

# Voices From the Movement

**DOWN  
Magazine**



A Publication by and for  
Students of Color.

# A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This past week, no one has been able to ignore the issues facing students of color Yale's campus. The conversation about the Christakis Halloween email and SAE's "white girls only" policy has taken over online student forums, student inboxes, Facebook newsfeeds, and late night discussions.

Hear me when I say that this is because of the work done by women of color on this campus at the expense of their health, sanity, and GPAs. The fight has taken place on many platforms, but this zine is focusing on the movement on Facebook led by women of color to make sure that people could not ignore their voices, their pain, or the issues causing the pain.

Thanks to these women, most Yalies could not open Facebook without seeing heartfelt post after heartfelt post written by women of color, alums, or allies. These posts took over newsfeeds or at least broke up the soul-draining threads of people not understanding that what they are feeling is discomfort while what we are feeling is our feet slipping out from under us into an early grave. An environment was created on Facebook where public support needed to be timely and silence was unacceptable.

This zine has compiled different Facebook statuses written in the past week. When they are all together, these words leave no room for apathy, ignorance, or doubt. These words inspired me when I first saw them on my Newsfeed, and they will inspire the people who find them many years from now in the archive. No one will ever be able to forget that this has been a week of resilience.

Now again, in the words of the movement:

*we out here // we been here // we ain't leaving // we are loved*

- Elizabeth Spent, Editor-in-Chief of DOWN Magazine

**Women of Color**

Dara Huggins  
Taylor Eldridge  
Chelsey Clark  
Erika Hairston  
Karleh Wilson  
Eshe Sherley  
Ashia Ajani  
Fadeke Sarat Muraina  
Darby Henry  
Abby Johnson  
Daad Sharfi  
Ale Estrada  
Yuni Chang  
Titania Nguyen  
Emily Van Alst

**Alums**

Patricia Okonta  
Kristjiana Gong  
George Ramirez

**Allies**

Dave Harris  
Travis Brady  
Abdul Razak-Zachariah  
Cassandra Darrow  
Sophie Freeman

# WOMEN OF COLOR

**DARA HUGGINS**

Black women on this campus put in so much work, emotional, intellectual, & otherwise. I'm really proud of many of you. I'm confident that much of the change we see on campus (and in the broader world) will stem from you. You are, and have always been, heroines - often unsung, but forever valiant. Here's to you, ladies.

**TAYLOR ELDRIDGE**

I've been struggling to find ways to articulate what it has been like to be a Black woman at Yale. What it feels like to spend hours debating with administrators about the "legitimacy" of the safety threat posed by a man waving a gun in my face on campus; or what it feels like to have an administrator in your college tell you they "get it" because they "go to Africa all the time and are the only white person in the room for weeks"; or what it feels like to have to fight for weeks to get housing that was safe to live in while working a student job requiring on campus housing this summer; or what it feels like when white students in my seminars blatantly interrupt, ignore or try to talk over me when I speak; or when I greet members of my athletic team on the street, people I've seen every day for the past three years, and they think I'm a panhandler and ignore me; or when white friends and coaches think it's funny that they don't recognize me if I change my hair; or when those same people shrug as they put their hands in my hair without my permission because it looks "too cool not to touch"; or when people assume I am a custodian and ask me to clean up things they could easily do themselves; or when a white man violently contorts himself when we pass on the stairs to ensure that no part of us touches.

"All my life I'd heard people tell their black boys and black girls to 'be twice as good,' which is to say 'accept half as much.' These words would be spoken with a veneer of religious nobility, as though they evidenced some unspoken quality, some undetected courage, when in fact all they evidenced was the gun to our head and the hand in our pocket. This is how we lose our softness. This is how they steal our right to smile." - Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*.

To my sisters, in case no one has told you yet today: I see you. I hear you. You matter. You belong. I stand with you as we continue to refuse to accept half as much.

## **CHELSEY CLARK**

Now that I have officially survived strep throat, I have a few words.

One time at SAE, I was standing in a circle of white girls dancing to some undoubtedly horrible music when a member of the fraternity entered our circle with [liquid substance] in hand. He went around the circle, girl to girl, pouring into their mouths then stopped right before me and exited the circle without a word.

Later, I confided in a black friend, and he told me that I should make more of an effort to become friends with the guys so that they won't exclude me in the future.

I felt invisible, I felt unappreciated. And someone that I trusted convinced me that it was my fault.

One time at SAE, I was dancing with my friends to, again, whatever shitty music they were playing when I was shoved against the wall with my arms pinned above my head. I was kissed aggressively on my neck until I slipped away. No one seemed to notice.

Later, I confided in a black friend, and, without asking if I was ok, he asked me to point out the guy so he could fuck him up.

@Black brothers, why, when it comes to your black sisters, do you only know how to stay silent or make it about yourselves? Be there for us like we've been there for you.

@SAE, you're literally the only ones in disbelief that the events of this past weekend could've happened at your house.

@The black queens of Yale, keep radiating.

@Everyone talking about, writing about, and truly listening to what's been going on, you are an invaluable part of this process. Thank you for all the love.

@Everyone else, do better.

*Erika Hairston*

This incident sadly isn't surprising to me in the slightest. As I heard someone wisely say at the BSAY meeting last night, "This isn't the only incident like this that has occurred, it's the public one". As a Black Woman on this campus, I stopped attending specific frat parties because I personally did not feel safe nor welcomed. SAE is only just ONE example of this behavior, but now is a time for us to reevaluate ALL systems that work to exclude, devalue, and discriminate against Black Women.

Thank you to all of the strong Black Women who have spoken up, and those who have shown support. Feeling unwanted on certain college campuses isn't new to many minority students, but this publicly can be traumatizing. Please stand in solidarity and support with your fellow peers during this time and don't let the conversations end here. As Briana Burroughs calls us all to action, Say it: "I do not condone racism and misogyny, especially in fraternities. I said it. It's now your turn."

**KARLÉH WILSON**

So I started last weekend scared as hell because Halloween is always the worst. Where I am from, it is a time where people literally die. Halloween is not my holiday and it is not my culture but I decided to participate on my own terms this

year. But like, the storm that came through Yale has had me feeling some type of way as well as the rest of the Native women and Black women on this campus. I just want to say a few things.

1. The solidarity is unreal. I am so proud of people of color at Yale right now for coming through and having my back when the administration did not even though it could have.
2. Thank you to everyone who messaged me to see if I was okay or just to tell me that I am amazing. It's crazy how I had 39 unread messages in my inbox today and none of them were from Dean Hol-loway. #wheresdarasemail?
3. If you are not a person of color and we are friends and you have not asked me how I am holding up right now, you have T-minus 5 days to address me or you will be dismissed.
4. Being Black and Native sometimes feels like a double-edged sword. Halloween is the kind of time that reminds me of that. But the solidarity between the NACC and AFAM is incredible right now, and it is making me feel a little bit safer (but please believe that I am still not safe on this campus).
5. I finally got the chance to share my Yale experience with President Salovey today. I have told almost no one what I have been through at Yale until today. I told him the things that have hurt me the most while I have been here, and explained to him that these kinds of incidents can be avoided because they are the result of systematic racism and negligence of students of color on this campus. I will feel so betrayed and hurt if no changes come from this. My story is personal but it is not unique. I make Yale look like an amazing place so Yale has a responsibility to take care of me.
6. Last night I spoke to SAE and I said "Discrimination against a Yale by a Yale is nothing less than discrimination by Yale against Yale. Why should Yale be a place where self-hate is allowed?" If you are someone who wants to see Yale continue as it is with no repercussions for its racist injustices, then please know that you are someone who condones ignorance and self-hate.

Like my woman Lauryn Hill said, "You might win some, but you just lost one." And this one loss is really not an anomaly. It is the beginning of the end of the white-male tyranny that has reigned for far too long.

*ESHE SHERLEY*

I'm doing my senior thesis on the history of the Afro-American Cultural Center at Yale and there's death at every turn. To give one example, the men who founded the House - Don Ogilvie, Glen DeChabert, and Armstead Robinson - all died before they made it to seventy. One of their classmates did the numbers, and the black men in their class are dying much earlier on average than the white men.

White people will probably deny this like they do everything else. But I'm going to put it in writing anyway. The stakes of the discussions around Associate Christakis' email, around SAE, and around retention of faculty of color are your people of color colleagues' lives. Which is why these busted ass emails aren't enough.

Yale has a way of making all students (and I would guess faculty and staff as well) miserable. But the next time you look at a colleague or a classmate of color, know that they are not okay. That they probably struggled to get out of bed this morning. That they probably cried over their homework last night. That their body is physically reacting to the stress racism is putting them through. And know that unlike the struggles all of us go through at Yale, this one is completely unnecessary, and if you're white, you're most likely one of the people contributing to it.

Don't worry; it's a slow death. And we're gonna raise all hell while we're alive (though very unwell). But when I go to the early funerals of the classmates and faculty of color I love dearly, or when they go to mine, I will not just blame cancer, or heart disease, or mental illness. I will blame you.

And if you don't like that, then do something about it: remove Christakis as master, discipline SAE, do this racial insensitivity training. It's that simple.

*ASHIA AJANI*

Last night I attended a forum surrounded by wonderful people of color who are not afraid to vocalize their disgust and anger at discriminatory institutions and the people

who seek to uphold those institutions. This is what solidarity looks like.

I also want to give a special shout out to the women of color who stood alongside their black sisters as we continue to battle misogyny. Y'all are beautiful and so very important, and you have such a huge place in my heart.

For my people of color who remain silent on the issue: your sisters and brothers are hurting. Be there to comfort them. Take care of yourselves. But remember Audre Lorde's words: "your silence will not protect you."

For my white friends, whether you are part of a marginalized group or not: you have an obligation to speak out about oppressive systems. Your privilege helps you in ways you can't possibly fathom. Your silence on these issues is deafening. That being said, you don't get to speak over people of color. Listen to us when we speak.

I myself am trying to do better. We are all growing and learning. That is why we are here: to make this place a better, safer environment for future students. I know that when I leave this campus, I want to feel like I did something to improve it. I want to contribute to a space where people of color feel protected, loved and cherished.

*FADEKE SARAT MURAINA*

A poem by nayyirah waheed:  
my whole life  
i have  
ate my tongue  
ate my tongue  
ate my tongue  
i am so full of my tongue  
you would think speaking is easy  
but it is not.  
—for those who keep our lives in our mouths

We as black women and women of color have been silenced for so long that many of us had thought that we had lost our voices. At least I thought I had.

To the many women of color who have spoken out against the racist and sexist actions that have been perpetuated on this campus over the past couple of days (weeks, years...), thank you. To the women who have led the charge, (esp. Dean Nelson, Dara, Lex, Neema, Briana, the list goes on and on), thank you. In particular to YBWC, thank you for not only facilitating the community that brought these indictments to the forefront, but also being there to support us in its aftermath. In your voices, I have found my own. I do not know how I, or any other black woman on campus, would be making it through this without you all.

\*\*\*To all the people who missed essay deadlines, didn't study for exams, or skipped classes or meals because they are/were trying to repair the damage done by Erika, SAE, and the Yale administration, please take care of yourselves. We as a community have put the collective struggle over our own mental health and wellbeing for far too long. If you need to take a step back to collect yourself in the midst of all of this utter bullshit, please do so. You deserve the right to be vulnerable in this time. Know that other people of color are here to support you in any way possible.\*\*\*

To each and every person on campus who has reflected on their past actions and inactions in response to racism and sexism, thank you. Particularly, thank you to Dr. Davis who is one of the few, if not the only, head of a college to offer his ear to the people of color struggling right now. BUT, do not take this thanks as an end point; take this thanks as motivation, rather a demand, to speak out against racism and sexism in every space that you occupy. I do not have the privilege (or time or energy) to navigate most white spaces on campus. If your friend tries to side with Erika or SAE, call them out on it. Your silence tells them that you agree. Prove to me and the entire POC community that you are worthy of the name "ally."

To the people of color who have not lent their voices to the calls for change on campus (at the forum at the Af Am House, chalking on cross campus, etc.), please come to the Silliman Master's House (I hate that it's still called this, but that's a whole other conversation) at 12pm on Sunday. And make sure to let Erika Christakis know that you will be there (erika.christakis@yale.edu). In solidarity.

Dear White Friends,

First, I want to say that I love you. I love you, and though this letter is an indictment of a system that you all benefit from and perpetuate, my love for you and my desire for your freedom will never cease. However, I cannot say that I love you while allowing you to be blind to the injustice that exists in our world. I cannot say that I desire your freedom while allowing you to live in ignorance of the role you play in this injustice. To be free we must know of the chains that keep us shackled, and the large majority of our country has chosen not to see these chains for far too long now.

However, I have also chosen a road of willful ignorance for too many years, and this leads me to what I want to say next: I am sorry.

I'm sorry I laughed when you called me the "whitest" black person you knew, because it taught us that stereotypes were something to joke about, rather than a threat to the humanity of individuals. I'm sorry for every racist joke I've ever told or laughed at with you, because that taught us that comfort and humor were more important than justice and truth. I'm sorry I didn't say anything when you called those girls "ratchet" and "ghetto," because it taught us that those girls weren't worth my time and energy. I'm sorry for joking that I only got into Yale because I'm Black and Japanese, because it affirmed that people of color are only good for filling diversity quotas. I'm sorry I never told you that my great-great-grandfather was born a slave, and that I sometimes wonder how many lashes my privileged life is worth, because that allowed us to increase the distance between slavery and us. I'm sorry for never asking the principal of my white school where the other kids of color were, because it taught us that those kids weren't worth the questions. I'm sorry for not pushing back when you said you "aren't attracted to Black guys," because that allowed us to ignore the ways in which the brand of whiteness has corroded our notions of beauty. I'm sorry for every time that I said, "I can say it because I'm Black," because that served to legitimate everyone else's racism. I'm sorry for never telling you how much I hate that my name is English when I am of African and Japanese descent, because it allowed us to forget how often our country erases identities. I'm sorry for not speaking up when you said you agreed with the email sent by Erika Christakis, because my silence let you believe that you, and she, were right.

I'm sorry I never told you how often I wonder if you see me as slightly less of a human due to the color of my skin, because I want you to know how impossible it is to feel loved as a Black person in this country. And I am sorry that I have never told you that I love being Black, because I do, and it needs to be said.

I am not blameless, but at least I am not blind. I am coming to terms with my role in this system of oppression. Now I am asking you to do the same. Look around your own world and look inside of yourself. Find what you are doing, thinking, saying, feeling that allows this system of racism to keep thriving. Though this system for you may be like water to fish, this system is torture for us. As I listen to and watch my Black sisters fight here at Yale, I am held in complete awe and admiration of their strength, courage, and elegance; but humans were not made to spend their lives fighting. This fight is exhausting and painful, but we will do it until we create a world where our sons and daughters can grow up loved and free.

To be free we must know of the chains that keep us shackled. It's time to shake off the chains and join the fight.

With love,

Darby

*ABBY JOHNSON*

Dear little girl waiting for the train:

A letter (inspired by a recent train ride) to little black girls and all those who used to be little black girls

You are full with expectation

Waiting for a train to come

To go home, to go to school

To explore a new place.

At this moment, you know where you are going

But sometimes, there will be moments when the

Next

Destination

Is

Uncertain

Moments when you are not sure what lies ahead

But always remember that you are Loved

That weakness is not your inheritance

Your ancestors

Great-aunts

Grandmas

Mothers

Sisters

Cousins

Have bequeathed you strength

Although sometimes you may feel as frail as gossamer

Know that your Voice matters

Your Perspective matters

Your Experiences matter

Although sometimes you may feel burdened

Overwhelmed

Saddened

By the experiences of others

You may see yourself as a sponge—absorbing all that is of the world

The good

And

The bad

But don't grasp too tightly to the negative

Don't internalize the toxic

Expel it with your tears

Your SHOUTS

Your calls for change

Your actions.

Your life is a gift.

To all my sisters of color both at Yale and elsewhere: You are loved, continue to use your voices to speak out for yourselves and your communities!

To all the people who have reached out to offer support this week, I thank you!

*DAAD SHARFI*

“i love myself”  
the quietest,  
simplest  
most powerful  
revolution  
ever  
(-ism, nayyirah waheed)

Over the past few days, I’ve clung to these words like a lifeboat. I’ve made them my laptop background, I’ve saved them on my phone, I’ve filled my dorm room walls with post-it notes reminding me of them. I’ve even found myself scribbling them onto my hands when I grew restless in class.

To love yourself in a place that fails to respect your personhood is a miracle. To love yourself in a place where figures of authority exercise various platforms to diminish the pain felt when your culture is packaged, picked up and donned for a night of ridicule, is a miracle. To love yourself when there are people around you who honestly (and unironically) believe that there are “too many minorities” is a miracle. To love yourself in a place that supports speakers who crack jokes about genocide (speakers brought by the same program that only a year ago invited a notorious Islamaphobe to discuss my faith while dismissing Muslim students who felt physically uncomfortable and threatened by her presence) is a miracle. To love yourself when you are forced to turn pain into testimony because your voice is not deemed legitimate, is a miracle. To love yourself when your

Identity is intellectualized to the point where even your physical safety is rendered a “concept” up for discussion is a miracle.

Take a look around and you’ll see women of color (and more broadly people of color) performing miracles every day. Quietly, creatively, thoughtfully-but most importantly, lovingly. I am still trying to wrap my mind around the love, support and solidarity I witnessed among the Black women on campus, the women of color, the PoC community and the cultural centers. I have never felt my blackness, my womanhood and my person so intensely before. I owe that to the women who trusted us with their tears and stories-even though we have done little to deserve them. To the people who spent hours doing the emotional and psychological work, reliving their experiences just so others would even begin to fathom their struggle. To those who just LISTENED without waiting to weigh in, add on to, play devil’s advocate or piggyback off someone’s experience.

I have thought a lot about this and really I don’t hate Erika Christakis or her reckless email, I don’t hate SAE and I have no energy to expend on the Buckley Program anymore. If I hated everyone who in some way has made me question my place at Yale, if I hated every moment I had felt unworthy of this campus and other white spaces, if I hated every instance in which I perpetuated the same harmful sentiments by failing to stand up for my sisters and other minority students when their existence was put up for debate-I would not be able to get up in the morning.

And I need to get up. We need to be up because it doesn’t end with an email. The racism, misogyny and prejudice women and students of color experience here everyday is so deeply embedded in this institution and its history- an email, or two or a hundred of them filling my inbox will not dismantle these systemic problems. It is a start to acknowledge the existence of a problem but this must be followed by commitments, by institutional changes, by a strong student presence in the administrative bodies that will enact these changes and by accountability. It’s going to be a long haul and I probably won’t be around to see the big picture realized to its fullest but to keep fighting this long, exhausting fight we need to commit to the revolution of loving ourselves. Of reminding each other to love ourselves. Of loving each other.

You love yourself when you speak your truth even though every person in the room has reduced your words to heresy the moment you walked in. You love yourself when you hold your closest friends accountable for their silence and inaction. You love

yourself when you decide that today you would rather nap than be woman warrior. You love yourself even when you need to remind yourself to do so. You love yourself when you take care of the people around you and when you let them take care of you. You love yourself when you realize that you do not simply "belong here"-you are part and parcel of this place right now. You are necessary. You are indispensable to it. You are loved.

*ALE ESTRADA*

First and foremost, I would like to express, to all the powerful and beautiful women of color I have had the opportunity to know and those I have yet to know, that you are so immensely loved, respected, and appreciated. I want to thank you all for having the courage to share your stories and let your voices be heard unapologetically. You have inspired me and will forever continue to inspire me, and I could never thank you enough for that.

I would like to apologize for not speaking to the recent events on this campus until now and thank my dear friend, Ivetty, for kindly reminding me that "a time comes when silence is betrayal". I have been listening, thinking, and trying to figure out what to do or say to make those I love so dearly in my community who are hurting, who feel unsafe, and who will continue to fight, feel any better.

"The aim of this education is the cultivation of citizens with a rich awareness of our heritage to lead and serve in every sphere of human activity." That's part of the mission statement of Yale College. This education does not solely come from what we learn in lecture or section, but also from what we learn from our friends and peers and their heritage.

I would like to believe that we are all aware of the reality that people can never fully understand what they cannot experience. Yet, I refuse to accept that we should ever use this knowledge as an excuse to disregard or disrespect the experiences, opinions, and voices of others just because we know that they differ from and/or can never echo our own. I would like to encourage you to listen and discuss, to not mishear and to not dismiss, the voices of those around you. You may or may not agree with the opinions of others, but this does not inhibit you from listening nor does not diminish the worth of your own beliefs. I think these problems do not concern you or you

are incapable of doing anything: listen.

Lastly, I would like to please encourage you to not forget to be kind. Amidst all of this negativity, “it takes courage to be kind” not only to others, but also to ourselves. Please have the courage to be kind to one another. Please take time to care for yourself and your needs. Please be kind to and love yourself because that’s the first step we must take in order to heal.

Please let me know if I can do anything for you.

*YUNI CHANG*

@ asian and asian american yalies, what are we doing for our Black and Native and Latinx peers and sisters? what emotional, intellectual, material labor and resources are we investing in supporting the WOC who were and continue to be excluded, harassed, physically intimidated on halloweekend and every single day of the year? liberation is a shared web of fates, we have to center those that experience closest proximity to state/institutional violence, and our silence is **\*\*hurting people\*\***. we need to keep our cousins and each other in check.

*TITANIA NGUYEN*

I haven’t written anything so far because I hate trying to draw attention to my voice. There are so many people who have put what I want to say so much more clearly than I ever could.

But I also can’t stay silent.

First, I want to ask my fellow Asian Americans and Asians who feel similarly about this issue to say something. Because our silence hurts more than we know. Our silence implies our complicity in this system that hurts women of color especially, but people of color in general. Yes, that is a group that includes us. Because, as Bianca Li said, "I know that you are tired of explaining, but I also know that inertia and white fragility will take our silence as an excuse not to engage with our ideas and lived experiences. I

Hold myself responsible for educating others about the kyriarchy, especially when other minorities are exhausted from the effort of just being.”

Second, I want to give MY TAKE—not anyone else’s—on why this is an issue. Because I have the energy, because I have the time, because I want to explain why it’s so important even though it sucks that I or anyone else has to do it, because as a member of the model minority my burden is lighter to bear and I can take on the one of explaining this to people who don’t see this load, don’t understand why we’re crumpling under this weight, ask us why we can’t stand up.

—

cw: racism + violence

For a long, long time, it was fine for black people to be called n\*\*\*er in the street by white people who had the intention to hurt. It was fine for East Asians to be drawn as bucktoothed, kowtowing, homogeneous, backstabbing, sometimes inhuman monsters. It was fine for Natives to be killed and ridiculed in the same breath by Tweety Bird. It was fine for Latinx to be cartoonish, indistinguishable, evil robbers and thieves. It was fine for people to have signs up saying “No Colored People” on property, public and private.

If you’d tried to say anything about that, like “Hey, that’s messed up! You shouldn’t say that!”, people probably would have said that you were oppressing their free speech. In one sense, yes, they did have a right to free speech: free speech is literally just the right to say what you want and to not be retaliated against or censored BY THE GOVERNMENT. (This, obviously, comes with some exceptions, such as true threats, inciting lawless actions, and my favorite, “fighting words”.) But they didn’t have the right to demand that you listen. They didn’t have the right to not get flak for their actions. They didn’t have the right to make you not be angry.

Today, we are angry. We are angry at people who insist that our dignity is about “freedom of speech”. Because we, as a society, do not treat all ideas equally, and that’s okay. (Like, most people don’t take neo-Nazism seriously. That’s fine.)

What we’re trying to say is that wearing our cultures without appreciation is wrong, and wearing them with appreciation has a long historical burden that you need to respect.

What we’re trying to say is that women of color are beautiful and deserve to be included, accepted, and welcomed in every capacity that anyone else is.

What we're trying to say is that we deserve for people to respect our history in the same ways that other people's history is respected.

What we're trying to say is that we are here and that we deserve to be loved by the university that promised us a home.

This isn't about free speech. This was never about free speech. This is about having a real, honest dialogue about social norms and trying to change them. This is about thinking about how your actions impact others instead of being able to pretend like you didn't know. This is about equalizing our voices: if you won't hear us when we talk, when we ask for respect, then I guess we have to speak louder.

## ALUMS

*PATRICIA OKONTA*

To all of my beautiful sisters still at Yale, Micah, Eshe, Briana , Dara, Lex, Neema, Carlene, Rachel , Chelsey and ALL of the other melanin positive women who are facing this RELENTLESS backlash at what is suppose to be supportive university, your strength, determination to demand your voices be heard, and commitment to creating an empowering community on campus is truly illustrious. You are all phenomenal women. I love you, I support you, and I am SO PROUD of you.

What a burden it is to be black and a woman. Shame on our (former) friends and colleagues that are implicit in silencing us by refusing to support us, believe in us, and lighten our ever encumbering load. Willful ignorance is absolutely intolerable.

Please do not forget to provide yourself with love and self-care during these trying times.

*KRISTJIANA GONG*

In my office I have "so many books." Some of my students jokingly refer to it as a library, because my collection is diverse, and uniquely targeted at education about identity, social justice, and community building. Students borrow my books regularly.

Almost a quarter of one shelf is taken up by Toni Morrison novels. It's noticeable, so people comment on it often, usually with surprise.

I tell people that I took a class on Morrison, and they often respond with enthusiasm, and gentle envy of my Yale experience. I usually then inform them that the Morrison course I took was not cross-listed with the English department. TONI FUCKING MORRISON.

Today it occurred to me that the professor I had who taught that course, Naomi Pabst, is no longer at Yale--and not even engaged in teaching. And that Elizabeth Alexander was at Yale while I was, and barely anyone took her classes.

And I worry -- how is Jonathan Holloway? To be the first, the only, black senior administrator, asked to be a bridge and a mouthpiece. Asked to endure and defend. Asked to represent and represent. I hope he, too, is being cared for in ways I know many of my former, no, the few, former faculty members of color I was taught by, the few that were on campus/are on campus have not been cared for.

Alumni, I encourage you to reach out to your former professors that are still at Yale. Ask them how they are. If they are okay. Consider that the students are looking to them for guidance, that they are having to defend students to other students and colleagues, that they are wondering what spaces are safe, and what spaces are for them. We need to build a community to care for each other--to help those adults who nurtured us--survive, thrive, and continue to be present for the future generations of Yalies to come.

*GEORGE RAMIREZ*

Shoutout to all the black women at Yale who refuse to let racism stop them from speaking up. Shoutout to all the students of color who go to sleep tired not only because they have homework but because they are organizing. Shoutout to all the black women at Yale who take the time to take care of themselves despite the fact that they are expected to be grateful to attend an institution that constantly tells them that their voice, presence, and skin are less. Shoutout to all the students who have to defend their academic interests to their school and demand that they get the excellent education they

were promised. Shoutout to the students who are doing more teaching than learning. Shoutout to the marginalized students who are too tired to pull away headdresses, mariachi hats, and other inappropriate costumes but still go out anyway. Shoutout to all those people who stand up for their friends and use their privilege for good. Shoutout to those who are afraid to go out but still have the strength to stay at Yale and finish. Shoutout to all those students who aren't supported and take the time to leave and take care of themselves. Shoutout to all the students who are constantly put down by simply existing at Yale and go to classes where their professors don't care to engage in the issues that exist in the community. Shoutout to those who are angry. Shoutout to those who don't feel comfortable living in a place that's named after someone who probably wouldn't have welcomed them there in the first place. Shoutout to the women of color who wake up tired and still find a reason to smile. Shoutout to all the homies who are perpetually exhausted by existing within an institution that doesn't consider them worthy of their time unless they do more than just be students. Shoutout to those who are not silent about the injustices that happen at Yale. Shoutout to all those who feel like every day is another battle but doesn't let that stop them. Shoutout to all those who stop fighting but start fighting again the next day.

I'm not there anymore, and I'm angry. You should be too. But to those who are there, GO YOU. And THANK YOU for everything you do.

## Allies

*DAVE HARRIS*

Sooooooooo let's talk about freedom of speech for a moment, shall we?

White people. You have freedom of speech. Everyone does.

Here's a list of things you can do:

You can wear blackface.

You can have a frat party and say "white girl's only."

You can sing your favorite songs and say ALL the words. Including, dare I say it, "the n word."

Here's a list of things that I can do:

Knock you the fuck out and not say why.

Take a shit on your forehead and call it a hot dog.

Scream your name while you sleep so that you are haunted by the sound of my voice.

The reason I don't do the latter is because I know better. So your excuse is...?

What people don't seem to get is that whenever I say "white people", I do in fact mean you. Yes, YOU. And when I say my country, I mean my college, and yes, probably still you.

My country the type of place to stab you in the back and then ask you to deconstruct why it hurts.

My country the type of place to pretend they invented freedom of speech then use it to live without consequence.

My country the type of place to run from its conscience and call it patriotism.

My country the type of place to look at its history and be surprised that it happened.

My country that type of place to look at its history and tell you it didn't happen.

My country the type of place to believe it just woke up like this.

This is real: when I wake up in the morning, I imagine fucking everything up. And when I get tired of being angry, I get up and go to class.

Here's the thing:

If we are angry, we lose.

If we are silent, we lose.

If we are loud, we lose.

I am alive, and Black, and today I go outside and find some reason to smile. And that's the fight I have. I'll go on and write a poem or a play or a series of tweets or something, sure, because that's the way I know to survive. And I'll do my best to hold close all the people whom I know are hurting. But at the end of the day, I am alive, and Black, and angry, and tired, and still smiling about something. And that's not progress, or hope, or anything else my country has told me to trust in.

Maybe it's winning in spite of you. But nah, it's mostly just me saying this: I'm still here, and I wish a nigga would.

*TRAVIS BRADY*

I don't have anything left to say except that I'm sorry to the women of color in my life who feel that I, not just as a board member for the Yale Black Men's Union, not just as a Black man, but as Travis Brady, someone who claims to be a friend, have remained silent for too long. All I can say is that my silence has stemmed not from a place of apathy, but from a place of ignorance and a desire for betterment. When I say ignorance I mean flat-out not understanding. Not some pretty word that's nice to put in a Facebook post, but as the word that most accurately articulates my failure. Over the past week I've listened to the voices of the Black women I encounter on a day to day basis. I've listened to things that, although have been communicated to me before, weren't given the proper attention. I wanted to make sure I had heard all the relevant voices before I contributed to a dialogue. This is not meant as an excuse, neither as an individual nor as a representative of an organization, but as an open confession to the flaws in my character. There is a time to listen, a time to respond, a time to support and a time to act. It's painfully obvious that I cannot discern when one is appropriate. I want to tell Yale to do better (and it should) but people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. I'm going to tell myself to do better. This is an open invitation to anyone, who has criticisms of me as individual or as a representative of an organization that aims to uplift Black people, let me have it. Let me know when I should listen, let me know when I should speak, let me know when you don't know, let

me know when you're speaking for yourself, let me know when you're speaking for others like you, let me know whatever I should know and you feel like I don't. Above all else, let me know when I have failed. Up until now I've worked on being a better listener, but listening alone isn't gonna cut it. Let me know what will. (On a related note, shout out to Madison DeJesus and the other amazing Black women in my life for educating me since day 1 and being a part of my day to day life).

**ABDUL-RAZAK ZACHARIAH**

The forum last night at the Afro-American Cultural Center was long overdue. The true experiences and pains that the beautiful women of color on this campus have faced is not something to ever gloss over or ignore. As a Black man, I have allowed my silence to be fodder and ammunition for those in power to dehumanize my sisters. By being passive, I have added to the oppressive activity of those with more violent intentions. These sisters have shown love, care, support and pure warmth to me on a daily basis because they hope to see me thrive. Being silent on this has been my biggest mistake and beyond an apology, I also promise to be a source of love and steadfast support that all the Black women on Yale's campus have been for me. I love each of you and want to see you thrive beyond what this world tries to limit you to. No groups dominated by men, no dismissive voices, and no violent opposition will prevent me from keeping this promise to you.

I denounce and will fight against racism and misogyny, specifically misogynoir (a word I am blessed to have learned from the powerful Dara Huggins which represents misogyny directed at Black women), on this campus and in the further reaches of my life. As the older brother of a beautiful Black girl who wants to go to Yale one day and make the next big discoveries in science, I will make sure this space is safe for the Black women that I have befriended here and for her when she has her opportunity to show the world all her strength, intelligence and love. As the future father of a beautiful Black girl, I make the same promise and will ensure that she knows a Black man loves her without fear or restraint. As the friend of many Black men, I will not allow my brothers to remain silent on the issues that plague our sisters. We are only here and surviving because of Black women; we must support the lives of those who support us.

CASSANDRA DARROW

Dear Women of Color on Yale's campus,

You are important and I am humbled by your strength and courage. This institution has so much more to learn from you than you have to learn from this institution. I love you.

To Myself and White Yale:

This isn't just about SAE and the Halloween email. Whole communities of students feel and have for a long time felt unsafe and unequal on our campus. Please, let us listen to the painful testimonies people have been so brave to share.

To the YDN: People have been brave to share these painful testimonies. Do not rip them from them without their consent and then broadcast their pain in 15 inches of "objective" reporting (the belief that there is such a thing as being objective is part of a culture of white supremacy:[http://www.cwsworkshop.org/PARC\\_site\\_B/dr-culture.html](http://www.cwsworkshop.org/PARC_site_B/dr-culture.html) ).

To me specifically:

White tears won't help anything.

I am a white woman, and I need to do better. On Wednesday night, Black Women called white women out for not doing anything appreciable to stand up and defend Black Women and Women of Color against the relentless attacks on their dignity and humanity. You were right about me.

These are my new commitments to Women of Color on campus:

1) I commit to speaking up when white friends treat your pain and experience as if it's up for some kind of debate. I commit to calling them out if they think what's at stake here is "censorship," or "fairness," or "coddling" or "our constitution" or any other "idea" that ensures the utmost emotional comfort of white people but not the basic physical protections to people of Color.

2) I commit to being there. You matter before anything—any homework, any class, any grade— at this institution. To the women in my suite, Elisia, Lisa, Michelle, Katie, Emily, Jinchen : I am here.

3) I commit to give credit to your words and ideas.

4) I commit to remember the disparity in emotional labor being done between you and me, forever and always. I will never understand your experiences and how different mine are, but I will remember that I cannot understand.

5) On Wednesday, the President of BSAY read aloud a list of demands. I commit to supporting and fighting for those demands in any way possible.

6) I commit to being brave enough to apologize when I make mistakes.

## *SOPHIE FREEMAN*

Women of color on this campus, you are my priority. You have put your lives on the line these past few days but they have always been on the line.

White women we need to do better.

We need to LISTEN to what the people of color are saying they need from us, from Yale.

We need to LEARN from them, but more than that we need to be educating ourselves (start with Google).

We need to LOVE the women of color on this campus with every ounce that we have and we need to SHOW them our love- SPEAK UP, stick up for them! If we hear something racist, blatant or not, it is OUR job to say something. If we see another white person struggling to understand, it is OUR responsibility to educate them.

Women of color are the strongest members of our community, they have survived on this campus this long without our help, but they shouldn't have to any longer.

The people I love the most are dying on this campus and it's my fault as much as anybody's.

Women of color I am here for you and I will fight for you.

We are here for you and we will fight for you.

Čhaŋtéšiče šni ye, thečhíhila kštó. // Don't be sad, I love you.

To my fellow People of Color, remember that you are strong and important and I appreciate you and I love you .

-Emily Van Alst

