

Freshman year of college is more than books

Diversity is difficult to overcome

Overcoming cultural barriers can pose challenges.

E pluribus unum (Latin for "from many, a common purpose"). These are the words that we find inscribed on our American currency along with the images of the torch (dime), Monticello (nickle), bald eagle (quarter) and the Lincoln Memorial (penny). These images combined with the language of *E pluribus unum* in

Joanna Iwata
GUEST COLUMNIST

essence captures the magnimity of the American spirit which we also find infused within the context of our constitutional rights and pledge of allegiance.

As we look at the changing face of America, we also understand or recognize what impact this has on the university, as we are a microcosm of the nation — a place composed of many different people, cultures, races, religion, traditions, genders and sexual orientations. With such diversity, our evolution as a community presents to us a unique set of challenges as we seek to understand our common ground.

I have sat with students, faculty, staff and colleagues as we shared our views about what constitutes "community" at the university and also try to find the answers of how best to address our diversity issues. And my epiphany on this subject came to me when I recently attended a lecture series given by Diana Eck, a professor of comparative religion at Harvard University (a visiting scholar for the Year of Religion), who spoke to us about the "human face" of what living within a pluralistic community requires from each one of us.

Eck pointed out that when we begin our discourse we must do so with an open mind and in my words, an open heart. Eck reminded us that by being "open" with each other without passing judgement first, we will find new ways to encourage more constructive dialogue as we build a context in which to understand our differences, as well as our similarities. She also stressed to us that tolerance is not enough in addressing our diversity issues.

This was all part of the focus of the last of her three-part lecture (as part of the Robinson Lectures in Religion), on the subject of "Going Public: Challenging Issues for Multi-religious America." She herself has also recently made national news by "going public." Acting on a personal decision she made to accept a special appointment at Harvard which would require her living in residence halls with students, she did so along with the understanding that she could bring her life partner with her, who happens to be of the same sex.

Just a few months ago as Eck spoke to us about the challenges which cultural pluralism brings, she in essence has lived it. Within her own academic community she has recently had to contend with the dark side which emerges when fear, coupled by ignorance and intolerance, makes her a walking target.

Thankfully, she is a formidable woman and this too shall pass, but what does this say about the status of how diversity issues are being addressed or not addressed within a premiere Ivy League private liberal arts institution such as Harvard? What implications does this have for us? I think there is a lesson here which we can draw from the example of our neighbor up north.

The lesson for me is one which rests in how we can intentionally build upon our awareness and appreciation of what makes us "unique" as a community while counteracting our fears.

In my mind, in order for us to cultivate a warmer cultural climate at the university, it seems to me to rest in recognizing our "humanity" — our fundamental human needs to be respected, valued and understood. And as we move into next year's theme year focusing on "Globalization and Diversity: Conflict or Harmony?" perhaps this will present to us a pregnant pause in all of our lives to reflect on what living within a pluralistic community means to us and what it will require from us.

So if we can for just a moment pause from the busyness of our lives at the end of this semester, and ask ourselves the question, "What can I do to improve my cultural sensitivity index?" This may be as simple as participating in a cultural event or attending a forum, listening to WAKE Radio's or viewing WAKE TV's student-based talk show programs on the subject, writing or reading the editorials or joining in a "talking table" group. And for those who like to communicate via e-mail, why not create your own list serve or web page to begin such discussions? Maybe then we will find our common purpose and create new ways to capture the true essence of what *E pluribus unum* is all about.

Friends help to ease the rocky transition from home to college.

Well, boys and girls, the inevitable has occurred. The year is drawing to a close and following that trend, so is my column. There will be counselors on hand to help you cope with your grief. I am sitting here, watching the cursor blink on my Official University Thinkpad, trying to think of

Jelisa Castrodale
STUDENT COLUMNIST

acceptable topics for my farewell address.

I've already shot down "Aramark: Service with a Smirk" and "Johnson Hall: Thank You For Not Discussing the Outside World," when a knock came on my door.

I opened it to find a crowd of onlookers, pointing at me, like I was an albino wildbeast on a Discovery Channel special.

"That's Jelisa," one of them says in a hushed voice. "She's harmless but don't make any sudden moves."

Why had I become a spectacle on this occasion? My dashing good looks? My witty, charming, yet humble personality? I assured myself that those traits played a part, but I was being put on display for

the good of a prospective student! A freshman!

That's when those proverbial gears started turning. WARNING: I am going to use this paragraph to "unify" the remainder of the column. Why, it seems like just yesterday when I was that kid, setting foot on campus for the first time...

Begin flashback sequence. Wow, my first day at college. I had been preparing for it for months: planning, packing, raising my alcohol tolerance. I am the oldest kid in my family, so my parents had not gone through the "Our Child is Leaving, We Can Turn Her Room into a Linen Closet" phase before. They were helping my efforts by crying and reading books about all the horrors that would undoubtedly occur on college campuses. My mother would take a break from sobbing to throw out uplifting facts like "One out of eight college students will unknowingly eat a deep-fried sparrow." It seemed ridiculous at the time, but when you think about it, where DOES the Pit get those Cornish Hens?

The packing was the big thing. I thought, Wow, I am going to need something for almost every situation... I mean, I'm on my own now, man! I graciously accepted the care packages my relatives sent, full of Econ-O-Packs of razors, staples and other sharp objects.

I would stack them in the corner with the cheese grater, the shoe shine kit and other "necessities" that to this day remain in their original wrappings.

So then I get here and realize that I have to haul all of that stuff up to the third floor (Note to Self: Next year,

leave complete library of Nancy Drew books at home). I was greeted by the perky RA staff who gave me a Dentyne cup full of feminine hygiene products. I spent the rest of the day wondering what was in the guys' cups.

Then began the first evening of "real college fun." Those "Get to Know You" activities, like passing oranges under your chins, blood-typing your hallmates and watching the RAs put condoms on bananas, where we all snickered like fourth graders whose teacher had mentioned the Grand Teton Mountains.

To be honest, my first evening was miserable. Everyone had paired off with their roommate to eagerly read the Housing Agreements together. I had a single room and no one to really bond with. My first dinner was KFC. I ate alone. And I tripped up the stairs to the Pit. And I spilled gravy on my Wachovia "What Keeps You Up At Night?" T-shirt. And they were out of Freshens. And I had bad skin.

Now that you know what a dork I was, let's flash forward to the present. I managed to survive my first night and since then, I've picked up on a couple of things.

OK, here's where I'm going to get bittersweet, but I promise it will be over soon.

We all came to college for basically the same reason — to secure a good education so that your future career isn't Sweat Mopper at a Pro-Wrestling tournament. And yeah, we all go to class on a (fairly) regular basis, but I have since learned that college is more than being able to recite the Treaty of Ghent or give the atomic weight of Californium.

MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION



Treasure your college memories, Class of '98

Soon to be graduates should reflect upon their changing years at the university.

I feel I must unabashedly address my class, the soon-to-graduate Class of 1998 and share my thoughts on our days together. As the curtain now drops on our undergraduate life, what memories will we have to carry with us of these four magical, budding years? Our tenure here has been tempered by both sweet and bitter days, days of

Emily Brewer
GUEST COLUMNIST

discourse and of debate, tolerance and challenge, innocence and experience. This is my tribute to our experience, to our school, and to these days I've so loved.

The Pit was a cafeteria, not a fast food strip, when first we dined there, and it wasn't lit up like Times Square. There was no frozen yogurt, no designer gourmet coffee and no Pizza Hut delivery in covered golf carts. Krispy Kreme was open twenty-four hours and the Dessertery wasn't quite so swank.

Our ID cards wouldn't pick up the laundry tab, and the dorms didn't lock until the witching hour. There was no cushy air-conditioning to ease the sweltering heat of August and September, no labels to decode the mangled halls of Tribble Hall, no high-tech, ergonomic, slouch-back rubber desks and no newfangled Ethernet connection sockets.

Life was, looking back on it, happy, and somehow simpler. Students still used answering machines, word processors and Macintoshes, still saved quarters for their laundry and still kept fans in their windows. Vegas was a computer lab, not a Spring Break destination. The med school was called Bowman Gray, and the business school, Babcock. Luter Residence Hall was Greek-free, Babcock, man-free. And, you could enter campus from Polo Road after ten o'clock.

We watched, somewhat green-eyed, as the laptops started to dot the campus, marveling at the university's technological revolution yet quietly fearing our educational experience had already become obsolete.

We shared the wisdom of William Rehnquist, James Earl Jones, Tony Campolo and Harold Kushner; the music of Itzak Pearlman, George Winston, They Might Be Giants and the Indigo Girls; and the enchantment of Diane Sawyer, Ted Koppel, A.R. Ammons, Alec Baldwin and our own Maya Angelou. Life has been rich.

We cheered Randolph, Rusty, Timmy and Tony to Atlantic Coast Conference glory, applauded the debate team's national title, and welcomed the Euzelians and Philomathesians back into the annals of University history. We tearfully buried nine of our peers, a president emeritus, a Wachovia teller, a Mag Room server and a soccer coach. Memories, shared and alone, lurk around every corner of our Alma Mater. I walk around the Quadrangle and see the luminaries aglow for the Love Feast and chuckle at the toilet paper roll lodged in the tree.

I think of the friends I made at Pre-School; a stolen kiss on Davis Field; all-night paperwriting in the computer lab; awkward freshman mixers on the Mag Patio; the shadow of Wait Chapel in the clouds on a foggy night; an insufferable Calculus class; the attentive ears and shared shoulder of a friend when my grandmother died; the swings outside Scales; a quiet

moment in Davis Chapel; long heart-to-hearts in Shorty's; a professor who enlivened my world with poetry; saunters through Reynolda Gardens and eating Hero House subs by the waterfall.

I think of Venice, of which memories of my fall semester haunt me daily. I can walk around here and in my mind go back to the music of the gondoliers, the regalia of the Regatta, the still water of the dark canals; the aroma of *pane dolce*; the majesty of Casa Artom and the camaraderie of the family life there. All of these memories have forever tied my heart and soul to that place and to its people.

The poet William Wordsworth wrote that his one-time vision of "a host of golden daffodils" often flashed in his mind when he lay reposed on his couch, pensive and placid. May the class of 1998, as we with fear-tinged excitement sally forth to start life anew, forever cherish and preserve the memories that we together made during these all too fleeting years.

Like Wordsworth, may we reap enjoyment and solace from those memories when they are no more than photographs and echoes in our minds. More than classes, it will be those remembrances that will last.

Not long ago, my friend and history study partner asked me, "Do you remember when we stayed up all night the eve of Dr. Barefield's final, cramming in names and dates, and choking down bitter coffee to keep ourselves awake?"

"And in the morning," I continued, "waiting at the doors of the Pit as they opened, scarfing down omelets, and then blasting the "O Fortuna" chorus from Carmina Burana in your car, just as the sun was rising over Scales?"

"That was awesome," he said. "Yeah," I agreed. We laughed and shook our heads.

"I don't remember that test very well," he said. "No," I replied. "Me neither."