

GREG
HALPERN
LEARNS
HOW
THE OTHER
HALF
LIVES AT
HARVARD.
BY
RUSSELL
HART



© GREG HALPERN/COURTESY QUANTUCK LANE PRESS

"Yanick Dunwell, Server, Private Catering Service," from Halpern's book *Harvard Works Because We Do*.

MEANS OF SUPPORT

No college or university could provide for its students without the day-in, day-out help of its nonacademic employees—custodians, cooks, gardeners, and guards. Yet these workers are often invisible and almost always underpaid. Their lack of reward and recognition is particularly distressing given the healthy endowments and high tuition of many schools. Fortunately, Harvard graduate Greg Halpern, now earning his MFA in photography at the California College of the Arts, tells their tales—and, through his sensitive black-and-white images, gives them a human face—in *Harvard Works Because We Do* (Quantuck Lane, \$30).

Halpern began talking with his subjects in his last year at Harvard, then continued for several years after his 1999 graduation. "The interviewing process made me a student all over again," he says, "and working on this book became a three-year extension of my education." The project coincided with the Living Wage Campaign, a student-led effort to improve earnings and benefits for Harvard's blue-collar workers. Halpern's materials were actually used to promote the cause, which culminated in a 2001 sit-in that led Harvard to reverse its decision to outsource service jobs and thereby lower its employees' hourly wages—this despite an endowment that earns it five million dollars a day. Halpern, who was one of the sitters-in, actually reproduces the university's 1999 IRS tax-exempt return at the beginning of the book, with its stunning \$22,652,903,404 bottom line.

The administration of Harvard had not given much thought to those who guarded the doors, changed the lightbulbs, made the beds, and mopped the floors of halls bearing Brahmin names," writes Studs Terkel in the book's foreword. Nor had the students or faculty, says Halpern in his introduction. "They work in every room of every building, day and night, and yet one of their frequent complaints is that the nation's most perceptive students and scholars simply do not see them," he writes.

"I do remember a long night, at four in the morning, when Carol-Ann, the cleaning lady, came in early to get her work done so that she could get back home to take her kids to school," says Halpern, who at the time was malingering in the all-male Phoenix social club. "I remember seeing someone in the club lifting his legs momentarily from the table while Carol-Ann wiped beneath them. The next morning I bought a tape recorder."

"The work itself sucks, all right?" says Carol-Ann in her interview with Halpern. "It's very tiring, and it's hard work, especially if one of the kids pukes. The kids drink, and they puke, and it dries on the walls and that's kind of gross. But you just clean it up, you hold your nose and you think to yourself, 'I got three kids, I love my kids, I love my kids. I want the kids to be happy. The kids are going get to college! And they're going get pregnant by someone with a degree and a job, not like their mother!'" ■

Win a copy of *Harvard Works Because We Do*

Greg Halpern's muckraking study of Harvard's blue-collar underclass carries on in the photographic tradition of Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, and Walker Evans. To win a copy, send a postcard with your name, address, phone, and school affiliation to *American Photo On Campus*, 1633 Broadway, 43rd floor, New York, NY 10019. Write "Harvard book" on your card. The deadline is November 30.

Here are the results of last spring's book giveaways. Dennis Doran of California State University at Long Beach wins a copy of Joe Szabo's *Teenage* (Grey-bull Press/D.A.P.). Uraline-Septembre Hager of New York City's Hunter College wins a copy of Alice Attie's *Harlem on the Verge* (Quantuck Lane Press). B. Calvin Coloma of Santa Monica College wins a copy of Brian Finke's *2-4-6-8: American Cheerleaders and Football Players* (Umbrage Editions). And Maria Malo-Molina of Ringling School of Art and Design wins a copy of Stephen Green-Armytage's *Extraordinary Pigeons* (Harry N. Abrams). Congratulations to all!

Harvard Works Because We Do

