NEWS

"From the moment I looked into your eyes, saw what I'd been searchin' for all of the time."
END OF TIME ZARA LARSSON

Yale trustee gives talk on leadership ahead of Corporation meeting

BY ARIA LYNN-SKOV
STAFF REPORTER

In a Wednesday afternoon talk with around two dozen attendees, Yale trustee Maryana Iskander LAW '03 answered questions about leadership and working in nonprofits.

About 25 people, mostly students, attended the event, which took place in the 53 Wall Street auditorium. Before the Yale Corporation's meeting on Saturday, the Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance is hosting two events featuring trustees. Fred Krupp '75, a trustee who is an environmental advocacy leader, is set to speak on campus on Thursday afternoon.

During the event and in an interview with the News, Iskander said that she values interacting with students. Iskander is one of the Corporation's student liaisons, alongside trustees Carlos Moreno '70 and Felicia Norwood LAW '89.

Students have criticized the Yale Corporation for not engaging with students' repeated requests for divestment from weapons manufacturers or companies tied to United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Ahead of the trustees' February meeting, students wrote letters calling for divestment and gathered outside of Yale President Maurie McInnis' office building.

"I actually meet with students, and then, as I said, I welcome opportunities to hear perspectives from students — whoever invites me," Iskander said in an interview after the event. Iskander said she didn't have any other student meetings before her Wednesday afternoon talk, which she said she was invited to give.

In an interview after the event, Iskander acknowledged widespread issues related to limited transparency of boards' activities. The Yale Corporation convenes on campus five times a year, and while the dates are disclosed, the times, meeting locations and agendas are not. The board's meeting minutes are sealed for 50 years, in accordance with the Corporation's regulations.

When asked what the Yale Corporation will discuss on Saturday, she pointed to general topics that she said boards often discuss.

"Boards usually discuss the same kinds of things: budget, governance, what's happening in the world," she said. "I think there's a lot that can be demystified about what boards do anyway, right?"

When asked specifically about what should be demystified, Iskander pointed to the "hard issues."

"I mean, to be honest, I feel like the hard issues are the ones that everybody's talking about," she said. "Trust in higher education, figuring out how to partner with the city of New Haven."

Last week, Yale's Committee on Trust in Higher Education released a sweeping report examining a wide range of campus issues and offering potential solutions. One of the report's 20 recommendations was to "build trust with the trustees," writing that "more formal methods" are needed to increase connection and trust with the board. The committee proposed adding faculty liaisons, and that "the Board of Trustees include, at all times, experienced scholars and academic leaders among its members."

Iskander did not comment on any of the report's specific recommendations, but she said that it would "probably" be discussed this weekend.

"I'm on the Corporation board, and when I come for meetings — which is why I'm here — nothing gives me more joy than spending time with students," she said to close her talk.

Iskander is the former CEO of the Wikimedia Foundation — the nonprofit that oversees Wikipedia — and the former COO of Planned Parenthood. She also served as the CEO of the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, a nonprofit based in Rwanda and South Africa that works to find solutions for youth unemployment.

Iskander was elected as an alumni fellow trustee in 2023. At her talk, she answered both prewritten questions from a student moderator and audience questions submitted through a QR code during the event.

During her talk, Iskander gave advice to students wanting to work in nonprofits and spoke about how nonprofits can increase efficiency to better achieve their goals.

"The value of most opportunities are the people you meet and the network you build," she said, adding that by network, she meant "other people who are interested in the same things as you."

Iskander also spoke about how nonprofits can be most effective in their work, saying "an important mantra is that you have to stay in love with the problem and not stay in love with your solutions."

In a response to a student seeking advice on managing people, Iskander highlighted the importance of listening.

"People don't spend enough time learning how to listen," she said.

Keith Pemberton '27, a student who is "building a startup here at Yale focused on knowledge infrastructure," was one of the students who attended the event.

"Considering her work with Wikipedia, as the CEO, I was very curious about how she thought about the reliability of knowledge infrastructure today, especially as large language models hallucinate, but also how Wikipedia operates as an inclusive encyclopedia, how it handles non-notable figures," he said when describing what drew him to the event.

The Yale Corporation's next meetings are scheduled for April 25 and June 6, according to a University website.

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MARTIN PERALTA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Maryana Iskander, who is one of the board of trustees' student liaisons, spoke about leadership and nonprofit work at a Wednesday afternoon event. The Yale Corporation is scheduled to meet on campus on Saturday.

Beverly Gage's new book explores American history through road trips

BY ANNA KOONTZ
STAFF REPORTER

Beverly Gage '94 has crisscrossed the nation from Independence Hall to Disneyland. After visiting over 300 historical sites, the Yale history professor published her latest book, "This Land Is Your Land: A Road Trip Through U.S. History," this month.

As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of its independence, Gage said she hopes that "This Land is Your Land" will inspire readers to wrestle with national identity and reflect on their favorite historical sites. The book travels across space and time with 13 chapters that focus on different locations and eras in American history.

"How do you say that you love your country, that you're a patriot, and yet also know and face and understand all of the really difficult parts of American history?" Gage said in a Zoom interview. "Some of the book is about my own wrestling with that question."

The book is recognized on the New York Times nonfiction best sellers list. Gage will be speaking about her book on Wednesday afternoon in the Sterling Memorial Library lecture hall.

The book's title is a reference to the popular Woody Guthrie song from 1940. Gage described both the song and her book as a "celebration and a protest."

"I also wanted to challenge people to in fact go explore this land, in a quite literal way," Gage said. "To think about it, to explore it, to be curious about it, to participate in it."

"This Land is Your Land" was published on April 7, eight days before the release of a major report from Yale's Committee on Trust in Higher Education, which Gage led as a co-chair. The report contained a wide range of recommendations for Yale to reform itself and prompted University President Maurie McInnis to acknowledge Yale's "role in the erosion of public trust."

In an email to the News on Monday, Gage wrote that "the main connection" between her book and the committee's report was "that it was hard to do both things at once!"

As she traveled to research for the book, Gage said she brought a notebook, voice recorder, phone and camera. She recorded her thoughts in voice memos as she walked around museums and photographed signs and plaques. While driving, she listened to audiobooks relevant to her location.

The first chapter centers on Philadelphia, where the Founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence and where Gage grew up.

"It's both the beginning of the nation's story and is also the beginning of my story," she said.

The chapters then proceed chronologically through history as Gage visits historical sites across the mainland United States, including the Alamo in Texas, a sex commune in New York and a Confederate memorial in Georgia.

Gage noticed that certain historical figures reappeared in the stories of many different sites. She decided to begin each chapter of the book with a notable individual embarking on a road trip of their own, such as George Washington's cross-country travels soon after becoming president.



COURTESY OF BEVERLY GAGE
History professor Beverly Gage said her newest book, published this month, is a "celebration and a protest" asking how to balance patriotism with acknowledgement of America's "difficult" history.

"A lot of people are moving from place to place and making new lives and taking what they learn in one place and bringing it to another," Gage said. "I was really able to see these local stories as also being national stories."

The project also allowed Gage to explore beyond her academic area of expertise. Gage specializes in 20th century American history and won a Pulitzer Prize for her 2022 biography of former FBI Director John Edgar Hoover.

Working on "This Land is Your Land" inspired Gage to suggest a one-time Yale course covering American history from colonial times to the 21st century. Alongside professors Joanne Freeman and David Blight, she taught the "America at 250: A History" lecture last fall.

Felix Santiago-Martinez GRD '29, a teaching fellow for "America at 250," described his experience as "fantastic" and highlighted Gage's contributions towards the class.

"I think it is important to look back on American history, especially during an extraordinary anniversary as the nation's 250th year, as a way to periodically remember that the American republic is still an unfinished project," Santiago-Martinez wrote in an email.

Gage spoke at a Yale Center for Civic Thought event last week, discussing the question "Can we face the injustices in our history and still love our country?"

"This Land is Your Land" was published by Simon & Schuster.

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