feedback

Gained new perspective on prejudice at home

To the Editor:

It was about this time last year that I stepped off of a 747 onto African soil to spend a junior semester abroad in Kenya and Uganda. It was the first time in my life that I had ever been a minority. This situation was intimidating at times and I was not sure I ever really transcended it.

The differences between my culture and theirs was very real, and I found myself seeking out the company of fellow Americans. As I did this I started to understand why minorities at MIT had a tendency to stick together. It's natural human feeling to be with people who are like yourself and with whom you can truly communicate.

The problem I had with this feeling was that I could never really experience Africa until I broke my self-made bubble and ventured out into the unknown. It's really hard to break down those barriers of race, culture, and education - sometimes it is impossible. However, I found that when my efforts were sincere, a whole world of human relationships opened up to me. By limiting our interactions to only people who are like us we inhibit our ability to grow as human beings.

I remember coming back to the States and noticing a tremendous number of misconceptions and prejudices, ranging from the blatant to the very subtle. Recently, an inter racial couple who are good friends of mine were walking down Massachusetts Avenue when a car pulled up and hurled slurs at them. Obviously, most prejudices are not this overt, but shortly thereafter I remember having an extremely heated discussion with a friend about whether racism was a problem in the United States. I couldn't believe someone could insist that prejudice was not a problem when he had never talked to a person of color.

All of us at MIT have unlimited opportunities to learn what other people are all about, yet most of us rarely do. By not doing so, we are hindering ourselves from becoming loving human beings. I guess the problem is that remaining the way we are is very easy while changing ourselves always takes effort and is often very uncomfortable. To solve the problem of prejudice requires a fundamental change in our attitudes towards other human beings and a ceaseless effort by everyone. If this solution could be attained, I think most of our other problems would also be solved.

How much prejudice is there at MIT? I would be interested in finding out what other people felt about this issue.

Roy Steiner '85

The art final was a 6-foot painting. Your friends helped you pass with flying colors.

A deftly hurled splash of magenta blended surrealistically with a cascade of vermilion, occasional suggestions of orange and cobalt. What do you have? What else: "The Birth of the Universe." It's the painting that completed your art final and, frankly, you couldn't have done it by yourself. Afterwards, it's time for a little down-to-earth gratitude. You owe them at least a few Löwenbräu, not to mention the laundry bill.

Löwenbräu.Here's to good friends.