Dear HRAAA Member:

At an all-day meeting yesterday in New York of the HRAAA Executive Committee, it was agreed that the time has come officially to broaden our mission as an organization, in recognition of which it was agreed that the title of HRAAA should be changed. The new name proposed by the Executive Committee is:

HRAAA
A Movement for Diversity and Social Responsibility

HRAAA began, five years ago, as an ad hoc effort by three West Coast graduates to bring the issue of divestment before the Harvard-Radcliffe alumni/ae, through the device of running candidates for the Board of Overseers. We have been successful beyond our wildest dreams in the Overseers' elections. There are now four Overseers elected by HRAAA: Gay Seidman, Consuela Washington, Peter Wood, and Desmond Tutu. In addition, our efforts have forced Harvard to nominate a number of progressive candidates, several of whom have been elected to the Board.

Nevertheless, despite our successes and the dramatic changes in the world situation, Harvard has refused to join the universal struggle against Apartheid by embracing the principle of divestment. During the same five years, Harvard's performance in the areas of minority recruitment and retention of faculty, recruitment of minority students, treatment of its professional staff, and interaction with its Cambridge environment has grown steadily worse. At this very moment, the Afro-American Studies Department is in shambles, with five senior offers rejected, junior faculty leaving, and virtually no instructional staff remaining. Professor Derrick Bell of the Law School, in a desperate effort to force Harvard to take steps to remedy the grotesque racial and gender imbalance of its faculty, has announced his intention of inflicting upon himself the immense hardship of an unpaid leave of absence until the Law School appoints a woman of color to a tenured position there. The percentage of Black students in the undergraduate body has actually diminished in the past five years!

As HRAAA has grown, you have made it clear in letters and personal comments that you want this organization not merely to broaden its official agenda, which actually happened several years ago, but systematically to extend the scope of its activities to include a wide spectrum of issues of diversity and social responsibility in the Harvard community, while maintaining constant pressure on the Harvard Administration to carry out a divestment policy.

We propose to continue running candidates for the Board of Overseers, choosing them explicitly for their commitment to an agenda of diversity and social responsibility, as well as for their commitment to divestment and their talents and abilities as potential Overseers. At the same time, to the extent that it is organizationally possible, we propose to extend our activities to include systematic liaison with campus student and faculty groups, expanded Commencement Week involvement, and broadened educational efforts in the alumni/ae community.

Accordingly, the Executive Committee recommends the following motion:
ENCOURAGED by our past success in building a Harvard-Radcliffe alumni/alumnae movement for divestment, and
MINDFUL of Nelson Mandela’s call for renewed pressure on the South African Government, and
RESPONDING to calls from our membership for a broadened organizational agenda

BE IT HEREBY PROPOSED THAT

1. The name of this organization be changed to Harvard-Radcliffe Alumni/alumnae Against Apartheid - A Movement for Diversity and Social Responsibility;

2. This organization continue its efforts to elect progressive members of the Board of Overseers who are committed to the policy of divestment;

3. This organization broaden the scope of its activities to include support in the Harvard-Radcliffe community of all those working for diversity and social responsibility in every sector of the operations of Harvard and Radcliffe, including student, faculty, and staff recruitment and retention, curriculum, development of a distinguished Afro-American Studies Department, humane labor and neighborhood relations, and corporate responsibility,

ALL IN FULFILLMENT of our commitment to articulate a progressive moral vision of the university in contemporary society.

Please use the enclosed ballot form to indicate your approval or disapproval of this motion, and to tell us in what ways you would be willing to help us carry out this new, more ambitious program.

COMMENCEMENT DAY MEETING

As in past years, we shall be holding a Commencement Day meeting of HRAAA, to which you are all most eagerly invited. We shall meet from Noon until 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 7th, at the University Lutheran Church, 66 Winthrop Street, Cambridge. At that time, we shall announce the results of this year’s Overseers election, and discuss our plans for the future. HRAAA will provide coffee and tea. Bring a bag lunch.

See You On Commencement Day,

Robert Paul Wolff
Executive Director