PRESS ADVISORY

(For Immediate Release)
Contact Donald M. Solomon (603) 358-6067

THREE TO RUN FOR HARVARD BOARD OF OVERSEERS
ON PLATFORM OF DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Two distinguished Harvard graduates joined the first African­
American president of the Harvard Law Review to run as petition
candidates for the Harvard University Board of Overseers.

Barack Obama, president of the Harvard Law Review and a member
of the Harvard Law School class of 1991, will be joined by
F. Forrester Church, Senior Minister of the Unitarian Church of All
Souls in New York City, and Nadine Strossen, general counsel of the
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), as candidates for the
Overseers, one of Harvard's two governing boards. They are
sponsored by Harvard and Radcliffe Alumni/ae Against Apartheid
(HRAAA), which has successfully campaigned for four of the 30
Overseers now sitting, on a platform emphasizing HRAAA's commitment
to diversity and social responsibility at Harvard. All three
candidates are committed to infusing Harvard with social
responsibility and moving it toward greater faculty and student
diversity. In addition, these candidates will work toward greater
openness in governance affairs at Harvard, hoping to lessen the
secrecy that dominate such events as the presidential selection
process which occurred this year.

The Board of Overseers is one of two governing boards at
Harvard University. The smaller board, called the Corporation, consists of seven members who meet frequently to review the policies of the president, and who choose their own successors. By contrast, the Board of Overseers consists of thirty members who meet only seven times a year and are nominated and elected by Harvard alumni. The Overseers generally exercise a veto power over major decisions of the Corporation, and supervise the visiting committees who keep track of the performance of the University’s academic departments and graduate schools.

Each year, five Overseers are elected for a six-year term. An official slate, generally of eight candidates, is nominated by the Harvard Alumni Association, and alternative candidates may be nominated by petition of a sufficient number of alumni. All graduates of Harvard University or any of its schools are eligible to vote, except for those currently holding a faculty or administrative appointment from Harvard.

In 1989, alumni elected HRAAA-sponsored candidate Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa to the thirty-member Board, joining three HRAAA candidates elected in previous years. With over 13% of the current Overseers thus pledged to social responsibility issues, the new candidates hope to form a working minority capable of raising these issues for discussion by the entire Board.

Petitions placing the five candidates on the Spring election ballot have been circulated among HRAAA’s more than 2000 members and supporters. In early April, the University will mail the ballots to the almost 170,000 graduates in all parts of the world. The results of the election will be announced at Commencement on June 6, 1991.

HRAAA has supported petition candidates for the Board of

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Overseers since 1985. Formed primarily to address Harvard’s refusal to participate in the divestment of South Africa-related assets, HRAAA’s members in 1990 formally voted to expand its mission to include all areas of social responsibility, as well as campus diversity — an issue whose importance has been highlighted by waves of student activism protesting the lack of attention to the Afro-American Studies Department and seeking greater faculty diversity in the Law School.

In a December article in the Harvard Crimson, HRAAA Executive Director Donald M. Solomon called on Harvard’s next president to adopt a university policy to address diversity and social responsibility. This would contrast with Harvard’s slow and inadequate response to the calls for South African divestment from 1985 to 1990. During those years, the value of Harvard’s South African portfolio declined to about $170 million, but in the first half of 1990, the portfolio value increased by some 32%. Solomon now says "Harvard must bear the burden of having failed to pull its oar in the fight for justice in South Africa. Our task is to convince the president and the Overseers to encourage social responsibility in the future, both for its own sake and to enrich the lives and work of Harvard’s graduates."

Solomon announced that HRAAA will send a mailing to more than 50,000 Harvard and Radcliffe graduates in an effort to bring out a large vote for diversity and social responsibility. In recent years, between 20% and 25% of the eligible voters have returned their ballots to Harvard in time to be counted.

More information about the three candidates follows:

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F. Forrester Church
Minister, theologian and writer

Forrest Church is serving in his thirteenth year as Senior Minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City. He received his bachelor’s degree at Stanford University in 1970, and received master’s and doctoral degrees in theology at the Harvard Divinity School in 1974 and 1978, respectively. Dr. Church has written or edited 15 books, including Father and Son: A Personal Biography of Senator Frank Church of Idaho, and a number of theological works. He spent two years as a weekly columnist for the Chicago Tribune (1987-88) and has written weekly op-ed columns for the New York Post. He also served two terms at Dartmouth College in 1989 as Montgomery Fellow and visiting professor.

Dr. Church is listed in Who’s Who in America. Three of his addresses have been selected for inclusion in the annual anthology, Representative American Speeches, and Bill Moyers included an interview with him in Moyers’ A World of Ideas. He is a member of the boards of the Union Theological Seminary and of the Council on Economic Priorities.

Church was born in 1948 in Boise, Idaho, son of the late Senator Frank Church. He is married, with two children.
Barack H. Obama
Law student, community activist

Barack Obama is a member of the class of 1991 at the Harvard Law School. He was elected in 1990 as the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review by his fellow editors at the Review, the oldest and most prestigious law journal in the United States. The president is responsible for managing a Law Review staff of 70 student editors, who produce and edit legal scholarship known for its accuracy and frequently cited by the United States Supreme Court.

Obama's background has influenced him to view his position as the source of a social responsibility to help the less fortunate. Born in Hawaii, the son of a Kenyan economist and an American anthropologist, Obama moved to Indonesia at a young age and became aware of Third World poverty at close range. After graduating from Columbia University, he became director of the Developing Communities Project, a grassroots, church-based community development organization in Chicago's Far South Side. During his four years in Chicago, Obama trained leaders of local churches and community groups to work together to renovate housing, streets and parks, establish training programs for youth and unemployed, and improve the performance of public education.

Obama writes and speaks on issues of race, the law, and community revitalization, and currently serves as a consultant for a number of community development corporations. He is currently writing a book, Journeys in Black and White, to be published in 1992.
Nadine Strossen
Law professor, civil liberties leader

Nadine Strossen’s professional accomplishments reflect her deep concerns with individual freedom and social responsibility. She is both a professor of law at New York Law School (since 1988) and general counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (since 1986). Her legal expertise is focused on issues of constitutional law, academic freedom and civil and human rights, including the responsibility of business in the human rights arena.

Strossen has published widely in legal journals, and lectures frequently around the world on human rights and civil liberties. She is a member of the Executive Committees of ACLU and Human Rights Watch; Vice Chair of Asia Watch; and a member of the boards of Middle East Watch, the National Coalition against Censorship, the Fund for Free Expression, and the Coalition to Free Soviet Jews. She has participated in over a half dozen human rights missions to Asian and Middle Eastern nations.

Strossen graduated from Radcliffe College in 1972 and Harvard Law School in 1975. While a Harvard Law student, Strossen was a Freshman Proctor and Advisor. Following law school, Strossen practiced corporate law for ten years in Minneapolis and New York. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Radcliffe Club of Minnesota, and is a member of the Harvard Club of New York City.