

Fiona Hill

Overseer Q&A

**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).**

One of the most important dimensions of Harvard's mission is the education of diverse, enlightened, and effective leaders for all segments of society and all levels of government. Good public policy—as well as scientific breakthroughs and the expansion of knowledge--depends on bringing people with diverse perspectives to the table to thrash out ideas. Universities like Harvard need to encourage critical thinking not just the mastery of facts, and this, of course, implies that the University must recruit and admit academically able individuals from all conceivable backgrounds. Race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, geographic origin, and socio-economic circumstances should all be factors for consideration along with academic record and scholarly potential. Harvard's faculty and its academic curricula must similarly reflect and actively promote these factors. The University has an historic duty both to educate Native Americans and to implement swiftly the seven recommendations contained in the recent report of the special Presidential Committee, "The Legacy of Slavery at Harvard."

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

Although my personal experience is one of socio-economic class and geographic discrimination and exclusion in the United Kingdom, as well as gender discrimination in both the UK and the United States, I am acutely conscious of the additional barriers that race imposes on educational attainment and socio-economic mobility. I believe that every effort should be made to increase access to a high-quality education for students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

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

Harvard's resources and its history impose a unique obligation. Other universities have always looked to Harvard for leadership whether they state this openly or not. If and when Affirmative Action is struck down in the Supreme Court later this year, colleges and universities across the nation will turn to Harvard for guidance on how to respond. Harvard will then have to develop strategies, staying within the boundaries of the law, to continue to recruit, admit, and support a widely diverse student body. If Harvard does this and signals its continued strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, then others will follow.

**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?**

In 2021, I published a book reflecting on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in education and politics: “There is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The book stresses the importance of education as a means of addressing America’s “opportunity crisis” and its evident political effects. The book draws on research conducted at my workplace, the Brookings Institution, and Harvard on these topics, together with my firsthand experiences in both institutions, in government, as well as in international organizations. The book lays out a series of specific recommendations for tackling diversity and inclusion in the public and private sectors, and in schools and universities. In line with the recommendations, I am personally donating the advance from the book and its proceeds to non-profits, colleges, and other organizations that promote diversity and inclusion, including setting up an internship program. I am also directly engaged in a series of projects in the UK and the U.S. to directly address deprivation and inequality and generate specific results, not just policy proposals.

Writing the book was a major step. It has been a bestseller and created a platform for outreach and debate. As a result of hundreds of media interviews, podcasts, and public appearances since October 2021, I have been inundated with emails and letters from readers, telling me their own stories and committing to implement the recommendations themselves and within their organizations. I would be delighted to share the conclusions of the book and discuss some of the initiatives I am involved in, in more detail, if anyone in this group is interested in following up directly.

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

Of course! As I noted in my Q&A for Harvard magazine, I am a first-generation college student as well as the recipient of a Harvard fellowship and other financial and material support for pursuing and completing my graduate studies. I want to help others access the same kinds of opportunities Harvard gave me. My personal goal is to find more ways to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, and this can only be done through dialogue and brainstorming.