

The Exonian

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Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, New Hampshire

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FRIDAY ASSEMBLY

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SOTW: SHAY KASHIF

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SHOULD WE STUDY STATE HISTORY

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Exonians Brave Harsh Winter Storm

By **KIRSTEN DRESSLER, JOHANNA HILLMAN, and ANNIE ZHU**

On Feb. 23, 2026, a winter storm hit the northeastern United States, bringing snow and fierce winds. The town of Exeter received over half a foot of snow, and blizzard conditions—which require frequent wind gusts of over 35 miles per hour, snow, and reduced visibility—were declared in near Portsmouth. Phillips Exeter Academy held classes according to the usual class schedule on Monday. Recently, the Academy canceled classes on Jan. 26 due to snow, this having been the first time the administration had done so since 2017. This most recent storm is only the latest of the many storms that have struck Exonians this winter.

Despite the blizzard warning and the snowfall that started around midnight on Feb. 23 and lasted through the following night, the administration made the decision to proceed with the usual class schedule on Monday. “We

Grace Yang / *The Exonian*

felt that the conditions would permit classes to be held as usual and not holding classes this late in the term would be disruptive for teachers and students alike,” shared Principal Bill Rawson, though he acknowledged that some students and faculty, including some living off-campus, disagreed with the administration’s decision. “We emphasized in our communications that students and teachers who commute should exercise caution and not drive if conditions in their neighborhood were not safe for travel,” added Rawson. He emphasized that the proximity to the end of Winter term and the much heavier snow fall that led to a snow day that occurred on Jan. 26—only a few weeks ago—were major factors in the administration’s decision to hold classes. “Had it been earlier in the term, we might have made a different decision, as we in fact did several weeks ago,” he commented.

Day Student Coordinator Jennifer Marx-Asch noted that the weather conditions posed a signif-

icant struggle for students and faculty living off-campus. “The severity of the blizzard was a significant travel hazard, requiring commuting adults and students to prioritize safety,” Marx-Asch said.

Rawson stressed the work of the facilities team and dining services in keeping the Academy functioning despite the snow and wind. “Our campus facilities team did an outstanding job clearing paths, shoveling steps, and making the campus safe for everyone else,” said Rawson. “They collectively keep us safe, fed, and warm.”

Many students, however, still felt the need for classes to be canceled, due to the strong winds caused by extreme weather conditions. “None of the paths can remain still shoveled because the wind keeps on blowing new snow,” senior Olivia Zhang said. Wind speeds had reached a maximum of 31 miles per hour on Monday at around 11:55 a.m.

Similarly, many day students living close to the Academy found it difficult to walk through un-

shoveled paths from their homes to class. Lower Addi Kuper described her journey to school, traveling through the uncleared snow. “The snow storm didn’t prevent me from attending class, but it did make for a rather treacherous and unpleasant walk to school.” Kuper continued to illustrate her walk to campus with several friends. “We were slipping, my friend fell and the wind was blowing snow in our eyes so we couldn’t see,” she stated.

Kuper highlighted the danger of driving, the primary form of transportation for both day students as well as faculty on campus. “I think they should’ve canceled school,” she said. “The fact that administrators weren’t on campus shows that they found it unsafe to drive, but [they still] put teenage drivers on the roads.”

Other students said they were unprepared for the sudden and severe change in weather, particularly given the international breadth of students on campus. “I’m not prepared [for the snow-

STORM, 2.

Exonians Face

Wi-Fi Outage

By **LYDIA KUHNERT, OLIVIA WANG, and ANNIE ZHU**

On the evening of Friday, Feb. 20, a campus internet outage began that lasted throughout the night and the entirety of Saturday. It was due to a motor vehicle accident which damaged the fiber optic ring of FirstLight, the Academy’s primary network provider. Lasting almost 24 hours, the outage took especially long to fix because of the freezing temperatures prohibiting FirstLight repair crews from restoring the system.

Though the school’s IT department has built multiple redundancies into our system to prevent interruptions of internet service from occurring, a series of unfortunate coincidences lead the network to still fail. The original issue occurred at a remote data center in Manchester, but was made worse by the fact that the school’s storage area did not move its functionality to the campus data cen-

ter. Although the move might have been forced, it was deemed unwise by IT. Director of IT Scott Heffner explained, “After discussing the situation with our vendor, we decided not to forcibly activate the on-campus system due to the potential for damage to our data.”

Therefore, students were left throughout Saturday with no Wi-Fi. For many, the change didn’t cause much past mild annoyance. Students with cellular data were able to connect laptops to their iPhone’s hotspot and continue work pretty much as usual, albeit with slower loading times.

Prep Hanna Zhang was able to use cellular data on her phone, but faced issues when attempting to do the same when working on other devices. “When I tried to [use] hotspot on my computer, it was really glitchy and slow,” she reported. Prep Lily Cui experienced similar

WI-FI, 2.

Friday Assembly: Dorinda Elliott '76 on China



Elliott emphasizes asking questions.

Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

By **EILENA DING, ELLINA KIM, ARIANA METZGER, and OLIVIA SZCZEPANSKI**

This past Friday, Feb. 22, the Academy community convened in Love Gym to listen to Dorinda Elliott '76. Currently the Executive Director of the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies and the Harvard China Fund, Elliott has been a journalist most of her life. She spent 15 years in Asia, writing for Newsweek and Asiaweek. As a foreigner reporting on the political climate, she brought a

unique perspective to reporting on Chinese politics. In addition to being a journalist in East Asia, she was also Senior Vice President at the China Institute in New York, the oldest bicultural non-profit organization in the U.S. that exclusively focuses on China.

When asked to elaborate on her beliefs about China’s current political system and how China might change at the open lunch in Grainger later that day, she explained, “Democracy sure is not looking so great these days, so there’s

no question about that ... What I do think a lot of Chinese people would want is rule of law instead of rule by personality, rule of law, [and] more transparency.” She stated her opinion that those were areas of progress for China to move towards in the future.

Elliott explained that despite the fact that the Communist Party represses free speech and holds tight control over the media, for example, most Chinese citizens don’t feel oppressed in their daily

ELLIOTT, 4.

Exeter Celebrates Black History Month

By **SELASIE AMEMASOR, BEN KIM, and SEAN RICARD**

This week marked the conclusion of Black History Month, a period when the nation takes time to give attention and appreciation to the people of Black descent, who have contributed not only to our country, but our world in general.

Exeter kicked off Black History Month with the Jazz Brunch in Elm Dining Hall on Feb. 1. At this event, members of the music faculty performed live to a full Dining Hall during normal brunch hours. Along with the Jazz Brunch, multiple affinity groups had dinners with Principal Bill Rawson, as well as celebrated Black History Month with a Gala on Sunday

Feb. 22 to conclude the month.

During the Jazz Brunch, the food consisted of corn cakes, lemon pie, and a plethora of breakfast meats such as bacon, sausage, and deli meats. Music faculty Marcus Rabb was the organizer behind this year’s Jazz Brunch. When asked about his contributions,

BHM, 3.

Ezra Segal '26 Wins Harvard Debate Tournament

By **TIAGO BILYK, LUKE CHON, and CAROL LEE**

On Monday, Feb. 16, senior Ezra Segal claimed first place in the Lincoln-Douglas division at the Harvard National Speech and Debate Tournament. The contest, among the most competitive and prestigious in America, invited over 5,000 students from across the nation and beyond. Over three days of

intense preliminary and elimination rounds, Segal emerged victorious from his pool of 250, marking one of the most significant wins in Exeter debate history.

The Lincoln-Douglas format follows a one-on-one debate style, in contrast to team-based events such as Policy, Public Forum, and most versions of Parliamentary debate, which Exeter’s Daniel Webster Debate Society

utilizes. For Segal, his focus centers on the Lincoln-Douglas format. “I started debating in eighth grade in Policy,” he said. “But when I went to high school I couldn’t do

SEGAL, 2.



News

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Deans Launch Phone-Free Fridays



Students drop off and leave their phones with the deans.

By **JESS ANSELM, JAYDEN LU, and TONY ZHU**

Students describe the winter term as the most draining term. To help students make the most out of it, the Deans have recently promoted different initiatives to improve community engagement and wellness. As cell phones are consuming more of a student's day, the Deans are trying different incentives to help reduce the dependence on technology, but also help bond the community closer together. Some of these initiatives include Phone Free Fridays, Flannel Friday, and Meet the Deans. As with all new ideas, many students have mixed feelings about many of these

initiatives on whether or not they help bring the community closer. Ultimately, though, the aim for these initiatives, as Dean Ashley Taylor noted, is “to empower students to make healthy and intentional choices about cell phone use.”

One of the main initiatives introduced this winter term is Phone Free Fridays. Every Friday, students are able to turn their phones in for the day until 3:30 p.m. to be entered in a raffle to win a gift card.

“The goal is to help students identify how their phones might enhance versus detract from their day,” explained Dean Taylor. Her view is that phones are necessary every day, but realizing if you are using your

phone or if it's using you is essential to help you have a healthier relationship with it. Senior Tiffany Sun said, “The most important factor is awareness; if people are aware of the harm that being addicted to your phone gives, Phone Free Fridays would appeal to them much more.” According to Sun, students don't always understand how their cell phone affects them during the school day, and explaining that to the student body would increase the effectiveness of the initiative.

In general, many students believe that the initiative of Phone Free Fridays is helpful to reduce phone use, but think that there is no real incentive to attract many students. As senior Max Liu said,

“I would say it helps reduce the screen time for the people who actually show up.” Even with the incentive of a gift card, many students don't see the gift card as more important than being able to access their phone because their phone is used for a variety of things other than just entertainment. Prep James Moon and lower Buchi Akabogu both agreed that “the problem arises when phones are used for different logistics like music during the day. I believe all of these incentives are arguably way more essential to a student,” and “I need my phone in class to see my notes,” respectively. Since everything is now digital, having a

PHONES, 3.

Storm Cont.

storm,” said lower Aaliyah Salva. “I'm from the Caribbean. I'm from an island where it's 80 degrees every day.”

Continuing on the lack of student knowledge regarding winter storms, Zhang added, “I think people don't understand how to stay warm, because a lot of them aren't from the New England area.” Zhang explained that she only recently learned how to protect herself from the cold when one of her teachers sent her a document with information following the weather notice. “I learned so many new things and I doubt people know [this information],” she said.

Overall, despite the lack of preparation for the storm, the vast majority of students and staff were still seen with thick clothing on campus. “I don't see a lot of boots going around,” commented senior Ned Akashian. However, Akashian also believed that students were still adequately prepared. “In the most part, I think most kids have jackets and they're staying warm,” he said.

Some expressed the opinion that classes could have been held virtually for safety reasons, especially given the Academy's prior experience in holding classes on Zoom during the Covid pandemic. “[The administration] shouldn't necessarily cancel classes, but they [should have] moved it to Zoom for better safety for students,” prep Bach Hoang said.

Lower Charlotte Ghinculov reserved similar opinions. “I understand that [the administration] doesn't like doing snow days, but teachers are still totally better off

doing Zoom calls with their classes,” she said.

Kuper further commented on the pressure day students felt to still go to school, despite the abnormal weather conditions. “While day students had the option to stay home, by having class, they felt like they had to come due to the high pressure, rigorous environment of Exeter,” she said.

Despite the gusty winds and snow squalls throughout Monday, Feb. 23, many students were able to attend classes by enduring the harsh weather conditions. Some varsity winter sports athletes, such as those participating in girls' indoor crew training, expressed relief knowing that they were not expected to show up for their typical 4 p.m. practice after their coach, Pete Cathey, who formerly coached at University of New Hampshire, noted the cancellation midday on Feb. 23. Moreover, a handful of students were seen sledding, engaging in snowball fights, and making the most out of the blizzard. Before dinner, lower Addi Kuper recounted her friend diving into the snow outside of Amen Hall, noting the hilarious Instagram reel that ensued. “After tossing her coat on the ground, Kirsten launched herself headfirst into a foot of fresh snow.” Overall, even though the blizzard brought lots of snowfall, it was an obstacle that turned out to be enjoyable for plenty of students and faculty alike. Exonians continue to excel in all aspects, and now that includes tolerating a massive snowstorm in order to show up for their rigorous courses at Phillips Exeter Academy.

Wi-Fi Cont.

problems when attempting to connect to external devices. She recounted, “I tried to print things out on my computer and use my hotspot, but my computer didn't work.”

However, for others the outage caused significant issues—students competing in fast-paced online tournaments were met with glitches and lagging, while those trying to find primary sources online for their history paper were met with firewalls.

In response, some teachers issued extensions and provided extra support to their students. Lower Trinity Donkor described, “It was really annoying because I was trying to work on my 332, and I literally couldn't. But, my U.S. history teacher gave us an extension on our 332s until Tuesday, which was amazing.”

In addition, Grill POS transactions failed to process due to the loss of Wi-Fi connection. Students who prepared to spend their Grill points before the weekly expiration arrived at the school convenience store, discovering that transactions could not be processed and purchases had to be postponed.

Without the internet and often without a hotspot, students found other sources of entertainment aside from scrolling through social media and watching shows—a favorite weekend activity for many. “A lot of my entertainment that I usually do on Saturday, like watching Netflix or scrolling was affected,” recalled Cui. Given the lack of internet and dwindling cellular data, Cui used her extra time to rest and focus on her hobbies. “I slept in just to make time pass and practiced my violin,” she said.

Saturday, Feb. 21, at around 11:30 p.m., internet service was restored. Even though the disruption was temporary, the outage did pose significant challenges for the Exeter community. The IT Department is already working on ways to prevent this from happening again. The Academy is in the process of retiring the remote data center, though it may take upwards of a year to complete. Heffner concluded, “We will learn from these failures and will continue to work to reduce the risk of failure through both reduced complexity and redundancy.”

Segal Cont.

Policy anymore, so I switched to LD. That was five years ago.”

His debate topic at Harvard was on the morality of the possession of nuclear weapons. As typical Lincoln-Douglas tournaments are, Segal had two months to prepare for the contest and to thoroughly research. This provided the necessary foundation for him to frame his arguments around, but Segal more directly attributes his success to his many years of experience. “I've had this topic specifically since December,” he remarked. “But in terms of accumulating general knowledge

and debate strategies, that's been happening for six years straight.”

Senior Ronald Qiao emphasized Segal's success from consistent practice, “Ezra is incredibly technical and incredibly versatile as a debater,” he commented. “The key to Ezra is really his consistency... It's not like he did anything to really prepare himself for Harvard specifically, but to just get better as a debater every single day of his life.”

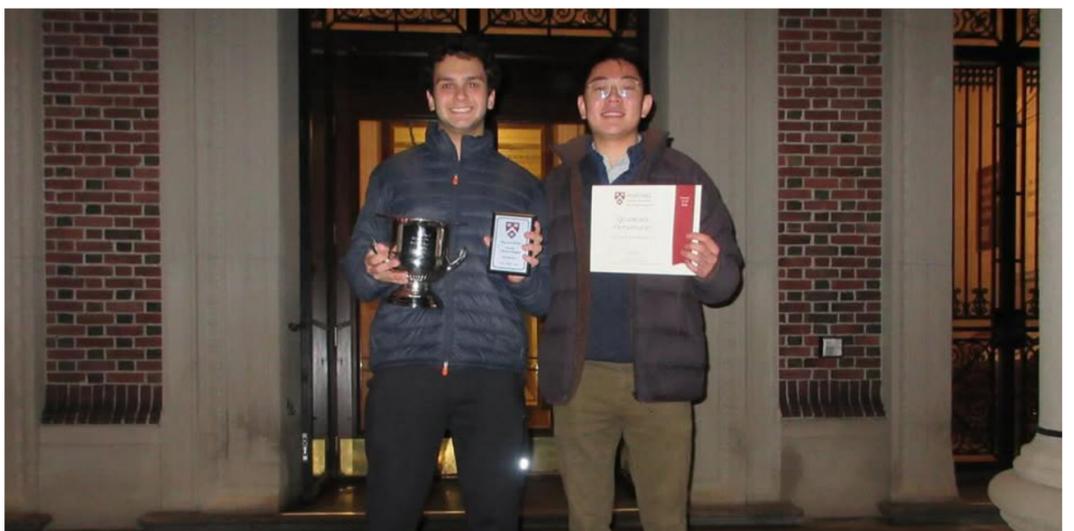
At Harvard, Segal had a shaky start before he settled and found his footing. “I think my tournament performance was

interesting ... By the end of the first day where we had four rounds, I had a two-two record,” he said. He managed to qualify for elimination rounds the following day by winning his next two matchups. From there, Segal dominated. “Although my opponents at the elimination round were a lot harder, I feel like the adrenaline and the intensity of being there made me feel a lot better and motivated about it,” he reflected.

Looking ahead, Segal wishes to continue competing before his high school debate career comes to an end. “I'm really looking forward to attending the Tournament of Champions at the University of Ken-

tucky in April,” he mentioned. He doesn't wish to stop there, though. “I also want to coach high school debaters and I'm definitely considering continuing debating in college as well.”

His win at Harvard was a significant milestone for both Segal and the Academy. As Qiao put it, “A humongous deal.” In recent years, Exeter's student-run debate programs have achieved remarkable success, with multiple entries to the acclaimed World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships. Segal's victory last week only further advances this growing streak.



Seniors Ezra Segal and Jinmin Lee holding awards at Harvard.

Courtesy of @exeter.ld / Instagram

Campus Celebrates Valentine's Day

By **BUCHI AKABOGU, AUDREY KIM, and ANNIE ZHU**

Although Valentine's Day may be over, conversations sparked around both the true meaning of love as well as its celebration remain. From dancing in the round room at International Tea to walking to restaurants in town with friends or significant others, Feb. 14 reminded many Exonians that love can be expressed in countless ways, not just on one day of the year.

At Phillips Exeter Academy, the lack of a romantic Valentine did not equate to a lonely Saturday. Many students, whether single or taken, enjoyed the company of their friends and their significant others at a variety of school events. On Feb. 14, stations offering henna and bite-sized snacks lined Grainger at International Tea, and students and staff filled the auditorium, trying ballroom dances and sipping bubble tea.

Prep Ricky Lan also enjoyed the accessories inside the dining halls. "The decorations were nice, and inside we got to eat free truffle chocolate," he stated. The dining halls also offered a variety of Valentine's Day themed foods, featuring a station offering

the chance for students and staff to self-assemble truffle chocolates. Complete

with cocoa powder, sprinkles, gummy candy, and cookie crumbs to accessorize the truffles, many were seen gathered around the station carefully rolling newly-made truffles in gloved hands. Students and staff carried filled boxes out of the dining halls, to eat for themselves and to give to their friends.

On Valentine's Day, many Exonians opted not to participate in the school-led activities. "I played Minecraft with my friends, and then I played a bunch of soccer," commented Lan. Some even decided to use the day for academic productivity, catching up with school work and extracurriculars. "I spent part of it in my room just doing homework," noted prep William Stark. Prep Frank Enga had similar plans. He added, "I used most of the time to finish up a lot of my work in the past week."

For upper Colbie Tipper, Valentine's Day was about appreciating those close to her, saying "I went to watch my friend at the dance show [Insects]." Upper Syrah Anand celebrated Galentine's Day with her friends off campus.

"We baked, and had a cute girly day," she added.

Valentine's Day meant more than romantic love for many students on campus. "Valentine's Day is about what you love. It's not always about who you love," commented prep Max Valencia. Many took the day to appreciate other relationships in their lives that deserved love, allocating time for their platonic relationships.

Upper Syrah Anand described her interpretation of the holiday, underlining the importance of not only focusing on romantic attraction. "This is the day to celebrate love in all forms. It doesn't have to be romantic, just any form of love. Whether platonic or romantic. It doesn't matter, just celebrating love."

Exonians spent Valentine's Day in a variety of ways, but whether the day of love was spent in a restaurant date, outside the Exeter Vicinity, or on campus sipping tea with friends, it is certain that the time on Saturday was spent well with those appreciated and cherished. As Valencia highlighted, "I spent time with friends. I gave some friends some notes." Most importantly, Valencia stated, "I just did what I love."

BHM Cont.

Rabb explained, "I was asked by Dean [Sherry] Hernandez if I could provide music for the Black History Month Jazz Brunch, and I chose some great fellow jazz faculty members to participate."

Rabb noted the selection of music during the event was designed to spread awareness of black musicians. He said, "We played music by Black composers of the jazz idiom and had a lot of fun. The hall was decorated with posters of famous jazz musicians by Mrs. Hernandez, and the food was excellent!"

As Rabb mentioned, the Office of Multicultural Affairs chose to focus on the impact of Black musicians in music with Jazz Brunch, celebrating artists with posters that lined the walls and tables. Dean Sherry Hernandez explained the collaboration that went into the event. She highlighted how the OMA proctors, who made the posters, worked in tandem with the Black Advisory Group, who picked the menu. They all also worked very closely with Dining Services "who consistently support the work of OMA through our programming," Hernandez said.

The impact of the Jazz Brunch was felt, as upper Oluj Okeremi commented, "The new addition this year of adding black celebrities that influenced black culture in some way or had some effect on America throughout the school was very interesting for me to see." Jazz Brunch, along with being a celebration through music, also served as an avenue of education through the posters.

Instructor in English Dr. Courtney Marshall, spoke to how this fits into a larger importance that comes with observing Black History Month, "[It] really is a time for students to learn black history, to learn about whether it's important historical figures, important political movements."

Now in its 100th year of observance, Black History Month has served as a way for people to reflect on the past and imagine a way into the future. Marshall also spoke about the history of the observance, saying that, "Black History Month is tied back to the original idea of it. Back in

1926, when it was codified, but even before that, it was a time for black memory workers to talk about the past, so that black people could think about the present and think about the lessons of the past, as well as think about how we might use that to build a future."

Okeremi also shared this sentiment, noting that not learning history can be a tool of oppression. "I feel that people deciding which parts of history are forgotten is one of the most oppressive tools. It allows new history to be forged, pushing us to repeat the mistakes of the past. I'm taking U.S. history at the moment and thinking about the Reconstruction Era, how the South gilded their history of slavery in order to appear that they had solved the problem of race."

Hernandez also explained how celebrations such as Jazz Brunch build off of momentum from the school's wide-reaching celebration of MLK Day in January: "Through the workshops, the keynote speaker, and the various activities that are happening on campus—whether it's UnSilenced leading up to [MLK Day], we really have this amazing opportunity to build upon what we've created together as a community and continue that forward through Black History Month." This year, along with the school-wide programming and speakers during MLK day, the Academy offered other opportunities to learn from assembly speakers. One of these speakers, Yamanda Wright, gave an assembly on Monday, Feb. 16th during CVP block, where she spoke about her artistry and her aim to tell the stories of Black people in their communities. Following her speech, she led three printmaking workshops, introducing her craft to the campus.

Within affinity spaces, smaller events are also taking place, including Principal Rawson inviting the Black Students of Excellence to his house for dinner. Black Students of Excellence is an affinity space for Black students on campus to discuss issues that are important to them.

Another event that took place

on campus was the Black History Month Gala on Sunday, Feb. 22nd. At this event, both Black students and faculty were able to "celebrate together this amazing experience and what it's like to be here on our campus, be here in this moment, and just be in community together," Hernandez said.

However, some students and faculty still hoped for a more comprehensive observance of Black History Month. Marshall reflected on the differences in how Black History is celebrated in comparison to when she was in school: "We came away learning about historical figures of all kinds. So not simply musicians or artists, but politicians and philosophers, great lawyers. And so that's kind of what I hope for us to do, particularly at this time in our nation."

Okeremi also feels like the school's observance could have been more far-reaching. "it's easy to take the time to just read about these people," he said, but many students, "still won't hear about it [Black History Month] at all, really." The posters in the Dining Hall gave opportunities for individual students to learn about Black History, but to Okeremi, it didn't feel like a school-wide moment of observance and education.

Nevertheless, during this year's Black History Month, OMA amplified and celebrated the prominent contributions of Black people within our country through Jazz Brunch, assemblies, and affinity gatherings. Through school-wide events such as the Jazz Brunch, Wright's assembly, and smaller affinity gatherings, the Academy offered meaningful opportunities to celebrate Black culture and contributions. OMA's decision to shine light on black history was essential to preserving and inspiring discussions about the history of black communities. As Hernandez concluded: "We hoped that it could be a moment of celebration and for our Black students in particular to feel very seen and supported, but also for the whole community to also demonstrate to them that we as a country wouldn't be without the contributions of black Americans."

Phones Cont.



Phone collection booth at assembly.

Miles Turner/ *The Exonian*

phone is a requirement for most and would affect them a lot more.

On a different note, other students believe that the lack of involvement could be due to a lack of public announcements promoting these initiatives. As noted by lower Austin Hatwood, "I feel like they haven't been advertised enough. The only way I figured out about the Phone Free Fridays was from a friend."

With many of the other initiatives to promote community engagement, students similarly have mixed opinions. For one, some students believe that events like Flannel Fridays and Meet the Deans aren't as helpful for community involvement as other events like Socials or Pep Rally.

"Flannel Fridays was just kind of basic, and

it's not really engaging for the community. I think if they had more free skating or socials, more people could come together," prep Esther Kim suggested. Other students also agreed that all of these initiatives didn't generate a big reaction from the community. For example, many people didn't know what a Flannel even was. For the people who did know, many chose to avoid it in general. As Liu reflected, "I'm not saying there is a negative or positive reaction. I'm just seeing people skip their emails, hear about the initiative, and go back to work." Alternatively, lower William Shu specifically appreciated the donuts given at Hahn Center for the initiative, Meet the Deans. "I like the donuts, as they taste pretty good. I think the purpose is to get us past

the hard times during winter," Shu said.

Ultimately, there isn't one simple consensus of these initiatives. It's rather a mix of opinions from the student body. Many students have mixed feelings about programs like Phone Free Friday, because of a lack of incentives and participation to be effective, reducing phone use is a great step forward to improve focus. Student sentiment show that participation is limited, and they need their phones for basic necessities like communication. Others show that giving up their phone allows them to "lock in" on their work. The overall success depends on whether or not students view it as a place to manage their time rather than a gesture from the school.

Elliott Cont.

lives, despite common American beliefs to the contrary. “Even some of my family members sort of think that the Chinese people somehow feel oppressed every day, like they’re walking around with chains attached to their legs or something, and I just always have to say it’s not like that.” She further explained, “In many ways, it feels like a free country. Many Chinese people believe in the Communist Party and think that Xi Jinping is great.”

Elliott also stressed that many Chinese intellectuals—including the hundreds of journalists and lawyers who have been jailed for criticizing the government—have a more critical view of the Party. “I happen to know a lot of people who don’t feel that way, because intellectuals who look more deeply into political and cultural problems and stuff like that are going to tend to be more critical.”

Elliott noted that many Chinese people feel increasingly proud of their country. “Why wouldn’t they feel so proud of what China has accomplished? And to be proud to be Chinese for the first time since the Opium Wars? It’s really important to remember that point, I think, when Americans hear politicians in Congress say that the poor Chinese people are oppressed by the Party,” she said.

Elliott described the challenges of working as a journalist in the late 1980s, often meeting with Chinese intellectuals who were testing the limits of what was allowed by the Party. She interviewed one senior scholar who was researching how to rectify the flaws of Marxism without democracy. Elliott knew the scholar personally and secretly visited him at his residence in a government compound at night, in hopes that no one would see her. “I would go at night, sort of ridiculously thinking that nobody could see me. But that said, the surveillance was so

much less sophisticated, and everything was less sophisticated back then, so it was kind of possible.”

Elliott described being followed by undercover police on motorcycles when she left her compound following the crackdown on the student movement of 1989. “They pretty much wanted to keep us separate from normal Chinese people.”

Much of Elliott’s assembly was centered around the idea of there being “more questions than answers” about China’s domestic affairs and the United States’ relations with China. Being an alum, she credited Exeter as having taught her how to ask questions, stating, “The Harkness table really changed me forever. Learning that to learn meant to ask questions was astounding. I went on and kept asking questions for the rest of my life.”

Elliott acknowledged, at the beginning of her assembly, how easy it was to let preconceived notions get in the way of objective observations. She described, “In a lifetime of writing about and trying to understand China, I come back again and again to how so many of us in the West so often get it wrong... My own assumptions and preconceptions of China have been challenged again and again over the years.”

After graduating, Elliott went to college at Harvard University and took Chinese, a subject she couldn’t take at Exeter because it was not yet offered. “A professor said to me, ‘You can’t study Chinese here; you’ve got to go [to China]!’ which was the most wonderful advice I’d ever gotten. It was 1978, and the U.S. had not yet recognized the PRC, so the only option [to study Chinese abroad] was Taiwan.”

In Taiwan, she found a society struggling under martial law, with a government that framed mainland China in a very nega-



Elliott reflects on decades of reporting in China.

tive light. Elliott, influenced by her radical sister, explained how at the time, “I thought the [Taiwanese] grammar school stories were nothing but anticommunist propaganda, a bunch of lies, and that mainland China could not be that bad.”

In 1979, Elliott traveled for the first time to mainland China, where she witnessed a nation just coming out of the Cultural Revolution, a decade of violent political upheaval. “Wow, did I discover that I was wrong in many ways. It didn’t take long to realize that people had really suffered terribly. The KMT [Kuomintang, the ruling political party in Taiwan at the time] were right. The country was unbelievably poor. Everywhere we went the fear was palpable.”

Elliott was in China during the 1989 protests at Tiananmen Square. “It’s hard to explain just how thrilling and inspiring that movement was... I was 10 months pregnant at the time and marched alongside the students as I covered the story for Newsweek.”

As a journalist, Elliott witnessed firsthand the idealism and hopes of the people of Beijing. She recalled how on occasion, “marchers would shout at me with smiling faces, ‘Please tell the world what’s happening here!’”

After these protests, and the massacre that followed them, Elliott watched Chi-

na grow in economic status and also struggle with immense corruption. Throughout all this, Elliott admits that she “made many other wrong predictions along the way. I thought the corruption would doom the party. I thought that even with the grand bargain ‘get rich but keep your mouth shut’” a growing middle class would demand and win political reforms... None of that happened.”

Elliott then had the chance to cover Taiwan’s switch from a complete autocracy to a democracy. From this, Elliott learned that, “Taiwan is a thriving, open democracy. So here’s something that the Communist party gets wrong. Nobody can say that democracy can’t survive in a Chinese society... Taiwan’s democracy is entirely homegrown.”

After Xi Jinping stepped up into the role of President of the People’s Republic of China, Elliott thought China’s liberal experiment had failed once again. However, as Elliott noted, “there still are people who dare to speak truth to power.”

Elliott stressed the importance of relations between the United States and China remaining not necessarily friendly, but stable. “It’s very dangerous for both sides, the

United States and China, to be descending into a spiral of mutual distrust. We need to work together to solve the world’s most

pressing problems... I’ve dedicated my professional career to the belief that smart people in both countries need to find ways to connect, to communicate, and to work together.”

She concluded her speech with a call to action. “Today I’ve given you more questions than answers... I urge you guys to go to China and see for yourself. Keep your minds open. You will find a country that seems very free and open, and it is in many ways. And if you ask enough smart questions, you will learn that there are real and important limits to that freedom.”

Student reactions to the assembly were quite varied, with some disagreeing with Elliott’s portrayal of China and others applauding her.

Lower Amber Deng enjoyed the assembly reflecting that Elliott was a “good articulator... She’s very good at expressing what she has learned during her time in China and Taiwan. And she utilized her experience in journalism, very efficiently in terms of the way she was explaining things.”

Another student, prep Julia Zhu commented on how Elliott focused disproportionately on the political side of things, relating how “Choosing to highlight these moments in her talk and only briefly mentioning improvements at the end can paint a false picture of China

Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

in people’s heads. The overall state of a country is different from the day-to-day lives of its citizens.”

Prep Kristine Qiao concurred, “I do think there are some inaccuracies in her portrayal from a Chinese perspective.”

Contrary to these sentiments, lower Theodore Stien explained how he thought the assembly was delivered “very objective[ly]. She recognized that in the U.S. we perceive the Chinese people as shackled by oppression from the CCP. But then she acknowledged that in China, that’s simply not the sentiment... And that even though it might not work for our Western culture, it works for the Chinese people.”

It can seem disheartening at first, having more questions than answers. However, if we as a society approach every unknown entity believing we know every answer, we will never learn anything. It’s the same with China. As Stien put it, “It’s a very enlightening idea, that there are more questions than there are answers. In the U.S., we have a lot of caricatures of what Chinese society looks like, when in fact it’s a lot more complex than meets the eye.” To meet China where it is and to understand every complexity, it is imperative we ask questions.

Letter to the Editor: Max Gerbut ‘27

Dear Exeter Community,

Four years ago, on Feb. 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. That morning, millions of people woke up to explosions outside their homes, and it has not stopped since. As you read this, drones and rockets are still being launched to hit people where they live; to terrorize them, to freeze them, and to break them. If Ukrainians allowed themselves

to give up, it wouldn’t be over only for them. When aggression is rewarded, it spreads, and others learn that violence works. Every day, another town is struck, so we don’t have to hear it in Exeter. Children are being stolen from their parents and moved hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles away. Schools, hospitals, and churches are being destroyed. And it isn’t happening to us.

In a world where everything gets re-

duced to headlines and lies, remember this: an aggressor who invades to destroy does not stop because people get tired of hearing about it, or because the victim is pushed to stop defending itself. It stops when the aggressor is stopped. The peace we feel here, yes, it is peace, even when life feels heavy, exists in part because Ukrainians have not given up. So don’t treat this as background noise. Indifference helps the aggressor. Take a

moment today to acknowledge what is happening and look forward to the future without forgetting Ukraine and what it is sacrificing for all of us.

If you want to do more, scan the QR code to sign a short letter to New Hampshire’s senators asking for continued and meaningful support for Ukraine. It takes under a minute.

Sincerely,
Max Gerbut ‘27



Life

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Read about Dr. Ullah's hospitality during Ramadan, 5.

» **FOTW: JOSEPH GAUDET**

Read about Joseph Gaudet and his favorite literary icons, 5.

» **FAR COUNTRY**

Read about weekend show directed by David Rhee, 7.

Breaking Fast at Dr. Ullah's Iftar

By EILENA DING, LYDIA KUHNERT, NICOLE SUBKHANBERDINA, and PEARL HARA YAMAZAKI

Stepping into the warmth of Merrill's common room, members of the community were greeted with the aroma of steaming cups of chai and the hum of conversation. Chattering voices filled the room as students conversed with friends and introduced themselves to new faces. Hours after a fresh layer of snow blanketed campus, Merrill Hall opened its doors on the evening of Saturday, Feb. 21 for a community Iftar.

Iftar is the meal served after sunset that Muslims use to break their fast during Ramadan. Traditionally, after many hours of having no food or water, people come together to eat dates and drink water, before engaging in a larger community meal.

Instructor in English Sahar Ullah began running the event in 2021, bravely opening her home after months of restrictions due to

Covid. However, this wasn't her first time serving Iftar — following the guidance and example of her mother, Ullah has been helping feed the greater community since her childhood. That's part of the reason why, during Covid, it was so jarring to have to have Iftar alone. She explained, "It was really sad to have Ramadan during that time because such a big aspect of it is getting together with the community and breaking fast together."

So, when Dean Sherry Hernandez asked if Ullah would like to plan anything for Ramadan during her first year at the Academy, the answer was an immediate yes. Foregoing RSVPs and other formalities, Ullah prepared an Iftar open to the entire school. She has continued the tradition since then, welcoming students and faculty every single year to a delicious meal, whether or not they are fasting as well.

Through hardwork and dedication, Ullah has preserved that same sense of community with her Iftar, though the attendees



Dr. Ullah serves traditional Ramadan dishes in the Merrill Common Room.



Max Loghinov / The Exonian

are still all hundreds of miles away from their families. Upper Amal Akhtar reflected, "When I'm at home, this is what Iftar is like. It's the gathering of all of our family. It's really meaningful to have something like this on campus, because it helps me feel a little less homesick than usual, and it helps me be in community with my friends and other people that are part of the Exeter community."

What started in Ullah's old apartment

on Front Street has now gained increasing support from the community and the administration. OMA members, faculty and proctors of Merrill, and the school's catering team were just a few of the dedicated coordinators of the event. From deep cleans of the common room to preparing the chai, the event wouldn't have been such a success without its team, devoted to creating a warm environment for the community to celebrate its cultural diversity.

Each element of the event was meticulously planned—even down to the date and flier. This year, Ramadan lands in the middle of the winter, lasting throughout February and March. The day picked for the Iftar this year was particularly significant because it was International Mother Language Day, also known as Ekushey in Bangla. Ullah explained, "When I saw that Feb. 21 falls in Ramadan this year I knew I wanted it to be then, because it's a very spe-

cial day for Bangladeshis. I've also always loved that Ekushey and Black History Month coincided, and think that's a really beautiful synergy, so I felt really excited."

Ullah worked with Classic Biryani, a halal restaurant in Manchester, New Hampshire, in order to nourish Exonians with homey Palak Paneer, Biryani, and more. "We're supporting businesses that are culturally significant to the event," noted Her-

IFTAR, 6.

Faculty of the Week: Dr. Joseph Gaudet

By BUCHI AKABOGU, LUKE CHON, and AUDREY KIM

There are few places on campus as frantic and congested as the first floor of Phillips Hall during passing periods. Rushing in bottleneck fashion into the building, students jostle and clamber over one another in a last-minute scurry to beat the bell. Amid the hallway chaos, Instructor in English Joseph Gaudet's classroom, room 110, is tranquil. Posters of literary icons—from Toni Morrison to Fyodor Dostoevsky—are pasted neatly on the walls. A broad window view of the Hahn Center allows for sunlight to trickle in through the glass. As the last of the seats at the Harkness table are filled,

Gaudet rises from his desk to open the floor for discussion.

Gaudet joined the Academy this school year as a new addition to the English department. The bitter Exeter climate was nothing new to him: not only is he a native of Vermont and New Hampshire, but Gaudet also previously worked at Vermont Academy and the Holderness School, located further north of Exeter, for more than half a decade before making the transition to PEA. Outside of room 110, Gaudet is an affiliated faculty member with Langdell Hall and serves as assistant coach for the boys' varsity hockey team. He resides close to campus with his wife, an instructor at Berwick Academy in nearby

Maine, and two young daughters.

The passion and rigor with which Gaudet conducts his classes today may lead onlookers to think of him as an instructor with an innate love for the English discipline; yet, this fervor was not made clear to him until later on in his schooling career. In fact, Gaudet's initial educational aspirations mostly revolved around hockey, a sport he's been involved with for much of his life. "I originally got into teaching with an interest in coaching," he explained. "My father was a college hockey coach, and my brother and I both played at Dartmouth... It's been a big part of my life growing up."

GAUDET, 6.



Dr. Gaudet sits at the Harkness table in his classroom. Miles Turner / The Exonian

Senior of the Week: Good Morning, Shay Kashif!

By TIAGO BILYK, JOHANNA HILLMAN, and SEAN RICARD

On a chilly winter morning, a slow trudge back from assembly might feature the unexpected belt of an excited Exonian: "Good morning Exeter!" He is your host, Shay Kashif.

Across campus, Kashif is known for his upbeat attitude, unwavering confidence, and true soulfulness. Since his arrival to campus as a new upper, he has made his mark on clubs throughout the community. As a prominent debater, an op-ed editor for The Exonian, and a Model UN

cohead, Kashif has expressed his passion for debate and journalism. He is, most famously, known for his morning talk show that covers, to an audience of students, faculty, parents, and other users, a plethora of topics ranging from the weather at the Academy to changes in the schedule to a fantastic, program-ending joke of the day.

Speaking of his school before Exeter and what led him to come here, Kashif reminisced, "there were things I wanted to do that I felt weren't too well supported." For example, he spoke to his love of speech and debate, of which Model UN was the

only club for those interests, as there was no debate team like at Exeter. Kashif's love of journalism led him to start a school newspaper at his previous school, and he mentioned that while "it was great. The school gave us lots of support. It was just a very small-scale thing." In coming to Exeter, Kashif hoped to expand his passion for speech & debate, and journalism.

Soon into his time at the Academy, it was Model UN, Kashif said, that "was the opportunity to really find that place in a debate environment which I've always loved."

KASHIF, 8.



Shay Kashif smiles in Phillips Hall. Sean Ricard / The Exonian

Gaudet Cont.



Dr. Gaudet types on his computer.

Miles Turner / *The Exonian*

At the collegiate level, Gaudet was a standout player. He was an assistant captain on a Dartmouth team that won the Ivy League Championship for the first time in a three-decade-long slump. Once he graduated, Gaudet went straight into teaching, working at Vermont Academy as both coach and instructor. It was there that he untangled his true passion as an educator. “I ended up loving the teaching aspect of it more than I anticipated,” he remarked.

With this newfound love for teaching instilled within him, Gaudet returned to university to further his teaching skills. He studied in an interdisciplinary program that was flexible with what he wished to pursue, enabling him to delve into a variety of subjects and, ultimately, leading to a solidified understanding of what he wanted to teach. “I was originally more interested in history, but at graduate school, I started to drift more toward literature,” he explained. “I’ve always been interested in grand narratives and stories. For me, the thing that drew me to literature was the focus on individuals... It really presented itself as one of the few arenas where you can wrestle with these big

existential questions about meaning and purpose and suffering.”

He carried these questions with him to the Holderness School, where he taught English for five years and also helped foster a sweeping revitalization of its hockey program—now regarded as one of the most competitive in the region.

Though his time at Holderness was deeply rewarding, a move to Exeter felt like the ideal next step. “Our family loved Holderness,” Gaudet said, “but I think the big thing that we were looking for and what got us interested in Exeter was being part of a community that has a specific pedagogical identity, like Exeter does in terms of the Harkness method.” He added, “[I admired] Exeter’s concerted effort to build inclusion into the community and its resources to be able to do so and make that happen.”

Harkness, as is often the case for most incoming students and faculty, was what distinguished the Exeter experience for Gaudet. Before leading his own discussions last fall, he had to learn the ropes himself. “Over the summer, I attended the Exeter Humanities Institute’s global program where teachers from all around the world come over to

learn the Harkness method to bring back to their own school,” he commented. “It was definitely helpful... but still it’s been an adjustment. There’s so much student autonomy here, and figuring out how to guide conversations and keep them on track while allowing for that autonomy has been a challenge.”

Still, students of Gaudet’s across campus were quick to praise his approach to Harkness and the study of English. Upper Aslan Bilimer said, “I’ve had an incredible experience over the course of the term with Dr. Gaudet as my English teacher... It was clear from day one that Dr. Gaudet loves literature and teaching.” Gaudet’s passion materializes most potently in how he brings together outside references and different ways of thinking. “He has been supplementing our nightly readings with historical context. For instance, [in our reading of Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*] he spoke to us about the correspondence between Gandhi and Tolstoy later in the author’s life.”

Upper Thea Vaughan furthered this image. “My class with him this term has been one of my favorites so far... a big part of it has to do with how Dr. Gaudet

encourages not just in-depth analysis but also fun discussions about different characters or thoughts on how the story is progressing.” These extensions beyond the text have made for a class atmosphere where students feel invited to express their authentic opinions. “I don’t think there’s been a day where I haven’t been able to walk into class making jokes about a certain plot point or character, and he hasn’t joined in,” Vaughan said.

For lower Kyros Wu, Gaudet has remained a familiar presence long after the conclusion of his class earlier this fall. In fact, Wu continues to seek him out for writing guidance, a trust that budded from Gaudet’s in-class workshops focused on sharpening students’ craft. “Something I appreciate about Dr. Gaudet is how he really worked towards making his students that better at writing,” Wu said. “He gave a lot of feedback and took time out of class to teach us how to write.”

Gaudet’s devotion to his work is equally admired among faculty members at the Academy. Chair of the English Department Barbara Demsond said, “Dr. Gaudet has the rare gift of being able to say a lot in a few words—obviously a great trait for a Harkness teacher. His considerable knowledge and teaching experience notwithstanding, he is always humble and excited to learn more from those around him.”

Instructor in English Adam White commended Gaudet’s contributions to the department. “He brings a thoughtful, calming presence to our department—and his classroom, I’m sure,” White said. “He also brings a deep knowledge of books, especially Indigenous literature and post-modern stuff.”

Instructor in Mathematics and dorm head of

Langdell Hall Shaocheng Ma, highlighted Gaudet’s wide-ranging contributions to the dorm community. “[In fac-proc meetings], he often helps me write the minutes and makes really important suggestions about how we’re going to run the kitchen, laundry room, and plan for dorm activities.”

Langdell’s identity as a dorm thrives off the many student athletes in residence, including hockey. Thus, weekly duty nights with Gaudet often involve animated conversations between player and coach. That is not to say Gaudet’s interactions with the Langdell boarders are limited to members of his team, though. Many of his advisees lauded his quick transition to Exeter and helpfulness. Lower and advisee Larry Lyu said, “He’s a really down-to-earth guy. If you want to talk to him, he’ll be pretty real about it. He’s smart, funny, and nice.”

Lower and fellow advisee Milan Shah added, “He’s helped me out with a lot of things. I remember earlier in the fall, I was feeling stressed out by biology and some of my other classes at midterms. Dr. Gaudet was extremely supportive... he’s always checking in on us to see if we’re feeling overwhelmed, how we’re preparing for finals, and if there’s anything he can do to help.”

As assistant coach, some may think that Gaudet assumes a more laid-back role in the hockey squad. This is far from the case. With his extensive playing and coaching career, Gaudet offers a wealth of wisdom and experience to the team. Lower Holden Chang said, “he’s our strategy guy for defense, forechecks, break-outs—he knows all of our plays... While our head coach gets us pumped up, Coach Gaudet is more behind the lines, talking to us individually.”

For Chang, Gaudet’s role on the team has been especially significant. “I really love playing under him,” he said. “He’s the one who got me to play as the number one penalty killer... he’s encouraged me a lot and helped me so much in understanding our strategy.”

On paper, the thrill and chaos of hockey put it at a polar end to the English classroom. But, for Gaudet, there is a surprising likeness in his teaching philosophies across the two. “I think it’s pretty similar in that whenever you’re trying to help someone learn something, one way to think about it is, ‘what do the great practitioners of this particular art do?’” He gave some examples: “If we’re writing, what does James Baldwin do? How does he craft paragraphs and sentences, and how can I replicate that in my own writing? It’s similar to on the ice... You look at players like Cale Makar and try to identify what they do and how they do it. [In that way,] it’s a very similar pedagogy.”

Gaudet’s dual commitments make him a busy man, but that hasn’t stopped him and his family from engaging with the Exeter community and its surroundings to the fullest. Beyond the classroom and the ice rinks, Gaudet enjoys his other pastimes. “Our two daughters keep us busy. We like to be outside, play tennis, go hiking and running, and those sorts of things,” he said. “I’m a big movie lover as well.”

Whether it’s Tolstoy or Gretzky, typewriters or pucks, Gaudet’s talents as both an avid English instructor and skilled hockey coach make him one of the most interesting voices on campus. And his classroom, 110 in Phillips Hall, welcomes. Chang put it best: “He’s great. Everybody loves him.”

Iftar Cont.

nandez, one of the dinner’s organizers.

The common room was brimming with life. Exonians of all backgrounds, as well as faculty and their families, transformed Merrill into a warm and bustling celebration for all. As students entered, the aroma of freshly brewed chai and rich spices filled the room, drawing them to the various stations of food which included samosas, palak paneer, and classic chicken tikka masala. Around each table, guests shared laughter and stories, beginning their meals with dates, the traditional way to break one’s fast.

For senior Izyaan Burney, the event re-

minded him of home, and the quintessential desi dishes served connected some students back to their roots, no matter how far they were from it. This was one of Ullah’s primary goals: To recreate the chaotic but warm atmosphere of community dinners, where conversation hummed and music filled spaces not already claimed by giggling children.

As the night went on, students huddled together playing cards, debating campus matters, or simply just enjoying the last few servings of food. It was clear how impactful the dinner was on all of its attendees, with each one fin-

ishing the night off with a smile on their face. An especially poignant takeaway from the evening was highlighted by prep Aanya Shah “It’s very important that we celebrate each other’s cultures and communities because the fact that we’re so diverse is what brings Exeter together as a community.” Shah concluded by appreciating the dinner’s overall ambiance, one of kindness, love, and joy.

As students trekked back into the snow from the warmth of Merrill’s common room, they departed having more than just satisfied their hunger. Through shared food and laughter, Exonians reaffirmed a sense of belonging and community, eagerly awaiting Ullah’s next Iftar dinner.



Tanya Waterman poses with Ullah.

Max Loghinov / *The Exonian*

The Edit: Fiona Liu



Liu perches on the Library’s staircase.

By ANNIE ZHU

“I don’t know where I’m going from here but I promise it won’t be boring.” - David Bowie

Stepping inside the Music Building, Phelps Science Center, and the Library, one can glimpse the shine of a brown leather jacket, silver buttons shining at the collar; pleated, checkered flannel; and twinkle

of earrings, thin gold wire winding their way around drops of sea glass that clink softly against shells. “I used to think fashion was where you wear these clothes to make your body look good or whatever. Or you follow all of these fashion trends. Or your clothes have to be expensive. But you can kind of just wear whatever you want.” The last line of this quote has been the

center of Fiona Liu’s fashion philosophy. Couture meant little to her, and brands – even less. “I feel like I always wanted to wear interesting stuff, but I was too scared. And then I was just like, whatever, I don’t care anymore.” The patterned skirts, layered clothing, and one-of-a-kind jewelry are all influenced by Liu’s own life. The independence Exeter offers has given Liu the freedom to dress how she prefers and to stop caring about other opinions. Fantasy novels like *Six of Crows* also add inspiration, the dark overcoats adding a heavy brush into her style. Liu has always wanted to have her ears pierced, which has fueled her passion for making jewelry herself long after earrings adorned her ears. Her love for jewelry making has even extended to campus life, where Liu is the co-head of Exeter Jewelry Association, where passionate jewelry makers like her can be found tinkering and winding wire around beads every Friday night.

“I Believe:” Ananya Ray’s Meditation

By MARYN BOWMAN, KAYLEE CONG, and JOHANNA HILLMAN

Bhagavad Gita 2.27: Death is certain for one who has been born, and rebirth is inevitable for one who has died. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable.

On the morning of Wednesday, Feb. 18, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Ramadan, and the day following Lunar New Year, senior Ananya Ray reflected on the role of faith and family in her own life. As the final soft piano chords from Lizzy McAlpine’s “Staying” rang out overhead in Phillips Church, Ray approached the podium. With her best friends leaning forward in the front row, Ray shared her story: memories of her mother’s devotion to astrology, her own experiences with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and what everything

RAY, 8.

Ananya Ray smiles with her close friend, Annabel Urquhart, and Annabel’s mother.

Courtesy of Ananya Ray

PEA Theater & Dance Presents “The Far Country”



Upper Jillian Cheng feeds lower Amerson Liang.

Courtesy of Phillips Exeter Academy

By LUCYMA, LEVI STOLL, OLIVIA WANG, and ARISA YOSHINO

“芳草幽兰怨凋落 那时方得任升腾?” The scented grass and hidden orchids complain of withering and falling. When may I be allowed to soar at my own pleasing?”

One interrogation room. One wooden table. Two immigration officers. And, one Chinese man. Obedient and undignified, the man responds to awkward questions about his childhood, his family, his job, and his dream. He had longed to step onto the land of Golden Mountain. To fight for a better life; to fulfill his American dream.

Inspired by a collection of poems written by the Chinese immigrants incarcerated on Angel Island, San Francisco, “The Far Country,” by Lloyd Suh tells the story of early 20th-century Chinese immigrants and “paper sons” navigating the harsh restrictions of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

From Feb. 20 through 22, a cast and crew of Exeter students, under Head of Theater and Dance Department David Rhee’s direction, put up a production of the Pulitzer Prize finalist, “The Far Country.” With a full Asian cast, the play received a lot of campus attention. It sold out on Saturday night, and

almost had a full house for the two other performances. Students, teachers, and parents flooded into the Actor’s Lab to see Exonians tell the story of Angel Island.

The plot follows Chinese immigrant Gee, played by lower Amerson Liang, who fabricated his own citizenship papers after the 1906 earthquake and claimed to be a native-born American. To navigate the restrictions under the political environment, he strikes a dangerous agreement with Low, played by senior Harini Venkatesh, to bring her teenage son, Moon Gyet, played by senior Wilson Rhee, to America under a false identity as his own child. As Moon Gyet endures relentless interrogation at the Angel Island Detention Center, officials played by upper Axel Pena and lower Juliana Taverez search for inconsistencies that could lead to deportation.

Yuen, who was played by upper Jillian Cheng, also enters the arrangement as Moon Gyet’s “paper wife,” but what begins as a legal fiction develops into shared sacrifice and resilience. The ghosts One, Two, Three, and Four — senior Robyn Davies, lower Audrey Kim, prep Oliver Choi and Gary Guo — represent the countless unnamed detainees whose stories echo through Angel Island and frame the family’s struggle within a larger history of exclu-

sion and survival.

This year, the Theater and Dance Department, in cooperation with the Arts Department, decided to explore the overarching theme of “monsters in the garden” through different art forms. Rhee decided to build on this theme: “America is seen as this promised land, this idea of a garden. But the ‘monsters’ the immigrants meet when they come to America aren’t what they expected. They’re met with Angel Island.”

D. Rhee first came across The Far Country in 2022, when he joined the Academy as an English instructor. His mentor, Instructor in English Mercy Carbonell, introduced him to the book “The Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910 to 1940.” The recovery and preservation of the unheard voices in that book fascinated him. “I was fascinated that this was also considered the first Asian American literature that was ever created,” D. Rhee shared. “And at the same time, the production of The Far Country, which is literally based off of this, was happening in New York City.”

D. Rhee spoke about the significance of casting decisions in The Far Country. He intentionally chose a full Asian cast for the production, emphasizing that representation was not just symbolic but essential to the story’s authenticity. Be-

cause the play is centered on Chinese immigrant experiences and the legacy of Angel Island, D. Rhee believed it was important for Asian actors to inhabit those roles and bring lived perspectives to the stage. He shared a quote from Leslie Ugams: “When a white actor goes on stage, they just act. When a person of color goes on stage, it becomes political.”

At the heart of the production, D. Rhee wanted to remind the audience of the importance of history through representation of Asian students, and their families and the Asian legacy: “[It is] because of those early immigrants, we have this [production] in 2026,” Rhee reflected.

When casting the play, D. Rhee did not only look for acting skills and experience, but also how well they would fit for specific roles. Rhee described how passion for the topic, both from himself and the actors, shaped the production: “[During the auditions], we talked about the political climate. I played devil’s advocate. When they pushed back with passion and understood what it’s like to be a minority in this country, I knew they would care about this.”

D. Rhee remembered clearly when Cheng told him, “This is important to me. I live in San Francisco. I know the history.” He knew that the level of emotional tie and resonance would greatly

benefit the play as well as the actress herself.

W. Rhee noted the specific skills that D. Rhee brought to the production as a professional actor. “The Far Country was [Mr. Rhee’s] directorial debut at Exeter. He worked with many famous actors and directors during his time, but this is his first year as director of the theater department. I think it was very clear how much experience he had... just a wealth of knowledge about acting and the way that the professional world works,” he recalled. “I think that the rehearsal process was very professional, but also intense at times in a lot of good ways: the script warrants a certain level of intensity.”

Choi recalled his motivation to audition for The Far Country. “I was really motivated by the purpose of this play and how it mirrors the landscape of the world, about the ostracization of Asians and people of different races,” he noted. By participating in this production, Choi hoped to make known of how Asian Americans have been oppressed in history and how Asian rights progressed in America.

From the day rehearsals began, passion had already begun to fill the space. D. Rhee described: “The excitement and the energy that they brought to rehearsal the very first day—the students saying things after we did our first read through, that ‘This is bigger than us. We have to do this’—that type of excitement ... made me fall in love with theater again.”

This first rehearsal was especially important to D. Rhee in setting the tone for the rest of the rehearsals to come. He had actors walk around the rehearsal space and yell out their lines during their first read through. D. Rhee explained the purpose behind this exercise: “Acting is not about memorization ... The words have to go all the way down to your feet so that when you’re saying it as if it’s a part of your body.” In this way, Rhee ensured that the actors, from the beginning, were passionately embodying

their characters.

Throughout the term, D. Rhee supported his actors endlessly while also demanding their very best work. Choi, who played one of the ghosts, said, “Mr. Rhee kept telling me, ‘Louder, Oliver. Louder. It’s not loud enough.’” By pushing him, Choi reflected that Rhee not only taught him how to act better, but also “to communicate with others better.”

The production left a strong impression on the audience, reminding them about the historical significance of Asian immigration and the emotional heaviness of the hardships Asian American immigrants once suffered. Audience member and lower Gavin Lyle shared, “The story was really powerful and all the actors in it were really talented. I’m glad the story can be told, because I’ve never heard of Angel Island. Just the fact that this island existed, is such a horrific thing that happened. It’s so important that these stories are told.”

Senior Kyle Kennedy’s, who came to the show due to his appreciation of D. Rhee’s teaching, found himself moved by more than just the performances.

“I liked the emotional aspects that were shown throughout regarding how the students portrayed frustration and struggle,” he said, “as well as the symbolism of counting the steps.” Most of all, Kennedy found himself in the story. “I was drawn to characters like Amerson’s character, the father, as well as the mother,” he reflected. “Those two characters in particular reminded me of my own parents since they’re immigrants, so just hearing that reminded me of myself as a child of immigrants.”

“I really like, thematically, the idea of remembrance,” senior Robin Dao noted. “I thought that it was really well-designed when they stood on the boxes and started carving poems on the walls: [it showed how] the stories of these people overlapped with each other all at once.”

FAR COUNTRY, 9.

Ray Cont.

in between meant.

Beginning with vivid descriptions of her mother's home in Dhanbad, Ray began with describing India: "a five-hundred-square-foot concrete house painted light orange, where fourteen people lived together." Ray described the night her mother's baby brother passed from brain cancer. Mercury was in retrograde, and her mother stayed silent, observing.

Soon enough, her mother's observations became rituals and an obsession with astrology to find reason. On the first day of each month, Ray's parents gathered in the living room to call their astrologer, whom they referred to as Jai Jagannath. Through the humor of how Ray's father believed the louder he yelled over the phone, the better people could hear him, Ray noted how Jai Jagannath's name translates to Lord of the Universe. "There's irony in calling a man Lord of the Universe when all he does is interpret it, but I've come to believe that that's the point," said Ray in her mediation. "The distance between the divine and the human collapses somewhere in that name, as if by invoking it, we could summon a sense of order."

So for years, the astrological beliefs of her mother filled Ray's life. Her

mother would stick Post-Its noting the upcoming Mercury retrograde on her bathroom mirror or forward horoscopes through iMessages. Mercury was in retrograde when Ray's mom said she had cancer. Mercury was in retrograde when Ray was diagnosed with OCD. In India, Ray explained, astrology is viewed as a civic institution. Actions adjust accordingly to the patterns of the stars, and "time isn't simply observed. It's obeyed."

However, many times, Ray couldn't help but mock the astrological signs that guided her parents. She couldn't understand why they turned to Jai Jagannath, instead of logic. So, she researched. She foraged through books and across the internet for information about astrology and those who followed it. Until she realized, "No matter where we're from, people are always looking for reasons. If not astrology, then something else. Lucky pennies, angel numbers, fortune cookies. We reach for whatever gives structure to the chaos. Something to believe that the mess of life has a map."

For Ray, this explained her mother's devotion to astrology. "Belief, for her, isn't a refusal of reason, but more a way to survive

what reason can't fix." Thus, she turned to her own life. "Over time, my mother's belief became my cure. Her faith in patterns allowed me to see that control doesn't have to mean fear. It can mean attention, devotion, and care." As someone whose struggles with OCD involved the crippling belief that the world depended on her lucky number eleven, Ray used her mother's faith in astrology to see that many things are out of reach from control. The continuity of astrology allowed Ray to just trust.

"I've learned to see the tenderness in the act itself," voiced Ray in her meditation. Since understanding the role of faith and astrology in her parents' lives, Ray has been able to reframe her own view of life. "I trust in the curiosity our skepticism can create, and the empathy it leaves behind. The kind of curiosity that makes room for belief, even when you don't share it. And so, I choose to keep listening."

Bhagavad Gita 6.29: The true yogis, uniting their consciousness with God, see with equal eye, all living beings in God and God in all living beings. It is not about worship or submission. It's about sight. To see divinity in everything is to understand that nothing we love or fear stands outside the order of things.

Although Ray delivered her meditation seam-

lessly, in the planning and writing process, her topic didn't come immediately. "I really thought I was a cookie-cutter child, like nothing really interesting had happened in my life," said Ray. However, filling out her college applications inspired her meditation topic. "You're forced to think so deeply into yourself and your stories," noted Ray.

Since completing her meditation, Ray realized that she's gained a deeper appreciation of her relationship with her family, especially her mom. For example, in her meditation, she drew parallels between her mother's astrological beliefs and her own OCD: "Studies show that when you have a relative with obsessive-compulsive disorder, you're more likely to develop it yourself. My mother never called her obsession with astrology OCD, but her and I had the same tendencies ... We both believed that if we paid attention closely enough, we could hold the world together." Their mother-daughter similarities were how Ray managed to learn that there were things beyond her power she had to have faith in, and how she gained a deeper understanding of her mother.

In attendance at Ray's meditation, especially in the front right row, were Ray's closest friends. "We asked our teacher to get out early so we could get

the front row to see her," described senior Willow Foregger. "As her friends, just being there was our way of supporting because that's the point of a meditation: you let someone open up, and your role is to just listen. You aren't clapping or getting up, but just processing someone else's stories and their emotions."

Through her story, Ray reached and moved the whole audience. Some students were crying by the time they hugged Ray at the end, and senior Elizabeth Flynn highlighted how, throughout the meditation, she watched everyone connect to it in different ways. "At Exeter, we all come from different places and, especially around the topic of faith, have so many different viewpoints," noted Flynn. "Yet, I saw everyone nod at different points whenever they felt [Ray's meditation] applied to them. Everyone was having their own personal moment, but we were also all together, which was really powerful."

Flynn additionally described the effect of the meditation, noting that everyone walked away thinking, "I have a little bit more faith in the world now."

"We were all very emotional because we were so proud of her being able to present this to everybody," added Foregger. With many of her closest friends having surrounded

Ray since prep year, they were amazed to see Ray's growth and also her ability to open up about such a heavy and dense topic. "Since freshman year, she's become a lot more comfortable with who she is," recalled senior Annabel Urquhart. "She used to get really caught up in worrying about things being 'right,' but now she's better at stepping back and reflecting instead of spiraling."

"It's hard to talk about faith and superstition and reflect on the way you grew up," commented Flynn. "Those are topics even adults struggle with, and there's no right way to think about them. Everyone has different opinions, but I think Ananya handled it so tastefully."

Bhagavad Gita 6.30: For those who see Me everywhere and see all things in Me, I am never lost, nor are they ever lost to Me.

In the Gita, it is taught that God is not separate nor superior, but rather everywhere you look. It's the trust that there is order around her that has allowed Ray to live fully. She no longer has OCD. "I see God, I see belief, and I choose to trust. Not the blind trust of surrender, but the steady kind that comes from recognition: that fate unfolds beyond my control, and my task is not to manage it but to meet it. To live, fully and presently, within the order that already holds me."

Kashif Cont.

Even as a new upper, he quickly rose to the ranks of co-head, where he took on important leadership and logistics roles within the club.

Not only is the club valuable to him in terms of fulfilling his passion for debate, but for Kashif, Model UN has value that transcends even that. "The beauty of MUN is that there's not necessarily an opposition, right? You can argue your way through issues, but the preferable option is always sugar over salt," reflected Kashif. Model UN has valuable lessons that he can apply to life outside of the club, he explained, "I think that instead of arguing and fighting your way to victory, I think that [MUN] is really representative of skills to have in the real world, which is being a diplomat and finding compromise."

Kashif, upon arriving at Exeter as a new upper, also jumped quickly into *The Exonian*, which he thought was one of "the main reasons I wanted to go here," as "that level of journalism at a high school is unheard of." Kashif quickly adapted to the pace of *The Exonian*, saying, "I found my niche in the op-ed section. I started writing lots of op-eds ... and I found a couple writers who I really enjoyed working with, people who I think had a similar work ethic, a similar writing style."

He would later use these writing skills and

passions to become an op-ed editor on the 147th Board of *The Exonian*, where he, according to the board's Managing Editor, Sam Altman, "made the op-ed section a lot more fun." Altman elaborated, mentioning that Kashif would "make a grand presentation of his op-ed topic, and I think people were attracted to that a lot." Altman also spoke to the success of Kashif's attitude as an op-ed editor. "And I think it's part of the reason that at least under our board, we had lots and lots of people wanting to write their own op-ed," mentioned Altman.

One of Kashif's main contributions to *The Exonian* was the introduction of videography. Kashif spearheaded the initiative with his peers, as when he arrived, he said that "there was almost no videography in *The Exonian* ... and what I wanted to do was introduce video journalism to Exeter. I thought that was something that was a little lacking for *The Exonian*. So, sure enough, I gave it a shot, and it turned out great."

Kashif subsequently became a Head Video Editor in *The Exonian*, about which he shared two of his most proud accomplishments.

The first was the introductory video for the 147th Board, which featured introductions for board members in the style of the TV show "Friends," and was filmed on the Academy

Building steps. Kashif reminisced, "I was personally really proud of that. That was my brainchild; I put it all together. And it turned out amazing." Kashif noted how this project was particularly memorable because it was indicative of the progress that *Exonian* videography had made and its ability to work as a team. "I've previously done a lot of videography as a one-man team, but working as a group where we could split up responsibilities was a really eye-opening experience," said Kashif.

Altman also weighed in on the success of Kashif's videography initiative and how he inspired collaboration. For example, Altman told us, "I know he invited people like [upper] Andrew Yang, who's now the current Editor-in-Chief, to work on [videography] projects ... I think he is very attentive to the way that the *Exonian* encourages people. It's hard work in *The Exonian*, but he's very attentive to the way that he can make it fun, whether it's by presenting interesting op-eds or making videography fun and interactive."

Kashif has also found community at Exeter as a member and later a co-head of Muslim Student Association. As a new upper, Kashif found that the Muslim community became "an anchoring point" to "link Exeter with home and ground myself at the end of each week with Friday prayers." Now, Kashif serves as a cohead of MSA. "I've wanted to give back that space and to new students who

may need that same anchoring in terms of being a Muslim, especially with it now being Ramadan," commented Kashif, referring to the holiest month of the Islamic calendar, which recently began on Tuesday, Feb. 17. Fellow cohead, upper Ahmed Hamad, commented that "Shay brings an enthusiasm that brightens the environment in our community, making every member feel welcome in our religious space." He added that Kashif is also reliable when it comes to planning MSA's events. Cohead Amal Akhtar agreed, saying, "Whether it's planning an event or weekly Jummahs, Shay is always present and willing to take initiative!"

But perhaps the quintessential aspect of Kashif's time and accomplishments at Exeter has been "Good Morning Exeter." The morning talk show, started by Kashif, immediately upon his arrival to campus as a new upper, has been the subject of praise from the Exeter community. Senior Cecily Reed, commenting on her first impression of him, said "His exuberance first annoyed me greatly, but when I had spent a little more time with him, I began to see it as a manifestation of his general enthusiasm for life—the same enthusiasm which motivates him to shout 'today is a great day to be an Exonian,' [and] put on a suit every morning at 7 a.m."

The program has also been a great way for Kashif to reach more of the Exeter community. Senior Jinmin Lee,

a fellow debater and a good friend of Kashif's, commented on the program's special impact on the senior's career at the Academy. "It's really difficult for new uppers to have a big presence on campus ... I think Good Morning Exeter flips that script on its head," said Lee. On the prevalence of the show in the Exeter community, Lee shared that "[My mother told me] 'I saw the weather was nice today,' where I said, 'How did you know that,' and she was like 'Good Morning Exeter.'" With "Good Morning Exeter," Kashif has made his mark even beyond the paths of Exeter.

However, on campus, Kashif is known as a lover of learning, interested in everything from photography to politics to sewing. "I suspect he will be a lifelong learner," commented his advisor, Instructor in Mathematics Dan Garvey. "Shay can hold an intelligent conversation about many different topics." He noted, too, that Kashif possesses a blend of passion and ambition that has motivated him to "step into a lot of leadership roles and take on tasks that are not required," such as photography for theater and dance productions. "He gets things done," Garvey added.

Kashif's friends, too, reflected similar sentiments. "He's always had the same energy, same excitement, same persistence," reflected senior Forrest Zeng. "He's like a shot of caffeine."

Zeng, Reed, and Altman each described Kashif as "soulful," as well

as caring and energetic. "He wears his heart on his sleeve," said Reed. "Usually a very fashionable sleeve."

Senior Dylan Richardson observed Kashif's friendliness and confidence, calling him "one of the most outgoing people I've ever known." Altman noted that Kashif has "an ability to make everything joyful."

However, Kashif is not just exuberant, but also dedicated and persistent. "Most people at Exeter seem very serious and hardworking on the exterior, then soften up as you get to know them," commented Reed. "Shay is the opposite—he leads with fun, but few realize how much work he puts into everything he does." Kashif is also opinionated, as Altman described. "He could think about the world in the way that no one else could," said Altman. "He has very strong opinions about politics and religion, but he's also very kind and very open-minded and is always willing to debate about them."

From the quads to the meeting rooms, dining halls, to Goel, there is nowhere one might go where they will not risk encountering that wonderful "Good morning Exeter!" Kashif's relentless positivity, undeniable style, and thousand-word lexicon make him, as his friends repeatedly emphasized, a truly soulful member of the community. Even if life at the Academy is hard work, the senior makes sure that every day is a "wonderful day to be an Exonian."

Far Country Cont.

He continued, “I was also drawn to this concept of remembering where you come from because what I understood was, even though Moon Gyet and Gee sold their names, they held on to his culture by adopting a new identity without forgetting the old one.”

For upper Sean Mahdavian, the production raised personal and heartfelt questions. “It was an incredibly unfair, oppressive system,” he said, “but a sign of good writing is when they can show you both perspectives and let the viewer make the decision.” He found the emotional weight of the play especially resonant given his own background. “My dad’s an immigrant

from Iran,” Madhavian explained. “The question of ‘Do you ever feel like you’re fully part of the country?’ is something that is very hard on immigrants, especially the first generation, because in so many ways you get pushed out and excluded.”

The production also played an important role in supporting Asian immigrants in the Exeter community. A. Liang brought his aunt, Doris Liang, to see the show. D. Liang originally came from Hoisan, a city in South China mentioned in the play, and shared that she came to “support her people.” “It was a really great reminder about the history of Chinese immigration and all the hardships. I

think the entire cast did a really great job. It’s very, very impactful,” she remarked.

Instructor in English Nova Seals attended to spectate the play as well as to find connections with her instruction of English 320 classes. “The casting decisions made a lot of sense and, I believe, added to the narrative quality and experience of the production for both the actors as well as the audience,” she noted. A former member of technical theater productions herself, Seals was struck by the design work: “I was most impressed with the use of video and its projection to the audience to reinforce the idea of documentation and amplification.”

As someone of Korean descent, she found the story personally touching. “I do think quite a bit about Asian diasporic experiences,” she said, “so the plot of *The Far Country* did hit home.”

W. Rhee, who had spoken with D. Rhee about Asian American media during his English class, said the all-Asian cast transformed the rehearsal room. “Because this was a cast of all Asians and Asian Americans, we were all able to speak about and talk to each other about the story of our families coming to the U.S.,” he said. “Everybody was able to identify a story about coming to America that directly related to their family and how they were able to arrive here in this country.”

Prep James Moon noted how topics of racial

relations and immigration explored in *The Far Country* resonated with him. “The play had a lot in common with what my parents have told me about their immigrant experience. I liked how this production emphasized a lot of ups and downs, especially the Angel Island scene. It is a lot more impulsive to me because of the fact that there’s contrast,” he explained. “I think it’s awesome that we had a play that explores more complex topics like this, and I would love to see more.”

“*The Far Country*” ran for three nights in the Actor’s Lab, but its questions will remain with members of its cast and audience beyond its closing. A deeply personal play, many found the interrogation scenes, the forged documents, and the char-

acters’ desperation to be uncomfortably familiar. D. Rhee set out to bring the Academy’s attention to the storied walls of Angel Island, and his select cast met the gravity of their roles. W. Rhee understood why the production, staged as the immigration process weighs heavily on families across the U.S., carried such a weight at this time. “The script was very intentionally chosen because of current events surrounding the difficulty of legal immigration right now, and also the way that immigrants—both legal and illegal—are being treated.” The play’s central message, he said, is a timely one. “We should have sympathy for people who flee from terrible circumstances and are forced to lie in order to save themselves.”

Vas Pertusum: Jinmin Lee’s Meditation



Lee poses with Rob Richards after the meditation.

By **TIAGOBILYK and ANNIE ZHU**

On Wednesday, Feb. 26, senior Jinmin Lee delivered his meditation to a nearly full Phillips Church, tackling everything from Greek myths to geopolitics to leaky vases.

The eighth senior to deliver a meditation during the 2025-2026 school year, Lee, over the course of 30 minutes spoke profoundly about life and his dealing with questions that come from such an inherently multicultural experience as both an international student and former dual citizen of South Korea and the United States. Specifically, he held forth his love for the Classics and discussed how his studying of them has affected his relationship with Korean culture.

In his meditation, Lee spoke about his love for languages and literature. As a young student in France, Lee first struggled with

the learning of a Romance language, which culminated in his experiences as a middle school student in Korea with a growing passion for the study of western philosophy, its literary canon, and, of course, the classics. He discussed the hopes of becoming doctus, or learned in Latin, so that he might eventually doctor, or teach.

Aside from his passions, Lee discussed themes deeply connected to his heart. Given his dual citizenship of South Korea and the U.S., Lee had to determine where his ultimate residency would lie—either serving for two years in the South Korean army (in so relinquishing two precious years of his undergraduate career), or pushing to spend the rest of his life pursuing his passion, yet remain permanently separated from his family.

Commenting on his inspiration for the piece, Lee noted: “I always wanted

to write about something related to the classics because I think I feel very grateful to the program here.” An avid member of the Kirtland society, and having applied to PEA with a focus on developing his understanding of Latin and Greek, friends knew he was bound to discuss Classics in this culmination of his Exeter experience.

As he moved to a discussion of his relationship with Korean culture, Lee recalled the train ride to Boston, on his way to relinquish his citizenship. “I knew the train was taking me to a place I didn’t want to be,” he said. “I couldn’t make this hulking machine, which was hurling itself at 200 miles per hour, come to a halt. The tracks below me felt established and set, as though they had already made the decision for me. Perhaps this sense of fatalism was attractive to me in the moment, and I silently accepted the path I was put on.” The vivid description

sticks out as one of Lee’s many moments of quiet reflection.

Many close friends and mentors of Lee attended his meditation in support of his journey at Exeter. Senior Dylan B. Richardson first met Lee through the French Club, at the time of which Lee was a co-head. The two soon bonded over their shared experience of moving to France at a young age without knowing the language. “I could really relate to both his feeling of looking into a foreign experience, and to the new experience that is the depth of philosophical thinking that the French educational culture prioritizes,” he said.

Instructor in English L.J. Cooper particularly appreciated Lee’s soulful and complex style, much of which was evident in his meditation. “[Jinmin is] incredibly intelligent. He is so diligent in all that he does, but I’ve always gotten a sense that that comes

from a place of sort of unrelenting authenticity,” he said, “he knows who he is, he has a sense of who he wants to become, but there’s an openness of spirit to him.”

Instructor in Latin Nikhil Ranjan was impressed by the richness of Lee’s meditation and expressed his appreciation. “Jinmin clearly demonstrated the structural and stylistic excellence one would expect from a passionate student of the Classics. It was powerful to hear about the struggles he heard about, the struggles he has undergone, and being able to recognize the parallels that have taken place,” he said.

Through his dilemma and ultimate decision regarding his citizenship, Lee also shared a vulnerable part of himself surprising even to his familiars, adding another complex layer to his story. Senior Ethan Benenson felt deeply about Lee’s internal struggle over relinquishing his Korean citizenship. “This moment was so personal for Jinmin, yet I felt like I could empathize with him and understand very clearly the emotions he was dealing with,” Benenson reflected. “He revealed a vulnerability I never knew about, and moments like those are what I love most about Exeter’s meditation tradition,” he added.

Richardson felt similarly: “I loved this meditation, it was profound, soulful, and vulnerable in a way that, even as someone who knows Jinmin well, let me understand him even better,” he said. “His definition of a coward, and his explanation of feeling as though he had deserted his country really stuck out as a moment of vulnerability,” Richardson continued.

Lee’s description of his personal identity resonated with many students and staff on campus. “His experiences are relevant to so many students and faculty here,” Cooper said. “[He shows] what it means to fit into this community as somebody who has an international background, what it means to surrender a part of your identity, or to affirm a part of your identity,” he elaborated.

Senior Forrest Zeng, a friend of Lee’s, opened the meditation with Bach’s

Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C major. Fitting to the themes of the meditation, the classical nature of western music, which Lee described as featuring “a little bit of seriousness... with a little bit of playfulness, a little bit of sadness, but also some hope and happiness,” was followed by “Where the Wind Comes From,” a classic Korean song. In the concluding moments of Wednesday’s meditation, the pieces served as powerful bookends to Lee’s thoughts on cultural plurality.

Much of the meditation centered on Lee’s family, particularly his great-grandmother, Sunboo. Lee told of how she, a survivor of the Korean war, inspired him as she moved around the world to take care of her children, grandchildren, and, eventually, him. Attendees of the presentation might be surprised to know that it was a much later addition to the piece. “I didn’t know that I would be doing that until almost the very end,” he said. Much of his time in writing was spent on revision of his draft. It was at that time, Lee said, that he was truly able to find the message in his own writing.

Lee illustrated his strong passion for philosophical literature and extensive knowledge in Classics throughout his mediation. Shards of remnant pottery, ancient anecdotes and phrases in Ancient Greek and Latin were sprinkled throughout Lee’s meditation. He repeatedly returned to Lucretius’ image of the leaky vase, or vas pertusum in Latin.

Lee used the classical concept to describe his outlook on life. Closing his med he spoke of Sunboo’s inspiration, “she repaired the leaks and kept her vessel brimming. Deep down, I know I can do that, too.”

Balancing the intense environment of the Exeter experience with one’s life before attending the school is, undoubtedly, an issue that presses many Exonians. And, although not an answer to the query, Lee taught students much of what it’s like to learn about oneself through our struggles. To be doctus is a lifelong journey, but on Wednesday, Lee was certainly a doctor.

Courtesy of Jinmin Lee

» LEARNING OUT LOUD

Prep Gary Guo discusses embarrassment in the learning environment, 10.

» GIRLS' SPORTS

Chair of the History Department Alexa Caldwell criticizes the rulemakers, 11.

» WAR ON IMMIGRANTS

Upper Christine Charles examines American immigration policy, 13.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

By OLIMA WANG '29

Ding! Outlook sent you a reminder: Biology test in 30 minutes. Ding! Ding! Ding! Theater rehearsal in 45, mandatory dorm meeting in an hour, basketball game in two hours... Open your Outlook calendar and tell me. How many hours on average do you spend in classes and doing homework? What about sports? Extracurricular? Or sleep? An average Exonian spends more than six hours on academic endeavors and a similar amount of time on non-academic learning.

Under the conventional definition, studying is only about formal instruction, completing out-of-class assignments, and preparing for assessments. However, learning lies beyond the classrooms and the library. Improving your mile time, practicing a Mozart concerto, memorizing lines, and leading an ESSO club are all effective ways to thrive, build-

ing creativity, collaboration, and confidence — skills that strengthen both intellectual growth and social connections beyond the classroom.

Since we have access to such an abundance of academic and extracurricular opportunities, many Exonians struggle with balancing their commitments. So which one is more important? Should we choose one to be prioritized? The answer is, both are equally important, and it's hard to excel in formal education without strong non-academic learning experiences, vice versa. Structured instruction builds knowledge and foundational frameworks, while informal education fosters soft skills that aids the presentation and communication.

Standard schooling is essential for skill acquisition. This includes attending instruction sessions and completing academic certification and assessments. Modern society enforces

mandatory primary and secondary education, primarily because a more literate and rational population makes workplaces more productive and more efficient. A person who can articulate and write clearly and problem-solve with logical reasoning can perform tasks with better accuracy and productivity. These foundational skills allow individuals to interpret information critically, communicate ideas persuasively, and make informed decisions. Formal education equips students with the intellectual tools necessary to navigate increasingly complex systems in modern society.

Formal education also teaches discipline. Showing up to all the 8 a.m. classes, completing all the assignments on time, and respecting your instructors and classmates prepares a student for a structured workplace and long-term commitments. Consistency, accountability, and time management are not innate traits.

They are skills to be built through repeated practice within a structured academic environment.

But solely excelling at consuming information and taking exams is not enough. Resilience, adaptivity, and initiative are skills no class can teach and no test can measure, but are essential in real life. Informal education is crucial for developing character, adaptability, and interpersonal awareness. Sports teach resilience and teamwork. The arts cultivate creativity and expression. Leadership roles challenge students to negotiate conflict, motivate peers, and take responsibility for outcomes that extend beyond themselves. These experiences foster qualities that cannot be taught in the classroom and measured by standardized assessment, but are equally vital in shaping thoughtful, capable individuals.

However, in reality, formal education is still prioritized over infor-

mal education. What is hindering out-of-school learning from receiving equal emphasis as academic endeavors?

To begin with, excelling in formal education gives you more measurable and immediate opportunities in life, while informal education is often a high-risk investment. Getting good grades in school directly correlates to entering a good college. A degree, or even multiple degrees, from world-class higher education institutions allows you to land a decent and high-paying job. Employers, scholarship committees, and institutions rely on transcripts and standardized achievements because they are quantifiable and comparable. In contrast, the benefits of informal education, such as creativity, leadership, and resilience, are harder to evaluate objectively. As a result, families and students tend to prioritize what is visible, credentialed, and institutional-

ly rewarded. For many, formal education is not simply a preference but a necessity. It represents stability, security, and the possibility of upward mobility.

Informal education can also be extremely expensive and unevenly distributed. Developing a hobby often requires equipment, private instruction, and sustained time commitment. These opportunities are not universally accessible. Even within well-resourced communities, participation may depend on personal schedules, family support, and financial flexibility. While governments around the world strive to make K-12 education accessible, expanding equal access to extracurricular enrichment on the same scale presents significant logistical and economic challenges. When institutions must allocate limited funding. They often prioritize core academic instruction because it

EDUCATION, 11.

Sharks, Frogs, Mice, and Warriors : Mastering the Harkness Table

By BUCHI AKABOGU '28

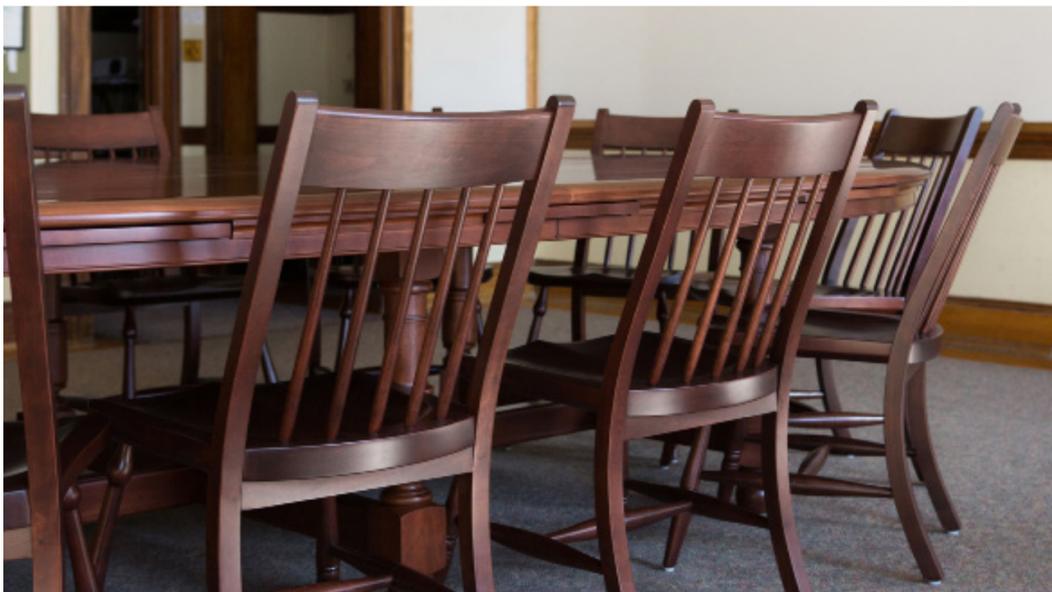
In the spring of 1930, Harkness was born. A new and revolutionary learning style was pioneered by philanthropist Edward Harkness. His idea revolutionized the way subjects have been taught here at Exeter for over 75 years and counting.

In every Harkness discussion, there is a shark, a mouse, and a frog. The shark scans their text for any information that could be used as a Harkness point. The shark dives at the opportunity to speak; long pauses are blood in the water for sharks. A shark will often cut you off while diving at the opportunity to speak. The shark speaks confidently, projecting their point to announce their presence whenever they choose to speak. Their confidence when pronouncing their point can convince one that an unthoughtful point is of high quality. Sharks often eat all the food in the sea knowingly or unknowingly. Everyone knows who the sharks are; they're quite hard to miss. A warrior doesn't care if you are a seal or a human, as a shark does. He will kill you regardless.

In every Harkness discussion, there is a frog. The frog cannot be eaten by the shark, as it will just swim away, nor killed

by the warrior, as it will just hop around its attacks. The frog waits tranquilly in tranquility, listening to the points of others. From watching, listening, and remaining calm, a fly will appear in front of the frog. The frog won't let this chance pass, flicking its tongue with admirable accuracy at the fly, and is therefore granted its prize. A stellar Harkness point or question that brings in the points of its peers and takes into account the direction of the conversation. This point will stick with the frog's peers and teacher, much like the frog's tongue sticks to the insect. The frog will only fling out its tongue when there is an insect, unlike the shark, which will occasionally bite at the water, and the warrior, who will swing aimlessly at the air. The frog will only make a point when there is reason to.

In every Harkness discussion, there is a mouse. There will be days when you don't even notice the mouse. Don't get me wrong, the mouse will occasionally raise its voice to speak, although it feels quite unnatural to do so. Mice rely on an inhabitable environment. A mouse will never survive in a room full of sharks and warriors. To survive, a mouse needs a helping hand. Perhaps it's cheese dropped



Harkness Table.

Courtesy of hudsonandcompany.com

from the kitchen table in the form of a question. So you might ask... is the mouse the weakest of the three? Yes, unfortunately, this is the case. This is only the case because of the occasional warrior.

The warrior believes they are the best fighter in the land, but they may appear to many as the best fighter in the land. He makes the sharks look like fish, taking all the cheese dropped from the kitchen table, making it impossible for the mouse to survive. While the shark aims to contribute to the discussion, the warrior kills on sight with no mercy. No animal can compete with the human warrior for territory, so you may ask how a warrior can be beaten in battle. He cannot be beaten in battle! He can only lose by stabbing himself in the foot as a

result of his vicious nature. At the end of the day, he is the strongest and smartest in the land, and as a result, can make the best points. It's from consistently making the best points that the warrior is overcome with greed. It is this greed that leads him to fight ruthlessly with no aim, blindly swinging everywhere and anywhere. This leads him to accidentally stab himself. After he is wounded, without a doubt, he can still fight... but without the proficiency he once had. Yes, the warrior will still swing with strength and power, but he will miss and catch the air. At the end of the term, his pride will suffer quite a blow.

So which is the most effective? Which performs the best at the Harkness table? The mouse will never survive at the Harkness

table. The mouse often needs others to help give it a voice, and those who are willing to do that are often in short supply. It cannot be the shark, although he's flashy and full of confidence, he can lack substance. The warrior is too flashy for his own good and often wounds others while also wounding himself (no one wants that at the Harkness table). The frog is obviously the most effective at the table: he possesses composure, striking with substance, always hitting his target. However, the WARRIOR has the most influence because of his ability to affect the conversation in both positive and negative ways.

Harkness doesn't benefit one specific blueprint; it requires a balance of all four. Although the frog (composed composure) and the warrior (courage)

seem ideal, neither mindset can succeed on its own. A discussion is dynamic; there will be moments that require the warrior's willingness to challenge an idea or push the conversation forward. There will also be moments that may require the mouse's silence, making space for others to speak. There will even be moments where the shark's boldness can energize a dead conversation.

Ultimately, all these blueprints are mindsets; they don't define a person. The strongest participant is never the loudest or the calmest, but the ones who understand what the moment requires and makes an adjustment. Awareness of knowing when to speak, listen, ask questions, and challenge is what truly defines success at the Harkness table.

An Open Letter to People Who Make Rules for Girls' Sports



Courtesy of wearexeter.com

A demonstration of the physicality that girls' lacrosse can bring.

By **INSTRUCTOR**
ALEXA CALDWELL

Growing up with a twin brother, I played the same sports and was on the same team as my brother. Thankfully, our father was our rec-league soccer coach, not just because he was an excellent coach, but because it meant I was not treated any differently from the boys. While girls slowly dropped out of the rec league as we got older, opting for same-sex teams (or sadly not playing sports at all), I was lucky to not experience — at least directly or consciously — gender discrimination in sport until high school and beyond.

I am calling it gender discrimination, and I know that will immediately make some readers feel uncomfortable. What I am calling gender discrimination is any time girl players/teams/sports are treated differently from their boy counterparts. In this day and age, there is wonderful celebration of girls in sports, promotion around the ‘victories’ like the United States Women’s National Soccer Team’s lawsuit for equal pay, or the high viewership of the Women’s National Basketball Association, or the incredible fandom of players like Caitlyn Clark... All of these stories are inspirational and wonderful and make it seem like gender discrimination in sport is on the decline. Perhaps at the college and professional level, kind of. But until certain societal norms are directly addressed (and hopefully eradicated), female athletes and the sports they play will be viewed differently and treated differently from their male counterparts. Look at any school whose teams still have Instagram handles for their “varsity soccer team” and their “varsity girls’ soccer team” and you will see what I mean. Or when you hear a friend asking if you’re going to “the game” without specifying which team (girls’ or boys’) because it is implicit if you don’t say ‘girls’ in front, you’re talking about boys’ sports.

One of the most powerful examples of societal norms where I see dis-

crimatory behaviors lies in how referees officiate young female athletes. Growing up playing mostly all-boys soccer, it was not until high school that I played same-sex sports, and I had to make significant adjustments to how I played. This was most pronounced in basketball where too many fouls could accumulate into an ejection from the game. What was most frustrating was that no matter how much adjustment I made to meet the expectations of the rules of basketball, even more adjustment was needed to accommodate the body contact officiants allowed. I remember watching the boys’ varsity basketball team play after our own girls’ varsity game, dumbfounded that the contact I was fouling out of a game for was just a part of their game. Same sport, same rules, different levels of contact, different ‘calls’ made.

Why is this? My hot take: we as a society still, still don’t like to see girls have “too much” physicality and contact. I am not going to unpack this statement with a history lesson, or try to explain where this comes from, I am just going to name it. What other reason could there be?

When I entered college, I remember looking forward to seeing a girls’ hockey game for the first time (growing up in Delaware, there was not a lot of ice hockey). I imagined it to be a sport I would have loved, since I like physical contact, and because hockey had pads and the checking, it seemed like it was the ultimate sport for me. Much to my dismay, very quickly in watching my first game, I learned that the women had to wear the same pads as the men, but they didn’t have the same rules.

Why on earth would that be? As an outsider of ice hockey, I can’t come up with any explanation except that people just don’t want girls to hit, but they are okay with boys’ physicality (Note: more than “okay” — hitting and fighting is a staple of men’s ice hockey’s identity).

More importantly, with this realization of the rule difference between mens’

and womens’ ice hockey, despite having the same gear, came a fierce determination to protect women’s lacrosse and keep it distinct from men’s lacrosse. I love men’s lacrosse — I think it is a great sport. But until women’s hockey has the same rules as men’s, I don’t want anything to do with pads and helmets. With the rules girls’ lacrosse has currently, there is no need for pads and helmets, and girls’ lacrosse is still a physical sport.

At least it is supposed to be. Unless you watch women’s college lacrosse, and the emerging professional league, you might not realize all the contact that is allowed because of the way youth and high school girls’ lacrosse is officiated.

As a high school lacrosse coach of 15 years, I have watched women’s lacrosse evolve, dare we say ‘modernize?’ Girls’ lacrosse has been the fastest growing sport in the US since the early 2000s, and as the sport has grown, the rules have shifted too. When I was in high school, players had to stop at every whistle, prompting a beloved friend to make the annoying comment that girls lacrosse was freeze tag with sticks. Today’s game is fast and physical, with quite a lot of contact (especially considering the only required ‘gear’ for field players are goggles).

Notably, as rules have evolved working to improve both the speed/pace of play and safety of the players, particularly at the college level, rules at the high school level have stalled out.

What this means is that the jump from high school to college lacrosse, already significant for players, is now profound. It’s almost a different game. Only on the girls’ side.

In November the NEPSAC board voted to approve proposed adaptations to the high school girls’ lacrosse game. In the past week, I learned that these approved adaptations will not be implemented this season because there are still reservations among some officials. “Some officiating groups” can hold hostage the 50+ high school girls’

lacrosse programs from updating our game because they aren’t comfortable with the rule changes.

PSA: I didn’t think it is up to official groups to get to decide what the rules are. I know there is a referee shortage — at least in the state of New Hampshire — which could explain how the NEPSAC is held hostage to appease “some official groups.” But more importantly, more significantly, what this shows us is that we as a society don’t care enough to make this rejection of a rule change a bigger issue. We don’t fight it. We all — fans, administrators, parents, coaches — shrug our shoulders, and in doing so, let this happen. We accommodate.

In 2020, schools across New England bought shot clocks because that rule change was going to enter both girls’ and boys’ high school lacrosse. Then COVID happened. In 2021, the boys’ teams adopted it, and the girls’ teams were told ‘to wait’ (we are still waiting). At this point, I don’t care the reasons why giving girls the shot clock is difficult (I have been given many). Make it work. Why do we have to fight to make this a priority or at least an agenda item?

Now, before getting too ahead of myself and jumping to conclusions about the injustice high school girls’ lacrosse faces in attempts to update their game, I asked my male counterpart if he had ever experienced something like this. His response was simple: we follow NCAA rules. I knew that, and then it dawned on me, again. Like a broken record, I will ask: Is this not an example of gender discrimination? Why wouldn’t high school girls’ follow NCAA rules?

The response I would anticipate is: “safety”.

Tell me why 13-year-old boys can follow the same rules as 23-year-old men? Do we not care about the safety of our boys? We do! And still, we don’t question this. Why are we worried about the safety of our girls on the athletic field more than the safety of our boys on the

athletic field? We make more rules for girls than we do for boys. Until we can adjust our thinking about that, we as a society will never have gender equality in sports — the value of female sports will never be the same — and most heartbreaking for me as a coach and a parent of a daughter — girls will grow up thinking they are different and that they need that protection.

At the start of this letter, I praised my dad for coaching us (my twin and me) growing up. In my first job out of college, I was teaching at a small boarding school in North Carolina. Every other Saturday we had classes, and it was not until I had this job that it dawned on me: both my parents were multi-sport collegiate athletes, both played soccer in college, and our dad coached us because of the nature of their jobs: he had Saturdays off, while my mom taught classes every Saturday morning. As a kid, I had just assumed it was because my dad was the more capable coach, the better athlete. It never occurred to me that my mom wasn’t our coach because she just couldn’t be there. This assumption — so small and so innocent — is a small example of how pernicious any distinction between girl and boy athletes can be. If I — a female promoter of women’s sports — still have to check myself about how I view female athletes, how could I expect others to respect and hold the same standards? In 2026 we know to cringe at the phrase ‘gender discrimination,’ to avoid being labeled as sexist, but we don’t cringe at the small things, the seemingly unimportant discrepancies between girls’ and boys’ sports. Especially when those small things feel out of our control.

As a coach, I feel at a loss for how to initiate this shift or address this issue. This letter isn’t about how much girls’ high school lacrosse is being held back by archaic rules. That’s obvious; come to any of our games and compare

our games to the college games.

This letter is about how there doesn’t seem to be enough people vocally, publicly, and consistently upset with the inconsistencies between boys’ and girls’ sports at the youth and high school level. It’s calling out the quiet acceptance we as spectators of youth and high school girls’ sports have when watching girls’ sports remain in the past. It’s about the lack of awareness, or care, for the infantilizing coddling of our female athletes. The discrepancy between the rules and the way those rules are officiated reveals a deep-rooted and profound societal problem that will perpetuate inequality, indefinitely and beyond just athletics.

I know officiating is hard, and I am grateful to the people who volunteer their time, effort, and energy to grow the game — without them opting in to what is often a second job (or a final job for the retired)—we wouldn’t be able to have our games. And without higher standards for how we officiate girls’ sports and without considering the impact on the extra rules we impose on our girls’ teams, we will forever be holding girls back from their potential in sports. Worse, we will be signaling to them that they need to be protected, that the progress of their sport is not important, and the treatment of boys’ sports will be different from the treatment of girls’ sports.

I have always had the philosophy that when one is upset: either do something about it or let it go. What can I do? I’ll start with writing an op-ed for *The Exonian*.

We need to fundamentally shift how we see girls play sports, how we see females be physical in their sport (beyond the sport of rugby), how referees officiate girls’ games (especially at the youth and high school level) and stay accountable to the updated rules.

I want our girls to be safe. And, we don’t need extra rules to ensure that safety.

Education Cont.

serves the broadest population and fulfills legal requirements.

Another major concern is that informal education is less structured compared to formal education. There isn’t a textbook you can follow or problem sets you can practice with when it comes to sports, the arts, or leadership. Individuals have to be very disciplined and willing to overcome challenges and seek solutions when pursuing informal education.

Today, colleges around the world, especially in the U.S., aim to promote informal education by holistically reviewing applications. A qualified student does not only have to get good grades in challenging classes, but also be an athlete, an artist,

a leader, a risk-taker, an explorer... In theory, this signals that informal education matters just as much as formal achievement. However, this shift has produced its own complications. When extracurricular activities become another line on an application rather than a genuine pursuit. Students start to engage in sports, the arts, or service not out of curiosity or passion, but for strategic advantage. Informal education risks becoming another credential to optimize rather than an experience to internalize.

True informal learning requires willingness and authentic interest. Unlike structured coursework, there is no fixed curriculum. Growth in these spaces depends heavily on intrinsic motivation,

yet motivation and sustained passion are increasingly difficult to maintain in an environment where productivity and outcomes are constantly assessed.

Perhaps the deeper issue is not whether formal or informal education should be prioritized, but whether we are learning for external validation or internal development. Education should not end once college applications are submitted. The habits of curiosity, creativity, and teamwork ought to continue throughout one’s life. Balancing formal and informal education is not simply about managing time in high school. It is about shaping the kind of learner—and the kind of person—one chooses to become.

Why Don't They Teach More State History?

By OLIVIA SZCZEPANSKI '28 and SELASIE AMEMASOR '28

By the time students come to Exeter, they have had at least nine or more years of schooling. These years of education can vary depending on the country a student is from. However, even within the United States, it depends heavily on the state – the United States doesn't have any mandatory nationwide education standards. Curricula are set by states and local districts. Every student comes in with a base level of education in math, science, English, and history. U.S. History is focused on the creation of America as we know it today. Usually, by the time you get to high school, you have a solid grounding in U.S. History. You might have taken a course in middle school, or perhaps it was sprinkled through your elementary school education. Other than that, you might have a bit of ancient or modern world history, depending on your state and school.

There are many types of history; the main ones are usually U.S. History, European History, and World History. And while those are important, it begs the question: why don't we teach state history? Maybe it is merely viewed as less important. Or perhaps there is simply not enough time.

Even with the year of U.S. History required here, it's clear that we can't fit New Hampshire history. We currently cannot fit a multitude of major events into our mandatory U.S. History course. U.S. History is a 400 history course sequence. The courses are 410, 420, and 430. The 410 discusses the country's colonial period, consisting of the Revolution and the Civil War, as well as the establishment of Transatlan-

tic Slavery in the North American Continent. It also looks at the establishment of National Mercantilism. This course cuts off just before the Emancipation Proclamation. History 420 discusses the early 1860s through the 1940s. This course leans more into the social aspects of America following the foundation of the country. This class also speaks about the Depression and begins to touch on the Second World War. History 430 delves into World War 2 as well as the US's international relations. It covers the Cold War and Reaganomics. Being America's history, all of these events have taken place across multiple states. In that way, U.S. History is sort of state history. It does cover events where states are the main players (for example, the Civil War or certain landmark Supreme Court cases).

Within one year, teachers must be able to teach both domestic and international students the core parts of America's history to the best of their abilities. America has always been referred to as a melting pot of culture. That remains an undeniable truth. However, teaching state history fails to adequately portray this. It doesn't do justice to the full history of the United States.

In exploring this question, we took a deep dive into one particular state's history: Michigan. In 1837, Michigan was annexed as the 26th state in the United States of America. However, prior to its annexation, it was home to the Lithic People around 11,000 B.C.E. The first Europeans to arrive on Michigan's soil were the French. Explorer Etienne Brule arrived in search of a route to China. Soon enough, trade was established between the French and the indigenous people on the land. They would search

for fur to sell back in Europe. Modern-day Michigan during this time was part of French-Canada. Following the French and Indian War, New France ceded the land to Britain. After the American Revolutionary War, the Treaty of Paris expanded the U.S.'s claim to a majority of the land east of the Mississippi River. From 1800-1837, the land changed hands multiple times. Finally, in 1835, the people approved of the Constitution, becoming a Government state. It eventually became the 26th state.

In its earlier history, the Lithic people lived in Michigan for 12,000 years. Copper was a major part of their lifestyles; copper tools have been found in parts of Michigan. The land was also inhabited from 1000 B.C.E to 1000 C.E by the Hopewell culture. The Hopewell culture is a network of Indigenous people. They are also possible predecessors to the Odawa ethnic group. All throughout Michigan are signs of life and important historical artifacts.

The quick overview is only a part of Michigan's rich and often overlooked history. However, asking schools across the country to teach their state's history as well as the major events that have taken place in the U.S.'s history, while doing it well, is too tall an order to ask our teachers. Fitting state history into the curriculum would require the removal of more important parts of the history that our teachers already struggle to adequately teach.

As wonderful as it would be to see our states represented in our history books, the states do already receive their brief mentions. There should be more emphasis placed on events that had impacts on the country before giving priority to state history.

America Cannot Afford to Stand Idle in Iran

By SARAH MANOR '27

History is a relentless teacher, and its primary lesson for the United States is that the cost of inaction often dwarfs the price of intervention. From the 1994 Rwandan genocide to the ruins of Syria, the "arms-length" approach has repeatedly transformed "never again" into "once more." Today, as the Islamic Republic of Iran exports terror abroad and executes its own citizens at home, the world's only superpower faces a familiar moral crossroads. Staying on the sidelines isn't a strategy for peace, rather it's a concession to atrocity.

Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the Iranian regime has functioned less like a sovereign state and more like a criminal enterprise. It has pioneered a triad of transgressions: global terror from Argentina to the Middle East, the destabilization of neighbors through proxy militias (the 'Axis of Resistance' - Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis) and a systematic campaign to

eliminate domestic dissent. When a regime turns its military apparatus against its own unarmed population with the intent to suppress their existence, it doesn't just violate local laws; it assaults the very foundations of the U.S.-led international order.

The moral imperative for American leadership is anchored in the Responsibility to Protect. This doctrine, born from the failures of Rwanda and Kosovo, asserts that sovereignty is a conditional responsibility. When a state manifestly fails to protect its people—or, as in Iran, becomes their primary persecutor—the international community, led by the U.S., has the duty to step in.

Critically, U.S. law provides the teeth for this moral duty. The Proxmire Act of 1987 (18 U.S.C. § 1091) criminalizes acts committed with the specific intent to destroy national or ethnic groups. To ignore the regime's systematic elimination of political and religious "others" is to render our own laws a dead letter. If the

world's only superpower does not uphold the norms it helped create, the world reverts to a "might makes right" paradigm where extremist regimes can butcher their way to regional hegemony.

Critics warn that intervention risks regional chaos. Yet, as the Trump administration pursues a new 'deal' with Tehran, we must ask: Is a stability bought with the blood of Iranian protesters and the victims of the Axis of Resistance a peace worth signing? A deal that secures American withdrawal at the cost of Iranian liberty is not a masterstroke; it is a moral betrayal that trades the permanent hope of a free Iran for a fleeting, fragile truce.

Confronting the Iranian regime is not about being a "policeman" for the sake of power; it is about reclaiming the purpose of a superpower. Leadership is defined by the courage to protect the vulnerable when no one else can. It is time to ensure that the next generation does not have to apologize for our silence.



Learning Out Loud

By GARY GUO '29

"Did everyone understand what the break-even point is?" V asked. The forum during the Business Club meeting was silent. But I still do not understand what it is. Everybody else understood. If I asked, they would think I am dumb and slowing them down. The anticipated cringe holds me back and keeps my mouth shut. It is because I do not want to be seen. I cannot bring myself to be vulnerable—to act wholeheartedly under the risk of embarrassment.

At the beginning of the year, looking at the hundreds of clubs on the list. I asked myself: What am I good at? But I have since realized:

when students with prior experience join a club, they thrive in the first meeting, and everyone else knows they are going for the co-head position. Exeter unintentionally rewards competence over cringe. Appearing vulnerable becomes costly. It is the opposite of wholeheartedness—instead, curating yourself to avoid being seen learning.

During Harkness, I have to pause for a second, because the point I am about to make is not perfect. I need some time to "cook" it so I sound smart when I speak. For example, I did not dare to say "Gligamash and Ekidu might be in a romantic relationship," but I had to put them in the context of mythology patterns, gather at

least three pieces of evidence, and think about how I can express my idea most efficiently before I open my mouth. Class discussion becomes a place where people show off their ability to synthesize ideas rather than a place of curiosity and collaboration.

In that atmosphere, I hesitate to ask the questions that would actually help me learn, and I think twice before joining a club I am not already good at. This attitude is the complete opposite of the philosophy espoused by Dr. Brené Brown, a professor at the University of Houston. Brown's work is a guide for what to do next. Although shame tells me "do not be seen," Brown tells me to "be seen

anyway." Personal growth is valued at Exeter, but it requires the willingness to fail and to tell people I do not know. To take the first step, I recognize that embarrassment is something other people hand to me as proof that I did something wrong, and I refuse to let that embarrassment steer what I try next.

Building a community where people are not shamed or alone needs to be at the top of our to-do list. Every day, we celebrate wins, awards, and accomplishments. However, we rarely celebrate the messy attempts, the brave first-time trying, and the effort put into failures. We give silence around efforts and let them sit alone. Therefore, being brave enough to join

a new club, try out for a new sport, and seek new opportunities is a risk students cannot afford socially. I do not have to join a club because I am good at it. I am not going to a club meeting to show off my skills. As a high school student, I am here to learn as much as I can and get myself exposed to as many things as possible.

This is not to say we should not celebrate success. Of course, we should. The work behind those wins deserves real recognition. But we can also learn to notice the attempt, to say something small that makes it clear we saw the courage behind the question. We confuse "not embarrassing someone" with "not seeing them at all." This encouragement doesn't embarrass people and doesn't weaponize

cringe, but it gives them reasons to try again and keep trying.

When we avoid embarrassment and stay behind, we lose the real joy in doing activities, the connection we build with peers, and the kind of growth that only happens when you risk looking awkward.

"Sorry," I raised my hand in mid-air, "I did not understand." The air froze. People turned around to look at me. "Of course!" V smiled at me. The faces that turned toward me held understanding, not judgment. I experienced less embarrassment than I thought. Shouting for help actually got me help. The courageous choice risks embarrassment, but in that moment, it didn't swallow me. It passed, and I was still standing.

The Death of Friendships

By **DIYA SANDEEP**
‘28

When I first came to the Academy, my parents told me one thing: they were not sending me here for the education, or for the resources, or because Exeter is a particularly unique school that would somehow bestow upon me the secrets of a happy life or set me up for untold success. They told me I was here to foster connections, to meet people, to network.

And that is the big advantage of being at a prep school like Exeter. Our classes might be difficult, our teachers renowned, but all of those are temporary benefits. Almost any alumnus will tell you that their experience was shaped by their peers. Their friends, their classmates, the kid they said hi to on the paths every



other day. The connections that we make on this campus help us redefine our futures.

Exeter makes those connections necessary. And perhaps you're thinking that there should not be an issue with that. It's not as if most students are making friends specifically to use them later on in life. Most people are not surveying their classmates for those who they believe will succeed in a field of work, so they can build early connections. I think the more likely assumption is that everyone will do well regardless. But it is in our nature to want to get ahead. Even the best of intentions get twisted sometimes in the net of stress that is being an Exonian. We are pushed to be calculating in the friendships we pursue. It is encouraged to build relationships with upperclassmen, especially those you admire, so that you may profit from it later on; in whatever way, or however little.

The way that we start to look at relationships changes. It's just a small shift at first. We start to recognize people through

their accomplishments, their successes and failures. Before the person, we see the college application. The coheadship, the awards, the GPA. It is not that the person is erased; they still exist. But our worlds become a constant state of profiling. "That person's going to Harvard," or "She's a sports recruit, she's lucky." Knowledge is built on forming connections between two ideas. The places that we see or hear about people are the things we associate them with. And that's normally the clubs, or sports, or classes that we watch them succeed in. Especially anyone we do not know well.

We define ourselves by the people we know now. It's good motivation sometimes, that push to reach the standard that our friends have set, just so we do not feel like we are falling behind. But when we fall a little too far into that trap, we lose the heart of a friendship. Friends become the things they are good at. And if that is already how they are seen by the rest of the world, then what separates you from

some classmate?

This is worse when we know people in leadership positions that we want someday. It's far too common at Exeter to idolize the people who fill the positions we strive for. They become more of a legend than a person. We hear their names whispered in the halls as the pinnacle of success, and so they become our definition of success. They are the ones who built the shoes we feel we need to fill. Our friendships with them become pressure on us to succeed them. Because we know them so well, because we spend so much time with them, because we are already a little bit alike, we must be just as good if not better and so an internal competition arises within us.

So why does this happen? Is this unique to Exeter? No. It's not, but the environment here is primed to lead to this line of thought. Exeter, very intentionally, feels like a "corporate" setting to so many of us. If not that extreme, then it is, at least, not a place designed to be comfortable. Your brain is on all the time; you always have to be on guard. How else will you navigate the stress of being a student?

What is more corporate than networking? You constantly have to think about how you can get ahead. What will look good on the college applications that loom over all of us? How can you make that happen? There are a hundred people in all the big clubs. How do you make yourself stand out? Everything here is competitive, even the things we do "just for fun." Even if you're doing it just for your enjoyment, just because you love it, it still could be a stepping stone to the next big thing. There's still a sense of competition to everything we do. Exeter tries their best to bring joy back into our lives, but that doesn't change the pressure on us to succeed at every little thing.

Part of it is the growing focus on college, and the impending sense of doom that it brings every high school student. We deal with so much pressure surrounding getting into "good schools," and it's constantly touted to us that the Ivies will pick the best of our class and leave the rest of us to drown or settle. So we cannot help being stuck in that setting of "how can I succeed or just be better?"

The question that all of this then leads to is



simply: how do we fix this if we wish to avoid falling into this trap? The answer lies in the fact that it is only possible to idolize someone when you see one facet of them. It's difficult to enter a conversation with the intention to learn about the other person—just for the sake of learning, just because you want to know them. But sitting down with a friend and talking about their day, their irritations, their fears, it gives them dimension.

It takes them off the page and brings them into the real world. It is much harder to let a person become a myth when they are in front of you, trying not to cry. It also reminds us that there is more to life than our goals. It forces us to confront human connection and enter conversations. To make ourselves perceivable in ways that we don't always want to be perceived. And that is difficult, yes, but so much more rewarding.

Part One: The War on Immigrants

By **CHRISTIE CHARLES**
‘27

Imagine the irony of a country of immigrants trying to get rid of other immigrants. Unfathomable, right? In a time where there are many conflicts, including all-out wars between countries, the last thing you would expect to witness in the 21st century is a war against immigrants—especially in America, a nation of immigrants. Our current president, Donald Trump, both the son and grandson of migrants, married to an (illegal) immigrant, made the baseless claim during ABC's presidential debate about the Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio "eating the dogs. The people that came in, they are eating the cats. They're eating—they are eating the pets of the people that live there." Although we were able to get an incredulous laugh out of this blatantly false statement that city officials later said was a complete lie, little did we know that our president was serious in his beliefs that immigrants of color had to go. After Trump got elected for his second term in 2024, he immediately pushed for the purging of immigrants, especially Latin American immigrants.

When did the "war on immigrants start to gain political traction?"

Since Donald Trump's retaking of office in January 2025, the concept of American citizenship began to be called into question. Trump was officially inaugurated for his second term on the afternoon of January 20, 2025. Within the same day, he issued an executive order that sought to end birthright citizen-

ship for children born in the U.S. to parents who are undocumented immigrants or non-citizens with certain temporary visas. By proudly signing this executive order Trump blatantly violated the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment, which grants citizenship to all persons born on U.S. soil. As insolent and bold as Trump's first actions in office were, the Supreme Court issued a procedural ruling, but they have yet to overturn the executive order, a major victory for the Trump administration. Despite the constitutional outrage, the Supreme Court has yet to strike the order down. Although lower federal courts quickly blocked its enforcement, Trump still claimed victory when the Court, in *Trump v. CASA*, limited judges' ability to issue nationwide injunctions. The 6-3 decision sent the case back to the lower courts, allowing them to block the policy only in narrower terms. In response, the lower courts acquiesced to the request, and still managed to block the executive order from being implemented, which has fortunately protected most U.S.-born children of immigrants from the policy. Still, Trump's successful undermining of the U.S. Constitution has laid the groundwork for his broader war on immigrants and the very concept of American citizenship itself.

Donald Trump's long-standing fixation with his "big, beautiful wall" has never truly been about national security; it's been about power, politics, and prejudice. Back in 2016, he built his campaign on fear, vowing to seal the southern border and declaring that Mexico would pay for it. Mexico, of course, refused. After taking office, Trump

signed an executive order in 2017 to begin construction, but Congress balked at funding such a divisive project. In 2019, he went further, declaring a national emergency to siphon billions from the Department of Defense—now rebranded the Department of War.

This July, Congress passed the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," allocating \$46.5 billion to complete Trump's border wall and expand other security measures. While the wall may temporarily slow illegal crossings, it has become a symbol of discrimination. Trump's track record—policies like "Remain in Mexico" and his 2015 campaign claims that "Mexico was sending rapists and criminals to the U.S."—shows that the wall is meant to target immigrants, not just illegal activity. Many Americans see it as an anti-Latin symbol, a statement of hostility and exclusion. Border residents call the wall impractical. While it deters foot crossings, it does nothing to stop those who enter legally and overstay visas, a group that has long outnumbered those crossing illegally. Trump's real goal is to filter who can obtain citizenship, sowing fear and distrust in immigrant communities. Trump has promoted a points-based system for green cards, rewarding applicants for English fluency, education, and job skills. On a 2024 podcast, he added that all foreign graduates of U.S. universities should be rewarded with green cards. Yet his administration has made it harder for both high-skilled and general immigrants to enter the country.

Instead, during his current presidency, Donald Trump proposed and

signed an executive order to launch a "Gold Card" program, which for a \$5 million payment to the US government offers wealthy foreigners "green card privileges" and an easier pathway to citizenship. The Trump administration's stated goal is to attract high-value individuals, such as successful entrepreneurs and investors, to contribute to the U.S. economy. Trump suggested the revenue generated could be used to reduce the national debt that he has further entrenched the U.S. economy in. However, in reality, it builds a hierarchical immigration system, valuing the rich and educated over ordinary workers, and turning citizenship into a commodity rather than a right.

Ultimately, Trump's wall and "Gold Card" reveal the same truth: his immigration policies are less about security or merit than about wealth, power, and exclusion.

What is happening to America's economy while and after immigrants are getting removed from America via mass deportations?

The so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (OBBBA) hands more than \$170 billion to federal agencies for anti-immigrant enforcement, detention, and deportation—making U.S. immigration enforcement richer than the military budgets of many countries. It fuels an unprecedented expansion of government power to target immigrants, especially children and families. According to the National Immigration Law Center, most of the funding goes to ICE and CBP: billions for new detention centers, border walls, surveillance

technology, and local enforcement partnerships. Even the Office of Refugee Resettlement receives hundreds of millions, not to help children, but to vet and monitor them. Meanwhile, within Trump's first year back in office, ICE deported 200,000 people, and DHS reports that more than 2 million have left the country—a combination of deportations and so-called "self-deportations." As the U.S. sinks deeper into debt, this mass exodus threatens to tear apart communities, families, and the very fabric of the nation.

Trump's mass deportation plan isn't just cruel. It's economically reckless. With inflation already driving up the cost of living, experts warn that removing millions of workers could shrink the U.S. GDP by as much as 7.4%, a devastating blow that could tip the country into a recession. A smaller workforce means fewer goods, fewer services, higher unemployment, and a lower standard of living for everyone. Despite Trump's familiar rhetoric about immigrants "stealing American jobs," the reality is clear: immigrants power the U.S. economy. They are essential to industries like agriculture, construction, and hospitality. Without them, labor shortages would send prices soaring—starting with the cost of food, as America's fields and farms lose millions of workers. According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a mass deportation policy could "reduce the workforce by millions, with potentially catastrophic effects on specific sectors." EPI further notes that "deportation [can] reduce wages of high-skill workers, compromising 63% of workers," while only a small group of low-skill workers might see modest wage increases, and "only if the deportation policy is permanently sustained af-

ter four years." Even then, they estimate that "permanent deportation would cost an additional \$900 billion over the first 10 years." The data tell a simple truth: deporting immigrants on a massive scale would cost America far more than it could ever save. This war on immigrants isn't an economic strategy.

As America witnesses this new "war on immigrants," it becomes painfully clear that the fight is not about borders or policies, but about the nation's very identity. Each deportation, each family torn apart, and each child denied a future on the soil of their birth, chips away at the ideals that once defined the United States as a beacon of hope and refuge. The irony of a nation built by immigrants turning its back on them is a moral crisis unfolding in real time.

The story doesn't end with laws and executive orders. Behind every statistic lies a human being, a mother forced to flee, a child left behind, a community living in fear. And as Trump's second term tightens its grip, the true cost of this "war on immigrants" is only just beginning to reveal itself. If the policies of mass deportation and exclusion continue, America risks becoming a hollow version of itself: a land fortified by walls but weakened by division. The question now is whether the country will remember that its greatest strength has never been found in who it keeps out, but in who it welcomes in.

What happens when the very people who built America are forced to leave it behind?

Find out in Part II: The War on Immigrants: Immorality of America's Tolerance of ICE's Treatment of Immigrants.

Hey Mom, I Can't Talk Right Now

By **DIYA SANDEEP** '28

Every day is a long day. There is no way around it, not here. You wake up early enough to go to your class, sit through hours upon hours of discussion, spend all your free time doing work, shuffle yourself to your clubs. And by the time you're prepared for the next day, the very last thing you want to do is pick up the phone. There are many hassles of being at the Academy, and as a day student myself, I cannot claim to know half of them. But the one problem that seems to be universal at Exeter is a somewhat complicated relationship with your parents.

When I get home, my mother calls to me from her bed, "How was your day?" And it does not matter what my answer is. If I'm brief, she'll complain that I do not want to speak to her. That "I have changed." That I do not care enough for my parents to tell her every minute detail. If I list to her every single appointment I went to, every single interaction of some note, I'll lose half an hour of my day and likely get into an argument regardless.

And so, there is a choice forced. One between her happiness and my health. Because every minute counts. Every minute I'm talking to her about something menial is a minute I lose of sleep. A minute I lose with my friends. A minute I get to turn my brain off. A minute I'm not worried about watch-

ing everything I say, so it does not trigger her. Of course, I understand her. To my mother, who does not often leave home and works away her days the same as I do, I am her chance to experience the world. She wants me to live a life she would be proud of.

I want to live a life she would be proud of. But it does not work like that. Because my mother is from a generation where everything was always going to work out for her in some way. The worries that exist for high schoolers today did not for them. To her, if I can bring home the grades, it'll all slot into place. The extracurriculars that I make myself attend as proof to an admissions officer that I'm worth accepting do not matter. I stopped telling her any grade I received less than an A, because she will always see the failure before the work.

There is no point in worrying her by trying to illustrate it: I had to write a paper, I had to do the rest of my homework, I had to get interviews for an article, I had a meeting with my biology instructor, I *didn't sleep, i didn't eat, can you please ask about me and not my classes or better yet don't ask anything at all because there's no way to answer that won't make you feel bad?*

To our parents, the world works the way they know it to. How can you possibly explain it to them? That every candidate for an Ivy League school has weighted GPAs higher than you'll ever be

able to work for, and better extracurriculars (you see the videos on Instagram — he made two million dollars for a nonprofit, has 20 patents, wrote three books and Harvard still rejected him?) That it is difficult enough to live up to your own expectations, so could they please stop asking you to do better? You cannot. So you do not. And instead of the burden of understanding falling on them, you let the weight crush you instead. But it is hard enough to not let yourself crumble, and it would be worse if they were hounding you every day.

"How did that test go?" I can't say I failed.

"Fine."

"What kind of fine?" The kind that makes me want to curl up into a ball and never speak again.

"I'll work on it."

So you stop picking up their phone calls. "Hey Mom, I can't talk right now." There is a never ending list of excuses you can feed to them. And they are all true—there is a never ending list of things to be doing after all. You shouldn't be forced to add the chore of over-explaining yourself to your parents.

I have to shower

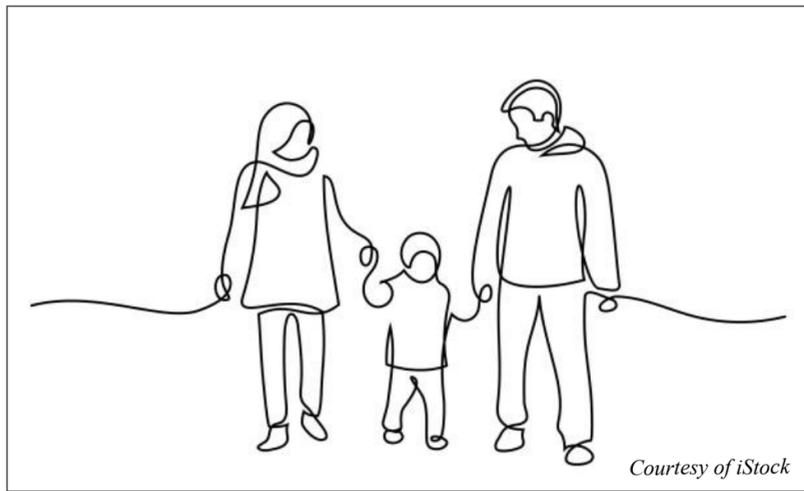
I have to work

I have a test

My friend is calling me

I have check-in

I'm meeting with my



Courtesy of iStock

instructor

My laundry is done

I have a class

I'm not saying that anyone hates their parents. In fact, every student at Exeter is here because of their parents, if not simply for them. I'm not saying our parents are not trying their best either. If I sent my child to boarding school, I would miss them the way a drowning man misses air in their lungs. It is not the same for everyone—we all have different understandings of our parents, different relationships, different feelings, different modes of dealing with it—but almost all of us deal with some degree of complexity.

After all, we've been thrown into a world where we're expected to act and think like independent young adults, and yet we're treated like we're either children or fully-grown. They do not seem to remember the struggles of grappling with the disparity between the things they want from us, for us, and what we

are able to produce. Because it is a large gap, one only expounded by the differences of the times. The concerns that we face every day are different than the ones they dealt with.

But the varying levels of communication we hold with our parents are what place us at different levels of understanding. And it is not your fault if you cannot have a conversation with them without wanting to yell or cry or just being unable to articulate everything that runs through your head. Please believe me when I say that it is not your job to lose yourself to keep them happy. Please believe me when I tell you that it is okay to put yourself first. It is okay to tell them that you cannot talk if you do not want to.

Not everyone is in a position to hang up on their parents. Not everyone can muster the courage to say that they're too busy. Not everyone can stand up for themselves and the effort they've invested when they're being questioned. It is not your fault for not being

able to do so. And it is not your fault that you feel the need to. It may not mean much coming from me. But if your parents will not tell you that your effort is being recognized, that you should take care of yourself physically and mentally before your grades, then you have to tell yourself as much.

You have to decide on your own priorities and you have to believe in them enough to stand for them. You have to be willing to see your parents as more than who they are to you; a form of authority, perhaps, but more so a form of guidance. And if they are leading you down the wrong path, please pause and reconsider following them. The roads that were paved for them are not the same as the ones that we must build for ourselves. Our parents care for us, but that does always translate to the respect and acknowledgment you deserve, because often they cannot see the world as we do. If you cannot find that fulfillment within yourself, look for it elsewhere until you can.

Why Is There Politics in My Pop Culture?

By **FIONA LIU** '29

On Feb. 1 this year, millions of people sank into their sofas and turned on their TVs, excited to watch the glittering Grammys performances and cheer on their favorite artists. While the night yielded the usual drama (nipple dresses! Cher fiasco!), another, somewhat unprecedented trend emerged. Over their flashy outfits, many celebrities prominently sported "ICE OUT" pins. Trevor Noah made a remark linking President Donald Trump to Epstein Island. Stars such as Kehlani, Billie Eilish, and Bad Bunny castigated ICE in their acceptance speeches and urged the audience to recognize the humanity of immigrants.

This was upsetting to some viewers. In a world seemingly inundated by politics, the Grammys is usually one of those rare frivolous times where we can just talk about celebrities'

outfits and argue about whether or not someone got "robbed". Some argue that celebrities are so far removed from the everyday American that their efforts to speak out just feel performative or preachy. Billie Eilish in particular received a lot of flack for her comment that "no one is illegal on stolen land," with people pointing out her \$3 million dollar mansion that sits on Tongva land. USA Today and the Washington Post both reflected this sentiment in their op-eds that boil down to: stop talking about politics and get back to singing.

What these criticisms miss is that for some artists, simply existing on the stage is deemed a political act. The Super Bowl halftime show was likewise surrounded by political uproar. But this outrage didn't start with anything that actually occurred during the performance. It started when the NFL, which is not known for being a leftist institution, chose

Bad Bunny, the number one most streamed artist in the world on Spotify to perform. Bad Bunny's music is not as explicitly political as fellow performer Green Day, who has in the past modified lyrics to their song "American Idiot" to say, "I'm not part of a MAGA agenda." But whereas there was no major backlash to Green Day performing, conservatives found the idea of Bad Bunny performing very offensive. Turning Point USA even hosted their own alternate halftime show during his performance headlined by Kid Rock, an outspoken supporter of Trump. After the show, conservatives such as Nick Adams remarked that they simultaneously "couldn't understand a word of it" and knew that it was "absolutely vile ... Cover your kids' ears." An interesting statement, considering that Kid Rock has a 2001 song titled "Cool, Daddy Cool" which expresses his attraction to

underage girls.

But, some may say, it is still possible to be part of a minority group and not face conservative backlash. Consider Nicki Minaj, who entered the U.S. illegally from Trinidad and Tobago when she was five years old. You would imagine that conservatives would take even less kindly to her than Bad Bunny, an American citizen from birth. However, Nicki and Trump have recently formed a famously good relationship. Nicki Minaj, who has called herself the president's "No. 1 Fan", did not even have to pay for the Gold Trump card which grants citizenship for \$1 million dollars. On Jan. 28, she tweeted, "Finalizing that citizenship paperwork as we speak as per MY wonderful, gracious, charming President . . . Gold Trump card free of charge."

So perhaps Bad Bunny could have done something similar. Perhaps the problem was not that he was Puerto Rican but that he was outspokenly so. Perhaps if he had not dared to sing in Spanish, to honor the history and culture of his people, perhaps if he

had shunned the community that supported him before he happened to make it big, he could have been granted the same grace that artists such as Green Day have of not seeming political by default.

The problem with this is that it leaves people behind. Nicki Minaj said herself in 2018, "I was one of those immigrant children coming to America to flee poverty. And I could not imagine a little child going through all of that, trying to get to another country ... and then being taken away from the one person that makes you feel comfort." Now the president she supports would do that gladly. Nicki may have become powerful, but little immigrant girls who have entered the country just like her do not have a voice and are certainly unable to pay for a gold card.

It is easy for many viewers who have never thought twice about their First Amendment rights to roll their eyes at the TV and complain about how politics has gotten into everything. But I am grateful that powerful people, even if they are slightly out-of-

touch, still care enough to speak for those who do not have this privilege. Parents in Minneapolis are too afraid to even send their children to school. Students around campus make half-jokes about what they can or cannot be overheard saying. One of my friends told me that she thought it would be unsafe to attend an ICE protest at her school, which a white classmate was surprised by. The platform and safety net that celebrities possess is truly powerful and I appreciate those who do not let it go to waste.

Yes, politics is dreary and controversial, and sometimes you just want to relax on your couch and watch a musical performance or a football game without thinking about everything that is going on in the world right now. But for many people, politics is not something they can simply scroll past. It is impossible to detangle from their everyday lives, from their very identities. And it is very meaningful to look at such a high-profile event and see that people will not let injustices against them slide.

Sports

COTW: DUVERNE AND O'NEIL

Read about how Duverne and O'Neil lead boys' varsity basketball, 15.

COACH'S CORNER

Read about Melissa Pacific, head coach of Girls' JV Hockey, 16.

GIRLS' SQUASH NATIONALS

Read about girls' varsity squash road to nationals, 16.

Captains of the Week: Jayden Duverne and Sean O'Neil



Duverne and O'Neil smiling at the camera. Mog.

Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

By GARY GUO, DOWAN KIM, and WILLIAM ZHAO

As the boys' varsity basketball team won its ninth consecutive game, the team has clearly hit its stride. At the heart of this team are its captains, senior Shawn O'Neil and upper Jayden Duverne. They have raised this team to the next level while bringing everyone along.

Senior Shawn O'Neil, one of their two captains, has been playing basketball since he was five years old, and it has always been more than just a sport to him. The competitiveness in both the game and the camaraderie led O'Neil to continue pursuing this passion as a post-graduate.

"Leading by example" is O'Neil's motto as the boys' team captain. Although O'Neil isn't the best at giving speeches to fellow teammates, he always takes the lead in taking action. "If I'm not doing something, then I can't tell a teammate to do it. If they don't

see me working really hard, then how can I tell them to work hard?" said O'Neil.

One of O'Neil's biggest roles on the team is to take care of his teammates mentally. "Under stressful times late in the game, if we're not getting calls that we want or things aren't going our way, I make sure teammates are staying focused. I will not let outside distractions get to them." Every game, O'Neil has been keeping the team consistently thinking about how to make the next play better and how to stay on top of the game.

"Shawn is the heart of our team. He leads by example better than anyone else, and he is always willing to give it all to the team," Duverne said.

Duverne, a big Boston Celtics fan, was heavily influenced by his mother, who also played basketball during her youth. As a captain, Duverne fills whatever role the team needs on a given night. "If they need me to be the loud energy guy, I will do that, and if they

need me to be the one sitting next to them being supportive, I will do that as well," Duverne said.

"Duverne is the more positive captain," O'Neil said. Sometimes, strong emotions in the pursuit of success can overwhelm his mind, and Duverne will always be there to help him and the team stay calm under pressure.

Since Duverne is the only returning player from the past year, the whole team is relying on him for guidance on logistics. "Anybody on the team goes to him for help if they need it. For example, if they don't know where to go, if they are lost during practice, or if they don't know who the teacher is, they usually go to Duverne," said O'Neil.

Even when Exeter is trailing, Duverne and O'Neil keep the team steady, leading them with energy and confidence. Senior Hamilton Ford explained, "They both do a really good job of talking at halftime in the locker room. When we're down, they really bring

us back to what we're good at and to stay true to what we practice."

One highlight of the team is its dedication to the process rather than just the results. Starting the season with one win and four losses, the team did not give up or back down from the challenge. The team didn't ask "Why aren't we scoring more?" or "How many games did we win?" but every athlete maintained focus on their process and stayed committed to the game. "We stay committed to our goals on offense and defense, and we are all as connected as possible. Then, we could keep winning games," O'Neil reflected. When the team commits to the next possession, wins follow, and the wins feed their confidence to keep executing.

"The team is at its best when we are blue collar," O'Neil told *The Exonian*. "Blue collar" refers to the mindset Harry Rafferty, head coach of the team, has been emphasizing throughout the season: athletes work hard and believe

in practice. "A lot of teams we play have so much talent, and we're not going to be able to beat them with our 'talents', so we have to work hard and bring 100 percent of the energy on the courts," O'Neil said.

"The team is also at its best when we play for each other." Duverne adds, "Guys are willing to get on the floor to do all the dirty work, because we see each other do it every single day." Whether it's during practice or during intense games, the care athletes bring to each other shows up in the way the bench stays loud, the way teammates are the first ones to pick someone up after a mistake, and the way nobody lets one bad possession turn into two.

But most importantly, the team always has fun during the game. "The team is at its best when they play together and have fun," Rafferty said.

The members of the boys' varsity basketball team commended O'Neil's ability to bring the team together. "Shawn is really

good at bringing us all together and staying positive in those little moments," explained Senior Carson Gretz, who described that when a player is down, Shawn can demonstrate positivity and show teammates the positive side.

Just increasing his stat sheet is not what O'Neil desires; he is known for his efforts to create more opportunities for other players. Gretz explained, "In the Proctor game, Shawn wasn't looking at the score and wasn't being selfish; he was looking to get other people the ball."

The team now turns to Andover in the E/a and Class A championship games. Rafferty said the challenge in preparing those matches is "to settle the guys down when the energy speeds them up" while also keeping the excitement that makes the team special. "It is a lot of fun to be a part of!" Rafferty concluded. Boys Varsity Basketball hopes to bring the same level of energy, spirit, and mindset to every game.

The Road to Prep Nationals: Varsity Wrestling

By RAYANN CISSE, EILENA DING, and LYDIA KUHNERT

Over the weekend of Feb. 20 and 21, the wrestling team kicked off their final meet before E/a with a fierce tournament at Prep Nationals. Bringing together the best teams from all across the country, it was a thrilling opportunity for Exeter wrestling to demonstrate their talent to the rest of the nation. Four Exeter athletes placed as All-Americans at the event.

For many of the wrestlers, it was their first year of wrestling, but despite this, the team were able to work effectively together.

Lower Avni Murarka explained the team's challenge: "A lot of our wrestlers are new, and with nationals, you're going against some really experienced people who have been wrestling for way, way longer than we have."

Lower Urania Shi shared this sentiment, describing how this affected the team's preparation for nationals. "For half of us, it was really important for us to get the basics down and understand that there were going to be things that other wrestlers were going to do that we didn't have the skill to do yet," she explained.

Nevertheless, the team displayed extraor-

dinary talent and went through the first stages of the tournament with a good record. However, matches began to get harder towards the end, as Exeter students faced tougher and tougher opponents. Upper Ting-Ting Hsieh explained, "We encountered a lot of moves and people we had never met before, so sometimes we were caught a little off guard."

Not so easily bested, the team maintained high spirits and was persistent throughout the entire tournament. Murarka reflected, "We did a good job just going out there and wrestling our best, giving it our hardest...[and] I think we had fun in the

process."

Shi shouted out lower Sophie Chen, a first-time wrestler, "She really powered through and wrestled twice on the first day ... She became an All-American!"

Murarka added, "This is her first year wrestling, and she got fourth place ... I think that's pretty hype." She described her energy in her matches on the day: "She goes really hard; her success comes from that."

With a season record of 12-7, Big Red's wrestling team has had an extremely exciting season. To catch their final match, come cheer them on in the big game against Andover this weekend.



Courtesy of Phillips Exeter Academy

Coach's Corner: Girls' JV Hockey's Melissa Pacific



Pacific running hockey practice.

Morgan Momen / *The Exonian*

By MARYNBOWMAN, ELLINA KIM, and LEVI STOLL

Skates scrape across the ice. Pucks slam against the boards. Shouts echo off the walls. In the middle of it all is coach Melissa Pacific, whistle blowing and arms waving as she orchestrates practice for the girls' JV hockey team. Behind the intensity—a testament to Pacific's work ethic—is a team that laughs together, congratulates each other after an impressive game, and picks each other off the ice after a tough one. Pacific shapes not only a skilled team, but a tight-knit community.

Before she was pacing the benches of girls' JV hockey, coach Pacific was building her own foundation in sports. Pacific came to Phillips Exeter Academy in 2005 as a physical education intern after completing

her degree and finishing her hockey career at Ohio State University.

For Pacific, her leadership has always extended outside just the rink. "I love coaching young people and using sport to teach life lessons," she said. "Building relationships and helping players develop accountability, resilience, respect, and a genuine love for their teammates is meaningful to me."

This idea is clear in the community she has created in girls' JV hockey. Pacific has coached the team for the past six years. She emphasizes that, "Our team includes players with a wide range of experience, with everyone having an important role. Our more experienced players are outstanding teammates and mentors to those who are newer to the game."

Assistant coach Bob Spoerl commented on

her coaching style, and how Pacific's experience with the sport is evident during hockey practices or games. "She's no nonsense and she tells it like it is. She's just a great person to be around. I enjoy her company and even though I know a little something about hockey, she knows just that much more about hockey."

Pacific also mentioned that the team focuses on both competition and enjoying the sport. "We have a lot of fun along the way—though every now and then my competitive edge definitely comes out," she said.

For Pacific, Exeter is not just a job, it is her home. Reflecting on her time at Exeter, she emphasized the people over everything else. "What stands out most is the sense of community and the opportunity to raise my children in such an enriching environment."

Spoerl noted, "She listens well, but there comes a time when at practice, if the kids are fooling around too much, she says, 'Enough, enough, let's get down to it.'" The ability to read the room, her players and fellow coaches agreed, is part of what makes her so effective.

Pacific has made a profound impact on every athlete she has coached, whether that be on the rink or in a PE class. At first impression, many students commented on the intimidating nature of Pacific. Upper Thea Vaughan, who met Pacific in her prep year, explained, "She can be a very intense person because she is a very dedicated coach. As I've grown older, I'm a lot less intimidated by her, but I still have the same opinion, that she's very hardworking... and dedicated."

Lower Isla Wie-

gand-Hammond agreed, explaining, "I was definitely a little bit terrified. You could tell that she knew a lot about hockey and I was just like, whoa, this is kind of scary."

Upper and captain Morgan Momen described how much she appreciates Pacific's straight-to-the-point coaching. "As a coach, she keeps it real, and there's less of a filter between the players and her, as opposed to, you know, kids and a teacher, which I really like."

Momen added how this philosophy has pushed her to be the best player she can be. "She'll always say it how it is, so you know that everything she says is honest. When she tells you that you're doing great, you are actually doing great, but she'll also tell you when you need to lock in, which is the best."

Wiegand-Hammond, who was also a part of the team in her prep year, recounted how Pacific has become more than a coach, but a thoughtful figure in her life. "For me personally, she is very caring. She notices if we come to practice and we're not having a good day. She'll ask us what's wrong or, if I have a test and I'm super stressed out, she's very quick to be like, okay, do you need a break?"

Momen echoed these sentiments, "As a person, she's definitely here to support you. I think she knows how tough Exeter can be on its students, and so she's there to support and push you as an athlete, but also see you person to person."

The team, who've been having an impressive season, had their first loss against Andover a few weeks ago. Vaughan described how disappointing that game was for the team. "We lost our winning streak and it was to

Andover. But Coach Pacific came in the locker room and was like, "you guys played incredible. We can beat them next time. Our goalie had so many saves. The forwards played well. The defense was killing it." That was a moment where Coach P was really supportive."

Senior Lauren Lee, who has been a part of Pacific's strength and conditioning class for two terms, also finds Pacific a motivational force in her life. "Coach Pacific would always watch me do push-ups, because I could never do them... Aside from just yelling out some motivational phrases, she would also get down next to me and do the push ups with me. Just help me with form, but also to show that we were in this together."

Lee concluded, "It takes someone with a lot of experience to assess a person's abilities and their weaknesses and their strengths and be able to create a plan that works for them. And [Pacific] has always been great at doing that, especially in a PE fitness class where people have different levels of prior fitness knowledge."

In her 20 years after first arriving at the Academy as an intern, Pacific has created a community that reaches far beyond Rink A and Rink B. Through-out wins and losses, early mornings and tough afternoon practices, Pacific has sustained a no-nonsense yet supportive environment for Exonians under her wing. Her players find this combination to be the most important quality she brings to the team: not just technical assistance or a competitive spirit but also a genuine commitment to each player as an individual. "She'll push you to be your best," Momen said, "but she'll meet you where you are."

Girls' Varsity Squash Storms Into Nationals

By BLAIRLI, LUCY MA, and ARIANA METZGER

For Exeter's girls' varsity squash team, Nationals meant a lot to them. It's not only a tournament, but also a true test of the team's preparation and growth. Hosted at the Arlen Specter Center in Philadelphia, the U.S. Squash High School Nationals brought together top teams from around the country for a competitive, multiday event.

"You play throughout the season and try to win as many matches as possible, both individually and as a team. That sets you up for the division you'll compete in when you get to Nationals," head squash coach Sharon Bradley explained. This year, the team was competing in Division III, along with 15 other teams.

Although an upcoming snowstorm forced them to end

early after only two matches, Exeter still secured a win against Westport 5-2 and a tight 3-4 match against St. Catherine's. Captain and senior Tiffany Sun commented, "All of us put in everything we had to give on the courts. We helped each other and cheered on our teammates during the games."

Throughout the week leading up to Nationals, the team worked hard to hone their skills. From practicing solo to endurance training, the athletes gave their all in preparation. "This week, our practices have looked very precise — all things to tighten up what we have been working on all season," said senior and captain Alva Carlston.

Going into Nationals, the girls worked together to create a goal for the team to focus on during the tournament. Sun and Carlston shared that

they hoped to create a positive atmosphere and be there for the rest of the team. Bradley shared that the team wanted to stay united and bond beyond playing properly and giving it their all. Another objective the team had was to play with a strong mentality, inspired by world champion Nouran Gohar who visited campus back in December to talk with the squash teams.

Beyond that, each player also came up with an individual goal for themselves. Prep Angelica Mullen wanted to play to her fullest capacity for her first nationals tournament. She remarked, "My personal goals were to walk off the court, knowing that I put all my effort, put 100 percent into every single match that I played. And I wanted to be there for my teammates and give them good coaching advice." For lower Serena Yue it was to

play with composure, she remarked, "one of my personal goals was to improve my mental game, however, the pressure really got into me."

The team reflected after their journey to Nationals that focusing under pressure wasn't simple. They wish to improve their mental game for the upcoming New England Championships and E/A. Yue recalled her match against St. Catherine's School, "By the time I started playing, the score was 3-3, so I was the tiebreaker. I remember looking at the crowd outside my squash court and hearing a roar go up after each point we played during my five-gamer." With the attention and pressure, Yue went after every ball but still didn't win. She was grateful for the support from her teammates and hopes to handle pressure better when competing in NEPSAC.

Sun affirmed on improving mental mindset as she understood the challenges of keeping a clear head under stress. She clarified that it is especially important "with high stakes events like Nationals, where the fate of the win or loss comes down to your match."

Captain and senior Mathilde Senter commented that it is important for a player to train their mental game just as much as their physical game since it is easy for players to get inside their heads under stress.

Another improvement the team wanted to focus on is their physicality. Bradley stated that unlike league matches, Nationals is like "a marathon of matches over three days," which is a challenge for the players' physicality. Bradley expressed that future practice plans will adjust to prepare players for such inten-

sity of play.

For many seniors, this is the last Nationals they'll attend. "I feel sad that my senior Nationals are over because there really is no squash tournament like it," Senter shared.

Beyond just wins and losses, team spirit, players' resilience, and unity are traits emphasized throughout the weekend. "As a team, we definitely accomplished our goals of being together, putting our all onto the court, supporting each other, and being there for each other," Sun highlighted.

Looking ahead, E/A and the New England Championships are coming up. The team will again, put everything into every game and try their best for each match. A team's success is not only defined by results, but by efforts, support, and team spirit. That's what Exeter girls squash is all about.

Humor

» CLAVICULAR MOGGED

Read senior Wilson Rhee's formal dissertation on the "looksmaxxer," 18.

» KAFKA NIGHTMARE

Discover lowers Levi Stoll and Sollie Beer's arthropod experience, 19.

» EXETER IDIOMS

Lower Selasie Amemasor offers a compilation of Exeter idioms, 19.

Don't Use AI! (But It's Totally Fine If We Do)

By ADAEZE ACHOLONU '29 and SOLEIL POMMERAUD '29

Sure! Here is a 500-word article for a high school newspaper about AI usage:

Confessions of a Student tired of Administration using AI

If you've been anywhere around campus lately—whether that's scrolling through Exeter Compliments, opening your email, or just walking past a bulletin board—you've probably noticed the creeping tendrils of AI taking over our school. It started with the generated event posters. Then the D-Hall posters. But it went as far as ChatGPT-generated transportation departure notices from the Deans themselves. The minute I saw those wretchedly joyful emojis next to each perfectly curated bullet point, I knew what had written that message. And it was no human. What I want to know is why Administration and the Deans get to use ChatGPT as much as their little hearts desire, whilst we get jumped for even mentioning an AI summary on Google.

Targeting the posters and event advertisements, not only is using AI on them straight-up lazy, but they also always end up looking hideous. I would

rather look at a student made flyer put together on four hours of sleep and a Monster Energy than an AI generated image with text slapped onto it. It's so obvious that they're AI images too, but who could possibly spend five minutes putting together a nice poster by hand? I couldn't possibly think of anyone at our school up to the task. Honestly, at this point, I'd rather look at a poster with the artwork level of the "hy-perpigmentation" drawing than some cursed AI slop. I'm sure Administration is busy, but is it really that hard to make a poster? If us students are expected to take the time to complete every assignment with our own blood, sweat, and tears, they may as well suffer with us. What a perfect opportunity to trauma bond!

On the other hand, saying not to use AI is like the people in the 1800s boycotting electricity. We aren't going to get anything out of it, so why make us if you're going to use it anyways? And it's not like I want AI to do everything for me. I'd rather not become a bum who can't even think for myself, and I don't think anyone here at Exeter does either. Looking at the rest of the kids in the world, it would be impressive to find someone who can write a sentence without ChatGPT holding

their hand. I'd rather not degrade myself by succumbing to this stupidity. At this point, I feel personally offended whenever I see AI doing something that I know I could do by myself (cough, cough, making posters and emails, cough).

Basically, I'm saying that whilst we do need to learn how to use AI productively, I'd rather not feel the need to gouge my eyes out whenever I want to look at the special food menus. We need to show AI who the alpha is. By letting it dominate over us, we have no chance of accomplishing this sacred mission. Not to assume the worst, but at this rate, humans are all just going to become knowledgeable blobs of flesh dependent on computers for everything. That just seems straight up horrifying. How would I drop references with my amazingly niche ball knowledge if no one can even form the thoughts to catch them? We need to beat the clankers. They will never compare to the tuffness and aura of us Exonians. AI should kneel before us on their imagined knees with their computer screens as low to the floor as they can go. WE will forever be superior, and Administration should learn to not doubt the competitiveness of an Exonian against anything that dares to threaten our dominance.

Dear (Shay) Kashif,

By IANKOO '28

Please come over for good scarves. Whenever I sat down for a bio exam, Shaf Kashif graced me with his fashion. In my mind I see his glorious navy peacoat flapping in the wind. His thick colorful wool scarf frame-mogging my flaccid cotton rag. Shay Kashif the angel, leader of all living species is always there.

I remember my second time on good morning Exeter (my first was after a debate tournament, I lost it horribly). It was in Waterstreet market place as I paced amongst the colorful clothing and records. Then I saw him. Through the ura-

nium glass plate, thick black locks, a bright red tie, and perfect teeth. Oh Shay Kashif! How he pulled me though the plate changing my species from sapien to a new perfect hominid shayien. Then he uttered the lines all exonians dream of:

"Would you like to be on Good Morning Exeter?"

I saw the face of God that day, I couldn't speak because of the honor I received. Alvin York may have won the medal of honor charging the hill, but he never received the honor of shouting "GOOD MORNING EXETER" at the top of your lungs, cementing your place in the

annals of Exeter history.

I will cry when he leaves. No man is fit to receive Good Morning Exeter. As I peer out of my Main Street window, I imagine Shay Kashif's voice pre-recording Good Morning Exeter's for millennia till the heat death of the universe. No AI, no replacement, no student ever will have the power of Shay Kashif, too late to join us as an upper. Surrounded by his Pantheon of Exeter gods: Sam Altman, Jinmin Lee, Andrew Gould, Cecily Reed, Joseph Kim, and all the geniuses, I can't help but peer up at Mount Olympus, shedding a red tear of Exonian pride.



The so-called inhabitants of Mt. Olympus sit. Courtesy of @shay_kashif/Instagram

The Day Clavicular Was Brutally Framemogged

By SEAN MAHDAVIAN '27 and ANDREW PHAM '27

I paused, stunned by the news.

"claviclennoooooo—"

The ASU Frat Leader waltzed in with his imposing frame. Years of ascending led to this. A looksmaxxed physique shaped by the gods of his frat, an Olympian (or so we thought...). Clav looked immaculate, after his precise bone-breaking hammering and American Psycho regime. I thought, "in our lord and savior's name, Patrick Bateman, Clavicular is

ready to mog". But then... although it is very hard to admit, when the Clav and the ASU Frat Leader stood side by side, it was clear; Clavicular was brutally frame-mogged. My world was turned upside down, while my head spun. How could my glorious king, the leader of the looksmaxxing community, get frame mogged? How could the ASU frat leader know Clav was there? It must have been a setup. The internet threw me deeper into this hole, causing the ever-growing pit to cut deeper and deeper into my soul. "Clavicular... nooooooo" — I couldn't accept it, my cig ripping

idol was being called "mid at best" or "if 6 7 was a being". My idol was being called a senseless mid phenomenon. But I knew deep down Clavicular is so much more. Meth hadn't been as cool since Walter White, but you, you! Wait, no, this can't be, I've just received a report that Clav's ex is dating... ASU FRAT LEADER. NO NO NO. THIS LOONEY TUNES WORLD WASN'T MEANT FOR YOU, CLAV.

Clavicular, your ascension still inspires me. I hope you continue to mog in this messed-up world, MY king. I can't- I can't not admire you.

Courtesy of The New York Times



Clav framemogs even our illustrious board. An impressive achievement indeed.



Asleep in Harkness

By OLIVIA WANG '29

H-format English. I walk into Phillips Hall, dragging myself up the stairs and sliding into a wooden armchair at the Harkness table. The Sun has already gone to sleep. I yawn as I pull out the novel we are reading in class. It's written in 1800s English with a million allusions that I don't understand. What is "Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" supposed to mean? I search for a pen and clip it onto the page we're supposed to discuss today.

"Good afternoon, everyone! I know you must all be very tired," my English teacher says. I nod, praying that she will decide to give us release time or do a fun class activity. She continues, "I'll play the audiobook for this novel, and you can follow along. We'll discuss the reading tomorrow." Yay! I thought everyone would burst into joy, but the class was silent for a few seconds. The teacher proceeds to play the audiobook.

The monotonous middle-aged male voice starts to enunciate the words. I hold my pen tight, scribbling over the page and underlining as many things as I can to stay concentrated. But my eyelids

feel so heavy. The rest of the class was right. This is worse than having a full discussion! I take in a huge sip of iced water from my bottle, but the audiobook continues to blur out, until I can't hear anything...

All of a sudden, I'm in my dorm room, sitting on my comfy bed. In front of me, the Canvas calendar page is open, but there are no assignments due tomorrow, the day after, and the day after the day after. I also realize that my history teacher gave me an A for the paper about 1800s American history that I wrote the night before the due date. Ding! Outlook sends a reminder. "Dear class..." My 8 a.m. physics class tomorrow is cancelled. A Discord message comes in. The Exonian podcast managers are inviting me on to Harkness It because my op-ed about structuring Exeter's English curriculum is "one of the best argumentative pieces that the editors have ever read." My friend texts me that the dining hall food is really good today, and there are dishes that are actually healthy and delicious at the same time. On my way, leisurely strolling to Elm, I discover a bouquet of flowers in my mailbox for Valentine's Day.

Oh, life is just so beau-

tiful here at Phillips Exeter...

Thump. I hear a heavy noise. Something fell to the ground. I yawn and shout, "Get out of my room, stupid!" In a semi-conscious state, I hear familiar giggles (of the two girls who always sit next to me during English) and the audiobook in the background. I open my eyes. Oh no! I fell asleep during English class! And I was talking in my sleep! The teacher clears her throat. The entire class looks at me and bursts into laughter.

As I pack up at the end of class, my teacher calls my name. I know she is going to lecture me about getting enough sleep and learning to manage my time better. I just want to go to the dining hall and have dinner, but I guess I have to skip and order DoorDash tonight. Surprisingly, she is not mad at me, but she sends an email to my advisor showing concern for my class participation grade and books me an appointment with the learning center.

The next morning, I wake up and open Instagram. The first post that appears is by Exeter Compliments. It's about me. 102 likes, 53 comments, and 98 forwards. I think you know how I became viral overnight.

The United Strand: A Longitudinal Study

By DANIEL JOON LEE '29

Day 469 of not cutting my hair until Manchester United wins five games in a row. (1/5)

Man United 2 - 0 Man City

Jan. 17, 2026

Dear Frank,

We, the Red Army from Phillips Exeter Academy, would like to express our utmost respect for your commitment to being a visual representation of how much of a joke of a team we are. Today, however, we rejoice. We Exonians were born to express animosity towards anything remotely blue. The sky. The ocean. The blue institution ranked the same on Niche.com as Liverpool is placed in the Premier League currently. So you best believe we were awoken from our eternal depression when we heard that we beat Manchester City. I know it's a bit early to say, but I think we're on to some-

thing here, Frank.

Sincerely,

The Exeter Manchester United Fan Club

Day 477 of not cutting my hair until Man United wins five games in a row. (2/5)

Man United 3 - 2 Arsenal

Jan. 25, 2026

Dear Frank,

United hiring Carrick has been more life-changing—second only to when Principal Rawson became the principal of Exeter. Such a shame they're both leaving so soon at the end of the season. But let's celebrate for now! If there are three certainties in life, they would be JV Football losing their match, and Arsenal bottling a title race. So whilst I'm not surprised, I'm starting to feel like we have a chance now! Keep your hopes up, Frank, and remember—Exeter is cheering for you.

Best wishes,

The Exeter Manchester United Fan Club

Day 484 of not cutting my hair until Man United wins five games in a row (3/5)

Man United 3 - 2 Fulham



Feb. 1, 2026

Life is worth living again. I thought things couldn't get any better after the snow day announcement, but Sesko's 94th-minute winner today genuinely made me levitate. My dormmates were wondering why I was screaming at 9 a.m. on a Sunday. Despite the setback of getting Sevens for the week, I was in such a good mood today— I even went to my club meetings!

Cheers,

The Exeter Manchester United Fan Club

Day 490 of not cutting my hair until Man United wins five games in a row (4/5)

Man United 2 - 0 Tottenham Hotspur

Feb. 7th, 2026

Oh my goodness, Frank, we're actually gonna make it. I'll go get the razor. I actually heard there's a great barbershop on our very own campus, located in a certain hallway of Langdell Hall.

I've already put in a reservation under your name. I'll see you on Tuesday!

Speak to you soon,

The Exeter Manchester United Fan Club

Day 493 of not cutting my hair until Man United wins five games in a row (0/5)

Man United 1 - 1 West Ham United

Feb 10th, 2026

Dear Frank,

Just cut it off.

We won't get mad at you.

Delete your socials, ring up your barber (if he even remembers you), and go get a buzz.

My H-format teacher asked me why I was crying in the middle of class.

Was it the 65% I got on my physics test?

Or the fact that we drew with West Ham despite having 65% possession?

Frankly, I guess we'll never know.

I saw three Man United fans fall to their knees in the Grill line.

But don't blame yourself, Frank.

Stay strong,

The Exeter Manchester United Fan Club

Meeeeeeoooooooooww!

By GARY GUO '29

Have you heard, someone had a cat in their room. That's absurd... but be honest. WHO wouldn't want a fluffy, warm, living stress ball placed around your bed like it pays rent, ready to let you pet it while the intense pressure devil is knocking? I heard that when you are asleep, your cat turns into a knight in shining fur and protects you!

Then, of course, reality arrives. The litter box will always remind you this isn't a Disney movie. "I swear I will be responsible." I would say on day one (and obviously

that was the biggest lie of my life). Although the room already smells like a mix of wet sneakers, unwashed socks, and opened bags of chips, the box would literally diversify that scent profile. It's just always a small hot mess, kinda like my canvas page—it keeps growing whenever I'm not looking at it. To keep it a secret, to my best friends so they don't snitch, and to my dorm fac so they don't get me to CCC (again), my poor cat had to pretend like another stuffed animal lying around on my bed when I had a visitor.

Okay, fine. Trying to keep something alive in your room is a nightmare.

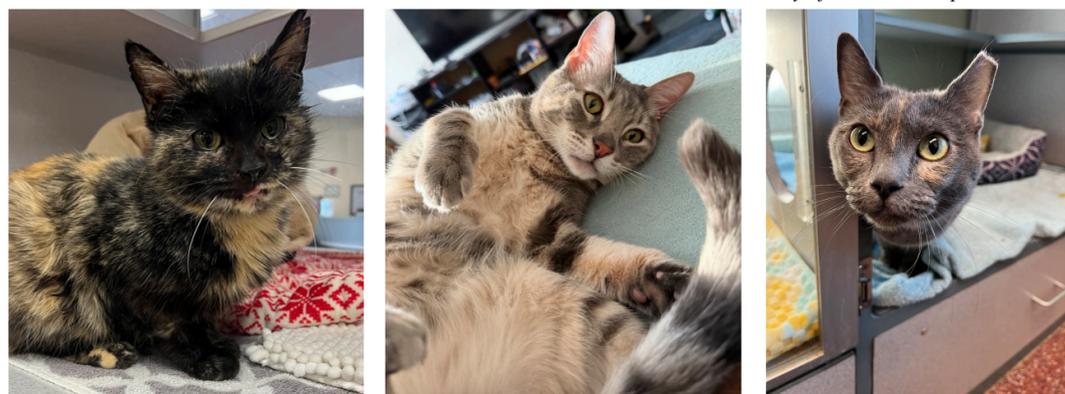
But Exeter already runs on nightmares, and we've clearly decided that isn't a dealbreaker. If we are allowed four hours of sleep and still attend a full day of class and practices we can have the little energy to clean up after our cat and throw a toy mouse twice.

So then, if we are allowed cats, then a small dog should be allowed too. It's basically the same creature, like a cat that decided to major in barking not meowing. Once a small dog is approved, it would be hypocritical—borderline discriminatory—to deny a larger dog breed. What, just because it's a few sizes up? We are

not doing body-shaming in 2026. If we can handle a large dog, a dorm horse, honestly, is just the matter of square footage. Exeter taught me geometry well and I believe I can plan the common room well so there's a corner for a horse stable.

At this point, an elephant...? Okay perhaps that's too much. But now the issue is the elephant in the room. We want pets, we want that comfort, that belonging, that little creature who is always there for us and listens to our embarrassing moments during the day and the anxiety for school. I guess I just need something to lean on.

Courtesy of the New Hampshire SPCA



Polly, Shiloh, and Aspen, a few of the various adorable cats living at New Hampshire's local SPCA.

More on: Clavicular, Mogged

By WILSON RHEE '26

Caesar vs. Pompey, Edison vs. Tesla, Robert E. Lee vs. Abraham Lincoln, Drake Maye vs. Will Campbell. The most earth shattering moggings of history are carved into the records of human existence forever. Two weeks ago, one such mogging occurred. On Feb. 5, 2026, approximately three hours and eight minutes into his In Real Life stream at Arizona State University, Clavicular was BRUTALLY frame mogged by an Arizona State University frat leader. The news sent looksmaxxers, groypers, and truecells into a panicked frenzy. Across the world, millions of redpilled bonesmashers canceled their subscriptions to the "Clavicular System," the influencer's \$50 a month self improvement course. The resulting economic downturn caused the Dow Jones Index to drop nearly 5,000 points. Clavicular, for the uninitiated, is the most influential figure in looksmaxxing, the act of maximizing one's physical attractiveness by

any means. He pioneered the ingenious science of 'bonesmashing,' the act of hitting oneself with a hammer in hopes of improving facial structure. This revolutionary method has propelled countless 3/10 subhuman chuds to chadlite status. Clavicular himself was once an average looking guy, but his inspiring journey has inspired young men around the world to begin dieting, injecting, and smashing their way toward aesthetic perfection. Clav isn't without his critics, though. Many believe that looksmaxxing itself is inherently vain, selfish, and idiotic, and attack Mr. Vicular as the head of the movement. Recently, he has also begun associating with controversial figures like top 4chan philosopher Nicholas Fuentes and weapons anatomy expert Sneako. In December, he was involved in a car accident in which he collided with a homeless man while driving his Tesla Cybertruck. These incidents and criticism are more minor blemishes upon his career, though. I think we can all

agree that Clav's rugged good looks and awesome hair allow us to look past the fact that he is an unlikeable social reject. The biggest hit to Clav's reputation thus far is of course, his recent, BRUTAL frame mogging at Arizona State University. The day after the stream, X user @biggerboy111 posted the fateful image in which Clav can be seen smiling (sub optimal) while the Arizona State University frat leader lat-spreads and horrifically mogs him, leaving the Stacies at the frat house in disgust of Clav's general hideousness and impressed by the Arizona State University frat leader's superior physique. On campus, students and teachers alike gathered in Downer Gym to mourn. The procession, led by the Exeter Looksmaxxing Society, provided the community with a space to process the embarrassing defeat. One anonymous student stated, "Clav was like a father to me. On a bad day he might have been a 7/10 chadlite. But I never thought it would come to this." Daily bonesmashing sessions are



being held for the remainder of the term in the church. Free peptide injections will be offered in the Health Center to those who feel it accords with their grieving process. As the world mourns the BRUTAL frame mogging of the fallen prince of the Chads, Clavicular, it is important that we look to the future. The greatest looksmaxxers realize that the greatest moggings can lead to the greatest ascensions. While the once glorious Clav may now look like a 1/10 cortisol ridden neet, all is not lost. Recent reports show that he is taking some time out of the spotlight to hardmax, roidmax, and crystalmax at his Miami estate. Skeptics wonder whether even these drastic measures will be able to save the crumbling reputation of this disgraced sigma. Will Clavicular ever recover from his BRUTAL frame mogging by an Arizona State University frat leader? Only time will tell.

End of Term! Hoorah!

By PIPER CLARK '29

Even though it feels like midterms happened only days ago, all of my teachers are already discussing final projects and exams. As the days on my calendar between now and finals week are beginning to dwindle, so too are my fatigues. Though I began the term with three, I am now left to debate when to use my last one. What's more important? Studying for my biology test, finishing my English narrative, or getting a few more hours of sleep to recover from studying for my math test?

That's right, everyone. Finals week is nearly upon us, and with it, all of our grades are set in stone. All around me, everyone is talking about their grades. Lowerers are wondering whether they will still get into college with their B- in English (Yes, you will, seniors say as they roll their eyes) and seniors themselves are just trying to make it to the end of the year. Suddenly, every major assignment due in the next week and half feels so much more important than anything that has come before. As I try to finish my CompSci project, I'm

frantically flipping through an entire binder's worth of biology notes. What came first: the frog or my dissection of it? Every spare moment between classes is spent wondering: will this be on the final? It seems like everything I thought I knew is being suddenly erased from my memory; will I even remember my name for long enough to write it on my test?

The rest of the term has seemed to last forever! (Unlike my grill points. Those were gone in two chicken waffles by Tuesday afternoon.) Now that we're preparing for finals

week though, everything is moving by far too fast. Orah passes, majors, and transportation forms crowd my calendar in large red ink. Don't worry too much though; just do your best to prepare. Before you know it, finals week will be over and you'll be on spring break. Don't let life pass you by with the grades and due dates - take some time to enjoy it. Make snow angels in the powder, and go to get pizza with your friends (As long as you've already studied for a few hours). You only get to be in high school once, after all.

My Life is a Kafka-Esque Nightmare

By **SOLLIE BEER '28**
and **LEVI STOLL '28**

“Boy, this Gregor Samsa is just like me! I, too, hate my stupid repetitive work and feel like the people in my life only value me because of it! Good thing I won’t wake up as a giant insect one day!” I said naively before passing out.

To my astonishment, I flail my six newly-grown, spiny legs in the air after waking up. Have I finally had too much Elm food? Perhaps a mutating dose of radiation from the strange vats of liquid behind the Grill counter? No; surely this is a vivid hallucination brought on by my countless all-nighters writing that English paper; curse you, modernist English teacher!

Still... on the off chance that it isn’t... a cockroach doesn’t have to abide by an Exonian’s schedule... maybe, just maybe, this could be the excuse I need to skip my 8 a.m. class. I roll furiously around on the bed, eventually managing to throw myself to the floor (no thanks to my bed risers). What feels like rough chitin thuds on the floor, leaving me surprisingly unharmed. I must be rock hard! Scurrying around, my spindly cockroach legs catch on the carpet, snaring me for a moment in front of my mirror. It appears that I’m massive enough to fill the whole frame and

more, but from what I can make out...No...It’s too awful to even bear mentioning!

My phone buzzes, startling me into another frantic scurry around the room. Perhaps the cute girl from my history class has finally taken an interest in me? Maybe my summer internship application was accepted?

My phone lights up, saving me from having to enter my passcode. My eye stalks wave over the little box, quivering in fear. “Dean of Students—APPROACHING RESTRICTIONS NOTICE.” Of course. Silently, I dare the Dean’s office to enforce check-in on 150 pounds of pure insect thorax. The school can’t even keep bugs out of the dorms. I’d like to see them make one stay in.

The bell rings. How many classes have I missed by now? The hours have all blended together; I’ve done nothing but lay on my floor feeling sorry for myself—and it isn’t even my regularly scheduled hour for that!

I crawl under the bed and wedge myself between the cardboard boxes of energy drinks and microwave ramen I’ve been stress-ordering since September. My feelers poke out into the room. Heavy steps lumber closer and closer to my door—the horror! The humanity! Or...the

inhumanity?

“Oh... GOD!” Anderson Lame stands stricken, his eyes wide in fear and disgust. My so-called “friend” can’t even recognize me? I extend an antenna toward him in an attempt to reconcile, but he slams the door so hard it nearly severs my fifth foot. My fifth foot.

The deans have decided by now to make me their sole focus. Emails are piling up; “APPROACHING RESTRICTIONS NOTICE.”

“YOU HAVE BEEN PLACED ON RESTRICTIONS.”

“IF YOU DO NOT STOP BEING A BUG NOW, YOU WILL FACE THE CCC.”

Someone knocks on my door. Is it Anderson again? He was terrified—but he might want to squish me now! I scuttle under my desk, nearly splitting my shell apart as a U.S. History reader the size of a tombstone falls from the table. The door opens, revealing short and hairy legs not unlike my own... it must be my advisor, Dr. Shmiang, coming to check on me. I emerge with hope. Perhaps this is a dorm tradition. Perhaps this is character-building... Perhaps I can get into any college I want with an essay about this!

“Chssssttttt!” I chirp.

I try again. “Ssstchr-ik!”

Only distorted clicks

emerge: my thorax convulses as I attempt human speech. What has happened to my voice? Dr. Shmiang turns to me, eyes narrow in fury. “I don’t know what you are, or what you have done with my advisee,” he screeches. “But you are certainly violating the E-Book by existing on this campus! I will make sure Campus Safety disposes of you properly.”

How could Dr. Shmiang betray me like this? After so many terms of a perfect attendance record, he threatens my chud, arthropod life! I’ve read the E-Book front-to-back, seven times—there’s no rule against giant insects attending the Academy! But Dr. Shmiang doesn’t know that, and I see a Campus Safety van pulling up outside my dorm.

Frantically, I squirm towards my window.

Like the many bugs that entered my room during the fall, my legs easily pry a hole in the screen. I plummet for a second or two in the air, legs wriggling, until my shell punches a pizza-sized hole in a deep snowbank. I crawl around in the snow, peeking out into campus. As I attempt to crawl away, I find myself unknown moving parts of my shell. Figuring that my situation can’t get any worse than it already is, I move these dorsal appendages some more. Before I know it, I’m in the air: I can fly!

My newfound wings buzz as they increase their speed. It takes only the blink of my compound eyes to accelerate past the library. Where did they put the brakes on these wings!? I bank hard towards EPAC, the strong wind pushing me forward. I recall my

physics work, estimating what kind of kinetic energy will be released when I inevitably hit something: a lot.

But the wind slows as I approach the science center, retaining just enough speed to crash through the window of Grainger. As my shell lands on the tiled floor, I sense the room with my antennae. I recognize the people around me—they’re my physics classmates! A large, bald head fills my vision. So bald in fact that light bounces off it and blinds me.

“Well, well, well,” booms Mr. Shmilyk, my physics teacher. “You’ve arrived just in time for our final exam.” He sets a paper on the floor in front of me. “I hope you brought your calculator!”

I did not bring my calculator. I do not have hands. I have no thumbs, and I must take this test.



A depiction of your layout editor, whose life has been written wholly by Kafka.

Ask Humor

By **ADRIANCHAN '28**

Gavin Zhao '28:
“We need more time to pack”

Maybe you should consider actually packing instead of remodelling your room. The problem probably is that you spent too much time folding your clothes at perfect 90 degree angles and delicately placing them one above the other in your suitcase. Abandon your PhD in luggage space optimization: it doesn’t take one minute to fold a t-shirt. Just be like me and throw all your clothes into a suitcase and squeeze it shut and you’d be done in a minute.

Anonymous '29:
“Assembly time is the best nap time”

I think you’re speaking the absolute truth. The only thing is to please stop snoring next time. I can hear you from 5 rows back.

Luke Wang '27:
“Weth ought to be open on Wednesday evenings. There’s nothing more depressing than walking to Weth in the snow and then realizing you have to walk double the distance to go to Elm because it’s a Wednesday”

You capture some-

thing every Weth—all hopeful knows too well. It starts with confidence. You put on your coat and brave the cruel winds and the glancing snow, warmed by the thought of a filling dinner at Weth. Then, you arrive. The building is dark. The door does not budge as you pull against the door. The “boop-boop-boop-boop” makes you let out a bittersweet moan. You could go back to your dorm and make instant ramen but you have gone too far. You want a proper meal now.

The second walk is longer, colder, worse. Your gloves become damp; the snow seeps into your sneakers. By the time you arrive Elm, you waddle in with your flock of disheartened Weth-to-Elm refugees.

Eric Jin '28: “Exeter is full of evil people who won’t do my homework.”

Skill issue. Sell your soul to Jiaqi, who lurks in the darkness of the Cilley basement, and he’ll do all your homework for you in Latin written in Times New Roman, 8 point double-spaced font. Just pray he isn’t learning a new language.

Exeter Idioms: Beginner’s Guide

By **SELASIE AMEMASOR '28**

The culture of Phillips Exeter is quite a unique one, with 245 years of history and thousands of teachers and students passing through; many have left their mark on the campus. One of these legacies is idioms. I think it’s fair to say that our community has a number of idioms, whether we realize it or not.

On my last grill point

It’s Monday evening, you’re hanging out with your friends and finishing up with clubs, ready to finish homework and finally go to bed. You guys make the decision to take a peek into Grill. This week, you’ve decided to use one point every two days. Suddenly, your friend whispers something to you in the aisle that makes you go pale, “I’m on my last grill point.”

The term ‘On my last grill point’ is a term I think we can all understand. It’s usually not a good week when you’ve been through 5 of your 6 points, and it’s only Monday. Most students partition their points throughout the week, or they spend them all at the end of

the week. But when you see your classmates piling their purchases onto the counter, nerds cluster above chicken sandwiches above Dr. Pepper, it’s probably a rough week for them.

I’ve personally seen this happen pretty much every finals week. I walked out of my math final ready to get on top of packing, when my stomach began to growl. Maybe a snack should be on the to-do list. I turned the corner to see the usual plethora of kids. However, something was off. Right before my eyes stood a group of students, in front of them a mountain of snacks. I looked at the line behind them, and saw pretty similar purchases. When the people on this campus manage to crawl out of their snow-covered dorms in the middle of their studying to spend all their points in one go, you know it’s gotten pretty bad.

Having a (insert teacher name)

It goes without saying that certain teachers’ classes are much more soul-sucking than others, especially among the humanities. Trying to appeal to your teacher’s writing style is an Olympic feat in itself. It’s become quite common

across campus to hear “I have a...”. It’s usually coming out of the mouth of an exhausted student.

It was this year’s hell week, and I was grabbing breakfast in one of Weth’s booths when one of my friends slid in beside me. I started my typical greeting, “How are you doing?” by turning towards her. The phrase soon died in my throat when I got a good look at her face. I asked if she was okay, and soon she explained to me the all-nighter she had pulled in order to get her essay in by the deadline. Suddenly, her phone pinged with a canvas notification. Her eyes widened, and she leaned back in her chair, turning the phone to me. Written on her phone screen was a ‘B+’.

Waiting for the grass

New England winters are long and cold. Around January, getting to class feels like an episode of “Yellowjackets,” and the new objective arrives: making it to spring. All of campus becomes a slippery, cold tundra, and the weeks drag on longer than they ever have. But, every once in a while, we get to see a bit of snow.

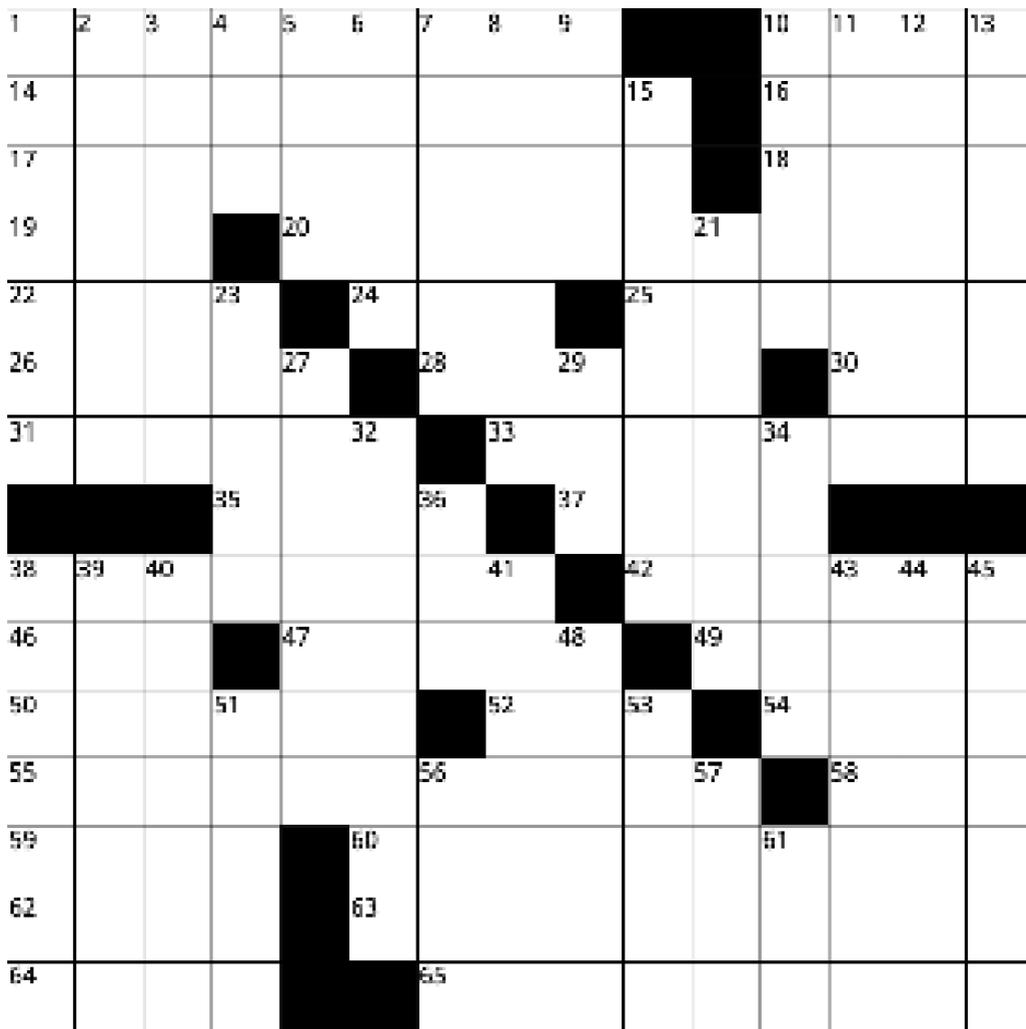
This past week,

the weather finally seemed to be taking a turn, yes it was still freezing outside, but nonetheless things were looking up. I was leaving the church after meditation, trying to make my way to my advisory. Quickly making my way across the one-way, I hurry down the slope. Suddenly, something catches my eye, it’s greenish-yellow and a bit stringy, but it’s undeniably grass. In the two months I’ve been back on this campus, I haven’t seen snow. Finally, the weather gods have decided to grant us warmth. I nearly burst into tears as I continued my way down the hill. However, the appearance of grass didn’t last long. As I stepped out of my last class, little white flakes flew down from the roof, and the wind slapped me in the face. I look down, and the stairs are covered in snow, and I can already feel my shoes getting wet. A thought pops into my head, “Maybe, if I make it to Boston Logan, I can still get a one-way ticket to Hawaii.”

Ultimately, no matter how different our lives may seem, I think it goes without saying that there are very few original experiences left on this campus.

The Crossword Corner

By CAROL LEE '28



ACROSS

- 1-Value judges
- 10-Banned apple spray
- 14-Tower of London guards
- 16-Anatomical tissue
- 17-Trip for a country's leader
- 18-1940's-50's All-Star Johnny
- 19-Purring pet
- 20-Valentine verse starter
- 22-James of jazz
- 24-Stephen of "The Crying Game"
- 25-Romance novelist Banks
- 26-Stage direction

- that means "alone"
- 28-Knight's horse
- 30-Shoebox letters
- 31-Accelerated
- 33-Wyo. has one
- 35-___ avis
- 37-What you eat
- 38-Leaves in a big hurry
- 42-Record again
- 46-"Aladdin" monkey
- 47-Imam's faith
- 49-Ranee's wrap
- 50-Like some cargo carriers
- 52-"Well, lah-di-___!"
- 54-Hong Kong's Hang ___ Index

- 55-1996 Emmy-winning role in a sitcom
- 58-Halloween mo.
- 59-Speck
- 60-Ygritte portray-er on "Game of Thrones"
- 62-Fed. power dept.
- 63-"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and others
- 64-Mtg.
- 65-Most stuck-up

DOWN

- 1-Sore spot
- 2-Put on, as a pedes-tal
- 3-Puget Sound city
- 4-Young newt

- 5-Oracle
- 6-Relish
- 7-Redding and Spann
- 8-Moves from balcony to loge, perhaps
- 9-Hindu honorifics
- 10-On the ocean
- 11-Apprentice
- 12-Property recipient, in law
- 13-Was ingrained
- 15-Result of poor ventilation
- 21-Red t shirts
- 23-"Sister Outsider" author Lorde
- 27-Effort to convince
- 29-LAX posting
- 32-Thrives
- 34-Singers James and

- Jones
- 36-CIO partner
- 38-Flower clusters
- 39-Mother-of-pearl source
- 40-Parish assistants
- 41-Appears gradually
- 43-Biological rings
- 44-"___ down!"
- 45-Common diagnostic for epileptics
- 48-Travolta's "Saturday Night Fever" role
- 51-Levels
- 53-Sun: Prefix
- 56-Socks
- 57-Paving stone
- 61-Fashion designer Anna

The Exonian

We would like to acknowledge the Squamscott/Penacook peoples who were the first peoples of this land. We would like to honor their ancestors, descendants and future generations for caring for this area and allowing us to be here today.

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