

**Senior Last Lecture**  
**Miami University**  
**Student Comments: Keep Striking**  
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Class of 2007: here we are. After years of memorizing notes, falling in, out, and again into love, spending a small fortune on bell tower smoothies, we have learned the hard way that putting on the hazards does not make us immune to parking tickets.

Waking up to realize we are unavoidably on the brink of full scale adulthood -- no time is better than the present to reflect back on the past four years and at how we, both as individuals and as a community, changed for the better.

I remember move-in weekend like it was yesterday. Excited, yet scared, my enthusiasm to finally be a college student was soon curbed by the three flights of stairs and blazing heat of late August separating my new life from a ridiculously overfilled car. After an awkward good-bye exchange with my parents, I left shortly later for convocation. With me were approximately 35 of my newest, and closest friends (although, unfortunately, at the time I could only remember the names of exactly 4 of them).

Caught up in the mechanics of my first convocation – ushering in, sitting awkwardly trying to impress my peers, and preparing to zone out as the speaker began – I vividly remember the feeling of being lost in a sea of polos, wondering if I would ever really get beyond the ‘get to know’ stage in conversation. Moments later, I was shocked to find myself on the edge of my seat as convocation was being transformed into a strike right in front of my eyes; courtesy of Ms. Barbra Ehrenreich.

In the first thirty minutes of our college careers, Ehrenreich informed us of the hundreds of thousands of working poor, struggling to make ends meet. Arguing for an increased minimum wage and reformation of the social welfare systems – she suggested that the entrapped working poor are everywhere in America, even on our own campus.

As she was just starting her final climatic statements, attempting to commence an impromptu march dramatically up Talawanda, I remember mumbling, “This was *not* what I was expecting.” Glancing around the 4000+ audience, it was obvious that all of us were struggling as to how best to respond to Ms. Ehrenreich’s comments while maintaining the inherent neutrality of our newly minted identities. Beyond just making a point and catching our attention, she was demanding our participation.

What stuck me the most about the resulting strike was a realization that inequality in institutions throughout the world was no longer safely removed from my presence, written about in a book that I could tuck under my arm and have a safe detached discussion. Rather, the issue was and is here right in front of our collective eyes begging us to learn and react.

In retrospect, I think that the strike was a symbolic foreshadowing of the experiences in store for our next four years. The years have come to prove, time and time again, that just as we felt we were in for the ride, opportunities and decisions would arise that forced us to learn, grow and react. Think about it: each of us has had several internal strikes between changing our majors, finding and following our passions, and challenging ourselves to perpetually live fuller, more complete lives.

As a community, many of us organized a strike to fight the closing of Western, and fought to insure that the tiny forest of Bishop Woods would remain as the business school expanded. Further, as a community, we observed the departure of President Garland and welcomed the arrival of President Hodge.

Strikes on the international level have been loud and we again have been responsive. We decided that the people struggling in Hurricane Katrina should not be alone, sending financial aid and challenging a government too slow in its own reactions. We as citizens are continuing to learn and respond to the men and women dieing willingly or otherwise in Iraq, and again we are gathered in an understood respect for those lives lost in the recent horrific tragedy at Virginia Tech.

Indeed, if there is one theme that has been present throughout our years here at Miami – it is that of growth through challenge and contention. By any and every stretch of imagination, our time here at Miami has forced us to step beyond ourselves and explore exactly who we are, and who we want to be as individuals, in the community, and in the world. From those very first moments as Ms. Ehrenreich walked on stage to the moment next week when we get our chance, Miami has encouraged us, to define, express, and act upon our core convictions.

My fellow classmates: my message to you is simple: *keep striking*. As you move beyond the comfortable confines of Oxford, do not allow yourself to slip into a state of ambivalence. Continue to explore your values and beliefs, get educated, and beyond all else, stand up for what you truly believe in.