



MICHELLE XIANG - THE TECH

Fireworks burst over the Boston skyline, lighting up the night sky in celebration of Independence Day on the 4th of July.

Interphase EDGE hit with declined enrollment for current cohort

The program's current cohort size of 30 falls well below expectations and follows similarly lower enrollment from the preceding cohort.

By Ellie Montemayor
& Vivian Hir
EDITORS

Student enrollment for the 2024 Interphase EDGE program has reportedly declined to around 30 students, according to student sources. Hosted by the Office of Minority Education (OME), Interphase EDGE is a "two-year scholar enrichment program" aimed at helping ease the transition to MIT for incoming students, according to its page on the OME website. The program mainly consists of students from underrepresented backgrounds but is open to all incoming students. The program includes an eight-week residential summer module

in which incoming MIT students come to campus and take classes to prepare for their first year at MIT. According to the OME website, Interphase EDGE usually consists of "70 scholars," while its remote sister program Interphase EDGEx has "20 scholars," numbers that are consistent with enrollment data from recent years. Current students are recruited to support each year's cohort as Residential Facilitators (RFAs) for the residential summer module and as Associate Advisors over the academic year. The 2024 cohort's initial eight-week session began on June 18 and is set to conclude on August 9. Student sources familiar with the program, including a current student RFA for Interphase EDGE

who insisted on anonymity for fear of retaliation from the program's leadership, attested to an approximate enrollment of 30. The Tech was unable to identify the number of students currently enrolled in EDGEx. Approximately 20 RFAs staff the residential summer component this year, a number that has stayed about the same since the program last fully met enrollment expectations in 2022. The 2023 cohort for Interphase EDGE—which was finalized by program administrators weeks before the Supreme Court's ruling on affirmative action that June—also fell below expectations with an

Interphase EDGE, Page 2

In Memoriam: Minh-Thi Nguyen G

Minh-Thi Nguyen G, a third-year graduate student in the Department of Physics, passed away the morning of June 21 following a traffic collision while biking from her apartment to campus. Nguyen, who was 24 at the time of her death, was born in Hanoi, Vietnam but spent her early years in Amsterdam and later moved to Orange County, California. She excelled academically, graduating as valedictorian of Los Alamitos High School, and pursued her undergraduate studies at Princeton University, where she was deeply involved in various extracurricular activities, including leading the Entrepreneurship Club and playing varsity rugby.

At MIT, Nguyen was a valued member of Professor Paola Cappellaro's experimental physics group, focusing on quantum engineering. She was also active in the Graduate Student Council and the Outing Club. Friends fondly remember her as "Mint," known for her kindness, adventurous spirit, and love of the outdoors. Nguyen's untimely death is a significant loss to the MIT community. President Sally Kornbluth expressed the collective grief in an email to the MIT community, stating, "Our hearts go out to her family and her many friends."

—Tina Zhang

SEE INSIDE MIT Touchstone system
City Council approves safety audits
MIT Health expands insurance options
Dialogues Across Differences final panel
Celtics parade attracts thousands
Premature reports of Chomsky death
July 4th Independence Day celebrations

CELTICS
PARADE
SPORTS, p. 3

WORLD & NATION:
DEBATE DEBACLE, AOC
ARTICLES, NATO SUMMIT
GAZA EVACUATION,
NIGER BASES, FRANCE
POLITICS
WORLD & NATION, p. 4

MUSIC
LISTENING
LAST
NIGHT
CAMPUS LIFE,
p. 6

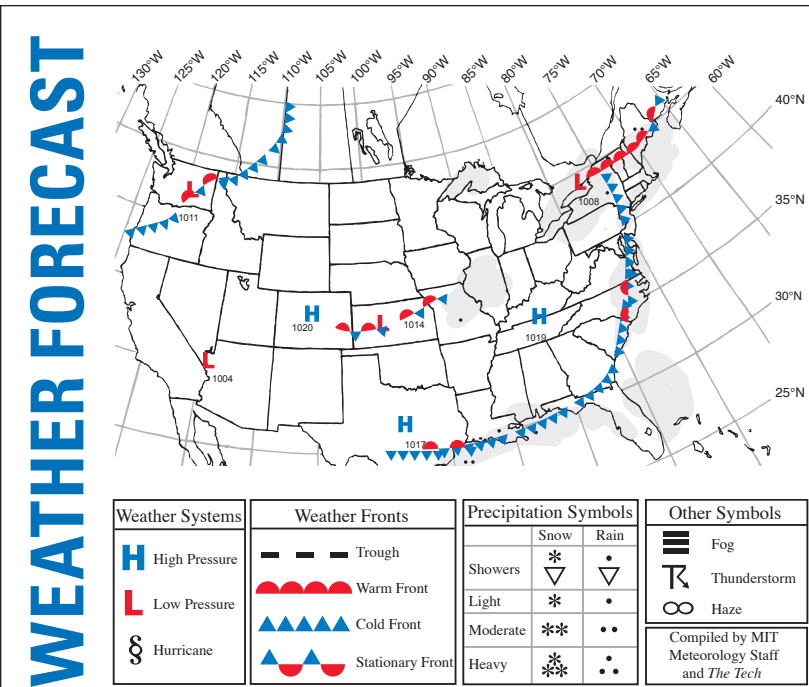
BASEBALL AS
REBELLION
CHINA'S RACE
FOR TREASURE
ARTS, p. 8

OMICSWEB:
STARTUP
SCIENCE, p. 9

FACULTY
RESPONSE
OPEN LETTER
50TH ANNIV.
OPINION, p. 10

PHOTO, p. 12

SECTIONS
Sports3
World & Nation . . .4
Campus Life6
Arts8
Science9
Opinion10
Fun Pages12



Hot, humid conditions to headline the week

By Phoebe Lin
SENIOR METEOROLOGIST

Warm weather interrupted by occasional storms are expected to headline the next few days. Dewpoints remain high throughout the week, meaning that temperatures will feel even warmer than they actually are. However, thunderstorms may provide some brief relief as they move through the Northeast.

Remnants of Hurricane Beryl are affecting the region while Houston still battles the main impacts of the storm. If you have any friends or fam-

ily impacted by these areas, please make sure to check in with them and send them some good wishes.



JULY 11 SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

Extended Forecast

Today: Chance showers. High around 90°F (32°C). Southwest winds 15-20 mph.

Tonight: Mostly clear. Low around 70°F (21°C). Southwest winds 10-15 mph.

Friday: Chance showers. High around 90°F (32°C). Southwest winds 8-14 mph.

Friday Night: Chance showers. Low around 73°F (23°C).

Saturday: Chance showers. High of 80°F (27°C), low of 70°F (21°C). Southwest winds 10-15 mph.

Sunday: Sunny. High around 93°F (°C) and low around 70°F (°C). Southwest winds around 5-10 mph.

Findings of reduced cohort size led to ongoing student speculation of broader trends

Interphase EDGE, from Page 1

estimated 50 scholars participating, according to a student from that cohort.

The apparent low enrollment numbers for this year's cohort raised alarm amongst students as a wave of speculation spread across campus, even prior to the commencement of the program's summer component, of possible links to ongoing organizational changes within the OME, reported knowledge gaps due to issues in staff retention, and the Supreme Court's 2023 ban on affirmative action programs in college admissions.

A spokesperson from the OME did not provide indication of whether this year's enrollment was linked to speculated circumstantial factors and did not verify the enrollment data obtained by The Tech. It is not immediately clear that the program's low enrollment for the upcoming cohort is representative of a broader trend across all campus minority-serving initiatives or ongoing speculation regarding the incoming Class of 2028, or that the change may have been signaled by the Supreme Court's action.

"It is true that this year we have had fewer students attend the on-campus program than typical," OME Interim Director Diep Luu said in an email to The Tech. "However, not all students we invite to Interphase EDGE/x choose to come, and it is hard to know all the various factors—from student/family schedules, competing opportunities, changing personal interests and so on—that might influence the final participation number."

Many students who spoke with The Tech who are familiar with the program either through their time as scholars or as staff-

ers corroborated on a level of disorganization that has followed the program in recent years. According to the students, Interphase EDGE underwent a transitional period following former program director Somiya Kalloo's departure in 2023. Kalloo was last involved in the 2022 program and left prior to the commencement of the 2023 program.

The Tech was unable to reach out to Kalloo ahead of this article's publication. She currently works as Associate Director for MITES Programs, another minority-serving initiative at MIT that operates independently of the OME.

Additionally, the students indicated that Kalloo's departure—having been affiliated with Interphase EDGE and the OME for many years up until that point since joining the office in January 2014—led to a "knowledge gap" amongst the program's administrators that has reportedly caused persistent operational problems. This issue also coincides with reported frequent turnovers across the OME, in which staffers are said to have left the office or transitioned into other roles across the Institute, within just a few years of their tenure.

Although the 2024 Interphase EDGE cohort is smaller than that of previous years, the program's format and structure remain largely unaffected. Modifications made to this year's program include smaller class sizes and fewer sections for classes.

The decrease in Interphase EDGE enrollment also coincides with recent changes surrounding the Institute's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)-centered initiatives, including the elimination of diversity statements for faculty hiring and the potential restructuring of the OME.

MIT's Touchstone system to be powered by Okta starting June 17

By Tina Zhang
NEWS EDITOR

Starting June 17, Information Systems and Technology (IS&T) will update MIT's single sign-on (SSO) web authentication service Touchstone to be powered by Okta Identity Engine, "a modern cloud-based and extensible platform," to protect users' identities and facilitate app access from any device.

Touchstone is used by members of the MIT community to access applications and websites associated with the Institute through their personal Kerberos account. Touchstone was previously utilized with Duo Security for multi-factor authentication (MFA).

After conducting a successful pilot program involving multiple MIT systems and services, IS&T decided to update Touchstone's configuration on June 17 so that "all Touchstone-enabled systems will use the new Okta-powered single sign-on service."

The justification behind the transition is that Okta allows for "new authentication mechanisms and second factors," which is

an upgrade from the "ease-of-use previously offered by MIT certificates and SPNEGO." IS&T anticipates making these improvements available to the community in the next few months.

Current authenticated users of Touchstone will not be impacted but new users should expect to encounter some changes. According to IS&T, Touchstone powered by Okta will "continue to support existing applications seamlessly" for current users while "new applications and services requiring Touchstone authentication will be configured to use the new platform."

Although Okta is functionally similar to Touchstone, there are a few differences between the two. For instance, the login page will be "on okta.mit.edu instead of idp.mit.edu." Additionally, for first-time users of Okta, they will need to finish "a one-time task to reconnect their login to their account." Moreover, MIT certificates and Kerberos tickets (SPNEGO) will no longer be supported by Touchstone powered by Okta, leaving the MIT username and Kerberos password.

MIT introduces new guidelines for Personal Wheels (PWs)

MIT has introduced new guidelines for the use of "Personal Wheels" (PWs), including scooters, skateboards, and bicycles, in response to a surge in their popularity on campus. The measures aim to enhance safety for both PW riders and pedestrians.

Key points include: no riding indoors, with PWs prohibited from being used inside any Institute building; parking restrictions, which mandate that PWs must not be parked in classrooms or common areas and should be stored only in residential rooms or personal offices; and charging safety, requiring that motorized PWs can only be charged while monitored and must be registered, UL certified (a safety certification for electrical devices), and must use manufacturer-supplied charging equipment.

These guidelines, effective immediately, are part of a broader initiative to create a culture of safety and responsibility among PW users. This summer, MIT is also piloting an updated registration process for motorized PWs, which incorporates safety certification details. The registration not only ensures compliance but also aids the MIT Police in recovering stolen PWs. For more information, contact Tom Giannino, Manager of Parking, Transportation, and Customer Service, at commuting@mit.edu with any questions.

—Jayashabari Shankar

City Council approves safety audits following fatal intersection collision

By Jayashabari Shankar
NEWS EDITOR

In response to the death of Minh-Thi Nguyen G on the morning of June 21 following a fatal collision with a truck, the Cambridge City Council voted unanimously on June 24 to initiate safety audits at intersections where serious collisions have occurred.

Nguyen, who was 24 at the time of her death and a dedicated member of the Institute physics community, was fatally injured in a traffic collision at Mount Auburn and DeWolfe Streets while commuting to campus by bicycle. Her passing sparked widespread calls for action from transit advocates and deep sorrow among her colleagues and friends.

The policy order, led by Councilor Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler and supported by Vice Mayor Marc C. McGovern and others, directed City Manager Yi-An Huang to develop a comprehensive plan for conducting safety audits and implementing necessary infrastructure improvements

at identified high-risk intersections.

"While Cambridge routinely updates street infrastructure, this moment calls for proactive measures to address our most dangerous intersections," stated Sobrinho-Wheeler during the council session. The policy order underscores community demands for enhanced intersection safety protocols, prompted by more than 100 supportive messages received by the council.

Although the order proposes various potential improvements like traffic signal adjustments, it avoids commitments to contentious modifications like separated bike lanes, which have historically divided council opinions. The Council previously contentiously passed the Cycling Safety Ordinance in 2019, requiring bike lanes that are separate from vehicular traffic. Studies show that the policy has been a success.

In addition to the intersection audits, the council also approved a separate policy order aimed at enhancing public education on roadway safety rules.

MIT Expands Insurance Options with New Enrollment Partner

MIT is set to enhance healthcare accessibility for students with expanded insurance choices and a new enrollment system. Starting this fall, all undergraduates and students alike will have access to dental insurance via Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBS MA) and vision coverage through EyeMed. These additions are designed to bolster comprehensive healthcare coverage tailored to student needs.

Additionally, MIT has partnered with Academic Health Plans (AHP) to streamline the enrollment process. Through AHP's Care26 portal, students can efficiently manage insurance waivers, enroll family members in coverage, and opt for dental and vision plans. This initiative aims to simplify administrative tasks and ensure students have seamless access to necessary healthcare services. Further details and enrollment instructions are set to arrive via email from the Care26 portal on July 15, and one can find further information on the insurance website, at <https://mit.myahpcare.com/>.

—Jayashabari Shankar

Dialogues Across Differences: Susannah Heschel, Ezzedine Fishere host panel on dialogue engagement

At Dartmouth College, Heschel serves as a professor and chair of the Jewish Studies Program, while Fishere is a senior lecturer on Middle East politics.

By Tina Zhang
NEWS EDITOR

On May 9, Susannah Heschel, the Eli M. Black Distinguished Professor and chair of the Jewish Studies Program at Dartmouth College, and Ezzedine Fishere, a senior lecturer on Middle East politics at the same university, held the final panel of MIT's Dialogues Across Differences: Building Community, a speaker series hosted at the Schwartzman College of Computing. Heschel studies the evolution of Jewish and Protestant religious ideas in Germany throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The pair's panel was titled "A Model for Discussing Conflict and War in the Middle East." The panel consisted of Heschel and Fishere's talk followed by a question and answer session with the audience moderated by Karl Reid, the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion at MIT. President Sally Kornbluth also attended the panel, introduced the speakers and moderators, and facilitated the talk.

Fishere began the talk with a metaphor from the Bible to emphasize different perspectives on the Israel-Hamas war, an ongoing armed conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas within the broader Israel-Palestine

conflict. He said that there are often multiple narratives to a single event, all of which are legitimate in each person's eyes. He added that everyone has the option to either choose one view and stand by it or consider, or at least acknowledge others' perspectives.

Fishere continued to speak about his views on college activism. He expressed that his aim as a university professor was to guide students to develop their own perspectives on different ideas. He continued to say that the primary purpose of universities is for learning and not activism, conveying that universities should allow students to advocate but also ensure that students do not overextend that privilege.

Fishere passed the rest of the panel discussion to Heschel, who spoke about the importance of universities being receptive to students' perspectives. She emphasized that universities should encourage students to engage in dialogue and help them make up their minds, because there is no other place to have these kinds of conversations where students could think together and be challenged by each other to change their minds.

Heschel and Fishere's panel marked the end of the "Dialogues Across Differences: Building Community" speaker series.

BOSTON CELTICS

Celtics parade attracts hundreds of thousands to the streets in celebration of 18th NBA championship

By Ellie Montemayor
PUBLISHER

On Friday, June 21, hundreds of thousands of Bostonians—with some reports placing the estimate of attendees to over a million—took to the streets geared in light green to celebrate the Boston-based basketball team Boston Celtics' 18th championship title, their first championship win in 16 years.

The festival celebrating the team's historic win came following their last 2024 NBA Finals match on June 17 against Western Conference champion Dallas Mavericks, with the Celtics finally earning the title on Game 5 (88-106) at home court. The win pushed the Celtics to take up the mantle of most NBA championships of any franchise and was hailed as a landmark for the city, which had not seen a major sports team championship win in several years. This summer's parade was the first since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 90-minute procession—a rolling motorcade of duck boats, which has become a city tradition since they were first rolled out for football team New England Patriots' Super Bowl win in 2002—began at 11 a.m. at TD Garden and ended at Hynes Convention Center, surrounded by a sea of fans.

"This was a big deal because the Celtics won the championship exactly 16 years from when they last won," Grace Gardner '25, who attended the parade, said. "There was a narrative [of] the current roster not being able to win in the playoffs."

The Celtics have a special relationship with the Institute through shooting guard/small forward Jaylen Brown, who is an MIT Media Lab Director's Fellow. Brown was named MVP this season, his first award of the kind. Through his efforts alongside the Institute, Brown has made significant off-court contributions in taking on social advocacy initiatives; notably, he co-founded the Bridge Program in collaboration with the Lab, which serves as a mentoring program and leadership initiative for Black and Brown high school-aged youth.

"I think that championship parades are a really awesome way for MIT students to get a feel for the city. The first parade I went to, I was like, 'Wow! I'm really an MIT student, and I really live in Massachusetts,'" Gardner said. "Boston sports can add to the MIT experience by helping students feel like they are part of a broader community beyond MIT."

Brown, as well as the other four starters for the Celtics, is under contract for the next season. Many have already hedged their bets on a potential 2025 championship for the Celtics.

Reports of Noam Chomsky's apparent death refuted by family

In June, reports of renowned linguist, philosopher, and political activist Noam Chomsky's apparent death surfaced across several news sites and social media platforms. The reports brought a wave of tributes to Chomsky, 95, and his numerous efforts in speaking out against U.S. foreign policy—including his opposition of American involvement in the Vietnam War and his criticism of U.S. support for the State of Israel amidst the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict—and for his advancements in the field of linguistics.

For the past year, Chomsky had been in recovery at a hospital in São Paulo, Brazil, following a massive stroke. Soon after the reports surfaced, which came after a local newspaper's reporting of his apparent worsening condition, Chomsky's wife formally responded to an emailed query from the Associated Press on June 18 that reports of his death were false. A statement from the hospital said that Chomsky was discharged that same day to continue his treatment at home, as reported by the Associated Press. Many of the reports and obituaries were soon retracted after the finding.

—Ellie Montemayor & Tina Zhang



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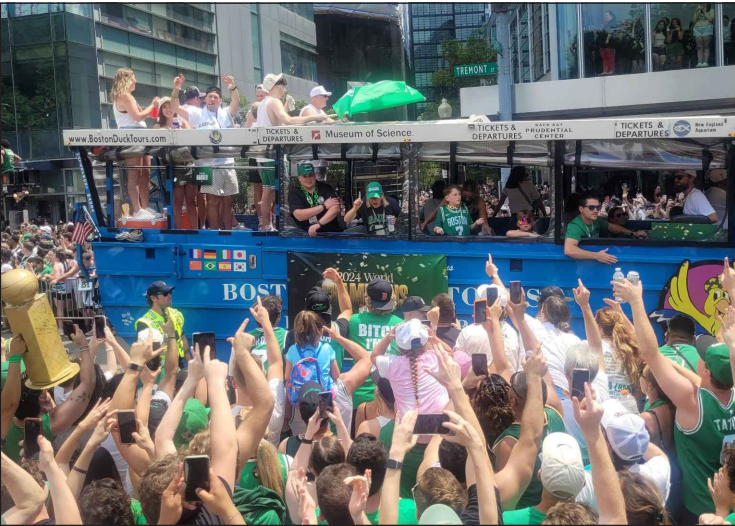
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COURTESY OF GRACE GARDNER

The Boston Celtics championship parade, Friday, June 21.



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The Boston Celtics championship parade, Friday, June 21.

WORLD & NATION is a two-page column featuring news articles syndicated from a selection of major newspaper outlets, covering topics of public interest and critical information which extend beyond the bounds of *The Tech's* coverage as centered around the MIT and local community. Ownership of syndicated content is retained under their original respective publications, and is republished in this format to serve as an easily-accessible, printed digest for *The Tech's* readership.

The column consists of two pages, with Side A focused on US news and politics and Side B on topics of international concern. The articles featured here are abridged as to contain only their most essential points; readers are directed to read more about an article from its original publication.

Immunity ruling leaves judge facing tough calls on Trump’s election indictment

At some point soon, the Supreme Court’s ruling on presidential immunity will land back with the judge who is handling the case from which it sprang — the criminal prosecution of Donald J. Trump on charges of plotting to overturn the 2020 election.

And when that happens, the judge, Tanya S. Chutkan, will face a daunting task. Judge Chutkan will have to sort through the 45-page indictment, making decisions about which of its many allegations can move forward and which will have to be tossed out.

— *Alan Feuer, FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 9, 2024

Extreme heat has killed at least 28 in the past week — and the toll is rising

A searing heat wave that has gripped much of the United States in recent days is suspected of killing at least 28 people in the last week, according to reports from state officials, medical examiners and news outlets.

The number, which is based on preliminary reports from California, Oregon and Arizona, is likely to grow as authorities assess the death toll of a heat wave that began last week, delivering record-breaking temperatures throughout the West and scorching East Coast cities. As of Wednesday, more than 135 million people across the Lower 48 were under heat alerts, many of which are expected to continue until the weekend.

— *Anna Phillips, FROM THE WASHINGTON POST*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

US House Republicans demand regulatory reviews after Supreme Court ruling

Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives have asked all federal agencies to begin reviews of regulations that could be affected by a recent Supreme Court ruling overturning a legal precedent known as “Chevron deference,” in letters released on Wednesday.

Three House committees targeted agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Securities and Exchange Commission and Department of Labor in what the chamber’s No. 2 Republican, Steve Scalise, called a “fight to free the American people from the power-hungry administrative state.”

— *Moirra Warburton, FROM REUTERS*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

Incoming Washington Post editor decides not to take job amid ethics concerns

The editor recently tapped to run The Washington Post won’t take the job after all, the chief executive of the newspaper announced Friday morning, following a series of reports that raised questions about his links to journalistic practices in Britain that would be considered unethical in the United States.

Will Lewis, the publisher and chief executive of The Washington Post, told staff in a note that the editor, Robert Winnett, withdrew from the position and plans to remain in the United Kingdom, where he is deputy editor of The Daily Telegraph.

— *Daniel Arkin & Joe Kottke, FROM NBC NEWS*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JUNE 21, 2024

Dartmouth student’s death prompts police hazing probe as university suspends 2 Greek organizations

The hourslong disappearance, then confirmed death of a Dartmouth College fraternity member has police investigating the case as a possible hazing incident. The Ivy League school has suspended the 20-year-old’s Greek organization, as well as a sorority.

Won Jang, a member of Beta Alpha Omega, had last been seen by friends around 9:30 p.m., Saturday, at an informal social gathering at docks near the Dartmouth boathouse on the Connecticut River, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department said in a news release. When he didn’t show up for an event the next day, authorities were notified, the agency said.

— *Alisha Ebrahimi, FROM CNN*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

Trump widens lead after Biden’s debate debacle, Times poll finds

Shane Goldmacher
FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 3, 2024

Donald J. Trump’s lead in the 2024 presidential race has widened after President Biden’s fumbling debate performance last week, as concerns that Mr. Biden is too old to govern effectively rose to new heights among Democrats and independent voters, a new poll from The New York Times and Siena College showed.

Mr. Trump now leads Mr. Biden 49 percent to 43 percent among likely voters nationally, a three-point swing toward the Republican from just a week earlier, before the debate. It is the largest lead Mr. Trump has recorded in a Times/Siena poll since 2015. Mr. Trump leads by even more among registered voters, 49 percent to 41 percent.

Doubts about Mr. Biden’s age and acuity are widespread and growing. A majority of every demographic, geographic and ideological group in the poll — including Black voters and those who said they will still be voting for him — believe Mr. Biden, 81, is too old to be effective.

Overall, 74 percent of voters view him as too old for the job, up five percentage points since the debate. Concerns about Mr. Biden’s age have spiked eight percentage points among Democrats in the week since the debate, to 59 percent. The share of independent voters who said they felt that way rose to 79 percent, nearly matching the Republican view of the president.

The poll offers early empirical evidence of what many Democrats have feared: That Mr. Biden’s faltering debate performance has further imperiled his chances against Mr. Trump this fall. Some Democratic lawmakers and donors are raising questions about Mr. Biden’s fitness following his struggles to finish his thoughts or articulate a vision

during the debate, and they are demanding that Mr. Biden prove for a skeptical public that he is capable of serving until he is 86.

There were a couple of faint glimmers of good news for Mr. Biden in the poll.

One was that he narrowed Mr. Trump’s edge among independent voters, even if that gain was more than offset by his erosion among Democrats and Mr. Trump’s improvement among Republicans. Another was that the share of Democratic voters who think Mr. Biden should no longer be the nominee ticked up, but by far less than the rising Democratic concern about his age. The first calls from Capitol Hill lawmakers for him to step aside came on Tuesday.

Overall, more voters thought Mr. Biden should remain the Democratic nominee — but only because more Republicans, perhaps emboldened after the debate, said they now want him as their opponent.

AOC files impeachment articles against Supreme Court justices

Ryan Nobles, Alexandra Marquez & Zoë Richards
FROM NBC NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., introduced articles of impeachment Wednesday against Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito over their refusal to recuse themselves from certain cases.

“Absent resignation, they must be removed,” Ocasio-Cortez said on the House floor, arguing that the two justices pose a threat to the rule of law.

“Because of Alito’s and Thomas’s refusals to recuse, everyday Americans cannot, should not and will not believe that these justices, and consequently the court they serve, is working to uphold the Constitution and put the country ahead of their own individual self-interests,” she said Wednesday night.

“Reasonable Americans will and do believe that Justices Thomas and Alito are prone and subject to corruption, that the institution failing to punish them is broken and that consequently their impeachment is a constitutional imperative and our congressional duty,” she added.

Ocasio-Cortez said both justices had demonstrated a “yearslong pattern of misconduct and failure to recuse in cases bearing their clear personal and financial involvement.”

That, she said, “represents an abuse of power and threat to our democracy, fundamentally incompatible with continued service on our nation’s highest court.”

The Supreme Court did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the introduction of impeachment articles.

The resolutions were co-sponsored by Reps. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-N.J., Delia Ramirez, D-Ill., Maxwell Frost, D-Fla., Ilhan Omar,

D-Minn., and Jamaal Bowman, D-N.Y.

The first charge centers on two controversial flags that were flown outside Alito’s homes — an upside-down American flag and an “Appeal to Heaven” flag. Both have been carried in recent years by members of the “Stop the Steal” movement, whose supporters claim President Joe Biden did not lawfully win the 2020 presidential election. Alito has said it was his wife’s decision to fly the flags.

Alito declined to recuse himself from two Trump-related cases that were pending before the court when the existence of the flags was first reported.

The second charge against Alito appears to refer to his relationship with hedge fund billionaire Paul Singer, who ProPublica reported took Alito on a fishing trip to Alaska that Alito did not disclose in ethics reports. Alito later did not recuse himself from cases involving Singer.

At NATO summit, allies move to counter Russia, bolster Ukraine

John Irish, Sabine Siebold, & Idrees Ali
FROM REUTERS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

The United States will start deploying longer range missiles in Germany in 2026, the two countries announced at a meeting of the NATO alliance on Tuesday, a major step aimed at countering what the allies say is a growing threat Russia poses to Europe.

The decision will send Germany the most potent U.S. weapons to be based on the European continent since the Cold War, in a clear warning to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

U.S.-German statement said the “episodic deployments” were in preparation for longer-term stationing in Europe of capabilities that would include SM-6, Tomahawk and developmental hypersonic weapons with greater range.

The move would have been banned under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

signed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union in 1987 but that collapsed in 2019.

“We cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies’ sovereignty and territorial integrity,” the allies said in a communique released on Wednesday.

More aid was headed to Ukraine as the allies bolster Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

A communique said the allies intend to provide Ukraine with at least 40 billion euros (\$43.28 billion) in military aid within the next year, but stopped short of the multi-year commitment NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had sought.

The document also strengthened past NATO language on China, calling it a “decisive enabler” of Russia’s war effort in Ukraine and saying Beijing continues to pose systemic challenges to Euro-Atlantic security.

Stoltenberg told reporters it was the first time the 32 allies had jointly labeled China a decisive

Israel urges Gaza City evacuation, calling it a ‘combat zone’

Aaron Boxerman
FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

The Israeli military on Wednesday urged Palestinians across the city to evacuate to the south, a sign that the renewed fighting meant to crack down on a resurgent Hamas insurgency would likely continue after nine months of war.

Israeli planes dropped leaflets on the city urging its residents to head for central Gaza through four “safe corridors.” Israel has already issued warnings for Palestinians to leave specific parts of Gaza City, and it was not clear if its latest statement amounted to an expansion of those calls. But the notice raised new fears among residents, many of whom have been displaced multiple times.

“Gaza City will remain a dangerous combat zone,” the Israeli military said in a statement published on social media. It said that Palestinians who left Gaza

City through the approved routes would get out “quickly and without inspection.”

Israeli troops had sent ground troops into the Shajaiye neighborhood late last month and the fighting has since expanded to other parts of the city. The military said later on Wednesday that it had concluded its operation in Shajaiye, but it gave no indication that fighting would end elsewhere.

Israeli troops have re-entered Gaza City in recent days, in the latest instance of Israeli forces returning to fight in places they had secured earlier and then withdrew. The Israeli military has repeatedly returned to areas across the Gaza Strip in an attempt to suppress Hamas fighters, who have fought a dogged guerrilla war. Analysts have said Israel’s unwillingness to install an alternative administration in Gaza has created a power vacuum, allowing Hamas to regroup.

In January, the Israeli military dialed back the intensity of its military campaign in Gaza City and the rest of the north. Since then, Israeli forces have carried out a series of targeted raids in the area, and in March its troops raided Al-Shifa hospital for a second time, killing nearly 200 people it called “terrorists” and leaving devastation behind after extended gun battles with Palestinian militants.

It is not clear how many Hamas fighters remain in Gaza City. After sending ground forces into Shajaiye, Israeli troops moved into other parts of the city: Tel al-Hawa, where Israeli forces stormed a United Nations compound that the military said had taken over by militants, as well as the neighborhoods of Al-Daraj and Tuffah.

In statements on social media, Hamas has said over the past few days that its forces were fighting Israeli troops in Shajaiye and Tel al-Hawa. In Shajaiye alone, Israel claims its troops have eliminated “more than 150 terrorists” over the past week and have destroyed six underground tunnels.

US troops leaving Niger bases this weekend and in August

Lolita Baldor
FROM AP NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 5, 2024

The U.S. will remove all its forces and equipment from a small base in Niger this weekend and fewer than 500 remaining troops will leave a critical drone base in the West African country in August, ahead of a Sept. 15 deadline set in an agreement with the new ruling junta, the American commander there said Friday.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Kenneth Ekman said in an interview that a number of small teams of 10-20 U.S. troops, including special operations forces, have moved to other countries in West Africa. But the bulk of the forces will go to Europe, at least initially.

Niger’s ouster of American troops following a coup last year has broad ramifications for the U.S. because it is forcing troops to abandon the critical drone base that was used for counterterrorism missions in the Sahel, a vast region south of the Sahara desert where groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group operate.

Ekman and other U.S. military leaders have said other West African nations want to work with the U.S. and may be open to an expanded American presence. He did not detail the locations, but other U.S. officials have pointed to the Ivory Coast and Ghana as examples.

Ekman, who serves as the director for strategy at U.S. Africa Command, is leading the U.S. military withdrawal from the small base at the airport in Niger’s capital of Niamey and from the larger counterterrorism base in the city of Agadez. He said there will be a ceremony Sunday marking the completed pullout from the airport base, then the final 100 troops and the last C-17 transport aircraft will depart.

Under the junta agreement, two-thirds of U.S. troops and equipment must be out of the country by July 26, Ekman said. That deadline, which forced the Pentagon to move

quickly, is a key reason why U.S. Africa Command will complete its withdrawal of all 1,000 troops from Niger early.

But it also leaves a counterterrorism gap that U.S. officials are struggling to fill as security threats from extremist groups in the Sahel grow.

One of those groups, Jama’at Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, known as JNIM, is active in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger and is looking to expand into Benin and Togo. Those expansion locations could be used initially as hubs to rest, recuperate, get financing and gather weapons, according to U.S. officials, but the group also has increased attacks there.

“Niger was immensely helpful for us as a location because it was in the Sahel and it was adjacent to those areas where the threat is most concentrated,” Ekman said. Now, he said, the challenge is battling the insurgency while having to get access from outside Niger, which makes it more difficult.

What happened in France’s shock election, and what next?

Christian Edwards
FROM CNN
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 8, 2024

On Sunday night, joy: French voters had, once again, kept the far right out of power. On Monday morning, uncertainty: A hung parliament, shaky alliances and the threat of turbulent years ahead.

President Emmanuel Macron called France’s snap parliamentary election to “clarify” the political situation. But after the shock second-round results, the waters are more muddled than they have been in decades.

While a surge in support for the left-wing New Popular Front (NFP) coalition foiled Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally (RN) party, French politics is now more disordered than it was before the vote.

So, what did we learn last night, who might be France’s next prime minister, and has Macron’s gamble “paid off?”

After leading the first round of voting last Sunday, the RN was closer to the gates of power than ever before, and was on the cusp of forming France’s first far-right government since the collaborationist Vichy regime of World War II.

But after a week of political bargaining, in which more than 200 left-wing and centrist candidates withdrew from the second round in a bid to avoid splitting the vote, the NFP – a cluster of several parties from the extreme left to the more moderate – emerged with the most seats in the decisive second round.

The NFP won 182 seats in the National Assembly, making it the largest group in the 577-seat parliament. Macron’s centrist Ensemble alliance, which trailed in a distant third in the first round, mounted a strong recovery to win 163 seats. And the RN and its allies, despite leading the first round, won 143 seats.

Does that mean the NFP “won” the election? Not quite. Although the coalition has the most seats, it fell well short of the 289 seats required for an absolute majority, meaning France now has a hung

parliament. If this was a victory for anything, it was the “cordon sanitaire,” the principle that mainstream parties must unite to prevent the extreme right from taking office.

It was meant to be a coronation. Crowds of supporters had crammed into election night events at the RN party HQ in Paris and at outposts all over the country, to watch the moment many felt had been decades in the making: Confirmation that their party, and its long-taboo brand of anti-immigrant politics, had won the most seats in the French parliament.

That wasn’t to be. The fervent atmosphere soured as supporters saw the RN had slumped to third place. Jordan Bardella, the 28-year-old leader handpicked by Le Pen to freshen the party’s image and purge it of its racist and antisemitic roots, was dyspeptic. He railed against the “dangerous electoral deals” made between the NFP and Ensemble which had “deprived the French people” of an RN-led government.

Keir Starmer becomes UK prime minister with a sensational victory

For someone often derided as dull, Keir Starmer has delivered a sensational election result.

Starmer led Britain’s Labour Party to a landslide election victory, and on Friday became the country’s 58th prime minister — the first leader from the center-left party to win a U.K. national election since Tony Blair, who won three in a row starting in 1997. It’s the latest reinvention for a man who went from human rights attorney to hard-nosed prosecutor and from young radical to middle-aged pragmatist.

Like Blair, who refashioned the party as “New Labour” in the 1990s, 61-year-old Starmer led Labour to a landslide victory over Rishi Sunak’s Conservative Party in Thursday’s election after dragging the party towards the political middle ground.

— *Jill Lawless, FROM AP NEWS*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 5, 2024

U.S. to again ship 500-pound bombs to Israel, reversing suspension

The United States is resuming a shipment of 500-pound bombs to Israel that had been held up since May, when the Biden administration suspended delivery of two types of large, airdropped weapons amid concerns about the ballooning scale of civilian casualties in Gaza, said U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

The paused delivery included 1,800 2,000-pound bombs, which remain on hold, U.S. officials said. But the supply of 1,700 500-pound bombs will move forward. Despite the pressure campaign and initial hold, the U.S. officials said the 500-pound bombs were never a serious concern for the Biden administration.

— *John Hudson, FROM THE WASHINGTON POST*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

This alliance united West Africa for decades. Now countries are backing out.

Three West African countries have broken away from a 15-member regional bloc that has long ensured free movement of people and goods among its tightly knit economies, further destabilizing an area that is home to nearly 400 million people and threatened by violent insurgents.

The leaders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger last weekend announced their “irrevocable and immediate” withdrawal from the bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, known as ECOWAS. They said that they are creating their own confederation.

— *Elian Peltier, FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

Rwanda says it doesn’t have to repay U.K. for scrapped migration plan

Rwanda does not have to repay the hundreds of millions of pounds it received from Britain as part of a contentious policy aimed at sending migrants on a one-way flight to the Central African nation, two senior Rwandan government officials say. Rwanda’s president had previously suggested that such money could be returned.

As part of the deal, Britain was set to give Rwanda as much as about half a billion pounds in development funding in exchange for taking in the migrants. Britain’s independent public spending watchdog said in early March that the country had already paid Rwanda £220 million, about \$280 million, even though no asylum seekers had been deported to the African nation.

— *Abdi Latif Dahir, FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

A.I. begins ushering in an age of killer robots

In a field on the outskirts of Kyiv, the founders of Vyriy, a Ukrainian drone company, were recently at work on a weapon of the future.

To demonstrate it, Oleksii Babenko, 25, Vyriy’s chief executive, hopped on his motorcycle and rode down a dirt path. Behind him, a drone followed, as a colleague tracked the movements from a briefcase-size computer.

Until recently, a human would have piloted the quadcopter. No longer. Instead, after the drone locked onto its target — Mr. Babenko — it flew itself, guided by software that used the machine’s camera to track him.

— *Paul Mozur & Adam Satariano, FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 2, 2024

More than 40 activists jailed for life in UAE for ‘terror’ offences

A court in the United Arab Emirates has handed life sentences to 43 activists after finding them guilty of terror offences.

State media said the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal convicted the defendants of “creating a terrorist organisation”. United Nations experts and human rights groups have severely criticised the mass trial. Human Rights Watch (HRW) said more than 80 human rights defenders and political dissidents - known as the “UAE 84” - were put on trial.

Last January, the UAE’s prosecutor general referred the defendants to the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal on charges of “establishing another clandestine organisation for the purpose of committing acts of violence and terrorism on UAE soil” known as the “Justice and Dignity Committee”.

— *Thomas Mackintosh, FROM BBC NEWS*
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2024

AN ELLIE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

Music Listening

A memoir about music.

By Ellie Montemayor
PUBLISHER

Content Warning: *This piece contains mentions of drinking, self-harm, and suicidal ideation as well as explicit descriptions of mental illness.*

This article details the many trials and tribulations I faced during sophomore year, as told through my ever-evolving music taste. A collection of the songs and artists featured here can be found in my Spotify playlist, “The Tech” [Music Listening] [https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6VfZms5OX0t35UGsyCmNw5?si=556f973a7c1f9a16].

I turn on my phone and look at the time. It’s 10:09 a.m.

The scene outside the window is grey, cloudy, drab. Silence but for the choked-up whirling of my old table fan, a maddening level of electrical hum, and the occasional groaning creak coming from the depths of the building itself. (It’s a dull brutalist beast, the Student Center; I’d be wallowing in the misery of my existence, too, if I were it. I am, but for different reasons entirely.)

Thirty minutes pass, and I’ve barely done anything. This column is 90 words in. I’ve written two emails, and the world is sitting completely still. The most productive thing I’ve done all day is break in the smoky silver chug I’m glued to—and it’s probably older than me, so I actually can’t even claim that as a win.

I sink into the sofa, propped up only by the unfortunate fact of my physicality; I wish I could keep sinking into the cushions and not have to come back out.

Instead, I do the next best thing—I turn my brain off and turn the volume up. Now playing: “Dead Girls” by Penelope Scott. Baroque punk, they call her music; “pov: indie” as Spotify markets it; I have it listed in my mental library for getting into the killing-yourself kind of mood. (I don’t have any associated songs grouped together in an actual playlist for obvious reasons.)

“I, your name, do solemnly swear / Not to off myself, think about offing myself / Or continue thinking about offing myself / Without reaching out for help after listening to this song,” Penelope Scott says in a spoken opener over a video game-esque synth track. The resigned percussive beat of a song about teen suicide keeps me regulated, in a kind of self-hating way.

It’s kind of calming; my thoughts just minutes prior to a tornado, are now all lined up like some ephemeral attention command. (“Atten-SHUN!” the brain conductor calls out, as a deep depression made manifest swaggers into the mind palace to the beat of the song.) The briefing: a scissor blade or a pencil sharpener?

(I get a text from a friend I’m supposed to have lunch within an hour; she asks to reschedule for another day. Fine—I suppose Penelope Scott stays on for a little bit longer.)

As the track ends and the music shuffles into other songs by Penelope Scott, I start to think about the way my musical interests were shepherded by and, in some ways, kind of stirred up the chaos of my sophomore year.

I started listening to artists like Penelope Scott sometime in October and November of the fall semester as I fell into my sophomore slump. Olivia Rodrigo had released Guts just a month prior, and the alt-pov teen exhilaration that bubbled in me throughout September blew up right in my face as my mental health, my social life, and my will to live all shattered into a million pieces. I was a wreck. My top songs at the time were “Cigarette Ahegao” (literally about the sophomore slump), “American Healthcare” (about the broken healthcare system), and “Dead Girls” (see: the beginning of this column).

It was hard to track how I obsessed over “Look What You Made Me Do” and “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” (Taylor Swift) in-between bouts of screaming. “I’m a perfect all-American b*tch!” (“All-American Bitch,” Olivia Rodrigo) just weeks before, when I was running on a turbulent high. The first couple weeks of the school year were indescribably intense, filled with love and rage; my musical tastes followed this as I tried to drown out the personal issues gnawing away at my in-

sides with songs about intimacy, betrayal, and conviction.

Other songs that marked the start of my second year at MIT include a collection of Chappell Roan and The Orion Experience queer erotica, Kenya Grace’s lost-in-thought synth ballads, and some carryover pieces of The Cranberries from a persisting summer obsession. Noticeable here was an undercurrent of feminine indie-pop that took over my Spotify playlist (everything from Beach Bunny to Al Önder). (I also listened to the punk masterpiece “American Idiot” proper for the first time; we’ll get back to that later.)

Glitz pop and the more experimental corners of the queer-fem indie scene began to intoxicate me as the first third of my sophomore fall came to a close.

At this time, artists like Boy Jr. and Medusa (both of whom I saw live at an intimate bedside show in Somerville some months later) fuelled an ever-soaring psyche. (“Babe, you can see that I’m danger...” Sleep was scarce as I stretched myself far too thin in the next couple of weeks. “Teetering off of the stage, yeah...”.) In retrospect, maybe Medusa was really trying to warn me about myself each time “Kinda Outta Luck” made its way into the queue. (“Sparkling in sequins, say hey-yeah...”)

Because then I went into freefall. (“Time to give in to the kindness of strangers—”)

My mental health abruptly, inexplicably went up in a ball of roaring flame mid-semester. Now playing: “paranoia party” by Frances Forever.

I hated myself, and I hated everyone around me. Now playing: “abcdefu” by GAYLE.

I operated almost purely out of spite; I wasn’t going to let them cast me off a failure. (To past Ellie: who is this “them” you were so hellbent on defying?) Now playing: “i think i want to be alone” by mazie.

It was nothing but dread and despair. “Cigarette Ahegao” eventually became my most-played song of 2023 after coming across it in the back quarter of the year. Penelope Scott, in particular, was (and still is) my go-to for triggering a depressive sink-hole. Day in and day out, I played her music with crap Apple earphones, and the volume turned way too high—

Then I hear the distinctive opening beats of “Kiss Kiss Bang Bang” and I’m snapped out of my self-reflective spiral. It’s nearing 2:00 p.m. I look out the window: still grey and cloudy, but brighter and livelier. The trees sway in the wind.

By this time, it was mid-November, and I was ready for a change of pace.

I was brought back to the real world by a person who soon became very special to me. (See: Dear Ex-Girlfriend, another column from “An Ellie For Your Thoughts.”) She introduced me to what it was like to be goth—I did not look back. My playlists went from titles like “Monstarr,” “H8R,” and “Brittle, Baby!” to “Mary On A Cross,” “Six Candles,” and “Bitch, Please!”

Everything was still too much to handle, but I found an outlet for myself. I was especially fond of gothic rock. For a few months, I felt a kind of stability I hadn’t been able to grasp since the semester began. To be honest, listening to gothic rock was in itself an immense, musically overwhelming stressor, but I needed that kind of suffocation.

I still found space for whimsy in this era. Some of my favorite goth songs were “Bats” and “Lesbian Vampyres From Outer Space” from the goth band Scary Bitches.

Goth music, to me, represented a kind of audacious resilience. Dark and brooding themes accompanied by lyrics centered around personal durability and adaptability really resonated with me. I needed the ability to look at the grim reaper eye-to-eye hole and go, “You don’t bother me.” Groups like Siouxsie and the Banshees, Lebanon Hanover, and Sisters of Mercy gave me that.

At the same time, I was beginning to develop a taste for rap. I had despised the genre in its entirety in the past; for years, I considered it flavorless nonsense. But a breakthrough in some slam pop songs that incorporated elements of hip-hop lyricism made me more receptive, and I started to edge into the genre through female artists like Doja Cat and Megan Thee Stallion.

Over the next few months, I would slow-

ly begin to delve into more niche aspects of the rap genre—although for some time, I still kept to pop-styled female artists. By December, I was keeping myself afloat through boss bitch songs like “Area Codes” (Kali) and “Princess Diana” (Ice Spice feat. Nicki Minaj). It wasn’t until April that I embraced more masculine figures in the scene: “C’est La Vie” (Yung Gravy feat. bbno\$ and Rich Brian) and “edamame” (bbno\$ feat. Rich Brian) were my gateway drugs, skyrocketing into the top two most-played positions in my Spotify that month. (I still prefer to keep to more underground artists in my rap selections.)

I had ended December visiting Maryland to see family, and that went about as well as one would expect... except miles, miles worse. I flew out a few days after New Year’s from DC to Las Vegas. I spent the next few days there in a cold hotel. Sparing the details, I crawled back to Boston battered and bruised; my mental health once again was spiraling out of control.

So, in January, I needed another transformation. I had already gotten hooked on a few punk rock standouts like “Teenagers” (My Chemical Romance) and “The Middle” (Jimmy Eat World); it was easier to digest than the dark overtones of goth music, which is a deeply hard pill to swallow, and I pretty quickly identified with the self-deterministic ethic that punk centers on. While goth was about embracing the darkness, staring death in the face, and daring it to do its worst—punk was about rejecting the darkness, punching death in the gut, and telling it to go f**k itself.

Mid-January, I still clung to the goth moniker; my aesthetic and sentiment were rapidly turning the tide.

An alarm rings, and I’m back to the present.

It’s now 6 a.m. the next day—I had spent the last dozen-and-a-half hours in a deep pit of depression; I had nothing scheduled for the day, nothing that could make me put on the face I wear around others to pretend like everything’s okay.

I look out the window. The sky is smoky. Many of the buildings on the horizon are hazy with morning fog. I take a swig of the rum sitting next to me. It hits hard. I take another swig.

My mind is racing, my fingers rushing across the keyboard. I shuffle through an array of Green Day songs as the seconds tick by. I’m back on a high, another casualty of my unfettered mood, volleying back and forth from the lowest lows to the highest highs.

I walk on the tiled floor barefoot to get something from the other side of the room. I couldn’t care less. I’ve done this dance before.

Today, right now and right here, at 6 a.m. on Friday morning, I make a vow to take on the world.

I told myself that too, end-of-January. I was trying on an array of different labels, finding myself and losing myself over and over again, and gradually losing touch with the world around me.

I turned that around when I embraced punk rock. Fast, loud, and aggressive. The rock-driven power ballads of the punk genre stank of revolution—and I was first on the train.

With punk, I wasn’t denying myself my humanity. (“I swallowed my pride, and I choked on my faith—”)

I was letting it consume me. (“I’ve given my heart and my soul—”)

Letting it fuel me. (“I’ve broken my fingers and lied through my teeth—”)

Instead of wallowing in my anger and my hate, I used it. (“The pillar of damage control—”)

I was going to take on the world. (“I’ve been to the edge, and I’ve thrown the bouquet—”)

I had stared death in the face. (“Of flow-ers left over from the grave—”)

Death can go f**k itself. (“I’ve sat in the waiting room wasting my time—”)

I write my own damn destiny. (“And waiting for judgment day—”)

(“I praise liberty / The freedom to obey / Is the song that strangles me / Well, don’t cross the line.”)

I developed my now-familiar aesthetic days before the start of spring semester classes: coal-black leather jacket, red

newsboy cap to cover my wavy black-and-orange hair, black-and-red flannel wrapped around my waist, faded black cargo pants, and black-and-orange hiking boots.

The next few months, sophomore spring, became the most intense months of my life. Suffice it to say, the spring semester changed me, for better or for worse. My indoctrination into this sense of being meant that good days were truly phenomenal and bad days were absolutely abysmal. Punk music meant that I was throwing myself right into the worst parts of me: on occasion it would lead to the most memorable moments—days filled to the brim with work meetings and endless parties, shopping sprees that ate up most of my income, and a week-long bout of sleepless labor in hijacking another university’s newspaper for April Fool’s Day (see: MIT-Caltech Joke Issue)—and at times it pushed me off the edge into the deepest depressions. (See: March 13th. That’s a story for another day.)

In March, my three most-played songs were “Shoplifter” (Green Day), “Teenage Rebellion” (Sarah Barrios), and “American Idiot” (Green Day). Six of the other top 10 songs of that month were from my punk playlist. (The only one that wasn’t was “Stupid With Love,” from the Mean Girls soundtrack—I’m still a hopeless romantic, okay!) In April, my top songs were “Obsessed” (Olivia Rodrigo), “American Idiot” (Green Day), and “I Disagree” (Poppy). Green Day was my third most-played artist in April and my first in May.

At times, it felt like my emotions were literally pulled right from my playlists. Bears in Trees would call apathy “boring.” *You’re right—I do want to feel alive*, I would respond. Change to the next track and “Love the Subhuman Self” synth-metal sounds would fill me with relentless determination. Then I would hear Jimmy Eat World and calm right back down to a good sustained high, knowing that everything would be alright.

The songs I listened to both helped me come to terms with my story and urged me to burn it in hellfire. April and May saw the worst of this rapid, unchecked cycling. It was maddening. It’s difficult to encapsulate in writing what those two months were like for me. Each day was a different fight entirely, with my music straddling both sides of the war between me and myself.

On my good days, it was punk. On my bad ones, it was goth. At my worst, it was Penelope Scott.

Music, to me, is an outlet. Across the stress and strain of sophomore year, all of my trials and tribulations were—sometimes to a terrifying degree—mirrored and encapsulated by the songs I listened to. Music is a driving force of my mood, pushing me into a particular interpretation of myself, deeply attached to the sonic and lyrical themes of the specific song that comes up next in the queue. It is also derived from my mood and the songs I choose to define myself with in the future based on how well they capture me in the now.

Another alarm rings. It’s 9 a.m. now. I look out the window to one towering building in particular that just hours earlier had been enshrouded in a sea of fog—its perch looking over the heart of Boston concealed to it by forces unknown—and see it bright as day. It can return to its solitary charge, sleeplessly watching over the city, once more.

The sky is still cloudy, but I can start to see patches of blue.

The playlist shuffles to the next track, and a reviving metallic riff reverberates through the room. I think to myself that the Student Center itself, which for the last day had played unwitting host to my internal madness, can hear it too.

The past 24 hours found me in a really deep, in parts painful, reflection of the past nine months. I took myself through a roller-coaster of a ride across these two semesters and dug up parts of myself that I had hoped to leave behind.

It’s alright, though. Because I’m going to take on the world.

I zip up my leather jacket and don my newsboy cap, plug in my earphones and turn up the punk rock song currently playing, and head out of the room.

A Seven Nation Army couldn’t hold me back.”

VIVIAN'S REFLECTIONS

Last Night

what will I remember about MIT?

By Vivian Hir
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

I have only pulled an all-nighter twice in my life. The first time was last May, when I talked with two friends in the French House kitchen until 7 a.m., something that I didn’t expect to happen; I seldom had conversations that went on for hours. The second time happened on the last day of May this year because it was the last night for me to spend time with my senior friends before moving out.

Unlike my first all-nighter, I kind of expected the second one to happen. Everyone was leaving the next day, which meant that there was very little time left to spend time together. I knew that a late-night conversation would mess up my sleep schedule, but I wanted to spend the last hours with my senior friends. Although I would get to see some of them on campus this summer, the late-night conversation would help bring about closure, a nice way to conclude the academic year before the start of my summer internship.

In the days leading up to my second all-nighter, I experienced this weird feeling that time was running out at a rate faster than I’d like. Perhaps this warped perception of time came from being the only non-senior French House resident out of the eleven who stayed for commencement. Hearing my senior friends talk about their last semesters and futures made me enter the mindset of a soon-to-be graduate, even though I have one more year of undergrad.

Watching my friends graduate and say goodbye felt like a simulation of Senior Week for me, except I did it one year ahead. I saw them process their last week as a list of lasts. Last time hanging out with podmates [1]. Last walk to Symphony Hall. Last night in French House. I didn’t need to complete everything on my bucket list now or say goodbye yet, but I couldn’t resist thinking about how little time I had left in college.

Independence Day celebrations with annual Boston fireworks show

By Ellie Montemayor
PUBLISHER

On the evening of July 4, thousands of spectators gathered around the Charles River esplanade to watch the annual Boston Independence Day fireworks show.

In a celebration of the country’s founding, US flags were held or hung all across the city all that day, and a sentiment of patriotism followed as families hoping to catch a suitable view of the fireworks show flocked to the part of Charles River by Harvard bridge, where a barge carrying the fireworks was sat.

Throughout the afternoon, various contingents of city and state police officers as well as uniformed military personnel were stationed in the Harvard Bridge area to set up for the closely-monitored event. Harvard Bridge and the surrounding streets were closed for vehicular traffic ahead of the event. By mid-evening, the esplanade was packed with attendees, some of whom were dressed in red-white-and-blue regalia. One prime spot for locals was Killian Court, where dozens of families gathered on picnic blankets.

The show began some minutes after 10:30 p.m., with fireworks being launched from a barge on the Charles River. The show lasted for about half an hour and featured a dizzying array of lights and explosions, including images of what appeared to be a set of paratroopers, a set of smiley faces, and explosions colored red, white, and blue.

Being situated right by the fireworks show, many members of the MIT community remaining on-campus for the summer enjoyed the evening’s festivities and welcomed the opportunity to celebrate the country and its meaning.

“To me, the 4th of July is a time to reflect on what it means to be American,” Howard Beck ’25 said. “Part of this is being thankful for the privileges we have. For example, living here affords us vast resources, safety, and many opportunities—even such as going to MIT.”

The conversation didn’t start until after midnight because everyone was busy packing the remaining items in the French House kitchen. After moving the boxes to the storage room, I decided to return to the kitchen so I could hang out with seven seniors who decided to stay awake instead of going to bed.

We played hot seat until sometime around 3:30 in the morning, the eight of us in a circle, having conversations that we wouldn’t have over the dinner table. Instead of asking hard questions right away, we chose to start with simple questions at the start, then ramp up the intensity ever so slightly after each round. While we called the game “hot seat,” all we did was ask questions that we never got the chance to ask before, having vulnerable and engaging conversations to understand one another better.

I lost track of time when I played hot seat with my friends, answering burning questions they had for me. At the same time, I learned a lot about my friends that I never knew before, such as relationships with their family and significant others. Other times, I laughed when my friends shared funny and entertaining stories, from desperately finding a bathroom in Pittsburgh to having too many Long Island iced teas.

By 3:30 a.m., a lot of people were tired and decided to say goodnight and end the conversation. Instead of going to sleep, I decided to finish packing. In hindsight, leaving a few items till the end was a horrible decision, but I thought I would be done packing within an hour. I was wrong. I kept packing until I saw sunlight outside of my window. It was around 5:20 a.m., and I was surprised that I was still awake despite feeling exhausted. Wanting to take a break from packing, I decided to bring a bag of clothes to the donation drive by the parking lot.

After putting my clothes in the donation bin, I couldn’t stop but marvel at how peaceful my surroundings were. Instead of hearing

sounds coming from traffic and construction, I heard quiet chirps from the birds. Besides a few early risers running along the Charles, I was the only person on Memorial Drive. I loved the chill that made my skin tingle, a sensation that energized me. Being awake at this time of day when everyone else was asleep was rare for me, and so was seeing the sunrise. My initial plan was to finish packing, but I didn’t want to miss this opportunity of watching the sunrise.

I don’t know why, but I decided to run towards the sun as if it were my last sunrise by the Charles River. It wasn’t even my last day at MIT, but when would I get up to see a beautiful sunrise at such an early time again? Seeing the sunrise while the world stood still felt like a closing scene from a coming-of-age movie, an event so significant that I wanted to savor the moment in its entirety. I kept running until I reached the Longfellow Bridge, then stopping to soak in everything around me: the yellow hue of the sun illuminating the blue sky, the crystal-clear water glistening in the sunlight, the tiny cars on Storrow Drive moving along the Charles River. I didn’t want this moment to end as the sky became brighter—I chased the sun to enjoy the present even longer.

But I knew that the sunrise was ephemeral and that, eventually, the world would wake up, so I returned to my dorm. I could have gone to bed right after I finished packing around 8, but I didn’t go to bed until I finished delivering The Tech newspapers at 9. After sleeping for less than two hours, I woke up to move my boxes and luggage. I thought I would have time to say some parting words to my friends and embrace them, but the move turned out to be much more chaotic than I expected. All my attention was focused on moving out before noon, and the whole process felt rushed. Even though I will probably see my friends again in the future, I regret not saying a proper goodbye to them.

On the car ride from New House to my

family friend’s house in Quincy, I thought about the conversations I had in the past 24 hours, from the French House 50th reunion in the afternoon to the late-night conversation that ended a few hours ago. After meeting so many alums from various class years and observing the conversations my senior friends had, I kept asking myself, “What will I remember about MIT?”

Although a bulk of the MIT experience comes from taking hard classes and completing challenging assignments, I believe that what I will remember most are the friends I made here. I am not even done with my undergraduate career yet, but I have already forgotten so much of what I have learned here—the reactions on my 5.13 psets, the concepts from 8.02 learning sequences, the list goes on. What I have remembered, however, are the memories I made outside of academics.

I won’t forget the excitement of making new friends at FPPO and REX, a time when I wanted to meet everyone. I still think of the instant friendships I made with the Caltech students who visited The Tech office on a Thursday night, talking until it was almost midnight. I remember the deep conversation I had with people in the ESP retreat, learning about the diverse backgrounds they came from and the challenges they faced at MIT. In short, I have made countless memories with many people in various contexts.

I acknowledge that MIT has been a stressful place for me, an institute that has lowered my self-esteem and barraged me with imposter syndrome. Despite this, I remain optimistic that many years later, I will look back and focus on fond memories I had here, recollections of being on the cusp of adulthood. Like the alums, I will think back to my college days with a tinge of nostalgia and reminiscence.

[1] A pod is a group of up to six students who lived together during the 2021 COVID spring semester.



KATE LU - THE TECH

Crowds gather along the Charles River to view 4th of July fireworks, Thursday, July 4.

This year was Beck’s third time watching the Boston fireworks show, having seen it in the summers after freshman and sophomore year as well. Beck described the raucous and thrilling scene along Memorial Drive, where he watched the show, and the joy brought by the coming-together of various Institute and city-wide communities. “There’d be groups dancing and singing until the fireworks started,” Beck said, also mentioning MIT Spinning Arts which brought LED pois and staves to perform with.

Correspondence from Associate Dean of Fraternities, Sororities, & Independent Living Groups Liz Jason sent to all off-campus living groups ahead of July 4 described limitations on the hosting of social events for Independence Day celebrations. Jason noted in the email that “no events were submitted for approval for the 4th of July”—as all social events over the summer are considered Special Events under Institute policy and thus re-

quire advance approval from the Associate Dean—“which means there cannot be any social events this week.”

The email also noted that all FSILGs found hosting an unregistered social event would be referred to the Committee on Discipline (COD) and that in general, FSILGs with approved roof decks are “not permitted to host social events on them.”

Some off-campus living groups nonetheless hosted gatherings in their living spaces and on their rooftops—as did several city tenants with roof decks—or otherwise celebrated the festivities with grilling events.

Some rooftops across the city, despite a statewide ban on the use of fireworks by private citizens, were also observed setting off their own fireworks during the event.

Other MIT affiliates took to the upper floors of various Institute buildings to watch the spectacle, with some campus groups and departments hosting watch

parties for their members.

This was Maia DeMeyer ’26’s first time watching the Boston fireworks show; DeMeyer described a level of gratitude for the largely responsible firework use across the city. “It’s crazy in my hometown—at least a dozen injuries and the streets are filled with smoke,” DeMeyer said. “I’m very grateful that Massachusetts law enforces responsible firework use so that we can enjoy their beauty safely and with minimal disruption.”

As the fireworks show ended at 11:00 p.m., an eruption of cheers rang across the city.

“To me, [this is] a time to reflect on current struggles Americans face, and also to remember the darkest parts of our imperfect history. This is a day to think of not only the good of America, but also to acknowledge that we must always fight for a better country and society, and to learn from and never repeat our worst mistakes,” Beck said.

THEATRE REVIEW

Baseball as an act of joy; baseball as an act of rebellion

The Huntington Theatre Company presents the story of an American pioneer

Toni Stone

Written and directed by
Lydia R. Diamond

The Huntington Theatre
May 17 - June 16

By Nicolas Suter

It's likely that you, like I, had never heard of Toni Stone, the first woman to play professional baseball. In 1953, she made history by joining the Indianapolis Clowns of the Negro Leagues, the highest level of play accessible to most Black Americans prior to integration. Huntington's production of Toni Stone tells the story of her life and career and serves to ensure that future generations will know her name.

In the opening monologue, Toni (Jennifer Mogbock) warns us that she won't be telling her story in order; indeed, Toni Stone is a play largely told in vignettes. Broadly, these vignettes tell two stories: that of her baseball career in the Indianapolis Clowns and that of her personal life. Despite skipping from subplot to subplot, non-linearly in time, Toni Stone avoids feeling disjointed by using Toni's passion for the game of baseball as a common thread.

Through Toni's baseball career, we meet the eclectic ball players filling out the Clowns' roster. Meanwhile, we learn about her personal life and meet Alberga (Johnathan Kitt), her love interest, and Millie (Stanley Andrew Jackson), her confidant.

The cast is all-Black, with a few white roles, such as Toni's childhood Irish-Catholic pastor and the owner of the Clowns, who is being doubled by actors playing ballplayers. The few other female roles, such as Toni's mother and Millie, are played by male actors. This choice has the effect of making Toni's position as the only woman in a world dominated by men more visceral.

The strengths of Toni Stone are in marrying the willful, joyous nature of the protagonist with the darker themes of sexism and racism in the 1950s. We see that all the ballplayers, and none more so than Toni, are happy to play ball, even if in a segregated league. They dole out humor freely, so much so that a whole scene is dedicated to yo-mama jokes. Yet this joy is played out against a backdrop of fear: fear of being denied a bed by racist hotel managers, of being pelted by onlookers after the final out is recorded. Even baseball itself, as it was played in the Negro Leagues, was often tinged with a sinister hint of minstrelsy, a symptom of deep American racism. Minstrelsy and its attendant notions of African-Americans as somehow other could too easily be written off as just singing and dancing. Toni Stone forces its audience to confront these profound forms of hatred.

Yet the play triumphs in portraying Toni as a hero, not a victim. Throughout her struggles, Toni's passion for the game shines through. Her joie de vivre is infectious. Even her struggles develop her character, forcing her to lean on others while trusting herself rather than breaking her spirit.

Toni Stone would remind you that she once got a hit off Satchel Paige. I believe Toni Stone will be a hit here in Boston.



People dance at the 2024 Cambridge Dance Party on Friday, June 28.



A person breakdances at the 2024 Cambridge Dance Party on Friday, June 28.

BOOK REVIEW

A thrilling read about China's race to save the imperial treasures in WWII: Fragile Cargo by Adam Brookes

Fragile Cargo will change the way you look at Chinese artifacts

★★★★★

Fragile Cargo:

The World War II Race to Save the Treasures of China's Forbidden City

By Adam Brookes

Atria Books - Simon & Schuster

October 2023

By Vivian Hir
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

When we look at Chinese artifacts in an art museum, we often don't consider the logistical challenges that come with safely transporting these objects, whether it is packaging or long distances. In *Fragile Cargo*, however, Adam Brookes encourages readers to look at China's precious art collection from a different angle, specifically the

complicated transport of these delicate objects from the Forbidden City to the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

Brookes presents a captivating story of museum curators who embarked on a difficult journey to save China's imperial treasures from the Japanese during the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945. Written in 2023, The book goes into detail about the events that unfold, from the founding of the museum in 1925 to the shipment of goods to Taiwan in 1949. *Fragile Cargo* centers around the following major curators and archivists involved in the planning and execution of the transport: Ma Heng, Na Chih-Liang, Ouyang Daoda, and Chuang Yen. Ma was the main leader who oversaw the transport and storage of the imperial treasures, though each person played an important role in the journey.

In the book, Brookes argues that a lot about the Second Sino-Japanese War can be learned by reading about the curators' tireless efforts to protect China's finest artworks.

The Japanese invasion and occupation of China influenced Ma Heng and the other curators to plan three convoluted routes (Northern, Central, and Southern) for the transport of the imperial collections inland to avoid the Japanese.

Another important point Brookes

makes in *Fragile Cargo* is that World War II was truly a global war. However, Western media tends to focus on the U.S. and Europe while overlooking what happened in Asia during this period. By covering this fascinating historical event, Brookes helps raise awareness of WWII in China for English readers and does a wonderful job engaging with history by using an interesting structure.

The book not only revolves around the museum curators' wartime journeys, but also weaves in events that happened during this time. Some parts of the book may have required a bit of the author's imagination, like the prelude describing a day in the life of Qianlong (1736-1795), a notable emperor in the Qing Dynasty. These depictions, however, are historically accurate because the author relies a lot on primary sources, especially diary entries of museum curators like Na Chih-Liang and Ouyang Daoda.

Besides diary entries, Brookes also uses a lot of local news articles written from the 1930s to 1940s to provide readers with a detailed understanding of the many events throughout the Second Sino-Japanese War. In addition, Brookes incorporates secondary sources to provide readers with context regarding the history of important art pieces in the journey, like the Early Snow on

the River (江行初雪图), a famous landscape painting from the 10th century. In short, Brookes employs a wide range of sources that serve as solid historical evidence and help readers learn about this history through various lenses.

The book could have explored more, however, what happened to the artifacts that stayed behind in mainland China after the founding of the PRC. Although Brookes delved deep into Ma Heng's life under Communist rule at the end of the book, there wasn't much about the fate of the Palace Museum in Beijing after Ma's death in 1955. Despite this minor gap, *Fragile Cargo* is a thorough and well-researched book overall.

As a whole, *Fragile Cargo* was fascinating because it goes into great depth about WWII in China from a different perspective by focusing on the wartime journey of the imperial collections. The book felt like an adventurous and thrilling read while being educational at the same time. After reading *Fragile Cargo*, my perception of China's imperial artifacts has changed significantly. Now, I consider how many complex factors go into ensuring that the delivery and storage of these precious pieces are safe. The curators' tactful planning was impressive, especially during an unstable period characterized by financial hardships and few resources.

STARTUP SPOTLIGHT

OmicsWeb: start-up co-founded by MIT professor launches bioinformatics copilot

"Research assistant in a box" will be available to the public and free for academics and nonprofit organizations.

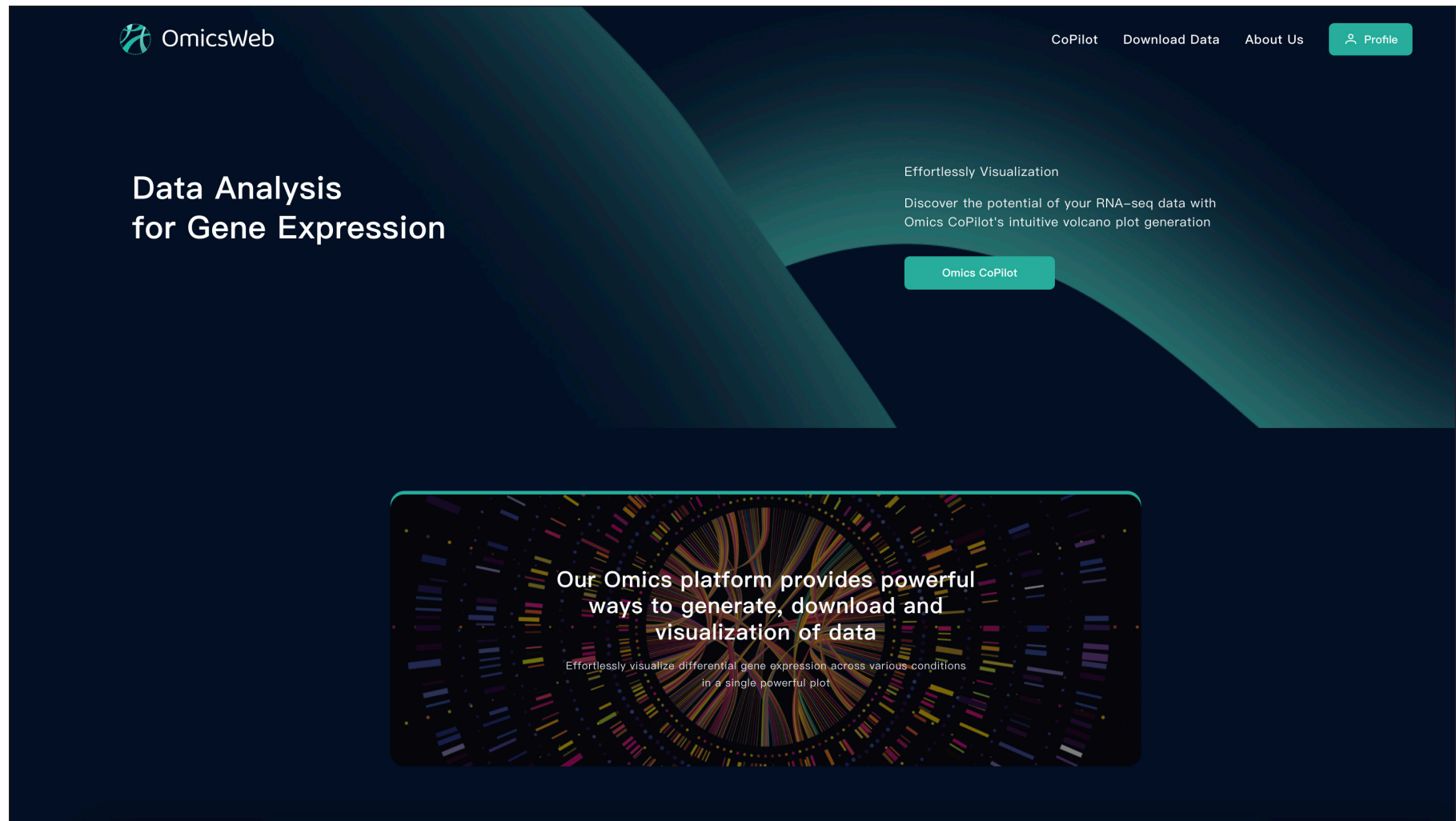


PHOTO COURTESY OF ORION LI, BIOSTATE AI SCIENTIST

OmicsWeb Co-pilot is available on Biostate AI's website.

By Karie Shen
SCIENCE EDITOR

The journey of turning data into a scientific story is one of the quintessential processes of discovery and research. OmicsWeb, a bioinformatics copilot launched on July 8 by a start-up headed by former MIT and Rice University faculty, might serve as the guide for many journeys with RNA sequencing data. OmicsWeb, like ChatGPT, is a conversational virtual assistant. It takes in genomic data, namely RNA sequencing, and returns an analysis with prompts as simple as, "What is this data about?" In turn, the user will gain information about the characteristics and significance of genes present in the dataset, as well as obtain visual representations of the data, such as volcano plots, all without having to actually look at the dataset.

OmicsWeb is trained on 2% of all the rat RNA sequencing data ever generated - data that Biostate AI is making open access for worldwide use. This corresponds to several terabytes of bulk RNAseq data, or about 3,400 samples. As of its launch, OmicsWeb is free for academics and nonprofit organizations.

The start-up behind OmicsWeb, Biostate AI, was co-founded in June 2023 by Ashwin Gopinath, former MIT Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering, and David Zhang, former Rice University Assistant Professor of Bioengineering. Gopinath, who described himself as "stumbling around from different topics" throughout his career, previously founded a proteomics company, Palamedix, whose goal was to scale single-molecule

protein quantification. His research in large language models (LLMs) centered on machine-based introspection: how to take the output of an LLM, have it reflect on its own thinking, and then refine its output. Zhang, who previously founded two start-ups in cancer diagnostics and PCR instruments, saw an opportunity when ChatGPT rose into the public eye near the end of 2022. "This is now the right time to build a biology AI," he said.

Thus, the two Caltech labmates became co-founders of Biostate AI. The start-up comprises around 15 full-time employees, including Orion Li '24.

Li explains that OmicsWeb is not Biostate AI's main product but rather a serendipitous result of their broader goal: to build an AI personally tailored to one's health needs. "Your personal AI will know how your health will evolve over time," Zhang said. Is your body on track to get a cold? Will your head hurt tomorrow because of that all-nighter? Are you going to have a heart attack next week? These cases can be particularly important, Zhang says, because "there's a golden 60-90 minute window in which you can rescue someone from death, but if you miss that period, if you happen to be on an airplane, then you might die."

The term "biostate" refers to the body's biological state, which is informed by the DNA, RNA, proteins, and other biological components within us. Traditionally, this data is collected just once for analysis, providing a snapshot of information at a given point. However, in order to predict a person's health trajectory, Biostate AI wants to insert the dimension of time.

"There, the temporal data becomes more important," Gopinath stated. If the AI predicts an adverse reaction based on the biological data, then the course of action can be stopped before harming the patient.

These types of temporal studies are not completely new to the research scene. What's new, Gopinath stated, is adding the dimension of time to an already complex analysis of multiple biological components, including DNA, RNA, and proteins. This increases the number of assays required, which is where AI minimizes the burden.

As with many AI pursuits, refining these predictions requires vast amounts of data and time for analysis. Offering low-cost data collection services and creating OmicsWeb was their solution. Li stated that Biostate AI offers to conduct experiments for research teams at a lower cost than many competitors. "It's usually a factor of three lower than everybody else," Zhang states. In exchange, Biostate AI uses the generated data to train its AI models. OmicsWeb then cuts down on analysis time. Rather than waiting for a bioinformatician to handle the analysis, biologists can draw conclusions from the data without writing a single line of code.

It's a "research assistant in a box," Gopinath said. "It became very clear that we are not the only ones who will make use of this. So we decided, 'let's open this up to the world.'"

Li says that researchers across the field will benefit from OmicsWeb, including seasoned researchers looking to accelerate their analysis, newcomers unfamiliar

with bioinformatic analyses, and biologists with limited programming experience. "This will be a tool for them to basically flatten out the skill difference," Li said. "We do want people to get into this research area. Better, faster, and more fluent."

At MIT, Li majored in Course 6-3 but became interested in biology after taking the 7.01X GIR. Though biology is a chaotic system, "there are so many relationships that we can discover and eventually forge," he stated. He was a sophomore when ChatGPT came out and was studying language processing in school. "I didn't know that AI [in genomics] was a thing before I came across Biostate AI. It introduced me to this entire field, and I'm grateful for that." The opportunity was enough to convince him to graduate a year early from MIT to pursue AI research at Biostate AI full-time. Having a role with more independence and opportunities for diverse tasks was exciting for Li.

Zhang supports this mindset while leading the start-up and states, "The benefit of autonomy is that people really learn to grow." He adds, "The opposite of a good idea is another good idea, and the opposite of a bad idea is common sense."

He recognizes many students' concerns that AI will become a saturated field but argues that "when you have a lot of massive changes, there's the most opportunity. With the advent of AI becoming mature, there's going to be a lot of things becoming available now that were never available before."

"Now, it's the time to take advantage of these opportunities."

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A Faculty Response to Prof. Michel DeGraff

By Senior Faculty of the Department of Linguistics

Publisher's Note: *The following letter to the editor addresses a prior guest column ("Is MIT's #MindHandHeart...") authored by Professor of Linguistics Michel DeGraff and published on June 13, 2024. This response was signed by several senior faculty members of the Department of Linguistics in response to an ongoing dispute between DeGraff and the Department of Linguistics regarding a proposed Fall 2024 seminar that touches upon the Israel-Palestine conflict.*

We write as senior members of the Linguistics faculty in response to comments of a personal nature that appeared in four paragraphs of a recent (June 13) Guest Column by Prof. Michel DeGraff of our department. We want to express our strongest possible support of our colleague and department head Prof. Danny Fox, who was attacked in this column.

Prof. DeGraff finds himself at odds with a negative decision of his department concerning a proposed Fall seminar entitled "Language and linguistics for decolonization and liberation and

for peace and community-building from the river to the sea in Palestine and Israel to the mountaintops of Haiti and beyond." We believe that his account of events does not accurately characterize the process leading to this decision.

Although we do not believe that this is an appropriate venue to discuss the details, we do think it is important to clarify that the decision concerning the proposed seminar has been the result of a course approval process involving a proposal, a committee, and discussion by the department as a whole. The decision did not stem from our Head's nationality and political beliefs (which, as it happens, Prof. DeGraff's column characterizes misleadingly), and to imply that it did is an unwarranted personal attack.

Sincerely,

Adam Albright
Kai von Fintel
Edward Flemming
Suzanne Flynn
Martin Hackl
Sabine Iatridou
David Pesetsky
Norvin Richards
Donca Steriade

OPEN LETTER

An Open Letter To The MIT Committee on Discipline

By Kate Pearce

Some portions of the actual COD statement have been edited or removed.

To the Committee on Discipline,

I am writing to contextualize my involvement in the Scientists Against Genocide encampment and to provide clarity regarding my actions during the week of May 6.

My primary motive for participating in the encampment was an acute sense of moral outrage; for eight months, the civilians of Gaza have faced ceaseless air strikes, manufactured famines, and endless slaughter. This comes in the context of decades of land grabs, surveillance, and movement restrictions. I came to MIT with vaguely-defined ambitions of "making the world a better place," but I soon faced the reality that the institution I idolized builds tools that destroy the livelihoods of many. I am disheartened that MIT researchers undertake projects like "Autonomous Robotic Swarms" and "Planning and Sensing Algorithms for Underwater Persistent Monitoring" for the Israeli Ministry of Defense when such research is used to prop up an apartheid regime. "Academic freedom" is used to justify the continuance of these projects -- what about the academic freedom of scholars in Gaza, where every university has been bombed?

MIT's acceptance of \$11 million in research funding from the IDF since 2015 is disgraceful; the notion that I ought to sit quietly and ask politely for change seemed nonsensical. As a student, I have little power other than where I place my body; regardless, I am compelled to act in whatever ways I can.

The choice of an encampment as a form of protest was not arbitrary; the tents on Kresge Lawn served as a stark reminder of the 1.7 million people internally displaced in the Gaza Strip. The encampment's visibility was purposeful; MIT should not be insulated from the happenings of the outside. If you are engineering projects that shape humanity's future, you must bear witness to the state of the world.

I emphasize that my usual role in the encampment was ensuring the safety of my peers. I took on many marshaling shifts and I was trained in de-escalation tactics. I connected newcomers with friendly faces and needed resources, I consoled my friends as they faced ceaseless harassment, and I coordinated with community members to arrange for leftover food to be donated to local shelters. I have compiled job resources for student activists and volunteered with local mutual aid organizations because everyone should have what they need. Practicing values like community care is more important than merely professing them.

These actions stand in stark contrast to MIT's administrative choices. Despite the use of "student safety" as a justification, many of these actions, particularly evictions, are clearly punitive rather than protective in nature. I struggle to understand how forcing students into homelessness promotes campus safety; moreover, these kinds of measures necessitate the student organizing they were intended to deter in the first place. If MIT will not protect its students, we must protect each other. Everyone needs a roof over their heads.

Cynthia Barnhart's statement during a faculty meeting on May 17th analogizing interim suspensions issued for student protestors to those issued for sexual assault perpetrators is particularly troubling. Violations of bureaucratic rules do not nearly equate violations of others' bodies, so this comparison is simply egregious. Moreover, this feels particularly distasteful given the harassment that myself and many female-presenting members of the encampment faced from pro-Israel counterprotestors. I've had people scream in my face that I deserve to be anally raped, that they'd like to use my long hair to choke me, that a trip to Gaza would "make me straight". I disengage and I do not take these things personally, but I do not deny that these experiences were degrading and humiliating.

I despise MIT's narrative of the encampment as a hostile environment -- to be honest, the reason I spent so much time there in the first place was the extraordinary support I received from the SAGE community. Local grandmothers delivered hot meals for us. When I spoke, people did not talk over me.

To be frank, most of the hostilities from my perspective came from counter demonstrators; I do not care about personal insults, but some actions reflected a disregard for human dignity that I find inexcusable, and the fact that MIT has not sanctioned any of these acts despite IDHR reports and administrative pleas boggles me. I include the following personal anecdote as an illustration.

During the beginning of the encampment, my peers and I created a memorial to the thirty-four thousand Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks since October 7th. Each death was represented as a single tally mark; it took three days and many hands to make. This process was sobering, each tally mark a life as complex as yours or mine. Whether they are mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, doctors, journalists, or students, they are casualties of a genocide so extensive that the loss of their life can only be represented as a small stripe of red paint.

On May 8, an undergraduate student defaced this memorial with an Israeli flag. Their group jeered, laughed, and filmed. A later



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communication from MIT only detailed the fact that someone put a red handprint on the Israeli flag that was over the memorial.

Whatever injustices we face as student activists pale in comparison to the atrocities inflicted daily on Gazan civilians. IDF soldiers have posted footage of themselves riding the bikes of children whose homes were destroyed in air strikes and posing with the underwear of Palestinian women. I have a friend whose entire neighborhood has been destroyed by air strikes. Scholars estimate that the death toll in Gaza could be up to 180,000 once indirect deaths (e.g. disease, malnutrition) are accounted for. Destruction on this scale should never be normalized.

"The principle that people should not kill other people is more important than notions of freedom to do any kind of research one might want to undertake." -- MIT anti-Vietnam-war protestor, 04/22/1969.

I do not see myself as a radical nor my values as particularly controversial. During the Lobby 7 sit-in on May 6, I carried a sign with the phrase "All Children Are Our Children". The screams and cries of terrified elementary schoolers ringing out into the night air before fading to silence should never be a scene of daily life. I believe that as scientists

at one of the most powerful universities in the world, we must hold ourselves accountable for the impacts of our research, and that we are obligated to disrupt the construction of weapons of war.

The actions during the week of May 6 reflected these beliefs; stalled negotiations left us seeking other routes. Administrators rejected a proposal to apply the red-yellow-green-light system described in the 2020 Suri Report to research funding without providing a counter argument; escalation seemed necessary.

I understand that MIT has the full right to enforce its rules and policies; I do not entertain notions about being on "the right side of history". This is not about me. Children in Gaza are missing limbs and mothers.

My peers are brilliant, insightful, and steadfast. I am honored to know them. They are fully capable of building a liberated world; I hope they have the courage.

Kate Pearce '27 studies urban planning and computer science and is a member of the MIT Coalition for Palestine. The views expressed in this letter are hers alone and do not necessarily reflect those of any MIT-affiliated organization.

OPINION POLICY

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Dissents are the signed opinions of editorial board members choosing to publish their disagreement with the editorial.

Letters to the editor, columns, and editorial cartoons are written by individuals and represent the opinion of the author, not necessarily that of the newspaper. Electronic submissions are encouraged and should be sent to letters@tech.mit.edu. Hard copy submissions should be addressed to *The Tech*, P.O. Box 391529, Cambridge, Mass. 02139-7029, or sent by interdepartmental mail to Room W20-483. All submissions are due by noon four (4) calendar days before the date of publication.

Letters, columns, and cartoons must bear the authors' signatures, addresses, and phone numbers. Unsigned letters will not be accepted. *The Tech* reserves the right to edit or condense letters; shorter letters will be given higher priority. Once submitted, all letters

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The Tech's telephone number is (617) 253-1541. Email is the easiest way to reach any member of our staff. If you are unsure whom to contact, send mail to tt-general@mit.edu, and it will be directed to the appropriate person. You can reach the Executive Committee by emailing tt-exec@mit.edu, and the Opinion Editor through tt-opinion-editors@mit.edu. Please send press releases, requests for coverage, and information about errors that call for correction to tt-news-editors@mit.edu. Letters to the editor should be sent to tt-opinion-editors@mit.edu. *The Tech* can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://thetech.com>.

GUEST COLUMN

On the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of Vannevar Bush's Passing

A letter to the editor about former MIT Chairman and Dean of Engineering Dr. Vannevar Bush.

By Rick Sheridan

An approaching anniversary date of former MIT Chairman and Dean of Engineering Dr. Vannevar Bush prompts me to write today. As his sole biographer has just highlighted in *IEEE Spectrum*, this Friday will mark 50 years since the Jun. 28, 1974 passing of this individual whose footprint looms large on global history.

Two decades into a business-technical career since graduating provide me the perspective to take stock of the engineering institution I trained in, leading inevitably to studying Vannevar Bush's undeniable influence on that institution. The recent *Oppenheimer* film, which featured Bush in blink-and-you'll-miss-it cameos, also piqued interest. What I learned about the man at once impressed, intrigued, but also dismayed me for reasons that will become clear below.

It seems most Institute stakeholders (going by the responses of fellow alums I have spoken with on it) know as little about who Vannevar Bush was as I did at the outset of my studying. Nor are they aware of the enormous impact he has had on society and on the Institute—at the curriculum level and also at the research organization level (both directly and via Institute Presidents Compton and Killian he engaged with).

In 1999-2003, most of what we saw of the man's legacy as students was a large picture in an Infinite Corridor display case highlighting his association with the Rad Lab (i.e. radar, rather than the even more impactful Manhattan Project that he uniquely enabled), a room named after him next to Lobby 10, and a wall

engraving in Lobby 13 (of the building named after him).

I feel the reason for this lack of familiarity is that the Institute hasn't collectively introspected during the intervening decades over what it means to be so closely associated with this pivotal individual, even while it was irrevocably transformed by him in practice. Why might the story of Vannevar Bush fail to be propagated from class year to class year? To put it simply, his accomplishments and legacy may be seen as controversial in many circles. While he built the Allies' much-needed military-industrial weapons innovation complex brick by brick during WWII, that same complex would grow into a source of foreboding from Eisenhower just 16 years later.

The counterfactual analysis of whether the Manhattan Project should have ever been initiated, based on the fission chain reaction feasibility studies Bush commissioned, remains the source of much hand-wringing today. He certainly led impressive accomplishments, like radar, but only thrived in attaining them by operating in the secrecy context that wartime imperatives afforded. He formed part of the nascent superstructure of cold war hysteria, generally accommodating HUAC/red-scare activity until it finally reached home with his colleague J Robert Oppenheimer as depicted in last year's blockbuster film.

The work of NSA academic historian Colin Burke portends a still-classified legacy of the man, stories that remain to be told. As his staunch 1945 advocacy of abortive Atomic Energy Commission legislation demonstrated, an unchecked

committee of technocratic experts appeared to be his preferred agency governance form.

On the positive side, we have his proposal of the Memex which inspired the first recognizably modern graphical user interface from SRI's Doug Engelbart. Bush made federal funding of peacetime science a reality, something that was barely a pipedream pre-war. However much we might see the edifice of centralized research funding creaking today, we do so from a much more scientifically advanced place today than if there had been no such funding.

Reading his works and the examples he set, I find myself positively guided by his:

1. empathy to teach
2. desire to ensure that others can inform themselves through openly accessible science, so that
3. they are poised to collectively unlock achieving complex technical goals in the face of uncertain prospects for success.

We can readily see, with some good and some not-so-good (in full awareness of judging from hindsight, benefiting from lessons learned that Bush and his contemporaries could have only set the stage for), it seems we're looking at a mixed-bag legacy here.

Bringing focus back to Cambridge, it's simply a matter of history that Vannevar Bush fostered collaboration between the defense complex and the 'tute to unprecedented degrees in WWII and post-WWII. Fast-forward nearly 60 years, and the Institute that I graduated from, and probably through today, seemed to struggle

with ambivalence over its relationship with defense funding of research, while maintaining a keenness for defense employment prospects for graduating students. This amid our laudable context of being open to students from all over the world (one of the qualitative features of the school of which I'm most proud).

Upon studying the man's legacy, I marvel that Vannevar Bush's name, whether spoken in warm or in despondent tones, isn't a household one at the same level as Edison or Musk. I think that should be otherwise, if for no other reason than for people to start the conversation on just where they should be placing this unique man within their pantheon of history. A good place to start would be the Institute's coming to articulate how its identity has been shaped by this unique individual. Friday's commemoration of 50 years since a world with Vannevar Bush's presence in it should serve as an opportune moment to reflect.

Monumentally impactful yet controversial, Vannevar Bush's legacy continues to shape the landscape of scientific research and national policy. Juxtaposing his undeniable contributions to technological advancement with the ethical questions raised by his work presents a complex portrait of a pivotal figure in American history. One or two generations from now, historians and ethicists may still grapple with the far-reaching consequences of Bush's legacy, as we continue to navigate the intricate relationship between science, government, military, and society.

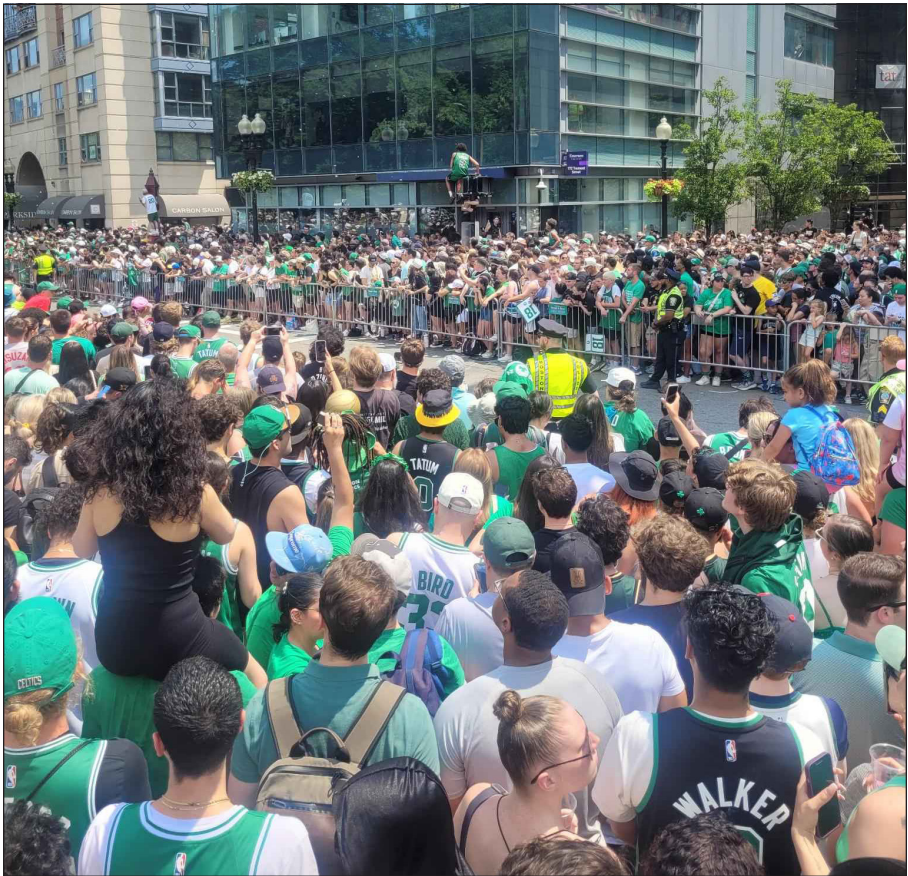
Rick Sheridan '03 B.S. XVI-2.



SPORTS SCIENCE WEATHER WORLD & NATION OPINION NEWS CAMPUS LIFE FUN ARTS



The Boston Celtics championship parade, Friday, June 21.



The Boston Celtics championship parade, Friday, June 21.

TECH's PICKS: ENTERTAINMENT THIS ISSUE

THURSDAY, JULY 11 – WEDNESDAY, JULY 31

FILM

FLY ME TO THE MOON
(FRI, JUL 12)

TWISTERS
(FRI, JUL 19)

FILM

DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE
(FRI, JUL 26)

THE FABULOUS FOUR
(FRI, JUL 26)

TV

EXPLODING KITTENS
(FRI, JUL 12)

THOSE ABOUT TO DIE
(THU, JUL 18)

VIDEO GAMES

NORLAND
(THU, JUL 18)

STORMGATE
(TUE, JUL 30)

Shortstop

by Manaal Mohammed '25

Solution, page 9

Across

01 Bean counters, shortly

05 "Rocky and Bullwinkle" producer Jay

09 Bumpkins

11 Soothing gel

12 Eagle's abode

13 ____ Rabbit (Bugs Bunny love interest)

14 Sparkling alternative

15 Laze

16 Fill-in-the-blank word game

18 "Roger that"

22 Flock talk

25 Cafeteria selections

26 Blockheads

27 Roman Demeter

28 Drop it!

29 Eid hand application, typically

30 Shade of green

31 Double ____

Down

01 Gorge

02 Michelangelo sculpture

03 Bitter, as a scent

04 Modern remark suggesting incompetence

05 Financial district

06 ____ sabzi (Indian potato dish)

07 Ecstasy trip

08 Poker action

10 Bud of baseball

17 Screw up

19 ____ asada

20 Serengeti scavenger

21 State in India known for its tea

22 Classic diner orders

23 Surrounding glow

24 Bug-eyed

Meet your fellow tech staff.
(aka, your new 3 a.m. pset support group)