

Cambridge 02138

*Artificial intelligence, belonging, immigration***AFTER THE ICU**

WHAT A relief it was to read “What It Means to Be OK,” concerning Daniela Lamas and her post ICU care practice, by Lydialyle Gibson (January-February, page 38). Although I had found website help for my West Nile encephalitis recovery and articles about ICU stays, this is the first experience reading about the effects of long-term ICU care from patient experiences.

One patient’s “awful dreams” and “hallucinations,” which I share, were assured by Lamas to be “your mind trying to make sense of your situation.”

During a long recovery, with much time at home “watching TV,” I queried, “Where’s the meaning?” and I relate to patients saying, “What am I doing here?” and “her road back to health was scary and sad.” “This sort of not-dead and not-alive (aspect) of illness and recovery” describes it perfectly. Thank you.

CAROLYN GOLD, Ed.M. ’85
Concord, Mass.

I AM NOT A Harvard graduate, yet I read about Dr. Lamas with keen interest. I lost my father this past November after a period of poor recovery following emergency surgery in August. At 87 he came through the surgery very well. In fact, the surgeon was impressed that he was so strong for his age. I fully expected him to bounce back, but this time was different. Sadly, my Dad ended up twice in the ICU afterward.

I read this article with gratitude for helping me to understand what was happening with my father when he went home for the last time and went into hospice care. I wondered whether any of the medical staff who



tended to him previously knew that he was dying. I want to thank Dr. Lamas for starting her clinic to follow up with her former patients. This kind of caring understanding will go a long way in helping families make decisions about whether to pursue medical intervention.

MARGARET A. E. BRYAN
Denver

AI AND ETHICS

“EMBEDDED ETHICS” (despite the cute caps) in a computer-science curriculum reflects a fundamental misconception: that technology subsumes ethics (“Artificial Intelligence and Ethics,” by Jonathan Shaw, January-February, page 44).

Everything about AI is a choice people make. The article ponders how to deploy AI and people interactions “properly and fairly,” but never really considers that ethically many of these interactions are better not developed and deployed. Lily Hu comes close in criticizing AI proponents approaching everything as issues of “optimization...or prediction...or classification.” Yet, that’s what the article discusses—logistics. Barbara Grosz, for example, studies how to help computers understand human speech, but doesn’t consider when they don’t belong in the conversation, offering instead the same kind of emotional, extreme example—children with rare diseases—as AI commercials. No one questions the inevitable implementation, assuming the answer to any problem from hiring to health-care is to turn it over to a machine.

Students in computer science at Harvard—its second largest undergraduate concentration—are likely to end up working with or being the “private commercial developers” the

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article mentions. What ethical reinforcement are they receiving before going corporate? Jonathan Zittrain argues AI “should be shaped to bear the public interest in mind.” (Sad to think that necessary to state.) However, his replacement for the “runaway trolley problem” is an equally hair-splitting debate over who’s responsible for the misuse of an autonomous car. Currently, the public itself is far from keen on the concept of autonomous cars. Isn’t that a more important discussion? Can companies accept that some products are not wanted? Plastic pollution and climate change come from unquestioned collaborations between business and technology. We should ask more of those who would change our world.

Fundamentally, it is wrong for elites—financial or intellectual—to eliminate such choices for others. Technology may be “ubiquitous,” often usefully so, but it is time to consider not just how, but what kind, how much, and where, and to set boundaries. Real issues of fairness, employment opportunity, individual privacy, and human dignity are at stake, and threaten most those who already have little of them. These courses don’t seem to be looking at such issues, and should.

CHRISTINA ALBERS ’79
New Orleans

WHO BELONGS?

IN RESPONSE TO “Who Belongs at Harvard?” by Catherine Zhang (The Undergraduate, January-February, page 30), I can answer: everybody and anybody. That doesn’t mean

everybody can or wants to belong to every social group, nor is that a requirement a college or indeed a society has to fulfill. A college does have to offer courses of instruction and professors able to teach them and ready to meet with students for intellectual guidance.

Zhang’s account of her visit to a final club struck me rather forcibly. When I was at Harvard as a Radcliffe girl (we were girls until the age of 21), there were a few old-time gentlemen’s clubs that a small percentage of boys belonged to. There were girls who socialized with them; most of us did not. Most of us—boys and girls—had no interest in social clubs. We created our social lives from the people we met in classes, in sections, in residential Houses. It used to be a point of pride with us that Harvard was not a fraternity and secret society school.

I’ve been disappointed with the advent of many final clubs, by nature exclusive. To allow such organizations at Harvard is to invite exactly the prejudices and discriminatory practices Harvard claims to reject. The behavior Zhang observed comes as no surprise, since such clubs have been regularly vilified in books, movies, and news reports. If she feels uncomfortable at social clubs, she doesn’t have to attend them.

I have nothing good to say about clubs, and I am sorry indeed that they have been handled, administratively, in such a ridiculous and ineffective fashion. I understand that students’ needs for large spaces to accommodate vast numbers has been a motivating excuse. In my modest college days, we were content to socialize on a smaller scale, which seems exactly like what would suit Zhang.

Her claim that “diversity... is the apparatus which sustains the preservation of the elite” should give her pause for further thought. Diversity is not an apparatus; it is a kind of social world (pretty much America’s social world) that offers everyone opportunities for social choice and personal enlargement.

Don’t worry that “change doesn’t happen overnight.” Be grateful that it comes at all and when it comes it proves a true boon.

HEIDI G. DAWIDOFF ’60
Francestown, N.H.

A Friend, Remembered

JOHN DE CUEVAS ’52, a long-time and steadfast friend of this publication, died on November 29. (An obituary appeared in the January-February issue.) He served as an Incorporator of Harvard Magazine Inc. for decades—an important role in the governance that assures the magazine’s editorial independence and integrity—and as a contributing editor. He was also a generous supporter of the enterprise, and, beginning in 1985, a source of the contents readers enjoyed—writing features on science, the environment and climate change (a special concern), and other subjects; and crafting Harvard-themed crossword puzzles in print and online. (See this characteristic devilment published in 2011, for the University’s 375th anniversary: harvardmag.com/375-puzzle-11.)

John was a gentle, genuine friend—sweet and mannerly, intellectually acute and curious, a superb writer. We remember him as a distinctive original.

~The Editors

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NONLEGACIES...AND LOTTERIES

THE COMMENTS IN “What Legacy?” (7 Ware Street, January-February, page 5) were appreciated by this grad, who benefited from a “thumb on the scale,” at least to the point of being admitted and given financial aid.

I was a public-school boy and transfer from Northeastern. Married, I lived off-campus and wasn't part of the House system. Dudley House, even with Lehman Hall, wasn't quite the same. As a consequence, I never quite fit in. Despite the aid, I had to work 20 to 25 hours

a week and through the summers.

I value what I got in my years there and some of the doors opened to me later—though I was still scrabbling from having left home at 18. Lately, as I was reflecting on my experience with a classmate also from the Boston pub-

7 WARE STREET

What Counts

The things that can be counted, count. That saying enjoys a special currency in certain precincts—in academia, especially among practitioners of many of the quantitative social sciences and the sciences proper. Locally, for those so inclined, the good times are rolling.

At least three converging factors—the advance of new research tools and fields; the easing of fiscal constraints after the Great Recession; and the blessings conferred by The Harvard Campaign—have enabled the University to put forth a trio of bracing intellectual programs, each broad in scope and each broadly quantitative.

The Harvard Data Science Initiative, first out of the chute, in early 2017 (see harvardmag.com/datascience-17), describes itself as being at the intersection of statistics and computer science, but with implications for “almost every empirical scholarly field,” foreseeing applications in “a wide range of practical areas including business and commerce, government and politics, pure and applied science and engineering, medicine and public health, law, education, design,” and, for good measure, “many others.” Medical scientists talk about gathering information from unusually long-surviving cancer patients to identify patterns that lead them to new therapeutic regimes, “druggable” genetic targets, and more. Kennedy School professors are examining communication strategies to encourage students to attend school more often (see “Trimming Truancy,” May-June 2018, page 8). And soon. All clearly to the good.

The Quantitative Biology Initiative, organized during 2018, leans more toward basic than applied science—melding life sciences with computation, engineering, and physics to harness enormous sets of data and use them to build models of complex living systems that are not themselves so complex as to be unwieldy and impractical. As illustrations, the initiative describes problems such as understanding “how molecular circuits within cells make decisions, how biological components such as cells and proteins self-assemble

to create complex structures including tissues and organs, and how biological systems adapt to changing needs of the environment.” In due course, naturally, there may be important applications, too (“Our goal is to uncover basic principles governing biology, to learn from biology to build novel engineering systems, and to address fundamental questions that have an impact on human health and disease”), but this work seems more clearly anchored in Cambridge, and ultimately Allston, than in the Longwood Medical Area.

Finally, the Harvard Quantum Initiative, a pre-Thanksgiving arrival (read about it at harvardmag.com/quantum-sci-18), aims to meld basic science (from physics) with “solution-driven” engineering, extending to partners in government, industry, and other academic institutions. Superfast quantum computing is a, if not the, holy grail. Astrophysicist Christopher Stubbs, the new dean of science, lists the two recent initiatives as among his chief priorities.

These programs involve graduate students and postdocs, expanded undergraduate teaching and experiential learning, new multidisciplinary faculty collaborations (and appointments), and more. They appear likely to attract interested students and researchers—and the resources to proceed. Each is likely to yield many exciting discoveries, even if the findings are not always immediately accessible to laypeople from other fields.

It is not churlish to note, at the same time, that the equivalent ambition is somewhat lacking, or at least less readily apparent, within the arts and humanities. The University has invested heavily in the wholesale remaking of the Harvard Art Museums as a teaching instrument, with excellent results, and has broadened undergraduate learning opportunities—but neither constitutes a similarly exciting point of intellectual or interdisciplinary departure. There is a smattering of interesting work in digital humanities, but many scholars regard that as a useful toolkit, not a breakthrough. To the extent that the humanities disciplines appear to have difficulty alighting on a similar, galvanizing Big Idea—well, that's the prob-

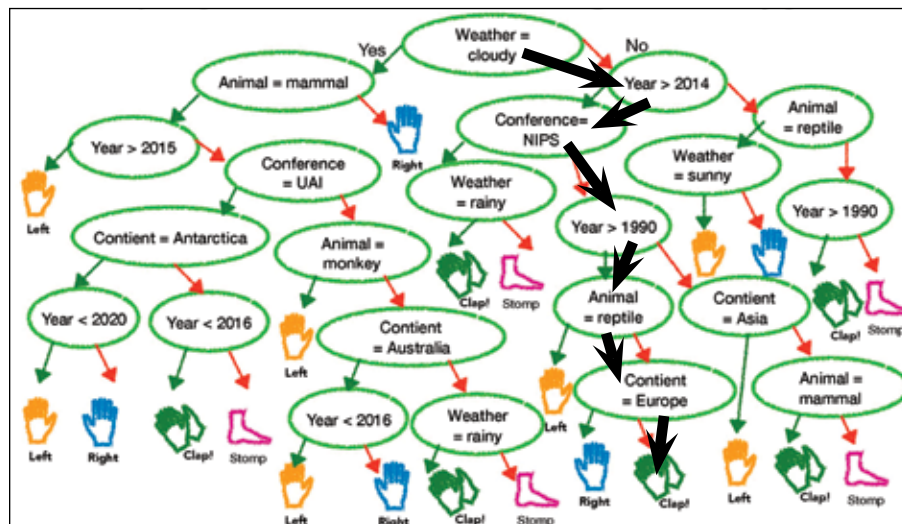
lem with the humanities, many people seem to think.

Nor is it new: in his remarks upon the dedication of the Barker Center, in 1997, then-president Neil L. Rudenstine (himself a literature scholar in good standing) commented: “[M]any of the discussions and debates of the past few decades—even at their most disputatious—have significantly broadened and deepened our ideas about human nature and experience in extraordinary ways,” he said. “We know much more about the human past—and present; about the values, the ways of life, and the art of people in a far greater number of societies; and about individuals and groups whose very existence, and whose contributions, were often overlooked and certainly underestimated,” a set of accomplishments that represent “a major achievement” realized through “real struggle, debate, and disagreement”: the generative forces of new ideas. At the same time, Rudenstine worried that “The best work of the past 20 to 30 years is already well established.... We can begin to consider which courses, curricula, and research might prove to be most fruitful in the *next* few decades.”

What seemed true then seems so now. The stakes in the humanities are more important than ever. It won't do to let matters languish. Harvard retains formidable resources—in its faculty members, libraries, collections, and students—in the humanities. Scholars in these disciplines appreciate and are excited about the advances in the sciences, and should neither feel, nor be inadvertently left to feel, overlooked. The University and its supporters, presented with exciting paths to new work in the humanities, will no doubt rally to the cause.

And by the way, that saying up top, about things being counted? It is a weird recasting of the original “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts,” and is often attributed to Albert Einstein. That attribution is wrong, as a rudimentary textual sleuthing reveals—the kind of work at which humanities scholars excel. You could look it up.

—JOHN S. ROSENBERG, *Editor*



DECISION TREE HELP!

READER Robert C. Grano, M.B.A. '56, of Portland, Maine, wrote: "Please provide illustration of correct navigation of 'simple decision tree'" published to illustrate "Artificial Intelligence and Ethics" (January-February, page 44).

Author Jonathan Shaw explains: Tracing a path through the decision tree: At each

level of the tree, determine which of the five inputs—ICML (International Conference on Machine Learning); 2017; Australia; kangaroo; and sunny—is relevant. Then ask whether that input matches what is described in the bubble. If yes, follow the green arrows to the left down to the next level. If no, follow the red arrows to the right. The correct solution is shown above.

cre in school—Einstein comes to mind. This could set off a major trend with Harvard, once again, the leader.

DAVID MUMFORD '57, JF '61, Ph.D. '62,
Saint George, Me.

MEDICAL GIFT

I AM WRITING about the large gift recently made to Harvard Medical School (HMS) by Leonard Blavatnik ("Accelerating Medical Research," January-February, page 18). There can be no question this gift is of great value to the school and should be welcomed. As part of his gift, there will be both an institute and a laboratory named in his honor.

Blavatnik is one of the wealthiest persons in the world. The nature of his background as a very successful Russian oligarch is discussed in a recent article published in *The New York Times* (Ann Marlowe, "Is Harvard Whitewashing a Russian Oligarch's Fortune?" December 5, 2018). Whatever may be true about Blavatnik personally, his associations and background raise questions at a time when reinforcement of certain values seems particularly important. This is especially true for an institution such as HMS, which has been committed to sustaining a high level of excellence as well as integrity and honesty. A name implies acceptance. At a minimum, the circumstances surrounding Blavatnik's gift need amplification.

I am grateful for my HMS experience, which has enabled me to have a meaningful and rewarding professional career. I have continued to support HMS and am now president of the Harvard Medical Society of Chicago. I am not certain that I can sustain these efforts with the same enthusiasm since it seems unclear to me at the moment where Harvard Medical School stands on issues of fundamental importance.

MORRIS A. FISHER, M.D. '65
Evanston, Ill.

Editor's note: The Medical School responded:

Harvard Medical School is deeply grateful for this generous and transformational commitment from the Blavatnik Family Foundation that will support discovery at HMS propelling the school's mission to transform human health.

The Blavatnik Family Foundation has a long history of support at Harvard. It originated a decade ago with a gift that established the Biomedical Accelerator Fund in 2007, followed by a \$50 million gift in 2013 that created the Blavatnik Biomedical Ac-

lic schools, he remarked that he never felt as well taken care of as the "stars": students from wealthier backgrounds with better preparations and connections. He thought Harvard didn't do particularly well by its average students. I have to agree. One big revelatory moment was walking into a room just as a fellow student, talking to someone else, said, "Oh, he's all right, even though he doesn't come from money." I knew my place then.

The thumb on the scale for the economically disadvantaged is a good thing that would be much better if Harvard did a better job of helping those admitted.

So imagine my surprise to read the excellent essay by Catherine Zhang ("Who Belongs at Harvard?" January-February, page 30), to much the same point, with its articulation of the resistance of Dean Rakesh Khurana to any such program. It is hardly a surprise to note in Brevia (page 28) the dean's choice to diminish the little support provided undergraduates not safely ensconced with their prep-school peers in the House system, with the demotion of Dudley House to the "Dudley Community."

It really makes one wonder whether Harvard means what it says.

ANONYMOUS

I WRITE AS A person with a very long Harvard affiliation: class of '57, Higgins professor of mathematics, etc. I would like to propose a radical change in admissions policy, one that I feel suits our "woke" age, steps down from a certain highly criticized pedestal, and saves a lot of money as well ("Admissions on Trial," page 15, and "What Legacy?" page 5, both January-February).

It is quite simple. Instead of playing God and making superhuman efforts to decide which adolescents have major leadership potential, I submit that random selection will do just as good a job. More precisely, take the applicant pool, admit a very small percent who simply cannot be turned down for various reasons, reject those clearly unqualified who would probably flounder and not benefit (30 percent? 50 percent?), and then accept randomly from the remaining pool enough applicants to fill the class. The brilliant work of the psychologists Kahneman and Twersky (see *The Undoing Project*) has shown how flawed human selection can be. It is certainly my experience as a professor that I rarely recognized which of my students would go on to do spectacular work, and which not. There are so many examples from history of geniuses who were medio-

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celerator at Harvard University and the Blavatnik Fellowship in Life Science Entrepreneurship at Harvard Business School.

The Blavatnik Biomedical Accelerator has awarded 104 grants to 80 principal investigators across Harvard University, totaling \$18.5 million. The Blavatnik Family Foundation is known for its Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists, which support noteworthy young scientists and engineers. HMS Professor of Neurobiology Rachel Wilson received this award in 2014.

As Dean George Q. Daley has said, “the work that takes place in the labs and clinics across Harvard Medical School embodies the promise of curiosity-driven fundamental research to solve some of humanity’s most confounding and pressing biomedical challenges. In that sense, this is a gift to medicine and to patients everywhere.”

IMMIGRATION AND INNOVATION

PROFESSOR William Kerr (“The Innovation Engine,” January-February, page 6) lauds the economic contribution of immigrants to U.S. innovation and growth. He urges us to “align the pipes” to make it easier “to attract and retain more talented immigrants.”

As far as I can tell, he never considers the impact on the countries they emigrate from. In the heavy majority of cases, they emigrate from countries much poorer than the United States. Thus, to improve the economic growth of one of the wealthiest countries in the world, he would have us drain away the best talent of the poor countries of the world. Am I the only one who finds this shameful?

JACK HARLLEE '63
Washington, D.C.

I ENJOYED READING about the value of high-skilled immigrants to the U.S. economy. A word on behalf of undocumented immigrants. Admit it or not, our economy depends on undocumented workers to build our houses, harvest our crops, and provide

SPEAK UP, PLEASE

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domestic services. Not only do they provide value in these ways, they pay taxes (\$11.6 billion annually) and buy goods and services. And they enrich our communities with their diversity. Our broken immigration system badly needs to be fixed to reflect these realities.

ROSANNE JACOBSEN, J.D. '90
Longmont, Colo.

HARVARD FINANCES

WHAT A delightful ending to your report on Harvard's finances ("Surplus Surprise..." January-February, page 19)! You very cutely liken Harvard's approach to that of the squirrels of Harvard Yard, storing away for the future. The article seemed subtly to poke fun at Harvard's unrelenting concerns. The glass is always half empty!

I have never doubted that in the long run Harvard would become ever richer. How could this not be so? Over the long run its endowment has always returned at least 2 percent or 3 percent per annum more than is distributed from it. In the meantime, our university aggressively and very successfully solicits contributions. I have even made them myself, though not at the magnificent level some others have achieved.

This scenario might be the subject of some political or sociological concern, in addition to amusement, but for this: Harvard has given me and countless others a wonderful education, and it remains a repository of extraordinary knowledge, expertise, and intelligence.

It was a pleasure to learn some of the details from your report, and also to be reassured that Harvard remains true to its fiscally conservative heritage.

ROBERT S. VENNING '65
Oakland, Calif.

AMERICAN INDIANS

MARINA BOLOTNIKOVA'S "Native Modern: Philip J. Deloria studies American Indians and the contradictions that made America" (January-February, page 50) requires clarification. This is especially true of her assertion that Deloria (a son of the famous Standing Rock Sioux activist, Vine Deloria Jr.) has "made Native American history about *culture*." Deloria has the academic right to interpret the Indian narrative in any context he deems appropriate, but there is an entirely different way of looking at Native American history than the one that he advocates, and (please turn to page 82)



WHY I JOINED THE HARVARD CLUB OF BOSTON

There are many different reasons to join the Harvard Club of Boston. Susan Kendall is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Kennedy School and here's why she joined.

“ I joined the Harvard Club of Boston right after I received my undergraduate degree, because I wanted to remain connected to my classmates and to Harvard. After I completed my degree at the Harvard Kennedy School, I found the Harvard Club to be a great place to keep in touch with my grad school classmates as well. Now that my children are older, I'm finding myself spending more time at the Club, attending faculty lectures as well as a wide range of educational and cultural programming that you can't find anywhere else.

The Harvard connection is important to me – and the Club is a way to be connected to both people and ideas. ”

— Susan Kendall '81, ks'99

For more information regarding membership, please call 617-450-4444 or visit harvardclub.com.



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LETTERS*(continued from page 9)*

that Bolotnikova focused upon.

An essential aspect of Native American history began in 1670, when the Indians of southern New England rose up against the second- and third-generation English settlers, who were encroaching upon their lands, in what is known as King Philip's War. Once the Indian tribes were defeated, and the survivors were either dispersed or sold into slavery in Bermuda and the Caribbean, waves of newly arrived Europeans moved westward, accompanied by a 200-year-long tsunami of genocide (or, if you prefer, ethnic cleansing) during which thousands of Indian men, women, and children were killed in tribe after tribe and nation upon nation, until the slaughter reached the shores of the Pacific Ocean, at which point it rolled back across the country as Union Army veterans of the Civil War, like George Custer, continued massacring Native Americans, until those remaining were confined to reservations, where many live today in conditions of mass unemployment, deep poverty, and wholesale discrimination. This

territorial expansion and its brutal consequences have been ascribed to the convenient ideology known as Manifest Destiny.

Such are the contradictions that made America.

PAUL BRODEUR '53
North Truro, Mass.

Author of Restitution: The Land Claims of the New England Indians

HOUSE MASTER JOHN FINLEY

IN HIS LETTER (January-February, page 75), William C. Wooldridge imagines the "chagrin" that John Finley would have felt at having non-prepsters "thrust" into Eliot House. I find it impossible to imagine that he ever felt any such emotion.

As a public-school graduate from Colorado with friends from similar backgrounds, I never felt the slightest bit out of place in Eliot House. There is no doubt that this was largely due to the atmosphere of acceptance which Finley generated. "Patrician" John Finley may have been. An extraordinarily warm-hearted human being he certainly was. Social snobbery was beneath him. His ability to write "storied letters of recommendation"

was founded on the fact that he took genuine personal interest in all the members of the house from the day they entered until...well, as long as possible really.

My first memory of him is that in the spring of freshman year, shortly after I had been admitted to Eliot House, he approached me as I was out walking and, though never having seen me before, greeted me by name and welcomed me to the House. That was the start. He had bothered to memorize who I was from a freshman picture. My last memory of him is that, at a gathering at Eliot House during my twenty-fifth reunion, he again greeted me by name and knew the basics of my life at that point from reading our class report. What a wonderful man he was!

JOHN R. McDERMOTT '59
Concord, Calif.

ISRAEL BOYCOTT

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John Millar (Letters, January-February, page 75) is entitled to call Israeli policies “brutal,” even if I disagree. He is not entitled to apply the term “apartheid” to a situation that bears no similarity to what was practiced in South Africa, or to Jim Crow in the U.S. South, even though anti-Semites the world over commonly invoke the canard and “useful idiots” repeat it. And supporting BDS [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions] is indeed anti-Semitic, in part because it is directed only at Israel and not at any of the immeasurably more extensive and serious government abuses on this planet.

ROBERT KANTOWITZ, J.D. '79
Lawrence, N.Y.

I WISH MR. MILLAR had done better in history while at Harvard. There is a big historical difference between Roman Catholics and the Italian government and Presbyterians and the Scottish government, and Jews and Israel.

Neither of the first two groups had a modern government dedicated to wiping them out and succeeding as to six million.

And neither group has continuing and now escalating groups around the world continuing to preach hate, which we see in anti-Semitism.

The reason U.S. Jews don't feel separate from Israel is that it's the only safe harbor. And just as Americans feel connected to the United States because of cultural reasons, Jews feel connected to Israel for cultural reasons.

As to “brutal and apartheid policies,” the U.S. has Israel beat there in its treatment of blacks and migrants. And what do you think the U.S. response would be if Mexicans started to shoot rockets into San Diego? A lot more brutal than the Israeli response to this continuing terror.

MERVYN L. HECHT, J.D. '63
Santa Monica, Calif.

WINTER IN MAINE

I ENJOYED Nell Porter Brown's article on Portland, Maine, a great deal (“Beyond Lobsters and Lighthouses,” Harvard Squared, January-February, page 12E). I was born in Lewiston and all our family have been going up every summer to the cottage at Higgins

Beach, just this side of Portland. We enjoy the restaurants, the museums, the lively feel of all the familiar and new places we visit and explore, so well captured in the article.

One thing I'd add would be a note on the literary scene. There are a number of independent bookstores and book and journal publishers in Portland, Brunswick, and around the state. I took part in a poetry reading in September at Longfellow Books with the Portland-area poets Mike Bove and Anna Bat-Chai Wrobel, and the books that we read from were published by Moon Pie Press, over in Westbrook. It was fun to take part, as it is all around the place up there.

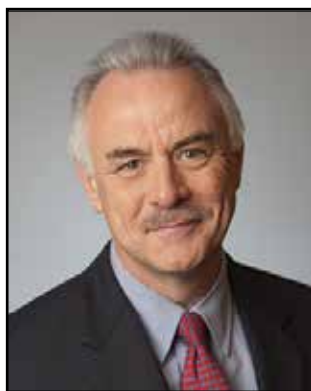
DAVID MCCANN, PH.D. '76
Korea Foundation professor of
Korean literature emeritus
Watertown, Mass.

ERRATUM

THE opening image for “What It Means to Be OK” (January-February, page 38) was incorrectly credited. The correct credit for the photograph is: Amélie Benoist/Science Source. We regret the error.

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