

**A Georgian Outlook at AB**  
Meet Lali Terterashvili, a Fulbright scholar from Georgia with a powerful story to share.

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Industry giants  
ONLINE SOURCE

**The Oligarchy of Tech**  
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ONLINE SOURCE

**Charles Mingus: Jazz and Soul**

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# The Spectrum

◆ e cineribus et ad astra ◆

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ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Smells like spring!  
NATE KIM / Spectrum Staff

## Deadly Addiction: America's Dark Obsession

By MATTHEW LIU '27  
Chief Copy Editor

True crime podcasts have exploded in popularity in recent years, captivating tens of millions of consumers who eagerly indulge in real crime stories. Podcasts like *Crime Junkie* and *My Favorite Murder* present these crime tales as entertainment but often blur the line between advocacy and exploitation. The Adnan Syed case, popularized by *Serial*, is one such tug-of-war. While the podcast sparked widespread debate and public pressure on the legal system, its incomplete storytelling created serious issues with fairness and due process. This points to a deeper issue: true crime media, which frequently poses as a force for justice, also distorts information, sensationalizes victims and their families, and invades legal processes in ways that undermine rather than support justice.

One of the biggest issues is the lack of accountability for true crime podcasts. While investigative reporters are bound by ethical standards, the majority of podcasters are not, leading to dishonest storytelling with real-world consequences. *Crime Junkie*, for example, was found to plagiarize from journalists and omit critical facts to create more sensationalized narratives. *Up and Vanished* also reshaped public perception of Tara Grinstead's murder case, building speculation that prompted law enforcement to act instead of allowing the investigative process to unfold at its own pace. When podcasters prioritize drama over fact, they destroy reputations, disrupt court cases, and even incriminate innocent people for crimes they didn't

commit. The rise of “armchair detectives” only compounds the problem, as amateur sleuths—often misled by sensationalized reporting—wrongly accuse innocent people, spreading unnecessary fear and interfering with legitimate investigations.

True crime podcasts also have a disturbing lack of oversight in legal discussions. When *Crime Junkie* was forced to retract several episodes due to plagiarism, it highlighted the absence of control in the world of podcasting. Unlike popular media outlets, which are governed by editorial and legal standards, there's little oversight in the podcast realm, allowing false or defamatory information to spread unchecked. Some even delve into live investigations, complicating legal matters. *Up and Vanished*, for example, directly influenced public perception of the Tara Grinstead case and potentially the course of justice before law enforcement had the chance to act independently. This lack of accountability allows podcasters to distort facts to fit their narratives, rather than seeking the truth.

Exploitation of victims and their families is perhaps the most troubling issue. Laci Peterson's relatives, for example, have objected to the way media and podcast coverage of her murder prolonged their agony, turning a personal tragedy into entertainment. Hae Min Lee's relatives, whose daughter's murder was the focus of *Serial*, have also expressed their frustration with how their pain was dissected for public consumption without their consent. Most true crime podcasts profit from these stories without interviewing or compensating the victim's families, turning real suffering into a

listener's entertainment commodity. *Sword and Scale*, for instance, has faced extensive criticism for sensationalizing grisly crime details with no regard for the emotional toll on the victims. This commodification of crime dehumanizes victims, transforming tragedy into entertainment.

It is argued that crime podcasts can bring attention to unsolved cases that might otherwise go unnoticed. While this can be true, it raises ethical concerns about public interference with the law. *Serial* played a crucial role in overturning Adnan Syed's conviction, freeing an innocent man from wrongful imprisonment. Despite the positive outcome in this case, it shows how public opinion—based on selective storytelling and shaky evidence—can exert pressure on legal processes. Similarly, West Cork implied Ian Bailey's guilt in the Sophie Toscan du Plantier killing and influenced public opinion despite the lack of solid evidence against him. In cases like *To Live and Die in LA*, fabricated stories have led to innocent people being harassed. The Amanda Knox case is a stark example of how media-driven rumors can lead to wrongful convictions. It becomes evident that when fiction overtakes fact, justice is lost.

Another issue is the glamorization of offenders, which shifts attention from the victims. The *Ted Bundy Tapes* podcast and Netflix documentary reignited interest in Bundy's charisma rather than focusing on the horrors of his crimes and the victims. Richard Ramirez, the “Night Stalker,” gained a cult following, partly due to sensationalized true crime journalism. Some listeners have even gone so far as to write

love letters to these convicted murderers, distorting the justice system by turning criminals into celebrities and victims into mere plot devices. When crime stories prioritize mystery over integrity, they distort public opinion, making it harder to achieve real justice and honor victims.

Ethical crime reporting must prioritize accuracy, transparency, and advocacy for victims—not sensationalism. Rather than distorting facts for entertainment or speculation, solid reporting should rely on verified sources, uphold the dignity of victims and their families, and avoid misleading information that could compromise legal processes. Ethical true crime journalism should seek to expose systemic law enforcement failures, wrongful convictions, and cold cases in a way that promotes justice, not profit from tragedy. Podcasters and journalists have an obligation to report cases with nuance, ensuring that storytelling doesn't compromise truth or human dignity.

However, not all true crime material is irresponsible. Podcasts like *In the Dark* have led the way by conducting solid investigations and adhering to fact-based journalism. Ethical true crime journalism must prioritize accuracy, transparency, and advocacy for victims, not sensationalism. Justice should not become entertainment, and the suffering of victims and their families should not be exploited for profit. As listeners, we must critically evaluate what we are hearing, being aware of when podcasts craft stories for drama instead of justice. True crime should be about pursuing justice—not distorting it.



# Intro

## Letter From the EICs

By ISABELLA HILL AND SHREE  
JAYAKRISHNA '25  
*Co-Editors-in-Chief*

Hey friends,

It's Isabella and Shree here! As the days grow longer and the spring flowers begin to bloom, we're embracing the renewal that the new season brings. This time of year is all about fresh perspectives, change, and shedding the weight of winter as we step into brighter days. From upcoming college decisions to the process of registering for new courses, it's clear that spring is the season of new opportunities. Whether you're basking in the sunshine, enjoying new adventures, or simply appreciating the beauty around you, spring invites us all to look forward with hope and possibility.

In this issue of *The Spectrum*, we're diving into the theme of justice—exploring how it shapes the world and impacts our daily lives. From the fight for LGBTQ+ rights and ongoing struggles for equality to the ethics of true crime and the mental toll of seasonal depression, we're tackling complex and urgent topics that demand attention. Through these stories, we

hope to spark reflection, conversation, and action. Justice is not a momentary pursuit; it's a persistent commitment to fairness, equality, and understanding, and we hope these articles inspire you to think about what justice means to you—and how you can help bring about change. Whether it is educating yourself about justice around the world or fighting inequality through action, we hope you use this spring to make a tangible impact.

However, we're not only focused on heavy topics—because spring isn't just about seriousness! We've also included some lighthearted content to brighten your day. Whether you're getting excited about the biggest gaming releases of 2025 or looking for fresh, fun recipes to enjoy the season's ingredients, we've got something to make you smile.

As always, we'd love to hear from you. Join us at the library alcove on Thursdays at 3 p.m. to share ideas, discuss the issue, and enjoy some Trader Joe's snacks!

Here's to a season of growth, reflection, and impactful change.

Warmly,

Isabella and Shree

## *The Spectrum*

Founded 1982  
*e cineribus ad astra*

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## Embrace Your Boredom

By ABHIJIT SANAL '26  
*Spectrum Staff*

As a child, whenever I was really bored I would complain to my parents, begging to play my video games. My baby sister would give me someone to hang out with later on, but until the age of seven, I didn't have any siblings, so I'd have to find my own entertainment. My parents, obviously tired, would just say something along the lines of, "Being bored is good for you." Maybe they said that because they didn't want to deal with me, but I think there was some kind of wisdom in their words. Boredom is something we despise and try to get away from whenever possible, but it's an opportunity for discovery: a chance to connect with ourselves and the world in unexpected ways.

When you have absolutely nothing to do, your brain does whatever it wants. It's like a mini machine; it's always looking for something to do, and if there's nothing, it'll make something. We're always looking for action, although now that's just scrolling through TikTok or Instagram reels mindlessly instead of finding something to do. Of course, social media is great for finding connections. It connects us with billions of people across the world, but in doing so, it can isolate us more than ever. For the mind that desperately wants to be used, the endless rush of chemicals from those apps is a dangerous trap that can have us end up lost or feeling like we wasted our time.

That's why when we are bored and have nothing to do, we try to stop that feeling no matter the cost. We hate the feeling of boredom because it makes us feel like we're not doing anything, and our monkey brains hate that. It's not that we are against wasting time—I'm an expert at that, and I can say that it's not the same as being bored. Doing nothing is an action, but being bored is when you want to do something but can't. That's why we create things and mess around when we are.

Think about the last time that you were bored. Maybe it was with your friends, or maybe you were just by yourself, but I bet you didn't just keep lazing around. When I'm bored with my friends, I always end up trying something different, and maybe even strengthen my friendships. If you look back, basically every great invention was created because people who were bored stumbled into a great discovery.

The world is filled with random things to grab your attention. Trends, drama, and jealousy define the world, but we don't always need to let those things absorb us. Embracing the boredom that comes with life can help us rediscover ourselves and take a break from everything that follows.

We constantly pump ourselves full of distractions to keep our focus away from the imperfections in our lives. Our grades, our personal lives, our fears. It's easy to run away from that, to occupy your mind with the endless but empty satisfaction that we gain from social media; which is too stimulating to look away from, but not important enough to remember. It's when we're bored that we are forced to confront ourselves. That's when we can't retreat to comfort; when we have to push forward instead of wallowing in our shells. Part of boredom is stepping out of our comfort zones.

But what can actually come from being bored? Well, that's the great thing, it differs from person to person! For some, it may just be a reminder of things they forgot. For others, it can be a time to reflect, think, or just be at peace. Sometimes silence is all we really need. Take the time you're given to think about anything, what's for dinner, things you need to do, or even your future!

Next time you feel a sense of boredom in your life, don't immediately whip out your phone to dull the sensation. Embrace it—see what comes out of it, because you may even discover yourself.

## New Season's Releases

By LUKAS KANICS '27  
*Spectrum Staff*

2025 is shaping up to be one of the biggest years for gaming yet, with Nintendo planning to launch the sequel console to their massively successful Nintendo Switch, Playstation releasing a suite of new and appealing exclusives, Xbox sharing its exclusives far and wide, and some of these most anticipated games of all time, such as *Grand Theft Auto VI* and *Metroid Prime 4: Beyond*, finally releasing this year.

Nintendo: After over eight years and over 150 million units sold, the Nintendo Switch is finally getting a true successor: the Nintendo Switch 2. While little beyond a quick teaser has been shown off by Nintendo—with a presentation on April 2 to give a more in-depth look—leaks, insider info, and patents have revealed quite a bit of information. The console is expected to have between the amount of power of a PlayStation 4 and the amount of power of a PlayStation 4 Pro, but it will likely cost far less and be packed full of highly anticipated exclusives, such as the first brand-new *Mario Kart* in over a decade. Another highly anticipated game is *Metroid Prime 4: Beyond*, which was first revealed in 2017; it is finally expected to be released this year as a likely cross-generation launch title for the Switch 2. With how popular and beloved the original Switch was, the sequel is destined for success, and this year is shaping up to be one of the best for Nintendo fans in quite some time. If you are debating whether you should buy the new Nintendo PlayStation: This year, they plan to release a suite of exclusives,

with highly anticipated sequels *Ghost of Yotei* and *Death Stranding 2: On the Beach* expected to come out. While PS5 took a while to get up and running, it is slowly gaining an ever-increasing library of strong exclusives along with quality titles from third parties. Without the PlayStation 6 expected to come out any time soon, the PlayStation 5 owners are safe with more exclusive games they can enjoy for themselves. Overall, similarly to Nintendo, this year looks like a great year for PlayStation fans.

Xbox: In 2025, Xbox is taking a very different route than the other major consoles by dropping the exclusivity of some of its titles. For example, *Halo: The Master Chief Collection*, an assembly of some of Xbox's most recognizable and exclusive games, is set to release on PS5 and potentially even the upcoming Switch 2. This decision joins a series of equally baffling past choices made by Microsoft to degrade the exclusivity of Xbox titles and remove most reasons to purchase an Xbox console. It seems that Xbox is willingly taking the path that Sega took in the 2000s, and without major changes, it seems likely that Xbox will soon meet its fate and lose its grip on the console market. Though some feel that Xbox is too big to fail due to it being backed by Microsoft, it is only a matter of time before we see if that backing will be enough to prevent these decisions from destroying the brand.

Other: Outside of the big console players, there are other upcoming releases of equal importance. First and foremost, the highly anticipated *Grand Theft Auto VI* (GTA 6) is set to release this year, but

it faces a big issue: pricing. For years, the cost of video games has been increasing, with most studios launching their base version of a game at a minimum of \$70 (excluding Nintendo, whose games are usually \$60). However, Rockstar Games has spent a large amount of money on *GTA 6*, and there have been talks of the game having a price point of upwards of \$100 for the base version. Not only is this greedy and predatory, but it also sets a dangerous standard for the industry that could price out many people from playing modern games. On a more positive note, Valve continually acts as a shining light in the gaming world. From outlawing games containing advertisements on their video game storefront, Steam, to allowing handhelds other than their own Steam Deck access to their SteamOS, to releasing the entire source code to the fan-favorite *Team Fortress 2* for all to see, Valve has done plenty worthy of praise. But even more exciting are their titles in development, *Deadlock* and a project rumored to be a new entry in the beloved *Half-Life* series (though the prospect of a 2025 release for either of these may be optimistic). Aside from this, popular live service games such as *Fortnite* and *Marvel Rivals* continue to see high player counts and exciting new content and plenty of other exciting games are set to release in 2025, like new *Monster Hunter*, *Doom*, and *Assassin's Creed* games.

Of course, that is just a sliver of what gaming has in store in 2025. With so many game studios, large and small, with teams of hundreds and teams of ones, all releasing titles, it is impossible to cover them all. But whoever you are, there's something you'll like coming your way soon.



# News



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## A Georgian Outlook at Acton-Boxborough

GYAN SREEJITH AND HENRY WANG '27  
PubFin & Staff

Over the past couple of years, The Spectrum staff has interviewed various faculty members, from Ms. Berg to Señora Savukoski, as well as other integral members of our community, such as Senator Jamie Eldridge. For this issue, we decided to branch out and offer our readers something different. Instead of focusing on our school, we are proud to introduce Lali Terterashvili, a Fulbright scholar from Georgia.

The Fulbright Program was established to promote education through cultural exchange for scholars worldwide. Currently, forty-nine countries participate in the program. Founded by U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright, it is recognized as one of the most prestigious scholarship programs, offering grants to educators to study, research, teach, or showcase their talents abroad. Each year, 8,000 grants are awarded, and over time, more than 350,000 individuals have taken part in the program. Among them, 62 scholars have won a Nobel Peace Prize, underscoring its prestige.

While many at AB know Lali simply as a Fulbright scholar from Georgia, she shared a much deeper perspective on her identity during her visit. Born in an area of Sakartvelo (Georgia) occupied by Russia, she grew up under circumstances unimaginable to most of us, with guns and bombs as part of her reality. Despite these hardships, she takes immense pride in her country and community—a quality our readers can appreciate. Throughout her visit, she frequently spoke about the beauty of Sakartvelo, fully embodying the concept of national pride.

As Lali explained, although Sakartvelo is a relatively small country, it has a rich history and a vibrant culture. The first human remains found outside of Africa were discovered in Dmanisi, a region of Sakartvelo, and its society has been evolving ever since. The Georgian language reflects this growth, with each letter in its script symbolizing “beauty and grace.” Despite its ancient roots, Sakartvelo’s modern culture is equally fascinating. Lali passionately shared that award-winning films, such as *Mandarinebi*, continue to be produced, and funk music remains popular despite the country’s small population. However, these cultural

achievements do not fully capture the extent of Sakartvelo’s talent. The Russian occupation has not only hindered the country’s physical and cultural development but it has also actively silenced its people. Lali has worked with organizations to raise awareness about these injustices, and upon arriving in America, she was struck by the level of freedom we often take for granted. Lali’s visit reminded us that cultural exchange is not just about sharing knowledge, but about fostering understanding and empathy across borders. As writers, we rely on the freedoms granted to us to create articles like this. However, in doing so, we are reminded that not everyone enjoys the same rights. This privilege can sometimes lead us to believe that, as Americans, we have a superior culture, when in reality, we have much to learn and improve upon. Opportunities differ across the world, and Lali noticed many contrasts between our community and Sakartvelo.

When asked what a typical school lunch looks like in Sakartvelo, she explained that students have limited, paid options. She pointed out that our school’s students should be grateful for the resources provided—even the smallest ones. Her stories of resilience and community spirit highlight the importance of recognizing our shared humanity, regardless of geographical differences. Additionally, she observed that our culture’s tendency toward embarrassment holds us back. When she arrived at our school, she expected everyone to stand up and dance with her—a common activity in Sakartvelo. Predictably, no one did. In Sakartvelo, Georgian dances symbolize respect between men and women and serve as a proud expression of cultural identity. In contrast, our culture often avoids unfamiliar experiences simply because they are unfamiliar. Lali subtly expressed that this mindset is in dire need of change. As we learn from voices like Lali’s, we are encouraged to embrace the richness of diverse experiences and re-evaluate our own cultural practices. On behalf of everyone at The Spectrum, we extend our sincere gratitude to Lali and the Fulbright scholars for visiting Acton-Boxborough. Her insights have shed light on AB’s culture and the ways we can grow as a community. With every issue, we strive to provide our readers with an outside perspective on their own lives, and Lali has helped us achieve that.

## Fulbright Scholars Visiting AB

By ISABELLA HILL & SHREE JAYAKRISHNA '25  
Editors-in-Chief

Every student—regardless of their ethnicity, ability, or geographical location—deserves the invaluable opportunity to learn and grow. We firmly believe that education should be accessible to everyone, a principle embodied by our dedicated Fulbright scholars, Lali Terterashvili, Ivannia Rivera, and Louise Torres. Each of these remarkable individuals bring a unique perspective to the table, drawing inspiration from their diverse backgrounds in their respective home countries—Costa Rica, Georgia, and Nicaragua. The scholars’ multitude of cultures and experiences has helped broaden our perspectives on learning. Through meaningful conversations with the scholars, we were able to dive deeper into how education can be implemented across various cultural contexts. Our guests made it clear that their visit to America held a distinct purpose.

Ivannia described the day she learned she was selected for the Fulbright program as profoundly emotional; she felt immense pride in being given this opportunity. Ivannia teaches in an indigenous community in Costa Rica that lacks technology, electricity, and clean water. She views her greatest challenge as pushing the boundaries of problem-solving and navigating educational limitations within her unique community. For Ivannia, the most surprising aspect of the American education system was the availability of resources. Reflecting on her Fulbright experience, Ivannia credited it

with broadening her perspective on education. During her time in America, she discovered new communication skills that will help her better aid her students back home in Costa Rica. She has learned about a “new reality” through her time in America and aims to apply every positive aspect of American education in her future teaching.

Despite being thousands of miles apart, Lali’s teaching journey closely mirrored Ivannia’s. She reminisced about her early teaching experiences near the Russian border; she emphasized that instead of attending school, students were encouraged to learn at home. Lali faced obstacles in motivating both parents and children to engage in education. When discussing how Georgian schools operate, she noted several differences between the educational systems in America and Georgia. She found our school’s schedule to be more flexible and diverse, which she believed enhanced student learning compared to Georgia’s more rigid framework. Upon returning to Georgia, Lali’s most significant change in her teaching approach will be her attitude. She observed that teachers in America seemed, in a sense, “friendlier” than she was accustomed to. She regarded this style of teacher-student interaction as surprisingly effective. In discussing the differences in Georgian education, Lali also expressed pride in her culture, highlighting that her people’s determination for independence persists despite the global challenges they face.

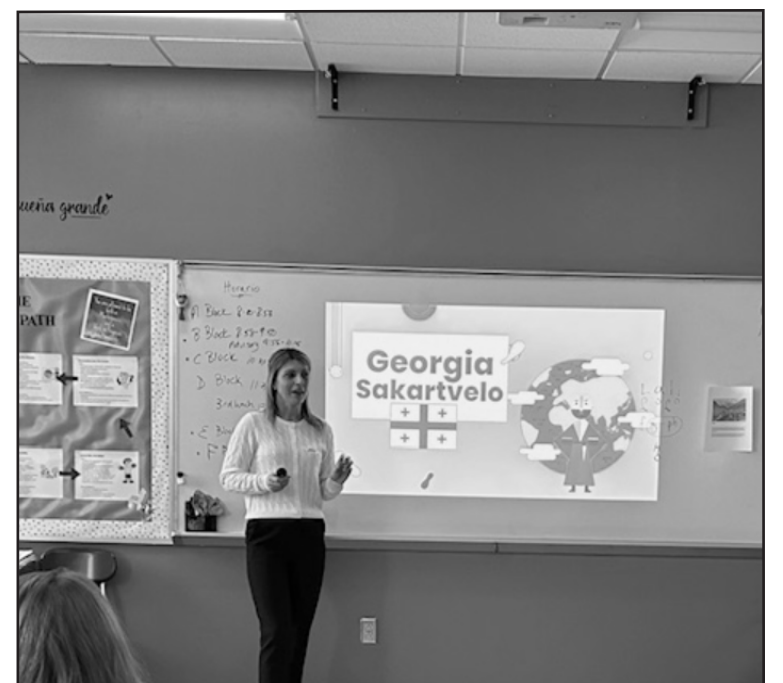
While learning about Costa Rica and Georgia, we were also fortunate to explore the land of lakes and vol-

canoes: Nicaragua. Louise began by sharing her motivation for teaching and participating in the program. Her primary interest in pursuing teaching centered on exploring special education and language-learning abilities in that region. The aspect of American education that shocked Louise the most was the disparity between schools. The economic status of a school’s region often affects the quality of education in our country. In Nicaragua, Louise noted that the geographical disparity in education was similar. Not every school in Nicaragua has the same facilities, and the variation in educational quality correlates with wealth. However, a more pressing issue in her home country is the lack of governmental support. Louise emphasized the insufficiency of funding for education in her home nation, stating that the consistent funding of the American education system is what allows students here to thrive.

Overall, the most important takeaway from our conversation with the scholars was that every educational experience is different. Each teacher encountered distinct challenges in their home countries, and at AB, we face our own challenges every day. Education is not guaranteed, and we are fortunate to have the resources and capability to provide it to everyone in our community. The experiences of Ivannia, Lali, and Louise in their homelands and America show that there is always room for both students and teachers to grow and learn. Lastly, it requires immense courage to travel to a new country and participate in the Fulbright program, so be sure to appreciate our three scholars and their efforts!



Fulbright Scholars!





# News

## The Bird Flu Outbreak

By MEENA ADUSUMILLI '27  
*Spectrum Staff*

Recently, egg prices have reached a 45-year high. For example, in 2020, Eggland's Best Large Eggs were priced between \$2.50 and \$3.50 per dozen. However, in 2025, the same product could cost as much as \$6.89. This is concerning for many Americans, especially those with low- or middle-income, leading to a blame game over which administration—Biden or Trump—is responsible for these rising costs. Regardless of where the fault lies, a critical question remains: why are egg prices skyrocketing? The answer lies in bird flu, an influenza virus that primarily affects birds but can, in rare cases, infect humans. Bird flu is relevant today due to a recent outbreak affecting several states, including Massachusetts. In fact, a bald eagle was recently euthanized after testing positive for bird flu, underscoring the importance of understanding the disease. Because bird flu outbreaks are complex and difficult to contain, their impact on both humans and animals can be harmful. However, there are treatments and potential solutions to alleviate bird flu and its side effects.

Bird flu, like many illnesses, has a long history. The first known

case was recorded in 1878, and in 1955, scientists identified bird flu as influenza A. Specifically, the H5N1 strain, which is currently affecting Americans, originated in China before spreading to the Americas, Europe, and Africa. Bird flu remains a global issue, from Hong Kong's 1997 outbreak to the 2014 North American outbreak. These outbreaks are particularly problematic due to their adverse effects on poultry—coughing, sneezing, difficulty breathing, lack of coordination, and discolored legs are common symptoms. Additionally, bird flu is difficult to contain for several reasons. The virus can mutate rapidly, meaning treatments and prevention methods that work for one strain may not be effective against others. Moreover, bird flu can spread to many animal species, including chickens, cows, and humans. As a result, containing bird flu requires coordination between human and animal resources. For example, 66 human bird flu cases have been reported in the U.S., mostly among individuals who work closely with high-risk animals, such as dairy farm workers. However, this is a relatively low number, so there is no need for widespread concern about contracting the disease.

The significance of bird flu

today is multifaceted. For animals, the disease causes sickness and death, and poultry eggs can become misshapen or discolored. The most significant impact, however, is a decrease in egg production due to the death of many chickens. In fact, egg production has decreased by 4%. For humans, this has led to egg shortages and prices rising by about 8%, according to recent reports. Additionally, bird flu has forced farmers to cull approximately 150 million chickens to prevent further spread. This egg shortage is harming both farmers and their businesses. As the U.S. farming industry declines and labor shortages grow, these setbacks are especially concerning for the future of American agriculture.

Another crucial factor contributing to the egg shortage is the strain bird flu places on supply chains. When outbreaks occur, farms must cull infected flocks to prevent further spread, but this also means fewer chickens are available to lay eggs. As a result, suppliers struggle to meet demand, leading grocery stores to stock fewer eggs, which in turn drives up prices. Furthermore, the cost of chicken feed and transportation has also increased due to inflation and supply chain disruptions, exacerbating the problem. The combination of these factors means that even when farms recover, it takes time for egg pro-

duction to return to normal levels. This makes it difficult to predict when consumers will see relief from high egg prices, leaving many frustrated as they navigate rising grocery costs.

While there is no specific treatment for bird flu, there are preventative measures that poultry owners can take. These include isolating infected animals, sanitizing hands before handling birds, keeping pet birds away from wild birds, and storing equipment out of reach of wild birds. It's essential to follow these steps because poultry rarely recover from bird flu. For humans, it's important to note that bird flu cannot be transmitted through properly handled eggs or milk. This means refrigerating and cooking eggs (runny yolks are fine) and avoiding raw milk. Despite these recommendations, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., now serving as Trump's health secretary, has advocated for unpasteurized milk, claiming it promotes bioactives and good health. In contrast, both the CDC and FDA state that raw milk offers no health benefits and can carry harmful bacteria like Salmonella and the bird flu virus. This is concerning because influential political figures pushing for unsafe practices could worsen the bird flu crisis, ultimately creating a more unhealthy America.

In conclusion, bird flu outbreaks are a part of our history

and continue to affect us today. These outbreaks are difficult to contain, and the disease's impact on both humans and animals is ongoing. Still, there are preventative measures that allow one to stay safe, including proper care for poultry and cautious handling of food like eggs and milk. Since bird flu rarely affects humans and primarily impacts animals, the most significant consequence of the current outbreak in the U.S. is the rising cost of eggs. This economic issue ties into the labor shortage in agriculture and recent political developments, illustrating how deeply interconnected public health is with global issues.

As egg prices remain high, consumers may need to adjust their shopping habits or seek alternatives, further shifting demand in the market. Additionally, continued outbreaks could place even more pressure on farmers, many of whom are already struggling with production costs and labor shortages. If these trends persist, policymakers may need to intervene with subsidies or other forms of assistance to stabilize the agricultural sector. Ultimately, the bird flu crisis serves as a reminder of the fragile balance between food production, economic policy, and public health, reinforcing the need for sustainable farming practices and better outbreak prevention strategies.

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training environment is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, enabling these aspiring athletes to hone their skills and develop the competitive edge necessary for success fostering resilience, teamwork, and confidence.



# Justice

## Justice in The Stranger

By NATE KIM '27  
*Spectrum Staff*

In Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, the court isn't just prosecuting Arthur Meursault for murder—it is punishing him for who he is as a person. From the moment he fails to grieve his mother in a socially acceptable manner, society marks him as an outsider. Meursault's lack of emotion, detachment, and refusal to conform are enough to seal his fate before the trial begins. The prosecution argues that his emotionless demeanor proves he is dangerous, convincing the jury—and even his partner, who initially supported him—that Meursault's lack of remorse is as much a crime as his actions. By the time the prosecutor presents his case, the crime itself becomes secondary to his "crime" of indifference, which is what ultimately condemns Meursault. Therefore, his death sentence is not just a punishment but a way to remove a perceived threat to societal order. Camus uses his novella to expose the flaws in a justice system that upholds moral expectations over the law itself, teaching us what to look out for in society. Arthur's fate was decided the moment he defied conventional norms, not when he pulled the trigger. The trial was never a fair evaluation of his crime but rather a performance designed to reinforce moral standards.

That brings us to a crucial question: when is justice really served? Should the sentencing of a crime account for societal norms? To determine the fairness of Meursault's case, a principle of justice must be established for comparison. From a libertarian perspective, this is a failure of justice. Libertarianism values individual freedom and minimal government intervention—Meursault's execution, based more on his character than his crime, directly op-

poses these ideals. If justice is about punishing unlawful acts, then Meursault should have been judged solely for the crime he committed. Instead, he was sentenced for his refusal to perform grief, his detachment from traditional morality, and his inability to fit into a system that demands conformity. His trial reveals a justice system prioritizing social order over individual rights. Had Meursault expressed even a fabricated display of sorrow, his fate might have been different. His indifference, rather than his crime, sealed his destiny, proving that the justice system does not always seek truth—it seeks reassurance that society's expectations remain unchallenged.

Despite *The Stranger* being over eight decades old, it remains relevant today—not just because nearly everyone at some point in their lives encounters its iconic black-and-white cover or the unsettling 1970s film adaptation, but because Camus critiques issues we still face. He doesn't just challenge the legal system; he pushes us to question the very nature of justice. How often do we see legal decisions swayed by public perception rather than evidence? How much do emotion, bias, and societal expectations influence the way we judge others, and how much should we allow these factors to be relevant? Cases in the modern era have demonstrated how easily public opinion can shape legal outcomes, from high-profile court cases to media-driven narratives. Meursault's fate may be fiction, but the questions his story raises are very real. If we continue to allow emotion and expectation to outweigh factual evidence in legal decisions, are we truly upholding justice, or are we reinforcing an unspoken moral code? As students of AB and members of society, we must resist the urge to shape justice into what we want to see—justice, after all, is meant to be blind.

**PUBLICATION FREQUENCIES**  
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**EDITING ACTIONS**  
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ARTICLE, COLUMN, REPORT, STORY

**NEWSPAPER NAMES**  
GAZETTE, HERALD, MONITOR, OBSERVER

Connections Answers  
Lucas Zhang / *Spectrum Staff*

## Politics of Human Rights

By TINA LI '27  
*Spectrum Staff*

In the wake of reelected President Donald Trump's sweeping executive orders and the rise of Project 2025, our future and civil rights are facing a critical turning point. With policies targeting gender-affirming healthcare, revoking diversity initiatives, and eliminating other protections against discrimination, the government is already changing in ways that could redefine freedom and alter lives. Now more than ever, advocacy plays a crucial role in protecting these rights. Public pressure, grassroots movements, and even self-education can be instrumental in preserving the liberties granted to us since the founding of our country.

So, what is Project 2025? Project 2025 is an initiative created and led by The Heritage Foundation, aiming to push for a more conservative administration and policies. Although Trump was not involved in drafting the project's blueprint or plans, many of his policies closely resemble the objectives it outlines. Additionally, several individuals associated with Project 2025 hold key positions in Trump's administration.

In January 2025, Trump issued the order "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity," which prevents companies and organizations from implementing DEIA programs in their employment and hiring practices. The executive order also revoked provisions of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, established in 1965. With parts of this act removed under Project 2025, workplace anti-discrimination laws have been weakened, making it harder for employees to hold employers accountable for discrimination. Removing these protections also reduces workplace diversity. Individuals from marginalized communities, minorities, and women may face disproportionate pay gaps and fewer hiring and promotion opportunities compared to their white male counterparts, as companies no longer have an obligation to hire for inclusion, diversity, and merit. Project 2025 also includes measures that could significantly restrict reproductive rights.

Project 2025 seeks to outlaw emergency abortion care, revoke the FDA's approval of abortion drugs, and criminalize sending abortion pills or related supplies, limiting services and potentially endangering women's health. After resuming office, Trump signed the executive order titled "Enforcing the Hyde Amendment," which prohib-

its federal funding for abortions and revokes previous executive orders that expanded access to reproductive healthcare. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 had already given individual states the power to ban abortions, but with Trump's new executive order, abortion clinics and reproductive services in states that had not enacted bans may now be severely impacted. Women seek abortions for various reasons—whether due to non-consensual conception, fatal fetal defects, or life-threatening health risks to the mother. Studies indicate that statewide abortion bans have already led to higher maternal mortality rates. These policies do not just take away rights; they also take lives.

The fight for civil rights in the U.S. has been long and ongoing, encompassing racial justice, gender equality, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ rights. Each historical movement has faced resistance, but advocacy, legal challenges, and public initiative have led to massive milestones. However, recent policy shifts through Project 2025 and Trump's orders have initiated a rollback of these rights. The Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s to 1960s advocated for racial equality, leading to landmark legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Second-wave feminism (1960s–1980s) fought for reproductive rights, workplace protections, and gender equality. The LGBTQ+ rights movement, which began in 1969, continues today. The Stonewall Riots, same-sex marriage legalization, and trans rights advancements achieved recognition and legal protections for the LGBTQ+ community. Now, all these achievements are under threat.

On January 20, Trump signed the executive order "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government." This order mandates that all federal agencies recognize only two genders—male and female—as determined at birth. It also removes materials promoting gender ideology, stops funding for gender-affirming healthcare, and prohibits the use of gender-neutral pronouns in federal workplaces. Anti-trans legislation fosters legal and social discrimination, creates a healthcare access crisis, and contributes to higher suicide rates and mental health decline. The administration has also initiated a comprehensive review of federal funding, leading to a freeze on grants and aid to organizations perceived as promoting "gender ideology," endangering resources allocated to LGBTQ+ health, safety, and rights. On a broader scale, Diver-

sity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) programs have been defunded in several states, reducing protections for marginalized groups. Workplace discrimination has surged, and same-sex marriage is under threat, with lawmakers suggesting revisiting *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the case that legalized same-sex marriage. Hate crimes against LGBTQ+ individuals have increased, fueled by negative political rhetoric against gender and sexual identity.

Questions of legality and constitutionality arise with the onslaught of these new orders. Multiple ongoing challenges and lawsuits have been filed against Trump's policies, citing discrimination. Many of his policies target marginalized groups, potentially conflicting with the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, which ensures that policies do not disproportionately affect protected classes based on gender, race, or other factors. Courts have the power to strike down unconstitutional policies. However, Trump has broad authority under Article II of the Constitution regarding presidential directives. The President can issue executive orders and direct federal agencies, but this power is limited. Actions that violate constitutional rights, contradict existing laws, or overstep presidential authority can be ruled unconstitutional in court. The President cannot unilaterally overturn laws passed by Congress, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, but he can issue orders that change how agencies enforce or interpret those laws. For example, eliminating DEIA programs and restricting LGBTQ+ rights may violate clauses under the Civil Rights Act.

These executive orders have serious implications for the future of civil liberties, targeting workplace protections, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ freedoms. These changes undo decades of progress while also setting a dangerous precedent for future governance. However, history has demonstrated that advocacy and action can drive change. Movements gain strength through numbers and determination—perseverance and passion have secured equality rights in the past. The same can happen now. Organizing fundraisers with friends, contacting community representatives, and sharing information through social media, public forums, and personal networks can spread awareness. Small acts such as showing public support, correcting misinformation, and amplifying silenced voices collectively create impact. One small step can lead to a significant movement. Speaking out and mobilizing against these policies is essential to defending civil rights and ensuring a future where equality is non-negotiable.

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# Justice

## The Oligarchy of Tech

By AARON WANG & LUCAS ZHANG '28  
*Spectrum Staff*

We now live in a world where one tweet shifts markets, algorithms shape our thinking, and a new form of power emerges. Billionaires like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Mark Zuckerberg wield this power, influencing public opinion and shaping political policies. As their influence grows, so do concerns about whether they should hold this level of control. The rise of these tech billionaires challenges democracy, accountability, and fairness, which form the foundation of this country. We must ask: Are they visionary leaders propelling society forward or oligarchs whose unchecked power threatens democratic values? The answer to this question could define governance's future.

Tech billionaires actively influence policy through economic power and political involvement. Politicians cater to their interests due to their immense financial clout. Elon Musk's influence stands out—his tweets about Dogecoin have shaken financial markets, and his sway extends to government policy, as seen in the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). President Donald Trump's executive order restoring historic names aligned with Musk's advocacy for American heritage. By controlling social media platforms and news outlets, these billionaires shape political narratives and sway public opinion. Their financial power ensures that political donations yield legislation favoring their interests, solidifying their control over decision-making. The sheer speed at which technology advances grants them an additional advantage, making it difficult for regulatory bodies to keep pace with their growing power.

Supporters argue that tech billionaires drive innovation, economic development, and job creation. Their companies generate employment, tax revenue, and industry growth while stabilizing economies. Musk's work in electric vehicles and clean energy and Bezos' investments in space exploration encourage gov-

ernments to adopt forward-thinking policies. Philanthropists such as Bill Gates have significantly contributed to public health, funding initiatives that combat malaria, polio, and COVID-19. These efforts demonstrate how billionaires use their wealth to address societal challenges. Additionally, these billionaires serve as global influencers, introducing futuristic concepts like artificial intelligence regulation, climate-conscious business models, and space colonization, which could potentially shape the future of humanity itself.

Critics argue that tech billionaires undermine democracy by prioritizing corporate interests over public welfare. With the ability to sway a handful of key figures, they push policies that serve personal or corporate agendas at the expense of the greater good. Their concentrated power distorts democratic processes, allowing them to craft policies favoring their interests over the majority. Musk's dominance in the cryptocurrency market exemplifies how a billionaire can manipulate financial markets for personal gain. Additionally, their immense wealth often disconnects them from everyday struggles, leading to unrealistic views on issues like income inequality, healthcare, and workers' rights. Their influence also trivializes significant policy matters—Musk's push to rename a U.S. government agency after Dogecoin illustrates how personal interests can overshadow governance. Bezos' lobbying for Amazon's tax concessions and opposition to labor reform further highlight how billionaires exploit their power to shape policies that benefit corporations while harming workers and small businesses.

Elon Musk's impact on cryptocurrency markets exemplifies how tech billionaires influence national agendas. His tweets have always triggered massive market fluctuations, and in 2021, his influence led to a U.S. government agency adopting Dogecoin's name. This individual control over policy underscores the disproportionate influence tech tycoons wield. Similarly, Mark Zuckerberg's role in spreading mis-

information during the 2016 U.S. election raises concerns about social media's impact on democracy. Despite criticism, Zuckerberg's ability to shape public discourse through his platform underscores how tech billionaires can influence politics. Bezos has also leveraged his power to push for deregulation, tax breaks, and resistance to labor reforms, preventing stricter labor laws despite Amazon's poor working conditions. Bill Gates has used his philanthropic foundation to influence global health policies, sparking criticism that private wealth drives decision-making rather than public needs. The ability of billionaires to craft their own global agendas without oversight makes them as powerful as elected officials, yet they remain unaccountable to the people they affect.

Public opinion on tech billionaires remains divided. A 2024 Pew Research Center survey found that most Americans believe social media companies wield excessive political influence and suppress opposing views. Analysts like Senator Ron Wyden warn that Musk's unchecked power threatens national security and democracy. Others, like Steve Bannon, label him a "techno-feudalist," suggesting that he prioritizes corporate interests over workers' well-being. These concerns highlight growing unease over billionaire influence on public policy and emphasize the need for stronger regulation and accountability. Some argue that billionaires should face new taxation policies or antitrust enforcement to curb monopolistic behavior, while others believe government agencies should impose stricter regulations on their industries to prevent overreach.

The reach of tech billionaires spans from global markets to national policy, sparking both admiration and alarm. While some view their innovations and philanthropy as forces for good, others fear their growing power erodes democracy and public well-being. As long as billionaires wield influence in government and business, the question remains: Can their actions be steered toward serving the greater good, or will they continue prioritizing personal and corporate interests? The answer to this question will shape the future of power, governance, and democracy itself.

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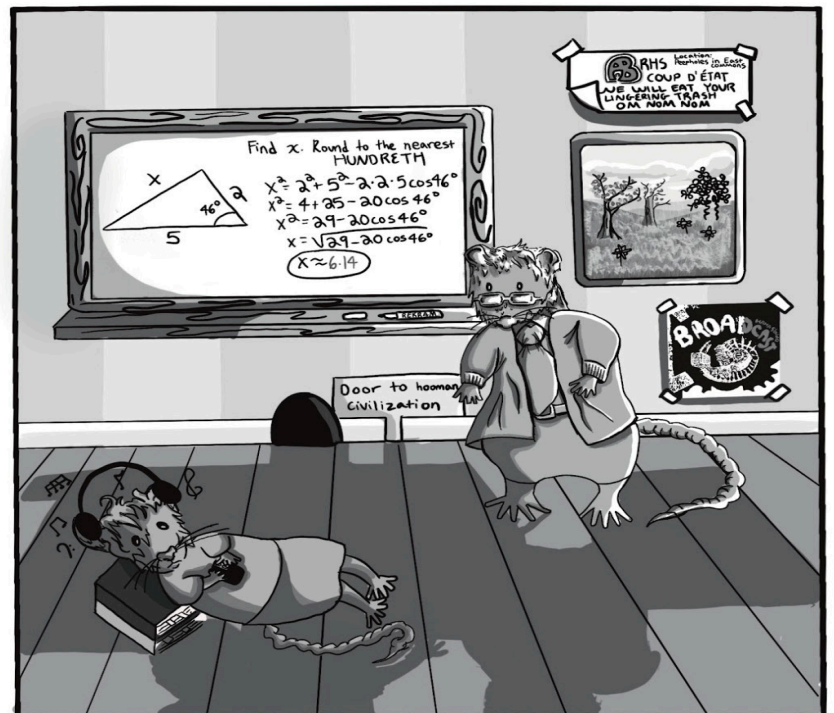
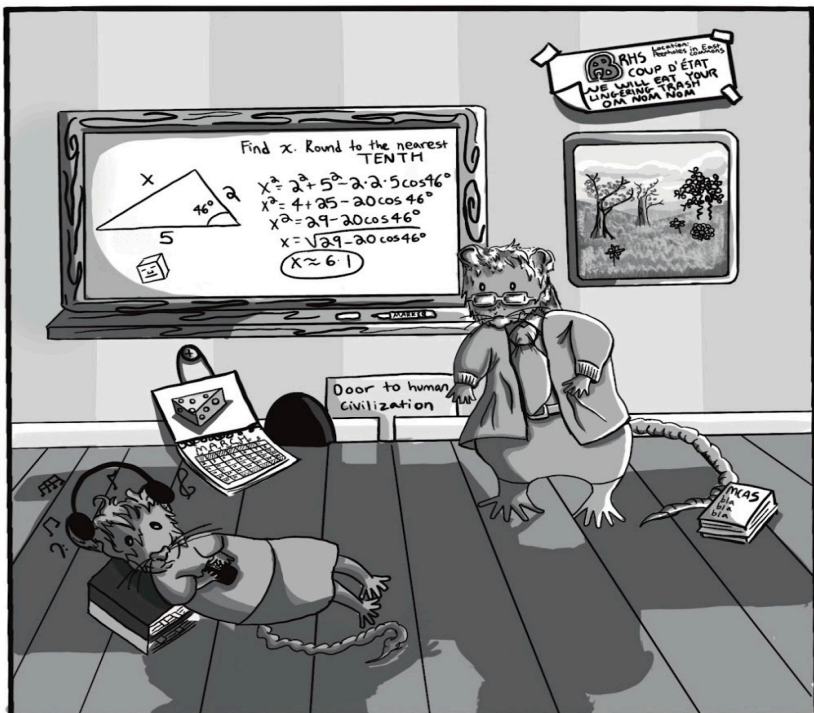
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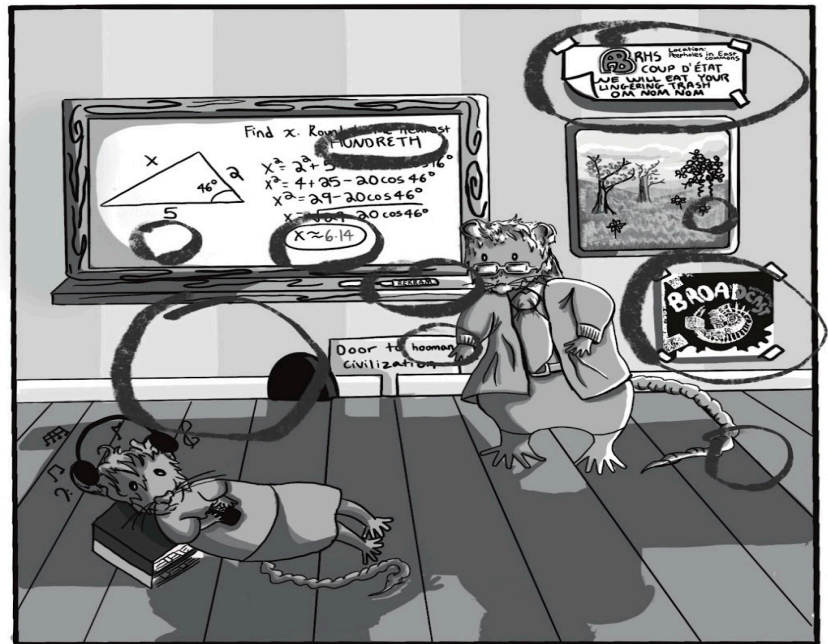
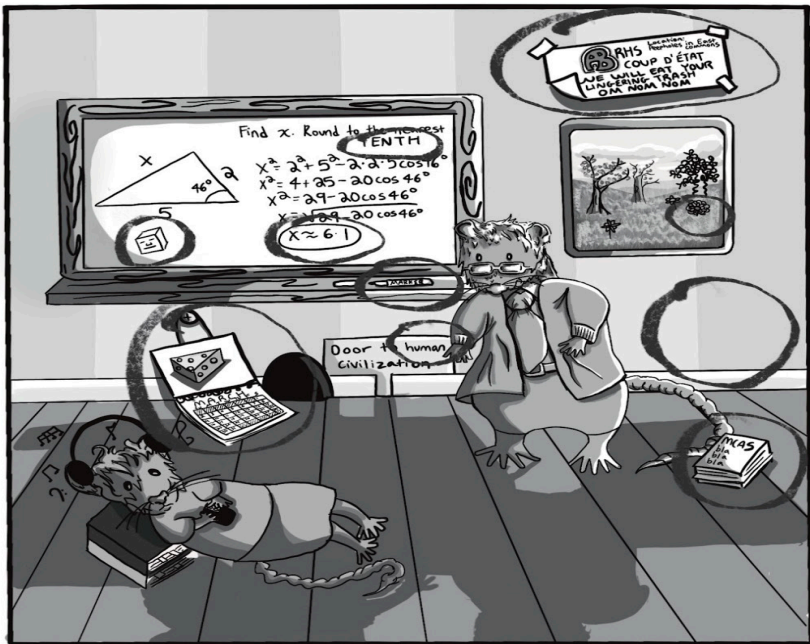


Torbell



# Op-Ed

## Spot the Difference Answer Key Spring Edition Can you find the 10 differences?



Torbell

### Celtics 2025

By ERIC ZHAO '25  
Spectrum Staff

On June 17, 2024, the Boston Celtics won their 18th championship, defeating the Dallas Mavericks in five games and ending a 16-year drought. The Celtics, who had a 64-win regular season, breezed through the playoffs with a 16-3 record, defeating every team they faced in five games or fewer. This dominant performance solidified their place among the most formidable teams in NBA history. After experiencing a loss in the NBA Finals and another in the Eastern Conference Finals in previous years, GM Brad Stevens recognized that changes were necessary. In the offseason, several roster moves were made, including trading longtime fan-favorite Marcus Smart for Kristaps Porzingis and sending Robert Williams and Malcolm Brogdon to acquire Jrue Holiday. Both Porzingis and Holiday played pivotal roles in the Celtics' 2024 championship run. Holiday became their premier defender and an efficient all-around scorer, while Porzingis, with his size and three-point shooting ability, expanded the offense and created new possibilities.

Entering the 2025 season, the Celtics quickly emerged as the early favorites to win the championship again and become the first repeat champions since the 2017-2018 Golden State Warriors. With a proven and dominant roster, GM Stevens made minimal changes, ensuring the core group remained intact. A few contract extensions were handed out to key players, including Jayson Tatum, who became the highest-paid player in NBA history with a five-year, \$315 million extension. The goal was clear: maximize the championship window by keeping the team together for as long as possible.

While the Celtics stayed strong, other teams made significant moves to close the gap. The Knicks, Cavaliers, and Thunder all bolstered their rosters to challenge Boston. The season started promisingly, with Boston going 21-5 in its first 26 games. However, the team then hovered just above .500 over the next 22 games. Although the Celtics have won 14 of their last 17 games, they haven't retained their previous dominance: finishing with 64 wins. Whether this is due to championship fatigue or a

lack of intensity during the regular season as they await the playoffs remains to be seen.

Injuries have also impacted the team, with Kristaps Porzingis playing in only 32 of the 64 games so far, and Jrue Holiday missing time due to a mallet finger injury. Porzingis plays a crucial role in stretching the floor, providing a presence in the paint, and spacing the offense with his three-point shooting. His ability to open up the court for teammates makes the Celtics' offense far more versatile. Holiday's defense and veteran leadership are also critical to the team's success. If both players can stay healthy, especially for the playoffs, the Celtics will have a much stronger chance of defending their title.

Another factor in the team's inconsistent play this season has been its increased reliance on three-pointers. While the Celtics have been a three-point-heavy team since Joe Mazzulla took over as head coach in 2022, they have taken this approach to new heights this season, attempting nearly 48 threes per game—on pace to break the NBA record—up from 43 last season. While teams that attempt the most three-pointers statistically win 69% of the time, this strategy also makes shooting slumps even more damaging. Many of the Celtics' losses this season were the result of a mid-season shooting slump in January, during which they blew multiple double-digit leads. If a similar slump happens in the playoffs, the team may struggle to recover against elite competition.

However, the Celtics still hold one major advantage over their toughest competition: playoff experience. While Cleveland and Oklahoma City have talented rosters, their cores are still relatively inexperienced in the postseason. In contrast, the Celtics are stacked with veterans who have made multiple deep playoff runs and know what it takes to win a championship. That experience could prove to be the deciding factor in high-pressure moments.

At 46-18, the Celtics remain on pace for 59 wins—one of the best seasons in franchise history—and are capable of beating any team on any given night. While their play has been volatile at times, if they can stay healthy and catch a few lucky breaks, Boston fans may soon be celebrating banner No. 19. Stay tuned to see what happens!

### Pius The XII's Papacy

By Andrew Moon '27  
Spectrum Staff

"Accipio in Crucem!" (I accept the Cross), said Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli on March 2, 1939, His 63rd birthday, as He ascended to the role of the 260th successor of Saint Peter, becoming Pius XII. This solemn declaration was not solely a beginning of His papacy but also foreshadowed the relentless burden and sacrifice that would define it. His papacy faced a great challenge barely six months into His reign, as World War II erupted when German troops overran Poland. Lasting nearly six years, the war left a trail of devastation, claiming millions of casualties. Among the most horrific atrocities was the Holocaust, genocide of approximately six million Jews across German-occupied Europe at the hands of the Nazi Regime.

In the face of such horrors, Pius XII's response remains one of history's most contested debates. Some critics accuse Him of silence, claiming indifference in the genocide, suggesting that He purposefully ignored the atrocities. Some publications by various authors further solidified these claims—well-known works include Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 play *The Deputy* and John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* in 1999, which portray Pius XII as a complicit figure in the face of Nazi atrocities. However, much historical evidence clearly shows that He played a crucial role in opposing totalitarian regimes. These accusations against Pius XII, which frame Him as Hitler's Pope, are nothing but blatant slander—deliberate fabrications that distort His legacy and disregard the immense efforts He made to save thousands of Jewish lives.

Born Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli, Pius XII lived as an apostolic diplomat before His papacy, serving in various roles, including Apostolic Nuncio to Germany and Cardinal Secretary of State. During His time in Germany, among many other important works, Cardinal Pacelli concluded the Reichskonkordat ("Concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich"), which aimed to protect the rights of the Catholic Church in Germany under the rising Nazi regime. As Cardinal Secretary of State, He played a central role in writing the 1937

encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, "With Burning Concern," of Pope Pius XI, which condemned Nazi oppression, particularly the regime's attacks on the Catholic Church and its violations of human dignity. When Pius XI predeceased in 1939, the Nazis strongly opposed the idea of Pacelli becoming His successor, for He was always opposed to Nazism.

The most widespread and egregious misconception regarding Pius XII during World War II is that His silence and indifference showed support for the Holocaust. If He had truly been indifferent and done nothing to have persecuted Jews, He would not have received the plaudits during and after the war from Jewish leaders and from Jewish scholars, such as historian Pinchas Lapide, who credited the pope with saving more than 860,000 Jewish lives.

It is true that the Vatican officially maintained a stance of neutrality and did not issue a church statement explicitly naming and denouncing the Nazis or Hitler. However, this apparent neutrality was, in reality, a carefully calculated strategy to save as many Jewish lives as possible. The Nazi regime had explicitly threatened that any public condemnation from the pope would result in brutal retaliation. Therefore, rather than risk worsening Nazi brutality with public condemnations, He worked behind the scenes to provide them with refuge.

Pius XII ordered that religious institutions offer refuge to Jews, even at great personal cost to those providing shelter. As a result, thousands of Jews were provided shelter, food, and clothing in 180 known locations, including Vatican City, churches, basilicas, Church offices, and parish houses. Moreover, many more found safety in Castel Gandolfo, the Pope's summer residence, as well as in other numerous private facilities. Pius XII personally ensured the well-being of Jewish children whose parents had been deported from Italy. His efforts were remarkable. It was determined that 80% of the Jews in Rome survived the Nazi occupation and only 8,000 Jews were deported from Italy by the Nazis—a significantly lower number than in other European countries. Furthermore, in June 1944, Pius XII sent a crucial telegram to Admiral Miklos Horthy, the

ruler of Hungary, effectively halting the planned deportation of 800,000 Jews from that country. Pius XII had been criticizing the Nazis before and during His papacy. In fact, Hitler disliked Him so much that he even considered assassinating the Pope after Italy's surrender. Given how strongly the Pope opposed the Nazis, how could He possibly have collaborated with them?

Then why do these false accusations against Pius XII persist? The answer lies in many fictional publications that are based on Soviet propaganda. Pius XII saw all totalitarian ideologies as threats to human dignity, religious freedom and moral values. Recognizing the dangers posed by communism, he strongly condemned its suppression of religious institutions and its assault on individual liberties. His unwavering moral stance against communism made Him a target of the Soviet Union's Operation Seat 12, a disinformation campaign to discredit the moral authority of the Vatican. One notable misinformation campaign from Operation Seat 12 was the 1963 play *The Deputy*. Orchestrated by General Ivan Agayants, head of the disinformation department of KGB, the play's research was based on forged documents by KGB agents. Additionally, the play's producer, Erwin Piscator, was a committed Communist with deep ties to the Soviet Union and played a key role in bringing this disinformation to the stage. Influenced by this play, John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* similarly disregards historical facts, focusing instead solely on a biased perspective and interpretation that serves to undermine the Pope's legacy. The accusations against Pius XII, therefore, essentially rooted from a deceitful work of fiction written over a decade after the war.

History undeniably testifies that Pius XII saved countless Jewish lives, yet the disregard for his efforts remains deeply regrettable. His example challenges the notion that heroism must always be loud or visible; instead, it can be strategic, quiet, and rooted in deep ethical conviction. Even in the face of war and the rising threat of communism, Pius XII stood firm in his convictions—rejecting violence while courageously working to preserve life and safeguard the Church: a true hero of World War II. As his motto reminds us, *Opus Iustitiae Pax*—peace is the work of justice.



# Op-Ed

## Choices

By Abhijit Sanal '26  
Spectrum Staff

Nothing is out of our reach. With technology, everything is in the palm of our hand—never more than a few swipes on a screen or a few clicks on a keyboard away. And while that may be an exaggeration, it's undeniable that we have access to an overwhelming amount of everything—far more than we actually need. Honestly, I spend more time deciding what to watch than actually watching anything on Netflix. The endless options overwhelm me, and I end up not picking anything at all. When I do pick something, I don't even really appreciate it anymore; it feels like I'm just passively watching instead of actually engaging with it.

As a kid, my parents didn't like buying me new games. Like most kids, I didn't have much choice in what I got, so I would spend an almost absurd amount of time on whatever I had, no matter how dumb it was. And maybe I look down on those games now, but I absorbed every bit of those experiences. They might not have had much to say, but I took in whatever they offered. I knew them better than I knew most things—inside and out. I'm sure you have fond memories of your childhood entertainment too, even if, looking back, they seem really stupid. But it's not just nostalgia. I think when we dedicate a lot of time

to a single experience, we transform and grow as people. And why does that matter? Because it's better to have a few meaningful experiences than an endless stream of forgettable ones.

Now, when we have as much music as we want, as many shows as we want, and enough TikToks to completely rot our brains, we're really just consuming mindlessly. We feel like we're gaining something by taking in as much content as possible, but what's the point if we don't even remember it? It just pushes our problems back for later—almost like running away from responsibility. Music, for example, becomes more of a background noise than something we actively choose to listen to. Sure, playing music while working might help you focus, but it also undermines the art itself. Over time, you condition yourself to need the noise simply because you're not really paying attention to it. Our focus is now split across so many different things that we don't fully engage with anything—and we end up appreciating nothing.

Think about the times you've truly locked in and explored something on your own, consciously, without distractions. You probably enjoyed it so much more. I struggle with this too, honestly. I always find some stupid YouTube video to watch while I try to work, and I'm listening to music while writing this right now. But I'm working on fixing that. Try separating your actions more—you'd be surprised how much it helps.



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## Opinions on Spring

By SOPHIA GOODNOW '28  
Spectrum Staff

Spring is often considered a time of growth and beauty, with many people welcoming the warm weather after winter's long, cold months. However, others dislike the season for various reasons, from pollen in the air to mud on the ground. Growing up in New England, it is common to hear complaints about the unpredictable weather, particularly in March and April. But just because people grumble about the season doesn't mean there's widespread hatred for spring. Opinions vary, and even if you passionately dislike spring's lingering cold, frequent rainstorms, and sudden temperature changes, there are plenty of ways to appreciate the often-overlooked season.

Spring is best known for its blooming flowers and thawing cold, as the classic image of the season represents growth and new beginnings, standing in stark contrast to winter's darkness. Many people love spring for its beauty, as birdsong and budding trees create a refreshing atmosphere. Additionally, the vibrant plant life and seasonal energy contribute to feelings of happiness and security. A study by Rutgers University found that flowers bring immediate joy to most people, reinforcing the idea that nature can positively impact emotions. However, blooming plants aren't the only mood boosters in spring. Longer and warmer days also help lift people's spirits, especially after months of limited sunlight and outdoor activity. Seasonal depression, often triggered by winter's short days and lack of exercise, tends to fade as spring arrives. Increased sunlight and opportunities for outdoor movement naturally improve both mental and physical health. These elements—brighter days, fresh air, and the season's renewal—create a powerful combination that enhances overall well-being, making spring one of the most refreshing times of the year.

Despite these positives, many people still find spring unenjoyable. For every seasonal highlight, there's an accompanying drawback, whether it's pollen or persistent rain. Some of spring's benefits don't even take effect until late in the season, making the early months feel underwhelming. For example, the health advantages of spring can be overshadowed by allergy symptoms.

While blooming flowers bring joy to many, their pollen triggers sneezing, congestion, and itchy eyes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 25% of U.S. adults and 20% of children experience seasonal allergies. Even for those without allergies, pollen can be frustrating, coating car windshields in a yellowish-green film after rainstorms. Beyond pollen, spring's frequent rain storms create additional challenges. In March and April, consistent rainfall and melting snow turn roads and trails into muddy, difficult-to-navigate paths. This excess precipitation benefits new plant growth but can make outdoor activities less enjoyable. Uncooperative weather often limits opportunities to appreciate spring's longer days and rejuvenated landscape.

Another downside to spring is the inconsistency of the weather itself. In some regions, early spring doesn't feel like spring at all, as temperatures fluctuate drastically. One day may bring sunshine and warmth, while the next might bring a sudden frost or even snow. In New England, early spring hardly feels like spring at all, as temperatures remain cold and snowstorms linger into March. Ski resorts sometimes stay open into April or May, reflecting the season's unpredictable climate. For students and professionals alike, the shift between warm and cold days can be frustrating, as it makes dressing appropriately for the weather a challenge. Light jackets and t-shirts may be comfortable one day, only to leave you shivering the next. This uncertainty adds to the frustration that many feel toward the season, making it difficult to fully embrace its arrival.

Even if spring ranks last on your list of favorite seasons, there are ways to make the most of March, April, and May while minimizing the season's downsides. A shift in perspective can help, particularly when dealing with unpredictable weather. Many expect winter to transition directly into warm temperatures, but that's rarely the case. Cold, rainy days can feel discouraging, but finding silver linings makes a difference. For example, rain has a calming effect and can even help with sleep. According to mental health researcher Emily Mendez, "Rain has a regular, predictable pattern [and] our brain processes it as a calming, non-threatening noise, which is why there are so many relaxation and meditation videos that feature the

sound of rain." This soothing quality can be beneficial, especially for students managing stressful schedules. Additionally, rainy or snowy days offer perfect opportunities to stay inside with a warm drink, a blanket, and a good book or movie.

While rain nourishes plants, it also contributes to allergy issues, another common springtime frustration. However, preparing for allergy season in advance can help minimize symptoms. According to Family Allergies and Asthma, taking allergy medication early, keeping windows closed, and monitoring daily pollen counts can reduce allergic reactions. Though pollen can be a hassle, it plays a crucial role in nature's renewal, reminding us that spring is a season of transition rather than an inconvenience. Learning to embrace its unpredictable nature can lead to a greater appreciation for the season as a whole.

Beyond the challenges, spring provides an opportunity for personal renewal, much like nature's revival. Many people associate the season with new beginnings, making it the perfect time for setting fresh goals and improving daily routines. Spring cleaning, for example, is a long-standing tradition that allows individuals to declutter their homes and minds. Research suggests that organizing and cleaning can reduce stress and improve mental clarity. Additionally, the longer daylight hours provide more time for outdoor activities, whether it's hiking, biking, or simply enjoying a walk in the fresh air. These activities can enhance physical health and contribute to an overall sense of well-being, helping to counteract any lingering winter blues.

Initially, I approached this article believing that spring was widely disliked, as I had always felt its drawbacks outweighed its benefits. However, after talking to peers, I realized my perception was shaped by my own experiences rather than widespread sentiment. While survey results vary, studies suggest that spring is a favorite season for 20–30% of Americans, leading me to rethink my stance. There's more to spring than gloomy weather and allergy flare-ups. In the coming months, I plan to embrace the season's ups and downs, appreciating both the lingering cold and the blooming flowers that signal brighter days ahead. After all, no season is perfect, and learning to enjoy each one—even with its flaws—can make the entire year more enjoyable.



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## Op-Ed

## The Abysmal Failures of Route 2

By DANIEL JIANG '25  
*Spectrum Staff*

Massachusetts Route 2. Arguably one of the most important stretches of asphalt and concrete that crosses through our town's borders. It's a highway that is the gateway for nearly all of us to the rest of the state. If you need to get onto Interstate 495 or 95, then Route 2 is probably your quickest and fastest bet to get there.

But Route 2 is also a devil in disguise. We sit on the western portion of what I might consider to be the most painful nine miles out of this entire highway's existence. Maybe you've experienced it yourself? Ever gotten stuck behind a row of cars at the traffic circle near the now-closed Concord Correctional Institution? Have you ever been cruising comfortably at a reasonable 65 miles per hour (because you know that 45 on such a wide highway is just blatantly idiotic) and then the traffic that was solid green turns yellow, and you have to slam on your brakes to stop in time?

Yeah. I hate it too. And it kills me that MassDOT isn't doing anything.

#### Background

Route 2's history is surprisingly rich. In the very beginning it was a rural trail used by the Mohican and Mohawk tribes to cross the Berkshires; hence it was understandably named the Mohawk Trail. When colonists arrived in the 1700's they expanded the Mohawk Trail to support commerce and trade. The trail was extended and was used to connect upstate New York and Massachusetts to the ever-growing Boston. In the 1800s, the first instances of tolled turnpikes began to appear along the Mohawk Trail. This led to the expansion and coining of the Cambridge, Concord, and the Greenfield-Shelburne Turnpike.

As the age of the automobile began to take hold of the United States, the Mohawk Trail was designated as a scenic highway in 1914, which helped boost tourism to the western half of Massachusetts. Then in 1922 the trail was designated as New England Interstate Route 7 (NE-7), as part of the new New England Interstate Highway System. This designation as NE-7 didn't last long; five

years later another renaming program went through, and finally NE-7 became known as Route 2, which is what it is still designated as today.

Throughout the 1900s there were a flurry of upgrades throughout the entire length of the highway. The Great Depression in the 1920s and early '30s fueled alignment and paving of the highway as part of public works projects. After World War II, Massachusetts sought to modernize the highway, and so large swaths, especially in the busier eastern and central sections of the state, received the upgrade to properly divided highway lanes. I'd argue this was about the time that we see Route 2 look how it is today.

In the 1950s and 1960s the expressway modernization continued, with many sections in Acton, Lexington, and Concord being converted to a limited-access expressway. Coinciding with the rapid acceleration of American suburbia and the boom of highway construction plans were floated to have Route 2 connect to the infamously proposed Inner Belt Expressway project, otherwise known as IBX or the I-695 project. I could rant about the IBX alone, but the summary of how that turned out is that residents of Cambridge and Somerville—two major cities where the IBX would cut through and demolish thousands of homes—protested, and so the IBX never came to fruition. As for Route 2, the compromise was made to stop the highway expansion at Alewife. Part of the redirected spending for IBX to transit included the construction of Alewife Intermodal Station, where a smattering of bus routes and the Red Line terminates.

#### The Issues

There are a few major issues on the Concord turnpike. You might already know the obvious, but I'll dive into them just to make sure we really understand the scope of it all.

The first issue is traffic speed. Remember, the Concord turnpike has highway-speed traffic being funneled in on both ends, and because we live in Massachusetts—where we have the most aggressive drivers in all of the United States—these speeds can be 60, 70, sometimes

even upwards of 80 miles per hour. The elevated speed of these cars in general means that when these motorists come upon a stoplight, they're forced to brake. Hard. One inattentive driver equates to a disaster.

So yes, the combination of speed and traffic lights, just to let a measly few cars across the road, is a horrible idea.

The second issue is that the Concord turnpike is having an identity crisis. Obviously the traffic lights and intersections are a big sign of that already, but then there's also these smattering of businesses. There's a literal farm stand on the side of the eastbound lanes towards Boston. Matter of fact, there's even a new shopping center springing up as well.

The third issue is the amount of connectors on this stretch. I've already mentioned the Corrections Institute, but there's also Walden Pond and the historical Concord and Lexington battlegrounds. Both of these are major tourist attractions, preserving the history of this region. Walden Pond gets hit with a heavy influx of traffic in the summer months. Then there's Emerson Hospital. Serving nearly 25 towns, this is the only major full-service hospital in this immediate area (the two other closest hospitals are in Marlborough and Bedford). You have ambulances rushing patients to this hospital, and nine times out of ten they'll take Route 2. But oh, no, snarling traffic will keep them stuck, shaving off valuable time. Shoulders on this highway are also next to non-existent, so these ambulances can't even bypass the lanes of traffic either.

The effects of these are an unpleasant experience for all. People who are trying to get to where they need to go are bogged down by traffic. Pedestrians—especially those who walk from the downtown of Concord to Walden Pond, for example—have to cross what feels like eight lanes of traffic at an intersection. Everyone who drives will surely have increased brake wear if they daily commute this section, as harsh braking impacts brake pad life ... full version published on website!

## Fast Fashion Realities

By MATTHEW LIU '27  
*Spectrum Staff*

In 2013, the tragic Rana Plaza factory collapse uncovered the ugly realities of fast fashion, killing over 1,100 garment workers and shaking the industry to its core. But a decade on, retailers like Shein, H&M, and Zara are still everywhere, tempting consumers with trendy, affordable clothing. Behind the cheap prices is a system of exploitative working conditions and environmental destruction. While fast fashion democratizes fashion, it does so at the cost of morality—one we can no longer afford to ignore.

For example, in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and China, factory workers toil in exploitative conditions, paid poverty wages to risk their lives in dangerous factories. Child labor and forced labor remain alarmingly common, but too many brands offload responsibility by subcontracting manufacture to subcontractors, creating layers of credible deniability. Businesses like Shein have been caught for using clothes supplied by child labor, yet as a company they continue to succeed. The cost of sustainability is also staggering—fast fashion is the second-largest user of water in the world, with toxic dyes polluting rivers and synthetic fibers shedding minuscule microplastics into oceans. Meanwhile, overproduction floods the market with cheap clothes, most of which ends up directly in landfills after a few wears. Clothing donations often end up incinerated and in landfills—making our brief fashion trends even more damaging to the environment.

Adding fuel to the fire, social media and influencer marketing have spawned a culture of overconsumption, where fashion spins on a whirring fast cycle: the epitome of hypocrisy. Fast-fashion giants like Shein churn out thousands of brand-new pieces per day, reminding consumers to buy more and waste faster. And although ethical and sustainable fashion exists, it is often priced higher than the average middle or low-income buyer can afford. Fast fashion is therefore seen as the viable option because customers can buy larger quantities while sacri-

ficing quality. Shein may be able to give you that dopamine rush of adding cheap items to your cart, but it's important to recognize the consequences that come at the expense of your massive shopping haul. Secondhand shopping would be a solution, but if secondhand rates continue to inflate with demand, it is also no longer available for those most in need, resulting in turning to cheaper and more environmentally unfriendly alternatives. However, it still is better than whatever clothes that are being produced by these companies. Oftentimes, these second-hand clothes will be high quality and can be for all. At a thrift shop, there can be clothes for anyone's style!

Even so-called "sustainable" initiatives by large corporations are nothing more than publicity stunts. H&M's green lines, for instance, create the illusion of change while the corporation continues to engage in destructive production practices. Greenwashing—when companies make claims of sustainability without real accountability—is widespread, and without strict regulations, corporations have the liberty to prioritize profits over people and the planet. It is important to think about where clothes come from and where they will go once we stop wearing them.

So, where do we go from here? As consumers, we can be more mindful in our choices, choosing quality over quantity where we can and avoiding the temptation to spend on short-lived trends. These fast-fashion brands are usually cheaper for a reason. They have terrible ethical practices, but also the quality of clothes will be much worse. Being able to find high-quality clothes that can last longer will be better for the environment and just last you in general. But meaningful change needs to happen at a systemic level. Governments need to intervene to impose stricter labor and sustainability standards, making ethical fashion not a luxury for the elite, but a right for all. A world in which fashion is accessible and sustainable shouldn't be a dream—it should be the norm.

## Conflict in the Mideast

By RETAL SAID '26  
*Spectrum Staff*

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been a central issue in the Middle East since the mid-20th century, primarily due to territorial disputes. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the region has experienced multiple wars, further intensifying tensions. Furthermore, the conflict is shaped by historical, political, religious, and provincial factors. At its core lies a deep dispute over land sovereignty, with both Israelis and Palestinians claiming the same territory. Understanding the historical roots of this struggle is crucial to grasping the present situation, from discussions about the genocide of Palestinians to ceasefires aimed at achieving some semblance of peace.

To fully comprehend the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one must examine its historical origins and the motivations behind both narratives. The roots of this conflict can be traced back to the early 20th century, with the rise of Jewish and Arab nationalism in the Middle East. Following World War II and the Holocaust, international support for a Jewish state increased, leading to the United Na-

tions Partition Plan of 1947, which proposed separate Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. While Jewish leaders accepted the plan, Arab leaders rejected it. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared independence, sparking immediate conflict with neighboring Arab nations, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. This conflict, known as the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, ended in an Israeli victory, resulting in significant territorial expansion beyond the UN partition plan and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. This displacement, known as the Nakba—Arabic for "the catastrophe"—remains a defining event in Palestinian history.

In 1967, tensions escalated again, leading to the Six-Day War, during which Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, numerous attempts were made to achieve peace, including the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, which sought to establish Palestinian self-governance and a two-state solution. However, ongoing violence and political divisions continuously derailed these efforts.

The rise of Hamas, an Islamic militant organization, further reshaped the conflict and led to more control on the Palestinian's side. In 2007, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, increasing tensions with Israel.

Shifting to the present, peace efforts have repeatedly failed, and the situation continues to deteriorate. A turning point in the conflict occurred on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing approximately 1,200 people. Around 250 individuals were taken hostage and transported to Gaza, with nearly 8,700 others injured. However, it is essential to recognize that hostilities between both sides had been ongoing long before this attack. Hamas justified its actions as a form of "resistance," citing decades of Israeli oppression, Palestinian casualties, and the long-standing blockade of Gaza.

Since October 7, the Israeli government has intensified military operations, expanding settlements in disputed territories and launching attacks that have resulted in the deaths of approximately 63,000 Palestinians, 30% of whom were children. Israel has also taken around 10,000 hostages and injured roughly 119,000 Palestinians. The crisis has

had devastating humanitarian consequences, not only in Palestine but also in Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon. Israeli forces have conducted significant operations in Lebanon, killing 4,000 people, and have launched numerous airstrikes on Syria following its liberation from the Assad regime. The destruction in Gaza has been catastrophic—nearly all homes have been damaged, 80% of commercial facilities have been destroyed, 88% of school buildings are in ruins, and healthcare facilities are in crisis, with only 50% of hospitals functioning at a limited capacity. Additionally, 68% of Gaza's agricultural land has been severely damaged.

In January 2025, after 15 months of intense conflict, a ceasefire agreement was reached between Israel and Hamas. The terms included the exchange of hostages and prisoners, with the most recent swap involving three Israeli hostages in exchange for 183 Palestinian prisoners. The agreement also allowed wounded individuals to cross into Egypt for medical treatment and permitted displaced Palestinians to return to their destroyed homes in northern Gaza. However, tensions have remained high. In February, Hamas announced that it would halt the release of hostages, accusing Israel of violating

the ceasefire terms, particularly regarding the delivery of humanitarian aid. In response, Israel threatened to resume its attacks if Hamas did not release three hostages by the weekend deadline. Most recently, Israeli forces killed two Palestinians in southern Gaza after the Israeli government cut off aid to the region, effectively undermining the ceasefire agreement. Hamas has continued to push towards advancing into the next stage of the truce, but with food, water, medicine, and essential supplies dwindling, survival has become increasingly difficult.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most significant and deeply entrenched conflicts in modern history. While the 2025 ceasefire between Israel and Hamas provided a brief moment of relief, longstanding issues such as territorial disputes and political tensions make lasting peace seem elusive. Achieving a sustainable resolution will require commitment from all parties, whether it involves the U.S. pressuring Israel to halt military operations or the establishment of a viable two-state solution. Prioritizing the needs and concerns of the people affected by this conflict is essential if peace is to be realized for both Israelis and Palestinians.



# Off-Topic

PENCIL	HERALD	YEARLY	STORY
OBSERVER	ARTICLE	DRAFT	DAILY
COLUMN	REVISE	EDIT	GAZETTE
MONTHLY	REPORT	WEEKLY	MONITOR

Connections!  
Lucas Zhang / Spectrum Staff

## Crossword Answers

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Across:</b>     | <b>Down:</b>        |
| 3. Nintendo        | 1. Concord Turnpike |
| 4. The Stranger    | 2. School uniforms  |
| 8. Serial          | 3. Newspapers       |
| 11. Raspberries    | 5. Meta             |
| 13. Boredom        | 6. Blueberry        |
| 14. Charles Mingus | 7. Twitter          |
| 15. Difference     | 9. Justice          |
| 17. Jayson Tatum   | 10. Fulbright       |
|                    | 12. Bird flu        |
|                    | 18. Anchorman       |



Spring is beginning, try a new treat as you enjoy the sun!  
ONLINE SOURCE

## Fun Blueberry Clusters

By TIFFANY VALKOVA '25  
Chief Copy Editor

Spring is finally here! I've decided to embrace a healthier and simpler dessert for this issue: chocolate covered blueberry clusters and raspberries! It's basically just berries and melted chocolate frozen over it. Similarly, one of my friends is obsessed with TruFru, chocolate covered freeze dried berries, so this is a great homemade alternative. These have a delicious blend of flavors from the light and tart berries and the decadent dark chocolate, which work together beautifully!

This recipe yields about 8 blueberry clusters and 30 chocolate covered raspberries but can be easily adjusted. I made these together to be more efficient, so I'm combining these recipes, but it's definitely not necessary to make both together. For the berries, make sure that you choose the firmer ones, which would hold up better in the preparation with the chocolate. Additionally, when melting the chocolate, definitely include a bit of coconut oil (or avocado oil as a substitute) and put in the microwave in 30 second bursts, stirring in between until fully melted to ensure it doesn't burn. In total, it takes about 30 minutes of prep work, 15 minutes of active work, and 15 minutes to freeze.

- Ingredients: Blueberries  
- 1 cup of blueberries  
- 1/3 cup of chocolate chips  
- 1/3 tablespoon of coconut oil

- Ingredients: Raspberries  
- 1 cup of raspberries  
- 1/3 cup of chocolate chips  
- 1/3 tablespoon of coconut oil

Instructions:

1. Prepare a large parchment-paper-lined tray or plate.
2. Wash the berries and leave them to dry for 30 minutes on a paper towel.
3. Melt the chocolate until smooth (for usually about a minute and a half).
4. Dip the raspberries into the chocolate, and lift and twist to reduce excess chocolate. Place on the tray.
5. Put the blueberries into the melted chocolate until evenly coated. Place clusters of about 6-7 blueberries on the tray.
6. Freeze the berries for about 20 minutes before serving.

I love how easy and fun this recipe is, especially considering that this can definitely be made with ingredients you could already have handy at home! The final product was so healthy and delicious, and it's definitely become a staple for me, and can be made with a variety of different fruits. The leftovers can be stored in a container and refrigerated for up to about three days. Lastly, since I am a senior, this will be my last article in my recipe column, so I wanted to thank the Spectrum for a great few years and fun memories baking! Happy baking!

## Charles Mingus: Jazz and Soul

By ANDREW MOON '27  
Spectrum Staff

To call Charles Mingus merely a great bassist would be an understatement. He was a force of nature—a prodigious bass player, skilled piano player, bandleader, visionary composer, and an artist who shaped twentieth-century American Music. If you haven't heard Mingus, you haven't truly heard jazz.

In a typical jazz ensemble, the rhythm section traditionally consists of the pianist, drummer, guitarist, and bassist. For a long time, bassists were seen as the tempo keepers and harmony supporters. But everything changed with Mingus. Thanks to his unique and pioneering bass techniques, he transformed bassists into powerful and independent soloists from mere timekeepers. His mastery stretched across all genres of Jazz—from blues to bebop, New Orleans Jazz to Swing, Latin jazz to experimental Avant-Garde Jazz—constantly pushing the boundaries of what jazz could be.

Born on a military base in Nogales, Arizona in 1922 and raised in California, he was first introduced to music through the church. He studied double bass and composition in a formal way while absorbing vernacular music from the great jazz masters, first-hand. His early professional experience, in the '40s, found him touring with

bands like Louis Armstrong, Kid Ory and Lionel Hampton.

Eventually, he made his way to New York, where he played and recorded alongside the jazz greats of the 1950s, including Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Bud Powell, Art Tatum, and even Duke Ellington. One of the few bassists to take on a leadership role, Mingus quickly established himself as a bandleader. An accomplished pianist as well, he could have pursued a career on that instrument alone. By the mid-1950s, he had taken control of his music, founding both publishing and recording companies to safeguard his expanding repertoire of original compositions. He also established the "Jazz Workshop," a platform that allowed young composers to have their works performed and recorded.

One remarkable accomplishment of his jazz workshops was *Pithecanthropus Erectus*. Mingus considered this album a breakthrough, as it was his first album where he taught arrangements to his musicians by ear instead of using written notations. Through this composition, Mingus sought to portray humanity's rise from his hominid roots (*Pithecanthropus erectus*) to an eventual downfall due to "his failure to realize the inevitable emancipation of those he sought to enslave and his greed in attempting to stand on a false security."

*Pithecanthropus Erectus* is

indeed one of Mingus' forefront Avant-Garde Jazz compositions, including *The Black Saint* and the *Sinner Lady*, *The Clown*, *Tijuana Moods*, *Mingus Dynasty*, *Mingus Ah Um*, *Cumbia* and *Jazz Fusion*, *Let My Children Hear Music*. He recorded over a hundred albums and wrote over three hundred scores.

In his album *Mingus Dynasty*, Mingus featured one of his most overtly political compositions, "Fables of Faubus." This piece was a direct protest against Arkansas governor Orval Faubus, who, in 1957, sent out the National Guard to block nine African American teenagers from the racial integration of Little Rock Central High School—known as the Little Rock Crisis. As shown, his compositions not only pushed musical boundaries but also served as powerful commentaries on the struggles faced by African Americans during the 1950-60s, highlighting the injustices and challenges of the era.

Charles Mingus was more than just a bassist—he was a visionary, composer, and a fierce advocate for artistic and social change. His legacy isn't just in the notes he played. Even decades after his passing, Mingus' influence remains undeniable. His music inspires musicians, scholars, and listeners alike, not only for its technical brilliance but for its emotional depth and unfiltered expression, making him one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century.



# Off-Topic

## Interview With Romeo

By DR. LOO & DR. HUGS  
*Spectrum Staff*

Dr. Loo: Hey lovebirds, how are y'all faring on this fine day? Well, whatever the base your situation might be, I hope y'all are all safe and sound. We have a guest who is afraid to publicize his relationship to the world. Come on in, Romeo!

Romeo: Hey, what's up, buddy!

Hugs: Ok, let's start. So how would you describe your love life so far?

Romeo: I would describe my love life as very fun and enjoyable to be in-

Hugs: Let's get to the real talk. Why are you so sensitive about being in a relationship.

Romeo: Bro, what? I'm not you must be bugging!

Loo: Dude, we all know you are dating--

Romeo: Hey, hold your horses! I cannot reveal my other half, yet but like coming soon. Who are you even talking about?

Loo: See, that is exactly our point. Do you really think no one notices you leaving classrooms for scores of minutes every day?

Romeo: I'd like to think I'm pretty nonchalant about the whole thing, even then who cares if people see me. No one does anywho I'm a ninja

in the night.

Loo: C'mon man. You have to be confident in your relationships. Love yourself and your partner.

Hugs: I think I have heard enough. I diagnose you with Romantic-anxiety syndrome, where you are not confident with your relationship. This type of behavior can negatively influence your relationship overall, eventually ending the relationship without a clean cut, leaving you with an unsatisfying ending to your relationship.

Romeo: Oh, okay. If you think it will be beneficial, I will proudly announce my relationship in the next issue!

Hugs: I will sign you off with some proper advice to give you some romantic boost, so you should be all right by next year... if you sillies are still together.

Romeo: I'm planning on it. Thank you so much doctors! Please have me again some time.

Hugs: Toodles!

Another day, another satisfied client! Contact [thespectrum@gmail.com](mailto:thespectrum@gmail.com) to submit your love life issue and other romantic topics you want to talk with us about.

- Dr. Hugs

- Dr. Loo

## SAD: Seasonal Affective Depression

By HANNA MOUSTAKAS AND ISABEL WALKER '26  
*Spectrum Staff*

Bare branches, fine white power coating the ground, and an icy wind biting any sign of life. It's winter-time—those couple of months when time feels as if it's not moving at all. The mood is solemn and dreary, the only light coming from the prospective notion of spring. While winter can be very difficult for some of us, it's important to recognize that preferring summer over winter is different from having diagnosed seasonal depression. Knowing what seasonal depression is and how it manifests itself is important in not only being aware of those around you but also figuring out why you may feel the way you do.

Seasonal depression, or Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), affects about 5% of the United States population (Mental Health America). While it is not very common, it is still present and something that is a harsh reality for many. SAD is a type of depression that occurs in a pattern with the seasonal cycle. Usually, people fall into their depressed state during the winter, and their symptoms decrease during the summer. Typically, the further a person is from the equator, the more likely they are to experience SAD. This is because regions further from the equator experience a "longer winter" and temperatures drop lower than they do close to the equator.

The causes of SAD vary from person to person, but the main two chemicals driving the science behind it are serotonin and melatonin. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that affects one's mood; sunlight affects the amount of molecules in the brain that help maintain serotonin, and shorter daylight hours prevent these molecules from working at the speed they need to. Research has shown that people who experience SAD have reduced levels of serotonin in the brain. Lower levels of serotonin are closely related to depression. Additionally, melatonin—a sleep-related hormone—is produced at higher levels in the dark. During the winter months, when the daylight hours are shorter, more melatonin is produced. Increased levels of melatonin make people feel more tired, which can be seen through lethargic behavior as a

symptom of SAD.

Symptoms of seasonal depression are very similar to other types of depression, which can make it hard to differentiate between the two. However, some specific symptoms of seasonal depression are weight gain, overeating, lethargy, and excessive sleepiness. It's more extreme than just overall tiredness; those experiencing depression often possess an inability to carry out their daily routine. If these symptoms occur in a clear pattern with the hours of daylight throughout the year, one is likely experiencing SAD rather than overarching depression.

Many people tend to throw around the word "depressed" without really knowing what it means or the severity of the language. Similarly, there is a tendency to say you have seasonal depression, but in most cases, it is just a case of the "winter blues". When someone has "winter blues" it simply means that they prefer summer over winter, and often find themselves less happy in the colder winter months. "Winter blues" is not a medical diagnosis—and it normally does not last long. It can be helped with simple lifestyle changes. This is very different from seasonal depression, which is a clinical diagnosis. In comparison to the mild "winter blues", seasonal depression lasts an extended period and can interfere with even the most menial tasks. Managing seasonal depression needs more than a few lifestyle changes, rather it requires attention from a medical professional. Whether you are experiencing SAD or just a case of the "winter blues," it is important to prioritize your mental health and look forward to brighter days, doing things that bring you joy in the meantime.

When trying to figure out if typical doldrums are different from a diagnosable disorder, clinicians tend to use three different criteria: intensity, frequency, and duration. To assess intensity, you might provide the person with a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 feels like the best day you ever had and 10 feels like you can't and won't get out of bed, and ask them to describe their current sadness. The higher the number, the more concerning. However, if this happens once every few weeks (frequency), it might be less concerning than if it is happening almost every

day. The last variable to consider is the question, "How long does the feeling last?" (Duration). If it is for the majority of every day, that would suggest a certain degree of seriousness compared to a passing feeling every once in a while. With that said, no one should ever self-diagnose and should seek out a professional if they have any concerns whatsoever.

Luckily, several well-researched treatments have been known to lessen the symptoms of SAD, such as light therapy. In this kind of therapy, around since the 1980s, the patient is seated in front of a light box for 30-45 minutes a day from fall to spring. It is about 20 times brighter than normal indoor light, which helps to make up for the decreased natural sunlight in darker months. It has been shown to suppress the brain's secretion of melatonin and has proved to be effective in up to 85% of diagnosed cases (Mental Health America). Psychotherapy, also known as counseling, can be helpful for people with SAD in pushing them to change their habits and find new ways to think about things. Medications like antidepressants alter the way one's brain produces chemicals involved in mood by increasing neurotransmitters like serotonin. In this way, when prescribed by a trusted doctor, they can be very effective in reducing the symptoms of seasonal depression.

Seasonal depression is very much a real struggle that warrants as much care and attention as any other mental illness. It is important that if you or someone in your life relates to any of the symptoms discussed in this article, you seek professional help. Even just talking to any trusted adult about it can be a great first step in getting the support you need to get back on track. Remember—we are almost there! While taking the time to see the little signs of spring is not by any means a cure for SAD, being aware of the light throughout these months can help boost your overall mood. Soon enough, small purple lilacs will start poking their heads out of hibernation, the sweet smell of spring rain will blanket you, and the sun will shine down on your face.

There is always help available. If you are ever in any kind of emotional crisis, call 1-800-273-8255 to reach the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, open 24/7.

## Automobile Enthusiasts

By DANIEL JIANG '25  
*Spectrum Staff*

America is no stranger to automobiles. If you've read anything I've written in this newspaper you'd know that I'm not too fond of the car dependency that exists today. It's unsustainable, bad for your health, and kills way more people than it has to. If you want to read more about car-dependency and its woes, then go check out Strong-Towns or NotJustBikes or a proper urbanist channel. I'd be flattered if you went onto The Spectrum's website and read some of my own articles as well.

Shameless plug aside, I'm making a complete-180 pivot. America may be car-dependent, but amongst the weeds the car culture in the States is quite nice. There are so many varieties of vehicles that people are falling for: domestic powerhouses from GM and Ford, European imports from Germany, and Asian underdogs from the likes of Hyundai and Honda. I don't think you'd find such diversity anywhere else in the world in terms of enthusiast cars.

That being said, there's a stringent definition for an enthusiast in my mind. Not anyone can be a 'car enthusiast', or claim to be one.

### A "Car-Enthusiast" and Mud-dying Definitions

The definition of a car enthusiast is simply one who adores the motor vehicle, and every aspect or counterpart to it. They can drone on and on for hours about the four-wheeled machine. Their pupils will literally turn into hearts if they spot a car they love. They most likely own their own car, whether it be some sort of sleek sports car or an affordable daily drive, and they care for the car like it's their child. They go to car meets and form little cliques, whether that's the art of drifting, rallying, drag racing, or touge-running.

To put it simply, a car enthusiast is mature. They understand the blood, sweat, and tears it took to

bring what was essentially a drawing on a piece of paper to reality. They have respect for what others construct or own. They make tasteful, realistic modifications—sometimes they prefer to preserve the raw nature of the car in of itself.

Of course, then you have the opposite end of the spectrum. You have those who steal old Hyundais and joy-ride them around town with no regard for other people's lives. You have the fools who shut down highways or intersections just so they can spin their cars in circles (we call these events "takeovers"). You have the people who decide that a car is not merely a work of art or even a tool, and instead perceive it as a toy and decide to waste hundreds of thousands of dollars buying and destroying perfectly created automobiles for the sheer "enjoyment" of it all (WhistlinDiesel, I'm looking at you).

On the modification spectrum, I can't say too much. Each person finds their clique, as I've said before. Some cliques are awful—"Carolina-squat" trucks, "slammed" culture, "rice" culture, to name a few—but the opinions that revolve around these cliques are very much subjective. Which is why, in this article, I won't be bringing up these cultures as much as the treatment of their respective vehicles overall. You could have a guy with a fairly-slammed car but who still babies it, after all.

### A Personal Verdict

Being a car enthusiast is not some sort of secret club. There's no requirement for one to become a car enthusiast, in practice, it's more of a mentality if anything. It's like with any sport or hobby, right? You can be classified as a sports fan if you love a particular sport very much. But look at the mentality of a sports fan: someone who probably loves the competitive nature of the sport, or a particular team, or obsesses over the history of a sport.

The same goes for a car enthusiast.

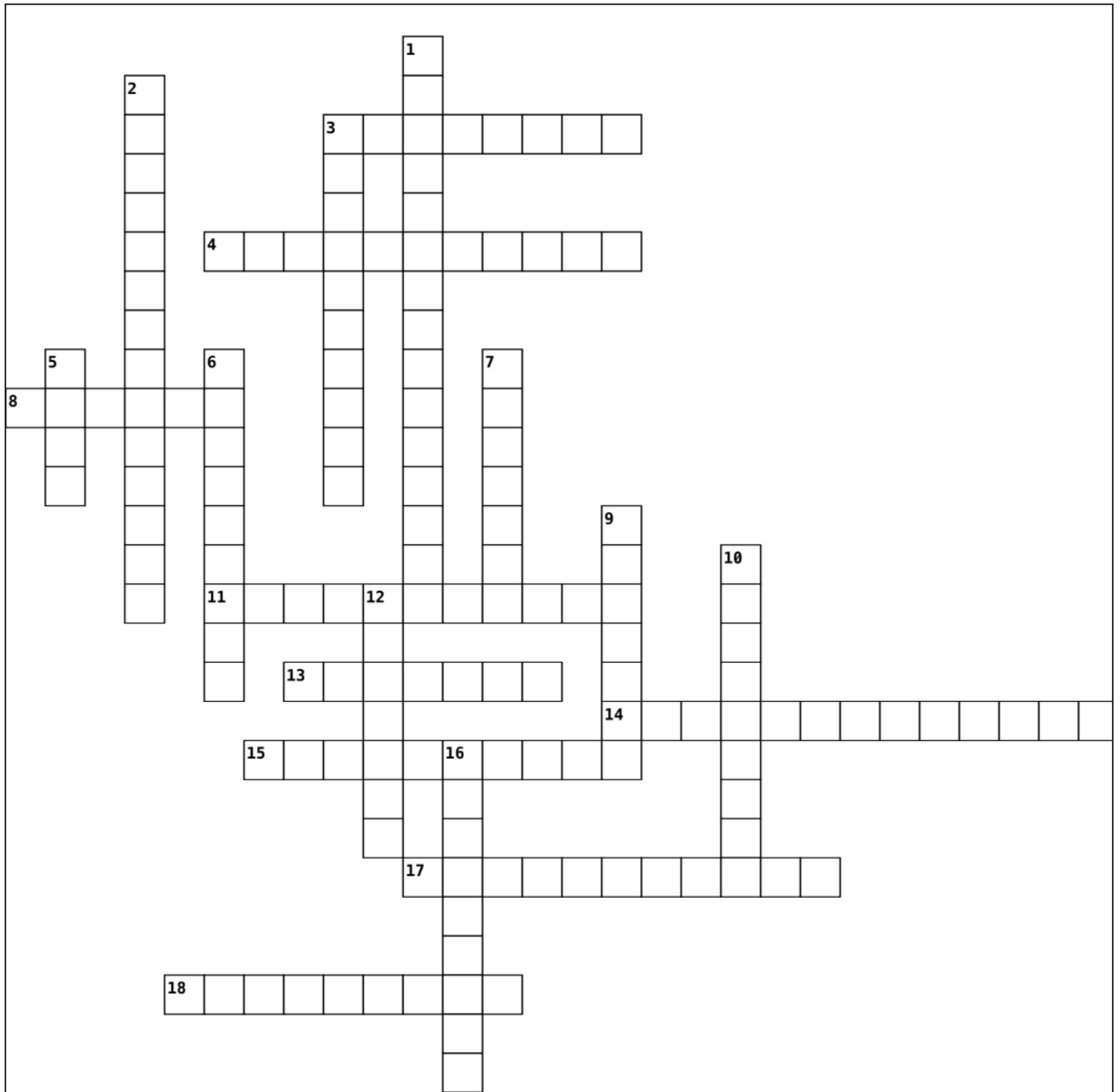
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# Off-Topic

Look no further! Read on to find the answers!



**Across**

- 3. Switch 2 Maker
- 4. "Odd" book by Albert Camus
- 8. Adnan Syed case podcast
- 11. Chocolate covered \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. Lack of enthusiasm
- 14. Jazz bassist who composed the album: Pithecanthropus Erectus
- 15. Spot the \_\_\_\_\_
- 17. Celtic player with 5-year, 315 million contract extension
- 18. Ron Burgundy

**Down**

- 1. Another name for Route 2
- 2. Students say this can have an impact on their identity
- 3. Connections Theme
- 5. Mark Zuckerberg's company
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ Clusters
- 7. X's former name
- 9. Mainspread Theme
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_ scholars who recently visited AB
- 12. Cause of high-priced eggs
- 16. In 2013, the \_\_\_\_\_ factory collapsed in Savar, Bangladesh