

Coalition for a Diverse Harvard

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Candidate for Elected Director

- 1. How important should diversity, equity and inclusion be at Harvard and what strategies should the University pursue to address these. If you can, please discuss specific programs and policies (e.g., Ethnic Studies, faculty hiring, tenure and advancement, Harvard's pledge in its 1650 Charter to actively facilitate the education of American Indian youth, Harvard's legacy of slavery; environmental justice.)**

Through a continued commitment to diversity, Harvard has the potential to democratize education and act as an engine for social mobility, providing future leaders with the experiences, relationships, and perspectives needed to create a more just society. Therefore, attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion must be fundamental to the Harvard enterprise.

When I stepped into Harvard Yard in 1992, I was amazed by how diverse my class was – that Harvard was so deliberate not only in scouring the country and the globe to bring students from nearly every state in the U.S. and from so many parts of the world, but also in creating a student body that represented different values, interests, and beliefs. I remember going to the extra-curricular fair and telling my mother how impressed I was that there was an LGBT table (then affectionately referred to as “BaGLS”!) among clubs for nearly every identity, affiliation and interest area– and if there wasn't one, it could be created. The diversity of the college–both in backgrounds and perspectives – fundamentally and positively impacted my campus experience and my outlook on the power of a diverse world view and the value of a liberal arts education. It was, I believed, what set Harvard apart.

Today, diversity has become far more of a touchstone, though it is often fraught, misunderstood, overused, and even weaponized. That Harvard then and now aspires to reflect the ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, gender, and cultural diversity of our country is critically important, and a statement that the university acts in alignment with its values.

Harvard has aspired to be a leader and a steadfast defender of diversity and must continue its leadership in several ways:

- **Faculty hiring and tenure decisions:** Harvard has made notable progress in increasing the diversity of its faculty and should continue recruiting and investing in educators from diverse backgrounds, not only to build a strong pipeline but also to ensure that these faculty members are *retained* and given tenure opportunities. This is especially true for the graduate schools where representation is more uneven and for Native American representation, where the University has not lived up to its 1650 pledge.
- **Admissions /student body:** Diversity begins with the students that Harvard admits and is realized through generous financial aid and non-financial student support services. The Supreme Court challenge against affirmative action threatens the character of campus life and I am proud that Harvard continues to defend with vigor the admissions policies that seek

to create a diverse campus community. Harvard must do more to reach out to, and prepare, under-represented students (ethnic minorities, low-income, first-generation, LGBTQ) in applying to and accessing the financial resources to attend Harvard as well as training interviewers to be more conscious of inherent biases.

- **Curriculum and scholarship:** The content of Harvard's curriculum should also expose students to diverse views and histories to encourage knowledge, empathy, and open-mindedness. That includes promoting scholarship on ethnic studies and hiring the diverse faculty needed to strengthen the core curriculum in this area.

On June 6, 1996, my graduation and birthday, I watched Walter Annenberg, the publisher and statesman, stand side-by-side with Oseola McCarty, a laundress, to receive their honorary doctorate degrees. Both were celebrated as philanthropists, each in their own right, with President Neil Rudenstine giving the epitaph: "the Lord loves a cheerful giver." Together with Chinua Achebe, Maya Lin, and many other honorees, the representation on stage was also a celebration of diversity in the best sense.

I will not forget that day or the image of artists, leaders, thinkers, scientists, and philanthropists from many different backgrounds being recognized, as I felt enormous pride not only because I was graduating among the Class of 1996, but pride for what this university represents.

And it is why working for a better Harvard is so important to me.

2. Please state your views on affirmative action and race-conscious admissions

Again, diversity begins with the students that Harvard admits. As I noted above, my own college and law school experiences were meaningfully enriched by learning from, and understanding my peers, across differences – from life experiences and beliefs to ethnic and racial backgrounds.

The freedom and flexibility to employ holistic admissions practices, including deliberate consideration of under-representation across race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background, is critical to ensuring a vibrant student body at Harvard. I cannot be more in agreement with former President Bacow, on why this matters:

"Our admissions process, in which race is considered as one factor among many, makes us stronger. It prompts learning in day-to-day exchanges in our classrooms and laboratories, in our residential houses, and on our playing fields and stages. Our students understand these truths and see them reflected in their interactions with their classmates. Diversity opens our eyes to the promise of a better future."

3. What do you think Harvard's role should be in creating a more equitable, inclusive, and just society?

Higher education isn't simply about the scholarship and academics offered to students, but also represents social mobility and democratized access to knowledge. Harvard, as one of the standard-bearers of higher education, has a more visible role and an even greater moral responsibility to lead by example.

A commitment to equity and inclusivity reflects the belief that universities play a vital role in shaping society and future leaders. It is why providing a learning environment that exposes students to a variety of experiences, backgrounds, interests and ideas - better prepares graduates "to live and serve in a pluralistic world." (President Drew Faust)

4. What steps have you taken to bring diversity and inclusion to Harvard, to your workplace, and/or to an organization that you have been involved with. Are you a member of any of the signing organizations below?

My commitment to diversity and inclusion at Harvard, in my workplace, and with the organizations I serve have taken on various forms:

- **Making education and educational experiences accessible to more students at Harvard.**

As a Vice Chair of the gift committee for my reunions, I valued expanding Harvard's financial aid program and resources for the curriculum. I have been proud to see Harvard develop its need-blind admissions policies and provide more scholarships and financial assistance to college students, recognizing that education should be accessible to exceptional students regardless of socioeconomic status. In 2017, I endowed a traveling research fellowship for undergraduates to enable students to pursue deeper academic inquiry through field research. I've also taken tremendous pleasure in serving as an alumni interviewer for Harvard College and supporting the applications particularly of promising young students who have overcome real hardship in their family circumstances to excel and strive for a better future through education.

- **Supporting diverse artists and stories as a trustee of Second Stage Theater and the Museum of Arts and Design for over a decade.**

Art and theater that opens a conversation and tells the stories of our collective identity is more vital than ever. The cultural institutions I have served on as a Trustee for over a decade have made seeing America through the eyes of artists from backgrounds as diverse as our country, and insisting on the humanity of all people, their fundamental mission. I have supported and advocated for Second Stage Theater and the Museum of Arts and Design because these institutions are committed to DEI in both the artists we support and the stories they tell. Since its founding, Second Stage Theater has been devoted to elevating American voices from every part of this country – voices that have struggled to be seen and heard. In its four decades, *two-thirds* of our plays have been written by women or people of color. The Museum of Arts and Design has similarly created exhibitions that have addressed issues of race and diversity head-on – exhibits such as *Unpacking The Green Book: Travel and Segregation in Jim Crow America* and recently, *Queer Maximalism* which explores the aesthetic language of liberation.

- **Advancing women's financial access and equality.**

One of my proudest professional achievements has been conceiving and launching the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index in 2016, which created a new global benchmark for issuers and investors to measure and hold companies accountable for the policies, practices and products that demonstrate equitable standards in their business. It also prompted a broader media platform focused on issues of Equality. I have also been proud to serve as a director for Women's World Banking, the largest global microfinance network dedicated to providing financial tools and resources to women in developing countries.

- **Promoting human rights awareness and accountability for corporations.**

I joined the NYU Stern Center for Business & Human Rights Advisory Council almost ten years ago to help advance transparency in data and reporting to create sustainable and ethical business practices for global enterprises.

With respect to the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard, I am a member of the Harvard Asian American Alumni Alliance and look forward to engaging more closely with the organization should I have the privilege to serve as an elected director of the HAA.

5. If elected, would you be willing to meet occasionally with the leaders and/or memberships of the groups below during your tenure?

Yes, not only would I welcome the opportunity to meet with leaders and members of the groups that represent Harvard's diverse community, but it would be invaluable to start my tenure by hearing about the priorities, challenges and opportunities these individual organizations are focused on to better serve the interests of our broader alumni community and lift up all marginalized groups.

HAA Priorities & Diversity

One of the key issues I would like the HAA board to focus on is how Harvard will continue to be thoughtful about and evolve the way the university constructs culture and how that is reflected in the alumni community across the globe. That means recognizing that diversity in ethnicity and gender is important, and that there's also a level of diversity that goes beneath what we see, such as: Where did you grow up? What was your socioeconomic circumstance? What did you study? What are your passions? What work experiences have you had? And how do these allow you to have a unique perspective that is different from others in the class? When woven together, racial, ethnic, cognitive, political, religious, professional, and philosophical diversity creates a rich fabric that promotes better and more informed citizenship among our alums. It can also address specific goals that are important to me:

1. Bringing less engaged alumni back to connecting with each other and Harvard through more diverse programming
2. Extending the opportunities of Harvard affiliation more into the lives of diverse alumni
3. Connecting alumni across various schools--undergrad and grad--and finding cross-school opportunities for engagement