

Fabian Fernandez- La Casa

Unite Yale - this rally for student power is so important because my community, the latino community, lies at the intersections of all of these issues. People forget that latinos are a racially and ethnically diverse community - there are white latinos, black latinos, asian latinos, and thousands of native latinos including but not limited to los Aztecos, los Mayos, los Incas, and los Taiños. We are a passionate and intersectional community of color trying to support the needs of our students. So many of our students are struggling with financial aid - working long hours every week to pay the student income contribution at the expense of their academic and extracurricular potential. So many of our students struggle with mental health issues they struggle to discuss because of the families or communities they live in. So many of our students come from marginalized communities where oil and gas drilling interests are polluting our waters and uprooting people from their homes for the sake of profit. Yale University is an amazing space that encourages us to attain our full personal and academic potentials, but it is difficult when the Yale Corporation is complicit in failing to provide sufficient resources for People of Color, when it requires students to work off their debt, when it does not fully address our mental health issues in a safe environment, and when it refuses to address its entanglement with fossil fuels. We deserve better.

La Casa Cultural is a home for Latinos across campus, yet our community is finding it difficult to come together in a building that is falling apart. We demand that our Cultural Centers be put on the regular college maintenance schedule and held to the same standard as every other building on campus. The population of latinos in this country is only growing and we demand that the University allocate more resources to our ever expanding student body. We stand in solidarity beside our hermanos and hermanas to support their causes because this is our struggle. El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido.”

Austin Long - AACC

GIVE US SPACE. ACADEMIC, CULTURAL, AND PHYSICAL.

The AACC is overflowing, but we are spilling to Cross Campus because our issues are cross cultural and cross disciplinary, because our issues cross the heart of this campus.

GIVE US ACADEMIC SPACE: Yale offers us one Asian American history course, but the idea that just one class is enough to cover the richness of our cultures, our backgrounds, and our experiences is laughable and insulting. Give us the space to study our communities not only because it is right, but because our liberal arts education cannot truly be liberating or complete without Asian American studies. Yale will not teach us legacies of Asian American resistance, and so today we are here to resist.

GIVE US CULTURAL SPACE: Yale, you tell us that you breed leaders and innovators, but how can we be expected to bring about progress and initiative when we are denied the resources to do so? You tell us that our diversity is important but how can we share our stories and narratives when there is no space for us in your budget, when your dollar signs mean more than we do?

GIVE US PHYSICAL SPACE: Our AACC is a safe space for discussion and dialogue,

but the irony is that our space is not even physically safe. Our basement is unfinished and off limits, the paint on the walls is hazardous and dangerous, our center is not even handicapped accessible. Our community is large and rich but our space is suffocating. Let us breathe. We dream of events to bring our community together, but we do not even fit inside what is supposedly ours. We cannot claim this space as our own.

To the administration, let us be clear that this is not meant to be personally offensive. We understand that much of the administration is new or in transitions, that change and reform take time and consideration. But it is personally offensive to all students of color when we are told that the condition of our cultural centers and our academic opportunities are sufficient and acceptable. We are desperate for self-determination. We implore you, to step in our centers and then tell us that they meet Yale's standards. To tell us that our peer institutions, which have complete Asian American studies departments, are wrong, because just one class at Yale can encompass the experiences of millions. To tell us that our culture is not worth funding, that traditions are frivolous, that who we are and where we come from does not belong here at Yale.

Because that is the message we are receiving.

We are overflowing and spilling out here today not because we don't believe in this institution but because we all so ardently and passionately do, we believe in Yale, a greater Yale that sheds both light and truth on its students, we believe in a Yale that values both culture and education, we believe that our liberation is bound and so we are here together, Yale, because we believe in you. Do you believe in us?

WE'RE HERE AS ONE.
CAN'T STOP US NOW.

Sebi - NACC

The indigenous student is a dual citizen. She lives in two worlds, neither of which can fully understand who she is, what she is doing, nor the sacrifices she makes for not only her people but for this world. It's time for Yale to acknowledge the essential struggle, The constant fight, the magnanimous bravery of she who has overcome genocide itself to stand here in the belly of the beast among people Who are invested in her assimilation and removal, who's scholarly understanding fundamentally assumes her death.

Native peoples have been picked apart by the Academy for too long. It's time for us to re-appropriate our own histories and offer a critical analysis of this settler colonial society from our unique position- on the outside. I'm not asking for another professor to do an autopsy of my body or an archaeological dig of my sacred land, I'm looking for a professor invested in critically interrogating our histories, understanding our current issues and imagining our futures- and what futures we do have. This is not just about serving the needs of native students, this is about legitimizing the scholarship on native peoples, these outdated forms of inquiry into native history are erroneous. I only ask for the opportunity to combat the widespread idiocy on this campus surrounding native issues from both students and faculty alike. when I arrived on campus there were three

faculty members doing these essential native studies, this year there were two, this next year there will only be one, because a brilliant woman, a mother of two Beautiful native children, who's unique and progressive scholarship has attracted hundreds of students to her lecture this year, is being forced out by fearful, shortsighted, and a racist faculty. Let us not forget our ancestors as we stand here among these monuments to privilege-marble erected by Indian killers on stolen land. We are making demands our grandparents could have only dreamed of, but in reality we are only asking to be treated with the same respect and dignity as our white peers. And after all that is what they fought and died for for 500 centuries. Do not be afraid. We the students have more power than you or the administration could possibly imagine. Our current age honors our ancestors struggle, and is deeply connected to it. Where here as one, can't stop us now.

Eli Ceballo-Countryman – the Af-Am House

We all decided to attend Yale because we were sold the bright side of Yale. The amazing resources, faculty, libraries, and the chance to be around each other and engage with amazing peers are some of the top reason we choose Yale. But most Yalies don't get to see Yale's dark side- the one that shows how much more they care about their endowment than the lives of their students, our lives.

But as a second generation Black Yalie I walk into this place with my eyes already open. I walked in knowing about the Black Yalies that came to this place with their sanity and left without it, the ones who never got degrees and even the ones that lost their lives to the stress of being Black and at Yale. And I also knew an incredible community was waiting for me- a house, a family willed into existence through the student power of those that came before me and maintained by an equally loving and powerful group of students. Just recently I found a photo of my Dad taken by my Mom while he was here- standing somewhere on Beinecke, speaking out in front of Woodbridge Hall. It's students like him- who in the 80s were fighting for divestment from South Africa, who built and lived in a shanty town on Beinecke- because they knew that the University's relationship to Black people who aren't here is just as important as it's relationship to the Black folks that are. They're the ones that created a legacy so that current Black Yalies could win this semester. Their energy is here right now- the Craig Fosters, the Larry Irvings, the Sylvia Boones, the Glenn DeChaberts, my mother and father. The spirit that reminds us that, as Assata said best, we have the duty to fight for our people and we have the duty to win.

Our house is a testament to how Black Yalies have taken up that duty for over forty years. If there's anything history has taught us, it's that there will be struggles in the future, but our petition and the subsequent resignation of Dean Cohen is our message to Yale that we're here as one, they couldn't stop us then and they definitely can't stop us now.

Maya Jenkins– Fossil Free Yale

[Hi, my name is Maya and I'm a freshman in Fossil Free Yale.] I'm here today because I'm scared. I'm scared because everything that has and will be said today is connected. The way in which Yale's investments put profits above people and the way Yale treats marginalized communities on this campus stems from the same choice as to who they serve.

But I'm also here because I'm hopeful, because I believe that we can win. I believe that winning divestment at Yale is going to be powerful for this coalition united here today. Divestment leverages student power and allows us to be at our most powerful: on campus, as we organize and build together, and beyond, as we stigmatize a corrupt and ruling industry, and call out the system in which it operates. Winning divestment at Yale is important because I see that the communities that are marginalized by the FFI parallel communities that are marginalized on this campus. Divestment strives to be in solidarity with both the communities fighting for climate justice and the communities fighting to survive and thrive here at Yale.

Divestment is powerful to me because I see it as the best way that I as a student can combat global climate change -- a crisis that seems to magnify by the minute, a crisis that eliminates our future and threatens our present and destroys the spaces of our past, a crisis that comes in from all sides until I am alone and cannot escape.

But divestment also speaks to me on an even deeper level. As I watch communities that look like me fight to free themselves of an industry's stranglehold, fight to gasp for air in a system determined to smother us, I feel helpless. But then I see these communities unite, I seem them powerfully take action together and I see them win. And that is why I believe we must fight for divestment here on campus, because of how urgent and serious it is, and because we *can* win. And that is why we must come together- because our issues are not separate, because in supporting each other we stand in line with our vision for the world.

I know it can be hard for people to find their stake in fossil fuel divestment, I know that it can seem disconnected -- and that worries me. But that is why I am committed to this fight, because these connections speak to me so deeply and their implications are so real. President Salovey and the Yale Corporation have denied these connections and ignored our calls to stand on the side of justice. And in doing so they have shown that they feel no obligation to us, no obligation to the resilient communities here and beyond; but an obligation to distant investors that perpetuate injustice and ensure the destruction of our future.

So we, as Fossil Free Yale, will take direct action: to show them the type of urgent and powerful action they must take. And so we unite, with other students here on campus, because when we stand together we can win together.

We're here as one, and we've made it pretty clear that they can't stop us now.

Caroline Posner – Mental health reform

There are two reasons people look strangely at the scars on my arm: they either want to know what kind of animal I fought, or they recognize what self harm looks like. I haven't cut in a few months: I'm what psychology nerds like to call "in recovery," and I don't want to hurt myself anymore. But I still feel the reflexive impulse to draw blood whenever something in my life goes wrong, and I still don't keep razors in my toiletry kit.

It's kind of funny, though, that the thing that really, really, really hurts about my history of cutting has absolutely nothing to do with with the physical injuries. It's that once you've cut you can't stop looking for lines on other people's arms, too. And when you find another member of this horrible secret club all you can do is wish that you

hadn't, that no one else but you were in this fucked up fraternity of past or present self-loathing, because you wouldn't wish that kind of darkness on anyone.

So when I overhear another student say they don't feel safe in seeking out help at Yale for self harm, or when I see yet another PostSecret status about someone cutting herself for the first time, I am deeply, deeply angry.

Any nonzero number of students harming themselves is too many. Any nonzero number of students struggling without the assurance of urgent, quality mental health treatment is too many. Any nonzero number of students who are afraid that Yale will force them to withdraw if they admit that their mind goes to these places is too many. When I write bitter pleas for change in the YDN and livid Facebook posts about Yale policies and when I argue with the director of Yale Health over rhetoric that discredits mentally ill students, I am not doing it for the Caroline Posner that is currently in recovery. I'm doing it for the Caroline Posner who wrapped up her bleeding arm in paper towels and Scotch tape under clothes because I was scared that my dean or my therapist would see my cuts and send me home. I'm not the only one who has lived this experience. There are so many of us whose mental health narratives are another variation on this theme, and who are struggling now to advocate for ourselves. Who need you to fight on our side.

We are asking that Yale Mental Health and Counseling publish a clear, comprehensive statement on involuntary withdrawal policies and processes, so that maybe some other student like me will know that she can get help before she slices open her skin for the first time. So she will know that no one at Mental Health and Counseling will tell her she doesn't belong at Yale for it.

We are asking that MH&C make accessible and visible the tools for lodging complaints and reporting wrongdoings. That the department take responsibility for acknowledging and fixing internal policy violations, rather than waiting for students to alert oblivious administrators. That when we do alert the department, there is some evidence of follow-up and demonstration of concern.

We are asking that administrators begin to address mentally ill and struggling students with respect and compassion, rather than disdain. We have been accused of spreading misinformation when we attempt to speak out about our experiences, as if MH&C is a political body and not a medical one. I have been told to my face by an administrator that mentally ill students fabricate stories to "preserve their dignity." I am tired of being treated as a liability and a liar.

But this isn't about me. This is about your best friend who couldn't get in touch with the on-call psychiatrist when he needed help. Your suitemate who waited six weeks to finally see someone about her depression. That kid you're dying to ask out for coffee who you don't know was forcibly hospitalized last month. Your amazing teaching fellow who still hasn't gotten on the right medication for their bipolar disorder.

If we're going to fight for a better world, we must demand the tools to first take care of our minds.

Today, we're here as one. We deserve this. We can't let anything stop us now.

Yamile Lozano – Students Unite Now (SUN), on the Student Contribution

[My name is Yamile Lozano and I am a sophomore in Davenport College.]

Freshman fall, after working for just a summer, I arrived at Yale College with more money than my parents had at the time, including their savings. I was determined to never ask anything from them again and become financially independent to ease their burdens. A daughter of two undocumented immigrants, a housekeeper and construction worker, I knew in my heart Yale had given me the chance to escape my family situation of increasing debt and decreasing stability; we lost our house my senior year. Higher education defies my family's background, as a first generation college, low-income, Latina student, and it is extremely valuable to me. Thus, Yale was, and still is, my hope for pursuing my educational passions and overcoming my disadvantaged background, so I could one day give back to my community. Granting me full financial aid made these dreams possible.

Yet, was it really need-based financial aid I received if Yale determined there was a sum *I* could somehow pay, just because I received financial aid, an arbitrary student contribution? Coming in, I thought Yale had understood my family and I could not afford my schooling, at all—this is why my parents had \$0 to contribute. How then, could *I* be expected to suddenly pay \$6,400 a year? It soon became a heavy burden, and defining aspect of my Yale experience. And it did not allow me to become financially independent, as I had desperately hoped because I was being charged more than I could afford.

Visits to the financial aid office were distressing. I was told that students were charged this amount so they could “value their education.” It was a complete shock to me, a slap in the face. I was born into financial struggle, I am fighting racial stereotypes against Latinos and the statistics against me, my parents' hope for the financial stability in the future lies in me and a success they never had.... don't you think I value my education enough?

The past two semesters, I received letters from Financial Aid saying if I did not pay by a set date there would be consequences, more specifically “the initiations of the proceedings of my withdrawal from Yale College.” It broke me down. I felt threatened, only because I couldn't afford my student contribution. My only way out was to take out loans, though Yale had originally advertised itself as loan-free, and keep working to have at least some personal expenses.

The student contribution has perpetuated class disparities. There is a difference between students who are able to hear the word once, pay it and be done, and those students like me who constantly carry the phrase “student contribution” in the back of their minds. In my experience, attempting to work ten hours a week at Yale minimum wage will not pay it off. I'm not the only one.

Yale, students should not have to choose between work and office hours. Students should be able to choose to spend their talents and time as best see fit, working if they so desire, not because they feel forced. Yale, extracurriculars and student organizations should be more diverse, and not look like you have to have socioeconomic privilege or not be part of Yale's working class to be in a certain club. Yale, do not these perpetuate class disparities. Recent policy changes should reflect progress, not steps in the wrong direction by ignoring a petition signed by 1000 students asking to remove the SIC. Yale,

become more accessible to more students like me, students whose parents could not afford their educational dreams. Don't just serve the elite.

Yale, our struggles are related. Cultural houses are safe places to discuss class at Yale and our financial aid experiences. Our Students Unite Now petition demanded financial support for students on mental health leave. We completely agree with Fossil Free Yale that student futures have not been prioritized by the Yale Corporation.

Yale, understand our plight. And act upon this understanding.

Because we are here as one. And you can't stop us now.

Lex Barlowe

[I want to start off with some thank you's. So much beautiful energy and teamwork has gone into this day. Thank you to Maya, Eshe, Liana, Joel, Phoebe, Yuni, Elias, Tristan, Ariana, Eli, Sebi, Neema, Angela, Justine, Athena, to BSAY, to Fossil Free Yale, to Steppin' Out, to Fabi, Yamile, Austin, and Caroline. Thank you all so much for having faith in a really big idea, for jumping in, pushing past a lot of difference, and believing with each other. And thank you all so much for being here. It really means the world.]

Today, all over the country and world there are people organizing. Today, there are students claiming power in their universities, sitting in for fossil fuel divestment, demanding black studies departments, and mobilizing against student debt. Today, there are students building coalitions and joining together their struggles and their lives. Today, that is us. Today, we dream together.

Many times people have told me that this is impossible, that today is impossible. They say that different groups will always be pitted against each other. They say that even if we really want to, us coming together cannot be real, that our coalition will never be authentic, that it is some sort of fantasy for us to stand together and stand with each other. But that is a LIE. Marginalized people have come together throughout history in order to survive and thrive and live out their visions of community and love. Not only must we do this, but our peoples have done this forever, and we are living that out right now. Our vision for Yale is possible, and we are making it happen, beginning with this rally. Yalies have done this before. And we will do it again.

Today is not just about different communities and issues coming together, though. It is also about all of the individuals here, all of us, and it is also about me. I have spent my time at Yale feeling like I'm straddling different worlds, that my vision for climate justice and deep solidarity work with Fossil Free Yale cannot somehow connect with the black community here. But we have seen the connections here today, and I feel the connections deep within me. The links between these parts of myself are non-negotiable, whether I like it or not they have and always will manifest inside of me. And us coming together today helps me honor that. The great Audre Lorde once said, "there is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." We make that real here today. I feel so much more powerful when I can connect and honor all of these things at once. We are all at our most powerful when we honor all the different parts of ourselves and their intersections. So us coming together is not just about winning our campaigns more easily and building a big movement, but it is also about who we are, the complexities of our identities, and honoring ourselves in our struggles for justice.

But why MUST we build together? Many people here have said that coming together is going to help all of us win, and that unity is the most important thing, that unity is why we are

here. But why unity really? While we may each work on individual issues sometimes, and we can't focus our attention everywhere all the time, whether we like it or not, all of our issues are DEEPLY intersectional. So we must come together to make our work whole. We must build and organize with this understanding so that we can really win, in the fullest sense of the word.

The world we want to see has success in the cards for all of our struggles. It has a world with students and folks getting the care they need when they need it, it has people of color being respected and empowered by the spaces they inhabit, it relieves students of unfair economic burdens, and it has a bright future without dirty, exploitative energy, with justice for all those marginalized in various ways, with real unity. So this means all of us have to win. But what does really winning look like? About a year ago someone asked me if I would be happy if Yale divested from fossil fuels tomorrow, or as soon as possible. And while my immediate answer is yes, I realized that it's not that simple. Because a win on divestment is not a real win unless we win with everyone, and everyone feels a stake in our work. A win on any of these issues cannot be fully celebrated without having this coalition behind it. If we want to really change everything, we need everyone. And today looks like the beginning of a win to me.

We're here as one, and nobody can stop us now. Thank you.