



Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging

Establish a University-Wide Research Center on Race and Ethnicity

POST # 1491

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Submitted by Juhwan Seo on 11/07/17

Now more than ever, we believe Harvard must make good on its promise to educate "citizens and citizen-leaders for our society" who understand complex and critical aspects of American history and society. Many urgent questions of our time concern race, ethnicity, and inequality, but Harvard lags behind its peers in fostering research on these topics across the University. Whereas Stanford established a [Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity](http://ccsre.stanford.edu) (<http://ccsre.stanford.edu>) in 1996; Columbia, a [Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race](http://www.cser.columbia.edu/) (<http://www.cser.columbia.edu/>) in 1996; and Yale, a [Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration](http://ritm.yale.edu/) (<http://ritm.yale.edu/>) in 2016, Harvard lacks any university-wide or school-specific research center dedicated to the study of race and ethnicity.

We ask the Task Force to recommend that the University establish a center for research on race and ethnicity that would serve as a national hub for this work. This center would support the study of race and ethnicity among Harvard's 12 schools, including a robust undergraduate and graduate ethnic studies program within FAS, which has been the subject of 12 community-wide [petitions](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByTbVbCYkx2ZTGRRRzFZeIBGTHM/view?usp=sharing) (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByTbVbCYkx2ZTGRRRzFZeIBGTHM/view?usp=sharing>) in [45 years](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2016/12/1/ethnic-studies-petition-department/) (<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2016/12/1/ethnic-studies-petition-department/>).

We believe that now is the time to act—for the University to be at the forefront of teaching, learning, and research on some of our nation's most fundamental issues—and renew its dedication to developing leaders who can enact meaningful change.

Signed,

Harvard Ethnic Studies Coalition, Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance, Harvard Asian American Alumni Alliance, Coalition for a Diverse Harvard, Harvard Alumnae of Color, Task Force on Asian and Pacific American Studies at Harvard College, Native Americans at Harvard College

[Academic Resources \(/solution-space/academic-resources\)](/solution-space/academic-resources), [Programs or research centers \(/solution-space/category/10\)](/solution-space/category/10), [Learning and teaching \(/solution-space/category/12\)](/solution-space/category/12), [race and ethnicity \(/solution-space/category/706\)](/solution-space/category/706), [ethnic studies \(/solution-space/category/111\)](/solution-space/category/111)

COMMENTS

My fellow students and I worked hard for this twenty-plus years ago. It is simultaneously inspiring and disheartening to see that today's students are still pressing on -- please, Harvard, just get it done!

Submitted by Rebecca Kiley on November 8, 2017

I fully support this solution. It is embarrassing that the University lacks any university-wide or school-specific research center dedicated to the study of race and ethnicity. Although socially constructed, race is and has been an integral part of the foundation of this country. How are students supposed to know where they are going if they don't know where they have come from?

Submitted by Paul Yoon on November 8, 2017

I wrote an undergraduate Social Studies thesis in 2005 about Asian American vets who served in the Vietnam War and felt very isolated during the process, given the lack of knowledgeable advisers and an intellectual support network on campus. I hope that Harvard College makes a serious investment in ethnic studies.

Submitted by Joy Lin on November 8, 2017

Long overdue. Harvard needs to be comprehensive in its educational mission to prepare leaders in this challenging 21st Century. Race and ethnicity will continue to be key dimensions to understanding the complexity of this precarious future.

Submitted by Deane Wang on November 8, 2017

I am currently a professor and a member of the core faculty in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies at the University of Michigan. For Harvard to not have courses in Asian American studies places it far behind its peer institutions, all of which offer substantially more robust support for meaningful research, teaching, and programming in this scholarly field.

Submitted by Melissa Borja on November 8, 2017

I do not understand how all our peer institutions have something like this but Harvard continues to drag it's feet on something that is fundamental to Harvard's mission to be more diverse and inclusive.

Submitted by Irene Pak on November 8, 2017

I fully support this solution. As an Asian American and a Korean American, I hope that Harvard University invests in ethnic studies to identify issues related to ethnicity in today's world and find ways to make society more diverse and inclusive.

Submitted by David Yoon on November 8, 2017

I support that Harvard shows its excellence in this area of studies immediately and belatedly. Surely Harvard has conducted sufficient studies on this topics and had a number of visiting professors when there were similar repeated, student-driven requests for ethnic studies since the 1970s and 80s.

Submitted by Mark Kuo on November 8, 2017

I was an Afro-American Studies concentrator in the early '80's. The curriculum opened my eyes in so many ways and has informed my life and work ever since. But our understanding of race, and the reality of race, in America has gone way beyond black and white. It's well past time for a university-wide program in race and ethnicity!

Submitted by David Van Taylor on November 8, 2017

We fought for this in the early 1990s when I was at Harvard. It is very disappointing that we are still asking for this almost 30 years later. This is long overdue, and given the national discourse on these important topics, now is the time for Harvard to contribute by establishing a center for research on race and ethnicity.

Submitted by Esther Lee on November 9, 2017

I fully support a university-wide research center on race and ethnicity. Future students absolutely need an institutionally recognized space to study and discuss race in America. Harvard needs this now, more than ever.

Submitted by Qichen Zhang on November 9, 2017

Our students need this and our university can provide it. I hope Harvard will choose to establish a fully-funded, comprehensive, university-wide research center on race and ethnicity, and in doing so support the students, faculty, and community members who are already doing work in this important area.

Submitted by Henry Atkins on November 9, 2017

I entered Harvard in 1976 with the intention of concentrating in Asian American Studies. I was obviously a naive first year student. At the time and to my dismay, there were no Asian American studies courses whatsoever. I did find many fellow students who were hungry to engage with that history and experience, and we continue to speak out today. Forty years later, Harvard has made little progress. But the call for Asian American - and Ethnic Studies as a whole - remains as resonant and necessary as it was during the 1970s. If anything, given our current moment, Harvard is woefully behind the curve. I urge Harvard to take leadership in this vital field. Ethnic Studies now!

Submitted by Renee Tajima-Pena on November 9, 2017

I worked on this same issue 20 years ago as an undergraduate, with an incredibly committed and serious group of peers. Harvard has dithered on this issue for far too long, and the conservatism exhibited is completely out of step with both academic rigour (witness the numerous other institutions that have similar programs) and the needs/desires of students. The double standard -- extending invitations and honors to the likes of Sean Spicer, Martin Peretz and other proponents of nakedly racist policies while desperately erecting roadblocks to the critical study of ethnicity -- is disgraceful. There is no convincing academic, financial, or institutional argument against an Ethnic Studies programme. While it's a shame that this couldn't be addressed in Dr. Counter's lifetime, this mistake can be corrected now.

Submitted by Simon Sternin on November 9, 2017

I am faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and formerly served as chair of the Five College Asian/Pacific/American Studies Program. I graduated in 1988 and my last semester, I was finally able to take one Asian American Studies course, with Prof. Reed Ueda who was brought in from Tufts to teach in response to student petitions as there were no permanent faculty at Harvard who could teach this. I recently attended my 30th reunion and was distressed to see how little progress has been made, especially given the importance of these issues and the growth in programs in other universities around the country.

Submitted by Miliann Kang on November 9, 2017

I was part of the Wellesley student group that spearheaded the drive to get the first Asian American Studies class on campus back in the '80s. Now Wellesley actually offers a minor in Asian American Studies. As a business school alum I am thrilled to be connected to the larger community at Harvard. I am not so thrilled to see so little progress has been made.

Submitted by Amy Chu on November 9, 2017

Harvard, this is the time to prove to us that you didn't just create ethnic studies as a selfish political move. Back it up with proof that you actually care and want to further research and conversations about race and ethnicity. Because right now, I really feel you don't care. Maybe you don't. Are we not incentive enough, a good enough reason for you to actually start caring?

Submitted by Sarah Chang on November 9, 2017

I support this solution wholeheartedly. As an Asian American with roots in Hong Kong, I think Harvard should lead to create a center for rigorous research and vibrant civic conversations about race and ethnicity. It's time to act.

Submitted by Mable Chan on November 9, 2017

It's long overdue. Looking around at current events, it's an important time to have a Center which can clearly focus on research in Race and Ethnicity. Hopefully there will be also be a variety of courses in Asian American Studies for the students. As a professor at Hunter College, students of all backgrounds have benefited from the Asian American Studies program - which is now approaching its 25th year.

Submitted by Margaret Chin on November 9, 2017

It is amazing -- or should I say appalling -- that students are still having to fight this battle. Margaret (previous poster), weren't we pursuing this as undergraduates in the 1980s? As others have said more eloquently, this is more than overdue, and more than appropriate given the current charged discourse on race and ethnicity in America. Do we need to earmark our donations to Harvard for such a program in order to make it happen?

Submitted by Samuel Wu on November 9, 2017

I believe that establishing a university-wide research center on race and ethnicity should be a vital priority for Harvard. It would strengthen our university's academic credibility compared to peer institutions and help attract more diverse faculty and scholars. It would give students the opportunity to engage in meaningful coursework on race and ethnicity, and help spark important conversations and research on these issues. As a student leader at Harvard involved in this movement, I frequently met with students who desired more institutionalized curricula in these fields but found Harvard's course selection lacking. To that end, a new center would help Harvard become a leading hub for teaching, learning, and research.

Submitted by Sietse Goffard on November 10, 2017

This is absolutely overdue. Harvard can't purport to train responsible leaders in this day and age without concretely investing in the study of race in this country. I appreciated the task forces and conversations and town halls and all the talk while I was a student, but it's time for an infrastructural investment.

Submitted by Tracey Lam on November 10, 2017

It would be invaluable to leverage and coordinate Harvard's resources for better research, education, and training related to the history and present challenges borne of structural racism. Additionally, the creation of such a Center would also represent a commitment and use Harvard's prestige to underscore the importance of more fully examining and intervening in the pernicious legacy of white supremacy.

Submitted by Andrew Bourn on November 10, 2017

Now **this** would be a Harvard initiative I would jump to give my money to!

Submitted by Angela Wu on November 10, 2017

I am Associate Professor of Sociology at Tufts University. We established a Consortium on Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora in 2014. It is a wonderful interdisciplinary space through which faculty here are able to exchange ideas and promote the intellectual study of race throughout our home departments and the Tufts curriculum. I support this initiative at Harvard, too.

Submitted by Helen Marrow on November 10, 2017

Race is and has always been the fulcrum of pain, progress, and social movements in this nation. Is it not time that Harvard joined the rest of the academy in acknowledging that reality? My husband was part of

the Asian American movement that led to the founding of Ethnic Studies departments at every University of California campus. We now send our son to Harvard, where forty years later there is no university-wide center to study a movement so central to our lives. The H-R Class of 2021 is 50.9%--a majority--students of color. Wake up, Harvard! The classes and perspectives you offer must be as diverse as the students who take them.

Submitted by Wendy Hanamura on November 11, 2017

Now, more than ever, Harvard needs to step up and make this happen. Race and ethnicity represent an opportunity, not a problem. But we need bright diverse minds focused on solutions. I am devoted to diversity as an enabler of success. I fully expect Harvard to do what is required to be a LEADER in this critical effort.

Submitted by Janet Smith on November 11, 2017

As a doctoral student of color at the Harvard Graduate School of Education I chose to attend Harvard specifically because of the diversity of my cohort. Most of us have now graduated, and we remain a tight knit community. Relatedly, I am encouraged to hear how many students of color are in Harvard's frosh class. I do believe that Harvard is an institution that cares about issues of justice and diversity. This center would symbolize this commitment by providing the financial and material resources for scholarly work in this area increasing the intellectual rigor for students. This would allow Harvard to join other institutions with centers such as these (e.g. Stanford). I fully support this and am excited about this possibility.

Submitted by Kari Kokka on November 12, 2017

Harvard would be wise to not only create a center of race and ethnicity, but to ensure that it is well supported and robust. As an undergraduate from 2011-2015, I was committed to studying societal disparities and history of Latin@s in the United States. My advisers and I initially thought that pursuing a Social Studies concentration and Ethnicity, Migration, and Rights secondary would be sufficient in supporting my academic areas of interest, but they were both lacking in course offerings, advisers, and relevant research opportunities. One of my academic advisers suggested I would have better luck finding support in my academic areas of interest had I gone to a UC or UT. In connecting with peers at Yale, Stanford, University of Southern California, among others, I witnessed how readily their institutions supported them in connecting with resources, networks, and opportunities to study disparities in Latinx migration, mental health, economic development, etc. Harvard has the opportunity to create something truly great. Please do not keep relegating the study of race and ethnicity to underresourced committees, limited course offerings, and well-meaning, but ill-prepared advisers.

Submitted by Veronica Gloria on November 12, 2017

As Vice President of the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance, we ask to please create this center, with tenure track faculty, full-time regular staff, and support for students, staff, and faculty of color.

Submitted by Monica Garcia on November 13, 2017