



COALITION FOR A DIVERSE HARVARD

December 11, 2019

Dear President Bacow,

We write to second the student and faculty distress at the tenure denial of Professor Lorgia Garcia Peña. You have said that you are "not the enemy" of Ethnic Studies. Please explain then why you and Provost Garber would reject, through an ad hoc process, the tenure candidacy put forward by the FAS of a renowned Ethnic Studies scholar who is an important academic mentor to countless already-marginalized students—in a moment in which Ethnic Studies, faculty diversity, and meeting students' curricular needs are stated priorities of the FAS.

We would also like to point out that the students and alumni who have most strongly defended race-conscious admissions—some of whom testified in court, to Harvard's great benefit—are the same students and alumni who are fighting fiercely for Ethnic Studies. This is no coincidence. It is through their exposure to Ethnic Studies that they have learned about historic, systemic inequities in our society, including how students are denied access to quality education according to their background. It is through Ethnic Studies that they have learned that the struggles of the disempowered are linked and that building coalitions is the strongest way forward.

We are alarmed that the Ethnic Studies program now seems in jeopardy. We stand with the protesters in their calls for a response and an explanation. Furthermore, we ask that you be the first to send, as Dean Gay requests of the FAS community, "an unambiguous message" that Harvard is ready to "create the strongest and most successful" Ethnic Studies program in the nation. If we are to rally around such a message, we must hear it from you first.

Jane Sujen Bock AB '81, Jeannie Park AB '83, Kristin R. Penner AB '89, & Michael Williams AB '81
Directors, Coalition for a Diverse Harvard

Below is a letter we have sent to Dean Gay in response to her community message:



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Dear Dean Gay,

Thank you for forwarding to us your message to the FAS community. We appreciate your strong words of support for Ethnic Studies and the additional context around your belief that it is through the hiring of faculty that an Ethnic Studies program must be built.

We find it very hard, however, to join you in putting our faith entirely in the hiring of faculty when the faculty can so easily be overruled and disregarded, as evidenced by recent events. The tenure denial of Prof. García Peña through an ad hoc review initiated by the President and overseen by the Provost—after she was moved forward by her department colleagues and by the FAS—has damaged our confidence in the University's commitment to Ethnic Studies, to say the least. Harvard's refusal to directly acknowledge and address this issue magnifies the damage. Without clear institutional support from the very top of the University, the "unambiguous message that the FAS is ready to embrace ethnic studies" that you ask us to support feels hollow.

Beyond that, we are alarmed to hear doubts from faculty and students about the direction of the cluster search process—even more so now with Prof. García Peña's departure from the search committee—and whether the committee's charge truly addresses the core academic underpinnings of Ethnic Studies. As we previously [wrote](#) to you and the search committee, it is critical that Harvard hire faculty whose work fits within an Ethnic Studies framework, and not just scholars who study race or migration more broadly. The fact that 65 undergrads are now minoring in Ethnic Studies, while 20 have declared a field of study in Ethnic Studies in History and Literature, is due to years of voluntary leadership and labor by such scholars as Professors Ju Yon Kim, Mayra Rivera Rivera, Genevieve Clutario and Lorgia García Peña. The loss of faculty like Professors Clutario and García Peña not only diminishes the important contributions of all of Harvard's Ethnic Studies scholars, but also sends Harvard's tenuous Ethnic Studies program into a hole that the four new hires could only begin to fill. We fear further losses, as we hear that remaining faculty are questioning whether Harvard is a place for them and intend to look for more supportive academic homes.



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We are concerned that the negative impact of recent faculty losses on the cluster search process is being ignored. In order for Harvard to reverse the message that leading Ethnic Studies scholars around the country have received—that the University is undermining Ethnic Studies—we urge Harvard to publicly:

- Commit to hiring four *senior, tenured* Ethnic Studies scholars whose responsibilities will include building an Ethnic Studies structure, in which they will have full or partial lines.
- Commit to providing proper resources to build a new academic program, including adequate funding to create a new department, paid time for faculty to work on its development, and an intergenerational community of students and scholars dedicated to Ethnic Studies.
- Reverse Prof. García Peña's tenure denial.
- Express support for the few remaining faculty who teach Ethnic Studies, for the foundational work they have already contributed over many years, and for the value of their expertise in the search for new faculty and the shaping of the new program.
- Immediately contact all applicants who have applied for the cluster positions, many of whom we understand have received no communication from Harvard since applying in September, to share with them the University's commitments.

As you know, we have believed fervently in the need for Ethnic Studies ever since some of us arrived at Harvard four decades ago and found virtually no curriculum to help us understand and explore the world we see and know.

We are unambiguous in our belief that the lack of Ethnic Studies continues to be a serious disservice to our students and to Harvard's standing as an academic institution that builds leaders. We stand behind the students' protests.

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