

COMIC BY LUCAS CASTILLO-WEST

WEEKEND RECOMMENDS:

SNOW BUCKET LIST

build a snow igloo

make a sled jump

bury someone in snow

make snow cream

go sledding on a dining hall plate

eat the yellow snow

build a snow version of your pet

throw a snowball at your HOC

faceplant in the snow

CULTURE

WHY WE RUSH

There are gateways and boundaries to community at Yale.

// BY INEZ CHUIDIAN

"I came to Yale to join a sorority" are the last words you would hear from any student on this campus. In a community of progressive intellectuals who are destined to be tomorrow's changemakers, partaking in such a dated social practice seems absurd. Yet every spring, hundreds of freshmen trek through the New Haven winter to try their luck for a sorority or fraternity bid. Why?

Their answers vary: Some are looking for a network, some just want to party and some want another circle to ground themselves. All answers are fair, but my answer was the latter.

A year ago, I was a freshman, just one semester into college. While I felt settled, grounded by friendships and the comfort of being on the rugby team, I was still in awe of how vast Yale felt. In the sea of faces I walked past on the way to class, I was met by strangers. Coming from a small high school where everyone was a familiar face, I couldn't shake the distance I felt from the student body. In an attempt to reconcile this distance, I rushed a sorority.

This was, without a doubt, a smart decision for me. After rushing Theta, I met girls that I never would have met otherwise. I found my place within the sea of unfamiliar faces, and my Yale became a little smaller. Although seemingly insignificant, the brief conversations I had throughout the rush process opened my eyes to corners of campus I had overlooked. Through rushing, I found family in my bigs and role models in my lineage.

Still, I can't help but wonder how differently things might have unfolded had I started on the wrong foot. Rush — three rounds of short conversations that ultimately reduce people to rankings — is highly impression-based, and I feel fortunate that I was caught at the right moment. I will admit that I'm a temperamental person. Under the weight of midterms or a packed week, I tend to retreat into an antisocial version of myself, functioning purely off my to-do list. I can't say whether my rush experience, or the impressions I left, would have been the same if I hadn't been floating through the lightness of syllabus week.

Which makes me wonder, how many girls were caught at the wrong time, or gave a misleading first impression that closed their doors to a community that could transform their college experience? In a system that moves so quickly with such high traffic, how do we ensure that no one slips through the cracks of rush or pledging altogether? I can't offer a solution or reform to these processes. Rather, I can offer some perspective that might comfort those students who may have slipped through the cracks.

Greek life is flawed. As grateful as I am for the opportunities and relationships it bestowed upon me, there is no world where a system selecting individuals based on brief impressions can be fair. I didn't realize this as a wide-eyed freshman. I believed that everyone would eventually find exactly where they were meant to be. That Yale, in all its abundance, would naturally sort us into the communities we deserved. But watching the rush process taught me otherwise. When belonging is filtered through brief conversations and mutual rankings, outcomes are shaped as much by timing and coincidence as by fit.

Freshman me also believed that social association was a prerequisite for a social life. I've come to see how untrue this is. While Greek life became one gateway to connection for me, it is far from the only one. Some of the most meaningful relationships I've formed at Yale exist entirely outside of social organizations.

I entered the world of Greek life with the hopes of expanding my social circle, and it very well did. But in doing so, I also realised how niche this demographic of the student body was. Sororities and fraternities require shared values that allow members to find like-minded students – those who value sisterhood, socializing and a healthy work-life balance. However, these organizations come with prerequisites not every person can fill.

Yale is so much more than social clubs. Surrounding yourself with people who fit a similar mold can only expand your world so far. I am a firm believer that everyone we meet shapes us in some way, and when we engage with those whose positions differ from our own, that growth is magnified exponentially. I am so grateful to have rushed a Yale sorority. I've found lifelong relationships and broadened my horizon in a way I didn't think possible without membership in a group like Theta. But social organizations aren't the only way to do this. So to any student concerned for the extent of their social life, trust that your social horizons at Yale will broaden regardless of bid day results.

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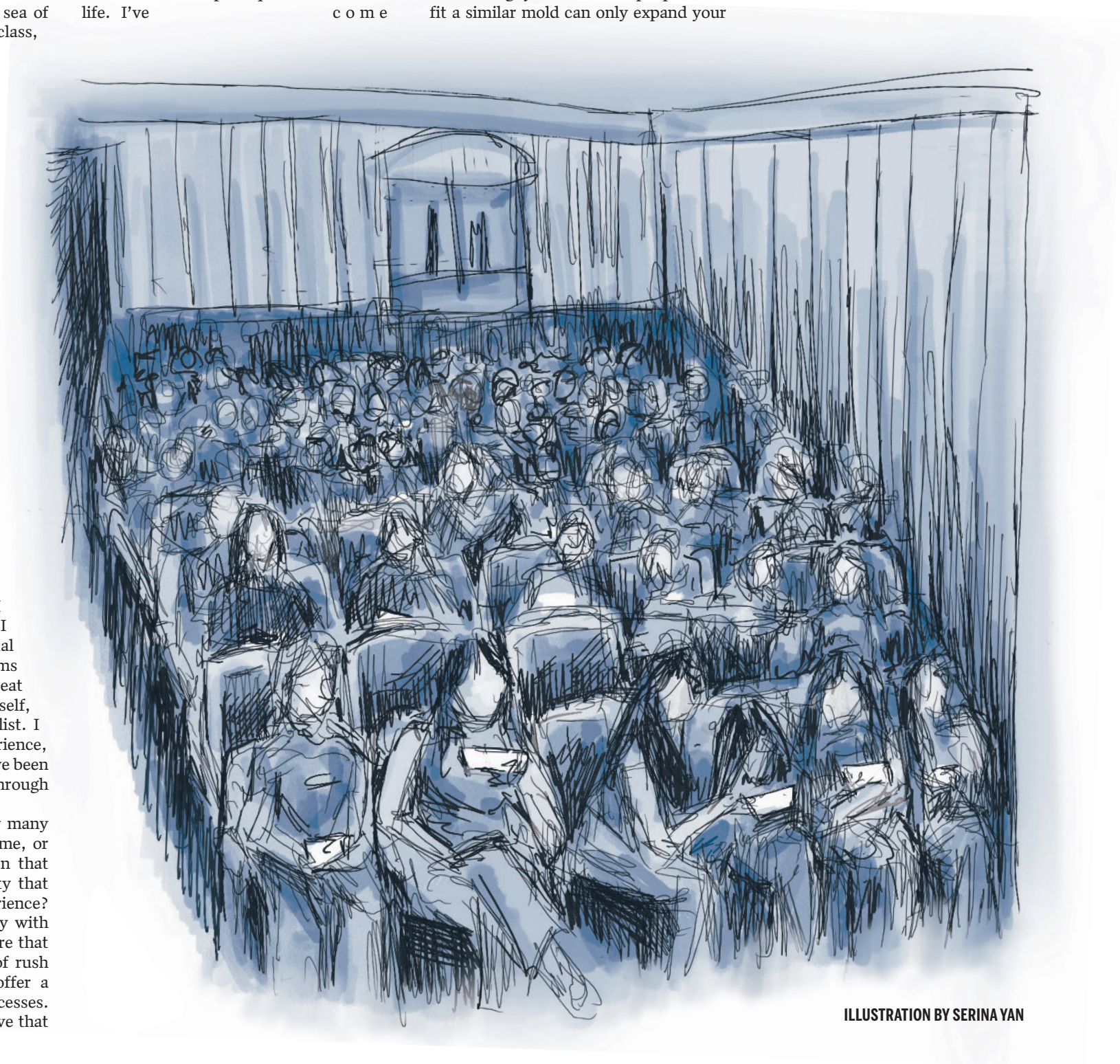

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