

COALITION FOR A DIVERSE HARVARD – QUESTIONNAIRE

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1. HOW IMPORTANT SHOULD DIVERSITY BE AT HARVARD?

Diversity in the classroom (students and teachers) is one of the pillars of a strong education. At the individual level, diversity enhances the experience of learning by increasing exposure to new lines of thoughts, emotions and singular priorities. This raises new possibilities for individual students to reflect on their life goals during their degree terms. By interacting with different 'others', students also learn more about themselves and test their core beliefs.

Diversity at the group level is increasingly the norm at work and society. Students and class teams are expected address complex problem-solving issues in class, just like in real life. Diversity in teams plays both ways: it increases the probability of discovering a-ha moments and new insights, which are wonderful to experiment. But diversity also raises the frequency of unproductive conflicts. Whether on one side or the other, diversity encourages the development of a critical skill-set: active listening, empathy, collaboration, responsible behaviours, the focus to find insights, etc. Great team work builds confidence and the leadership attitude required for the next decades.

The Harvard Innovation Labs have become an outstanding example in teaching students to build great teams through diversity. Students learn that great teams can generate insights and connections that last a lifetime for them. Chancellor Merkel spoke wisely at the commencement of 2019. She advocated that the resolution of the complex problems that societies will face in the next decade required intense international collaboration, the tearing down of walls and courage from the new generations to make changes. 'Every thing is possible, but nothing can be taken for granted', she said. No single view can solve by itself climate changes, or ethically harness artificial intelligence, or appease international inequities.

I believe ethnic studies should be positively encouraged. For one, they bring down persistent stereotypes. They promote inclusiveness as opposed to sharpening differences and inward nationalism. They highlight the inherent strengths found in ethnicities, whether at the cultural and even philosophical levels. Sometimes these treasures lay devalued. Ethnic studies encourage the curious mind to seek new partnerships and new alleys of thoughts.

The education of the American Indian should be actively encouraged, to the extent that it also serves to promote reconciliation, mutual respect and community development. Native communities face demanding challenges: how to protect their identity, evolve their own culture in a world of big transformations and find new tracks for community development, owned and

led by native leaders. Universities can facilitate and leverage their impact on native populations by creating communities of work and learning, with them.

2. PLEASE STATE YOUR VIEWS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS AND RACE CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS.

I am generally comfortable with the admission process conducted by Harvard. There often is a little gap between managing underrepresentation and the research of excellence and leadership. It is all too often easy to slowly and steadily slide to a passive view of underrepresentation. Strong applications in terms of representation and affirmative action, but slightly marginal in terms of excellence, can easily be pushed off to the margins of the admission process, and slowly fade away. In a world of markedly reduced social mobility, these cases should be pro-actively promoted. They can produce astonishing snowball effect in their community when graduates return to them, sooner or later.

I have been a witness to such an effect. The Quiet Revolution that took place in Quebec in the 1960-1970's encouraged a new generation to pursue graduate studies in the best universities in the world. They then changed in their own ways the fields of education, arts, sports and business in the province and provided inspiring leadership for the new generations. For instance, one can now think of the Cirque du Soleil, Celine Dion and Denis Villeneuve (director of Dune) in the field of arts and culture. They have gifted the newer generation with wide education options and richer career tracks.

I have also keenly observed development in my native community, Wendake near Quebec City. Education access in a variety of fields, such as medicine, engineering, social services amongst others, have over time built a more cohesive society, with much greater confidence to manage and complete big community projects. These projects have strengthened (and not diminished) the cultural values and social identity for the community. We can even now see new initiatives emerging in regard to conservation, land usage, research, and tourism, carried out in collaboration with the provincial government. This is slow and steady work but the results show off. In general, confrontational mindsets are shifting to productive partnerships. There have been graduates from Harvard, Stanford and European universities at the Wendake community. Though not directly involved in community affairs, I regularly participate in traditional activities, such hunting and fishing, and art craft making.

3- WHAT DO YOU THINK HARVARD'S ROLE SHOULD BE IN CREATING A MORE EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE AND JUST SOCIETY?

Harvard should be part of the leading institutions that shape, promote and guard long term values that help Western societies come through existential challenges. In times of severe crisis, societies must be able to rely on institutions such as universities and think tanks, to

provide pathways to the balanced resolution of challenges and come out of ordeals in better shape. Universities carry the responsibility to research and analyze problems, provide forums for international discussions, devise and experiment imaginative solutions, promote collaboration among key players in society, and possibly fend off extreme interests. Values such as equity (equal opportunities), justice and fairness (rule of law), the common good (ideals) and progress (new solutions) help to steward societies in difficult times, such as the next decade.

I tend to believe that this current decade of 2020-2030 will influence, shape and mold this century. Many exponential changes will combine in the next 10 years to profoundly affect society and individuals: millennials will lead a change in generations; the era of AI will take root and change the future of work; the new great game in geopolitics between China and USA will capture attention and resources; climate changes will accelerate and test international cooperation in water resources, epidemics and migration; and stress lines in international finance and economics will surely disrupt markets. All these forces will test the resilience of communities, whether governments, towns, companies, families, or even individuals. As a result, Western democracies will face additional divisions in constituencies. It will become more difficult to build the necessary political coalitions to address those challenges in a comprehensive way. Without the participation of NGOs and non-governmental institutions, we cannot predict the quality of responses in Western societies to those challenges.

Without a strong sense of core values, such as the common good and mutual aid, communities, organizations, and individuals might see their core identity erode in this whirlwind of changes. Without proper value safeguards, many could succumb in their mission and lose the essence of their identity! Community missions and values are therefore likely to play a decisive role in the years ahead. Equity, inclusiveness and justice should stand as core values for institutions that will shape our future.

4. WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO BRING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION?

I have worked and travelled in more than 90 countries, and spent over 20 years overseas, in a variety of continents, from Latin America to Asia. I have always taken the obligation to invest myself in local cultures and languages. By learning new languages, you learn about how people think in their environment. By visiting a diversity of local communities, you increase your understanding of habits and customs, all the while expanding a network. This has always served me well in my role of bridging cultures.

As head and board member of Canadian chambers of commerce overseas (Spain, Philippines, Mexico), we have always promoted memberships based on 50% Canadians and 50% of local members. We thought this approach would facilitate mutual understanding, good citizenship, productive partnerships and even long-lasting friendships.

I now live in a fairly multicultural city, Montreal, recently voted as the safest city in the world. I have been teaching at universities for 15 years and most courses at Master's level would regularly encompass more than 12-15 nationalities. This is a wonderful pool of thoughts from which to draw new points of views and angles, particularly from the Millennials generation. I greatly enjoy steering respectful and productive debates amongst a diverse group of nationalities. In the last two years I have taken a more active role at the department of Indigenous Relations and Initiatives at McGill University.

Lastly, as past president of the Harvard Club of Quebec and HAA director for Canada, we have striven to be very inclusive in the organization of activities and representations, and board memberships. This approach has led us to put in place innovative partnerships with think tanks and various cultural organizations.

5. IF ELECTED, WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO MEET OCCASIONALLY DURING YOUR TENURE?

I would certainly welcome the opportunity to exchange with the listed groups, individually or within the context of panel discussions. I am a member of the following Clubs and SIGS: Harvard Alumni for Entrepreneurs; Native American Alumni of Harvard University (recent), Governor of the Harvard Club of Quebec.

As an elected director, I would be interested to explore and analyze how to strengthen community values and resilience. We might find inspiration in a variety of environments and in surprising places: new digital communities such as the Harvard SIGs, existing native communities that have displayed amazing resilience through decades of hardship, international organizations that defy time and distance, municipalities that bend citizens to respond to climate changes and renew their economic base, etc. The international community of Harvard graduates represents a great asset in the goal of leveraging the global Harvard collective leadership and engaging the Millennials in their new roles.

Andre Du Sault.