

# OPINION



The Harvard Crimson

The University Daily Since 1873

PETER F. ZHU '11  
PRESIDENT  
ESTHER L. YI '11  
MANAGING EDITOR  
ALIX M. OLIAN '11  
EDITORIAL CHAIR  
MOLLY M. STRAUSS '11  
EDITORIAL CHAIR  
JULIAN L. BOUMA '11  
BUSINESS MANAGER

## THE CRIMSON STAFF

# Showing the Real Harvard

The recent Boston party shutdown indicates a misconception of the University today

During Harvard-Yale weekend, Cure Lounge, a club on Boston's tony Tremont Street, shut down a party for black students and alumni of both schools after it discovered that the majority of the guests waiting outside—in cocktail attire—weren't carrying Harvard or Yale identification cards. An email from Michael Beal '06, a second-year student at Harvard Business School who helped organize the party, accuses the club and its officials of racism; the club management insists that it shut down the party because of the other young people in line, "bad people" who "couldn't spell the words 'Harvard' or 'Yale'" and who might "cause trouble."

Although Beal maintains that club officials told him his party might attract "local gangbangers" and the "wrong crowd," there is simply not enough information to pass judgment on the thought processes of those club employees who made this decision. However, regardless of whether racism actually played a role in the events of last Saturday, the occurrence still seems an appropriate window through which to examine the way those outside the University's gates perceive the Harvard student body. The history of race relations at Harvard is not a pleasant one, and although Harvard itself has become much more sensitive to racial issues in the recent past, the world's perception of America's oldest university has not changed as significantly. For many, Harvard is still the mythic territory of white male elites, and this particular incident—whether or not the Cure Lounge can be called "racist"—is nevertheless an opportunity for the University to combat the popular misconceptions of what Harvard is and to whom it belongs.

First and foremost, that Harvard and Yale IDs were requested from these students and graduates suggests an uncertainty about whether they could actually belong to communities as hallowed as those of the two most prestigious universities in the United States. While we hope that such uncertainty didn't stem from the fact that these students and graduates were black, it's all too common for those not acquainted with the current amount of racial diversity at places like Harvard and Yale to misconstrue what today's Harvard student actually looks like. Indeed, the typical Harvard student is no longer the wealthy Oliver Barrett IV from "Love Story," nor is she the well-to-do Skylar from "Good Will Hunting." In fact, there is no typical Harvard student of today whatsoever—white, black, or otherwise. But no matter how clear that fact may be to members of our community, a string of events in recent years indicates that the University would do well to communicate this message more thoroughly to an audience much wider than

just its current students and faculty.

In 2007, the infamous "Quad incident" saw the Harvard University Police Department interrogate black students gathered on the Radcliffe Quad; in the summer of 2009, Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, Jr. was arrested outside his house in Cambridge after having been presumed to be breaking into his own home. These events—within the last three calendar years—all substantiate the need for better University communication on what people affiliated with Harvard look like today. In both of these additional cases, black students and faculty were afforded, as Harvard Law Professor Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. argues in a recent book on the Gates affair, "the presumption of guilt." In that sense, even though the perception of Harvard as the property of the white elite still seems to exist outside Harvard Yard, the onus is nevertheless on the University itself to portray its student body as it is now, not as it was a number of years ago in an era that a dwindling number of Harvard affiliates would even recognize.

Of course, as Ogletree also notes in his book, the University has already taken several steps over the years to show the world that there is no typical Harvard student or faculty member, at least not anymore. In general, we appreciate the University's establishment of a Dean of Diversity and its commitment to diversity in faculty hiring and student acceptances. Specifically, we strongly support President Drew G. Faust's 2008 establishment of a special review to "consider how best to assure the strongest possible relations and mutual understanding between the Harvard University Police Department and Harvard's highly diverse community." Other developments, such as the creation of a University Safety Advisory Committee and a public-safety ombudsman duty within the Ombudsman's office, also warrant significant amounts of praise. Finally, the recent move to diversify Harvard's portrait collection is similarly an excellent means of altering the public image of the Harvard affiliate on the most literal level.

We regret, however, that these initiatives—as noble and as necessary as they are—might not be enough for the potential damages caused by events like the "Quad incident," the arrest of Professor Gates, and, most recently, the Cure Lounge shut down, whether or not it was a "racist" decision. As Ogletree himself wrote in an e-mailed statement to The Crimson Editorial Board last night, "If this were an isolated incident, that might be different. When it continues to occur, that leaves a bad taste in the mouths of current and former students. We have a lot of work to do to learn from this episode and ensure that it does not happen ever again."

## COMMENT: WILLIAM F. POFF-WEBSTER

# Why So Focused?

Harvard's competitive club environment runs contrary to the liberal arts

Harvard embodies a pretty strange contradiction. Everyone here is great at something, from the fastest runner in New England, to the best Starcraft player outside of South Korea, to the guy who seemed kind of lame until he invented a multibillion-dollar website. Contrary to what you thought right after that painful midterm, the Admissions Office did, indeed, pick you for a reason, and you almost definitely have a major talent you've nurtured for years.

And yet, in the academic arena, we are told day in and day out to not rest on our laurels and to try new things. Administrators and our advisors tell us of the importance of a broad-based liberal arts education in the Harvard experience; we are urged to test out unfamiliar concentrations and take eccentric Gen Ed classes. Members of the class of 2014 will remember President Drew G. Faust's compelling answer at prefrush weekend to a question regarding the difference between Penn and Harvard. She communicated that while Penn gives you an education that prepares you for a specific career, Harvard gives you an education for wherever life may take you.

Particularly in their extracurriculars, freshmen are unknowingly caught between these two poles; we try to follow our established talents but also want to branch out and explore new things. The problem with trying a new

activity at a place like Harvard, however, is that many extracurricular activities are populated by those who were accepted to the College because of their success in said activity. Students who have had more than a decade of vocal coaching join the a cappella groups, the leads in high school plays fill the roster of Antony and Cleopatra, and national champion debaters join the debate team.

While there are plenty of introductory classes, "intro extracurriculars" are often either nonexistent or hard to find. Many students find themselves pigeonholed into what they already excel at, instead of being able to explore new interests. This is not to denigrate wholesome Harvard's extracurricular scene; students definitely benefit from elite extracurriculars bringing together the most talented young people in their fields. I would prefer to see an improv show featuring experienced improvisers, like we have in the Immediate Gratification Players and On Thin Ice, than a show of newbies. At the same time, it is unfortunate that many extracurriculars at Harvard follow a vicious cycle: You need experience to get in, and you can't get that experience unless you get in.

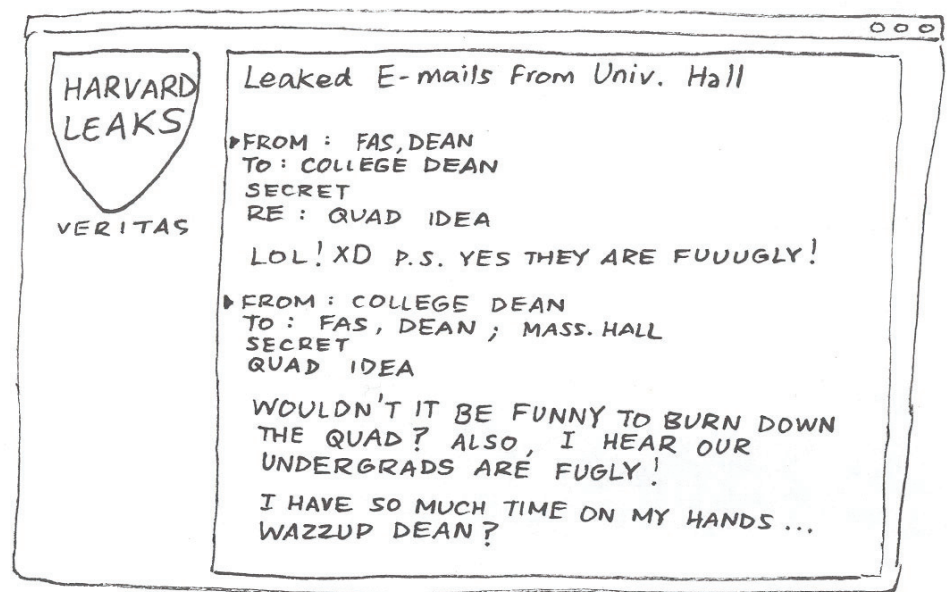
I, myself, have fallen into this trap. I had no trouble getting involved in the many political offerings on campus, but after doing improv in high school in a troupe with no auditions, I wasn't

up to snuff to get involved in Harvard's more elite comedy scene. I certainly don't begrudge these hilarious groups their duty to get the best performers for the job, but at the same time, it would be great to have a low-stakes environment like I had in high school. Similarly, a friend of mine who has done theater his whole life—and did get into improv here—has been trying to explore creative writing, but doesn't have the experience to be accepted into Harvard's high-quality publications. Something's wrong with this picture.

Every Harvard student, since orientation, is told about the theory of a liberal arts education. But we must do a better job putting that theory into practice in extracurriculars, which serve as every student's essential informal education. If students don't have to declare a concentration until sophomore year, why is it that we can go through all four years without experiencing an off-the-road extracurricular simply because we don't have the qualifications to get in and can't get those qualifications because there's nothing less competitive in the same field? Focusing on what you're good at is all well and good, but at Harvard—especially at Harvard—students should have the option to break that focus and be a novice in a new activity.

William F. Poff-Webster '14, a Crimson editorial comper, lives in Canaday Hall.

IMAGINE A HARVARD WIKILEAKS...



LIKE THE REAL WIKILEAKS, IT WOULD REVEAL NOTHING SURPRISING.

RAJARSHI BANERJEE

# Keep the Promise

By MARGUERITE THORP,  
RUMBIDZAI C. MUSHAVI, and  
KRISHNA M. PRABHU

Tomorrow, hundreds of students and community members will gather in Boston Common in honor of World AIDS Day. We will gather not only to remember the 25 million people whose lives have been taken by AIDS but also to hold our leaders accountable for the promises they made to fight this epidemic.

One such promise was made in 2007 by then-presidential candidate Barack H. Obama. In 2007, AIDS advocates politely went to town hall meetings in New Hampshire and Iowa during the presidential primary season, asking candidates to commit to spending \$50 billion by 2013 for global AIDS programs. Through our concerted efforts, we managed to get Hillary R. Clinton, Joseph R. Biden, and Obama to all promise to dedicate \$50 billion by 2013 to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund to treat and prevent global AIDS, including \$1 billion in new money every year.

For the past two years, however, it has become increasingly clear that simply electing a leader who campaigned on a platform of hope, change, and increased AIDS funding is not enough. President Obama's actions on global AIDS have fallen appallingly short of his campaign pledges. Though during his speeches he may have claimed to have "increased funding for AIDS," his budget "increases" for the PEPFAR—the principal U.S. funding body for global health—have barely kept pace with inflation. He asked Congress for a \$0.2 billion increase in

2009 and \$0.1 billion increase in 2010—one-tenth of what he promised.

Many continue to claim that flatlining funding to combat the AIDS pandemic was the best Mr. Obama could do given the global financial crisis. They say that there is no money in an already-tightened budget. However, money can easily be found for presidential priorities. For the New Start Treaty for nuclear weapons, the administration was able to find an extra \$4 billion for weapon modernization at the drop of a hat last week, in addition to the \$80 billion it had already promised for weapon modernization programs. Yet when asked to fulfill a campaign promise of a \$1 billion increase to combat the global AIDS epidemic, the administration claims that there is no money. It is clear that the global AIDS epidemic is not a priority for President Obama like it was for candidate Obama.

We recognize that politicians often fail to deliver on campaign promises. But as university students committed to global health improvement, we are taking it upon ourselves to stand up at this pivotal moment and hold our government accountable for this devastating regression. We have served in communities around the globe and have witnessed, first-hand, the extent to which AIDS can destroy families and undermine economies. Millions of people with AIDS, including mothers and children, are deprived of life-saving treatment because of funding shortfalls. We are learning from studies, such as one published recently in *The Lancet*, that global flat funding could lead to an additional seven million deaths and 14 million new HIV infections over the next 20 years. The cost of inaction is painfully high.

Increased funding for PEPFAR would not only save lives, but would also prevent the spread of AIDS. Studies showed that antiretroviral treatment reduces HIV transmission by 92 percent, making it the single most effective form of prevention. Further, treating AIDS comprehensively, as PEPFAR has shown is possible, improves care for other diseases like tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections and has been shown to boost primary health care in even the most desperate settings. Rarely do we see something this close to a win-win in global health.

The neglect of AIDS and other global health inequities is the most pressing moral issue of our time—on par with slavery in the 19th century, and civil and women's rights in the 20th century. But if we are to make fighting this epidemic a presidential and congressional priority, we must publicly hold our leaders to account for their bold promises. We therefore urge those who want to see a world free of HIV/AIDS to come to Boston Common tomorrow from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. to stand in solidarity in support of those suffering from a treatable illness. Together, we will urge President Obama to ask Congress for increases in global AIDS funding and work to fulfill his campaign promise to dedicate \$50 billion to global AIDS treatment by 2013.

Marguerite Thorp '11 is a member of the Harvard College Global Health and AIDS Coalition. Rumbidzai C. Mushavi '12 is the secretary of the Harvard African Students Association, and Krishna M. Prabhu '11 is a member of the Harvard College Global Health and AIDS Coalition.

# The Winter of our Discontent

As more and more Americans fall into poverty, our safety net is becoming weaker



RAVI N. MULANI

## BRIDGING THE GAP

In the highest number since 1959, approximately 43.6 million Americans lived in poverty in 2009. Devastatingly, this included "almost one in four American children under the age of six." A record number of Americans now depend on food stamps for their meals, as hunger creeps into over 50 million households.

This holiday season will be one of the toughest in memory for America's least fortunate. Unemployment has barely budged in months, while many of the federal and state programs that constitute America's weak safety net are set to expire or run out of funds. America's rapidly expanding poor population will need substantial assistance from the government and private individuals to make it through the winter.

Government policy is far and away the most powerful tool to alleviate this devastating spread of poverty. Increased food-stamp funding from the stimulus bill has been a critical lifeline for the poor to gain access to food, and extended unemployment benefits have been the only source of funds for the non-senior jobless. This unemployment insurance is in danger of expiring on Nov. 30 for many long-term jobless, leaving them without funds and resources during the harsh winter.

There is a strong macroeconomic incentive to continue and expand these programs. Programs including food stamps and unemployment insurance have some of the highest gross domestic product multipliers because the poor will almost

spend all of their funds. A dollar spent to provide food stamps creates \$1.74 in economic activity, while \$1 on unemployment benefits will create \$1.61 in economic activity.

Funds in the stimulus that employed workers, such as the Employment Contingency Fund—which paid private companies to keep employees in their jobs—and state and local aid—which funded many public sector jobs—also prevented poverty while placing incomes in hands where it would be spent. When our economy is struggling to move in the right direction, it is confounding that Congress is not continuing many of our most effective macroeconomic policies. Republican filibusters to any additional aid to the poor or stimulus show a fundamental lack of concern with the health of the economy or the plight of the poor.

Helping the poor makes a great deal of economic sense, but, even more importantly, it is a moral imperative. No child deserves to go without meals or warm clothing in the dark days of January; no single mother should have to choose between spending on one child over the other. A society should and must be judged by how it treats its least fortunate, and that's why, regardless of Congress's actions, private citizens do what we can to ensure that every American has a meal to eat and the resources to get through the winter this holiday season. It is important to continue to lobby Congress on behalf of the poor because the government can act at a much greater scale than can charities. That said, there are various causes that Americans can support independently with their time and resources.

Feeding America is a network of America's food banks that provides food to one in eight Americans. It covers almost every county in the nation and is a vital resource for America's neediest. A

donation as small as \$1 can provide three meals, and the need for this food is as great as it's ever been. With a small contribution, you might end up providing breakfast for a child before he goes to school or Christmas dinner for a family in need.

At donorschoose.org, you can provide a small donation to a classroom in need and allow a project or curriculum that was in doubt to come to fruition. Students might learn a special curriculum about democracy or read a new book because of your small gift. A classroom in a poverty-laden town in Texas needs funds for audiobooks for hearing-impaired students, and a classroom in California needs a carpet so that the kids can sit down, read aloud, and build community.

There are countless other organizations that help support America's poor during tough times, including many here at Harvard and in the Boston area. Time is a very valuable resource to donate as well, and nonprofits and charities always need extra volunteers during the holiday season. The circumstances demand that we each find some way to support America's poorest over the next few months and encourage those closest to us to do the same.

These are dark days for America's poor, and the government seems unlikely to extend and solidify the weak safety net and support system that it has provided for the poor, despite the clear economic and moral imperatives in favor of doing so. Thus, it is essential that Americans privately step in to fill the gap. Through donations and volunteering, we can help ensure that, despite the highest levels of poverty in decades, every American can find a little stability and comfort this holiday season.

Ravi N. Mulani '12, a Crimson editorial writer, is an applied mathematics concentrator in Winthrop House. His column appears on alternate Tuesdays.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS/SUBMITTING AN OP-ED PIECE

Letters should be e-mailed to [letters@thecrimson.com](mailto:letters@thecrimson.com), faxed to (617) 576-7860, or sent to the editorial board c/o The Crimson, 14 Plympton St., Cambridge, MA 02138. Letters may be edited at the discretion of the editorial board. They must be signed to be published, and brevity is encouraged.

The editorial board also welcomes unsolicited and unpublished manuscripts at the above addresses. Submissions should be 750 to 900 words and should note the author's Harvard affiliation (if any), contact information, and relevant credentials. If your op-ed is chosen for publication, an editor will contact you.

Secretaries

CRIMSON EDITORIAL POLICY: Crimson Staff editorials represent the official opinion of The Crimson Staff, which is decided at Staff editorial meetings. Columns, op-eds, and letters to the editors, as well as cartoons and illustrations, represent the opinions of their authors and do not represent the opinion of The Crimson Staff.