

12) "Words of Wisdom" Jacqueline Rossi '12

Congratulations Harvard Class of 2012, you have officially learned how to think but have no idea how to apply it. That's because here at Harvard, practical skills and personal hygiene are replaced with the pursuit of Wisdom. Wisdom is one of the key qualities this great institution cultivates, along with diversity and Asians. As the less prominent Dexter Gate tells us, We as Harvard Students, "Enter to Grow in Wisdom." And over the past four years we have indeed grown in wisdom through age, scholarship, and personal experience. With age we learned that alcohol is a gateway drug to fun, with scholarship we learned God is a woman and does not exist, and with personal experience we learned that if dresses well, dances well, and dated me, ladies, he's gay. But the knowledge we gain at Harvard is not just for party tricks and mindless small talk, like did you that the mechanism that enables you to flush your toilet is called a ball cock?! I just said ball cock in front of Drew Faust, TWICE! No, the knowledge we gain here is for, as the back of the Dexter Gate tells us, "To serve better thy country and thy kind." With these degrees, we become the modern wise men, and the world looks up to us for the answers to solve the problems of our time. We are expected to be the cat's pajamas of people, using our big brains for selfless academic pursuits, like opening an orphanage, curing cancer, or joining the NBA.

But If you're like anything like me, these expectations can make you feel like a freshman boy, scared, sweaty, and unable to perform. For me personally, I'm not sure I'm ready to be considered a wise man--these lady parts are all I know. But we can't escape these expectations: our parents are expecting this investment to pay off, our friends are expecting to be interviewed for our E true hollywood stories, and the crimson is expecting to make bank when they blackmail us with pictures from primal scream. Yes, we've had four years of intense preparation, with classes like Women and Gender Studies 202: Can a person have a uterus and a brain? Or Science of the Emotional Universe 18: I have mass and take up space but do I matter? Harvard prepared us not only academically but for the real world, as well. We now know that food is free, cars will always stop for us, and public urination and cross dressing are encouraged and invaluable traditions. But when I think about segwaying from an undergraduate to graduate, yes I'll be the one riding the segway to receive my diploma, I can't help but think that there is still so much we have to learn. Are we really ready to join the ranks of wise men past, like Confucius, Albert Einstein, and the lady who wrote everybody poops? Probably not, considering that half the men I know at Harvard think girls don't do poop.

But then again when we think about it, what is it about these wise men that makes

them so inspirational? Take Sir Isaac Newton, for example, yes, he invented physics but he was surprised when an apple fell on his head while sitting under an apple tree? Or what about the three wise men? Who brings Myrrh to a baby? How in-sense-ative. If Dumbledore existed in real life, people would give him spare change and apologize for the Vietnam war. If Yoda got accepted to Harvard, he would spend the majority of his time in the writing center. If King Solomon were still alive he would be in prison for attempted infanticide.

And if Mark Zuckerberg didn't invent Facebook, he still wouldn't have any friends. So maybe being a wise man is about making a few mistakes, being little bit of a weirdo, and in some cases threatening the lives of children. But its through these alternative qualities that these men stood out and were able to change the world. Take, for example, the great men of history like Karl Marx, Mark Twain, or Abraham Lincoln, who altered history forever with their trend setting facial hair. Or Plato who changed childhood forever, not with his nonsensical rantings, but through his invention of the pliable dough we enjoyed as children. We remember these wise men often not just because of their academic achievements but of their other laughable oddities, humorous handicaps, and occasional moral oversights. Sure, Sir Isaac Newton invented applesauce and Greg Mankiw invented boring, but they definitely weren't perfect.

And here at Harvard, guess what, we're not perfect either. But, my friends don't cower in the face of imperfection, relish in the fact that here at Harvard you, too, are aesthetically and socially challenged, lacking in common sense and many cases moral convictions. But your eccentricities and societally deemed failings, i.e. your B minus in Human Sexuality, make you more like a wise man than anything else.

Because yes, a wise man is smart and changes the world but completes this task being completely and absolutely ridiculous. So even if you wake up next to a half eaten sandwich in your bed from the night before and you proceed to eat that morning, or you took the T 5 stops in the wrong direction, or actually attended an EC 10 lecture, these mistakes don't deny you access to the world of the wise. Rather, they make your life the joke that everyone can laugh at, just like Buddha's belly or Steven Pinker's haircut. So if your goal is in fact to make the world a better place, once smile at a time, don't lose all the dopiness, your nerdiness, and the pretentiousness that comes with the Harvard degree because we're all laughing at you and feeling better about ourselves. If Dexter Gate were still alive today, I think he'd agree, here at

Harvard to serve better thy country and thy kind, we enter to grow in weirdness. So, friends, stop thinking about fulfilling expectations and becoming some hyperbolized

wise man here to solve the world's problems. Instead take pride in your lack of practical skills, knowing that every time you fail or do something stupid, someone out there is happy you did. And eventually, after enough mistakes and unrelenting laughter, you'll find yourself as an old, wise, Harvard Graduate who made the world a better place by just being yourself.