

Mexico City, February 13th 2021

To whom it may concern,

I am here attaching the questionnaire the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard send to all candidates. I have to tell you that it was very humbling and educational experience. I enjoyed sitting by myself and, in silence, getting in touch with my values and thoughts. I got the chance, thanks to this exercise, to delve into what I have done and what I still want to do. I've tried to be as candid as possible, however, if you think you need more information or clarification please contact me anytime. For the purpose of brevity, which I certainly did not reach, I left out parts of my youth and teenage years where I started working with very poor communities in my country, Argentina. This experience that without a doubt, shaped me and made me a firsthand witness of the crucial task I had ahead.

Thanks again for taking the time to read this, and for the good work you do at the Coalition.

Warmly,
Corina

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.)

Looking into the programs that Harvard has instituted to tackle diversity issues, there has been interesting advancement concerning activities directed to students. There are pretty varied and creative, and hopefully they have had an impact on the student community. On the 2019 first pilot Inclusion and Belonging Pulse Survey, 73% of students agreed with the statement “I feel like I belong at Harvard”. Those results somehow vary when we look across ethnicities for example, ranging from a 77% for Whites to a 62% for Middle Eastern and 69% of African Americans. If we look closer and focus on sexual orientation, 76% of heterosexuals, 72% of gay/lesbian and 65% of bisexual agree. It is quite auspicious though that the difference among domestic and international students is very small 75% to 74%. However, question with the most disagreement was: “I believe Harvard leadership will take appropriate action in response to incidents of harassment and discrimination.” 34% of students disagreed, more than any other question for students. This poses the question of how safe and supported the students feel, specifically if we note that only 19% of respondents that identify as queer and nonbinary believe so, and 37% of identified as Black or African American do, as opposed to 55% of Asian or Asian American and 53% of White. As stated in the Survey’s Executive Summary “The results show that respondents, across all three roles, report rates of inclusion and belonging in the positive range across most categories. However, that picture changes markedly when one looks more closely at specific demographic groups within the Harvard community. While most responded positively across all items, those from historically underrepresented and disadvantaged groups reported fewer positive views and higher levels of disagreement with the prompts.” This shows that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in the near future. Hopefully, the formation of the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Leadership Council and the fact that a Pulse Survey will be conducted every two years, will help take the necessary steps to bridge these differences identifying and implementing evidence-based strategies, services and programs.

I have found particularly positive that The Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning has developed Harvard Link, a dashboard where users can search and explore a variety of Harvard data, news, events, colleagues, organizations, courses, and research funding opportunities. And, in partnership with ODIB, it has created a “DIB Channel” on Link. The Harvard DIB Link Channel is an easy way for the community to explore diversity, inclusion, and belonging news, events, and related organizations. Besides these initiatives there are many others that are worth mentioning like the Community Dialogue Series and the Culture Lab Innovation Fund.

Even if Harvard has committed significant resources and energy to be at the forefront of inclusion and diversity, we are not close to where we should be. As a member of the HKS Alumni Board, I have firsthand experience to the how difficult is to have a diverse recruitment process for example. The efforts the school is making are coming a little too late, which means, among other things, that it’s not yet refined. As of 2021, 52% of the student body was White. However, the problem is deeper when we look at faculty and staff, where that number rises to 77%. This comes to show that the University and the Schools need to go a lot further when it comes to diversity policies and initiatives, especially when it comes to faculty hiring.

As reported by The Harvard Gazette, as of 2019, “sixty percent of tenure-track and 41 percent of tenured faculty are now women and/or minorities.” One of the reasons improvement is slow is that turnover in the senior faculty at Harvard is pretty low, near to 95 percent of faculty members remain. In any given year, approximately 95 percent of Harvard faculty members remain. Data shows

improvement since the beginning of the century. Tenured faculty who are women or minorities was up 49 percent from 2004, and tenure-track appointments are up 14 percent for women, 32 percent for Asian and Asian American faculty, and 54 percent for other underrepresented minorities.

It is pretty commendable that in 1650 the Harvard Charter included the “Indian youth”. If one tries to imagine how society looked like 371 years ago, one can definitely assume that most citizens of Cambridge were not in favor of that inclusion. I would like to presume that that spirit of openness was key in making Harvard what it is now. However, historical forces prevailed and it wasn't until 1970 that a program to address Native American issues was established, and the greatest number of Native Americans attended Harvard -11 students admitted to the HGSE- that year.

Looking into our history serves us in many ways, one of them is to teach us not to make the same mistakes. Fortunately, we live in a very different world and it will not take three centuries to acknowledge the need to devote attention to minorities and underrepresented communities. Yet, many of those forces still prevail in our society and raise their voice loud enough to make it somehow hard to advance these much-needed programs. Dedicating each month of the academic calendar to celebrate and commemorate heritages and making specific identity acknowledgements is not only fair, but it also raises visibility of those communities that still need affirmation, acceptance and validation.

In 2021 the President and Fellows of Harvard College reaffirmed the University's policy concerning affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. Harvard has stated, many times, that a diverse community serves the advancement of its academic purpose. Nonetheless, this is not sufficient. It is critical that the University takes even more resolute steps towards a stronger affirmative action program.

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

A student, a teenager, a person, is not a number. We are not a GPA, a sum of qualifications, or awards, a total of sports played or music interpreted. We are the product of a family, a community, the school we attended, the jobs we might have had to take to help at home, or the privilege of only dedicating our time to our studies and passions. Hence, I do not believe a university should evaluate a candidate solely on their academic success. What students do outside of their classrooms sometimes says a lot more about themselves than a simple number. Considering the very diverse backgrounds from where applicants to Harvard come from, it would not be fair, in my view, not to take into consideration all the elements that converge into molding who a student is and mainly who they want to become.

Both in the United States and around the world, academic disparities are more than usually tied to race, socio-economic background and gender. Admission processes should take this into consideration when evaluating students. The cycles of poverty, discrimination and marginalization does not stop by themselves, a clear and focused action is needed to help those who have been historically disenfranchised to elevate themselves and with them their peers and communities.

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

We had the privilege of having attended one of the best higher education institutions in the globe. Harvard is a leading voice in academia. 161 Harvard professors have been awarded a Nobel Prize.

Our university is, without a doubt, a beacon in almost every discipline that is taught. This prominent place makes of Harvard a voice that is heard and respected, always. As such, it has the responsibility of advancing those issues that are key to the construction of a more just society, for all. In my view, Harvard is morally compelled to be a leading voice, to set the agenda in campus and outside of it. It is its duty as a higher education institution, and our duty as alumni, to promote a more equitable, diverse and inclusive community where students, specifically and all members at large, experience a true sense of belonging that can be replicated as a value wherever we go.

Diversity is paramount, and those who have any responsibility in education are morally obliged to make it one of their core values. A school that is not diverse, is not representative of the world we live in, it would be portraying a reality that does not exist and with that, it would further injustice. However, diversity is not enough, it needs to be paired with inclusion in order to make it work, to make it genuine. Inclusion means that you are not only here but that you are valued here, and if one feels valued, one experiences belonging. I love the quote by Rev. Jesse Jackson that says “Never look down on anybody unless you are helping them up”. Education is about lifting people up, making them discover and reach their true potential. We are all born equal but not in the same circumstances, that is why education should always be a means to level the playing field. Education does not end with graduation, which brings us to our own responsibility, as Harvard alumni, to keep working towards diversity and inclusion in every aspect of our lives.

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?

As a member of the HKS alumni board, I am part of the first ever DEIB committee. We are committed to be partners with HKS administration on how to recruit, review applicants, and successfully matriculate prospective students. We also aim at proposing and organizing alumni events that are reflective of diverse communities and ensure we have an annual DEIB welcoming reception for newly admitted students. We are also dedicated to making sure that the internal structure and governance of the board incorporates diversity and inclusion in its backbone, and also working in coordination with Networks and SIGs to make sure we are all on the same page.

During my years at HAA I was part of the Public Narrative Initiative. This initiative has evolved into an HAA Anti-Racism Working Group that offered a Public Narrative leadership skills-building program last Fall. I was selected to be one of the facilitators of these four-part series. The workshop aimed at learning and practicing the fundamentals of Public Narrative, using stories to embrace our shared values and to move others to action in order to build more equitable and inclusive alumni communities.

At this moment I am working at the Harvard Club of Mexico in coordination with the HAA, on a regional social impact program that includes 11 Latin-American clubs. The objective is to create awareness regarding the deep socio-economic disparities in our continent through activities that connect members of the Clubs with the realities and needs of their fellow countrymen. We are working with local NGOs that provide us with a flawless platform in terms of resource management and programming.

ChildFund Mexico is an organization focused on serving the needs of children living in poverty, fostering their capacity to improve their lives and providing them with the opportunity to bring lasting change to their communities. One of the pillars of what we do is to provide these children and their communities with an opportunity to experience a sense of agency and self-development. These

native Mexican kids and their communities have been living in poverty and marginalized for as long as they can even remember, hence the importance not only to contributing with providing educational, health care and self-awareness tools but also with the opportunity of creating value by themselves in their own community.

I am very proud to share that the Fundación Mexico en Harvard, during more than 35 years helping Mexican students has experienced a wonderful transformation and a targeted evolution. We started funding HBS and HKS students mainly from Mexico City. The Fundación has made, a very conscious effort to attract students from more diverse backgrounds and from all over the country. We aim at helping Mexico by making sure that the much needed highly trained professionals in education and health, for example get the best education possible. By taking into consideration the salary breach among different graduate degrees, we provide financial assistance through plans that are more in accordance with student backgrounds, needs and future employment.

I am a member of the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance, the Black Alumni Association at HKS and the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard.

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

If I get elected I would very much like to have the opportunity to meet with the different organizations that are part of the Coalition and with its members. There is no way we can do the work that we need and want to do for the alumni community, if we do not actively participate in alumni life.

Presently, I am member of three Harvard related boards where I have an active participation and very close contact with many wonderful alumni: HKS Alumni Board, Harvard Club of Mexico and Fundación México en Harvard. Being a member of any Harvard related board and not having direct contact with our fellow alumni is not only nonsensical, but also entails a very poor understanding of what representation really means. Outside of these boards, I maintain very close relationships with my peers in Latin-America.

I have also found very helpful to get to know students even before they start their programs. For the past 6 years I have hosted new admits gatherings in Mexico City. Being able to follow their paths from before acceptance to after they graduate, has provided me with a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Harvard experience given that I graduated more than 20 years ago.

During my three years as Director for Latin-America at the HAA, one of my main mandates was to be in close contact with the Clubs in the region to be able understand the needs of their members, and to inform them of what was going at the broader Harvard level. Without that close communication my appointment would have been unproductive and futile.