There is something very wrong with the system

of values in a society that has only derogatory terms

like nerd and geek for the intellectually curious and

academically serious.

*5* A geek, according to *Webster’s New World*

*Dictionary*, is a street performer who shocks the

public by biting off heads of live chickens. It is a

telling fact about our language and our culture that

someone dedicated to pursuit of knowledge is

*10* compared to a freak biting the head off a live chicken.

Even at a prestigious academic institution like

Harvard, anti-intellectualism is rampant: Many

students are ashamed to admit, even to their friends,

how much they study. Although most students try

*15* to keep up their grades, there is a minority of

undergraduates for whom pursuing knowledge is

the top priority during their years at Harvard. Nerds

are ostracized while athletes are idolized.

The same thing happens in U.S. elementary and

*20* high schools. Children who prefer to read books

rather than play football, prefer to build model

airplanes rather than get wasted at parties with their

classmates, become social outcasts. Ostracized for

their intelligence and refusal to conform to society’s

*25* anti-intellectual values, many are deprived of a

chance to learn adequate social skills and acquire

good communication tools.

Enough is enough.

Nerds and geeks must stop being ashamed of

*30* who they are. It is high time to face the persecutors

who haunt the bright kid with thick glasses from

kindergarten to the grave. For America’s sake,

the anti-intellectual values that pervade our society

must be fought.

*35* There are very few countries in the world where

anti-intellectualism runs as high in popular culture as

it does in the U.S. In most industrialized nations, not

least of all our economic rivals in East Asia, a kid

who studies hard is lauded and held up as an example

*40* to other students.

In many parts of the world, university

professorships are the most prestigious and materially

rewarding positions. But not in America, where

average professional ballplayers are much more

*45* respected and better paid than faculty members

of the best universities.

How can a country where typical parents are

ashamed of their daughter studying mathematics

instead of going dancing, or of their son reading

*50* Weber\* while his friends play baseball, be expected to

compete in the technology race with Japan or remain

a leading political and cultural force in Europe?

How long can America remain a world-class power

if we constantly emphasize social skills and physical

*55* prowess over academic achievement and intellectual

ability?

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\* Maximilian Weber (1864 –1920), German political economist and

sociologist