

**Questionnaire for Harvard Elected Director Candidates
Theodora Skeadas**

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).

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and access are all critically important and should be prioritized throughout Harvard's processes and institutions.

Strategies include:

- Expand Harvard's Ethnic Studies offerings (currently consisting in the [Committee on Ethnicity, Migration, Rights](#) (EMR) and the [Ethnic Studies field within the History and Literature concentration](#)), by hiring a critical mass of tenure-track faculty who specialize in related studies.
- Establish a University-wide center on the study of race and ethnicity.
- Increase the racial and gender diversity of new faculty hires across Harvard.
 - The American Association of University Women (AAUW) [finds](#), "Only 5.2% of tenured faculty at bachelor-degree granting schools in the U.S. are Black, and just 6.6% are Latinx."
- Hire more Black studies faculty and create more courses in this discipline.
- Improve access to these increased resources for students from different schools across the University.
- Improve credit policies across the University, such that students can engage in such interdisciplinary scholarship while earning credits toward their degrees.
- Renew Harvard's commitment to the 1650 Charter to educate American Indian youth, and expand support systems for Indigenous students on campus.
- Increase financial aid commitments through more abundant and affordable housing for graduate school students and childcare.
- Invest in culturally contextualized mental health services, particularly for students from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Create pathways for students to access networks and alumni resources, as students who come to Harvard from less well-networked backgrounds often do not know what resources are available to them.
- Foster efforts to increase socio-economic diversity. Specifically, more people from low-income families globally should be able to access the University.
- Increase Harvard's diversity of thought. Celebrate ideologically diverse views, especially when it comes to capitalism and other systems which Harvard has historically prioritized.
- Preserve inclusive admissions at Harvard, as the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard has [highlighted](#).

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

I will work to expand and improve affirmative action and inclusive, race-conscious admissions. These policies help redress hundreds of years of race-based educational and economic inequality. They create pathways to leadership for underrepresented minorities. They also recognize the reality that we do not all start from the same place, and that bias and systemic structures do create disproportionate barriers for some over others.

Further, a more diverse study body enhances the learning of all students.

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

Harvard has incredible power, and therefore a real responsibility to create a more equitable, inclusive, accessible, and just society. Harvard needs to play a central role in conversations and substantive efforts to advance this society.

I have maintained connections to Harvard since stepping on campus in 2008, and during this time, I have seen how Harvard's actions and decisions have global impact. The release of the [2022 Report of the Committee on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery](#), and Harvard's subsequent decisions to accept the committee's full recommendations and make a commitment of \$100 million to fund their implementation, offer a global model of what institutions of higher education can do to advance the process of reckoning and repair. Harvard's recent [decision to divest](#) from fossil fuels, the result of years of activism and pressure, has elevated the importance of substantiating climate commitments in the global conversation. And Harvard affiliates have worked to increase equitable responses to the pandemic in recent years, with global ramifications. Last, the [Coalition for a Diverse Harvard](#) itself has [fought for](#) diversity, equity, inclusion, and racial justice at the University and in higher education at large.

Ultimately, the harms of an inequitable society, where gaps are currently widening, impacts all of us. We need the Harvard community to generate and implement solutions to these complex problems. I am working to be part of this solution.

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?

I have worked to bring diversity and inclusion to Harvard, to my workplace, and to other organizations that I have been involved with. These efforts include:

With Harvard-affiliated organizations:

- At [Harvard W3D: Women in Defense, Diplomacy, and Development](#), where I serve as Board President, we introduced [two Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Board Co-Chairs](#), to advance diversity in our [programming](#), partnerships, and Board representation.

- At [HKS New England Alumni Association](#), where I serve as Board President, we have worked to build out a more diverse [Board of Directors](#) and [programming](#) by identifying gaps and prioritizing Board members, speakers, and themes that reflect a broader range of voices and issues.
- Since 2019, I have led three Harvard alumni groups ([Harvard W3D: Women in Defense, Diplomacy, and Development](#), [HKS New England Alumni Association](#), and [HKS Women's Network](#)) to serve as co-hosts of multiple discussions on race. Through my advocacy, we partner with Jenny Korn, a member of the Harvard Asian American Alumni Alliance, in biweekly, intersectional [conversations](#) focused on race and related themes, including food, self-identity, geography, belonging, health, socialization, higher education, relationships, AI and technology, immigration, and corporate leadership.

At my workplace:

- At Twitter, I prioritized diversity and inclusion in my work. This includes:
 - I helped build and lead a trusted partners program to provide trauma-informed support to diverse global stakeholders, including journalists and human rights defenders. In this work, I partnered with frontline crisis responders and advocacy nonprofits like [Access Now](#), [Frontline Defenders](#), [Article19](#), [GLAAD](#), and the [Anti-Defamation League](#). Ultimately, in this program, we fielded thousands of incoming escalations, and combated issues including platform manipulation, disinformation, impersonation, fraud, hateful, abusive, and violent behavior, and child sexual abuse material.
 - I managed our [Trust and Safety Council](#), Twitter's largest public consultative body, to incorporate the perspectives from diverse expert nonprofits globally into our product and policy development.
 - I led a monthly research newsletter that highlighted issues including online gender-based violence and hate speech.
 - I supported the development of [Twitter's Content Governance Initiative](#), a framework comprising guiding principles and standardized guidelines on policy development, enforcement, and appeals.
 - I wrote talking points for the public policy team on issues like [safety by design](#), which puts user safety and rights at the center of the design and development of online products and services.
 - I supported the [Twitter Moderation Research Consortium](#), which shares takedown data on state-backed information operations with researchers, so that we can better combat coordinated inauthentic behavior and influence operations campaigns, including those that work to [foment ethnic violence](#) and undermine diverse [civil society](#) and [democracies](#).
 - I supported global consultations on issues including gender-based violence and human rights impact assessments.
- At [Cambridge Local First](#), a nonprofit where I serve as Executive Director, a commitment to inclusion and equity is integral to my work. I consistently advocate for more equitable access to opportunity for all members of our community, including BIPOC and immigrants, LGBTQIA+ members, and women. This includes:

- I co-founded the [Cambridge-Somerville Black Business Network](#) to promote Black-owned businesses in Cambridge and Somerville.
- We recently received an [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) grant](#) to pilot a BIPOC business accelerator.
- I supported a partnership between Cambridge Local First and local activists to enable [Residential Kitchen Retail Sale permits](#) allowing people to prepare safe foods (such as baked goods, confectioneries, and jams and jellies) in their home kitchen for direct sale to the public; these permits create new pathways for economic mobility for immigrant communities in Cambridge.
- At the direction of the Cambridge Community Development Department, and through Cambridge Local First, I coordinated the [2021 Cambridge Business Diversity Directory](#), a listing of small businesses owned by women or minorities including people of color, LGBTQ+ owners, veterans, and persons with disabilities, so that customers can identify and support them more readily.

With other organizations:

- As the [Board Chair](#) of the [YWCA Cambridge](#), a nonprofit focused on anti-racism and women's empowerment, I oversaw funding for [programs](#) to improve housing security for women and combat racism in the housing market, and I expanded the capacity of our Advocacy and Social Justice Committee to advance the organization's [advocacy agenda](#).

While I am not a member of the signing organizations below, I enthusiastically support their work and hope to partner with them while on the Board and beyond.

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

Yes, absolutely. If elected, I would be honored to meet regularly with the leaders and memberships of the groups below during my tenure.

My commitment to this work is personal and deeply rooted in my lived experiences.

I have worked with refugees in the [West Bank](#), [Morocco](#), [Turkey](#), and Iraq. I have worked in conflict resolution, community development, economic empowerment, education, and digital safety efforts across Central America, the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe.

Further, personal life has bolstered my commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. My life partner identifies as Arab, African, Muslim, and an immigrant. My sister identifies as queer, and her partner as trans non-binary. We also have immediate family members who are deeply conservative and Orthodox Christian, creating quite the dynamic mix.

Ultimately, my own context and life has shaped me tremendously and encouraged my numerous efforts to advance diversity, equity and inclusion both at Harvard and beyond.