

scrutiny



# THE FANTASTIC 15

Our annual list of Harvard's 15 most interesting seniors

A SCRUTINY BY THE FM STAFF

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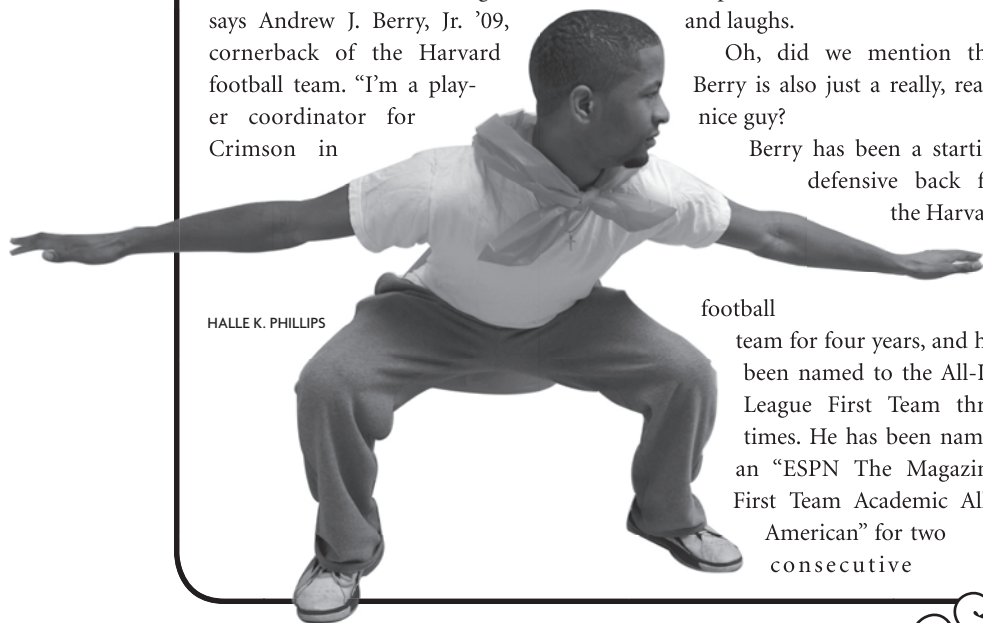
# THE FANTASTIC 15

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## ANDREW J. BERRY

"I'm a senior counselor and director of the Summer Urban Program," says Andrew J. Berry, Jr. '09, cornerback of the Harvard football team. "I'm a player coordinator for Crimson in



HALLE K. PHILLIPS

the Community," he says. "And a math and science tutor at St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church."

He speaks quickly, too modest to dwell long on any one accomplishment.

He stops. "I can slow down," he says, and laughs.

Oh, did we mention that Berry is also just a really, really nice guy?

Berry has been a starting defensive back for the Harvard

football

team for four years, and has been named to the All-Ivy League First Team three times. He has been named an "ESPN The Magazine: First Team Academic All-American" for two consecutive

seasons. This year, he earned his team's Robert F. Kennedy Award for desire and determination.

"Being here and being in that program is the biggest blessing in my life," Berry says of Harvard football.

Head Coach Tim Murphy acknowledges Berry as both a tremendous player and scholar. "He's one of the great human beings in college history," Murphy says. "His best quality is his extraordinary character. He's definitely one of the most remarkable kids I've been around."

In addition, Berry remains an active volunteer in the community, through Harvard programs like the Summer Urban Program, where he serves as a senior counselor and director, and Crimson in the Community, a service program through Harvard football. He also

tutors

math and science at Cambridge's St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church.

"He has a strong spiritual foundation," says Brenda Fowler-Berry, Andrew's mother, of his involvement at St. Paul. "He's stayed true to his values," his father, Andrew J. Berry, Sr adds.

Faith remains important to Berry, despite his varied collegiate obligations. "It's the number one thing in my life," Berry says. "I try and make sure it dictates all of my actions."

Berry, an economics concentrator, will be graduating with two degrees in June, one from Harvard College and another from the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

"We're all extremely proud of him and his accomplishments," Brenda says. "When I look at Andrew now, I see a young man."

—Stephanie M. Bucklin

You know you've made it when you have two things: an Olympic medal and a Wikipedia page. Emily R. Cross '08-'10 has made it.

Originally scheduled to graduate in 2008, Cross took three semesters off in order to train for fencing. Now, we are lucky enough to count her as a member of the class of 2009, and a "most interesting" member, at that.

Teammate Elizabeth S. Bast '09 is amazed at the accomplishments that Cross has managed, especially in light of her overwhelming athletic and academic commitments.

"I couldn't imagine traveling internationally every weekend," Bast says, speaking to the amount of time that Cross has had to spend off campus while still juggling her premed course load.

And the time away from school certainly paid off. This fall, Cross returned to campus with a shiny silver medallion, which, we imagine, doesn't hang in her college dorm room.

Cross's mother, Elizabeth K. Cross, is proud of her daughter's silver medal. "I think it's great since she sacrificed so much," she says.

While in China but after the competitions (and obviously with silver medal in hand), Cross talks about how she relaxed and finally took advantage of the legendary Olympic Village.

"It was like a big party," Cross says. "I'm not used to partying all night 'til 6 a.m., so I had to alternate: one night in, one night out."

Despite her rise to fencing

fame, Cross has remained characteristically modest.

"You wouldn't know that she is the best fencer in the country," Bast says. "She never makes you feel inferior."

And after her intense year and a half off, Cross is ready to return to the Square.

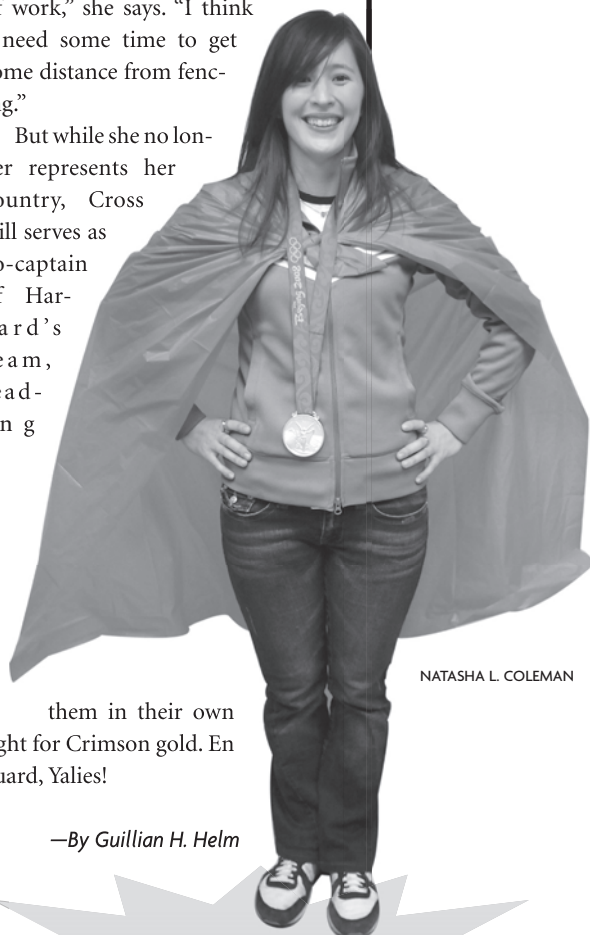
"It was a lot of fun, but a lot of work," she says. "I think I need some time to get some distance from fencing."

But while she no longer represents her country, Cross still serves as co-captain of Harvard's team, leading

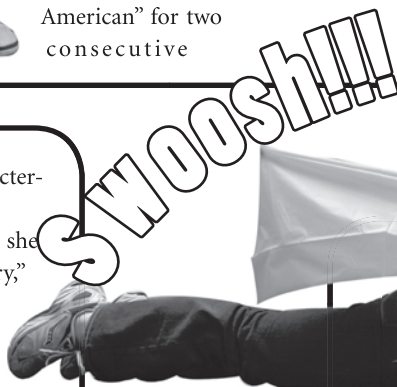
them in their own fight for Crimson gold. En guard, Yalies!

—By Guillian H. Helm

## EMILY R. CROSS



NATASHA L. COLEMAN



LILY G. BELLOW

## GAYATRI S. DATAR

Gayatri S. Datar '07-'09 is often called to the rescue. Such was the case at Café Gato Rojo last weekend: instead of being confronted by her reporter, the interesting senior found FM instead.

We shouldn't have been surprised: self-assured Gaya has a penchant for helping people.

As an undergraduate, she has provided aid and relief in New Orleans, India, and Namibia. Last year, she took a year off to work in Albania, filing a class action lawsuit against the corrupt government. Datar, who works for New Sector Alliance, an organization that helps develop social action plans around the world, first traveled to Albania on a two-week trip organized by a client. Datar was so moved by her visit that she decided to extend her work there.

Datar's efforts in Albania did not mark the first time she ditched a comfortable life at Harvard to help people in desperate need. At the time of the tsunami in India, Datar, then in her second semester of sophomore

year, took time off to work for BLESS, an NGO in India, helping to translate proposals for aid and development plans.

"I was in India when the Tsunami struck," Datar explains. "I went back to school and we were doing these stupid little fundraisers. I was frustrated with how little I could do here. I was not happy. I guess Harvard students were being Harvard students, and I was like, I can't handle this."

Yet she's quick to deflect compliments. "I don't want to make it into a saintly thing to do this work that is so important," she says. "It should not be lauded, it should be an obligation."

Although she doesn't have a clear idea what she'll do after graduation, Gaya has a realistic approach towards her ultimate goal: ending global poverty. "Development is like cleaning a house, rather than building one. It is an ongoing process. It will never be quite over."

—By Emily S. Shire

Today, Baruch Y. Shemtov '09 has chosen to wear a waterproof, rip-stop nylon, camouflage pattern tie. "This fabric is used by the military," he says of the tie, which he himself happened to create. "It's waterproof with a great texture. A reinterpretation of a traditional necktie."

This particular tie is just one of many originals that can be seen around the slender neck of Shemtov, the always impeccably groomed, chipper Leverett resident known on campus for his infectious laugh and sharp wit.

Shemtov began designing similarly ingenious neckties during his early years at a Manhattan private school, where his uniform required ties. "I was tired of wearing the same old ties," he says. "So on a whim one day I turned a bandana into a necktie."

This whim resulted in what is now the successful "Baruch Shemtov" brand, which sells neckties, cummerbunds, and bowties across the country and in Japan. His ties are known for their eye-catching vintage fabrics and superior construction. "I invented the double tie," he says, "which is two ties sewed together to create a layered effect. My ties offer the customer a way to follow dress codes for the office or school while still expressing himself."

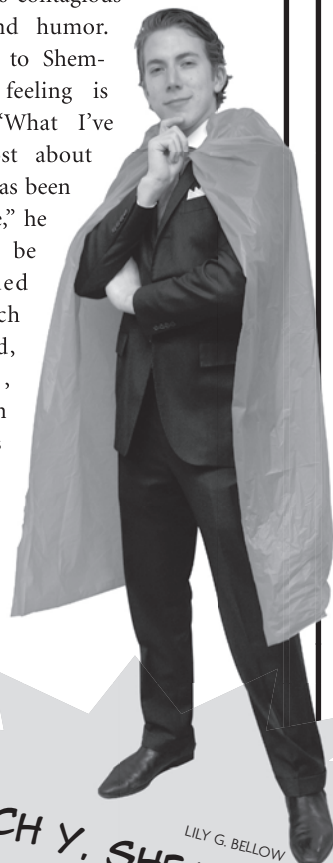
Shemtov's keen fashion sense, innate entrepreneurial skills, and ardent motivation have paid off; he was recently accepted into Harvard Business School's prestigious "2+2" Program. During the next two years, he plans on expanding his apparel line, increasing distribution, and exploring television opportunities.

As a psychology concentrator, Shemtov believes that his Harvard classes have complemented his growing business. "I'm very pas-

sionate about psychology because I love people," he says. "It's very useful and applicable to business because it helps you best serve the consumer by understanding what the consumer wants."

Despite the fact that Shemtov has been occasionally absent from campus due to interviews, photo shoots for publications like "The New York Times" and "GQ Japan," and television appearances on CNN and NBC, he somehow remains a spirited omnipresence at Harvard.

The most fashion-savvy undergraduates flock to Shemtov not only for ties and style advice, but also to simply be in the presence of his contagious energy and humor. According to Shemtov, the feeling is mutual. "What I've loved most about Harvard has been the people," he says. "To be surrounded by such motivated, creative, driven people has inspired me on a daily basis."



BARUCH Y. SHEMTOV  
LILY G. BELLOW

—Julia M. Spiro

Dressed in a navy velvet blazer and matching plaid slip-ons, Chris R. Schleicher, '09, sits relaxed, one arm on the back of his chair, one foot up on the table.

"Alex and I are very similar people, but we have trouble seeing eye to eye," says Schleicher, who recently appeared on Jeopardy. "He asked me about the Lampoon, and I said that I achieved everything I had because of how popular, charming, and good looking I am," Schleicher says. "He had this look of horror in his eyes that I had not one modest bone in my body."

And it is this irreverent humor that truly defines Schleicher.

"Locking myself in a castle with a bunch of freaks is the best thing that's ever happened to me," says Schleicher, who is co-president of the Harvard Lampoon. "I improved my writing, stopped seeing my other friends, and turned into the terrible, snarky person I am now." As president, Schleicher has brought Paris Hilton to Harvard, jumped on a trampoline with Zach Braff, and delivered fake National Geographic magazines to doorsteps across America in a prank of national proportions.

Yet Schleicher doesn't forget his humble beginnings. "It took me three semesters [of comping] to get in," says Schleicher. "Totally worth it." Apart from the Lampoon, Schleicher is also a gifted figure skater. Now retired, he has competed in both national and international championships. He attributes his sense of humor to a childhood of ice-dancing. "Growing up, I got teased a lot. I suppose you have to be funny to get away with being teased so much," Schleicher says.

Schleicher, an English concentrator, is also no stranger to serious academics—though serious is a relative term for the quick-witted senior.

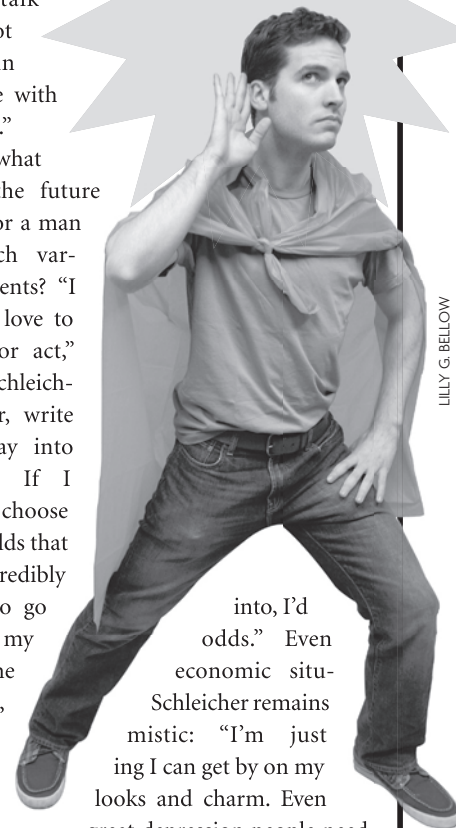
"I'm writing a thesis on John

Updike in the 1960s, and how that relates to the culture of what's cool and not cool, because he's not cool and that's a great thing," Schleicher says. Note: John Updike was also a former president of the Lampoon.

"Also as a cool person, it's nice to study what's cool and how cool I am," says Schleicher. "This is the type of talk that got me in trouble with Trebek"

So what does the future hold for a man of such varied talents? "I would love to write or act," says Schleicher. "Or, write my way into acting. If I could choose two fields that are incredibly risky to go into, I'd double my odds." Even with the economic situation, Schleicher remains optimistic: "I'm just ing I can get by on my looks and charm. Even in a great depression people need something pretty to look at or something to laugh at... God knows stockbrokers need some good jokes to laugh at."

—Kevin Lin



WOW!!  
CHRIS R. SCHLEICHER

LILY G. BELLOW

Daniel A. Svirsky '08, Tech Vice President of the Hasty Pudding Theatricals, stumbled upon the Pudding rather haphazardly, or rather, the Pudding stumbled upon Dan haphazardly.

After an uneventful night freshman year, Dan headed back to his dorm, a bit resigned, only to find his room filled with seniors who had lived there during their freshman year. The upperclassmen were camped out with beer and plans to go to the Quad, but before they departed, Dan met one who just so happened to be the then-Tech VP of the Pudding. The rest is history.

Although Dan did not have too much experience in the theater world beforehand, it is now so integral to his life that asking about it is like asking

what it feels like to "write with your arm." Dan is also involved with On Thin Ice improv comedy troupe and has written for 24 Hour Plays.

But there is more to Dan than just plays and funny business. As a senior, Dan is thinking about life after Harvard. Law school may be on the horizon, but so may be traveling or working. Forgoing e-recruiting and soul selling, Dan spent one summer working for a public service attorney and another working in a bookstore in Indiana. He spent part of last summer road-tripping across the country, the highlight of which was the "spiritual" rock formation, "Devils Tower," in Wyoming.

Dan was born in New Orleans, grew up in Cambridge, and went to high

school in Indiana, but he is still amazed at the wealth of experience and "intense high energy level" at Harvard. He ranks his work with the Pudding among some of his greatest accomplishments (along with making 15 most interesting seniors, of course). Although he loves Man and Woman of the Year and the annual Bermuda trips, he prefers working in the tech shop, and hanging out with colleagues. The Pudding has been a great source of fun and revelry for Dan, though "not too much of it is kosher," he says with a laugh.

What makes Dan so unique doesn't lie in all his accomplishments, great as they may be. He believes that what

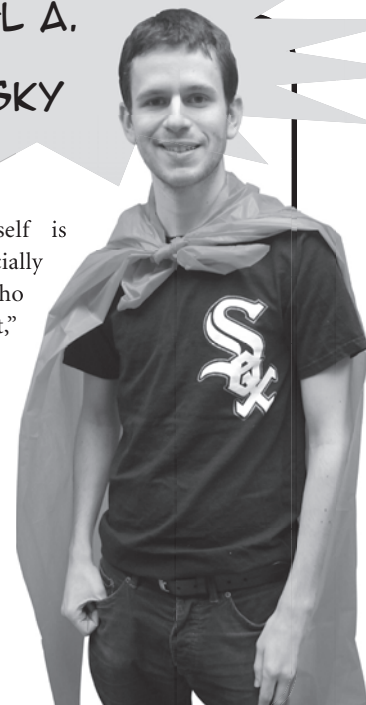
distinguishes himself is "my friends, especially the ones at FM who control the content," he says.

Although he has mastered travel, tech, and school, Dan remains humble, denying that he is "any more interesting than the next person."

—Julia S. Chen

Crack!!!

DANIEL A. SVIRSKY



NATASHA L. COLEMAN

Define "cool": infamous blogging. Sex-ed advocacy. Bright pink. Kameron A. Collins '09.

Collins, most known for his work at the Women's Center and his sometimes-scandalous blog posts, has made a name for himself at Harvard since his arrival some four years back.

Blockmate Rachel Marie Douglas '09, who is also a Crimson photographer, remembers meeting Kameron way back during their first week of school. "When I met him he was wearing an H-Bomb t-shirt, and I was like, Who was this cool black gay guy in this hot pink t-shirt with two nude men holding hands?"

Collins' eclectic habits reflect his mingled background. Despite growing up in "boring New Jersey suburbs," Collins says he identifies more

with his Southern roots. "I was raised in a very conservative Southern Baptist family, and I'm gay, which made things interesting," says Collins.

Kameron first became interested in sexual education during high school. After he appeared on Dateline his senior year, discussing the cons of an abstinence-only sex-ed, his work landed him interviews with both National Public Radio and People magazine. His work continued in college when he helped to found the Harvard's Women's Center situated in the cozy basement of Canaday.

Collins contends that the Women's Center has really helped him define his time at Harvard. "It felt really good to be part of the initial years of something that women at Harvard have been fighting for for

decades."

Collins' blog, [www.harvardhair.blogspot.com](http://www.harvardhair.blogspot.com), has also garnered him quite a lot of attention. Cameron explains, "It's about personal things, politics, pop culture, race, sexuality. I got into some trouble my sophomore in a brief scandal involving this guy... I wrote a brief thing on my blog, sent it to a couple of friends, they sent it out over house lists, and soon thousands of people were reading it. Thousands of people were commenting on it."

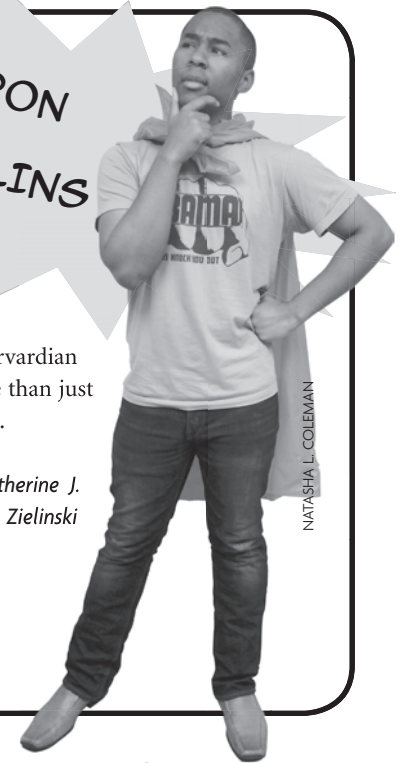
Where does he see himself in 20 years? "I want to get a Ph.D. in English to study violence," explains Collins. "All of our lives have been marked by things like the Rodney King video and the tape from JFK and 9/11, these really violent monumental things."

Keep your eyes peeled, you may be seeing

KAMERON  
A. COLLINS

this Harvardian on more than just Dateline.

—Catherine J. Zielinski



NATASHA L. COLEMAN

KABOOM!!

KYLE A. MAHOWALD

When Kyle A. Mahowald '09 said he'd try "to be interesting" to live up to his new title, it was already clear that crosswords are always on his mind: the phrase "to be interesting" fits perfectly across the standard 15-by-15 crossword grid. Consciously or not, word play is this cruciverbalist's cross to bear.

Since he started constructing crosswords for his high school newspaper, Mahowald's passion for puzzles has come a long way. On Sept. 19, 2004, Mahowald became the youngest person to get a Sunday Crossword published by the "New York Times." In that year alone, he sold a total of 10 puzzles to the Times, and caught the attention of the puzzle's editor, Will Shortz, who calls Mahowald's work "ambitious and well-crafted."

In the summer of 2006, after impressing this crossword king, Mahowald became Shortz's only intern. Mahowald may make it seem easy to get a crossword published, but that's far from the truth: Shortz goes through 50 to 60 submissions a week looking for good themes, good fill words and adherence to rules. Needless to say, few make the cut—and those that do are subject to rigorous editing.

But Mahowald's puzzles require little adjustment—"mostly just clue changes," Mahowald says modestly, "to adjust difficulty."

An English concentrator at Harvard, Mahowald will be studying linguistics next year at Oxford with a Marshall Scholarship. "It will be interesting to look at words in a more scientific way," he says, "the study of sounds, the way the brain processes sounds."

Outside of class, Mahowald is a member of the crossword society at Harvard. While word-play takes up the bulk of his time, Mahowald exercises more than his mind. "I ran a marathon last year without training," he says reluctantly, as if describing a walk along the river. "It was a bad idea, I wouldn't recommend it."

Without a number or registration, he finished in four hours and 26 minutes. "It's easier than you would think," he explains. "All the people there, everyone just running together. You get into a rhythm and go."

Mahowald's roommate, Rob P. Ciofani '09, says he was originally intending to run the first few miles with a friend, to provide support. "But he just kept going and going," Ciofani says. "It was one of the most impressive feats of mind over matter I've ever seen."

Even in his athletic pursuits, Mahowald's brain plays a bigger role than his bulk. "It was a testament even more to his mental prowess, telling his body to do something," Ciofani says.

—Mark J. Chiusano



LILY G. BELLOW

PETER C. SHIELDS

During the day he is Peter C. Shields '09, an unassuming student in Kirkland house and active member of the Crimson Key Society. But during the night, he is Petros, international pop star and Harvard music sensation.

It was on the islands of his Mediterranean heritage that Shields began his career. "My mom used to let me dance in the Greek nightclubs to Madonna when I was a kid. People threw roses at me. I had no choice but to turn to music," laughs Shields.

The English concentrator writes and produces all of his own music, spending hours in 'the studio,' (aka the Kirkland Practice Room).

"I [recently] learned that he is a pop star, which didn't surprise me, as strange as that sounds," says Shields' English professor, Matthew Kaiser. "While he doesn't rip off his shirt, gyrate, or spritz himself with water in class, he's basically the same guy, only a scholarly version."

Shields's music videos, available on his MySpace and YouTube, are self-produced, and have launched his international sex symbol status. "We were out one night and these freshmen freaked out when they met him. But he's just dorky Peter who looks in the mirror too much and loves Britney," teases Shields's good friend, Nick A. Noyer '09.

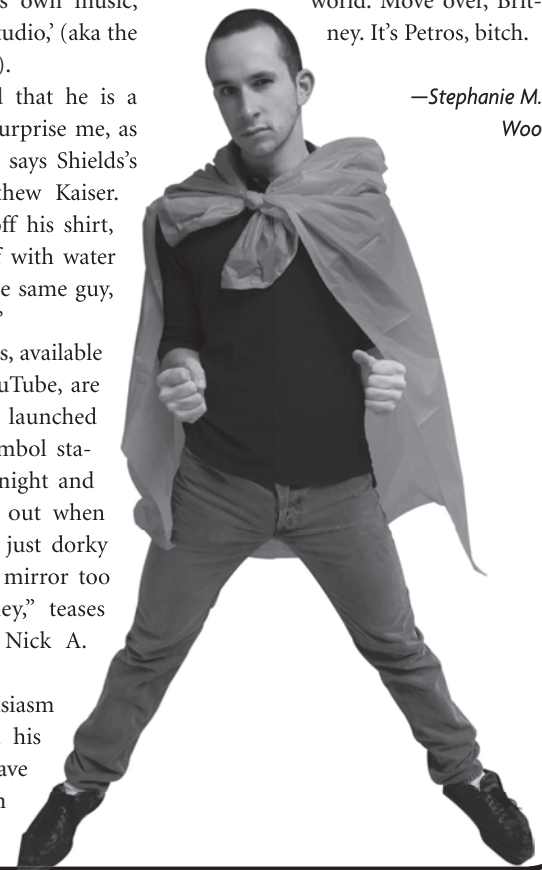
His unbridled enthusiasm and raw talent seen in his hits like "Body Glow" have drawn attention from various producers, who

have approached Shield's about possible collaborations. "His passion for the industry and for things he cares about really sets him apart," says Noyer.

Shields' perseverance and excitement is all encompassing. "Some people wait for the future to happen. Peter makes it happen," says Kaiser.

What exactly does the future hold for Shields? He plans on moving to L.A. after graduation to pursue a career in music production. Whether he's singing or producing, be prepared to see much more of Shields in the music world. Move over, Britney. It's Petros, bitch.

—Stephanie M. Woo



HALLE K. PHILLIPS

Rachel E. Flynn '09 is a self-declared "laugh-whore." As a dynamic triple threat (singer, actress, and director), Flynn most enjoys getting a round of laughter from her audience.

"I live for those moments of people applauding just the idea of the humor. When you hear people have a visceral reaction to something onstage, that's something that's so rare, it makes a lot of that process...worth it," Flynn says.

From Mrs. Lovett in "Sweeney Todd" last spring to a Five of Spades in "Alice in Wonderland" two years ago, Flynn has entertained Harvard audiences in both dramatic and musical productions. Her powerhouse voice was most recently heard in the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club's fall production, "Songs for A New World," in which she played Mrs. Claus, among other colorful characters. Her main directing project was "Bent," or as she calls it, the "gay holocaust show"—a play which centered on the gay victims of Hitler's ethnic cleansing.

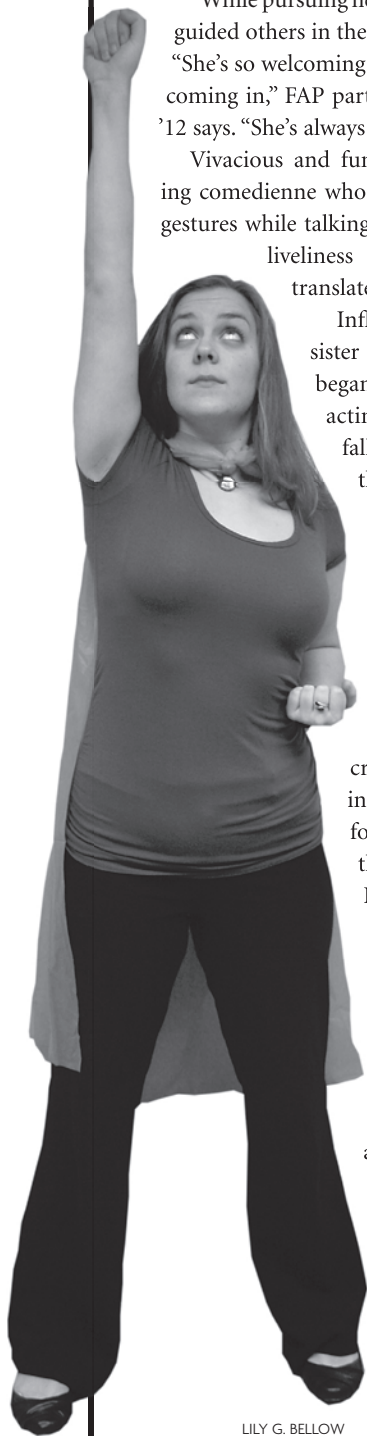
While pursuing her own projects, Flynn has guided others in the Freshman Arts Program. "She's so welcoming to us new little freshmen coming in," FAP participant Nivedita Sarnath '12 says. "She's always cheerful."

Vivacious and funny, Flynn is an easygoing comedienne who makes continuous hand gestures while talking. It's easy to see how her liveliness and vibrant personality translate into theater prowess.

Influenced by her playwright sister and musician father, she began singing at age eight and acting at age nine, quickly falling under the spell of the arts. Here at Harvard, she's continued to develop her love of music as well as discover a love for something completely different. "I have a real passion for directing, so my ideal career would be one of those crazy renaissance people in the arts that get to perform and also get to direct their favorite shows," says Flynn.

Despite her coming graduation, Flynn hopes she can combine her twin loves: Harvard and the arts. "I live in this bubble and I love it. I would like to stay here and live in Quincy House and also be on Broadway. If that's possible somehow, someday I want to do it."

—Li S. Zhou



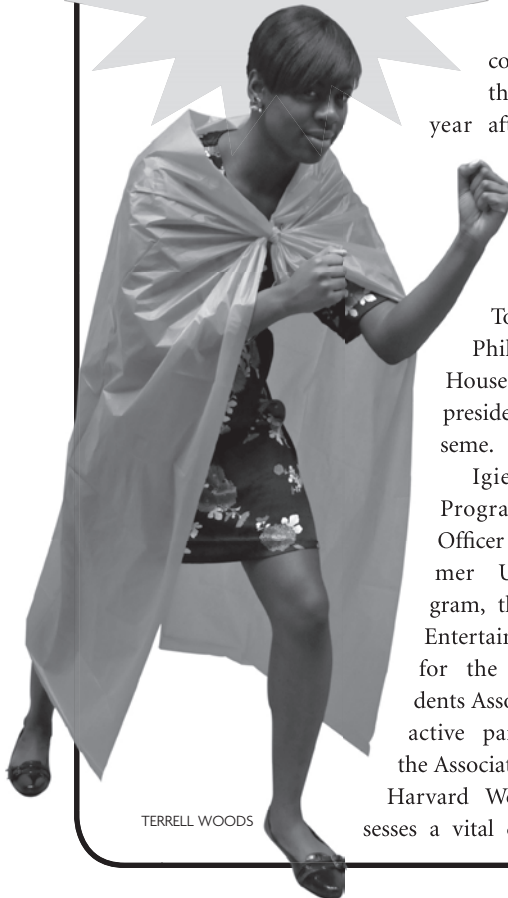
LILY G. BELLOW

RACHEL E. FLYNN

It is one thing for a person to understand injustice. It's quite another for someone to try and affect it. Nene V. Igietseme '09, passionate defender of social rights, is certainly a shining example of this very rare breed.

NENE V.

IGIETSEME



TERRELL WOODS

"It takes a special kind of person to see the depths of a problem and not only want to come back to the challenge year after year, but be able to do it better each time," says Frances M. Tompkins '09, Phillips Brooks House Association president, of Igietseme.

Igietseme—the Program Group Officer for the Summer Urban Program, the Arts and Entertainment chair for the Black Students Association, and active participant in the Association of Black Harvard Women—possesses a vital combination

of motivation, determination, and realism that she brings to every activity she commits herself to.

For example, during her time with the Summer Urban Program, Igietseme was in charge of running 12 camps for 800 low-income youth in Cambridge and Boston. "With that split among all these different camps, it's really easy to have people feel burnt out even before the summer really begins. But Igietseme consistently brought so much energy to her position. She was crucial to holding the team together," Tompkins says.

How does Igietseme maintain this enthusiasm despite being fully cognizant of her work's challenges? "You just have to do it," she says. "You can't just get paralyzed with inaction because something may be difficult or may not work. In order to keep other people motivated, you have to stay motivated yourself."

A great sense of humor doesn't hurt either. Roommate and fellow Bee Club member Angelica M. Kelly '09 says, "Nene is one of the funniest people I know. Her sarcasm and wit is unparalleled."

"I guess I am pretty goofy," Igietseme concurs.

Next year, Igietseme will be working for Booz Allen Hamilton, a government consulting agency. A self-described bleeding-heart enthusiast, she hopes to fuse her passion with an infrastructure that's capable of bringing about change.

"I'll have accomplished all I want to accomplish when I don't need to do it anymore—when there's no need for PBHA or this thing called service. I'll have succeeded when I don't have to think about this concept of social justice anymore."

Such passion is rare. Such action is even more so.

—Rebecca A. Cooper

"I am in Harare," Simon J. Williams '09 says. "The capital city." So began Williams' interview. Unlike most of FM's 15 Most Interesting Seniors, Williams was just too interesting to stay in Cambridge last weekend.

"I had to come home for an interview that couldn't be moved," Williams says. Friends explain that Williams traveled 7,661 miles, from Cambridge to Harare, for the final round of Rhodes Scholarship interviews, which he was successfully rewarded last Tuesday.

Though his background as a Zimbabwean Jew may seem like an impossible contradiction (Williams explains that he has a "little bit of an odd background"), friends say his identity informs his world view.

"He looks at everything he does as a way to make things better or a way of crossing the culture divide," says Olivia A. Benowitz '09, friend and fellow member of the Harvard Drama Club.

On paper, Williams's lists of accomplishments and activities are great, varied, and, in a way, completely puzzling: he's both a member of the Drama Club and president of the Porcellian; he's

both a student of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and president of the Signet.

He speaks English, Arabic, French, and Hebrew. His Latin, Shona, and German are also quite passable. When pressed, his roommate, Paul T. Mumma '09 finally confesses a tiny Williams flaw: "He can't tie regular shoes well," Humma says. "He's so talented at so many other things. I mean he can tie his shoes but it's not his strong point."

Despite his accomplishments, Williams remains modest. "He is incredibly humble and very approachable. He is incredibly compassionate to everyone who's around him. And that's very rare at a place like Harvard," Charles C. Young '09, a close friend, says.

Williams, working on his thesis in contemporary Saudi literature, remains unsure about post-Rhodes plans.

"I think that one of the most interesting things about Simon is that he is so talented, and he could be great in so many environments, but no matter which of these worlds he is in, he will be the one pulling the strings," says fellow Porcellian Club member Dan R. Rasmussen '09.

Unfortunately, we doubt this future will involve the bird suit he boasted in the class of 2009's Freshman Musical. But hey, a girl can dream.

—Lauren J. Vargas



COURTESY SIMON WILLIAMS

SIMON J. WILLIAMS