**LETTERS**

**Cambridge 02138**

Harder Harvard, presidential speech, endowment-swoon song

**ATUL GAWANDE**

Floreat Atul Gawande.
David J. Kenney ’55, M.B.A. ’61
Upperville, Va.

While I applaud and appreciate Atul Gawande the surgeon as writer (“The Unlikely Writer,” by Elizabeth Gudrais, September-October, page 30), I wish you had engaged a health professional with some knowledge of infection control as medical editor.

The cover photo of Gawande depicts him in scrubs, mask hanging on his chest, and his hand on his chin.

Early in the article, Gudrais writes: “After examining the patient, Gawande conferred with the resident in the corridor outside the man’s room. He went through a familiar... set of actions... slipping his ring finger into his mouth to moisten it, working his wedding band off, unbuckling his watchband, threading it through the ring, refastening it, all while carrying on a conversation about stopping the patient’s anti-clotting medication and getting a vascular surgeon to assist.”

Nor was I thrilled to read of Gawande’s late lunch: “He took a few bites between bursts of typing, but then it was on to appointment number 10. By 5:30 p.m., when he saw his twelfth and final patient, the sandwich was still not fully eaten, and he had barely touched the water, or for that matter had anything to drink all afternoon.

The disconnects between the article and best medical practice troubled me.

Sandra Rasmussen, Ph.D. ’73
Mechanicsville, Va.

**Editor’s note:** Rasmussen should not be troubled. The cover portrait is just that: a portrait. It does not purport to be an image from an operation. Dr. Gawande obviously practices proper hygienic procedures when he is in a sterile facility and working with a patient; he was depicted outside the patient’s room. As for his lunch habits: many professionals work hard and keep unusual hours, as described; his surgical peers, as reported, are clearly comfortable with Gawande’s performance.

**FINANCIAL REGULATION**

I hope David Moss will extend his superb analysis, “An Ounce of Prevention” (September-October, page 24), to deal with a moral hazard he did not mention. Decision-makers in financial institutions gamble with other people’s money. Even if they did not do so, they are likely to have risk aversion that is not appropriate for the nation as a whole.

Glenn J. Battaglia, M.B.A. ’53
Harrisburg, Pa.

I disagree with David Moss where he said, “Regulators should not have to wait until the very last minute.” They did not have to wait. They had many regulatory capabilities, and could have requested more. The fact that they did wait was because of...
either a failed notion of how markets work or just plain lethargy. The plain truth is that our regulators failed us. The market is just too sensitive and self-reinforcing, both on the up and the down swing, to be left to its own resources, or tardy authorities.

Edmund Helffrich ’49
Allentown, Pa.

Professor moss repeats the recently formed conventional wisdom that New Deal financial regulation was a “successful” strategy that “helped ensure financial stability and financial innovation.” According to this new wisdom, “the success of New Deal financial regulation actually contributed to its own undoing” as “academics and policymakers may have taken stability for granted” and viewed regulation as an “unnecessary burden.”

Before 2007, the story of banking “de-regulation” starting in the 1970s was very different. The “stable” and “innovative” commercial-banking system was losing retail deposits to money-market funds. At the “wholesale” level, dollar deposits were moving to the “Eurodollar” market. Regulation Q’s hard caps on deposit interest rates could only work in a stable, low-interest-rate world. The relatively stable and remarkably low-interest-rate world of the 1950s started to end in the mid 1960s. By 1968 it was over. While most people have heard of the elevated rates of the late 1970s and early ’80s, a less well remembered but at the time startling rate increase took place in the late 1960s and again in 1973-74. The Federal Reserve’s website provides easy access to this historic rate information (www.federalreserve.gov/releases/h15/data.htm). The dollar, of course, lost its “stability” by the early 1970s.

It has long been recognized that these events put great stress on the banking system. Along with interest-rate and currency fluctuations and the loss of funding to less regulated money markets and Euro-markets, on the asset side banks were losing investment-grade customers to the commercial-paper market and other capital markets (including the Eurobond market that avoided U.S. securities law issues). They were also losing “lower-end” customers to finance companies and other less-regulated sources of credit. At least one recently published book, Daniel Tarullo’s Banking on Basel, recalls this history. Perhaps Moss believes the 1970s concerns about the operation of New Deal financial regulation in the world as it then existed were misplaced. If so, it would be interesting to read his explanation. Simply ignoring the problems the banking industry faced from the late 1960s on serves no purpose other than to perpetuate the myth that somehow 1980s “deregulation” was a mindless action that emerged from the “stability” created by New Deal regulation.

Bob Lockner, J.D. ’79
Chicago, Ill.

CULTURAL CARICATURES

Paul M. Barrett’s critique of Christopher Caldwell’s application of the “clash of civilizations” theory to Muslim immigration in Europe (review of Reflections on the Revolution in Europe, July-August, page 20) is generally on point. However, Barrett is wrong to stereotype Europe’s post-World War II immigrant workers (and their children) as less “ambitious” than their American immigrant counterparts. It is true that starting in the 1970s many immigrant workers in Western Europe had difficulty finding work to replace their former jobs in the declining manufacturing sector. Rather than evidence of any lack of ambition, unemployment was reinforced by racism on the part of employers and lack of transferable skills on the part of immigrant workers. Many of these immigrants, as former European colonial subjects, were products of a European colonial and neo-colonial system characterized by structural inequality, a system that continues to fuel international migration today. Muslim communities of immigrant origin, whether Algerian or Pakistani, have set down roots in Europe whether or not Europe has accepted them. Moreover, contrary to Barrett’s suggestive stereotype, it is clear to anyone who has visited Europe recently that members of the second and third generations of immigrant origin are not characterized by any lack of ambition and are able to realize their dreams of professional success when given the education and opportunity necessary to do so.

Leila Kawar ’98
Politics Department, Bates College
Lewiston, Me.

MAKING HARVARD HARDER

In “Why Harvard Needs to Get Harder” (September-October, page 54), Christian Flow ’10 correctly observes that many
Harvard undergraduates devote much more time, energy, and passion to extracurricular organizations than to academics. Yet his proposed solution of making undergraduate academics more demanding addresses only half of the equation. Another way that academics might assume a more prominent role in the undergraduate experience would be for Harvard students not to take their extracurricular pursuits so seriously. So here’s my advice to Crimson editors, Model UN directors, WHRBies and the rest: Lighten up. It’s just a college club.

Thomas A. Gentile ’92, J.D. ’95
Glen Ridge, N.J.

As a former Crimson, I relished “Why seriously. So here’s my advice to to take their extracurricular pursuits so se- riou se xperience would be for Harvard students not to academics more demanding ad- dresses only half of the equation. Another way that academics might assume a more prominent role in the undergraduate experience would be for Harvard students not to take their extracurricular pursuits so seriously. So here’s my advice to Crimson editors, Model UN directors, WHRBies and the rest: Lighten up. It’s just a college club.

Thomas A. Gentile ’92, J.D. ’95
Glen Ridge, N.J.

I read Christian Flow’s article with in- terest. I have long believed, and I think it is widely known, that the hardest thing about Harvard is getting in. The students are so smart they teach themselves. Flow is hardly the first to point this out. Is there any evidence that the University is inter- ested in changing this?

Greg Miller, A.M. ’76
(Yale ’74—that was hard!)
Bethesda, Md.

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LETTERS

DO TELL
Re: “don’t tell,” a letter from Charles A. Johnson (September-October, page 4)—Let us all hope earnestly that President Drew Faust continues to speak out on issues of general interest, and does not confine her public remarks exclusively to “the business or mission of the University.”

College presidents were once a great font of civic leadership in this country, and a few still have the courage to offer challenging views. Far too many tend only to their knitting, fearing to offend donors or crotchety alums.

Robert L. Turner, M.P.A. ’82
Milton, Mass.

Charles A. Johnson’s letter viciously attacking President Faust for writing a letter to the Secretary of Defense objecting to the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy is full of baseless arguments. Johnson says Faust overstepped her authority, did not know the difference between military and civil law, and misinterpreted the Emancipation Proclamation. Then he throws in the tired canard that this is all the fault of some mythical “new” social science at Harvard. His letter tells me, to borrow Johnson’s own language, that he should have his degrees revoked.

As president of a university that must host ROTC on its campus or lose its federal funds, Faust has every right to oppose vociferously the policies of ROTC and the United States military. In fact, she has moral, ethical, and professional duties to defend Harvard’s LGBT students, graduates, and employees from discrimination, especially on the campus she governs.

She clearly knows the difference between military and civil law; if Johnson had bothered to read any of Faust’s other statements on the issue, including her comments at the June 3, 2009, ROTC commissioning ceremony, this would be obvious. That said, since “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is written into the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which can only be changed by act of Congress, it may only affect the military, but it is a law made by civilians.

Faust’s interpretation of the Emancipation Proclamation as guaranteeing “the right to military service” to freed slaves is hardly, as Johnson so arrogantly and bizarrely claims, “nonsense.” While Lincoln never used the word “right”—writing neither that anyone has a “right” to freedom from slavery nor a “right” to military service—Lincoln clearly stated that the slaves shall forever be free and that those slaves will be accepted into the military. As Faust is considered one of the greatest living historians of the Civil War and antebellum South, I trust her interpretation that these are Lincoln’s guarantees of freedom and military service. Rights, if you will. For sure, the “right to military service” is a topic of contentious debate. That Faust takes a side does not make her scholarship suspect; it’s what makes her a scholar.

What I found most infuriating about Johnson’s letter was that it came from a Harvard graduate. As a social science concentrator in the 1990s—probably after this “new” social science came to take over the school—I was taught always to research my claims and always to be respectful. That’s why I checked Faust’s, Johnson’s, and my facts before I wrote this letter. I assumed that even in the late ‘40s and early

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'50s, when Johnson was an undergraduate, the “old” social science encouraged such scholarship, too. Maybe I was wrong?

Ted Gideonse ’96
San Diego

Charles Johnson’s letter has it exactly right. Scholarship at Harvard has taken a back seat to the faculty’s and administration’s radical social agenda. Common sense has been abandoned and replaced by venomous anti-American posturing and political correctness. Members of the faculty and administration should tend to their primary responsibility, i.e., to educate. The College is not intended to be a propaganda mill spewing out radical messages. Harvard should be known for its educational agenda, not its activist radical social agenda.

Walter Bilowz ’52
Chatham, Mass.

So President Faust should be fired, the Harvard Corporation should be seriously chided, and the “new” social sciences at Harvard should be excoriated...all on the strength of one letter by Faust.

Having retired last year after over 30 years as a college president, I am proud that Harvard’s president is a scholar who uses the bully pulpit to express a point of view, and I believe in the rhetoric about the university as a marketplace of ideas. I also believe in civility. If Mr. Charles A. Johnson disagrees with Harvard’s president about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” perhaps he can express himself in a way that invites dialogue?

Jonathan M. Daube, Ed.D. ’68
Manchester, Conn.

Charles Johnson ’52 wants President Faust fired for her letter in support of full rights for gays and lesbians in the military. To most if not all of us, Harvard stands for

FAIR HARVARD, SWOONING ENDOWMENT

RECALLING the distant memory of “Fair Harvard,” sung at the end of football games and on other sentimental occasions, I offer a topical revision of the first stanza, inspired by recent articles on the University’s currently declining endowment:

Poor Harvard, thy grads to thy endowment must give,
If their grandchildren hope to attend.
High-risk deals of the age that is past,
The new age must seek to amend.
With amenities lost and dorm thermostats down,
Old memories will still keep them warm.
As confidence builds, the decline will reverse,
And Fair Harvard will weather the storm.

E. M. Gilbert ’54
San Miguel de Allende, Mexico
academic freedom and freedom of speech. If those are not for the University’s president, whom are they for? If not for a professor, then for whom? If for Johnson, then for me and everybody!

I suggest that Johnson use his letter-writing abilities to enlighten us as to why he apparently thinks only partial rights for any segment of our society are good for either the military or our country. Not only the “good” but the very best for those two entities is the right and the need of us all.

Dave Dockham ’58
Hood River, Ore.

ON RADCLIFFE AND REUNIONS
Terence Roche Murphy’s sweet letter of concern about the shoddy treatment of Radcliffe women at the fiftieth reunion (September-October, page 6) calls forth this memory.

When I began the practice of law in New York City, there sat on the bench a famous jurist who eased his boredom by vicious ridicule of lawyers appearing before him. In my first appearance, I no sooner opened my mouth than his sharp wit and tongue began its attack. After two parries, I lightheartedly delivered a crippling blow. The 200 lawyers in the room roared with laughter as the judge smiled and sheathed his sword.

Then, and for years after, my “balls” were admired for besting this master of intimidation and harassment. It was easy work, requiring no effort. Sandbox play, for I came from an arena of unsurpassed viciousness directed unrelentingly towards women. I had spent four years as a Radcliffe student at Harvard in the late 1950s. And thus, kind Murphy, spare your efforts. As the U.S. Supreme Court records in stone, “Past Is Prologue.” Purse closed.

Kathleen G. Heirich-Casey, Radcliffe ’59
Orinda, Calif.