

# Why Harvard Hates America

Faust is right to rain on ROTC's parade  
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By ADAM GOLDENBERG

Any Harvard student with the balls to participate in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) deserves our respect. Quite frankly, ROTC doesn't sound like a whole lot of fun.

For four years, cadets and midshipmen wake up obscenely early in order to trek to MIT and get yelled at by their instructors. That's an indignity that Harvard usually reserves for accounting students. If you want to know what visceral discomfort looks like, watch a Harvard ROTC student shuffle across campus in his military uniform. Banished by the Faculty in 1969 amid a rising tide of anti-war sentiment on Harvard's campus, ROTC has more recently been relegated to its pariah status because of the military's mindless discrimination against homosexuals. Forget the active duty that follows graduation—for our peers in uniform, the years of glory-free self-sacrifice start in Harvard Yard.

Their one moment in the sun comes during the week of Commencement, when Harvard's cadets and midshipmen receive their commissions and their first salutes in a touching, deeply significant ceremony in Harvard Yard. It's a chance to celebrate new officers' past achievements and their future service to the nation. Their recognition is richly deserved.

This year, University President Drew G. Faust will attend the ROTC commissioning, but with an asterisk. Proof to the aged adage—beware geeks bearing gifts—Faust will harness the symbolism of her appearance by criticizing “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” (DADT) the federal law that bars openly gay Americans from serving in the military. While she will recognize the value of military service, Faust will also express her wish that, “every Harvard student had the opportunity to serve in the military.”

Few at Harvard disagree with the sentiment. Even Harry R. Lewis '68, former dean of the College and one of Harvard ROTC's staunchest advocates, argued on this page last year that, “the ban on homosexuals in the military is unwise.” The dispute here is not over Faust's message, but rather her timing. “If it's going to be political, I think everyone would be happier having someone else speak,” one Marine midshipman told *The Crimson* earlier this week.

But ROTC graduates' happiness is, unfortunately, not the issue. On June 4, they will be commissioned in a military ceremony in Harvard Yard, despite the fact that the military explicitly violates Harvard's non-discrimination code by forbidding gays and lesbians to serve.

President Faust should absolutely use the occasion to express this community's moral outrage at DADT. It would be offensive to our values for Harvard's ROTC graduates not to begin their service in the shadow of the Pentagon's repugnant discrimination. (These values are, incidentally, not just President Faust's—there is no shortage of Harvard ROTC students who oppose DADT, but who are forced to keep their silence because of the military's restrictions on their free speech.)

Other Americans seem perfectly capable of respecting the military—if, perhaps, from a distance—while remaining deeply ashamed of its intolerance of homosexuals. It is incumbent on the military's youngest officers to feel the same way, even—indeed, especially—at an event with as much military and personal significance as the commissioning ceremony.

It is hardly extreme to claim that all Americans who value liberty and equality—not just those in uniform—should be deeply embarrassed by the profound systemic discrimination that DADT embodies. What kind of liberal democracy, after all, can passively abide what Faust rightly described last week as “a badge of degradation or second-class citizenship” for gay Americans?

The point, however, is not to hold cadets and midshipmen responsible for their political overlords' intolerance. The decision to ban gays from the military was not theirs to make. But if this country is to overcome the well-worn prejudices that make DADT possible politically, then moral objections to the status quo must be involved wherever the military and civil society meet—in Harvard Yard, for example. And the generation of military officers now being educated at Harvard and elsewhere should rightly have their service tinted by the discrimination of DADT, at their commissioning and elsewhere.

Some will object, of course, that mine is a deeply political, even partisan view. Paul E. Mawn '63, who chairs the pressure group Advocates for Harvard ROTC, declared this week that, “it's not appropriate to talk politics at a military service.” Joseph M. Kristol '09, a Marine ROTC midshipman, despaired that Faust's comments would “radicalize” the ceremony.

Opposing discrimination is, however, neither political nor radical. Dismissing Faust's—and Harvard's—objections to anti-gay discrimination as “political” cloaks the issue in the mundane. ROTC graduates certainly earn their right to celebrate their commissioning with their peers and their families, but they do not deserve to ignore blithely the military's formal discrimination in the course of their revelry. On June 4, President Faust owes it to this institution and its values to at least offer a gentle reminder of the discrimination that the military has come to represent.

As they sally forth to serve their country with pride, Harvard's ROTC graduates should do so with firm misgivings about the discrimination built into the organization of which they will have become part. Only by doing so can they

aspire to overcome the generational divide that stands between the status quo and real equality of citizenship for gay Americans.

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