

# Separate, But More Than Equal

Neomi Rao and Luis Roth • From admissions to ethnic deans, a look at minorities at Yale

JUST TWO WEEKS INTO HIS FIRST semester as Dean of Yale College, Richard Brodhead found himself unexpectedly attacked for his administrative review of the need to fill the vacant Chicano deanship.

"That's an insult, it's like a slap in the face," said Black Students Alliance at Yale co-moderator David Bradley TD '94 in the September 10 *Yale Daily News* article credited with launching the campus debate. In a September 24 *Yale Herald* article, president of the Chicano organization Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) Maricela Ramirez ES '96 threatened to "take action if the decision is not favorable."

Suddenly, the moderately liberal Dean Brodhead, who has participated in the minority freshman orientation program, was being compared to his conservative and less popular predecessor Donald Kagan.

But in an interview with *The Yale Free Press*, Dean Brodhead denied that his administrative review was anything out of the ordinary.

"I feel I've been misrepresented by the previous coverage," he said referring to the September 10 *YDN* article. "I am not talking about getting rid of the cultural centers or even the other cultural deans. I am only talking about rethinking how we will fill the Chicano dean position."

Dean Brodhead pledges to release his decision on the Chicano dean issue on October 22. The flap over his ordinary review process provides a good example of the extraordinary importance of the ethnic support system to minority activists.

Yet this elaborate (and relatively expensive) network of deans, counselors, and cultural houses has had its share of problems since its establishment in the early 1970's. Critics, both white and minority, have questioned some of the undesired consequences of these programs, saying that the structure is inefficient and the programs have fostered racial segregation.

## THE RECRUITMENT OF MINORITIES

The special treatment for minority students begins even before they are admitted thanks to the aggressive Minority Recruitment Program (MRP) run by the admissions office. Minority applicants receive special mailings from MRP and minority students are hired to call applicants during the application process. These letters and phone calls are "warm, informative letters, without any promises," said Derek Gandy, MRP's director.

The outreach to minority communities intends to shatter the myths about Yale which present it as a university which only graduates rich white men like George Bush, the director said. Instead of viewing Yale as an unreachable and distant goal, the recruiting process tries to make Yale accessible to all, said Gandy.

The program has largely suc-

ceeded in its goals. 35 percent of the current undergraduates are classified as "minority." "The Class of '97 is very diverse ethnically, culturally, and racially," declared Gandy proudly.

The quest for racial diversity, however, has sometimes placed minority students into categories with which they feel uncomfortable. This past spring, a Chinese-American applicant named Ludy Chen took offense at the term "students of color" used repeatedly throughout a Yale admissions office pamphlet. When her father complained to the admissions office, he was initially answered with hostility, Chen said. In the end she was not accepted by Yale and is now enrolled at Stanford.

The Chen episode clearly illustrates how the ideology of diversity can clash with minority interests.

Gandy disputes Chen's claim saying that Chen's father was treated cordially and that his complaint in no way affected her admission chances. He also reiterated his support for the use of the term, "people of color."

In a phone interview with the *YFP*, Chen explained that she found the implications of the term disturbing. "Initially when I saw the phrase 'person of color,' I felt it had an isolationist tone to it. It seemed to imply that there were white people and then everyone else was considered non-white, or colored."

According to Chen, one of the Chinese-American student recruiters in the MRP acknowledged that the office had received similar complaints about the term in the past.

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ogy of diversity can sometimes clash with the very minority students it is intended to embrace.

## CELEBRATING DIFFERENCE... FROM A DISTANCE

Since 1969, when the university dedicated its first cultural house, the Afro-American Cultural Center, the administration has expanded its support network to include other minority groups. Today, Asian-Americans, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, have received their own cultural houses, along with ethnic deans and counselors.

Advocates of the programs point out that the ethnic deans represents concerns specific to minority groups. The ethnic deans also provide a more sympathetic and un-

selected ethnic groups hardly seems justified, argue opponents of the deanships. If non-minority students at Yale have no particular voice except, perhaps, for their YCC representative, why should each collective of ethnic students receive a professional, faculty representative? Concern about quality teaching, student life and college housing are, after all, shared by every undergraduate, the critics say.

The need for a confidante for minority students concerned about racism seems less questionable, opponents concede. In a situation similar to that of sexual harassment, individuals may suspect that administrators will not believe them or try to cover up wrongdoing. Yet critics charge that the formation of

nic groups within the umbrella term "Asian," encompassing groups like Chicanos and Puerto Ricans. Yet the Chicano and Puerto Rican groups are treated as separate entities, with separate deans, counselors and cultural houses. More numerous Asian-American students, however, are lumped together under a single dean and house.

Dean Brodhead recognizes the sympathies with this position and says that the system's contradictions should outweigh the national contradictions.

"The institutions evolve and the changing needs of minority students and different ethnicities," he said. "I remain committed to maintaining the cultural centers and helping make Yale a more equitable and accessible place for all students."

Brodhead's evaluation means, say critics, that the deans and houses go to the most obvious and indignant groups rather than which groups really need support. The louder the groups complain, the more likely they will receive administrative attention.

One Chicano student wished to remain anonymous and served, "Every group needs an ethnic dean...If [any group] puts pressure on the administration, they would almost be forced to give a dean."

## QUESTIONING IRONY

The irony of universities in the 1990's undoing some of the gains of the civil rights movement has not been lost on national cartoonist Garry Trudeau DC '73, who in the "Doonesbury" cartoon has featured a university trying to deal with the demands of minority activists for separate dorms and dining halls.

In one frame, Trudeau's cartoonist observed, "When this university first opened its doors to blacks, it had created separate dorms and dining halls on grounds that blacks would be more 'comfortable' in than where I'd rather go down swinging for integration."

Soon-to-be inaugurated Dean Levin is facing minority activists only slightly less demanding than the ones in the "Doonesbury" cartoon. In a *YFP* interview, Levin supported Brodhead's review saying, "We have to be free to question everything in a university. We have our own methods of providing services to students in our governance. That's what we have to do—ask questions and get the answers after thorough consideration."

As criticisms about the structure of the ethnic support system and the questioning advocated by students over the proper role of the administration in supporting ethnic communities will likely intensify when Dean Brodhead announces his decision on the Chicano deanship this month.

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