

W. J. Houghton Library
Periodicals Department

The Star

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Latin American Dictator Owns Houghton Gas Station: Students Organize Protest

In the following weeks, a petition will be circulating, addressed to the owners of Houghton's only gas station. The purpose of the petition is to persuade the owners to change their supplier from Citgo to Mobil, reversing a past decision.

Citgo is owned by the government of Venezuela, whose president, Hugo Chavez, has declared open enmity for the United States, vowing to be President Bush's "worst nightmare." While recognizing the possibility for hyperbole, those organizing the petition are committed to the idea that American citizens should not have to indirectly support a hostile foreign power, regardless of partisanship.

Beyond any political reasons, there is

an economic concern the petitioners wish to address. Throughout Allegany and surrounding counties, Citgo gas stations are routinely ten to twelve cents more expensive than its competitors' stations. Every Tuesday gas sale at the Houghton Citgo represents the typical charge per gallon at Mobil stations in surrounding areas.

According to some students' calculations, money spent driving to Fillmore or Nunda is reimbursed by savings at the pump. Taken together, concerns about the expense and political support have spurred the latest petition on Houghton College's campus.

The petition will be available for signatures during dinners in the upcoming weeks, until February break. The wording is respectful and

simply requests the change on the basis of Citgo's ownership; if the owners of the gas station do not agree to the change, a boycott and public protest of the gas station will be organized. As there is a captive market in this small town, the petitioners hope the consumers' voices will be persuasive. ♦

-Adam Carman
Guest Writer

Email your response
to this or any
other article to
the Editor at

STAR@HOUGHTON.EDU

Building Stonework

The Houghton College writing department is expanding with the newly-established online journal, *Stonework*. The journal, proposed by the department at the end of last year, was created to provide a professional venue to showcase both institutional writing and outside established academic writers in conversation with the evangelical tradition.

Stonework is a more ambitious project than a small literary magazine that Houghton sponsored, *For the Time Being*, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. That publication was "suspended due to the rise in cost of distribution and production, but now, with the practicality of internet publishing, the department is able to once again have a public voice. Also in the spirit of its predecessor, *Stonework* is accompanied by a workshop class in publishing, the official title being Workshop in Literary Publishing. The class is limited to four students selected for their particular abilities each semester. They act as an editorial board and production staff for the journal along with Professor Leax who is currently serving as editor. The students also

study the tradition of the literary magazine in America, and learn to navigate the literary market by beginning to submit their own work for publication.

The first issue of *Stonework* is posted and is available by link from the Houghton College website. The journal is prefaced with a note from the editor explaining the intentions and goals. "We do not ask our writers or artists to be in complete conformity with any particular branch of that tradition," Leax explains, "We ask only that they stand beside us in our desire to find the arts enriching our common experience of God-with-us." Leax is openly aware of the tension that can exist between the literary world and the evangelical tradition, but nonetheless is hopeful in creating a journal that can be professional and respected in both circles.

The writers for the first issue were entirely solicited. Prominent writers include poet Luci Shaw, novelist Hugh Cook, and Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message*. Local writers include Linda Mills-Woolsey, James Wardwell, Allison Brown, and Mari Lamp. Art work by

Professor Ted Murphy is also included, along with an interview. The second issue, scheduled to be published in May 2006, will include work by alumni Thom Satterlee, winner of the 2006 Walt MacDonald Prize for a first book of poetry as well as fiction writer Alison Gresik. The journal will be taking unsolicited material starting with the third issue. The first large-scale advertising is scheduled to take place at Calvin College's Festival of Faith and Writing.

The publication of *Stonework* has the potential to attract more students to the writing department, and also to introduce Houghton College into the larger Christian literary world. Hopefully *Stonework* will be the beginning of a long-lived, fruitful tradition.

Stonework can be accessed at the website www.stoneworkjournal.blogspot.com, or by link from the Houghton College website.

-Allison Brown
Design Editor



Call To The Mountain

Less than an hour away from Houghton's Protestant stronghold is little-known religious community of a very different type. Mt. Irenaeus is a Franciscan retreat center based out of St. Bonaventure University in Olean, where four friars and a regular stream of visitors spend their days in prayer and contemplation.

The Franciscans have their roots in thirteenth century Italy. At the time, the movement was a radical return to the simplicity of the Christian story. Images from the life of St. Francis show him living in the fields and



even preaching to the birds. His followers were wandering preachers with a message of reform, yet they were able to remain within the larger context of the traditional Catholic Church.

Like all the traditional religious orders, life at Mt. Irenaeus is carefully structured. The monastic liturgy is designed to create a sense of rhythm through a daily and yearly cycle of prayers. Their services also incorporate a variety of visual symbolism, including the significance of the sunlight in the chapel. Even the winding of the road on the way up the mountain is an intentional reminder of the place of pilgrimage in the Christian tradition. Former-Professor Scot Bennett used to take groups of Houghton art students to Mt. Irenaeus to see the way the friars incorporate sculpture and painting into their sacred spaces.

At the same time, the friars don't fit the austere and silent stereotypes. The Franciscans emphasize community outreach as a part of their ministry. (A story from the life of St. Francis depicts him walking through hot coals as a witness to a Muslim ruler.) They place great value on connection and conversation. One of the Mt. Irenaeus friars has been reported to have



the loudest laugh in the world.

Houghton students have been invited for an intercollegiate retreat on the weekend of February 19th, and the friars are also always delighted to have visitors at the weekly 11am mass and potluck. Visitors are often asked to participate in the readings. Contributions to the meal are welcome. ♦

-Kelsey Harro
Managing Editor



In Review: Joyce Yang

It has frequently been my experience that hype leads to disappointment - the Backstreet Boys, for instance, very disappointing. But at her performance at the Houghton College Artist Series on Friday night, pianist Joyce Yang did not disappoint.

Born in Seoul, Korea, Yang started to play the piano at the age of 4. Becoming proficient in a very short time, she won many competitions in Korea before coming to the United States to attend Juilliard's pre-college division in 1997. From there she went on to win two Pre-College Division Concerto Competitions and the Philadelphia Orchestra's Greenfield Competition for students. More recently she has been hailed as the silver medalist in the highly demanding Twelfth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in June of 2005.

So you can understand my expectations. How could she possibly live up to it all? As she entered the stage, her manner shy and modest, I wondered whether or not I would see what others found so impressive.

She stood at the center of the stage and bowed to the audience, seeming almost embarrassed at the formality. But when she sat at the piano her presence conveyed confidence and control as she began Bach's *Overture in the French Style*. I was captivated by her communion

with the instrument. It was almost as though the audience was an intruder, pecking in on her private rehearsal.

Although now an adult, she retains a childlike fascination as she plays, head bent low over the keyboard, watching her fingers dance. But for all her guileless expression, she is ahead of her years in technique. She tears through the frenzied runs of the Bach effortlessly. During intermission, Professor of Piano Dr. Robert Galloway remarked, "For someone as young as she is, her playing shows a maturity that belies her age." Recalling the previous piece, Carl Vine's *Sonata No. 1*, he praised her for "profound musicianship".

Vine's *Sonata* was startlingly modern and dark after the Bach. Just as technically demanding, it had a different kind of intensity - passionate and stormy. Yang's expression was captivating. At times she would lean back, giving the impression of a distant conductor, her fingers on the keys commanding the storms the music suggested. Other times she appeared afflicted, possessed by the tortuous phrases and entranced by the mysterious tones. I could well imagine why the St. Petersburg Times named her the "crowd favorite" at the Van Cliburn Competition.

At the end of the second and final



Photo courtesy of East Carolina University www.ecu.edu

movement of the piece, the music truly sounded like thunder, wind, and torrential rain. This faded to a close with a few eerie notes and silence. She rose, bowed, and left us for the intermission.

The second half of the program was a stark contrast to the first. The opening piece was a work by Russian composer, Nikolai Medtner called *Sonata Reminiscenza, Op. 38, No. 1*. This nostalgic composition was an appropriate introduction for the selections to follow. Yang conveyed the broad range of emotions in the work, from peace and coyness to bitterness and obsession. The audience seemed enthralled by the cloud of feeling she created.

The Chopin pieces, *Andante Spianato* and *Grande Polonaise Brillante, Op. 22* had less

(cont'd on p. 5)

A Tentative Peace

"I don't think peace is an emotion so much as it's a kind of assurance," Eryn says, cupping her hands around a cup of coffee. I watched her closely but my mind shifted.

Peace of any kind is precious these days. And assurance, in the moments I've experienced, comes in pieces that are gone before they are grasped. The sun comes out, a friend shows up, and I suddenly feel that I might just be in the right place at the right time after all. I have a suspicion that it's largely dependent on how much sleep I got the night before.

Still I may have known some peaceful people once, way back in the depths of my Pentecostal childhood. They glide indistinctly in and out of my remembrances with Praise Jesus on their lips, vague, but inexplicably solid nonetheless. They give up their dreams of glory and move across the country to be closer to a church. They tell the guy on the first date that no matter what, they are going to love Jesus most. They last, somehow, through abandonment and despair.

I could only see two completely different patterns of thinking, existing within completely different frameworks for interpreting the world.

"The key," Hiram told me as we cut across the soccer field to church, "is to avoid totalizing meta-narratives."

I laughed. It was the language of the fourth floor philosophy classes. "Do you think we can admit uncertainty and live with conviction at the same time?" I asked him.

His tone was casual as he said the incredible: "We have no choice. Living our lives as part of a larger story as best we can is our only chance at finding any meaning at all."

Conviction without assurance? At best it is an infinitely tenuous business. One night a very drunk friend told me that he saw himself walking along the edge of a piece of glass. Every step brought the danger of lacerations. If we look at life like this then life seems to be more like a balancing act than a happily-ever-after.

I try to quiet the nagging fitfulness by cramming each moment with more than it can hold, but eventually I find myself lying awake, staring into the blackness. If I manage to squeak out any prayer at all, the only thing to say is *God grant us peace.*

*-from "Assurance",
written in fall 2004
by Kelsey Harro,
Managing Editor.*

Understanding Depression: A Redeeming Perspective On Life.

*"All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you, whose eyes
Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space;
For, if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
When we are there. Here on this lowly ground,
Teach me how to repent, for that's as good
As if Thou hadst seal'd my pardon with Thy blood."*

-From "Holy Sonnet VII", by John Donne

The Bigger Picture

In a recent study, the American College Health Association reported that they surveyed 54,000 American college students and 46% of them said that last year they were depressed, at least once, to the point of not being able to function. The Houghton College Counseling Center's annual report stated that 253 students received some form of services during the 2004-2005 academic year, representing roughly 20% of the student body. Of this number, 26% were being treated for depression or for symptoms of depression. These students reported that they felt: 1) sad or depressed 2) lonely and not connected 3) having trouble concentrating 4) getting too emotional and 5) feeling guilty. These symptoms can be considered a "cluster group" associated with depression.

Taking into consideration the fact that the symptoms of clinical depression must usually be present for a period of two consecutive weeks in order for it to be diagnosed, these statistics are not accurate measures of *diagnosed clinical depression*. Rather, these figures represent students *self-reporting*, yet that alone is cause for concern. Especially when you are mindful of the fact that, of the 20.53% of Houghton students seeking help from a counselor last year, sadness and depression was the number one complaint among 26% of those. Dr. Michael Lastoria, Director of the Center, stated that the number of students seeking services has risen in the past several years. Prior to the fall of 2003 the average number of students seeking help in the Center was consistently around 17%. The jump in the past two years is indicative of what has been termed a college mental health crisis. A recent publication, *College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis* (Kadison and DiGeronimo, 2004) supports this trend by mentioning that 81% of college counseling center directors report seeing more students with serious psychological problems than were seen five years ago. Though Houghton's numbers

are slightly higher than the national average for other small colleges (from a sample of colleges with a population of less than 2,500, the average percentage of student body seen = 12.7, *National Survey of Counseling Center Directors 2004*) colleges nationwide are reporting an increasing demand for counseling services. And depression remains the number one symptom reported on campus.

Interestingly though, when asked about depression, a former student said that most of his friends suffered from depression and that they either ignored the problem or they went elsewhere to get help. A current senior here at Houghton told me that she also has seen plenty of people who experience the symptoms of depression, but appear to be willing to hide this fact from others. There apparently still remains a stigma, at some levels, of acknowledging the "common cold" of mental illness. Why would someone, especially at a place where Christ's love is evident in the lives of the faculty, staff, and students, want to keep this from Houghton's counselors and even their friends? What accounts for this apparent sense of disconnection for so many in a small community such as ours?

Dr. Lastoria suggested one factor might be the difference between the ways that some evangelical Christians look at spirituality and mental health. Although a small campus, we are not all similar in our views on the nature of mental health problems and the role of the spiritual in addressing these maladies. One perspective I gathered after speaking with a few students, and one also suggested by Dr. Lastoria, is that a small, but still significant number in our community have "over-spiritualized" mental health by assuming that if someone is not feeling well mentally, something must be wrong spiritually. "You should pray harder," the person might say, "and then you will be fine." Looking at depression from this point of view implies that it is actually, moreover always, a spiritual problem that causes depression. Is it not equally possible (or more often than not) that depression is actually a mental problem that affects our spirituality? Since, when we suffer from depression or we feel the symptoms of depression all of our relationships are affected, it should not come as a surprise that these things would affect your relationship with Christ as well.

It is hard to get at the root of depression because there are so many things that will play a role in someone feeling down, lonely, or depressed. Much of what goes into these "depressive" feelings comes down to the way that we approach life. Like Kelsey wrote in her story, she saw two completely different ways of approaching life and then Hiram showed her

(cont'd on p. 5)

In Response...

Hi Uan,

Your article was very good- I hope it stimulates some profitable conversation. I feel the school is ready to embrace this issue as one of importance to the broader topic of how we Christian artists might be empowered to impact the larger culture.

However, I should point out that you have miss-quoted Dean Oakerson. My memory of the conversation is that Ron asked: "How would this exhibition be effected if these works were removed". He did not ask us to remove the works at that time- nor at any time.

I think a follow up correction is in order. The article characterizes Dean Oakerson as having been foreclosed on the subject- which he was certainly not. None of the administrators were inclined to be directive on this issue. They asked questions, good questions and we gave our defense as to why we felt these works should remain in the exhibition.

In fact all three were entirely open to a discussion on this subject. We need to keep the conversation open and accurate. Let me know what you think.

Murph

Dear Murph,

Thank you for your careful consideration of this article and for your communication with Dean Oakerson. I did have an interview scheduled with Dean Oakerson, but because of an unforeseen event, was not able to meet with him before the article had to print. I interviewed VP Wayne Macbeth on the issue, and quoted him in the article. VP Macbeth probably did not mean to give me this impression, but my notes from the interview show that from his perspective, Dean Oakerson asked for the Art professors to consider taking the paintings down — and asked what the significance of that action would be. I am sorry if I wrongfully accused Dean Oakerson, as this was not my intent. I am optimistic about the conversations that have occurred because of the article and would be happy to hear more from anyone who would like to share their opinion. Thanks again Murph,

Sincerely,
Hi Uan Kang ♦

Faculty Book Review

Roger Scruton, *Gentle Regrets* (London: Continuum, 2005) \$19.11 on Amazon

If there is one thing that can be said with certainty about modern public life, it is that, if only the neoconservatives would actually try conserving something, and the liberals would be a bit more ... you know, liberal — and stop trying to persecute all who cannot say their shibboleths — then the world (as my political mentor, The Queen of Hearts, once put it) would go round a great deal faster than it does.

Indeed, if more people were like Roger Scruton, who meets the first part of this equation so admirably (and writes like an angel to boot), then the globe would be positively skidding around on its axis. He is one of the world's leading political philosophers, and his recent book, *Gentle Regrets*, is an autobiography, of sorts, though arranged thematically, rather than strictly chronologically, and all the better for it.

Scruton's penetrating remarks on a range of subjects illuminate all he touches. I never believed myself capable of being much interested in architecture, for example. I merely know what I like. Even my untutored eye, wandering its Central European haunts, can discern the difference between the modest-but-beautiful Habsburg-era houses and the ghastly monstrosities of socialist concrete in which most people are still forced to live. But Scruton helps me see further: that modern Western cities have been deliberately de-centered by a combination of Wal-Mart and modernist dogmatism — that the inhuman nature of the resulting mix is no accident, that local communities are rendered impossible, that our shopping

malls are turning our world into "a ubiquitous nowhere".

After several decades living, umm, loosely, Scruton has, in the past decade, settled down and got married, become a father — and a Christian. He had for long recognized the importance of Christianity but, like so many Westerners, he just could not bring himself to pay the price of living it. Now, he comments: "To grow up aged 54 is not a great achievement. But it is better than not growing up at all." He describes the family in the postmodern West as "a subversive institution — almost an underground conspiracy — which is at war with the State-sponsored culture."

In secularized society, there is "a kind of contagious hardness of heart.... There is neither love nor happiness — only fun." And it is his acceptance of Christianity that has enabled him to deal with the unavoidable reality of loss in life — rather than to continue toying with secularism's denial of tragedy, grief, and mourning. "The loss of religion is the loss of loss." Of the growing Muslim presence in Europe: "They show us what we really stand to lose, if we hold nothing sacred: namely, the future."

To be world famous and then to admit that you've only just grown up takes some courage. Does this mean that he considers his life until recently to have been entirely wasted? Not quite — but then, as the title says, his regrets are gentle.

—Meic Pearse
Professor of History

(Yang, cont'd from p. 2)

intensity and breadth of emotion. The *Andante* was light, sweet, and tender, and the *Grande* was bold and friendly. Quiet and wistful, like memories of happy times, *My Joys* and *The Maiden's Wish* from Chopin and Liszt's *Six Polish Songs, Op. 74* subtly reintroduced depth to the performance. Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6* as a finale was grand and confident.

I talked briefly with Joyce after the concert. It took some time to wade through the crowd of admirers. She wanted to impress on me how connected she felt with the Houghton audience. "Sometimes it feels like a brick wall," she said, referring to a number of her previous performances. "I get very nervous. But it's great to feel like I really connected." Perhaps it was performing for her peers that put her so at ease. "It's usually people in their seventies," she grinned at me. "I walked out and was like 'Oh, they're all young!'"

The Houghton community appreciated her as much as she appreciated us. The audience responded to her conclusion with exuberant cheers and whistles culminating in a standing ovation and a brief encore. Dr. Galloway gave his professional opinion: "Hers is a name that's going to be heard in years to come. This is early for her yet." ♦

-Hilary Young
Staff Writer

From Ritual to Art Exhibit in the Ortlip

The next art exhibit to be held in the Ortlip Art Gallery is the Ritual to Art exhibit from Friday, February 17 to Monday, March 20. Most of the pieces in the show have been used in the rituals and customs of over forty different people groups from Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroun and numerous other countries south of the Sahara desert. Since that time the pieces have been bought and collected as art and a new respect has surfaced in the western world for the African artisan and his work. The exhibit promises to be an eye opening event for all. Whether you are an art student looking to be inspired like so many other artists have been, a sociology student interested in African peoples or someone back from Tanzania experiencing homesickness, this exhibit will give you a unique view of the cultures of Africa. The work in the show is on loan from the collection of Charles Hudgins who has been collecting African artwork since 1989. There will be an Opening Reception on Saturday, February 18 from 7:30-9:30pm where you will be able to meet and talk to Mr. Hudgins about his passion for African art. Refreshments will be served.

-Daniel Fessenden

(Depression, cont'd from p. 3)

a third; One in which we could embrace our uncertainty and still live with conviction. The larger story for us at Houghton is the Christian life. We are striving towards eternal life which goes beyond the things of this earth. This larger picture gives us the perspective through which we can cope with the events of this life. To feel depressed or lonely doesn't mean you are depressed, nor does it make you less of a Christian, but it does make you human.

In his classic work, *A Road Less Traveled* (1978), Scott Peck's first sentence reads, "Life is difficult." This idea is one worth reflecting upon, perhaps even internalizing. Dr. Lastoria put it this way, "Life is beautiful but it is also a journey...one inevitably prone with struggles. This is the gospel story, a theme carried from the Old and New Testaments; from the laments of the psalmist to the thorn in Paul's side. Too much is made of the goal of "happiness" for its own sake. This creates a problem in itself...so that not always being happy is in some ways seen as a pathological state of mind. Often times I have found myself saying to a student, 'well given what you've just told me, depression seems an accurate feeling to me.'"

Although there should be complete comfort in the truth that God loves us no matter what, we don't always feel comforted. The simple fact is that life is difficult. Sometimes what we do see obscures what we should see; our sinful nature means we are a first-hand witness to our failures but not to the grace of God.

John Donne's poem isn't saying that we, at Houghton, must endure a flood or a fire, fight in a war, die, grow old, or suffer oppression. He is saying that we must endure life, a difficult life, a sinful life. And when we do that, "on this lowly ground" we will see God, the saving and redeeming Christ. ♦

-Benjamin Loos
Guest Writer

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• THE STAR IS ALWAYS •
• IN NEED OF WRITERS: •
• ONE TIME •
• CONTRIBUTIONS •
• ARE ALWAYS WELCOME. •
• PLEASE EMAIL THE •
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Listen up!

The Star would like to hear the memorable, witty, or just plain silly things said around campus. Send in your Quotables to star@houghton.edu

The Food Critic

The India House



Voted best Indian Restaurant in Rochester for five years in a row, the India House serves up some delicious, flavorful dishes. Being rated best Indian Restaurant, I had very high expectations for the India House. The service was slow, however, and the overall ambiance at the Victor location was disappointing. At first the food portions seemed very small for the price, but eating in a family style, the food lasted longer than expected. I would highly recommend the lunch buffet because you can get more for your money and sample a variety of different traditional dishes.

The chicken makhani is a mildly spiced chicken dish with tomatoes, ginger, garlic and nuts, cooked in a cumin butter sauce. It was creamy and just the right amount of zing for those with mild tastes. A simple yet favorite dish of the night was mixed vegetable curry. The title is pretty self explanatory, but the combination of the soft vegetables with the curry sauce was perfect to put over the rice pilaf that came with dinner.

If I could do one thing over, it would be to not order the bread basket. Typically the breads, nan, a flat bread similar to a flavorful cross between a pita and tortilla, are my one of my favorite parts of Indian food. The bread basket provided a wide array of breads. The problem was that the ones I really loved, tikka nan for instance (a spiced, chicken stuffed white flour bread), I only received a small portion of and the rest were onion or tomato filled and not what I had expected.

If you like Indian food, also check out Raj Mahal in Rochester. I have to say, although the food at both restaurants is wonderful, I prefer Raj Mahal. To see the menu for India House and get a coupon go to their website at www.indiahouse.com or for Raj Mahal check out www.rajmahalrestaurant.com. ♦

-Adam Sukhia
Columnist



In Response...

Dear Rachel Ingraham,

I appreciated your thoughtful essay in this week's Star, entitled "Why I Learned to Start Worrying and Question Houghton's Priorities." Your overall tone and treatment of the subject was just and fair, until the end.

In your second to last paragraph you made this statement: "there surely must be other ways to save money beyond terminating relationships with programs and faculty." Perhaps you are right. But I question your questioning of the motives and actions of Houghton's "decision-makers." You call the decision-making process "seemingly unilateral, behind closed-doors." Making such a claim and prefacing it with the word "seemingly" isn't fair or just in the least. If you don't know for sure that a decision was unilateral or behind closed-doors, then don't suggest that it was.

If you were president of Houghton College (or a vice president, your choice) how would you handle a significant budget deficit? Would you have made the exact same decisions as were made this past year? Probably not. Would the decisions you ended up making be any less painful for those involved or less scrutinized by the campus community? Probably not.

Welcome to the world of a small, private, religiously-affiliated college. Since 80-85% of our revenue comes from student tuition, we rely heavily upon enrollment to make budget each year. If we bring in less revenue in a given year, changes need to be made to the budget. If I were to suffer a pay cut this year, I'd have to make some modifications to my family budget. No, I wouldn't be willing to sell any of my children, but I might have to cancel a family vacation or sell some of my vintage baseball cards.

Another quote from your article claims that some of Houghton's decision-makers are shortsighted (you used the word myopia). Considering that some of the decision-makers you might be referring to have worked at Houghton for longer than you have even been alive makes your claim in itself shortsighted.

So, back to a previous question. If you were one of the powers that be, what would you have done to close the budget gap?

- * Sell off some of our 1,300 acres?
- * Drop a few under-enrolled majors?
- * Turn down every thermostat on campus a few degrees?
- * Cancel some of our study abroad programs?
- * Cut financial aid awarded to students?

Any of these would assuredly make some contingent of current students, faculty, staff, or alumni quite unhappy. A few years ago during another tight budget year we did cut financial aid to students. Let's just say it didn't go over very well.

I'm saddened that you've become disenchanted with Houghton and would think twice before recommending it to others. Throughout our history alumni have severed ties with the college over a number of issues: the loosening of the no-dancing policy, funding cuts to WJSL, the elimination of various academic or co-curricular programs. The list could go on. I would hope, though, that a person's view of Houghton isn't wrapped up in a program, building, or even a particular person. I would hope that one would choose to support Houghton because of its commitment to its mission. Are we still providing an "academically challenging Christ-centered education?" Are we still seeking to "equip scholar-servants?" The means by which we accomplish this (programs) and the personnel who work toward this end (faculty and staff) will change over time. My hope is that our mission will always transcend individual people and programs.

The last sentence of your essay suggests a sort of sky-is-falling mentality. Yes, Houghton's facing some real challenges. But the sky is not falling. Houghton is not in danger of closing. We're still mission-focused. There are many good and positive things going on every day on campus. Faculty are engaging students in the classroom, inspiring them toward a love of learning and a life of service. Staff are working hard, for modest pay compared to their peers elsewhere, to meet the daily needs of students.

Last May we graduated the largest class

in Houghton's history. This June we will wrap up a fundraising campaign that brought in close to \$50 million dollars. We've expanded our facilities, hired some great faculty and staff, added programs, maintained our academic standards. Good things are happening. And more good things are on the horizon.

I applaud the administration at Houghton for making some tough decisions in recent months. They might not have been the same decisions you or I would've made, to be sure. Our leaders are fallible (just as we would be if we were in their positions). But they are our leaders. We need to respect their decisions and trust that they made the best choice possible with the information they had at the time. We need to trust that they prayed about their decisions. We need to trust that their decisions weren't made lightly. We need to realize that these decisions were probably among the most difficult they've ever had to make.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your essay, Rachel, and offer my input as a staff member, a Houghton alumnus, and as someone who wants to see the best for Houghton in years to come. I've heard Dr Chamberlain state; on more than a few occasions, that this is "God's college." I trust that this thought will constantly be on the minds of the decision-makers as Houghton continues to carry out its mission, long after you and I have departed.

Sincerely,

Jeff Babbitt
Associate Director of Admission
Houghton College class of 1996

Houghton Abroad

Vanua Levu, Fiji Islands

Taken by Nora Jacob in Fall 2005 with an EduVenture Program



Weaving palm frond for a bure (thatch roof hut)

*Apologies: Last week's Houghton Abroad photos were courtesy of Melissa Murray and Shannon Callan.

Dear Mr. Babbitt,

First of all, let me thank you for responding to my editorial in such detail. Though we differ on some points, it is obvious that you, like myself, care deeply about Houghton College and its future. For that, and for your willingness to consider an opposing point of view, I thank you.

However, Mr. Babbitt, I feel that I must respectfully disagree with your belief that the end of my editorial was neither fair nor just. To the contrary, I consider myself to be a fair-minded and just person, and would not make statements if I did not know or feel them to have some basis in reality. As such, I hope that you will allow me to explain and defend my statements.

Your letter makes good points about the difficulty of balancing the budget at a small college. This is an area in which I have little expertise, having had exposure to budgets, fundraising, and development only as they apply to the non-profit sector. Still, I have enough grasp of fiscal matters to appreciate the difficulty of choices President Chamberlain and others had to make regarding the budget. I certainly do not envy them their position.

I am also willing to grant that they made decisions based on what they felt was best for Houghton. Indeed, my editorial was not meant to question the President and Vice-Presidents' decisions as such; it was meant to question the priorities on which those decisions were based. My editorial stated that Houghton's strengths lie in its people and programs. It would seem that you and the administration believe its strengths lie in its goals and missions statements. Perhaps you are correct, perhaps my earlier statements were, or--and I am now inclined to suspect this is the case--perhaps the correct vision for Houghton's future lies in finding a balance between the two.

I understand that as administrators, the President and Vice-Presidents must think in terms of mission statements and long-term goals. And as missions go, the plan to train "scholar-servants" at "God's college," would indeed seem to lay out a noble path. However, Mr. Babbitt, as you attempt to recruit a greater number of students to Houghton, I hope you will remember that many people do not operate within the parameters of goals and mission statements. We seek out and base our lives around human relationships.

As a young person who grew up in a consumerist society, I have learned to be suspicious of mission statements and buzzwords. I did not come to Houghton because I was excited about becoming a scholar-servant... I came because the conversations I had as a prospective student--including a few with you, Mr. Babbitt--made me believe that this was the place where I was meant to spend the next

four years of my life. Even after I arrived on campus and became disillusioned with certain aspects of life here, I always felt comfortable recommending Houghton to prospective students by saying that the relationships they would have with faculty would be very strong--stronger, indeed than even the student-professor relationships at other Christian colleges. As I made these recommendations, I firmly believed that Houghton was committed to being a place where students from a variety of backgrounds and academic interests could enter into such relationships. However, now that Dr. Beach and the Oregon Extension faculty have been cut off from a relationship with Houghton, a large number of students who identify themselves as left-leaning or open to diverse voices now find themselves with significantly fewer mentors. I thus feel that I must rescind my former position.

Along similar lines, I am somewhat dismayed that your letter creates an analogy between faculty resources and family vacations/vintage baseball cards. Good faculty are neither a luxury nor an object to be sold at will; they are the foundation on which a college student's daily experience in the classroom is based. I am further troubled when you say that your hope is that Houghton's mission will always transcend its people and programs. Mr. Babbitt, my hope is that I will always have in mind that the only reason missions and programs exist is to serve people.

I know that this position is my luxury as an individual. For the sake of the college, I hope that the administration continues to keep Houghton's mission in mind as they make decisions. However, as they make at least some of these decisions, I also hope that they remember that people are involved, and act accordingly. In my opinion, such action would include communicating with the appropriate constituencies in such a way that regardless of the tough decisions that must be made, the Houghton community might understand at least some of the reasoning behind them.

Given the continuing state of campus unrest surrounding Dr. Beach's tenure refusal, I am led to believe that there is a sizable number of persons on Houghton's campus who do not understand why financial difficulties necessarily led to Dr. Beach's being let go. Because of this lack of understanding, feelings of distrust and discontent on the matter of Dr. Beach have circulated throughout the campus. When I said that this decision was made seemingly unilaterally, and behind closed doors, I was referring to this lack of understanding, cited repeatedly in the fine article by Rosaline Kelada-Sedra and Elizabeth Overhauser that appeared in a December issue of the Star. If someone in a position of authority higher than yourself were willing to respond to their article, my editorial,

or the questioning of the Save the Beach Campaign with something more than silence or obfuscation, I would be more than happy to retract my statements on this matter.

However, as it stands, I hold firm to my belief that I and others not only can, but must continue to call into question those things we believe are unjust. I believe that what happened to Dr. Beach and the Oregon Extension faculty was unjust. And as both a free American citizen and a freed child of God, I plan to continue voicing my opinion on Houghton's decisions through both words (as now) and through the withholding or giving of funds in the years following my graduation.

Contrary to what you and others seem to believe, Mr. Babbitt, I think that this sharing of opinions and asking of hard questions can be partnered with a genuine concern for Houghton's future. I do not believe that the sky is falling. I know that positive things are happening at Houghton. The purpose of the first seven paragraphs of my editorial was to celebrate some of those things. The purpose of the last two paragraphs was to encourage the Houghton community toward further pause and self-reflection, so that what I and others have acknowledged to be one of Houghton's greatest strengths might continue in the years to come.

Yours Sincerely,
Rachel Ingraham

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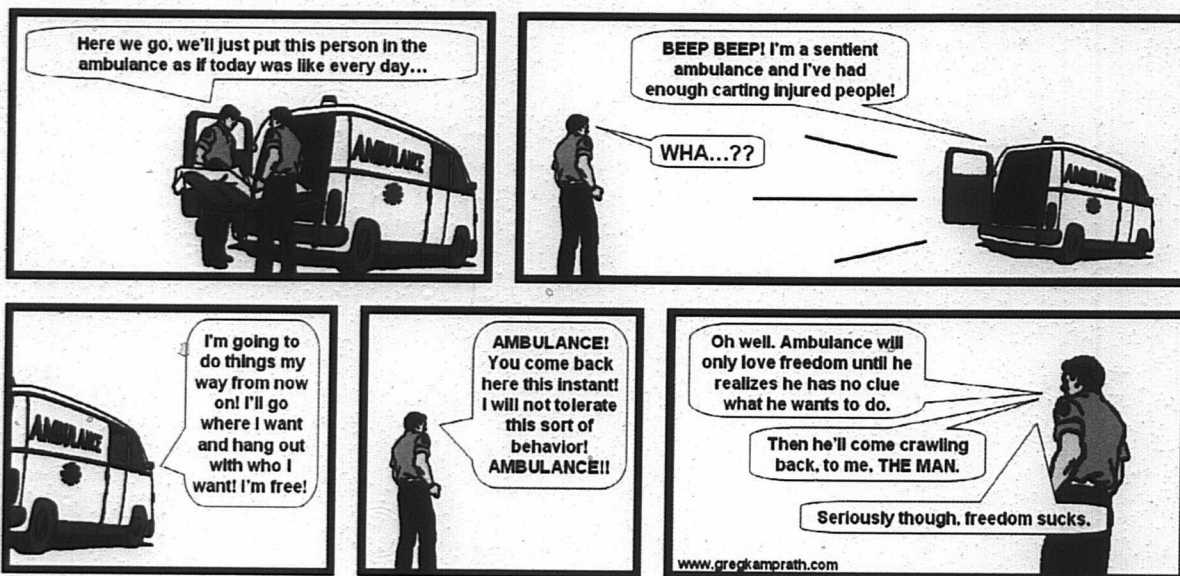
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