



# THE DANDELION

## Uncovering the North End's Hidden Black History

BY JUGEIRY PEREZ

The North End is home to Italian restaurants and historic architecture. However, its Black history has long stayed in the shadows.

Roberto Mighty, a local award-winning filmmaker and multimedia artist, is working to change that narrative. His recent multimedia creation, “We Were Here Too,” depicts a forgotten Black community in the North End — New Guinea, who were the first Africans to make the neighborhood home.

Mighty originally got the



MADOLYN ROY/NEHSJC

A scenic view of Copp's Hill Burying Grounds.

inspiration for the project during a visit to Copp's Hill Burying Ground three years ago. He said he was working on a film there and overheard a tour guide describing historic figures from the North End.

“[The] tourists would come to see Paul Revere, John Hancock, all that,” he said.

But of all of the figures that were named, none of them was Black.

“It was a travesty that some of those other people

**BLACK HISTORY**

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CARISSA DESSIN/NEHSJC

A Green Line train pulls into Coolidge Corner.

## City or Town? Brookline is Divided

BY BIRUK MEYER

An ongoing question has some Brookline residents divided. Should Brookline become a city or remain a town?

The debate stems from a 2020 charter commission that would reconsider the town's form of government, and requires more than 6,000 signatures in order to appear on the ballot for May 2026.

Advocates for keeping Brookline a town cite Town Meeting's direct democracy and the citizens' role in preventing abuse of power.

Opponents say that Town Meeting doesn't reflect Brookline's diversity and that the government is inefficient in decision making.

Among the proponents of change is Katherine Haenschen, a professor at Northeastern University and a Town Meeting member.

Haenschen questioned the local government's

**BROOKLINE**

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## Boston's Orchestra, Everyone's Stage

BY ISAAC LADAS

For 25 years, the Boston Landmarks' orchestral music has filled Boston's parks, bringing free performances to overlooked communities.

The Boston Landmarks orchestra was started in 2001 by conductor Charles Ansbacher. His goal was to bring free, high

quality orchestral music to public spaces all across Boston. The orchestra has performed in different neighborhoods and parks, offering the performances to those who might not usually attend classical concerts.

Christopher Wilkins, who became the music director in 2011, sees the orchestra as a

way to connect people.

“Music touches every part of our being - mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual,” he said. “It connects us to hope, to sadness, to joy, and to each other.”

Wilkins stepped in during a difficult time. Ansbacher, his friend, had developed a brain tumor in 2010.

“He called and asked if I would be supportive, or would be willing to conduct some [concerts] in his place,” Wilkins said. “So in the last year of his life, I started both supporting him and conducting the orchestra, and that's how I became involved.”

Ansbacher's wife Swanee Hunt, set up a fund to ensure the orchestra would continue producing free and accessible music.

Since then, Wilkins has focused on making the orchestra more inclusive and community centered. “People will say, you'll attract more audience members from more diverse backgrounds if the performers themselves are more diverse. There's no question that's true.”

From the beginning, the Boston Landmarks orchestra

**ORCHESTRA**

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representation saying most residents don't participate.

"I would argue that the number of people who are willing and able to both run and serve is shrinking," Haenschen said. "This year we had a number of precincts in which there were five seats and five people didn't file."

Other Town Meeting members and Brookline residents oppose becoming a city because, they say, Brookline's population suits a town structure. In contrast to Haenschen's argument, some say the participation of citizens directly in government is a strength of a town government.

"Brookline is a very much activist community...and an activist citizenry means people are really

looking for ways to participate in government," said former town moderator Sandy Gadsby. He said if Brookline becomes a city, citizen voices would be diluted; people would elect representatives rather than directly participate in policy making.

A weakness of the town model, according to Haenschen, is that many students and young



**Katherine Haenschen**

some demographics.

in local government.

Her push for cityhood is also driven by the belief that Town Meeting underrepresents

diversity of the community," said Haenschen, adding that Brookline Town Meeting members are typically older, long-term residents.

Gadsby also worries about the misrepresentation of the town's demographics. However, he highlighted the possible lack of residents' voices and the increase of leaders who disregard public interests. He said there is a great danger of being stuck with an incompetent person who holds a lot of power as mayor.

Businessman Nick Mallia, 42, agreed with Gadsby.

The partner of Paris Creperie and Bar Lunette said he wasn't aware of the ongoing debate, but after learning about the movement to make Brookline a city, he said: "In which case, I'd say it should not change."

## ***'I would argue that the number of people who are willing and able to both run and serve is shrinking'***

KATHERINE HAENSCHEN

professionals are limited by time from participating. Though the work is less than they perceive, she said, many younger people still feel incapable of taking part

"You could question whether someone who's lived here a long time and is demographically in one corner of the population can truly represent the

## BLACK HISTORY

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that were here in Boston...(and) no one knew about that," Mighty said during a recent interview at Copp's Hill.

After the experience, Mighty decided to research more on Copp's Hill which led him to learn about the old community of New Guinea.

In the 1600s, the earliest inhabitants of the North End were enslaved Africans. It quickly became densely populated, with nearly half of all enslaved people in Massachusetts located in the North End, according to The Forgotten North Enders, a website that chronicles the neighborhood's history.

By 1750, Irish and Italian immigrants began moving into the neighborhood, while many of the Africans began moving out, according to the website.

Mighty's film focuses on five Africans who were buried in Copp's Hill. They include Prince Hall, who became the first Black Mason in the city. Very little is known about the others, including the correct spelling of their

names. They were Sarah Ritchie, who was 24 when she died; Mary Augustus, a servant; and Abel Barbadoes, a laborer. Margaret Collee is only known by her name.

Mighty's project is one of several chronicling the Black History of the North End in recent years. They include the North End Black History Self Guided Tour; Mapping the North End's South End Community 1780 to 1810; and Old North Church's Illuminating the Unseen project.

The North End Historical Society, which highlights the Italian-American history, is also hoping to represent the neighborhood's Black history when it completes its museum next year.

"What we're trying to say is that we're more than just restaurants. ...There's more history to it than Mike's pastries or cannolis and cappuccino[s]," Tom Damigella, the society's president, who noted that the North End has become more diverse over the years

Damigella said his organization has released a documentary, created a monument, and held multiple presentations on the Italian-American history of the



DAVID LUCCI/NEHSJC

**Roberto Mighty with the grave of Onesimus, a servant for Cotton Mather that told him of a traditional African method for curing smallpox.**

North End. It's also raising funds for its museum.

"We want to create a legacy that will be there forever," he added.

The Black History is also critical, Mighty said.

"I just feel that it's important to know that we were here too." Mighty said.

## ORCHESTRA

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has offered more than just music — it's offered belonging.

From classical pieces to performances with rapping, dancing, and gospel, the orchestra tailors its programming to engage every kind of listener, whether long time concert goers or kids at summer camp.

This mission is especially clear

in how the orchestra brings performances to underrepresented neighborhoods across Boston. "We're not Vienna's orchestra- we're Boston's," Wilkins said.



**Christopher Wilkins**

The orchestra is funded by a mix of public money, individual donors, foundations, and its largest supporter, the Free for All Concert Fund.

Wilkins believes that if the orchestra gets financial support from the city, it should reflect the community.

"If we're going to expect the Boston Foundation to support us, and other community foundations and the people of Boston, then we need to represent the people of Boston," Wilkins said.

For him, accessibility is more than just an idea, but a responsibility. "It's really a question of fairness," he said. "Are we Boston's orchestra, or are we a replica of what Vienna had a century ago?"

Wilkins is also open about the history of orchestral music and who it has traditionally served.

"When I grew up in Boston, all of the schools, all of the youth orchestras and the professional orchestras- you just take one look at them, and you see overwhelmingly white and privileged," he said. "That legacy is still there."

He believes changing that reality means reshaping every part of the experience: the performers, the composers, and the listeners. "We're trying to disrupt that at every level," he said.



# The Dandelion Always Rises

## Growing Out of the Weeds

Often dismissed as weeds, few understand the resilience of the dandelion. No matter how many are pulled or mowed down, new dandelions will always grow.

This week, we met with individuals who showcase what it truly means to be resilient. Although sometimes stepped on, each story is an example of strength.

Our nation’s immigrant population is the target of new federal administrative policy, with Immigration and Customs Enforcement making more than 1,000 arrests daily. In this uncertain climate, the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition is working tirelessly to inform individuals of their Constitutional rights.

In the North End, the Haitian population is alive and present, yet its culture is historically hidden. Defying this misrepresentation, the Toussaint Louverture Cultural Center preserves under-celebrated identities and ensures the North End will not ignore the neighborhood’s Haitian presence or history.

As young journalists we are entering an industry full of uncertainty, learning a trade that is changing faster than ever. However, we came together with a common cause: to spread stories of strength rising above the forces of opposition.

When the community faces challenges, a group’s resilience causes change. We found those who were willing to fight against the pressure from above; individuals who refused to lie flat when pushed down. Whether it was as simple as spreading music, or as daring as advocating for federal policy change, resilience is how the flower grows.

— ISAAC LADAS AND LILY MANCANIELLO

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# Portraits of Pride Celebrates the LGBTQ

BY LILY MANCANELLO

**P**ortraits of Pride: A Celebration of Legacy Makers,” a traveling exhibit by the Boston LGBTQ Museum of Art, Culture and History, highlights thriving members of the local LGBTQ community.

The exhibit showcases 20 10-foot-high portraits and is making its fourth appearance in the Boston area as part of Pride Month. This year’s exhibit has been placed outside Tia’s restaurant at Long Wharf, where it will remain until June 30.

On a recent afternoon, the verdant trees on Atlantic Avenue cast flattering shadows on the portraits of openly gay individuals, including Boston Ballet alum John Lam and Dr. Gary Bailey, the MSW program director for the School of Social Work at Simmons University. Photographer John Hue is credited with capturing the regal nature of the exhibit’s subjects.

Brittany Santos recently absorbed the power of the photo gallery with her partner. A tourist from San Antonio, Texas, Santos said she appreciated the exhibit, which de-

picts LGBTQ success. Referencing the presence of queer culture in her hometown, she said “our government is fighting against it,” and therefore she is “glad it’s so out in the open.”

Jean Dolin, founder of the Boston LGBTQ Museum of Art, Culture and History and the visionary for “Portraits of Pride,” said he wanted to create an exhibit of local, openly gay community members. His second exhibit, which appeared in June 2023, included Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, who had been recently elected. Dolin’s exhibit is now a staple of Pride Month.

Dolin defines gay pride as “a reminder of a responsibility” adding that he felt compelled to depict the LGBTQ community from the angle of success.

When asked to describe the value of the exhibit, Dolin said that portraits have been historically used to legitimize the power of individuals, and this was his goal for members of the local LGBTQ community.

“Portraits of Pride” exists “to dignify our community, to showcase us, send the best



LILY MANCANELLO

**The gallery extends the length of Atlantic Avenue towards Long Wharf.**

light, because I recognize that’s not done enough,” Dolin said.

Dolin, who chooses the exhibit’s individuals, made clear his fondness for each person highlighted in the gallery.

“All of these people have put in so many decades of work that their legacy is somewhat cemented in our community,” he said.

He gushed over the portrait of Gretchen Van Ness, who, he said, is “building and leading the first...apartment complex that is LGBTQ-friendly in New England.”

At a time that LGBTQ rights have come under fire nationally, Dolin refuses to succumb to cynicism. “You have to cultivate the hope from inside,” he said.

# PTSD Event Builds Community for Military Veterans

BY NANDA MEIRELLES

**M**ilitary veterans experience post-traumatic stress disorder, including flashbacks from combat, difficulty following a routine, and lack of connection to the rest of the world. Often, they suffer in silence, but Boston’s Office of Veterans Services is working to help veterans. “We appreciate them, we honor them, we recognize them,” said Robert Santiago, commissioner of Boston’s Office of Veterans

Services. “We want to ensure that their voices are being heard.” Santiago, a 20-year US Navy veteran, organized the first PTSD Awareness Golf Tournament at Franklin Park on June 23. The event aimed to support the veteran population and connect them to resources.

Organizations present at the tournament were Boston Vet Center, Veterans Yoga Program, Bright Marine, and Delta Airlines. The organizations offer assistance to veterans with PTSD and their



GABRIELLY DE FREITAS AND NANDA MEIRELLES

families, offering lifestyle and fitness programs, mental health services, and prizes.

PTSD is a mental health condition caused by an extremely stressful and terrifying event, often combat, leading to long-term changes in how the brain processes daily stimuli and emotions, according to Mayo Clinic. Veterans can be triggered by service-related activities, causing uncontrollable anxiety.

Santiago, who said he has a

mild form of PTSD, has an interest in helping other veterans suffering from PTSD and their families. He said other veterans who have devoted their lives to this cause served as his inspiration.

The camaraderie among veterans at the golfing event was clear as friends shared their stories and received prizes. Bobby Camp, a veteran who served in the US Air Force for 22 years, attended the event. He said gatherings such as the golf event are great opportu-

**Left: Boston Veterans Services Commissioner Robert Santiago**

**Right: Bobby Camp**

nities for veterans to get together and learn more about participating organizations. Camp said he is always trying to get involved in veteran events and enjoy quality time with other veterans.

Santiago, after the tournament ended, spoke of the efforts by Mayor Michelle Wu to help the veteran community. He said Wu always checked in with his office on what local veterans needed. Recently, Governor Maura Healey signed the HERO Act, expanding assistance to veterans.

Santiago said he wanted to use the golf event to give a deeper view of veterans. “A lot of what people know and see about veterans is what you hear on TV and what you see in movies or what you read in the newspapers and books,” he said. “We’re more than just that. We’re fathers, we’re brothers, we’re husbands.”

# Boston Launches Food Trucks for a City That Sleeps

BY ABIBATOU SAGNA

**B**oston is a city with a reputation for having a nonexistent nightlife, which has frustrated people for decades.

The cost of entry fees, buying drinks, and getting home makes the night-out experience expensive, and with final trains departing MBTA stations as early as 1:05 a.m., people are forced to rely on ride-share services, another cost.

In an effort to revive Boston's nightlife scene, Corey Reynolds, director of nightlife economy, has proposed a series of initiatives, including the launch of 10 food trucks to feed students and night-shift workers.

"We have this issue of how do we attack late-night hunger, but also support our third-shift workers, and what's more mobile than a food truck?" said Reynolds. "We can provide diversity and stability to an industry [food trucks] in this city that has been built over 15 years and has seen extreme impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

Boston has many laws that regulate nightlife: prohibiting discounted alcoholic beverages during happy hour; limiting the number of new liquor licenses available each year; and requiring alcohol service to end by 2 a.m.

Since being appointed to her position in 2023, Reynolds has worked to connect businesses with residents, creating opportunities for nightlife experiences that bolster the local economy, said Mayor Michelle Wu when introducing Reynolds.

Reynolds has been taking steps to implement solutions such as a "sober hour" after 2 a.m. to allow businesses to stay open later, to permit staggered releases of patrons, and hopefully to lessen the spike in Uber costs because of surge pricing.

Reynolds is also ensuring that young people have spaces to gather.

"[The nightlife is] very bare. There are also not a lot of 18-plus options here. A lot of the events posted on Eventbrite have some sort of liquor, so it ends up turning 21-plus when that really isn't necessary," said Edlawit Zewde, a



ABIBATOU SAGNA

## Mayor Michelle Wu samples a meal from Chicken on the Road food truck.

data science Northeastern University student.

The lack of nightlife affects not only college students and young adults, but also third-shift workers who are searching for food during overnight shifts. Most Boston-area restaurants are closed by midnight, leaving night-shift workers to rely on fast-food options.

Reynolds emphasized that both night-shift and day-shift workers should have the same options when it comes to what they want to eat, adding, "what happens at night is just as important as what happens during the day."

The 10 food-truck vendors who are part of Reynolds' initiative were selected through a city-wide lottery that received more than 40 applications. Those selected reflect the cultural diversity of Boston's culinary scene, offering everything from jerk chicken to lobster rolls. Trucks rotate around different Boston areas, including Tufts Medical Center, Northeastern's campus, and The Fenway. They are strategically placed near hospitals, college campuses, and transit hubs.

During a press conference June 23, three of the food trucks gave tastings on City Hall Plaza. The excitement was palpable. Music blared from the DJ booth as lines formed in front of each truck. People laughed, cheered, and posed for photos. The scent of spices and fried food filled the air.

People raved about the food, including Wu, who said: "[Chicken on the Road's] sauce is really good! The honey mustard I highly recommend."

Boston may finally be cooking up a nightlife scene as diverse and vibrant as its daytime one.

# Greenhills Bakery Serves Up Some Nostalgia

BY ANNALIESE-BLESSER BONSU

**T**he smell of freshly baked bread fills Greenhills Bakery, a local business where laughter is prominent along with rustic family photographs on the wall.

The best description for this Dorchester bakery is nostalgic. Varying generations of people walk in and out of the doors. Recently the bakery was one of 30 local establishments to receive Boston's 2025 Legacy Business Award.

The program aims to recognize long standing businesses that are a "driving force of support, resources, and connection across" Boston's neighborhoods.

"It was a total surprise," owner Cindy Quinn said. "We didn't even apply for it. The city councilors applied for us."

Award recipients will receive \$5,000 to \$10,000 in grant money, marketing services and assistance for new owners, according to city officials. The city's Office of Small Business received more than 1,450 nominations this year, but only 30 establishments won awards, including Greenhills Bakery.

"I got the award, and it was really amazing to see how many people work in the economic development department," Quinn said. "I can't wait to work with them and see what kind of ideas they might have."

Customers are on a first name basis with Quinn. She has been running the establishment with her husband Dermott Quinn since 1991.

Dermott Quinn immigrated to Dorchester in 1980 from Ireland. He

chose to live in Dorchester because of its prominent Irish community. He first worked as a bricklayer and then started baking for friends in his apartment complex in South Boston.

He then met Cindy and the pair ran Adam's Corner Store across from their current location. The two were married in 1993, and have worked together ever since.

"Fifteen years ago, there was a Main Street Program with the city and that was just kind of to spruce up different areas," Cindy Quinn said. "We were able to take advantage of that and then they helped us work on a logo. We got all new windows and we've probably spent three times as much."

Cindy Quinn, a Massachusetts native, grew up in Holden. She said she never limited herself or her future plans.

"It wasn't like, 'I'm going to do this for five years, I'm going to do this,' she said. "Okay, I didn't have a road map like that either."

Even during Covid-19 the hardest point for most small business owners, Greenhills suffered little. Aside from the three-weeks where they closed, loyal customers ordered items through grocery stores. In return, the Quinns said they have given to local churches, organizations and provided food for funeral repasts.

She said most of her workers are in college, which makes it tougher on the business during the fall, but overall she's full of gratitude.



Customers at the counter of Greenhills Bakery

BLESSER BONSU



# Meet the staff of The Dandelion



## Sid Chopra

Sid Chopra, 15, is a rising sophomore at Roxbury Latin School in Boston, Mass. With a passion for amplifying marginalized voices through journalism, Sid is drawn to stories of underrepresented communities. Sid's interest in the classics, especially Latin and Ancient Greek, inspired him to explore how ancient civilizations can shed light on contemporary issues. He is involved in his school's newspaper, The Tripod, where he writes feature and opinion pieces focusing on politics and social justice. Sid aspires to create his own publication to serve as a platform for unheard voices and aims to preserve and share the rich, diverse stories of society's most vulnerable members. **BY BLESSER BONSU**



## Nanda Meirelles

Nanda Meirelles, 17, is a rising senior at Durfee High School in Fall River, Mass. Born in Brazil where she resided for 15 years, Nanda now lives in Fall River. She hopes to pursue her higher education while traveling the world. Nanda is an aspiring journalist and hopes to refine her craft through the NEHSJC as she pursues a career reporting on global politics and foreign relations. Nanda has lived in four cities in Brazil and Massachusetts and has attended 10 schools, and embodies the resilience that The Dandelion intends to amplify. **BY LILY MANCANIELLO**



## Rose Howell

Rose Howell, 17, is a rising senior attending Burlington High School in Burlington, Vt. Rose is currently coeditor-in-chief of her school's paper, The Register, and the coeditor-in-chief of the Green Mountain Student Press, a program at her high school. Rose is interested in journalism because she enjoys figuring out how to best tell the stories of others. She likes the people-focused side of news and sees herself becoming a coeditor-in-chief someday. She applied to NEHSJC because it looked like a great program with a strong foundation. Rose plans to major in journalism in college and enter the field professionally. **BY ROANA HARDY**



## Marcel Anderson

Marcel Anderson, 17, is a rising senior at The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center in Providence, R.I. He is copresident of The Met's student government and a winner of the 2025 Rhode Island Ethics Bowl. Marcel is a part of the Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Anti-Racist Education Policy Collaborative, which advocates for social change in the state. Marcel hopes to sharpen his storytelling skills during the NEHSJC program. In his free time, he likes to walk. Marcel wants to major in psychology and divinity in college and travel the world. **BY ALANA WILLIAMS**



## Roana Hardy

Roana Hardy, 18, is a recent graduate of Southeast Regional High School in Easton, Mass. In the fall, Roana will be studying journalism at Boston University. Since her sophomore year, Roana has been editing and writing stories for her school's newspaper, The Monthly Hawk Talk, and continually honing her journalistic instincts. She is a tutor for disadvantaged youths, a singer in her church's choir, and previously a yearbook club editor and a volunteer designer for an online newsletter. Additionally, she is an avid writer, a music enthusiast, and a lover of realistic fiction books. **BY GABRIELLY DE FREITAS**



## Madolyn Roy

Madolyn Roy, 17, is a recent graduate of South Portland High School in South Portland, Maine. In the fall, she will attend Hofstra University, where she plans to study strategic communications and public relations. In high school, Madolyn took part in numerous programs such as the WPNG radio station and the Transportation Advisory Council. Through journalism, Madolyn has met people of various backgrounds and gained a better understanding of community and global news. Madolyn dreams of working as an Associated Press journalist in the future. **BY JUGEIRY PEREZ**



## Lily Mancaniello

Lily Mancaniello, 17, is a rising senior at Lynn (Mass.) English High School. Inspired by a teacher whose own professional path was changed by the NEHSJC program, Lily applied to the program to further her interviewing and investigative skills; she's drawn to covering social justice and immigration issues. Lily has had an interest in journalism for more than five years, and worked on her school's short-lived newsletter and been part of an elementary school journalism club. If she could interview any person, she said, she would interview former vice president Kamala Harris, whose journey motivates Lily. **BY ISAAC LADAS**



### Jugeiry Perez

Jugeiry Perez, 16, is a rising senior at South High Community School in Worcester, Mass. She took a journalism class her sophomore year, enjoyed it, and continued pursuing the craft. Jugeiry's favorite aspect of journalism is the opportunity to learn from various types of people. One of her hobbies is drawing, which she's done since age 5. She believes that the biggest issues that threaten journalism are censorship and the uses of AI. College majors that interest her are neuroscience, biology, and English.

BY BIRUK MEYER



### Alana Williams

Alana Williams, 17, is a rising senior at Tantasqua Regional High School in Sturbridge, Mass.. As the president of her school's Model UN club and a volunteer for state Senator Ryan Fattman, she's passionate about international relations and journalism. After being inspired by a former adviser who worked for The Worcester Telegram & Gazette, she hopes to spotlight overlooked stories in local news, like those of Ukrainian refugees in her community. Alana also enjoys digital art and painting, and seeks to tell powerful stories. BY ABI SAGNA



### Isaac Ladas

Isaac Ladas, 17, is a rising senior at Marlborough (Mass.) High School. He enjoys covering stories about politics and religion. Isaac has started two nonprofits in his community. The first is Stepping Up, a shoe donation program that hands out shoes to local food pantries and community partnerships. He also started the Cultural Compassion Alliance, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting immigrants in Massachusetts. It assists with financial and legal aid, as well as providing personal items. In his free time, Isaac is a music producer and plays lacrosse. He plans to become a corporate lawyer. BY ROSE HOWELL



### Abibatou Sagna

Abibatou "Abi" Sagna, 18, is a rising senior at Phillips Exeter Academy, a boarding school in Exeter, N.H., but calls Cairo, Egypt, home. At school, Abi is a thrower on the track team and helps lead the Belling Dancing Club. She loves styling her friends' hair; her favorite style is Boho braids. Abi also serves as proctor of her dorm, helps head the African Student Association, and works at the school's radio station. She plans to apply to Brown University or the University of Chicago in the fall and pursue a career in activism and storytelling. BY MADOLYN ROY



### Gabrielly De Freitas

Gabrielly De Freitas, 17, is a rising senior at Watertown (Mass.) High School. As a passionate thinker and activist for social issues, she wants to study journalism in college and champion the voices of underrepresented people. This coming school year, she hopes to establish a newspaper club at school to create writing opportunities for future students. Outside of journalism, she loves many forms of art: literary, through reading and journaling; performance, by participating in her school's theater program since freshman year; and auditory, as she loves listening to music. She also enjoys being exposed to different languages, and, as a native Portuguese speaker, is currently studying Spanish. BY SID CHOPRA



### Biruk Meyer

Biruk Meyer, 18, is a rising senior at Boston (Mass.) Latin Academy. He's been writing for his high school newspaper, Dragon Tales, since his freshman year and now runs the journalism club. Biruk enjoys meeting young people who are also interested in journalism. His hobbies include reading, skateboarding, and fencing. Well-traveled, Biruk was born in Ethiopia, spent two years in Portugal, and lived in Angola for 10 years. He hopes to pursue a career in the business or economics fields. Biruk is excited to improve his communication and writing skills during the NEHSJC program. BY NANDA MEIRELLES



### Blessier Bonsu

Blessier Bonsu, 16, is a rising senior at Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School in Worcester, Mass. She is currently a member of the media club and hopes to become president next year. As president of the media club, she would create a podcast and revitalize daily broadcasting. She wants to attend college and study political science and journalism. In her free time, she enjoys reading and writing, and is currently working on publishing her first book – vignettes of the experiences of a teenage girl. This summer, she plans to obtain an art internship.

BY MARCEL ANDERSON



# Campaign Seeks Legal Defense Fund for Immigrants

BY MADOLYN ROY

A local nonprofit is pressing Massachusetts lawmakers to retain funding for an immigrant legal defense fund in the state budget, which is expected to pass early next month.

Officials at the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition said the money is critical now more than ever as the Trump administration accelerates its wide sweeping arrests and deportations of immigrants in the country.

“Immigrants don’t have the right to an attorney so they have to pay for their own—and that’s not cheap, by any means,” said Sarang Sakhavat, chief of staff at MIRA.

Nearly 1,500 were detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents this May in Boston, raising fears about due process and the humanitarian rights of the detained.

MIRA, which helps immigrants assimilate to a new life in the United States, has been stepping up its advocacy for the legal rights of its clients.

It has launched “Protecting Our Immigrant Communities,” a campaign that seeks funding to provide free legal defense to immigrants amid a federal mass deportation effort.

The effort also aims to push educational infographics and papers about the rights of not only immigrants during ICE raids, but also the rights of businesses, schools, medical centers, and the public where immigrants gather.

“People see the injustice, and they want to come out and help,” Sakhavat said.

In the first four months of President Trump’s administration, more than 66,000 immigrants had been detained and arrested and 65,000 deported, according to ICE’s website. Some of the detained immigrants were sent to El Salvador and other foreign countries. Others, including Rümeysa Öztürk, a doctoral student from Tufts University, were apprehended in March.

Öztürk’s case went viral online as the video of her surprise arrest spread on TikTok, Instagram and other social media platforms. People have started recording the



A framed photo represents the families helped by the coalition.

JUGEIRY PEREZ

arrests, raising awareness and putting issues such as the lack of due process into focus.

“There’s no democracy without due process,” Sakhavat said. “Without due process you are basically saying the government has all the power.”

He added that the recordings not only give people the ability to protect themselves, but also allows the public to see “what’s really going on,” Sakhavat said.

Sakhavat said he was drawn to social justice work when he saw the reaction to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks by the administration of former President George W. Bush. He criticized the launch of ICE and Homeland

Security as unjust to immigrants because, he said, both agencies lacked oversight. Both agencies remain unchecked, especially within the Trump administration, he said.

Sakhavat said Trump administration officials are counting on the fact that people do not know what they can legally do when they are getting detained.

“The one thing we know is that it is actually useful very early on [to hear the administration officials complain that] these people know their rights,” Sakhavat said. “That should never be a complaint of the government — that someone knows their rights.”

## Need To Park? Ask AI

BY SID CHOPRA

The City of Boston is using AI that processes street imagery to help residents understand parking rules and how curbsides are being used.

Drivers, including those from DoorDash, Amazon, are clashing with residents over the same curbs and parking spaces.

People do not know where to find parking available or understand the parking rules of a certain area, said Amelia Capone, director of parking and curbside management in Boston.

“My team sees a lot of the parking



Amelia Capone

She said Bostonians of every age want to be able to get around the city easily and legally.

The city recently launched an effort driven by AI that provides detailed descriptions

tickets and violations,” said Capone. “The majority of them are either confused by where they are or aren’t supposed to park, or they have legitimate needs.”

of a neighborhood’s parking laws as well as who is occupying a given curb or parking spot. It is creating a real-time, interactive map with parking and curbside information through two technologies: Light Detecting and Ranging and artificial intelligence.

The light-detecting technology, which is used in autonomous vehicles, uses lasers to measure a given landscape, according to National Ecological Observatory Network, a network of field research sites. The city is using this technology to convert the layout of Boston to a digital map for residents to visualize parking, curbs, and street signs, which can be analyzed by AI.

“It’s both machine learning... and potentially some generative AI,” said Michael Lawrence Evans, Boston’s director of emerging tech-



Michael Lawrence Evans

nology. “So you would give (the generative AI) a picture of a sign, and then it would give you everything about that sign—whatever’s related to the regulation, the time of day, and how long you can be there.”

The project is going through a multi-phased process. Once the first phase of expanding the interactive map and its accompanying information is complete, the city plans to use AI to analyze and predict behavioral data, traffic patterns, and violations, according to Capone.

Support has been smooth sailing for this effort from both the city and

data scientists on board, the city officials said.

“There hasn’t really been that much that has stopped us from... finishing the project by February of 2026,” said Evans.

Collaboration has been key to their work, both with scientists and local communities, to create an application that is both accurate and accessible, Capone said.

“We’re coordinating with neighborhood groups really proactively rather than reactively,” she said.

Besides the technological innovation and practical use cases, the project aims to enable the next generation of Bostonians to enjoy city life, the officials said. Their goal is to allocate curbside space so that residents can “get to where life happens off the streets,” whether it be restaurants, cafes, or stores.

# What's The Scoop With Whale Poop?

BY ALANA WILLIAMS

Last year, Danielle Dillon was on a research mission in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean collecting valuable specimens — three samples of right whale poop.

After locating the orange sludge floating on the surface, she scooped it into a container using a net and quickly placed it on ice to preserve it. This isn't a random project — it's how scientists discover the stories of right whales.

North Atlantic right whales are considered one of the world's most endangered large whale species, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Boat strikes, entanglement in fishing nets, and climate change threaten the species.

There are limited ways of collecting biological samples from the species non-invasively.

Obtaining blood samples isn't feasible because of the right whale's thick layer of blubber

and the potential harm to the animal. Instead, researchers like Dillon, an assistant scientist and lab manager at the Wildlife and Ocean Health hormone lab at the New England Aquarium, have opted to collect their waste from the ocean surface.

Dillon has been working with the aquarium since 2023. She explained the process and reasons for right whale excrement collection. "Poop is the source of so many things," Dillon said.

Fecal samples are used to analyze an animal's DNA and hormones. These samples are especially useful for animals in the wild that can't be disturbed like domestic or captive animals. Last year, Dillon collected three right whale poop samples, all about the size of a pinky. Although small, she said, there were plenty of hormones to analyze. "You don't have to use very much sample at all. It's a tiny bit, like 50 milligrams."

The New England Aquarium is home to both the largest and oldest collection of right whale excrement in the world, spanning more than 25 years. With one specimen, scientists can create an outline of a right whale's life, as diet and health are reflected in the sample.

Through hormone analysis, scientists can detect pregnancy and increased stress. Poop may sink if whales don't have enough fat in their diet, or might be thinner if the whale has ingested a lot of water. "There's lots of factors because your digestive tract is the summary of your whole body," Dillon said. "It's like the good, the bad, and the ugly will all show up in your poop."

Poop samples are not the only method of collecting a whale's data. Scientists also use baleen — keratinous plates found in the jaws of whales — and blow, the substance a whale shoots up from its blowhole.

"Baleen can go back years," Dillon said.



GABRIELLA DE FREITAS

**Danielle Dillon holding a characteristically orange sample of right whale poop**

"Blow can tell you what's happening right now. Poop kind of gives us that kind of in-between time frame. Ideally, you want to have all the things, and that would tell a more complete picture of how that animal is doing."

## Preparing Boston for Climate Change by Thinking Ahead

BY GABRIELLA DE FREITAS

Temperatures are warming, ice caps are melting, and sea levels are rising. Knowing this, nonprofits like Boston Harbor Now are making plans to redevelop the waterfront to withstand rising sea levels.

Just over half of Massachusetts residents live near the coast, placing much of the population under threat of rapidly rising sea levels, according to Mass.gov. With such high stakes, Boston Harbor Now's work is crucial to the city's environmental welfare and Bostonians' safety.

Bud Ris, a trustee of Boston Harbor Now, stressed the significance of the harbor to the city, as 11 million people use the harborwalk annually. He reviews waterfront development projects and ensures they account for the gradual rise in

sea levels.

Preparing the city is not a one-man job. Ris is among several experts, scattered across public and private organizations who are transforming Boston into a climate-ready city. They're setting aside simple mitigation tactics and making the city resilient by elevating coastlines and building buffer projects like the harborwalk.

Different organizations are tackling the five coastal neighborhoods in the city as part of a plan called Climate Ready Boston. Through this "divide and conquer" mindset environmental organizations like Boston Harbor Now involve members of the community,



Bud Ris



GABRIELLA DE FREITAS

**Boston Harbor is a key spot to Bostonians**

like property owners, in preparing Boston for the consequences of climate change.

But Boston Harbor Now's work is not without its challenges. Ris pointed to the organization's concerns about the current presidential administration.

"Because of what Trump's doing, everybody's really nervous about the economy," Ris said. "Major donors are worried about the stock market and not easily giving money."

Yet this isn't the first time Boston Harbor has struggled. In 1976, Ris fell overboard into the harbor and was rushed to MGH for a tetanus shot due to the extremely poor water quality. Today, Boston Harbor is one of the cleanest in the country, as a result of an extensive \$6 billion clean-up project. "So if I fall off now, I just go swimming," said Ris.

The organization holds fundraisers, including the annual 'Spectacle on Spectacle' party to

raise money for essential projects and developments. But Boston Harbor Now and other environmental organizations need public engagement, especially from the youth.

Massachusetts hasn't seen a significant flood in a long time, decreasing the public's awareness and sense of urgency. There isn't enough involvement from the youth in resilient environmental action, Ris said. He urged the younger generation to "get active."

# Fresh Start for Boston Tenants

BY SID CHOPRA

For several years, Massachusetts has been facing an affordable housing shortage.

In 2024, Governor Maura Healey signed the Affordable Homes Act in response. The act, which went into effect in May, in part allows tenants to petition to seal their eviction records for a chance at a fresh start.

Eviction records — public documents detailing the process of removing a tenant — can hinder some people from securing housing again, according to the Mass.gov website. The law allows some people to eliminate at least one barrier to housing.

“Having any eviction on your record can bar you from finding housing,” said Daniel Jacobson, an attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services, as landlords may reject tenants with a past eviction. The law helps people who are disenfranchised or marginalized, he said.

“We’re generally talking about a lot of single mothers, a lot of [working-class] families ... frequently Black and Brown families,” said Jacobson.

He said the law has a significant social justice aspect because higher socioeconomic classes would not face eviction since, “[they’re more likely to be] paying for a mortgage.”

Aidan MacGowan, a student at Northeastern University who, along with his roommates, recently faced a \$2000-a-month rent hike, agreed with Jacobson.

“It’s more likely that a person gets evicted due to economic and political influences that create ... a need for renting,” he said.

There are two types of legal scenarios that result in the sealing of eviction records, according to Mass.gov. In the case where a tenant has not broken the lease agreement and a landlord still decides to begin the eviction process to renovate or sell the property, the tenant can seal the record immediately after an initial appeal, according to the Boston.gov website. This is a no-fault eviction case.

No-fault cases often affect immigrants, said Jacobson. “A landlord might be looking to evict them so they can renovate the building and sell it for much higher,” he said.

In the case of non-payment, if a tenant satisfies the court judgment and pays the amount owed, the tenant is able to seal his eviction record immediately.

However, when a tenant does not pay the agreed-upon amount, the eviction record can be sealed four years after the case ends.

Some landlords have voiced disappointment over the law. “The downsides to landlords are a little bit exaggerated,” Jacobson said.

He said the idea of “the professional tenant,” someone who moves from property to property, sometimes not paying rent or even damaging a property, does not exist and that “people are just trying to live.”

This law is only a “piece of the picture,” said Jacobson. It is one act in a series of movements to create greater opportunity and affordability in housing throughout the state.

There are “pushes for things like rent stabilization to ensure that rents don’t continue to spiral further out of control,” he said.



ROANA HARDY

**Robert Powers, the policy director for the Massachusetts Seal, Flag and Motto Advisory Commission, stands between the state and US flags.**

## Redesigning the Symbols of Massachusetts

BY ROANA HARDY

Massachusetts is changing its historic emblems — the flag, seal, and motto—and state leaders have sought the public’s input in reimagining the symbols that tell the state’s complete history.

So far, more than 1,100 ideas have flooded in, and many of them reflect the state’s rich cultural diversity.

Massachusetts’ growing population of more than 7.1 million people has become more culturally diverse, and 30 percent represent people of color, according to data from UMass Donahue Institute.

Members of the Massachusetts Seal, Flag, and Motto Advisory Commission, who were tasked with the redesign, said the state’s symbols should reflect not just the state’s history, but its vibrant and diverse community.

Rob Powers, policy director of the commission, which has 10 members, said the commission was asked by the Legislature to complete the redesign.

“We want to ensure this is a really inclusive public process,” Powers said.

The current Massachusetts em-

blem features the state’s coat of arms, a blue shield, and a Native American man holding a bow and arrow. Its current motto in Latin translates to “By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty.”

The origins of these symbols date back to the early 1700s, historical records show. Algernon Sidney, an English soldier, penned the motto in the 1659 book “Book of Mottoes.” Similarly, the state seal was also established in 1775, during the Revolutionary War and then changed five years later.

The diversity of Massachusetts has changed a lot since then. Since 2010, the percentage of nonwhite residents increased by 8.2% in 2020, according to state data.

Powers is in charge of assisting the commissioners and works with the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. The commission initially suggested that potential design elements include nature-based symbols native to Massachusetts, such as the right whale; the geographic shape of the state; and coastline imagery that reflects the state’s ties to the Atlantic Ocean.

The commission has received nearly 1,000 redesign ideas for the flag, and about 100 for the motto and seal.

Powers said over 25% of the submissions came from the youth of Massachusetts.

“It’s pretty cool too because we’ve had presumably really high student engagement in the process,” he said.

Powers added that having an abundance of ideas gives the committee more options to choose from and a range of diverse perspectives.

The commission has a budget of about \$200,000 to cover things such as hiring a graphic designer and bringing the finalized ideas to life, Powers said.

Powers said the commissioners will soon narrow the submission ideas and issue their redesign recommendations to Governor Maura Healey soon.

He said he hopes to have a smooth, robust process so that everyone feels included and valued, and the commissioners feel supported.

“I’d want everyone to know that this is an open process, and to stay along for the ride with us. We want to be in conversation with everyone in Massachusetts,” he said.



ROSE HOWELL

Josh Kraft at campaign office in Roxbury

## One on One with Josh Kraft

BY ROSE HOWELL

Josh Kraft is trying to do something that hasn't been done since 1949. He's trying to beat an incumbent, Mayor Michelle Wu.

He acknowledged that no incumbent mayor has lost a race in 76 years, pointing out that beating an incumbent is a "hard thing to do."

But Kraft said people want to be listened to and they don't currently feel represented by the programs of the current administration.

"I wouldn't have gotten into this if I didn't think ... we could win it, and I'm confident we're going to have success," Kraft said during an interview at his campaign headquarters in Roxbury.

Kraft is one of at least seven people seeking to unseat Wu, who has been in office since 2021. Wu's campaign did not respond to a request for an interview for this story. According to her website, the mayor "has invested more in making housing more affordable than any other administration in Boston's history." Kraft, 57, comes from an affluent family. His father, Robert Kraft, owns the New England Patriots. Josh Kraft has tried to separate himself from his family and points to his involvement in community work as an example of how he plans to lead the city.

"To me, a mayor is not about politics. It's not about big ideology," said Kraft. "It's simply about getting things done for people and knowing how to work with people."

Some Boston residents interviewed say they are unfamiliar with Kraft.

During the interview, Kraft highlighted

his 30-year ties to the Boys and Girls Club of Boston and his work with people in the prison re-entry system, as well as his nonprofit volunteer experience.

In addition to working with underserved communities, Kraft has made housing — particularly affordable housing — central to his campaign.

Current city rules require that 20 percent of all housing in the city must be affordable to low and moderate income people. Kraft said he wants to lower that affordability percentage to 13 percent.

Kraft also proposes offering tax incentives to landlords who commit to minimal rent increases for the next 10 years. But he stressed that the affordable percentage should be a fluid number.

"We have a housing emergency, not a crisis, a housing emergency," he said. "In great economic times, maybe it should be higher. In tougher economic times, like higher interest rates and construction costs, [then] knock it down. Twenty percent of nothing being built, is nothing being built."

Education is also a big campaign topic. Wu has advocated for a hybrid and elected school committee, but in 2023, she vetoed a proposal by the City Council seeking an elected school committee, according to published reports.

Kraft said he supports a hybrid elected and appointed School Committee to ensure better representation for residents.

"I want to make sure people aren't left behind," he said. "People aren't falling through the cracks."

## TLCC aims to re-write the narrative of Haitian culture in Boston

BY MARCEL ANDERSON

In an effort to uplift and celebrate Haitian culture, the Toussaint Louverture Cultural Center (TLCC) has hit the ground running in Boston's North End.

The center is a new initiative from Haitian Americans United (HAU), an organization that has been working to support Haitian people by providing resources in education, advocacy, and legal support for over 25 years.

The TLCC opened its doors on Lovejoy Wharf in May after winning a free 25-year lease through a grant, beating out other well-known North End organizations, including The North End Historical Society.

"In the past couple of years, Haiti has been in the news for only negative headlines," said Karm-Syndia Augustine, the center's program director. "We're trying to showcase a different side of us."

For example, the TLCC brought Caribbean investors and startups together at a breakfast mixer on June 25.

"People tend to have that belief that immigrants are just taking and taking and taking," Augustine said. "They don't think about the contribution aspect. We are contributing intellectually and also economically."

The center is named after Toussaint Louverture, who led Haiti to independence in a rebellion by enslaved fighters against French colonial rule. The center is committed to preserving Haitian culture through educational programs and aims to uplift and unite Boston's active Haitian community.

Only a month in, the TLCC is making strides toward its mission. The center is building relationships with Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and other cultural centers around the state. It is also providing an internship opportunity for students from Boston Public Schools (BPS). June 24 marked the first day of the internship, with four BPS students in the cohort.

"I'm excited for other people who are

not educated about Haitian culture — for them to be educated in a nice environment," said Arielle Marcedat Avi, one of the new TLCC interns.

In addition to community partnerships, the center is looking to share Haitian culture with the larger Boston community. The TLCC plans to host events including dance classes, and cooking and art lessons, "that will always be for everyone," said Augustine, who sees the center as a "cultural embassy."

"We want to share our culture with you," she said. "... Where we are bringing the culture out to the world, but we also want to bring the world to the community."

While the center has big plans for how it wants to affect the community, the first step is getting people in the door.

"My goal is to create activities to reach out to the community — whether we are reaching out to the Haitian community or the neighboring community," she said. "Let them know we're here... come in and celebrate with us."



COURTESY PHOTO

**Modern Portrait of Toussaint Louverture as part of Haitian artist's gallery.**

BY JUGEIRY PEREZ  
AND ALANA WILLIAMS

If you can't handle the heat, then get into the splash pad. Frog Pond splash pad opened on Boston Common this month as temperatures soared to the triple digits.

Bostonians, young and old, wearing swimwear and carrying beach balls, splashed and waded, taking comfort on the pond's cool waters.

"We don't come often, maybe twice a month, but we wanted to come for opening day," said Boston resident Jacelyn Virve, who attended the Frog Pond opening alongside her sons Amelio and Alex.

The opening coincided with the end of the academic year for the city's public schools and marked the beginning of summer. It also came days before the Fourth of July festivities.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu and members of the Skating Club of Boston hosted the ceremony, while officials from organizations such as the Boston Water and Sewage Commission and the nonprofit IMPACT Melanoma, dedicated to skin cancer prevention, handed out free water and shade tents to help prevent heat stroke and sunburn.

"We thought it was important to keep it happening, because it's the first day it opens, and it is such a resource for people to cool off... Things like the frog pond [...] help mitigate extreme heat," said Grace Burke, marketing and communication specialist for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department.

The Boston Fire Department, University of Massachusetts Lowell Early Minds Lab and Boston Music Project provided educational activities such as an instrument "petting zoo."

Elsa Fernandez, visiting from Florida with her three children Reagan, Riley, and Jack, appeared grateful for the Frog Pond opening. "I take my kids to the pool and I also go to places like this," she said.

The Frog Pond splash pad is open daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. until Labor Day.

# Boston's Frog Pond Opens On the Hottest Day of the Year



PHOTOS JUGEIRY PEREZ

**Above: Elsa Fernandez and her daughter Reagan dip their feet into the splash pad. Left: Children and parents splash in the water with their toys. Right: Angela, a frog statue made by local sculptor David Phillips, greets people near the splash pad on Boston Common.**

