



HARVARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING 2021

Friday, June 4, 2021

ORDER OF PROGRAM

Welcome by the President of the
Harvard Alumni Association

John J. West Jr. MBA '95

Volunteer acknowledgment
by the Harvard Alumni Association
Executive Director and
Associate Vice President

Philip W. Lovejoy

First Vice President of the
Harvard Alumni Association

Vanessa W. Liu AB '96, JD '03

Chief Marshal of the 25th Reunion

Anurima Bhargava AB '96

Presentation of the 2020 and
2021 Harvard Medals by the
President of Harvard University

Lawrence S. Bacow JD '76,
MPP '76, PhD '78

“Radcliffe, Now We Rise to Greet Thee”

Report to the Alumni

Lawrence S. Bacow

Address by the Annual Meeting Speaker

Kevin Young AB '92

“Fair Harvard”

THE 2020 HARVARD MEDAL RECIPIENTS

The Harvard Medals have been given by the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) since 1981 in recognition of extraordinary service to the University.

DAVID L. EVANS

Having served Harvard with distinction for over five decades, David L. Evans retired as senior admissions officer in September of 2020. Known for his effective communication and humor, Evans has acted as a mentor, advocate, and friend for Harvard students since he began his career on campus.

Evans's tireless recruitment efforts have reinforced Harvard's mission of excellence and helped to create a more inclusive and diverse College. Participating in the selection of 50 classes, Evans has recruited from California to Connecticut, ensuring that students from all backgrounds gained the same chance at higher education.

Raised in Phillips County, Arkansas, Evans earned degrees in electrical engineering from Tennessee State University and Princeton University. While working in Huntsville, Alabama, on the Saturn-Apollo project in the late 1960s, Evans began recruiting African American high school students for admittance into some of the nation's top universities. The media attention his work garnered led Harvard College Admissions to offer him a job in 1970.

Evans has served as an advisor to the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations since its inception in 1981. At the Harvard Alumni Association Black Alumni Weekend in 2003, the David L. Evans Scholarship Fund was announced—its original \$250,000 target soared to over \$1 million within three years. In 2016, referencing Evans as “the best of Harvard,” the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research awarded him the W. E. B. Dubois Medal.

LEILA T. FAWAZ AM '72, PHD '79

Leila T. Fawaz has been unwavering in her dedication to Harvard. As a member of the Board of Overseers from 1996 to 2012—including a term as president—she demonstrated an ability to build consensus, serving on its executive committee, chairing the social sciences committee, and leading the subcommittee on visitation. A former Carnegie Scholar, Leila was also a member of visiting committees at the College, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

From 2009 to 2016, Fawaz was an Overseer member of the Harvard Alumni Association Committee to Nominate Overseers and Elected Directors, chairing the committee in 2016. In 2014, the Harvard Arab Alumni Association presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognizes alumni who have

made “distinctive achievements in promoting cultural, scientific, social, economic, or political development in the Arab region.”

Born in Sudan to Greek-Orthodox Lebanese parents and raised in Lebanon, Fawaz studied history at the American University of Beirut. She continued her studies at Harvard, receiving an AM in 1972 and a PhD in 1979, and joined the Tufts University faculty. In 1994, she became chair of the history department, and from 1996 to 2001, she was the dean of arts and humanities and associate dean of faculty. Fawaz is now the Issam M. Fares Professor of Lebanese and Eastern Mediterranean Studies at Tufts. In 2012, she was named a Chevalier in the French National Order of the Legion of Honour.

JOSEPH J. O'DONNELL AB '67, MBA '71

Joseph J. O'Donnell has been referred to as a “Harvard treasure” and one of its most inspiring volunteers. His Harvard tenure includes service as a member of the Harvard Corporation and the Board of Overseers, where he served on and chaired numerous committees, and as director of the HAA Board of Directors.

When The Harvard Campaign was launched in 2013, O'Donnell was tapped to co-chair what would become the largest capital campaign in the history of American higher education. O'Donnell has also demonstrated his commitment to the University in his role on the Harvard College Fund Executive Committee and as honorary co-chair of the Harvard Graduate School of Education Campaign. In addition, O'Donnell has served on the Allston Work Team and chaired many College and Harvard Business School (HBS) reunions.

For over three decades, O'Donnell has also dedicated his philanthropic efforts to cystic fibrosis research, establishing the Joey Fund in 1986 after losing his own son, Joey, to the disease.

Growing up in Everett, Massachusetts, O'Donnell enrolled in Harvard College in 1963 on a full scholarship and excelled in football and baseball. He would later go on to endow the baseball coach position and fund what is now known as O'Donnell Field.

Upon earning his MBA in 1971, O'Donnell joined HBS's administration as associate dean of students before establishing a food service management company for sports and entertainment venues. O'Donnell now serves as chair of a nationwide leader in food service, while continuing to serve Harvard in numerous ways.

THE 2021 HARVARD MEDAL RECIPIENTS

WALTER K. CLAIR AB '77, MD '81, MPH '85

A deeply committed leader and mentor, Walter Clair has strengthened collaboration across Harvard's Schools and supported generations of students. As a member of the University's Board of Overseers from 2009 to 2016, he served as vice chair, led several visiting committees, and served on many others, including those to the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Harvard Medical School, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He was also a member of the Joint Committee for Alumni Affairs and Development from 2011 to 2015, helping to foster lasting connections with Harvard alumni. Prior to that, he served as an Elected Director of the HAA and chair of its Awards Committee.

The executive medical director of the Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute from 2015 to 2021, Clair now serves as professor of clinical medicine at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and is vice chair for diversity and inclusion in the Department of Medicine.

Throughout his career, he has dedicated his efforts to supporting students of color, including through his work with the nonprofit mentoring program 100 Black Men of Middle Tennessee, which seeks to enhance educational and economic opportunities for young Black males.

Clair attended St. Mark's School in Southborough, Massachusetts, later receiving its Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2013. He currently serves as a trustee. At Harvard, where he earned his bachelor's and professional degrees, he was a nonresident tutor and premedical advisor in Leverett House.

The winner of an HAA Award for outstanding volunteer service in 2016, he has previously served as an executive committee member and alumni interviewer for the Harvard Club of Middle Tennessee.

NANCY-BETH GORDON SHEERR AB '71

A passionate Harvard volunteer and proud alumna of Radcliffe College, Nancy-Beth Gordon Sheerr has devoted her time, energy, and talent to advancing Harvard's mission. As chair of the Radcliffe College Board of Trustees from 1990 to 1999, she was instrumental in the successful Harvard-Radcliffe merger and the creation of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, where she continues to serve on the Dean's Advisory Board.

Her longtime dedication to Harvard is also marked by decades in service to the HAA. Gordon Sheerr chaired the Awards Committee, Schools and Scholarships Committee, and the HAA Recent Graduates Committee, and she helped drive initiatives focused on leading and inspiring volunteers, bolstering Clubs and Shared Interest Groups (SIGs), and promoting organizational

problem-solving. In addition, she was an HAA regional director for the Greater Delaware Valley from 2006 to 2010 and an HAA appointed director for Radcliffe from 1972 to 1974. She was recognized with an HAA Award in 2010.

Deeply involved in her Class and local Harvard activities, she is past president and longtime board member of the Harvard-Radcliffe Club of Philadelphia, an active class reunion committee member, and past president of the Harvard-Radcliffe Class of 1971.

Gordon Sheerr graduated cum laude from Radcliffe College, where she studied social relations, and received her master's in psychology from Columbia University in 1978. A former senior financial advisor at Veritable LP, she serves as an independent trustee for families and the Value Line Funds. She is also a former trustee and chair of the Baldwin School Board.

PRESTON N. WILLIAMS PHD '67

Preston Noah Williams has dedicated his life to working for social and racial justice and supporting belonging and inclusion of all scholars and students at the University. The first tenured African American member of the Harvard Divinity School (HDS) faculty and the first to lead HDS when he was acting dean from 1974 to 1975, he was also the founding director of Harvard's W. E. B. DuBois Research Institute.

Now the Houghton Professor of Theology and Contemporary Change Emeritus at HDS, Williams is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Washington and Jefferson College, earning his bachelor of divinity at Johnson C. Smith University and his master of sacred theology from Yale Divinity School. He taught at three historically Black colleges and served as associate chaplain at Pennsylvania State University.

After completing his doctorate at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, he taught at Boston University, serving as the Martin Luther King Jr. Professor of Theology. In 1971, he became the Houghton Professor of Theology and Contemporary Change at HDS, chairing the Ethics Department from 1977 to 1980. He led efforts for the inclusion of African American religion in the curriculum, incorporating African religions into HDS's Center for the Study of World Religions and improving services to students of color. He was an associate at Mather House from 1973 to 2018.

In recognition of his service, Williams was awarded the Harvard Foundation Medal for Intercultural and Race Relations, the W. E. B. DuBois Medal, the Black Alumni/ae Network Award, and the Peter J. Gomes STB '68 Memorial Honor. HDS also established the Preston N. Williams Black Alumni/ae Award in his honor.

THE 2021 ANNUAL MEETING SPEAKER

KEVIN YOUNG AB '92

Kevin Young is the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. As the nation's largest museum dedicated to telling the African American story, the 19th and newest museum in the Smithsonian complex welcomes 2 million annual visitors and engages an international audience through world-class online programming and digital access to its collections.

Prior to joining the Smithsonian, Young served as the director of the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture from 2016 to 2021, where he oversaw significant increases to its funding, archive acquisitions, and visitor reach. A professor for two decades, he began his career in museums and archives at Emory University in 2005, first as curator of the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library and later as the curator of Literary Collections, while serving as Candler Professor of English and Creative Writing.

An award-winning author of 13 books of poetry and prose, Young is the poetry editor of the *New Yorker*, where he also hosts the poetry podcast. Young's most recent works include *Brown* (2018) and *Bunk: The Rise of Hoaxes, Humbug, Plagiarists, Phonies, Post-Facts & Fake News* (2017), which was longlisted for the National Book Award and a National Book Critics Circle Award; both were named *New York Times* Notable Books. Other noteworthy titles include *Blue Laws: Selected & Uncollected Poems 1995–2015* (2016), longlisted for the National Book Award; *Book of Hours*

(2014), winner of the Lenore Marshall Prize; and his nonfiction debut, *The Grey Album: On the Blackness of Blackness* (2012), which won the PEN Open Award and was named a *New York Times* Notable Book. His third poetry collection, *Jelly Roll: a blues* (2003), was a finalist for both the National Book Award and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize.

Young is also the editor of nine volumes, most recently the anthology *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song*, released in fall 2020 from Library of America. The collection was named one of the best books of 2020 by the *New York Times Book Review*, *Esquire*, *TIME*, *The Atlantic*, *Good Morning America*, *O, the Oprah Magazine*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Shelf Awareness*, *Lit Hub*, and Barnes & Noble. The *New York Times* called it "monumental and rapturous;" NPR's "Fresh Air" named it "the year's most revelatory book;" and *TIME* magazine describes it as "a document both breathtaking and inspiring, historical and personal."

Young holds a bachelor of arts from Harvard College and a master of fine arts from Brown University. He has held a Stegner Fellowship in Poetry at Stanford, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, and an NEA fellowship. Director Young is active across the art and cultural community. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and was named a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2020.

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