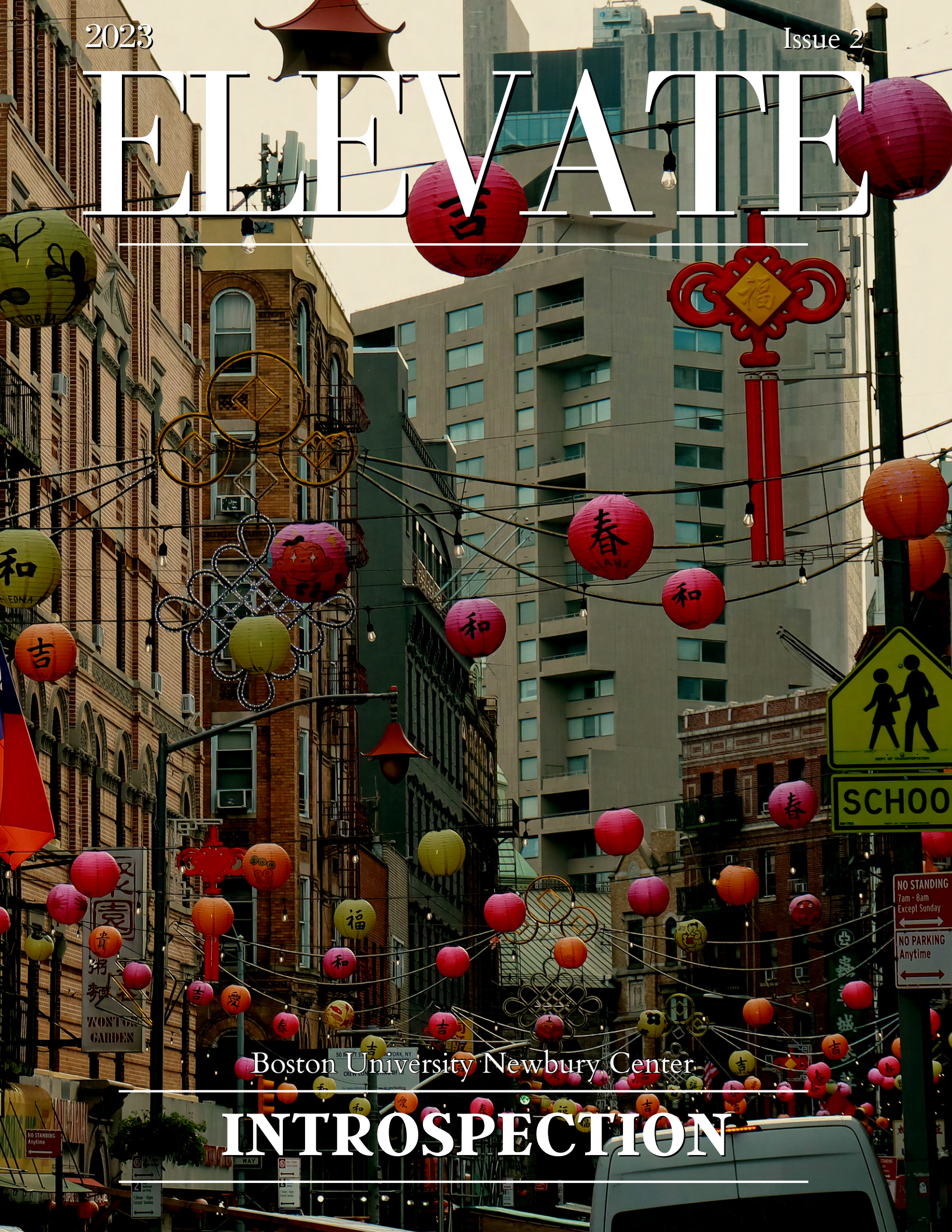


2023

Issue 2

# ELEVATE



Boston University Newbury Center

# INTROSPECTION

Cover Photo  
by Jerry Chen

*in·tro·spec·tion (noun): a reflective looking inward:  
examination of and attention  
to one's own ideas, thoughts, and feelings*



Newbury Center



**ELEVATE:  
INTROSPECTION**

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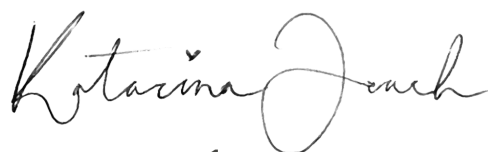
# A NOTE FROM THE CO-EDITORS

My first year in Boston, on campus at Boston University, was an interesting one. I had spent my first year enrolled taking classes remotely all the way from Seattle, Washington, and a year later, I find myself sitting in my apartment in LA doing a semester "abroad". Life has been anything but normal, yet, I still take the time to reflect on how I've gotten here, all that I've done, and all that I need to celebrate.

So much of my introspection was making sure that I stayed true to myself, and what I wanted out of the world, and I hope that in reading this year's edition of Elevate, you take the time to reflect on that too. Give yourself space, time, and most importantly, grace, as you navigate the trials and tribulations (and grand successes) of being a first-generation student.

Thank you again, for reading, submitting, and being.

KATARINA QUACH  
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION '24

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katarina Quach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small heart symbol above the letter 'a' in "Katarina".



As the second, and latest, edition of Elevate is published, I reflect on our theme: introspection. Being at BU for three years now feels like such a short time still. With everything college entails, it's difficult to slow down; to reflect on your experiences, your thoughts, your feelings, your experiences.

In doing some introspection myself, I've realized how much I've truly grown since becoming a first-gen college student. As I prepare to enter my fourth and final year of undergrad, I hold close all the experiences these past few years that have shaped me into the person I've become. Being a first-generation student is one of those experiences that I most think of in my introspection, and one I am most grateful for. I hope this edition allows you to take a pause, and take a moment for some introspection. Who have you become? Who do you want to be?

Thank you to everyone who has contributed, as well as everyone who has supported Elevate, even just by simply taking the time to read.

2023

VALERIE SANCHEZ COVALEDA  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '24

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie S.C." in a cursive, flowing script.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

Introspection. Spending a moment to fully take in the creativity and talent of our contributors. Reflecting on all that our students have been through and overcome. Knowing that by amplifying their voices through their pieces, the contributors are sharing hope and joy with their first-gen peers.

Many thanks to our faculty and staff mentors who provided encouragement and feedback throughout the Newbury Center Elevate Magazine Mentoring sessions this past fall. Your devotion of time to support our students' endeavors is appreciated and seen.

This year's second edition of Elevate Magazine will not disappoint, and once again, you will be moved by the incredible stories and perspectives of our beautifully diverse Terrier F1RSTS community.

**BEST,**

**MARIA DYKEMA ERB, M.ED.  
DIRECTOR OF THE NEWBURY CENTER**



## **HONORING THE LEGACY OF NEWBURY COLLEGE**

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE NEWBURY COLLEGE MISSION, THE NEWBURY CENTER AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY IS DEVOTED TO FOSTERING THE SUCCESS OF FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS BOTH DURING THEIR TIME AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY AND AS THEY PURSUE CAREERS AND FULFILLMENT AFTER GRADUATION.

*DEDICATED ON OCTOBER 26, 2020*

ELEVATE WAS CREATED BY THE NEWBURY CENTER, UNDER MARIA DYKEMA ERB. WE WERE INSPIRED BY SEATTLE UNIVERSITY'S PUBLICATION FOR FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS, TITLED "IMPRINT", AND THE PREMISE OF PROVIDING FIRST-GEN STUDENTS WITH A PLATFORM IN ORDER TO SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WORK.

THIS YEAR, AFTER OUR SERIES OF MENTORING MEETINGS IN WHICH STUDENTS MET WITH VARIOUS FACULTY AND STAFF IN ORDER TO COLLABORATE AND DEVELOP THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS, WE FOUND A THEME: INTROSPECTION.

WE FOUND THAT OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS, WITH AN ONGOING PANDEMIC, LOTS OF TIME ALONE, TIME SPENT WORKING, AND TIME SPENT JUST SURVIVING, THERE WAS A PARADIGM SHIFT IN MANY OF US, THAT WE NEEDED TO REFLECT ON, AND TALK ABOUT. THUS, INTROSPECTION WAS BORN.

WE HOPE THAT THIS YEAR, YOU TAKE THE TIME TO REFLECT ON YOUR JOURNEY, EXPERIENCE, TIME, DECISIONS, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN AS YOU CELEBRATE YOUR EXISTENCE AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT, ALUMNI, STAFF, FACULTY, OR ALLY.

THANK YOU.

**PHOTOGRAPH BY M.C. DAMM, M.DIV.,  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE NEWBURY CENTER**



*THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN AT MY GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE IN RURAL WISCONSIN. BECAUSE THE MIDWEST IS SO FLAT, THE HORIZON IS VERY LOW--IT FEELS LIKE THE SKY GOES ON FOREVER. WHEN I IMAGINE THE FUTURE, I FIND MYSELF BACK HERE--HOPEFUL HORIZON BEFORE ME, BLUE SKY ALL AROUND ME--***PLENTY OF SPACE TO GROW.**

# **THE 9TH SYMPHONY**

**BY**

**MANEGABE BUJIRIRI**

**QUESTROM SCHOOL OF BUSINESS '25**

I used to fear death, the voice in the darkness would frighten me at night and would leave me speechless and hopeless, many men have feared death to the point of searching for immortality.

How do you think God reacts? Does he shake his head? Cry? Mourn?

No, when God look down and see our petty attempts to live forever he laughs. He laughs because what we have failed to realize is.

Death is a gift. It's our way out.

And once you stop fearing death even the shadows will obey your command.

Where is this mystical being? If there is any evidence that points to the existence of God, it is found in our incessant desire to be God and our repeated failure to be anything but a mortal.

When all have taken its course when the horsemen have ridden out that's where we see God's true hand when all is in destruction and agony.

Once we realize that from ash a phoenix raises. For a healthy flower to grow it must first die.

When death produces life and brings fullness that's when we have a brief taste of the knowledge and mystery that these gods have been cursed with.

*"We must let go of the unkown, and not live in fear of anything. Once we have let fear go we are able to accomplish anything and everything."*



BY  
MINNA  
NATSUKO  
ITO

SARGENT COLLEGE  
OF HEALTH AND  
REHABILITATION  
SCIENCES G'23



*"I wanted my magazine submission to center my joy, craft, and inner child healing!"*

*As a medium, clay was something I have always been interested in. I remember mixing Elmer's glue and baby powder in middle school, as brand-name polymer clay was either too expensive or unavailable in my island's local office supply store.*

*I picked up sculpting again in 2020, at the height of the pandemic. It was so gratifying to finally have the disposable income to indulge in higher quality supplies, and to have the time to refine my art! Sculpting teaches me that patience and gentleness often yields the most gratifying results. As I wrap up grad school, I am reminded of the importance of softness."*



Culture Comfort Fellowships





# **CULTURE, COMFORT, FELLOWSHIP**

**BY  
CURILLE MCKENNA  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH G'23**

*My submission reflects my love of food and some of what it symbolizes to me: Culture, Comfort, and Fellowship. As a first-generation student, moving away from my home and community was very hard. I often cook traditional dishes of Trinidad & Tobago, such as saltfish and coconut bake (top left) and curried chicken, with chana, potatoes and pholourie (bottom left) to help me feel connected to home and my culture. The middle shows my favorite comfort dessert, cinnamon rolls, that I usually make to cheer me up throughout the weeks. On the far right, are some cool restaurants I have visited in the Boston area with friends. Ledger Restaurant in Salem (top right) and Ruka Resto Bar (bottom right).*

# **I DID IT?**

## **JENNA HANSEN COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '23**

The last semester of a four-year degree snuck up on me,  
Like a groundhog seeing its own shadow—  
I can't say that I don't want to hide.

3.5 years done  
1,933 pages printed (yes that is accurate) (also 12.4% of a tree according to MyPrint)  
1,000,000 books read (that might be an exaggeration—don't quote me)  
and more memories than I can count

This semester, like every semester, feels like an impossible task:  
syllabi ask more of me than I think I can do,  
choosing between socializing and homework has never felt like a more dire task.  
Everyone says that these are the best years of our lives.

(And frankly, writing yet another argumentative essay does not feel like a contribution the best years of my life).

3 months left  
3 months left  
3 MONTHS LEFT

(more like 3 months and 3 weeks and 1 day)  
(but who's counting?)

I should believe it.  
I've done enough, seen enough, cried enough, laughed enough—  
to know I've earned it.

And yet,  
I feel her eyes on me.  
The scared, insecure, "introverted" 19-year-old who came to BU,  
in the fall of 2019.

I don't know what she would think.  
Would she wonder if I've done enough? Been enough?

But I know what I think:

There are generations of strong women behind me,  
women who didn't have the time or the resources to do what I have done.

Marion, Carole, Kimberly—  
Jenna.

I didn't do it for me. I did it for them,

I know what they would think.  
And that?

That is enough.



*For me, this piece is really me reckoning with myself. As a senior in my last semester (ah!), the theme of "introspection" could not be more pertinent. I lost my grandmother in the fall; my world stopped for a moment. Graduating felt so far away--impossible even.*

*But it wasn't. I kept going. I had a 4.0 semester.*

*I have never been so proud of myself, and I know that my grandma is too. That's what this piece is: me reminding myself that I am allowed to proud of what I've accomplished. (As are all first-gen students! You are taking a big step for your family and for yourself--own it! You're amazing).*



**VISUAL ACCOMPANIMENT  
KARSON QUICK,  
7 YEARS OLD**

# MIZANI

4:13 AM; FULL MOON (2021)



Why do I try so hard to be a great writer?  
What makes a writer "great"?  
Is it the way I speak to my audience?  
Is it originality?  
Is any thought truly original?  
If energy cannot be created nor destroyed, is this recycled thinking?  
My? best thoughts come to me when I am not trying,  
when I consume my vices to cope with the fact that I am not seeking love,  
I am seeking to become the person who feels deserving of it.  
Is that what makes a good writer great?  
Is it vulnerability?  
If energy cannot be created nor destroyed, are these recycled feelings?

**By Niyana Self  
College of Arts & Sciences '23**

*"Being first generation feels like constant competition for greatness. The western obsession with exceptionalism, especially in the black community, only exists to justify our humanity. My humanity is NOT justified by how well I climb the socioeconomic ladder. My humanity is justified by the mere existence of life--by the preservation of my ancestors. In this work, I question what greatness means, especially within a society whose core value is consumption. Consumerism teaches us that we can fill our void of lovelessness with material items.*

*To acquire those material items, we have to surrender to exploitation-- convincing people that how hard we work equates with how great of a person we are. Even though I am a first-generation college student, I am no greater than anyone who came before me. I would not be here if it weren't for the sacrifices my ancestors have made. My intelligence, my creativity, my thoughts, and my emotions... none of these would exist if it weren't for the lives lived outside of mine. I am great simply because I am preservation of life.*

*I included a visual piece created by the one and only, Karson Quick, at 7-years old. As I stress the importance of preservation and appreciation of life outside of consumption, it only makes sense that I include art created by the next generation."*

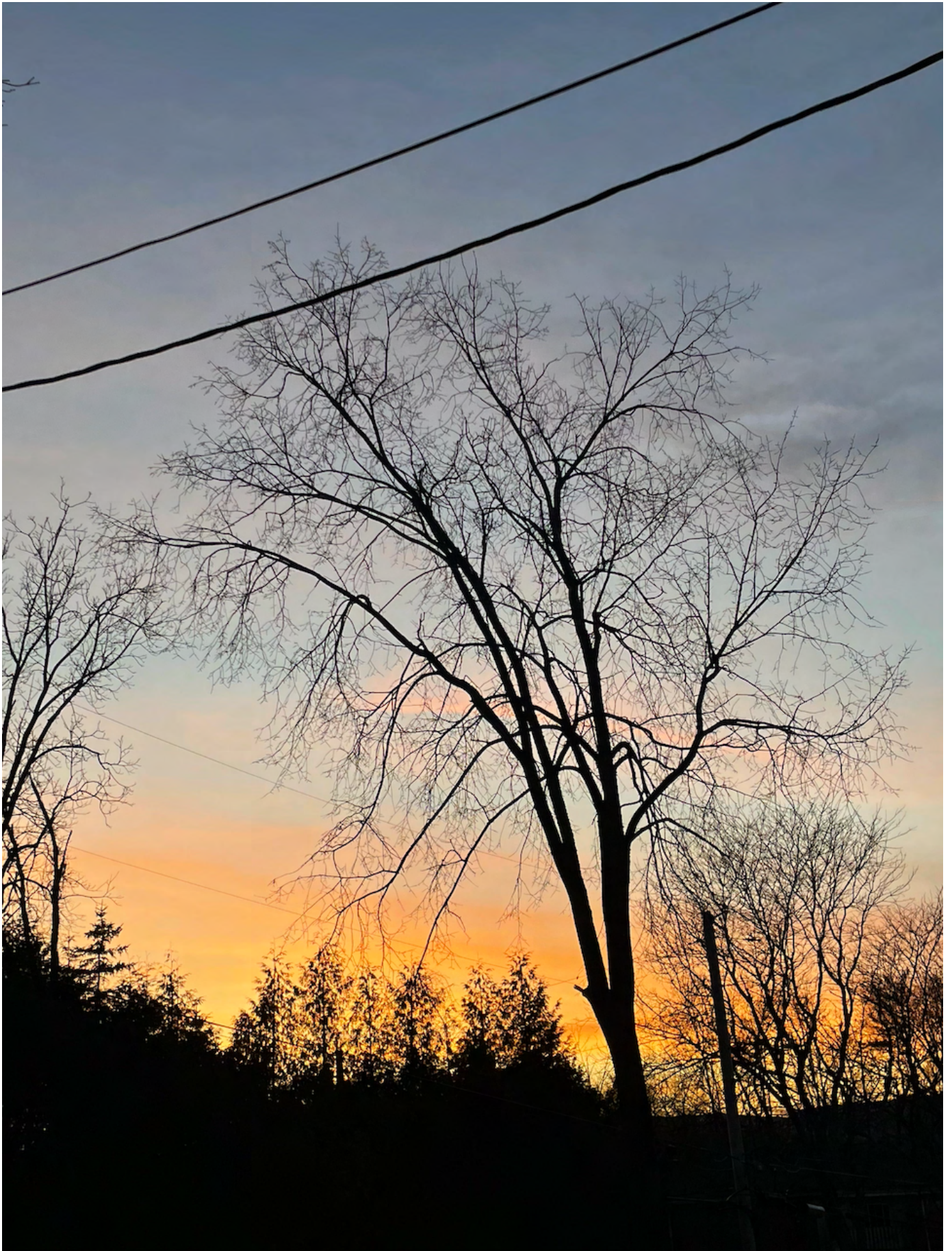


# **OUR DYING SAVIOR SLEEPS ON MOTHER'S LAP**

**BY  
HECTOR RIVERA JR.  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS '25**

*"This graphic piece is an exploration of my relationship with femininity in my culture through religious iconography. It is very ornate, yet intentional, as every detail is somehow connected to my experience growing up in a Catholic Hispanic community. The women in my life are my biggest inspirations. Being a first-generation student, you realize how a community can develop in an echo chamber. Many don't acknowledge how harmful ideologies can be perpetrated by certain structures and beliefs that reinforce them. Seeking out that education has shown me that even what I grew up thinking was the norm, was not. As the leaders of this generation, it is important to tackle and have these conversations. I like the attention, so negative reactions are always welcome."*

*"My life lives through what I create."*





*"The beauty in sunsets is their consistency. Whether it be a gloomy, winter evening, or a long, sunny, summer night, sunsets are a persistent end to every day. With every sunset comes a beautiful medley of colors and gradients; colors that will reinvigorate one's lust for life and nature. I make it a goal to catch every sunset every single day. You never know what colors you'll see, or what new beauty you'll find right after. :)"*

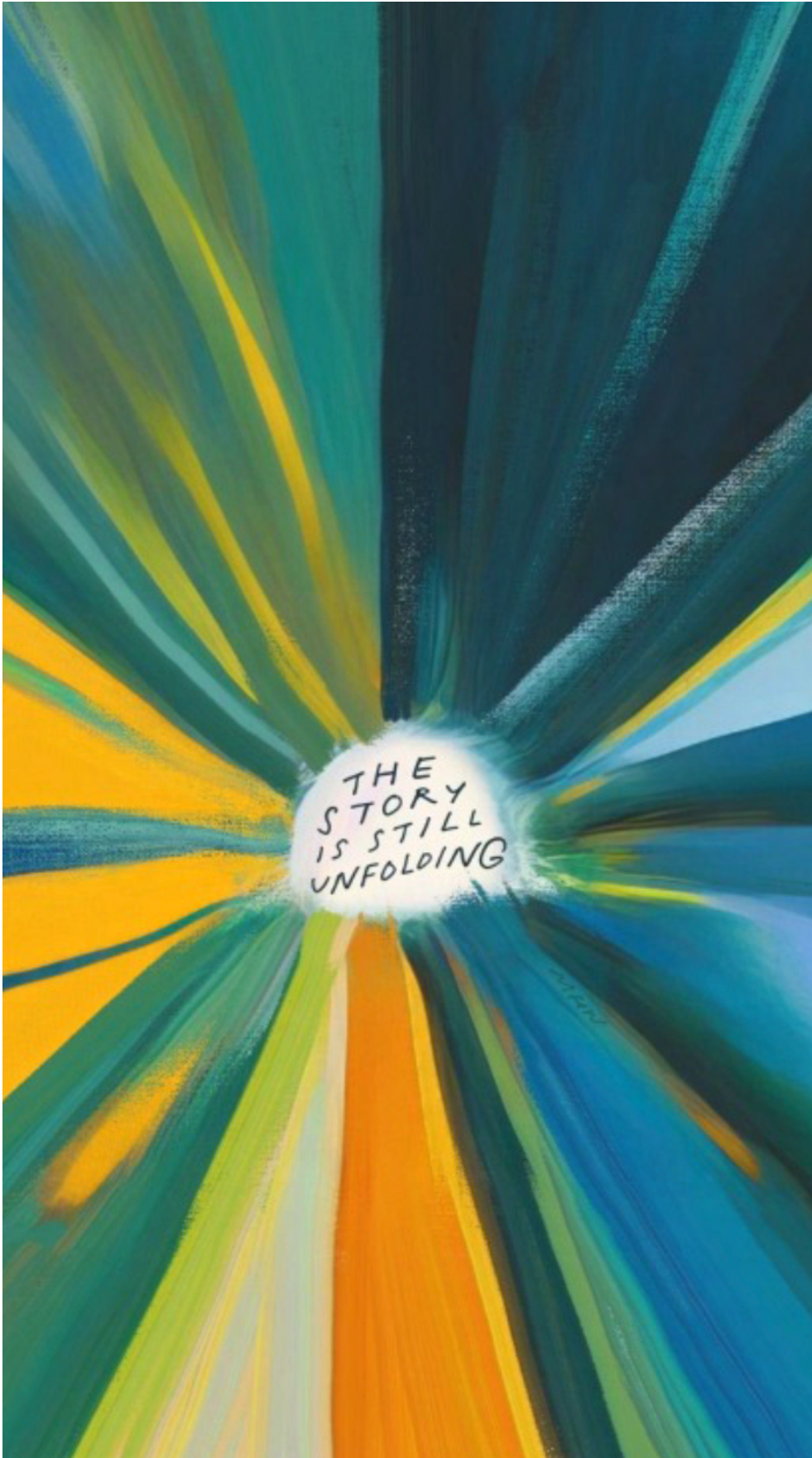
**BY  
MOHAMED MUSALLAM  
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION G'23**



*"To me, being a first-gen college student at BU means experiencing a world of which you're unfamiliar with and getting to explore! Coming from Texas, the weather is always hot and it never truly snows. In the pictures, these are the first and second times I got to experience snow."*

**BY  
JAIRO ZELAYA  
COLLEGE OF  
COMMUNICATION '25**





**BY  
LACOY BROWN  
SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH G'23**

*The quote above is a constant reminder to myself as I complete my graduate program at Boston University School of Public Health. The reality is that every sacrifice I made and obstacle I overcame did not go in vain. It only brought me closer to my desired dreams and aspirations (Image is by Morgan Harper Nichols).*

*Being a first-generation college student at Boston University means being the most resilient person in the room. If I could give any words of encouragement to undergraduates or graduate/professional students after me, it would be the statement above -keep going. You're closer to your goal than you think!*

# **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

**BY**

**DAIJA MILLER**

**COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '26**

The first snow  
Covers the gravel, the dirt, the issues  
The first flakes  
Glisten under the stars' sos  
The first student  
Shivers in the snow's kisses  
Never feeling warmth so cold  
Never walking on university snow

The first melt  
Disappears into the earth  
The first ray  
Shines across the jungle  
The first student  
Taking notes of passion  
Never being in awe of a new world  
Never walking an uncharted path  
Never

I am the new never  
She is the new never  
He is the new never  
Holding hand in hand  
Braving being the first of many flakes  
Being the first of many rays



*I can still remember my first time seeing snow, it was beyond magical and fabulous just like my experience being a first generation student. Me and the snow started together. I wanted to give an insight on what it's like being the first of many ahead to embark on a journey that has never been done before. I wanted to share what it is like to feel like an sos signal under the most beautiful and accomplishing circumstances. Here's to being first gen!*

*"My submission tells a story about where my identity is. As a New Yorker, I have experienced almost every street in New York City Chinatown. As a first generation, low-income student, I find that Chinatown gives me comfort away from the academic pressures."*



PHOTOGRAPH  
BY JERRY CHEN  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '26



# HURRICANE

TW: MENTIONS OF SELF HARM AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

NO. the streets weren't flooded with rivers streaming garbage  
or my neighbor's cat and  
NO. the lights didn't go out and we weren't forced to eat  
peanut butter sandwiches by candlelight and  
NO. we didn't have to pack our necessities and leave our  
most precious belongings in the dishwasher  
with all our sacred memories  
just to come back days or weeks later only to find out  
that that "internet hack" was bullshit.

no. we didn't get a hurricane.

we emptied shelves at the grocery store and bought all the damn water.  
we "attended" every facebook event made of bad jokes.  
we essentially meme-roasted the fuck out of that storm.

and it clearly worked because

we didn't get a hurricane.

but 200 miles east of us. 25 people died at the coast.  
trees flattened. roads crumbled.  
200,000 homes were left with nothing, but candlelight. or nothing at all.

but here... the hurricane was just a state of mind.  
that's how it works, right?

like with mental illness.  
It's just a "state of mind" right?

*"Being a first-gen student means so much to me. I've proven to myself how capable, independent, intelligent, and worthy I am of goodness. I'm so thankful for the privilege I have today that allows me to be a part of this program and this school. I'm doing things I never even dreamed about and I couldn't be more proud of myself. This piece is one I thought I'd never share, but now I think the vulnerability speaks for itself."*



no one ever realizes that people are dying.  
it's just another storm that we prepare for, but in reality all we're doing is sharing internet stories that go viral or maybe a meme that jokes about depression.

my mother wears her mania like it's on sale at Macy's.  
she does this because when she was told she had Bipolar,  
the doctor gave her pamphlets about controlling her "mood swings"  
and he told her to see a shrink  
but all the shrink did was shrink her problems and  
shrink her self-esteem until it was small enough to fit into a pill bottle  
that fit in her pocket.

i once was told i had PTSD because a man forced his way between my legs.  
and because i hadn't told anyone until years later my body waged war on itself  
and the doctor told me it was all in my head and i had to let it go.

get myself into a better state of mind.

so i took it out on my arms. and then my legs.  
i took it out in my eating habits or lack thereof.  
there were days where only razor blades could meet my appetite  
and days where the covers on my bed were my life jacket. though  
sometimes i wanted to suffocate in them.  
sometimes i tried.

and then i had to see a shrink.  
so now i have OCD.  
obsessive. compulsive. disorder.  
obscure. condescending. dislike.  
because when you obscurely condescend my reality. i strongly dislike you.

it turns out you can't meme-roast a mental illness away.

***I HOPE I CAN  
HEAL THE  
CHILD IN ME***

**MICHELLE GRULLON  
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION '26**

I hope I can heal the Child in me  
Sometimes the words get caught up in my chest.  
Suddenly I feel like im five years old again  
Being yelled at for the broken tv remote.  
It only costs \$10 to replace,  
But that mistake clearly will cost me my whole career.  
"How can you expect to be someone important when you can't even hold something!"  
My mother would yell at me in Spanish.  
Sometimes I silently work on my computer.  
As im transported back in time  
Where I heard the cruel whispers of classmates  
Or the laughs of friendship.  
I was always told to work as hard as I could.  
Yet I was left with nothing but loneliness at the end.  
Sometimes when I go to get another plate of food  
I am reminded of home.  
Of those words that still sting my throat  
"The only thing you have is your looks. No one wants a fat woman."  
I decided to put my plate down and quietly leave the dining hall.  
Sometimes I lay down on my bed  
and cry at night.  
As I remember this common occurrence  
Me muffling the painful gasps and the stinging tears  
As emotions were never my specialty,  
And I wouldn't dare for someone to hear.  
I pictured myself as a rose from birth

Slowly withering away with each passing day.  
One look at my parents was supposed to depict who I am  
Being told that I would never amount to a good life.  
That my Hispanic origins were a death sentence the second I was born.  
I was pushed to such a breaking point that I don't know what success is  
But I know the pain failure brings to my heart.  
That it doesn't matter how high you climbed

Because if you fall down once, that is what will define the rest of your life.  
But when I think back to my mistakes,  
When I think back to the yells and pain  
I don't give up.  
I pack my stuff up for the day  
And focus on my next goal.  
I refuse to let the past kill the good in my heart.  
To determine my life and break my head as much as it shattered my chest.  
I hope to one day heal from this illness and live the life I deserve.  
Until then all I can do is replant the withered stem of my dead flower  
And hope it blossoms into something beautiful.

*"My submission is generally about the hurtful parts of being from an immigrant family and being a first-generation college student. My poem is meant to speak on the fact that when you fall into this category, so much pressure is put on you to have a successful life it is like you never get a childhood to begin with. That the words of "encouragement" I got from my elders still harm me today as I go on to become an adult. Being a first-generation student at BU is definitely a bitter sweet experience. I love the feeling that I made it to one of my major goals and I love being in an environment where I feel supported in, but as I talk to people about their lives and compare it to mine, I have often went back to my room with the same lingering thought if I ever got a chance to be a child.*

*I refuse to let the past affect me now and I will keep on pushing for the life I want, but it always get brought up again and again. Being a first-gen student, though stressful, is still a wonderful experience, and I love the sense of freedom I have that I can really choose how I take the rest of my life. College has given me the time to explore my hobbies more, one being poetry, and I can't wait to share more of my work with the world and in turn talk about the mental struggles I have faced/ continue to face each passing day."*



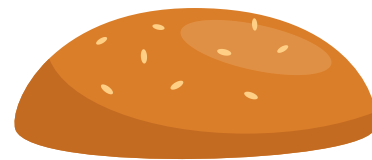
# ***BIG MAC ON THE BELL***

**YUANDI TANG  
COLLEGE OF  
COMMUNICATION G'23**

With the ringing bell of the New Year, it's time to wrap up again. When I wrote my first article for Elevate this time last year, I had only been in the United States for four months, and many of my feelings were fresh but perishable. 2022, according to Chinese feng shui, is the year I conflict with, which means my health, studies, relationships, and financial situation are full of ups and downs. I don't usually don't believe in mystical doctrines, but after this year, I feel like it's true. These feelings wrapped up my first four months of experience like a hamburger, rich and delicious. So, with the ringing of the New Year, I set out to make my Big Mac.

**Bread:** Life and Health. Life and health are the bread, without which there would be no hamburger. I have gained a lot in life, got closer to my friends, and met more people. This year, I participated in many volunteer activities, including Cradles to Crayons, GBFB, and Pan-Mass Challenge; I learned about the need of so many people around me and the severe shortage of supplies and staff, volunteer organizations are facing after the pandemic. Martin Luther King, a first-gen BU college student like me (smile), once said, "Everybody can be great - because anybody can serve." I can't tell you how happy I am when I think of the food I've made and the clothes I've sorted reaching the hungry and freezing people because I know it's something my grandmother could never have imagined when she was young. If you are reading this, I wish you could also take the time to volunteer and help others. I know we first-generation college students don't have the extra money to donate, but it doesn't matter; we have the time and love. Our volunteering is the best donation, and the caring heart, social understanding, and spiritual satisfaction you gain from it will far outweigh all you have to give.

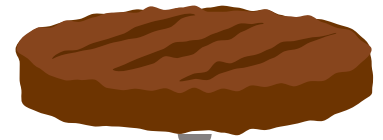
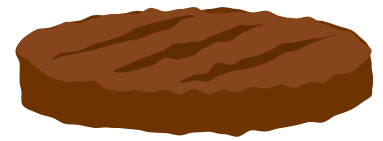
Speaking of health, I experienced a sudden onset of hives this summer, which still hasn't healed. The two hospitals I was referred to offered me a ridiculous 8-month waiting list, and the expensive specialist didn't give any advice except to put me on quadruple recommended doses of medication. I felt powerless by the gross imbalance in the medical system. I decided to be rebellious and stick to the recommended dosage because I knew my body could not afford to take quadruple dosage anyway. Now I could gradually lower the dosage. I felt like trusting authority but more so trusting my gut. I got the HPV vaccination, even though it may not seem like a choice for men. I know that the low risk is only statistically significant and that there is only a difference between being infected and not for individuals. I just want to be responsible and reduce the risk to myself and my future love. Through my study in statistics and communication, I learned that numbers and charts could be manipulated. Even if they are not, as mentioned above, the statistical significance and the actual meaning are not the same. To make the best choice, everything must be analyzed and judged from as many angles as possible.



**First Beef:** Career Development. This year I did a few internships and gained some experience. Due to the economic downturn, many students have encountered unimaginable difficulties finding jobs. Job downsizing and layoffs, coupled with the demotion of employees in large companies looking for jobs, have crowded out the already narrow space of positions. We are all working hard with aggression, pressure, and disappointment; we are all on the same path. However, I heard some students get a position by "whatever it takes." Cheating and lying will not make you better tomorrow. It will only poison everyone's tomorrow. As first-generation students, we can't help each other enough; why should we hurt each other? May we all make the right choice.

**Second Beef:** Study. Through hard work, my GPA has improved. I met some great professors, Professor Elasmak took me deep into the depths of market research, and Professor Alizadeh-Shabdiz got me started in the machine learning course and continued to help me along the way. One of my favorite moments of the year was talking with Professor Clark after class; her years of teaching and life lessons continued to enlighten my mind. Don't be silly and afraid to connect with your professors; you will miss a million. Many of them even want to talk to you, even beyond the classroom topics. If you meet a professor you like, keep in touch and link with them personally (if you can). Not for a recommendation or an A, but for they help you become a better person, you will have the support of their moral strength for a long time to come, and they will for sure become your most shining memories of BU.

**Lettuce:** Opinions and Conflict. With the social media's information recommendation mechanism, I know more and more about different topics, but the depth is getting shallower. We are more insistent on our views and love it when others agree with us and react violently to "contradicting opinions." As a Chinese Language Link Leader, I felt the significant difference between Chinese and Western cultures. This year, there were many intense conflicts in war, pandemic, politics, and culture. In the face of conflicting values and the resulting interpersonal impact, I have reflected on several viewpoint "conflicts" this year. First, my views are valuable because they are the summation of my years of experience and understanding. My opinions are worth defending regardless of the media or others' attempts to deny the legitimacy of my views. However, if I calm down, I will know others do not contradict my point of view 100%; most of the time, others' opinions are complementary to mine rather than refutation. Calm, Listen, Analyze, Absorb, and I'll pin to my note in 2023.





**Ketchup:** BU International Graduate Student Guide. This is the work I am most proud of this year. From proposal to publishing online, I improved my skills and left an asset for the international graduate community to refer to. I will continue to do so by putting my goals in the context of the community's needs and enjoying every cheer and benefit along the way.

Well, my Big Mac is finished, and I'm sure you are too, so let's take a nibble. Yum Yum! A prosperous 2023 to you!



*“My second reflecting essay, 2022 was brutal but also gave me a lot of hope and thoughts. I can proudly say, being a first-gen student is great because of the Newbury Center. I wish everyone can be happy, really!”*

# **ON PURPOSE**

**ROSE J. PERCY**

**SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY G'23**

You learned the difference  
Between "by accident" and "on purpose"  
Because you chose the wrong one and got in trouble.  
You wonder why José and Rose don't rhyme  
And you wonder if José and the other boys laugh at you  
And if every laugh is about you.  
You struggle with "Sh" and "Ch"  
And "Q" and "K."  
When you learn, you learn most quickly mistakes will not be tolerated.  
Your teacher, the one who only yells, tells your dad you'll never learn English.  
Your dad comes to school to be your comfort and translator.  
You make it fun and decide that that day is a special occasion:  
meaning no uniform.  
You speak English confidently at home.  
Younger brothers in tow, writing swear words on the walls while playing school.  
You get in trouble again:  
And that is how you learn about swear words.  
Your parents are convinced that "freak" is one of them  
And they tell you being bored is a sin.  
So you read a lot and make sure you are always busy.  
Your family moves from New York to Rhode Island  
And for once, you do not have to wear a uniform but you are introduced to the  
Burden of choosing every day.  
So you wear a uniform two days in a row and  
Hope to introduce your new classmates to its comforts.  
Next time you are asked if you made a mistake,  
You will know the difference between "by accident"  
and "on purpose" and you will find one: purpose.  
You will write a beautiful essay in second grade that your parents  
make you read to all their guests.  
They are proud as you read and  
You all celebrate your carefully chosen American words  
In your home clothes.

*"I was a first-generation undergraduate student and am now working on my second masters. This poem, "On Purpose," recounts my earliest memories of learning English in school as an immigrant child from Ayiti (Haiti). It is true that my teacher told my parents that I would never learn English because I didn't speak in class. What she didn't know was that I was waiting until I had mastered the language to speak. Somehow, at an early age, I understood the consequences of making mistakes were too heavy, as the first stanza indicates. In second grade, one of my essays for a state test was selected to be a sample essay. My parents were so proud they made me read aloud often, which was both embarrassing and encouraging. It is my earliest memory of them celebrating an academic achievement. It captures a simplicity of identities I sometimes wish I could go back to, a sense that finding your purpose can be as simple as being a good daughter and mastering a language. As a first-generation student and an immigrant, I carry in my body the sense that education leads to opportunities. But as a theologian who thinks about vocation and formation, I pursue education because there is so much more at stake for me.*

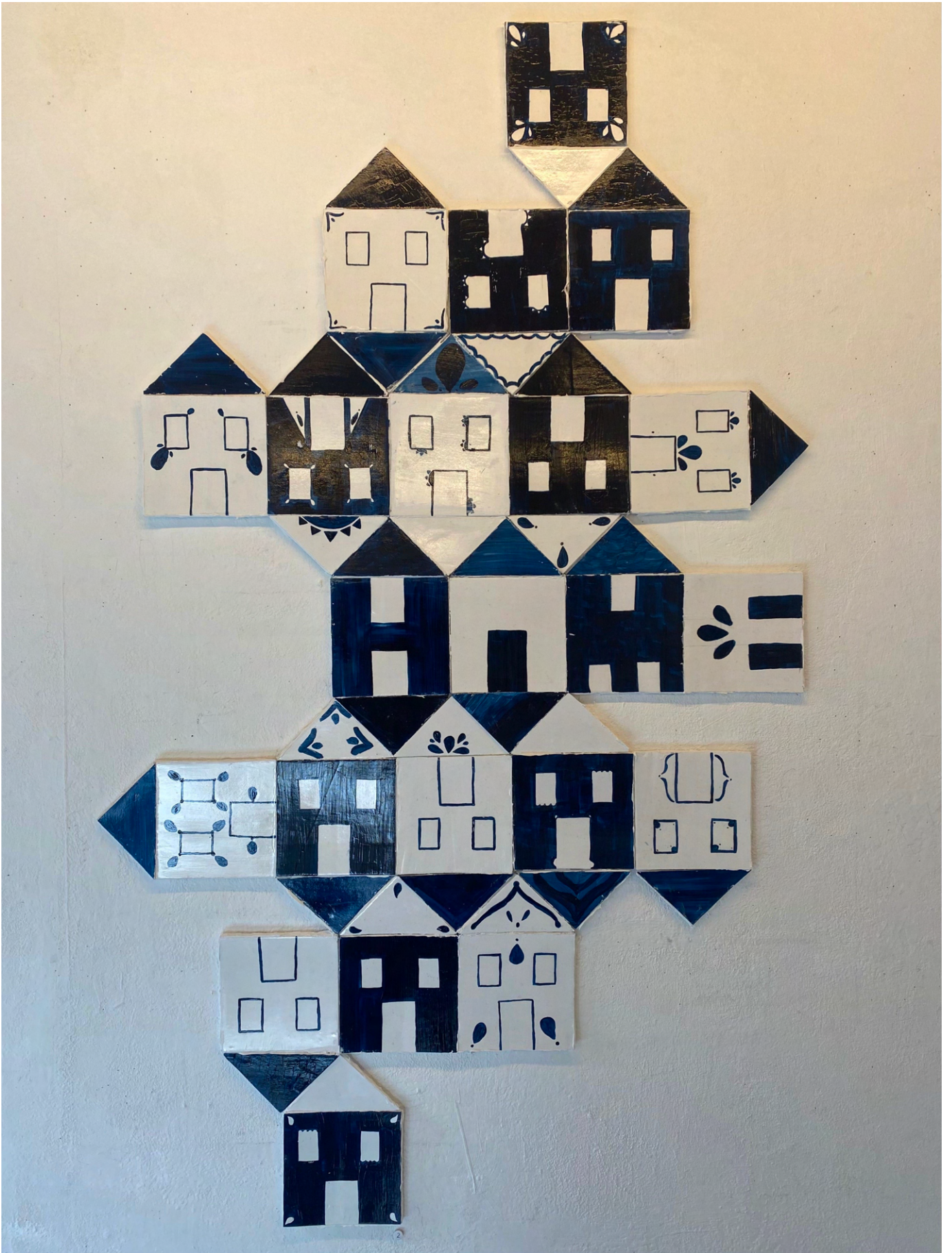
*One of my favorite quotes on vocation reminds me that it is "a gradual revelation—of me to myself (by God)... It is who we are, trying to happen." Beyond the utility of a degree, I wonder— who am I and who am I becoming? What if in the pursuit of becoming who I am meant to become, I stumble, I fall, and I stutter? Do I have the grace to do so?*

*So often, the first-generation college student's journey is much like this one, only there is no loving parent or guardian to accompany you. The moments between celebrated achievements can grow longer and longer. The "burden" of choosing every day can overwhelm the pursuit of joy and deny the beauty of being ordinary. The pursuit of purpose and the pressure to be purposeful in all things can often overwhelm my ability to see my own belovedness. But I have learned to give myself permission to choose process, which includes practicing self-kindness towards the person I am on this journey of becoming.*

---

*My quote on vocation comes from:*

*Evelyn and James Whitehead, Seasons of Strength: New Visions of Adult Christian Maturing (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 10."*



# HOME

**BY JENNIFER RAMIREZ  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '23**

*"Home" is an installation project I created during my study abroad program in Venice, Italy. It is composed of various houses, some upright, sideways, and upside down, painted to mimic traditional Mexican talavera tiles. The process of creating art is something I've found to help me be a little bit more introspective, as I'm able to express feelings that I couldn't otherwise. I've reflected a lot on my journey as a first generation student at BU, and one of the most prominent things that has happened along the way is that the definition of home has changed.*

*Home is the place where I grew up in, but it has also become the new places where I've found myself. It was scary to move from Texas to Boston, especially knowing that my parents couldn't visit me and that I would be the first one to do this in my family. Homesickness was something I struggled with, and still do, but soon enough Boston started to feel like home.*

*It's easy to want to go back home when you're in a strange new place, constantly questioning yourself if you even belong there. But it's so important to enjoy these experiences. I never thought I would get the chance to travel outside of the U.S., let alone Italy. I think it's important for first-generation students to make these new places feel like home and remind ourselves that we do deserve this and we do belong here. "*



# **PHOTOGRAPH**

**BY NICOLE MOULIA  
SCHOOL OF LAW G'24**

*This past winter break, my family and I returned to Uruguay for the first time in twenty-one years. I was two years old when we immigrated to the United States. Delays in gaining U.S. citizenship, money, and the pandemic had made it difficult to return; but after two decades we finally did. I took this photo at Punta Ballena, Uruguay. My sister and I found a pile of stones on the beach and decided to make a couple of cairns--an impermanent commemoration to our return to the country of my birth. My life as a first-generation college and professional student has been full of challenges, but this photo is a celebration of "firsts". This was my first return to Uruguay as the first in my family to graduate college. These pile of stones are a promise that this visit will not be the last.*

## The Multidimensional Experience of First-Generation Perseverance

As a first-generation student, I can be simply categorized as “your parents didn’t go to college” but I’m also more than that. To be first-gen is a beautifully complex journey of finding oneself in higher education.

It’s like the core of a plant that perseveres through the seasons,

receiving what it needs and at other times, deprived of the support or direction that is required to flourish. How I

family and friends could see how hard I’ve get through college....to take the path less

Anthropology even though it has a

history but has the capacity to

medicine and allows us to see

beings. I must admit that

guilt that many first gen

struggle to separate the

from my

crying



responsibility of student, daughter, friend, and many other roles. The reality is that yes, I am first gen, scrambling to make myself better and

my parents happy while I have the privilege to learn more about the world,

navigate it, and discover how I want to serve others in my future career in

Medical Anthropology. Since being first generation isn’t a choice, but is so heavily

intertwined with my identity, I embrace it moving forward. Being first-gen is associated



wish my worked to



known in Medical controversial racist



change how we understand patients as ordinary human alongside the first generation



students commonly experience, I also work that I find meaningful in Anthropology emotions. All of the nights that I stay up late,



myself away because I feel torn between school and home, the uncomfortable and comfortable and reconciling the





with so many emotions, privileges, confusion, and doubt, and it produces resiliency. It reminds me not of my parents' "failure" to go to college, but more so of my mom's sacrifices to

ensure that I'd be able to education in debt. It



pursue higher without drowning

reminds me of how thankful I am for my dad supporting me in my endeavors, and pursuing a

career he enjoys which typically requires a degree. Growing stronger each day in response to my struggles as I find out the person that I want to

become is something I CAN control, over what the "outsider" thinks of me.

## **KASANDRA RUE-ROJAS COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '24**

*"This piece is about who I am, what I can be, and what I can control. It is an ode to the multidimensional experience of being first-generation as the title "first-generation" overlaps with different facets of our identities and the traits or communities that we associate ourselves with throughout college and beyond. I use the symbol of perseverance in the form of a staircase through which climbing upward attests to growth. Being first-generation encourages us to grow through challenges & new experiences. Graduation will be the day when we reflect upon the past four years to finally say "I did that!"; despite the many emotions, doubts and failures we may have experienced to get to where we are and where we are headed in the direction that gives us purpose."*

*"Throughout my journey as a first-generation half-Hmong, half-Dominican college student, I have learned the importance of being proactive with addressing challenges while also acknowledging my limitations and imperfection as a human being. I am also intentional with the work that I sign myself up for. By being proactive and intentional, I am able to see goals achieved in the long run and create more opportunities for myself. I hope that those who read this realize that you are more than just "first-generation"; you are capable of doing what you set your mind to. "*



*The*  
**People's**  
**Designer.**

# **PHOTOGRAPH**

**BY PERRY SOSI  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS '23**

*This artwork, inspired by the Heroes & Villains album cover, highlights the duality of my artistic practice as both a designer and photographer. Over the years, my passion for each has become almost equal and I see the two working together to propel myself forward as a creative. As a first-generation college student I am so grateful for the opportunity to pursue design at BU while also having opportunities to pursue other interests to develop into a well-rounded individual that can make a positive contribution to our world.*



# **MOONLIT REFLECTIONS: THE DUALITY OF BEING A FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT**

**BY HANNAH HALLETT  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK G'23**

*Moonlit Reflections: The Duality of Being a First-Generation College Student" is a digital art piece that explores the complexities of navigating higher education as a first-generation student. The central image shows a young woman looking at her inner child. The two figures are linked by the flowering thoughts growing from their minds, symbolizing the unity and continuity of the self throughout different stages of life. The moon in the sky above them serves as a symbol of the subconscious, representing the inner thoughts and feelings of the protagonist as she reflects on her journey.*

*The inner child is standing on a foundation of clouds, representing the freedom and possibilities of the future, while the adult version is supported by a pile of books, representing the weight of the knowledge and expectations she carries. The golden frame that surrounds the image symbolizes the shift from learning for the sake of curiosity to framing and collecting achievements as we grow up.*

*The adult student's gaze falls toward her inner child which serves as a reminder for us all to return to that innate sense of wonder, curiosity, and playfulness amidst adult pressures and responsibilities. From my chapter to hers, this art piece captures the unique challenges and triumphs of being a first-generation college student, and the struggles to balance the different versions of oneself. It is a powerful exploration of identity, growth, and self-discovery.*

*(@canvas.elevati0n)*

**BY LEONEL DE LA TORRE BUSTOS  
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING '23**



*"My parents immigrated from Mexico in the early 90s as teenagers. They stopped pursuing their education once in the United States to be able to work multiple jobs and provide for their families back in Mexico and later for me and my siblings."*

*"Every time I feel like the weight of being a first-generation student is getting too great, I remember these two kids and the struggles they faced, the sacrifices they made, and the life they built for themselves and those around them. Every time I remember that, I get strength."*

# a thank you letter

**BY VALERIE SANCHEZ COVALEDA  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '24**

on my first international flight alone, i scrolled mindlessly through my phone. i'd gone through the usual rotation of inflight entertainment and had landed on my phone's camera roll. 27,094 pictures, built up on the same storage since 2016.

exasperated, i scroll quickly. i land on a picture of 16 year old me.

usually, my train of thought would be  
ugh  
what am i wearing  
why does my hair look like that  
god that's so embarrassing

for the first time in my life, i don't think any of that. i suddenly don't feel like i'm still that 16 year old. it may seem silly, but i felt like i never actually grew out of that. it felt like i was still a high schooler, just doing my best to pretend i knew how to live alone and take care of myself; to pay bills and sign leases, to fake academic success and pretend to know what i was doing.

somehow, something shifted. this didn't feel like i had just looked at an embarrassing picture of myself. i was just looking at a 16 year old girl.

instead of those self deprecating comments about myself that would usually come to mind, i had the overwhelming urge to cry. to hug her. to apologize for ever being so harsh.

to tell her everything turned out okay  
that it was all worth it  
that she did it

and most of all  
to tell her thank you

because of her hard work, i've been able to have so many experiences i never dreamed were possible

because of her, i was on my way to live abroad, after having never been  
because of her, i was able to move away from home, and learn to let go of my family's hands  
because of her, i was able to pursue and accomplish so many goals  
because of her, i'm able to see a tangible future for myself



believe it or not, that was all that 16 year old girl.  
she was the one checking the bulletin boards all over school for any opportunities that just  
might help her reach her goals

she was the one spending sleepless nights.  
pouring over free test prep worksheets and videos  
spending countless hours scouring free college admission websites and forums

she was the one bold enough to send bold emails to any adult in her vicinity who might be  
able to guide her. to tell her how to register for the ACT. to explain what FAFSA was. to ask  
for help when there was no one to turn to

she was the brave one  
taking chances  
seeking opportunities

to learn  
to grow  
to discover what she liked  
and didn't like

she was the one who shaped me  
and continues to inspire me

so now i sit quietly  
and mentally  
give that 16 year old girl a hug  
and tell her thank you  
for everything



*"Picture of 16 year old me, 2019"*

# EBB AND FLOW

KATARINA QUACH  
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION '24

to walk towards the ocean  
as the tide recedes:  
a moment in which it  
feels like the world has  
stopped entirely,  
how far could i go,  
before i would be fully submerged?

i step further  
and further  
out into the water

finding myself deeper and deeper,  
unknowingly.

until i am reminded  
by the returning cycle of ebb and flow  
there is no ceasefire in my life  
even if sometimes it feels  
as if there is a lull.  
a calmness that feels almost overwhelming  
to bear

the waves continue,  
once again.  
as they always do.  
they come,  
and they go

crash,  
bubble,  
and return.

and in those moments  
when the waves return,  
back out to the sea,  
and i step forward  
inch by inch,

i am no one of significance,  
just a soul looking for something.

just a small girl  
who misses the embrace  
of her mother

the feeling of being held,  
by someone who cares,  
without condition.

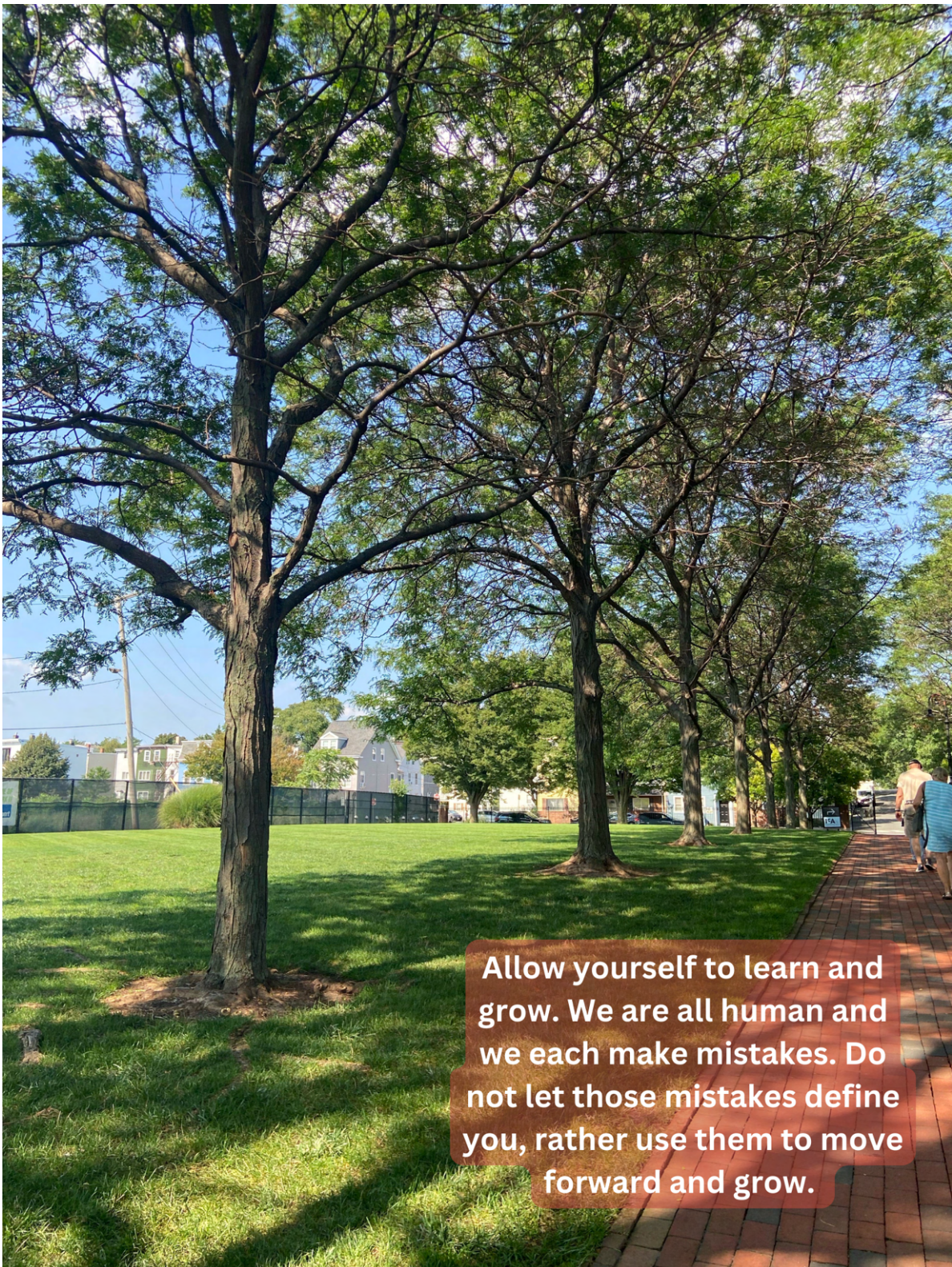
*Ebb and Flow is a poem that I wrote, inspired by a trip with other BULA students to Malibu, California. As I was laying on the beach, far from home in Seattle and far from my closest friends in Boston, I felt a deep, profound, and inexplicable sadness. I decided to get up and walk into the water, even if the Pacific Ocean was freezing in the middle of February. As the waves crashed and then returned, I found myself walking further and further out into the ocean: reminded of my late mother. My sister and I scattered her ashes in the Puget Sound up in Seattle after her passing, and we've both always felt like her presence was whatever body of water we could find ourselves in.*

*I wrote, "i stood with my feet in the water at the beach. thought about how it might be one of the most beautiful things I'd ever seen. thought about how each wave feels like a kiss hello and a kiss goodbye from my mom. fleeting moments of embrace. comfort. i hold myself as if not to spill, pour from the seams.*

*hello.  
goodbye.  
i love you. i love you.  
see you again and again and  
again."*

*I stood there, calf-deep in the water, holding myself. Crying, but still smiling. (It was actually quite a funny sight to see: me in a giant oversized black hoodie and a black sundress. The only person standing in the freezing cold water.)*

*Ultimately, I am reminded that love comes and goes, and I am further reminded that even though it is fleeting, in its own right, it is absolute: always and forever. Even in all my travels, all my hardships, triumphs, and experiences, I've never truly been alone.*



Allow yourself to learn and grow. We are all human and we each make mistakes. Do not let those mistakes define you, rather use them to move forward and grow.

**BY  
BRIANNA BOURNE  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES'24**

THE PHYSICAL NEWBURY CENTER SPACE ON BOSTON UNIVERSITY'S CAMPUS HOSTS A ROTATING COLLECTION OF ART THAT IS SUBMITTED THROUGH OUR YEARLY ART CONTEST. THE FOLLOWING PIECES WERE SUBMITTED IN FALL 2022.

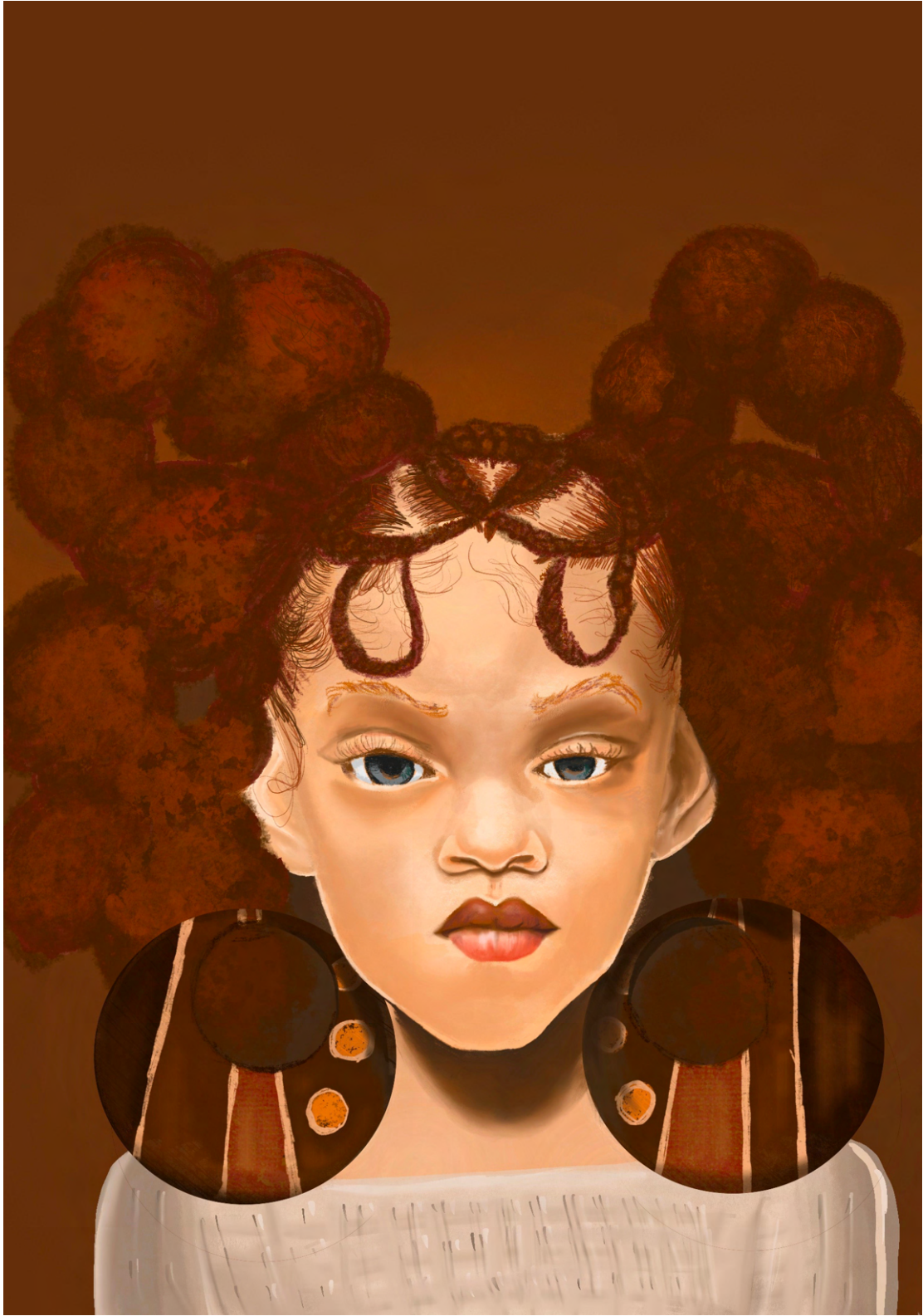
THE ART CENTERS AROUND WHAT THE FIRST-GENERATION EXPERIENCE REPRESENTS TO OUR ARTISTS.

FIRST PLACE: GUENSLY DESIR, "HOMECOMING" (LITTLE GIRL WITH BIG HAIR AND EARRINGS)

SECOND PLACE: ARINNA BOCCARDI, "MONOPOLY"

THIRD PLACE:

TIE BETWEEN #6 AND #7 - AMARA OKEKE, "UNTITLED" (PHOTO OF GIRL WITH FLOWERS)  
AND ANDREA MAKKAS, "UNTITLED" (GIRL WITH MEDUSA HEAD)



# **HOMECOMING**

**BY GUENSLY DESIR**  
**WHEELOCK COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**  
**& HUMAN DEVELOPMENT '24**

*Being a first-gen student at BU has had more than its fair share of challenges for me. However, throughout all of those challenges, I've learned so much about what it means to be myself and be confident in my own culture. My piece, "Homecoming," is a visual representation of being reborn into my own culture as I navigate what it means to be a first-generation Haitian student at BU.*



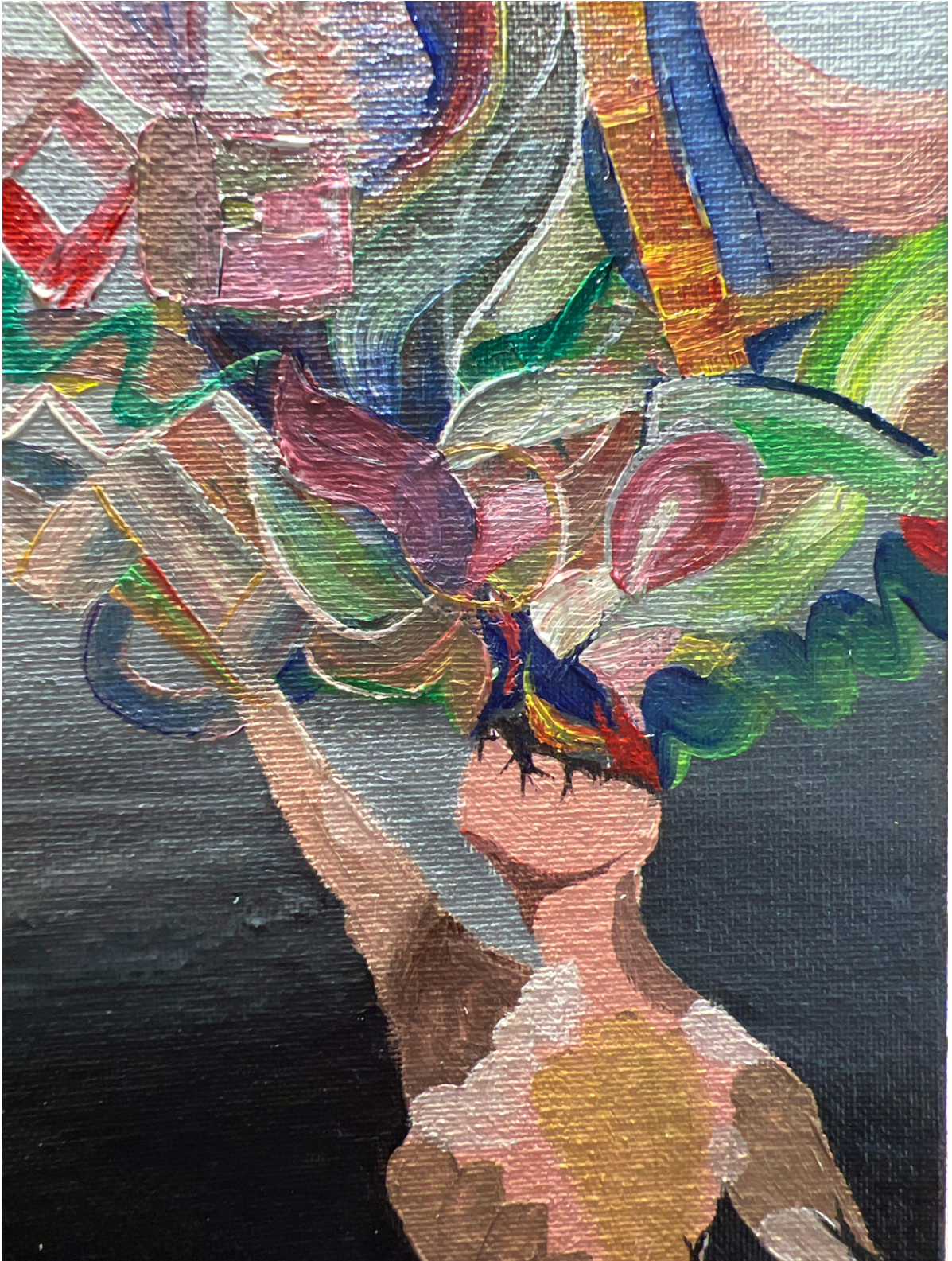


# **IN-CLASS DOODLE**

## **BY YENNIFER RIVAS PAULINO**

### **COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION '25**

*This is one of my doodles from class. This is what the inability to focus in class looks like. As someone who has always struggled to focus in classes, doodling keeps me stimulated and my mind awake enough to listen in class. It always looks like I am slacking off in class when, in reality, drawing helps me retain information and listen better. Each doodle I do will sometimes unconsciously resemble what the teacher is talking about. Doodling keeps me relaxed and focused on SOMETHING since my mind wanders so often, especially in quiet places like a classroom. As an Afro-latina, pursuing a creative field is almost never what an immigrant family wants their children to pursue. However, art and doodling is extremely prevalent in my family, we all do it and I love it. I'm grateful that my parents support my decisions to do what makes me happy, and express myself. Art is universal and can be appreciated no matter where you come from, that's what makes it beautiful.*



# ***PAINING*** **BY ANONYMOUS**

It feels like I can finally breathe.



# ***MEDUSA***

## **BY NAOMI OKEKE**

### **COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '23**

It feels like there are a lot of people telling you what to do and how to succeed. It feels like there's a lot of pressure to succeed to help your family. It also feels like you have to be tough and on your guard all the time because no one else is going to help you. You are on your own. I took inspiration from the myth of Medusa because I felt misunderstood by my peers and demonized for being tough and hard but that was the only way I've been able to make it this far. I wanted my face to show the vulnerability I felt at being at such a prestigious school and constantly having to worry about money and my parents.



# ***INSIDE OUT***

## **BY ANDRÉIA MAKKAS**

### **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK G'23**

*Talking with the model about George Floyd's assassination, we were trying to find ways to express our unworthiness. The conversation interceded with the pandemic context. This conversation inspired me to create a photograph that represents what the oppressed have to give in order to survive.*

*Between flowers and thorns, we find a subtle way of surviving.*





# **SWAN**

## **BY NICOLE SCROGGIE**

### **COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION '23**

*I painted a glowing swan to symbolize my personal transformation over the course of my college experience. I have learned many lessons and am much wiser now than I was four years ago. Much like the water in the painting, a crucial lesson I learned is to be like water and go with the flow of things. There is always hope, and life is beautiful if you care to see. Like the story of the ugly duckling, I was lost as a freshman without the guidance of parents who went through the same experience.*

*Instead, I had to learn how to flourish all on my own. Of course, I received guidance from professors, peers, and my faith to help me make it through. Today, I feel I am the blooming swan as portrayed in the portrait who has only become more beautiful and effervescent through the challenges that life has thrown my way over the course of my college experience. It has not been easy, but I am grateful for the strength I have acquired through this particular journey of forging the way for my family as a first-generation college student.*

	STUDENTS FOR QUALITY HEALTH CARE	 COMMUNITY	BUSPH STUDENT SENATE	HC MANAGEMENT STUDENT ASSOCIATION	GO TO BU EVENTS	
CHANCE 	   					BU STUDENTS
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ORGANIZATION						BU STAFF
FRIENDS 					CHANCE 	
QUEER ALLIANCE						BU FACULTY
STUDENTS OF COLOR FOR PUBLIC HEALTH					SIGNIFICANT OTHER 	
JUST VISITING 	TERRIER FIRSTS	ALPHA ALPHA ALPHA	FAMILY 	NEWBURY CENTER	UNBOUND TO YOUR FUTURE 	

# **FIRST-GEN MONOPOLY**

## **BY ARIANNA BOCCARDI**

### **SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH G'23**

*In my opinion, being a first-generation student is all about connecting and networking with all organizations, clubs, and community members within and outside the BU scope. By supporting each other in various avenues, we not only build our community stronger, but also create opportunity and change throughout. As a first-generation BU graduate student, I feel I have a "Monopoly" of opportunity because of the connections and endless support I have received while being here.*



# **MAKING MOMOS BY DAWA GYALPO QUESTROM SCHOOL OF BUSINESS G'25**

*To me, being a first-generation student at BU and moving here from across the country means remembering where I came from. Continuing my traditions and practicing my culture by preparing momos (Tibetan dumplings) and sending pictures to my family allow me to stay connected to my roots and family back home. This collage is a compilation of the preparation, momo making and dishes.*



# **PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY CHEN COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '26**

*Born and raised in New York City, I was a first-generation student in the New York City education system. Throughout my seventeen years of growing up, I remember almost every day that there would be some special event that would happen in Chinatown. Carnivals, fundraisers, parades... you name it. But when my father could afford some of his saved up money to buy me a camera, I believed that the first photo I would take would be something memorable of Chinatown. What defined me as a first-generation was the story of the older generations--older generations of Chinese immigrants who came to this country. Through this photo, it made me realize that many generations of Chinese Americans have sworn allegiance to this Nation and that veteran's day was a memorable day for them just as first generation students in college. Their triumph is a story to be told and we as first-gen students should tell their stories.*





# **OUT AT SEA**

## **BY NZNA NGUYEN**

### **COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES '26**

*Being a first-generation college student means that I'm making my own path and charting unexplored territories. It's new territory not only for me, but for my parents. I thought being a sailor on a boat out at sea was an apt metaphor! Out at sea--that is my time at BU, I'm going to discover things not only about the world, but about myself.*

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SUBMITTED A PIECE INTO THE  
SECOND ISSUE OF ELEVATE MAGAZINE.

MAY WE MOVE FORWARD WITH A NEWFOUND LOVE FOR  
INTROSPECTION.

THANK YOU FOR READING.

THANK YOU FOR BEING YOU.

WE APPRECIATE YOU.



