OPINION

STAFF COLUMNIST

RICHIE GEORGE

Fight U.S. Empire

We are coming of age in turbulent times. Two weeks ago, I scrolled through X and saw bombings in Caracas. One week ago, I scrolled through X and watched Renée Nicole Good's death. In Venezuela, a U.S. military operation to capture President Nicolás Maduro left 100 people dead, according to Venezuela's interior ministry, and so-called "international law" in shambles. In Minnesota, a mother lay dead at the hands of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, blocks away from where George Floyd was murdered in 2020. A symphony of violence plays without end in front of our eyes. It all becomes noise.

Politics is, in part, the means to obtain information from noise. Statements are read. Bombs are dropped. People are killed. Political acts always end with a big fat period. What we have learned from the Trump administration is that it does not wait for public consensus. They will claim the U.S. "will run" Venezuela. They will accuse Good of being a domestic terrorist by virtue of witnessing their violence. They will hide her murderer Jonathan Ross from prosecution if it means they rule with impunity. That's because they have to get their agenda done. It means the destruction of communities at home and abroad, to remake Venezuela and Minnesota in their image.

Make no mistake: we can't distance ourselves from these crises, however distant we are from the Midwest or Latin America. Yale has its part to play in this sordid tale. Its job-seeking graduates are channelled into war-making careers. Our hawkish and Machiavellian Vice President, J.D. Vance LAW '13 is Yale's most problematic alumnus in recent memory. But the function of the university exceeds elite reproduction.

The future of the university is vested in war, surveillance and climate catastrophe. Yale's endowment is invested in natural gas, arms manufacturers and Palantir's surveillance programs, at home and abroad. Meanwhile, New Haven activists fight for a fully funded city, where children and working families can thrive, where safe schools and union jobs are rights instead of privileges. The invasion of Venezuela, the occupation of Minnesota, and the deprivation of New Haven are bound up by a cruel logic, through which elites have hoarded the power to decide humanity's fate and chuck the "rules-based international order" in the bin of history.

So it's not just about oil. Soon after the president's press conference, the Trump administration posted memes that echoed the Monroe Doctrine, President Theodore Roosevelt's "Big Stick Diplomacy," and the apocalyptic threat of a small, communist-run island called Cuba. And, apparently, Greenland is on the list for capture too. Remember to bring your winter jacket when Inuit territory is parceled and sold at homesteader prices.

Let's be clear. This administration has revived a long forgotten — or more accurately, a long repressed — history. It is the history of imperial war and racial terror, inflicted on far-flung territories, against peoples from whom all we care to know is their capacity for submission. Are these the actions of a president sworn to peace, democracy and humanitarianism?

There is no obvious future for the lands to which Trump has laid waste. Maduro, a brutal dictator in his own right, has been deposed, but his subordinates run Venezuela in his absence, while paramilitaries roam neighborhoods to take up whatever space is left in the power vacuum. Families mourn those lost in the attack. Their cries ring with the cries of Minnesotans mourning Renée, Los Angelenos mourning Keith Porter Jr., a 43-year-old father killed by an off-duty ICE agent on New Year's Eve, and the millions mourning the losses that abound and do not measure against the losses that will continue under this regime. Yet all we have heard from the White House are more statements that suggest it will occupy Venezuela, Minnesota and wherever it chooses, through either violent or nonviolent means. We don't know which.

In the absence of information, all we have left is noise. But what we have learnt so far is that, by witnessing the two faces of empire, within and outside our country and our Yale, is that this crisis cannot end until the rule of its elites also ends. They desire a world that runs on bombs, bodies and barrels of oil — and that world is unjust and unlivable.

Mathematician Claude Shannon once said that uncertainty makes information possible. Our future will always be uncertain, from now onwards, yet it is, at once, overdetermined by the powers that made this crisis possible. As inheritors of injustice, we must now decide if we will yield to a darker world, or build a brighter world for ourselves and future generations. We, too, can capture the future's uncertainty to build that future. It could be a world where everyone lives with dignity, where our Earth is not burned, bombed, and bled dry, and where justice and abundance coexist in our communities. It would mean a future beyond empire.

That is a future worth fighting for.

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STAFF COLUMNIST

MANU BOSTEELS

Musk, Yale and truly outrageous bigotry

The Buckley Institute recently published its annual report on Yale faculty members' political affiliations. The report found that, across all Yale departments, 82.1 percent of faculty "were identified" as Democrats, 15.5 percent as independents and just 2.4 percent as Republicans. In 27 of the largest departments, the report identified no Republicans among the faculty.

On Dec. 22, responding to a New York Post article on the matter, Elon Musk wrote on X, "Literally zero Republicans in 30 Yale departments when half the country is Republican is truly outrageous bigotry!"

The Buckley Institute's founder and executive director, Lauren Noble '11, made a similar, if more measured, claim: "Yale has committed repeatedly over decades to fostering an environment conducive to open debate and discussion but has all but excluded diversity of opinion through its hiring process."

One of the many problems with using these statistics — which primarily measured party registration — to argue that conservative thought is silenced in universities is that it places faculty party makeup in isolation from the shifting platform of the Republican party. This argument ignores how the GOP has chosen to distance itself from and attack academia.

In a 2021 speech at the National Conservatism Conference, Vice President JD Vance LAW '13 quoted Richard Nixon in his speech's title, "The Universities are the Enemy," and spoke about the need to "honestly and aggressively attack the universities in this country." Vance decried the control that universities have on truth and knowledge.

Vance was right: Universities do have an incredible amount of control over truth and knowledge in this country. That is because American universities are engines of research, investigation, discourse and peer-review. The confrontation between universities and the Republican party stems from the fact that the leaders of the GOP today have chosen to reject truth and the academic community.

Most economists agree that President Donald Trump's tariff policies are bad for consumers and for industry. Trump falsely claims that windmills make whales go "loco." Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Secretary of Health and Human Services, is changing vaccination requirements and issuing warnings on the link between Tylenol and autism despite a lack of support from leading medical professionals. Under Trump's directive, the National Park Service has been removing plaques and exhibits that highlight the inconsistencies in current Republicans' particular version of American history.

This is part of an overall political scheme that defends whatever position Trump or his Cabinet decide to take, whether or not it is true. As a political strategy, that's just fine — but since universities are designed to investigate truth and knowledge, this strategy inevitably creates confrontation between the GOP and institutions of higher education. Freedom of speech permits Republicans to question universities, question expert opinions and even endorse scientifically discredited positions. But choosing to denounce, criticize and attack academia naturally alienates the people who work in academia.

To reiterate, there is nothing inherently objectionable about the Republican party choosing to turn its back on academia. For one, it's a pragmatic choice: Voters without a college education continue to be among the GOP's strongest electoral demographics. The contradiction arises when Republicans want academia to itself accept and support the rejection of academia.

Thus, any claim of conservative silencing in academia requires discussion of the context of the directed conservative attack on institutions of higher education and the Trumpist tactic of rejecting the knowledge and expertise academia is designed to espouse.

Moreover, Musk's expectation that Yale and other top universities match the political composition of the general public is statistically dubious.

For starters, Musk is already wrong to claim that half of the country is Republican, at least not in the sense that the Buckley Institute's methodology, which primarily used party registration, would identify as Republican. Per the institute's quoted numbers, around 30 percent of Americans are Republicans, and in Connecticut, that number drops to around 21 percent.

Nor is Yale's faculty made up of only American citizens. How did the institute classify the roughly 13 percent of professors at Yale who are international, who are neither Republican nor Democrat and for whom the "independent" label would be misleading?

More importantly, it doesn't make much sense in the first place to compare statistics of the average American with Yale faculty demographics. Yale professors are not plucked from the general population at random. To be a professor at Yale, you must have a doctorate or an equivalent terminal degree; there is a persistent and increasing tendency for those with more education to hold more liberal political beliefs, and the correlation gets stronger with more education. Is it utterly implausible that Yale, selecting the most elite, educated individuals from the U.S. and the world, ends up with a faculty that models this demographic tendency at its extreme?

And even as Noble faults Yale's hiring process for preventing diversity of opinion, the institute's report does nothing to investigate the process or flesh out which part of the complicated procedure is at fault. In fact, for all we know, that process is meritocratic — something today's GOP celebrates. What makes conservative academics fail this meritocratic test? And what do Musk and Noble envision to solve this ideological sorting, then? Affirmative action for conservative academics?

These are all factors and questions that one must address to make any compelling argument about bigotry toward conservatives in higher education, and all are left unaddressed in the institute's report. It may well be that Musk and the Buckley Institute are correct, but they don't provide the evidence or the arguments to prove it. Unsupported opinion might suffice for politics. In academia, however, not so much.

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STAFF COLUMNIST

SHAYE KIRMAN

Be quick, don't hurry

Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, who won 10 college championships in 12 years, used to tell his players to "be quick, but don't hurry." At first, it may be hard to make sense of his cryptic advice: if you're not hurrying, how could you possibly be quick? It sounds as contradictory as "chug gracefully" or "panic calmly." But the paradox disappears when we hear Wooden's explanation: "I want quickness under control." Wooden wasn't warning against speed itself, but against speed without control.

Wooden's lesson doesn't stop at the sidelines; it shapes how we study, choose commitments and move through college. We often equate speed with efficiency, but in practice it is smoothness, not sheer speed, that wins the day.

Take studying. Every semester starts the same way: fresh pens, a color-coded calendar and a vow to "stay ahead this time." That's quickness: anticipating, organizing, creating early momentum. But then midterms hit, and "quick" mutates into "hurry": cramming an entire textbook overnight while whispering "just one more page" like an incantation. Quickness is reviewing notes weekly; hurrying is finishing problem sets at 3 a.m. Both are movement, but only one is in control.

Quickness isn't just about how you start, but about how you sustain momentum. We've all opened a document a week early, typed a clever title and rewarded ourselves with two hours of YouTube because "the hard part is done." Spoiler: it's not. To be quick is to write a messy draft early, let it breathe and revise. To hurry is to shout ideas onto the page the night before, fueled by caffeine and panic. The same rules apply to other parts of college life. Speaking up in class and choosing a major are moments that reward students who have thought ahead just enough to act decisively when the window opens.

In the sports arena, athletes try to live in the narrow zone between hesitation and rushing. A quick jab step to make a defender commit, then drive — that's control. Rush into traffic without creating the opening, and you're likely to hit a wall. Reaction times have to be fast or the opportunity disappears, but rushing often brings bad form and mistakes. The only way to play well is to move quickly without rushing, to trust preparation rather than force the moment. When that balance clicks, the game feels effortless. Time slows. Decisions arrive before you consciously make them. Psychologists call this "flow," a state of deep focus where action and judgment align. But flow isn't accidental, it's earned. It comes from preparation, repetition and calm attention, so that when speed is required, panic doesn't take over.

Wooden's principle also applies to decision-making more generally. Our obsession with efficiency sometimes makes us inefficient. In one picture book I loved as a child, Phyllis Krasilovsky's "The Man Who Tried to Save Time," a man adopts a number of extreme efficiency hacks; for example, he sleeps in his suit to save time dressing, only to wake up with it wrinkled and for his boss to comment on his dishevelled appearance. We too can over-optimize ourselves into dysfunction. We pack our calendars to the brim, skim readings and cram study sessions, then spend even more time undoing our own shortcuts. Skimming leads to re-reading; cramming leads to burnout. We save minutes and lose hours.

There is, of course, a tension between moving fast and avoiding mistakes. Mark Zuckerberg loves to say, "Move fast and break things." Yet the Navy SEALs say, "Slow is smooth, smooth is fast." Both are right. It just depends on how expensive failure is. When the cost of "breaking something" is low — a brainstorming session, a returnable purchase or a messy first draft — speed beats perfection. But when the stakes are high — a midterm, a job interview or a friendship — hurrying becomes costly. That is when Wooden's version of quickness matters most: anticipate early, prepare steadily, revise continually before panic sets in.

As the new semester begins, fueled by hopeful New Year's resolutions, that's the game plan I'm bringing. Urgency matters, but control matters more. Together, they win championships — in sports, in school and in life.

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