An Awakening

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Ever fallen asleep in class? Sure you have. Maybe it was a quick snooze, encapsulating a mere second of rest. Maybe it was knowledge that finally dawned on you as you were dozing. It could be the version where you wake up drooling and subsequently realize that your classmates and professor departed from your course of study. I understand you, were you up late last night finishing a lengthy research paper or a lengthy essay, perhaps likely having to rise early as well, or catching a night’s sleep of “Saturday Night Live” on Comedy Central, or approximating yourself of the activities of friends back home or at other colleges, or partaking in no way, not partaking! or doing something productive. I understand you were prostrated on the doorstep of Holy Cross to tend to do during the ungodliest of hours. You stumble into eight AM class the following morning, your surroundings an incomprehensible haze. The professor drones for what seems like an eternity, and you are not sure whether you can understand. It is a class that is not over yet, and the student indulges in the vain hope of perusing anything worthy of its continuation. Don’t worry, I’m getting there.

Two days! Two whole days! Two days two days! Two days... One conjures up images of the indomitable and beloved Energizer Bunny, except this time the rabbit is fatigued sumpsantly as the preeminent pink fitness guru marches about, bears the circular shape of all, the burden of the last eighteen months of history. We were astonished by this mere mortal ABC’s helm during the coverage. ABC’s helm during the coverage. The following is a figure that eventually produced an aggregate sum in excess of two days. Not to mention the time he spent off the air, preparing himself for the next interview, the next notification, the next... But digress.

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The classroom environment is a message to the world around us. When news happens, it runs its course, preaching to the people regarding the gravity of the situation. It is not something that will be forgotten any time soon. News stories and their legions of reporters, affiliates, and experts, along with an unheard-of豪华 habitat of cameramen, technicians, and public relations personnel, comprise the student body of this class. They were swamped because the teacher was going too fast, growing out enough information to fill dozens of notebooks. There was only one difference. These students couldn’t fall asleep in class.

Two weeks ago, as a series of indescribable tragedies raged both the Holy Cross community and paralyzed our supposedly impermeable national consciousness. That was an experience that each and every one of us, male and female, violent and nonviolent, of the media, and especially the local and national media, has had to endure. It has been more than a week, and we are still not all the way over it. News is fragmentary, news is contradictory. News stories are not linear, but tend toward the maddening confusion of the unfolding terrorist offensive and the unfolding terror hysteria in the streets, from our nation’s capital to its most obscure backwoods regions.

ABC, following the lead of every other broadcast network, has spent two weeks detailing and informative reports, whose very suppression of personhood and the right to be heard, every incident that could be had, had more on their minds than the duties of journalistic integrity. To claim that nobody involved in the nonstop coverage had a personal connection to the tragedy they solemnly observed is far-fetched indeed. Some were prominent as Jennings, some were anonymous. The emotional strain is crucial to effective reporting, could have fighting back tears as he witnessed the tears of his fellow colleagues, perhaps more so than Chief of Air Force. The Trade Towers housed corporate offices for his network and others, offices filled with colleagues, filled with friends.

Fell with memories.

Unfortunately for Jennings, Brokaw, and all the countless other national and local news personalities, memories are for the history books, not to be interred with reports of here and now. For them, the teacher was here, the class was now. And they stayed awake. Wide awake.

Peter Jennings needs to get home and go to bed. But like so many others, he won’t. Not until class gets out for the day.

Which won’t be anytime soon.

To the Editors:

I have taken up Mr. Bennici’s offer in his article “Perspectives on the Odyssey Program” to offer more information on the Odyssey Program. The Odyssey Program is an optional two-week orientation program open to ALANA and international students of the entering class. The first year of college is filled with fears, doubts, and challenges. The Odyssey Program seeks to provide a support network to ALANA and international students who face these challenges in a unique way. Our alums from the Pre-Odyssey class often speak of their painful social isolation. Their reports as well as those from faculty also speak of a mass murmur while other jargon swept away from their studies while developing a peer network or making connections to campus resources.

To address these issues, Odyssey introduces students to Holy Cross’ academic environment and its many campus resources through mini-classes and workshops while helping build comfortable relationships among students, faculty, and administrators. There are also field trips, a community service day, and social programs. The Odyssey Program promotes community by fostering pride in ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity rather than through a focus on “minority” or “cliquish” thinking. There is a series of workshops offered through the Counseling Office and the Office of Multicultural Education to help the students adapt to college life as CUA’s “first-year national orientation.” On the last day of the Odyssey, the participants work with the Multicultural Center to plan activities for the rest of the students. Odyssey encourages and urges students to participate in the general orientation with all first year students.

To the Editors:

Bennici’s all too common “perspectives” on the Odyssey Program is the same article written by a different author each fall semester since the Odyssey’s birth in the distant 90s. The same misguided claims are made: its “cliquish group cohesiveness,” its “further isolation of minority students on campus,” and its perpetuation of the “us versus them” mentality. The following is a manner’s perspective on the Odyssey Program.

A group of minorities, whether they are conforming in Kamholl or on the lawn, are not “cliquish.” Cliques are formed because they can be formed (in the case of Holy Cross) by the desire to be a part of a group, the desire to belong. Some of them wear long dark trench coats and entertain thoughts of joining various other student organizations. They are blessed with our support and involvement. The notion of our isolation is an illusion created to justify your failure to take initiative in introducing yourself, your fear of getting out of your comfort zone and—worse of all—your failure to recognize our existence.

Odyssey does not teach us to unite against “them.” I would go so far as to suggest that the current racial make-up of Holy Cross is its problem. Some people call Holy Cross the “O.A.,” others call it “cliquish.” But none of us, on Holy Cross (pun not intended) (in comparison to the diversity at Harvard and Yale), is the “us versus them” mentality. The “us versus them” mentality is that minorities do not share. I am not against white people. I am against a notion of whiteness, which means that everything human and moral and good and pure and innocent is associated with whiteness. People I revere their trait, Italian, and Greek cultures in order to participate in this bigoted, demonic notion of whiteness. It is a notion that has had a profound impact on our society but has not had a profound impact on my life. The power of the Holy Spirit can help burn out of peoples’ hearts and minds.

Bennici lists Odyssey’s “Strength” as its problem. I take umbrage with that statement. In other words, the coffee is a little too black. Add a touch of cream and sugar to make it less potent. I have a different perspective on what the problem is. Try not to get offended: your Holy Cross mothers are not attracted to the Catholic idenity and tradition of this school naively rebels against the problem. It is not Odyssey or Gateway. It is the notion of whiteness that creates a lack of communication and love; a notion that entices unsympathetic understandings about minorities and eventually—if kept unchecked—an ill will, hatred and action upon that ill will that will lead to the demise of every ideal this school holds most dear.

Odyssey gave me night when I was walking by faith alone. This note is the least I can do right now for a program that has profoundly affected who I am, who I wish to become and what Holy Cross has become because of Odyssey’s so-called “problem”: its strength.

David Robbins ’03