

Garza gathers with children from Henry Street's early-childhood education program.



The stalwart block of red-brick structures stands out today, architecturally and symbolically, amid a new reality: rapid gentrification. That “tale of two cities” slogan New York City mayor Bill de Blasio ran on in 2013? Garza notes: “Here, it’s the tale of a block.”

Median household incomes in Garza’s community district (which also includes the East Village and Chinatown) already range from \$17,000 to \$130,000—the second-largest gap in the city. More than a quarter of its 165,000 residents (and 45 percent of its children) live in poverty, which is \$25,750 for a

family/household of four, under federal guidelines. But that “archaic” rate structure, Garza says, is not adjusted for inflation and “grossly understates what it means to be income-insecure or self-sufficient” in Manhattan. THE HIGH COST of living, and shrinking affordable housing options, are compounded by the thousands of new market-rate housing units available through recently completed, approved, and pending condominium towers, he says. Walking toward the organization’s single-parent family shelter, Garza points to a new, glass-clad Extell Development skyscraper that overlooks the East River, dwarfing the Manhattan Bridge. Units are currently listed at between \$1.24 million and \$6.6 million, with amenities like a fitness center and spa with a saltwater pool, a bowling alley and theater, and cigar and wine rooms. Marketers tout the area—where the median household income directly around the tower is \$30,000, and about 30

percent of the people live below the poverty line—as “glamour and grandeur meet graffiti and grit in this proud home to avant-garde galleries, cutting-edge boutiques, and trailblazing bars.”

Garza notes that the developers also built an adjacent 13-story building of units for people earning 60 percent of the area median income, as part of the approval process. But he considers that a minimal benefit, especially since the City Planning Commission in December approved three more adjacent luxury towers in that Two Bridges section, despite local opposition. Garza, who still lives in the Brooklyn apartment building where he grew up with two siblings and a single mother, testified against it, and keeps an image of the towers on his phone “because I look at it, and I get a little nauseous,” he says. “The commission’s big defense was that it’s legal to do what they’re doing. And my perspective is that just ‘cause it’s legal doesn’t make it right. I mean, it used to be legal to own someone else.”

The settlement is a service agency, but because of the recognized affordable-housing crisis, which affects his constituents and offends his own sense of rootedness, Garza has made advocating for housing a top 2019 priority, and held a community town meeting

Alumni Association Honors Clubs and Shared Interest Groups

THE HONORS, awarded at the Harvard Alumni Association’s winter meeting in February, celebrate alumni who have made exceptional contributions to their clubs, and Shared Interest Groups (SIGs) that have significantly improved or developed new programs to contribute to the growth and sustainability of their local alumni communities.

As president of the 6,000-member Harvard Asian American Alumni Alliance (H4A), Jeannie Park ’83 continues the work that she began as an undergraduate: organizing and inspiring the University’s multiple Asian populations. In 2010, she co-chaired the inaugural Harvard Asian Alumni Summit, which drew more than 400 alumni spanning six decades and all of Harvard’s schools. Since then, Park has also been instrumental in hosting two more H4A summits. More recently, she has shown characteristic leadership and diplomacy in listening to alumni of all backgrounds regarding the current admissions lawsuit, and collaborating with multiple alumni groups to support diversity at Harvard.

In just two years as president of the Harvard Club of Miami, Jeff Bartel ’88, a business leader and philanthropist, has overseen exceptional club growth. He has dedicated time, energy, and financial support to the endeavor, working with members

to triple the size of the membership, increase financial stability, and more effectively gather and communicate with South Florida alumni. During 2018, the club hosted 10 events, including lectures, a Harvard-Yale Game party, and a community-service panel discussion on college and career advice, which took place at a local high school.

Although the 10 board members of the Harvard University Club of Brazil represent six schools and seven programs, they are united in their mission of engaging and strengthening the Brazilian alumni community. Within the last 18 months, the board has reinstated regular meetings, organized the membership process, and hosted events that attracted hundreds of participants. The club also partnered with the Brazil office of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies to conduct a Harvard-Brazil Impact Survey to better serve local alumni.

During the last two decades, Harvardwood has grown from a trio of arts-focused alumni into a thriving SIG of more than 10,000 members in chapters across the country, as well as in England and Canada. The organization has organized myriad events, workshops, and social and networking gatherings for students, alumni, and other Harvard affiliates exploring, or already working in, the arts, media, and entertainment sectors. Harvardwood runs mentorship and summer internship programs, along with its Harvardwood 101 project, which sponsors undergraduates in Los Angeles during Wintersession.