

April 21, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

The first time I spoke to Karith over the phone, I was amazed by her charisma, sincerity, and general good nature. When I met her for the first time one year later, I continued to be in awe of Karith. She is the living embodiment of her message, “Be You. Be Limitless,” and hearing Karith speak for even a moment empowers you to follow that mantra.

My name is Alexis Mealey, and I am an undergraduate at Harvard University, where I serve as the President of the Harvard College Open Campus Initiative (HCOCI). The HCOCI is designed to support the free exchange of ideas on Harvard’s campus and beyond, with the intent of broadening academic perspectives on the basis of shared empathy. We are free speech advocates who believe that open communication brings people together, rather than dividing them.

On April 17, 2019, we hosted Karith and fellow comedian Nimesh Patel for “Laugh It Off: An Evening of Comedy,” an event celebrating the power of free expression and humor to create common ground among a diverse group of people. Before the event even began, I was astounded by Karith’s flexibility. Even though she came to our event just one day after a conference in Washington D.C., she arrived with a smile on her face, ready to give the performance her all. Through logistical problems on our organization’s end, Karith remained calm and gracious beyond expectations.

The Open Campus Initiative has faced resistance in the past. In an effort to broaden academic discourse, we have invited several controversial speakers prior to this event, which has been faced with some protest. This was not the case when Karith came to campus. From the moment she began her presentation, the atmosphere in the room shifted to one of openness, rather than tension. We invited Karith to our campus to perform stand-up comedy; I did not know that comedy could be so powerful until I heard Karith speak.

Karith is *hilarious*. She kept the audience laughing with every single line, and I left her performance with a sore face. We had several student stand up comedians in the audience who approached me after the event, thanking me for inviting Karith and praising her ability to engage with her audience. The room held onto her every word, and we were never disappointed.

Outside of her sheer comedic talent, Karith found a way to captivate us all with even serious material. The event was held on a Wednesday night, just two weeks before final exams were set to begin. Students in the audience were not in the mood to hear serious content, and yet Karith somehow made it fun, made us *want* to listen to what she had to say. She tackled issues like free

expression, race, and body image, all while keeping the audience engaged and relaxed. Her performance exceeded the highest of expectations, and even after her set was over, Karith was omnipresent in the room. She even took on my job of introducing several student stand-up comics who had been invited to perform at the event. For many of these students, it was their first time performing in front of a live audience. Karith took it upon herself to not only introduce these students with no advance notice, but to also praise them for their performances on the microphone after they had completed them. This encouragement was not at all required of her, but it was indescribably meaningful to these student comics.

That line sums up the essence of Karith Foster. She is a woman who *always* does more than what is required of her, regardless of the effort it takes on her part to do so. Karith has a gift for making people feel safe, comfortable, and relaxed that she puts to work at every single moment. In every conversation you have with Karith, you can feel that she believes in her mission, and it makes you want to believe in it as well. I left Karith's presentation with goosebumps, and her message has remained with me and will continue to do so. She has inspired me to reconsider the approach I take to leadership, and I have even gone so far as to recommend her to the Harvard Office of Student Engagement as a speaker for our annual first-year orientation. I would recommend Karith to *any* organization, university, or corporation seeking to revolutionize both individual perspectives and company culture.

Please reach out to me if you would like additional information.

Best Regards,

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