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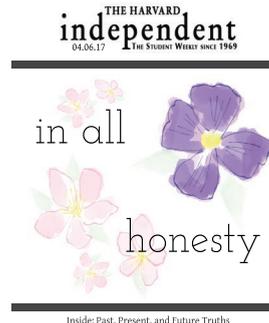
honesty

Inside: Past, Present, and Future Truths

04.06.2017

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CONTENTS



The Indy intimates.

Cover design by
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- 3 Inadequate Honesty
- 4 Where are You From?
- 5 Burning Bridges
- 7 Engagement
- 8 Sex Survey
- 9 Student Arts Show
- 10 Senior Sports Awards

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As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newsmagazine, the Harvard Independent provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The Independent has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

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The Inadequacy of Honesty

A world without hypocrites and frauds isn't a world at all.

By DAN VALENZUELA

For some reason whenever I set out to write this column, I feel as though I have a moral duty to present an authentic self with honest arguments that come from my heart and mind. This admission, however, seems to do little to convince you that I am in fact honest in my arguments, given all you have to go on is my word. So I'll offer this: I am desperately trying to be honest about my honesty.

Yet this second admission, like the first admission, is me trying to make up for any possibility of dishonesty that might be present in saying . . . well, you get the point. You can see the rabbit hole from which I'll never emerge trying to be honest and authentic to the nth degree.

Sometimes I do get myself into such rabbit holes as I write. I often type out sentences that don't exactly capture the truth, and I try to add more to flesh out the entirety of my thoughts. It's all in vain, however. Despite any number of sentences I write, the truth about me or some thought that I have seems eternally compromised.

I see that others are getting into trouble by being wholly committed to honesty, too. This is exactly the hole that people have gotten themselves into by focusing on accusing people like Trump of hypocrisy.

Take, for example, the focus on the comparison between Trump's numerous golf

outings and his criticisms of Obama's trips to the green. The comparison begs a question: does Trump honestly believe that golfing as president is wrong if he does it himself? In other words, is Trump a hypocrite?

To answer the question, you could amass all of Trump's tweets on the topic and calculate the average number of days between each of his and Obama's golf trips. You could then conclude that Trump is dishonest if Trump has said many times that Obama should not be golfing, and if Trump takes more golf breaks than Obama.

Even better, you could invent some serum that forces Trump to say the truth, convince Trump to take the serum, and ask him if he believes that golfing while president is wrong. If he answers in the affirmative, given all of his golf course visits then you can definitively say he is a hypocrite.

What's the point in gathering all this evidence to show that Trump is a hypocrite? I suppose it would show that Trump doesn't entirely act according to what he believes. There is another word for this, though. It's called compromise.

If I were to condemn Trump for his inconsistencies in his actions and beliefs, then I would also have to condemn myself for inconsistencies in my written words and beliefs. Whatever I write is going to be as unfaithful to what I believe as a politician's actions are to their principles and promises.

But there is an important difference between us. Trump seems to compromise everything and anything in service of his image and ego. I, on the other hand, am trying to remind people that compromise is an essential part of life, even when we reach for things better than image and ego.

Let me put it this way: If we hold honesty, authenticity, or any other ideal that tracks some notion of individual "realness" as good in themselves, there is no possibility achieving them. Whatever our honest, authentic, or real

elves, they'll be compromised in service of something else. The important task is figuring out what that something else is.

I recently listened to an interview with author Elif Batuman and was struck by a description of the protagonist of her new book: "Not everything that everyone says is a 100 percent pure manifestation of something in their soul. In fact, very few of the things that people say are a 100 percent pure manifestation of what's in their soul, which is how Selin really wants it to be and how she aspires to be."

Like Selin, I aspire to speak from my soul 100 percent of the time in this column. Although, in this op-ed, I have already committed a sort of lie. I don't care to write about anything related to Trump anymore. I'd rather point to something valuable in this column, outside of whatever mess he has made. But if I'm going to get my point across I have to start from some common ground, even if that ground compromises what I want.

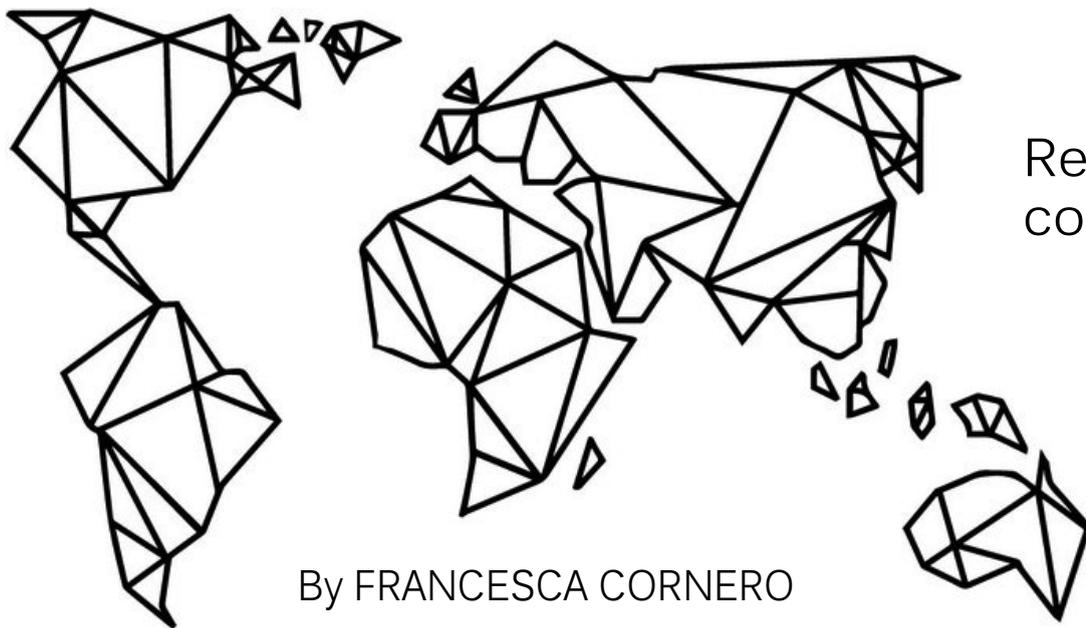
There's another way in which I'm not speaking entirely from my soul. I got the idea to write this op-ed after reading an article on hypocrisy by B.D. McClay and David Foster Wallace's short story on what it means to be a fraud, "Good Old Neon". So you could say that my soul isn't speaking here. It might be McClay's or Wallace's.

What can you conclude about this op-ed given these little lies? Personally, I think that these lies are not sins. In fact, if these lies convince you that compromising yourself is necessary for anything worthwhile, they will have done some good.

Dan Valenzuela (dvalenzuela@college.harvard.edu) is an unabashed fraud and hypocrite. Feel free to call him out on it.

INDY FORUM

“But Where are You From From?”



By FRANCESCA CORNERO

I have come to disconnect my brain from my words every time I answer the question of where I am from. No matter whether I tell you I am Italian, which means I want this conversation to end as quickly as possible, or whether I tell you I am Mexican, which means I am feeling patient, or whether I explain the story of my life; at this point I feel nothing but exhaustion for the epic I need to tell in order to account for all the pieces.

When I get asked deeper questions, however, my wall of distance breaks. When I try to explain that (even though I can claim no Brazilian nationality) the only language I had no accent in was Portuguese (which is no longer true) my accent fumbles and changes, suddenly aware of its linguistic contradictions and peculiarities. When I state that I have never lived in Italy, even though all of my family is from there, and that in fact I had not even visited Rome until last summer, I begin to believe that the most Italian thing about me is my ability to cook a dozen types of pasta. When someone asks about some particular

Mexican slang, and I have an even more vague notion about what it means than they do, I visualize why I always get spoken to in English while in the land of my birth.

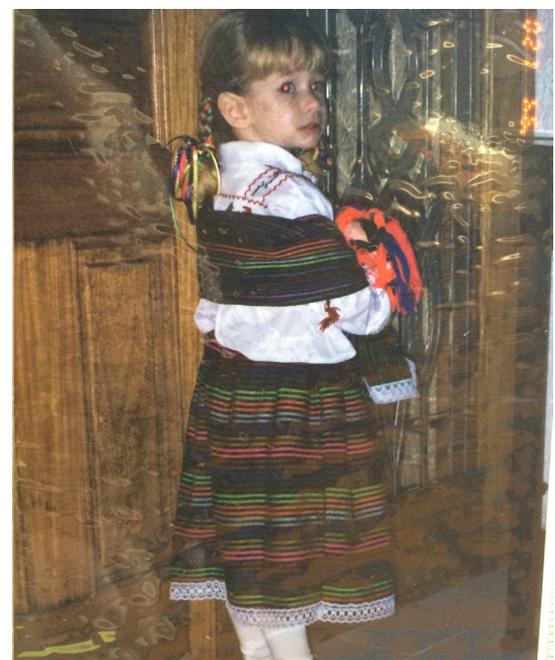
In one of my classes this semester, I sat in silence and watched several American students discuss what it means to be an immigrant in the book *White Teeth*, by Zadie Smith. Very little of what they said made any sense to me. I did not resent them for speaking, or even for being, in my opinion, often wrong. But when the teaching fellow asked me to contribute to the discussion, I could not. I could not even explain why I could not - all of the explanations I had memorized over the years, in their various different forms and versions, suddenly all seemed wrong. When made to really think about the issue of nationality, and immigration, and belonging, my mind drew a blank.

The truth is, I don't know where I'm from. If you catch me in my darkest moments, I will respond: “nowhere.” But I honestly do not, ever, blame you for asking. It is not your

fault that I feel this way, and most likely you have no idea that I do. Your inability to place my accent is through no fault of your own, and neither is your curiosity about on what authority I base my distaste for Border Café and how it balances with my blonde hair and blue eyes. The mini existential crisis I have when you ask me what country I would fight for in a hypothetical World War III is in no way, I assume, something you meant to induce.

Reflections from a confused expatriate.

I have been told by my American friends that it is impolite to ask someone “where they're from from”, because it might come off as racist, discriminatory, and be triggering and shame-inducing. From the personal corner of my experience in the matter, I respectfully disagree. In the particular context in which we live in, on this specific college campus, I find that this is rarely the case. I cannot think of a single instance in which someone has asked me that question in order to judge me, shame me, or exclude me, and not out of sheer curiosity and excitement. I have never gathered any response more offensive than



A portrait of the writer as a young girl.

“my favorite pasta is Alfredo!” And for all my identity uncertainty I do not feel ashamed of any of my potential nationalities. What’s more, I believe that treating the question as a taboo is a positive feedback loop of offensiveness, in which we are taught that asking someone where they’re from is offensive because not all answers are accepted. That, in my opinion, is what induces shame: the idea that some nationalities are “bad” answers. And that to avoid making people uncomfortable by having to admit they are from these “bad” nationalities, we should just not ask the question at all.

But there are, or rather there should be, no “bad” answers to such a question. One was born in a certain place to certain parents, and there is nothing one can do to change that. It is futile, and possibly harmful, to feel shame over something so inconsequential, and that one cannot in any way change. I do not want to think badly of you for being curious about how I can be a blonde Mexican, I do not want to punish or frighten away your innocent curiosity, because the only way we can learn to live together without violence and fear is to understand each other. You cannot understand me, and I cannot understand you,

without questions being asked, and answers being given. I cannot expect you to “like” or accept my culture if you are not allowed to explore it and find aspects of it (and there are many in every culture) that you can enjoy.

So, do continue to ask me where I’m from if you want to - I want us to live together peacefully and openly.

Francesca Cornero (francescacornero@college.harvard.edu) is starting a petition to make “the basement of William James” an acceptable nationality.

Burning Bridges

And summer bridge programs.

As a first generation student, pre-orientation programs didn’t quite make sense to me. I was attracted to Dorm Crew, which offered me a way to make quite a bit of money before the semester started. Being low-income, I worried about being able to do the same things I heard my roommates were interested in doing. Before I had even gotten to campus, I already had to decline my roommate’s invitation to a concert because I couldn’t afford the tickets. I could only imagine what else I would have to turn down, even with the Student Events Fund (SEF) tickets for which, I was told, I would be eligible. The truth is, the Harvard experience is much more than Harvard itself. The college has once again decided not to focus their attention on supporting low income, first generation students in the ways for which these students have continued to ask. Dean Rakesh Khurana’s confirmation that there will be no pre-orientation program for their peers in incoming classes has burned a bridge to reaching the goals to which Khurana swears he is committed.

The proposed pre-orientation program would introduce first generation, low income students to Harvard and allow them time to adjust to the cultural, social, academic, financial, and political shifts of beginning college. Rather than providing for the program, a part-time position in the Freshman Dean’s Office will be created to advise the first generation, low-income

With a rising population of college-age students who will be first in their family to attend university, it’s irresponsible for Harvard to still be lacking.

By HUNTER RICHARDS

students. However, because roughly 15% of admitted students identify as first generation there will be many who fall through the cracks regardless of this new adviser. Typically, first generation students are hesitant to reach out to administrators and unaware of resources available to them. Only recently have Harvard first generation students had their own student organization that represents them since the founding of the First Generation Student Union in 2013.

Although the full financial aid package I was awarded freed me from the worry of working to pay tuition, I still found myself struggling to make money to afford plane tickets home or order the dorm room essentials from Amazon that I had forgotten to pack. Watching my friends call their parents only to ask for more money while I was calling my mom regularly because I was homesick made me feel like I didn’t belong. Unlike some of my peers, the only students I knew coming into college were the roommates who had emailed back and forth with me briefly before arriving on

First Gen Bridge, continued.

campus and the few people I had met through Visitas events. While I watched my roommates grab meals with their pre-orientation groups throughout the first semester, I struggled to make it from office hours, classes, and my three jobs to the dining hall on time.

It is hard for many students to leave home for the first time and it certainly is no less hard for low-income students and, at times, is more difficult for first generation students. In addition, it is hard to justify leaving for college a week early when you realize that plane tickets home for Thanksgiving are too expensive and that your parents won't be coming to Freshman Parents Weekend. Knowing that you'll go from your tight connection with your family to not being able to hug your parents for roughly four months is a struggle many first gen students experience their first year. As students are told not to bring all of their luggage during the early move-in for their first year, making and paying for two trips of transporting belongings to campus is another impediment to the participation of low-income students in pre-orientation programs. Therefore, the already difficult situation of making a new home for oneself in an unfamiliar environment with limited resources is made more uncomfortable by the lack of a security that could have been found in a single week.

Having a pre-orientation program geared towards helping first gen, low-income students get over the initial culture shock and feel comfortable with the college experience before being thrown into the Harvard bubble could have prevented me from considering dropping out my freshman year. I'm not alone in having felt lost and out-of-place at Harvard and many of my first generation, low-income friends have also struggled with the decision of whether to continue at the college. Whether

it's taking a semester off to recuperate after especially trying times, or deciding whether to transfer to a college where we feel more comfortable – many first gen, low-income students find themselves facing complex uncertainties. I wasn't the only one.

Regardless of the national attention that first generation, low-income students at Harvard have received in recent years, the University has yet to fully address their concerns. With a rising population of college-age students who will be first in their family to attend university, it's irresponsible

Using my identity to
argue against these
institutions does not
make me a student:
it makes me a
prop, a statistic, a
cautionary tale.

for Harvard to still be lacking. While the University has historically been populated by much more privileged people than myself, my identity does not make me less "Harvard" and I need support from the university to prove that they acknowledge that. Although the Harvard First Generation Student Union has pushed for better representation and support from administration, the administration has been reluctant to making changes that would provide for the needs of first generation, low-income students.

In the Final Report of the Implementation Committee for the Policy on Membership in Single Gender Social Organizations, released on February 17, it is stated that the college is determined to commit itself to diversity even as it becomes a more exclusive institution with decreasing acceptance rates. Although the recommendation for increased regulation of single-gender social organizations is said

to combat discrimination and exclusivity, the failure of the University to provide alternative support systems for the students that they claim inherently are unable to benefit from such exclusive groups seems to reflect hypocrisy.

The recommendation that houses develop a program of inter-house dining societies in alternative to unrecognized single-gender social organizations means that the college is prepared to reconfigure the very basic principles of its residential life. Repurposing or renovating existing facilities to serve as social spaces before acknowledging the need for multicultural centers for students of diverse backgrounds to find support does not serve the populations that said regulations are meant to embrace. The intentions to prioritize House life does not address the problem that first generation students need the attention and support to adapt to college and thrive alongside their peers early on. Students coming from under-resourced backgrounds need to learn how to navigate college and find their footing before they get to campus. Without reform and action to begin supporting such students early on, it becomes increasingly hard to address their concerns and needs.

If the University wants to support its under-resourced students, it must first prove that its dedication to diversity is valid and not a front for dismantling resented structures like single gender social organizations that are not under its control. Using my identity to argue against these institutions does not make me a student: it makes me a prop, a statistic, a cautionary tale.

Hunter Richards (hrichards@college.harvard.edu) is hopeful that the college will use her for more than her ability to enhance the diversity statistics.

Engage!

An afternoon with Drew Faust.

By CAROLINE CRONIN & PULKIT AGARWAL

The Inclusion and Belonging Task Force at Harvard has been met with a variety of reactions this year. Its origins are muddled by the ongoing debate on administration enforced sanctions relating to single gender social organizations and the perceived hypocrisy of many of the University's actions. However, on Wednesday April 5, University President Drew Faust held a 3 hour-long event in Sanders Theater to expound on the ideals and aims of the Task Force. Since the Task Force's creation by Faust in September 2016, it has been operating in a "Discovery Phase." It plans to move into a more active capacity this coming fall of 2017 and sees the "Afternoon of Engagement" as one of the necessary prerequisites to entering that active phase.

The Task Force publicized that "This special event will offer the Harvard community an opportunity to explore what the concepts of inclusion and belonging mean for our campus through story-telling and small-group conversations." College Dean Rakesh Khurana also stressed the cooperative aspects of the Task Force's event. In an email following Faust's announcement of the event, Khurana stated, "Change begins with open dialogue and collaborative problem solving, and I know that together we can spur Harvard to deliver on its aspirations." The event was open to students, staff, and other Harvard affiliations and the video of the administrator speeches was posted on the Task Force website. Though the Task Force is made up of over 50

individuals, speeches from the leaders of the Task Force filled the first 90 minutes of the event.

Co-Chair Danielle S. Allen, wearing a yellow "Afternoon of Engagement" shirt, opened the forum by asking for the audience's "help to identify obstacles to inclusion and belonging," and to finding solutions to those issues. She acknowledged the "courage and compassion" it takes to tell and listen to the variety of stories and experiences on campus and in the world. Interestingly, Allen then listed a few "ground rules" for the engagement. More like the instructions on how to be a good listener, the "ground rules" seemed to keep the "engagements" from becoming debates. As Allen finished her introductory remarks, Faust made her way to Sanders stage - a position she has been in on countless other occasions.

Despite what could have become a routine description, Faust noted that Harvard is probably, "the most diverse community to which we will ever belong." The statistics of the student body support this claim, and attending Harvard is an immersion unique among the experiences of most people. Still, this specialty of Harvard does not make it immune from the prejudices of the world. Faust continued to tell an anecdote from a press conference in 2007 at which she realized, "I'm not the woman president of Harvard. I'm the president of Harvard. I didn't want an asterisk next to my name." Nor does anyone, most likely.

But, as many students are sure to tell, being a part of Harvard means more than a simple accomplishment of the individual; it holds deeper meaning to families and friends who admired and supported the aspirations that led to Harvard. Faust understands this as, "My belonging here made their belonging somewhere else." To "share this experience of belonging" is now a goal of hers wherever she goes.

Others followed Faust to present heartfelt anecdotes of their own. Allen told the story of her departure and return to Harvard due to a complicated concerns arising from a number of encounters. In one of these, a "supervisor asked me why black people don't like being

called Negroes anymore." There is a reason why this event is not just about undergrads at the College.

Next, Kalan Chang, who arrived in New York City from Ecuador and began working in construction without knowing a word of English, told of her relationship with language and storytelling. To Chang, it is important to remember the value of "language, understanding, resilience." Lastly, Katarina Armstrong told of her humble beginnings and struggles in school. Now, after she has accomplished much, it troubles her when people refer to her male colleagues as Doctor but forget to do the same for her while she runs a department that is far more diverse than it was in the past.

The storytelling session of the event over, the engaging commenced. Due to random seating, audience members took the opportunity to discuss in small groups their experiences with inclusion and belonging and their reactions to the stories told by the speakers. The effort to sincerely have a profound experience with your stranger neighbor in a packed Sanders Theater (a venue that may also be tainted with the tedious nature of Ec lectures) may have been a forced one. The audience was as bubbling with the opportunities to spill their favorite stories as the administrators were, but the self-selection bias that determined the audience's makeup cannot be dismissed. It is possible that Sanders Theater served as more of an echo chamber than anything else. Given this possibility and the current goals of Faust and her force, it is more important than ever that the voices of the students be heard in a professional and actionable context. Only time will tell whether the University's efforts will truly make everyone feel a sense of belonging at a campus that is meant to challenge one's ideas of the world and what it actually means to belong.

Caroline Cronin (ccronin01@college.harvard.edu) and Pulkit Agarwal (pulkitagarwal@college.harvard.edu) hope that the administration's engagements with students result in policies that truly reflect the minds of the student body.



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The Indy Sex Survey

aims to demystify sex & promote sex positivity
on campus in a fun and open way!

Take the survey.

Tell us your counts, your fantasies, your bests and funniest.
Answer what you want, and leave blank what you want.

Then, send us your stories, essays, thoughts, and photos.
(as long as they're *mostly* SFW!)

We'll showcase it all

in our annual Sex Issue, published April 20th!

Once you fill out the survey,
you can enter a lottery for gift cards!
Prizes include Tatte, SoulCycle, Zinneken's, and more!

Here's the link:

[https://goo.gl/forms/
OBQgXzXLga4UivA33](https://goo.gl/forms/OBQgXzXLga4UivA33)

INDY ARTS

Harvard Student Art Show



On April 1st, the Harvard Student Art Show welcomed the community to view the 9th annual exhibition on its opening night. With the work of 38 artists from the undergraduate and graduate school populations on display, the exhibition featured a range of media and themes.

Run entirely by students, the exhibition solicits and curates student artwork annually. Among the artists featured this year were many from the college studying a range of subjects. Many submissions were not from students concentrating in Visual and Environmental Studies (VES) at the college, showcasing the greater arts community and the artistic expressions of students outside of their classes. The Student Art Show hopes to offer an outlet for artists within the Harvard community to share their work in a display for fellow students and interact with the work of fellow artists.

For its ninth annual exhibition, the Student Art Show has collaborated with the Crossings Gallery at the Harvard Ed Portal and Gallery 224 at the Ceramics Program through the Office for the Arts at Harvard. Transportation to the event was provided, with shuttles running regularly from the Harvard Community Garden to the galleries located in Allston, allowing greater access to students. With live performances from students, including beatboxing and instrumentals, those who viewed the exhibition on its opening night were able to escape the Harvard bubble and take in art.

The Harvard Student Art Show will remain open until April 20th at the studio for viewing.



Showing of
ninth annual
exhibition.

Photos and text by
HUNTER RICHARDS



Courtesy of Elan Kawesch, GoCrimson.com.

For the Love of the Game... and Haiti!

Senior CLASS awards
to baseball.

By TUSHAR DWIVEDI

I personally loved baseball while growing up. Chicago carried two teams, and although I was a White Sox fan from the start, the city was always abuzz with excitement. Watching the Sox win the World Series in '05 and seeing the city awake with the rapid rise of the Cubs never fails to bring back a nostalgia for home – and the game. From the earliest age possible, I crouched by the t-stand, hitting little dribblers and racing to beat the lob to first base. Through the next decade of my life, I tried everything else as well. Football was fun

and exciting, but just too physical; basketball never carried the same excitement of football or the charm of baseball; and soccer was just flat out too much running. None of these, of course, were judgments on the sport – just on myself. Baseball, however, remained throughout.

Over the next ten years, I played my heart out; the precision, intellect, and never ending patience that the game required played itself to my strengths. I was never the fastest or the strongest on the field, but I aim well enough to pitch and compete hard enough to hit near the

top. I resisted training, however. I played my heart out, but I refused to sacrifice my other interests to go to the gym and consistently work out, or hire an outside coach to develop my skills- I loved the game, and so I played. At one point, he told me, “You’ll have to make a choice.” He was right – I felt that I had to choose between the sport I loved and my



The Senior CLASS Award website.

academics, and that I could only devote my time to one. So I left the game – and many of my friends did the same.

The Senior CLASS Award rewards those who stayed. The award stands for: “Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School,” and emphasizes the following four impact areas: community, character, classroom, and competition. According to the website, “The award program is designed exclusively for college seniors who are utilizing their complete athletic eligibility, remaining committed to their university and pursuing the many rewards a senior season can bring.” A combination of coaches, fans, and reporters help choose the candidates for the award and includes a public fan vote as well. With the idea coming from famous sportscaster Dick

CLASS: Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School

Josh has intimately tied his classroom and community efforts, along with his tremendous effort on the field.

Enberg, the award has existed since 2002 and strives to promote collegiate students staying to finish their college education before leaving for professional sports.

Harvard's Josh Ellis is currently one of thirty Senior CLASS Award nominees in the sport of baseball; his peers range from across the country from coast to coast. Each of the four attributes measured in the CLASS award (community, character, classroom, and competition) stand out and stand strong for Josh, and he represents both the sport of baseball and Harvard as a whole by having immense skill in a variety of disciplines. He follows a highly prestigious legacy as the 144th Crimson captain, and a highly unique one; he was a freshman year transfer from Bowdoin and faced a tough recovery after having just four at-bats his sophomore year following

several severe ligament injuries. His baseball merits are unparalleled; a team leader in stolen bases, he hit .304 and ranked second in the Ivy League conference with a 41% runners thrown out percentage. His qualification for the CLASS award as an athlete is of no question – but neither is his qualification through his community involvements.

For almost a decade, Josh has made Haiti his priority: while originally helping younger children in schools, he has taken his efforts to tremendous heights, most recently having created a mental health clinic. With his language skills in French and Creole, Josh is able to help the community members in person, while also helping them from a distance, having raised over \$300,000 for the community after analyzing and researching their needs as part of a summer fellowship. Along, with his Neurobiology major, Josh has intimately tied his classroom and community efforts, along with his tremendous effort on the field.

Tushar Dwivedi (tushar_dwivedi@college.harvard.edu) is looking forward to the White Sox's turn!

captured and shot

Deep thoughts up high.
By FRANCESCA CORNERO

TAPALPA, MÉXICO

