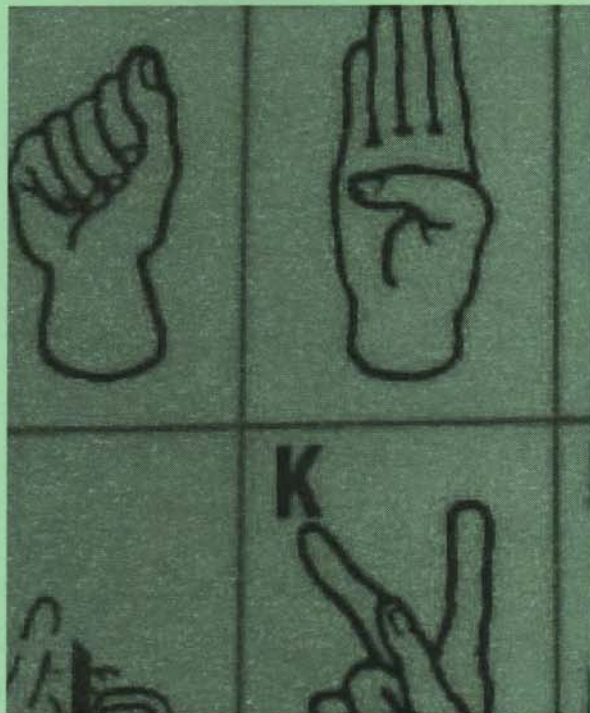


The Challenger

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November, 2009



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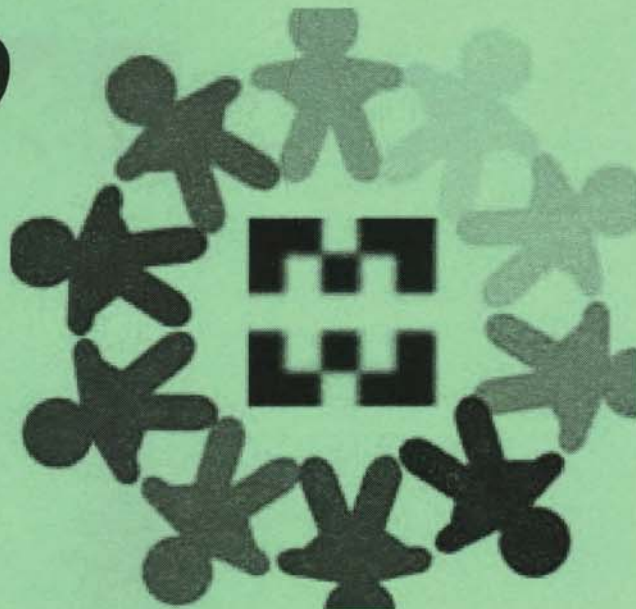
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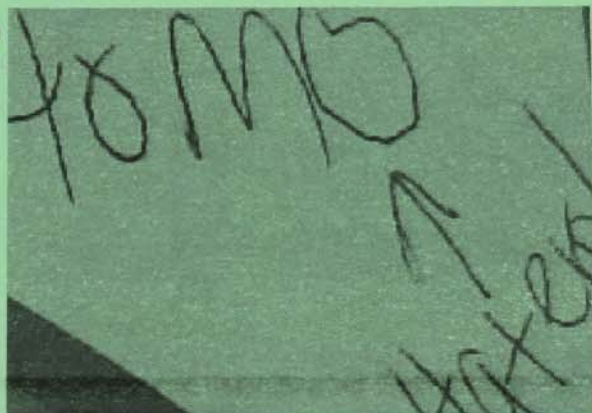
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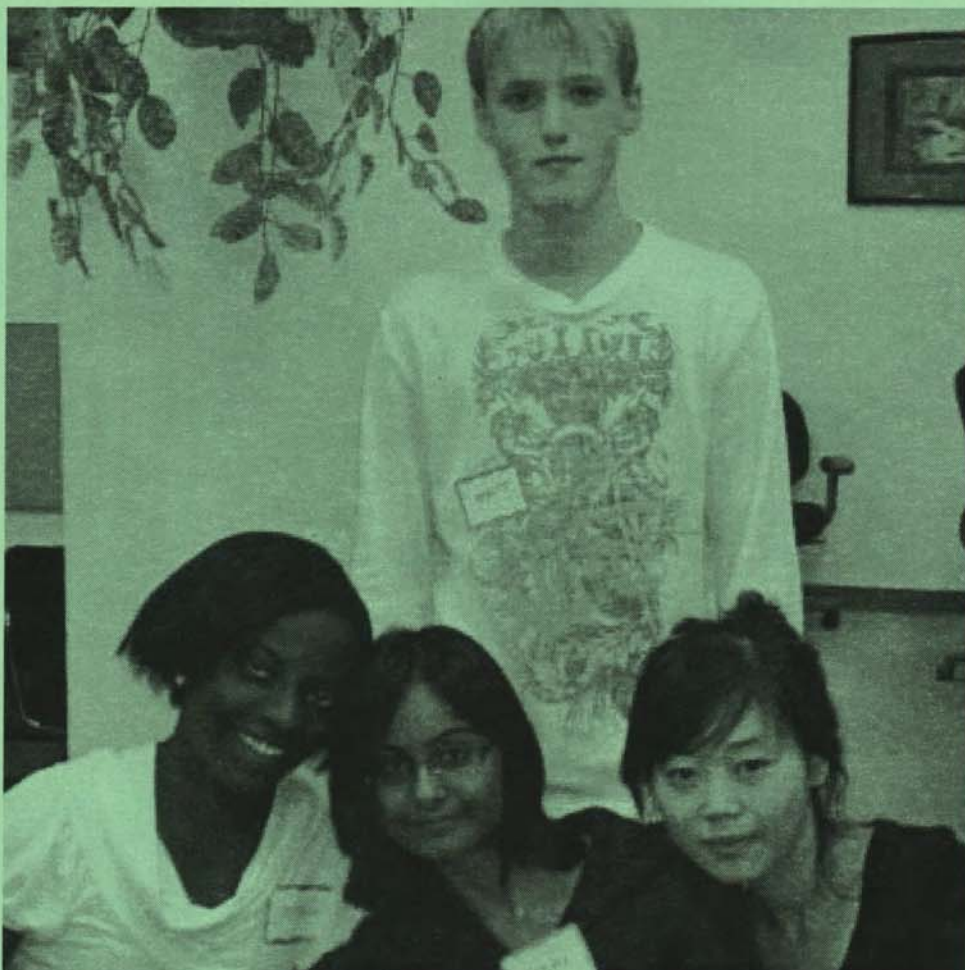


Some Thoughts on Diversity

By Catherine Walter

If you walk down the hallways here at Harper you'll notice we have a lot of students from a race different than yours. This is fairly likely to happen given that Harper is one of the most racially diverse community colleges in our area: home to a white majority of only 58%; compared to MCC's 88%; and COD's 66%. No matter which race you belong to, at least half of the rest of us are from a different race.

There is more than just skin color to diversity. In every classroom, you have teachers from all walks of life teaching students from all kinds of ethnic backgrounds, and you see students in every hallway making friends with people whose ancestors lived on entirely different continents. Yet people are made as much by their love of the Beatles, a



Enrollment for 2007-2008: 25,817
Asian or Pacific Islander: 2,011: 12%
American Indian Alaskan Native: 62 less than one percent
African American: 1,038: 4%
Hispanic: 4,588: 18%
White: 14,769: 57%
International: 223: 1%
Unknown (didn't fill out field): 2,126: 8%

punk haircut or an accounting major as they are by their race. At Harper, one in three of us are Liberal Arts Majors, and given the diversity of graduation requirements for each major, you are more likely to make a new friend from a different race than a different major.

A Glance at Harper Through Disabled Eyes

By Cheryl Gistenson

Hi. I'm Cheryl, and I have just begun my third year at Harper. I will be taking you on a blindfolded tour around some of our campus. You may think this is possible due to my familiarity with the campus, as I've been here a while now. Though this is true, it is not the main reason I'm able to give you this type a tour. I won't be needing a blindfold because I am blind. Contrary to what many of you might think, there are quite a few perks to being a blind student on campus. However, the past three years have also been a taxing experience. Here is how it all started.



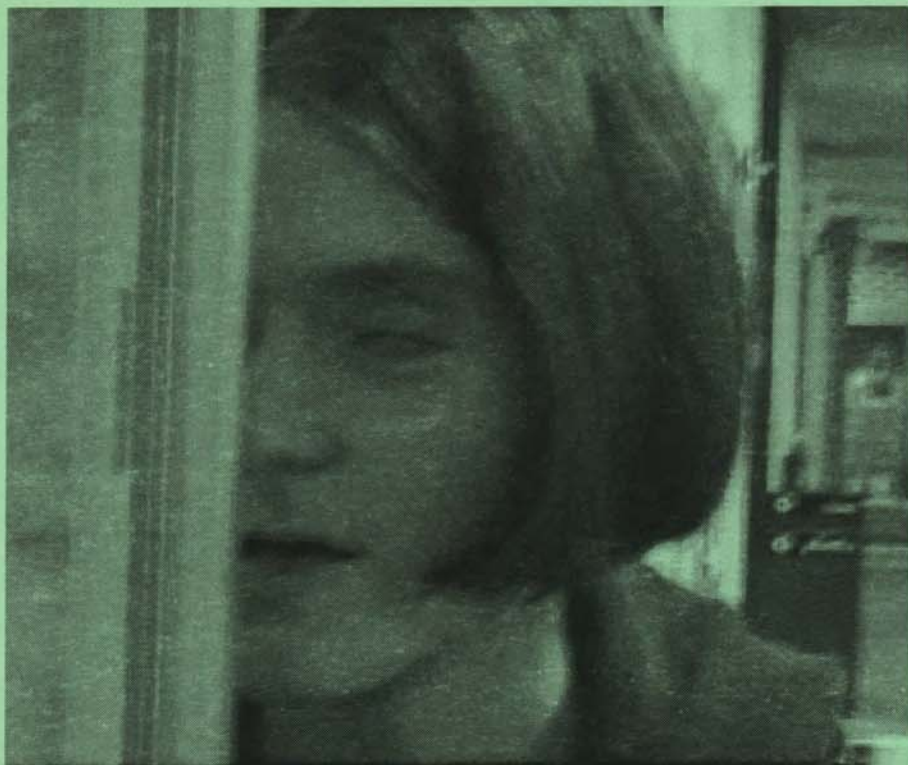
Before the fall semester of 2007 began, I spent many summer days roaming the campus. Since I could not simply look at a map or sign to see where a class would be held, I had to create a "route" from one place to another, and as they say, "practice, practice, practice," all the while, creating a visual map in my head. My map was lacking, though, because I was only aware of the buildings, trees, trash cans, and other obstacles if they were along my path, or if their existence was useful for a directional purpose. At first, my Swiss cheese map had three out of the millions of buildings that stand on Harper's green grass, a trash can, two benches, a concrete ramp and its railings and one concrete base to a map. The day before classes started I came to the campus with my mom to go over my travel directions one more time. I was to begin at the far left entrance of the D building and make my way to my history class

on the second floor of H building, and after history I needed to make my way to the other end of campus to L building. With great difficulties, I found the first classroom, and my mom read a note that was

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posted over the room number sign. It had a list of classes that would no longer be held there, and it listed their new room numbers. I freaked out; I wasn't even sure if my class was on the list. We headed straight to the Access and Disabilities Service room to tell my counselor I had had enough. Luckily, she calmed me down and assured me they would be there to give me as much assistance as I needed--including helping me get from class to class. Since then, I've learned about the many joys and frustrations of being a blind student.

Let's get started. We'll begin by the far left entrance of the J building (near X building) One of the more efficient ways by which I travel is called "shorelining." This method consists of walking along a distinct edge; the meeting place of concrete and grass, floor and wall; or the crack or seam in a surface. As I walk next to an edge, I drag my stick from one side in front of me, across to the edge along which I am walking.



WORD TO THE WISE: THE PROPER OR TECHNICAL TERM FOR "STICK" IS WHITE CANE.

If we find the brick wall on our right side we can shoreline along it to the doors. Be sure to stay to the right, and once we enter the building shoreline with the far right edge of the mat and the tile. This is important to remember because if you stray too much to the left the underside of the staircase might decapitate you. I'm serious. There is no railing or blockade of any sort to keep people from walking right under the staircase. I've come very close to smacking my head on its edge. As we lose the mat and continue forward, you'll most likely run into the post which has the button to the automatic door opener and walk to the left of it. These buttons are rarely in the same

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spot at different entrances on the campus. Now walk through the second set of doors into the J building. You might be able to hear the pop machines running to your right; be careful because a lot of students don't announce themselves if they are in your path. Also, if you want something from the machine, you'll have to ask someone for help because the machines don't have braille. Let's turn right after the machines and head down the hallway. Immediately on the left are bathrooms. Face the bathrooms: the men's is on the left; water fountains are in the middle; and the women's bathroom is on the right. I've come to realize, not only at Harper, bathrooms are always in this order. It is a very helpful detail to know. Unfortunately, the inside of the bathrooms are not so predictable. Every bathroom I've used on campus has been designed differently than the rest; I must trail the wall with my hand to find the location of the stalls and sinks and to find the shelf that is usually placed at neck or head level near the door. If no one has to use the washroom we will continue.

WORD TO THE WISE: TREAT THE HALLWAY LIKE A STREET. STAY ON THE RIGHT SIDE SO YOU FOLLOW THE "FLOW OF TRAFFIC."

At this point, our shoreline method becomes complicated. You'll notice as we walk, Harper's halls are cluttered with standing bulletin boards and signs, trashcans, chairs and tables, and students along its walls. It is dangerous and becomes difficult to try to maneuver yourself around all these obstacles.

WORD TO THE WISE: IF YOU TAP WITH YOUR STICK WHAT YOU THINK IS THE POST TO A SIGN, HOLD YOUR FOREARM BY YOUR FACE TO BLOCK IT; YOU NEVER KNOW HOW FAR OUT THE SIGN STICKS.



Continued from Page 5

Remember, students don't always announce themselves or move out of your way so you may have to break your line of travel to walk around someone. You may have an easier time in cluttered hallways if you walk nearer to the middle of the hall; listen for the walls and other large objects which you can usually go around if you've heard them clearly enough.

Let's check out a classroom. As we stand outside the doorway, let's see if we can tell what is being taught and if we can understand the lecture. It sounds like the professor is standing at the front of the room going over her slides. "... that equals 53. Now subtract this from the answer we got up here and you end up with that," she explains. Do any of you know what's happening? I don't either, and I ran into this problem in my own math class. I didn't have a note taker, but even if had, I don't think they could have transcribed the instructions accurately. There have been a few instances in which I had to talk to my professors about the way in which they taught their lessons. The majority of my professors were more than willing to work with me to make their class and materials fully accessible. However, it seemed to me that a few other professors acted as if changing their ways was an annoyance, or just as if they had no idea how to interact with me.

WORD TO THE WISE: A VOICE RECORDER IS INCREDIBLY HELPFUL WHEN YOU WANT TO TAKE THOROUGH NOTES.

From here, we'll walk sighted-guide across the campus to the L building. Sighted-guide is a method used when walking with people who have vision. Cup your hand, as if you were holding a glass, and hold on to the backside of the arm, just above the elbow. This method gives both the sighted and the blind person good control. Sighted-guide is the method I use when I don't know a portion of the campus. I use it when I am walking with a friend so we can move quickly and so I don't have to focus all my attention on my traveling.

WORD TO THE WISE: NOTICE THE CHANGING TEXTURES OF THE SURFACE YOU WALK ON; IT CAN BE INFORMATIVE IN FIGURING OUT WHERE YOU ARE AND NEED TO GO.

As we walk through the Quad, can you feel the texture of the bricks as your stick moves across them? Also, listen carefully for the bust of William Rainey Harper; if you are close enough you can hear a difference in the sound of the air. Now that we've come to the sliding doors on the first floor of the L building, we don't need assistance because I am familiar with this area. Since the sliding door is not opening, you have to walk from side to side in order to trip the door's sensor. Once we've gone through the second sliding door, stay in the middle of the hallway. We have to be careful of the brick pillars sticking out from the wall. Soon, you will either smell the grease of the elevator across from the black box or hear it running. Get into the elevator and feel for the braille corresponding with the button to the second floor.

WORD TO THE WISE: BEFORE EXITING AN ELEVATOR, FIND THE PLAQUE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE OUTER METAL FRAME; IT WILL HAVE THE FLOOR NUMBER PRINTED IN BRAILLE.

Ok, we know we're on the right floor. Let's head to our classroom. How do we know if we've found the right room? Of course, we check the braille. But where do we find the sign? A room sign is always located on the wall on the same side as the door handle. This is so you won't get hit by the door if someone opens it while you are reading the sign. I have come across a room or two (D building) at which the sign was hung high above arms reach, and I had to ask someone if I was at the right room.



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I prefer to sit near the door in my classes. If there is less space between you and your destination, there is little room for obstacles you will have to move around. I suggest saying hello to the person who ends up next to you. In my experience, most students don't initiate any sort of communication. In fact, sometimes I've felt rather isolated from the rest of the classroom because it seems as though people are nervous and don't know how to talk to me. Just the other day I was left out of a group assignment; they all had their back to me, and I had to repeatedly ask what they were doing. I was given a short description of what they had last said and they turned right back around. Out of seventeen classes I've attended, I can think of three people who introduced themselves and talked with me throughout the semester. Another guy asked what one of my tattoos meant, but we never spoke again. The social aspect might seem awkward or tense, but talking to a person with broken eyes is no different than talking to a person with a broken arm. Don't get me wrong. I've talked with people in my classes, but I feel they handle the situation with some sort of protective gear.

After our class, we'll leave through the doors near the library. Be extremely cautious, slow even, when approaching this long set of concrete stairs; the indicator strip is missing from the top stair. **WORD TO THE WISE: THE GROOVED SURFACE IS TO NOTIFY YOU THAT YOU ARE COMING UP TO A SET OF DOWNWARD STAIRS. THE INDICATOR IS ALSO LOCATED AT THE BOTTOM OF CUT-AWAY RAMPS NEAR THE CURB TO LET YOU KNOW YOU ARE APPROACHING A STREET OR PARKING LOT.**

Many times you will find students sitting near the railing on the steps. I prefer to use the railing when traveling on stairs, and sometimes people don't move or let me know they are there. You may find yourself in a similar situation, reaching over someone's head while teetering at the edge of the stairs.

One of the major benefits of being blind is that I don't have to deal with the parking lot. If you have a ride coming for you (I take a cab) wait by the curb. It helps to tell the driver the parking lot number since people can get confused in Harper's lots. I hope you've enjoyed this tour, and if you see me around campus say hello. I've met some pretty unique people here, and they've made my days and nights at Harper all the better. Now here I am starting my third year, and sometimes I have to direct my friends around campus. I now travel around a baby Swiss cheese map because I've filled in a lot of the blank space as I've discovered random bits of information about this or that location. I admit I've made my life a little easier by coordinating my schedule so the new classes I take are in places with which I am somewhat familiar. But each year I get a little bit bolder and the holes in my map become a little bit smaller.

From The Mouth of a Newcomer

By Diptika Khanal

Three key words best describe my life: transition, adaptation, and adventure. Throughout my life, I have moved several times, the movement being for one sole purpose: education. To be precise, I have lived in four different places and have gotten the golden opportunity to study in four different schools in three different countries. I went to an elementary school in Nepal, attended one of the finest high schools in India, studied in West Virginia for a semester and finally came to the Windy City to pursue my dream, which is to earn a bachelor's degree from one of the top institutions here. Transition was hard, but when I look back at my life so far, each move has added a new chapter to my story. Every school that I went to shares something

in common. The universal language English was something that I had to learn since I was in kindergarten.



Many Americans aren't aware that Indian students study English from such a young age. In India, I learned English in the British context and when I came here, I learned it the American way--this fascinated me!

Getting the visa to come to the United States of America is like a blessing for many young students around the world. It is the high standard of education, which attracts many students to come to this land of opportunity. Harper College forms the base for many international students. It is a home far away from home.

Not a long time back, I was asked by one of my friends who was in the ESL program, "You studied in India, and yet you speak so well in English; did you take any ESL class before?" I chuckled at him for asking me this. At that time, I was ignorant of the term ESL and I asked my friend, "What does ESL mean? He replied, "English as a Second Language." It is for students who have problems reading, speaking, and comprehending English. I sheepishly said, "thank you" and walked away.

Later that day, I learned many things one should know about the ESL program. After having learned so much about ESL, I was left pondering. I thought

about my friend who has come all the way from Korea to earn a bachelor's degree.

How would it be possible for him to achieve his dream when he doesn't know how to read and write fluently in English? How many of you have ever thought of going to some other country to seek a degree where the mode of conversation in the class is in a foreign language? Think of yourself beginning from scratch to forming sentences and so forth in that language. This is mind boggling to me. At the time, it seemed like an impossible task.

My friends, I was so wrong then. Dedication, hard work, patience, and commitment are the ladders to success and this is how the magic works. Before you enroll in the ESL program, it is very essential to see an ESL advisor. The advisors in the ESL office are like guardian angels. They are professionals who have training and experience. Students who are either enrolled in the ESL classes or who have been referred for ESL must meet with an ESL advisor before registering for any degree courses.

To begin with, the ESL program is divided into two parts. Depending on your English proficiency, you are either put in the Intensive English Program or the Part-Time Program. There are some conditions that are to be fulfilled before anyone is allowed to enroll in the Intensive English program. It is required that a student should have completed high school (at least twelve years of formal education) in their home countries or in the United States.

The ESL program has four levels of instructions, from beginning to high intermediate. Only after the completion of the high intermediate level can a student take advanced courses in the Part-Time Program. The IEP (Intensive English Program) offers a 12-week semester, Monday through Friday. I was bowled over when I learned that students who enroll in the IEP have to attend up to 18 hours per week of daytime class in which

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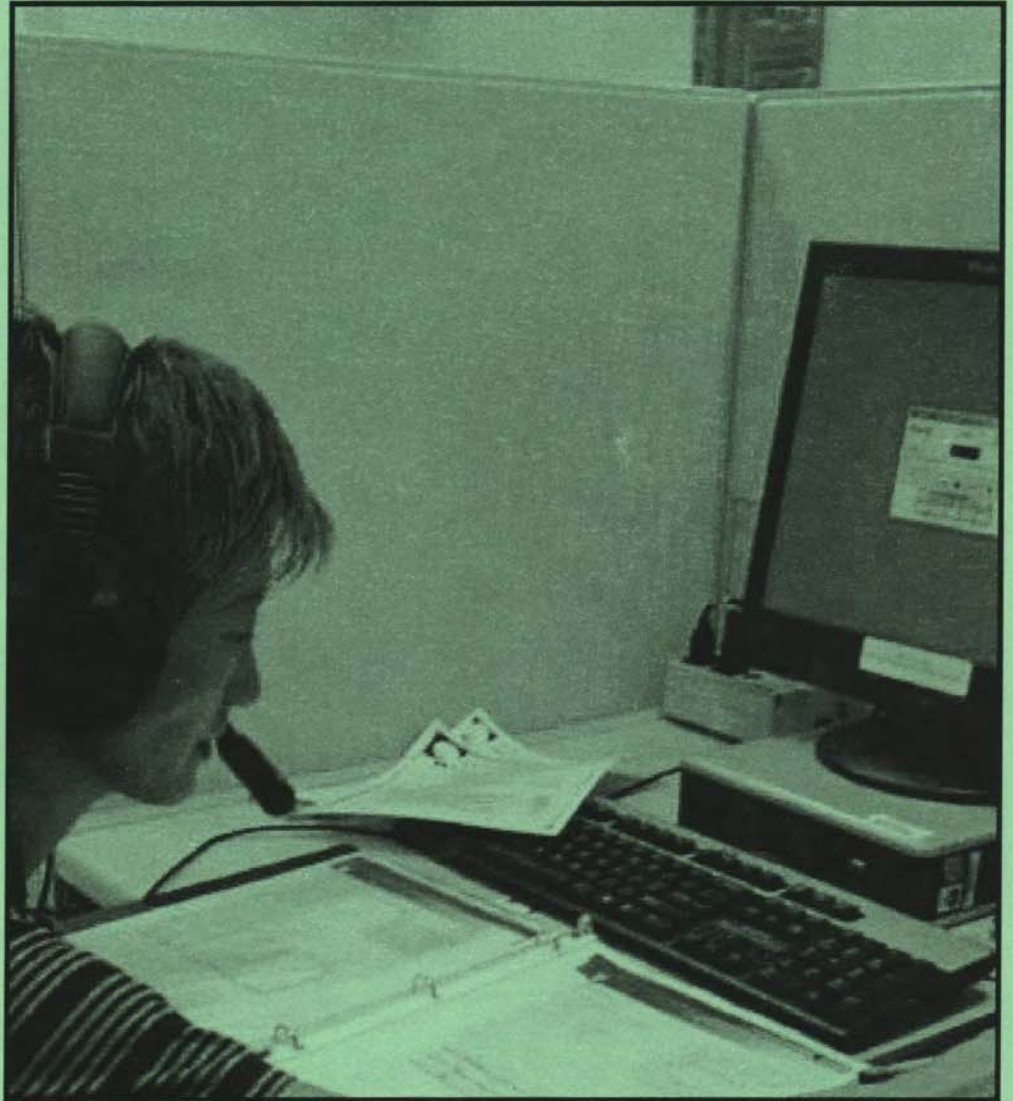
they practice only reading, writing, grammar, listening, and speaking. Can you imagine the amount of hard work and patience required of students and teachers?

Now let me take you on a delightful tour of what the courses are like in the ESL program. Level A is the lowest level and level D is the highest. A student advances to English 101 only after passing through Writing 5 and Reading 5. In the Reading 5 class, the course helps improve students' comprehension and critical reading skills. Classroom discussion, outside readings, written assignments, and examinations are included in this class. The Writing 5 class helps develop academic writing skills by focusing on expository essays. It helps students use appropriate vocabulary and write with few grammatical errors.

There are many courses that the ESL program has to offer: Advanced Vocabulary, Academic levels 4 and 5, helps students learn formal and academic vocabulary in American English. It covers topics such as word parts, word relationships, word origins and word meanings. Conversation levels 1 - 6 help students work on their conversation skills (listening, and speaking), pronunciation, and spoken grammar abilities. There are also Core classes and the Core levels 1-6, which help students with English grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing and furthermore help students with everyday life in the USA. It is interesting to know that they also have grammar classes to help students understand and correctly use English grammar structures at various skill levels.

Did you know that there is a class for pronunciation? It focuses on the improvement of pronunciation skills for advanced ESL students. In this class, there is an emphasis on individual sounds, rhythm, and intonation. Many of my friends who were in the ESL program have told me that with the help of teachers, native friends, and the well-planned ESL courses, it was possible for them to learn English. These were all necessary ingredients in the recipe of success. Hats off to these challengers!

Isn't this whole process magical? It sure is to me. Let's take a peek into the world of a student who came to



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the United States of America to achieve his dream, which is not only to earn a bachelor's degree in accounting but also to be able to write and speak fluently in English. Phi Theta Kappa member Gun Sik Kim, a former ESL student who is now a full-time student, explained what life as an ESL student is like.

1. Gun Sik, when did you come to the USA? Did you know how to write or speak in English at all when you came here?

I came to the USA in 2006 to get a good college education. Well, in Korea I had taken Basic English. I took that when I was in middle school.

2. What would you like to tell anyone who doesn't know how to speak English? How do you feel about the English language?



I would like to tell them to enroll in the ESL program at Harper College. (He laughs). When I was in the ESL program, I thought English to be easy as I learned fast, but when I took my first English 101 class, I realized that there was so much more. We learn English everyday!

3. What do you think about your accomplishments so far?

Well, I think, place and situation makes one stronger. I thank my lucky stars for having this opportunity to have come here and learn English.

After my conversation with Gun Sik, I realized that every time I write something, I learn a myriad of things. This time I am taking away something that I know will

help me in every aspect of life. I learned that anything is possible in this world, only and if we have the determination. I was also lucky enough to get some views of Professor Andrew Wilson on the performances of ESL students once they reach English 101. When I asked Professor Wilson how well these students are prepared for English 101, he said that they are extremely well prepared. He said, "They are very hard working, and they are totally immersed in what they are doing! I think sometimes their English skills are even better than native speakers, and this is because the basic English skills that they learned are still fresh in their minds."

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With the permission of ESL teachers Patricia Ramsey and Marjorie Allen, I got the chance to sit in on an ESL conversation class. The moment I entered the classroom, I saw how students were trying to converse in English, whether it was broken or in correct sentences.

They were not shy; I could see the passion and the spark in most of their eyes. After attending the class, I realized that some of the credit for making the students so well prepared must go to the teachers who are so patient, experienced, and devoted to their students' progress.

While there are many obstacles in life (life would not be fun without them), the only thing we as students must keep in mind in order to do well is that anything in this world is possible only and if we have a vision in our minds. Having a vision about what we want in life itself would automatically awaken in a person dedication, commitment, loyalty, and sincerity. I believe that in our story of success, all the above-mentioned words are the ingredients that make a successful person.

Pride and Prejudice

By Amanda Muledy

Megan Moloznik knows the cure for depression. We'll meet her in a moment. But first, a word about taking back some power from people who try to tell us who we should be.

We are shoved into roles from birth. We theme baby showers blue for boys and pink for girls. We have clear paths set out for us--we go to school, make friends, graduate, get jobs, get married, have kids, and do whatever gender and lifestyle appropriate thing society tells us to do. Most people, at some point, feel isolated and sad, and cannot pinpoint exactly why. I would venture to say that this is because somewhere along the line, we either feel we had followed the path society expected us to follow and are not finding it to be satisfying, or we are beginning to sense that we are not fitting into that niche society had made for us and we feel a little rude, maybe even ashamed.

What happens when we throw off these roles we never agreed to in the first place? We acknowledge that we are not obliged to be who others think we should be. We decide our lives are our own, and we will be who we are with pride. Feelings of guilt, shame, isolation begin to abate. You've begun to "take back the power"--that is, you are ceasing to let society's roles and stigmas control the way you feel about yourself. "Taking back the power" is a term used by the gay and lesbian community to describe, for instance, the act of letting the casual mention of "that's so gay" or "what a fag" roll off their backs and not giving others the power to hurt them. This is why Megan, as the Vice President of Harper Pride, the school's club for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) students, knows the cure for depression.

Did you just frown? Were you with me right up until the point that I started talking about gays and lesbians? Perhaps not. Many people nowadays, especially in an environment like Harper's, are accepting of those who are different in some way from themselves. But there are maybe a few who were excited to read the beginnings of an inspirational story of personal growth they could relate to and instantly soured with the mention of how their plight was parallel to that of a gay young man's or woman's. But the LGBTs are not unlike those who alienate them. When Megan talks about the moral of this self-discovery success story, it is a moral not limited to sexual orientation. She believes that as you begin to discover yourself, accept yourself, and love yourself no matter what the world thinks of you, these feelings of depression will fade. Much of the world is still telling people, in so many ways, that homosexuality is morally wrong and distasteful, making their battle in public challenging and their battle in private even harder. Anyone who

has grown up with pressure from their parents to pursue a career they hated, for example, can certainly muster up some empathy for what it is to struggle with these battles and how crucial it is to accept yourself who you are, even if you are the only one who does.

I don't mean to say that being gay is just like that time you didn't make the cheerleading squad and your family seemed disappointed in you. I am attempting to show that, while it is not possible for a straight person to fully grasp the struggles of coming out and living as a gay man or woman, it is possible for all of us to try to stroll through the halls of Harper College in their shoes. On a personal level, I don't know what it is like to be living the lives of the people I've spoken to. What I can do is share my interpretation of the difficulties they have, and spread some of the good news--what is being done about it.

Alaine Garcia is a name that will pop up at every turn in an exploration of Harper's extracurricular world. Not only is she a student here, but she has been on the board of student trustees, serves as an aide at the Center for Multicultural Learning, and is Editor-in-Chief of the school newspaper, *The Harbinger*. As I walked down the halls with her to *The Harbinger's* office to chat, every person that passed knew her and had a warm greeting for her. Alaine is friendly, personable, and sure of herself. She is also a lesbian. Even after sixteen years of being openly gay, she has struggles and must face confrontation. However, she has enough experience to deal with it appropriately and not let it affect her pride in who she is. When called a "fag" in one of her male-dominated classes, she wanted to set a standard of what was acceptable and what was not in the classroom. When the situation was brought to the adjudicator, many of the young man's friends leapt to his defense, saying he was European and he meant "fag" to be interpreted as a reference to a cigarette. The ridiculousness of the excuse for an already eyebrow-raising comment was not the real problem in this situation. What was at the heart of the matter was the assumption that people can say whatever they want and then expect to be pardoned with "it was misinterpreted" or "I didn't really mean it." The latter statement is the one that really plagues our campus and was something mentioned by both Alaine and Megan as one of the biggest struggles at Harper for them: the words that no one really means.

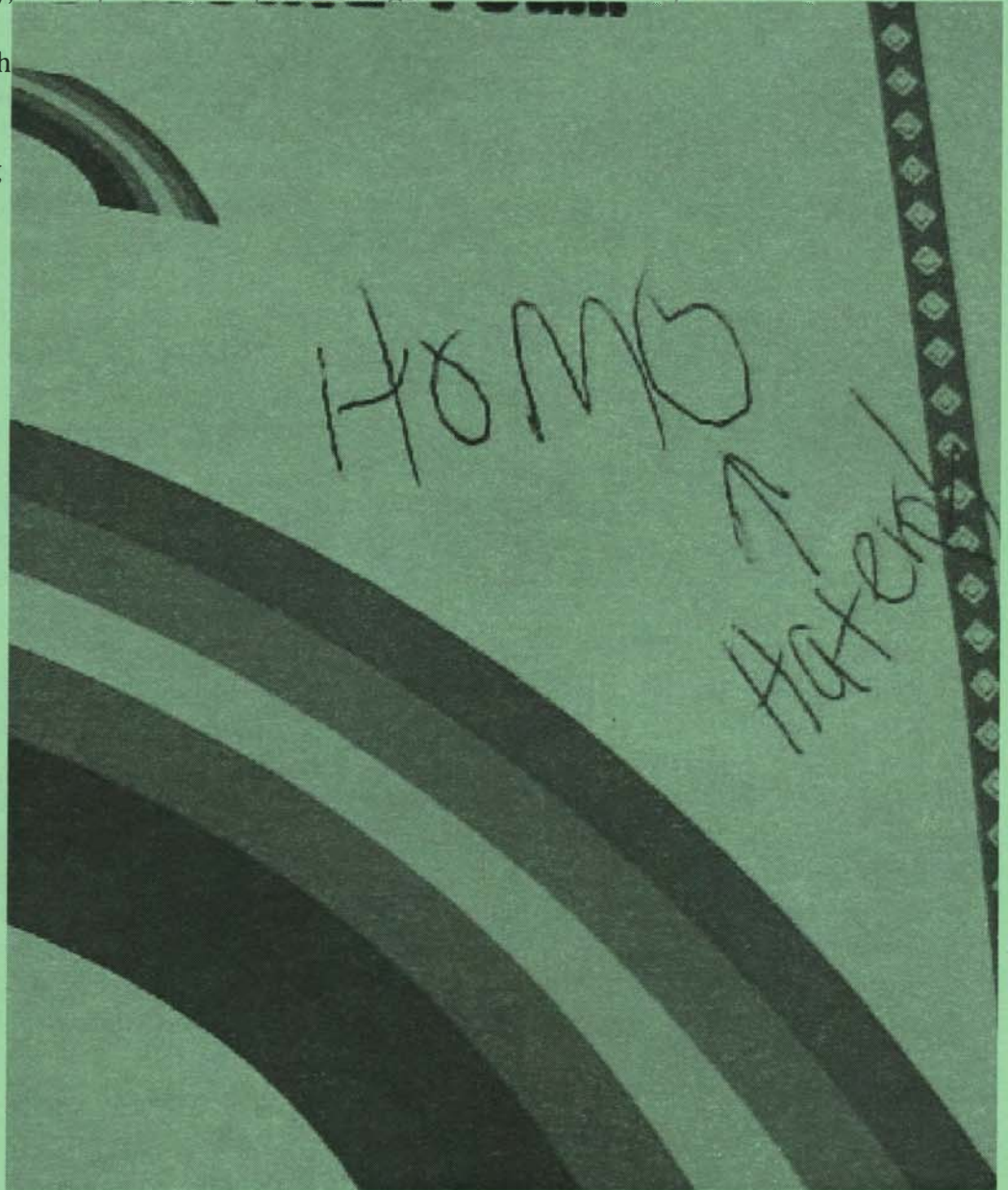
While our parents' prejudices lie more in their hearts, ours lie in our words and the freedom with which we throw about these spoken daggers. It seems like such a little thing to toss out slang, but the frequency with which it is done reminds a whole subset of our students that they are different. Derogatory terms are used to reference their sexuality, and there is no way to soften that fact. The term "that's gay" is not something we consciously consider interchangeable with saying "that's homosexual, and homosexuality is bad." But I imagine that's how it is heard. It is just one more voice telling our LGBT community that no one really cares how they feel, because they are pariahs and outcasts. That is not what I believe is the intended results of a straight person's actions, but who is it that should change? It would be easy for the straight person to stop saying things to offend. On the other hand, our gay students would not just have to work to harden themselves against negative attacks on them in everyday conversation. They would also know that they are silently sending out a signal that "it's all right to use a reference to my lifestyle that classifies me as a lower class of human. I'll just accept that this is how the world views me." Why in the world should anyone have to accept that? By saying the things that you don't really mean, you support the backwards notion that is so prevalent in this country--who someone dates can shrink them to a sub-human status. I don't want to concede to that just because it's easy for me to use popular language. It's not worth the trade-off.

The battle between insensitive people and LGBT students (and their allies) can be seen just walking through Harper's halls and looking at the posters. On a sign advertising the Center for Multicultural Learning as home to Harper pride, "homo" is written in ballpoint pen. An arrow with the word "hater," pointing to the first defacement, is in pen next to it. Really? We can't even let a sign hang in peace?

Most difficulties for the LGBT student could not even be imagined by the straight student. For

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instance, Megan spoke of the social blockades in openly pursuing love or affection outside the bounds of a male/female interchange. People can not be open enough with each other to simply say, when they are attracted to someone, "Hey, I like you. Would you like to go out sometime?" Any time we ask another on a date, we are, in a way, asking "Are you okay with me?" LGBTs are asking it on a whole different level. They are wondering not just whether the other person would like them, but also if the object of affection would accept an approach by the same sex. So they developed codes. A few words are thrown out to test the waters, and a person who is familiar and friendly with the community will recognize them and understand what is really being said. Megan dreams of the day when she might be free to tell someone, as one human to another, how she feels without regard for petty social stigmas. Often overlooked are the trials and tribulations of the transsexual or transgendered student, but knowing of their troubles may present a whole new way of seeing something as simple as a Harper application. If you are one of these students, you



consider yourself completely to be the gender in which you live your life. When a form is placed in front of you with the option to check "male" or "female," you, of course, don't even think about which box to mark. You pick the gender you are inside. Then, later, someone has checked with your records and calls you--angry at you! Accusing you of lying on this piece of paper! Now, consider the sign on the door of public bathrooms, labeling which gender goes where. It is a thing that certainly would never strike the average student with a sensation of dread. Kristen Spence, Counselor, Advisor for Harper Pride and teacher of Diversity 101, tells me that there are those who feel this way. She knows a young man who lives as a male, dresses as a male, and in every way is a male except anatomically.

As a result, he waits until hallways are clear, and when he feels most sure other students are in class, he can use a bathroom. A non-event to most students at Harper becomes a potentially dangerous situation, and for one reason. Closed-mindedness can escalate one's capacity to do terrible things. And capacity alone is not where it ends. History shows that atrocities springing from intolerance can and do happen. They happen today, in seven different countries where it is legal procedure to punish acts of homosexuality with death. It is a relief that America is a place more focused on civil rights and respect. However, the young man who wonders if he needs an escort to use a bathroom safely is almost certainly wishing there could be a little more respect to go around. The 2007 National Climate Survey says that almost 40% of transgendered students feel unsafe at school. Notice it does not say "uncomfortable." It says "unsafe." Where vehement prejudices go, violence is almost sure to follow. More than a few "out" gay men can testify to that as well.

As may be expected, the struggles of a gay male student are not always the same as those of lesbians. On the surface, it seems as if society is a little more receptive to the idea of two girls dating than two boys. The reaction to a gay man can be antagonistic to the point of being scary. Although no one I spoke with can remember any incident of physical confrontation at Harper over this issue, they remember when it has come close. Situations have required outside mediation. There is a disturbing amount of open hostility and boldly-voiced opposition toward a gay man, and he faces threats of not only bodily harm but also threats to his ability to continue to be proud in the midst of a huge collaborate rejection of who he is. Women face a less tangible threat, in many cases. For them, it is the same story it has always been for women through the ages--sexism. They are patronized. As with men, there is a rejection of who they are, but it comes in a whole new horrid flavor, because in the smuttier worlds of low-class videos and vulgar depictions of women, two girls together has been turned into, in our social consciousness, just another way to attract straight males. A woman is no less a sex symbol to a man when she writes off a man as a potential mate. Instead of a lesbian relationship being socially recognized as the potential for a partnership filled with love and devotion (the way a monogamous heterosexual partnership would be), it inspires elbow jabs, eyebrow waggling, and chuckles. The result, although seldom requiring a trip to the hospital over someone who was homophobic enough to want to show some [insert slanderous and vicious reference to a gay man here] what he thought of his life choices, is the same. It works to chip away at the ability to be proud.

But why is "pride" such a buzz word, anyway?

"The gay pride parade." "Harper Pride." That word comes up over and over again. Why? I suspect it is because the world has worked so hard to make non-traditionally practiced sexuality seem dirty, sinful, gross, and, worst of all, shameful. Culture teaches those people who couldn't find happiness or fulfillment in the roles predestined for them that they should hang their heads in shame for not conforming. That's right. They are taught to hate themselves for not martyring their personalities to a cause. This cause cannot be defined by what people believe should be done, but rather what should not be done. They are not supposed to ruffle feathers. They are not supposed to do anything someone might disapprove of. Gay people are trained to be ashamed, and it can lead to despair, self-loathing, and fear. I imagine, for most, there is a moment they realize that it is not they who are "queer," but society, with its unrealistic expectations and senseless rejection of its members. When any of us, LGBT or not, begin to accept ourselves in spite of this rejection, that is the point where we can reverse the ingrained feeling of guilt and failure. It is enough for the people in Harper Pride to love themselves. They can be proud of who they are, because it is not they who should be ashamed. It is those who reject others for not being more like they are who should be ashamed. This is especially applicable to those who hold a position of moral authority.

Kristen Spence remembers an event a few years ago where students were to share their coming out stories. It was open to the public and advertised in the papers. Along with people coming for support at this

event were a few ministers of local churches, whose main goals were to create a disturbance. A professor from Harper who attended this panel described the event.

“Several men from a specific church were there, all dressed up with their wives and children waiting in the back,” she said. “One or two of the men were rather disruptive, asking leading questions about whether the students’ parents were worried about them going to Hell, ect. One of our wonderful faculty basically told them to let the others talk, so the men waited until after the panel and approached our students.” These people from the church apparently proceeded to tell the students who had spoken that they were damning their souls and making their families suffer for their sins. The professor attending said, “I remember one specific student being asked if her parents would support her decision to jump off a tall building or overdose on drugs, because in his mind those were the same as being gay...[for] students in some cases telling their stories for the first time, the behavior was deeply hurtful.”

It seems these Christian leaders who come to vocalize their disapproval of people making themselves vulnerable by talking about personal and painful matters have lost sight of the greatest commandments in the New Testament--love God, and love others as yourself. Jesus himself said, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” Many in the LGBT community value spirituality or believe in God, and hostile rejection from the religious is sad. Whether you believe homosexuality is a sin or not is not the issue. Ms. Spence shouldn’t have to find a new way to advertise open LGBT events because some who preach a message of compassion and love do not practice it. That, however, is exactly what happened. No one will find these events advertised in the paper again until our world starts changing.

Don’t despair over stories like these. Change is coming and has already started. There is so much activism in our country pulling for it, and plenty of things here at our school working to further it. I have had an overwhelmingly positive response from LGBT students regarding Harper’s programs, teachers, and students. For many, Harper is an easier place to find acceptance than their high schools were. Clubs formed there as more of a defense against the cruelty, while Harper Pride is active in helping the progression of gay rights and civil treatment, as well as being a social group. Megan Moloznik, as the Vice President, is well-qualified to speak on the matter. She says that some LGBT students may have been rejected by their families, and they can come and find support they could not get at home from Harper Pride.

Harper College’s reputation of receptiveness toward the LGBT community gets a boost by the many teachers and faculty that have participated in the Safe Space program. These people are trained in “identity development theory,” and upon completion know how to help a student struggling with the coming out process. The Safe Space sign hangs outside faculty members’ office doors, and anyone walking past can visually see who has made themselves an ally for people who otherwise may be disinclined to ask for help for fear of an adverse reaction. And because of the awful reality that any talk about struggles with sexual identity may turn hostile, so many have remained quiet. That’s why many also participate in The National Day of Silence. On April 16th, 2010, people all over the country will take a vow of silence for the day to acknowledge those who have and will feel unable to speak out about their sexuality for fear of negative, violent repercussions at school. Those who participate in the National Day of Silence will hand out cards during classes, explaining why they are not speaking. Youth is taking a stand against those who persecute students of a different sexual orientation than them, and last year, 8,000 schools and hundreds of thousands of people participated.

As to the overall social temperature, so to speak, of our school’s reception to the gay community, it is getting warmer. People are less likely here to feel the sort of deep rooted fear of differences that you hear about in other pockets of the country. As Kristen Spence mused about this, she came to the conclusion that a college’s

very purpose for existence is a large reason for this. "It's fertile ground," she said, "for the opening of the mind and the challenging of what you know. You're more likely to consider new information." If we go to college expecting to learn academically, we, perhaps unconsciously, are also in a mindset to learn socially. Very few people I know in college would actually voice a hatred for gay people, because they don't actually feel it (although positive talk from most straight people about anyone of the LGBT persuasion is still rather patronizing). But I feel that, in this school, the people with a vicious nature and who actually mean direct harm are few. I know they exist, but it isn't the majority of straight people, as may have been the case going to school fifteen or twenty years ago. Where the problem elsewhere can be hatred in hearts, the real problem here is insensitive words. People say things to their friends about an LGBT student that they wouldn't say to the student's face. They use the words "gay," "fag," and "homo" flippantly, feeling that the average LGBT student should be desensitized to it by now. Alaine Garcia spoke of how people will use a preface of "no offense, but..." to a derogatory reference to homosexuality, thinking that to preemptively excuse an insulting comment is somehow the same as taking the insult out of the comment all together. Alaine is no shrinking violet. She will not accept people's half-hearted attempts to excuse behavior. It is not out of pain, but out of pride. Someone has to draw the line in order for things to change. Alaine is willing to stand up and announce when things we do or say are not okay, and we need that. She feels that if she can just change one person's mindset, she has won something big for a cause she believes in. And maybe that one person will have a ripple effect, and change will be here in full force before we know it.

Where does that leave us? Perhaps, like Alaine, you help just one other person look at an LGBT classmate or student in a new light. Or, perhaps you can make an effort to stop casually using language that means nothing to you, but something to someone else. Perhaps you can visit dayofsilence.org and find out how you can join in this April for the National Day of Silence. If you are a teacher, you can contact Ms. Spence and find out how to make your office a Safe Space. Or, instead of prejudging someone, you can remember a time when you felt stifled by the roles your family or culture decided you should fill. When you look at the people who have decided to be who they are, despite all the opposition, and are proud because of it, you can let yourself be inspired.

Making Harper Accessible: ADS

By Cheryl Gistenson

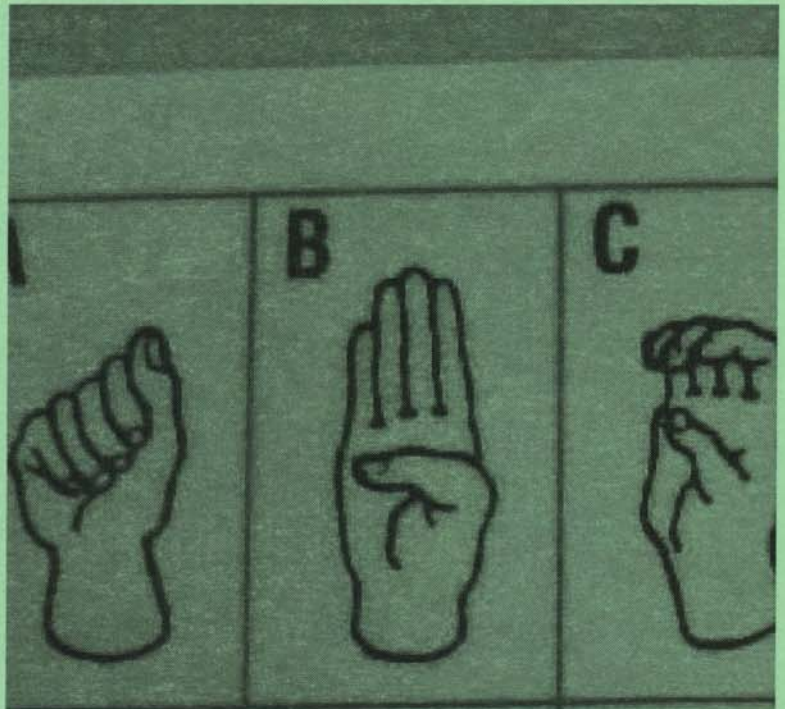
Mission: "To create a comprehensively accessible environment and to empower students to become actively involved in all aspects of campus life."

Millions of students can sail through college relatively easily if they put forth the effort; They comprehend and pay attention to the lectures, complete the homework, take notes, read the textbooks, and succeed in taking their tests. But how would those students go to school if they were incapable of doing these things? I had to ask myself this very question as a newly disabled person looking for a college to attend. When I checked out Harper College, I was told to stop in to the Access and Disability Services (ADS) office, where prospective and current students can receive assistance if they have a diagnosed medical/psychological disability that impairs their learning experiences.

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The program began 36 years ago when Harper implemented services to assist the deaf and hard of hearing, and in 1975 ADS began offering services to those with learning disabilities--the two largest populations served by ADS. ADS also assists students who are blind or visually impaired and those with physical disabilities or other health impairments. Did you know that, in addition to these disabilities, those with traumatic brain injuries or temporary impairments can receive ADS's help as well? Imagine you, a temporarily able-bodied student, are crunching numbers in your Pre-Calc class and experience a freak accident that leaves you with a broken arm. Don't worry ADS can help you too! If you are unable to take notes while your hand is casted, ADS can provide you with a notetaker.

This year ADS implemented a new program to assist its largest population: LD and ADHD attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). ACES, which stands for academic counselors empowering students, provides many benefits to Harper's newcomers. In order to be eligible for the program you must be a new student with a learning disability or ADHD and enroll in FYE 101. In First Year Experience, students will learn to become independent learners, discovering their strengths and ways to use them to become successful in school. The professor of the class becomes an Academic Coach (AC) to the students in his or her class. Incoming students can benefit from an early close relationship with an academic member of the Harper community, and because of the cohort-style learning environment the students can form friendships and find allies who will help support each other throughout their years at the school. The AC is an important factor to the ACES program, taking on many responsibilities including meeting regularly with students, making helpful recommendations to ensure academic success, and requiring progress reports. But don't think this program is an easy ride for the students. They have to keep up their part in order to become successful, and the students remain in contact with their ACs for the duration of their enrollment. That being said, what about the rest of the LD population already attending Harper? Because the program is available only to newcomers, one might think the rest of Harper's LD community is missing out, but ADS already practices these measures to all of its ADS students if it's necessary. The only difference I have found is the lack of the cohort-learning environment.



It may come as a surprise to some that not everyone knows they have a disability. Every syllabus I have received for my classes here at Harper includes a section that informs students of the ADS department. So, if you have come up with every strategy, from notecards to playing a recording of your notes while you sleep, and you still can't retain the information to pass your tests, you may want to stop into room D119 and talk to someone at the front desk about learning disabilities; two of ADS staff members are bilingual.

ADS Director Tom Thompson reiterated that there are many students in higher education with invisible disabilities, and he would hope for everyone to be aware of ADS. He also wants students to feel comfortable and confident in coming to ADS for assistance. He has witnessed many students who have been in special education classes in high school who don't want to bother with it anymore, or those who are simply

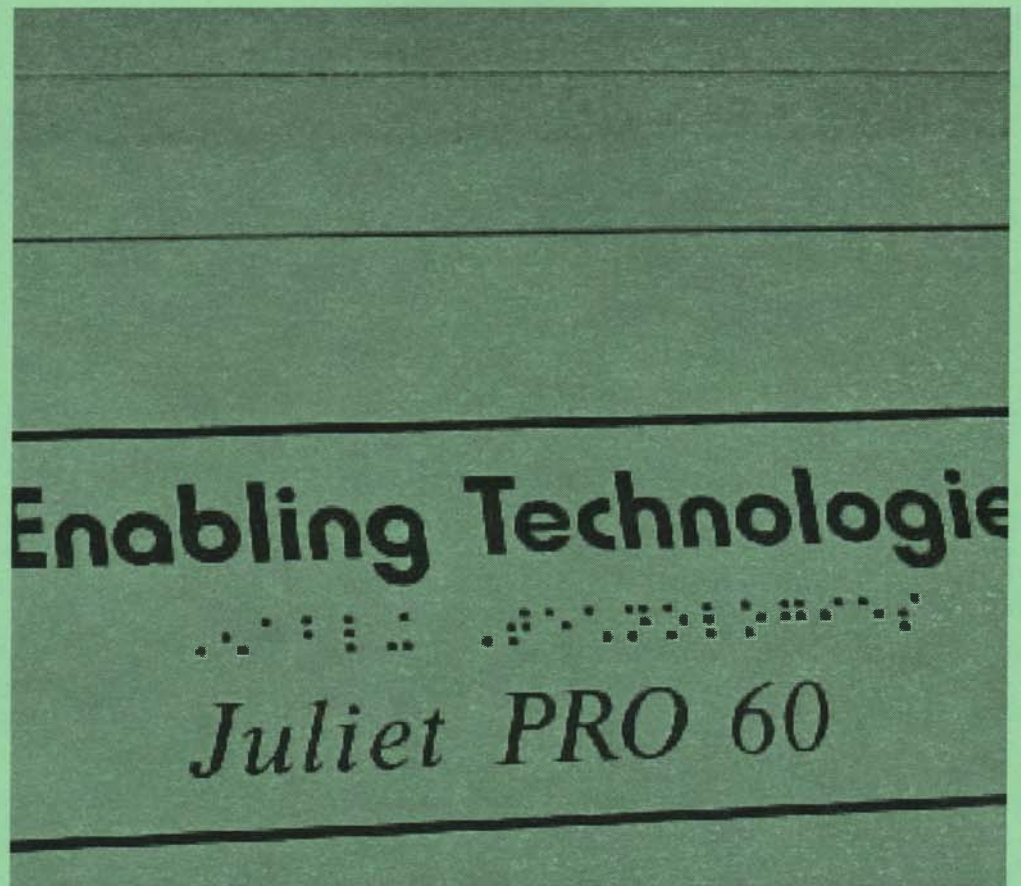
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self-conscious about acknowledging their disability. Mr. Thompson ensured me many people can function independently, using an ADS staff member as an academic coach, similar to an athletic coach who checks up on a student's performance. One way I can think of that might better inform students of ADS would be to change the statement in the syllabi. Each time the message has been vague and slightly different from the others. If ADS prepared a universal statement with more in-depth information that the teachers can paste into their syllabi, I feel students would get adequate knowledge of the department and its helpfulness.

If you receive help from ADS, don't feel detached from the rest of the student body. Last year alone, the department assisted nearly 1,300 members of Harper's 26,000 student body. The ADS staff share close relationships with their students, seeing about 1,000 of the total patrons on a frequent basis. I myself see my counselor nearly everyday. She helps me around the unfamiliar parts of campus and makes my paperwork accessible. Mr. Thompson assured me the majority of students who form a tight bond with at least one member of the ADS staff are almost guaranteed to succeed. Since class syllabi include a statement about ADS, you might think some of the only ways the department attracts students is by this method or way-of-mouth around campus. How does the program grow each year? In part, ADS gains new members just like the college gains athletes, adult, and international students; ADS actively recruits students to Harper. The department runs a program call College

Awareness Program (CAP). Harper is known for multiple prestigious awards for ADS and ADS participates in college fairs. Each year, CAP invites groups of students, usually juniors and seniors, from district high schools in surrounding areas to come to presentations about the department and its services and benefits; this program is ADS's main source of younger incoming students, putting them in contact with approximately 500 prospective students and their parents each year. ADS contributes to Harper's diverse population by attracting adults and those from around the nation; some students using ADS come from as far as other countries. An international student to whom I was introduced attended a college in Chicago, but because their program was lacking, he was referred to Harper. This student informed me colleges in his country do not offer programs to assist the disabled.

A program that helps such a diverse and large number of students each year must experience some kinks, right? Its staff is limited in numbers, resources, and thus abilities. I spoke with Tom Groh, a 24-year-

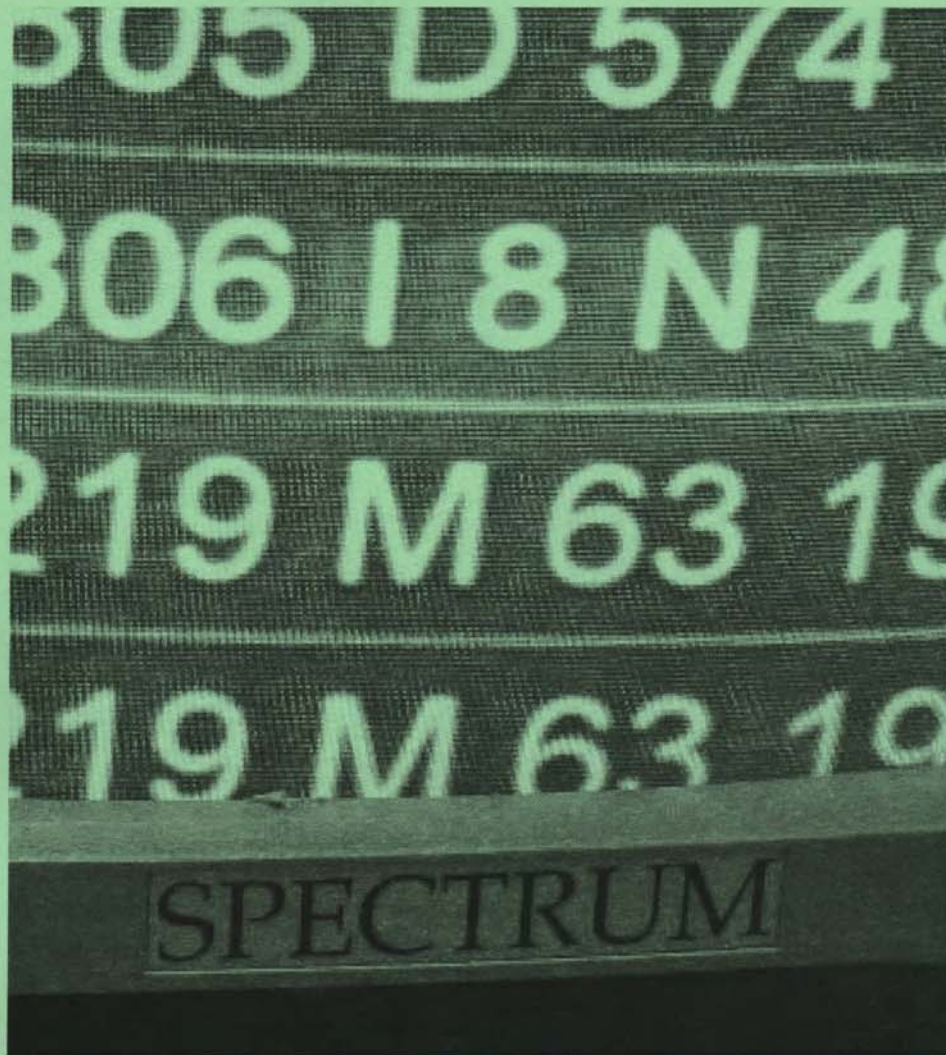


old student who has severe learning disabilities and vision impairments, about his experience using ADS. The only concern Tom expressed about his five year history with ADS was that they are slow. "There are not too many people who would sit down and help you like Beth does, but if I need help from Beth I always have to wait." He continued, "I don't think the counselors communicate well between each other. . . I am always repeating myself, and that's another reason why I think they are slow."

I too, have experienced ADS's slow performance. In fact, I've had to take a total of three incompletes in the past two semesters because ADS was unable to provide my materials in a timely fashion. Now, ADS may not have been directly responsible for my lack of materials since they order audio textbooks from an independent organization. But isn't it their responsibility, in the end, to provide the books in time for a

student's class? Beth Krueger, ADS' instructional specialist, expressed her frustrations regarding this book situation: "People don't find out what books they need until the last minute and it doesn't work. . . it makes it difficult for students to get the materials on time at the beginning of the semester." I've also experienced problems receiving my graded work back from ADS. On one hand, ADS allows me to read my professors' comments on homework and rough draft assignments because Beth scans and types the information into an electronic document that I can access with a screen reader. However, sometimes it would take at least a week to get my stuff back.

This caused a snowball effect, and all my due dates and deadlines would be pushed back. I have noticed an improvement in the turn-around time since I brought the issue to their attention, but I still feel ADS could use more staff hands around the office. Plus, I have found



the ADS mission not to hold true in some circumstances. I have heard many discouraging comments when discussing certain class choices: "You may not want to take this class because it's very visual;" "There's a lot of reading; are you sure you want to do this one;" or "I don't know that teacher very well, and I'm not sure of their willingness to work with us." I don't sense the empowerment, and I surely can't figure out how discouraging a student from taking a class for the above reasons is making their experience more accessible.

One must wonder what services ADS provides that keeps its staff so busy. Can you imagine tak

ing a class and not being able to hear the lectures? ADS has almost twenty interpreters (two full-time staff) who can ensure the 50 or so deaf and hard of hearing students don't miss a thing. Professor Wilson of the English Department said he has had one deaf or hard-of-hearing student almost each semester. I asked him if he found himself changing his lectures in order to accommodate for these students, and he said quite the contrary. Professor Wilson expressed a confidence in the interpreters, and said he feels very comfortable knowing those students rely on the interpreters to relay the lecture. Professor Wilson also felt confident in the team because he said most of the deaf students' test answers are word-for-word from his lectures, and these students often times do as well as the top performing temporarily able bodied students in his classes. Tests are difficult for everyone at some time or another. So, try adding the stresses of a learning disability or memory deficiency to the mix. Remember Tom Groh? Due to his learning disability, he is allowed to use a teacher-approved index card to help him retain some basic information for his tests, and he can use a calculator. Tom takes his tests in a quiet room for an extended period of time; he can take a break when his efforts have worn him out. He, and many of the other ADS students use a notetaker to ensure they have thorough notes. If you aren't able to copy the notes from a lecture due to your disability, you can recruit a fellow classmate to be a notetaker. Don't worry; if you are willing to be a notetaker you don't have any extra writing to do for the class. The student for whom you are taking notes provides a binder from ADS with carbon paper. You, the notetaker, writes on these sheets and keeps one of the copies for yourself. Another perk just about every college student could use is the money ADS will pay you for your work.

There is also adaptive technology to help students. Those with poor fine motor skills can utilize adaptive keyboards and speech to text programs; visually impaired students can use closed circuit TVs (CCTV) or computer programs to magnify their work, and ADS has computer programs with speech that make the computers accessible to the blind and visually impaired; and there are different types of playback systems that students can use for audio textbooks.

Like I said earlier, many of Harper's students don't realize they can get help from ADS. I, a student who uses ADS, have been surprised to find out many of the resources one can find in ADS. For example, I had no idea ADS can help students with things that aren't directly academically related. Mr. Thompson explained that diabetics whose health issues are not stable may need to take medicine throughout the day or keep refrigerated food on hand to stabilize their blood sugar levels. He told me the student can provide their teachers with an accommodation sheet that notifies the teacher of the issue, and the student can keep their food in ADS fridge and have a safe and private place to administer their medicine--especially if needles are involved. He also said it is helpful, safe, and comforting just knowing there are people on campus who know of your condition and know how to handle the dangers if something arises. A temporarily able bodied person may have their life turned upside down by an accident, leaving them with traumatic brain damage. These people may, among many other debilitating things, experience memory loss. What could ADS do for them? One of the many ways ADS might help a person, which we would never think to be available, is simply a directional shove. The campus is already confusing enough to those without injuries to the brain. Imagine the frustration of turning a corner or leaving a classroom and not remembering what to do next. Thankfully, ADS can arrange for a staff member to meet you after your classes and help you travel. And, ADS has staff available for psychological and emotional counseling.

After talking with students and the faculty members of Harper I have learned a lot about what ADS can do, but I wonder about the things with which ADS cannot help. I spoke with one professor, who wished to remain anonymous, who currently has an autistic student in his class, and Professor Z (we will call him) expressed a concern for the functionality of putting a person with severe behavior problems into the mainstream academic setting. Professor Z told me about certain instances in which the student disrupted the class with outbursts. In no way were the random blurting out of sometimes inappropriate statements in malice,

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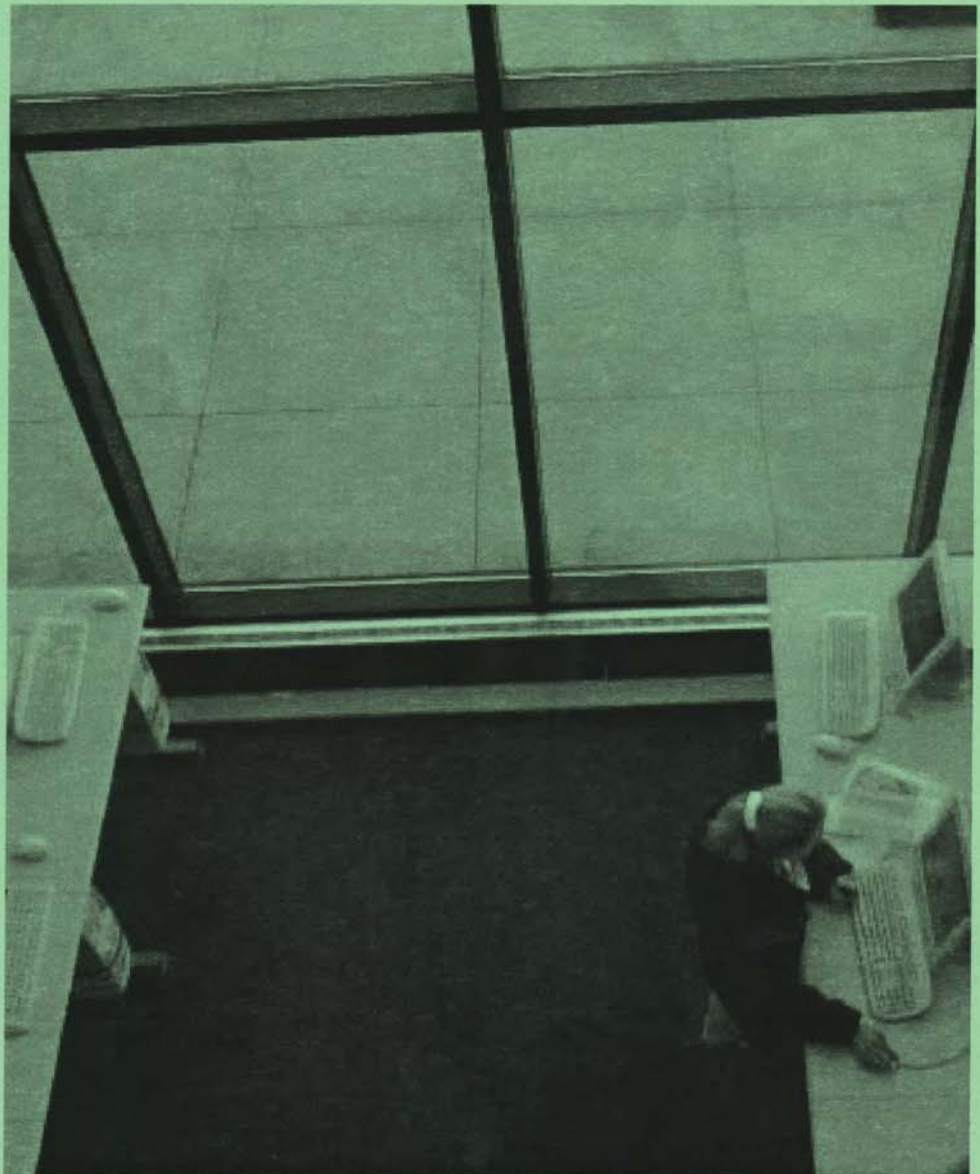
the professor assured me. However, class was delayed by up to five minutes. Professor Z was just recently made aware the student works with ADS when he was contacted by the student's counselor to discuss the matter and teach the professor some cues to help the student stay in line. Professor Z wondered, then, what can be done when the behavior problems are so bad that a student can't behave with social etiquette, and when the student is taking a class for the fourth or fifth time and is simply unable to pass it. Is it fair to the rest of the students to disrupt their learning? Can everyone be taught valuable life lessons in such a situation? Professor Z said it would be more than worth it if he is able to help a student with a severe behavioral disorder learn. The professor admitted he was ignorant about some of the services ADS offered the student, but familiarized himself after speaking to the counselor.

It seems as though the majority of Harper's population, students and staff alike, are not very aware of the benefits offered by ADS. The common knowledge or straight forward, so to speak, things are well known, but when it comes to invisible disabilities everyone seems to be left in the dark. I feel ADS could do more around campus to make people aware of the department's full capabilities, and a much larger group of individuals could benefit.

Gender at Harper

By Diptika Khanal

December 6, 2007 was the first day I landed in the United States of America. Today I can proudly say that I am one year nine months old in this wonderful land of opportunity. To introduce a little about myself to my Harper friends, I come from Nepal, which is best known as the home the world's highest peak, Mount Everest. My grandmother, like many women in Nepal, married at the age of twelve and did not receive a good education. Thus, she always wanted me to go to school. It was with this hope that she urged my father to send me to India and



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later to the U.S.A. to seek the best high school and college education respectively.

Before I came to the U.S., I remember my grandmamma telling me, "Choru, now you will be leaving for overseas to seek a good education. People are very liberal in the country where you are going; you will even see women go to work and will see how women stand shoulder to shoulder with men. You will breathe the air of freedom." Like my grandmother, I always believed America to be a land where there was no gender bias, a land where men and women were given equal opportunities, a land that stood for honesty, hard work, and equality.

Initially, my experience at Harper was a satisfying one. My grandmother was so right; I saw young girls, married women, mothers, and in some cases, grandmothers, coming to school. I also saw my sister going to work like my brother. I was surely breathing in the air of freedom. However, things are not always as rosy as we expect them to be. It was my first semester here at Harper when I experienced a rather jarring personal encounter. I was working in the Writing Center as a lab assistance; it was there that I experienced this rude behavior from a man. Many of you may be aware of the sign-in-and-out system at the Writing Center. As a lab assistant, I am also given the task of reminding students to sign in and sign out on the computer each time they come in the lab and after they have finished their work.

There was a particular guy who quite often came to the Writing Center and always refused to sign in. When I told him to sign in, he said, "I don't know what you are saying; I don't understand your accent." Giggling, he walked away. He would never dare to say such stuff to the male lab assistant, even though some of them were foreign students with accents thicker than mine. I felt as if I had been slapped in the face. I thought my personal experience was rare, but as I became acquainted with Harper's environment, I learned of a much more startling incident.

The incident had taken place in the heart of the campus, by the library, where men were acting very poorly toward young women. I was lucky enough to receive an account of the incident from one of the victims. I have not used the name of the women being interviewed out of respect and security.

1.)When did the incident occur, and can you give a brief description of what happened?

2002-03 semesters; they would follow me from a distance to my car. When I'd walk past the book store, they were very vulgar: They said, "We're going to run the train on you," or "I'm going to rape you."

There was a group sitting by the library and near the main doors by the Algonquin exit . . . Once the incidents started (usually it happened in morning or around noontime), I started taking afternoon or night classes because I knew they'd be at practice, and there were less people on campus overall. I started parking on the opposite side of campus and taking alternate routes to my classes. They went as far as harassing me at my home. They found out where I lived from a mutual friend and started randomly driving by and calling to say they were outside my house. When I would look out there, I'd find three or four cars parked at the curb.

2.)In your opinion, what sparked the incident, or what, if any, factors led up to the incident?

Women . . . accepted flirtatious behavior, but then it escalated out of control.

3.)How do you feel about the incident?

It was a horrible experience to have to go through--especially during my first year of college. I don't wish it upon anyone else, to have to wonder and check who is outside your house before going to bed, to listen to disturbing voicemail threats about rape.

4.)What happened as a consequence of that incident?

I know three of them got kicked off the football team. I had to get a temporary restraining order at school



area, and the entire campus, more comfortable and safe.

8) Last but not least: what do you think about the gender atmosphere at Harper?

I feel guys--athletes more specifically--get away with more stuff, like the demeaning way in which they treat women. It seems like men are more often assumed to be crude or unruly, and thus it is tolerated more.

This Harper alumna is not the only one who feels that there is still gender bias on campus. Recently I had the opportunity to talk with Alaine Garcia, Editor-in-Chief of Harper's newspaper, *The Harbinger*, about this issue. She said, "When it comes to gender bias there are a lot of stereotypes. Like ... that women are over emotional and do not make good leaders." However, Garcia acknowledged progress: "This year

and had to have protection from security when going to and from classes and my car. The computers were put in place, [across from the bookstore] so the area couldn't be used as a "hang out." One guy, I believe, lost his scholarship.

5) How safe do you feel Harper was immediately following the incident?

I went for another two or three years. There were more security guards walking and driving around the campus, which made me feel safer because security was more aware.

6) Who would you blame for this incident?

The boys should have been more respectful towards women. In a way, I kind of blame myself because I'm very gullible and naive, and I am friendly with everyone. I wonder if it's happened in the past and nobody brought it to light until I did.

7) Do you feel the school took appropriate measures to deal with and resolve the matter?

Yes. The boys were penalized and appropriate steps were taken to make that

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we . . . had a serious female contender for the presidency of the United States. Even here at Harper College, one of the two finalists for our new president was a woman, Dr. Martha Ellis.” Garcia noted that women have not progressed equally in all fields: “One thing I do often notice is that there are plenty of female teachers, but never enough when it comes to the technical programs. I often find myself as the lone female in the electronics classes I have taken at Harper. I know of one rocket scientist, Collette Marsh that we have on staff who is a female.”

So where do we go from here? First of all, women should know their rights under U.S. law. Harper ladies, here is a fine piece of information for you: According to Benokraitis and Feagin’s book *Modern Sexism*, in the field of education, it is a felony to exclude women from government paid work-study opportunities, monetary support through scholarship, equal access to institutional facilities, and entry into all the other areas of study.

In fact, here at Harper, females dominate the Honor classes. Professor Andrew Wilson, Coordinator of the Harper Honors Program, offered the following surprising numbers for the fall 2008 semester: In Honors Political Science 101, nine students were women and six were men; In Honors English 101, only five of the fifteen students were men; in Physics 225, only three in a class of fourteen were men; four of fourteen Speech 101 students were men; and perhaps most surprisingly, only four of thirteen Chemistry 121 students were men. This is particularly odd, because chemistry classes outside the Honors Program tend to mostly populated with male students. The other classes were even more unbalanced; in Philosophy 205, only two out of fourteen students were men, and in Geography 103, every single one of the fifteen students was a woman.

When I first studied these statistics, I was astounded by these ratios. But now I am in an Honors class myself, *The Challenger*; my class is comprised of three students and all three are females. I am used to seeing all smart, intellectual ladies in my class. In my experience, women form the majority in most of the Honors classes and are the top graders in any class. So why are men getting better jobs in the so-called competitive world? In her book *Cult of Power*, Martha Burk writes, “If there was one thing that had become crystal clear It was that corporate America does not respect its female employees and many have records to prove it.” (Page133). In the words of a Chinese saying, “Women hold up half the sky.” Women are always hard working and are always trying to reach for the sky, yet there is always an impediment. It seems that for most Harper women, the impediments hit us beyond campus. I did a survey of female students here at Harper to see if they feel that there is gender discrimination among students here. Everyone articulated the same point: “I haven’t faced any gender issues here at Harper but definitely to some extent off campus at work.”

It would be wonderful if men would seek opportunities to educate themselves on this issue. However, Professor Liz Medina, who teaches Humanities 110: Women and Creativity, states that 99% of the students in her class are female. Men usually don’t take this class as it talks about women. The 1% of men who take the class either take it because it fits in their schedules or because they are keen to learn. We can thank this group of men who are taking the initiative to educate themselves and become allies to women. It is very motivating to learn that young students like us are making a stand against the malpractices that go on in the Big Bad World. We are the tomorrow of the world, so let us all appreciate the efforts a woman makes and give her what she deserves!

The Back-to-School Experience for Age 25 and Over

By Amanda Muledy

Ah, September. I was preparing for my first class at Harper last year at around this time. It had been more than eight years since I'd been in a classroom, and it seemed as though I had lived several lifetimes since then. It was fall, the leaves were changing, and I was at Walgreens buying spiral notebooks and packages of roller-ball pens. The *deja vu* of this ritual of youth felt tangible, as if there was electric familiarity crackling through the air. It was eerie, and unbelievably exciting. I arrived at my first class a half hour early, sat with my hands folded and my leg bouncing rapidly as I reached a nervous twitch plateau, and anticipated with all my heart, soul, and being my first homework assignment. I felt as if I had been waiting my whole life for some homework. (Though the recollection of my high school experience proves it was merely a feeling.) After class, I lugged my two million pound history book to Panera Bread under the false pretense of getting lunch. What I was really looking to do was to show off to the world that I was a student now. I sat at a table with a history book wide open in front of me, a salad off to the side as mere decoration, and glanced anxiously around to see if anyone was noticing that I was totally studying for a class. I was in college! I was in a place where adults went to school, where people wanted to learn, where everyone was focused on success, where people stopped caring about what clothes so-and-so was wearing and who was on the football team and instead focused on making their brains bigger and futures brighter.

What has not changed since that day is my excitement for going to school. I have loved every class and every moment of knowing something that I did not know before. Every teacher I have had has been leagues ahead of me in their field, something that was not always the case in high school. In high school, I could trick my teachers into giving me A's for half the work I should have been doing, and I would go through the handouts that they had typed up describing homework assignments and amuse myself by grading their grammar. There is no such thing going on at Harper. Every one of my teachers have been teachers in the true sense of the word. They tell me things I did not know before taking the class, they challenge and engage me, and, when necessary, they humble me. I haven't had a teacher yet that I did not respect or admire.

What has changed, though, is my expectations from my classmates. I had visions of sugar plums and a whole new social life dancing through my head. I thought I would be surrounded by scores of people who felt the way I did about school, by buildings teeming with people wanting to squeeze as much knowledge out of life as it had to offer. Oh, white nights dreamer! Oh, sad (and kind of pathetic) optimism! As we waited for English class to start, the person next to me bragged to a few friends that she "totally didn't read the stuff we were supposed to last night, 'cause it's soooo boring." In math last semester, every class was opened with a chorus from the corner filled with eighteen-going-on-thirteen-year-old boys telling the teacher, "We should have class outside." "We should get out early today." "You should cancel class today." After five months, it ceased to be cute. Actually, after three days of it, my head started its pre-migraine pounding as I wondered if I ever left high school at all. The material is different. The teachers are different. My classmates are not. I'm reminded of a comparison a fellow adult student once made to this "not caring about my schoolwork makes me cool in college, too" attitude. He said that, "It's as if you walked into Best Buy, plunked a plasma television on the counter, paid for it, and then said, 'HA! Now I'm going to walk out without taking the T.V.! I sure showed you how awesome I am!'" Perhaps it is more real to me, not

having parents factor into my consideration of financial matters, that school costs a lot of money and it needs to be milked for all it is worth. Maybe it really is a difference of age. And certainly, not every person attending Harper straight out of high school is like this. But a lot of them are. For me personally, it has taught me that my time here as an adult student has to be a triangle of me, the class material, and the teachers. My slightly younger peers are not to be considered a part of the learning experience. In fact, their ringing cell phones, complaints, uproars, and giggling throughout class present a distraction, a challenge to be overcome.

Harper seems to understand some of these struggles and has created an alternative for adults looking to go back to school. One is in progress. There is not a lot of information available as of yet, but perhaps as soon as 2010, we will see a program called The Weekend Advantage. It will be created for those nine-to-five-ers who don't want to entertain the thought of coming home from a long day at work to a nice relaxing five hour class on algorithms and the perpetual traffic jam in Harper's parking lot. While it certainly doesn't leave time for a thriving social life, two-and-a-half-years of weekends can be traded for an Associate's degree. All required classes for the degree would be offered on weekends, meaning that you could have two full days dedicated to school, instead of the "afterthought" feel taking classes after work may give an adult student. There is also the option of taking online courses, but be warned. Many degrees will require some physical attendance on campus. The popular option, at least for the working adult, is to enroll in the Fast Track program. It is a bundle of accelerated part-time classes that can get you an Associate's Degree in two-and-a-half years or less. It is designed for people twenty-five and older who have full-time jobs, who are busy with families, or who just want their degrees as soon as possible. The work load is vigorous and the pace is daunting, but oh, the advantages!

The Fast Track takes into account the realities of life at this age. These prospective students have been out of school for at least six or seven years, have probably gotten used to working a job, and have built their lifestyle around the income and schedule to which they have grown accustomed. Perhaps they have started a family. Not everyone is prepared to simply abandon life as they know it to go back to school. In fact, many times that option is not a practical one. While the Fast Track is not a tiny addition to an adult's life that will barely be noticed, it is not a complete upheaval of everyday life. It is a series of classes that are made for people who don't want to give up their daytime jobs or their afternoons with the kids. This is a kind of schooling made to work around busy lives, not completely restructure them.

In the Fast Track, the students are guaranteed to have hard work rewarded with an Associate's in a fraction of the time it would take to plod through sixteen-week courses one or two at a time. That equates to more years to realize higher earning power and less time spent trying to balance a home life, a job, and school. Students who have their eye on a Bachelor's can begin right away to explore the four-year universities they may like to apply to--it is something on their visible horizon. A part-time adult student not in the Fast Track program might instead feel as if Notre Dame or Northwestern is a far-off fairy land, that, one day, a long, long time from now, they may be able to attend.

Possibly the most significant advantage to the Fast Track is that the students engage in something called "cohort learning." When adults sign up for this program, they are put into a group, and that group moves together through each class toward their degree. That means that by the second or third class in the program, every student will know each other, most likely have collaborated on homework, and have most of their classmates' phone numbers. Beyond the academic advantages of being familiar with fellow students, cohort learning provides a tremendous social advantage. Imagine, if you will, that you are a student enrolled in the Fast Track program. Instead of being placed in a room a few times a week with people significantly younger than you, in some cases your children's age, you have a group of peers in a common situation and with shared goals and motivations. Part of what makes the Fast Track students' connection with each other so strong is the very nature of accelerated classes--every student there

is focused, working hard, and taking school seriously. It is impossible to succeed half-heartedly from such an intense packing of education into this short time. Therefore, Fast Track comes with a warranty: those serious enough to take this route will find others who they can relate to along the way. Harper Fast Track Professor Patricia Ferguson says that her students have a sense of camaraderie and some even meet for dinner before class. Her delight in observing her students bond together was only one of the joys she expressed finding while teaching her Fast Track students, which brings us to another advantage of this program: the teachers.

The challenge of being a teacher isn't something a student would normally consider. We are fairly occupied by our own challenges. But it is an interesting mental exercise to try to view school through a teacher's perspective. It's difficult enough to decide how to present material so it will be absorbed, to create tests that are fair, and to best engage students. They are charged with laying the groundwork for students' knowledge and deciding how to best ensure the knowledge is retained. But to be a Fast Track teacher presents a whole new set of challenges. How do you cram sixteen weeks of information into half the time? How do you appeal to adults, and what is the difference between education that is targeted toward them and education targeted toward people who have spent only three months away from a learning environment? When I spoke with Professor Ferguson, she said this new challenge was exactly what drew her to the Fast Track program. As an additional perk, she has found uncharted delight in dealing with adults. She, as a Fast Track teacher with children, can bring up parenting in class, and many of these students will identify and relate to the situation. When T.V. shows from the 1970s are mentioned, it draws laughter and nods instead of blank looks. There is a connection made between adult student and adult teacher. That connection provides an environment that makes a teacher's enjoyment of a class obvious, and I think most of us can testify that the best classes are those where you can see that your teacher loves what he or she does.

So we have a program where the experience of an adult student is a shared one, the students can get their degrees going part-time very quickly, their over-twenty-five lifestyle is catered to, and they have teachers who want to be teaching adults and enjoy what they are doing. What's not to like? If you aspire to be a history teacher or research librarian, or if you learn best taking things slow, a few things.

The "tracks" in the Fast Track are limited to management, marketing, and computers in business. They offer an Associate's Degree in the Arts, but with an emphasis on business. While these are the most applicable fields for adults already working and looking to get ahead, they are not for everyone. The pace is also not one in which every student will thrive. If you value class discussion time and in-depth examination of the material the class covers, Fast Track may not provide all that a sixteen week course will. In most cases, it simply cannot due to time constraints. It does not mean you won't get a complete education; it is just not well-suited for student who want to know all they possibly can about the subjects of their classes. But for some, the trade-offs are worth it. For others, perhaps the social struggle of being over twenty-five in an eighteen-and-nineteen-year-old world is mitigated by a less intense course that can cover more details and allow for more discussion time.

Professor Ferguson also teaches sixteen-week courses, and she has observed the experiences of adult students in the average college setting as well. She has sensed or heard directly about the difficulties her older students have had in that environment. There is the feeling of "sticking out like a sore thumb," "feeling isolated," and there seems to be a sensation, looking around, that time has started to pass the student by. This is not the only possible range of emotions to be had, however. Some of her adult students, Professor Ferguson says, are invigorated by the young, energetic crowd of people around them, and that very thing that will

make one student feel isolated--the age gap--may make another feel inspired. Enthusiastic anticipation of the future ahead can be a contagious thing and is found most frequently in those who are just out of high school and have so much ahead of them. So those who do not opt for the Fast Track but desire education may find themselves in a room full of people six, or ten, or twenty years their junior. This is where Floyd Wesel finds himself, and he doesn't find it half bad.

Floyd has been going to Harper for seventeen years, off and on, as he has time between freelance jobs and travel. With his jolly countenance and instant familiarity with teachers who are often in the same age group as him, he has found school to be pleasant enough to keep him coming back again and again. While Floyd is not among the oldest of Harper's learners, a student in his late thirties is going to eventually have a teacher who is younger than him. Put in that scenario myself, I might feel a little odd, and perhaps on my guard. That isn't how Floyd has found himself feeling. As he gets older, he appreciates all of his teachers more, including those who are younger. In fact, when talking about his teachers and the advantages of being an adult student, he said, "I...feel that I can better relate to them than most students because we share a deeper history." So the ability to enjoy professors seems to only grow with a student's age. As for his classmates, Floyd sees potential everywhere. He takes mainly day classes, where there is a smaller percentage of adults, so he has much experience with being surrounded by the younger Harper students. While he admits that, often, their enthusiasm that is so inspiring sometimes "is not directed toward the discussion at hand" in class, he is overwhelmingly positive in his relation of his college stories. When given an invitation to talk about anything that bothered him during his time at Harper, he responded with, "Nothing to complain about. Nope." So there we have it! An adult student with no complaints, one of the many who is enjoying his time here and pursuing an expansion of knowledge through sixteen week classes.

There are many reasons someone might not get to college three months after high school graduation. Some of them are as simple as "I wasn't ready," or as complicated as "I couldn't qualify for enough financial aid until I was living on my own for exactly one year and was born before 1987," but all we adult students have come here when we realized the time is right to take our lives up a notch. Harper College has taken into account the differences between an adult's needs and a fresh high school grad's needs and provided options for those who are not suited for the sixteen-week classes. But whether you decide for an accelerated, adult-dominated route, or a thorough trek through sixteen weeks of information where time is not of the essence, your experience as an adult student will ultimately be decided by one person--yourself.