if not all, U.S. markets. It's rare that I drool over food, but boy do I drool over waxy corn.

I walk around the produce aisle of Target, and I admire the husk that surrounds you, the firm grip with which each kernel clings so confidently to the cob. Alas, this is perhaps your very downfall: your pride. You cling so tightly to your shell that you can't even grow out of it to reproduce without human help.

But despite your fundamental downfall, you have helped the human race immensely in not only your nutrition, but also your contributions to genetics. Who would've thought that admiring you could have led Barbara McClintock to the discovery of transposons, one of the most important discoveries in semi-modern genetics, not only useful in artificially engineered systems but also fascinating as a possible precursor to many viruses?

Additionally, dare I say that you help create one of the best substrates on which penicillin can grow? Wild.

You taste sweet. You taste like the wind on a hot and sunny Texan day. You taste like the tortilla of a crunchy taco, the crunch on a deep-fried stick of butter, and the buttery smoothness in that yummy, yummy high fructose corn syrup.

I roll around in trousers after returning from the grocery store. Sorry, to clarify: I'm in bed at this point. It's not like I just arrived home, dropped everything, and immediately started rolling around in my trousers. I mean, that's not out of the question for me, per se, but it is a bit absurd.

Sorry, back to you. This article is all about you, after all. I want to focus on you. I want to give you all my attention, if only for approximately 900 words.

Corn powers the economy, and it powers our cars. Biodegradable plastic polylactic acid? Also corn! Who knew that the decision of one to believe in a tiny weed many thousands of years ago would lead to a bustling economy? I certainly didn't.

Is there a moral to this story, a beautiful story about how belief will solve all our problems? Definitely not. Don't read too deeply into this. Some things cannot be fixed with all the belief in the world, and that's just the way things are.

But let me tell you why I decided to write about you, of all days. It's because today I thought about you while taking a stroll in the morning. As the frigid air blew past my face despite my best efforts to shield it, I thought about all the cornfields I had trekked through when I was younger, and all the corn mazes I used to go into typically around this time, and how I have to wait at least until next year before I can do these things again. But with the new possible vaccine, I'm optimistic. Cautiously.

I also thought about you due to the upcoming Thanksgiving break, of course, but that was *definitely* not the primary reason.

I mean, this doesn't mean I don't have some qualms with you, though. For example, what in the world is baby corn? Why does it exist? It doesn't taste good, and it serves no culinary purpose, as far as I know. So why? Why? Why? Can't we just leave the unripe corn alone to let it become the magnificent being it was destined to be?

Love, Wenbo

P.S. Thanksgiving or not, this year will be different for most of us. I hope you, dear reader, get to spend time with your loved

ones. Despite the chaos of the past year, I hope that you are able to congregate in some form, socially distanced and virtually perhaps, around the table with some delicious food (and corn too, if you please).

