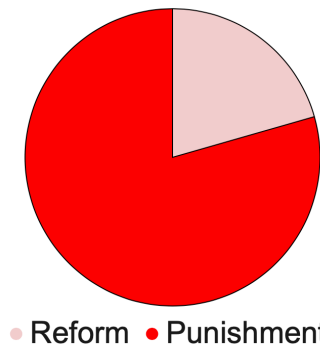


## What's Your Opinion?

Are American prisons more effective at reform or punishment?

Out of 34 responses:

Reform - 7  
Punishment - 27



## Next Poll:

**Food Craving**  
Is mayonnaise a valid condiment?

Students can answer the poll on The Herald's Instagram page, [@astateherald](#). Instagram polls are posted on Mondays. Previous poll results can be found on [astatetheherald.com](#). Have an idea for a poll? Send your ideas to [heraldopinion1921@gmail.com](#).

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website.

## Politics is simple; just stand for something

ELIJAH TEMPLETON

LIFE EDITOR



Elijah Templeton is a senior English major from Jonesboro.

The year is 2025. The Democratic Party is disorganized. The Republican Party reigns supreme in every branch of government. The President hosts "Great Gatsby" themed Halloween parties while millions of his citizens risk losing SNAP benefits. Amidst the chaos and noise, a beacon of hope has emerged in the Big Apple, claiming the national spotlight as all eyes turned to New York City's Mayoral race. Zohran Mamdani, an unknown New York Assemblyman just one year ago, launched a grassroots campaign that saw his stock take a meteoric rise, which won him the Democratic primary in June and led him to becoming the new Mayor of New York City. No establishment backing, no major party funding or endorsements until his victory seemed assured and all this while



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ASSOCIATED

**Zohran Mamdani speaks after winning the New York City mayoral election.** being an open Democratic Socialist in the capitalist heart of the country. In spite of all this, Mamdani has galvanized millions in his city and around the globe and sparked a feeling many thought would take years to reclaim: hope. After witnessing Kamala Harris evade and deflect the simplest of questions and refuse to really say much of anything in 2024's presidential campaign, Democrats and progressives seemed disillusioned with the direction of the Democratic Party. After a decade of running on the "we are not Trump" ticket, Dems seemed directionless, weak and ineffective. Then came Mamdani. A candidate who at long last had a platform and

a vision for the city he called home, coupled with the intelligence and charisma to communicate that vision to voters across the political spectrum. Mamdani is the anti-Kamala in effect. Able to answer questions, appease concerns and most of all, articulate stances that he has not folded on under pushback and scrutiny. not fold on. His campaign has shown that the hope of change is more compelling than a defense of the status quo. Voters will mobilize behind a candidate who poses risks but offers a chance. A chance that things can be better for working and middle-class Americans in spite of corporate interests and the ultra-wealthy. Can Mamdani deliver on his lofty campaign goals to make buses fast and free, guarantee universal child care and raise taxes on the richest residents of his city to pay the bill? That remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that voters are willing to give him a chance rather than capitulate to establishment politicians who speak only of what they can't do, never of what they can. High-ranking Democrats have been reluctant to endorse Mamdani, fearing he may be too radical or idealistic. Too inexperienced and potentially ineffective. Voters have proved twice over that they do not share these concerns. With the right candidate, at the right time, with the right platform, miracles can

happen. Donald Trump is proof of that fact, and Mamdani, in a polar-opposite presentation, is the newest candidate who appears untainted by a lifetime of political service, unburdened by corporate donors, and the kind of candidate who, at the very least, will shake things up a bit. Americans will risk upending the status quo in search of a better country; New Yorkers will risk the same for a better city. Whether or not Mamdani keeps every campaign promise is almost irrelevant now. He has done what many thought impossible: given Democrats a blueprint to follow that may just save the party. If they hop aboard the hype train and do their utmost to make his vision for New York a reality, other cities and states will follow suit. A true 'blue wave' may just sweep the nation. Maybe it leads to a utopia, perhaps to widespread chaos and anarchy. Either way, we are ready to find out what is possible when we stop listening to those who say right now is as good as things can ever be. Mamdani could be the heir apparent or the straw that breaks the camel's back, but things will not be the same after he takes office on January 1st and for now, that is good enough. But that's just one man's opinion.

## The prison reform system needs change

SHAYAAN SAYEED

OPINION EDITOR



Shayaan Sayeed is a freshman International Business major from Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Prisons are touted as rehabilitation programs and punishment facilities for people who break the law, but whether they truly reform remains one of society's biggest debates. In theory, prisons should offer inmates education, job training and life skills on how to function in society; they should teach prisoners to be law-abiding citizens. But the system often fails to meet those expectations. Prison systems differ from country to country, and the results show the difference the approach can make. For example, Norway orients prisons around three pillars: normality, progression and dynamic security.

Norwegian staff are friendly and try to build relationships with inmates, daily routines are designed to reflect life outside of prison and activities point to reintegration. Norway's approach leads to one of the lowest relapse rates globally. German prisons focus on rehabilitation and normalization, relating life in prison to that of outside. This creates a sense of familiarity and normalcy for inmates inside prison, so they can implement the same when they are released. Now, let me get into the shitshow; the main issue with the prison system in the United States is that it focuses more on vengeance rather than rehabilitation. Systems that prioritize punishment over personal development of inmates see a higher rate of relapse. We have seen time and time again the brutality of these prisons. One example is the murder of Rocrast Mack by the guards at Alabama Ventress Correctional facility in 2010. After being accused of looking at a female officer inappropriately, he was beaten to death by guards in the facility. If you teach inmates that, if they commit a crime, they will be kept in a box and given meals twice a day, what do you think they will do?

They know the realities of the outside world are harsh; many were homeless and hungry, and life outside prison walls is often what pushed them to commit a crime in the first place. Rather than focusing on making sure the prisoners have the worst time of their lives, why not educate them on why a life of crime was wrong in the first place? Prisons should not only focus on punishment but also on the promise

of rehabilitation that all these prisons advertise. Let's focus on educating them, making sure they have the requisite life skills before releasing them back into society, so they do not end up returning to prison in the first place. Place fair sentences and punishments for those who commit violent crimes, but for those who can have a second shot at life, why not take that chance and rehabilitate them?



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Norwegian prisoner stands in a special cell focused on addiction recovery.

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