 Equal Chances

Economist Roland Fryer on Bridging America’s Achievement Gap

Making a Home at Dudley House

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Correction: Due to an editing error, the winter 2009 issue inadvertently described polymerase chain reaction as a technique for DNA sequencing. In fact, it’s a technique for gene amplification, which can, among other things, make it easier to perform DNA sequencing on a given sample.
Charting a Steady Course in Uncertain Waters

The current economic crisis and a recent decline in the value of Harvard’s endowment have created fiscal challenges that can rightly be called unprecedented. Harvard is not alone in facing such challenges, of course. Universities across the country are scrambling to find the right way forward in a financial landscape that looks entirely different from the one they planned for a year ago.

At the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, our path forward, while no less challenging, is illuminated by our commitment to our core mission: to deliver an exceptional graduate education to our students. The steps we are taking to weather the current crisis are predicated on the centrality of that mission.

I want to assure you — as I have reassured our students — that we remain fully committed to supporting our graduate students. We will honor the guarantees we made when we accepted them. The multi-year commitments we offered them then will continue unchanged.

Even as we work to reduce expenditures across the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the University, there will be no reductions in our financial aid. In fact, we will provide a modest increase in the living stipend for our students. In a time of extreme economic uncertainty, when some reduction in support might seem inevitable, it is my conviction that pulling back is simply untenable. Providing our students with a living stipend is a top priority, not only to me as Dean but to the departments and faculty as well.

Many of our students are concerned about the job market they will find when they complete their graduate study, and we share their concern. We are working with our faculty and with colleagues across FAS to find positive ways to respond to the constraints of the academic market, and we will steadfastly support students who are seeking jobs, both within and beyond the academy.

As ever, Dudley House remains a crucial resource for Harvard graduate students. It offers a multitude of possibilities for community, for developing talents far beyond the scope of one’s degree program, and for something as simple as a good meal with friends. It is a refuge from the stresses of graduate study, never more valued than today.

In order to honor those and other commitments to our students, sacrifices will be required. One such sacrifice is our decision to modestly reduce the size of our incoming class next fall. This decline in class size will be painfully felt as departments make their admissions decisions this spring. But it is the responsible course of action, both because of the uncertain academic job market and because our first priority is providing a truly outstanding education to the students we admit.

GSAS, along with the whole of FAS, will be working hard to reduce administrative expenses in the next fiscal year. We’ll be looking to lower our operating budget by approximately 15 percent — a significant cut, but one we feel confident we can achieve without affecting our core activities.

It is worth noting that this particular historic juncture offers opportunities as well as challenges. This year, GSAS received a record number of applications,12 percent over last year and 17 percent over the past five year average. And it isn’t just more applications; it’s demonstrably stronger applications. The quality of the incoming class will be exceptional.

So rest assured, our ambitions are undamped. We remain committed to the excellence and integrity of graduate education at Harvard. Even in these hard times, we will continue to insure that our students receive an incomparable education, one that prepares them to make critical contributions to knowledge and to society. ☛
In faded jeans, flannel shirt, and wool sweater, Roland Fryer looks less like a tenured professor than a graduate student. He paces back and forth at the front of the room, bouncing a rubber ball off the floor, gesturing emphatically, talking to half a dozen people seated at two rows of computer-laden tables. He’s constantly in motion — coaxing, questioning, joking, goading his audience to think.

Welcome to Harvard University’s Education Innovation Laboratory (EdLabs), a research center funded in part by a $6 million grant from the Broad Foundation. With its intense focus and genial camaraderie, EdLabs feels like the best kind of graduate seminar. It’s small and informal. It pulses with energy. And it’s Roland Fryer’s baby. The 31-year-old economist is its founder and CEO.

CROSSING THE FAULT LINES

Education is profoundly important in shaping our trajectories through life. But in the United States, as Fryer observes, there are huge disparities between the educational...
EdLabs is driven by Roland Fryer’s conviction that education can be transformed by bold ideas and a commitment to scientifically objective evaluation.

“haves” and those who wind up having a whole lot less. “Take a look at kids in D.C.,” he says. “The average school there has 8 percent of kids who do ELA [English and language arts] at grade level, 12 percent who do math at grade level.” Fryer believes the best way to address the inequities — racial and otherwise — that divide American society is by eliminating the country’s “education fault line,” an effort that he sees as “the biggest civil rights struggle of our time.”

American education is sick, Fryer says, and he created EdLabs to find the vaccine. The analogy to medicine is apt, since EdLabs seeks to take the research-and-development model that drives scientific and medical investigation and apply it to education. Founded last year and housed within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, EdLabs combines analytical rigor with bold ideas and a practical focus on effective results. And — in partnership with the school systems of New York City, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. — it is already hard at work testing a hypothesis that neatly symbolizes Fryer’s commitment to innovation.

America’s education fault line isn’t just a rich area for research; it’s a chasm that Fryer himself has traversed. He finished college in less than three years and earned his doctorate at Penn State in three more. Six years ago, he accepted a highly coveted Junior Fellowship with the Harvard Society of Fellows and then became an assistant professor in the Economics Department. He’s been featured in numerous articles, including a lengthy 2005 profile in the New York Times Magazine, and last year became the youngest African American — and among the youngest overall — to receive tenure at Harvard.

Yet he’s no stranger to dreams denied and deferred. His early years, in Lewisville, a small city near Dallas, were marked by family trouble, brushes with the law, and an undistinguished academic record. “Apart from one day in first grade,” he says, “I never studied a lick until I got to college.” He didn’t need to — not so much because he was gifted as because the academic standards and expectations were so low. When he entered the University of Texas at Arlington, he went on an athletic, not an academic, scholarship. Quickly, though, he learned two things: First, despite his lackluster education, he had a fine mind; second, that didn’t mean he could sail through college without studying.

Of all his subjects, he says, economics came most easily. “I thought it was the most commonsense thing I’d ever seen,” he recalls. “It was really simple and elegant to me — in a way that, say, Gothic literature wasn’t. And I felt like my background, if it didn’t help me, didn’t hurt me, either. In addition, I had a professor who was really good and who took an interest in me. He came to me after my first economics course and said, ‘I think you have a special gift: You think like an economist.’”

**ENDING AMERICA’S EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IS “THE BIGGEST CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE OF OUR TIME,” SAYS ROLAND FRYER.**

**TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS**

Fryer’s research has already suggested the potentially transformative effect of education. In a 2004 article in the Quarterly Journal of Economics, Fryer and University of Chicago economist Steven Levitt analyzed the economic impact of distinctively black names. Given names often communicate racial identity, they noted, and African Americans, in particular, are likely to receive racially distinctive names, a trend that increased significantly starting in the 1970s, as a cultural byproduct of the civil rights movement and a growing emphasis on black pride. The authors noted that blacks living in highly segregated areas “are much more likely to have distinctively black names than those in integrated communities.” But what are the economic consequences when the name on a resume reveals a minority status?

To address the question, Fryer and Levitt turned to a rich data set compiled by the California Department of Health Services — the Birth Statistical Master File. They looked specifically at data for 1961–2000, encompassing more than 16 million births. They also took a subsample — women born in 1973 and 1974 (the first years that offered the necessary information) — and linked those birth records to data on the women when they had children of their own, permitting an intergenerational analysis. (Their rate of successful matches was an impressive 90 percent.)

Fryer and Levitt reached a surprising conclusion: They found “no relationship between how black one’s name is and life outcomes, after controlling for other factors,” Fryer says. But among those other factors, education was clearly important. Children with distinctively black names who had poorly educated mothers (and grew up in poor, racially segregated neighborhoods) faced poor prospects. Those with comparably distinctive black names whose mothers were better educated — and who lived in more integrated and prosperous areas — did not.

In a recent study, Fryer demonstrated how education could actually tumble the ramparts of racial division. Using U.S. Census data for 1880–2000, he explored trends in interracial marriage among whites, blacks, and Asians. (Because of inconsistent census definitions, it was difficult to include Hispanics.) The results, though preliminary, are fascinating. Interracial marriages account for only one percent of all marriages in the United States. However, there was a sharp turning point in the 1960s. For almost a century, such unions had traced virtually a flat line, but then their relative numbers began to climb. Today, the percentage of interracial marriages is four times what it was forty years ago.

Besides increasing in number, interracial unions have changed in a second key respect. Prior to the 1960s, they generally involved the least educated, poorest members of society. From the ’60s on, continued on page 7
Editor’s note: This is the second in a two-part series on developing graduate-student teaching skills.

In the first of our two-part series on supporting a culture of outstanding teaching among graduate students, Colloquy’s winter 2009 issue featured a discussion with three GSAS faculty members about how their departments have integrated pedagogy with graduate training. Now we present another perspective, that of the students themselves. In a wide-ranging conversation at the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, four advanced graduate students talked about their training as teachers, the unexpected rewards of the classroom, and the challenges of balancing teaching and their own academic work. The student participants were Ryan Bañagale, music; Yves Chretien, statistics; Marcella Frydman, English; and Karim Kassam, psychology. Cassandra Volpe Horii, associate director of the Bok Center, moderated the conversation, and James Wilkinson, the center’s director, added his voice as well.

Horii: What aspects of your teaching fellows training were most helpful?

Chretien: In the Statistics Department, my class was the first to go through a new year-long colloquium, Statistics 303, the Art and Practice of Teaching Statistics. It was terrific — we got to practice teaching, and we received valuable tips from the Bok Center. The 303 course is now part of our professional development curriculum; the chair [Xiao-Li Meng, Whipple V. N. Jones Professor of Statistics] has recognized that teaching is a key component of professional development.
Frydman: I was fortunate to benefit from a semester-long colloquium in the English department, which was especially useful because it was co-led by a senior faculty member, Marjorie Garber [William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of English and of Visual and Environmental Studies], and by a student who was ahead in the program. It was nice to have both perspectives. One of the things I’ve tried to cultivate as a departmental teaching fellow is peer interaction, which is enormously useful — anything from a tip to an approach to a philosophy that someone has that you didn’t know about. My feeling is you learn the most from your peers.

Bañagale: What was most helpful for me was actually teaching for Tom Kelly’s First Nights, a core music class that’s been taught for a long time, so there’s ten years of teaching material in a TF manual. Professor Kelly [Morton B. Knafel Professor of Music] was very interested in the pedagogical aspects of the course. In our weekly staff meetings we addressed different aspects of teaching, whether it was responding to student writing or a possible situation that might occur in the classroom around “hot-topic issues.”

Kassam: We have a pedagogy course in the Psychology Department that I facilitated this year, and it’s what Marcella said was saying: it brings peers together. It has a micro teaching component, where we all have a chance to see everyone else’s teaching style. It’s one of those aspects of professional development that you don’t always get. If you really like someone else’s writing style, you can try to copy it. With teaching, you don’t often get a chance to see what other people do.

What’s most facilitated my enjoyment and appreciation of teaching in the Psychology Department is the fact that our faculty really cares about it. As much as the four of us here really are intrinsically motivated to teach, most of the reward structure we have as graduate students is based on publications; whether you get a reward for teaching is sort of immaterial. I’m applying for a job, for instance, and they haven’t asked much about my teaching. But when your office is next to a faculty member who’s obviously huge in the field and you see how much effort they put into Psychology 101 or whatever class it is, that rubs off. When you see all through the department that faculty members take a lot of pride in their teaching, that makes a huge difference.

Hori: What’s your read on other students? How would you describe the culture around teaching?

Frydman: I think it’s inspirational that despite a culture that really does distance us from teaching, most people actually care deeply about teaching. When asked the question “Why do you want to be a professor?” most graduate students would say, Not only because I care deeply about King Lear, but because I care about communicating why King Lear is important, and I care about the continuing relevance of King Lear in a contemporary culture for people who wouldn’t normally gravitate toward the reading of a Renaissance text.

Chretien: I think changing the culture can go a long way toward overcoming the professional disincentives toward teaching. My cohort was the first that had the pedagogy course, and we saw it as something that was nice, but rather an experiment. Now it’s in its fourth year, and one of my office mates, a first-year student, asked me, “I heard they used to not have a pedagogy course — is that true?” The chair and a couple of other professors have invested themselves in the course and set the tone, and over a very short period of time it’s become the norm.

Bañagale: In music, we’re still in the process of putting a pedagogical practicum in place. It’s not that there hasn’t been a culture of teaching, but we’re still in the process of getting everyone on board. And as I’m working with first-year TFS in my role as a departmental teaching fellow, I’m noticing there’s more of a cohort and community of teaching. People are talking about it.

continued on next page
Wilkinson: Were there parts of your training that didn’t work so well or weren’t very useful?

Frydman: There are some general tools that work really well in literary settings, and there are others that simply don’t. One of the ways that emphasis on teaching can go awry is when it gets to be a general set of templates. Because one of the things that makes teaching at Harvard good when it’s good is the specificity, disciplinary rigor, depth, and knowledge base.

Chretien: For our pedagogy course, we recalibrate from year to year, see what’s working most effectively, see what’s not working, and try to improve on that. What we learned in previous years is that students received the greatest benefits from practice teaching, so we’ve compressed other parts and increased this aspect of their training.

Horii: Was there a time when teaching was transformative for you or your students — when you met a challenge?

Kassam: My first teaching experience at Harvard was a sophomore statistics course. Statistics for psychology concentrators is interesting because the students may not be strong mathematicians, and it’s a course they have trouble with. Harvard brought in an outside lecturer that they were very excited about, and it just didn’t work out. The course was a disaster in many ways — there’s no other way to say it. Because students weren’t understanding the material from the lectures, we ended up lecturing in our sections and putting together PowerPoint presentations to help them. It took a lot of time, but we received so much appreciation from students. Their reactions made it a fantastic experience.

Frydman: One time I had a senior faculty member come to my section. I made a mistake, and the students really came to my aid. That was a pivotal moment, in terms of realizing that they are allies in making the dynamic work. My best teaching experience, I think, was with a course called Art and Thought of the Cold War. This was a fairly wide-ranging course in which we looked at painting, films, novels, and political theory. And it was fun to learn this material and then learn how to teach it in the section. I’m not a trained art historian, and I don’t read film on a regular basis, or political theory, either. So I learned the sometimes trite, but very true rule, which is that you learn the most from your teaching.

Bañagale: For me, the first ‘Oh, wow, I can actually do this’ moment was in my first semester teaching here, in the First Nights course. One of the papers students have to write is a concert review. They’d all been through expository writing, so they knew how to write an argumentative paper, but they didn’t know how to write a review. The assignment I gave them was to read historical reviews of pieces we were studying and to rank which were the best and the worst. They all thought they were on the same page, but when I put the information on the board, a great debate broke out, and they argued about what did and didn’t make a strong review. They had so many different thoughts that by the end we had a list of points on the board describing how one might write a review. It was really quite thrilling to have that happen almost by accident.

Horii: Talk a little about the interplay — the balance, the benefits — between your teaching, your own research, and your academic requirements.

Chretien: When I’m teaching introductory statistics, I’m always saying, “Here’s an equation or technique you need to learn, and here’s why you should be excited to learn it.” The work that’s required to do that is remarkably similar to what I have to do every semester in my department when I have to convince people about my work. In essence, I’m saying “Here’s what I’ve been working on; here’s why the department should continue to fund it.” It’s surprisingly similar, in the sense that you have to engage people who aren’t immediately interested and expert in your own topic.

Frydman: One of the similarities between teaching and my research is the continuing imperative to justify or articulate the stakes of my work. That’s something that’s very important to me. I always want to be able to describe to a reasonably interested person what I’m working on and why it might matter. I think teaching really trains you to do that more than anything I’ve ever done.

Wilkinson: Were there ideas you had about teaching that proved not to be accurate? Was it better or worse than you thought?

Kassam: I definitely underestimated the time teaching would take, just at the base level needed to get through my sections, and how much time it would take to teach well. We have this stereotype of Harvard undergraduates that they’re all going to be brilliant, and there are a lot of smart students, but at the same time for any given subject you’re going to have a diversity of students. Some are going to care more about it than others; some are going to have more natural ability than others.

Bañagale: One of my expectations coming in was that I was going to be on my own. I came from another university where there isn’t an established culture of teaching, nor resources like the Bok Center. Looking back now, I marvel at the support Harvard provides its T.F.s.

Chretien: When I came here I had a very hierarchical view of teaching, probably from my own undergraduate experience. I thought, the professor gives a lecture and tells me what to do and I go into the section and then give another mini-lecture based on that. I was surprised how interactive it turned out to be — that with the students I could be more effective if I presented less and actually allowed more time for in-class exercises.

Frydman: One thing that surprised me is that the classroom is really its own little world. Once you close the door, and you’re in a section with 19 students, it’s actually its own little society with its own environment that develops its own social dynamics and affections and disaffections. And you are the manager of that little world.

Harvard University GSAS
however, those most likely to marry someone of another race have been individuals with the highest levels of education. Among the well-educated, Fryer writes, patterns of interracial marriage have become “strikingly similar across all racial groups,” suggesting that education lowers the barriers — psychological, social, or material — that keep people apart.

AN INCENTIVE TO LEARN
At EdLabs, Fryer sets a tone that’s democratic in the extreme. “In building this organization,” he explains, “my philosophy has been that everyone down to the temps who are typing in data has been to school, so everyone brings something to the table. Pretty much every day I go in and say something to stir the pot. Today I asked them to try something else.”

In his larger goal, however, he’s unwavering. “I’ve got a bunch of consultant types running around here asking, ‘What’s your definition of success?’ And I tell them, ‘Indifference.’ My goal is to have a world in which people are totally indifferent to which public school their kids go to because they’re all of equally high quality.”

Roland Fryer

Roland Fryer

The early agenda at EdLabs demonstrates Fryer’s willingness to stir that pot. Fryer and his research team are testing the idea of financial incentives, asking whether cash rewards can help keep students engaged and focused on academic achievement. The researchers are leading three separate inquiries that together will involve more than 15,000 public school students: the Spark Program, which started in 2007 in New York City; the Paper Project, begun last September in Chicago; and the Capital Gains Program, which also started last September, in Washington, D.C. Though differing somewhat in design, each measures and rewards student success on the basis of selected academic indicators (for example, grades, standardized test scores, attendance, or behavior). The rewards are cash in varying amounts: The better students perform, the more they earn.

This research (like Fryer’s earlier pilot studies of incentive-based approaches) has, predictably, generated some controversy. But to Fryer, the argument that education is its own reward is out of touch. “Too often, when kids in urban schools look around, they don’t see many examples of how education can help them,” he says. “They don’t see educational role models — not at home, not in their neighborhoods, not in their schools.” So exhortations about the value of schoolwork don’t ring true — or do much good.

Will an incentive-based approach do better? Fryer won’t hazard an opinion. In typical fashion, he’s waiting for the data. But he’s not tied to any given strategy; he wants ideas that work. If financial incentives aren’t the answer, he says, “we’ll try something else.”

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James Clyde Sellman, PhD ’93, history, has copyedited Colloquy for several years and is a freelance writer living in Newton, MA.
it was inauguration day, and a large-screen TV beckoned in the graduate student lounge at Dudley House. The room was packed. Rows of chairs had been set out, and every seat was taken; stragglers stood two- and three-deep along the walls. There were plates of cookies with red, white, and blue icing, some decorated like flags, others O-shaped, with “Obama” and “2009” written out in sugary ink. As the speech began, a hush fell over the room — a collective awareness of history in the making. A cheer, and then laughs, when the new president promised to “restore science to its rightful place.” More cheers as the speech ended, and then the sound of champagne popping. Trays of plastic glasses were passed around the room, enough for everyone.

By Bari Walsh

Photographs by Leah Fasten, except as noted
In this wired world, it was an hour
that easily could have passed in private,
with students and staff members watching
on their computers from wherever on or off
campus they call home. But it was imme-
surably richer, and immeasurably more fun,
at Dudley House — a gathering place for
Harvard’s graduate student community on
momentous days and every day.

From its commanding location on
the southwest corner of Harvard Yard,
across Massachusetts Avenue from Out of
Town News, Dudley is the center of graduate
small (the occasional ice-cream social).
It also has its own dining hall and
coffeehouse, both open to the public,
drawing an eclectic mix of undergraduates,
graduate students, staff, and faculty. It is
a hub for GSAS student services and
student leadership, housing the offices
of the dean for student affairs, the director
of student services, the housing director,
and the Graduate Student Council, among
other resources. And it also serves a small
but vibrant community of undergraduates
who live in co-ops or private housing.

The point of it all, according to
House Master Jim Hogle, is community. “It
seems obvious, but there is nothing like this
at most graduate schools,” says Hogle, who
with his wife and co-master, Doreen, has
been at Dudley House since 2002. “It can
be a lonely experience being a graduate
student. If you’re in a small program, or if
the culture of the program is such that
students don’t do a lot together, it can
be isolating. And inevitably, there comes
a time when you’re ABD, doing your
research — and you’re alone. Dudley gives
people a community they can belong to
from the moment they enter Harvard to the
moment they leave.”

And it’s a community that welcomes
the whole person, not just the graduate-
student part of the person. “Our students
are multitalented; they’re not just
academic,” Hogle says. “We have people
who are musicians, who dance, who write
— these are things they’ve done all their lives.

“By providing an opportunity to
continue those things, and by having
a visible center that sponsors them, we’re

DUDLEY HOUSE MAKES A HOME FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN HARVARD YARD
No one is competing with you here, no one is judging you here . . .

Jean-François Charles and Nick Atwood catch the improvisational spirit during rehearsals of Dudley’s Third Stream jazz workshop.

Anouska Bhattacharyya, a second-year PhD student in the history of science, says her experiences as a Dudley Fellow help reenergize her when academic demands pile up.

Thomas Dudley, who signed the Harvard College Charter in 1630 as governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. It traces its origins to 1935, when Allston Burr, a fellow of Harvard College, became concerned about the experience of undergraduates who did not live on campus. He turned the basement and ground floor of the old Dudley Hall, on Dunster Street, into a non-resident center, and in 1958, the space was officially recognized as the eighth unit in the Harvard House system and was named Dudley House. Its mission evolved over the years to meet changing needs, and in 1991 Dudley House was established in

of the Committee on Higher Degrees in Biophysics. Doreen Hogle is an intellectual property attorney at the law firm of Hamilton, Brook, Smith & Reynolds in Concord, Massachusetts. With those resumes, both could have politely declined this extra affiliation; in fact, they recently extended their appointment.

Zawalich is the face of Dudley, the connector of students past and present, and the purveyor of the fine art of toy therapy. “It’s not hard to see what I’m interested in,” she says, gesturing toward her office, chock full of knickknacks and mementos of Paris, Shakespeare, Jane Austen, nieces and nephews, Godzilla, Audrey Hepburn, Kermit, and, especially, Fred Astaire. It would make a novelty shop owner feel at home, but the point is that it makes students feel at home. “I’ve had many instances where a student I don’t know will come in and say something, and I’ll ask them something, and it will become a conversation” — about their program, their progress, or their concerns, she says. “I’m not officially a counselor, but I don’t underestimate toy therapy as a wonderful technique for relaxing people.”

“Dudley House is a really nice place to hang out,” says Anouska Bhattacharyya, a Dudley Fellow who personifies the spirit of curiosity and collegiality that infuses the place. “There are all these big lovely couches up on the third floor, and you often walk in and see someone just sprawled out asleep. It isn’t this formal atmosphere where you always have to mind your p’s and q’s. It’s a place where you can just relax.”

The Fellows are a group of specially appointed graduate students responsible for programming cultural, artistic, and social activities each year. Bhattacharyya, a second-year student in the Department of
History of Science — working, she says, on the history of medicine and madness in nineteenth-century India — is an intellectual/cultural fellow, “which gives me the freedom to organize any events that I want to, because everything fits under that umbrella,” she says with a smile.

She applied to become a Fellow because she “wanted a way of grounding myself in the GSAS community,” she says. “It’s really easy for you to just do your research — eat, sleep, research. I wanted a way to break out of that little bubble.”

One of the best ways she’s found to do so is by meeting people from different disciplines, interactions that Dudley explicitly fosters. She recalls an evening last fall when MIT neuroeconomist Drazen Prelec had come to speak. “We had psychologists in the same room as economists and political scientists and social scientists,” she says. “It’s encouraging this interdisciplinary forum, but not on a rigorous academic level. You’re just there to learn something new.”

Fellows make a significant commitment of time and energy, says Hogle. “But it’s easy to write letters of support for them when they’re out there looking for positions. A student’s ability to pursue academic excellence while at the same time taking a leadership role in a service organization is real evidence of the traits that make for a strong faculty.

“Of course, the other thing we’re doing is proselytizing,” he adds. “We’re sending people out there who recognize the whole approach to graduate student life. They may not be able to create Dudley House at another school, but at least they’ll recognize that graduate students have real needs as individuals.”

For Bhattacharyya, balancing those needs has been the unexpected payoff of her Dudley involvement. “When I need downtime from my research, I do the work I need to do for Dudley. But when I’m up to here with logistics for an event at Dudley, I know I can just return to a quiet place in the library and do some reading. I’m definitely doing more work on my degree this year than I was last year when I wasn’t a Dudley Fellow, when I didn’t have this other outlet.”

It would have been easy to feel rootless, but “Dudley was really my base.”

REFUGE FROM THE STORM

Elio Brancaforte, PhD ’01, in the Dudley House game room

When Elio Brancaforte left New Orleans on the day before Hurricane Katrina rolled through in 2005, he packed a few days’ worth of underwear and his laptop. Classes at Tulane, where he is an associate professor of German, were about to start, and — like everyone else — he figured he’d be back in a day or two.

Instead, Brancaforte, PhD ’01, comparative literature, spent the next four months in Cambridge, where Dudley House became “quite literally, a refuge,” he says.

And not for the first time. Dudley was a home away from home for Brancaforte throughout his Harvard career, as he wound his way through a complex degree program and dissertation, much of which was written in Dudley’s Café Gato Rojo and in the House library.

Having done graduate work previously at Berkeley and at Johns Hopkins, Brancaforte found a sense of community at GSAS that he hadn’t felt at those institutions, largely due to Dudley House.

It was a central connecting point, a place that drew students from all disciplines and backgrounds, both intellectual and geographical — something that was especially appealing to the peripatetic Brancaforte, the Madison, Wisconsin–raised son of a Bavarian mother and a Sicilian father: “Little by little, you’d meet this person who’s in physics, and you’d learn about string theory,” he says. “And you’d talk to a guy who does biochemistry about genetics. You got to learn about things that, if you’d just stuck to your core group, you wouldn’t know.”

In comp lit, Brancaforte notes, “you’re pretty much on your own after the first year” — in his case, teaching courses in the German department and occupying a role that crossed programmatic lines. It would have been easy to feel rootless, but “Dudley was really my base,” he says. He spent about five years as a Dudley librarian — “the best job I ever had,” he jokes — forming friendships that continue today.

Brancaforte is back at Harvard this year, as a visiting scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies while on sabbatical from Tulane. It has been a productive year for this eclectic scholar, who works primarily on early modern European travel accounts (in particular the relationship between image and text) and the history of cartography (especially of the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf). Last summer, he co-curated two related exhibitions at Harvard, From Rhubarb to Rubies: European Travels to Safavid Iran (1550–1700) at Houghton Library and The Lands of the Sophi: Iran in Early Modern Maps (1550–1700) at the Map Library, looking specifically at the artifacts, treasures, and curios that European travelers brought back from Persia in the 16th and 17th centuries. Now, in addition to finishing the exhibition catalog, he is working on a book project, tentatively titled Iran Through Western Eyes: European Representations of Safavid Iran.

And when he’s not working on either project — or even when he is — you may find him at the Gato Rojo, indulging in coffee, tea, and nostalgia.
Through the Thickets of Race
Excerpted from Lincoln on Race & Slavery, edited and introduced by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.


THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN of the popular American imagination — Father Abraham, the Great Emancipator — is often represented almost as an island of pure reason in a sea of mid-nineteenth-century racist madness, a beacon of tolerance blessed with a certain cosmopolitan sensibility above or beyond race, a man whose attitudes about race and slavery transcended his time and place. It is this Abraham Lincoln that many writers have conjured, somewhat romantically — for example, as Ralph Ellison often did — to claim for him and those who fought to abolish slavery a privileged, noble status in the history of American race relations from which subsequent, lesser mortals disgracefully fell away. This is one reason that blacks such as Marian Anderson in 1939 and Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1963 used the Lincoln Memorial as the most ideal symbolic site through which to make a larger, implicit statement about race prejudice in their times, and why Barack Obama launched his campaign for president in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln’s home. Black people, to an extent that would no doubt have surprised Frederick Douglass, have done more perhaps even than white Americans have to confect an image of Lincoln as the American philosopher-king and patron saint of race relations, an image strenuously embraced and enthusiastically reproduced in lithographs by Booker T. Washington at the turn of the century to sanctify the authority of his leadership in a direct line of descent from both Frederick Douglass and Father Abraham himself.

However, contemporary views of Lincoln, and of the abolitionists, as the sources of the modern civil rights movement have sometimes been naive and have almost always been ahistorical. Black abolitionists, keenly aware of the vast difference between finding the economic institution of slavery a harmful and repugnant force of inequity in the marketplace, on the one hand, and embracing black people as equal human beings, on the other, were fond of saying that the only thing some of the white abolitionists hated more than slavery was the slave. While this was meant to criticize their white associates for unconscious forms of racism, it is certainly true that many white abolitionists treated black people paternalistically. But at least they advocated emancipation, both immediate and gradual, and in theory called for racial equality, even if they often had a difficult time realizing it in their personal relations with actual former slaves. What’s more, many of the abolitionists came to define themselves against colonizationists, those who would free the slaves only to remove them outside the country.

It should not surprise us that Lincoln was no exception to his times; what is exceptional about Abraham Lincoln is that, perhaps because of temperament or because of the shape-shifting contingencies of command during an agonizingly costly war, he wrestled with his often contradictory feelings and ambivalences and vacillations about slavery, race, and colonization, and did so quite publicly and often quite eloquently. It is the progress of his fraught journey through the thickets of slavery and race that this book seeks to chart, in Lincoln’s own words, arranged chronologically between 1837 and his final speech, delivered just before his assassination in April 1865, a speech in which he said that he intended to secure the right to vote for “very intelligent negroes” and the 200,000 black Civil War veterans. It was this speech, overheard by John Wilkes Booth, by Booth’s own admission, that led to his decision to assassinate the president.
FREDERICK DOUGLASS and Abraham Lincoln are the two preeminent self-made men in American history. Lincoln was born dirt poor, had less than one year of formal schooling, and became one of the nation’s greatest presidents. Douglass spent the first twenty years of his life as a slave, had no formal schooling, and became the most famous black man in the Western world and one of the nation’s greatest writers.

In ways I never could have imagined before starting this project, they also led strikingly parallel lives. They learned to read and remake themselves from the same core set of books: the Bible; Shakespeare; Lord Byron; Robert Burns; Aesop’s Fables; and The Columbian Orator, a popular anthology of speeches for boys. They avoided tobacco and alcohol at a time when people regularly chewed and drank on the job. They became dazzling orators when public speaking was one of the few forms of entertainment, equivalent to professional sports or popular music today. And they were strapping men, at least a half foot taller on average than their peers, when physical prowess could determine success or failure, even life or death.

In explaining their destiny, Douglass and Lincoln both quoted the same line from Shakespeare’s Hamlet: “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hewn them how we will.” They exemplified the hope of America by pursuing their inalienable rights and continually remaking themselves. And they delved into the past to forge their way forward. . . .

In the process they muddied the racial divide, by turns becoming enemies and friends. More than once Douglass called Lincoln a representative racist and the greatest obstacle to freedom in America. He brilliantly exposed Lincoln’s limitations as a champion of freedom, while Lincoln spent most of his life hoping to rid the nation of blacks (and slavery).

They were also pragmatists who were able to put aside their vast differences and come together as friends. In 1860 Douglass helped elect Lincoln as president. At a time when most whites would not let a black man cross their threshold, Lincoln met Douglass three times at the White House. Their friendship was chiefly utilitarian: Lincoln needed Douglass to help him destroy the Confederacy; Douglass knew that Lincoln could help him end slavery. But they also genuinely liked and admired each other.

In placing their lives side by side, reflecting the one off the other, we gain a fuller picture of each man’s career and character, and a better understanding of how friends, mentors, lovers, and rivals shaped them. We also acquire a richer sense of the nature of personal transformation and its limitations. Then too, relying primarily on their words and actions offers an on-the-ground perspective of how racial difference shaped the texture of their lives and times. . . .

Ironically, Douglass and Lincoln came together as friends during a war that transformed American society and in the process greatly restricted the possibility of self-making. The war abolished slavery and nominally gave suffrage to black men. But it also brought a surge of racism, a vicious backlash against blacks as a means of reuniting North and South, and enormous bureaucracies and disparities of wealth that impeded social mobility among the lower classes. In the Gilded Age, the self-made man became a public myth. In this sense, Douglass and Lincoln rose from the dregs to the heights of society in ways scarcely imaginable fifty years later.
VOICES CARRY
Behind Bars and Backstage During China’s Revolution and Reform

By Ying Ruocheng and Claire Conceison, AM ’92, Regional Studies — East Asia (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009, 246 pp.)

Voices Carry is the autobiography of the late Ying Ruocheng, Chinese actor, director, and high-ranking government official. Long a member of the Beijing People’s Art Theater, Ying had a “reactionary” family background and was imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution. Ultimately, he returned to acting, appearing as Willie Loman in China’s first production of Death of a Salesman and in films including The Last Emperor (1987) and Little Buddha (1993). In the 1980s, he was China’s vice minister of culture. Conceison’s close collaboration with her subject has produced a deeply empathetic narrative.

NETWORK POWER
The Social Dynamics of Globalization

By David Singh Grewal, AB ’98, PhD ’09 (expected), government (Yale University Press, 2008, 416 pp.)

This impressive contribution to the study of globalization explores what Grewal calls “network power,” the standards that set the global terms for communication, commerce, or political action. Drawing on varied examples — including the World Trade Organization, the growing primacy of the English language, the struggle between Microsoft and proponents of open-source operating systems, and even the rise and fall of the gold standard — he argues that global standards are not simply neutral conventions but emerge through “reason, force, and chance,” opening global possibilities while simultaneously closing off alternatives.

BOOK OF RHYMES
The Poetics of Hip Hop

By Adam Bradley, PhD ’03, English and American literature and language (Basic Civitas Books, 2009, 304 pp.)

Bradley analyzes hip hop not as a musical or cultural phenomenon, but as poetry. Book of Rhymes looks at how rappers use language creatively to craft rhythmically sophisticated verse. Marshalling comparisons to such poetry as that of Langston Hughes, Coleridge’s Rime of the Ancient Mariner, and Piers Plowman — and offering a wealth of examples that reflect rap’s history and stylistic range (from Run-D.M.C. and KRS-One to Kanye West and Andre-3000) — the author applies his critical skills and affinity for the form to interpreting it as a literary art.

WOMEN PIONEERS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
How Culture Came to the Wild West

By Jurgen Herbst, PhD ’58, history of American civilization (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 232 pp.)

This lively study recounts how “proper” middle-class women shaped community life in Silverton, Colorado, between the 1870s and the early 1900s. These women faced a challenging natural environment (winter snows of up to twelve feet) and a boomtown atmosphere dominated by restless, single miners and the unsavory establishments that catered to their needs. Rather than seek transformation through religious faith, these wives of storekeepers and smelter owners turned to public education — America’s secular faith. And by 1886, Silverton had elected its first female school board president.

SITE FIGHTS
Divisive Facilities and Civil Society in Japan and the West

By Daniel P. Aldrich, PhD ’05, government (Cornell University Press, 2008, 254 pp.)

Site Fights details the politics and civic response to the contentious siting of nuclear waste, nuclear power plants, and other environmentally controversial facilities.
Finding sites for nuclear power plants, landfills, and other instances of what Aldrich terms “public bads” often results in sharp controversy. Scholars have identified various economic and political factors that influence the location of public bads. Aldrich, focusing on Japan (with comparisons to similar conflicts in the United States and France), stresses the importance of communities’ civil society — the organizations, associations, and networks capable of resisting public bads. Bureaucrats, he concludes, seek to minimize resistance by locating sites in less-populated places with limited or eroding civil society.

**ARTISTRY OF THE EVERYDAY**

*Beauty and Craftsmanship in Berber Art*

By Lisa Bernasek, PhD '07, anthropology and Middle Eastern studies (Peabody Museum Press, Harvard University, 2008, 128 pp.)

This volume grew from a 2004 exhibition of Berber art and craftsmanship at Harvard’s Peabody Museum, curated by Bernasek and Susan Gilson Miller, an associate professor at the University of California, Davis, and a former Harvard faculty member. Deeply grounded in Berber history and anthropology, Bernasek’s narrative also recounts the varied origins of the exhibited items. The authors caution that neither the exhibition nor its catalog conveys the full creative range of this North African culture, yet with its lavish illustrations, *Artistry of the Everyday* brings Berber art to life.

**THE LESSONS OF WAR**

*The Experiences of Seven Future Leaders in the First World War*

By William Van der Kloot, SB ’48, PhD ’52, molecular biology (The History Press, 2008, 211 pp.)

World War II remains a compelling cultural touchstone — evident in such recent films as Clint Eastwood’s *Flags of Our Fathers* and *Letters from Iwo Jima* (both 2006), *Atonement* (2007), and *Valkyrie* (2008) — but World War I seems far more distant. Van der Kloot seeks to close that distance in an almost filmic manner, interweaving the wartime experiences of seven future leaders — Hitler, Mussolini, Charles de Gaulle, Herbert Hoover, Finland’s Gustav Mannerheim, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of modern Turkey.

**POLICING THE GLOBE**

*Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations*

By Peter Andreas and Ethan Nadelmann, AB ’79, JD ’84, PhD ’87, government (Oxford University Press, 2008, 333 pp.)

The policing of international crime has evolved from limited, ad hoc measures to increasingly far-reaching, systematic ones. Historically, international policing is rooted in responses to piracy and reform movements against slavery and the slave trade. From the late twentieth century, international law enforcement has focused on drug trafficking and terrorist activities. In these efforts, the authors contrast the multilateral cooperation of European efforts with more unilateral, coercive American approaches.

**WHY WE FOUGHT**

*America’s Wars in Film and History*

Edited by Peter C. Rollins, AB ’63, PhD ’72, history of American civilization, and John E. O’Connor (University Press of Kentucky, 2008, 624 pp.)

These essays review American wars as portrayed in motion pictures (for instance, *Drums Along the Mohawk* and *Saving Private Ryan*), propaganda films (Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* documentaries), and television documentaries (Ken Burns’s PBS series *The Civil War*). The book takes on depictions of every conflict from the American Revolution to September 11 and its aftermath, showing how films have shaped America’s understanding of its history. A highlight is Frank Thompson’s essay about the Alamo, drawing on his own experiences as a youngster entranced by Davy Crockett and, years later, writing the “making of” book and a novelization of the 2004 film *The Alamo*.

**PROMISING GENOMICS**

*Iceland and deCODE Genetics in a World of Speculation*

By Mike Fortun, PhD ’93, history of science (University of California Press, 2008, 343 pp.)

Interweaving humor and detective work, Fortun recounts the strange story of deCODE Genetics. Part business venture and part con, deCODE planned to isolate the genetic sources of disease using a database of medical and DNA records for the entire Icelandic population. This database was established by a 1998 law incorporating the somewhat Orwellian concept of “presumed consent.” Given the excitement surrounding genomics, deCODE seemed to have great potential. But it was challenged on scientific grounds and brought to a halt when Iceland’s Supreme Court ruled the 1998 law unconstitutional.

Authors: GSAS alumni who have published (as author or editor) a general interest book (no textbooks, reprints, or revised editions, please) within the past year and would like it to be considered for inclusion in Alumni Books should send a copy of the book to: Colloquy, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-3846. Questions? E-mail gsaa@fas.harvard.edu.

Colloquy 15 Spring 2009
FROM HARVARD TO HANOVER
Educator and global health leader Jim Yong Kim, MD ’91, PhD ’93, anthropology, will become the 17th president of Dartmouth College on July 1, 2009. Kim, the chair of Harvard Medical School’s Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, is best known as a pathbreaking public health specialist and a co-founder of Partners in Health, which supports health programs in poor communities around the world. He has also directed the HIV/AIDS department at the World Health Organization. At Harvard, in addition to his appointment at the Medical School, he is director of the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at the School of Public Health. “Jim Yong Kim embodies the ideals of learning, innovation, and service that lie at the heart of Dartmouth’s mission,” said Ed Haldeman, chair of Dartmouth’s Board of Trustees, in announcing the appointment. “As a passionate educator and physician, he has had a profound impact on students, faculty, colleagues, and fellow health professionals. And as a leader in the field of global health, Jim has helped to transform efforts to bring health care to the world’s poor.”

ILLUMINATING THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE
Sara J. Schechner, AB ’79, PhD ’88, history of science, has won the 2008 Joseph H. Hazen Education Prize from the History of Science Society for twenty-five years of innovative teaching focusing on “tactile access to the history of science.” Schechner is the David P. Wheatland Curator of the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments in Harvard’s Department of History of Science. The award committee was particularly impressed with how, in a five-year period, Schechner incorporated museum-based experiences with historical objects into the curriculum of 80 different classes in 50 different courses offered by Arts and Sciences, the Graduate School of Design, the Graduate School of Education, and other Harvard centers. The prize recognizes the fact that her educational activities are extraordinarily broad, encompassing museum work, the organization of educational programs, writing, innovation in instruction and pedagogical materials, and public outreach.

THE GENES IN YOUR CONGENIALITY
Can’t help being the life of the party? In findings published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Nicholas Christakis, professor of sociology, reports that you might have been born that way. In the first study to examine the inherited characteristics of social networks, Christakis, MD ’88, MPH ’89, and colleagues Christopher Dawes and James Fowler of the University of California, San Diego, have found that our place in a social network is influenced in part by our genes. While it might be expected that genes affect personality, these findings go further, and illustrate a genetic influence on the structure and formation of an individual’s social group. The researchers found that popularity, or the number of times an individual was named as a friend, and the likelihood that those friends know one another, were both strongly heritable. Additionally, location within the network, or the tendency to be at the center or on the edges of the group, was also genetically linked. However, the researchers were surprised to learn that the number of people named as a friend by an individual did not appear to be inherited. Christakis, who is also a professor of medical sociology at Harvard Medical School, has worked extensively on other aspects of social networks, including their role in the spread of obesity, smoking, and happiness.

Photos: top, © WHO/P. Virot; center, courtesy Sara Schechner; bottom, Harvard News Office
“Adventurous,” is how one member of the Music Department describes the well-attended musicology workshops that take place weekly in his department, usually over lunch. The workshops are led by a different graduate student each week, with frequent assistance from the piano or from PowerPoint. The sessions encourage students to push the boundaries of their scholarship and to develop the professional skills they’ll need to present their work in more formal spaces, either in person or in publication.

The GSAS Research Workshop Program has funded more than 200 comparable projects over the last ten years in departments across the humanities and social sciences. The Graduate School awards grants of up to $5,000 per year to fund projects designed to encourage discussion of works-in-progress by graduate students and faculty members. Topics may be cross-disciplinary, and although faculty must submit the formal application, graduate students are encouraged to generate interest and ideas for workshops.

Learning to conceive and write a scholarly article and achieve a level of professionalism in presenting one’s work is a vital part of preparing for life in the academy. GSAS research workshops give students the chance to present and receive feedback on thesis prospectuses, dissertation chapters, or seminar papers being prepared for talks or publication. The workshops also offer a venue for faculty members to share drafts of scholarly work or explore new research interests in a collegial setting.

Topics are as wide-ranging as GSAS itself. The 84 workshops now being funded across the Graduate School include “Colloquium in American Religious History,” “Current Issues in Biological Anthropology,” “Decision Making in Economics and Psychology,” and “STS Circle [Science, Technology, and Society].”

Alexander Rehding, a professor of music who specializes in theory, says musicology workshops provide a setting where insights that are genuinely new can be introduced and discussed. “Yesterday’s talk, for instance, was the first exploration in this department of the role of music in virtual reality games,” he explains. “It was a fascinating ethnography of a space that makes its own rules and sets its own limitations in many ways, and music — often very loud or annoying music — plays a major part in the social relations of this virtual world. This, in turn, can tell us important things about the uses of music in our own society.”

The workshops often become focal points for the department’s academic life, opening up a wide variety of subjects and methodologies. Last fall, for example, topics ranged from “Concert Programming and Cultural Propaganda: The Symphony Orchestra of Radio Frankfurt, 1945–January 1949” to “You Are My Sunshine: The Recorded Pedigree of an American Folk Song.”

Sindhumathi Revulu, an assistant professor of music, says the workshops let presenters explore their topics without the risk entailed in larger, more public settings. The workshops “also build community within the department,” she says, “and give faculty insight into what students are thinking about.”

“It’s a forum where adventurous topics can be tested,” says Rehding. “The informality often encourages students to go out on a limb and venture into areas that might not yet be regarded as suitable for academic discussion of a more public kind.”

Thomas Forrest Kelly, the Morton B. Knafel Professor of Music, agrees. “We often see a piece of research begin as a seminar paper, improve through feedback in a workshop, then become a conference paper and ultimately a publication. These workshops are a useful — and usually painless — way to learn from one’s friends what one hopes one’s enemies will never say. They refine both thinking and presentation and teach everyone involved, not just the student who is presenting.”

The Graduate School Fund provides discretionary funding for areas of vital academic importance, like the GSAS Research Workshop Program. To learn more about supporting the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, please contact Marne Perreault at 1-800-VERITAS or mame.perreault@harvard.edu. Visit the GSF online at post.harvard.edu/harvard/gsf.
Alumni Events and Notices

For more information about any of the following events, e-mail gsaa@fas.harvard.edu or call the Graduate School’s Office of Alumni Relations at 617-495-5591.

CHAPTER EVENTS

Wednesday, May 6, 2009 | New York City
Daniel Schrag, Sturgis Hooper Professor of Geology, professor of environmental science and engineering, and director of the Harvard University Center for the Environment, will give a talk called “Imagining the Future of Climate and Energy.” Professor Schrag studies climate change over the broadest range of Earth history. He has examined changes in ocean circulation over the last several decades, with particular attention to El Niño and the tropical Pacific. He has worked on theories for Pleistocene ice-age cycles, including a better determination of ocean temperatures during the Last Glacial Maximum, 20,000 years ago. He is now working with economists and engineers on technological approaches to mitigating future climate change. Cost: $15 (talk only); $80 (talk and dinner with speaker).

Tuesday, May 12, 2009 | Chicago
A talk by Timothy J. Colton, Morris and Anna Feldberg Professor of Government and Russian Studies and the director of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. Information at www.gas.harvard.edu/alumni/alumni.php.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The GSAS Centennial Medal and Graduate School Alumni Association Council
Help GSAS recognize its most distinguished alumni through nomination for the Centennial Medal. The medal recognizes contributions to society that have emerged from graduate study at Harvard. Alumni/ae who have received this honor since 1989 include theological scholar Elaine Pagels, historian Bernard Bailyn, author Susan Sontag, biologist E. O. Wilson, and economist Jeffrey Sachs. The medal is awarded annually at a ceremony held in Cambridge during Commencement Week.

Alumni are also invited to submit nominations for the GSAA Council, the governing body of the Harvard Graduate School Alumni Association. Typically, Council members will have achieved distinction in their careers or made significant contributions through community service. Council members share a strong commitment to Harvard and to graduate education.

To nominate: Submit a letter stating your reasons for selecting the candidate, marked either for the Centennial Medal or for the Graduate School Alumni Association Council, to: GSAS Alumni Association, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. Nominations may also be e-mailed to gsaa@fas.harvard.edu.

DOCTORAL REUNION FOR GRADUATES OF GSAS/HBS JOINT PROGRAMS

May 28–31, 2009
Harvard Business School is pleased to invite all doctoral alumni from HBS and from joint GSAS and HBS programs to return to campus for a Doctoral Reunion Weekend from Thursday, May 28, through Sunday, May 31, 2009. Reexperience all the School has to offer with two full days of presentations by HBS and Harvard University faculty. For more information, visit www.alumni.hbs.edu/reunions/doc.html.