DISORIENTATION GUIDE

Harvard University
Students for a Democratic Society
Spring 2008

Arise, ye wretched of the university.

THE APRIL DECLARATION

Preamble

We are a Harvard that endeavors to exist, think, feel, and love more democratically.

We seek to stand alongside workers, teachers, and neighbors that all claim this place as we claim it. Thought, word, and action bind us to each other, from a President perched in her office by day, to the anonymous custodians who sweep it clean it by night; from the first-years finding their feet in the Yard, to the residents of Allston safeguarding decades of history and life.

We share, by choice or by chance, a common path in our journey through this world.

In this we should find immense courage, inspiration, and power to constitute collectively a more just and more loving world. So rarely does this place achieve or even presage that depth of community. Rather, we find ourselves frustrated, divided, and all-too-often defeated.

Harvard promises, in bold and golden phrases, liberation through education. But too often we receive not lessons of empowerment, but rather the fearful apologetics of blind obedience to Power. Many here have had to struggle for barely sufficient wages, others can imagine no future except a handful of purposeless careers in finance, and still others are forced from their homes in the name of things better and brighter. Even in these struggles we find ourselves alone. Where we should discover a profound siblinghood transcending class, occupation, race, gender, and sexuality—contemporary Harvard divides and conquers us. Where we seek institutions to bridge the gaping distances that prohibit our coming together, they today loom as high, tall walls impeding even minimal interactions.

Harvard must change. Yet, if we have learnt anything from our time here, it is this: for Harvard to change democratically and positively, *we* also must change. We must awaken to the disjointed character of our collective existence and investigate its individual and institutional origins. We must imagine what this place could be, and commit ourselves to its transformation. Such a commitment is at once individual and social; for while one cannot individually live as a collective, history also teaches us that one cannot simply depend on the collective to re-make the individual. Our critiques of the present and hopes for the future must thus cultivate the courage to transform both ourselves individually, and also the institutions that order our world.

Thus, this Manifesto is many things: a critique of Harvard as we exist today; a statement of hope that another, more democratic Harvard is possible; a vision of how we might work towards that future; and a call to participate collectively in the making of a new university.

Through it we communicate three core messages: First, we ask all of us to become compassionately alive to the surrounding seas of humanity. Second, we seek, through this awareness, to sensitize ourselves critically to the imperfections of the present and also the urgency of protesting these imperfections as injustices. Third, we begin the process of outlining proposals to make real our dream of a more democratic Harvard—five, ever-widening conceptual discussions: on pedagogy, administrative structures, labor relations, surrounding communities, and Harvard vis-à-vis the world.

We hope to chart a path towards a new Harvard, and to inspire the courage in each other to again consciously take up the joyful work of making Harvard more democratic.

Democratic Hopes and Values

Democracy is the cultivation of a critical awareness of our interconnectivity and the task of discovering in it the courage, hope, and creativity to construct a free and fair world.

We strive to embrace, truly and profoundly, the infinite beauty and worth of every fellow being. This ethic we establish as the core of our social outlook—as the soul of our community. This kind of life demands that democracy infuse every aspect of our lives. The full engagement of each individual to this reality is the praxis of this vision—in democracy, we are the meeting of infinities.

From this awareness flows the impulse and capacity for individual transformation and social courage. We must not only strive to live more democratically, but also struggle to dismantle the entrenched structures of inequality in our world in order to make a democratic life more possible. Institutions are undemocratic when they limit, either deliberately or inadvertently, the capacity of human beings—or certain groups of human beings—in their strivings to become more fully free.

Individual Transformation: Learning to Live Democratically

We must first confront what Whitman called "sad, serious, deep truths" at the heart of our current community. We say that Harvard has shaped us; we say that Harvard represents us, yet do we actually know one another? Do we enact this possibility in our daily lives, even falteringly? How many people do you know as full, authentic, and human individuals? How many of the workers landscaping the Yard? How many of your professors? How many of your Facebook friends? Is this a community that you might grow in, that you can trust, that you can love?

These are terrible questions because they provoke terrible answers in so many individual hearts here. Few of us could authentically claim that we have experienced Harvard as a human community where all voices are valued and engaged equally. Few could claim that students, faculty, workers, and neighbors form any coherent or conscious community. We have been alienated from one another, occupying self-contained subworlds, moving in a small circuit of compartments. And because we do not know one another, we cannot appreciate one another as infinitely valuable. This segregation and exclusion dispossesses this place of immense opportunities for learning, growth, and community. We are divested of our togetherness, and thus we cannot realize its beauty and power. As long as this Harvard persists, we do not and we cannot live as free human beings.

> “We want structures that serve people, not people serving structures.”

We call democracy the practical realization of our “interconnectivity”. At Harvard, this requires that we assert that we are not our libraries, our classrooms, or our dorms. We are the students that study in these libraries, learn in these labs, and sleep in these dorms. We are the professors that teach in these classrooms. We are the workers that mop these floors, wipe these blackboards, and guard these buildings. And we are the neighbors whose lives have been and are being uprooted by expanding libraries, labs, and dorms.

We must strive to realize democracy in the everyday. We must develop urgently new ways of seeing and thus living. Such a challenge implies very concrete transformations. We must reconsider the boundaries of our current communities, and the hierarchies that impede the constitution of what they could become. Students enthusiastically engage fellow students, while impatiently handing IDs to tired dining hall workers or leaving dirty classrooms to overworked custodians. Professors profess a commitment to genuine pedagogy, yet many cannot find the compassion to teach us how to be human beings. Administrations proclaim their love of “diversity” through glossy, glitzy brochures, yet the secret court of the Ad Board and the exclusion of student, worker, and community voices from decisions of significance reeks of hypocrisy of the rankest sort.

Democracy means, first and most importantly, engaging with all as equals. It requires us to recognize that we all have something important to teach each other. We—students, faculty, workers, and neighbors—are human beings, are Harvard. We rely upon each other. Harvard could not be if any group of us were not here.

Institutional Transformation: Cultivating the Possibilities of Democratic Living

Of course, individual transformation cannot stand alone. It prefigures also a challenge to the way most of us now live at Harvard and the structures that regulate this living. For this place is not undemocratic simply because we lack awareness or the courage to transform ourselves. Real asymmetries and deeply vested interests maintain structures that nourish anti-democratic dynamics. Thus, we must also struggle to remake the institutions that delimit our lives.

A strict hierarchy rarified through a complex of cultural traditions and socio-economic dynamics, values our professor of labor history over and above those who actually labor to keep our lecture hall clean. Within campus organizations, a culture of competition for a perceived scarcity of resources and emphasis on minute difference forecloses the possibility of wider solidarity everywhere: academic departments fighting over funding, housemates with “too little time” to check in with one another, service and cultural clubs fighting over a handful of potential participants. These institutions and the cultures they generate must be radically critiqued, challenged, dismantled, and replaced with positive, democratic alternatives.

Such a struggle must be launched strategically and carried out with courage—the social courage we shall find by really and fully connecting to one another. And of course, we need all the courage and creativity we can find. Entrenched power and its beneficiaries will not capitulate unless challenged. Good intentions and glowing slogans are never enough. Campaigns must be initiated on many fronts at once, but coordinated under the aegis of an overarching democratization movement at Harvard. To name only a few discussed in this Manifesto: The Ad Board must be remade, recourse for workers suffering from oppressive labor practices and conditions must be instituted, student government must be reevaluated and reconstituted, and neighborhood relations must be transformed.

Too often the political activities of the members of the Harvard community compete with one another. This must change if we hope to permanently change this place. We must reimagine what we mean by “political” action, which will entail also a coming-to-terms with the interconnectivity of all progressive action in our community. Debates over labor issues, race issues, bureaucratic dynamics, and our pedagogical philosophy are deeply interlinked. Not all struggles ought to be collapsed together, but by actively building campaigns and coalitions from points of intersection, we will surely all emerge renewed, re-energized, and stronger.

Pedagogy

For us, burdened by the rabid nar-

cissism that plagues this place, the task of finding value in our education without repudiating the democratic foundations of our convictions has proved taxing. Our classes, our classmates, our professors, and our own work are marked through-and-through by the resolutely hierarchical and inaccessible context of their formation.

To hope for a better world within these walls has thus often meant running from what it means to teach us.

In a University where Power is groomed for its future day-in-the-sun, the formulation of a democratic politics has often been a tale of Harvard's hidden spaces: to call for an end to capitalism, one must withstand the stultifying, dogmatic rigidity of our economics curricula; advancing an anti-imperialist agenda entails ignoring the entreaties of our most famous, prominent historians.

The task of reclaiming our education and rendering it transformative rather than conciliatory has always demanded that we re-open Harvard itself to contestation—that we re-imagine what it, together with this world, might one day become. As a place tasked to inflame leaders-in-waiting with a belief in their unflappable importance, the university has been politicized in a purely instrumental sense. In other words, "politics" has been located beyond its gates, destined to be the futures of the wide-eyed alumni rolling off the production lines at the Institute of Politics.

It is this very instrumentality that a truly revolutionary pedagogy must renounce. By re-making this place into a site of contention—by re-politicizing it—we reject the basis of the excellence it claims. Against a Harvard committed to tending to the insecurities of the "best and the brightest", we here demand an end to the ethic of the Expert that suffocates the spirit and the soul of this school. We refuse to be those adolescents of faith who let urgent hairs fall over thick, concrete, manufactured textbooks—we refuse to be reduced to our problem sets, our midterms, our papers, our GPA. We refuse to be shaped into those battalions of earnest soldiers who fight on behalf of "techniques of management" whose foundations they have never understood, and thus whose consequences they shall never question.

By emphasizing that all is politics—that politics suffuses the here and the now—we seek to make it impossible for Power to promise itself to those it deems qualified. In this sense, the task of democratizing Harvard, then, is largely the task of ending the domination of "qualification"—of freeing our pedagogical life of the Veil dividing expert from mass, leader from led.

And that, thankfully, has implications not simply for those lorded over by this institution, but for all who live and die by the whims of bigwigs everywhere. In place of the corrupt notion that experts must speak for the uninitiated, that politics means politicking, that "leading lights" should lead the layman, we call for a new Harvard, founded in the promise of collective leadership and truly democratic politics. We imagine a Harvard that understands the fallacies and false assumptions of hermetic educations—a Harvard that recognizes and rejects the inevitable prejudice of Power when granted to a self-important minority.

Until that day, it should be acknowledged that we never mean to pretend to flee from our privilege into the waiting arms of the multitude to whom this world belongs. We do not imagine that Harvard has left us unscathed for the worse, even as people here have taught and made us for the better. We mean simply that the vision of "higher" education we embrace today demands a decidedly anti-Harvardian set of commitments to radical and popular transformation.

Administration

This year, in a show of bureaucratic demagoguery, Harvard's powers-that-be have created and selected a new committee that purports to review the roles of students in college governance. Yet the Dowling II Committee suffers from the same reformist predilections as the 1981 Dowling I Committee—Dowling II takes the creation and fine-tuning of the Undergraduate Council to be its main focus. Add a few more sub-committees, revise the electoral process, hold more meetings between the Undergraduate Council and their "constituents," and, miraculously, one washes one's hands of the whole bothersome matter of "student governance."

While many may appreciate UC party funds, TV screens in every JCR, and calendar reform—to call this "student governance," to even suggest that herein exists any semblance of self-governance ought to be an affront to each and every one of us. Governance at this college, true governance, lies well out of the hands of students, staff, workers and even most faculty. Governance concerns the production of norms and the production of a certain moral subject who adheres to those norms. And norms are defined not by general consensus in the Harvard community, which the term "community standards," often employed by administrative bodies, might imply; rather, norms are defined by disciplining and punishing those students who fall outside the "norm." These norms, though not decided by us, can still determine major aspects of collegiate life—sometimes even life beyond—and in being measured against them we become the unknowing vessels of their reproduction.

To glimpse the machinations of governance at work, one need only look as far as the disciplinary policies of the Administrative Board. Few of

us realize that the Ad Board, which has no student representatives and has as acting members some of the most powerful administrators in the college, describes itself as an educational rather than a judicial body. This allows it to utterly disregard due process and stifle student rights. The most severe of punishments dealt out by the Ad Board short of expulsion is the infamous "requirement to withdraw":

> [This] Action is taken when a student's conduct is unacceptable and the Board has determined that the student needs to gain perspective on his or her actions, or to address and resolve his or her difficulties. In all cases, the Board requires the student to leave the Harvard community completely and to hold a full-time, paid, non-academic job in a non-family situation, for at least six consecutive months before petitioning for readmission to the College. (Administrative Board of Harvard College, 25)

When one imagines the type of student who might gain the most "perspective" after receiving such a sentence, one begins to understand the identity of the college's presumed moral subject: someone with particular investment in the Harvard community, who has not worked a non-academic, full-time job before, and whose family resources might have conferred them considerable advantages should the Board have not stipulated otherwise. Such is the sense of entitlement of this imagined subject—in order for threats to that entitlement to effectively pressure the student to comply with "community standards"—that one ironically begins to question whether this imagined student subject, this "John Harvard IV," would indeed gain perspective or feel any sort of remorse for his "misconduct." Indeed, the moralizing tone of the Ad Board policy explanations evokes memories of a self-contained, all-male, all-white Harvard. This is not to suggest that students that fit the description of John Harvard IV no longer attend. But by that very same token, one must recognize that this moral subject has always been imaginary, or at the very least, produced.

According to the members of Dowling II, the Ad Board, and the Harvard Corporation, the role of the resident is not an issue that pertains to "student governance." But can we expect otherwise from a committee comprised of administrators, faculty and a handful of student "representatives"? The creation of new committees, subcommittees, student faculty bodies—these are the very means by which the capacity for self-governance is further limited, constrained, and destroyed.

And the moment we become that moral subject—"the Harvard man"—we are lost.

In the interests of free speech, in our desire to question power relations, property regimes and the very production of our subjectivity, we must assume—not simply ask for, or demand—our own self-governance. We must radically redefine the notion of "the Harvard community" so that it encompasses everyone who makes this university possible.

> "We refuse to be highrised, diplomaed, licensed, inventoried, registered, indoctrinated, suburbanized, sermonized, beaten, telemanipulated, gassed, booked."

Labor

Mired in the self-important image of our excellence, we here too rarely recognize that many among us relate to this place not as an institution of learning, but as a Boss. Even while we students pore over problem sets and papers, thousands of custodians, security guards, dining hall workers, clerical workers work to sustain this place. And in so doing, they daily make and re-make this University that prefers to hide them.

As one of the largest employers in the State, zealously safeguarding a thirty-five billion dollar endowment, Harvard has always had every opportunity to remedy the inequalities and asymmetries that riddle its everyday life.

Yet the history of labor at Harvard is a history of unfulfilled promises.

It has always been clear that, by outsourcing work to thrifty subcontractors, by paying unpalatable wages, by intimidating employees in order to silence them, Harvard in its daily practices consistently negates what it has the opportunity to embody.

And so, alongside this history of unfulfilled promise lives a history of uncompromising struggle: workers, students, and community members have long rejected a corporate Harvard in favor of one that could be so much more alive and free. These histories tell of democratic demands made against the segregation that makes inequality and injustice sustainable and possible, by making workers invisible and disempowered.

It has been a rebellion against the disjuncture between hundred-dollar economics textbooks that profess the inefficiency of a living wage, and the world of a single mother working full time and failing to put food on her table. It has demanded that this community realize the bankruptcy of the philosophy that enables Harvard students to recommend better skill-sets to escape the work that makes our education possible.

We have rejected, and today continue to reject the galling notion that

the world's wealthiest university cannot afford to pay its workers a living-wage, or meet the highest standards of dignity and respect. And for the last ten years students have been organizing sit-ins, rallies, and hunger strikes to lend leverage to the fight for these rights.

Ultimately, a democratic university requires the full participation of all those it affects. And thus, while we question, dispute, and reject the labor-related decisions taken by the administration, we also always believe in something greater. Indeed, it will never be our place as students to intervene paternalistically in workplace affairs. We believe fully in the possibilities and potential of workplace democracy.

> "These petrified conditions must be forced to dance by singing to them their own melody."

As it stands, of course, worker opinions are hardly integrated into the decision-making institutions that rule over them. The centralization of Power in these few hermetic offices—and indeed, in the hands of a few administrators—ignores the narratives, histories, and demands of those who often know this university best.
And thus we demand a whole new paradigm of labor relations at Harvard. In place of the cold calculations of administrators seeking to regulate labor militancy in the service of Capital, we here demand a radical restructuring and re-ordering of this regime.

Not only will this new Harvard be governed differently, but it will also be lived more completely. After all, we who are Harvard are not simply students, professors, and high-ranking administrators, but also janitors, dining hall staff, security officers, and clerical workers. The task of fashioning a democratic community demands that we reject a world where these all-too-shallow distinctions rule and regulate. In place of inequalities and hierarchies, we instead imagine real friendships, cooperation, and solidarity.

Harvard has always worked only because of the workers that keep it working.

Communities

This university purports its mission to be a commitment to education. How this commitment plays out in policy regarding workers, students, and communities, however, reveals that this noble vision often belies actions which are undemocratic and intolerable. Of course, insofar as financial resources determine the value of an education, Harvard has achieved its intended goal. Yet even our President Drew Faust claims that "people make a great university." And people—the people who pass through Harvard Yard each day, the people of Cambridge, the people of Allston and Brighton—often unseen and frequently forgotten, have been excluded from this vision.

Thus, in this university's educational mission, a commitment to open dialogue and community involvement in the decision making process is attenuated. The university deems community concerns irrelevant to the greater goal of education. This doctrine reveals much about our education and the principles which underpin it. The communities Harvard impacts are rendered accessory objects in the enterprise of university expansion and development. We are to believe that the fulfillment of our educational goals requires certain resources: the creation of advanced facilities, the admission of bright and ambitious students, and a collection of esteemed scholars and educators. Those on the periphery of this vision are ascribed simply instrumental roles. This structure is not only exclusive, but dehumanizing and repressive to all of us who claim this place as our own.

Education is not the information deposited in students at lecture, but a process of dialogue. Thus, an academic institution is defined as much by its social spaces as by its classrooms—by its dining tables, club meetings, and the interpersonal relationships of students to other students, to professors, and to workers. A university expansion must not mean the purchase of more property or the construction of new facilities. If we are to broaden our education we must extend dialogue to neighboring communities, for those debased by our exclusive educational structure too are educators and scholars; they carry narratives and experiences, each unique and human. An interchange of ideas—knowledge that encompasses the broadest range of human experience and understanding—reinvigorates our education and brings us closer to knowing truth. The dialogical project, extended to others, brushes against the hermetic atmosphere of academia, and in doing so bears the promise of transforming the educational enterprise. The present model must be transcended by one which recognizes communities and engages them as equal members.

Today, a veil of benevolence clouds how we conceive of our relationships to surrounding communities. Harvard boasts of its current expansion as a project of community development, priding itself on supposed benefits doled out to Allston. This mode of thought often dominates the relationships of students to communities. We commit ourselves to servicing communities, and while service does present the opportunity for dialogue, it often narrows how we interact with communities. The goal has to be to shift the paradigm from service to solidarity. Despite our self-perception, our current relationship is determined by existing asymmetries of power. The university exercises such power willingly, at times mitigated by the supposed benevo-

Beneath the paving stones, the beach.

lence of our service. In reference to Harvard's expansion into the Allston-Brighton communities, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, a civic agency, has stated their intended goal of giving Harvard the campus they want, not protecting the community Allston-Brighton residents cherish.

Students must challenge this power structure and work towards a democratic university. The paternalistic offer of benefits to communities mocks any sense of justice, and impedes all possibility of genuine democracy. To create such a relationship, to build a democratic university, communities must be involved in the decision-making processes that affect them. Not through bourgeois committees which claim representation, but democratic structures that involve all members of the surrounding community irrespective of class, gender, or race and that place power in the hands of the people.

Critically, by redefining the university's relationship to communities, we redefine the university.

Institutions

In recent decades, we have seen the ever-increasing corporatization of higher education. Elite universities in the service of Capital have implemented policies that enable them to perform their function of retaining hegemony through conditioning the minds of future generations of technocratic managers and intellectualls. At Harvard, the accelerating transition towards corporatization has taken place via several processes including the creation of profit-oriented institutions, the restrictions on student participation in university decision-making, the construction of consent, and the suppression of dissent.

Amid the rise of neoliberalism, elite universities have prioritized investment in private firms over investment in the public good, training students to become the next class of business-friendly policy makers and propaganda specialists. With the dissemination of "market principles" and the transition towards corporatization, universities have systematically narrowed the scope of critical inquiry. Rather than exposing the doctrinal framework of modern institutions and challenging the bases of legitimacy on which they rest, the intellectual community provides powerful actors with vast ideological support. To preserve the structure of power and privilege that characterizes the political economy of neoliberalism, intellectuals have developed theories and models that advance the reigning orthodoxy, which regards the elite as participants and the public as spectators. Through the imposition of effective thought control and the move towards commodification, universities select for obedience and further market-oriented solutions to today's crises.

At Harvard, students receive a specialized training, in preparation for entrance into positions of decision making and authority. Thus, the pedagogical function of prestigious universities promotes efficiency over equity, competition over cooperation, and dependency over development. If the program of corporatization is to be successfully replaced by a model of popular education, it is incumbent on students at Harvard to confront and understand these harsh realities—both within and beyond the university—by proposing and realizing a democratic alternative.

The movement for student power at Harvard is motivated by a desire to transform the structure of the university into one that promotes free expression, creative inquiry, critical thinking, civic engagement, and collective empowerment. We students understand that popular education is a precondition for meaningful participation in democratic decision-making. We want a school that encourages individuals to connect their personal experiences with larger societal problems. We want a university that is accessible, accountable, affordable, and democratic. We want an education that allows us to develop our full human potential and that facilitates our growth into critical, conscious, and engaged participants of a democratic society.

Conclusion

Reflect for a moment upon a world, a Harvard where the answers to the questions above can be answered by all positively and joyfully, rather than with loathing and denial—a Harvard made differently than the one we lay claim to today. Our institutions and social culture would cultivate radically different values. Institutions would not only govern us more fairly and transparently, but we ourselves would exist day-to-day in a radically new way. We would eagerly engage our texts and essays, but we would also engage more deeply the friends, acquaintances, and unfamiliar faces we encounter every day. All emotions would be felt more fully, all thoughts conceived more completely, all words articulated more eloquently, all acts done more courageously, all fellow beings loved more magnificently. All hopes would accelerate us upward towards still greater hopes.

Such a Harvard is possible. In fact, such a Harvard might well be at hand. Harvard has changed immensely since its founding. It is changing again. Harvard is a site of struggle, and many of these struggles have been victorious. We are heirs to three centuries of movements for racial, gender, and class justice at Harvard—most of us owe our presence to these histories. Radical democracy animates our hopes and our vision, as it did for many before us and will for many after us.

And so, in the words of just one of the legacies we inherit: Run, comrades, the old world is behind you!

The Other Harvard Legacy

Behind Harvard University's hallowed halls lies a hidden history of dissent. It's a history of student movements that have challenged ivy orthodoxies for the past century and change, making this a very different place along the way.

For most of its 370 years, this place was a bastion of exclusion and inequality. In many ways, as you will read about in these pages, it still is. But if it wasn't for the students and others in this community who stood up for something bigger than themselves, Harvard would still be a place reserved for those with white skin, with old money, a Y chromosome, a hetero sexuality, and a faith in Jesus. It would be a place where everything from research on the most lethal weapons to investment in Apartheid and genocide would have gone unquestioned, and where financial aid and decent pay would only be meant for the president and his friends.

This is the intro to Harvard you won't get in your first year orientation, your presidential addresses, your walking tours, or your Crimson headlines. These are the stories you won't hear anywhere else. First, here's a sample of that hidden history.

Universities like Harvard have always compelled some students to challenge the assumptions of their society and demand something more than a higher rung on the social ladder. For instance, Henry David Thoreau (Class of 1837) and W.E.B. Dubois (Class of 1890), prophets of civil disobedience and racial justice respectively, made their early marks on this campus.

Campus activists began to organize themselves in earnest in the 1930s, finding their power in the Harvard Student Union. HSU took on everything from organizing campus campaigns for a more open university to putting on "proletarian theater" to fielding candidates in town elections. Thanks to their efforts, Harvard was finally forced to start admitting more African-American, Jewish, and lower-income students (though quotas continued into the '60s), and teams were forced to reverse a policy of periodically benching minority athletes. A band of students even went to Spain in 1937 to fight the fascist armies, years before the World War.

Though Harvard officially succumbed to the "witch hunts" and political censorship of the '50s, some campus journalists didn't hesitate to publicly challenge Senator McCarthy and his House Un-American Activities Committee. Then, the gates were thrust open. In the Sixties, Harvard became the center of radical politics and culture known as the "Kremlin on the Charles."

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the young anti-war movement came to Harvard, and soon the university had the biggest chapter in the country. SDS organized an unprecedented drive to protest Harvard's complicity in the Vietnam War, decrying its proxy

Central Intelligence Agency, university assistance to companies manufacturing weapons that were killing hundreds of thousands, and the unwelcome presence of the Reserve Officer Training Corps on campus, as it trained students to kill even more Vietnamese people.

The SDS offensive culminated in 1969. That year saw a sit-in at a faculty meeting on the question of ROTC and, in April, the legendary takeover of University Hall. When state police, called in by the administration, staged an early-morning raid on the building and beat the protesters bloody, students went on strike by the thousands and effectively shut down the university for two months. Their call to arms offers an illuminating look at the student sentiment of the time:

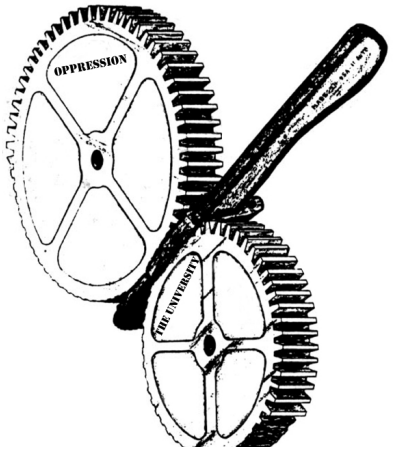
STRIKE FOR THE EIGHT DEMANDS STRIKE BECAUSE YOUR ROOMMATE WAS CLUBBED STRIKE TO STOP EXPANSION STRIKE TO SEIZE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE STRIKE TO BECOME MORE HUMAN STRIKE TO RETURN PAINE HALL SCHOLARSHIPS STRIKE BECAUSE THERE'S NO POETRY IN YOUR LECTURES STRIKE BECAUSE CLASSES ARE A BORE STRIKE FOR POWER STRIKE TO SMASH THE CORPORATION STRIKE TO MAKE YOURSELF FREE STRIKE TO ABOLISH ROTC STRIKE BECAUSE THEY ARE TRYING TO SQUEEZE THE LIFE OUT OF YOU STRIKE

Ultimately, the administration was forced to kick ROTC out, bring African-American Studies in, and soon, work to equalize the education of men and women—with quotas on women at the College abolished by 1975. These protesters struck at the very core of old school Harvard, and its connections to war, tyranny, racial and gender discrimination. The threat was genuine. The urgency was real. And the university had no choice but to change its ways.

Throughout the '70s and '80s, the Old Harvard faced further challenges, many led by the growing population of students of color. The university's hundreds of millions of dollars invested in apartheid South Africa fueled a decade-long campaign by the South Africa Solidarity Committee. The Committee demanded that the university divest from the regime, reaching a head in 1986 with a semester-long shantytown built in the Yard to bring home the oppression of Black South Africans. Then-president Derek Bok, who was recently brought back to head up Harvard, refused all divestment demands, but the campaign helped bring national attention to the struggle against apartheid.

With the advent of the 1990s, activism died down some as many students tuned out of politics and tuned into making lots of money. They were following Harvard's example: Between 1991 and 1999, the university's endowment tripled to over $15 billion.

But students started wondering about all the people left out of the rosy picture: The workers trying to live on poverty wages while working for the wealthiest university in the world. The women going to a school that would allow high rates of sexual violence, but not a women's center. The students of color going to a school that would tolerate hate crimes on campus, but no room for ethnic studies. And last but not least, all the people around the world impacted by our university's striking compliance with the Bush Administration and its wars.



Many students have kept their mouths shut through all of this. That silence is a function of what's known as the "Harvard bubble," a function of our privilege and insulation from the rest of the world. This is the same bubble that kept female, Black, Jewish, Latino, Asian, and poor students out of Harvard for so long. But then there's the other Harvard legacy, the one that you didn't hear about in your orientation. Today, that legacy of dissent is alive and well, and your class could be a new generation of activists just waiting to take back the campus.

Within these pages, you will read more about the ongoing issues facing us here at fair Harvard, and the movements that are fearlessly taking them on. But this Disorientation Guide is not just made to tell you things you didn't know about the school you're going to. It's also about the school you could be going to. What kind of school do you want to go to? You might think that you decided that already when you chose Harvard, or Harvard chose you.

But really, it's something we decide every day.

The Harvard Corporation

Most people are familiar with Harvard's reputation as one of the most prestigious universities in the world; the college itself trumpets this tag to its incoming first-years. However, orientation week will leave first-years woefully uninformed about the nature of governance and the process of decision-making at Harvard. This is no accident. This lack of information is symptomatic of the severely antidemocratic environment created by the invisibility and inaccessibility of those who hold effective authority at the College.

Established in 1650, the main governing body of the University remains the President and Fellows of Harvard College, commonly known as the Harvard Corporation (the oldest corporation in the western hemisphere). A self-perpetuating body made up of seven members, the Corporation has final say in the decision-making of the administration; these seven members, exclusively, delegate authority on behalf of the University.

The current management style largely originates from President Derek Bok's model of governance, which replaced the traditional, centralized form of administration with the modern, decentralized structure. In response to the growth of student activism and the rapid expansion of the University during the 1960s, Bok entered the following decade and instituted a corporate style of administration aimed at effectively diffusing subsequent student revolts.[1] Under Bok's presidency, the Corporation has vested more power and authority to the president and his appointees. While only serving as an advisory role to the president, the Fellows, in conjunction with the president, wield extensive power and operate on a rigid hierarchy that precludes any student participation.

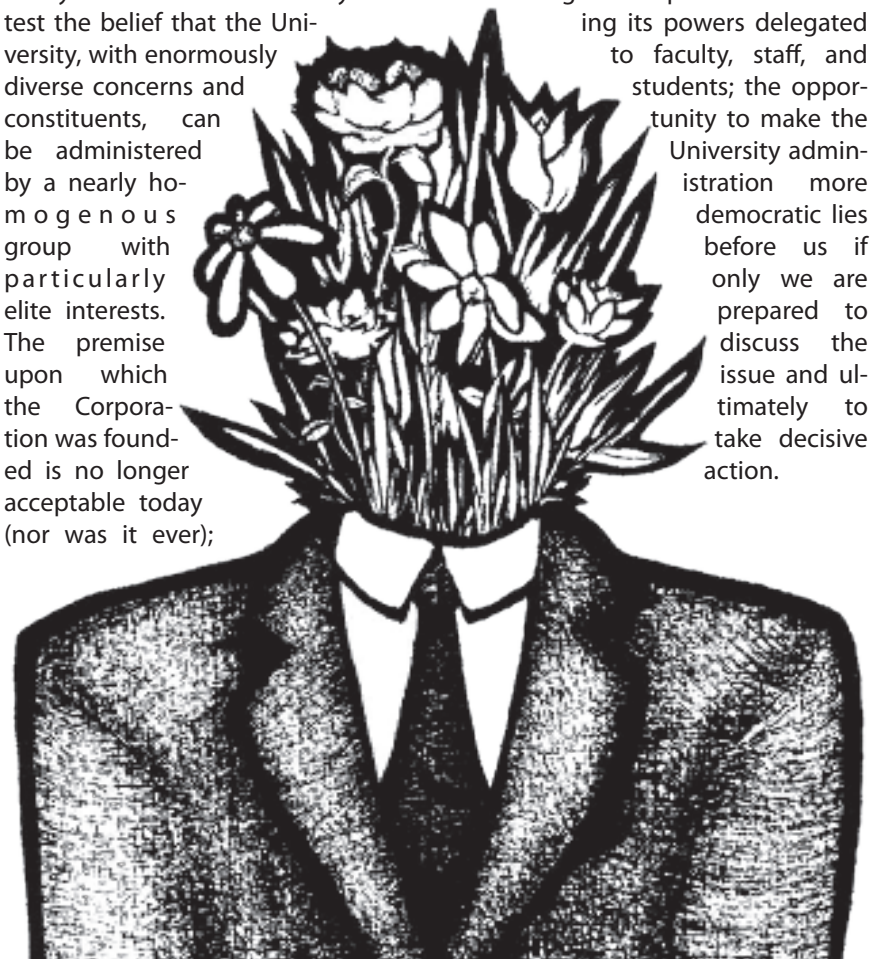
There are two major reasons that Harvard's incoming first-years should be up-in-arms about this body:

Inaccessibility: The Corporation's meetings are held in secret, and minutes are not disclosed. Reported to meet biweekly, the Corporation takes pains not to divulge the location and time to the student body (although it is widely accepted that they convene at Loeb House, by Lamont Library). Given the Corporation's isolation, students can hardly influence the content of their discussions directly, as petitions or demands are only heard at "their secretary's discretion." At many multinational corporations, the board of directors conducts its business in similar fashion. If first-years hope to study at an academic institution that is rooted in the public good, they then must reject the idea that our community can be managed from above (as well as the assumptions on which that belief is grounded); we all deserve a say in its future because, as students, we play an important role in the University community. In an editorial in the Crimson published in 2000, members of the Progressive Student Labor Movement (now the Student Labor Action Movement) wrote: "Our liberal education is founded on the principles of open dialogue and civic participation, while the authority of the Harvard Corporation demonstrates the contrary."[2] The class of 2012 should echo these sentiments as the year commences.

> "...first-years should work towards abolishing the Corporation and having its powers delegated to faculty, staff, and students; the opportunity to make the University administration more democratic lies before us if only we are prepared to discuss the issue and ultimately to take decisive action."

Elitism: Given this extreme exclusivity, it is perhaps unsurprising that the members of the Harvard Corporation have almost always been wealthy, white, Christian males. It was not until 1985 that the body admitted its very first Jewish man. Three hundred and fifty years of absolute homogeneity had preceded

his appointment. Four years later, Judith Richards Hope, a white corporate attorney, became the first woman appointed to the Board of Overseers.[3] And it was not until the twenty-first century that the first person of color became a fellow. While superficial measures have been taken to respond to criticisms of obvious racism and sexism, the historical record reflects the perverse philosophy that underpins the Corporation. First-years should vociferously contest the belief that the University, with enormously diverse concerns and constituents, can be administered by a nearly homogenous group with particularly elite interests. The premise upon which the Corporation was founded is no longer acceptable today (nor was it ever); indeed, it was with the same claim to "expertise" that European monarchs and aristocrats erected vast empires by exploiting indigenous peoples and natural resources in the Americas, Africa, and Asia—their imperial ambitions often praised by prominent intellectuals of the time. Out of a need to overcome the racist, patriarchal, and elitist structure of the Harvard Corporation, incoming first-years should work towards abolishing the Corporation and having its powers delegated to faculty, staff, and students; the opportunity to make the University administration more democratic lies before us if only we are prepared to discuss the issue and ultimately to take decisive action.



SLAM

In 1997, the big men on campus were raking in millions of dollars. But over a thousand people who worked on campus were living in poverty, struggling to subsist on $7 or 8 an hour after Harvard had cut their wages and "outsourced" their jobs.

That year, a group of students decided to do something about it.

The Progressive Student Labor Movement (PSLM) launched a campaign to bring a "living wage" to Harvard - $10 an hour in 1999 as declared by the City of Cambridge.

PSLM held over a dozen big community protests, won the support of hundreds of faculty and alumni, staged a "teach-in" for prefrosh in the admissions office, and even chartered an airplane to fly over commencement pulling a living wage banner.

When the administration and the Harvard Corporation still wouldn't budge, and worse, outsourced even more workers from above to below the living wage, PSLM knew it was time to up the ante. In April 2001, fifty students staged a sit-in in Mass. Hall in protest of Harvard's poverty wages and the administration's intransigence. Daily pickets, rallies, and a "tent city" in the Yard attracted up to 2000 people and the attention of national media. After three weeks, students finally left Mass. Hall with an agreement from the university to create an independent committee to investigate labor practices, put a moratorium on outsourcing of jobs, and renegotiate a better contract with campus unions.

Over the next year, janitors and dining hall workers would see their wages rise to a level above what was then the Cambridge living wage. But to this day, the university still refuses to implement a lasting living wage standard.

Student Labor Action Movement

Over the next few years, students would graduate, awareness of work-

ers' rights would fade, and activists would turn their attention to other concerns after September 11th. But injustice would not go away so easily. Workers kept up the fight for their rights, but they were losing ground. As soon as students had their backs turned, Harvard busted the union of security guards, outsourced more jobs, and in spite of record revenue, laid off hundreds of workers from 2003-4.

It was up to a new generation of Harvard students to revive the movement for justice.

Enter Student Labor Action Movement (SLAM) in the fall of 2005. The janitors' contract with Harvard was expiring, and the university was ready to take a hard line to try to keep the janitors where they were: with hourly wages still $7 below the "state self-sufficiency standard," poor health and vacation benefits, and few full-time jobs. What's more, Harvard's security guards, who had seen their union crushed, were struggling to organize a new one.

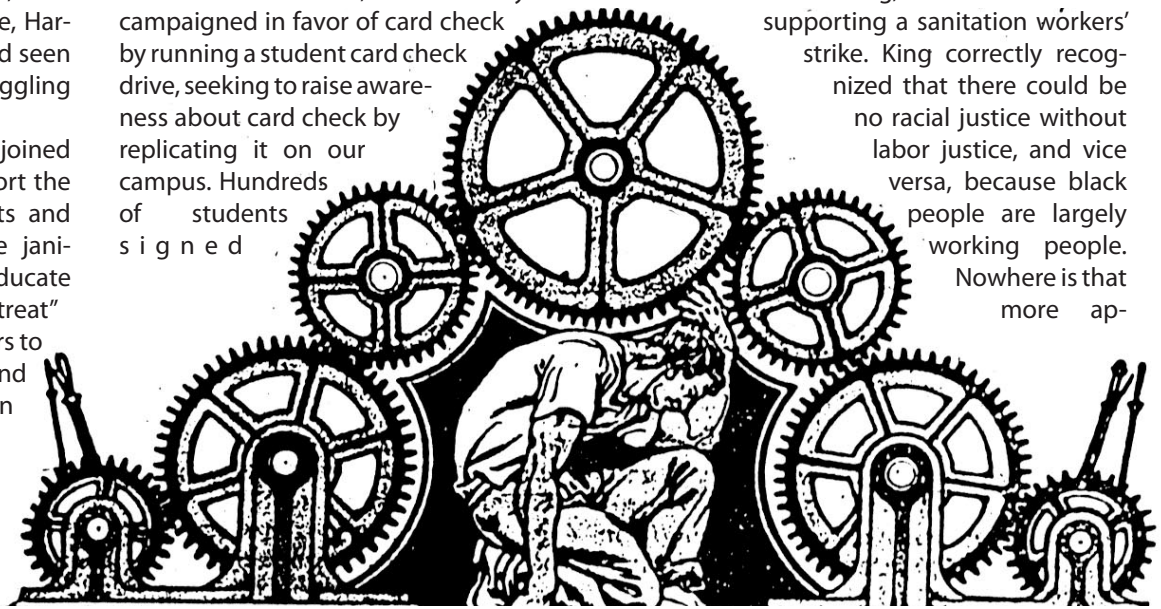
Hundreds of students joined SLAM in stepping up to support the janitors. SLAM held speakouts and community lunches with the janitors, a "Workers' Week" to educate the student body, a "trick or treat" visit with the children of janitors to President Summers' house, and the two biggest protests seen in years, with students and janitors blocking traffic on Mass. Avenue in front of the Harvard Club of Boston.

In November, janitors won a $5 raise over the next six years, along with enforcement of the "parity" standard, better overtime pay, and increased sick time, disability, and vacation benefits.

In February 2006, SLAM launched the "Right to Organize" campaign, meant to defend the human rights of workers to form unions and freely associate with each other.

The campaign calls on Harvard to institute a campus labor code of conduct, to implement "card-check neutrality" as a democratic process to allow workers to organize without fear, and to cut contracts with companies in flagrant violation of these rights. Companies like AlliedBarton Security, which has harassed and retaliated against Harvard guards for trying to organize, and Coca-Cola, which has been found responsible for the murders of union activists in Colombia.

In the fall of 2006, SLAM actively campaigned in favor of card check by running a student card check drive, seeking to raise awareness about card check by replicating it on our campus. Hundreds of students signed cards in support of the officers' call for a fair unionization process.



In October, the Stand for Security Coalition was formed, including SLAM, the Black Men's Forum, the College Democrats, and more than twenty other student groups. This coalition organized over a hundred officers, students and community members to rally for card check, and march through Harvard Yard. Soon after, AlliedBarton signed a card check agreement with SEIU 615, cementing the union for security officers.

Although guards were unionized, they still lacked their first contract. Negotiations were rocky all through March and on April 4th, officers, students, other Harvard workers and community members braved freezing rain and snow to show their commitment to justice. The march was on the same day that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed while supporting a sanitation workers' strike. King correctly recognized that there could be no racial justice without labor justice, and vice versa, because black people are largely working people. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the security workforce across the country, which is largely black. That the last non-union and the lowest-paid workforce on this campus is made up largely of blacks and/or immigrants of color was not lost on us on that day.

With the negotiation process stalled, SLAM realized that more pressure had to be placed on Harvard to guarantee a fair contract before the end of the academic year. On April 26, 2007, seventy-five students participated in a one-day fast in support of Harvard security officers. Over the next week, students planned and participated in a series of escalating fasts. This culminated on May 4th, when eleven student began an indefinite hunger strike, which eventually lasted nine days. Each day, hundreds of students, workers, and community members rallied in Harvard Yard, once even shutting down the Holyoke Center. Nightly vigils were held on the steps of Memorial Church led by allies from the faith community. The hunger strike garnered international media attention and sparked the crisis that reinvigorated the negotiation process.

On June 6th, security guards agreed to a contract that would provide them with a thirty percent pay increase, improved benefits, and a fair grievance process. Another success for students and labor united!

SLAM continues to meet regularly and is actively engaged in support labor rights at Harvard and beyond.

Harvard & War

Background: Many of the authors in this booklet and myself co-founded the Harvard Anti-War Coalition (HAWC—irony deliberate) in September 2007. HAWC is dedicated to building consciousness on campus about the current US-led occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq through a range of activities, including: The Harvard-Cambridge Weekly Peace Walk in the Yard, several street theater actions including anti-torture issues, a "Billionaires for Bush" themed protest, distributing flyers on the human and financial cost of the wars, sponsoring anti-war films and speakers, working with fellow Boston anti-war groups. A group of campus anti-war activists, mostly HAWC folks, had an on-record conversations (excerpts printed by the Crimson) reflecting on the war, our activism, and communities a few days before our major event this year—a rally in the Yard commemorating the 5th Anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. We encourage you to get involved next year, join our list (harvardawc@lists.riseup.net) and check out more media on our actions on cambridgecommon.com.

Today at 2:30, members of the Harvard Anti-War Coalition (HAWC) will gather in front of the Science Center, along with over a dozen other campus groups, to protest the Iraq War on its fifth anniversary. The Crimson sat down with HAWC's co-founders and the president of the Harvard Democrats to discuss the state of protest and politics at Harvard.

The Harvard Crimson: What was your political ideology five years ago at the brink of the U.S. invasion of Iraq?

Kyle A. Krahel '08: I was conservative. The war was one of the biggest things that made me move towards the left. It is something that is very much tied to my identity. It has had an extraordinary, direct influence on me.
Jarret A. Zafran '09, president of the Harvard Democrats: I was not even that politically active or conscious about this five years ago. I would probably say I was a supporter of the war. I can't pinpoint where I changed my mind.
Paul G. Nauert '09: I can directly trace my political trajectory from this event, from the run-up to the war to the war actually happening.

THC: What has been the trend of anti-war sentiment on campus?

Zafran: The campus has been solidly against war. At least 75 percent of the campus opposed this war at least since 2005. After the 2004 elections, people were forced into different camps.

THC: Would you characterize Harvard students as politically apathetic?

Nauert: I feel that many people at Harvard are engaged in some form of social action or political action... very broadly and diversely construed, whether it's Phillips Brook House, House government, the UC, Dems, or whatever the case may be. What I think I have been surprised at is that with some very, very major exceptions—like the Stand for Security Campaign, the May Day rallies for immigration my freshman year—groups fail to connect on broadly shared interests and form lasting, coalitional outlooks.
Zafran: Typical Harvard students support a lot of what the activist students on campus are pushing for, but yet always wonder if it's worth it to invest their time. A lot of Harvard students say, "Yeah, I'm opposed to the war but does the fact that I'm coming out on a rainy Wednesday to support a peace walk matter at all?" In some ways, Harvard students are too mature for their own good. Perhaps students have lost a bit of the idealism that has characterized previous generations and is what college students of the '60s and '70s have criticized our generation for. It's not that we don't care—I don't think I would characterize it as apathy. It's just a more pragmatic—and perhaps some people would say more cynical—outlook on how you achieve that.

THC: So you feel that Harvard students are politically conscious but don't feel compelling personal stakes to engage in political activism on campus?

Adaner Usmani '08: Politics is something that takes place at Harvard. It's the idea of politicizing Harvard. People aren't willing to acknowledge that Harvard is a site of contention, that Harvard itself is a site of politics. It's about fostering a different type of ethic in Harvard students. It's about not enabling them to say that "this is a place where I'll come and be educated and be trained and then I'll go and do political stuff." No. It's this place that you're at now—this is a political place.

THC: How do you compel students to feel a personal stake for the issues for which you advocate?

Alyssa M. Aguilera '09: We are trying to show that it isn't just an issue limited to political activists or peace activists

getting involved. This affects all sorts of facets of our lives.

Usmani: One of the other tactics HAWC discussed at the beginning of the year was what we saw as a failure of anti-war activism in past years. It didn't seem like we were doing a good job of bringing the war home and making it pertinent to Harvard students' realities. So what we decided to do this year was investigate Harvard's own investments in relation to the war and push a divestment campaign of some sort. We found significant investments in the war that the Harvard Corporation has. For various reasons, partly for personal reasons, we haven't been able to energize that campaign as much.

THC: What are some of the parallels between anti-war protests against the Vietnam War and the Iraq War on campus?

Krahel: This University will try and squelch dissent. As somebody who was involved in the hunger strike, I know. They tried to kick us out of Harvard for doing the hunger strike. When it comes down to it, the administration and faculty in those times [during the Vietnam War] were vehemently opposed, and explicitly so, to anti-war activism. This created an opposition. On a lot of campuses, police, things like that were brought in. This was one of them. And they beat students. Students that were otherwise depoliticized saw that. That exploded campuses across the nation, including ours. Students saw the forces of the status quo holding us down and keeping us quiet.

THC: Why was Harvard, as Krahel characterized it, so ready to "squelch dissent"?

Krahel: We were going to cost them money.

Aguilera: When it comes down to it, in order for Harvard to act, they need to have an incentive. During the hunger strike, during the Living Wage campaign [aimed at increasing wages for Harvard employees about a decade ago], during the divestment campaign, their reputation was at stake. As activists, that's where we try to hit them. That's why we're in the middle of the quad, we're sending press releases out to everyone, drawing attention to Harvard. Personally, I want to rid where I live of militarism and of war profiteering. I don't want my school to have those sorts of ties. That's why we're acting at Harvard. The rally is not an attack on the Harvard administration. That doesn't make much sense tactically.

THC: What role do you believe Harvard should play in anti-war protests?

Aguilera: Nobody thinks that the Harvard administration is going to end the war. It has to be a collective source of action all across the nation, a huge mobilization of students, raising our voices, coming together, and doing something on a broader scale. In the past, Harvard has really been a hotbed of activism. Harvard does have this name and the media does latch on to that. So if we're going to stir stuff up, this is where we have a lot of leverage. If 500 Harvard kids get arrested for protesting the war, that will be on the national news, the world media. Nobody is trying to get arrested though.

THC: How do elements of restraint, specifically in the strategy of silence in the weekly peace walk through the Yard, reflect HAWC's aims?

Aguilera: It's a vigil, it's silent. In terms of our strategy, we ask ourselves: Is this a tactic we believe in? Is this too non-confrontational for something like the war, which is so inherently confrontational? Should we be responding to war by walking, literally silenced? [This is] something we grappled with as anti-war activists.

Usmani: In years past, the peace walk was viewed as a group of older Cambridge residents foreign to our campus and to our student body walking around in Harvard Yard. The intentions of them are exactly what we've been talking about: politicizing campus. This is why the peace walks are in the middle of the Yard, at the middle of day, and the middle of week. The intention is to bring politics to what is normally viewed as an apolitical space at an apolitical time—at a time of learning and not of politics.

THC: What is the underlying goal behind HAWC's strategy of creative street theatre?

Nauert: You see the random kid in your section. You make that eye contact. We were wearing black hoods, specifically an action to draw attention to the torture and human rights abuses of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. You can see through the material, you can see your friends, peers, but they don't really see you. You're put in a position where they're responding to you precisely as the extracted essence of activism at the moment.

THC: What have been some of your most meaningful experiences as anti-war activists?

Nauert: The moments where we made eye contact, whether it's from behind the hood, or when actually holding a sign, and that person actually responds to you, recognizes you as a human being. Those moments give me an immense sense of hope. We strive to show the interconnectivity of politics. It's not just that we want to transform Harvard. We hope that human beings are being transformed. One of the most important lessons I've learned is to focus on the kid who comes every week and to find hope in that. It gives me a lot of hope, not just for ending the war, but for democracy and world justice.

from *The Harvard Crimson*
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by BITA M. ASSAD

You, my comrade, you whom I was
unaware of amid the tumult, you
who are throttled, afraid, suffo-
cated — come, talk to us.