SABRINA SPEAKS
A LOVE LETTER TO HAVERFORD COLLEGE

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Haverford College, Special Collections

Gratitude and prayers for the Lenape, the First Nations people upon whose traditional homeland Haverford College sits.

nanticoke-lenapetribalnation.org/about/

Many thanks to my beloved husband and ally for the brewing of tea, the massaging of knots, the editing assist on your off-time, and for making sure I catch sight of myself in the mirror of excellence every day.

Gratitude also goes out to M. for your proofreading, and J. for your appropriately outraged comments in the margins, your superlative encouragements, and your bracing sisterhood.
Dedicated to “Kelly,” and “Jill,”

past, present, and future Fords of color,

and all who use their advantage for equality.

Our time is always now.
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To participate in the practice of compensating women of color for unpaid intellectual and emotional labor, funds can be directed to the author’s account at paypal.me/happytodomypart. Invitations to discuss direct reparations of land, income, and opportunities may be included with contact information.

III. Overview

Charlie, Sabrina, Kelly and Jill a.k.a. Charlie’s Angels is a historic 1994 Haverford College Honor Council trial initiated by myself, ("Sabrina"), and two other women students of color. "Kelly," “Jill,” and I worked together to confront an older student who was perceived to be “white”¹ about his racist hate speech postings on a physical comment board that was spreading misinformation and causing pain to people of color on campus. Confrontation is a specific process of conflict resolution-oriented discussion described in the 1993-1994 Social Honor Code signed by all students mandating that “we must confront others when their conduct disturbs us.” In this way, The Code sought to protect the community from actions that jeopardized “the sense of acceptance essential to an individual or group’s participation in the community.”

During that conversation as we sought to engage Charlie on his beliefs and the impact of their expression, we were disrespected further in word and demeanor. Charlie made no good faith effort to understand the damage he had caused, nor repair the breach of his actions. After agreeing to his request for mediation, hoping for one last chance at reconciliation, all of our attempts to inspire empathy and reason in Charlie failed, and the matter went on to a lengthy and injurious trial.

¹ Whiteness, like “race” itself, was invented for the purpose of white supremacy. It is a contrived concept that has no biological basis and therefore appears in quotation marks throughout this document.
In a belligerent offense-as-defense confusion strategy we see so often in today’s GOP polititricks, Charlie countered with his own accusation of violation alleging impropriety in the manner of our confrontation. In doing so he circumvented the lengthy confrontation and mediation process that we had undertaken. As I recall, he was not held to the same protocol of confrontation, instead the Honor Council allowed him to conveniently turn his trial into a double trial, destabilizing our rightful position as “plaintiffs” and turning us into simultaneous “defendants.”

In a stunning turn that continues to shock the conscience of the Haverford community and beyond, the majority “white” jury found Charlie to be innocent of committing a violation due to “freedom of speech,” and instead found us to be guilty of violating the Honor Code due to our “moral superiority.”

After receiving such a morally violent decision, we refused to participate in the remainder of the trial, exiting with dramatic flourish. The jury continued the trial in our absence. We had been effectively rendered absent by bias the entire time, and now not even our physical presence was required for the wheels of “justice” to keep on turning.

Refusing to be cowed, we hung a huge signed banner across the entrance to the D.C. stating “The Honor Code has been reduced to rubble under the administration of Xan Ornston.”

In the end, the jury ordered us to write Charlie a letter, and demanded that we meet with them until we demonstrated an understanding of their twisted rationale to their satisfaction.

Instead, we appealed the decision and were later exonerated when President Thomas Kessinger overturned the jury’s finding of violation with support from Dean Randy Milden.

Charlie’s faulty verdict of innocence was not examined due to procedural restrictions.

Our efforts for justice electrified the campus and when the abstract of the trial was released, it seemed the whole college fell into a hush and could be found huddled in Magill (Lutnick) Library or splayed out on Founders Green devouring the lengthy document.
Our bravery inspired a packed college-wide meeting in the Quaker Meeting House with nearly the entire student body, president, deans, faculty, and other Haverford community members in attendance. In a generous cinematic moment, the three of us young women of color stood up together before a sea of somber white faces and renounced our anonymity. We were, in fact, proud of our actions and never asked to be assigned aliases in the first place, a practice that protected Charlie’s reputation while cutting us off from communal support.

Charlie was either absent or kept to the shadows, apparently even in victory lacking the courage to defend his racism in the light.

The laborious trial process and its aftermath weighted down many months of our Sophomore year, distracting from our coursework and creating painful impacts felt even today. Charlie, Sabrina, Kelly and Jill became a touchstone at Haverford and beyond, moving through waves of technological advance from discussions IRL to online chatrooms.

Meanwhile the same rhetoric of people of color’s inferiority and illegitimacy espoused in Charlie’s parroting of “conservative” books continued to gain ground, helping build the platform for the card-carrying white supremacist uprising that has flourished with D.T.’s 2016 presidential campaign and claiming of the U.S. presidency (according to our intelligence services, a development aided by massive Russian interference that played up interethnic divisions, and Cambridge Analytica, a company that gamed the system using propaganda to target millions of voters based on personal Facebook data).

For decades as the U.S. approaches a turning point of “white” people becoming a statistical minority, white supremacists have strategically stoked the tradition of grievance culture among “white” people, using pseudointellectual objections to college admittance of students of color and anti-hate speech efforts on campus as fuel. The grievance culture that Charlie nurtured at Haverford was later whipped into a frenzy by the D.T. campaign, tilling the ground for a poisonous renewed cycle of the U.S. abduction and internment of Indigenous children at the southern border, federal bans on immigration from majority Muslim countries, the Battle of U.C. Berkeley, the murder of African American teen Larnell Bruce Jr., deadly attacks on trans women
of color, hate-filled torch marches at the University of Virginia, racist and anti-Semitic mass shootings, and the assassination of anti-racist activist Heather Heyer during the Nazi terrorist attack and white supremacist siege of Charlottesville about which the man occupying the White House infamously declared there were “fine people on both sides.”

The abstract of our trial disappeared from Haverford’s digital record for four years until it was recovered and re-released to the entire student body in 2018, stirring organized discussions and tears as a new generation grappled with a painful chapter of injustice and courage at Haverford along with lingering suspicion over the erasure of the record. Ironically, though our leadership and sacrifice were at the center of these galvanizing developments, neither I, (nor my sisters to my knowledge) were contacted by Haverford administration by way of apology or invitation. Instead, an ethnically and gender-integrated group of students took action in an effort to express their solidarity and properly center our voices.

Representative Katie Leiferman ’20 reached out to interview me and the two other women who initiated the trial. I responded with this memoir, and the groundbreaking multimedia exhibit entitled “The (Dis)Honor Code: Policing at Haverford College” was born. Underscoring the vital importance of having women of color professors at Haverford, the students’ presented the exhibit to the community as a final project for Professor Juli Grigsby’s class “Race, Crime and Sexuality.” Their interview questions introduce each section here.

An earlier draft of this memoir was printed out and displayed as part of the exhibit and quoted in the students’ accompanying short film. Considering the original abstract was lacking a true reflection of our voices yet we ran out of time and energy to write a rebuttal, I am glad to finally have that opportunity over twenty years later, though I speak only for myself.

After the success of the exhibit, the students took further action to have my writing archived in Special Collections toward the critical goal of correcting “archival silences” in Haverford’s record as identified by librarian Krista Oldham. Drew Cunningham ’20 coordinated with Ms. Oldham, and I was asked to donate the work with a Gift of Deed cosigned by Terry Snyder, Librarian of the College. After several months of emotional processing and revision, I discovered
Ms. Oldham had left Haverford with no apparent handoff. I reestablished contact with librarian Sarah Horowitz and continued to write, seeing the project to completion in Fall, 2019.

Nothing about this process has come easy. Revisiting this chapter of my life has reignited old wounds, stirring up feelings of disbelief, anger, and disgust all anew. For a year and a half, under the weight of an international Neo-Nazi uprising that delivers a bevy of horrors by the day, I have chosen to write this memoir unpaid in the hopes that my words will echo through the halls of time like the freedom songs my ancestors sang as they cast their eyes upon the North Star.

The legacy of this trial and our bold struggle for justice is far beyond me. It reaches far and wide, initiating perennial reflection, serving as curriculum at Barnard College, and inspiring generations of marginalized people and their allies to embrace their self-worth and stand up for the full recognition of human equality.

I ask that if you are moved by what you read here, you pay it forward with nonviolent acts both bold and quiet to push back the rising tide of racist terror and structural oppression, joining together in solidarity as we call forth The Beloved Community.

I am Sabrina, and this is my story.
Q: Are there particular moments from the trial that you vividly remember?

I vividly remember entering the jury room with my sister Fords for what was supposed to be the “Circumstantial” portion of the trial. After the shock and upset of being found in violation of the Honor Code for our efforts to uphold and realize the Honor Code, we were ordered to set aside our classwork once again and report to a secret room. We had been called there to honor the jury’s right to have their voices heard on the topic of our failure to make a man spouting racist hate speech feel that he was heard on the topic of why we were intellectually inferior and shouldn’t have been present at Haverford to object to racism to begin with.

We thought otherwise.

Continuing to participate in the trial was simply not an option as it would be participating in my own oppression and degradation. The jury had turned the trial into a theater of the absurd with their backwards, inside-out ruling, and we were determined to exit stage left. We had come with a simple, courageous plan to express our nonviolent defiance, to shock the conscience of the jury, and to restore some common sense to a process gone mad. If the trial had been in present times, I imagine I would have been bumping Janelle Monae’s “Django Jane” on the way… ♫

“Yeah this is my palace, champagne in my chalice. I got it all covered like a wedding band, Wondaland, so my alias is Alice.” ♫

Through the looking glass we went.

I felt clear and strong entering that room; I was in total solidarity with my sisters, and with all of my ancestors who had stood up to bullies over and over again, from my African family who survived the holocaust of generational enslavement and went on to found one of the most celebrated African American businesses in the nation, to my interethnic Pennsylvania
relatives who defied anti-miscegenation laws to live and love together and fight in the Civil War with the U.S. Colored Troops, to my Uncle Ray who drank from the “whites”-only fountain in Louisiana and integrated the local movie theater with his school age buddies. I was standing in honor of my grandparents who suffered a cross-burning for the crime of being African American business owners, and for my parents who protested the Vietnam War and smashed the boundaries of social segregation, for my Mom who set an example of not staying “in your place,” and raised me to hold my head high in all-“white” lecture rooms, theaters, schools and shops. I stood for my father who served in the military, even while his own nation subjected him to American apartheid. I stood for my Aunt Martha who I grew up hearing became a community leader against police brutality after her son was shot and killed by a “white” cop while holding an infant. I stood as the likely descendant of a “white” (there was no such thing yet) British indentured woman, who, just as the bogus concept of “race” was being invented for the purposes of division and conquest, was publicly tortured by the authorities of colonial America for giving birth to a child with her enslaved African partner, and then did it again and again and again.

They, like I, were determined to disrupt the rancid status quo. We had tried playing by the rules. Now it was time to get into some of that “good trouble” world treasure Congressman John Lewis so often encourages us to do. No, we were not facing jail or snarling dogs, water hoses meant to strip off our skin, or hordes of Klansmen armed with billy clubs designed to beat us bloody for the crime of thinking we should be treated with dignity and respect, but we were facing the possibility of life as we knew it coming to an end. ♫ “I put my life on a life line. If she the G.O.A.T. now, would anybody doubt it?” ♫

The fact is we had no idea what the repercussions could be for refusing to submit. I remember gazing out the window of my dorm room in a sober reverie knowing that I could lose all I had worked so hard to achieve for the crime of being foolish enough to imagine that my allegiance to the ideals of Haverford would be appreciated and supported. Sadly, I did not know then that the Social Honor Code itself was the product of a hard-won battle taken up years before by women and students of color. Truly, the most marginalized and demonized among us are
usually the most ardent torchbearers for a more evolved, humane, fair and decent standard of conduct, and this was no exception.

As soon as we entered the room, we faced a tight circle of stern, mostly “white” faces. We were directed to take a seat, but having previously agreed that it was in fact the jury, who in the colloquialism of 2019, needed to “take several seats,” we politely refused. ♫ “Take a seat, you were not involved. And hit the mute button. Let the vagina have a monologue.” ♫

Standing in that secret room, burning with a calm, righteous fire, we could have well been wearing the civil rights placards of old proclaiming “I am a (wo)man.” Sad that something so basic was (and still is) a necessary reminder, but that is in essence what our message was. Charlie, and potentially some of the jurors themselves, considered us lowly “Haverblacks” who the institution had bent over backwards to accommodate, handing out acceptance letters, “oppression studies” courses, and degrees like candy. It is important to note that this is a white supremacist talking point and underpinning of the “white”-male-as-societal-victim ideology that stands as the deranged base of white supremacy itself. I draw a direct line of illogic from Charlie’s indignant cries that the very presence of students of color evidenced unfair place-taking to the cries of the hellish hordes of Nazis and others who marched in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11, 2017 screaming “Jews will not replace us.”

There we stood in the sacred circle of three like The Triple Goddess Herself. Between us we were African American, Latina, and South Asian, descendant of enslaved Africans, and survivors of the same rapacious European colonists continents apart. We had just stepped off a plane to Turtle Island for the first time, and we had been here since before the United States was “America.” ♫ “A-town, made it out there. Straight out of Kansas City, yeah we made it out there. Celebrated, graduated, made it pass/fail. Sassy, classy, Kool-Aid with the kale.” ♫ We were from great wealth, and we couldn’t afford to purchase college textbooks. We were from two-parent homes, and homes led by a fierce woman warrior. ♫ “Momma was a G, she was cleanin’ hotels. Poppa was a driver, I was workin’ retail.” ♫ We were strong and slim, and rocking curves that have inspired millennia of worship. We were of a variety of spiritual backgrounds and spoke at least six languages between us. In short while we had ample differences that seem to so vex the
peace of the world, we were in that moment a gorgeously unified, perfectly prepared and exquisitely composed triumvirate of young Fords with our “melanin poppin’” and our hearts set on justice. ♫ “We gave you life, we gave you birth. We gave you God, we gave you Earth. We fem the future, don’t make it worse.” ♫

We had come to say “I am a human being, inferior to none, fully deserving of my place at the highest tables of the land and I will not stand to be assailed with demeaning epithets or watch my fellow students of color whither under the ‘white’ gaze.” We came, not just for ourselves, but because we could not stand to watch the annual flood of stress and anger and sadness unleashed by Charlie’s writings. I had heard a rumor that a student of color had been admitted to a mental hospital in part because of the pressure and tension Charlie’s inflammatory actions had created, and enough was simply enough.

I had come in fact for the same reasons Janelle Monae wrote her epic powerhouse of a song “Django Jane.”

It was a combination of things. Just feeling like as a young black woman, my very existence felt less than the people in the position of power right now, in that regime, and feeling like my rights as a woman were being trampled on. My agency was constantly trying to be taken away. Take the artist Janelle Monae out of it, the make-up, all that. When I go home, and when I’m in the grocery store, I’m looked at as a young black African-American woman. Not just me going through that, just what they say about women’s rights, what they say about us in this world, made me feel like my back was literally against the wall and like I had to come out fighting, you know?

There were a lot of times where I left the studio recording the song, I was so upset. But I knew that I needed to channel that energy, and I try my best to channel it, and I wanted to make sure the black girl magic was at the root of it. The love of black women, that they felt seen, they felt heard, and they felt like they had an anthem whenever they got down, whenever they got weary.²

I remember an older student telling me Charlie “does this every year around exam time.” Keep in mind Haverford’s exam period is a time of great rigor and stress with a student suicide inspiring the push for self-scheduled exams years before my time. During this sensitive time of year, the whipping up of historical trauma, provocation of anger and sadness, and destabilization of security could be a life or death issue. I was naively surprised that students of color hadn’t already taken care of this under the Honor Code before we arrived. Hadn’t they too signed a pledge that read:

“We cannot expect to feel at ease when confronting another student about his/her actions. But even if difficult, we must take upon ourselves individually the responsibilities stated in the Code, or be ourselves in violation of the Code because of our failure to act?”

If there was a clearer case of a student jeopardizing the Honor Code’s mandate that “Our social relationships must be based on mutual respect and concern,” I could not imagine one. The 1993-1994 Code literally spelled out a need for mindfulness in word and action lest we jeopardize “the sense of acceptance essential to an individual or group’s participation in the community.” The core of Charlie’s message was that many students of color should not have been admitted to Haverford to even step foot on campus, much less accepted and allowed to participate – a flouting of the Honor Code so precise it makes me wonder if he hadn’t set out to test and weaken that exact passage.

I would like to point out here the unfair burden placed on students of color to take the risk of objecting to racism even as we are toiling daily to shield from and heal the wounds wrought by the relentless storm of institutionalized white supremacy and cross-cutting oppressions, all the while keeping up with the renowned rigor of Haverford studies. It is very telling about my experience of “white” silence on issues of racism at Haverford that my only surprise was that students of color had not acted.

As it was later noted in Dean Randy Milden’s recommendation to overturn the finding of our violation,
There is a certain irony in the fact that a case has been brought forward because a confrontation fell short of the guidelines set out in the Code. Students in this community commit a more serious ‘violation’ of those guidelines every day by not confronting, by not making any effort whatsoever to talk to others with whom they disagree, by simply not engaging around these issues at all.  

In terms of tackling white supremacy, undoing structural racism, challenging unearned “white” advantage, and maintaining an atmosphere of respect for all, I experienced the voice of “white” students and the administration to be sorely lacking. It is my prayer that things have improved since my time at Haverford as awareness of the responsibilities of “white” people in undoing unearned advantage has risen. I must say I am much encouraged that the group of students who reached out to me for this memoir appear to be a mixed team of “white” students and students of color. I am told that in review of this historic trial, they collectively agreed that it was a miscarriage of justice, going so far as to title their project “The (Dis)honor Code.”

After the reappearance of the Charlie’s Angels abstract and its redistribution to the Haverford community, the students clearly recognized the further injustice of having the trial discussed without the voices of the women of color who initiated it, and took action to rectify this problem. Finally, they presented not just an analytical paper, but an exhibit with a physical recreation whereby the audience was drawn into the gravitas of the proceedings and the inherent imbalance of power, highlighting the David and Goliath nature of our struggle. They also produced a short film, stark, dramatic, and for me heart-wrenching in the deft capture of the cold and vicious finding of our “guilt.” They literally gave my words voice through narration by a woman I believe to be a current student of color, an inheritor of the prayers I had for successive generations to be more free.

Participants were surrounded by posters setting further context under headlines showing evidence that we were “Marginalized,” and calling out how the jury was “Protecting Whiteness” using “Dismissal” and “Double Standards.”

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3 “Dean’s Review” in 1994 abstract Charlie, Sabrina, Kelly, and Jill.
An earlier draft of this memoir was on display, and it is interesting to note the similarity in our analyses though they were undertaken separately across generations. Finally, to great emotional effect for me, with my permission, my true name was taped to one of three chairs positioned side by side, a particularly poignant act against the tide of occlusion and disappearance that too often subsumes the stories and contributions of oppressed people.

This beautiful melding of analysis, art, history, political commentary and theater is a shining example of the holistic approach that is required to disarm the many-armed monster of oppression threatening our planetary destruction. Teamwork across division, creativity, social consciousness – all these and more were on display. These students did not simply argue, conclude, and object; they did something crucial to the way forward – they called on the power of empathy. This is the life-affirming, Indigenous values-driven, left/right brain harmonizing excellence Haverford must continue to support and nurture in its work to responsibly set forth the leaders our world so desperately needs.

We are in a precarious and extremely dangerous moment in U.S. and world history not only due to the catastrophic climate change that began with the European attempt to erase Indigenous people and values around the world, but anti-democratic forces and just about every ugly “ism” you can imagine struggling to hold onto power. We are embroiled in a war on our constitutional checks and balances from the claim that the powers of the executive place a president outside the rule of law, to the pardoning of soldiers convicted of war crimes over the objection of the Pentagon, to constant attacks on the press, and the ever-flowing stream of lies about matters big and small.

In addition, there is diabolical Republican scapegoating and fear-mongering around people of color, immigrants, LGBTQIA+/Two Spirited and others, continuous shockwaves of institutionalized misogyny and rape culture, the mass incarceration of people of African, Latino/a/x, and Native/First Nations heritage, a crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous
Women and Girls, the degradation of privacy combined with the entrenchment of the Patriot Act,\(^4\) and decades of shocking legal fortification of presidential power.\(^5\)

With all these concurrent abominations taking place during a time of the yawning gap between rich and poor, the explosion of hate groups and hate crimes, and the U.S. abduction and caging of Indigenous children at the southern border in facilities described by Congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio Cortez and jailed Jewish protestors as “concentration camps,”\(^6\) the warnings about the similarity of our predicament with pre-Holocaust Germany have become so frequent that they risk a numbing effect.

Experts on the Holocaust like Yale History professor Dr. Timothy Snyder warn:

Many Americans have reacted better than the Germans did in 1933. This would include physicians, lawyers and journalists. We are still in the early stages of an authoritarian regime change. We still have an aspiring authoritarian leader. Many people have gotten to the point where I was a year ago, which is recognizing that this situation is uncertain and the outcome depends upon us. Matters are not hopeless but they are dire. The stakes are very high.”\(^7\)

When “Commander in Chief” D.T. proclaimed that there were “fine people on both sides” of the murderous Nazi and white supremacist siege of Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12, 2017, waves of shock and disgust roiled across the nation and the planet, but why? He had in fact been saying belligerently racist things for years:


“Black guys counting my money! I hate it. …I think that the guy is lazy. And it’s probably not his fault, because laziness is a trait in blacks.”8 “(Mexicans are) bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime, they’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”9 “Look at my African American over there.”10 “(Haitians) all have AIDS.”11

This is of course nothing new as racism was a founding value of the United States. Past presidents include slavers like Thomas Jefferson, leaders of Indigenous genocide like George Washington (dubbed “Town Destroyer” by the Haudenosaunee), and plainspoken racists like Ronald Reagan who was captured on tape comparing African diplomats to monkeys. Advancements have certainly been made, yet Nazis and other white supremacists (card-carrying or unwitting) have methodically worn down our defenses since post-WWII advancements. One of their favorite techniques ever since the invention of the bogus concept of separate human “races” has always been the pseudointellectualization of white supremacy. Racism cloaked in a certain brand of scientific and academic language is a formidable threat due to its insidious nature. “(Racism) is infinitely adaptable. It comes in fitted suits as well as flowing sheets, in well-appointed faculty lounges as well as smoke-filled dive bars.”12

For many “white” people, hate speech is only recognizable when it is in its crudest form. Charlie could just as well have written that:

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Niggers and other mud races are inferior to whites, lazy, and over entitled to handouts. Whites naturally deserve to dominate Haverford’s roles because we are the best. The few minorities we let into our institution should have to prove that they are masters at reflecting our superiority back to us through the standards we have designed in our own image, kept under watchful eye 100% of the time, and any course that pretends they have value, history or humanity is beneath us and a waste of our superior brainpower.

Instead he wrote:

Blacks and other minorities have no more clout at Haverford than they are given [sic] We’re talking about communities whose members present disproportionately substandard qualifications and are disproportionately represented on the financial aid rolls. Haverford owes them no dubious “favors” of the kind described above. Haverford does owe all of us a return to meritocracy, to integrationism, and to courses that will challenge our minds more than our ability to accept voughish [sic] dogma [sic]13

It is important to remember the historical context of the early 1990’s here. The 1980’s saw a move by the weakened racist terror group The Ku Klux Klan to literally cloak itself in the garments of respectability. Though pillars of “white” society had always formed the backbone of the KKK, they had fallen from the heights of mass marches in the U.S. capital and been weakened by legal battles. “Grand Dragon” David Duke cooled it with the traditional white hoods and robes, and as Chuck D of Public Enemy so aptly noted in “Rebirth,” “These days you can’t see who’s in cahoots, ‘cause now the KKK wears three-piece suits.”

While high school classmate after classmate of mine were recruited by Neo-Nazi skinheads in the early nineties, cutting striking figures with their shaved heads and steel-toed boots, 1994 saw the publishing of “The Bell Curve,” an academic return to the pseudoscience that invented the concept of race and conveniently placed “white” people at the top of an intelligence hierarchy. Author Dr. Richard Herrnstein was a Harvard psychologist and Dr. Charles Murray a political scientist degreed at Harvard and MIT. These were the type of profane

13 “Charlie’s original posting,” appendix to 1994 abstract Charlie, Sabrina, Kelly, and Jill.
and potentially radicalizing books from which Charlie quoted relentlessly instead of having a true dialogue when we came to speak with him in his dorm room, the same books whose reference the jury suggested we should have been grateful for.

From then to now, there has been a steady movement to dress Nazism up in the language of “conservative” philosophy and to obscure its proponents behind banal sounding institutions like Richard Spencer’s “National Policy Institute.” Spencer, as you may know, is the charming fellow who led torch marches on Charlottesville and his former alma mater the University of Virginia screaming “Jews will not replace us” and “No more brother wars, Russia is our friend!” just before the terrorist carnage of A12. Note that he and his cadre of white supremacists were clad not in shaved heads and steel-toed boots, but mainstream khakis and polos. “Alt-Right,” White Nationalist,” “Race Realist,” “White Lives Matter,” “Make America Great Again,” “Heritage Not Hate,” “It’s Ok to Be White,” terms like these make it trickier (largely for “white” people) to call a thing a thing, and it is more important now than perhaps ever for you dear reader, to strap on those B.S.-detecting goggles, call up your courage, and nonviolently resist the galloping fascism of our times wherever it is found—whether a comment board, a hospital, a classroom, a courtroom, or a boardroom.

In reflecting on how the American History Review had to apologize after printing a book review by Dr. Raymond Wolters, Dr. Nicole Hemmer writes about how the publication mistook his extensive academic credentials for trustworthiness.

There are some bigger lessons to draw here. First, we need to pay more attention to the institutions, organizations and publications that provide a veneer of respectability to people who promote racist pseudoscience and hold them accountable for that role. Second, at a time when universities are constantly portrayed as hotbeds of intolerant liberalism, especially in humanities and social science departments, people like Wolters remind us that such a view is ultimately a caricature, that universities often tolerate ideas that are not only deeply offensive but factually untrue.14

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The Charlie’s Angels trial vividly demonstrated that Haverford is not immune to this frightening practice. The jury actively defended Charlie’s right to be both offensive and inaccurate due to a bizarre tenet that all opinions contribute to learning and growth. ♫ “You want the world? Well, what’s it worth? Emoticons, Decepticons, and Autobots. Who twist the plot?” ♫ His use of the term “return to meritocracy” is a particularly egregious example of racist obscenity dressed up as intellectual nicety. To state the obvious, from Indigenous genocide to the onset of slavery to a constitution that exempted women and people of color from human rights protections straight through to redlining, Jim Crow, mass incarceration, ongoing environmental racism and the theft of a staggering 53% of African American wealth through the predatory lending recession of 2007,¹⁵ this nation has never been a meritocracy, and the idea that women and people of color ever had equal chances of attending college is patently absurd. Making this claim about a college that did not even admit women for over a century would be laughable if it weren’t so dangerous.

“Return to meritocracy,” much like D.T.’s campaign slogan “Make America Great Again,” is just a fancy way of saying “white” men deserve the best because they are the best. It is a vicious and debased ploy to make the deadly and torturous crimes of oppression invisible, offload accountability for structural inequality onto its survivors, and whip up “white” and male yearning for the “good ‘ole days” before the movements for Civil Rights, Women’s Rights, Gay Rights and other societal advancements. (advancements I might add that came after European colonizers brought retrenchment of tens of thousands of years of Indigenous equality traditions on this land. See the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace, an ancient democratic system of tribal representatives chosen by Clan Mothers. Benjamin Franklin and others studied in these Great Councils before the Declaration of Independence.)

It is no accident that Charlie’s language so closely mirrors the demonic dog whistle of D.T.’s campaign slogan harkening back to a mythical American utopia for “white” men. I and my young sisters were sounding the alarm on a gathering national and global threat when we

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objected to Charlie’s hate speech, and I am sad to say the community warning was suppressed and then weaponized against us by the jury using the Orwellian doublespeak of promoting “freedom.”

This obsession with facilitating and protecting racist hate speech under the guise of keeping things “fair and balanced” as Fox (Faux) News would say, is a perilous misdirection. Hate speech is inherently unfair and imbalanced because the burden of suffering it produces falls disproportionately on its intended victim. It actually stifles fair exchange because as Dean Milden’s letter argues

It is very hard to speak when you feel that someone is saying that you shouldn't have a voice. I think we need to be careful that our ideals about appropriate dialogue don't invalidate the reactions of people who are the objects of offending speech. We need to be sure that our requirements for confrontations don't aspire to a sort of discourse predicated on a level political and social playing field.¹⁶

I very much appreciate the Dean’s intention here and her solidarity with us as students of color should never be forgotten. Respectfully, I would tweak this to say It is very hard for institutionally marginalized and dominated people to speak when they feel someone is saying they don’t have a voice. In this context, we need to make certain that our ideals about appropriate dialogue center on and defer to the objections and insights of the targets of offending speech. We need to be sure that our requirements for confrontation don’t aspire to a sort of discourse predicated on the lie of a level playing field in any aspect of society.

Reflecting on the skewed power dynamics of the trial makes me even more proud and in awe of our courage as young women. ♫ “In the darkest hour, spoke truth to power.” ♫ It is also somewhat surreal to watch the tactics we were calling out as a danger to the community playing out on a national stage so many years later. During the impeachment hearings of D.T. while former ambassador Marie Yovanovitch gave her testimony, D.T. tweeted out yet another

¹⁶ “Dean’s Review” in 1994 abstract Charlie, Sabrina, Kelly, and Jill.
personal attack, an attack she described as “intimidating.” His excuse for blatant witness intimidation? “I have freedom of speech.”  

Skewed power dynamics or not, there was no discussion of giving in after the jury found us in violation. For me, it was an utter impossibility. We were shell-shocked but soon set about our planning.

When we stepped into the trial room, supposedly to hear our punishments, we were resolute, our plan executed flawlessly. I calmly read a prepared statement I had written declaring the jury’s authority “null and void” on account of its abuse, Kelly shared her disgust with the failure of a couple of jury members who shared a similar ancestry (a sharp-witted move calling them to account that I fully supported), and “Jill,” far from the minimizing characterization of her in the abstract, spoke loudest of all by physically ripping up the printed decision we had been delivered.

Our actions were pure and corrective, and absolutely perfect. And with that, we were out. ♫ “Black girl magic, y'all can’t stand it. Y'all can’t ban it.” ♫

We would be told later by a member of the administration that the jury sat in stunned silence after we left, then erupted into panic, called President “Tommy K.” out of his bed, and had Security escort them all home. ♫ “Look at that, I guarantee I got ’em quiet, look at that I guarantee they all inspired…And we gon’ start a mother------Pussy Riot.” ♫ Whether it is true or not, this image provided years of laughter at the sheer ludicrousness of it all. So not only were we too inferior to be admitted to Haverford and undeserving of basic respect once we got there, but now we were marauding ninjas hiding in the bushes to top it all off? Racism sure makes for a vivid imagination, fitting considering it is predicated on the fabricated delusion called “race” to begin with I suppose. I imagined the president being roused from sleep for a campus emergency “What is it, a riot? A blackout? An invasion of black squirrels?” “No Sir, three uppity women of

color have declined the reeducation portion of the Honor Council trial they initiated and are threatening to unleash their anti-racist “moral superiority” all over the place, come quick!”

The abstract’s claim that we promised “retribution” does not ring as accurate to me, and if it is, I know precisely that I was thinking of reaching out for press coverage or the support of civil rights organizations. “Widening the scope of conflict” when you are losing was one of the central principles emphasized in my study of Political Science at Haverford after all. The thought of physical violence had never entered my mind, and reports of the jury’s readiness to jump to that conclusion speaks volumes about the hardcore racist stereotyping at work.

We left on a high. By the time the jury was supposedly summoning security, we were back at the dorms laughing and ready to celebrate. ♫ “Let’s get caught downtown in the whirlwind. And paint the city pink, paint the city pink.” ♫ We had done what we had had set out to do and were ready to accept the consequences. We would leave worry for another day. ♫ “And tuck the pearls in, just in case the world end.” ♫

To participate in the practice of compensating women of color for unpaid intellectual and emotional labor, funds can be directed to the author’s account at paypal.me/happytodomypart. Invitations to discuss direct reparations of land, income, and opportunities may be included with contact information.
Q: Do you feel as if the Honor Council and/or the jury valued freedom of speech above your sense of acceptance on Haverford’s campus?

I do not feel the Honor Council valued freedom of speech above my sense of acceptance on Haverford’s campus; instead I feel that they intentionally and/or unconsciously valued the preservation of the racist-sexist order which dictates that the unbounded speech of one man with “white” skin privileges is always more valuable than the freedom or wellbeing of any number of women or people of color, and we were both.

As women of color we were subject to the double bind of “Intersectionality” as coined by legal scholar Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a founder of Critical Race Theory. (I thank Professor Jesse Borges for introducing me to this vital term that describes so much of my lived experience.) Living at the intersection of overlapping oppressions means that we are constantly fighting a Sisyphean battle to blossom through ever-poured layers of concrete attempting to render us invisible, and in this trial room, invisible we were. If we were men, would the jury have been so consumed with the idea of us legitimizing Charlie’s white supremacist worldview by being more vulnerable, more understanding and more pliant to his needs? If we were “white,” would the jury have assumed our intellectual defiance turned us into the ugly trope of restless natives on the warpath?

If we were perceived as “white” and male like Charlie, would we have been afforded all of the numerous benefits of the doubt given him? The abstract is replete with the jury twisting themselves into Fox “News” flavored pretzels in order to let Charlie off the hook, assume he was ignorant and meant no harm, take his account as the unvarnished truth, or uphold his right to hold and express any opinion he felt like, in any manner he felt like. Consider this commonsense-defying passage:
“Concern was raised over the implications of (Charlie’s) sentence ‘...Prove to me you're not the unqualified token I claim you are.’ The jury felt that it could not prove either way the reasons behind Charlie’s characterization of Bosley…”

This is a prime example of Gaslighting, a dangerous form of psychological abuse. Charlie could not have been more clear about his belief that students of color are inferior on the whole.

“…but agreed that Charlie left room for argument about this characterization.”

And with that, Charlie’s imperious demand that “Bosley” prove his own equality and value as a man of color is recast as an act of intellectual generosity. The absurdity is staggering.

Then there is this beauty:

The jury also debated at length Charlie’s use of the word "Haverblack." Charlie had said that this word was an abbreviation of the phrase "blacks at Haverford." He had written this word in order to save space because he’d been scrawling in the margin of another posting on the Comment Board. Though Charlie’s word choice was not sensitive or necessarily respectful, the jury felt that the implications of the word were open to interpretation.

Note the complete disregard of our inherently prevailing expertise as people of color in recognizing a racist epithet, the bending over backwards away from common sense to take Charlie at his word that he meant no harm, the privileging of Charlie’s convenience over our right to be free from degradation, and the total sidelining of the Social Honor Code principle discouraging actions that threaten the “sense of acceptance crucial to an individual or group’s participation in the community.”

At another point the jury seems to be arguing it is Charlie’s duty under the Code to be as disrespectful as he saw fit in order to express his opinions, and our duty to acclimatize ourselves to the discomfort of being disrespected. Though it appears certain jury members attempted to insert some debate, The Honor Code was repeatedly shredded in spirit and tortured in letter in

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order to avail Charlie of every possible inch of unearned advantage. I do not rule out that there were card-carrying white supremacists among the jury constantly undermining and twisting attempts to raise “concerns.” It is also possible that they were unconsciously acting out the pre-prescribed script of racism and sexism, or internalized isms in the case of women jurors and jurors of color, as blindness to your own indoctrination is a hallmark of both. In the words of Dr. Cornel West in THE MATRIX RELOADED, “Comprehension is not a requisite of cooperation.”

We were ultimately found to be in violation because of assumptions made about our behavior in a conversation that none of them were present for and the bias against our being considered believable was baked in:

“In discussing Charlie's role in the conversation in his room, and whether his actions, or lack thereof, were a violation of the Honor Code, the jury only considered as true things said in fact-finding which were agreed upon by both parties.”19

Keep in mind this was not a “he said-she said.” This was a he said-she said, and she said, and she said the same thing. The fact that the voice of one man with “white” skin privileges was explicitly defined as able to override and cancel out the voices of three individual cognitively functional women of color says it all. Is it any wonder we live in a society where often dozens of women have to come forward with allegations of sexual abuse by a prominent man before it is (maybe) taken seriously? Is it any wonder that it took so many decades of allegations of fraternity victimization and terrorization of women, people of color and LGBTQIA+/Two-Spirited students at Swarthmore before they were pressured to disband themselves in 2019?

For more evidence of the inherent discrimination against us at play, consider that after telling the jury we went in to better understand Charlie’s beliefs and not to discuss abstract theory, according to the abstract:

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“Some jurors were concerned that the women purposely told this explanation to the jury because they thought it was the "right" answer and what the jury wanted to hear.”

On what basis were all three of us suspected of being manipulative liars? – nothing but pure racism, sexism, and misogynoir dictating that women of color are inherently unethical and non-credible despite the fact that as Dean Milden pointed out, we were the ones showing an unusual level of integrity by taking on a confrontation when students every day violated the Code by neglecting to do so (and no, oppressed people should not be held to the same expectations due to the lopsided risks).

We were accused of not trying hard enough to understand Charlie or to share our pain, yet I gave numerous examples of ways in which we did the exact opposite, asking if he understood the connotations of the word “ghetto” as a gateway to a discussion about how hurtful his language was for example.

Though Charlie would sabotage every such invitation to deeper exchange and personal connection by refusing to acknowledge our feelings or answer in good faith, redirecting to someone else’s words in a racist book and speaking as if his repulsive generalities related to no actual human beings, it was us who were said to be at fault for not sharing our feelings deeply enough with him. It was even suggested we should have been happy for the references to books, as if we were the ones who could benefit from higher learning about our own inferiority. Could the jury have given us the benefit of the doubt that we were already well-versed in the theories and twisted logic of white supremacy, that it is something we learned every day by living in a system of pervasive structural racism? No, because they were too busy doing Charlie’s bidding as he plainly states that the goal of his wretched posting was to get us to “engage in introspection and self examination (sic).”

Had the jury actually been concerned with freedom of speech unto itself, they would have been dedicated to the spirit of the Social Honor Code which seeks to till a fertile bed for a garden

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of speech to flourish by discouraging hate speech, that noxious weed that naturally chokes out the real exchange of ideas and organic growth toward a more enlightened union. Instead they chose to throw their lot in with the likes of D.T. who just signed an executive order tying federal funding for colleges and universities to the protection of “free” (read racist/rightwing) speech on campus. Every day I am more in awe of how prescient our efforts were in ringing the bell on the gathering storm threatening our nation and planet.

As a case in point example of how the right uses a pseudointellectual debate over “free speech” to confuse and stifle true free speech, when he announced his intent at CPAC, the current occupant of the White House brought Hayden Williams to the stage who claims to have been punched at a university for his “conservative” views. Ironically this poster boy for “free” speech on campus is a member of Turning Point USA, a rightwing student activist training organization that as of this writing posts an ominous “Professor Watchlist,” flagging for instance a Harvard professor because he “calls D.T.’s presidency a ‘shameful stain’ that today’s universities should reject.” So much for free speech on campus.

Keep in mind that while Turning Point USA claims to be about “freedom” and “free markets,” this is the same organization whose Communications Director said that “…if Hitler just wanted to make Germany great and have things run well, okay fine…the problem is that he had dreams outside Germany.” She was also cited by the white supremacist charged with the mass murderer of fifty people in the Christchurch Mosque Shootings as “the person who has influenced me above all.”

“Freedom of speech” is an ever-debated and oft-confused concept in our society. The fact is, by the laws governing this nation we do not have total and complete freedom of speech. There are a whole host of things that are flat out illegal to say or do falling broadly under categories like Obscenity, Defamation, Incite to Violence etc.

Freedom of Speech is often talked about in absolutes, but as Professor Kent Greenfield of Boston College Law reminds us,
The way we interpret the First Amendment need not be simplistic and empty of nuance, and was not always so. The Supreme Court unanimously held over eighty years ago that ‘those words which by their very utterance inflict injury…are no essential part of any exposition of ideas.’ And in 1952 the Court upheld an Illinois statute punishing ‘false or malicious defamation of racial and religious groups.’ These rulings, while never officially reversed, have shrunk to historical trinkets. But they mark a range of the possible, where one can be a staunch defender of full-throated discourse but still recognize the difference between dialogue and vomitus.21

And when it comes to the white supremacist writings of “Charlie,” vomitus is precisely what it was.

In any event, those arguing that hate speech should be tolerated and protected at Haverford would do well to refresh themselves with the words of President Thomas Kessinger in his letter overturning the jury’s unjust finding of our violation:

We are more than a group of people who have gathered here for educational purposes. “The community” at Haverford is a group of people, however diverse, differentiated or divided, who have voluntarily pledged themselves to standards, goals and ideals embodied in the Honor Code -- standards, goals and ideals, I should add, that are higher and more ambitious than those of the so-called “real world.”

Here I would like to point out how far both Charlie and the jury went to find labyrinthine passageways around these higher standards in a way that resembles “Gaslighting,” as mentioned earlier.

Gaslighting is when an abuser denies, confounds and redirects your sense of reality and objection to mistreatment with the effect of making you begin “second guessing yourself,”

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22 “President’s Response to Appeal” in 1994 abstract Charlie, Sabrina, Kelly, and Jill.
“asking yourself ‘Am I too sensitive?’, wondering if you are “good enough,” “causing you to feel confused and even (mentally ill).”

Gaslighting is a serious personal and public health threat as it can result in self-devaluation, precisely Charlie’s stated goal. Consider this passage regarding the 1993-1994 Honor Code that stated “Our social relationships should be based on respect and mutual concern. We must consider how our words and actions may affect the sense of acceptance essential to an individual or group’s participation in the community.” From the abstract:

Charlie then addressed the women's concerns regarding his having threatened students of colors' sense of acceptance in the community. He said that he had considered how the argument in his letter had effected [sic] their sense of acceptance and said that he was trying to ask students to engage in introspection and self-examination. Charlie felt that he didn't have to affirm everyone's sense of acceptance with his every thought and action.

So, the argument here is that Charlie’s actions met the strictures of the Honor Code because he did in fact consider the impact on our sense of acceptance, it’s just that he was actively hoping that impact would be negative and lead us to understand that as people of color, we were inferior and unworthy, and categorically unable to earn “clout” aside from what we were given as tokens. Voila! – no violation here.

In fact, the abstract shows many such denials of reality, insults to our dignity, delegitimization of our story, victim-blaming, and disappearing of our right to be treated with common decency. It also cries out with the shameful lack of integrity displayed by Charlie in his lawyerly parsing of the Honor Code. The Code is not a legal document, it is a statement of ideals and principles. When we signed The Code, we were agreeing to it not just in word, but more importantly, in spirit. Becoming a member of this intentional community is optional. The more honest move for Charlie would have been to matriculate elsewhere on a campus that demanded


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no agreement to foster a climate of respect. I would like to note that part of the problem here is that the Code was not explicitly anti-oppression enough. I honor and hold great respect for the women and students of color who pushed for the Social Honor Code. It was a beautiful step forward. I am certain that the goal was to protect women, people of color and perhaps other marginalized groups from abuse, but the language uses a vague universal “we,” and does not spell out the particular responsibilities of those with unearned advantage along with the outsized risks and burdens born by everyone else.

As I learned from the “(Dis)Honor Code” exhibit, the confrontation requirement sprang from organized attempts by brave Haverford and Bryn Mawr students of 1971-1972 to whom I am eternally grateful. My concern is that more nuance is necessary considering the uneven power dynamics at play. It is my hope that this will be urgently rectified with an explicitly anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-sexist, anti-ableist, anti-homophobic, anti-classist, anti-oppression Honor Code. This would go far to mark Haverford’s place in history as a beacon for allies in the struggle against the global rising tide of Nazism, white supremacist massacres, the recent D.T. and Kirstjen Nielsen-led abduction and internment of Indigenous children, and all manner of assaults on democracy and humanity.

I might add that this rising tide would not be possible without the massive twisting of reality and Gaslighting of the sort committed by Charlie and the jury. What was done to us is now being done en masse with various techniques of outlandish double standards, audacious lying, brazen violation followed by almost comical denial, shifting narratives, fake apologies, admissions and retractions, ironic claims of “fake news!” and counterattack as defense.

In light of the fact that I am living in a time where news organizations like CNN feel the need to run public service announcements stating This is an apple and no matter how many people yell banana, it is still an apple, I have to say that rereading the abstract has been difficult, and that certain details have been downright creepy. In particular I am reflecting on the very real danger we were in of falling prey to the trap of Gaslighting. I see with my adult eyes that I was resisting this at every turn and ultimately that our refusal to proceed with the trial was a valiant and self-protective act of severing the dysfunctional relationship we were being coerced to carry
on with both Charlie and the jury. It gives me chills to read that one of the stages of Gaslighting is that you start defending yourself and working harder and harder to prove you are not what the abuser says you are, including submitting to demeaning demands. After a while you can lose the ability to see anything wrong with the relationship and succumb to depression with untold chilling consequences.

What if? What if I had not been raised to recognize and call out injustice? What if my self-esteem was more fragile or I didn’t know that I had a right to my anger and self-expression? What if I hadn’t been carrying the ancestral memory of the Picts who fought off the Roman empire, our most elite warriors running into battle naked and covered in tattoos? What if I hadn’t been the product of generations of Africans held captive, thriving through the hell of slavery to emerge as Broadway playwrights, top Black business owners, peace activists and luminaries? It pains me to imagine that had I been someone else, I could have submitted to the jury’s demeaning resolutions, acquiesced to their demands on my body, mind and spirit, and been robbed of myself in the process.

The jury’s toxic resolutions:

1) Sabrina, Kelly, and Jill will meet with the jury to discuss the jury’s reasoning behind the statements of violation and nonviolation until both parties agree that some level of understanding has been reached.

After all of the indignities we had suffered from the posting to the trial, not only were we denied justice and criminalized for objecting to racism, but now we were being ordered to sit in a chair against our will until a majority “white” body decided we understood that we deserved it? As I write these words, my heart beats faster, my stomach tightens, my jaw clenches. Real harm has been done here.

Jordan Peele’s celebrated horror masterpiece GET OUT comes to mind, particularly the scene where a “white” mother hypnotizes an African American man without his consent in order to lock his own consciousness in “The Sunken Place” within him. The mother is a critical member of a modern-day slavery ring who lures her daughter’s targeted African American “love
interests” with the mirage of inclusion and acceptance, turns their psyche against them, and delivers them to an operation that replaces their brain with the brain of a “white” person. Then and now I say no thank you.

2) Sabrina, Kelly, and Jill will write a letter to Charlie explaining why they found Charlie’s document, including specific words, phrases, and arguments offensive.

The abusive sense of entitlement to our uncompensated time, energy, labor, thoughts, emotions, actions, relationships, and personal expression is glaring here. It is also worth noting that Charlie had not demonstrated an iota of capacity to receive, empathize or learn anything from the sharing of our feelings. Here, we were being ordered into deeper vulnerability and exhaustive giving with a man who was actively trying to publicly humiliate us, rally our “white” classmates against us to possible violent ends, erase our humanity, and even turn our own psyches against ourselves. Reprehensible.

In 50 Ways People Expect Constant (Unpaid) Emotional Labor from Women and Femmes, Suzannah Weiss defines emotional labor as “the exertion of energy for the purpose of addressing people’s feelings, making people comfortable, or living up to social expectations. It’s called “emotional labor” because it ends up using – and often draining – our emotional resources.” The jury’s resolution here is case in point. Another form of unpaid emotional labor that was being demanded is the labor of educating and serving as a moral conscience for the betterment of us all (as in the case of writing this document, or all the long nights I spent explaining racism/sexism and basic U.S. history to my Haverford classmates). As Amari Gaiter aptly notes,

Entering Columbia University, I knew that I would have to partake in the Core Curriculum. I did not realize that in addition to mandatory coursework and rigorous academics, I would frequently be required to offer my existence and knowledge as learning tools, let others challenge the fabric of my humanity, and allow my peers to use my emotional vulnerabilities for the greater sake of education and awareness. I am never thanked for my emotional expenditures, but I am always left feeling as if I’ve made a slight impact on my counterparts’ thinking and worldview, and by extension made the world a slightly better place. Thus, I am left with a conflict: Do I self-sacrifice for the greater good of our
community, or prioritize my own well-being? Society chooses for me, and I am left as the instructor of an additional course titled "Free Black Emotional Labor."

Amen sister.

3) The jury asks Sabrina, Kelly, and Jill to consider submitting suggestions for ways in which the community can deal with issues of speech and diversity.

We had done precisely that in bringing the case before the Honor Council and this represents a total erasure of our arguments and immense energy already spent.

The cruel and shameful way that we were treated has gone down in history even beyond Haverford. I shudder to imagine the role Charlie and some of the jury members might be playing in upholding and advancing the sociopathic march of white supremacy today, having escaped consequence and been empowered with the sword and shield of Haverford degrees at such a pivotal age. I can only hope that they will one day see the error in their ways and seek atonement. The future of the world hangs in the balance of such courageous awakening.

In the meantime, the many ways in which we were rendered invisible in this process continues to be sickening. The four-year “disappearance” of the abstract from the Honor Council website and the subsequent redistribution to the student body without any apology or contact with us is only the latest blow in this trend. Nonetheless, something is going very right at Haverford that should be encouraged and built upon. I was delighted to see fellow Ford of color and leader for equality Dr. Daniel Dae Kim ’90 receive an honorary degree at our 2019 commencement. His crediting of Haverford for expanding his vision of the world and giving him his start in acting is particularly moving and speaks to the power and promise of our beloved alma mater. In the face of the D.T. immigration crack downs, I was likewise heartened to see the letter from President Kim Benston published January 31, 2017 announcing support for immigrants.

Haverford will uphold its principles of care, trust, and respect in supporting all members of this community. Specifically, we will not voluntarily cooperate with any federal effort to identify and extrude members of our community on the basis of their religion or country of origin.” I was proud to learn that “Haverford has
taken a lead role in bringing Pennsylvania’s college and university presidents together to lobby for the BRIDGE Act. This proposed congressional legislation would extend protections afforded by DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy of 2012.

Finally, I commend student Katie Leiferman and her group project members for seeing through the wall of invisibility to seek us out with sensitivity, endeavoring to respect our contribution and properly latch our voices to Haverford’s institutional memory. I see so much hope in the current generation of young Fords who are every day building on the lessons and treasures of the past to unify in the name of equality, safety, diversity, and accountability. I’m immensely proud to have played a small role in the nurturing of this transformation during my time at Haverford and throughout my life in the decades since.

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Q: How did you feel when you heard the jury’s decision?

When the decision was hand-delivered in our dorm, I felt utter shock, betrayal, and anger. I would like to point out here the burden of microaggressions on the health of people of color and other subjugated groups, the constant drip, drip, drip, and sometimes flood of adrenaline and cortisol needed to survive as a marginalized person. “White”-dominated, colonial-minded science is just beginning to recognize what people of color have known since the invention of race:

The consequences of psychological stress, resulting from racial discrimination, may contribute to racial health disparities in conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other age-associated diseases. This is according to analyses of data from the epidemiologic study Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span (HANDLS), conducted by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), National Institutes of Health.25

The “findings (that) identify potential cellular pathways by which racial discrimination may amplify cardiovascular and other age-related health problems”26 should inform a reframing of the debate about hate speech on campus. It is a vicious cop-out to draw a line as the jury does at brute threats and external violence, the plain fact is that racism hurts and racism kills.

(It should be noted here that the term “racial discrimination” obscures the fact that there is no biological basis for the invented concept of distinct human “races.”)


26 Ibid.
“Through the Honor Code, Haverford students enjoy a bond of trust and mutual respect that shapes all aspects of their academic and community lives.” – Haverford website

In contrast to the scourge of unceasing microaggressions, bonds of trust and mutual respect foster balance, harmony and good health. This is a perfect ideal that is in no way reflected in my experience of this trial. As women of color, we were explicitly mistrusted and disrespected, and the implications of this fact reach far beyond the walls of those secret meeting rooms.

For Haverford to protect the wellbeing of students of color and truly live up to its stated ideals, it is not just hate speech that has to be denounced and side-lined, it is all of the many ways in which Charlie’s message of “white” male superiority is shouted at people of color on Haverford’s campus from physical structures, to who is honored, to who makes decisions, to which books make it onto syllabi, etc.

As an African American girl at Haverford, I lived in a dorm that looked like a European fortress, was driven to distraction by the whiteness of Wuthering Heights, and passed painting after painting of honored “white” men as I hoped the books I couldn’t afford to buy for class hadn’t already been checked out. As I walked the halls of the Magill (Lutnick) Library puzzling over some finery of physics from the class I shared with post-baccalaureates at Bryn Mawr, contemplating how “democratization” has been used as a cover for U.S. interventions in Latin America, wondering why a book I read in medieval Spanish discussed Mary Magdalene and The Holy Grail side by side, or pondering how I might convince my English prof. to add Toni Morrison’s Beloved to the syllabus, I was often jarred out my musings to wonder as a character in Spike Lee’s DO THE RIGHT THING, “How come they ain’t got no brothas on the wall?” Much less any sistas.

One would think being so thoroughly situated in Euro-centricity would prepare me for the possibility of receiving an unjust jury decision. Alas, the blinding, yet vitally productive optimism of youth.
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Q: How did you feel about the appeal? Do you feel like the overturned decision served the justice for which you hoped?

While I am grateful for President Kessinger and Dean Milden who rightly acted to exonerate us, their reversal could not undo the damage of trust, nor give me back the months of stress and anguish, academic disruption, or ensuing years of painful memories.

Having to further defend myself and throw my future at the mercy of the administration over an Honor trial that I initiated as an act of Haverford citizenry was an added layer of damage and insult. To be clear, there was absolutely no way I would have complied with the jury’s sick demands that I sit in a room until they determined I co-signed their abuse of me with my “understanding,” nor would I have ever given Charlie any further educational gift of laying out my emotional and ancestral pain in a personal letter as commanded. After having been treated with such vicious dehumanization by both Charlie and the jury, being commanded further into the trap was a higher order of psychopathic logic I would have no parts of.

The consequences of my defiant self-respect were unknown to me. I was fearful that it would mean expulsion, and I lived with that fear hanging over my head as I went about the challenge of a demanding Haverford curriculum. I was often juggling a campus job, babysitting and volunteering. I was also dealing with the aftermath of an attempted rape and threat of murder on campus that I successfully talked my way out of and prosecuted through the court as a teenager with no offer of administrative support after my report. Yes, #MeToo.

Even in recovery I remember keeping my civic duty to attend Plenary while “white” boys made merry and threw paper airplanes around the room. This was actually one of three gendered crimes I survived at Haverford including having a gun pulled on me and a group of girlfriends by
a stranger who asked us “Who wants to die tonight?” In addition, I was the target of a pervert in the basement of the Magill (Lutnick) Library where I successfully got other girls out of harm’s way, chased after the predator, and worked to identify the man as a serial sexual harasser operating on local campuses after which it was suggested by a Security officer that I must have been repeatedly targeted because I was “so beautiful.”

Having to navigate an appeal under these circumstances was another unjust burden that never should have been. Besides the drain on my time, my studies and my emotions, I faced a kind of disquieting disappointment, not because I wasn’t proud of my actions, but because when it came to my academic reputation, I had always been an ambitious goody two-shoes, and this was not the way I envisioned the president of my alma mater learning my name.

Even though I appreciate President Kessinger siding with us in writing and meeting with us, Haverford should have done more to support us and convey institutional pride in our service. I do not recall being offered support before the all-college meeting that despite being centered on me, I played no part in organizing. I do not recall being publicly identified as what I was, an exemplar of Haverfordian commitment, an intellectual and social leader, an extraordinarily resilient and passionate young woman with an iron will to uplift the consciousness of wealthy “white” Haverford students so that they could take up their positions of power in a more responsibly qualified fashion. Thankfully, there were professors of color who filled that gap like Dr. Jesse Borges and Dr. Lucius Outlaw, but this is no substitute. My sisters and I should have received a sincere apology for our institutional mistreatment along with the overturned verdict, and our sacrifice should have earned us much more moral support, honors, and elevated opportunities. I encourage Haverford to actively seek out and promote such students of integrity and promise now and in the future.

Disadvantaged students, especially women of color, are some of Haverford’s most valuable storehouses of life experience and knowledge with the potential to have a corrective, strengthening and enlightening influence on a majority “white” student body that I found largely overprivileged, sheltered, and out of touch with reality to shocking degrees. Knowingly or not, white supremacist rhetoric was flung around liberally. A “white” male student bizarrely stated in
class that racism no longer existed because Martin Luther King had taken care of it, and it now existed “only in the minds of Black people.” A “white” female student, clearly unqualified in the History department, told me flatly she “didn’t want to hear about my one hundred years of oppression, or whatever.”

When Professor Borges asked us to consider that people with low incomes struggle to “put food on the table,” another “white” female student took exception stating that her mother also had trouble getting food to the table – sometimes her milk and cookies were late after school. Keep in mind this was the same student whose mansion was rumored to be purchased from a world icon. Another time Professor Borges had us read a hideously racist/classist sociology book, Banfield’s The Heavenly City, with gasp-inducing chapters like “Rioting Mainly for Fun and Profit.” In it Banfield argues that “the lower-class individual is too alienated to be capable of much indignation,” as opposed to upper class (largely “white”) people who hold “demonstrations” due to legitimate grievances. He says that elimination of racism and poverty would have no effect on the number of “riots” (vs. rebellions or uprisings) like Watts, and paints low income urban people (a dog whistle meaning “people of color”) as categorically prone to violence and a desire for immediate gratification – a well-worn KKK and Neo Nazi talking point.

When the professor asked the class for thoughts on the text, not one recognized the white supremacy save me, to my memory the only person of color. “White” students were so woefully unprepared to have a cogent conversation about the basic structures of our society, it got to the point where classes would begin with “As Aretha said yesterday,” and end with “As Aretha just said.”

Why do these memories send shivers up my spine? Because I know many of these students have gone on to powerful positions in society, and this kind of “white” blindness to pseudointellectual racism and comfortability with white supremacy is not just academically and morally bankrupt, it is deadly. It has left us with a society where people of color lose our lives disproportionately every day from the crisis of Black women dying in childbirth to the plagues of diabetes and heart disease due to stress and food deserts. It has left us with a society where Black women like Atatiana Jefferson are shot by police while playing video games with our nephews,
where Black women like Sandra Bland are stopped for a traffic infraction and end up hanging in a jail cell, where Black women like Malissa Williams are shot twenty four times after her car may have backfired; and it has left us with many “white” members of our society woefully ripe for a white supremacist revolution in the guise of conservative political ideology.

In “The Origins of Our Police Problem” for the Roosevelt Institute, Mike Konczal, while failing to indict racism here clearly enough, points out that

Before it was anything else, the neoconservative movement was a theory of the urban crisis. As a reaction to the urban riots of the 1960’s, it put an ideological and social-scientific veneer on a doctrine that called for overwhelming force against minor infractions—a doctrine that is still with us today, as people (of color like Michael Brown and Eric Garner) are killed for (being people of Black/African, Latino/a/x, and Native/First Nations heritage) walking down the street in Ferguson and allegedly selling cigarettes in New York. But neoconservatives also sought, rather successfully to position liberalism itself as the cause of the urban crisis, solvable only through the reassertion of order through the market and the police.27 (The same concepts operating when D.T. positioned himself as the “Law and order” candidate and appeared before a gathering of cheering police encouraging them “not to be too nice” when transporting suspects.)28

Shocking ignorance and racism were commonplace out of class as well. My mother and “Kelly” had “white” men scream “Niggers!” out the window of a passing truck while walking in Ardmore. My “white” first year roommate, selected by the college, casually warned me that she was bringing her Grandmother to visit our Barclay dorm room, and that she was so racist she probably would not even acknowledge my presence. I tidied up my side of the room and lay on the bed under my rap poster waiting to find out.


Microaggressions were all around. When I told a “white” student my friends and I were going into Philadelphia for dinner, her face drained of color and she asked if we were taking a gun. Another told me in our Senior year that she had not left the campus even once. One “white” student scuffed her shoes and wrapped them in duct tape in an effort to look poverty-chic. The same student so brazenly appropriated her vision of a woman of color, a rapper from Black Sheep stopped the music mid-concert, walked over to the edge of the stage, and told her to “Ask the Black girl.”

These cringe-worthy anecdotes bring into stark relief not just the unfair burdens faced by students of color at Haverford, but the abject absurdity of the debate over “unqualified admits,” as Charlie called Fords of color. I do not care what score you get on an SAT, if you arrive at an elite college with the kind of ignorance and disorientation I have described, you are the one who has benefitted from unfair preferencing, set-asides and exclusionary policies.

A more recent Honor trial “The Muppets” provides a case in point. Echoing my experience, “white” men were confronted by brave and commendable women of color for committing an atrocious act of blackface, making a hypersexualized costumed mockery of African American women at a Halloween party. I was dismayed, though shouldn’t have been, to discover in the abstract that these men repeatedly referred to students of color as “colored,” an offensive and ridiculously outdated term with origins in American Apartheid. This is the condition of students being graduated from Haverford into a nation wracked by a Nazi uprising that will be majority of color in our lifetimes on an increasingly multicultural planet that relies on human solidarity for our very survival as a species? It sadly appears that the pathways and channels that welcomed “Charlie” to Haverford, co-signed four years of classwork that could not possibly have escaped his racist worldview, and sent him on to another elite institution are still open and populated.

In an act of divine timing, at the time of this writing, the news has exploded with the largest college admissions fraud bust in history, an elaborate scheme whereby many students from wealthy families (inherently more likely to be “white”) have been funneled into the most prestigious colleges and universities through bribery, money laundering, and the creation of
completely fake credentials. This is of course only the tip of the iceberg of bias against people of the African, First Nations, Latina/x/o diasporas and other people of color in the admissions process from unequal school funding to SAT prep courses, to private college counseling, legacy status, and of course Euro-centric curriculum and standardized tests, all within the context of a nation that was largely designed by “white” male supremacists for the benefit of “white” males.

One particular CNN headline caught my eye: “Admissions Scandal Reveals Aristocracy Masquerading as Meritocracy.” This was of course not news to me as I was arguing the hollowness of Charlie’s call for “a return to meritocracy” decades ago. I am finally starting to see my experience reflected in the mainstream.

These low-income students—overwhelmingly students of color—arrive on elite-college campuses and are perpetually made to feel as if they don’t deserve to be there, whether it’s while cleaning a classmate’s bathroom, stocking up on nonperishable food for spring break, or overhearing an offhand comment about how their acceptance was predicated on the color of their skin, or the lower socioeconomic status of their family. Meanwhile, many wealthy students for all intents and purposes have their parents buy their way into these schools through private-school tuition, test prep, donations to colleges, and myriad other advantages. And they rarely experience the same level of skepticism as to whether they have “earned” their place.29

The irony of all is that while I was defending myself from charges that I didn’t deserve to be at Haverford, wealthy “white” male students raised by nannies were coming to me for help on their papers. In one case I recall drawing a red X through three out of five pages, so utterly unsalvageable as it was. When we were assigned two-page papers on Hamlet in first year English, I rolled my eyes, not just out of annoyance that I thought I had placed out due to my 5 in AP English, but because I had been writing these papers since middle school. I was frankly overqualified for Haverford in many ways, and ended up being asked to teach supplementary classes and give classmates quizzes of my own design. I was chosen to do paid research for a professor’s dissertation presented at Harvard, and was selected to represent the Ralph Bunche

Summer Program at the American Political Science Association’s annual conference after secretly placing out of exams.

Among the paltry African American population at Haverford (4% if memory serves with at least one dispiriting year of zero incoming African American men), there was disproportionate brilliance. The same was true for students of color as a whole. Far from being chosen at random for our skin color, we were clearly handpicked from around the world, extraordinary in a way far fewer “white” students were. There was a reason I was identified as “Gifted” with two special teachers taking me out of class and designing a program around me from the time I skipped Kindergarten and entered the school system. There was a reason a judge said that I argued more cogently in his mock court than most of the lawyers that came before him. There was a reason I won a Bausch and Lomb medal in Chemistry and a Rotary Club Award where I was feted at a country club. There was a reason I was featured in the press for founding our school’s Martin Luther King Day and again as the poster child for top students who had the pick of numerous colleges and universities. There was a reason Haverford and other colleges flew me out to visit in the hopes of winning my matriculation. There was a reason that I was an Ira D. Reid scholar at Haverford and attended with a full scholarship. There was a reason I graduated with Honors four years after I first caught sight of rowers on the Schuylkill at twilight through the window of the van carrying me to Tri-Co where I would be warned to brace myself for the gale force winds of life in the minority at Haverford. Not only was I bright and academically prepared, I brought an invaluable hardiness, spunk, determination, moral education, ancestral fire and informed worldview hard-won in my years surfing the waves of a demanding private school, swimming in the pools of royalty and billionaires, then returning to a home led by a struggling single mother of color who somehow managed to take me on epic adventures through the jungles of Mexico.

Students of color who have made it to Haverford are rare gems who are constantly asked not just to compete academically, but to muster the psychic, physical and spiritual fortitude to do so whilst fending off structural racism, intersectional sexism, xenophobia, ableism, trans and homophobia, not to mention the pressure of knowing people died and shed blood for us to even walk the campus and that so many more are languishing in poverty, Indigenous genocide, and
mass incarceration, hoping we will use our degrees to lift the boot off their necks. As First Lady (and future president?) Michelle Obama says in her record-setting autobiography *Becoming*:

This is doable, of course – minority and underprivileged students rise to the challenge all the time – but it takes energy. It takes energy to be the only black person in a lecture hall or one of a few non-white people trying out for a play or joining an intramural team. It requires effort, an extra level of confidence, to speak in those settings, and own your presence in the room. Which is why when my friends and I found one another at dinner each night, it was with some degree of relief. It’s why we stayed a long time and laughed as much as we could.

I could have written these words. While we stand beside our “white” counterparts yelling out to the dark heavens at Primal Scream, and competing in the Haverlympics as Frosh, we Fords of color are doing so with many added burdens, fears and challenges waiting for us around every corner. Whether we are wealthy immigrants faced with the shocking task of learning what it means to be treated as a minority for the first time, or First Nations students fighting through a web of colonial values and norms that are caustic to our being (I will never forget the young Native brother who left Tri Co before the first day of classes), we are warriors and superheroines, and deserve to be respected as such.

The cruelty of making it to the hallowed halls of elite schools only to have people like Charlie attempt to cut our legs out from under us, infect us with the poison of self-doubt and internalized inferiority, and wipe away our hard fought achievements with a sweep of a pen or click of the keyboard cannot be understated. We deserve compassion from all sides, the lack of which can stick with you for a lifetime. I still remember the cutting coldness of my Custom’s Person (RA) when he assailed me online after the trial and met up to basically call me a whiner who needed to stop complaining and study harder. So sure was he that I had no extenuating circumstances as a woman of color, he literally forgot that I had woken him in the dead of night to report a sexual assault.

**Make no mistake; hate speech and degradation is a violent attack, an attempted murder of our psyches and spirits that should never be tolerated, much less rubber stamped and enshrined as it was by the jury in my trial. Those of us who have made it**
through the eye of the needle onto Haverford’s campus are categorically exceptional and precious (along with so many more who are weeded out by structural inequality).

A classmate of color who spent lunch with me in the D.C. explaining how fax machines work went to a professor for help only to be rebuffed because he probably “partied too much.” After Haverford, he went on to explode the modern scientific understanding of the universe(s).

*Charlie* on the other hand, after being given an incentive to continue his destructive ways with the jury’s encouragement, has busied himself online warning the nation to listen to rightwing Europe and wake up to the evils of Islam, defending D.T. from criticism about his corrosive impact on our free press (a man who literally declared multiple mainstream news outlets “the enemy of the American people”)³⁰, ridiculing a film about police brutality because it paints African Americans as “angels,” and critiquing a writer’s creative work on the topic of historical racism with the charge that it “exterminates” depth as effectively as a “gas chamber.”

Q: When you were a student at Haverford, did you feel that the Honor Code did enough to protect students of color?

No. The Honor Code is simply not explicit enough in its protection of dominated voices. The Social Honor Code was a vital step forward by a generation of women and students of color to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude. It went far in setting out the ideal of mutual respect, but the problem is that it employs neutrality in its language that can be interpreted to presume the imaginary even playing field spoken of in Dean Milden’s letter. Again, I recommend that students adopt an explicitly Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression Honor Code, especially in honor of our Quaker roots. Considering “The Religious Society of Friends” was the first corporate body in England and North America to fully condemn slavery as both ethically and religiously wrong in all circumstances,”31 it should be spelled out that the standards of conduct at Haverford whether social or academic, make no room for the coddling of racism/sexism/classism/immigrant persecution/transphobia or any other institutionalized oppression. In fact, as an institution that proudly nurtures social consciousness, Haverford should explicitly endeavor to graduate citizens who are determined to use their privilege to undo inequality, internally and externally.

Perhaps as well it makes sense to reform trial policies so that a case on racism/misogynoir cannot be judged by a majority “white” or male jury or simply that an Honor Council cannot be seated unless there is equal representation from “people of color” and women. Finally, we must write the histories of marginalized people into the history of The Honor Code. I

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was dismayed to see that in *Honor Bound*, a 2013 article in the Haverford Magazine, the author recorded the history of The Code going back to the nineteen forties without any mention of racism or the women and people of color who fought for the Social Honor Code. The article mentions efforts to engage The Honor Code around drug prevention and women in dorms, but nothing about *Charlie, Sabrina, Jill and Kelly*, or other formative trials led by women of color. We can and must do better.

To participate in the practice of compensating women of color for unpaid intellectual and emotional labor, funds can be directed to the author’s account at paypal.me/happytodomypart. Invitations to discuss direct reparations of land, income, and opportunities may be included with contact information.
Q: How has this experience framed or affected your memories of your time at Haverford?

My time at Haverford was filled with learning, fun, work, growth, friends, parties, concerts, summer research, music, camp counseling, study abroad, conferences, romance, laughter, dancing and community service. Despite the formidable hardships, I stand in awe of the ground I covered with such firecracker energy, verve and style. I studied hard, but like Boys II Men in Motown Philly, I “Never skipped a beat, while coolin’ on South Street.” From acing oral exams before an unusually full panel of professors, to being bathed in the light of ancient stained glass in La Mesquita de Cordoba, from hearing the CEO of Time Warner presciently warn about technology’s potential to manipulate news, to Heavy D honking and waving at me in traffic, from a rock star announcing his enduring love for me on stage in Paris, to seeing my name printed under Honors at graduation, my memories of Haverford are precious and irreplaceable.

Haverford truly has a special place in my heart and I will be forever grateful to the admissions officers who recognized my value, for the friendship of my classmates, and for the support of women professors like Professor Anita Isaacs and professors of color who nurtured my talent, appointed me as a teaching assistant, paid me to do doctoral research, honored my voice, and opened doors for me later in life. I am also grateful for African American staff like Willie, the all-around fix-it man and maintenance leader who was so kind and helpful, and Georgia, the warm elder who took our dining cards. I am so proud to say that I graduated with Honors from Haverford; I hold it in high esteem as one of the most powerful and promising colleges on the planet. With this power comes great responsibility, and all of my efforts for equality on campus were helping the college meet these responsibilities while preparing me for a life of service.
The lessons and skills that I learned at Haverford helped propel me on to a career of breaking down barriers for first generation college students to enter higher education, helping Chicana/o/x children celebrate their heritage by bringing cultural arts education to the inner city and nursing a national renaissance of Dia de Los Muertos, serving as a public speaker on women’s rights, working to end sexual assault, resettling Hurricane Katrina survivors, and assisting women of color publish books and attain prestigious surgical fellowships. The honing of excellence in research, writing, analysis and persuasive writing allowed me to teach myself screenwriting and then win awards in Hollywood on my very first try for work that uplifts Indigenous knowledge and the unheralded women of color who have shaped history, lead teams of managers twice my age in anti-racist organizational development, help set up scholarships for young women of color to follow in my footsteps, and produce work that denounced hate crimes and advocated for a more just nation.

There is so much about my college experience to look back on with gratitude, however the trial itself certainly has had lifelong painful repercussions and unfairly colored my coming of age. It was a kind of robbery that affected my sense of foundation. The experience was flatly traumatic and took a few springs out of the springboard college should be. While Charlie skipped off to a prestigious grad school, it definitely contributed to my decision to retract my own graduate applications. I paid a heavy price for living up to my obligations, but I must say that recent developments have gone a far way in healing.

I have been so gratified to see the staying power of this case and how it continues to serve as a tool for learning and discussion and social change. It is immensely poignant that Haverford students who were not even born when we brought this trial forward are reaching back to find us and to build upon our work. My motivation was to clear the field for full participation of marginalized students and it is so gratifying to see events like the 2019 Black Student League Fashion Show dealing with the same themes of visibility and invisibility in such a creative and empowered way. Between this show, the re-release of our abstract, and the exhibit of “The (Dis)Honor Code” honoring our contribution to courage and equality at Haverford, the blossoming of this generation’s multidimensional brilliance gives me hope as they synthesize
scholarship, art, philosophy, history, activism, analysis, empathy and spirit, placing Haverford on the forward edge of the more humane, multicultural, empowered, luscious, and holistic world being born and leading us all one step closer to the Beloved Community. A recent message from student leader Gabriel Pascal ’21 brought my reflections on this memoir full circle:

We are so grateful for alumni like you who have done so much taxing and thankless work before our time at Haverford in order to make it the school it is today. Haverford still has a long way to go before being perfect, but the school will continue improving through consistent efforts at change, and that starts with you, so I thank you.

Taxing and thankless it was, and I sometimes wonder what more I could have accomplished had I not taken on this obligation, but as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us “The time is always right to do what is right.” (A value still lived today by Dr. King’s family who I have had the honor of spending time with.) Doing right may be costly in the moment, but thanks to this painful process I have growing appreciation for the power of the unseen ripples we create when we choose to do so selflessly.

Our trial was actually used as a point of study at Barnard College and I have met Fords decades younger than me whose eyes go wide when they learn I am Sabrina of the Charlie’s Angels fame. Most wonderfully, I have been thanked by another student of my year for helping him learn early on that he could stand up for himself. At the post-trial all-college meeting in the Quaker Meeting House, while the courage gap was clear in Charlie’s absence, it did not escape my notice that the students who stood to defend us – from the student member of the LGBTQIA+/Two-Spirited community who purposefully spoke Charlie’s real name, to Charlie’s meek roommate who wanted to say that he heard nothing disrespectful in our confrontation, to a friend who stood and identified herself as a Woman of Color for the first time – all of them were inspired to cast off their shackles of silence, claim their own voices, and activate their power in the service of truth and solidarity.

This is my legacy, and my soul’s reward.
With Love,

Aretha Williams ‘96

To participate in the practice of compensating women of color for unpaid intellectual and emotional labor, funds can be directed to the author’s account at paypal.me/happytodomypart. Invitations to discuss direct reparations of land, income, and opportunities may be included with contact information.
X. Recommendations Toward an Equitable Haverford Community

1. Establish/strengthen a respectful, socially and spiritually just relationship with the Lenape, the Indigenous people upon whose traditional lands Haverford sits.


3. Activate Haverfordian ideals and Quaker heritage by establishing an “all hands on deck” approach to the national and global white supremacist/anti-democratic crisis. Create more action-oriented courses and paid internships for credit. Fund graduates to speak/write/teach/mentor on how “white” students can translate their unearned advantage into safety and justice for people languishing in torturous detainment camps and other vulnerable groups. Offer resources for students of color and other targeted groups to strengthen their resilience and wellbeing.

4. Complete an anti-racist/anti-oppression organizational development assessment of Haverford from hiring to admissions, courses, physical grounds, artwork, finances, alumni awards, etc.

5. Commission a compensation fund for the gathering of reflections and recommendations by past and present Fords of Color in order to correct the “archival silences” as identified by Special Collections.

6. Train and require all students to intervene against hate speech targeting People of Color, Women, LGBTQIA+/Two Spirited People, Differently Abled People, Immigrants and Refugees, Economically Disadvantaged People, and other marginalized groups.

7. Educate students and professors on the tricky perils of pseudointellectualized racism in academia and beyond including its role in the current global white supremacy crisis.

8. Increase direct moral support and mentoring between administration and students of color.

9. Assign a support team for any student who reports a sexual assault to assist with planning, appointments, court appearances, moral support etc.

10. Provide low income students with computers, a separate fund for living expenses aside from the bookstore account, and travel funds for any student who needs assistance returning home on breaks regardless of distance.

11. Educate students about the fact that “race” is an illusion and that we are all one human family.

Mitakuye Oyasin, All My Relations (Lakota)