thetech.com

Volume 143, Number 3



WEATHER, p. 2 FRI: @@°F | @@°F Partly cloudy. SAT: 21°F | 16°F

Thursday, February 23, 2023



Mocha Moves, MIT's competitive hip hop dance team, presents their biannual dance showcase, MO'FLIX 2023, in Kresge Little Theater, Saturday.

# The MIT community observes | Class of 2026 visits 49th annual MLK Celebration | Museum of Science

Dozier: "This event is about coming together as a community to revisit the legacy of Dr. King. His insights and his wisdom are remarkably resilient."

By Julia Fortt

MIT marked its 49th Annual Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr on Feb. 8. The event was organized by the Institute Community and Equity Office, and hosted by President Sally Kornbluth. Dr. Angela Davis, an activist and author, gave the keynote address, and additional speakers included undergraduates, graduate students, and staff. The celebration also featured a musical performance by The Masta-Donis Project, a black-led Bostonbased jazz group.

Due to complications stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, events for the past two years were held virtually. Institute Community and Equity Officer John Dozier said, "This was my first in-person MLK celebration at MIT, and it was deeply moving." In particular, Dozier highlighted how the event "really reminded me of how hard it has been over the last two years for people at MIT to feel connected to each other and feel like a community"

The first MLK celebration took

place in 1975. Since then, the event has become an annual MIT community tradition. "This event is about coming together as a community to revisit the legacy of Dr. King. His insights and his wisdom are remarkably resilient," Dozier remarked.

The celebration serves not just as a unifier for the MIT community, but also as an opportunity to reflect on Dr. King's message of racial equality. Dozier said that, "anything we can do to get people thinking about Dr. King's calls to action, the better off we all will be.'

Despite now being a longstanding tradition at MIT, Dozier said that the purpose of the event and the challenges that the event seeks to address remain relevant as ever. "The MLK celebration is an opportunity for the MIT community to pause, to speak to itself, to listen to itself, and to take one more step in this direction every year," Dozier remarked.

Dozier emphasized tance of collective reflection about Dr. King's legacy, drawing parallels to contemporary American society. In his 1967 book 'Where Do We Go

From Here?,' Dr. King writes about "the challenges of maintaining momentum in the civil rights movement," Dozier said. Despite having achieved "many legal and legislative victories...the movement's work was not done, and American society was in deep turmoil. That book is filled with parallels to today," Dozier

In addition to the luncheon, additional activities celebrating MLK included an art exhibition in Lobby 10, the MLK Leadership Award Ceremony, and an MLK Vendor's Market in the Bush Room. The first annual market featured a variety of products from local black owned businesses.

When asked regarding plans for future years, Dozier highlighted continuing to expand and grow the celebrations. "We are looking into ways to meet" that "interest," Dozier said.

"We move forward on the path to justice and we slide back-at the me time, over and over again. This event is a way for us to come together, share our hope, and be reassured by Dr. King's words and wisdom," Doz-

Approximately half the freshman class attended the event before the beginning of the spring semester.

By Isabella Duan and Shreya Chaudhary

The Night at the Museum event was held on the evening of Feb. 5 at the Museum of Science for the class of 2026. The event was hosted by the Office of the First Year (OFY) before the start of the spring semester, and over 500 out of 1,136 first-years

According to the OFY website, the event is part of the larger Connect by Chance program which aims to "bring together random groups of classmates for conversation and fun." A previous initiative included a class of 2026 trip to the New England Aquarium during Orientation.

The 'Red Wing' was rented-out specifically for the event, and included many exhibits ranging from displays of models of famous historical ships to a showcase of optical illusions and light tricks.

One of the popular activities was the Theater of Electricity show. The show included both solid state and spark gap tesla coils, as well as the world's largest air-insulated Van de Graaff generator. During the showcase, a brief rendition of "Never Gonna Give You Up" by Rick Astley was played by tesla coils changing frequency.

Museum, Page 2



ALEXA SIMAO—THE TECH

Students attend a town hall led by UA president David Spicer '23 regarding W20, shortly after partial reopening of the Student Center was announced, Wednesday Feb. 15.

#### **IN SHORT**

**Deadline for submission of Minor Completion Form** for final-term seniors is Feb. 24.

The MIT Monologues will be performed Feb. 24 - Feb. 26 in 32-123.

**Undergraduate registration opens** for fourth quarter Physical Education & Wellness classes March 1.

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

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

#### **FUN**

Play The Tech's Sudoku and Crossword puzzles. Check out our haikus, and learn about new entertainment releases this week!

FUN, p. 4-5



#### **GRADUATE GRIEVANCES**

Read about an eye-opening set of accounts on bullying behavior in MIT's graduate program.

SECTION, p. 7

#### VIVIAN'S REFLECTIONS

Read the latest entry in Vivian Hir's long-running reflections column.

SECTION, p. 8

#### **SECTIONS**

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Thursday, February 23, 2023

**WEATHER** 

# Return of wintry weather into the weekend

By Yoland Gao

After an unseasonably warm January in Boston this year, we have the return of wintry weather as we close out the week and into the weekend. A winter storm is going to affect New England and the Great Lakes throughout today and tomorrow bringing snow and rain from Minnesota to

Maine. Here in Boston, we are expecting mostly a wintry mix with the possibility of road ice throughout the day today, so don't forget your winter boots. We will also be expecting temperatures to plummet below 20 degrees for the next few nights, and it will be particularly cold on Saturday. Make sure to bundle up and stay warm everyone!

#### **Extended Forecast**

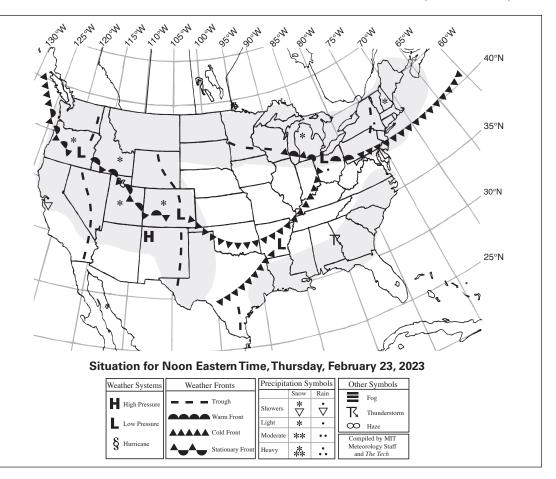
**Today**: Wintry mix. High around 34°F (1°C). Northeasterly winds around 15-20 mph.

Tonight: Wintry mix. Low around 29°F (-2°C). Westerly winds around 5-10 mph.

**Friday**: Partly cloudy. High around 36°F (2°C) and low around 13°F (-11°C). Northwesterly winds around 20-30 mph.

Saturday: Cloudy and cold. High around 21°F (-6°C) and low around 16°F (-9°C). Northwesterly winds around 5-10 mph.

**Sunday**: Cloudy, slight chance of snow. High around 36°F (2°C) and low around 20°F (-7°C). Westerly winds around 5-10 mph.



#### Romero: "There was something for everyone to love."

Museum, from Page 1

Although the event was advertised by the OFY as an opportunity to meet new freshmen, some attendees stated that they spent time mostly with existing friends. Other reasons for students deciding to attend included free food and the opportunity to explore the exhibits.

Most students stayed at the event for two to three hours. Ellie Romero '26 said, "there was something for everyone to love: dinosaurs, space, robots, coding games, science exhibits, an electricity show, a playground, and so much more."

The artificial intelligence exhibit, featuring Boston Dynamics robotics, was another highlight. Jeremy Minniear '26 called the experience a "mechanical dream" with the mechanical "dog, gas motor, trains, [and] model ships."

More lighthearted aspects of the event included a dinosaur wearing MIT merchandise and trays of food on all three floors.

While some students found the exhibits "boring," others like Romero rejoiced in the fact that they could "be childish, playing on the interactive games and the play structure."

Minniear stated they look forward to going back to the museum in the future. "I fulfilled a lot of items on my bucket list while going there and I'm excited to go again someday."

#### **Event Planning**

Jordan A. Sell '23, a current intern at the OFY, explained that the office "has been working to increase programming and do some more, large scale events."

Planning for the Night at the Museum began last spring; much of which included coordinating with the museum's event staff on possible ideas for the event.

"[This] was the second year we held the event, so we already had an idea of what students liked from the year prior," Sell said.

The office selected the museum for the event location as they wanted students to have "the freedom to do whatever they wanted at their own pace". In particular, the variety of events and free food provided helped attract students. The organizers also highlighted their appreciation towards students for attending the event due to its timing with the upcoming semester.

"We are very thankful that so many students decided to spend the night before classes started with us," Sell summarized.

Students interested with feed-back can email firstyear@mit.edu and visit the Connect by Chance website for more information regarding the initiative.





#### Solution to Too Cheap

3 6 5 3 8 4 6 8 9 4 9 6 5 2 3 5 6 4 3 1 6 9 4 6

#### Solution to Annoyingly Affordable

4 3 5 2 6 8 9 4 2 3 8 4 9 6 2 8 6 4 6 8 4 3 1 6 8 9

#### Solution to Too Expensive

from page

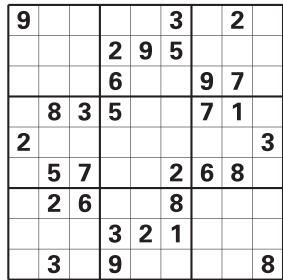
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Thursday, February 23, 2023



## **Too Cheap**

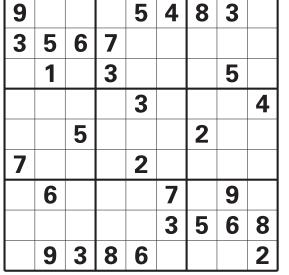
Solution, page 2



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.

## **Annoyingly Affordable**

Solution, page 2



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.

## Too Expensive by Steve Faiella

#### **ACROSS**

- 01 Smidgen
- 04 Religious leader
- 09 Drama with orchestra 14 Poetic homage
- 15 Pompeo of Grey's Anatomy 16 Designated
- 17 Woodland creature
- 18 Parade presentation
- 19 Still in contention
- 20 One offering sign-on bonuses
- 23 Emphatic assent
- 24 GPS reading
- 25 Lentils, peas, etc.
- 32 Yr.-round setting in Yuma
- 35 Measure of force
- 36 Juliet speech starter
- 37 Square-mile fraction 39 Vintage
- 41 Was worthwhile
- 42 Tiki culture refreshment 45 Outperform
- 48 Goat quote
- 49 Oil magnate known for his art collection
- 52 Santa \_\_\_, CA 53 Buffett, by birth
- 57 A 2022 14-foot-high Tel Aviv menorah
- 61 Put on again
- 63 Multitude
- 64 Erstwhile inhabited orbiter
- 65 Lexus alternative 66 Garden tool
- 67 Sketch artist's need
- 68 Data transmitter
- 69 Visionaries
- 70 Conniving

#### **DOWN**

- 01 Now
- 02 Hold dear 03 Regards
- 04 Word on taqueria menus

#### 15 16 17 18 19 20 23 26 27 33 |34 37



- 05 Anatomical aversion
- 06 Like-minded group
- 07 Withstand
- 08 Perfectly pitched 09 Winning consistently
- 10 Washed-out
- 11 Dubai's head of state
- 12 Amp (up)
- 13 Suffix for stock 21 High fashion monogram
- 22 Lowdown
- 26 Small number in Naples 27 Peach \_\_\_ (dessert)
- 28 Unruly hair
- 29 Religious leader
- 30 Star Wars royalty
- 31 Star Wars sage
- 32 Family nickname
- 33 Simba's royal predecessor

34 Decorative embellishment

70

- 38 GPS reading 40 FDR or JFK
- 43 Gallery, to 5 Down
- 44 Medicare issuance: Abbr.
- 46 Burn without flame
- 47 Tones down
- 50 Chops finely 51 Chinese zodiac animal
- 54 Camel characteristics
- 55 Computer screen font
- 56 Hardly hip 57 Give props to
- 58 Word on Irish euros 59 Programmer's work
- 60 Argue for
- 61 Plow into
- 62 Prefix that can mean "green'

by Eunice Zhang

#### **Haikus**

#### **FREE BOBA**

boba is tasty sweet, decadent, and so slay indeed, i love boba

free boba events, happening around campus thank you career fairs!

#### **HRRG**

the feeling of hrrg ain't fun to experience helpful reminders:

you are doing great take each day one at a time sending love uwu

#### 6.101

list comprehension truly a nifty feature python—kind of slay

[me + food for food in range(potatoes)] yes, i am hungry

#### **PAX EAST**

a slay convention that's happening in boston i quite want to go

gaming and streamers four day extravaganza it'll be lots of fun

## [533] LAPTOP HELL





POWERFUL, DURABLE, HAD EVERY FEATURE AND MADE THE AIR LOOK BULKY, AND THAT WAS BACK IN 2006!



WAIT. DON'T YOU ENCOURAGE EVIL ACTS DOWN HERE? IN THEORY, YES BUT WE NEED LAPTOPS, TOO! ALTHOUGH IT'S MOOT, SINCE WE HAVE AN EXCLUSIVE DEAL WITH SONY. I KNEW IT!

SARCASM. MATH. AND LANGUAGE by Randall Munroe

he's upset with me -- I hope he doesn't take revenge by messing with my site's contenDISREGARD THAT I SUCK COCKS The xkcd.com sysadmin has a Q2010, and I can attest that it can handle a fall down several flights of concrete steps. Relatedly,

#### [2739] Data Quality

SOMEONE WHO

ONCE SAW THE

DATA DESCRIBING

IT AT A PARTY

BLOOM

FILTER

HASH

TABLE



MPEG

LOSSY LOSSLESS

JPEG, PNG, ZIP, RAW DATA+ GIF TIFF, WAV,

RAW DATA

PARITY BITS FOR ERROR DETECTION

RAW DATA+ BETTER DATA PARITY BITS FOR ERROR CORRECTION

cat] -> [photo of your cat] -> [your actual cat] -> [my better cat] [exclamation about how cute your cat is] -> [last 4 digits of your cat's chip ID] -> [your cat's full chip ID] -> [a drawing of your

THE TECH 5 Thursday, February 23, 2023



Students attend a Spring Welcome Banquet organized by the Association of Taiwanese Students (ATS) for a night of delicious Taiwanese food and festivities, Monday.

## **ENTERTAINMENT THIS WEEK**

**FILM JESUS REVOLUTION** (TUE, FEB 21)

**FP 4EVZ** 

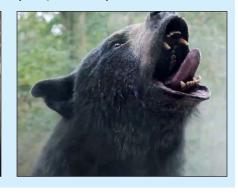
(THU, FEB 23)



**DIE HART: THE MOVIE** (THU, FEB 23)



**COCAINE BEAR** (FRI, FEB 24)



TV THE CONSULTANT (FRI, FEB 24)



**POKEMON ULTIMATE JOURNEYS (FRI, FEB 24)** 



**VIDEO GAMES ATOMIC HEART** (TUE, FEB 21)



**KERBAL SPACE PROGRAM 2** (FRI, FEB 24)



Did you see speling or grammar mistake in The Tech? Join copy!















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**GUEST COLUMN** 

# MIT, it's time to support your police officers

Since November, the MIT Police Association has distributed more than 6,000 flyers [1] to students and faculty. Standing outside campus interrupting you as you make your way to class is not something we want to do. But unfortunately, it has become our reality. The response from faculty and students has been overwhelming — thank you! However, the school and Chief DiFava continue to show zero respect or support to rank-and-file officers.

The 42 officers of the MIT Police Association have been working without a contract since last July. We've met 16 times, but the school continues to refuse to address reasonable quality of life and economic issues. At the heart of the negotiation is the question of whether MIT will follow the lead of Harvard and Boston University in mitigating the impact of inflation, acknowledging the extraordinary new burdens imposed on police officers, and ensuring that it will continue to at-

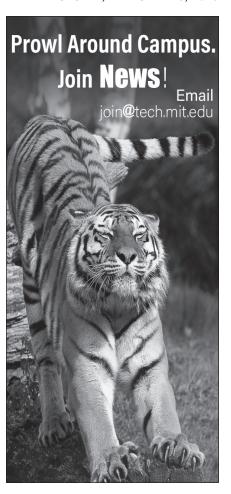
tract and retain officers with the highest quality through providing comparable contract improvements. All we are asking for is a modest raise so we can support our families.

In fact, Chief DiFava defended the MIT Police Civilian Dispatchers in the Public PERF Report, calling their jobs demanding and competitive and advocating for better pay. Why hasn't the Chief publicly supported our request for competitive wages? We are asking him and the school to acknowledge that MIT police officers are valued members of the MIT community.

You came to MIT because it's a well-respected, world-class university, an international leader in academia. Our officers are proud to work at such a well-respected institution. We only wish our police chief and school officials felt the same way about us.

Melissa Sullivan is a representative of the MIT Police Association and former Cambridge resident.

[1] The association distributed flyers outside campus on Nov. 16, Jan. 11, and Feb. 6.



Want to draw graphics that engage, provoke, and speak to the MIT community?

# The Tech is looking for editorial cartoonists.

join@tech.mit.edu



**GUEST COLUMN** 

# MIT GSU's proposed grievance procedure offers solution to broken advising system The current system allows abusive advising at MIT to continue unchecked and

threatens MIT's mission

The following stories were collected from seven Master's and/or PhD program alumni who endured severe and prolonged bullying from the same advisor at MIT. Their experiences span 14 years, from when the first of them joined the group to when the last left. All of them suffered deep injury to not only their careers and wellbeing, but also the scientific rigor of their research. By silencing dissent, shutting down inquiry, and demanding that data be massaged to fit pre-existing theories, this advisor and his unchecked abuse directly threaten MIT's fundamental mission and its reputation for expanding the bounds of human knowledge. These alumni do not share their stories to disparage the Institute, but rather to highlight the failures of current policies in responding to cases of advisor abuse. They implore the MIT administration to listen to grad workers and accept the MIT GSU's proposed grievance procedure for harassment, discrimination, and bullying. This change would offer grad workers suffering advisor abuse real protection and recourse, thus making MIT a better place for both researchers and research.

In the following paragraphs, we will refer to the alumni as Alums 1-7.

#### All of them suffered deep injury to not only their careers and wellbeing, but also the scientific rigor of their research.

A ubiquitous theme in the alumni stories is that the professor, as Alum 5 put it, "rules by fear." All the alumni report regularly seeing members humiliated in front of the rest of the group. Alum 1 recalled "Once, in front of a bunch of other people in the lab, he scolded me, saying 'When someone smarter than you tells you to do something, you need to do it!" Alum 5 remembers "watching him berate some of the research scientists in our group." But the mistreatment wasn't just in public — Alum 2 recalled that "My advisor quite often bad-mouthed a student behind his/ her back to other students." Some of the advisor's behavior was so perversely bad that it bordered on surreal. Upon learning Alum 4 was using mental health services to work through the stress of supporting their ailing father, the advisor was incensed and criticized them, saying "You're sick. How can I work with you when you're sick? This is why we are not making any progress."

#### Some of the advisor's behavior was so perversely bad that it bordered on surreal.

This professor also exploited students' desperation to graduate and leave the group in order to extract further concessions. "For students on the verge of graduation, my advisor would threaten to withhold thesis approval unless excessive additional work was completed. This tactic was applied indiscriminately; every

student that I knew during my time with the group was subjected to it, with some of the highest performing students facing the most outlandish demands," said Alum 6. Alum 3 corroborated this account, saying that the advisor "agreed that once I reached a certain result, I would be ready to graduate, but once I produced the agreed upon result he said, 'I know I said that... but what we really want is [something else].' I was completely powerless; I had no choice but to do as I was ordered."

#### This professor also exploited students' desperation to graduate and leave the group in order to extract further concessions.

All of this mistreatment took a serious toll on the grad workers. Alum 1 stated that their "career was derailed" and that they are "years behind where I could be in life" because rather than spending time learning valuable research skills, they "wasted so much time trying to survive in and then escape a toxic lab." Several alums reflected on the high frequency with which students who entered the lab intending to complete a PhD left with a Masters: "When I look at the 'alumni' of his lab, I realize that almost all of them I know intended on earning a PhD with him, but instead left the lab with a Master's (like me) or without a degree at all." Alum 6 said the toxic environment was a "major contributor to my decision to leave the school after completing my Master's degree, despite my original intention to pursue a doctorate" and that it was "a sad end to my relationship with MIT — the place I had called home since my undergraduate days."

#### "When I look at the ʻalumni' of his lab, I realize that almost all of them I know intended on earning a PhD with him, but instead left the lab with a Master's (like me) or without a degree

The professor's cruelty not only affected the grad workers in the lab but also tainted the science that they were producing. Alum 4 said, "When conducting research, I believe ideas should be met with skepticism and challenged based on their strengths and merit. While working with my advisor at MIT, I did not feel this research was conducted Rather. I found that anything I said that may contradict my advisor... was met with swift verbal attacks on my character, competence, and way of thinking." Alum 3 recalled that, when questioned, the advisor would often respond with insults such as "Are you going to stop talking garbage?" and that once the professor even "pounded on the glass table, shouting 'NO!' to make me accept that I was wrong and that the matter ended then and there." Alum 2 noted, "If he believes an idea of his should work like a charm but you bring back negative results, rather than focusing on investigating what went wrong, he tends to feel offended, blame you for not doing things right, and lash out his frustration on you.'

Alum 7 recalled that "He was latently aggressive in his style of management... truthfully, parts of me were afraid of him - or rather, of the power he held over me. I quickly recognized that nodding my head and doing as I was told would heighten the chance of avoiding conflict." Alum 3 recalled a time when they had discussed a research question with another professor when their advisor "would simply not accept that certain assumptions he held were erroneous." When the advisor found out that Alum 3 had consulted another scientist who had agreed with the student's analysis, "He threatened that since I had zero results after more than a year of working with him, he might give me a fail for my thesis." This stain on the scientific method often led to, as Alum 2 put it, "weak and questionable results that must be packaged by my advisor's top marketing skills in order to be sold to sponsors." This environment, in which scientific inquiry is systematically quashed, taints all research it hosts and has the potential to undermine MIT's reputation as an elite academic institution

#### "He threatened that since I had zero results after more than a year of working with him, he might give me a fail for my thesis."

Some alumni in this lab tried to use MIT's existing resources to resolve the situation. Alum 1 went to the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education (ODGE since renamed OGE) when the advisor was withholding approval for graduation, and was told that resolving such advising issues is the primary reason for the office's existence. However, while the deans offered some emotional support, they were unable to offer real solutions and, by their own admission, had no ability to protect anyone from retaliation. Alum 6 consulted with their department's graduate student office and "looked for other means of reporting the situation." But ultimately, most alumni came to the same conclusion as Alum 5: "None of the resources I found gave me confidence that substantive, corrective action would have been taken, particularly without compromising my own prospects for a timely graduation. Ultimately, I resigned myself to simply toleratsituation and getting out possible — the dismal, practical course of action that every generation of the group's students has been left to take."

Sadly, despite efforts to address these issues, things have not changed. "In speaking with recent members of the group, I am deeply disappointed to hear that the intervening years have seen no change to the group experience. My advisor's abuses have continued, unchecked," says Alum 6. While the OGE is staffed by caring and empathetic administrators who can offer emotional support, they have little power to enforce change.

At MIT, there exists no formal process for students being bullied by their advisor. Since grad students don't count as employees in MIT's internal logic, we don't really have access to HR. This leaves us with departmental solutions which often means going to a friend of the abuser for

This is exactly why we need a different system — a grievance procedure — that empowers grad workers to seek recourse until a resolution is achieved.

#### They were unable to offer real solutions and, by their own admission, had no ability to protect anyone from retaliation.

In spite of this, MIT has argued in recent negotiations that our union should be contractually barred from filing any grievances around harassment, discrimination, and bullying, despite the fact that, by their own admission, the policies that failed these alumni have not been changed.

Our union is demanding a revised system to address advisor abuse and other misconduct that runs rampant in the current system. We are fighting for:

The right to file grievances about bullying and identity-based harassment, thereby empowering workers to address and seek recourse for these

A clear, fair, process for handling misconduct which prioritizes improving the well-being of the student above all other considerations;

The right to a trained, experienced, and legally protected union steward at the grad worker's side through the entire conflict resolution procedure, so that no one has to navigate these problems alone;

and the right to escalate adjudication to a third party arbitrator (not an Institute-affiliated group) if cases cannot be resolved through mutual discussion.

#### This is exactly why we need a different system — a grievance procedure — that empowers grad workers to seek recourse until a resolution is achieved.

Harassment, discrimination, and bullying happen at MIT, and the current or nonexistent. With our proposed grievance procedure, grad workers will have the support we need to fight for the treatment we deserve.

Adam Trebach is a 6th year PhD Candidate in the Physics Department. He has been organizing with the MITGSU since

#### OPINION POLICY

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# MPUS LIFE CAL

#### **VIVIAN'S REFLECTIONS**

# Tears, Tsukiyo, and Never Let Me Go

Thoughts on life's fleeting nature

By Vivian Hir
CAMPUS LIFE EDITOR

Walking across the Harvard Bridge back to my dorm from an orchestra performance in Symphony Hall, I answer my phone: "Hello?"

"Hello Vivian," my mom replies. "I am currently waiting for an Uber and I plan to go to the airport now. Where are you now?"

Hearing this makes me feel a little sad. A few hours ago, I quickly left for the concert while my mom napped in my room. I thought that I would get to see her again after the performance and say a formal goodbye. Instead, she has to leave just before I get back. Despite my slight disappointment, my mood isn't that affected, as I know that I will see my mom again over winter break.

"I am on the Harvard Bridge. It will take me another 20 minutes to reach the dorm," I say, as I admire the blue sky and wonderful New England foliage along the Charles Biver

My mom pauses before she says, "I am sorry I was napping before you left." At first, I hear her trying to hold back tears, but she eventually breaks down.

"I am such a bad person. I didn't even say a proper goodbye," my mom says, starting to sob.

It's the first time I've heard someone cry on the phone. Physically, my mom is only a mile away from me, yet the phone call makes me think that she is much farther away. In less than two hours, she will board a plane and fly back to San Francisco, 3120 miles away from Boston.

As cold-hearted as it sounds, the idea of being thousands of miles away from someone never really bothered me. I thought that with phone and video calls, these geographical barriers would vanish. I could still have conversations. But as I remain silent and listen to her cry, I begin to question my naïve view on distance.

I am not sure how to comfort her. No

matter what I say, it seems like nothing will be as good as a face-to-face conversation. My heart tightens when I hear her weep. I expect tears to start flowing down my cheeks, but nothing comes out of my eyes. I start to wonder what's wrong with me and ask myself the last time I cried. I can't even remember. Was it during winter break of freshman year or sometime during my first semester at MIT? Regardless of the answer, I find it concerning that I haven't cried in almost a year when there were many times that I wanted to.

One part of me thinks that MIT has hardened me. The other part thinks that MIT has worn me down so much that as much as I want to cry because of how cathartic it feels, I don't have the mental and physical energy to. I am scared that crying will only make me cry more and put me in awkward situations with others, something that I experienced many times growing up.

"You aren't a bad mom; we will see each other in a while," I reassure her.

After she collects herself, my mom says, "I hope the rest of the semester gets better. I will try to help you as much as I can."

We both say goodbye and then end the call.

On the way back to New House, all I think about is the conversation I just had. Impressions of Mitsuko Uchida's wonderful piano escape my brain. My phone's call history says that the call was two minutes, yet it feels like time came to a standstill because of the many swirling thoughts and epiphanies I had within that short time.

The summer before college, my parents frequently reminded me that the time I had with them would be very limited once I left home. Despite this, I never really let that thought bother me. I was sad that I was starting to count down the number of months, then weeks, then days left with my family before I left for college, but I accepted it as a fact of life. Unless I chose to live near my family for the rest of my life,

there wasn't much I could do about it. Even hearing my peers say that 90% of the time spent with parents is gone after high school didn't make me very concerned. Sure, the percentage sounded very high at first, but after thinking about the number of days I had during college to visit my parents, the number made sense.

But having this phone call with my mom sobered me. Based on Tim Urban's blog post "The Tail End", the number of days I have with my parents for the rest of my life is a small fraction of our total time together before college. As a result, the time I have with them is quite precious. I thought about why my mom cried besides the fact that she said she felt like she was a bad parent. I may not be fully correct, but a possible reason is that she assumed that she would still have time to say goodbye to me before going to the airport, which wasn't the case in the end. In other words, she felt regret for not cherishing every moment with me as she chose to keep napping instead of waking up to say goodbye before I left the dorm.

The more I thought about what was going on in my mom's mind, the more I thought about a dance performance I had watched at the Boston Ballet a while back. On its own, the dance may appear to be completely separate from my life, but the emotions it imprinted on me strongly echoed with what I felt during the phone call with my mom. Directed by Helen Pickett, Tsukiyo is an intimate duet that captures the power of love perfectly. When I watched the couple dancing with such closeness and grace, I started to feel a lump in my throat. The performance was so touching and moving, yet I couldn't cry because of how beautiful it was to see them dance under the moonlight-like setting.

The intimacy of the dancers made me think of how we want to be vulnerable in front of our loved ones so they can be there for us, even though we sometimes say that we are independent. Despite being adults, we desire a return to childhood so someone can take care of us. My interpretation may be a stretch, but the ballerina's delicate nature as she allowed her partner to hold her in the air reminded me of how fragile and short human life is. The two hold on to each other most of the time, but in some parts of the choreography, they walk away from each other and then come back together again.

While the dance portrayed a couple, I thought of other relationships — a friend-ship or a parental bond. The tension present in the dance made the constant internal struggle over whether to let go so visceral and real. In a greater context, the dance made me think of how hard it is to say goodbye to someone we love and accept the fact that intimacy in a relationship cannot last forever, just like the former closeness a parent and child or two siblings may experience.

The phone call not only evoked strong memories of *Tsukiyo* but also made me think of *Never Let Me Go*, a book I read this summer by Kazuo Ishiguro. The narrator, Kathy, experiences one of the book's central conflicts as she struggles to accept the facts that her friends will pass away and that time will keep passing by. The title itself is thought-provoking, as it highlights Kathy's tendency to reminisce about her close friendships during school.

The title haunts me because it applies to my relationships with people like my mom. When things are too late, we realize the time we have left with a loved one is limited and cannot be taken for granted anymore. Time does not wait for us. As much as we want to hold and be held onto by those we love, including our family members, ultimately we must let go, even if this means being thousands of miles away from them.

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