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Front Matter

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OUT OF SIGHT
COLLEGE THROUGH THE EYES OF A BLIND STUDENT

WHAT THE HELL TO DO IN IOWA | INSIDE THE LIVES OF LOCAL WITCHES
TAKING IN CASH BY TAKING OFF CLOTHES | CAMPUSTOWN'S BEAD DEALER
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You know what they say about people who assume: they suppose something to be the case, without proof. That’s what they say, right?

Despite generally-accepted conventional wisdom to the contrary, making assumptions and “judging a book by its cover” isn’t always a bad thing. Making and acting on assumptions is part of human nature that can save us time and keep us safe. Notice someone’s never in class? You might not want to pick them as a project partner. See mold on your bread? You throw it out (well, you should). You may have even picked up this magazine because you “judged it by its cover” — or approached this page with hesitation after seeing my photo.

But when it comes to people, the overused “cover” aphorism holds true. We often get caught up in judging people based on a single aspect of their identity, printing our own homemade cover and shoddily slapping it on them, not bothering to find out what they’re really about.

It’s not hard to fix this. All it takes is getting to know people as individuals—not as the identity that you project on them. Doing this will broaden your worldview and allow you to meet a lot of interesting, cool people. You’ll start to realize that certain groups of people aren’t as scary or unapproachable as you thought.

Taking the time to get to know people as individuals will shatter any ill-informed stereotypes you have. Not all “stoners” are slackers. In fact, many are productive, hard-working students. Blindness doesn’t prevent people from attending and succeeding in college. Wiccans are only another peaceful religious group—they just cast a few more spells than those we’re more familiar with. For some women, a part-time job getting partially naked can be an empowering way to help pay for school.

I fear that saying this too much will somehow make me become Oprah, but it’s true—everyone has a unique and personalized story. It may be interesting, boring, sad, inspiring or heart-warming, but the story is there, and it matters. We hope that after reading this issue, you’ll see how this applies to our lives right here at Iowa State.

It’s never a bad thing to break out of our comfort zones, to meet diverse people with different ideas, experiences and interests. We can learn more about them, and in turn, more about ourselves. I think that this issue of Ethos is a good start in that direction. We tried to give people a voice to explain who they are as individuals, and how they’re more than the stereotypes that we seem to hear louder and more often.

If you’re reading this page, you’re already on your way to looking past the cover and finding things out for yourself. Remember what happens when you assume—you confine people to narrow, limiting boxes based on only a small facet of their identity.

Or something like that. 😊