

## Harvard Questionnaire

### **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 and faculty hiring, tenure, and advancement, if you can.)**

Diversity should be the University's top priority. My children who are eight and six represent the first generation of a majority-minority, multi-ethnic country. However, our leadership across institutions: government, tech, science, academia, media, medicine and more doesn't reflect this diversity that our country will need to compete and to excel. Harvard can set the standard, be bold and lead by setting requirements for a student body, a faculty, administration and an investment portfolio that reflects who we are as a country and the bets that need to be made to address the climate crisis and curb humanitarian abuses.

One could argue that the lack of institutional diversity in tenured faculty, student body, study, research and investment has left us short footed in responding to our country's gravest problems today. Harvard prepares the leaders of tomorrow - the University should prioritize a diverse leadership who can lead across sectors. For people of color growing up in America neither Trump's rise nor COVID's disparities were a surprise. We were taken aback by the surprise of those in power who seemed to finally understand deep racial resentment plaguing our nation and the deep inequities for the first time over this past summer..

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

As a first generation college student, I am a direct beneficiary of both affirmative action and the Pell grant. During high school, I juggled school and work in order to help contribute to our household. Like millions of young people who help make ends meet, I didn't have the benefit of someone counseling me through the college process nor the extra hours nor financial resources to devote to enrichment courses. However, it was this experience paired with an excellent education that prepared me for my life's work seeking equity and racial justice.

Having a diverse student body, administrators, and faculty prepares the leading institution not only into the future but it allows it to solve our most pressing issues today. Affirmative Action is one policy to ensure a diverse, thriving, competitive student body. In Texas 51% of those in K - 12 are Latino. Across the nation, one in five children live in poverty - a startling statistic before the pre-pandemic statistic. Affirmative Action is a stop-gap policy that is needed until education is truly equitable across zip codes.

Pressing issues to address systemic institutional racism across sectors will not be solved unless those most impacted have a voice and a vote at the table. COVID has exposed our great inequalities - we have a unique moment to re-imagine our future.

The case for diversity is often surmised as a nice to have so I'll illustrate the 2018 election and her results. Despite the real barriers to the voting booth in almost 40 years, the most diverse set of Americans cast a ballot setting the highest participation in 100 years. Young people voted in record number and as a result ushered in the most diverse U.S. House of Representatives in our nation's 240 plus year history: the most women, the most veterans in decades, the youngest congress, the most muslim, first native american women, the first Latinas from Texas and more. The results of that diversity produced 400+ bills that spoke to our values serving as blueprint for our future. The diversity brought about fair wages, non-discrimination based on gender preferences, meaningful background checks legislation in more than 25 years, the Dream Act, climate, and even police reform. The governing body tackled fundamental issues facing our country because the Chamber was filled with people who had front row experience to government failures. Juxtaposed to a Senate where the diversity is lacking and the blueprint languished in a body not clamoring for change because it is the status quo.

Now imagine if Harvard reflected our rich diversity. The research around racial inequities and disparities found in institutions could be tackled whether in science, literature, law technology or design in the same meaningful way and they could be solved. Alleviating not only the pain of millions but helping us to achieve the promise of more equitable, just union.

**3. What do you think Harvard's role should be in creating a more equitable, inclusive, and just society? For example, please share any thoughts on divestment from fossil fuels and the prison industry and on the role of the Harvard University Police Department, issues of concern to current students.**

For too long institutions, either because of implicit bias or by design, have failed to address systemic racism and failed to curb climate attitudes that can no longer be ignored. The sheer size of Harvard's endowment and the University's prestige can dictate where other universities and pensions invest thus leading to a more equitable society and cleaner planet. Placing investment bets should focus on cleaning up our planet (though not through geo-engineering). Aside from divesting from fossil fuels and the prison industrial complex, Harvard should include - if it hasn't already - divestment from for-profit immigrant detention facilities, a multi-billion dollar industry that houses the most vulnerable who lack a political voice.

When it comes to the issues of policing, the external review of Harvard Police commissioned by the University is a good starting point but should go further. At Voto Latino, we participated in Obama's 21 Century Policing Taskforce. We were asked to testify on behalf of the community. A deep believer that our community who are on the frontlines of policing held solutions to tough problems, we surveyed our audience and their concerns and recommendations. Their responses served as my testimony that was ultimately incorporated into the final recommendations to the President. Similarly, a

commission of students, past alumni, faculty and experts should serve as advisors to the University policing policy on an ongoing basis.

**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?**

As a member of the Planned Parenthood National Board, I was the sole Latina in a 32 executive board. I joined the nominating committee and when my tenure expired eight years later, there were five members who were Latinx serving. This was particularly important because over 30% of those they served were Latinas. I play a similar role for the Council on Foreign Relations and as a Search Committee member for Emily's List as it embarks to change its leadership.

Voto Latino's true north is intersectionality and inclusion whether at the ballot box or through unique programs addressing issues of exclusion whether encouraging young people to vote and run for office, demanding [diversity in our newsrooms](#) or even in Silicon Valley. When in 2014 the tech industry claimed they couldn't find people of color talent, Voto Latino Foundation launched the [VL Innovators](#), a \$500,000 seed funding challenge in partnership with the MacArthur Foundation to address diversity and inclusion in technology, becoming the first tech incubator targeting Latinos. (Of the seven winners, two were later recognized by *Forbes* 30 under 30.)

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

Yes, it would be a priority and should be made a condition for serving on the Board of Overseers.