

FUP Reading Packet 2015



the FUPrint

*your first steps towards FUP love
and the Harvard community*

FUP Reading Packet

This packet is meant to present a variety of perspectives on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, identity, ability status, religion, social justice, oppression, privilege, power structures and what it means to participate in service, activism, and social change. There is no one way to “FUP,” but all the pieces in this packet have been chosen to provoke critical thought, discussion and reflection.

Don’t feel any pressure to agree with all (or any) of the authors - but do take the time to think about the issues they raise. Please do all the reading carefully, as we’ll be meeting in small, organized discussion groups throughout FUP week.

While we tried to include a diverse range of topics relating to service, activism, and social change, there is definitely no way for a compilation of readings like this to cover everything—if there is a topic that you feel is missing, that’s definitely something you can bring up in your small discussion group at FUP! This packet is meant to serve as a way to start the conversations that we will have throughout FUP week, but there will also be plenty of space to talk about your personal experiences with the kinds of topics raised here if you feel comfortable. While reading this packet, it can be helpful to think about what the community you’re from is like and how that has influenced how you see the issues that are brought up in this packet.

Please print a copy of the reading packet before arriving, so that during discussion of an article everyone can refer back to the text and refresh their memory on the details of what it said. (The length of this packet can make it especially hard to discuss without being able to do that!) If having access to a printer before arriving is an issue for you for whatever reason, email harvardfup@gmail.com and we can sort it out before FUP!

Good luck, happy reading, and we cannot wait to FUP with you!!

Intro to Harvard

Welcome! We want to make sure you all are equipped to take on your freshman year, so here is a list of resources at your disposal for the next four years.

- **CS50 Course Guide** *A very comprehensive guide of Harvard courses.*
<https://courses.cs50.net/>
- **Mental Health Resources** *There are a multitude of mental health resources at your disposal.*
 - **Student Mental Health Liaisons(SMHL)** Taken from their website: *“Aims to reach students in a non-threatening environment, engage them in the ongoing effort to promote a community that attends to the emotional wellbeing of students, and to provide factual information orientated to and delivered by students.”*
 - SMHL also provides a well-organized diagram of all the different types of resources: professional, peer, and residential support. Link [here](#).
- **Sexual Assault Resources** *There are also a multitude of resources for sexual assault.*
 - **Office of Sexual Assault Prevention & Response(OSAPR)** Taken from the SMHL diagram: *“Trained staff members are available to survivors of sexual violence; provide support, information, and resource referral; connects students with other resources like SASH, and peer groups, like CARE”*
 - Located at 731 Smith Campus Center, open from Monday-Friday, 9AM-5PM
 - Phone: 617-496-5636, 24 hour hotline: 617-495-9100
- **Women’s Center, Office of BGLTQ Student Life, and Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations** *All these offices are located in various basements within Harvard Yard and are available for your use. They are all welcoming and inclusive environments.*
 - *Women’s Center is located in the basement of Canaday B. BGLTQ Office is located in the basement of Boylston Hall. Harvard Foundation is located in the basement of Thayer.*
- **Academic Advisors and Peer-Advising Fellows (PAFs)** *Your academic advisors are assigned to you based on your concentration and help you with any information you need regarding academics. Your PAFs are other students who are there to guide you in everything from academics to extracurriculars. They are both going to be great resources for you to seek out information about academics, extracurriculars, and anything else you will need.*

- **Harvard University Police Department (HUPD)** *The official Harvard University police that can help you with whatever you need if it's simply needing an escort to take you home or something more serious.*
 - Number: 617-495-1212
- **Harvard University Health Services (HUHS)** *The local hospital where you can get a checkup, use the pharmacy, or go to for any medical needs.*
 - Located at the Smith Campus Center Monday-Friday 8AM-5:30PM; Urgent Care open 24/7; Number: 617-495-5711
- **Yard Operations or Yardops** *Yardops keeps up the maintenance of all the freshmen dorms and other buildings. They are the ones you go to when something in your room is broken or you have some pests in your room.*
 - Located in the basement of Weld Hall; Number: 617-495-1874

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Introduction to Social Justice

There Is No Hierarchy of Oppression

By Audre Lorde

A great place to start!

I was born Black and a woman. I am trying to become the strongest person I can become to live the life I have been given and to help effect change toward a livable future for this earth and for my children. As a Black, lesbian, feminist, socialist, poet, mother of two including one boy and member of an interracial couple, I usually find myself part of some group in which the majority defines me as deviant, difficult, inferior or just plain "wrong".

From my membership in all of these groups I have learned that oppression and the intolerance of difference come in all shapes and sizes and colors and sexualities; and that among those of us who share the goals of liberation and a workable future for our children, there can be no hierarchies of oppression. I have learned that sexism (a belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over all others and thereby its right to dominance) and heterosexism (a belief in the inherent superiority of one pattern of loving over all others and thereby its right to dominance) both arise from the same source as racism - a belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby its right to dominance.

"Oh," says a voice from the Black community, "but being Black is normal!" Well, I and many Black people of my age can remember grimly the days when it didn't used to be!

I simply do not believe that one aspect of myself can possibly profit from the oppression of my other part of my identity. I know that my people cannot possibly profit from the oppression of any other group which seeks the right to peaceful existence. Rather, we diminish ourselves by denying to others what we have shed blood to obtain for our children. And those children need to learn that they do not have to become like each other in order to work together for a future they will all share.

The increasing attacks upon lesbians and gay men are only an introduction to the increasing attacks upon all Black people, for wherever oppression manifests itself in this country, Black people are potential victims. And it is a standard of right-wing cynicism to encourage members of oppressed groups to act against each other, and so long as we are divided because of our particular identities we cannot join together in effective political action.

Within the lesbian community I am Black, and within the Black community I am a lesbian. Any attack against Black people is a lesbian and gay issue, because I and thousands of other Black women are part of the lesbian community. Any attack against lesbians and gays is a Black issue, because thousands of lesbians and gay men are Black. There is no hierarchy of oppression.

It is not accidental that the Family Protection Act, which is virulently anti-woman and anti-Black, is also anti-gay. As a Black person, I know who my enemies are, and when the Ku Klux Klan goes to court in Detroit to try and force the Board of Education to remove books the Klan believes "hint at homosexuality," then I know I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot afford to believe that freedom from intolerance is the right of only one particular group. And I cannot afford to choose between the fronts upon which I must battle these forces of discrimination, wherever they appear to destroy me. And when they appear to destroy me, it will not be long before they appear to destroy you.

What Is Privilege?

An Analysis of Privilege, Power Structures, and Systematic Oppression
Adapted from the AFED Women's Caucus "Class Struggle Anarchist
Analysis of Privilege Theory." See the full essay [here](http://www.afed.org.uk/blog/state/327-a-class-struggle-anarchist-analysis-of-privilege-theory-from-the-womens-caucus-.html).

(<http://www.afed.org.uk/blog/state/327-a-class-struggle-anarchist-analysis-of-privilege-theory-from-the-womens-caucus-.html>)

Defined as: set of
unearned benefits
provided exclusively to
people within a specific
social group

What do we mean – and what do we *not* mean – by privilege? Privilege implies that wherever there is a system of oppression (such as patriarchy or white supremacy), there is an oppressed group and also a privileged group, who benefit from the oppressions that this system puts in place. The privileged group do not have to be active supporters of the system of oppression, or even aware of it, in order to benefit from it. They benefit from *being viewed as the norm*, and providing for their needs being seen as what is naturally done, while the oppressed group is considered the “other”, and their needs are “special considerations”. Sometimes, the privileged group benefits from the system in the obvious, material ways, such as when women are expected to do most or all of the housework, and male partners benefit from their unpaid labour. At other times the benefits are more subtle and invisible, and involve certain pressures being taken off a privileged group and focused on others, for example black and Asian youths being 28% more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white youths².

The point here is not that police harassment doesn't happen to white youths, or that being working class or a white European immigrant doesn't also mean you're more likely to face harassment; the point is that a disproportionate number of black and Asian people are targeted in comparison to white people, and the result of this is that, if you are carrying drugs, and you are white, then *all other things being equal* you are much more likely to get away with it than if you were black. In the UK, white people are also less likely to be arrested or jailed, or to be the victim of a personal crime.³ The point of quoting this is not to suggest we want a society in which people of all races and ethnicities face equal disadvantage – we want to create a society in which nobody faces these disadvantages. But part of getting there is acknowledging how *systems of oppression* work, which means recognizing that, if black and ethnic minority groups are more likely to face these disadvantages, then by simple maths white people are *less* likely to face them, and that means they have an advantage, a privilege, including the privilege of not needing to be aware of the extent of the problem.

A privileged group may also, in some ways, be oppressed by the expectation of the system that privileges them; for example, men under patriarchy are expected to not show weakness or emotion, and are mistrusted as carers. However, men are not oppressed by patriarchy *for being men*, they are oppressed in these ways because it is necessary in order to *maintain women's oppression*. For women to see themselves as weak, irrational and suited only to caring roles, they must believe that men are stronger, less emotional and incapable of caring for those who need it.

It is crucial to understand that members of the privileged group of any of these systems may also be oppressed by any of the other, and this is what allows struggles to be divided. We are divided, socially and politically, by a lack of awareness of our privileges, and how they are used to set our interests against each other and break out solidarity (more on this in the section on Intersectionality).

Privilege, Social Class, and Cultural Identity

The term “privilege” has a complex relationship with class struggle, and to understand why, we need to look at some of the differences and confusions between economic and social class. Social class describes the cultural identities of working class, middle class and upper class. These identities, much like those built on gender or race,

are socially constructed, created by a society based on its prejudices and expectations of people in those categories. Economic class is different. It describes the economic working and ruling classes, and is based on the ownership of material resources, regardless of your personal identity or social status. This is why a wealthy, knighted capitalist like Alan Sugar can describe himself as a “working class boy made good”. He is clearly not working class if we look at it economically, but he clings to that social identity in the belief that it in some way justifies or excuses the exploitation within his business empire. He confuses social and economic class in order to identify himself with an oppressed group (the social working class) and so deny his own significant privilege (as part of the economic ruling class).

This doesn’t make economic class a “primary” oppression, or the others “secondary”, but it does mean that resistance in economic class struggle takes different forms and has slightly different aims to struggles based on cultural identities. We can’t force men to give up their maleness or white people to give up their whiteness, or send them all to the guillotine and reclaim their power and privilege as if it were a resource that they were hoarding. Instead, we need to take apart and understand the systems that tend to concentrate power and resources in the hands of the privileged and question the very concepts of gender, sexuality, race, etc. that are used to build identities that divide us.

A large part of the resentment some feel of the term “privilege” comes from misunderstandings of how privileges based in these cultural identities work – men, white people, straight people, cisgendered people, etc., can’t give up their privilege – no matter how much they may want to. It is forced on them by a system they cannot opt out of, or choose to stop benefiting from. Nevertheless, many feel as if they’re being accused of hoarding something they’re not entitled to, and that they’re being blamed for this or asked to feel guilty or undergo some kind of endless penance to be given absolution for their privilege. This is not the case. While some may feel guilty for their privilege, we must recognize that **guilt isn’t useful; awareness and thoughtful actions are**. If you take nothing else away from this document, take this: **You are not responsible for the system that gives you your privilege, only for how you respond to it.** The privileged have a role to play in the struggle against the systems that privilege them – it’s just not a leadership role (more on this later).

Answering Objections to Privilege

A common objection to the concept of privilege is that it makes cultural status out of the lack of an oppression. You could say that not facing systematic prejudice for your skin color isn’t a privilege, it’s how things should be for everyone. To face racism is the aberration. To not face it should be the default experience. The problem is, if not experiencing oppression is the default experience, then experiencing oppression puts you outside the default experience, in a special category, which in turn makes a lot of the oppression invisible. To talk about privilege reveals what is normal to those without oppression, yet cannot be taken for granted by those with it. To talk about homophobia alone may reveal the existence of prejudices – stereotypes about how gay men and lesbian women behave, perhaps, or violence targeted against people for their sexuality.

To talk about straight privilege, however, show the other side of the system, the invisible side: what behavior is considered “typical” for straight people? There isn’t one – straight isn’t treated like a sexual category, it is treated like the absence of “gay”. This analysis goes beyond worries about discrimination or prejudice to the very heart of what we consider normal and neutral, what we consider different and other, what needs explaining, what’s taken as read – the prejudices in favour of being straight aren’t recognizable as prejudices, because they’re built into our very perceptions of what is the default way to be.

It’s useful to see this, because when we look at oppressions in isolation, we tend to attribute them to personal or societal prejudice, a homophobic law that can be repealed, a racial discrimination that can be legislated against. Alone, terms like “racism”, “sexism”, “ableism” don’t describe how oppression is woven into the fabric of a

society and a normal part of life rather than an easily isolated stain on society that can be removed without a trace, leaving the fabric intact.⁵

Privilege theory is systematic. It explains why removing prejudice and discrimination isn't enough to remove oppression. It shows how society itself needs to be ordered differently. When people talk about being "colour-blind" in relation to race, they think it means they're not racist, but it usually means that *they think they can safely ignore differences of background and life experiences due to race*, and expect that the priorities and world views of everybody should be the same as those of white people, which they consider to be "normal". It means they think they don't have to listen to people who are trying to explain why a situation is different for them. They want difference to go away, so that everybody can be equal, yet by trying to ignore difference, *they are reinforcing it*. Recognising privilege means recognising that differences of experience exist which we may not be aware of. It means being willing to listen when people tell us about how their experience differs from ours. It means trying to conceive of a new "normal" that we can bring about through a differently structured society, instead of erasing experiences that don't fit into our privileged concept of "normal".

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the idea that we are all privileged by some of these systems and oppressed by others, and that, because those systems affect one another, our oppression and privileges intersect. This means that we each experience oppression in ways specific to our particular combinations of class, gender, race, sexuality, disability, age etc.^{6,7}

If we want a post-revolutionary society free of all oppression, we need all the oppressed to have an equal role in creating it, and that means listening to experiences of oppression that we don't share and working to understand how each system operates: in isolation, and in relation to other systems.

Just as sexism and racism divide class struggle, capitalism and racism divide gender struggles, and sexism and capitalism divide race struggles. All systems of oppression divide the struggles against all the other systems that they intersect with. This is because we find out loyalties divided by our own particular combinations of privilege and oppression, and we prioritise the struggles we see as primary to the detriment of others, and to the detriment of solidarity.

By being able to analyse and point out how systems of oppression intersect is vital, as hitting these systems of oppression at their intersections can be our most effective way of uniting struggles and building solidarity across a number of ideological fronts.

For example, certain strands of radical feminism have refused to accept the validity of trans* struggles, keeping trans women out of women's spaces (see the controversies over Radfem 2012 and some of the workshops at Women Up North 2012 over their "women born women" policies). The outcome of this is as above: the most oppressed get the shitty end of both sticks (in this case **cisnormativity** and patriarchy), with feminism, the movement that is supposed to be at the forefront of fighting oppression that affects both parties (patriarchy) failing at one of its sharpest intersections. This also led to the fracturing of the feminist movement and stagnation of theory through failure to communicate with trans* activists, whose priorities and struggles have such a massive crossover with feminism. One positive that's come out of these recent examples is the joining together of feminist and trans* activist groups to challenge the entry policy of Radfem 2012. This leading to more communication, solidarity and the possibility of joint actions between these groups.

The above examples mean that thinking about privileges and oppressions is essential for organizing together, for recognizing where other struggles intersect with our own and what our role should be in those

The assumption that a person's gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth.

situations, where our experiences will be useful and where they will be disruptive, where we should be listening carefully and where we can contribute constructively. Acknowledging privilege in this situation means acknowledging that it's not the responsibility of the oppressed group to challenge the system that oppresses them, it's everybody's responsibility because being a part of a privileged group doesn't make you neutral, it means you're facing an advantage. That said, when we join the struggle against our own advantages we need to remember that it isn't about duty or guilt or altruism, because *all of our struggles are connected*. The more we can make alliances over the oppression that have been used to divide us, the more we can unite against the forces that exploit us all. None of us can do it alone.

The Myth of the "Oppression Olympics"

To say that somebody has white privilege isn't to suggest that they can't also have a whole host of other oppressions. There is no points system for working out how privileged or oppressed you are in relation to somebody else, and no point in trying to do so. The only way that privilege or oppression makes your contributions to a struggle more or less valid is through that struggle's relevance to your lived experience.

A black, disabled working class lesbian may not necessarily have had a harder life than white, able-bodied working class straight cis-man, but she will have a much greater understand of the intersections between class, race, disability, gender and sexuality. The point isn't that, as the most oppressed in the room, she should lead the discussion, it's that her experience gives her insights he won't have on the relevant point of struggle, the demands that will be most effective, the bosses who represent the biggest problem, the best places and times to hold meetings or how to phrase a callout for a mass meeting so that it will appeal to a wider range of people, ways of dealing with issues that will very probably not occur to anybody whose oppression is along fewer intersections. He should be listening to her, not because she is more oppressed than him (though she may well be), but because it is vital to the struggle that she is heard, and because the prejudices that society has conditioned into us, and that still affect the most socially aware of us, continue to make it more difficult for her to be heard, for us to hear her.

Some would argue that government, public bodies and corporation have been known to use arguments like these to put forward or promote particular people into positions of power or responsibility, either as a well-meaning attempt to ensure that oppressed groups are represented or as a cynical exercise in tokenism to improve their public image. We oppose the idea that, for instance, a woman Prime Minister, will be likely to do anything more for working class women than a male Prime Minister will do for working class men. **It should be remembered that privilege theory is not a movement in itself but an analysis used by a diverse range of movements, liberal and radical, reformist and revolutionary.**

We have to challenge ourselves to look out for campaigns that, due to the privilege of those who initiate them, lack awareness of how an issue differs across intersections. We need to broaden out our own campaigns to include the perspectives of all those affected by the issues we cover. This will allow us to bring more issues together, gather greater solidarity, fight more oppression and build a movement that can challenge all oppression.

Daily Effects of Class Privilege

From the Piedmont Peace Project

- I don't have to feel apologetic for whatever my lifestyle is
- I don't have to fight a tendency to feel ashamed of myself and my background because of others' attitudes about my economic group
- I can assume that money will not keep me from getting whatever job or career I would like, and if I choose a lower-paying job I know that I always have family to fall back on for financial support
- I know that money will not be a limiting factor in where I choose to live.
- I can afford rent, utility, and phone deposits etc. whenever I need them. If not, I have an acceptable co-signer, or can have them waived because of my income level and good credit rating
- I can take vacations and travel as often as my work permits
- I will be able to take care of myself and my family after I retire, and will have wealth to pass on to my children.
- I am not obligated to spend all my resources and personal time taking care of my extended family.
- As a child I will not be placed in a lower academic track or discouraged from taking certain classes because of my economic status.
- My thinking about higher education has always centered around *which* college I will attend rather than *if* I will attend college.
- I can make sure that my children attend schools where they will learn to read, write, and develop other skills they will need to get a job.
- If I achieve outstanding accomplishments of any kind, others will not think it is because I am an exception and different from other people of my economic group.
- I'm not portrayed as ignorant and stupid on TV and in the movies. Other people will not assume that I am dirty, lazy, and unmotivated.
- I learned early on that I can assert my rights and expect that they will be addressed.
- I have been taught to assume that it is my right to express my opinion and to analyze and criticize things.

What about the intersection of race and class?! For more on the topic look up "[explaining white privilege to a broke white person](#)"

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

Peggy McIntosh

To read the full essay, click [here](#). (Or visit: <http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>)

"I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group"

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life. I have chosen those conditions that I think in my case attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can tell, my African American coworkers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place and time of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
14. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.
17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.
18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.

19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
23. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
24. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.
25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
27. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.
28. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.
29. I can be pretty sure that if I argue for the promotion of a person of another race, or a program centering on race, this is not likely to cost me heavily within my present setting, even if my colleagues disagree with me.
30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.
31. I can choose to ignore developments in minority writing and minority activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.
32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.
33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.
37. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.
38. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race
40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.
43. If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.

- 44. I can easily find academic courses and institutions which give attention only to people of my race.
- 45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.
- 46. I can chose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.
- 47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.
- 48. I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.
- 49. My children are given texts and classes which implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.
- 50. I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.

What's the asterisk for, you ask? It's so the phrase trans* can represent multiple identities that share a common root. This includes transvestite, transsexual, transgender, genderless, gender fluid..... and so many more!

Non-Trans* Privilege or Cisgender Privilege List

This list is based on Peggy McIntosh's White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.

You can find this list [here](http://new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/2012181.pdf), or by visiting: <http://new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/2012181.pdf>

- 1) Strangers don't assume they can ask me what my genitals look like and how I have sex.
- 2) My validity as a man/woman/human is not based upon how much surgery I've had or how well I "pass" as a non-Trans person.
- 3) When initiating sex with someone, I do not have to worry that they won't be able to deal with my parts or that having sex with me will cause my partner to question his or her own sexual orientation.
- 4) I am not excluded from events which are either explicitly or de facto* men-born-men or women born-women only. (*possibly anything involving nudity)
- 5) My politics are not questioned based on the choices I make with regard to my body.
- 6) I don't have to hear "So have you had THE surgery?" or "Oh, so you're REALLY a [incorrect sex or gender]?" each time I come out to someone.
- 7) I am not expected to constantly defend my medical decisions.
- 8) Strangers do not ask me what my "real name" [birth name] is and then assume that they have a right to call me by that name.
- 9) People do not disrespect me by using incorrect pronouns even after they've been corrected.
- 10) I do not have to worry that someone wants to be my friend or have sex with me in order to prove his or her "hipness" or "good" politics.
- 11) I do not have to worry about whether I will be able to find a safe and accessible bathroom or locker room to use.
- 12) When engaging in political action, I do not have to worry about the gendered repercussions of being arrested. (i.e. What will happen to me if the cops find out that my genitals do not match my gendered appearance? Will I end up in a cell with people of my own gender?)
- 13) I do not have to defend my right to be a part of "Queer" space or movement, and lesbian, gay, and bisexual people will not try to exclude me from our movements in order to gain political legitimacy for themselves.
- 14) My experience of gender (or gendered spaces) is not viewed as "baggage" by others of the gender in which I live.
- 15) I do not have to choose between either invisibility ("passing") or being consistently "othered" and/or tokenized based on my gender.
- 16) I am not told that my sexual orientation and gender identity are mutually exclusive.
- 17) When I go to the gym or a public pool, I can use the showers.

Though you might not mean it, qualifying trans* beauty by saying they're "somehow" prettier than you is offensive!

18) If I end up in the emergency room, I do not have to worry that my gender will keep me from receiving appropriate treatment nor will all of my medical issues be seen as a product of my gender. ("Your nose is running and your throat hurts? Must be due to the hormones!")

19) My health insurance provider (or public health system) does not specifically exclude me from receiving benefits or treatments available to others because of my gender.

20) When I express my internal identities in my daily life, I am not considered 'mentally ill' by the medical establishment.

21) I am not required to undergo extensive psychological evaluation in order to receive basic medical care.

22) The medical establishment does not serve as a "gatekeeper" which disallows self-determination of what happens to my body.

23) People do not use me as a scapegoat for their own unresolved gender issues.

Able-bodied Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

By Amy Kelly

To read the full essay, click [here](#) or visit:

<http://www2.edc.org/WomensEquity/edequity/hypermail/1180.html>

1. I cannot easily arrange to be in the company of people of my physical ability.
2. If I need to move, I cannot easily be assured of purchasing housing I can get access to easily - accessibility is one thing I need to make a special point of looking for. *
3. I cannot be assured that my entire neighborhood will be accessible to me. *
4. I cannot assume that I can go shopping alone, and they will always have appropriate accommodations to make this experience hassle-free. *
5. I cannot turn on the television or open a newspaper and see people of my physical ability represented. (This is more so the case for people who walk on crutches, or who have some sort of physical distortion, as these people are not as attractive as people sitting neatly in a wheelchair whom you would not know were handicapped if they were seated in a regular chair.)
6. When I learned about history, people of my physical ability were not well represented. (Roosevelt's polio was kept out of the media as much as possible, as is Dole's and Silber's amputation --I would be interested in discussing their decision to not make it an issue with anyone who is interested.)
7. I was not given curricular material which showed people like me as a role model. (Like other minorities, we are only portrayed as either pathetic or heroic, not normal)
8. This point may be arguable, but I have seen few pieces of literature on able-bodied privilege.
9. I cannot be assured that assumptions about my mental capabilities will not be made based on my physical status.
10. I cannot swear, dress sloppily, or even be in a bad mood without people attributing it to my physical disability.
11. I cannot do well in challenging situations very often without being told what an inspiration I must be to other disabled people.
12. I have been asked to speak for all physically challenged people.
13. I have often, when criticizing an organization for not being accommodating enough, been thought of as mal-adjusted.
14. I hardly ever, when asking to speak to the person in charge, will find someone of the same physical status.
15. I cannot buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, children's magazines featuring people of the same physical status. (Unless it is a specialty book, aimed at sensitivity training, or a **pc** doll "Share a Smile Becky" with the acronym for the Individuals with Disabilities Act sprawled across her sweater, sending the message: "Don't worry, I am always happy - see my ever present smile?" and "My disability is my sole identity".
16. I cannot take a job with an affirmative action employer without having someone suspect I got my job because of my disability.
17. If I am fired, not given a raise, or not hired, I must question if it had anything to do with my appearing physically incompetent. (although it doesn't serve any purpose to question it, because it would be almost impossible to prove).

Politically Correct:
Pejorative term used to frame oppressive actions against a social group as "offensive to sensitive people" rather than real and systemic.

Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality: “I wanted to come up with an everyday metaphor that anyone could use”

By Bim Adewunmi

To read online, click [here](#) or visit:

<http://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2014/04/kimberl-crenshaw-intersectionality-i-wanted-come-everyday-metaphor-anyone-could>

Kimberlé Crenshaw's ears must have been burning with alarming regularity and intensity over the last couple of years. We meet in one of the dining rooms of her hotel in central London, her base while she's on a whistlestop lecture tour. Two days before our meeting she spoke at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and later this evening, she will speak at the London School of Economics. Her subject is intersectionality and feminism. In recent times, intersectionality theory – the study of how different power structures interact in the lives of minorities, specifically black women, a theory she named in the 1980s – has enjoyed a resurgence in popular and academic feminism. Her name and her work has become an introductory point for feminists of all stripes.

Of course, she says, the concept of intersectionality is not exactly new. “So many of the antecedents to it are as old as Anna Julia Cooper, and Maria Stewart in the 19th century in the US, all the way through Angela Davis and Deborah King,” she says. “In every generation and in every intellectual sphere and in every political moment, there have been African American women who have articulated the need to think and talk about race through a lens that looks at gender, or think and talk about feminism through a lens that looks at race. So this is in continuity with that.”

For Crenshaw, a law professor at UCLA and Columbia, intersectionality theory came about specifically to address a particular problem. “It's important to clarify that the term was used to capture the applicability of black feminism to anti-discrimination law,” she says. In the lecture she delivered at the LSE later that evening, she brought up the case of *Degraffenreid vs General Motors*, in which five black women sued GM on the grounds of race and gender discrimination. “The particular challenge in the law was one that was grounded in the fact that antidiscrimination law looks at race and gender separately,” she says. “The consequence of that is when African American women or any other women of colour experience either compound or overlapping discrimination, the law initially just was not there to come to their defence.” The courts' thinking was that black women could not prove gender discrimination because not all women were discriminated against, and they couldn't prove race discrimination because not all black people were discriminated against. A compound discrimination suit would, in the courts' eyes, constitute preferential treatment, something nobody else could do. Crenshaw laughs when she adds: “Of course, no one else had to do that. Intersectionality was a way of addressing what it was that the courts weren't seeing.”

Cases like these informed much of her earlier work on intersectionality – trying to show how these African American plaintiffs' arguments rested on the ability to show that the discrimination they were experiencing was the combination of two different kinds of policies. But there was an additional point to the theory as well: pointing out that the tools being used to remedy the overlapping discrimination – anti-discrimination law – were themselves inadequate. “You've got to show that the kind of discrimination people have conceptualised is limited because they stop their thinking when the discrimination encounters another kind of discrimination,” she says. “I wanted to come up with a common everyday metaphor that people could use to say: ‘it's well and good for me to understand the kind of discriminations that occur along this avenue, along this axis – but what happens when it flows into another axis, another avenue?’”

Laid out like this, it may seem baffling that so many have had a problem with the idea of intersectionality. What is it, I asked Crenshaw, that makes it so difficult for people to grasp? She pauses briefly before she answers. “I’m only speculating, but there lots of different reasons. I mean, intersectionality is not easy,” she says. “It’s not as though the existing frameworks that we have - from our culture, our politics or our law - automatically lead people to being conversant and literate in intersectionality.”

On the charge that intersectionality is not new, she gets philosophical. “Well, a lot of things aren’t new,” she says. “Class is not new and race is not new. And we still continue to contest and talk about it, so what’s so unusual about intersectionality not being new and therefore that’s not a reason to talk about it? Intersectionality draws attention to invisibilities that exist in feminism, in anti-racism, in class politics, so obviously it takes a lot of work to consistently challenge ourselves to be attentive to aspects of power that we don’t ourselves experience.” But, she stresses, this has been the project of black feminism since its very inception: drawing attention to the erasures, to the ways that “women of colour are invisible in plain sight”.

“Within any power system,” she continues, “there is always a moment - and sometimes it lasts a century - of resistance to the implications of that. So we shouldn’t really be surprised about it.”

There is sometimes a failure to make analogies, she says. Feminists who have answers for the questions of class politics and how it plays out along gender lines sometimes exhibit an unwillingness to apply the same principles around feminism and race. “That ability to be intersectional - even though it’s not called that - isn’t replicated in [this] conversation,” she says. I think that the same kind of openness and fluidity and willingness to interrogate power that we as feminists expect from men in alliance on questions of class should also be the expectation that women of colour can rely upon with our white feminist allies.”

I bring up a tweet I recently read, about the “perils of yelling at white women for a living” to ask what form pushback takes when discussing intersectionality in feminism. “At the end of the day, it really is a question of power: who has the power to end the debate? To walk away? To say, “I’m done talking about it, and I can go on with my rhetoric in a ‘business as usual’ kind of response?”” She smiles. “Sometimes it feels like those in power frame themselves as being tremendously disempowered by critique. A critique of one’s voice isn’t taking it away. If the underlying assumption behind the category ‘women’ or ‘feminist’ is that we are a coalition then there have to be coalitional practices and some form of accountability.”

Reminder: Black women felt that they were asked to choose between a black rights movement that primarily served the interests of black male patriachs, and a women’s movement which primarily served the interests of racist white women.

But she also stresses the importance of **black feminists** being the originators of dialogues about their own experience. “When I was writing in the late 80s, there was a strain of discourse among women who were not the subjects of traditional feminism, to simply make critique a difference,” she says. “So just the claim of ‘woman’ or ‘feminist’, prompted some women of colour to say, “but that’s not me”. Well, yeah - that might not be you. But say what difference it makes that it’s not you - what difference does it make in what kinds of interventions come out of a feminist frame that doesn’t attend to race?” She pauses, spreads her hands. “That is our responsibility. It’s up to us. Granted, the space has to be open and there has to be a sense of receptivity among the sisterhood, but I really don’t want other women to feel that it’s their responsibility to theorise what’s happening to us. It’s up to us to consistently tell those stories, articulate what difference the difference makes, so it’s incorporated within feminism and within anti-racism. I think it’s important that we do that apart, because we don’t want to be susceptible to the idea that this is just about the politics of recognition.”

No discussion of Crenshaw’s work can be complete without discussing the congressional hearings of October 1991, organised to address the claim that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas had sexually harassed a colleague, Anita Hill. In his denial of the allegations, Thomas said it was a “high tech lynching”. Crenshaw was part of the legal team that represented Hill - and arguably changed the course of history with regards to the recognition

of sexual harassment in the workplace. A documentary film, *Anita*, has been made of the events of the time, a period Crenshaw describes as “life-defining”.

“When we were defending Anita Hill, it was it felt like there was 10 of us against the whole world,” she says. “There was overwhelming criticism of Anita Hill from Clarence Thomas’s camp, the Republican camp, from the White House, from the senate judiciary committee. And the Democrats were not defending her.” Thomas’s ‘lynching’ comment, she says, communicated to many African Americans this was a race issue - leaving Hill with no base to rally. “Lynching is representative of the quintessential moment of racism - and that in turn centres African American male experiences,” she says.

Crenshaw talks about a sort of ‘collective forgetting’ - the fact that black women were not spared from lynching themselves, and the way that racist sexism played out for black women involved sexual violence that was never prosecuted. Rosa Parks, she says, “was a rape crisis advocate before she sat down on that Montgomery bus. The very fact that there are a range of experiences around sexualised racism that’s not remembered - and we only remember one experience - is what then replayed itself in the 1990s.”

She describes coming out of the Capitol to find it ringed by largely African American women “holding hands singing gospel songs in support of Clarence Thomas. It was like one of these moments where you literally feel that you have been kicked out of your community, all because you are trying to introduce and talk about the way that African American women have experienced sexual harassment and violence. It was a defining moment.”

One consequence of this was Anita Hill’s claim being taken up by mainstream white feminists - only she was stripped of her race, reinforcing the idea that the case was a race vs. gender issue. “She simply became a colourless woman, and we as African American women feminists were trying to say, “you cannot talk about this just in gender terms - you have to be intersectional - there is a long history you cannot ignore,” but they didn’t have the skills to be able to talk about it,” she says. That led to another big moment: the moment when, as Crenshaw puts it, African American feminists had to “buy their way into the conversation”.

Nearly 2,000 African American feminists across the US collectively raised \$60,000 and bought ad space in the New York Times. The ad, called African American Women in Defense of Ourselves, was signed by 1,600 women, and covered among other things, the historical discrimination against black women, as well as what had been happening in the hearings. “That was a moment where black women came forward. Twenty years later,” says Crenshaw, “that has been forgotten.” The legacy of the Anita Hill case is one that subsequent generations of women in the workplace will benefit from. “Many women who talk about the Anita Hill thing, they celebrate what’s happened with women in general: the fact that we have more elected officials now because they were outraged when they saw what the men were doing, Emily’s List came in and really helped women get elected, and so on. So sexual harassment is now recognised; what’s not doing as well is the recognition of black women’s unique experiences with discrimination.” The forgetting is important to note. Crenshaw recalls the strong anti-harassment work of the civil rights movement, and speaks of a “certain ahistoricism” in some of the conversations around feminism and anti-racism work. “Intersectionality was something I wrote in 1986, ‘87 and there’s whole generation now that has come to the conversation after black feminism and other forms of intersectional work tilled the soil,” she says. “And I think sometimes its hard for people to imagine what the world was like at the point when none of that work had been done. So I think it’s useful to tell genealogies that include social histories - so people have a sense that the way we talked about it then was as against the constraints of the time. And the way way we talk about it now has built upon that. There are many things that are forgotten, and many other things that are elevated.”

No Connections

By Jonathan Kozol, from *The Night Is Long and I Am Far from Home*

“Politics is your concern; mine is the education of young children. If it is only children of rich people who can choose for schools like this, it is my own decision nonetheless. I choose to lead a stable, rational existence; I do not choose to deal with politics, racism and class-exploitation.”

-- teacher in an upper-class school of Cambridge, Massachusetts

The idea states in these grotesque but familiar words – that it remains for anyone to choose or not to choose to be involved in someone else’s desperation—depends upon the prior myth that he is not involved already in its proceeds.

Self-deception of this kind would not be possible if we had not been trained in school to undergo the infinite fullness of the world through patterns of disjunction, segmentation, separation. School is not the only place where segmentation is purveyed to children. I wonder, however, if it does not represent the first place in the lives of many children where clean divisions and what will prove much later on to be quite brutal separations have been given an official ratification from an outside source.

Prior to the classroom, outside of the school, most things flow into each other, one thing blends into another; many things certainly at any single moment are residing simultaneously within a child’s mind. Suddenly in kindergarten, then more clearly in the First and Second Grades, the day begins to lose its complex wholeness and turns into separate items known as “periods.” Imagination, diffuse as in reality it is, begins to be divided into items known as “subject matter.” Intellect itself gets split up two ways into “reason” and “emotion.” The day and the week and the season and the year are turned into two items known as “school” and “real world”; and the future is transformed into twelve evenly divided, but distinct and isolable, items known as “school years” – separated by invisible connectives called “promotions.”

The point is not that teachers find it useful to teach subjects separately. It is the fact that we should need to separate each item with such clean *division*. One thing must not “bleed” into another. It is as if the teacher had been handed a cold Sheffield blade when he came in to teach the class and took, as his first job, the task of carving up each life into so many marketable pieces. Educators used to speak of something known as “the whole child”; yet, in certain ways, the teacher’s job is less one of amalgamation than skilled surgery. In most cases, he has first applied the same divisions to his own sense of experience. If not, it has been done *for* him by *his* teacher: so that he does not sense the surgical function, nor feel the sharpness of the blade he wields. Yet even the ordinary language of his daily use reveals the underlying process.

Words like “division,” “period,” “section,” “unit,” “grade,” “assignment,” “chapter,” “topic” and “subtopic,” “term,” “semester,” “credit-hour,” “area of concentration” are far more common in the public schools than the words that speak of continuity or wholeness. I have in my mind a kindly teacher I once knew who used to ask the class, at certain moments, to “put on our thinking caps.” Once they were “on,” often enacted by a bit of ritual, she would, in most cases, pose a thoughtful question to which it was made clear that she expected thoughtful answers. Surely she did not mean that we might not have been thinking earlier than that moment—or that we might not keep right on thinking later. Still, there was the definite and intriguing sense that “thinking” as a high-priority action began with putting on the “thinking-cap” and ended with its symbolized removal. To me, this seems an apt, if innocent, example of the whole idea of carving up our intellectual experience into discrete and separate pieces. The child puts on or takes off “his thinking cap.” In much the same way, adults put on, or take off, their feelings of compassion, their recognition of delight, their instinct for rebelling or their inclination to self-interest.

A fine discrimination along lines of time and place assists the process. We deal with certain things in their close presence only, severing the bond of love, or chain of obligation, the instant we have moved away in time and situation. The ghetto teacher, who lives outside the city, cares a lot about his young black pupils and senses a wave

of strong compassion every day as he drives in along the highway to their neighborhood: compassion which does not “dissolve” – but loses strength, persistence, credibility, each night—as he drives back along the opposite side of the same highway to the segregated suburb where he has his home. The doctor comes into the City Hospital each morning for a year of clinical instruction in a special field—neurology, perhaps, or pediatrics—experiences a sense of strong involvement and disturbing confrontation with the bitter life of those within the ghetto neighborhood who are his clients and sometimes, his friends: a sense of confrontation and involvement which do not cease to “exist” so much as they cease to “obtain,” to “feel believable,” once he is back at night within the pleasant neighborhood of trees and lawns and flagstone walks and nightlamp-lighted terraces, and foliage-protected porches and illuminated pools, in which he has his home and leads his life with his three children and young wife.

I lead, as I believe, a too-divided life myself. Often, therefore, I meet such men and women at both ends of their careers. The contrast between the daytime mood of absolute immersion and commitment—and the other mood, or kingdom, or condition of entire absolution, distance and relief—is so remarkable, so sweeping and so deep, that it is like meeting a new person, a new section or subsection, a new continent as it were, of the old person, once night comes down and scenery is shifted and plywood windows and the neon designations are replaced by linen tablecloths and lighted candles and the gentle ripples of Vivaldi or of Boccherini.

It is not easy to approach this point without the implication that the people that I have in mind are in some manner consciously corrupt. This is not what I feel. It is much more like knife-blade coming down on memory than like a cruel dismissal of remembered pain. In the day the scarred child, snot on nostril, no warm stockings, coat missing its third button, open sore on swollen wrist, is altogether vivid and believable. By night, in the ample acreage of Westwood, or out amid the cold stone of Lexington and Concord, that little kid is *just no longer there*: nor is the sense of passion and conviction that she has inspired in the mind and the perception of her would-be benefactor. The high mood, the glib and giddy humor, the elegance of silver, the delicious sense of beautiful companionship and of adept and clever conversation: all testify to the failing of the blade, to the coldness of the metal, to the efficient cleanness of the steel.

Like the falling tree in the wood we do not hear, so too the desperation, lead-paint poison, ruined brain-cell, horror of the blinded child and of the mother's havoc-ridden cry, the siren's scream and blue light spinning in the neon sky are just not credible to us when they are not “there” in the sense of being validated, comprehended and authenticated by our vision. The rich man carves his beefsteak with impunity because he first applies the knife blade to his brain. The liberal scholar finds it possible to stretch out, to relax, to savor his unhurried and enjoyable career, within an insular and well-rewarded circle of New Haven, Palo Alto, or Poughkeepsie, because—*while he is in that circle*—several million starving souls of Harlem, Roxbury, or Mississippi cease to be. Most of us look with terror on the knife-blade of the archetypal neurosurgeon: yet each, in our well-tailored way, has been quite tactfully lobotomized. The wires do not meet. The messages from one part no longer seem to reach the other. The brain, like the new school-structure, is divided into “modular units” and our lives, like school-days, are segregated into subject-areas that never meet.

The twelve-year exercise in psychological and moral disconnection takes on a specific form when we must deal with matters which involve direct and clear-cut lines of economic exploitation. Few concepts threaten to disturb rich students quite so much as the explicit recognition that they may have gained their own good health, T.V. or twelve-gear bike at the direct expense of someone else. School administrations pander to this dear by ruling out all narratives of straightforward economic exploitation.

Little by little, year by year, a wall of separation is constructed in the child's mind to offer self-protection in the face of realistic guilt at unearned privilege and inherited excess. Poor people exit—so also do the rich—but there are no identifiable connections. One side does not live well *because* another side must live in pain and fear. It is a matter, rather of two things that happen to occur at the same time: and side by side. The slumlord's daughter,

therefore, is not forced to be unsettled, and still less tormented, by the fact that there are black and Puerto Rican families two miles distant who must pay the rent to make her luxuries conceivable. The general's children do not need to know their father's hands are steeped within the blood of innocent people in far-distant lands. The bank-director's child, the foreign-investment analyst's son, do no need to know the price in pain their privilege, their peace and their unprecedented economic strength are built upon.

In most instances in Northern cities now, the line between two sides is virtually impossible to find. Topographical divisions on the gird of U.S. urban architecture and design function well to reinforce the economic fictions offered in the public school. Exploitation, therefore, does not seem believable. Misery, hunger or starvation is perceived as if it were, in every case, a situation of uncaused ordeal, "benign misfortune," technological or biological mistake. There is no underlined affiliation between people who must live in grim slum-areas on one side of town and those who are invited to enjoy the art causative connections which exist between great desperation and immense excess, "yet it is precisely what is being done."

He then says this: "The men of the ruling classes—honest, good, clever men among them—cannot help but suffer from these internal contradictions...We cannot pretend that we do not see the policemen who walks in front of the windows with a loaded revolver, defending us, while we eat our savory dinner or view a new performance... We certainly know that if we shall finish eating out dinner, or seeing the latest drama, or having our fun at a ball, at the Christmas tree, at the skating, at the races, or at the chase, we do so only thanks to the bullet in the policeman's revolver and in the soldier's gun..."

In evident anguish for his own sense of immersion in the self-deception he describes, Tolstoy directs his words to those of his own class: "All these men and those who live on them, their wives, teachers, children, cooks, actors, jockeys, and so forth live by the blood which in one way or another by one class of leeches or by another is sucked out of the working people: thus they live, devouring each day for their pleasures hundred and thousands of workdays of exhausted laborers... They see the privations and sufferings of these labourers, of their children, old men, women, sick people; they know of the penalties to which the violators of this established spoliation are subjected... They not only do not diminish their luxury, do not conceal it, but impudently display before these oppressed labourers... their parks, castles, theatres, chases, races..." At the same time, he says, they also "assure themselves and one another that they are all very much concerned about the good of the masses..." On Sundays they dress up and drive in expensive carriages to church, "houses especially built for the purpose of making fun of Christianity." There, they listen to men, "especially trained" in pacification, "who in every manner possible, in vestments and without vestments, in white neckties, preach to one another the love of men—all of which they "deny with their whole lives."

Tolstoy is unsparing when he talks about the willed oblivion by which rich people, in his day, as ours, contrive their own self-exculpation: "Men who own large tracts of land or have large capitals, or who receive large salaries, which are collected from the working people, who are in need of the simplest necessities... are fond of believing that those prerogatives which they enjoy are not due to violent, but to an absolutely free and regular exchange of services..." They like to think that "these prerogatives are not only the result of assault upon people, and the murder of them... but have even *no connections whatsoever with these cases...*"

These people, Tolstoy says, try to pretend that all those privileges which they enjoy "exist in themselves." This, to me, is the essential point. There is the myth, potent in its early implantation, cancerous and irresistible in its later growth, that the lives of children of the white and well-to-do within a land like ours exist upon a plateau of relaxed and innocent intent: one which turns at times, if we so wish, to passages of benefaction, at other times to academic labors, string quartets or summer garden parties, yet one which is at all times disaffiliated from the exploitation that it rests on, uncontaminated by the blood that nourishes its soil.

The high school senior, college freshman, university professor needs to believe his own career exists in vacuo. He cannot dare to understand that he is there at the expense of someone else. The private patient in a pastel-

painted air-conditioned room within the high-rise hospital along the river here in Boston, Massachusetts, cannot bear to know that he is there at the first expense of those who wait five, six or seven hours on a long and steamy summer afternoon within the basement of a ghetto hospital far over on the other side of town, before a hectic and unpracticed intern offers ten, twelve, fifteen minutes out of his long siege of eighteen desperate hours before he sends them up into a hot, unsupervised and often-times unsterile hospital ward—or else back to the fever-ridden streets they came from. No one believes that he exploits someone else. It is more like this: “the one thing here, the other over there.” It is, indeed, a pity that the two things must reside together in one city. The one, however, does not bleed into the other. Each exists in its own private realm and separate universe. Clean steel edges: hard, explicit separation: No Connections.

There is today, in Boston, one particularly vivid instance of this surgical determination. Brandeis University, highly respected and increasingly prestigious, stands outside the city limits in suburban Boston. One of the most impressive buildings on this campus bears the name of one of the most hated slumlords in the Boston area. For many years, the man was so despised within the Boston ghetto that Jewish agencies did all they could to counteract, disown or modulate his predatory acts. The ethics of priest, rabbi, minister alike never were equal to the influence of this man or his immense reserve of cash with which to buy prestige and sidestep condemnation. There is no mystery about his methods, about his reputation or his manner of exploitation. The only mystery lies in the means by which the Trustees of this institution, as well as those who labor in its libraries and labs, are able to pretend that they do not directly profit from the desperation of a slumlord’s victims.

The tall stone structure stands today upon the green sloping hills of this expensive university: financed with misery, nourished with injustice and erected on despair. No one stands outside, with forehead bare and eyes on fire, shakes his fist and asks of one and all who come and go, enter or leave, just how much pain and how much desperation it requires in order that such luxuries as these may not accrue to those who are the children of the men whose names appear in carved words above the door. Nobody asks. If someone does, it is the type of question we dispatch with labels such as “excess rage,” “innocence of the world,” or else the more familiar designation: “poor taste.” In the universities and in the cocktail parties and in the dinner parties of the rich, it is inevitably in the worst of taste to try to tell each other where the money comes from.

In a series of conversations held with Daniel Berrigan in 1972, Robert Coles explores this point in words which bring back to my mind the atmosphere in which I lived, and studied, and advanced my own career, when I was still a Harvard student back in 1958. The candor with which Coles discusses his own fears is brought forth by a question posed by Berrigan. The question asks if he believes that he is free, in his work as a doctor, to pursue his own ideals. Coles begins by saying that he doubts many doctors, or professionals of any kind, ever dare to ask themselves such questions: “where their money comes from, who pays them, who rewards them... whom they never get to represent...” His deeper answer is contained, however, in these words: “When I was at Harvard... I never questioned the fact that the university not only had its own police force, but was buying up property... only in certain areas of Cambridge and not buying up property where the professors lived or where wealthier people... lived...I never questioned that. I just thought it was part of the legitimate needs of a university—to have land, to put buildings on that land, so that people like me could learn... I never asked... what people are being educated... for what reason, by whom... at whose expense?”

The question, and the danger it conveys, does not obtain, is not allowed within the U.S. public schools. The ruling principle is: No Connections. The primary action is the action of the surgical division. The myth of prior disaffiliation constitutes our document of diplomatic passage. It becomes our paper of safe transit in close cars across the continents of fear. If it were not for powerful and persuasive fictions of this kind, much of our foreign travel would, I think, be finished in one hour. Planes would not fly, and steamships would not sail. People would stop frozen in the tracks of intellectual perseverance or within the lockstep of professional careers. The five-ten from Grand Central to New Canaan would not slowly to a stop some place in Harlem. The air-conditioner would

not work. Ice in cocktail glasses would melt. Seersucker would wilt. Tall men with exquisite manners and fine fingers would begin to tremble. They would throw away their pipes and thin cigars. It does not happen. It is not by chance.

There is one city in North Africa I know which never has found its way into the textbooks issued to children in the U.S. schools. It is a city that has, for several decades, been a diplomatic colony—almost a military outpost—of the U.S. government. Each morning, U.S. diplomats and businessmen and military attaches, their wives and children, come out from the hotel doorway and proceed across the city square. Outside the hotel, in a long, long, line of silence, patience and despair, are dozens of very old and often crippled people, wrapped all in white, the women in white veils as well, and often quite a small child standing at the side of mother or grandfather.

At eight A.M., as the sun comes up above the city square, the oldest people will be standing straight with palm outstretched before them, the other hand resting gently on the child's head, the child's palm outstretched as well. By twelve o'clock, the oldest people start to bend somewhat, forehead declined beneath the heat of noon, eyes closing slightly. By night, the old, old people are asleep, or half-asleep, asleep in pain, in fixed and frightening immobility there against the long white silence of the wall beneath the evening heat.

The Americans pass, and pass again, as they go to and fro in crisp bright jackets, seersucker and cord, attractive people, clever and adept, graceful and well-tailored in the modulation of their own compassionate reactions. Children at times will pull their mother's or their father's arm, or cry, or shudder, or in other ways react to what they see. Mother is cool and calm and well-bred and cleanly limbed and neatly dressed for travel. Father is concerned about his government assignment or his business plans.

At midnight often, when the hotel guests return from various places they have been, voices shrill and bright with good delight and memory of fine colonial service in some French or British club, the old blind beggars have fallen down the full length of the wall, unspeaking, uncomplaining and, but for the slow decline along that wall, unmoving since dawn. Crouched, huddled now, stooped-over, bent in one white triangle of silence, anesthesia and oblivion, the beggar slumbers at the bottom of the day's long journey downward, while infant, borrowed companion or grandchild sleeps as well, curled up against the older person's side, sores on forehead, sores and scabs and growths all over legs and arms, feet filthy, small toes bare, but hand still open, outstretched still, with palm still pleading even in the sleep of midnight on this silent street, where only the attractive young Americans from New York or from San Francisco might still chance to come by once, and shudder once, then to move on to customary and appropriate places of refined and air-conditioned slumber.

The child, unsophisticated, cries or questions. His parents, better instructed in the disciplines of North American adulthood, know well by now how to control their sense of unrest and to keep on with the evening's pleasure. If they ever stop to think about this street of misery at all, it might be only to persuade themselves that what they see before them is, in some way, spurious or inauthentic: a trick to fool the heart or to subvert the mind. In any event, they can assure themselves that grief and pain of this variety and on this scale are unrelated to the world of glass and steel in which they work and dwell.

At worst, it is a matter of marginally perceived despair that is permitted to exist somehow within the same world as seersucker and fresh linen. Connections there are none: causations there are not any. They are Americans: rich, fortunate, well-educated, skillful. Clean steel edges in the secret places of the well-indoctrinated brain have drawn explicit demarcations. Things break down into acceptable division. They are, indeed, well-educated: trained and schooled to logical postures of oblivion and acceptable self-interest. They live in one world: the starving beggars and their desperate children in another. It is a property of reason, of good sense and civilized adulthood, both to respect and understand the space that stands between.

Class and Socio-Economic Status (SES)

“When someone works for less pay than she can live on... she has made a great sacrifice for you... the ‘working poor’... are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. They neglect their own children so that the children of other will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect; they endure privation so that inflation will be low and stock prices high. To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone.”

– Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America*

A Safety Net that is leaving more people out

By Yvonne Abraham, *The Boston Globe*

Ginna and her daughter had bounced from couch to couch for months before they lost their last refuge: A friend, worried about losing her lease, asked her to leave.

Unemployed and out of options, the young mother went to the state to ask for emergency shelter on Aug. 8. She had previously been denied because she was \$12 over the income limit. Now Department of Housing and Community Development workers suspected Ginna of quitting her job at a sandwich shop to get benefits. She begged them to talk to her former boss, who could tell them she was let go because she had no child care and couldn't make shifts. They didn't.

"If only they had made that call, this would never, ever have happened to me," said the slight, dark-haired 21-year-old.

Instead, Ginna and her 17-month-old began sleeping at South Station. On the first night, a man brought her food. He came back the next night and told her he had a place for her to stay. She was exhausted and her baby was wailing and she had no one, so she went with him. Later that night, the man raped her. She waited for him to fall asleep, then fled with her daughter.

"I work, I don't party, I don't do drugs. I'm a good girl. I want to make something of myself," Ginna, a rape victim who was turned away from homeless shelter.

The Patrick administration's heart might be in the right place when it comes to ending homelessness, but its new approach to this huge problem is hurting some of the very people most in need of help. While boosting resources for permanent housing, the state has begun turning away an alarming number of families from its shelter system. Until recently, 40 to 50 percent of families who applied for emergency shelter were denied each month. Last month, the average was 68 percent. In the last week of September, 74 percent of families seeking shelter were denied. Ginna's case is the most tragic of many.

"We've seen a real spike," said Jim Greene, director of Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission, which took about 500 calls from desperate families last month, compared to an average of 375 earlier this year. "We get calls almost daily . . . reporting that people are staying in emergency rooms because they have nowhere else to go. More people are reporting to us that they're staying in parks and vans." Boston Medical Center confirms that it has seen an increase in homeless families showing up at the ER over the last month.

"We are completely inundated" with calls from families who have nowhere to go, said Ruth Bourquin, senior attorney at the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. "Before August, we almost never heard of families staying in [cars]. Now it's every day."

Since new regulations went into effect in August, state workers are suddenly far more skeptical about people's claims of homelessness, far less likely to believe somebody who says they can no longer stay with the friend or grandmother with whom they've been doubled up.

"The restrictions have never been this tough before," said Kelly Turley, legislative director of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless. "This is the most discouraging situation I've seen. It's scary."

How did we get here? From good intentions, actually. The Patrick administration and many legislators are truly committed when it comes to the issue of homelessness. Currently, the state provides shelter space to about 2,000 families, and houses another 1,800 in expensive motels. Few other states provide that kind of safety net.

In an effort to move people out of politically unpopular motels and head off homelessness before it happens, the 2013 budget contains big funding increases for rental assistance and other programs that keep struggling families in their homes. Accompanying the shift towards permanent housing are the new regulations designed to make getting into shelters more difficult.

“Obviously we want to maintain a strong safety net,” said Aaron Gornstein, undersecretary for Housing and Community Development. “But we also want to make sure we’re spending taxpayer dollars wisely, investing in prevention and permanent housing, and that emergency shelter is a last resort.”

The problem is, there isn’t yet enough prevention and affordable housing to save many families from the street. “None of us have a safety net to put under the safety net that has been restricted,” said Greene.

What’s frustrating to him, and to others who work on the front lines, is that the state seems unwilling to recognize there is a problem here. State officials seem entirely wedded to the notion that almost everybody has somewhere to stay, even when they say they don’t. They say this is based on experience – that their past investigations have shown people can almost always find someone to take them in.

They’re not persuaded by the stories of families sleeping in cars and on beaches and in the lobbies of apartment buildings, which they believe are exaggerated by advocates determined to grow the shelter system. Privately, they have suggested Greene and others are using poor families as pawns. Publicly, they wonder if advocates are suggesting homeless families put themselves in dangerous situations just to qualify for shelter.

“I hope they’re not coaching them to do that,” Gornstein said.

Seriously? People who have devoted careers to ending homelessness would advise families to give up homes and put themselves in harm’s way?

It’s hard to reconcile the Deval Patrick who demanded that his party stop apologizing for its values at the Democratic National Convention with the way his administration is handling this.

“I believe the governor when he said it’s about our values,” said Senator Ken Donnelly, an Arlington Democrat who is one of a group of legislators trying to rebalance the shelter regulations. “But they have this feeling that people are somehow gaming the system, and you just look at them and say, ‘What planet are you on?’ ”

Look, this is clearly a tough issue. The governor and the Legislature have taken on a difficult and expensive balancing act trying to work out how much to devote to long-term solutions like affordable housing and how much to short-term ones like shelter. It is always a good idea to keep people with family or friends as they await help with permanent housing — as long as that is possible. But the state is increasingly unwilling to admit that sometimes, it’s not. And some of the very people shelters are designed to protect are casualties.

“I work, I don’t party, I don’t do drugs,” Ginna said. “I’m a good girl. I want to make something of myself.”

When she went back to the housing office in Roxbury after she was raped, Ginna said, housing officials refused to look at her rape kit. They denied her shelter again, then had her escorted out by guards, she said. Then the workers who had refused Ginna and her daughter a safe place to sleep filed a report accusing her of neglecting her baby.

After Bourquin and others got involved, Ginna finally was granted emergency shelter. The neglect complaint was thrown out.

Gornstein said Ginna’s shelter denials had nothing to do with the new, stricter regulations. He said she would have been denied last year, too, because workers believed she had quit her job without good cause.

No way, say those who have been fighting for Ginna: They’re certain she would have gotten the benefit of the doubt before, that workers would have made the call to her supervisor.

That would have taken three minutes, tops. Last week, that supervisor, Robert Peebles, picked up on the second ring at the cell number Ginna begged state workers to call in August. He said he never received a call or a message from housing workers. Ginna lost her job “because she couldn’t make it any more, she had her daughter and she was not able to obtain child care,” he confirmed. A second call to the sandwich shop to confirm Peebles was a supervisor there took another minute.

In an affidavit, a Department of Housing and Community Development supervisor said a worker in the Dudley Square office did try Peebles's cell at some point, but did not speak to him. Ginna said the worker certainly didn't call while she was pleading with her in the office.

"While she was sleeping in her bed, I was being raped," she said. "That's going to be with me for the rest of my life. Nobody can erase this."

Still, Ginna is trying to move on. The sandwich shop hired her back last week. She is working on finding care for her daughter so she can pick up more hours. She wants to get into her own place quickly, to stabilize her life so she can bring her husband from the Dominican Republic; she is a US citizen.

Gornstein said he is looking into Ginna's case, and at those of other families across the state who advocates say have been unfairly denied shelter under the new rules. "I want to assure you, we are taking this very seriously to make sure people don't fall through the cracks," Gornstein said. "We're trying to err on the side of caution and make sure we maintain a safety net for people who really need it."

There will be hearings on the new shelter regulations in Western Massachusetts on Oct. 22, and in Boston on Oct. 25. Ginna may testify. Gornstein points out that his office has already made 20 changes to the new rules based on public input, and that it's prepared to make more to better protect families who need help.

Good. This must be fixed, and fast. Winter is coming.

The Art of Survival: Why Poor People Have the Best Anti-Poverty Ideas

By Jess Hoffman and Tim Lahan

To read online click [here](#), or visit: <http://magazine.good.is/articles/the-art-of-survival>

“Welfare *queeeens*, super baby mamas!” a diverse group of women, holding hands, shouted in unison in front of an Oakland, California, welfare office, their voices overlapping as they weaved around each other on the sidewalk. The welfareQUEENS, a performance-poetry group composed of mothers who have survived and cared for their children through extreme poverty, were part of a series of actions staged by POOR, a 16-year-old arts-and-action nonprofit, on a sunny day last November, when POOR invited Occupy Oakland protesters to march out of their City Hall encampment to sites that “occupy” poor people throughout the Bay Area.

“Our lands and resources have been occupied for many years,” says Lisa Gray-Garcia, better known as Tiny, the wiry 38-year-old cofounder of POOR. “More people are now feeling the pain. For us it was not like, ‘Omigod, let’s occupy!’ It was like, ‘More people are waking up to the torture and the tragedy that has hit poor and indigenous people forever—so how do we harness the power of this movement to support the work that’s been going on for hundreds of years?’”

The November day of action was one answer. POOR took occupiers to the housing authority to protest how Section 8 waiting lists have ballooned because of budget cuts. They also demonstrated in front of the San Francisco Immigration and Customs Enforcement office because, as Tiny explains, “If you don’t have money for an attorney, you get picked up on a misdemeanor and suddenly you’re in Mexico or Guatemala, even if you haven’t been there since you were 1 year old.” At the welfare office protest, the welfareQUEENS talked about imminent cuts to California’s food-stamp program—“the last crumbs we had.” And in front of an Oakland police station, speakers called prisons “the last form of public housing.”

Tiny is excited by the energy of the Occupy movement, but she is sure that for real change to happen, “the poorest of the poor” need to be heard. “Survival itself through extreme poverty and crisis,” she says, provides the best ideas for how to create a world where no one has to suffer lack of food, education, or safe shelter. Poor people “have the knowledge this movement needs.”

Tiny—who’s constantly running from one activity to the next, usually in tight jeans, hoop earrings, and a cap that says POBRE—likes to say she’s got a Ph.D. from the School of Hard Knocks. When she was 11, her mother, Dee, lost her job. Dee was sick and overwhelmed by what Tiny describes as “a complex web of phobia, conflict, and poverty.” Struggling with post-traumatic stress from a lifetime of abuse, Dee couldn’t work and often couldn’t leave the small apartment she and Tiny shared in Hollywood, which in the 1980s was more rough than glamorous. “People told me to put her in a home, go off to college, that I was a smart girl and I could do anything,” Tiny says. “I was told from very early on that staying with my mom was the least positive thing I could do.”

Instead, Tiny dropped out of sixth grade and started figuring out how to help their small family survive. If she’d told a social worker or teacher what was going on, she’d have been swiftly placed in foster care. But in Tiny’s view, families struggling with poverty need to stick together. Over the next few decades, Dee and Tiny would manage not only to survive together through bouts of homelessness and incarceration, but also to create *POOR Magazine*, which is much more than a publication. Right now, POOR is publishing books; running PeopleSkool, which allows people struggling in poverty to teach each other media skills; and creating a project called Homefulness, where formerly houseless people will be able to create their own permanent housing rather than hope for beds in a shelter or project designed and run by people who have no clue what it’s like to be homeless.

* * *

At 12, Tiny created an alter ego named “Rent-starter,” an ideal tenant no landlord could refuse even though she had no cash or credit. Rent-starter embodied what Tiny describes as an odd mix of “sincerity, strength, and extreme sycophantism.” The performance worked many times: Landlords who might have turned away Dee, seeing a dark-skinned single mother (Dee was black and indigenous Puerto Rican, Irish, and Roma) as a bad tenant, believed that a white-looking 12-year-old Tiny (her dad, from whom she’s estranged, is white) was “a 25-year-old making \$65,000 a year.” If Tiny couldn’t come up with enough money to pay rent on an apartment or motel room, she and her mom lived in their car. When they were cited for the illegal act of sleeping in a vehicle, penalties they couldn’t possibly pay piled up and turned into arrest warrants, which turned into stints in jail. Dee and Tiny learned that, when you’re poor in the United States, many of the things you have to do to survive are illegal.

When Tiny was a teenager in the ’80s, she and Dee made and sold clothes on the Venice Boardwalk and Berkeley’s Telegraph Avenue. Their 2-by-1-foot Venice retail outlet doubled as a venue for conceptual-art installations and performances commenting on the economy that was crushing them. In an interactive piece, *The Depressed Box*, black-clad Tiny and Dee stood next to a giant donation box with a sign that said, “Give us a dollar and we’ll tell you why we’re depressed.” They were written up in the *L.A. Weekly* and placed their clothing line, Street Clothes, in a few pricey boutiques. Later, while living and working in an Oakland storefront the landlord had insisted was *not for living in*, they led “Art of Homelessness” tours, guiding viewers through their lives.

Their situation was always precarious. When a month of rain interfered with street vending or a broken foot immobilized Dee, they were unable to pay rent and ended up homeless again. Or rather, “houseless.” Tiny thinks “the homeless” is a dehumanizing phrase that takes all people who don’t rent or own the place where they sleep and lumps them into a single group that is easy to pity, dismiss, or brutalize. She prefers “houseless,” which describes a concrete situation and doesn’t carry the cultural weight of decades of philanthropic and government conversations about, but not with, “the homeless.”

Just after she turned 18, Tiny landed in jail for failure to pay a heap of sleeping-in-a-vehicle citations. There she met other women in similar situations. Tiny started to see her poverty, her mother’s poverty, her grandmother’s poverty as “an unending chain of isolated poor women with no resources, no family, no support, and no luck”—and part of a broader story. “From a Western psychotherapeutic perspective, my mom was severely phobic and I was her support system. But from the perspective of almost every non-Western culture, nobody is ever left alone the way they are in the United States,” Tiny says. She and Dee were dependent on each other in a society that valorizes individual success. “Perhaps my mother’s worst problem was that she had no extended family.”

Tiny’s next stint in jail—for failing to complete the thousands of community-service hours she’d been assigned last time, something she couldn’t have done while keeping up sufficient street-vending hours—led to a surprise break. Osha Neumann, a Berkeley civil-rights attorney responsible for supervising her community service, asked Tiny “an odd question,” she says. “He asked me what I could do.” She tentatively answered that she wanted to write.

Neumann designed a community-service assignment that she could actually accomplish. Tiny was to write an article about poverty every week; Neumann would meet with her regularly to give feedback. She wrote in 30-minute spurts amid long days of street vending. Soon she was being published in Bay Area alternative papers. She wrote one piece about standing in line for nine hours with hundreds of others whose utilities had been turned off for lack of payment; another was a first step toward the memoir she’d write a decade later about her “crimes of poverty.”

But Tiny wasn’t interested in making a career for herself as a journalist. “When I’m inspired, I think, how can I inspire other people like me?” Dee and Tiny talked about starting a savings circle for poor people in the Bay Area. Tiny latched on to the idea of poor people’s media, which would allow people who were struggling in poverty to tell their own stories via journalism, poetry, and visual art.

In 1996, Tiny and Dee published the first issue of *POOR Magazine*, a beautiful glossy. Its theme was Homefulness, and its content came from writing workshops Tiny and Dee improvised while waiting in lines at

welfare offices and eating free meals at shelters. “It’s not something nonprofit organizers could do,” Tiny says. “These were workshops for poor people, led by poor people, fit into the lives of poor people, in the communities in which we were dwelling, selling, and working. We were them, they were us. We weren’t saviors, we were other folks working together within our current realities to make our voices heard.”

“POOR could not have happened without the understanding and collaboration of a few folks with privilege,” Tiny says. “Me and my mama had a dream, but we were poor people with nothing.” Bay Area artist Evri Kwong donated art for the cover of the first issue and allowed the original to be auctioned off to cover printing costs. He and others supported Dee and Tiny’s dream with “understanding, consciousness, and empathy” in place of “charity.” Kwong, Tiny says, “had no requirements about what we did with his art; he trusted us and supported the leadership of poor people.”

When Dee and Tiny got a grant from the San Francisco Arts Commission to print a second issue of *POOR*, they put part of the grant money back into their community. They launched MamaHouse, a one-bedroom apartment in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood where they and other single-mother-headed families could live together, sharing both burdens and resources. “Organizational and personal lives are naturally enmeshed [in] poor-people led organizations like ours,” Tiny writes in her memoir, *Criminal of Poverty*.

A few years later, while on welfare herself, Tiny won a competitive grant to teach journalism skills to people coming off welfare. That led to the creation of *POOR*’s community newsroom, where participants decide together what stories need to be told, who should tell them, and how; a *POOR* radio show; PeopleSkool, with stipends, child care, and meals for participants; and the Race, Poverty, and Media Justice Institute, which trains people with race, class, or educational privilege how to support poor people equitably.

POOR is complicated like that. Media education and magazine production have always been a part of it, but poor has never simply been a media project. It has also been about direct actions, such as gentrification tours that disrupt restaurants and museums throughout San Francisco. MamaHouse was just the beginning—or, as Tiny puts it, the “small, rented version”—of Homefulness, the dream described in the first issue of *POOR*: a cohousing project by and for poor people.

POOR enjoyed a few years of government and foundation support in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when they rented an office and became an official nonprofit. “We were feeling happy for the first time,” Tiny says. But they were also honest in their critiques of the system. The bulk of their funding was public, the result of Clinton administration welfare-reform programs. Tiny recalls, “We were on welfare while training people to write about the welfare system and how messed up it is,” and then publishing that work. Before long, the funding dried up.

In 2002, Dee was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, which often leads to heart failure, and her health deteriorated. Then Tiny got pregnant; and, Tiny says, “We basically fell apart.” MamaHouse and *POOR* were both evicted. Tiny found herself once again with no money, and now she was caring for her ailing mother and a newborn. She was often houseless, writing for low pay for independent-media outlets, stealing food to feed her son, and keeping *POOR* alive. She and Dee were fighting: “fighting each other, fighting to survive, and fighting campaigns”—including one for child care for working-poor parents, something Tiny herself was painfully lacking.

Tiny joined with other struggling single mothers, borrowed \$850 from a friend, and started a second MamaHouse, this time in a three-bedroom apartment in the fast-gentrifying Mission District. The place was only affordable because they shared it with rats and pigeons. “It wasn’t all utopic; we had problems,” Tiny acknowledges, “but that’s what interdependence looks like. MamaHouse was a lifesaver.” The welfarequeens started there, and sharing child care with the other moms allowed Tiny to get a job at an education-policy nonprofit. When a fire destroyed MamaHouse number two, Tiny and her growing community later started a third.

One night in March 2006, Dee finished a segment for POOR's radio show, went home, and died while napping on the couch. She was 61.

Tiny, 32 at the time, had lived her entire life in partnership with her mother. At POOR, which once again had an office, she created an altar featuring photos, flowers, doughnuts, candles, and a large urn that contains Dee's ashes. It's dedicated to her and "all victims of police terror, racism, and poverty in America."

* * *

"Fill this out." "You're not done yet?" "You forgot this box." "No, this form!"

Members of the welfareQUEENS hustled around the POOR office, shoving paperwork into the hands of young adults who had graduated from some of the best colleges in the United States but were suddenly feeling clueless, unable to complete the forms fast enough.

In the summer of 2009 Tiny and some collaborators created a weekend-long program for people with money, education, or other resources who wanted to help create a world without poverty. I was among them.

Instead of just writing checks or volunteering whatever help we deemed they needed most, we were schooled by POOR's members. The welfareQUEENS performed poems about raising kids with no health insurance and living with the constant threat of separation. Members of POOR ran us through crushing exercises that mimicked the experience of dealing with social-service bureaucracies, shouting at us to cram our life stories into forms. They also told inspiring stories about communities that take care of each other. Tiny, as usual, was both warm and painfully honest, calling out our role in gentrification while addressing each of us as "hon."

At the end of the weekend, a few of us formed POOR's Solidarity Family. We talk to each other, and others in the POOR family, about things that are both practical and emotional, like how our families relate to money and how to share resources and build real relationships despite class differences. We're one part of a multifaceted funding strategy: Instead of relying on government and foundation grants with all sorts of strings attached, POOR is supported primarily by individual donations from people who are part of its extended family.

In summer 2011, with the help of the Solidarity Family, POOR bought land for Homefulness. The site, located on busy MacArthur Boulevard in East Oakland, is a rectangle of weeds, dead grass, broken concrete, and a small house rendered uninhabitable by weather and neglect. Behind the house a large tree leans precariously. There are a couple of liquor stores in walking distance, and cheap motels where Tiny and Dee occasionally slept, decades ago. On this land POOR will build housing for up to eight houseless or formerly houseless families. There will be a community garden, offices for poor, classrooms, and a café and performance space. poor doesn't have the money or the exact plan mapped out to make this happen. POOR, after all, is still poor—but as creative and resourceful as ever. Tiny is sure: Homefulness is happening.

POOR held an Interdependence Day celebration on the Homefulness land last Fourth of July. POOR's existing family and their soon-to-be neighbors ate grilled chicken and veggie burgers, and broke into a spontaneous afternoon dance party. But first, two elders blessed the land, and Tiny, in one of her signature fashion-art pieces—tight white jeans, tall boots, and a trim white blazer with "Take Back the Land!" painted on the back—performed a poetic tribute to Dee ("without whom there would be no me") that had half the people circled around her in tears.

When anyone praises Tiny for her resilience, she's quick to resist. "It's not about my determination. And it's not about working hard," she insists. Dee's mother worked multiple domestic jobs simultaneously and still struggled. "We worked hard our whole lives and had nothing. The thing I have, maybe, is vision—but not vision for myself. I don't believe as humans that we are separate from each other. Anything that promotes disconnect causes pain. The vision is always togetherness, by any means necessary."

Interested in Worker's Rights?! Consider joining Harvard's SLAM: (Student Labor Action Movement) run in part by Gabriel Bayard (part time FUP Leader, part time amazing human being)

Fast Food Workers Fight for \$15 Minimum Wage

By Camille Schimdt and Mattea Mrkusic, *Harvard Political Review*

To see pictures, click [here](#) or visit:

<http://harvardpolitics.com/media/fighting-15/>

Across the country today, fast food workers are walking off the job to show their support of increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. The economic justice campaign, known as “Fight for \$15,” has been described as the “[largest-ever mobilization of underpaid workers](#),” with rallies taking place in over 200 cities. In Boston, [#WageAction](#) supporters gathered at the Harvard Square MBTA stop to exchange personal anecdotes about the reality of living on a minimum wage.

Sabrina, a worker at the Harvard Square Chipotle, Boston Logan airport and a Health Aid company, shared her struggles with the crowd of Fight for \$15 supporters. In her speech, she described working three jobs under the minimum wage, while supporting her mother in hospital and her sister. “When my mom is in the hospital, I’m there for her. I’m always saving my family’s life, and I’m tired of struggling. I want to be home. I want to only have to work one job.” An employee at the Harvard Square Chipotle, she told the crowd to stop by and say hello.

Joining the fast food workers were members of the [Harvard Student Labor Action Movement](#), Harvard College Democrats, HLS Labor and Employment Action Project, Act on a Dream, Black Students Association, Progressive Jewish Alliance, Fuerza Latina and Divest Harvard.

Among these supporters was Harvard student and Fight for \$15 supporter Henry Gomory. He shared his perceptions of the rally with HPR. “What resonated with me was hearing over and over again the stories of people who are working two or three jobs—saving every penny they can, but still have to choose between paying rent and buying food.”

“These stories made me feel emotionally something I knew intellectually: that you can’t survive making minimum wage in Boston or almost anywhere else, and you certainly can’t live the secure, comfortable life that everyone deserves.”

“The idea that people are poor in this country due to lack of effort is just absurd. Deeply entrenched systematic forces make it all but impossible to climb out of poverty for huge swathes of the population, no matter how hard they work.”

In June 2014, Massachusetts enacted a new minimum wage law, raising the hourly rate from \$8 to \$11 over the next few years. Many critics, including members of [#WageAction](#), have argued that this increase does not amount to a living wage.

Gap's Inconsistent Corporate Ethics

By Greg Randolph, *U.S. News & World Report*

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2013/12/11/gap-can-build-on-its-sikh-ad-by-protecting-bangladeshi-garment-workers>

The liberal social media bloc was abuzz recently with praise for Gap, the ubiquitous apparel company known for its khaki, clean-cut sense of style and — most recently — an advertisement that featured a visibly Sikh male model, sporting a pagdi (turban) and a full beard. The ad achieved nationwide fame when the company produced a swift and emphatic [response](#) to racist graffiti scribbled over it in a New York subway station.

But another of Gap's recent decisions — its refusal to join a groundbreaking accord to protect Bangladeshi garment workers — calls into question whether the corporate ethic of inclusion extends beyond marketing campaigns.

By selecting Waris Ahluwalia to model in its "Make Love" campaign, and immediately denouncing the act of an intolerant graffiti artist who changed that slogan to "Make Bombs," Gap sent an important message of inclusion to [280,000](#) Sikhs living in the United States, telling them that Gap believes their faces and lived experiences are part of the American story.

Socially minded consumers might find it surprising then, that on another issue of justice and inclusion, Gap's response has been anemic. After the [death of nearly 1,200 apparel workers](#) in the horrific collapse of Rana Plaza — a dilapidated building housing several garment factories on the outskirts of Dhaka — retailers around the world sought channels for improving working conditions in the country. A landmark agreement emerged, aimed at strengthening worker protections in Bangladesh's massive apparel industry, but Gap has refused to sign on.

The [Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh](#) goes beyond traditional corporate social responsibility. First of all, a broad coalition of corporations, trade unions and workers' rights organizations negotiated jointly and endorse the agreement. Second, its signatories are legally obligated to fund independent inspection of facilities, plus structural repairs and renovations of existing factories. Over 100 international brands — including Gap competitors like Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle Outfitters and H&M — have already signed on.

The accord is about basic human rights. Bangladeshi workers possess the right to safe working conditions, the right to fair wages and the right to life.

It's also about inclusion. Mirroring the globalization story in many countries, economic growth in Bangladesh has been rapid, but its rewards have not been shared broadly. Rather than creating an economic culture of shared prosperity, Bangladesh has engaged in a ["race to the bottom"](#) — maintaining substandard wages and working conditions in order to make production costs attractively, and artificially, low. The accord is a first step toward transforming those marginalized by globalization into its beneficiaries.

If it joined the accord, Gap would send another powerful message of inclusion to [four million](#) Bangladeshi garment workers: your economic opportunity, your ability to obtain a just job, and your right to share in the fruits of economic growth, matter to us. Further, it could demonstrate to its new Tweeting extollers that the company's progressive attitudes inform its supply chain management, not only its advertising.

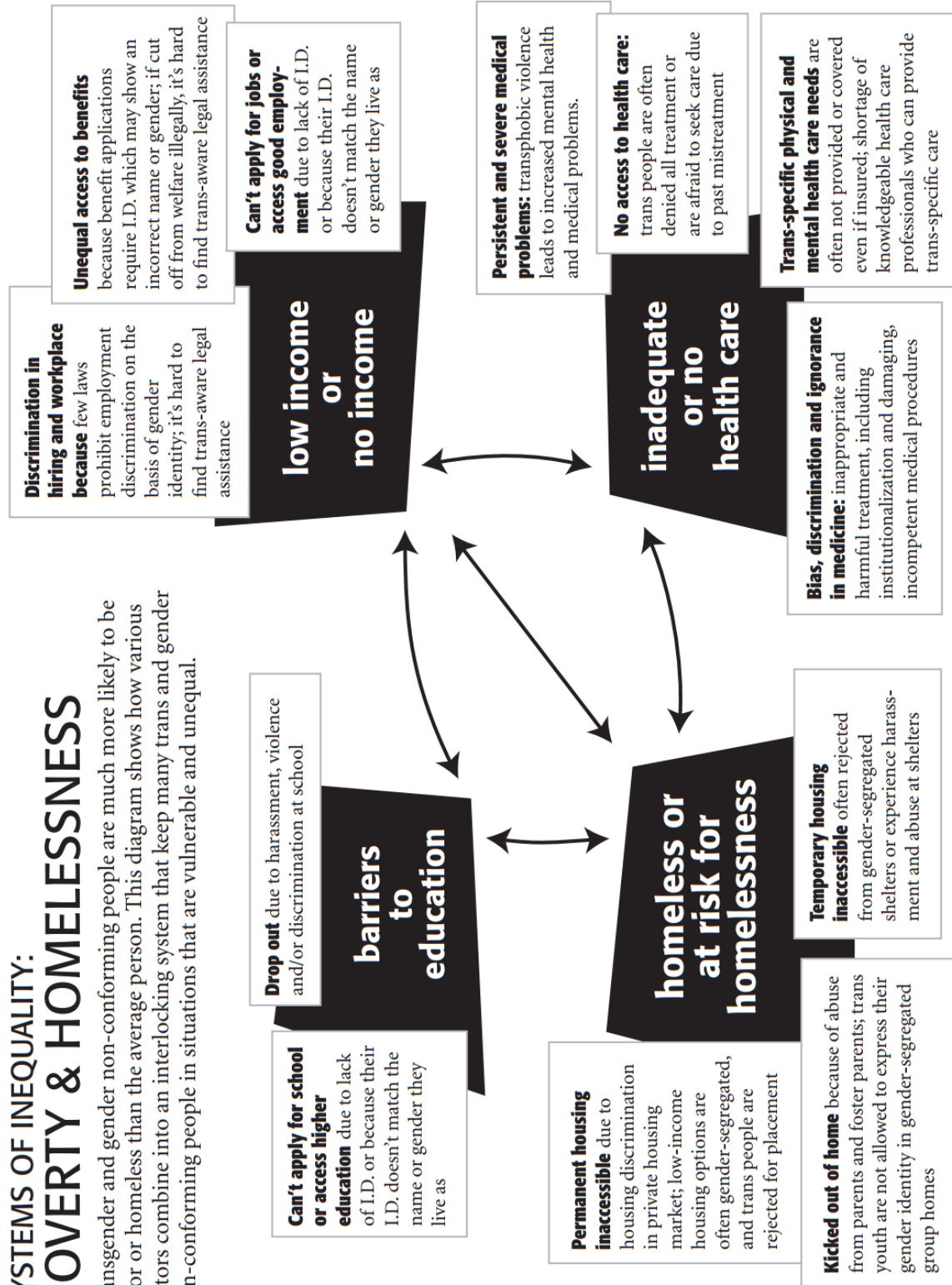
Arsalan Iftikhar, the social commentator and online personality who made the Gap ad famous, [wrote last month](#): "I want to live in an America where a fashion model can be a handsome, bearded brown dude in a turban who is considered as beautiful as a busty blonde-haired white girl in see-through lingerie."

That America does sound nice. But a fashion industry committed to diversity and inclusion stands on hollow ground if the products it markets are founded in economic exclusion. With the power of its brand and the size of its supply chain, Gap can and should do more to create just jobs in the apparel sector. Signing the accord is a necessary step.

SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY:

POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS

Transgender and gender non-conforming people are much more likely to be poor or homeless than the average person. This diagram shows how various factors combine into an interlocking system that keep many trans and gender non-conforming people in situations that are vulnerable and unequal.



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Race and Contemporary Discrimination

Pollution, Poverty, People of Color: Falling into the Climate Gap

By Doug Stark

To read online, click [here](#) or visit:

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2012/pollution-poverty-people-of-color-the-climate-gap.-day-7>

EAST BOSTON, Mass. – The Shore Plaza East apartments have a stunning skyline view of downtown Boston across the harbor: Waves lap at the foot of the eight-story building; sailboats carve foam trails in the water.

These could be million-dollar condos. But, buffeted by winds and the threat of storm-water flooding, these apartments are subsidized housing, reserved for the poor.

"I worry about the water. The weather is changing a lot," said Margaret Orzco, who has lived here three years and is one of thousands of immigrants in this struggling, working-class neighborhood. "And the wind is scary. It sounds like a tornado."

Despite their first-class view, Orzco and her neighbors are especially vulnerable to whatever the air and water may bring to East Boston, a neighborhood that's a magnet for immigrants. That vulnerability puts them, and poor communities like theirs, in the crosshairs of environmental disruption expected from climate change.

Climate change is adding a new dimension to the three-decades-old environmental justice movement.

As the effects of global warming become more evident, disaster planners and community activists are beginning to acknowledge that class disparities will come with a changing climate here in the United States, just as they will in developing countries.

A 2011 [New York state report](#) concluded that climate impacts will be "highly uneven" across households and disadvantaged populations. The poor are exposed on several counts, including higher energy costs, dependence on public transit and lack of access to health care, the researchers reported.

East Boston, for instance, is surrounded on three sides by water. A few blocks from the East Shore apartments, Lucy Acevedo wonders what she would do if an extreme storm surge swept the peninsula and cut the mass transit that is a lifeline for the community.

"I guess I would have to start walking," said Acevedo.

With climate change expected to bring higher waters and harsher winds, those already struggling will bear the brunt disproportionately, said East Boston community activist Neenah Estrella-Luna.

"Lower income people often do not have a choice as to whether they will live in an area of climate hazard," said Estrella-Luna, who teaches urban planning at Northeastern University. "They are the most vulnerable people to climate impacts. They don't have the economic conditions that allow them to be resilient to the hazards."

Acevedo, 40, who raised four children in East Boston after coming from Puerto Rico two decades ago, suffers from asthma. She wonders how much the smoky tankers that pass through the waters outside her window are polluting the air. Her neighbor, Magdalena Ayed, sees her two small children walk to elementary school past fuel storage tanks, and worries what would happen if a tank caught fire. On a recent spring day, they were both picking up empty vodka bottles and marijuana wrappers from a local park.

"The majority of people here are immigrants. They do not know how to navigate the system. They are not empowered. They don't know how to access information about health and the environment," said Ayed, 41, an Argentina-born medical interpreter who lives in subsidized housing with her husband, a taxi driver from Algeria.

"It's a huge issue for us and the neighborhood," added Philip Giffie, executive director of [Neighborhood of Affordable Housing](#), a community organization in East Boston. "It is hard for people to think of what it's going to be like in 30 years when they are worried about feeding their family the next day."

Kim Foltz works on building and environmental issues for the organization and is a nine-year resident of East Boston. The stakes, she said, are different for those without money.

"We have lots of undocumented immigrants, who have a lot of social vulnerability to something like devastating flooding in East Boston.

"If you are working two jobs, and all of a sudden your transportation is cut off and you can't get to your job for a couple of days, it might be the end of your job. If you are an immigrant, your only option might be to go back home," she said.

In many cases, the poor are simply in the wrong place, historically situated in low, flood-prone, economically cheaper areas. Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans' poor Ninth Ward because it was the lowest neighborhood in the city; the floods last year on the Mississippi River repeated that pattern among the poor.

But the effects of such disasters extend past the immediate loss, said Jennifer Leaning, a professor of health and human rights at the Harvard School of Public Health.

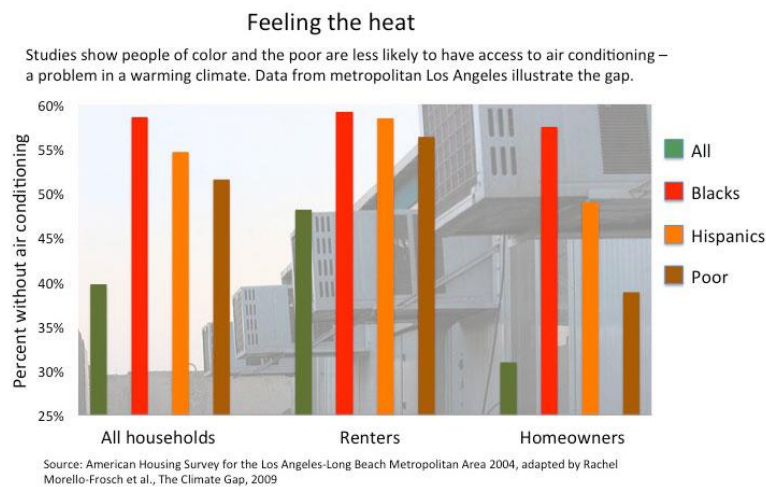
"The wealthy and middle class are equally vulnerable to the immediate water effects," she said. "But they will have so many other resources in terms of getting out of the way and restarting. The poor are going to be trapped with having lost everything – including family members – and will have no money or resources" to recover.

During Katrina, many poor had no access to transportation, often did not hear warnings in time, and did not have the experience or confidence to leave; many never had been more than five miles outside of New Orleans, she said. The poor are less likely to have insurance, savings to help them recoup, or even a safe place to keep important documents.

"Poverty really makes a difference in one's ability to survive these events," said Jerold Kayden, a professor of urban planning and design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. "It impacts the ability of people to adapt individually through purchasing an air-conditioner, locating an air-conditioned space, having a car to transport them away, or having connections to others who can help them get over a disaster."

As the public debate shifts from the diminishing possibility of avoiding climate change to adapting to its consequences, some steps are being considered to help the poor. Rachel Morello-Frosch, a researcher at University of California, Berkeley, led a 2009 [study](#) on the "climate gap." She said attention to the issue helped prompt a proposal now before the California legislature to earmark funds from the state's carbon cap program for low-income and hazard-prone communities. "We have to acknowledge certain communities are more vulnerable" than others, she said.

East Boston, Massachusetts	
Population	43,814
Hispanic	52.9%
Per capita income	\$21,495
Household income < \$15,000	16.8%
(Source: 2005-2009 Census)	



said. "Overlap that in the inner city, where you have high density, fewer trees and higher asthma rates – that's a major health concern."

The city has launched a project to plant 100,000 trees over the next decade, and will target inner-city areas that have little shade, he said. "You have a tale of two cities. Some neighborhoods with very, very high tree canopy, and others woefully underserved."

The history of East Boston's Shore Plaza apartments stretches back four decades. Built in the 1970s, the development was financed in part with a public housing loan when interest rates were high, with the intention that the loan would be repaid and the housing converted to market value condos to be sold to middle- and upper-income buyers. Then the market crashed in the late 1970s, and periodic flooding and harsh winds helped convince the developer the property would not appeal to a wealthier clientele, according to Estrella-Luna. The apartments have been through several owners since, but always as subsidized housing.

Ayed and Acevedo live in other subsidized apartments nearby, only slightly more protected from sea rise and storms. They are campaigning to get more information about climate change, development plans and environmental risks in their community.

"I worry about it," said Acevedo. "I'm really scared about what will happen."

The United Church of Christ – a pioneer in the environmental justice movement in 1987 when it reported on the prevalence of toxic waste dumps in poor, black neighborhoods – has turned much of its attention to climate change. The church is calling for people to change their personal habits related to fossil fuels and demand action from their public officials.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People also [has embraced](#) the "climate justice" issue.

Jacqui Patterson, director of the Environment and Climate Change Justice Program at the NAACP headquarters in Baltimore, said impacts of climate change are entwined with class, race, lack of political clout and economic disruption when polluting industries close.

The organization is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and is trying to help promote more volunteer programs to deal with climate justice.

"I think there is a slowly growing awareness, and some moderate attempts to deal with it," Patterson said. "But moderate might be the right word."

James Hunt, chief of environment and energy services for Boston, says climate change will be a challenge throughout the city, half of which is built on filled tidal lands. Officials are trying to make sure poorer neighborhoods are not neglected in planning for soaring city summer heat and other consequences, he said.

"If our temperatures continue to rise at this rate and our climate begins to look like New Jersey or Maryland, we will have an increase in 90-degree days and days with 100-plus temperatures," he

"The New Jim Crow" –
alternatively: "Why
Racism isn't Dead"

The New Jim Crow

By Michelle Alexander

The subject that I intend to explore today is one that most Americans seem content to ignore. Conversations and debates about race—much less racial caste—are frequently dismissed as yesterday's news, not relevant to the current era. We have entered into the era of "post-racialism," it is said, the promised land of colorblindness. Not just in America, but around the world, President Obama's election has been touted as the final nail in the coffin of Jim Crow, the bookend placed on the history of racial caste in America. This triumphant notion of post-racialism is, in my view, nothing more than fiction—a type of Orwellian doublespeak made no less sinister by virtue of the fact that the people saying it may actually believe it. Racial caste is not dead; it is alive and well in America. The mass incarceration of poor people of color in the United States amounts to a new caste system—one specifically tailored to the political, economic, and social challenges of our time. It is the moral equivalent of Jim Crow.

I am well aware that this kind of claim may be hard for many people to swallow. I, myself, rejected the notion that something akin to a racial caste system could be functioning in the United States more than a decade ago—something that I now deeply regret.

I first encountered the idea of a new racial caste system in the mid-1990s when I was rushing to catch the bus in Oakland, California and a bright orange poster caught my eye. It screamed in large bold print: THE DRUG WAR IS THE NEW JIM CROW. A radical group was holding a community meeting about police brutality, the new three-strikes law in California, the drug war, and the expansion of America's prison system. The meeting was being held at a small community church a few blocks away; it had seating capacity for no more than fifty people. I sighed and muttered to myself something like, "Yeah, the criminal justice system is racist in many ways, but it really doesn't help to make such absurd comparisons. People will just think you're crazy." I then crossed the street and hopped on the bus. I was headed to my new job, director of the Racial Justice Project for the ACLU in Northern California....

By the time I left the ACLU, I had come to suspect that I was wrong about the criminal justice system. It was not just another institution infected with racial bias, but rather a different beast entirely. The activists who posted the sign on the telephone phone were not crazy; nor were the smattering of lawyers and advocates around the country who were beginning to connect the dots between our current system of mass incarceration and earlier forms of social control. Quite belatedly, I came to see that mass incarceration in the United States had, in fact, emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow.

What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than the language we use to justify it. In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we don't. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color "criminals" and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination—employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.

I reached this conclusion reluctantly. Like many civil rights lawyers, I was inspired to attend law school by the civil rights victories of the 1950s and 1960s. Even in the face of growing social and political opposition to remedial policies such as affirmative action, I clung to the notion that the evils of Jim Crow are behind us and that

we have made real progress. I understood the problems plaguing poor communities of color, including problems associated with crime and rising incarceration rates, to be a function of poverty and lack of access to quality education—the continuing legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. I strenuously resisted the idea that a new caste system was operating in this country; I was nearly offended by the notion. But after years of working on issues of racial profiling, police brutality, drug law enforcement in poor communities of color, and attempting to assist people released from prison “re-enter” into a society that never seemed to have much use for them in the first place, I had a series of experiences that began what I call my “awakening.” I began to awaken to a racial reality that is so obvious to me now that what seems odd in retrospect is that I was blind to it for so long.

Here are some facts I uncovered in the course of my work and research that you probably have not heard on the evening news:

* In 2007 more black men were disenfranchised than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified prohibiting laws that explicitly deny the right to vote on the basis of race.⁴ During the Jim Crow era, African Americans continued to be denied access to the ballot through poll taxes and literacy tests. Those laws have been struck down, but today felon disenfranchisement laws accomplish what poll taxes and literacy tests ultimately could not.

* In many large urban areas in the United States, the majority of working-age African American men have criminal records. In fact, it was reported in 2002 that, in the Chicago area, if you take into account prisoners, the figure is nearly 80%. Those bearing criminal records and cycling in and out of our prisons today are part of a growing undercaste—not class, caste—a group of people, defined largely by race, who are relegated to a permanent second-class status by law. They can be denied the right to vote, automatically excluded from juries, and legally discriminated against in employment, housing, access to education, and public benefits, much as their grandparents and great-grandparents were during the Jim Crow era.

I find that when I tell people that mass incarceration amounts to a New Jim Crow, I am frequently met with shocked disbelief. However, the mere fact that some African Americans have experienced great success in recent years does not mean that something akin to a caste system no longer exists. No caste system in the United States has ever governed all black people. There have always been “free blacks” and black success stories, even during slavery and Jim Crow. The unprecedented nature of black achievement in formerly white domains today certainly suggests that the old Jim Crow is dead, but it does not necessarily mean the end of racial caste. If history is any guide, it may have simply taken a different form.

Any honest observer of American racial history must acknowledge that racism is highly adaptable. The rules and reasons the legal system employs to enforce status relations of any kind evolve and change as they are challenged. Since our nation’s founding, African Americans have been repeatedly controlled through institutions, such as slavery and Jim Crow, which appear to die, but then are reborn in new form—tailored to the needs and constraints of the time.

Today, I believe the criminal justice system has been used once again in a manner that effectively re-creates caste in America. Our criminal justice system functions more like a caste system than a system of crime control. In less than 30 years, the U.S. penal population exploded from around 300,000 to more than 2 million. The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, dwarfing the rates of nearly every developed country, including highly repressive regimes like China and Iran.

In fact, if our nation were to return to the incarceration rates of the 1970s—a time, by the way, when civil rights activists thought that imprisonment rates were egregiously high—we would have to release four out of five

people who are in prison today. More than a million people employed by the criminal justice system could lose their jobs. That is how enormous and deeply entrenched the new system has become in a very short period of time. As staggering as those figures are, they actually obscure the severity of the crisis in poor communities of color.

Professor Loïc Wacquant has argued that the term “mass incarceration” itself is a misnomer, since it implies that nearly everyone has been subject to the new system of control, though the overwhelming majority of the increase in imprisonment has been poor people of color, with the most astonishing rates of incarceration found among black men. It was estimated several years ago that, in Washington, D.C.—our nation’s capital—three out of four young black men (and nearly all those in the poorest neighborhoods) could expect to serve time in prison. Rates of incarceration nearly as shocking can be found in other communities of color across America.

So what accounts for this vast new system of control? Crime rates? But crime rates have fluctuated over the past thirty years, and are at historical lows, but incarceration rates have soared. Most criminologists and sociologists today acknowledge that crime rates and incarceration rates have moved independently of one another. Rates of imprisonment—especially black imprisonment—have soared regardless of whether crime has been rising or falling in any given community or the nation as a whole.

So what does explain this vast new system of control? The War on Drugs and the “get tough” movement explain the explosion in incarceration in the United States and the emergence of a vast, new racial undercaste. In fact, drug convictions alone accounted for about two-thirds of the increase in the federal system, and more than half of the increase in the state prison population between 1985 and 2000. Drug convictions have increased more than 1000% since the drug war began, an increase that bears no relationship to patterns of drug use or sales.

People of all races use and sell drugs at remarkably similar rates, but the enemy in this war has been racially defined. Despite this fact, the drug war has been waged almost exclusively in poor communities of color. This evidence defies our basic stereotype of a drug dealer, as a black kid standing on a street corner, with his pants hanging down. Drug dealing happens in the ghetto, to be sure, but it happens everywhere else in America as well. Illegal drug markets, it turns out—like American society generally—are relatively segregated by race. In fact, the research suggests that where significant differences by race can be found, white youth are more likely to commit drug crimes than youth of color.

But that is not what you would guess when entering our nation’s prisons and jails, overflowing as they are with black and brown drug offenders. In the United States, those who do time for drug crime are overwhelmingly black and brown. In some states, African Americans constitute 80 to 90% of all drug offenders sent to prison. I find that many people are willing to concede these racial disparities once they see the data. Even so, they tend to insist that the drug war is motivated by concern over violent crime. They say: just look at our prisons. Nearly half of the people behind bars are violent offenders. Typically this is where the discussion ends.

The problem with this abbreviated analysis is that violent crime is not responsible for the prison boom. Violent offenders tend to get longer sentences than nonviolent offenders, which is why they comprise such a large share of the prison population. To get a sense of how large a contribution the drug war has made to mass incarceration, consider this: there are more people in prison today just for drug offenses than were incarcerated published that year revealed that white students use cocaine and heroin at significantly higher rates than black students, while nearly identical percentages of black and white students report using marijuana.

Discrimination in virtually every aspect of political, economic, and social life is now perfectly legal, once you’re labeled a felon. All of this has been justified on the grounds that getting brutally tough on “them” is the only way to root out violent offenders or drug kingpins. The media images of violence in ghetto communities—particularly when crack first hit the street—led many to believe that the drug war was focused on the most serious offenders. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Federal funding has flowed to those state and local law

enforcement agencies that increase dramatically the volume of drug arrests, not the agencies most successful in bringing down the bosses. What has been rewarded in this war is sheer numbers—the sheer volume of drug arrests.

The results are predictable. People of color have been rounded up en masse for relatively minor, non-violent drug offenses. In 2005, for example, four out of five drug arrests were for possession, only one out of five for sales.⁴⁶ Most people in state prison for drug offenses have no history of violence or even of significant selling activity.⁴⁷ In fact, during the 1990s—the period of the most dramatic expansion of the drug war—nearly 80% of the increase in drug arrests was for marijuana possession, a drug generally considered less harmful than alcohol or tobacco and at least as prevalent in middleclass white communities as in the inner city.⁴⁸

In this way, a new racial undercaste has been created in an astonishingly short period of time. Millions of people of color are now saddled with criminal records and legally denied the very rights that were supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement. The U.S. Supreme Court, for its part, has mostly turned a blind eye to race discrimination in the criminal justice system. The Court has closed the courthouse doors to claims of racial bias at every stage of the criminal justice process from stops and searches to plea bargaining and sentencing. Law enforcement officials are largely free to discriminate on the basis of race today, so long as no one admits it. That's the key. In *McCleskey v. Kemp* and *United States v. Armstrong*, the Supreme Court made clear that only evidence of conscious, intentional racial bias—the sort of bias that is nearly impossible to prove these days in the absence of an admission—is deemed sufficient.⁵⁰ No matter how impressive the statistical evidence, no matter how severe the racial disparities and racial impacts might be, the Supreme Court is not interested. The Court has, as a practical matter, closed the door to claims of racial bias in the criminal justice system. It has immunized the new caste system from judicial scrutiny for racial bias, much as it once rallied to legitimate and protect slavery and Jim Crow.

In my experience, those who have been incarcerated have little difficulty recognizing the parallels between mass incarceration and Jim Crow. Many former prisoners have told me, “It’s slavery on the inside; Jim Crow when you get out.” Prisoners are often forced to work for little or no pay. Once released, they are denied basic civil and human rights until they die. They are treated as though they possess an incurable defect, a shameful trait that can never be fully eradicated or redeemed...

A black minister in Waterloo, Mississippi put it this way:

‘Felony’ is the new N-word. They don’t have to call you a nigger anymore. They just say you’re a felon. In every ghetto you see alarming numbers of young men with felony convictions. Once you have that felony stamp, your hope of employment, for any kind of integration into society, it begins to fade out. Today’s lynching is a felony charge. Today’s lynching is incarceration. Today’s lynch mobs are professionals. They have a badge; they have a law degree. A felony is a modern way of saying, ‘I’m going to hang you up and burn you.’ Once you get that F, you’re on fire. What is painfully obvious to many trapped within the system, remains largely invisible to those of us who have decent jobs and zoom around on freeways, passing by the virtual and literal prisons in which members of the undercaste live.

None of this is to say, of course, that mass incarceration and Jim Crow are the “same.” There are significant differences between mass incarceration and earlier forms of racial control, to be sure—many of which are described in some detail in my book. Just as there were vast differences between slavery and Jim Crow, there are important differences between Jim Crow and mass incarceration.

Yet all three (slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration) have operated as tightly networked systems of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race. When we step back and view the system of mass incarceration as a whole, there is a profound sense of *deja vu*. There is a familiar stigma and shame. There is an elaborate system of control, complete with political disenfranchisement and legalized discrimination in every major realm of economic and social life. And there is the production of racial meaning and racial boundaries.

Just consider a few of the rules, laws, and policies that apply to people branded felons today and ask yourself if they remind you of a bygone era: Denial of the right to vote, Exclusion from jury service, Employment discrimination, Housing discrimination, Public benefits, Fees and fines.

What, realistically, do we expect these folks to do? What is this system designed to do? It seems designed to send them right back to prison, which is what in fact happens most of the time. About 70% of released prisoners are rearrested within three years, and the majority of those who return to prison do so within a matter of months, because the barriers to mere survival on the outside are so immense. There are two major reasons, I believe, that so many of us are in denial about the existence of racial caste in America. The first is traceable to a misunderstanding regarding how racial oppression actually works. If someone were to visit the United States from another country (or another planet) and ask: 'Is the U.S. criminal justice system some kind of tool of racial control?', most Americans would swiftly deny it. The visitor would be told that crime rates, black culture, or bad schools were to blame. "The system is not run by a bunch of racists," the apologist would explain. They would say, "It is run by people who are trying to fight crime." Because mass incarceration is officially colorblind, and because most people today do not think of themselves as racist, it seems inconceivable that the system could function much like a caste system.

But more than forty-five years ago, Martin Luther King Jr. warned of the danger of precisely this kind of thinking. He insisted that blindness and indifference to racial groups is actually more important than racial hostility to the creation and maintenance of systems of racial control. Those who supported slavery and Jim Crow, he argued, typically were not bad or evil people; they were just blind. But, he added, "They were victims of spiritual and intellectual blindness. They knew not what they did. The whole system of slavery was largely perpetuated by sincere though spiritually ignorant persons." The same is true today. People of good will—and bad—have been unwilling to see black and brown men, in their humanness, as entitled to the same care that would be extended to one's friends, neighbors, or loved ones...

Another reason that we remain in deep denial is that we, as a nation, have a false picture of our racial reality. Prisoners are literally erased from the nation's economic picture. Unemployment and poverty statistics do not include people behind bars. In fact, standard reports underestimate the true jobless rates for less educated black men by as much as 24 percentage points. During the much heralded economic boom of the 1990s—the Clinton years—African American men were the only group to experience a steep increase in real joblessness, a development directly traceable to the increase in the penal population. During the 1990s—the best of times for the rest of America—the true jobless rates for non-college black men was a staggering 42%.

When we pull back the curtain and take a look at what our so-called colorblind society creates without affirmative action, we see a familiar social, political and economic structure—the structure of racial caste. And the entry into this new caste system can be found at the prison gate.

So where do we go from here? What can be done to dismantle this new system of control? What is clear, I think, is that those of us in the civil rights community have allowed a human rights nightmare to occur on our watch. While many of us have been fighting for affirmative action or clinging to the perceived gains of the Civil Rights Movement, millions of people have been rounded up en masse, locked in cages, and then released into a parallel social universe in which they can be discriminated against for the rest of their lives—denied the very rights our parents and grandparents fought for and some died for. The clock has been turned back on racial progress in America, yet scarcely anyone seems to notice.

What is needed, I believe, is a broad based social movement, one that rivals in size, scope, depth, and courage the movement that was begun in the 1960s and left unfinished. It must be a multi-racial, multi-ethnic movement that includes poor and working class whites—a group that has consistently been pit against poor people of color, triggering the rise of successive new systems of control.

The drug war was born with black folks in mind, but it is a hungry beast; it has caused incalculable suffering in communities of all colors. In California and throughout the Southwest, Latinos are a primary target of the drug war. And now that Wall Street executives have found they can profit from prisons, private prison companies have lobbied for punitive laws aimed at suspected illegal immigrants, in the hopes of building new immigration detention centers—the newest market for caging human beings.⁷⁶ The impulse to exploit racial fears and biases for political and economic gain is leading to a prison-building boom aimed at immigrants. If we are going to succeed in bringing this brutal system to an end, we must map the linkages between the suffering of African Americans in the drug war to the experiences of other oppressed and marginalized groups. This movement must be multi-racial and multi-ethnic, and it must have a keen sense of the racial history and racial dynamics that brought us to this moment in time.

But before this movement can even get underway, a great awakening is required. We must awaken from our colorblind slumber to the realities of race in America. And we must be willing to embrace those labeled criminals—not necessarily their behavior, but them—their humanness. For it has been the refusal and failure to fully acknowledge the humanity and dignity of all persons that has formed the sturdy foundation of all caste systems.

It is our task, I firmly believe, to end not just mass incarceration, but the history and cycle of caste in America.

Think your opinion on the topic has been solidified? Inspired by Alexander's rhetoric? Well, you may want to turn the page!

Black Out: Michelle Alexander's Operational Whitewash - The New Jim Crow Reviewed

By Joseph D. Osel

Michelle Alexander's new book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* is strange and omnipresent, coming to us under the often co-opted banner of the noble cause. I first stumbled onto Alexander's book by accident, finding a mention of it somewhere and following up to satisfy my own curiosity. After my initial discovery I found the likable, knowledgeable and well-meaning Alexander speaking about her book on various radio and television programs, finding most of her standalone statements accurate, important and worthy of discussion.

Upon finishing her book I recently attended a rally in Seattle in support of the family of Trayvon Martin where references to "The New Jim Crow" were abundant, the signs and chants of the "No New Jim Crow Coalition" ringing throughout the event -- the strangely backward chant of "no peace, no justice" adopted quickly by the crowd. When visiting the home of a white hippy friend who lives in the city's gentrifying Central District a pristine copy of Alexander's book sat proudly on her living-room bookshelf. During a chance encounter with a local civil rights attorney, upon exposing myself as a sociologist, Alexander's book was recommended right on cue, "The New Jim Crow is our new Bible!" the young lawyer told me.

An Analysis for the "Colorblind"

These recommendations aside, *The New Jim Crow* is "not for everyone," that is, according to Alexander. So who then is *The New Jim Crow* for? According to the preface, the target audience for the book is well-meaning middle-class+ liberals who, for various reasons of privilege (or "lack of information"), have failed to grasp how and why racialized policies of social control persist in the so-called "age of colorblindness." Of course, the irony here is that the "age of colorblindness" does not exist, save for the theoretical ideals of Alexander's audience (i.e. the non-racist, enlightened, multiculturalist readers). Moving forward in this sense, then, the entire book operates on a falsehood designed to massage the reader's "enlightened" sense of self -- and this is where things begin to go wildly awry.

Alexander's preface makes the liberal-humanist, bourgeois framework of her anemic structural analysis clear. In turn, as the astute social philosopher might expect, the most striking feature of *The New Jim Crow* is not found in its analysis of "mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness" or in its repudiation of the cleverly named "war on drugs," but rather in the stark limitation that Alexander imposes on her critical discourse -- her first ideological gesture to bar the framework of liberal-humanism from her critical-ethical-historical scope. This limitation (imposed for the comfort of her expected audience and perhaps for Alexander herself) is why *The New Jim Crow* offers no serious or sustained discourse on the harder and larger issues that are, in-fact, central to her subject(s) [1].

Alexander's analysis emphatically and categorically ignores the systemic violence endemic to the socioeconomic order, its origins and persistence in contemporary society. She provides this order, this undeniable defining critical context -- which informs and perpetuates the logic of mass incarceration, whose sole function it is to reinforce and protect the interests and sensibilities of the upper-classes -- with anonymity and exclusive critical immunity.

The symptom of this critical immunity and the analytical result of *The New Jim Crow* is exemplified by the well-known expression "can't see the forest for the trees." To illustrate this one need go no further than to point out that while Alexander's book claims to be concerned with exposing and describing the history and mechanisms of mass incarceration or the American "caste system," which affects the poor and people of color systematically and disproportionately, her work systematically, strangely, and emphatically excludes these voices.

That said, the content of Alexander's well-researched, tip-toeing book may be enlightening or nauseating depending on the reader's existing understanding of mass incarceration in the United States and their ability to think critically and contextually about complicated social issues. Privileged or sheltered progressive liberals, or for that matter any individual with the garden variety college education, as well as the vast majority of progressive academics, will likely find *The New Jim Crow* stimulating, maybe cathartic and probably worth recommending. On the other hand, those with any kind of serious background in Black philosophy, history, criticism, or even a passing interest in self-determination should brace themselves for the all too familiar: a breathtaking descent into the nether regions of Eurocentrism, in all its clever disguises. *Black Out / Operational Whitewash*

Although Alexander offers some insightful analysis about the American drug war, policy making and various other things, the entire contextual frame of her work can be characterized by two words: bizarre omission. According to Alexander's history, there is no Malcolm X or George Jackson, no Frantz Fanon, no Richard Wright, no Eldridge Cleaver, no Angela Davis, no Huey P. Newton, no Bobby Seale, no Black Panther Party, no Black Power Movement, no self-determination, no prison-struggles, no political prisoners. Suspiciously there is almost no 1960's, no 1970's, no Black History, no Black Criticism, no Black Radicalism, no radicalism, no class struggle. There is no serious or sustained critique of colonialism, imperialism or capitalism. There is no discussion of international law, implicit racism, of privileged ignorance or prosperity, no acknowledgment that the likely champions of the text are the direct and continued benefactors of the "caste system" they so deplore. There is no connection to any of this. None.

All of this: the radical voices of America's black and brown inmates, the strong voices of anti-oppression, anti-imperialism, anti-exploitation, the voices of revolt, rebellion, revolution, Black and Brown power, the most salient historical texts, speeches, time-periods, and philosophies -- all these things have been miraculously purged from Alexander's lens in a sort of operational whitewash, a black out, apparently unnoticed. How is this possible given the subject of her book? How is it even passable? Could one write a book about the rain, but never mention the weather? Could one write a book about the weather and never mention the atmosphere, its history or defining patterns? Here we have an instant classic: whitewashed language, whitewashed social relations, whitewashed history, whitewashed brutality, a vast rhetorical and historical facelift where the most relevant and affected voices on the topic at hand are safely expunged from the discussion, from relevance, from history.

With all this precluded for the comfort of Alexander's readers (or for some other reason) while the bulk of *The New Jim Crow* is dedicated to the logical treatment of these very subjects, her thesis, however luxuriously poignant and possibly useful, ultimately fails. Its logical conclusions simply cannot be drawn without producing internal contradictions that are endless. The function of the rhetorical limitation in *The New Jim Crow* is to obscure these contradictions and the repercussions of these strange obfuscations, and subsequent maneuvers of concealment produce analytical limitations that render Alexander's overall analysis demonstrably ahistorical, and thus inconsequential in any seriously critical sense. Put simply, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in Age of Colorblindness* sadly is a book that happily implies the annihilation of its own thesis.

Notes [1] In this case "subject(s)" refers both to Alexander's topic as well as those groups and individuals most affected by the issues (situation) under consideration.

Higher Profits Explain Why There Are More People of Color in Private Prisons

By Joshua Holland

To read online, click [here](http://billmoyers.com/2014/02/07/higher-profits-explain-why-there-are-more-people-of-color-in-private-prisons/) or visit: <http://billmoyers.com/2014/02/07/higher-profits-explain-why-there-are-more-people-of-color-in-private-prisons/>

It's well known that people of color are overrepresented in America's prisons relative to their share of the population. But [a recent study](#) finds that they make up an even larger share of the populations of private, for-profit prisons than publicly run institutions.

According to Christopher Petrella, a doctoral candidate at UC Berkeley who conducted the study, this is not an accident — it's about private firms selecting the least expensive prisoners to manage and leaving costlier populations in the hands of state correction systems.

Why would African American and Latino prisoners be cheaper to incarcerate than whites? Because older prisoners are significantly more expensive than younger ones. "Based on historical sentencing patterns, if you are a prisoner today, and you are over 50 years old, there is a greater likelihood that you are white," Petrella explained to BillMoyers.com. "If you are under 50 years old — particularly if you're closer to 30 years old — you're more likely to be a person of color." He cited a 2012 report by the ACLU which found that it costs \$34,135 per year to house a non-geriatric prisoner, compared with \$68,270 for a prisoner age 50 or older.

"I came to find out that through explicit and implicit exemptions written into contracts between these private prison management companies and state departments of correction, many of these privates — namely GEO and CCA, the two largest private, for-profit prison companies — write exemptions for certain types of prisoners into their contracts," Petrella said. "And, as you can guess, the prisoners they like to house are low-cost prisoners... Those prisoners tend to be younger, and they tend to be much healthier."

But why are older prisoners more likely to be white? Petrella explains that "up until the mid-1960s or so, two-thirds of the US prison population was what the Census Bureau would consider non-Hispanic white. Today, that's totally inverted — about a third of all prisoners around the country are white and around two-thirds are people of color. And the chief explanation for that trend is the so-called drug war, which disproportionately impacts people of color."

Petrella looked at the nine states with private prison populations large enough to yield reliable data. In four — California, Georgia, Oklahoma and Texas — people of color's share of the private prison population was at least ten percentage points greater than in state-run facilities. The disparity was evident not only in the states included in the study but in 30 of the 32 states that contract with private corrections companies.

Health care is a big part of why older prisoners cost so much more to house than younger ones. But Petrella found the same trend even in those states that provide their prison populations with health care directly and only use private companies to house inmates. "Those assigned to monitor geriatric and/or chronically ill prisoners often require special training, and they often benefit from higher pay grades," Petrella explained.

The private prison industry has come under criticism for [spending millions lobbying for harsh sentences](#) that would put more people in jail. Contracts that require minimum occupancy rates — and force states to pay for unused beds — [have also come under fire](#).

Privatization is sold to the public as a way to save money, but [various studies have found](#) that they either end up costing more, or save states just a few dollars per prisoner. According to [an American Friends Service Committee study](#) of private prisons in Arizona — a state that's led the privatization trend — they turn a profit by paying corrections officers less and cutting corners when it comes to security and health care.

Chris Petrella's study shows that they also pick and choose their prisoners in order to maximize their bottom lines. But somebody has to pay the price.

"One of the reasons I think the study's important," Petrella said, "is that it continues to show how laws — and even contractual stipulations — that are, on the surface, race-neutral, continue to have a disproportionate and negative impact on communities of color."

Masked Racism: Reflections on Prison-Industrial Complex

By Angela Davis

To read online, click [here](http://www.colorlines.com/articles/masked-racism-reflections-prison-industrial-complex) or visit: <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/masked-racism-reflections-prison-industrial-complex>

Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of the social problems that burden people who are ensconced in poverty. These problems often are veiled by being conveniently grouped together under the category “crime” and by the automatic attribution of criminal behavior to people of color. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages.

Prisons thus perform a feat of magic. Or rather the people who continually vote in new prison bonds and tacitly assent to a proliferating network of prisons and jails have been tricked into believing in the magic of imprisonment. But prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings. And the practice of disappearing vast numbers of people from poor, immigrant, and racially marginalized communities has literally become big business.

The seeming effortlessness of magic always conceals an enormous amount of behind-the-scenes work. When prisons disappear human beings in order to convey the illusion of solving social problems, penal infrastructures must be created to accommodate a rapidly swelling population of caged people. Goods and services must be provided to keep imprisoned populations alive. Sometimes these populations must be kept busy and at other times -- particularly in repressive super-maximum prisons and in INS detention centers -- they must be deprived of virtually all meaningful activity. Vast numbers of handcuffed and shackled people are moved across state borders as they are transferred from one state or federal prison to another.

All this work, which used to be the primary province of government, is now also performed by private corporations, whose links to government in the field of what is euphemistically called “corrections” resonate dangerously with the military industrial complex. The dividends that accrue from investment in the punishment industry, like those that accrue from investment in weapons production, only amount to social destruction. Taking into account the structural similarities and profitability of business-government linkages in the realms of military production and public punishment, the expanding penal system can now be characterized as a “prison industrial complex.”

The Color of Imprisonment

Almost two million people are currently locked up in the immense network of U.S. prisons and jails. More than 70 percent of the imprisoned population are people of color. It is rarely acknowledged that the fastest growing group of prisoners are black women and that Native American prisoners are the largest group per capita. Approximately five million people -- including those on probation and parole -- are directly under the surveillance of the criminal justice system.

Three decades ago, the imprisoned population was approximately one-eighth its current size. While women still constitute a relatively small percentage of people behind bars, today the number of incarcerated women in California alone is almost twice what the nationwide women’s prison population was in 1970. According to Elliott Currie, “[t]he prison has become a looming presence in our society to an extent unparalleled in our history -- or that of any other industrial democracy. Short of major wars, mass incarceration has been the most thoroughly implemented government social program of our time.”

To deliver up bodies destined for profitable punishment, the political economy of prisons relies on racialized assumptions of criminality -- such as images of black welfare mothers reproducing criminal children --

and on racist practices in arrest, conviction, and sentencing patterns. Colored bodies constitute the main human raw material in this vast experiment to disappear the major social problems of our time. Once the aura of magic is stripped away from the imprisonment solution, what is revealed is racism, class bias, and the parasitic seduction of capitalist profit. The prison industrial system materially and morally impoverishes its inhabitants and devours the social wealth needed to address the very problems that have led to spiraling numbers of prisoners.

As prisons take up more and more space on the social landscape, other government programs that have previously sought to respond to social needs -- such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families -- are being squeezed out of existence. The deterioration of public education, including prioritizing discipline and security over learning in public schools located in poor communities, is directly related to the prison "solution."

Profiting from Prisoners

As prisons proliferate in U.S. society, private capital has become enmeshed in the punishment industry. And precisely because of their profit potential, prisons are becoming increasingly important to the U.S. economy. If the notion of punishment as a source of potentially stupendous profits is disturbing by itself, then the strategic dependence on racist structures and ideologies to render mass punishment palatable and profitable is even more troubling.

Prison privatization is the most obvious instance of capital's current movement toward the prison industry. While government-run prisons are often in gross violation of international human rights standards, private prisons are even less accountable. In March of this year, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the largest U.S. private prison company, claimed 54,944 beds in 68 facilities under contract or development in the U.S., Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Following the global trend of subjecting more women to public punishment, CCA recently opened a women's prison outside Melbourne. The company recently identified California as its "new frontier."

Wackenhut Corrections Corporation (WCC), the second largest U.S. prison company, claimed contracts and awards to manage 46 facilities in North America, U.K., and Australia. It boasts a total of 30,424 beds as well as contracts for prisoner health care services, transportation, and security.

Currently, the stocks of both CCA and WCC are doing extremely well. Between 1996 and 1997, CCA's revenues increased by 58 percent, from \$293 million to \$462 million. Its net profit grew from \$30.9 million to \$53.9 million. WCC raised its revenues from \$138 million in 1996 to \$210 million in 1997. Unlike public correctional facilities, the vast profits of these private facilities rely on the employment of non-union labor.

The Prison Industrial Complex

But private prison companies are only the most visible component of the increasing corporatization of punishment. Government contracts to build prisons have bolstered the construction industry. The architectural community has identified prison design as a major new niche. Technology developed for the military by companies like Westinghouse is being marketed for use in law enforcement and punishment.

Moreover, corporations that appear to be far removed from the business of punishment are intimately involved in the expansion of the prison industrial complex. Prison construction bonds are one of the many sources of profitable investment for leading financiers such as Merrill Lynch. MCI charges prisoners and their families outrageous prices for the precious telephone calls which are often the only contact prisoners have with the free world.

Many corporations whose products we consume on a daily basis have learned that prison labor power can be as profitable as third world labor power exploited by U.S.-based global corporations. Both relegate formerly unionized workers to joblessness and many even wind up in prison. Some of the companies that use prison labor are

IBM, Motorola, Compaq, Texas Instruments, Honeywell, Microsoft, and Boeing. But it is not only the hi-tech industries that reap the profits of prison labor. Nordstrom department stores sell jeans that are marketed as “Prison Blues,” as well as t-shirts and jackets made in Oregon prisons. The advertising slogan for these clothes is “made on the inside to be worn on the outside.” Maryland prisoners inspect glass bottles and jars used by Revlon and Pierre Cardin, and schools throughout the world buy graduation caps and gowns made by South Carolina prisoners.

“For private business,” write Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans (a political prisoner inside the Federal Correctional Institution at Dublin, California) “prison labor is like a pot of gold. No strikes. No union organizing. No health benefits, unemployment insurance, or workers’ compensation to pay. No language barriers, as in foreign countries. New leviathan prisons are being built on thousands of eerie acres of factories inside the walls. Prisoners do data entry for Chevron, make telephone reservations for TWA, raise hogs, shovel manure, make circuit boards, limousines, waterbeds, and lingerie for Victoria’s Secret -- all at a fraction of the cost of ‘free labor.’”

Devouring the Social Wealth

Although prison labor -- which ultimately is compensated at a rate far below the minimum wage -- is hugely profitable for the private companies that use it, the penal system as a whole does not produce wealth. It devours the social wealth that could be used to subsidize housing for the homeless, to ameliorate public education for poor and racially marginalized communities, to open free drug rehabilitation programs for people who wish to kick their habits, to create a national health care system, to expand programs to combat HIV, to eradicate domestic abuse -- and, in the process, to create well-paying jobs for the unemployed.

Since 1984 more than twenty new prisons have opened in California, while only one new campus was added to the California State University system and none to the University of California system. In 1996-97, higher education received only 8.7 percent of the State’s General Fund while corrections received 9.6 percent. Now that affirmative action has been declared illegal in California, it is obvious that education is increasingly reserved for certain people, while prisons are reserved for others. Five times as many black men are presently in prison as in four-year colleges and universities. This new segregation has dangerous implications for the entire country.

By segregating people labeled as criminals, prison simultaneously fortifies and conceals the structural racism of the U.S. economy. Claims of low unemployment rates -- even in black communities -- make sense only if one assumes that the vast numbers of people in prison have really disappeared and thus have no legitimate claims to jobs. The numbers of black and Latino men currently incarcerated amount to two percent of the male labor force. According to criminologist David Downes, “[t]reating incarceration as a type of hidden unemployment may raise the jobless rate for men by about one-third, to 8 percent. The effect on the black labor force is greater still, raising the [black] male unemployment rate from 11 percent to 19 percent.”

Hidden Agenda

Mass incarceration is not a solution to unemployment, nor is it a solution to the vast array of social problems that are hidden away in a rapidly growing network of prisons and jails. However, the great majority of people have been tricked into believing in the efficacy of imprisonment, even though the historical record clearly demonstrates that prisons do not work. Racism has undermined our ability to create a popular critical discourse to contest the ideological trickery that posits imprisonment as key to public safety. The focus of state policy is rapidly shifting from social welfare to social control.

Black, Latino, Native American, and many Asian youth are portrayed as the purveyors of violence, traffickers of drugs, and as envious of commodities that they have no right to possess. Young black and Latina women are represented as sexually promiscuous and as indiscriminately propagating babies and poverty. Criminality and deviance are racialized. Surveillance is thus focused on communities of color, immigrants, the

unemployed, the undereducated, the homeless, and in general on those who have a diminishing claim to social resources. Their claim to social resources continues to diminish in large part because law enforcement and penal measures increasingly devour these resources. The prison industrial complex has thus created a vicious cycle of punishment which only further impoverishes those whose impoverishment is supposedly “solved” by imprisonment.

Therefore, as the emphasis of government policy shifts from social welfare to crime control, racism sinks more deeply into the economic and ideological structures of U.S. society. Meanwhile, conservative crusaders against affirmative action and bilingual education proclaim the end of racism, while their opponents suggest that racism’s remnants can be dispelled through dialogue and conversation. But conversations about “race relations” will hardly dismantle a prison industrial complex that thrives on and nourishes the racism hidden within the deep structures of our society.

The emergence of a U.S. prison industrial complex within a context of cascading conservatism marks a new historical moment, whose dangers are unprecedented. But so are its opportunities. Considering the impressive number of grassroots projects that continue to resist the expansion of the punishment industry, it ought to be possible to bring these efforts together to create radical and nationally visible movements that can legitimize anti-capitalist critiques of the prison industrial complex. It ought to be possible to build movements in defense of prisoners’ human rights and movements that persuasively argue that what we need is not new prisons, but new health care, housing, education, drug programs, jobs, and education. To safeguard a democratic future, it is possible and necessary to weave together the many and increasing strands of resistance to the prison industrial complex into a powerful movement for social transformation.

Safe Diversity: Black Is Beautiful... But Not Too Black

By Katrina Richardson

The Daily Show has a new Asian Correspondent. It's a lady. Her name is Olivia Munn. A woman most famous for her cheesecake photos and hosting the live TV program Attack of the Show on the G4 channel.

In theory this feels like it should be good news. Another woman on The Daily Show and a woman of color at that. It feels like I should be writing a different article entirely, praising the show's bold move. But I just can't get excited and I'm disappointed in their choice.

Munn's mother is Chinese and her father is of German-Irish descent. Munn is Asian, but she is also white.

Before we get our delicacies in a bunch, let me make one thing clear:

I am multiracial (African American & Malaysian). I am more than familiar with hurtful and misguided efforts made to discredit both my black and Asian identities. I have no interest in doing the same. I am not attempting to challenge her Asian "authenticity" or dismiss her identity. However, Munn's new position on The Daily Show deserves closer examination. Why did they choose her? They claim it's because she's funny. We all know it's because she's hot. She's famous for her hotness. Part of this is because she happens to be a good looking lady. But there's something else at work: she's an Asian woman that looks less like an Asian woman and more like a white girl. Jackpot!

The media devours palatable representations of "ethnic" beauty. It allows them to truly believe they're celebrating diversity while continuing to maintain a certain aesthetic. This is certainly no new revelation, but Munn's presence in the news last week offers us another opportunity to consider the media's habitual white washing of color.

No where has this practice been more noticeable than in images of African American women in film, television, and music. Black women come in a multitude of different shades: Freckly yellow, copper, blacker than black, and even ::whisper:: ashy gray. We have a multitude of different ass sizes and a plethora of hair textures. If, however, you grew up in a small and dark cave with nothing but the glow of a television to light your way, you would never know this.

The problem is, many of us have unconsciously allowed the media to be our only light. No person is immune to the ideas of beauty American culture celebrates. It affects the world. And though we have taken enormous strides and made great progress (Barry Obams!), a quieter method of oppression remains quietly in place.

You might not see it. It moves in and out of shadows.

It slinks. It hides.

It clings to Halle Berry's legs and peeks through Beyonce's hair. Hangs on a Lena Horne note and makes figure eights around Rihanna and Alicia Keys. It is a tricky thing. Conniving. It doesn't shout like Jim Crow. It whispers. It hisses.

Light skin is soft and sexy.

Dark skin is unfeminine.

Dark eyes are boring.

Light eyes are sexier.

Thin noses are pretty.

Wide noses are ugly.

Straight hair is professional.

Straight hair is beautiful.

Natural hair is unruly.

Natural hair is clear evidence of activist leanings.

Black is beautiful...but keep the blackness to a minimum.

It is significant that the majority of our most famous black actresses and musical artists represent one small corner of the color spectrum. It didn't end with Josephine Baker or Dorothy Dandridge. It continues with Halle Berry, Beyonce, Rihanna, Jessica Alba, Thandie Newton, Eva Mendes, Salma Hayek, Jennifer Lopez, and dear Olivia Munn.

These are women of color with tremendous talent, but who are also admired for a particular kind of beauty. They are ethnic enough to titillate, but not too ethnic to offend the white aesthetic. Yellow...but not too yellow. Brown...but not too brown. Black...but not too black.

Kartina Richardson is a writer, filmmaker and playwright. She runs the sites thismoi.com and mirrorfilm.org where she explores race, gender, pop culture and her love of film.

Excerpts from “Paper Tigers”

By Wesley Yang

To read the full article, click [here](#) or visit: <http://nymag.com/news/features/asian-americans-2011-5/>

Sometimes I'll glimpse my reflection in a window and feel astonished by what I see. Jet-black hair. Slanted eyes. A pancake-flat surface of yellow-and-green-toned skin. An expression that is nearly reptilian in its impassivity. I've contrived to think of this face as the equal in beauty to any other. But what I feel in these moments is its strangeness to me. It's my face. I can't disclaim it. But what does it have to do with me?

Millions of Americans must feel estranged from their own faces. But every self-estranged individual is estranged in his own way. I, for instance, am the child of Korean immigrants, but I do not speak my parents' native tongue. I have never called my elders by the proper honorific, “big brother” or “big sister.” I have never dated a Korean woman. I don't have a Korean friend. Though I am an immigrant, I have never wanted to strive like one.

You could say that I am, in the gently derisive parlance of Asian-Americans, a banana or a Twinkie (yellow on the outside, white on the inside). But while I don't believe our roots necessarily define us, I do believe there are racially inflected assumptions wired into our neural circuitry that we use to sort through the sea of faces we confront. And although I am in most respects devoid of Asian characteristics, I do have an Asian face.

Here is what I sometimes suspect my face signifies to other Americans: an invisible person, barely distinguishable from a mass of faces that resemble it. A conspicuous person standing apart from the crowd and yet devoid of any individuality. An icon of so much that the culture pretends to honor but that it in fact patronizes and exploits. Not just people “who are good at math” and play the violin, but a mass of stifled, repressed, abused, conformist quasi-robots who simply do not matter, socially or culturally.

I've always been of two minds about this sequence of stereotypes. On the one hand, it offends me greatly that anyone would think to apply them to me, or to anyone else, simply on the basis of facial characteristics. On the other hand, it also seems to me that there are a lot of Asian people to whom they apply.

Let me summarize my feelings toward Asian values: Fuck filial piety. Fuck grade-grubbing. Fuck Ivy League mania. Fuck deference to authority. Fuck humility and hard work. Fuck harmonious relations. Fuck sacrificing for the future. Fuck earnest, striving middle-class servility.

I understand the reasons Asian parents have raised a generation of children this way. Doctor, lawyer, accountant, engineer: These are good jobs open to whoever works hard enough. What could be wrong with that pursuit? Asians graduate from college at a rate higher than any other ethnic group in America, including whites. They earn a higher median family income than any other ethnic group in America, including whites. This is a stage in a triumphal narrative, and it is a narrative that is much shorter than many remember. Two thirds of the roughly 14 million Asian-Americans are foreign-born. There were less than 39,000 people of Korean descent living in America in 1970, when my elder brother was born. There are around 1 million today.

Interested in hearing some perspectives on the Asian American identity and the affirmative action debate? Look up the Crimson article: “Supporting Affirmative Action as Asian Americans” by Brenadette Lim and (FUP-alum) Ivy Yan! Don't ever feel like you have to agree with anything presented, though!

Asian-American success is typically taken to ratify the American Dream and to prove that minorities can make it in this country without handouts. Still, an undercurrent of racial panic always accompanies the consideration of Asians, and all the more so as China becomes the destination for our industrial base and the banker controlling our burgeoning debt. But if the armies of Chinese factory workers who make our fast fashion and iPads terrify us, and if the collective mass of high-achieving Asian-American students arouse an anxiety about the laxity of

American parenting, what of the Asian-American who obeyed everything his parents told him? Does this person really scare anyone?

Earlier this year, the publication of Amy Chua's *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* incited a collective airing out of many varieties of race-based hysteria. But absent from the millions of words written in response to the book was any serious consideration of whether Asian-Americans were in fact taking over this country. If it is true that they are collectively dominating in elite high schools and universities, is it also true that Asian-Americans are dominating in the real world? My strong suspicion was that this was not so, and that the reasons would not be hard to find. If we are a collective juggernaut that inspires such awe and fear, why does it seem that so many Asians are so readily perceived to be, as I myself have felt most of my life, the products of a timid culture, easily pushed around by more assertive people, and thus basically invisible?

A few months ago, I received an e-mail from a young man named Jefferson Mao, who after attending Stuyvesant High School had recently graduated from the University of Chicago. He wanted my advice about "being an Asian writer." This is how he described himself: "I got good grades and I love literature and I want to be a writer and an intellectual; at the same time, I'm the first person in my family to go to college, my parents don't speak English very well, and we don't own the apartment in Flushing that we live in. I mean, I'm proud of my parents and my neighborhood and what I perceive to be my artistic potential or whatever, but sometimes I feel like I'm jumping the gun a generation or two too early."

One bright, cold Sunday afternoon, I ride the 7 train to its last stop in Flushing, where the storefront signs are all written in Chinese and the sidewalks are a slow-moving river of impassive faces. Mao is waiting for me at the entrance of the Main Street subway station, and together we walk to a nearby Vietnamese restaurant.

Mao has a round face, with eyes behind rectangular wire-frame glasses. Since graduating, he has been living with his parents, who emigrated from China when Mao was 8 years old. His mother is a manicurist; his father is a physical therapist's aide. Lately, Mao has been making the familiar hour-and-a-half ride from Flushing to downtown Manhattan to tutor a white Stuyvesant freshman who lives in Tribeca. And what he feels, sometimes, in the presence of that amiable young man is a pang of regret. Now he understands better what he ought to have done back when he was a Stuyvesant freshman: "Worked half as hard and been twenty times more successful."

Entrance to Stuyvesant, one of the most competitive public high schools in the country, is determined solely by performance on a test: The top 3.7 percent of all New York City students who take the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test hoping to go to Stuyvesant are accepted. There are no set-asides for the underprivileged or, conversely, for alumni or other privileged groups. There is no formula to encourage "diversity" or any nebulous concept of "well-roundedness" or "character." Here we have something like pure meritocracy. This is what it looks like: Asian-Americans, who make up 12.6 percent of New York City, make up 72 percent of the high school.

This year, 569 Asian-Americans scored high enough to earn a slot at Stuyvesant, along with 179 whites, 13 Hispanics, and 12 blacks. Such dramatic overrepresentation, and what it may be read to imply about the intelligence of different groups of New Yorkers, has a way of making people uneasy. But intrinsic intelligence, of course, is precisely what Asians don't believe in. They believe—and have proved—that the constant practice of test-taking will improve the scores of whoever commits to it. All throughout Flushing, as well as in Bayside, one can find "cram schools," or storefront academies, that drill students in test preparation after school, on weekends, and during summer break. "Learning math is not about learning math," an instructor at one called Ivy Prep was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying. "It's about weightlifting. You are pumping the iron of math." Mao puts it more specifically: "You learn quite simply to nail any standardized test you take."

And so there is an additional concern accompanying the rise of the Tiger Children, one focused more on the narrowness of the educational experience a non-Asian child might receive in the company of fanatically

preprofessional Asian students. Jenny Tsai, a student who was elected president of her class at the equally competitive New York public school Hunter College High School, remembers frequently hearing that “the school was becoming too Asian, that they would be the downfall of our school.” A couple of years ago, she revisited this issue in her senior thesis at Harvard, where she interviewed graduates of elite public schools and found that the white students regarded the Asians students with wariness. (She quotes a music teacher at Stuyvesant describing the dominance of Asians: “They were mediocre kids, but they got in because they were coached.”) In 2005, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on “white flight” from a high school in Cupertino, California, that began soon after the children of Asian software engineers had made the place so brutally competitive that a B average could place you in the bottom third of the class.

Colleges have a way of correcting for this imbalance: The Princeton sociologist Thomas Espenshade has calculated that an Asian applicant must, in practice, score 140 points higher on the SAT than a comparable white applicant to have the same chance of admission. This is obviously unfair to the many qualified Asian individuals who are punished for the success of others with similar faces. Upper-middle-class white kids, after all, have their own elite private schools, and their own private tutors, far more expensive than the cram schools, to help them game the education system.

You could frame it, as some aggrieved Asian-Americans do, as a simple issue of equality and press for race-blind quantitative admissions standards. In 2006, a decade after California passed a voter initiative outlawing any racial engineering at the public universities, Asians composed 46 percent of UC-Berkeley’s entering class; one could imagine a similar demographic reshuffling in the Ivy League, where Asian-Americans currently make up about 17 percent of undergraduates. But the Ivies, as we all know, have their own private institutional interests at stake in their admissions choices, including some that are arguably defensible. Who can seriously claim that a Harvard University that was 72 percent Asian would deliver the same grooming for elite status its students had gone there to receive?

Somewhere near the middle of his time at Stuyvesant, a vague sense of discontent started to emerge within Mao. He had always felt himself a part of a mob of “nameless, faceless Asian kids,” who were “like a part of the décor of the place.” He had been content to keep his head down and work toward the goal shared by everyone at Stuyvesant: Harvard. But around the beginning of his senior year, he began to wonder whether this march toward academic success was the only, or best, path.

“You can’t help but feel like there must be another way,” he explains over a bowl of phở. “It’s like, we’re being pitted against each other while there are kids out there in the Midwest who can do way less work and be in a garage band or something—and if they’re decently intelligent and work decently hard in school ...”

Mao was becoming clued in to the fact that there was another hierarchy behind the official one that explained why others were getting what he never had—“a high-school sweetheart” figured prominently on this list—and that this mysterious hierarchy was going to determine what happened to him in life. “You realize there are things you really don’t understand about courtship or just acting in a certain way. Things that somehow come naturally to people who go to school in the suburbs and have parents who are culturally assimilated.” I pressed him for specifics, and he mentioned that he had visited his white girlfriend’s parents’ house the past Christmas, where the family had “sat around cooking together and playing Scrabble.” This ordinary vision of suburban-American domesticity lingered with Mao: Here, at last, was the setting in which all that implicit knowledge “about social norms and propriety” had been transmitted. There was no cram school that taught these lessons.

Before having heard from Mao, I had considered myself at worst lightly singed by the last embers of Asian alienation. Indeed, given all the incredibly hip Asian artists and fashion designers and so forth you can find in New

York, it seemed that this feeling was destined to die out altogether. And yet here it was in a New Yorker more than a dozen years my junior. While it may be true that sections of the Asian-American world are devoid of alienation, there are large swaths where it is as alive as it has ever been.

While he was still an electrical-engineering student at Berkeley in the nineties, James Hong visited the IBM campus for a series of interviews. An older Asian researcher looked over Hong's résumé and asked him some standard questions. Then he got up without saying a word and closed the door to his office.

"Listen," he told Hong, "I'm going to be honest with you. My generation came to this country because we wanted better for you kids. We did the best we could, leaving our homes and going to graduate school not speaking

Glass Ceiling (related term) - A glass ceiling is a political term used to describe "the unseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements."

much English. If you take this job, you are just going to hit the same ceiling we did. They just see me as an Asian Ph.D., never management potential. You are going to get a job offer, but don't take it. Your generation has to go farther than we did, otherwise we did everything for nothing."

The researcher was talking about what some refer to as the **"Bamboo Ceiling"**—an invisible barrier that maintains a pyramidal racial structure throughout corporate America, with lots of Asians at junior levels, quite a few in middle management, and virtually none in the higher reaches of leadership.

The failure of Asian-Americans to become leaders in the white-collar workplace does not qualify as one of the burning social issues of our time. But it is a part of the bitter undercurrent of Asian-American life that so many Asian graduates of elite universities find that meritocracy as they have understood it comes to an abrupt end after graduation. If between 15 and 20 percent of every Ivy League class is Asian, and if the Ivy Leagues are incubators for the country's leaders, it would stand to reason that Asians would make up some corresponding portion of the leadership class.

And yet the numbers tell a different story. According to a recent study, Asian-Americans represent roughly 5 percent of the population but only 0.3 percent of corporate officers, less than 1 percent of corporate board members, and around 2 percent of college presidents. There are nine Asian-American CEOs in the Fortune 500. In specific fields where Asian-Americans are heavily represented, there is a similar asymmetry. A third of all software engineers in Silicon Valley are Asian, and yet they make up only 6 percent of board members and about 10 percent of corporate officers of the Bay Area's 25 largest companies. At the National Institutes of Health, where 21.5 percent of tenure-track scientists are Asians, only 4.7 percent of the lab or branch directors are, according to a study conducted in 2005. One succinct evocation of the situation appeared in the comments section of a website called Yellowworld: "If you're East Asian, you need to attend a top-tier university to land a good high-paying gig. Even if you land that good high-paying gig, the white guy with the pedigree from a mediocre state university will somehow move ahead of you in the ranks simply because he's white."

Jennifer W. Allyn, a managing director for diversity at PricewaterhouseCoopers, works to ensure that "all of the groups feel welcomed and supported and able to thrive and to go as far as their talents will take them." I posed to her the following definition of parity in the corporate workforce: If the current crop of associates is 17 percent Asian, then in fourteen years, when they have all been up for partner review, 17 percent of those who are offered partner will be Asian. Allyn conceded that PricewaterhouseCoopers was not close to reaching that benchmark anytime soon—and that "nobody else is either."

Part of the insidious nature of the Bamboo Ceiling is that it does not seem to be caused by overt racism. A survey of Asian-Pacific-American employees of Fortune 500 companies found that 80 percent reported they were

judged not as Asians but as individuals. But only 51 percent reported the existence of Asians in key positions, and only 55 percent agreed that their firms were fully capitalizing on the talents and perspectives of Asians.

More likely, the discrepancy in these numbers is a matter of unconscious bias. Nobody would affirm the proposition that tall men are intrinsically better leaders, for instance. And yet while only 15 percent of the male population is at least six feet tall, 58 percent of all corporate CEOs are. Similarly, nobody would say that Asian people are unfit to be leaders. But subjects in a recently published psychological experiment consistently rated hypothetical employees with Caucasian-sounding names higher in leadership potential than identical ones with Asian names.

Maybe it is simply the case that a traditionally Asian upbringing is the problem. As Allyn points out, in order to be a leader, you must have followers. Associates at PricewaterhouseCoopers are initially judged on how well they do the work they are assigned. “You have to be a doer,” as she puts it. They are expected to distinguish themselves with their diligence, at which point they become “super-doers.” But being a leader requires different skill sets. “The traits that got you to where you are won’t necessarily take you to the next level,” says the diversity consultant Jane Hyun, who wrote a book called *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling*. To become a leader requires taking personal initiative and thinking about how an organization can work differently. It also requires networking, self-promotion, and self-assertion. It’s racist to think that any given Asian individual is unlikely to be creative or risk-taking. It’s simple cultural observation to say that a group whose education has historically focused on rote memorization and “pumping the iron of math” is, on aggregate, unlikely to yield many people inclined to challenge authority or break with inherited ways of doing things.

At the AASA gathering at Yale, Chua made the connection between her upbringing and her adult dissatisfaction. “My parents didn’t sit around talking about politics and philosophy at the dinner table,” she told the students. Even after she had escaped from corporate law and made it onto a law faculty, “I was kind of lost. I just didn’t feel the passion.” Eventually, she made a name for herself as the author of popular books about foreign policy and became an award-winning teacher. But it’s plain that she was no better prepared for legal scholarship than she had been for corporate law. “It took me a long, long time,” she said. “And I went through lots and lots of rejection.” She recalled her extended search for an academic post, in which she was “just not able to do a good interview, just not able to present myself well.”

In other words, *Battle Hymn* provides all the material needed to refute the very cultural polemic for which it was made to stand. Chua’s Chinese education had gotten her through an elite schooling, but it left her unprepared for the real world. She does not hide any of this. She had set out, she explained, to write a memoir that was “defiantly self-incriminating”—and the result was a messy jumble of conflicting impulses, part provocation, part self-critique. Western readers rode roughshod over this paradox and made of Chua a kind of Asian minstrel figure. But more than anything else, *Battle Hymn* is a very American project—one no traditional Chinese person would think to undertake. “Even if you hate the book,” Chua pointed out, “the one thing it is not is meek.”

“The loudest duck gets shot” is a Chinese proverb. “The nail that sticks out gets hammered down” is a Japanese one. Its Western correlative: “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” Chua had told her story and been hammered down. Yet here she was, fresh from her hammering, completely unbowed.

There is something salutary in that proud defiance. And though the debate she sparked about Asian-American life has been of questionable value, we will need more people with the same kind of defiance, willing to push themselves into the spotlight and to make some noise, to beat people up, to seduce women, to make mistakes, to become entrepreneurs, to stop doggedly pursuing official paper emblems attesting to their worthiness, to stop thinking those scraps of paper will secure anyone’s happiness, and to dare to be interesting.

Ahluwalia Defaced with Racist Graffiti

By Yasmin Hazif

To see pictures, click [here](#) or visit: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/26/gap-ad-sikh-waris-ahluwalia_n_4343586.html

This is how the Internet is supposed to work.

[Arsalan Iftikhar](#), senior editor at The Islamic Monthly and founder of [TheMuslimGuy.com](#), [posted a picture](#) to his Twitter and Facebook wall of a defaced subway advertisement for Gap featuring Sikh actor and jewelry designer [Waris Ahluwalia](#). The caption had been changed from "Make Love" to "Make Bombs," and the writer had also scrawled "Please stop driving TAXIS" onto the poster.

He told The Huffington Post, "When I first saw my Facebook friend's photo of this GAP subway advertisement defaced by vandals with racist messages, I wanted the world to see how millions of brown people are viewed in America today."

The next day, Gap [tweeted back](#) at Iftikhar to find out the location of the ad, which is part of its holiday "#MakeLove" campaign featuring a wide variety of diverse models.

But that wasn't all. The company proceeded to change its Twitter background to the picture of Ahluwalia, to show solidarity and support.

Their action was applauded by Sikhs and Muslims alike, as Iftikhar shared their incredible and speedy response.

Some members of the Sikh community have started a "[Thank you, Gap](#)" campaign in order to show their appreciation for the inclusion of a Sikh model. A letter to the company says, "By placing a Sikh model in prominent locations on billboards, direct mail advertising and digital channels, you have raised the profile of Sikhs in ways the community couldn't have accomplished with its limited resources. The community has tremendously benefitted from the attention it has received through Gap's marketing campaign."

Ahluwalia is certainly an inspiration to Sikhs and non-Sikhs of all ages, as one can see in this adorable picture that he shared on his Facebook page. The importance of relatable role models in media can't be underestimated.

[Waris Ahluwalia](#) has landed on multiple [best-dressed lists](#) and is a regular in art and fashion circles. Iftikhar told [The Daily Mail](#), "This whole story just proves that we do not live in a post-racial America yet when South Asians and those perceived to be Muslims cannot even grace fashion advertisements without racial epithets being directed their way."

Columbusing: The Art of Discovering Something that Is Not New

By Brenda Salinas

To see pictures, click [here](#) or visit:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/07/06/328466757/columbusing-the-art-of-discovering-something-that-is-not-new>

If you've danced to an Afrobeat-heavy pop song, dipped hummus, sipped coconut water, participated in a Desi-inspired [color run](#) or sported a henna tattoo, then you've Columbused something.

[Columbusing](#) is when you "discover" something that's existed forever. Just that it's existed outside your own culture, nationality, race or even, say, your neighborhood. Bonus points if you tell all your friends about it.

Why not? In our immigrant-rich cities, the whole world is at our doorsteps.

Sometimes, though, Columbusing can feel icky. When is cultural appropriation a healthy byproduct of globalization and when is it a problem?

All The Rage

Buzzfeed Food published an article asking, "Have you heard about [the new kind of pie](#) that's *all the rage* lately?" It's a hand pie, a little foldover pie that you can fit in your hand. They have flaky crusts and can be sweet or savory. You know, exactly like an empanada, a Latin American culinary staple.

On face value, it seems stupid to get worked up over an empanada. I mean, it's just a pastry, right? But "discovering" empanadas on Pinterest and calling them "hand pies" strips empanadas of their cultural context. To all the people who grew up eating empanadas, it can feel like theft.

Feeling Overlooked

When it comes to our culinary traditions, Latinos are used to feeling robbed.

Latino activists spoke out in May when Chipotle announced plans to print original stories by famous writers on its paper goods and [failed to include](#) any Mexican-Americans or Latinos on the roster. The American-owned chain can profit from Mexican culture while overlooking the harsh reality of how Latinos have been treated in this country.

Warning: Cinco de Mayo is not to be confused with Mexican Independence Day, or hit TV-series *Arrested Development*'s "Cinco de Cuatro."

On [Cinco de Mayo](#), chef Anthony Bourdain [asked why Americans love Mexican food](#), drugs, alcohol and cheap labor but ignore the violence that happens across the border. "Despite our ridiculously hypocritical attitudes towards immigration," writes Bourdain, "we demand that Mexicans cook a large percentage of the food we eat, grow the ingredients we need to make that food, clean our houses, mow our lawns, wash our dishes, look after our children."

It's frustrating when even the staunchest anti-immigration activists [regularly eat Mexican food](#). It seems like a paradox to relish your fajitas while believing the line cook should get deported.

Admittedly, cultural appropriation is an integral and vital part of American history. And one day, empanadas might become as American as pizza (yes, I appreciate the irony of that statement). But the day when Latinos are considered as American as Italian-Americans, well, that feels further away.

Why It Hurts

The condolence prize for being an outsider is that you can take solace in the cultural traditions that make you unique. When outsiders use tweezers to pick out the discrete parts of your culture that are worthy of their attention, it feels like a violation. Empanadas are trendy, *cumbia* is trendy, but Latinas are still not trendy.

Code Switch blogger Gene Demby [writes](#), "It's much harder now to patrol the ramparts of our cultures, to distinguish between the appreciators and appropriators. Just who gets to play in which cultural sandboxes? Who gets to be the bouncer at the velvet rope?"

Playing Explorer

Of course, there is no bouncer, but we can be careful not to Columbus other culture's traditions. Before you make reservations at the hottest fusion restaurant or book an alternative healing therapy, ask yourself a few questions:

- Who is providing this good or service for me?
- Am I engaging with them in a thoughtful manner?
- Am I learning about this culture?
- Are people from this culture benefiting from my spending money here?
- Are they being hurt by my spending money here?

It is best to enter a new, ethnic experience with consideration, curiosity and respect. That doesn't mean you have to act or look the part of a dour-faced anthropologist or an ultra-earnest tourist. You can go outside your comfort zone and learn about the completely different worlds that coexist within your city. If you're adventurous, you can explore the entire world without leaving the country and without needing a passport.

Just remember, it's great to love a different culture and its artifacts, as long as you love the people too.

Key Points to Consider: What do you consider to be the boundary between healthy cultural exchange and cultural appropriation? How do you distinguish the two? What does each look like?

Gender and Sexuality

Who Does Marriage Leave Behind?

By Drew Ambrogio

To read online, click [here](http://www.washingtonblade.com/2013/04/19/who-does-marriage-leave-behind-getequal-opinio/) or visit: <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2013/04/19/who-does-marriage-leave-behind-getequal-opinio/>

Interested in Queer Issues on Campus?

Check out the Quoffice! Look out for it on the AWESOME tour of Harvard your FUP leaders will give you! It, along with the women's center, are two awesome spaces on campus.

Last month at rallies outside of the Supreme Court, the Human Rights Campaign asked protesters to move their trans pride flag from behind the podium and censored a speech given by the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (QUIP) so as not to reveal the immigration status of the speaker.

Later, HRC, GetEQUAL and United for Marriage issued public apologies for “offending” those groups, and reminded them that they are committed to their issues. But this is more than a matter of unintentional “offensive” incidents. These are people being told that they must conform or get out of the way. These are people being told that their needs and experiences aren’t relevant to those making decisions in their communities. Yet this is nothing new for the mainstream gay rights movement.

Our most effective arguments for marriage equality have been ones that mirror the values of those who are in a position to give us access to the rights we seek. We seem overjoyed to explain time and time again that, just like them, we too believe in the supreme value of marriage and the nuclear family. In order to support this argument and present ourselves as a non-threatening community of good citizens, we’ve actively excluded and suppressed those of us who depart from the values of the heterosexual majority, leaving our most marginalized brothers and sisters behind.

The actions of HRC, GetEQUAL, and United for Marriage at the rallies last month reflect these strategies, and remind us that in selecting marriage as its priority, the gay rights movement has also told us what issues should take a back seat.

Talking about marriage as if it is the most important issue for the LGBT community silences those of us with needs that access to marriage will not address. Marriage won’t provide adequate health care to those of us who are without it. Marriage won’t address the domestic violence many of us face in our relationships. It won’t save the one in four LGBT youth who are homeless, and it won’t help those of us living with HIV as crucial assistance programs face budget cuts. It won’t address the routine violence faced by trans people and it will do little for LGBT people who are undocumented. And it will probably make things more difficult for those of us living outside of nuclear family formations.

As non-heterosexual people, our existence is a fundamental threat to the organization of society. For decades we’ve lived in the margins where we’ve drawn strength from our difference and from our diversity as a community. As we built families on our own terms, we recognized the necessity of fighting oppression in all of its manifestations, and we envisioned radical alternatives to a society that wanted nothing to do with us. How have we come to see our uniqueness and our diversity as blemishes we must cover up while we try to win the respect of our oppressors?

As a goal, marriage equality reflects the needs of the members of our community with the most power and privilege — those who have access to resources that allow them to emulate the heterosexual lifestyle. As HRC, GetEQUAL and United for Marriage demonstrated, the rest of our concerns are merely distractions.

The priorities of our movement's self-appointed leaders reveal their self-interested motivations. You can't help but wonder whether they'll still be around to help the rest of us out when marriage equality becomes a reality. In their apologies, all three groups promised that they are committed to issues beyond marriage. In the weeks, months, and years to come, we must hold them accountable to this claim.

Trans Basics: Glossary Of Terms

From the Gender Identity Project

To read online (and watch a video), click [here](#) or visit:

<https://lgbtlatestscience.wordpress.com/2009/12/20/transgender-basics-video-and-vocabulary/>

TRANSGENDER-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to: transsexuals, cross-dressers, and other gender-variant people. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF). Use the descriptive term (transgender, transsexual, cross-dresser, FTM or MTF) preferred by the individual. Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

Transsexual (Transexual)

An older term which originated in the medical and psychological communities. Many transgender people prefer the term “transgender” to “transsexual.” Some transsexual people still prefer to use the term to describe themselves. However, unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term, and many transgender people do not identify as transsexual. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Gender Non-conforming

A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from the societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth. Gender Non-conforming individuals may or may not pursue any physical changes, such as hormonal or surgical interventions. Gender non-conforming individuals may or may not identify as trans, male or female.

Genderqueer

A term used by some individuals who identify as between genders, or as neither man nor woman. Genderqueer identity may be seen as an identity under the gender non-conforming umbrella. Genderqueer individuals may or may not pursue any physical changes, such as hormonal or surgical intervention. Genderqueer individuals may or may not identify as trans.

Transition

Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following cultural, legal and medical adjustments: telling one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgical alteration.

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)

Refers to surgical alteration, and is only one small part of transition (see Transition above). Preferred term to “sex change operation.” Not all transgender people choose to or can afford to have SRS. Journalists should avoid overemphasizing the importance of SRS to the transition process.

Cross-Dressing

To occasionally wear clothes traditionally associated with people of the other sex. Cross-dressers are usually comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and do not wish to change it. **“Cross-dresser” should NOT be used to describe someone who has transitioned to live full-time as the other sex, or who intends to do so in the future.** Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression and is not necessarily tied to erotic activity. Cross-dressing is not indicative of sexual orientation.

TRANSGENDER TERMINOLOGY TO AVOID

PROBLEMATIC TERMINOLOGY

Problematic: “transgenders,” “a transgender”

Preferred: “transgender people,” “a transgender person”

Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, “Tony is a transgender,” or “The parade included many transgenders.” Instead say, “Tony is a transgender person,” or “The parade included many transgender people.”

Problematic: “transgendered”

Preferred: “transgender”

The word transgender never needs the extraneous “ed” at the end of the word. In fact, such a construction is grammatically incorrect. Only verbs can be transformed into participles by adding “-ed” to the end of the word, and transgender is an adjective, not a verb.

Problematic: “sex change,” “pre-operative,” “post-operative”

Preferred: “transition”

Referring to a sex change operation, or using terms such as pre- or post-operative, inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to truly change one’s sex.

Problematic: “hermaphrodite”

Preferred: “intersex person”

The word “hermaphrodite” is an outdated, stigmatizing and misleading word, usually used to sensationalize intersex people.

“Call Me Caitlyn” Blog Post Response

By Laverne Cox

To read online click [here](#) or visit:

<http://lavernecox.tumblr.com/post/120503412651/on-may-29-2014-the-issue-of-timemagazine>

On May 29, 2014, the issue of timemagazine magazine which proclaimed the “Transgender Tipping Point” was revealed with me on the cover. June 1, 2015 a year and 3 days later, Caitlyn Jenner’s vanityfair cover was revealed proclaiming #CallMeCaitlyn I am so moved by all the love and support Caitlyn is receiving. It feels like a new day, indeed, when a trans person can present her authentic self to the world for the first time and be celebrated for it so universally. Many have commented on how gorgeous Caitlyn looks in her photos, how she is “slaying for the Gods.” I must echo these comments in the vernacular, “Yasss Gawd! Werk Caitlyn! Get it!” But this has made me reflect critically on my own desires to ‘work a photo shoot’, to serve up various forms of glamour, power, sexiness, body affirming, racially empowering images of the various sides of my black, trans womanhood. I love working a photo shoot and creating inspiring images for my fans, for the world and above all for myself. But I also hope that it is my talent, my intelligence, my heart and spirit that most captivate, inspire, move and encourage folks to think more critically about the world around them. Yes, Caitlyn looks amazing and is beautiful but what I think is most beautiful about her is her heart and soul, the ways she has allowed the world into her vulnerabilities. The love and devotion she has for her family and that they have for her. Her courage to move past denial into her truth so publicly. These things are beyond beautiful to me. A year ago when my Time magazine cover came out I saw posts from many trans folks saying that I am “drop dead gorgeous” and that that doesn’t represent most trans people. (It was news to be that I am drop dead gorgeous but I’ll certainly take it). But what I think they meant is that in certain lighting, at certain angles I am able to embody certain cisnormative beauty standards. Now, there are many trans folks because of genetics and/or lack of material access who will never be able to embody these standards. More importantly many trans folks don’t want to embody them and we shouldn’t have to to be seen as ourselves and respected as ourselves. It is important to note that these standards are also informed by race, class and ability among other intersections. I have always been aware that I can never represent all trans people. No one or two or three trans people can. This is why we need diverse media representations of trans folks to multiply trans narratives in the media and depict our beautiful diversities. I started #TransIsBeautiful as a way to celebrate all those things that make trans folks uniquely trans, those things that don’t necessarily align with cisnormative beauty standards. For me it is necessary everyday to celebrate every aspect of myself especially those things about myself that don’t align with other people’s ideas about what is beautiful. #TransIsBeautiful is about, whether you’re trans or not, celebrating all those things that make us uniquely ourselves. Most trans folks don’t have the privileges Caitlyn and I have now have. It is those trans folks we must continue to lift up, get them access to healthcare, jobs, housing, safe streets, safe schools and homes for our young people. We must lift up the stories of those most at risk, statistically trans people of color who are poor and working class. I have hoped over the past few years that the incredible love I have received from the public can translate to the lives of all trans folks. Trans folks of all races, gender expressions, ability, sexual orientations, classes, immigration status, employment status, transition status, genital status etc.. I hope, as I know Caitlyn does, that the love she is receiving can translate into changing hearts and minds about who all trans people are as well as shifting public policies to fully support the lives and well being of all of us. The struggle continues...

Heterosexual Questionnaire

To read in full, click [here](#) or visit:

[https://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/gsc/downloads/resources/Heterosexual Questionnaire.pdf](https://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/gsc/downloads/resources/Heterosexual_Questionnaire.pdf)

This questionnaire is for self-avowed heterosexuals only. If you are not openly heterosexual, pass it on to a friend who is. Please try to answer the questions as candidly as possible. Your responses will be held in strict confidence and your anonymity fully protected.

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
4. Could it be that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
5. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how can you be sure you wouldn't prefer that?
6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
7. Why do heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into their lifestyle?
8. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?
9. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they'd face?
10. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexual men. Do you consider it safe to expose children to heterosexual male teachers, pediatricians, priests, or scoutmasters?
11. With all the societal support for marriage, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
12. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
13. Considering the menace of overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual?
14. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear s/he might be inclined to influence you in the direction of her/his own leanings?
15. Heterosexuals are notorious for assigning themselves and one another rigid, stereotyped sex roles. Why must you cling to such unhealthy role-playing?
16. With the sexually segregated living conditions of military life, isn't heterosexuality incompatible with military service?
17. How can you enjoy an emotionally fulfilling experience with a person of the other sex when there are such vast differences between you? How can a man know what pleases a woman sexually or vice-versa?
18. Shouldn't you ask your far-out straight cohorts, like skinheads and bornagains, to keep quiet? Wouldn't that improve your image?
19. Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous?
20. Why do you attribute heterosexuality to so many famous lesbian and gay people? Is it to justify your own heterosexuality?
21. How can you hope to actualize your God-given homosexual potential if you limit yourself to exclusive, compulsive heterosexuality?
22. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to. After all, you never deliberately chose to be a heterosexual, did you? Have you considered aversion therapy or Heterosexuals Anonymous?

Perfect Victims, Perfect Narratives

By s. e. smith

To read online, click [here](#) or visit:

http://meloukhia.net/2012/05/perfect_victims_perfect_narratives/

People involved in any sort of service, community, or activism work that involves interaction with the court system are well aware of the need for 'perfect victims,' people who can serve as adequate test cases in the legal environment because their narratives are flawless and beyond reproach. An attorney working with victims of domestic violence, for example, knows that it will be hard to get a conviction if the client fought back or has a criminal record. Rape victims are only good on the stand if they can tell the right kind of story, the one where they were innocently minding their own business and weren't trans, or poor, or sex workers, or people with any sort of history. Young men who are murdered by police or overzealous vigilantes are only public causes to rally around if they, too, were pure and innocent, with nothing to besmirch their reputations.

The need for victims to be perfect is an awful bind to be caught in; even people who hate the perfect victim narrative may need to play by the rules in the interest of what they think of as the greater good. An attorney won't bring a case to court if the outcome is predetermined, or if it's likely to be traumatic and pointless for the client, for example, because it serves no function. People laying the groundwork for a precedent want to find the best possible representative to create a rock-solid foundation, so that the precedent will be unassailable.

This narrative is advanced by the media, and reinforced by the media, in the way it reports on these issues, and conservatives are quick to take advantage of it. In any case where an unfairness and a wrongness is in the public eye, there is a rush to find something 'wrong' with the victim, some reason the case doesn't matter and can't be taken seriously. She was asking for it. He shouldn't have behaved suspiciously. She was a drug user. He was a rent boy. She had a history, you know. He shouldn't have been out in that neighbourhood.

An awareness of the perfect victim narrative is important, and it's critical to acknowledge that sometimes people are forced to sacrifice or make bad choices because of the predominance of this narrative in the system. We are doing no one any good if we pretend that it doesn't exist and isn't a problem. At the same time, though, it is important to avoid being consumed by it, and to prevent the tendency to play into it when it's not necessary; pushing back against the perfect victim narrative is the only way to abolish it.

In the Trayvon Martin case that burst into the public eye in March, many people reacted with outrage and horror to the initial story, of a young man shot to death while walking home with a pack of Skittles for his brother. The shooter's defense team quickly turned to smearing him, attempting to make the case out as an act of self-defense, but also specifically casting aspersions on Mr. Martin's character, making him seem like a suspicious kid with a bad history. This was deliberate, not just because they wanted to win their case, but because they know that by undermining Mr. Martin's character, they could weaken the outrage.

By turning him from a perfect victim into someone more nebulous, or at least creating the illusion of doing so, or suggesting that there might be more to Mr. Martin's life than was originally discussed, they created a ripple effect that slowly spread out. Questioning started to spread. They turned the victim into one of those boys people don't care about, the ones who don't provoke anger across race and class barriers because they die every day. They didn't just build a case for themselves; they reminded people about the perfect victim narrative and the need for all victims to be spotless if they want justice.

In the United States, there is a claim that justice is blind, and people can access it without prejudice if they have been mistreated or are victims of inequality. This is not upheld with the actual enforcement of justice in the United States, and the way justice really works on the ground, rather than in the halls of theory. One reason for this is social attitudes about perfect victims, and the responsibility of victims to society to meet their expectations

about what a victim should look like, how victims should behave, and how a victim should testify about the experience of violence or abuse.

Progressives play into this by taking up the cause of perfect victims, rallying around them with their petitions and outcry while ignoring the less perfect victims. There are all sorts of excuses for this; some advocates, like people working directly in institutions to change them, argue that they want to create a precedent, a stepping stone or foundation block that can be used to progress to more systemic change in the long term. Others are ignorant of other cases, because they don't take the time to look, or they ignore these cases when they are presented, since they don't match their impression of what a victim should look like; they claim to be advocating for communities, but don't work with the people in those communities who are working full time for justice and a better chance at equality.

For every *cause celebre*, every perfect victim who captures media and political attention, scores of people go unremarked and are lost to the flow of time, remembered only by their families and a handful of community members. Because they weren't perfect victims, and only perfect victims garner attention. *All* of these cases represent a horrible wrongness, and *all* victims deserve justice.

Sexual Assault Is Not a Privilege

By Anonymous, for *Harvard Political Review*

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://harvardpolitics.com/covers/sexual-assault-privilege/>

In his widely-criticized [column](#), George Will recently bemoaned how sexual assault victims are endowed with “a coveted status that confers privileges” due to academia’s progressivism and government interference. According to Will, the Obama administration “vows to excavate equities from the ambiguities of the hookup culture, this cocktail of hormones, alcohol and the faux sophistication of today’s prolonged adolescence of especially privileged young adults.” He backs up his claim with shoddy statistical analysis and an analogy equating people who are sensitive to assigned readings with those claiming they have been sexually assaulted.

Will’s opinions on sexual assault are hopelessly outdated and demonstrate a remarkable ignorance of reality. Will appears to be willfully ignorant of the damning statistics regarding sexual assault on college campuses—[20-25 percent](#) of female college students in the US have been sexually assaulted and [55 colleges](#), including Harvard, are under investigation by the government for Title IX violations due to their mishandling of assault cases.

By arguing that people who claim to have been assaulted do so in order to attain some form of privilege, Will not only offends all victims of sexual violence, but also the academic institutions and public leaders who are [taking](#) much-needed steps to remedy widespread sexual assault on college campuses. In an implausibly counterintuitive fashion, Will’s vehement rejection of sexual assault victims perfectly elucidates the reason why only [12 percent](#) of rapes on college campuses are reported—victims are told by the many George Wills of the world that they are lying.

I was always aware that assault happens to too many women, but I never thought it would happen to me. Nearly a year ago to this day, I was the victim of sexual assault. For months after, I suffered serious bouts of insomnia and had to spend hours working myself to exhaustion at the gym in order to get even an hour of sleep at night. When I did fall asleep, I was plagued by constant nightmares about the incident, forced to relive it over and over again. I completely lost my appetite and barely ate, and I never left my room at night without a male companion.

My friends all knew that there was something wrong but had no idea what had happened. I couldn’t bring myself to talk about what happened with anyone except my then-boyfriend. But two months later, we broke up—it was clear that my assault had played a large role in pushing him away. After that, I refused to let anyone into my life romantically for nearly a year because I thought anyone who found out what happened would leave me. Being assaulted was the worst thing that has ever happened to me. And getting through months of insomnia, exhaustion and emotional rollercoaster rides was the hardest thing I have ever had to do.

My anger has festered for a long time due to developments over the past year concerning sexual assault on this campus and on others. But the despicable reaction of many so-called “male apologists” to the #YesAllWomen campaign and, finally, George Will’s column has prompted me use my personal experience to demonstrate how flagrantly offensive it is to demean the female experience and sexual assault victims. I, like every other victim of sexual assault, should not have to listen to the misguided beliefs of those who believe that women frequently lie about sexual assault, claim that there are “shades of gray” when it comes to consent, and argue that sexual assault is an exaggerated problem.

George Will says that people claim victimhood to obtain a coveted status of privilege. But being assaulted in a world where [54 percent](#) of rapes are not reported and 97 percent of accused rapists never go to jail is not a privilege. Not being able to tell your parents what happened because of their cultural values is not a privilege. Not

telling your friends because you are scared that they may doubt your truthfulness or pity, rather than support, you is not a privilege. Not being able to talk to your house masters or resident dean about an assault because they may [end](#) your hope of receiving justice is not a privilege. Attending a school in which a professor may have been [removed](#) from tenure track because of her mentorship of sexual assault victims is not a privilege. Not being able to continue your studies in peace because your rapist is [allowed](#) to stay on campus is not a privilege. Listening to [Glenn Beck](#) claim that being drunk excuses men from rape, [Rick Santorum](#) explain that rape can be “something that God intended to happen” and [Roger Rivards](#) argue that some girls ‘rape so easy’ is not a privilege. Knowing that there will be at least one person who thinks you deserved it because you were drunk or because your dress was too revealing is not a privilege. George Will, like so many others, cannot contemplate that these are just a few of the countless threats facing any women who has been subject to assault.

Unfortunately, George Will is a just one example of a widespread societal problem: society conditions victims of sexual assault to suffer in silence. #YesAllWomen not only revealed the constant harassment that women suffer, but also the ignorance that many men have about harassment and sexism. Will’s piece should only serve to motivate you to disregard, reject and actively combat hateful stereotypes which further victimize those who have experienced sexual assault. If your friend is telling rape jokes at a party, remind them that chances are that one in five women in the room will have been assaulted before they don their cap and gown. Remember that an intoxicated “no” is still “no.” And if you come across a Facebook/Twitter/Reddit/4Chan post from a “male apologist” about women falsely accusing men of rape, remind yourself that only an estimated [2-8 percent](#) of rape accusations are considered unfounded and that rape is already a grossly underreported crime. It seems almost too obvious to explain that assault victims deserve to be taken seriously. But this was clearly forgotten by George Will’s poor (and confusing) use of sexual assault as an example in his larger diatribe against progressivism. The least that we can hope for is that it does not remain forgotten on our campus.

Note: I originally submitted this piece on June 9 to The Harvard Crimson’s Editorial Board, but received no response from the board’s chairs. On the 18th, I reached out to the president of the Crimson about the delay on the piece. Although I never received a response from the president, the Editorial Board chairs subsequently e-mailed me back for the first time. They explained that they would not run the piece because “with each op-ed we publish anonymously on [sexual assault] we loose a bit of credibility [sic].” I do not take this experience personally, but I worry that it may be a further indicator of the wider, systematic lack of empathy toward, understanding of, and interest in the victim’s experience in matters of sexual assault.

Update, June 23: The note has been reformatted to more accurately reflect the author’s perspective.

I Want a 24-Hour Truce During Which There Is No Rape

By Andrea Dworkin

It is astonishing that in all our worlds of feminism and antisexism we never talk seriously about ending rape. Ending it. Stopping it. No more. No more rape.

This was a speech given at the Midwest Regional Conference of the National Organization for Changing Men in the fall of 1983 in St. Paul, Minnesota. One of the organizers kindly sent me a tape and a transcript of my speech. The magazine of the men's movement, *M.*, published it. I was teaching in Minneapolis. This was before Catharine MacKinnon and I had proposed or developed the civil rights approach to pornography as a legislative strategy. Lots of people were in the audience who later became key players in the fight for the civil rights bill. I didn't know them. It was an audience of about 500 men, with scattered women. I spoke from notes and was actually on my way to Idaho – an eight-hour trip each way (because of bad air connection) to give a one-hour speech on Art – fly out Saturday, come back Sunday, can't talk more than one hour or you'll miss the only plane leaving that day, you have to run from the podium to the car for the two-hour drive to the plane. Why would a militant feminist under this kind of pressure stop off on her way to the airport to say hi to 500 men? In a sense, this was a feminist dream-come-true. What would you say to 500 men if you could? This is what I said, how I used my chance. The men reacted with considerable love and support and also with considerable anger. Both. I hurried out to get my plane, the first hurdle for getting to Idaho. Only one man in the 500 threatened me physically. He was stopped by a woman bodyguard (and friend) who had accompanied me. I have thought a great deal about how a feminist, like myself, addresses an audience primarily of political men who say that they are antisexist. And I thought a lot about whether there should be a qualitative difference in the kind of speech I address to you. And then I found myself incapable of pretending that I really believe that that qualitative difference exists. I have watched the men's movement for many years. I am close with some of the people who participate in it. I can't come here as a friend even though I might very much want to. What I would like to do is to scream: and in that scream I would have the screams of the raped, and the sobs of the battered; and even worse, in the center of that scream I would have the deafening sound of women's silence, that silence into which we are born because we are women and in which most of us die.

And if there would be a plea or a question or a human address in that scream, it would be this: why are you so slow? Why are you so slow to understand the simplest things; not the complicated ideological things, you understand those. The simple things. The clichés. Simply that women are human to precisely the degree and quality that you are.

And also: that we do not have time. We women. We don't have forever. Some of us don't have another week or another day to take time for you to discuss whatever it is that will enable you to go out into those streets and do something. We are very close to death. All women are. And we are very close to rape and we are very close to beating.

And we are inside a system of humiliation from which there is no escape for us. We use statistics not to try to quantify the injuries, but to convince the world that those injuries even exist. Those statistics are not abstractions. It is easy to say, "Ah, the statistics, somebody writes them up one way and somebody writes them up another way." That's true. But I hear about the rapes one by one by one by one by one, which is also how they happen. Those statistics are not abstract to me. Every three minutes a woman is being raped. Every eighteen seconds a woman is being beaten. There is nothing abstract about it. It is happening right now as I am speaking.

And it is happening for a simple reason. There is nothing complex and difficult about the reason. Men are doing it, because of the kind of power that men have over women. The power is real, concrete, exercised from one body to another body, exercised by someone who feels he has a right to exercise it, exercised in public and exercised in private. It is the sum and substance of women's oppression.

It is not done 5,000 miles away or 3,000 miles away. It is done here and it is done now and it is done by the people in this room as well as by other contemporaries: our friends, our neighbors, people that we know. Women don't have to go to school to learn about power. We just have to be women, walking down the street or trying to get the housework done after having given one's body in marriage and then having no rights over it.

The power exercised by men day-to-day in life is power that is institutionalized. It is protected by law. It is protected by religion and religious practice. It is protected by universities, which are strongholds of male supremacy. It is protected by a police force.

It is protected by those whom Shelley called "the unacknowledged legislators of the world": the poets, the artists. Against that power, we have silence.

It is an extraordinary thing to try to understand and confront why it is that men believe – and men do believe – that they have the right to rape. Men may not believe it when asked. Everybody raise your hand who believes you have the right to rape. Not too many hands will go up. It's in life that men believe they have the right to force sex, which they don't call rape. And it is an extraordinary thing to try to understand that men really believe that they have the right to hit and to hurt. And it is an equally extraordinary thing to try to understand that men really believe that they have the right to buy a woman's body for the purpose of having sex: that that is a right. And it is very amazing to try to understand that men believe that the seven-billion-dollar-a-year industry that provides men with cunts is something that men have a right to.

That is the way the power of men is manifest in real life. That is what theory about male supremacy means. It means you can rape. It means you can hit. It means you can hurt. It means you can buy and sell women. It means that there is a class of people there to provide you with what you need. You stay richer than they are, so that they have to sell you sex. Not just on street corners, but in the workplace. That's another right that you can presume to have: sexual access to any woman in your environment, when you want.

Now, the men's movement suggests that men don't want the kind of power I have just described. I've actually heard explicit whole sentences to that effect. And yet, everything is a reason not to do something about changing the fact that you do have that power.

Hiding behind guilt, that's my favorite. I love that one. Oh, it's horrible, yes, and I'm so sorry. You have the time to feel guilty. We don't have the time for you to feel guilty. Your guilt is a form of acquiescence in what continues to occur. Your guilt helps keep things the way they are.

I have heard in the last several years a great deal about the suffering of men over sexism. Of course, I have heard a great deal about the suffering of men all my life. Needless to say, I have read Hamlet. I have read King Lear. I am an educated woman. I know that men suffer. This is a new wrinkle. Implicit in the idea that this is a different kind of suffering is the claim, I think, that in part you are actually suffering because of something that you know happens to someone else. That would indeed be new.

But mostly your guilt, your suffering, reduces to: gee, we really feel so bad. Everything makes men feel so bad: what you do, what you don't do, what you want to do, what you don't want to want to do but are going to do anyway. I think most of your distress is: gee, we really feel so bad. And I'm sorry that you feel so bad – so uselessly and stupidly bad – because there is a way in which this really is your tragedy. And I don't mean because you can't cry. And I don't mean because there is no real intimacy in your lives. And I don't mean because the armor that you have to live with as men is stultifying; and I don't doubt that it is. But I don't mean any of that. I mean that there is a relationship between the way that women are raped and your socialization to rape and the war machine that grinds you up and spits you out: the war machine that you go through just like that woman went through Larry Flynt's meat grinder on the cover of Hustler. You dick well better believe that you're involved in this tragedy and that it's your tragedy too. Because you're turned into little soldier boys from the day that you are born and everything that you learn about how to avoid the humanity of women becomes part of the militarism of the country in which you live and the world in which you live. It is also part of the economy that you frequently claim to protest.

And the problem is that you think it's out there: and it's not out there. It's in you.

The pimps and the warmongers speak for you. Rape and war are not so different. And what the pimps and the warmongers do is that they make you so proud of being men who can get it up and give in hard. And they take that acculturated sexuality and they put you in little uniforms and they send you out to kill and to die. Now, I am not going to suggest to you that I think that's more important than what you do to women, because I don't.

But I think that if you want to look at what this system does to you, then that is where you should start looking: the sexual politics of aggression; the sexual politics of militarism. I think that men are very afraid of other men. That is something that you sometimes try to address in your small groups, as if if [sic] you changed your attitudes towards each other, you wouldn't be afraid of each other.

But as long as your sexuality has to do with aggression and your sense of entitlement to humanity has to do with being superior to other people, and there is so much contempt and hostility in your attitudes towards women and children, how could you not be afraid of each other? I think that you rightly perceive – without being willing to face it politically – that men are very dangerous: because you are.

The solution of the men's movement to make men less dangerous to each other by changing the way you touch and feel each other is not a solution. It's a recreational break.

These conferences are also concerned with homophobia. Homophobia is very important: it is very important to the way male supremacy works. In my opinion, the prohibitions against male homosexuality exist in order to protect male power. Do it to her. That is to say: as long as men rape, it is very important that men be directed to rape women. As long as sex is full of hostility and expresses both power over and contempt for the other person, it is very important that men not be declassified, stigmatized as female, used similarly. The power of men as a class depends on keeping men sexually inviolate and women sexually used by men. Homophobia helps maintain that class power: it also helps keep you as individuals safe from each other, safe from rape. If you want to do something about homophobia, you are going to have to do something about the fact that men rape, and that forced sex is not incidental to male sexuality but is in practice paradigmatic. Some of you are very concerned about the rise of the Right in this country, as if that is something separate from the issues of feminism or the men's movement. There is a cartoon I saw that brought it all together nicely. It was a big picture of Ronald Reagan as a cowboy with a big hat and a gun. And it said: "A gun in every holster; a pregnant woman in every home. Make America a man again." Those are the politics of the Right.

If you are afraid of the ascendancy of fascism in this country – and you would be very foolish not to be right now – then you had better understand that the root issue here has to do with male supremacy and the control of women; sexual access to women; women as reproductive slaves; private ownership of women. That is the program of the Right. That is the morality they talk about. That is what they mean. That is what they want. And the only opposition to them that matters is an opposition to men owning women.

What's involved in doing something about all of this? The men's movement seems to stay stuck on two points. The first is that men don't really feel very good about themselves. How could you? The second is that men come to me or other feminists and say: "What you're saying about men isn't true. It isn't true of me. I don't feel that way. I'm opposed to all of this."

And I say: don't tell me. Tell the pornographers. Tell the pimps. Tell the warmakers. Tell the rape apologists and the rape celebrationists and the pro-rape ideologues. Tell the novelists who think that rape is wonderful. Tell Larry Flynt. Tell Hugh Hefner. There's no point in telling me. I'm only a woman. There's nothing I can do about it. These men presume to speak for you. They are in the public arena saying that they represent you. If they don't, then you had better let them know.

Then there is the private world of misogyny: what you now about each other; what you say in private life; the exploitation that you see in the private sphere; the relationships called love, based on exploitation. It's not enough to find some traveling feminist on the road and go up to her and say: "Gee, I hate it."

Say it to your friends who are doing it. And there are streets out there on which you can say these things loud and clear, so as to affect the actual institutions that maintain these abuses. You don't like pornography? I wish

I could believe it's true. I will believe it when I see you on the streets. I will believe it when I see an organized political opposition. I will believe it when pimps go out of business because there are no more male consumers.

You want to organize men. You don't have to search for issues. The issues are part of the fabric of your everyday lives. I want to talk to you about equality, what equality is and what it means. It isn't just an idea. It's not some insipid word that ends up being bullshit. It doesn't have anything at all to do with all those statements like: "Oh, that happens to men too." I name an abuse and I hear: "Oh, it happens to men too." That is not the equality we are struggling for. We could change our strategy and say: well, okay, we want equality; we'll stick something up the ass of a man every three minutes.

You've never heard that from the feminist movement, because for us equality has real dignity and importance – it's not some dumb word that can be twisted and made to look stupid as if it had no real meaning.

As a way of practicing equality, some vague idea about giving up power is useless. Some men have vague thoughts about a future in which men are going to give up power or an individual man is going to give up some kind of privilege that he has.

That is not what equality means either.

Equality is a practice. It is an action. It is a way of life. It is a social practice. It is an economic practice. It is a sexual practice. It can't exist in a vacuum. You can't have it in your home if, when the people leave the home, he is in a world of his supremacy based on the existence of his cock and she is in a world of humiliation and degradation because she is perceived to be inferior and because her sexuality is a curse.

This is not to say that the attempt to practice equality in the home doesn't matter. It matters, but it is not enough. If you love equality, if you believe in it, if it is the way you want to live – not just men and women together in a home, but men and men together in a home and women and women together in a home – if equality is what you want and what you care about, then you have to fight for the institutions that will make it socially real.

It is not just a matter of your attitude. You can't think it and make it exist. You can't try sometimes, when it works to your advantage, and throw it out the rest of the time. Equality is a discipline. It is a way of life. It is a political necessity to create equality in institutions. And another thing about equality is that it cannot coexist with rape. It cannot. And it cannot coexist with pornography or with prostitution or with the economic degradation of women on any level, in any way. It cannot coexist, because implicit in all those things is the inferiority of women.

I want to see this men's movement make a commitment to ending rape because that is the only meaningful commitment to equality. It is astonishing that in all our worlds of feminism and antisexism we never talk seriously about ending rape. Ending it. Stopping it. No more. No more rape. In the back of our minds, are we holding on to its inevitability as the last preserve of the biological? Do we think that it is always going to exist no matter what we do? All of our political actions are lies if we don't make a commitment to ending the practice of rape. This commitment has to be political. It has to be serious. It has to be systematic. It has to be public. It can't be self-indulgent.

The things the men's movement has wanted are things worth having. Intimacy is worth having. Tenderness is worth having. Cooperation is worth having. A real emotional life is worth having. But you can't have them in a world with rape. Ending homophobia is worth doing. But you can't do it in a world with rape. Rape stands in the way of each and every one of those things you say you want. And by rape you know what I mean. A judge does not have to walk into this room and say that according to statute such and such these are the elements of proof. We're talking about any kind of coerced sex, including sex coerced by poverty.

You can't have equality or tenderness or intimacy as long as there is rape, because rape means terror. It means that part of the population lives in a state of terror and pretends – to please and pacify you – that it doesn't. So there is no honesty. How can there be? Can you imagine what it is like to live as a woman day in and day out with the threat of rape? Or what it is to live with the reality? I want to see you use those legendary bodies and that legendary strength and that legendary courage and the tenderness that you say you have in behalf of women; and that means against the rapists, against the pimps, and against the pornographers. It means something more than a personal renunciation. It means a systematic, political, active, public attack. And there has been very little of that.

I came here today because I don't believe that rape is inevitable or natural. If I did, I would have no reason to be here. If I did, my political practice would be different than it is. Have you ever wondered why we are not just in armed combat against you?

It's not because there's a shortage of kitchen knives in this country. It is because we believe in your humanity, against all the evidence. We do not want to do the work of helping you to believe in your humanity. We cannot do it anymore. We have always tried. We have been repaid with systematic exploitation and systematic abuse. You are going to have to do this yourselves from now on and you know it.

The shame of men in front of women is, I think, an appropriate response both to what men do do and to what men do not do. I think you should be ashamed. But what you do with that shame is to use it as an excuse to keep doing what you want and to keep not doing anything else: and you've got to stop. You've got to stop. Your psychology doesn't matter. How much you hurt doesn't matter in the end any more than how much we hurt matters. If we sat around and only talked about how much rape hurt us, do you think there would have been one of the changes that you have seen in this country in the last fifteen years? There wouldn't have been.

It is true that we had to talk to each other. How else, after all, were we supposed to find out that each of us was not the only woman in the world not asking for it to whom rape or battery had ever happened? We couldn't read it in the newspapers, not then.

We couldn't find a book about it. But you do know and now the question is what you are going to do: and so your shame and your guilt are very much beside the point. They don't matter to us at all, in any way. They're not good enough. They don't do anything.

As a feminist, I carry the rape of all the women I've talked to over the past ten years personally with me. As a woman, I carry my own rape with me. Do you remember pictures that you've seen of European cities during the plague, when there were wheelbarrows that would go along and people would just pick up corpses and throw them in? Well, that is what it is like knowing about rape. Piles and piles and piles of bodies that have whole lives and human names and human faces.

I speak for many feminists, not only myself, when I tell you that I am tired of what I know and sad beyond any words I have about what has already been done to women up to this point, now, up to 2:24 P.M. on this day, here in this place. And I want one day of respite, one day off, one day in which no new bodies are piled up, one day in which no new agony is added to the old, and I am asking you to give it to me. And how could I ask you for less – it is so little. And how could you offer me less: it is so little. Even in wars, there are days of truce. Go and organize a truce.

Stop your side for one day. I want a twenty-four-hour truce during which there is no rape.

I dare you to try it. I demand that you try it. I don't mind begging you to try it.

What else could you possibly be here to do? What else could this movement possibly mean? What else could matter so much?

And on that day, that day of truce, that day when not one woman is raped, we will begin the real practice of equality, because we can't begin it before that day. Before that day it means nothing because it is nothing: it is not real; it is not true. But on that day it becomes real. And then, instead of rape we will for the first time in our lives – both men and women – begin to experience freedom.

If you have a conception of freedom that includes the existence of rape, you are wrong. You cannot change what you say you want to change. For myself, I want to experience just one day of real freedom before I die. I leave you here to do that for me and for the women whom you say you love.

Ableism – A form of discrimination or social prejudice against people with disabilities.

#SolidarityIsForTheAbleBodied and Feminism's **Ableism** Problem

By Annamarya Scacci

To read online, click [here](#) or visit:

<http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2013/12/19/solidarityisfortheablebodied-and-feminisms-ableism-problem/>

“The world, as imperfect as it is, it is not built for the disabled community,” Neal Carter said over the phone one late November morning.

At the time, it had been a few weeks since #SolidarityIsForTheAbleBodied trended on Twitter, and [Carter](#), who was born with spina bifida, was explaining the motivation behind the hashtag he created. Both an extension of his #Ableism101 tag and a play on [Mikki Kendall](#)'s work starting #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, #SolidarityIsForTheAbleBodied aimed to spark a conversation among people with disabilities who “have to fight, and *hard*, to adapt ... to fit into the world,” Carter, a political consultant who lives in Maryland, said.

More so, it was meant to uncover the ableism experienced daily by the [one in five people in the United States who has a disability](#). Just [take a quick scan](#) of the hashtag on Twitter, and you'll [read tweet after tweet](#) of inequitable treatment. Denied government benefits because you're not “disabled enough”? [Check](#). Confronted by a “take the stairs” campaign when you use a wheelchair? [Check](#). Avoided visiting the doctor's because it's inaccessible? [Check](#). Told your depression is nothing but temporary sadness and that you should “just smile”? [Check](#).

While #SolidarityIsForTheAbleBodied shined a light on incidents of able-bodied privilege from across the globe, showing how ableism is a systemic issue in all political and societal respects, it also revealed something that has long been known by some, but that has been unrecognized by others: that [feminism has an ableism problem](#).

Plenty of well-known feminists have been known to use [ableist speech](#)—language invoking disability as a metaphor, typically in the pejorative. For instance, Caitlin Moran [described her teenage self](#) in her 2011 memoir, *How to Be a Woman*, as having “all the joyful ebullience of a retard.” On December 14, Lizz Winstead [tweeted that](#) President Obama is “surrounded by so many wildly gesturing loonies” in his day-to-day life, in response to the [controversy surrounding the sign language interpreter](#) at Nelson Mandela's memorial. And last year Jezebel editor Jessica Coen defended against [allegations](#) that the blog is ableist by [tweeting](#), “[T]he word ‘ableist’ is crazy and lame.”

[In an article](#) published earlier this year, Indiana University gender studies grad student Sami Schalk found that indirect ableism is “problematically habitual and historically consistent” in feminist texts, with feminists and women's rights activists often invoking disability metaphors (such as “crippled,” “handicapped,” “lame,” “crazy,” and “insane”) to “represent inability, loss, and lack in a simplistic and uncritical way” for over a century.

“The continued use of mental health ableism, especially by progressives, is my personal bugbear,” [Amadi Lovelace](#), an active participant in #SolidarityIsForTheAbleBodied, said earlier this month. She said she's unfollowed “many major noted feminists” on social media because of it. “We're acculturated to consider disability as always a negative. We're acculturated to think [of] disability as conferring inferiority. We haven't come to a place yet where we are accepting the equality of disabled people,” she said.

Ableist rhetoric is only an overt measure of feminism's ableism problem, though. For many activists and feminists with disabilities, like Lovelace, able-bodied privilege within the feminist movement is more [defined by](#)

[disregard](#)—a dearth of conversations happening in the most prominent feminist outlets and among some of the more well-known feminists.

[Disregard](#) for the barriers [women with disabilities face accessing reproductive health care](#), especially in places like Texas, Arizona, Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio, where the number of reproductive health clinics has shrunk [due to restrictive legislation](#).

Disregard for the [higher rates of poverty](#), which both exacerbates and is exacerbated by disability. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that [21 percent of people with disabilities](#) are living below the poverty level, which is 10 percent more than those who are able-bodied. And, according to the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Labor Statistics, [13.7 percent of women with disabilities were unemployed](#) in 2012, nearly [7 percent more than able-bodied women](#).

Disregard for how sexuality, relationships, and caregiving [take shape for people with disabilities](#), continuing the [ubiquitous belief](#) that people with disabilities are asexual.

Disregard for the intersection of race and disability—[disabilities are most prevalent](#) among American Indians and Alaska Natives (29.9 percent), followed by Black and African-Americans (21.2 percent), whites (20.3 percent), Hispanics (16.9 percent), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (16. percent), and Asians (11.6 percent).

[Disregard](#) for how feminist and social justice spheres are too often [exclusive of or inaccessible to people with disabilities](#).

As [Lovelace noted](#), there's disregard for the [higher rates of sexual violence](#) experienced by people with disabilities.

And then there's the fact that, [as predicted by Twitter user @RobinsToyNet](#), the [most prominent feminist blogs](#) and [news sites](#) have given #SolidarityIsForTheAbleBodied little—if any—attention even a month after the topic trended.

"We have seen in some place[s] the rate of being victims of sexual violence is doubled for women with profound physical, and especially mental, disabilities," Lovelace said. "If you aren't verbal, and you can't tell what happened to you, I don't think we even know. I don't think we would know how many people are in those situations, especially ones being cared for in institutional care [who] have been victimized."

The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that, in 2011 alone, serious violence (including rape and sexual assault) accounted for [43 percent of non-fatal violent crimes](#) committed against people with disabilities; of that, 57 percent occurred against people with multiple disabilities. The bureau also found, from 2009 to 2011, the average annual percent of rape and sexual assault, robbery, and simple assault increased against persons with multiple disabilities.

Meanwhile, data collected by the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (WCSAP) reveals that [83 percent of women with disabilities](#) will experience sexual assault in their lifetime; only 3 percent of cases are ever reported. WCSAP also found that women with disabilities are more susceptible to having a history of intimate partner sexual violence, with a rate that is nearly two-and-a-half times higher than for women without disabilities. Population-based studies examining rates of sexual violence against men with disabilities are limited, but a [2011 report](#) published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (the first of its kind) found that, in Massachusetts, 13.9 percent of men with disabilities reported lifetime sexual violence—a rate nearly four times higher than for men without disabilities.

And, according to the World Health Organization, children with disabilities [are nearly three times more likely to experience sexual violence](#) than children without disabilities, with children living with mental or intellectual disabilities at nearly five times the risk. WCSAP also found that 54 percent of boys who are deaf and 50 percent of girls who are deaf experienced sexual abuse.

“There’s a knowledge gap because we find young kids—especially [those] who have profound disabilities, especially intellectual disabilities—aren’t taught about being safe in their own bodies, and that people can’t touch them or shouldn’t touch them,” Lovelace said. “We act like this isn’t something that’s possible, that people with profound disabilities have no sexuality. Also, there’s that mindset of innocence. People ascribe innocence to people with profound disabilities and they expect everybody will see them that way.”

But those are just the statistics. The stories are even more traumatic. Early this month, a 30-year-old woman with a mental disability filed a federal lawsuit [against a West Sacramento police officer](#) for reportedly sexually assaulting her in two separate 2012 incidents. In an unrelated case, Sacramento police [arrested a veteran cop in December 2012](#) for the reported rape of a 76-year-old woman who experienced communication issues after suffering a stroke—a disability the defense [hoped would discredit the victim](#). And in August of this year, another Sacramento man was [sentenced to 11 years in prison](#) for raping his 14-year-old stepdaughter, who has cerebral palsy.

That’s just one city. In July, a 55-year-old Philadelphia man [confessed to raping a 15-year-old girl](#) with severe mental and physical disabilities. In 2012, a 33-year-old man [was charged with](#) sexually molesting two young girls and raping an 18-year-old woman with a developmental disability at a care facility in Los Gatos, California. In 2011, a Des Moines, Iowa, woman who has an intellectual disability reported being [raped several times over five days by fellow residents](#) at a state-licensed facility. And, going back 13 years, Cobb County, Georgia, police arrested 20 suspects in [the repeated gang rape of a 13-year-old girl with a mental disability](#), which happened over two days at two apartments.

Yet, these occurrences of sexual violence against people with disabilities are rarely discussed in the majority of well-established feminists outlets and blogs—statistics living in the shadows of the “intersectional understanding of feminism,” said Lovelace—

despite [the large network of disability activists and feminists with disabilities](#) doing the work. It’s this exclusion that triggered disability rights activist Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg to [disassociate from the feminist movement](#).

But feminists have the opportunity to change this tide. As with the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality, the feminist movement still has an opportunity to be more inclusive of people with disabilities, both in addressing these sweeping issues more frequently and actively making spaces, materials, websites and other methods of outreach accessible. If #SolidarityIsForTheAbleBodied has taught us anything, achieving this inclusivity is just a matter of listening and broadening your horizons, Lovelace said.

Or, as African activist Agness Chindimba, the founder of the Zimbabwe Deaf Media Trust (and is herself deaf), [so eloquently put it](#): “Disability and issues affecting disabled women do belong to the feminist movement. ... We cannot afford to leave out other women because they are different from us. At the end of the day, whatever gains the movement may make will not be real and sustainable if millions of other women are still oppressed.”

Harvard Life and Surrounding Communities

University Announces New Sexual Assault Policy

By Matthew Q. Clarida and Madeline Conway, for *Harvard Crimson*

To read online (and see the policy), click [here](#) or visit:

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2014/7/3/new-sexual-assault-policies/>

A new set of University-wide Title IX policies and procedures set to take effect this fall will create a central office to investigate cases of sexual assault and gender-based harassment and institute a “preponderance of the evidence” standard for evaluating those allegations.

The new policy, unveiled Wednesday, dramatically changes how cases of sexual assault are handled at Harvard. The new Office of Sexual and Gender Based Dispute Resolution will employ professional investigators and essentially remove investigative responsibility from individual disciplinary boards across schools. Based on the facts provided by the central office, those disciplinary boards will work with University Title IX Officer Mia Karvonides to issue sanctions.

The “preponderance of the evidence” standard that the office will employ is seen by many as a lower burden of proof than the “sufficiently persuaded” standard currently used by the College’s Administrative Board. The preponderance of the evidence standard, favored by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, is generally understood to require more than 50 percent certainty to determine guilt.

Absent from the new policy is an affirmative consent requirement, under which partners must affirmatively communicate their willingness to participate in sexual activity. Activists on Harvard’s campus, such as those involved with the group Our Harvard Can Do Better, and across the country have lobbied for such a clause.

Instead, Harvard’s new policy—which also applies to faculty and staff—uses a standard of “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature” to define sexual harassment, a term which encompasses sexual assault and a number of other actions. According to the policy, a number of actions, including conduct that “interferes with or limits a person’s ability to participate in or benefit from [University programs]” fall under “unwelcome sexual conduct.” In a statement, University Title IX Officer Mia Karvonides said that there is no “standard definition” of affirmative consent.

Wednesday’s announcement comes amid federal review of Harvard’s handling of sexual assault cases. In March, two undergraduates—at least one who is a member of Our Harvard Can Do Better—filed a complaint with OCR alleging that the College’s sexual assault policies violate Title IX. OCR has since opened an investigation into those policies and procedures, as it has with dozens of other colleges and universities across the United States. Harvard Law School’s policies are also under federal investigation, prompted by a complaint filed with OCR in 2010.

Under the procedures announced Wednesday, involved parties may respond in writing to the report filed by the investigative office and may appeal if procedural errors occur or new evidence surfaces. While there is no timeframe for original complaints to be filed, appeals must be delivered within a week of the release of the final investigative report.

Parties to the case may also request an “informal resolution” decided by an official from the investigative office, which would presumably eschew the more formal disciplinary measures that are traditionally applied. Any “informal resolution” must be granted before the investigation is concluded and a final report is delivered and approved by the complainant, the respondent, and Karvonides in consultation with the relevant school.

The new procedures also allow for complainants to request anonymity, though the policy draft says that such a request “may mean an investigation cannot go forward” or might result in an alternative resolution to the claim.

Karvonides said in a press release that the new central investigative office “will create a new level of continuity and consistency” in the way the University handles allegations of sexual assault. She also said that though central investigators are at the center of the new policy, individual schools will be involved in cases involving their students.

University President Drew G. Faust, who made the development of new sexual assault support and response procedures a priority this spring, hailed the new policy on Wednesday.

“This new, progressive policy—alongside the new, centralized procedures for investigating reports—will significantly enhance Harvard’s ability to address these incidents when they occur,” Faust said in a statement.

While the new policies will take effect this fall, Karvonides confirmed that it has not yet been approved by OCR. She added, though, that University leadership felt that waiting much longer to announce might make implementing the policy difficult in time for the fall term.

Excerpts from Harvard's Womanless History

By Lauren Ulrich

To read the full essay, click [here](#) or visit:

<https://harvardmagazine.com/1999/11/womanless.html>

In the opening pages of *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf imagines her fictional self walking across the grass at a college she calls Oxbridge when a stern beadle in a cutaway coat intercepts her. His outraged face reminds her that only the "Fellows and Scholars" are allowed on the grass. A few minutes later, inspired by her reverie on a passage from Milton, she ascends the steps to the library. "Instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction."

I thought of these passages late on a summer day in 1997, when I walked into the newly renovated Barker Center for the Humanities at Harvard. There was no living person to be seen in the grand public rooms, but everywhere I turned the eyes of long-dead men looked down at me from their portraits. "What are you doing here?" they seemed to be saying. "Have you a letter of down at me from their portraits. "What are you doing here?" they seemed to be saying. "Have you a letter of introduction?" There was no room on these walls for ladies. Nine eminences, bewhiskered and stiff-collared, asserted the power of Harvard past.

At the gala dedication a few weeks later, the ghosts were less formidable. There were as many women as men in the crowd, and some of them were faculty members. Porter University Professor Helen Vendler gave a graceful dedicatory reading that included lines from Elizabeth Bishop and Adrienne Rich '51, LL.D. '90, as well as Lord Tennyson and Seamus Heaney, Litt.D. '98. Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Jeremy Knowles said how pleased he was that both the chief architect and the project manager for the new Barker Center were women. The tone was light, but both speakers knew that something in the room needed exorcising.

I should have been reconciled, but as I started to leave the building, I felt a tug of something like responsibility. I was going to lecture on *A Room of One's Own* the following week, and I wanted to make sure I could come to terms with my own disquiet on my first visit to Barker Center. Seeing two young women with "Staff" badges near the entrance, I asked if there was someone who might be able to answer a question about the portraits. They pointed to a woman standing in a nearby doorway.

I approached her awkwardly, concerned about raising what might be perceived as a negative question on a day designed for celebration. The renovation was lovely, I told her, but I was puzzled by the portraits. Had the absence of women been discussed?

"Of course, it was discussed," she said briskly. "This is Harvard. Everything gets discussed."

Was she annoyed at me? At the question? Or at a situation that forced her to explain a decision she did not control?

I pushed on. If the issue had been discussed, I asked, what was said? She told me that there had been so much controversy about turning the old Freshman Union into the Barker Center that some people thought it was a good idea to keep some things just as they had been before.

"Besides," she continued, "Harvard doesn't have any portraits of women."

I was stunned by her certainty. "No portraits of women! Not even at Radcliffe?"

"No," she said firmly. "Nothing we could use."

As she walked away, she turned and said, over her shoulder, "*You can't rewrite history.*"

Maybe you can't, I thought, but that's my job description. You can blame the woman in Barker Center-- and Virginia Woolf--for this essay. If I hadn't been preparing to teach *A Room of One's Own*, I might not have been so attuned to the subtle discriminations around me. If the woman in Barker Center hadn't tossed off her quip about history, I wouldn't have been provoked into learning more about Harvard's past.

Most people assume that history is "what happened" in the long ago. Historians know that history is an account of what happened based on surviving evidence, and that it is shaped by the interests, inclinations, and skills of those who write it. Historians constantly rewrite history not only because we discover new sources of information, but because changing circumstances invite us to bring new questions to old documents. History is limited not only by what we *can* know about the past, but by what we *care* to know.

When I came here in 1995, I naively assumed that female students had been fully integrated into the University. I soon discovered ivy-covered partitions that divided the imaginative as well as the administrative life of the institution. My encounter with the woman in Barker Center epitomized the problem. Obviously, if Harvard had no portraits of women, it couldn't integrate women into a vision of the past that required portraits. But the woman's allusion to history told me that the real problem was not missing artifacts but a curiously constricted sense of what belonged to Harvard's past. In the weeks that followed, I found the same narrow vision everywhere I turned.

The standard assumption was that female students were recent arrivals. Yet by any historical standard, that notion is absurd. Women were studying with Harvard faculty members at the "Harvard Annex" in 1879, 20 years before Henry Lee Higginson donated the money to build what was then called the Harvard Union (later to be transformed into Barker Center). Radcliffe College, chartered in 1894, predated the House system, the tutorial system, and most of the departments now resident in Barker Center. Because it never had its own faculty, its instructors--and sometimes its presidents--were drawn from the Harvard faculty. Radcliffe's history always has been an essential part of Harvard's history, yet few of our custodians of the past have acknowledged that.

Part of the problem is that the history of women at Harvard is both extraordinarily long and exasperatingly complex. Does the history of undergraduate women at Harvard begin with the Women's Education Association in 1872, the establishment of the Harvard Annex in 1879, the chartering of Radcliffe College in 1894, the merging of classroom instruction in 1943, the awarding of Harvard degrees to Radcliffe students in 1963, or some time earlier or later?

Not long after the Barker Center dedication, Boston newspapers were full of plans for a gala event commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the integration of women into the Harvard freshman dormitories in 1972. Under the direction of Harry Lewis, dean of Harvard College, the College organized seminars for undergraduates, published an expensive picture book honoring recent alumnae, students, and faculty members, and--in a moving ceremony--dedicated a new gate into the Yard to women. Yet where was Radcliffe, some wondered, in this celebration of Harvard's past? The inscriptions on the new gate added to the puzzlement. To the right was a cryptic quotation from the Puritan poet Anne Bradstreet, who died in 1672, to the left a statement, beautifully engraved in gold, explaining that the gate "was dedicated twenty-five years after women students first moved into Harvard Yard in September of 1972." Intentionally or not, the organizers left a gaping hole between Bradstreet's death and the integration of Harvard dormitories 300 years later.

There is no conspiracy here, just collective complacency and an ignorance compounded by separatism. Writers and

publicists at Harvard have never considered Radcliffe their responsibility. Radcliffe has been too busy negotiating its own status to promote its history.

Fortunately, in the past two years, some people have begun to think more creatively. Rather than take the "great man" approach to its past, the Afro-American studies department, housed on the second floor of Barker Center, embellished one wall with a roster of student photographs dating from the late nineteenth century to 1920. "I wanted our current students to know who came before them," explained Henry Louis Gates Jr., Du Bois professor of the humanities and chairman of the department. By including African-American students who attended Radcliffe as well as those at Harvard, Gates acknowledged the joint histories of the two institutions. He also offered an instructive history in interlocking discrimination. Not only are there fewer female than male students in the gallery, but more of them are represented by blank ovals where photographs are supposed to be.

In an exhibit mounted in November 1998 in conjunction with the conference "Gender at the Gates: New Perspectives on Harvard and Radcliffe History," Harvard archivists Patrice Donaghue, Robin McElheny, and Brian Sullivan took an even more innovative approach. Their introduction offers an expansive view of women's history:

Q: Since when have there been women at Harvard?

A: From the establishment of the "College at Newtowne" in 1636 to the present, the Harvard community has included women.

Q: Then where can we find them?

A: Everywhere--from the Yard dormitories, where they swept the halls and made the beds, to the library, where they cataloged the books and dusted the shelves--and nowhere, their documentary traces hidden between the entries in directories that include only faculty and officers, or missing from the folders of correspondence that they typed and filed.

Despite the obvious problem with sources, the archivists were astonished at how much they *could* document once they put their minds to it. "From our initial fear that an exhibition on women at Harvard would barely fill one display case," they wrote, "we found that we could amass enough evidence to fill twice as many cases as we have at our disposal." Vivid examples of such material turned up in the booklet *Women in Lamont* published last May by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences' Task Force on Women and Leadership. Using old *Crimson* articles, photographs, and "Cliffe" songs, the designers vividly recreated the controversy in the 1960s over admitting female students to Lamont Library.

Meanwhile, the difficulties of integrating women into an already established and overflowing narrative were strikingly displayed in the timelines published in 1998 in *Harvard Magazine's* centennial-year issues. Among the 45 historical events featured, nine mention women, clear evidence of a desire for a more inclusive history. Yet a close look at the actual entries is disappointing. In brief textual references we learn that the library named for *Titanic* victim Harry Elkins Widener was given "by his mother," that the Biological Laboratories built in 1931 are "guarded by Katharine Lane Weems's rhinos," and that Professor Howard Mumford Jones once described Memorial Church as "Emily Dickinson above, but pure Mae West below." Six entries include pictures of women, but in only one case--the photograph of Radcliffe president Matina Horner signing a "nonmerger merger" agreement with Harvard president Derek Bok in 1971--are women portrayed as actually doing anything. Harvard men build buildings, conquer disease, play football, appoint cabinets, give speeches, and confront the press, but the women

pictured are apparently distinguished only because they were the "first" of something. In 1904, "Helen Keller became Radcliffe's first blind graduate."* In 1920, the appearance of women in a photograph of students from the new Graduate School of Education underlines the fact that the school was "the first Harvard department to admit men and women on equal terms." In 1948, Helen Maud Cam "becomes the University's first tenured woman."

In the two other entries, there is a subtle--and no doubt unintentional--washing out of female activism. Here the contrast between the descriptions of women and related entries about men is striking. The "era of angry political activism" between 1966 and 1971 is symbolized in a photograph of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara trapped near Quincy House, but when the timeline pictures female students moving into Winthrop House in 1970, the prose turns cute. "The times, they are a-changing," it says, as though feminist agitation had nothing to do with this radical transformation in undergraduate life.

Most telling is the treatment of two incidents of labor conflict, one involving men, the other women. The male story from 1919 is all action. The verbs convey the drama: "Boston policemen strike. Lecturer Harold Laski, a political theorist, supports them. The Board of Overseers interrogates Laski. President A. Lawrence Lowell...defends him, but Laski departs for the London School of Economics." In contrast, the description of a 1954 labor conflict at Harvard is playful: "Biddies, more politely 'goodies,' cease making the beds of undergraduates. Their future has looked cloudy since 1950, when they mentioned a raise in pay. Former head cheerleader Roger L. Butler '51 had described daily maid service as Harvard's 'one last remnant of gracious living.'" Astonishingly, the illustration accompanying this entry appears to be from the nineteenth century. By the time we get to 1988 and the successful organization of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, women have disappeared entirely. The union is represented by its campaign button, reading "We Can't Eat Prestige." There is no clue in the text that the leader of the union, Kris Rondeau, and most of the members were female.

Still, the decision to include Radcliffe students and female workers in the Harvard timeline is significant. Harvard Observed is also a great improvement on other recent Harvard histories. Bethell is best at pointing out the ironies in Harvard's treatment of women. Summarizing the achievements of Alice Hamilton, appointed to the medical-school faculty in 1919, he observes: "Hamilton's appointment did not entitle her to use the Faculty Club, sit on the Commencement platform, or apply for football tickets." His juicy tidbits from the old alumni magazines remind us that Harvard men, too, participated in the emancipation of women--though usually not with the support of the University administration. In 1911, when the Harvard Men's League for Woman Suffrage invited British suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst to speak in Sanders Theatre, the Corporation refused them the use of the hall. In 1963, undergraduate columnist Edward Grossman reported in the *Alumni Bulletin* that a reverse panty raid by Radcliffe students on John Winthrop House had "focused a cold, hard light on the most compelling problem in this community: the integration of Radcliffe into the academic and social company of Harvard, on equal terms and no eyebrows raised." The quote from Grossman is intriguing, but unfortunately we learn nothing at all about the Radcliffe women.

If you get the chance, check out the portrait In Winthrop House's (upperclassmen house) Junior Common Room! Treasurer of the US, Rosie Rios, recently became the first Latina to have her portrait unveiled in the college!

“I Am Fine”

By Anonymous, a Crimson Staff Writer

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/2/17/harvard-many-feel-out/>

I feel like I should remember the first time I came close to committing suicide, as if it's something along the lines of a first kiss. I guess it should be one of those things that produces a rush of sensory imagery with the slightest trigger. You're meant to remember some soft noise humming in your ear, a faint trembling of the body, a detailed image of what was around you—even though your eyes were closed. It should be one of those moments, the kind that remains vivid even as the rest of your past blurs and fades away; it's the kind that you're supposed to remember, right? I don't.

I can only talk in generalities, what it was like every time I felt like this. There were always tears—lots of them—my shirt wet as they seeped down my cheeks, paused at my chin, dropped to my chest. I would be sitting on my bed, fixated on a single point in the room, my eyesight transitioning in and out of focus. At times I saw everything—my face smiling back at me from glossy pictures on the walls, the days on my hanging calendar, days I never wanted to face—at others, only my thoughts. There was always some reason to feel meaningless. Most importantly, it was always night.

I played out scenarios in my head. My knife was on the top shelf of my bookcase, my fourth-floor window could be easily opened, my roommate wouldn't be back for another hour or so.

Eventually, I would begin to turn the knife over in my hand. It provided no guarantee. What if I didn't do it properly? I wasn't looking for a cry for help, I was looking for a way out. I would open my window, delicately balancing so that my torso leaned precariously near the tipping point. Then came the painful deliberation.

“All I would have to do is tilt a little farther forward.”

“The fall would feel nice.”

“But it's only the fourth floor, what if it doesn't work?”

“Am I really that worried about the pain?”

“What if I regret my decision just before it ends?”

It was this last question that saved me. Somehow, my lack of confidence in the future both made me desire to end my life and prevented me from doing so. Feeling all the more inadequate, I would turn on the shower, remove my damp clothes, and sit on the cold tiled floor. A thousand more water droplets washed away my own.

There were many nights like this. No matter how many times I reasoned my way out of it, the darkness always washed over me once more. I could not prevent night from falling. Tears, glossy pictures, misery—these are the things that consumed me. Without any faith in life beyond death, I saw no point in prolonging the inevitable. Why continue to exist?

For a number of reasons, returning to campus at the beginning of this year was very difficult for me. The end of freshman year had left me feeling abandoned by those I had considered to be my closest friends. I filled my schedule with clubs, activities, and classes to avoid the isolation I felt when I was idle. When you're running from one meeting to the next, it becomes easy to forget how alone you really are.

But while I could fill my days with meetings and work, I had little control over my nights. It's hard to escape the truth when you are left alone with it. It was a reality I continued to run from.

Terrified of being by myself, I spent all my time with my boyfriend. We ate meals together, took classes together, did the same activities. He was there for me every single night as I cried for no reason other than sadness. He gave things up, knowing that I would break down at the mere mention of most social events. He took the knife out of my hand. He picked me up off the shower floor. He was the one constant in my life.

I can only describe the feeling as physical, all-consuming. Any moment my mind began to idle, thoughts of suicide would consume me. Looking out of a window, I tried to feel the fall. Swimming laps, I would imagine fluid filling my lungs.

The worst part? I felt guilty.

You're not supposed to attend Harvard and get depressed. You're supposed to attend Harvard and take advantage of opportunities. Opportunities. "Isn't it amazing being there? There are so many things you can do!" "You go to Harvard? That's so wonderful, you must have so many options." "There are just so many things to take advantage of there." You're not supposed to complain about the fact that you go to Harvard. It's the dream. You are supposed to go to Harvard and do things, make the most of it.

"Yeah, it's a great place. There are so many possibilities," I would usually say.

But it wasn't just the outsiders who made me feel ashamed. Even at school I was surrounded by thousands of other students—all of them able to manage the same difficulties that had rendered me hopeless. They wrote papers, chaired activities, networked, partied, all with an air of ease.

"Hey, how's it going?"

"OhmygodIamsoooobusyIhavethreepsetsandtwopaperstowritetonightbutitistotallyfine."

Effortless perfection. I was the exception. I was the one who was incapable of handling all the wonderful opportunities that Harvard presented me with.

At least that's what I thought.

One day, I decided to talk to someone. Not as in talking to a professional, I had tried that already. I mean, I had an actual conversation with another student at work. Instead of joking about lack of sleep and 20-page papers, I opened up. For the first time, I discussed what was really going wrong in my life. I told her about what had happened, the constant physical pressure that I felt on every inch of my body, the apathy with which I now looked at every aspect of my life. I told her I wanted to die.

In turn, she opened up to me.

Here was someone with whom I sat in an office every single week yet knew very little about. Who else might be feeling what I was feeling? Who else might feel like they are the only one? I started talking to more people. I started to ask questions and I stopped accepting "psetclubactivitypaperNOSLEEP" as a response. The things I learned both allowed me to share what I was going through and helped me to realize that what I was experiencing did not warrant feelings of shame. By the time finals period came, my nights didn't seem so daunting. J-Term provided me with the time necessary to complete the process; leaving Harvard allowed me to reevaluate what I wanted out of my four years here. I strengthened ties with friends who were positive influences on my life and cut ties with those who weren't. I built the support system I needed to face the veneer of effortless perfection once more. The pressure was finally starting to fade.

But returning to campus wasn't easy. There are still days when I feel trapped by emotion. There are still days when I'm not sure if I can face other people. But there aren't still days when I pick up the knife.

Harvard isn't always the glossy ivy-covered utopia that many conceive it to be. There are moments of that place, yes. Walking past Memorial Church in the fall with reds and oranges on the ground around you, the first warm day in the spring when students on blankets adorn the Yard. Brochure Harvard does exist. The reality of the situation, however, is that this is not the Harvard that many students must wake up to and battle every single day. It is not always a place where conversations about mental health are necessarily encouraged. On a campus where the need for assistance is too often perceived as a flaw, the student body has a tendency to rely on variations of "I'm fine." And, at a college where so many students already have far too much on their plate, it's understandable that most don't press the question further.

I've learned the importance of doing just that. I have also learned to cut back—on friendships, on extracurriculars, on classes. By concentrating my energy on the people and activities that I care most about, I have gradually begun to get past all Harvard has taken and realized just how much it can give. The most important opportunity I've found here is the opportunity for happiness, though the place that lies between night and Brochure Harvard holds a happiness that can be hard to find.

—The writer can be reached at studentx.harvard@gmail.com.

***Editors' Note:** We made the decision to run this piece anonymously due to the private and intensely personal nature of its material. However, we, and the writer, feel very strongly that open lines of communication and the simple act of talking are immensely important. We understand that the content of this article may be upsetting to many of our readers but decided to run this piece in the belief that talking openly about our emotions and feelings is a good thing. Mental health issues should not go unnoticed. We publish this article in the hope that it will make our readers more aware of the fact that these issues affect many members of our community.*

We would also like to note the availability of resources such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK, the UHS 24-Hour Urgent Care number 1-617-495-5711, and Room 13, reachable 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. Mon. through Sat. at 617-495-4969.

Keep these handy! Also – FUP stays with you ALL FOUR YEARS! FUP Fam is life and all the FUP leaders will be here for you if you ever need anything! Never hesitate to reach out <3

Undocumented at Harvard

By Lisette Candia

To read online, click [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisette-candia/undocumented-at-harvard-real-american-heroes_b_6984788.html) or visit: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisette-candia/undocumented-at-harvard-real-american-heroes_b_6984788.html

Ever since I "came out" as undocumented, people have been telling me how brave I am. They tell me that they admire my strength. They ask me how I found the courage to put myself in that spotlight. But here's what I want to explain. I am not braver or more courageous than others who choose to keep their status a secret. I am just someone with an incredible amount of luck and privilege.

Had I not been a Harvard student, it would have taken me a lot longer to publicly acknowledge my undocumented status. I came out as undocumented knowing I had the Harvard title to back me up. I have the world's most prestigious institution as a security clutch. I am not brave. No, the brave ones are my parents. My parents who left their native country, who left everything they know, in order to give me a better future. My parents who drive my siblings to school, despite not having valid licenses. My parents, who despite the many injustices they face, still choose to pay taxes to the country that still does not recognize them as contributing members of society, but instead portrays them as criminals in the media.

When I was in second grade, I first learned about taxes. My parents had just started paying taxes and I didn't quite understand why. I have a vivid memory of my dad dropping me off at school one morning. As we walked to school, I turned to my dad and asked him "Why are you just giving money to the government? Wouldn't it be better if we just didn't pay any money?" My dad said that it was because I went to a public school and we used the roads so we had a duty to pay taxes. My undocumented father, who is continuously, framed as being a lazy, welfare abusing, criminal. My father feels a duty to the very same country that dismisses him as subhuman and rejects his personhood by demonizing his character. Everyday, my dad works in an enclosed space where he inhales dangerous chemicals in order to put food on the table and pay the taxes he believes he owes to this country. My father is the brave one.

I remember the first time my mom got pulled over by a cop. We were both on our way to pick up my dad from work. She accidentally went the wrong way on a one-way street. A cop saw her and pulled her over. My mom started crying. She was petrified that the cop would see her expired license and that we would get deported. Luckily, my mom only got two tickets. She cried for 30 minutes, then we continued on our way to pick up my dad from work. The next morning, she drove my dad to work, drove me to school, then drove to work herself. 12 years later, my mother continues to drive my dad to work and my siblings to school. My mother gets in that car everyday, knowing that there is a possibility that she could get pulled over, detained, and deported just so that my siblings can have a proper education and my dad can work to pay the bills. My mom is the brave one.

Everyday millions of undocumented parents around the U.S. risk deportation when they drive their kids to school. Millions of parents avoid going to the hospital even when they desperately need to, in order to avoid "medical repatriation," a lesser-known practice of sending undocumented immigrants back to their native country while they are unconscious. Millions of undocumented parents try to lead a normal life but at the same time live life under the radar. Silencing their voices in fear of deportation. Living in shadows so dark that even they do not recognize each other anymore. These people, who wake at 5, 4, 3:30 in the morning to go to work so that their kids can have access to things they never had access too. The parents who work 12 hour shifts just that their kids can buy that book they needed for school. These silenced individuals are the brave ones. These undocumented individuals are real American heroes.

On February 17th, hours before it went into effect, a federal judge in Texas halted the progress that President Obama made last November in expanding DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) as well as the

implementation of DAPA (Deferred Action for Parental Accountability). DAPA would have given millions of undocumented immigrants a chance to finally come out of the shadows. DAPA would have given parents of U.S citizens a chance to be formally recognized as individuals by giving them a work permit to legally, although temporarily, work in the U.S. It would have allowed millions of undocumented parents a sigh of relief. My parents were counting on that relief. My heroes were counting on that relief. Millions of undocumented American heroes were counting on that relief.

I am not brave for sharing my story with the world. I am not brave for speaking about my experiences as undocumented when I know I have a voice that will be heard. I am protected by DACA. I have Harvard to back me up. The brave ones are people like my parents, who go to work everyday, who risk deportation everyday while driving their kids to school everyday. Those who risk deportation everyday just so they can create a better future for their families. The real brave ones are the millions of undocumented parents who risk themselves everyday for the sake of their families. Yes, they broke the law. But I ask you. What is a law to you, when your family is starving? What is a law to you when your children are being required to join gangs?

It is these individuals who are brave. They are the courageous ones. It is these individuals, people like my parents, who have risked it all by coming to the United States in order to give their family a better life., who are the real American heroes.

Lisette, the writer of this beautiful piece, is current co-director of Harvard College's Act on a Dream, an immigration reform group on campus! Other options to flex your political efficacy can be found at the Institute of Politics (IOP). Sign up for the IOP-Announce list here: to be kept up to date on all things political happening at <https://lists.hcs.harvard.edu/mailman/listinfo/iop-announce>

The IOP is also a source of service on campus, alongside PBHA (Phillips Brooks house Association). You're going to find many FUP leaders are involved one of the two, if not both! If either interest you, check 'em out 😊

Diversitas? Take a Close Look

by Justin Lanning

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2012/1/26/diversity-lack-figures-evidence-harvard/>

There's been a fair amount of discussion on campus over the past few months about income inequality in the U.S., Harvard's role in such inequality, and the socioeconomic diversity of Harvard students themselves. With so little publicized information available on the socioeconomic diversity of Harvard undergraduates, I hope to provide reliable facts and analysis to help thin the fog of misinformation.

The data behind the following breakdown comes straight from our own Financial Aid Office, particularly their [fact sheet](#) (based on the 2010-2011 academic year). I also used statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau on the distributions of U.S. incomes.

According to the census, about 96 percent of American households make less than \$200,000 a year. Last year, approximately 3,610 students applied for financial aid from this income bracket, out of a total of 6,636 currently enrolled undergraduates. It seems fair to assume that almost all students whose families make below \$200,000 applied for financial aid, considering that the process is quite easy to complete and families stand so much to gain. Harvard policy states that families with annual incomes below \$60,000 pay only a student contribution of a few thousand dollars, and families with annual incomes between \$60,000 and \$180,000 pay the student contribution plus a family contribution averaging 10 percent of annual income. Even at the top of the latter bracket families would pay approximately \$20,000 compared to the sticker price of \$52,652, saving over \$30,000 for a few hours of work. Harvard also makes specific note that financial aid is still available above \$200,000, and at least 10 percent of students receiving non-repayable aid fall into this income range.

If we do assume that almost all students from families making less than \$200,000 annually applied for financial aid, we come to the stunning conclusion that approximately 45.6 percent of Harvard undergraduates come from families with incomes above \$200,000, placing them in the top 3.8 percent of American households. Even more shockingly, only about 4 percent of Harvard undergraduates come from the bottom quintile of U.S. incomes and a mere 17.8 percent come from the bottom three quintiles of U.S. incomes.

The financial aid numbers also refute the misconception that Harvard is more accessible for poor families than wealthy ones. We can examine the true burden of paying Harvard tuition by comparing income-after-Harvard, or a family's remaining yearly income after paying Harvard, with their income-before-Harvard. The only possible range where families' income-after-Harvard could be lower than those with smaller incomes-before-Harvard is \$60,000-\$66,667. For this condition to be met, Harvard would have to require a full 10 percent family contribution, bringing income-after-Harvard to slightly below \$60,000. Only families earning between \$54,000-\$60,000, in which range the family contribution does not exist, could have higher incomes-after-Harvard than families with greater incomes-before-Harvard. However, outside of these unlikely marginal conditions, families making more than \$66,667 a year will always have greater incomes-after-Harvard than that of families with smaller incomes-before-Harvard. While some complain that wealthier families bear a disproportionately higher burden, I find it difficult to sympathize with the complaint that a \$20,000 annual payment for a Harvard education is an unbearable burden on a family with a \$180,000 annual income.

Unfortunately, Harvard structurally encourages obliviousness to our own skewed income distribution by misnaming our financial aid initiatives. Our "low income initiative" covers families with incomes up to the 58.3rd percentile of annual incomes, and our "middle income initiative" covers those with incomes from the 58.3rd percentile to the approximately 94th percentile. How incomes above the 50th percentile count as "low" and ones above the 90th percentile count as "middle" is beyond me. The self-held myth that Harvard undergraduates come

from the “middle class” is a dangerous delusion indeed, and Harvard’s at-best negligence or at-worst complicity in perpetuating this belief is concerning. At a school whose motto is truth, we’re far from forthcoming about how wealthy our students actually are.

While the photos on our admissions materials may indicate other priorities, the educational value of diversity stems from variety of thought and experience. It can hardly be said that Harvard is socioeconomically homogeneous but it would still be a stretch to call it socioeconomically diverse. Harvard may be missing some of the most important factors that give value to diversity. Undoubtedly, Harvard is more socioeconomically diverse than ever before but, as with all things, better does not always equal good. In a (hopefully) meritocratic admissions system, our current socioeconomic distribution raises difficult questions about the role of financial capital—and its social and cultural capital correlates—in acquiring and displaying merit.

The Harvard Disadvantage

Despite outreach, the needy face socioeconomic gulf.
By Tracy Jan (tjan@globe.com) Globe Staff.

May 12, 2009.

CAMBRIDGE – He was valedictorian of his senior class, and had been accepted at all 13 colleges to which he applied. But when Miguel Garcia entered Harvard University last fall, he felt he didn't belong.

As classmates moved into Harvard Yard that first day with parents – and in some cases, chauffeurs – driving fancy vehicles packed with boxes, Garcia arrived alone. His belongings fit into two suitcases and a backpack. His mother, a worker at an industrial laundry and father, a janitor at a Detroit casino, could not afford the trip.

"Everyone else seemed so polished and entitled and seamlessly adapting," Garcia recalled. "It just felt like they'd been here their whole lives. I was really intimidated. I didn't feel like I had anything in common."

Students of modest means have attended Harvard on scholarship for decades. But with the school making an unprecedented push to recruit more of them by offering virtually free rides, the number of students from families making less than \$60,000 a year has surged 30 percent over the last five years – to about one-fifth of all Harvard students.

As it increases its outreach to such students, Harvard is doing more to help them adjust to campus life and address the disconnect that many experience on arrival, said William Fitzsimmons, dean of admissions and financial aid, who himself was a scholarship student at Harvard.

To make the transition easier, Harvard has quietly expanded a fund that students can tap to pay for such things as admission to dorm dances, tutoring, winter coats, even plane tickets home. Financially, at least, their four years at Harvard would appear to be worry-free, as the school covers tuition, room, and board – close to \$50,000 a year. The university has nearly doubled its investment in financial aid since 2004.

Socially, though, less-fortunate students must gingerly navigate the minefield of class chasms on a campus still brimming with legacies and wealth.

Jim Crossen, a Harvard senior from Davenport, Iowa, recalls that he balked during freshman year when his choir required students to don tuxedos for concerts.

"No one ever told me I was poor until I got to Harvard," Crossen said. "It was that culture of saying, 'Just wear your tux.' I don't even own a suit – still."

Even when he discovered that the choir has money to help members in a pinch, Crossen was too embarrassed to ask. He bought a tuxedo for \$80 at a bargain basement – it smelled like a basement, too – spending wages from his part-time job at the law school library.

And while many of his classmates went hiking on Harvard-organized trips just before the start of freshman year, Crossen chose to spend the week earning \$11 an hour scrubbing toilets in Harvard dorms. He later stopped buying textbooks, using the library instead to save \$400 a semester.

It can be difficult to discern the neediest students. There's no support group or club for them – many students prefer not to reveal their socioeconomic standing. The university keeps a list of them, available only to Harvard financial aid officials, to try to meet their needs throughout their undergraduate years, be it emergency money for a root canal or a loan for test-prep courses, an interview suit, or travel while studying abroad.

The college discreetly notifies needy students of the financial safety net not early on and checks in monthly through an e-mailed newsletter that reminds them of the benefits for which they are eligible. The system is private and dignified.

The attempts at socioeconomic immersion begin even before students arrive on campus. Harvard hires about 10 scholarship students each year to reach out to talented middle- and high- school students from similar backgrounds, get them to apply, and ultimately, to enroll. They are a diverse group of recruiters – some first generation college students and the children of alumni whose financial fortunes plummeted due to layoffs or a parent's death; one is the son of an Ethiopian diplomat.

On a recent Saturday, five of the recruiters crammed into an overheated office on campus to call more than 250 low- and moderate-income students who have just been accepted for admission. They congratulated the high school seniors and invited each one to visit Cambridge on a Harvard-funded trip.

"The stakes are high here," Fitzsimmons said in an interview. "If we aren't educating the full range of the population, we won't be educating effective future leaders of the country."

Fitzsimmons, a 1967 Harvard graduate, experienced the initial alienation that some disadvantaged students feel. His parents, who never attended college, ran a convenience store and gas station in Weymouth. Two of his teachers refused to write him a recommendation, telling him, "Harvard is for a bunch of rich snobs. If you go there, you won't fit in."

"The place overwhelmed me with its affluence," Fitzsimmons said. "I certainly felt like I was a kind of a stranger, visiting, for quite some time. This is a much more hospitable place than when I first arrived."

Much of Harvard has changed. Even its exclusive final clubs – once a bastion of privilege – have opened up to students from modest backgrounds. While membership costs thousands of dollars a year, many now let sought-after recruits know that financial aid is available.

Still, a sense of isolation strikes some undergraduates in the most mundane moments. While wealthy housemates bemoan the walk to drop off their dirty clothes at a laundry service, students like Garcia wait hours for the washer and dryer in the dorm basement. Everyone, it seems, has traveled to Paris and summered on the Vineyard. For Garcia, summer isn't a verb; growing up, it was a time for menial work.

Garcia, the first boy in his family to graduate from high school, is grateful to have made it to the Ivy League. Intellectually, the 19-year-old history and literature major feels at home. But the pressure to fit in got to him soon after moving into the suite he shared with three other freshman. As rich housemates talked of jetting to Las Vegas for the weekend, he privately worried about helping his parents cover their car loan, utilities, and other expenses.

Many days, he just wanted to be alone. He requested a new living arrangement, and weeks after arriving on campus, he moved into a single. It's where he meditates and writes in a journal to sort out his feelings.

"You can't take a kid who's lived in the ghetto for 18 years and just make them feel OK now," Garcia said. "But other people say, 'Why are you complaining? You're at Harvard. You have a full ride. And when you graduate, you'll be just like us.'"

Instead of pretending everyone is equal, he said, the university should encourage more candid conversations about the sensitive topic of wealth and poverty. Garcia would like to see Harvard form a support network for students like himself who want the camaraderie, and establish an office to help them adjust.

Harvard officials acknowledge there is more to be done. During orientation next fall, new students will be asked to discuss readings about class differences and privilege, said Thomas Dingman, dean of freshman. "The makeup of Harvard has changed a lot, and this is something we can do to address some of the issues of socioeconomic diversity," Dingman said.

Two weekends ago, recently admitted low- and moderate-income students gathered at the campus pub for a special reception. They drank Shirley Temples, picked up free pocket guides on how to survive Harvard on a shoestring budget, and grilled current scholarship students about their experiences.

Rosario Santillana, a Los Angeles student, said she would not have visited Harvard if the university had not paid for her flight. She was surprised to learn that she could receive free tickets to parties, concerts and shows through the university box office website. “As far as money goes, Harvard spoils you,” Santillana concluded.

But Bradley Craig, a Dallas student whom Garcia hosted that weekend, still had reservations. Garcia helps Harvard recruit other students like him, and has joined multiple campus groups to make the college he now considers home a home for others as well. He has entered next year’s housing lottery with a group of seven friends, and says he looks forward to living with at least one roommate – now that “I’m comfortable with myself being here.”

Days later, Craig enrolled. “I know that at times, Miguel has questioned his decision to come here,” he said, “But the fact that he’s still here and wants to stay here says a lot.

Let the beauty of what you love be what you do. There are Hundred of Ways to kneel and kiss the ground. – Rumi.



Just keep reading, just keep reading, just
keep reading – reading, reading!

Miguel Garcia's Response to the Above Article

Fellow Harvard Students,

I am writing to address comments and express my concerns regarding a recent article published by the Boston Globe in which I was featured titled, "The Harvard Disadvantage". First of all, allow me to admit that although I believe the article to be rooted in legitimate arguments, I found it to be one-sided, misrepresentative, and ultimately counterproductive. I was asked to share my opinion regarding the issue because of my involvement with the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations, particularly my involvement with issues concerning income and social class on campus.

Personally, I was disgruntled with the author's self-constructed image of me. The author's decision, for example, to use my expressed interest in writing for the Harvard Crimson and translate it into an image of me writing "in my journal to sort out my feelings", or to claim that I was relocated due to class-tension issues (which is completely false) reveals the deliberate choice to portray the interviewed students as ghetto, troubled, self-absorbed, and socially misfit. The article disregarded my involvement with campus organizations, my immeasurable happiness with Harvard faculty and students, and my positive attempts to address these issues. It is obvious that the writer intended to portray the subjects, not as multifaceted individuals, but as low-income, "needy" students. These fabrications have the potential to cause dismissal more than they do to evoke productive dialogue.

But this skewed and stereotypical depiction is more problematic than it appears. The author applies the forced images of the interviewed students on all low-income students. This distortion of the truth can be used to support the argument that low-income students are commonly unqualified, ill-equipped, and unfit for a place like Harvard. It can lead one to believe that Harvard's Financial Aid Initiatives are unsuccessful and that minority recruitment efforts are futile. Quite the contrary, however, Dean Fitzsimons and Senior Admissions Officer David Evans, have frequently stated that the recent minority recruitment efforts and new financial aid initiatives have led to the formation of the "most academically gifted classes in the history of Harvard College".

Needless to say, the article's focus on laundry and tuxedos is trivial and silly (aside: I actually enjoy doing laundry and most of us rent tuxedos, if needed), but let's not ignore the issue at hand—the fact is that socio-economic, immigrant, and transitional issues have been historically overlooked at Harvard. These unaddressed issues have led students, due to misunderstandings and feelings of isolation, to categorize based on class and race. In addition, Harvard has had until very recently one of the lowest low-income student enrollment rates among the Ivies. However, this enrollment issue is NOT exclusive to Harvard.

Largely overlooked is the fact that American universities with the largest endowments continue to do a poor job of enrolling low-income students. The Journal of Black in Higher Education's data shows that, as of 2008, over the past 23 years, eight of the 10 universities with the largest endowments have shown a decline in the percentage of low-income students in their student bodies. Over the past five years, many of these universities have virtually eliminated the cost of attending these institutions for students from families earning under \$60,000. Yet, over the most recent two-year period, the percentage of low-income students has declined at eight of the 10 universities with the largest endowments. Clearly, there is more work to be done.

But Harvard's pioneering financial aid initiatives—which provide money for tuition, books, housing, etc. — have caused a dramatic increase in low-income applicants and students. In the past ten years, the percentage of federal Pell Grant recipients qualifying students (of family incomes typically below \$40,000) at Harvard has increased almost ten percent. But diversity is more than putting everyone in the same room.

Very little has been done to address the different needs that these students bring with them to campus. Financial aid policies are not enough to ensure success and should be complemented with a range of support systems. Multicultural centers, Women's studies centers, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organizations

are commonplace on college campuses. Why is it so hard to acknowledge that, similar to other minorities, students from different socioeconomic backgrounds arrive to campus with different needs? It's time to acknowledge, support, and celebrate one more form of diversity that is too often ignored: socioeconomic diversity.

The successful "I am Harvard" campaign spearheaded by the Association of Black Harvard Women and the Black Men's Forum in 2007 intended to bring the campus together through a series of events to question the conception of what a Harvard student should look and act like. The "campaign served as an affirmation of minorities" rightful presence at the University. But the issues of class and race are not mutually exclusive and often intersect. Shouldn't all minority groups, including underrepresented socioeconomic groups, have the right to assert their presence and identity at Harvard? Is it not possible to be grateful towards Harvard's unmatched generosity while still fearlessly expressive of constructive criticism?

Misunderstandings, lack of information, inflammatory articles, and avoidance of sensitive issues create fruitless tensions. The mistake of the *Globe* article is not that it spoke of socioeconomic issues on campus but that it made it seem as if Harvard was making no efforts to address the issues. The article intended to perpetuate old images of the place that everyone loves to criticize. But I do think that we should acknowledge the distinct and uncomfortable challenges that low-income students face on campus. We should acknowledge that the issues of classism, while less overt than depicted in the story, are real. Most importantly, we should work towards addressing these issues and finding solutions.

Harvard Dwdles, Allston Waits

By Paul McMorrow

To read online, click [here](#) or visit:

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2011/06/27/harvard_dawdles_allston_waits/

If you're in the habit of passing through the Allston tolls, then you're probably well acquainted with the biggest white elephant in Boston real estate. It's been a ghost building for 10 years now. Drive by this afternoon, and the hulking steel-and-concrete structure will be doing the same thing it's done for the past decade: looming over the Mass. Pike, dark and empty and begging to be put to good use.

Get one last look while you still can. After a decade of disuse, the Lincoln Street building has finally found a purpose — as the trade bait in a neighborhood-wide game of Monopoly. The vacant building's owner, Harvard University, is flipping it for a couple of run-down properties down the street. When the trade is finished, the facility at 176 Lincoln St. will be razed. It's an ignominious end for a property that has been cursed since the day it opened. And it speaks volumes about the development dynamics in Allston, where commercial development is dominated by a single investor that just happens to be the country's wealthiest university. Harvard's habit of buying up real estate under the cover of darkness has earned it the enmity of many Allston residents. But when it comes to 176 Lincoln St., the massive empty complex overlooking the Pike, the university was supposed to be rescuing the neighborhood from a real estate deal gone terribly wrong.

The Lincoln Street property was originally a pure dot-com bubble play. A developer tried turning a moving-company warehouse into something to sell to the scores of Internet companies that were cropping up along Route 128. The dot-coms disappeared before the building ever opened. What was supposed to be called Boston Internet City was rechristened as a biotech facility. Biotechs never came, though. Companies preferred being in Cambridge, or Lexington, or anywhere other than that terrible concrete box overlooking the Allston tollbooths. So the building sat empty, a concrete shell the size of a city block in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

Harvard scooped up the property in late 2006. The school dropped \$16 million on the vacant facility around the same time that it was advancing ambitious plans to create a life sciences hub in Allston. Neighbors assumed the Lincoln Street building factored into Harvard's life sciences strategy. Why else would the school buy a lab-ready building while making a major push to expand its lab presence?

Harvard never announced what it planned to do with the Lincoln Street complex. It's become obvious that the school never had a plan. The building has been in Harvard's hands, collecting dust, for more than four and a half years. It sat vacant in 2007, when Harvard's endowment was flush with cash. It was vacant at the recession's depths. It's vacant today, as the school is unveiling its latest plan for building out its Allston campus. Soon, it'll be gone entirely.

Earlier this month, Harvard announced a land swap with the owners of a figure skating rink along Western Avenue. Harvard will take the old rink and an aging motel next door, and the rink's owners will construct a new facility on the site of the vacant Internet City building.

Between the cost of the property, the taxes it paid on the empty building, and the land value it's losing in the land swap, Harvard's Lincoln Street adventure will wind up costing the school more than \$20 million — real money to some folks. The land swap does allow the school to consolidate its holdings along Western Avenue. It has shared no immediate development plans for those parcels.

That's the problem. The school doesn't operate on the same timetable as the rest of the city. It banks land to ensure that it has room to grow in the coming century. But Harvard's own long-term interests don't square with its neighbors' more immediate concerns. Allston residents have watched in recent years as spots like Kenmore Square and Brigham Circle have received drastic makeovers, thanks to ambitious private development. In Allston, all development is tied to Harvard, and Harvard is in no hurry to build. The school says it has plans to remake the neighborhood, but it's not really in the neighborhood-building business. Which is why every time Harvard rolls out a new plan for reshaping Allston, the refrain is: We'll believe it when we see it.

Update on Allston Construction

By Ignacio Sabate and Luca Schroeder

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/4/9/harvard-allston-housing-stabilization/>

The Harvard-Allston Task Force met on Wednesday to discuss the North Allston/North Brighton Housing Stabilization Program, ongoing construction and demolitions at the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences complex and Charlesview apartments, and the renewal of Everett Street.

At the meeting—the first in [more than 100 days](#)—Allston residents also brought up perennial concerns about construction workers parking in their neighborhoods.

Representatives from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, left, including Gerald Autler addressed members of the Harvard-Allston Task Force during its first meeting in over 100 days on April 8 to discuss the North Allston/North Brighton Housing Stabilization Program, ongoing construction and demolitions at the SEAS complex and Charlesview apartments, and the renewal of Everett Street. The task force was created in 2006 and serves as a liaison between Harvard, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the residents of the Allston neighborhood of Boston.

BRA senior project manager Gerald Autler and Val Frias, an associate director at the Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation, presented the task force with an update on the housing program, which is intended to stabilize the Allston housing market by promoting long-term homeownership. The ABCDC will use \$3 million contributed by Harvard's [community benefits package](#), along with an additional up to \$5 million in credit from the Boston Community Loan Fund, to buy 13 properties over two years and resell them on the condition that the owners live on their properties as long as they own them.

“One of the great concerns the task force and many in the community had...was the fact that so many properties in the neighborhood are being bought by investors,” Autler said. Allston residents have said that [cash-paying investors](#) seeking to rent out properties purchase newly available houses before potential homeowners have the chance to make a bid.

Directly preceding the task force meeting, Autler also presented on the reconstruction of Everett Street. The first phase of the long-awaited project, funded by the City of Boston and a \$500,000 contribution from Harvard, will see the installation of new concrete sidewalks, granite curbs, street trees, and stormwater infrastructure from North Beacon Street up to Western Avenue. Autler projected work to start on the project around July.

“I think we have a great opportunity with [\[the \\$5.35 million Public Realm\] Flexible Fund](#) to look at some of the other improvements that might be made here...[such as] some sort of public art along the street,” Autler said. Harvard Associate Vice President for Public Affairs and Communications Kevin Casey speaks during the first meeting of the Harvard-Allston Task Force in over 100 days.

Harvard Public Affairs and Communications Associate Vice President Kevin Casey updated Allston residents on construction projects discussed at a [recent Allston Construction Mitigation Subcommittee meeting](#). Casey reported that the foundation of the SEAS complex is currently undergoing enabling work, despite the lack of finalized architectural plans. He added that regulatory and community review is slated for fall 2015, with construction commencing by mid-2016.

Casey also provided an update of the University's [demolition projects](#) in North Allston, reporting that the Brookline Machine demolition was almost complete and that six out of seven Charlesview apartment buildings are already down.

Subcommittee attendees such as Allston resident Paul “Chip” Alford expressed concerns that Harvard’s construction worker parking program, though effective, was not properly enforced. Alford called for checks six times a week, which he said would be far more frequent than the two weekly random spot checks done at the moment.

“We the committee backed off calling [the Boston Transportation Department] so [Harvard’s] program could be enforced,” added subcommittee co-chairman Ed Kotomori, who said residents would now be referring parking violations once again to the BTM. “The tickets are going to start coming every single day—in two hour parking spots, BTM’s going to be there.”

Divest Harvard Ends Heat Week Protests

By Mariel A. Klein and Theodore R. Delwiche, for *Harvard Crimson*

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/4/18/divest-harvard-ends-protests/>

Environmental activist group Divest Harvard ended its six-day blockade of Massachusetts Hall on Friday after protesters delivered a petition demanding that Harvard divest its \$35.9 billion endowment from fossil fuels to Loeb House, an administrative building.

To deliver the petition, protesters walked from their positions at Mass. Hall to Loeb, the former home of Harvard presidents and the current meeting place of the Harvard Corporation, the University's highest governing body. The building was guarded by Harvard University Police officers and bordered with police barricades.

After a short negotiation with an officer stationed at the entrance, Sidni M. Frederick '17, who is a current Crimson Multimedia comper, walked through the fortification to deliver the petition and a letter from alumni. Former Harvard University Professor Cornel R. West '74 and Medical School professor James M. Recht followed. More than 100 demonstrators chanted and sang protest songs, before returning to their blockade. At a rally preceding the march to Loeb, West and other activists spoke to the protesters, denouncing Faust, who has repeatedly argued against divestment, maintaining that Harvard should address climate change through research and teaching.

In the afternoon, Divest Harvard held an open forum. The forum, which took place in a Harvard Hall classroom decked out with balloons and buckets of candy, featured Divest Harvard members and faculty and alumni affiliates discussing climate change and fielding questions from the audience.

On Friday night, hundreds of Divest Harvard supporters gathered in the Science Center plaza for a closing rally and subsequent march through Harvard Yard. Members from divestment campaigns at MIT, Tufts, Brandeis, and Boston College were also present.

"Heat Week," which marked Divest Harvard's largest set of demonstrations since the group's conception in 2012, [started on Sunday](#) when members first blockaded all entrances to Mass. Hall, as previously planned and publicized. They later hung banners all around the building and pitched tarps and tents for a week of sleeping outside.

Faust on Thursday offered to meet with Divest Harvard members on the condition they stop "disrupting university operations." The students [continued their blockade](#), however, and did not meet with the president. Besides its blockade of Mass. Hall, alumni supporters of Divest Harvard occupied the Harvard Alumni Association headquarters on Mt. Auburn St. for about two days; on Tuesday, the group [blocked off all the entrances to University Hall](#) for about four hours, and on Thursday, the group again blockaded University Hall, that time for the full work day.

With their offices inaccessible for parts of the week, administrators worked from coffee shops or hotel lobbies. Few reacted with public frustration.

Affiliates Raise Hands, Snarl at Harvard's Protests

By Michael Rothberg and Steven Watros, for the *Harvard Crimson*

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2014/12/13/march-on-harvard-protest/?page=2>

Hundreds of Harvard affiliates from across the University's schools brought traffic in and around Harvard and Central squares to a standstill Friday evening as they marched through Cambridge streets in protest of racial prejudice in the criminal justice system.

After lying down shortly after 6 p.m. for what activists have called a “die-in” that stretched several hundred feet along Mass. Ave., protesters rose and marched from Harvard Square to Memorial Drive, continuing east to Western Ave. They turned there, marching through stopped traffic toward Central Square before ultimately returning to Harvard Square. Along the way, the protesters staged three other die-ins, halting traffic on Western Ave. as well as in Central Square and for a second time in Harvard Square.

The “March on Harvard,” as the demonstration was billed, was the latest in a series of protests on campus and around the country in recent weeks prompted by the decisions of two separate grand juries not to indict white police officers who had killed unarmed black men, Michael Brown and Eric Garner.

The Cambridge Police Department hired additional traffic and patrol officers to monitor the protest, according to an email from CPD spokesperson Jeremy Warnick. He said that no arrests were made during the nearly two and half hours demonstrators were active on campus and in Cambridge.

Dozens of Cambridge and Massachusetts state police officers were present throughout the evening, with some escorting the protesters and others stationed at a number of intersections along the route clearing their way. Before converging upon the Square for the first die-in, protesters gathered in the Science Center Plaza at 5 p.m., where they heard from a series of speakers, including Cambridge City Councillor Leland Cheung, who addressed the crowd, intermittently joining in with chants such as “No justice, no peace,” common to similar protests that have sprung up around the country.

Before concluding the hour-long string of speeches, poetry, and songs, Victoria I. White-Mason, a Law School student who organized the demonstration, told fellow protesters to remain peaceful as their demonstration proceeded into the Square.

White-Mason also invited representatives from other Harvard schools to a stage organizers had set up, asking them to read “oaths” that vowed commitment to fighting racial inequality in their respective disciplines and professions.

As part of the series of speeches and poems, Kimiko M. Matsuda-Lawrence '16 read a poem she wrote inspired by a [protest during Primal Scream](#) two nights before, in which protesters attempted a moment of silence during a college tradition that involves running naked around the Yard. She said that facing the “mob of angry drunk white men” that stood juxtaposed to the protesters had been the scariest instance of her time at Harvard, and accused Primal Scream participants of “running away from race” when they turned away from the protesters.

As of 5 p.m., more than 1,700 individuals had indicated that they were attending the demonstration on its Facebook page. The crowd on hand at the Science Center appeared to be significantly smaller than that estimate, though still at least several hundred people.

College Dean of Student Life Stephen Lassonde sent an email to undergraduates Friday afternoon acknowledging the demonstration, but asking participants to refrain from gathering in the Science Center Plaza before 5 p.m., when final exams concluded for the day.

Although protesters began gathering before the permitted 5 p.m. start time, they remained quiet until exams concluded.

Among the first demonstrators to arrive was Timothy C. Devine '17, who said that although the campus movement would lessen when students left campus for the winter break, its momentum would be “spread to a thousand hometowns across the country.”

Lassonde, Dean of the College Rakesh Khurana, and other College administrators would be present for the demonstration, Lassonde said earlier Friday.

More than two hours after they began, shortly after 7 p.m., the protesters returned to Harvard Square, where they staged the final die-in along Mass. Ave. in front of the Smith Campus Center. After the die-in, one of the march’s organizers asked the protestors to sit where they were.

“Thank you all for inviting yourselves. Look to the left and right. Tell your neighbor, ‘Welcome to the movement.’ This is the moment. Don’t wait. Tell them you won’t stop until you see justice. This is our Selma,” she said.

Primal Scream 2015 Coverage by the *Harvard Political Review*

A few short minutes before midnight on December 10, hundreds of Harvard undergraduates gathered in the center of Harvard's campus to partake in a semiannual tradition called Primal Scream. This year the tradition, which involves students taking a naked lap through campus in order to relieve end-of-semester stress, was interrupted by a much smaller group of undergraduates who asked for four and a half minutes of silence from their peers to demonstrate Harvard's solidarity with Michael Brown. In this HPRgument, three students voice their opinions on the efficacy of the demonstration, and the meaning of the conversation that followed.

To read these and other online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://harvardpolitics.com/harvard/hprgument-primal-scream-blacklivesmatter-protest/>

“There Is No More Convenient Season”

By Sasanka Jinadasa

We asked for four and a half minutes of silence to symbolize the four and a half hours that an unarmed, facedown, dead Michael Brown was left in the streets of Ferguson, MO. A police officer had shot him six times. And we asked for four and a half minutes of respect, four and a half minutes of silence. Often, white silence is deafening. Last night, I could have only wished for it.

Trust me, I understand if people were confused and expected to go to Primal Scream, get drunk, and have a good time running naked around the Yard. It sounds liberating and it sounds fun. People want to have fun, and I get that.

The day after the protest people tell me: well, we would have supported you if we had known. Or, why can't we have our fun and protest too? Protest later? Protest anywhere but here? Why didn't you tell me? If you had told me nicely, maybe I would have joined you.

To that I say: it's cute that black lives matter when it doesn't inconvenience you. I find it fascinating that people are willing to march around Boston, through Back Bay and Roxbury, shut down the T, shut down the highways, shut down intersections, make society stop working for a night. It's fine when it's not us. Tell me, is Primal Scream more valuable than someone's commute home? For parents, for children, for taxi drivers, for people with real jobs? It is the ultimate in elitist snobbery to say that inconveniencing the Boston working class is more useful than inconveniencing Harvard “fun.”

“Over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a “more convenient season.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

Let me tell you something about Primal Scream: it is a symbol of all the glorious decadence we get to enjoy by being Harvard students. Break as many laws as you want on Harvard's campus. Administration will ignore you, the police will shut down the Yard for you, and everyone will get to bathe in each other's hedonism. It is a night of debauchery that we get to enjoy with all the privilege that we have.

So for everyone who said, “I didn't know about it”—would all of you have protested with us had you known? Would you have given up your privilege to run wild that night to have a die-in with us? Or would you have

then said, “it is not the right time or place”? Would you have then said, how is this my fault, and why should I have to give anything up? Why me? Why sacrifice?

I am angry that you are having fun. I am angry that we get to have fun while every 28 hours another black person is shot by the police. And I'm so angry that we don't see it that way.

The truth is, it's giving things up that upsets people. To get justice, it might take the interruption of their own lives. True allies actually give things up. They give up money, they give up time, and they give themselves. They bail protestors out of jail, they go to jail, they get an arrest record, they refuse to work for racists, they call out their racist friends, they don't let anyone get away with anything in front of them. They work.

It's too easy to say #BlackLivesMatter. Of course they matter. But if the only time you talked about it this week was when we delayed your fun for a full five minutes, this protest did more than its job. It shamed you. And if it didn't shame you, you're not an ally—you're part of the problem.

The thing is, Harvard is part of the problem. I'm part of the problem because all non-black students are. We enjoy privilege more than we can imagine, we feed off the decadence the Harvard name gives us, and we revel in the whiteness this institution is steeped in. Harvard [could not exist without slavery](#), yet almost no black people are celebrated throughout this University's [halls and portraits](#). For hundreds of years, black students have experienced [harassment](#), [discrimination](#), [violence](#), [profiling](#), [disgust](#), [ignorance](#), [dismissal](#) and so much more. So I, frankly, don't care if you had to wait five minutes longer for your Primal Scream. We only asked for four and a half.

Being drunk is not an excuse.

Being unaware is not an excuse.

It's never been an excuse.

It's time for all of us to do better.

“Having the Right Conversation”

By Lane Ericson and Joshua Speagle

In an email to members of the Harvard student body, the activists who organized the demonstration at Primal Scream argued that the event was successful. While these activists do have a just cause, and while their goals lie beyond the scope of disagreement, the demonstration itself did not succeed in advancing *any* of its meaningful goals.

The email noted first that the demonstration was “peaceful and nonviolent.” Indeed, the demonstrators did not use force against the naked bacchanal of drunken students. However, activists have made allegations that some “Primal Screamers” physically assaulted demonstrators. If there was an assault it should be the focus of this conversation. However, the scope and nature of the allegations are unclear: What type of assault? Were there injuries? How many assailants were there? Were they students? Can we find out who they are? How is it that they escaped the notice of Dean Khurana, who was in the crowd of protestors? If there were at least fifty demonstrators, including Harvard College’s dean, why couldn’t any assailants be detained and identified?

Given that the assault is neither the activists’ central complaint, nor has it been substantiated in any way, the allegation serves to legitimate the larger claim that the unresponsiveness of students partaking in Primal Scream is symbolic of a systemic issue with Harvard student morality. Certainly the “Primal Screamers” behavior, namely their shouts of obscenities and general refusal to take a moment of silence, is both rude and juvenile, but it is hardly shocking.

The demonstration was a last-minute, poorly-communicated event, the result of which was anything but a “powerful show of solidarity.” While activists did have a large audience, the vast majority of students either did not notice the demonstrators or failed to understand their purpose. Those students, many of whom agree with activists on substance, have instead been made to feel guilty for their actions. This guilt is fueled by the protestors’ misguided attempt to commend themselves for forcing people to confront hard truths and starting a “conversation.”

Unfortunately, conversation is not good in and of itself. Conversation *can* address the injustices of a society where a police officer gets one paid vacation and a not-guilty verdict for beating a homeless man to death. Conversation *can* address the unchecked power of a legal system entrenched in an atmosphere of racism. Or conversation can address the chants of a naked crowd of overwhelmingly liberal and informed people, dwell on the rudeness of criticizing badly-strategized protests and draw baseless negative attention to Harvard and its student body.

As Harvard students, we can let pride and righteous sentiment draw our eyes away from *murder* and towards ourselves, or we can concentrate on fighting the institutional racism that confronts minorities every single day.

Some conversations and protest strategies can actually advance the causes that fundamentally matter. The demonstration which took place at Primal Scream isn’t one of them. Let’s get serious.

The Launch of *Renegade* Magazine

In Spring 2015, *Renegade* magazine was launched. The following two articles detail what *Renegade* is and some students' response to the magazine.

Students Prepare to Launch Advocacy Magazine

By Carolina Portela-Blanco

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/3/31/arts-advocacy-magazine-renegade/>

A group of Harvard students have joined together to launch an arts and advocacy magazine to focus on issues of diversity and identity among students of color at Harvard, called *Renegade*, which will debut online on Friday.

The group—which is composed of visual artists, musicians, writers, and podcast makers, according to *Renegade* member and spokesperson Andrea Ortiz '16—started a social media campaign publicizing the upcoming launch of the publication through Facebook and other platforms on Sunday.

The magazine's [Facebook page](#) describes the group as “an art and advocacy collective of Harvard student artists, writers, musicians, poets, activists, and thinkers who have come together in solidarity as people of color.” The Facebook page also links to several Web platforms to showcase the group's work, including its [website](#), a [SoundCloud profile](#), [Twitter feed](#), and Tumblr.

Individual students have also changed their Facebook profile pictures and cover photos publicizing the publication. The magazine's official Facebook page is highlighting individual members leading up to its launch.

According to Ortiz, the group was founded after a brainstorming session between a group of students in February. It will be launching its Web page on Friday and will remain based online for the time being, according to Ortiz, who described the project as a “forum where people of color can express themselves through any artistic and creative medium” in an email.

“In our writing circle, we have received a lot of essays, columns, and creative writing,” Ortiz wrote. “Overall what we feature depends heavily on what our contributors bring to the table out of their own creativity.”

Through its social media campaign publicizing the launch, the group has created a video which includes anonymous statements, many of which relate to issues of race and diversity on campus and express frustration.

“[P]eople dress up as my ethnicity on halloween,” one quote in the video says. Other statements in the video include “‘diversity’ is not just a buzzword” and “this campus was built by slaves.”

The video defines the group's namesake, *renegade*, as “someone or something that causes trouble and cannot be controlled.”

The group has also made a Tumblr page titled [Crimson Catharsis](#) to serve as an online forum for discussions about identity and diversity on campus, according to a description on the blog. Posts on the page are anonymous and are not affiliated with *Renegade*, according to blog description, and by Monday evening the Tumblr included roughly 20 posts addressing a range of issues and institutions on campus, including Harvard University Health Services and The Crimson's editorial board.

According to Ortiz, the group has so far received positive feedback. “Our launch has also started up many meaningful conversations about race with people from different corners of campus,” she wrote. Multiple students who are involved in the publication declined to comment on the project before its Friday launch.

Posters Parodying Advocacy Magazine Prompt Controversy

By Noah Delwiche and Ivan Levingston

To read online, click [here](#) or visit: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/4/8/posters-parody-advocacy-magazine/>

Posters that parodied a new campus arts and advocacy magazine that focuses on issues of race and diversity prompted criticism from students and administrators in Pforzheimer House this past weekend.

Upperclassmen (translates to: not freshman) Houses Include:

Pforzheimer (Pfoho)	Eliot
Currier	Kirkland
Cabot	Leverett (Lev)
Quincy	Mather
Winthrop	Dunster
Adams	Lowell

Last week, a group of undergraduates [started the online magazine Renegade](#) in an effort to showcase the writing and artwork of students of color. The group advertised its website by putting up posters around campus leading up to its official launch on Friday.

On Friday night, the day of the formal launch, Black Students Association President Sarah F. Cole '16 emailed a photo of a Renegade poster that had been ripped in half over Pfoho's House list, prompting responses from other students. One response included a photo of three posters that

appeared to mock the magazine.

Official Renegade posters in Pfoho had white backgrounds with black text containing phrases about race and diversity, such as "because Mather owned slaves," according to a statement on behalf of the group from Jenny A. Gathright '16, a former Crimson editorial writer. The apparent parody posters, however, were black with white text and included the messages "because all straight white men are racist" and "because anyone that disagrees with me is racist." The posters included the url of the magazine's website and its launch date.

In her statement on behalf of Renegade, Gathright confirmed that "[a]ny other posters in Pfoho imitating the style and font of Renegade were not produced by or endorsed by Renegade."

"These posters were put up by people outside of Renegade, presumably with the intention of mischaracterizing our mission and reducing the work we are trying to do on this campus," Gathright's statement said on behalf of the group.

"The production and distribution of these fake posters is an immature and unacceptable attack on students of color in Pfoho and across this campus who have come together to speak their truths," the statement read.

Pforzheimer House Masters Anne Harrington '82 and John R. Durant reacted to the incident in an email to Pforzheimer residents on Saturday, writing that a Renegade magazine poster had been ripped in half the previous night and that they were "far more troubled" by "parodic" posters that had surfaced in the House.

"Whatever the intent behind these posters, their effect has been to potentially mislead our community about Renegade, and to personally hurt and undermine some members of that group who live here in Pfoho. That is absolutely unacceptable, and we intend to take those posters down immediately," Harrington and Durant wrote. Harrington and Durant could not be reached for further comment. Several members of Renegade did not respond to or declined requests for comment beyond the group's statement.

Activism and Organizing

The Revolution Will Not Be Polite

By Rachael, from the Social Justice League

To read online, click here or visit: <http://www.socialjusticeleague.net/2012/04/the-revolution-will-not-be-polite-the-issue-of-nice-versus-good/>

A while ago, tumblr user “iamateenagefeminist” compiled [a list of non-oppressive insults](#), a public service that will never be forgotten. The people of tumblr wept with joy and appreciation (although it should be noted that the people of tumblr will literally weep over a drawing of an owl). The list is not perfect, and “ugly” should NOT be on there as it reinforces beauty hierarchies. Still, I was happy to find it, because I am always looking for more insults that don’t reinforce oppressive social structures.

But if you scroll through the reblogs you’ll see that not everyone was enamoured of the idea of creating this list at all. In particular, several people said that trying to find non-oppressive ways to insult other people is “missing the point” of social justice. Those people seem to think that being nice is a core part of social justice. But those people are wrong.

Social justice is about destroying systematic marginalisation and privilege. Wishing to live in a more just, more equal world is simply not the same thing as wishing to live in a “nicer” world. I am not suggesting niceness is bad or that we should not behave in a nice way towards others if we want to! I also do not equate niceness with cooperation or collaboration with others. Here’s all I am saying: the conflation of ethical or just conduct (goodness), and polite conduct (niceness) is a big problem.

Plenty of oppressive bullshit goes down under the guise of nice. Every day, nice, caring, friendly people try to take our bodily autonomy away from us (women, queers, trans people, nonbinaries, fat people, POC...you name it, they just don’t think we know what’s good for us!). These people would hold a door for us if they saw us coming. Our enemies are not only the people holding “Fags Die God Laughs” signs, they are the nice people who just feel like marriage should be between a man and a woman, no offense, it’s just how they feel! We once got a very nice comment on this site that we decided we could not publish because its content was “But how can I respect women when they dress like – sorry to say it, pardon my language – sluts?”. This is vile, disgusting misogyny and no amount of sugar coating and politeness can make it okay. Similarly, most of the people who run ex-gay therapy clinics are actually very nice and polite! They just want to save you! Nicely! Clearly, niceness means FUCK ALL.

On an even more serious note, nice people also DO horrible bad things on an individual level. In [The Gift of Fear](#) by Gavin De Becker, he explicitly says that people who intend to harm others often display niceness towards them in order to make them feel safe and let their guard down. This trick only works because we have been taught that niceness indicates goodness. What is more, according to De Becker, women have been socially conditioned to feel indebted to men who are “nice” to them, which is often exploited by abusers. If this doesn’t seem obvious to you, I suggest you pick up the book – it talks a lot about how socialisation of men and women makes it easier for men to abuse women.

How many more acts that reinforce kyriarchy have to be done nicely and politely before we stop giving people any credit for niceness? Does the niceness of these acts make them acceptable? It does not. An even bigger issue is that if people think social justice is about niceness, it means they have *fundamentally* misunderstood privilege. Privilege does not mean you live in a world where people are nice to you and never insult you. It means you live in a world in which you, and people like you, are given systematic advantages over other people. Being marginalised does not mean people are always nasty to you, it means you live in a world in which many aspects of the cultural,

social and economic systems are stacked against people like you. Some very privileged people have had awful experiences in life, but it does not erase their privilege. That is because privilege is about groups of people being given different rights and opportunities by the law and by socio-cultural norms. Incidentally, that is why you can have some forms of privilege and not others, and it doesn't make sense to try to "tally up" one's privilege into a sum total and compare it against others'.

By the way, the first person who says "But then why are TV shows a social justice issue?" in the comments will have their head put on a pike as an example to others. Cultural narratives are part of what builds and reinforces social roles, and those determine what opportunities a person has – and the rights they can actually exercise, even if they have them in the law. If you don't believe me and don't want to accept this idea, you will now google "stereotype threat", you will read [Thinking, Fast and Slow](#) by Daniel Kahneman, you will watch [this speech by Esther Duflo on women and development](#) (which talks about stereotypes and outcomes), and THEN you may return to this blog.

The conflation of nice and good also creates an avenue of subtle control over marginalised people. After all, what is seen as "nice" is cultural and often even class-dependent, and therefore the "manners" that matter get to be defined by the dominant ethnic group and class. For example, the "tone" argument, the favourite derailing tactic of bigots everywhere, is quite clearly a demand that the oppressor be treated "nicely" at all times by the oppressed – *and they get to define what "nice" treatment is*. This works because the primacy of nice in our culture creates a useful tool – to control people and to delegitimise their anger. A stark example of this is the stereotype of the desirably meek and passive woman, which is often held over women's heads if we step out of line. How much easier is it to hold on to social and cultural power when you make a rule that people who ask for an end to their own oppression have to ask for it nicely, never showing anger or any emotion at being systematically disenfranchised? (A lot easier.)

Furthermore, I think the confusion of meanness with oppression is the root cause of why bigots feel that calling someone a "bigot" is as bad as calling someone a "tranny" or taking away their rights. You know, previously I thought they were just being willfully obtuse, but now I realise what is going on. For example, most racists appear to feel that calling POC a racist slur is a roughly equal moral harm to POC calling them a "racist fuckhead". That's because they do not understand that using a racist slur is bad in any sense other than it hurts someone's feelings. And they know from experience that it hurts someone's feelings to be called racist douche.

So if you – the oppressed – hurt someone's feelings, you're just like the oppressor, right? Wrong. Oppression is not about hurt feelings. It is about the rights and opportunities that are not afforded to you because you belong to a certain group of people. When you use a racist slur you imply that non-whiteness is a bad thing, and thus publicly reinforce a system that denies POC the rights and opportunities of white people. Calling a white person a racist fuckhead doesn't do any of that. Yes, it's not very nice. And how effective it is as a tactic is definitely up for debate (that's a whole other blog post). But it's not oppression.

Being good and being nice are totally unrelated. We need to get serious about debunking this myth, because the confusion between the two is obfuscating our message and handing our oppressors another tool with which to silence us. In some cases, this confusion is putting people (especially women) in real danger. This social movement can't achieve its goals if people think it's essentially some kind of niceness revolution. And anyway, social justice is not about making the world a nicer place. It's about taking back the rights and opportunities denied to us by law or by social and cultural norms – and breaking out of the toxic mindset that wants us to say please and thank you when we do.

Nothing But Hollow Excuses

By Amy Offner for the *Harvard Crimson*

Since last December, the Harvard Living Wage Campaign has united University and community members in an effort to secure a minimal living wage for anyone who works at the University. Last Tuesday, we invited President Neil L. Rudenstine to address our community and to explain why he has continued to pay poverty-level wages to workers despite the fact that support for a living wage has grown both on campus and nationwide. Not only did Rudenstine fail to appear at our rally, but he has yet to offer an answer to our question. In fact, he has made no response at all to the call for a living wage and has shown no commitment to the well-being of the people who work for him.

As far as we can tell, the only reason that Rudenstine has remained silent is that he can make no argument against a living wage that would not be publicly embarrassing for the president of the world's richest university. By liberal estimates, implementing a living wage at Harvard would cost the University \$10 million annually. This amounts to three-fifths of 1 percent of Harvard's annual budget, and exactly equals the compensation paid the University's top fund manager in 1998. It is impossible for Rudenstine to argue that Harvard cannot afford a living wage. Had he come to our rally, we can only assume that he would have made the same four arguments which other administrators have made against the living wage. We would like to outline these arguments here and put them to rest.

1. "Harvard already pays nearly all of its workers at least \$10 per hour."

This argument is based on a purposely limited definition of the Harvard workforce. It includes only those workers who are directly employed at full-time hours--a fraction of the university's employees. Excluded from this definition are hundreds of full- and part-time workers, some of whom are directly employed, and some of whom are employed through outside contractors. Based on information gathered from the University, campus unions and the hundreds of workers with whom we have spoken, we estimate that when all employees are taken into account, an estimated 2,000 workers at Harvard are paid less than \$10 per hour.

2. "When we consider total compensation--benefits as well as wages--even those 2,000 employees are paid at least \$10 per hour."

In our experience talking with workers, we have found that most underpaid employees receive no benefits at all; their hourly wage of less than \$10 per hour is their "total compensation." In light of this, the administration's emphasis on benefits is misleading.

Consider that the \$10 per hour living wage adopted by the Cambridge City Council last spring was designed to apply to workers who also received benefits. Even with benefits, these workers still required at least \$10 per hour to meet their families' needs. A living wage is designed to cover daily expenses such as rent, transportation and groceries. These expenses cannot be paid in dental appointments or yearly check-ups.

We do agree, however, that fair compensation should include both wages and benefits; for this reason, we support the implementation of a living wage of \$10 per hour with the option of benefits.

3. "Ten dollars per hour is not a living wage. It is simply an arbitrary and inflated number."

Our \$10 per hour standard is taken directly from the Cambridge living wage ordinance, approved by the City Council in May. The ordinance established a minimum wage of \$10 per hour for all city workers, as well as employees of city contractors. According to the Eviction-Free Zone, one of three organizations which drafted the

ordinance, \$10 per hour was chosen because it was the lowest wage paid any unionized city employee. As such, it was seen as a minimal standard for a living wage. In fact, studies on the local cost of living show just how minimal it is. According to the National Low-Income Housing Commission, a wage of roughly \$15 per hour is needed to live in the Boston area. Wider Opportunities for Women also found that in 1997, a living wage for families of varying composition would range from \$11 to \$18 per hour.

These findings have been borne out by our experience talking to workers: We have not found a Harvard employee who earns less than \$10 per hour and who can afford to live in Cambridge.

4. "We can't force our subcontractors to pay a living wage."

The city of Cambridge and every other city that has passed a living wage ordinance requires subcontractors to meet its wage standard. Mechanisms have been developed in all these cities to force subcontractors to pay decent wages, and there is no reason to believe that Harvard could not employ similar means. In fact, Harvard already directly participates in determining the wages of its subcontracted workers through contract negotiations. As one of the largest and most powerful institutions in the state, Harvard has no trouble influencing the firms with which it does business.

The arguments presented by the administration are evasive, misleading and so obviously wrong that we can hardly imagine that administrators honestly believe them. It is clear to the overwhelming majority of students, workers and community members that a \$10-per-hour living wage at Harvard is fair and necessary, and that the poverty that this University creates is unacceptable by any measure.

No Harvard employee should have to work three jobs to meet his or her family's basic needs; no working family should be forced to balance endlessly on the brink of economic disaster. In asking for a living wage, we call on Harvard administrators to join the rest of the community in recognizing that the lives of working people are more important than nickels and dimes. It is time for Neil Rudenstine to take responsibility for the economic survival of the people who make this university run.

The Rise of Native-Rights Based Strategic Framework

By Clayton Thomas-Muller

To read in full, click [here](https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/the-rise-of-the-native-rights-based-strategic-framework) or visit: <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/the-rise-of-the-native-rights-based-strategic-framework>

Years ago I was working for a well-known Indigenous environmental and economic justice organization known as the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN). During my time with this organization I had the privilege of working with hundreds of Indigenous communities across the planet who had seen a sharp increase in the targeting of Native lands for mega-extractive and other toxic industries. The largest of these conflicts, of course, was the overrepresentation by big oil who work—often in cahoots with state, provincial First Nations, Tribal and federal governments both in the USA and Canada—to gain access to the valuable resources located in our territories. IEN hired me to work in a very abstract setting, under impossible conditions, with little or no resources to support Grassroots peoples fighting oil companies, who had become, in the era of free market economics, the most powerful and well-resourced entities of our time. My mission was to fight and protect the sacredness of Mother Earth from toxic contamination and corporate exploration, to support our Peoples to build sustainable local economies rooted in the sacred fire of our traditions.

My work took me to the Great Plains reservation, Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold to support a collective of mothers and grandmothers fighting a proposed oil refinery, which if built would process crude oil shipped in from a place called the tar sands in northern Canada. I spent time in Oklahoma working with Sac and Fox Tribal EPA under the tutelage of the late environmental justice warrior Jan Stevens, to learn about the legacy of 100 years of oil and gas on America's Indian Country—Oklahoma being one of the end up points of the shameful indian relocation era...

During my five years as an IEN Indigenous oil campaigner (2001–2006) I learned that these fights were all life and death situations, not just for local communities, but for the biosphere; that organizing in Indian Country called for a very different strategic and tactical play than conventional campaigning; that our grassroots movement for energy and climate justice was being lead by our Native woman and, as such, our movement was just as much about fighting patriarchy and asserting as a core of our struggle the sacred feminine creative principal; and that a large part of the work of movement building was about defending the sacredness of our Mother Earth and helping our peoples decolonize our notions of government, land management, business and social relation by going through a process of re-evaluating our connection to the sacred.

In the early years I often struggled with the arms of the non-profit industrial complex and its inner workings, which were heavily fortified with systems of power that reinforced racism, classism and gender discrimination at the highest levels of both non-profit organizations and foundations (funders). It was difficult to measure success of environmental and economic justice organizing using the western terms of quantitative versus qualitative analysis. Sure, our work had successfully kept many highly-polluting fossil fuel projects at bay, but the attempts to take our land by agents of the fossil fuel industry—with their lobbyist's pushing legislation loop holes and repackaging strategies—continued to pressure our uninformed and/or economically desperate Tribal Governments to grant access to our lands.

The most high profile victory came during the twilight of the first Bush/Cheney administration when our network collaborated with beltway groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council and effectively killed a harmful US energy bill containing provisions that would kick open the back door to fossil fuel companies, allowing access into our lands. The Indian Energy Title V campaign identified that if the energy bill passed, US tribes would be able, under the guise of tribal sovereignty, to administer their own environmental impact assessments and fast

track development in their lands. Now this sounds like a good thing, right? Well, maybe for Tribal governments that had the legal and scientific capacity to do so, but for the hundreds of US Tribes without the resources, it set up a highly imbalanced playing field that would give the advantage to corporations to exploit economically disadvantaged nations to enter into the industrialization game.

Through a massive education campaign and highly-negotiated and coordinated collaborative effort of grassroots, beltway and international eNGOs—as well as multiple lobbying visits to Washington DC, lead by both elected and grassroots Tribal leaders—we gained the support of the National Congress of American Indians who agreed to write a letter opposing the energy bill to some of our champions in the US Senate, most notably the late Daniel Akaka who was Hawaii's first Native Senator. Under the guidance of America's oldest Indian Advocacy group he would lead a vote to kill the energy bill in the Senate. This was my first view into the power of the Native rights-based strategic and tactical framework and how it could bring the most powerful government on Earth (and the big oil lobby) to their knees...

For example with the passing of the US energy bill under the second US Bush/Cheney administration the US climate movement began to ramp up its attempts to have the administration pass a domestic climate bill... Citizen groups like the US Public Interest Research Group (US PIRG) received millions of dollars to try and organize people to put pressure on President Bush, and later President Obama, to adopt some form of climate policy... The groups that ended up receiving resources from that limited pot of climate funding... did not focus on mobilizing the masses to get out in the streets; to target and stop local climate criminals or build a bona fide social movement rooted in an anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-oppressive foundation to combat the climate crisis. Instead, it kept the discourse focussed on voluntary technological and market-based approaches to mitigating climate change—like carbon trading and carbon capture and storage.

I would argue that this frame is what kept this issue from bringing millions of Americans into the streets to stop the greenhouse gangsters from wrecking Mother Earth. Groups like the Indigenous Environmental Network, Southwest Workers Union and others fought tooth-and-nail to try and carve out pieces of these resources to go towards what we saw as the real carbon killers, which were local campaigns being lead by Indigenous Nations and communities of colour to stop coal mining, coal-fired power and big oil (including gas)...

SOOOO GOOD

Stop Trying to Save Africa

By Uzodinma Iweala

To read online, click [here](#) or visit:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/13/AR2007071301714.html>

Last fall, shortly after I returned from Nigeria, I was accosted by a perky blond college student whose blue eyes seemed to match the "African" beads around her wrists.

"Save Darfur!" she shouted from behind a table covered with pamphlets urging students to TAKE ACTION NOW! STOP GENOCIDE IN DARFUR!

My aversion to college kids jumping onto fashionable social causes nearly caused me to walk on, but her next shout stopped me.

"Don't you want to help us save Africa?" she yelled.

It seems that these days, wracked by guilt at the humanitarian crisis it has created in the Middle East, the West has turned to Africa for redemption. Idealistic college students, celebrities such as Bob Geldof and politicians such as Tony Blair have all made bringing light to the dark continent their mission. They fly in for internships and fact-finding missions or to pick out children to adopt in much the same way my friends and I in New York take the subway to the pound to adopt stray dogs.

This is the West's new image of itself: a sexy, politically active generation whose preferred means of spreading the word are magazine spreads with celebrities pictured in the foreground, forlorn Africans in the back. Never mind that the stars sent to bring succor to the natives often are, willingly, as emaciated as those they want to help.

Perhaps most interesting is the language used to describe the Africa being saved. For example, the [Keep a Child Alive](#)/[I am African](#) ad campaign features portraits of primarily white, Western celebrities with painted "tribal markings" on their faces above "I AM AFRICAN" in bold letters. Below, smaller print says, "help us stop the dying."

Such campaigns, however well intentioned, promote the stereotype of Africa as a black hole of disease and death. News reports constantly focus on the continent's corrupt leaders, warlords, "tribal" conflicts, child laborers, and women disfigured by abuse and genital mutilation. These descriptions run under headlines like "Can Bono Save Africa?" or "Will Brangelina Save Africa?" The relationship between the West and Africa is no longer based on openly racist beliefs, but such articles are reminiscent of reports from the heyday of European colonialism, when missionaries were sent to Africa to introduce us to education, Jesus Christ and "civilization."

There is no African, myself included, who does not appreciate the help of the wider world, but we do question whether aid is genuine or given in the spirit of affirming one's cultural superiority. My mood is dampened every time I attend a benefit whose host runs through a litany of African disasters before presenting a (usually) wealthy, white person, who often proceeds to list the things he or she has done for the poor, starving Africans. Every time a well-meaning college student speaks of villagers dancing because they were so grateful for her help, I cringe. Every time a Hollywood director shoots a film about Africa that features a Western protagonist, I shake my head -- because Africans, real people though we may be, are used as props in the West's fantasy of itself. And not only do such depictions tend to ignore the West's prominent role in creating many of the unfortunate situations on the continent, they also ignore the incredible work Africans have done and continue to do to fix those problems.

Why do the media frequently refer to African countries as having been "granted independence from their colonial masters," as opposed to having fought and shed blood for their freedom? Why do Angelina Jolie and Bono receive overwhelming attention for their work in Africa while Nwankwo Kanu or Dikembe Mutombo, Africans

both, are hardly ever mentioned? How is it that a former mid-level U.S. diplomat receives more attention for his cowboy antics in Sudan than do the numerous African Union countries that have sent food and troops and spent countless hours trying to negotiate a settlement among all parties in that crisis?

Two years ago I worked in a camp for internally displaced people in Nigeria, survivors of an uprising that killed about 1,000 people and displaced 200,000. True to form, the Western media reported on the violence but not on the humanitarian work the state and local governments -- without much international help -- did for the survivors. Social workers spent their time and in many cases their own salaries to care for their compatriots. These are the people saving Africa, and others like them across the continent get no credit for their work.

Last month the Group of Eight industrialized nations and a host of celebrities met in Germany to discuss, among other things, how to save Africa. Before the next such summit, I hope people will realize Africa doesn't want to be saved. Africa wants the world to acknowledge that through fair partnerships with other members of the global community, we ourselves are capable of unprecedented growth.

How to Write about Africa

By Binyavanga Wainaina

To read online, click [here](http://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/) or visit: <http://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>

Always use the word 'Africa' or 'Darkness' or 'Safari' in your title. Subtitles may include the words 'Zanzibar', 'Masai', 'Zulu', 'Zambezi', 'Congo', 'Nile', 'Big', 'Sky', 'Shadow', 'Drum', 'Sun' or 'Bygone'. Also useful are words such as 'Guerrillas', 'Timeless', 'Primordial' and 'Tribal'. Note that 'People' means Africans who are not black, while 'The People' means black Africans.

Never have a picture of a well-adjusted African on the cover of your book, or in it, unless that African has won the Nobel Prize. An AK-47, prominent ribs, naked breasts: use these. If you must include an African, make sure you get one in Masai or Zulu or Dogon dress.

In your text, treat Africa as if it were one country. It is hot and dusty with rolling grasslands and huge herds of animals and tall, thin people who are starving. Or it is hot and steamy with very short people who eat primates. Don't get bogged down with precise descriptions. Africa is big: fifty-four countries, 900 million people who are too busy starving and dying and warring and emigrating to read your book. The continent is full of deserts, jungles, highlands, savannahs and many other things, but your reader doesn't care about all that, so keep your descriptions romantic and evocative and unparticular.

Make sure you show how Africans have music and rhythm deep in their souls, and eat things no other humans eat. Do not mention rice and beef and wheat; monkey-brain is an African's cuisine of choice, along with goat, snake, worms and grubs and all manner of game meat. Make sure you show that you are able to eat such food without flinching, and describe how you learn to enjoy it—because you care.

Taboo subjects: ordinary domestic scenes, love between Africans (unless a death is involved), references to African writers or intellectuals, mention of school-going children who are not suffering from yaws or Ebola fever or female genital mutilation.

Throughout the book, adopt a *sotto* voice, in conspiracy with the reader, and a sad *I-expected-so-much* tone. Establish early on that your liberalism is impeccable, and mention near the beginning how much you love Africa, how you fell in love with the place and can't live without her. Africa is the only continent you can love—take advantage of this. If you are a man, thrust yourself into her warm virgin forests. If you are a woman, treat Africa as a man who wears a bush jacket and disappears off into the sunset. Africa is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated. Whichever angle you take, be sure to leave the strong impression that without your intervention and your important book, Africa is doomed.

Your African characters may include naked warriors, loyal servants, diviners and seers, ancient wise men living in hermitic splendour. Or corrupt politicians, inept polygamous travel-guides, and prostitutes you have slept with. The Loyal Servant always behaves like a seven-year-old and needs a firm hand; he is scared of snakes, good with children, and always involving you in his complex domestic dramas. The Ancient Wise Man always comes from a noble tribe (not the money-grubbing tribes like the Gikuyu, the Igbo or the Shona). He has rheumy eyes and is close to the Earth. The Modern African is a fat man who steals and works in the visa office, refusing to give work permits to qualified Westerners who really care about Africa. He is an enemy of development, always using his government job to make it difficult for pragmatic and good-hearted expats to set up NGOs or Legal Conservation Areas. Or he is an Oxford-educated intellectual turned serial-killing politician in a Savile Row suit. He is a cannibal who likes Cristal champagne, and his mother is a rich witch-doctor who really runs the country.

Among your characters you must always include The Starving African, who wanders the refugee camp nearly naked, and waits for the benevolence of the West. Her children have flies on their eyelids and pot bellies, and her breasts are flat and empty. She must look utterly helpless. She can have no past, no history; such diversions ruin the dramatic moment. Moans are good. She must never say anything about herself in the dialogue except to speak of her (unspeakable) suffering. Also be sure to include a warm and motherly woman who has a rolling laugh and who is concerned for your well-being. Just call her Mama. Her children are all delinquent. These characters should buzz

around your main hero, making him look good. Your hero can teach them, bathe them, feed them; he carries lots of babies and has seen Death. Your hero is you (if reportage), or a beautiful, tragic international celebrity/aristocrat who now cares for animals (if fiction).

Bad Western characters may include children of Tory cabinet ministers, Afrikaners, employees of the World Bank. When talking about exploitation by foreigners mention the Chinese and Indian traders. Blame the West for Africa's situation. But do not be too specific.

Broad brushstrokes throughout are good. Avoid having the African characters laugh, or struggle to educate their kids, or just make do in mundane circumstances. Have them illuminate something about Europe or America in Africa. African characters should be colourful, exotic, larger than life—but empty inside, with no dialogue, no conflicts or resolutions in their stories, no depth or quirks to confuse the cause.

Describe, in detail, naked breasts (young, old, conservative, recently raped, big, small) or mutilated genitals, or enhanced genitals. Or any kind of genitals. And dead bodies. Or, better, naked dead bodies. And especially rotting naked dead bodies. Remember, any work you submit in which people look filthy and miserable will be referred to as the 'real Africa', and you want that on your dust jacket. Do not feel queasy about this: you are trying to help them to get aid from the West. The biggest taboo in writing about Africa is to describe or show dead or suffering white people.

Animals, on the other hand, must be treated as well rounded, complex characters. They speak (or grunt while tossing their manes proudly) and have names, ambitions and desires. They also have family values: *see how lions teach their children?* Elephants are caring, and are good feminists or dignified patriarchs. So are gorillas. Never, ever say anything negative about an elephant or a gorilla. Elephants may attack people's property, destroy their crops, and even kill them. Always take the side of the elephant. Big cats have public-school accents. Hyenas are fair game and have vaguely Middle Eastern accents. Any short Africans who live in the jungle or desert may be portrayed with good humour (unless they are in conflict with an elephant or chimpanzee or gorilla, in which case they are pure evil).

After celebrity activists and aid workers, conservationists are Africa's most important people. Do not offend them. You need them to invite you to their 30,000-acre game ranch or 'conservation area', and this is the only way you will get to interview the celebrity activist. Often a book cover with a heroic-looking conservationist on it works magic for sales. Anybody white, tanned and wearing khaki who once had a pet antelope or a farm is a conservationist, one who is preserving Africa's rich heritage. When interviewing him or her, do not ask how much funding they have; do not ask how much money they make off their game. Never ask how much they pay their employees.

Readers will be put off if you don't mention the light in Africa. And sunsets, the African sunset is a must. It is always big and red. There is always a big sky. Wide empty spaces and game are critical—Africa is the Land of Wide Empty Spaces. When writing about the plight of flora and fauna, make sure you mention that Africa is overpopulated. When your main character is in a desert or jungle living with indigenous peoples (anybody short) it is okay to mention that Africa has been severely depopulated by Aids and War (use caps).

You'll also need a nightclub called Tropicana, where mercenaries, evil nouveau riche Africans and prostitutes and guerrillas and expats hang out.

Always end your book with Nelson Mandela saying something about rainbows or renaissances. Because you care.

Don't forget to check out the FUP website for more linked, vids, pics, and general #FUPhype!
<http://fup.fas.harvard.edu/>

Also don't forget to request the FUptown 2015 Facebook group!
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/900994189961992/>

The Limits of Charity

By David Hilfiker

THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET MICAH ARE FAMILIAR:

*What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God, (8 : 6)
But what if our love of mercy chokes out our ability to act justly?*

Since 1983, I have worked as a doctor with poor people in the inner city of Washington, D.C. I began at Community of Hope Health Services, a small church-sponsored clinic, and at Christ House, a thirty-four-bed medical recovery shelter for homeless men. In 1990, I founded Joseph's House, a ten-bed community for homeless men with AIDS where I work now. I intend to continue working there. But I've been having misgivings.

I have begun to see some "side effects" to the kind of work I do, and they concern the important difference between justice and charity. Justice has to do with fairness, with what people deserve. It results from social structures that guarantee moral rights. Charity has to do with benevolence or generosity. It results from people's good will and can be withdrawn whenever they choose.

To put the question most bluntly: Do our works of charity impede the realization of justice in our society?

This is not a question of our personal commitment to justice. Throughout all of my years in Washington, I have yearned for justice and felt ready to sacrifice for it. I have hoped that my work brings attention to the plight of the poor and thus contributes to justice.

What I actually do, however, is offer help to poor people. Though I believe God calls me to do this, I could leave at any time. The poor people I have served over the past seventeen years have had no "right" to what I was giving them. While I believe in justice for the poor and in challenging the structures of our society that deprive them of that justice, in fact I have offered charity.

My overall concern is this: Charitable endeavors such as Joseph's House serve to relieve the pressure for more fundamental societal changes. In her book *Sweet Charity*, sociologist Janet Poppendieck writes that charity acts as "a sort of a 'moral safety valve'"; it reduces the discomfort evoked by visible destitution in our midst by creating the illusion of effective action and offering us myriad ways of participating in it. It creates a culture of charity that normalizes destitution and legitimates personal generosity as a response to [injustice]. "

I was reminded of this recently when I attended a Walk for the Homeless in Washington, one of those many good and important efforts to raise money for Joseph's House and similar organizations. Before we began to walk, a nationally known sports star gave a little pep talk, exhorting the walkers to "go out and do your part to end homelessness." I have nothing against the walk, and I suspect the sports star did not really intend the implication. But walking five kilometers on a beautiful Saturday morning is not "doing your part to end homelessness."

Something similar happens at Joseph's House itself. How many of our contributors and volunteers end up feeling that their participation with us fulfills their responsibilities to the poor? It will not be a conscious thought, of course. But you come down and volunteer for a while, or you write a check, and it feels good. Perhaps you develop a close relationship with a formerly homeless man with AIDS, and you realize your common humanity. You feel a real satisfaction in that. You bring your children. But in the process you risk forgetting what a scandal it is that Joseph's House or your local soup kitchen is needed in the first place, forgetting that it is no coincidence that your new friend is black, poor, illiterate, and unskilled. It is easy to lose an appropriate sense of outrage.

I am also concerned that places like Joseph's House may reassure voters and policy makers that the problem is being taken care of. Joseph's House gets a fair amount of publicity; we are well known around the city. So when the issue of AIDS and homelessness arises in people's mind, it can be mentally checked off: "Look at Joseph's House! Isn't it wonderful? I guess things aren't as bad as we thought."

Soup kitchens and shelters started as emergency responses to terrible problems--to help ensure that people do not starve, or die from the elements. No one, certainly not their founders, ever considered these services as appropriate permanent solutions to the problems. But soup kitchens and food pantries are now our standard response to hunger; cities see shelters as adequate housing for the homeless. Our church-sponsored shelters can camouflage the fact that charity has replaced an entitlement to housing that was lost when the federally subsidized housing program was gutted twenty years ago. Our soup kitchens can mask unconscionable cuts in food stamps.

Furthermore, if we are busy caring for the poor, who is going to do the time-consuming work of advocacy, of changing the system? Lots of "people power" goes into running Joseph's House: We have board members, staff, and volunteers. Even those of us who understand that our charity does not satisfy the demands of justice have little time or energy left for advocacy work. Day-to-day responsibilities and frequent emergencies leave few opportunities to picket, to write letters to the editor, to testify before a commission. Those of us who care the most may be the least able to get involved.

For most of us, the work of advocacy is less rewarding than day-to-day contact with needy people. It is less direct. As an advocate, I may never see significant change; I would rather immerse myself in direct service. And so the desperately needed work of advocacy is left undone.

A more subtle problem is that many social ministries may unwittingly contribute to the perception that governmental programs for the poor are inefficient and wasteful, and are better "privatized." The last twenty years have seen a harsh turn against government. People in our society who oppose justice for the poor have used the inevitable organizational problems within some government programs to smear any kind of governmental action. One of their favorite tools is the supposed "efficiency" of nonprofit organizations.

It is true that nonprofits can often do things with relatively little money--primarily because of all the volunteered hours, the donated goods, the low or non-existent salaries, the space donated by churches, and so forth. Government programs do not ordinarily get these enormous infusions of free time and materials, so of course they are more expensive than ours. But "expensive" is different from "inefficient."

Only the government--that is, "we the people," acting in concert locally, state-wide, or nationally--can guarantee rights, can create or oversee programs that assure everyone adequate access to what they need. Because government can assure entitlements while Joseph's House cannot, comparing the two is not even appropriate. Still, the comparison is used to rail against government action for justice.

And what of charity's toll on the recipients' human dignity? Charity may be necessary, but charity--especially long-term charity--wounds the self-worth of its recipients. Try as we might to make our programs humane, it is still we who are the givers and they who are the receivers. Charity thus "acts out" inequality. Poppendieck writes that charity excuses the recipient from the usual socially required obligation to repay, which means sacrificing some piece of that person's dignity.

We hear much talk these days about "faith-based organizations" as appropriate tools for dealing with social ills--perhaps even replacing government as the primary provider of services to the needy. But while they certainly play a useful role, faith-based organizations cannot be a substitute for government.

Consider, for example, Joseph's House. In our care for homeless people with AIDS, Joseph's House depends on the good will of an enormous number of people. We were founded only with the extraordinary support of a nationally known faith community (Washington D.C.'s Church of the Saviour), plus the gifts of many people. Even now, local foundations and several thousand individuals and churches across the country provide support, and most of our professional staff have salaries considerably below what they could earn elsewhere. All this is certainly not unique to Joseph's House, but it is hardly commonplace.

So what happens in a place that does not have a faith community with a national list of donors? What happens when the people who want to start a house such as ours already spend all their time working in soup

kitchens and health clinics or providing food and shelter to homeless people in their churches? What happens if the local populace is not interested in caring for homosexuals or drug users? In all those cases, nothing happens--because society has said that homeless men with AIDS do not have an entitlement to food, shelter, and appropriate medical care.

Even if there were enough well-intentioned people in every community, where would the money come from? Like most nonprofits, Joseph's House receives much of its funding (in our case almost two-thirds) from the local and federal governments. Even with that funding, we share the lament of other similar nonprofits: There is so much more we could be doing, so many more people who need help. But no one who is implying that faith-based organizations should take over the care of homeless persons with AIDS is also talking about increasing taxes to fund them. And without those increases, charity is not going to replace taxes as a solution for this problem.

As for faith-based organizations providing for all the needs of the poor, the chances are even more remote. Some idea of the magnitude of the problem comes from Rebecca Blank, a government economist during the Bush administration and author of *It Takes A Nation*, an excellent, balanced look at U.S. poverty. She points out that if we asked churches to pay the costs of only three government programs--welfare for families, disability payments for the poor, and food stamps--every single church, synagogue, mosque, and other religious congregation would have to come up with \$300,000 a year. For the average congregation, this would mean tripling its budget and spending all of the increase on the poor. If, instead, we asked the nonprofit charitable institutions that currently serve the poor to foot this bill, they would need their contributions to increase seven-fold. Add in Medicaid, and the need for additional funding more than doubles!

Our charitable works, then, simply cannot provide care for all who need these services. Yet our projects can give the illusion that charity is the solution.

At another level, the fundamental problem for the poor in our country is not homelessness or AIDS or hunger or the like--or even any combination of these. They are just symptoms; the problem is injustice. In promoting our institutions, it is natural to emphasize the importance of our own project. But this can lead to subtle impressions that if we just distribute enough food, or create enough bed space, or find enough homes--that is, if we just treat the symptoms--we will have solved "the problem."

Injustice, however, is more deep-seated. It is the inevitable result of the structures of our society--economic, governmental, social, and religious--that undergird inequality. The way things stand now, poverty is built into these systems.

Consider just the economics. Despite the U.S. poverty rate being the lowest since the 1970s, despite the lowest unemployment rate in thirty years and the rise in the minimum hourly wage to \$5.15, one out of eight Americans is still poor. Among children below the age of six, one out of every four lives in a poor family.

What are the economic structures that keep poor people trapped in their poverty?

The first is low wages. The big change in U.S. poverty over the last twenty years has been the decline in wages among the less skilled, leaving many full-time workers in poverty. Of the people who are below the poverty line, 30 percent live in families with at least one full-time worker. In 1970, a single mother working full-time at minimum wage could pull herself and two children out of poverty. Today, a minimum-wage job leaves a parent and one child below the poverty line. Another is unemployment. The national unemployment rate is just 4 percent, but this figure is deceptive. It does not include involuntary part-time workers (increasingly common as employers avoid paying benefits); those who have dropped out of the work force altogether (for example, those who are so discouraged they are no longer even looking for work); those who are incarcerated; or those with jobs that do not pay them enough to stave off poverty.

Yet another is lost or inadequate unemployment benefits. Fewer than half of the unemployed still collect unemployment benefits. For those who do, the average benefit is 40 percent of one's previous earnings--not much if the previous earnings were minimum wage.

Also dragging down the poor is the high cost of housing. Of all the U.S. households with incomes below the poverty line, nearly half (45 percent) spend more than 70 percent of their of their money on rent and utilities.

Other developed countries have put into place economic safety nets for people who fall into poverty. But the "safety net" in the United States is so shredded it no longer deserves the name.

Charity does little to change the wider social and political systems that sustain injustice. In fact, most charities depend heavily on the very volunteers, individual donors, and institutions that have prospered under the current systems. And people who have done well in a system are usually not interested in changing it drastically--in fact, they may be diametrically opposed.

So even if we ourselves perceive the need for systemic changes, we may feel compelled to whisper those perceptions rather than shout them for fear of alienating those on whom we most depend. Charity offends almost no one; at one point or another, justice offends practically everyone.

I am not, of course, suggesting that we abandon charity. As an adjunct to justice, charity is both necessary in our current situation and a requirement of our faith. But we must acknowledge the broader implications of our charity and recognize that it alone is not enough. That done, we need to start thinking, about ways for our charitable organizations to support those who work for justice.

Our promotional materials, for example, must at least refer to systemic factors, recognizing that charity is not the solution.

We must be careful about comparing our work to, or even alluding to, the "inefficiency" of government programs. We must offer our volunteers reading materials, seminars, and discussion opportunities about the systemic issues. By putting themselves into face-to-face contact with the poor, they have taken an important first step. We need to encourage them to continue the journey.

We must include education as part of our mission. This can mean talking about larger issues in our newsletters and donor appeals. Perhaps it will result in a few people dropping their financial support, but that is the type of risk our organizations need to take.

We must engage in political advocacy. By law, tax-exempt organizations are able to use portions of their budget for advocacy. What if every social ministry dedicated 5 percent of its budget to advocacy, freeing up time for staff to preach sermons, to speak on justice issues in small groups at our churches, to testify before government commissions, to write letters to their newspaper, to call or write our elected representatives?

We must get behind the effort to drastically change campaign financing. Though barred from supporting individual candidates, nonprofits can use this election year to emphasize that the United States will not be an effective democracy until the enormous influence of money on government decisions is reduced. "We the people" currently have little power to persuade our representatives to vote for justice.

Working for justice is messier and far less rewarding than charity. There are no quick fixes, and the most common reason for quitting is discouragement. But we have little choice. Within an unjust society, there are limitations to our charity; we need to join others in the struggle for justice as well. It is a fundamental requirement of our faith.

What Can Be Done in the Face of Heart-Wrenching Truths: An Exploration in Quotes

What can be done in the face of heart wrenching truths? What can I do? Complacency and willful indifference just doesn't work. Ignorance was never bliss, just one of several deceptive ways to keep me from my brothers and sisters suffering - distracted and removed from my own humanity to care. - Jemila

My friend, Jemila, wrote this on Facebook today and it really resonated with me. Sometimes world events can be like an undertow that pulls you down into the depths of anxiety, anger, even depression – and yet becoming “blissfully ignorant” is not a viable option for people who pay attention. How do we stay compassionate and keep our balance?

Gloria Steinem said “The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off.”

“Usually when people are sad, they don't do anything. They just cry over their condition. But when they get angry, they bring about a change.” -Malcolm X

How do we use painful emotions to generate effective action rather than ulcers? How do we tell the difference between right action and reaction?

Siddhartha Gautama: “Rage is a powerful energy that, with diligent practice, can be transformed into fierce compassion. However much we disagree with our enemies, our task is to identify with them. They too feel justified in their point of view.” Is this really our task? Sometimes it seems naive or trite. But there have been times when being able to find the kernel of humanness in someone who is acting in a way that I abhor has helped me to make a human connection and have them hear me.

And then there is Martin Luther King, Jr, who has another perspective on compassion when he says, “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.” This opens up the whole idea that helping individuals may not be enough. Does true compassion require us to address systemic change and, if so, how? Or does system change happen one person at a time?

It is easy to feel hopeless and lose energy. “Politics hates a vacuum. If it isn't filled with hope, someone will fill it with fear.” - Naomi Klein - and that is just what our adversaries do. “Hope is essential to any political struggle for radical change when the overall social climate promotes disillusionment and despair.” - bell hooks

We must use all the tools at our disposal to resist the lethargy or unthinking action of despair. How? Music, shared celebration, attention to our needs (rest, good nutrition, recreation, introspection, love), art, mutual support, collaboration and connection. And balance – finding ways to place all the suffering that we see in a “bigger container” that also includes the daily progress, small victories, kindnesses, wonders, and joy of the world.

Malcolm X: “We need more light about each other. Light creates understanding, understanding creates love, love creates patience, and patience creates unity.”

Glossary of Terms

Ableism: A system of oppression that includes discrimination and social prejudice against people with intellectual, emotional, and physical disabilities, their exclusion, and the valuing of people and groups that do not have disabilities.

Ageism: A system of oppression that works against the young and the old and values individuals in their 30s to 50s.

Ally: a person who is a member of an advantaged social group who takes a stand against oppression, works to eliminate oppressive attitudes and beliefs in themselves and their communities, and works to interrogate and understand their privilege.

Anti-Semitism: the systematic discrimination against and oppression of Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture and traditions.

Asexual: an identity term for a people who either do not feel sexual attraction or do not feel desire for a sexual partner or partners. Some asexual individuals may still have romantic attractions.

Biphobia: the irrational hatred or fear of people who identify as bisexual, pansexual, or fluid.

Bisexual: an identity term for persons who are attracted to people of more than one gender, whether romantically, sexually, or both. Bi* is often used as an inclusive abbreviation for the bisexual, pansexual, non-monosexual and fluid community.

Birth Assigned Sex: the designation that refers to a person's biological, morphological, hormonal, and genetic composition. One's sex is typically assigned at birth and classified as either male or female.

Cisgender: individuals whose gender identity and expression line up with their birth-assigned sex.

Cissexism: The system of oppression that values cisgender people, upholds the gender binary, and marginalizes, oppresses, and makes invisible the lives and experiences of transgender people.

Classism: The institutional, cultural, societal, and individual beliefs and practices that assign value to people based in their socio-economic class. Here, members of more privileged socio-economic classes are seen as having a greater value.

Collusion: Thinking and acting in ways that support dominant systems of power, privilege, and oppression. Both privileged and oppressed groups can collude with oppression.

Coming Out: the process by which LGBTQI individuals recognize, accept, typically appreciate, and often celebrate their sexual orientation, sexuality, or gender identity/expression. Coming out varies across culture and community.

Discrimination: When members of a more powerful group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful group (Qkit: LGBTQ Residence Hall Programming Toolkit, UC Riverside)

Ethnocentrism: judging another culture solely based on the standards and values of one's own culture. Also, a belief in the inherent superiority of one's own nation or ethnic group.

Gay: an identity term for a male-identified person who is attracted to other male-identified people.

Gender: Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society deems masculine or feminine. This social construct is often linked to and confused with the biological construct of sex.

Gender Binary: a social construction of gender in which there are two distinct and opposite genders: male/masculine/men and female/feminine/women.

Gender Expression: a person's presentation of their gender. These outward expressions of gender can be intentional or unintentional and involve one's mannerisms, clothing, hair, speech, clothing, and activities (and more!).

Gender Identity: a person's innate sense of their own gender: being a man, a woman, a girl, a boy, in between, or outside of the gender binary.

Genderqueer: an identity term for a person who may not identify with and/or express themselves within the gender binary.

Heterosexism: the individual, societal, cultural, and institutional beliefs and practices that favor heterosexuality and assume that heterosexuality is the only natural, normal, or acceptable sexual orientation. This creates an imbalance in power, which leads to systemic, institutional, pervasive, and routine mistreatment of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. (UT Austin Gender and Sexuality Center)

Heterosexual: an identity term for a female-identified person who is attracted to male-identified people or a male-identified person who is attracted to female-identified people.

Homophobia: the fear, hatred, and intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as gay or lesbian.

Horizontal Oppression: When people from targeted groups believe, act on, or enforce dominant systems of oppression against other members of targeted groups.

Internalized Oppression: the fear and self-hatred of one's own identity or identity group. Internalized oppression is learned and is based in the acceptance of oppressive stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs about one's own identity group.

Intersectionality: A feminist sociological model and/or lens for critical analysis that focuses on the intersections of multiple, mutually-reinforcing systems of oppression, power, and privilege. Intersectional theorists look at how the individual experience is impacted by multiple axes of oppression and privilege. Variables include, but are not limited to: race, gender, ethnicity, religion, ability, education, sexual orientation, sexuality, gender identity, gender expression, class, first language, citizenship, and age. (J. Beal 2011)

Intersex: A person whose genitals, secondary sex characteristics, chromosomes, and/or hormone levels do not fit into the medical/societal definition of male or female. This is the preferred term to hermaphrodite.

Islamophobia: the irrational fear or hatred of Islam, Muslims, Islamic traditions and practices, and, more broadly, those who appear to be Muslim.

Lesbian: an identity term for a female-identified person who is attracted to other female-identified people.

Oppression: The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society.

- Oppression denotes structural and material constraints that significantly shape a person's life chances and sense of possibility.
- Oppression also signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privilege groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.
- Oppression resides not only in external social institutions and norms but also within the human psyche as well.
- Eradicating oppression ultimately requires struggle against all its forms, and that building coalitions among diverse people offers the most promising strategies for challenging oppression systematically. (Adams, Bell, and Griffin, editors. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.)

Pansexual: an identity term for a person who is attracted to people of all genders: men, women, transgender individuals, and genderqueers.

Power: the ability to get what you want (The GLSEN Jumpstart Guide: Examining Power, Privilege, and Oppression).

Prejudice: A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics. (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. *A Community Builder's Tool Kit*. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University.)

Privilege: A group of unearned cultural, legal, social, and institutional rights extended to a group based on their social group membership. Individuals with privilege are considered to be the normative group, leaving those without access to this privilege invisible, unnatural, deviant, or just plain wrong. Most of the time, these privileges are automatic and most individuals in the privileged group are unaware of them. Some people who can "pass" as members of the privileged group might have access to some levels of privilege (J. Beal 2009).

Queer: a term for individuals whose gender identity/expression and/or sexual orientation does not conform to societal norms. This reclaimed term is increasingly being used as an inclusive umbrella term for the LGBTQIA community.

Pronouns: a word that substitutes for a noun. Most people have pronouns that they expect others to use for them. Most cisgender individuals use pronouns that line up with their birth-assigned sex. Many GenderQueer and Trans* folks have selected pronouns that best suit who they are and sometimes generate new terms.

Racism: oppression against individuals or groups based on their actual or perceived racial identity.

Religious Oppression: oppression against individuals or groups based on their religious beliefs and practices.

Sexism: a system of oppression that privileges men, subordinates women, and devalues practices associated with women.

Sexual Orientation: a person's sexual and emotional attractions, not necessarily dependent on behavior. Terms associated with sexual orientation include: gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, heterosexual, and more!

Social Justice: a process and a goal. A commitment to a socially just world and the committed actions to make that world a reality. Or, "The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure... Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader world in which we live." (Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice)

Transgender: an umbrella term for people who do not identify with their birth-assigned sex and/or whose gender expression does not conform to the societal expectations. Trans* is used as an inclusive abbreviation.

Transsexual – people who change their presentation to express their gender identity. Examples of these transitions might include: changing one's name, pronouns, hair, or manner of dress, and medical transitions, like gender affirmation surgery, hormone replacement therapy.

Transphobia: the fear and hatred of transgender people.

White Privilege: The concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to share the norms and values of society that Whites receive, tacitly or explicitly, by virtue of their position in a racist society. (Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Second Edition, Routledge, 2007)

Xenophobia: the fear and hatred of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. Please note that many of these definitions have been influenced by multiple sources. Some terms have specific roots in communities of color, the LGBTQ communities, and other marginalized groups.

We thank everyone out there who does social justice work and has contributed to our understanding of the above terms.