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Disinvited speaker says ‘politics’ to blame

Poet laureate replaced for Concord Academy commencement

By Nick Stoico

GLOBE STAFF

On her visits to Concord Academy, Boston’s poet laureate, Porsha Olayiwola, bonded with the students, inspired by their intellect and engagement.

When the private school reached out in January to tell her the senior class had chosen her to speak at their graduation on May 24, she was thrilled.

But in early April, the school announced that a new speaker — Alexandra Berzon, a New York Times reporter and 1997 graduate — was



‘I didn’t have any proof as to why they removed me, but I had an educated guess.’

PORSHA OLAYIWOLA, *who has retweeted posts criticizing Israel and expressing sympathy for Palestinians under siege in Gaza*

taking her place.

Olayiwola said she didn’t know she was no longer the speaker until the Globe contacted her about it earlier this month and she checked the school’s website to confirm.

“I didn’t have any proof as to why they removed me, but I had an educated guess, which is my politics,” Olayiwola said.

Olayiwola is active on X, formerly Twitter, and has retweeted several posts criticizing Israel and expressing solidarity with Palestinians under siege in Gaza.

In late October, Olayiwola retweeted a post that included a link **SPEAKER, Page A12**

Columbia’s president vows to fight antisemitism

Unlike other leaders, says school taking strong steps as she’s grilled by Republicans

By Nicholas Fandos, Stephanie Saul, and Sharon Otterman

NEW YORK TIMES

The president of Columbia University said it had suspended 15 students. She promised that one visiting professor “will never work at Columbia again.”

And when she was grilled over whether she would remove another professor from his leadership position, she appeared to make a decision right there on Capitol Hill: “I think I would, yes.”

The president, Nemat Shafik, disclosed the disciplinary details, which are usually confidential, as part of an all-out effort Wednesday to persuade a House committee investigating Columbia that she is taking serious action to combat a wave of antisemitism following the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

In nearly four hours of testimony before the Republican-led Committee on Education and the Workforce, Shafik conceded that Columbia had initially been overwhelmed by an outbreak of campus protests. But she said its leaders now agree that some had used antisemitic language and that certain contested phrases — like “from the river to the sea” — might warrant discipline.

“I promise you, from the messages I’m hearing **COLUMBIA, Page A7**

POP-UP SPRING



DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The season’s often slow to materialize here but it’s coming on strong on the Esplanade, where cherry blossoms are out.

Suffolk County youths more likely to be held after arrest

Concerns raised about racial disparities

By Sean Cotter

GLOBE STAFF

It can mean falling further behind on schoolwork, missing therapy appointments, or losing a part-time job. The consequences for youths who are detained after being arrested — rather than being released — are serious, and in Suffolk County, it’s happening more often.

People under 18 in the county are nearly three times more likely to be held in state detention programs after arraignment than youths in the rest of Massachusetts, according to court data. The Suffolk district attorney’s office said it is responding to a rising number of firearm cases among young people while trying to

balance how best to help children involved in crimes. But civil rights activists say the growing number of interactions between minors and the justice system reflects worrisome racial disparities and could have serious repercussions if youths end up pushed further down the wrong path.

In Suffolk County, which spans Boston, Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop, 35 percent of young people who were arraigned between July 2022 and June 2023 were then held in Department of Youth Services detention programs, either because they could not make bail or because prosecutors moved to hold them without bail, according to data from

the Massachusetts Trial Court. Statewide, 14 percent of youths were held after arraignment. Without counting Suffolk, the number dropped to 12 percent, data for the same time period show.

Just over half of the youths held after arraignment in Suffolk were Black, and 5 percent were white, the data said, though census estimates say Black people make up about a quarter of the county’s population. Black youths were held about 35 percent of the time there, while whites were held 27 percent of the time, according to the data for that 12-month period. The racial disparity is more stark statewide, with 19 percent of Black youths and 8 percent of white youths held.

The amount of time young people

are detained can vary widely, from a day or two until a cash bail amount is submitted, to multiple months if the courts deem them dangerous. The median time statewide from July 2022 through June 2023 was 35 days, which rose from 32 the previous year and 31 the year before that, according to a state report. Statewide, around one in four youths who are held after arraignment have a cash bail set but can’t afford it, while the rest are held without bail.

Some advocates question this approach to targeting youth crime.

“The idea that a young person goes in and gets scared straight — the research just doesn’t back it up,” said Leon Smith, executive director

JUVENILES, Page A9

As legislation languishes, another day of chaos in D.C.

By Jim Puzzanghera and Lissandra Villa de Petrzelka

GLOBE STAFF

and Charlotte Ehrlich

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — Senator Ed Markey was rushing to get to the Senate chamber Wednesday to be on time for what he called a waste of time: the impeachment trial of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

“It’s complete political theater,” the Massachusetts Democrat said before jumping into an elevator in the Capitol with Senators Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent, and Marsha Blackburn, a Tennessee Republican.

“We don’t know how long this is going to take today,” Markey said, clutching a chicken salad sandwich he hoped to eat during breaks in the proceedings. “Marsha might know, but we don’t know.”

“I don’t know,” Blackburn responded. “I’m asking you.”

It was one of the many unanswered questions on an unusually chaotic day in Congress. And that’s saying something.

Republicans found themselves grappling with a three-headed monster of their own making: the impeachment of a Democratic Cabinet secretary

CAPITOL HILL, Page A8



On the murk

Thursday: Gray and cool. High 47-52. Low 38-43.

Friday: More of the same. High 51-56. Low 44-49.

High tide: 8:13 a.m., 8:54 p.m.

Sunrise: 5:58 Sunset: 7:30

Weather and Comics, D5-6. Obituaries, C10-11.

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Jury selection continued in the Karen Read case, with seven more people added and five more needed. **B1.**

The state Department of Fire Services has identified 50 lithium-ion battery fires in Massachusetts over the past six months, more than double the annual average. **B1.**

Massachusetts General Hospital was cleared to add nearly 100 new beds to its downtown construction project. **D1.**

European diplomats traveled to Israel to plead again for restraint against Iran but said a reprisal seems inevitable. **A4.**

Jontay Porter was banned for life from the NBA after a league probe found he disclosed confidential information to bettors and wagered on games. **C2.**

Low-income areas want voice in greening of the grid

Often saddled with energy infrastructure, neighborhoods push back

By Sabrina Shankman

GLOBE STAFF

On a recent weekday afternoon, the American Legion playground in East Boston was a symphony of the sounds of spring: the crack of a bat during baseball practice, cheers from a soccer field, laughter from parents chasing their toddler.

But there was another sound, too: the shrill *beep-beep-beep* of a construction vehicle just across the street, as it chewed into the ground, building East Eagle Substation, a project by utility Eversource coming to fruition after years of neighborhood opposition and an overwhelming vote in a nonbinding ballot question to stop it.

Across the state, more often than not, energy infrastructure ends up in communities such as East Boston — so-called environmental justice neighborhoods, where the population on average is low-income, has a high percentage of people of color, and/or where a sizable number of households do not speak English very well, if at all.

Advocates worry environmental justice neighborhoods are being saddled with this infrastructure, taking away open space and exposing residents to risks such as fire, while wealthier communi-

INFRASTRUCTURE, Page A9



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Noemy Rodriguez, a local organizer with GreenRoots, said the new East Boston substation is too close to a playground.