

BETWEEN THE LINES

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50 Years: Boston's Busing Legacy Holds Lessons for the Future

BY MARY DENG

In the lobby of the Community Academy of Science and Health, student artwork celebrating Black history decorates the walls.

It was formerly the grounds of the Grover Cleveland Middle School, one of the first four schools that became integrated in 1967.

It has been 50 years since Judge W. Arthur Garrity ruled in a landmark case in favor of integrating schools by busing children into historically Black or white neighborhoods.

"There's a lot of ways the



MARY DENG/NEHSJC

Boston Public Schools yellow buses are lined up in a parking lot.

school desegregation decision is still in effect," said Lew Finfer, the director of Massachusetts Action for Justice.

In one of the academy's empty classrooms, Finfer recalled a 1975 incident at Carson Beach, the site of a violent racial clash that spurred mass protests. "[These were] the things I saw on TV that were happening in the South, in terms of opposition to desegregation," Finfer said.

The school now has a 98

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Pond-emonium: Frog Pond Springs to Life

BY CARISSA DESSIN

Children shrieked and laughed as the announcer began his countdown from 10, waiting impatiently to jump into the bubbling fountains that lined the tiled ground.

As the mist began and the smell of chlorine filled the air,

the fountain erupted and the Frog Pond Spray Pool opening ceremony was off to a splashing start.

Three-year-old Leo Purvis couldn't contain his excitement in the shallow water as he played catch with his

FROG POND

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CARISSA DESSIN/NEHSJC

Frog Pond Freddie performed the Cupid Shuffle.



JILL CLARDY/CREATIVE COMMONS

Faneuil Hall Marketplace

New Program Focuses on Stories of Enslavement

BY DAVID LUCCI

The Boston Reparations Task Force, or RTF, headed by Joseph Feaster Jr., is working to heal the city's racial divide by assessing how to help residents whose ancestors have been affected by the Massachusetts slave trade.

Its latest project, the Community Grassroots Program, allocated \$70,000 to collect stories from local families with a history of enslavement. Launched in June, it aims to shine light on the history of slavery in Boston and to move toward developing more racial tolerance in the state.

The Massachusetts slave trade was active from 1638 until the abolishment of slavery in 1783. During that time, more than 2,300 people were enslaved in Boston, making up 2.2% of the population.

The RTF, established by an ordinance from the Boston City Council in December 2022, follows a three phase reparation process.

Phase One plans to research the impact of

TASK FORCE

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FROG POND

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CARISSA DESSIN/NEHSJC

Mayor Michelle Wu, a large proponent of the Frog Pond Spray Pool, engages with the community.

mother, Elizabeth Purvis, in the spray pool, which opened in 1947. They frequently visit the Frog Pond Spray Pool in the summer and the ice skating rink in the winter.

“We love the Frog Pond,” Elizabeth Purvis said. “Here in the city, it’s so hot in the summer, so it’s important for them to have a place to cool off and play with other kids.”

As a Boston resident, Elizabeth Purvis and her family are “grateful for things like this that make it so great to live here.”

Around the perimeter of the pond, vendors such as New England Dairy and the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition interacted with eager families who were present for the opening day. The Frog

Pond Spray Pool is open everyday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and will remain open until Labor Day.

Grace Burke, marketing and communication specialist for the Boston Parks and Recreation Dept., helped promote the event in person and on social media, and worked with media outlets to get the word out.

Growing up in Boston and visiting the pool as a child, Burke was glad to play a role in keeping the tradition alive. “[The most rewarding part] of this is watching how excited the kids get when we countdown from 10 for them to get into the pool — it’s almost impossible to hold them back,” she said.

New Boston resident Jessica Gibson found out about the opening after her husband read a poster promoting the celebration and decided to attend. “[My family] loves community events and it’s so fun to see so many kids and families,” Gibson said.

Gibson’s first week in Boston truly lived up to her and her husband’s expectations. “This is one of the big reasons why we wanted to move to the city,” she said. “We wanted events like this and a sense of community.”



DAVID LUCCI/NEHSJC

Attorney Joseph Feaster sits at his office.

TASK FORCE

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slavery on the city, finding candidates that qualify for reparations. Phase Two features a recommendation to Mayor Michelle Wu on the types of reparations granted. Phase Three consists of implementing the reparations to the community.

Phase One’s initial deadline was June 2023, but was pushed back to December 2024 in favor of “doing the appropriate deliberations.” As of this month, Phase One has not been completed.

“I say, ‘Folks, hey, this has been going on for 400 years, so don’t rush through the process,’” Feaster said.

The concept of reparations for former slaves is centuries old, but formal action has only been proposed

within the last 35 years. In 1989, U.S. Rep. John Conyers, D -MI, introduced H.R. 40 into Congress. The bill, which would have explored restitutions for descendants of slavery in the United States, has yet to pass the House as of now.

Feaster hopes the program will continue the work of men like John Conyers, allowing families to take a closer look at their ancestry and its ties to slavery.

“It allows [the descendants] to tell their story,” Feaster said. “If nothing else, it’ll... [allow] families to get an understanding of their own lineage.”

“To those who say, ‘My ancestors did it, why should I be held responsible?’” Feaster says, “You may not have...[done] the acts, but you are benefitting from it,

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Lew Finfer

percent minority enrollment. During the ‘70s busing crisis, the building served as an asylum for white and Black members of the Dorchester Community Action Council. However, Boston’s violent busing legacy still resonates.

“If someone moves to Boston and is Black, sometimes their friends from the other city go, ‘Why are you moving there? Don’t you know its reputation?’” Finfer said.

In recent years, Boston Public Schools’ enrollment decreased from 90,000 in 1960 to 45,000 in 2024 according to Boston Indicators, and



MARY DENG/NEHSJC

Student artwork of the Community Academy of Science and Health.

widening achievement gaps have plagued the school system.

Despite Boston Public Schools’ large minority demographic, ESL learners have received inadequate

support, and declining enrollment has urged consolidation plans. This has driven “white flight,” leading parents scrambling toward the METCO program and Boston’s three exam schools.

According to experts, efforts should be directed to addressing family instability, which is a main contributor to poor educational outcomes — not funding or busing.

The Boston Busing and Desegregation Initiative hopes to urge future policy changes. In June, it held a forum with plaintiffs from the Tallulah Morgan vs. James Hennigan court case and will host a walking tour examining busing’s legacy through several of Boston’s major landmarks.

“We stand on the shoulders of people who took risks and got things done before us,” Finfer said. “And we’re obligated to create changes that will help people now in the future.”

Decisions Matter

Visitors to Boston may only think of it as a city home to Fenway Park and the harbor. While these landmarks are some of the city's most notable attributes, Boston's neighborhoods are its foundation. They foster a sense of community that empowers individuals to make decisions aimed at contributing to society.

we've set out to not only recognize community decisions, but also understand the motivations behind them. Our publication, *Between the Lines*, highlights those narratives' intricacies. Although the students of this workshop represent only small pockets of New England, our diverse backgrounds have allowed us to collaborate. While we all have varying levels of journalistic

While we all have varying levels of journalistic experience, our goal is the same: to use journalism as a tool to uplift and serve others.

Yet their decision-making processes often fall between the lines.

We all make decisions every day, from choosing what cereal to eat to deciding who to vote for. Some choices, such as celebrating the opening of the Frog Pond or providing teens with educational voting resources, shape Boston but are nonetheless overlooked.

We're making a decision to prevent these stories from slipping through the cracks.

Throughout this workshop,

experience, our goal is the same: to use journalism as a tool to uplift and serve others.

We want our efforts in covering these stories to parallel the effort individuals put into bringing together Boston. All decisions, no matter how big or small, have an impact.

— ISABELLA HILL, DANIEL O'TOOLE, GRACE YANG

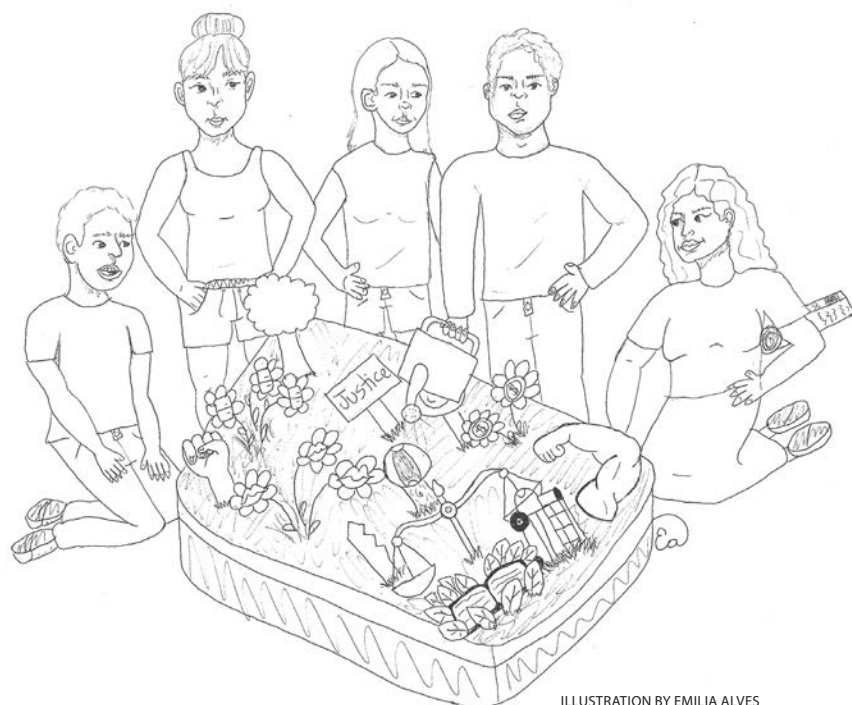


ILLUSTRATION BY EMILIA ALVES

*Students water
the garden of choice.*

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SPECIAL THANKS

Mary Kaye Leonard
The Carole C. Remick Foundation

Tara Cleary
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Stone Wall Blocks Flow of Community Spirit

BY EMILIA ALVES

Birds chirp from the trees, the Neponset River flows peacefully and children can be seen playing on the swings at Kennedy Playground in Mattapan.

But citizens of this neighborhood are unable to fully enjoy the scenery — a stone wall, unkempt vegetation, and litter stand in their way. The Edgewater initiative has been working for 15 years to open up the river to Edgewater residents and will start construction as soon as spring 2025.

Vivien Morris, longtime resident of Edgewater Drive and a pioneer in the Edgewater Neighborhood Association, has helped construct the Edgewater Food Forest, the Kennedy community garden and the Kennedy Playground in Mattapan.

The Kennedy Playground is a children's park on the edge of the river that serves to further bring the community together.

"It's crucial for our children," Morris said.

The park borders the overgrown and inaccessible space beside the river which

is set to be cleared up and converted into a walkable space.

The six-block long, almost 5-foot tall stone wall which blocks Edgewater's access to the river, "was built as part of what was called the Works Progress Administration back in the 1930s," Morris said.

Although building the wall was unnecessary, it served as an opportunity for employment, she added.

Almost 90 years later, the wall is still standing and preventing the community from accessing the picturesque landscape that lines the neighborhood. The initiative calls for lowering the wall in certain areas, as well as building more entrances for easier access.

Spending time in nature is known to have major mental and physical health benefits, and Morris believes in this sentiment strongly.

"All of these things are just really good at helping you relax," she said. "And it's a nice thing to spend time with others ... It's just good for us all."

For years, Mattapan didn't have safe



EMILIA ALVES/NEHSJC

Vivien Morris in the Kennedy Playground.

access to the river, unlike the Milton community. This shows the state's lack of motivation to offer resources to low-income communities, especially to those like Mattapan, with a majority being people of

color.

Opening up the waterfront, while a small step, is proof of the city's commitment toward making community spaces more accessible.

Roslindale's Butcher: Tony DeBenedictis

BY TERRANCE LORN

Antonio DeBenedictis dreamed of being an opera conductor, but his father quickly rejected the idea, saying "all musicians die poor." Instead, he became an award-winning butcher providing Roslindale and surrounding towns with his personality and imported Italian groceries.

Born in 1939 in Pratola Serra, a small town in Italy, DeBenedictis was the oldest of nine siblings. At the age of 19, his world changed when he emigrated to the United States.

Before becoming Roslindale's

favorite butcher, he first worked sewing clothes. He found that he was unfit for sewing, and in 1963

Everything's fresh; it's like an old school deli. These guys are great.

DUFFY, DEBENEDICTIS' CUSTOMER

he jumped at the opportunity to buy a butcher shop in Dedham Square for \$8,000.

Although he knew nothing about running a grocery store, he decided to sell meats, along with Italian delicacies. And in June,



TERRANCE LORN/NEHSJC

Tony prepares for customers

he was presented one of Boston's Business Legacy Awards by Mayor Michelle Wu.

His community has continuously supported him throughout his career, some patrons trav-

eling as many as 60 miles for his imported groceries. One of DeBenedictis' regular customers, called Duffy, shared his thoughts about the shop: "Everything's fresh; it's like an old school deli.

These guys are great."

DeBenedictis often brings his love of opera and ballroom dancing into the store, entertaining his customers with his brand of singing and dancing.

During the pandemic, as businesses struggled to make ends meet, his shop thrived with customers repeatedly coming back. "It was crazy busy, no one went out to eat, so they came here," DeBenedictis said.

After recently receiving his business legacy award, the 85-year-old said: "You get rewarded, it always feels good." DeBenedictis' personality and imported groceries have allowed him to serve his community for 61 years — and he's still making an impact.

He may not have become an opera conductor, but has found fame through an unlikely passion.

What's in the fridge?

Feeding Hope in Harvard Square

BY REESE LINCOLN

In Harvard Square, there is a little shed with a big impact. The Fridge in the Square is a mutual aid operation fighting food insecurity through open food access and has been serving the area for years.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment, housing instability and food insecurity each rose significantly. Concerned Cambridge residents came to Denise Jillson, the executive director of the Harvard Square Business Association, in December 2020 with the idea of the community fridge.

She knew it was a worthwhile pursuit and spearheaded the initiative.

"I will put up with the mess... because at the end of the day... we're serving a need in the community," she said.

Since then, the Fridge in the Square has been a major catalyst for community action. Donors stock the fridge with nutritious foods, including fresh produce, meats and pre-made meals.

Jillson herself uses donation money to stock the supplies for individuals and households.

The fridge, initially placed outside The Sinclair on Church Street in early 2021, was relocated outside the First Parish Church in Cambridge on Massachusetts Avenue later in July. It has stayed there for the past three years.

It's not just individual donors, either; many organizations have been eager to help the cause.

BREATHE Cambridge, a local yoga studio, held a free outdoor class and food drive from June 21-23. This past year, Lesley University's Threshold Program, a class for young neurodivergent adults, partnered with Fridge in the Square, sending students to First Parish twice a week to drop off donations and make an estimation of



DENISE JILLSON/HSBA

The fridge is seen fully stocked at the First Parish Church in Cambridge, MA.



Denise Jillson

70-80 bagged lunches weekly.

Still, Jillson said food in the fridge leaves as quickly as it enters. "Food insecurity is real," she said.

Jillson said the Fridge in the Square has done a lot of good for a lot of people. She said this is on par with the Cambridge community, which has always supported its people.

"I think Cambridge has always been a community [that is] all about social justice, social awareness," she said.

There have been struggles — due to outdoor exposure, for example, the organization had to replace the fridge three times. Still, the program perseveres, and Jillson believes it will for a long time to come.

"It has become part of the fabric of the community," she said.

Hector Sonero taking a look at what is available in the fridge for the day.

LEIRE CUBERES BARLUENGA/NEHSJC

Moving around in Allston and Brighton

BY LEIRE CUBERES BARLUENGA

The Allston and Brighton Community Fridge and Pantry, a mutual aid effort created in 2020 to combat food insecurity, has shut down and relocated a number of times in recent years.

Organized by neighbors of Allston-Brighton, the effort consists of a colorful fridge and shed, containing foods and materials that volunteers routinely restock. They typically serve the elderly or immigrants, volunteer Emily Schubin said.

"It's so rare that there's a resource available to people unrestricted 24 hours a day with no barriers to access it," she said.

These relocations have traveled throughout Allston and Brighton, including Union Square, Oliveira's Deli and, currently, Brighton's Congregational Church.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity rose, resulting in a need for community fridges. Over time, the number of statewide fridges grew to 20. However, this number has since dwindled down to 12.

"About 1 in 4 families with children across the state are food insecure," long-time volunteer and Allston-Brighton resident Megan Ramette said. "Each closure of a community fridge has a massive negative impact."

Hector Sonero, a Brighton resident and father of five, expressed in Spanish his reliance on the fridge and pantry alongside his wife and a cart of food.

"We have people who visit the fridge,

constantly, all hours of the day. No matter the weather, no matter what day of the week. That tells you that there is a tremendous amount of need," Schubin said.

Some of the difficulties volunteers have faced included miscommunications with landlords and evictions. In one instance, a landlord purposefully unplugged a fridge, spoiling food worth hundreds of dollars.

Additionally, when the fridges shut down and their visitors would ask about alternatives, volunteers had difficulty responding.

"There's a massive difference between information about food pantries miles away and a meal in hand to eat right away," Ramette said.

Schubin said that gentrification is a possible cause of marginalization of those in need, putting mutual aid efforts through difficult decisions such as relocating. Most lack support from hosts or communities in donations and care, leaving them to abandon neighborhoods in dire need and with few resources.

"When you see every member of your community as your neighbor, you cannot ignore their suffering," Ramette said.

However, volunteers are hopeful for the fridge's future.

"I'm so grateful for the support of this host site," Ramette said, "and I see this location as a very stable site."

"I'm so grateful for the support of this host site," Ramette said, "and I see this location as a very stable site."





Meet the staff of Between the Lines



Ariana Mohamed

Ariana Mohamed, 18, is a graduate of New Britain High School in Connecticut. She plans to major in communications at the University of Connecticut in the fall. Ariana is an active member of her local community, working at the town library and local newspaper, the New Britain Herald. During high school, she was a member of the choir and helped manage her school district's social media accounts. She also served as a class representative in her school's student government. Ariana hopes to use the NEHSJC program to improve her interviewing skills in her pursuit of a career as a professional journalist. **BY DAVID LUCCI**



Ella Namiranian

Ella Namiranian, 16, is a rising junior at Buckingham Browne and Nichols School in Cambridge. She writes for her school newspaper, The Vanguard, and enjoys reporting on feminism, recently writing about the struggles Iranian women face. In addition to English, Ella speaks Swedish, Persian, Spanish, and some French. In her free time, Ella enjoys working as a life-guard and playing lacrosse or squash. During the NEHSJC program, she hopes to develop her journalism skills, gain a better understanding of media ethics, and connect with professionals in the field. In the future, she hopes to study law or medicine.

BY EMILIA ALVES



Carissa Dessin

Carissa Dessin, 16, is a rising senior at Andover High School. As an aspiring broadcast journalist, she writes for her school newspaper, The AndoverView, where she's sports editor. Since her sophomore year, she has been interested in sports topics that go beyond game coverage and player profiles. Outside of journalism, she is an advocate for diversity and equity at her school as president of its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Student Advisory Council and Black Student Union. She also volunteers with the town's Diversity and Inclusion Commission. Carissa also enjoys reading, writing, assembling crafts, and working on her sports podcast. **BY MARY DENG**



Emilia Alves

Emilia Alves, 16, is a rising junior at Ludlow High School in Massachusetts. She was drawn to journalism after writing articles in her school newspaper, The Cub, focused on the local community. Outside of journalism, Emilia enjoys being creative in different mediums of art, including writing short stories and drawing. She has been a member of many of her school's clubs and volunteers at her town's public library. Emilia wants to pursue a writing career. During the NEHSJC program, she hopes to improve her writing skills and become a more professional writer.

BY SIBRINA YOHANNES



Daniel O'Toole

Daniel O'Toole, 18, is a recent graduate of Malden High School. He was a three-sport athlete who participated in field hockey, indoor track, and crew. He was editor in chief at his school newspaper, The Blue and Gold, one of the oldest high school newspapers in the country. Outside of school, he volunteers at his local church and has worked at a pizzeria since his sophomore year. His strongest trait is time management. As an aspiring journalist, he will be attending Emerson College with an interest in sports media in the fall. **BY ARIANA MOHAMED**



Gavin Lin

Gavin Lin, 17, is a rising senior at Noble and Greenough School in Dedham, Massachusetts. In addition to writing for his school paper, The Nobleman, Gavin writes for his school magazine, Nobellium, as well as for local online and print news organizations where he covers community events. He enjoys mountain biking with friends, photographing wildlife, and flying drones. Gavin hopes to become a journalist, and he is thrilled to gain professional experience and hone his passion for writing through the New England High School Journalism Collaborative.

BY REESE LINCOLN



David Lucci

David "Ric" Lucci, 16, is a rising junior at Lincoln High School in Rhode Island. Passionate about journalism, Ric currently writes for his school newspaper, The Lion's Roar. An academic, Ric is on the school honor roll and has played in his school band since the sixth grade. He is also a member of the ski and snowboard club. In his free time, he runs on his track team and has a newfound love of cars. Hoping to become a writer for Men's Health Magazine, Ric plans to study biochemistry and writing in college.

BY TERRANCE LORN



Grace Yang

Grace Yang, 15, is a rising sophomore at Newton South High School. Grace's interest in journalism stems from her enjoyment of writing social commentary, which led her to become an editor of the opinion section of her school newspaper, The Lion's Roar. Throughout her freshman year, Grace also kept busy as a class officer and as a member of the debate team and High School Democrats of America. With the dream of working as a journalist for a multimedia company, Grace hopes to improve her news reporting skills as a strong foundation. **BY DANIEL O'TOOLE**



Isabella Hill

Isabella Hill, 17, is a rising senior at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. She is the editor-in-chief of her school newspaper, The Spectrum, and also works with her local paper, Boxborough News, where she launched their newsletter and runs their social media platforms. Isabella is also passionate about activism, runs the social media and outreach for a nonprofit called Kids Teaching Kids Acton and contributes to the website and volunteers for the Acton Boxborough Student Activities Fund. In the future, Isabella hopes to combine her passions for social justice and journalism to pursue a communications career on a pre-law track. **BY CARISSA DESSIN**



Serena Hu

Serena Hu, 17, is a rising senior at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. She loves asking questions to learn more about people and their stories. During a multicultural journalism summer program, she wrote about the history of segregation at the University of Alabama. Serena is also interested in computer science and hopes to combine data analysis with journalism in a possible career. She created her own Hackathon club at school. In her free time, she enjoys giving back to her community through volunteering and serving on Sudbury's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission. **BY ISABELLA HILL**



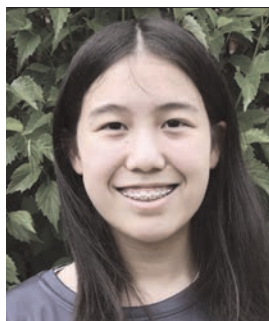
Leire Cuberes Barluenga

Leire Cuberes Barluenga, 17, is a rising senior at the Goddard Scholars Academy at South High Community School in Worcester. Leire is a long-distance runner and captain of her school's cross-country and track teams. She enjoys playing the piano and being a member of the Tri-M Music Honor Society. She also recently founded and serves as vice president of the Latinx and Hispanic Student Alliance at her school. Leire is an editor and translator for The Colonel Chronicle and former treasurer and editor of The Apricot Journal, both at her school. She plans to study journalism or communications in college. **BY ELLA NAMIRANIAN**



Sibrina Yohannes

Sibrina Yohannes, 18, is a graduate of the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science in Boston. She has been a member of her school's journalism club since seventh grade and has actively contributed to the Rubix literary magazine since her junior year. Sibrina is drawn to multimedia journalism because it uses both photography and writing to inform communities. After taking a gap year, she wants to double major in English and STEM-related subjects. Aside from journalism, Sibrina enjoys reading, biking, playing tennis, and swimming. **BY GRACE YANG**



Mary Deng

Mary Deng, 15, is a rising junior at Boston Latin School. Working as a news editor for her school newspaper, The Argo, Mary enjoys covering her school's current events. In addition to potentially studying journalism, Mary is drawn to the STEM field and is considering working as a physician. She is also an officer for her school's Science Olympiad Team and a member of the youth advisory board for an Asian American youth research project at Brigham and Women's Hospital. In her free time, Mary tutors children at her church, reads, makes music, and spends time with family and friends. **BY LEIRE CUBERES BARLUENGA**



Terrance Lorn

Terrance Lorn, 17, is a rising senior at Lowell High School. He is an honor roll student and is in the top 20 percent of the class. He hopes to pursue his new-found passion of journalism as a potential career. His interest in journalism developed from his love of making new friends as well as his curiosity about several professional fields, including real estate, business and finance. Outside of journalism, Terrance loves playing football, basketball, and volleyball and spending time with friends and family. He plans to major in either journalism or business in college. **BY GAVIN LIN**



Reese Lincoln

Reese Lincoln, 16, is a rising senior at Moultonborough Academy in New Hampshire. Reese loves spreading awareness through writing and hopes to become a published author. She also enjoys drama and recently wrote a skit on the relevance of Julia Child in modern cuisine and cooking culture. After high school, she hopes to pursue a career in psychology and kindergarten education because she enjoys working with children. Outside of school, Reese's favorite activity is baking, and she also enjoys serving as a dungeon master in Dungeons and Dragons campaigns, which she plays with her friends. **BY SERENA HU**



Young Voters Take On This Year's Election

BY ARIANA MOHAMED

In the upcoming presidential election, many voters will cast their ballots for the first time, but are deterred by the strong opinions of the two candidates.

According to the Massachusetts Secretary of State's office, there have been 175,847 newly registered voters compared to last year. At Northeastern University, young voters shared their thoughts on this year's election.

"People are kind of displeased with both of the candidates. And so it doesn't feel great voting for either of them, which kind of turns people away from voting at all," said Danielle Stone, an 18-year-old from Rhode Island.

Another student added, Siddakk Chatrah, "I think also as a person of color and as a child of immigrants, the overall climate was very different in those times as well."

Chatrah said there were a lot of "shifts that I saw growing up that were harmful."

He said that is what is motivating him to vote and get more involved in civil service as a citizen. For Henry Madden, 19, of Roxbury, voting is his responsibility.

"I can vote, so I should vote," he said. "Not everyone has the privilege to vote in the world,

or even people in this country because of their circumstances, but I can, so I feel as though I should."

At MassINC Polling Group, a company that gathers public opinion from various polls, Senior Research Director Rich Parr said he thinks many young people will not be voting in this year's election because of the two candidates who are running for president.

"Sometimes, you need to make the choice that's the best for you, based on the options even if you're not thrilled with both of the options that you're being presented with," Parr said.

In his 11 years at MassINC Polling Group, Parr has seen how data has changed throughout the years.

"A lot of polls have also been showing that Biden is getting less of a share of young voters than maybe you might typically see for [a] Democrat," Parr said.

However, he stressed that all young voters should go to the polls to weigh in on what they think is best for them and the country.

"You still should vote even if you're not thrilled with the candidates," he said. "But sometimes, you need to make the choice."



ARIANA MOHAMED/NEHSJC

Left: Henry Madden. Right: Danielle Stone.

Managing the Voices of the People

BY DANIEL O'TOOLE

One of the most important elections in the history of the country has put polls and public opinion into the spotlight.

With so much misinformation floating around, MassINC Polling Group has worked to correct this issue by taking a different approach compared to other polling agencies.

Founded in 2010 under Steve Koczela, the organization's current president, MassINC focuses its efforts and resources on Massachusetts communities in order to gain a greater understanding of residents.

By being local, it can expect certain demographics to have certain beliefs and can better detect inaccuracies in data collection based on those expectations.

"Before we get there and start serving questions, we understand the relationship that their opinion has to the rest of the state in a way that a pollster who doesn't know Massachusetts wouldn't," Senior Research Director Rich Parr said.

The group often receives accusations of misinformation on polls, but criticisms typically stem from a lack of polling literacy and understanding survey results, Parr said.

"Even though people would say you got it wrong, if you look at the way these polls work, we were closer than anybody else," Parr said. "There's a bit of education that has to go on about how polls work and how accurate polls can be."

In the 2016 election, MassINC predicted Hillary Clinton to win New Hampshire by one point, and the company was criticized when she didn't. But with a margin of error of 1.5, predicting a win by one point isn't definite, which leads to confusion.

In order to prevent cases of misin-



DANIEL O'TOOLE/NEHSJC

Senior Research Director Rich Parr at the MassINC Polling office.

formation, MassINC has developed new methods of data collection over the last decade.

A simple online survey has quality and bias concerns from its respondents, but MassINC has implemented measures that track the speed of survey completion, answer patterns and open-ended questions for personalized responses, Parr said.

MassINC hasn't stopped its innovations there. The polling group's podcast, "The Horse Race," focusing on policies and politics, uses its data alongside current events to accurately inform listeners.

Parr is eager for the beginning of the election season to test MassINC's polling accuracy and turnout with voters.

"We can still learn from them in terms of techniques of how to check our data, how to sample properly," he said. "What are the best ways to ensure that people will take your survey? What incentive is the right incentive to get people to respond?"

Recognizing Chinatown's History, Step-by-Step

BY GRACE YANG

公為下天 —

“A world shared by all,” reads Boston Chinatown’s entrance, a gateway to the city’s rich Chinese heritage and a trail dotted with markers.

Launched by the non-profit organization Chinatown Community Land Trust, or CCLT, the Immigrant History Trail strives to preserve Chinatown’s history.

With plaques and QR codes, the trail is a multimedia art project and educational resource. Its physical and digital elements document working-class immigrants’ stories, many of whom have historically struggled to find affordable housing. Yet, according to Lydia Lowe, the community continues to face challenges, despite increased awareness.

“The cost of housing is a really big issue, leading to displacement for a lot of people,” said Lowe, executive director of CCLT, which focuses on community control of land.



Lydia Lowe

Having grown up without Chinese communities, Lowe struggled with her identity, leading her to volunteer in San Francisco Chinatown. Her participation made her feel committed “to improving Chinatown as a place for our community.”

Part of Chinatown’s disregarded history is its Chinese working-class immigrant population. Their class status puts them at “the bottom rung of the social ladder,” Lowe said. Being an immigrant also exacerbates some individuals’ inability to find affordable housing, as Lowe said there is a lack of security associated with immigrant status. The Immigrant History Trail aims to combat societal ignorance of those challenges.

“Most of Chinatown’s history has been overlooked,” Lowe said, which motivated the creation of the multimedia art project.



GRACE YANG/NEHSJC

An advertisement for The Kensington, which is luxury housing in Chinatown, against the backdrop of older buildings and new developments.

For example, in the 1990s, New England Medical Center proposed to build a parking garage on Chinatown’s Parcel C. Residents protested and voted against the proposal in a referendum. Their efforts resulted in Parcel C becoming reserved for affordable housing and community usage.

“Unless you tell that story and keep shar-

ing that story, people will forget,” Lowe said.

As time goes on, CCLT plans to continue expanding the Immigrant History Trail. By adding new markers each year, the non-profit hopes “to do justice to the history of different places” and promote Chinatown’s history.

“This is a chance to have histories of ordinary people recorded and shared,” she said.

Lost in Translation: Struggles and Hopes of Asian Immigrants

BY SERENA HU

Qingling Mei received a middle school education and worked at a doorknob factory in Guangdong Province. But because of the highly competitive nature of GaoKao, China’s national college entrance exam, she was unable to advance her education.

Mei, 41, immigrated to the United States eight years ago, but she is unable to speak English. Having spent her entire life in Guangdong Province, Mei decided to move with her two children to join her husband, who had immigrated three years earlier.

Though she personally strug-

gles with English, Mei hopes her children can take advantage of the opportunities here otherwise not found in her homeland.

Mei’s comments were translated from her native dialect into Mandarin, which was then translated to English for this interview.

Due to her lack of English proficiency, Mei struggled to find employment in Boston, and the challenge intensified when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, causing many restaurants that Chinese immigrants relied on for work to close down.

Mei is not alone in her immigration journey. According to the city of Boston, 25% of the foreign-born population in the city are Asian or



SERENA HU/NEHSJC

A family walks underneath the Chinatown Gate.

Pacific Islanders.

For younger Asian American immigrants like her 16-year-old child, Mei recounted how they wrestled with adapting to a foreign culture and language at school.

Fanny Lio, Mei’s caseworker from the Asian American Civic Association, an organization dedicated to supporting immigrants, said some of the people she assists know so little English, they are un-

able to spell their own names.

Immigrants often cannot sign important documents for special benefit programs, Lio said. The organization provides Mei and other low-income families with financial assistance for housing and food. It also offers emergency aid to the elderly, disabled, and children and education programs to help immigrants achieve economic independence.

Angelina O’Connor, a college student from Boston who also assists in Asian community work, said she often sees immigrants encounter racial prejudice and struggle to familiarize themselves with their new country.

“When I was out with my Filipino relatives, a lot of people did look down on them mainly because they were either speaking Tagalog or had a Filipino accent,” O’Connor said.

“People just treated them as lesser than even though they are incredibly smart.”

Ballots and Brains: Encouraging Young People to Vote

BY ELLA NAMIRANIAN

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, four high schoolers around Boston will attend MassVOTE's Young Civic Leaders program to encourage young people to make an impact in their communities.

"MassVOTE is an organization that works to protect voting rights for people, particularly people in low-income communities," said Bridgit Brown, the leader of the program.

Founded in 2007 by MassVOTE Executive Director Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, the Young Civic Leaders program was begun as a response to the lack of youth understanding of and involvement in American politics and government.

This summer, Brown plans on taking the students to visit political institutions, such as the Statehouse, where they will meet Gov. Maura Healey and her council members.

During the program, students will also create a webpage on Massvote.org. This year, the website will educate the electorate on the candidates running for the Governor's Council and their role in various legislations, the appointment of judges, and the granting of pardons.

Although members worked to encourage the public to vote for upcoming elections through the MassVOTE webpage, participation became limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the summer program was temporarily shut down.

In the past few years, involvement increased again, which prompted MassVOTE to restart the summer program.

Before the pandemic, students started the work that will be continued this summer. After workshops and hands-on activities, the students conducted mini-lectures around the city and at different schools like Suffolk University. The students also added resources to the MassVOTE webpage to spread political awareness to primarily low-income communities and youth in Boston.

"The program was pivotal because it opened me up to the possibilities [of] the real world and how we can change things," said Vivian Mihalí, a member of the program from 2017 to 2020.

"It really influenced me," she said.

Through reinvigorating the program, MassVOTE continues to help young people realize how much of an impact they can make in the political world.

"High school students are going to have a lot of influence and what they do now determines the fate of the next 10 years," Brown said.



ISABELLA HILL/NEHSJC

Shawnta Reid, who organized the job fair for the Massachusetts Trial Court, said the aim is to help people on probation have access to a variety of resources.

Probation job fair expands beyond employment

BY ISABELLA HILL

People on probation often struggle to find employment to support themselves and their families.

It's tough to find high-paying jobs that also accommodate people with criminal records.

"I thought having all the resources...in one place would be helpful," said Shawnta Reid, a pretrial services coordinator for the Massachusetts Trial Courts.

Reid was instrumental in launching the Trial Courts' first Community Connections Resource and Job Fair in June that aimed to connect people with criminal records to employers. The event also included access to housing information, mental health services and educational training. These services help to reduce recidivism rates.

The Roxbury job fair, organized by the Massachusetts Probation Department, is one of 18 held across the state in June. It reflects a shift in probation policy away from purely punitive measures, Reid said.

"When you think of a probation officer, you think of a hard-nose kind of tough person," Coria Holland, the probation spokeswoman. "That's not probation anymore — probation officers are trying to meet the needs of those

they supervise."

Having a "one-stop shop" reduces the burden on people on probation to seek support in scattered places, Reid said.

These resources encourage "prosocial" behavior in which individuals have the tools to integrate more effectively into society, achieve personal growth and reduce the likelihood of reoffending, Reid said.

Additionally, the department also has an eReminder Program, which notifies defendants of court appearance obligations, minimizes unnecessary pretrial detention and reduces failure to appear rates.

The Probation Department also has improved access to mental health, housing and insurance services, Reid said.

Reid said that having reduced access to these services prevents people on probation from getting the treatment they need to rebuild their lives.

In addition to rehabilitation programs, Massachusetts has hosted around 30 community engagement events since March.

"It's not [about] trying to catch them when they're wrong," Reid said. "It's [about] trying to help them."

Campus Uproar: Students Join Protests Over Gaza Occupation

BY GAVIN LIN

At Northeastern University this spring, students set up camp, waving Palestinian flags, chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!”

At other universities across the country, students initiated similar encampments to protest the military occupation of Gaza by Israel in response to the Hamas terrorist attack in October 2023.

Ali Caudle, a Northeastern student, said that the protests were intended to pressure universities to make change.

“They generally follow the same themes of divest, denounce [and] disclose,” Caudle said.

She criticized Northeastern for indirectly using students’ tuition money “to fund dropping bombs on innocent civilians.”

“We were hoping for, if not meeting all three demands, at least disclosing and denouncing [the war],” she said.

Northeastern shut down the encampments, citing both student and campus safety risks that arose from the growth of the encampment’s size and the use of anti-semitic slurs.

“The persistent use of intolerant and hurtful speech over the course of two days reached a crescendo late Friday night,” Northeastern administration explained in a statement. “Hate speech has no place in any decent so-



Ali Caudle

ciety, least of all on a college campus.”

Other institutions took similar approaches to handling the student encampments. At MIT, the administration was forced to arrest protesters and suspend students after the protest became increasingly tense.

However, at Brown University, administrators took a more collaborative approach. The university agreed to meet with student representatives to divest funds going toward companies funding the Israeli military. In October, the Corporation of Brown University will vote on whether the university will divest the funds.

Despite their size and prominence around the country, this is not the first time universities have encountered student encampments and protests. During the 1960s, student protests over the Vietnam War turned violent when students began to set fire to Reserve Officers’ Training Corps buildings.

Back in Boston, Caudle believed the encampments improved awareness.

“I think we proved our point,” she said. “We showed what we believe in, and if people don’t want to listen to us, well, they’re probably on the wrong side of history.”



MARY BOSCH/THE DAILY CARDINAL

Students at the University of Wisconsin Madison gather to protest the Israeli occupation of Gaza.



COURTESY PHOTO

The staff of Massachusetts Voter Table

Coalition Determined to Change Voting

BY SIBRINA YOHANNES

Shanique Rodriguez steers the way for progress, urging more Massachusetts voters of under-represented backgrounds to go to the voting booth.

Rodriguez works as executive director of the Massachusetts Voter Table, a Boston social worker organization committed to representing marginalized voters.

“It’s really important that we continuously engage and build trust for those folks to engage in our elections because that’s how we move towards a more multiracial democracy,” Rodriguez said.

The nonprofit establishes trust with voters by talking to communities. Rodriguez said voters were more likely to turnout when they were contacted than those who were not, showing voters will turnout when connected with the right resources and support.

“They’re the best people to do that work because they know the lay of the land,” Rodriguez said. “They know their community and they know the people in the community.”

The organization uses foreign language interpreters when teaching the importance of voting to underserved communities.

The group has representatives who

work to reach voters in all areas of Massachusetts, instead of just focusing on Greater Boston. In 2023, the goal of reaching 300,000 voters in key demographics was hit.

Achieving voter engagement has not always been easy. The Massachusetts Voter Table struggles with funding, in comparison to other political machines, Rodriguez said.

The organization also faces citizen disinterest in politics. After dealing with the recent pandemic, inflation and shelter crises, Rodriguez said many eligible voters are desensitized to social issues and do not bother to vote.

The group hopes to make an impact in increasing voting rates in specific communities for the upcoming election, Rodriguez said, and getting more residents involved in the election process and politics.

With this organization gaining momentum, Rodriguez hopes to see change in the future with a higher voter turnout rate. She said there are other organizations focused on voter engagement that collaborate with the Massachusetts Voter Table.

“So much of our lives is run by politics,” Rodriguez said. “Pretending it doesn’t exist and opting out doesn’t change anything.”

