

## Coalition for a Diverse Harvard Committee Questionnaire

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**1. How important should diversity be at Harvard? What strategies should the University pursue to address diversity? (Please discuss specific programs and policies, including Ethnic Studies; faculty hiring, tenure, and advancement; and Harvard's pledge in its 1650 Charter to actively facilitate the education of American Indian youth, if you can.)**

The ongoing and permanent journey towards diversity in all its manifestations should be at the core of the Harvard experience and in everything it strives for in the future. While the University has made significant progress towards this goal, much work needs to be done, work that requires intense, committed and ongoing focus at all levels, particularly from governing bodies such as the Overseers.

Diversity at all levels, starting with senior university leadership, deans and department heads, as well as faculty, staff and students is critical to creating the best and broadest possible educational experience for the entire community. Ongoing and relentless efforts in recruiting, hiring and retaining the most outstanding and diverse students and scholars can be intensified to build on the already positive momentum.

I have been devoted and committed to furthering diversity and inclusion as central and lived values throughout my adult life. This commitment has been ongoing professionally through institutions I have served and led as well as personally through my life experience and the eyes and experiences of my five Chinese-American children, all born and raised outside the US and four of whom have studied at Harvard.

It is very encouraging to realize how vastly more diverse and fuller their Harvard experiences have been than mine from the 1970s. But I am also aware through their eyes, particularly my three Harvard daughters, of their frustrations and challenges and particularly of the significant gender and ethnic under-representation among the faculty and students in areas they have studied, such as sciences and the arts, and of course in others.

While a challenge, this under-representation also represents an ongoing opportunity to identify, nurture and develop existing faculty as well as attract the most outstanding scholars from around the world. But it will not just happen. Specific and accountable plans and programs need to be developed even further and all selection panels and bodies must be as diverse as possible. The governing bodies at Harvard, including the Overseers, can play an important role in bringing experience, judgment and oversight to make this process as effective as possible.

There are other, more subtle ways of increasing diversity through environmental and cultural contexts and symbols. As a practicing artist, highly attuned to visual surroundings, I have noticed a significant lack of diversity in portraits, photographs, and other representations across Harvard. I feel it would be positive and timely to closely examine Harvard's past and present to identify overlooked individuals and groups who should be more prominently displayed.

Having lived and worked more than half my life in Europe and Asia, I am very well-aware and deeply respectful of the varying perspectives and traditions that different cultures can bring. There is no monopoly on what is "right", but rather a need to bring together, evaluate and study all elements of different cultures and shared histories with a goal to objectively find effective answers and actionable solutions to the world's most challenging problems.

Thus, if elected an Overseer, based on the University's diversity objectives and my own experience living within other cultures, I would strongly support a fully resourced Ethnic Studies Program. This program should stand on an equal footing with other departments and draw on a broad group of faculties from

literature and the arts to sociology, history, government, law, economics and business among others, with options for students to focus on one ethnicity or to study across a broader group.

As part of this, a deeper commitment to identifying and recruiting more Native American faculty and students is essential. The 1650 Charter pledged the University to “the education of English and Indian youth” and the first Native American graduate was in 1665 from the Wampanoag Tribe of New England. According to the Harvard Gazette, the second graduate from the Wampanoag tribe, still largely based in New England, was in 2011, obviously an unacceptable gap. The Class of 2025, according to Harvard statistics, has 1.2% Native Americans. While Harvard has made very positive steps towards diversifying itself, this number represents a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Based on my long-standing life and personal beliefs, diversity in all its manifestations is a critical part of the Harvard experience and represents an ongoing core goal of the University.

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

I have long supported affirmative action and race-conscious admissions as a critical element in creating a more diverse student body and promoting much-needed social mobility with a view towards reducing inequality. I am deeply concerned that, while Harvard has prevailed to date in defending its holistic admissions process, the upcoming Supreme Court review may jeopardize this approach. Because of Harvard’s leadership role in education and society more broadly, it is very important that the university continues this fight to create the most diverse student body possible.

As President Bacow noted recently, a position I support entirely, the Supreme Court review “could put forty years of legal precedent at risk. Colleges and universities could lose the freedom and flexibility to create diverse campus communities that enrich education for all...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?**

Harvard has a unique, global position within higher education and far beyond. What Harvard says and does are observed closely and often followed and at times of course challenged. When there is resistance, such as in the recent legal process regarding admissions, Harvard can and should respond firmly with a clear-eyed vision of what it believes to be right.

Now more than ever, Harvard’s position presents an opportunity, and indeed a responsibility, to provide rigorous thought, clear leadership, and decisive action towards creating a more equitable, inclusive, and just society. Yes, of course there are, and always be structural, cultural and economic challenges towards achieving this vision. But as the great Nelson Mandela once said, “it always seems impossible until it’s done.”

Harvard’s leadership role can and should occur on many levels both within the university and in its community’s actions beyond Cambridge. Stating clear, ambitious and accountable goals relating to further, proactive efforts towards diversity and inclusiveness of students, faculty and the curriculum are the beginning. Committing the organization to achieving these in a finite time and undertaking a systematic review to diversity all processes and committees are also important and immediate goals. Broadening outreach even further, particularly to first-generation college students and underserved communities is an important goal to help reduce inequality in the US and globally. And of course, thought leadership and action on climate change, starting at the University itself, is part of this mission given that poor air and water quality and other negative climate factors disproportionately affect disadvantaged and marginalized people globally, thus furthering inequality.

Another element in Harvard's mission is to provide students with the education and experience to highlight important areas that require change and help promote positive action. While there are many areas and parts of Harvard that work towards this mission, I would like to highlight one in particular which is creative visual expression.

As a full-time photographer and student of the history of photography, I have long been deeply aware of the power of visual imagery to raise awareness, highlight uncomfortable truths, change public opinion and promote positive social change. While we live in a world awash with visual imagery via social media and the like, committed photography and powerful individual photographs have and will always be unique tools to promote and catalyze change.

The photographs of Dorothea Lange powerfully demonstrated the suffering of working class rural families during the depression, and those of Gordon Parks and Doris Derby, among others, documented the injustices and violence facing civil rights activists in the 1960s, raising awareness and promoting political and social change. One of the most important examples of this was the powerful visual imagery of the Selma Bridge Crossing on March 7, 1965. This prompted President Johnson to announce on a nationally televised address to Congress soon after that he supported an expanded new voting rights bill which was introduced on March 17, 1965, two days after his speech.

Other important examples of the power of visual imagery to catalyze positive change include several individual photographs from the Vietnam War, particularly Nick Ut's disturbing image of children running in agony after being doused with napalm. This image, in particular, documented the true effects of military action in Vietnam and helped change public opinion. Ansel Adams, whose work helped raise environmental awareness, and more recently Ed Burtynsky, have powerfully shown the effects of climate change and what the world risks through inaction. And of course, the shocking images of the tragic murder of George Floyd have helped bring about an overdue racial reckoning. The profile of Professor Tomiko Brown-Nagin in the January-February 2022 issue of Harvard Magazine includes several powerful photographs of the civil rights movement which again demonstrate the power of visual imagery.

Thus, an important part of Harvard's role in creating positive change in society should be providing every student with the access and opportunity to explore visual and creative expression in areas they feel are important in deep and meaningful ways. While there are currently excellent opportunities for a limited number of Harvard students to pursue these areas, the faculty and facilities could be substantially expanded. I strongly believe this enhancement will result in positive change in as yet unknown ways as more students find impactful avenues to express issues of importance to them and to society.

Harvard has many ways to help create a more equitable, just and inclusive society through thought leadership and powerful actions. The University's opportunities and responsibilities in these areas call for a truly ambitious and uncompromising vision.

**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?**

Diversity, equity and inclusion have been at the core of my approach to Harvard, my photographic career (starting in my teens and full-time for nearly half my life, far more than anything else) and its base, Bramley Studio. I have also brought this approach in deeply committed ways to the many organizations that I have led or served as a trustee or board member.

Through my numerous roles at Harvard since graduation, including serving as an elected director of the Harvard Alumni Association, a member of the Global Advisory Council, on the Dean's Advisory Boards of the

Graduate School of Design and the Law School and others, I have championed diversity and inclusion and encouraged others to do so as well.

A very specific example of my approach towards diversity and inclusion arose from being selected as a Harvard-Cambridge Scholar in my senior year. When I commenced my studies after graduation, it was my first trip outside the US. (I was also the first member of my family to attend Harvard.) I have served on the selection panel of the Scholarships many times and have worked towards identifying a broad, diverse and outstanding set of winners, most recently this past weekend, where all four of the Harvard-Cambridge Scholars chosen this year represent diverse and historically under-represented backgrounds. I hope the experience is as life-changing for them as it was for me.

My photographic work is based at Bramley Studio, a former derelict pub located within a cluster of social housing in West London, which I founded and lead. This creative hub has served as a beacon for local artists, particularly promising creative students from nearby state schools, most of whom represent diverse backgrounds and come from challenging circumstances and who we have identified through an outreach and recruiting program.

In addition, we have provided exhibition space to numerous local artists. Two noteworthy ones included a large outdoor installation celebrating the Afro-Caribbean heritage of the Notting Hill area, where we are located, and a set of portraits of the victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster, a nearby apartment complex destroyed by the worst UK residential fire since World War II. Nearly all of the victims were poor, diverse, and largely ignored immigrants whose tragic deaths were primarily the result of negligent maintenance. This exhibition, entitled "Gold and Ashes" and displayed on the windows of Bramley Studio, gave them a powerful and prominent voice through the photographer, herself a relative of one of the victims.

While Covid has of course limited our activities, we found various ways to continue to mentor and support a broad and diverse group of artists. One in particular involves young artists taking over the Bramley Studio Instagram site for a period to post their work and thoughts. Since the Instagram takeover began, over twenty largely diverse artists, whose creative outlets were largely silenced, have participated with wonderful and impactful results.

As post-pandemic life begins to stabilize, we will continue and expand outreach, mentoring and support of an extensive group of local and more far-reaching artists. Diversity, inclusion and broadening artistic access have and will always be at the heart of Bramley Studio's activities.

I have served on many governance and advisory boards in the US and UK. In every case, my approach has been to formally and informally champion and work towards diversity and inclusion, particularly in arts organization where there has historically been gender and ethnic under-representation in curatorial roles and exhibited artists. These voices must be heard far more broadly, and I am committed to do so, a commitment I will energetically bring to Harvard's arts world if elected as an Overseer.

More detail on my approach and involvement at a few institutions, among many other possible examples, may be helpful. I have served in numerous roles over the past ten years at the University of the Arts London (UAL), the largest arts university in Europe, including the President's Advisory Board and as a Governor (Trustee). In these roles, I have championed recruiting and outreach, and the university has substantially increased the diversity of its students and faculty.

We have also significantly decolonized the UAL curriculum, an important priority of mine in general, but also given the experiences of my Chinese-American family who struggle to find opportunities to explore their Asian artistic heritage outside Asia.

A number of years ago, it became apparent at UAL that many promising creative students of color and from disadvantaged backgrounds had very few ways to explore their artistic journeys. Outstanding artists and promising projects often withered away due to lack of mentoring and support. Working with the university

and faculty, we created a series of fellowships and grants which to date have been awarded to over 75 diverse and under-represented students based on specific project proposals, many of which were later acquired by museums and galleries.

Another example of my approach to bringing diversity and inclusion to the arts world is my ongoing service over the past 10 years on the executive committee of the Tate Foundation, which provides governance to the four Tate Museums, one of the largest museum groups on the world.

We have monitored and focused on substantially increasing visitor access among diverse and under-represented groups as well as instituting programs to identify and mentor promising curators and artists of color. (The current Caribbean British Art exhibition is one recent example.) The objective is to make the often-intimidating art world much more diverse and accessible and reach often forgotten or neglected artistic voices.

I have long been committed to expanding access and facilities for women's sports, especially having seen my four daughters' challenges and barriers in pursuing their athletic dreams. Therefore, to help make a positive difference I have served for many years in various roles at the Women's Tennis Association, (WTA) the governing body of Women's Professional Tennis. These roles, including the Global Advisory Council and Vice-Chair of the finance committee, have given me a ringside seat and opportunity to help in the important fight for equal prize money and other recognition relative to the Men's Tennis Tour.

In this process, I had the privilege to work alongside the inspirational Billie Jean King, the original founder of the WTA and central activist in Title IX (federal legislation requiring equal sports facilities for men and women). While challenges remain in areas such as equal payment for televised sports rights and other items, my ongoing roles at the WTA continue to allow me to champion important initiatives that promote diversity, inclusion and fairness.

In addition to these formal roles, I have provided mentoring and advice to many important initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion. One example is the Anti-Racism Fund, founded by a group of recent Harvard graduates, friends and classmates of my son, who sought my advice as their very important project was evolving. This very impressive group has identified and substantially assisted many innovative initiatives including a major and successful step forward in helping diverse fashion designers and artists find meaningful roles at top organizations.

These are but a few examples of my long-standing commitment to address diversity and inclusion. A core reason why I want to serve as an Overseer is to be able to further champion at Harvard these critical components of a fair and just society.

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

Yes, and at an early stage should I be elected. In addition, I would welcome and look forward to ongoing meetings and dialogue with these groups and would encourage broader and possibly more formal ways for the groups to engage with the Overseers.