

A TIMELINE: FALL 2015

by Anya Geist, Dani Klein and Michelle So

OCTOBER 28

Yale's Intercultural Affairs Committee sends an email to Yale students urging them to wear culturally sensitive costumes on Halloween.

From: Yale Intercultural Affairs Committee
To: Yale students

... Yale is a community that values free expression as well as inclusivity. And while students, undergraduate and graduate, definitely have a right to express themselves, we would hope that people would actively avoid those circumstances that threaten our sense of community or disrespects, alienates or ridicules segments of our population based on race, nationality, religious belief or gender expression ...

- **Wearing a funny costume?** Is the humor based on "making fun" of real people, human traits or cultures?
- **Wearing a historical costume?** If this costume is meant to be historical, does it further misinformation or historical and cultural inaccuracies?
- **Wearing a 'cultural' costume?** Does this costume reduce cultural differences to jokes or stereotypes?
- **Wearing a 'religious' costume?** Does this costume mock or belittle someone's deeply held faith tradition?
- Could someone take offense with your costume and why?

OCTOBER 30

Silliman College Associate Master Erika Christakis sends an email to Silliman students in response to the IAC email, defending students' rights to wear potentially insensitive costumes.

In the long email, in which she referred to her academic work, Christakis encouraged students to "tolerate offense" as an exercise of free speech. Her email prompted more than 740 undergraduates, graduate students, alumni, faculty, and students from other schools to sign onto a letter arguing that Christakis's words invalidated the experiences of students from minority groups.

From: Erika Christakis
To: Silliman College Students

... I don't wish to trivialize genuine concerns about cultural and personal representation ... But in practice, I wonder if we should reflect more transparently, as a community, on the consequences of an institutional (which is to say: bureaucratic and administrative) exercise of implied control over college students ...

... I wonder, and I am not trying to be provocative: Is there no room anymore for a child or young person to be a little bit obnoxious ... a little bit inappropriate or provocative or, yes, offensive? American universities were once a safe space not only for maturation but also for a certain regressive, or even transgressive, experience; increasingly, it seems, they have become places of censure and prohibition ...

Photo by Brianna Loo, published in the News in 2015

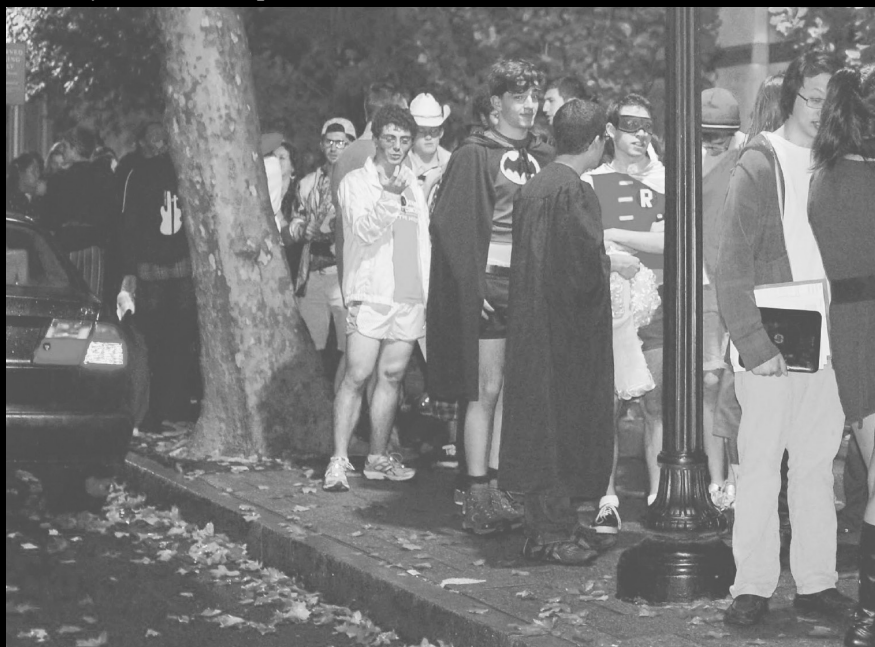


Photo by Ken Yanagisawa, published in the News in 2015



OCTOBER 29

Calhoun College Master Julia Adams joins the call to change the college's name.

In an ongoing campus debate over the name of Calhoun College, Adams called for a change, because John C. Calhoun, the college's namesake, owned slaves and promoted slavery during his lifetime. Some students and administrators had advocated for a new name, such as Calhoun-Douglass, which would honor abolitionist Fredrick Douglass. Others called for the name to be changed completely.

OCTOBER 30

A student posts on Facebook about women of color turned away from a Sigma Alpha Epsilon party on the grounds it was for 'white girls only.'

The fraternity's president denied the allegations. Dean of Student Engagement Burgwell Howard told the Yale Daily News that administrators were investigating the claim, and that he would look into whether SAE — which is now LEO — had violated University policy.

Photo by Wa Liu, published in the News in 2015



NOVEMBER 5

Students confront Yale College Dean Jonathan Holloway and Silliman Master Nicholas Christakis about the Halloween email and campus racial climate.

At the meeting, hosted by Salovey, Holloway and two other administrators, a member of the Black Student Alliance at Yale suggested possible steps the administration could take to address the discourse about campus racial climate. Salovey wrote in an email to the Yale College community a day later that the meeting left him "deeply troubled."

Photo by Razvan Aza, published in the News in 2015

