

**Constitution of Despierta Boricua – 2024**  
The Puerto Rican Student Organization at Yale  
*EST. 1971*

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**Article I: Organization Name**

The name of the organization shall be Despierta Boricua (DB), which directly translates to “Wake Up, Puerto Rican.” Our organization adopts the phrase “Despierta Boricua” from the political chant that could have been utilized as far as the mid-19th century. Archival documents from the 1970s documenting protests in New York City, for example, have referenced chants such as “*Despierta, Boricua. Defiende lo tuyo.*” Across the years, the phrase has served as a call to arms in the struggle for justice. It has been used to call for everything from “waking up” to protest against violence and police brutality against Boricuas and “waking up” to join the fight for independence from Spanish and American colonization. The phrase has most recently been revitalized through lyrical references in popular music, such as through Andrés Jiménez’s *Despierta Boricua*, a song recounting the 1868 uprising in Lares, Puerto Rico.

As of 2024, the members of the Yale student organization Despierta Boricua (DB) wish to join this tradition of utilizing the phrase. The members of DB aim to call upon the Boricua Yale community members to the realization and understanding of the importance of our heritage. Recognizing that not all members of the diasporic community speak Spanish, the members wish *not* to include solely Spanish speaking or Spanish<sup>1</sup> descending individuals, but rather to call upon the historical implications of the phrase to invoke a sense of urgency to us maintaining and seeking community. Members of DB have found solace in the phrase calling them to community, to paying attention to the various economic and political issues occurring within and against the island, to raise awareness regarding Yale University’s relationship to the island and its economic trials, and to advocate for the wellbeing and

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<sup>1</sup> “Spanish” here refers to those with ancestors from Spain. Boricuas may claim heritage from a blend of Taíno, Spanish, or/and African ancestors and cultures. This organization acknowledges the nature of this blend and of the blend of languages and cultures of those of the diaspora.

prospering of both the island and all of those across its diaspora. The members of DB wish for its name to call all to remember them and their island's existence, culture, history, importance, and potential.

## **Article II: Mission**

Despierta Boricua aims to bring together members of the Yale community who identify with the heritage of the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico in celebration of its culture, history, and traditions. Despierta Boricua shall take an active role in promoting the causes of the Puerto Rican people both from the island and its diaspora through establishing and maintaining community, conversation, education, and activism. As one of the founding organizations of La Casa Cultural de Julia de Burgos, the Latine Cultural Center at Yale, Despierta Boricua aims to promote the causes and interests of the greater Latine community at Yale. More pertinently, as members of the wider Boricua community in New Haven and in New England, the organization values the nurturing of Yale and La Casa's connections with local Puerto Rican communities so as to build these relationships—not impose them. Despierta Boricua insists on the existence and thriving nature of our community. Whether it be through its visibility on campus, within the internal university culture, or through the public facing image of Yale University, the organization and its members will insist on one thing: *estamos aquí y estamos despiertas*.

DB also strives to establish, strengthen and maintain active connections with New Haven through programing and partnership with local organizations that share common goals and values.

In dispersed materials, the shortened version of the aforementioned mission shall read the following: *Despierta Boricua (DB) aims to bring together members of the Yale community who identify with the heritage of the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico in celebration of its culture, history, and traditions. This celebration most immediately takes place within Yale's campus and the greater New Haven city through establishing and maintaining community, conversation, education, and activism. Despierta Boricua insists on the existence and thriving nature of our diasporic community. Whether it be through its visibility on campus, within the internal university culture, or through the public facing image of Yale University, Despierta Boricua and its members insist on one thing: estamos aquí y estamos despiertas.*

## **Article III: Membership**

1. All members accept the consent to be governed.
2. Membership in this organization shall be open to students currently enrolled in or affiliated with Yale University

3. Membership shall be inclusive of various backgrounds and identities. Membership shall not be excluded on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, neurodivergence, or disability.
4. Membership will be retained during the vacation and recesses of the university.
5. Active membership will transition into *alumni membership* upon graduation from the University. *Alumni members* of Despierta Boricua shall be engaged with the organization at the discretion of the current DB officer of Alumni Relations.
6. Membership is not unconditional. If one inhibits the organization from fulfilling its mission to promote a safe and respectful community, then membership can and should be revoked by the active board.

#### **Article IV: Leadership**

1. Leadership will consist of a Board selected through the process outlined in [Article V](#)
2. The goals of implementing a Board are as follows:
  - a. To be a reliable source of information and support for members to carry out their ideas
  - b. To maintain a regular flow of communication to members and those affiliated with the organization
  - c. To promote community outreach through events and programming
  - d. To secure operational funding from the University and other relevant sources
  - e. To more efficiently delegate tasks so as to follow through on ideas and hopes for the organization
  - f. To facilitate conversations amongst the organization
  - g. To maintain the archival value of the organization through the organization of historical documents, including through note-taking as needed during board and organization wide meetings
3. Though individuals in leadership, the Board's most important role shall be to support the ideas, events, and programming proposed by DB members.
4. Leadership positions are subject to term limits of one year maximum.
5. Each board position is designed to create and maintain institutional knowledge by capitalizing on specific skills necessary to effectively execute the tasks relevant to that role. This requires timely and thoughtful board transitions that allow outgoing members to train incoming members as necessary.

6. Each position on the Board has signature tasks and responsibilities, but the entire Board will join together for more general and broader projects. The Board will consist of the following positions:

- a. Co-chairs**

- i. Two (2) individuals responsible for
      1. administrative tasks, including agenda setting for board and general meetings, maintaining the organization of the shared archives and google drive, and attending affiliate meetings with La Casa's Associate Director
      2. alumni and community outreach
      3. The organization of event ideas and hopes, including individually strategizing on how to achieve certain events or relationships and regularly checking in with individual members hoping to lead events or conversations and connections
      4. speaking at public facing events if no other members wish to do so
      5. initiating and leading elections

- b. Treasurer**

- i. One (1) individual responsible for
      1. Creating and following a budget that will be provided to the university
      2. Applying to grants and funds (such as UOFC, SOAR, etc.)
      3. Securely and confidentially maintaining the bank account information
      4. Collecting receipts each time money from the organization bank account is used

- c. Communications & Media Coordinator**

- i. One (1) individual responsible for
      1. Disseminating information (such as through creating posters) about programming and operations relevant to the larger DB membership and relevant communities

2. Creating and regularly sending out the e-newsletter about current and anticipated events or other relevant news
3. Delegating the collection of content (photos, videos, etc) if not present to do so oneself
4. Creating and maintaining DB social media accounts in accordance with the DB mission and values so as to better inform the greater public as to DB happenings.

**d. Alumni Relations**

- i. One (1) individual responsible for
  1. General outreach to DB alumni and/or Boricua alumni more generally
  2. Creating and maintaining a quarterly newsletter to alumni
  3. Building a network of alumni via some sort of spreadsheet or physical database so as to promote personal and professional connections between active and alumni members

**e. Social Chair**

- i. One (1) individual responsible for
  1. Ensuring a well-rounded calendar of events ranging from social and community bonding focused to educational and activism focused events
  2. Making sure the organization focuses on strategizing on various DB events to foster community
    - a. Within the organization
    - b. Within the Boricua community at Yale
    - c. Between DB and other affinity organizations on campus
    - d. Between DB and the greater NHV & New England community
  3. Organizing social gatherings, mixers, cultural celebrations, and other informal events that foster community building and networking
  4. Cementing the logistical information and communication needed to bring such social events to life, such as solidifying the dates, times, and locations

5. Initiating the contact and being the main point of contact for inter-group events (i.e. being the main point of communication for the Caribbean mixer)

**f. First Year Liaison**

- i. One (1) individual responsible for:

1. Providing perspective and insights to the leadership team on issues and challenges faced by first-year students.
2. Making sure the organization prioritizes the accessibility and promotion of events, resources, and goals to first years
3. Being the main point of contact to the La Casa and The House PL teams in the event of a student being interested in connecting with DB
4. Being the main point of contact to first years during the extracurricular bazaar and to prospective DB members during Bulldog Days. If not available, this individual is responsible for assigning this task to other members.
5. Regularly collecting feedback from first-year members about their experiences with DB and presenting this information to the board.

7. The contact information for all board members will be easily accessible to the general membership, enabling open lines of communication between leaders and the broader organization.

**8. Removal Process:**

- a. Any active member can submit a written complaint about another member to the Co-Chairs, detailing the grounds for removal.
- b. The Co-Chairs will convene a Review Committee, consisting of themselves and two other board members, to investigate the complaint.
- c. The Review Committee will meet with the accused member, give them an opportunity to respond to the allegations, and determine if removal is warranted.
- d. If the Review Committee unanimously agrees that removal is necessary, they will present their recommendation to the general membership.
- e. The general membership will then vote by two thirds majority to finalize the removal decision. The accused member will be recused from this vote.

- f. The removed member will be notified in writing of the decision and the rationale.
- g. **Appeal Process:**
  - i. Removed members have the right to appeal the decision within 14 days.
  - ii. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Co-Chairs, who will convene a separate Appeal Committee made up of two board members not on the original Review Committee.
  - iii. The Appeal Committee will review the case and render a final decision, which cannot be further appealed.

## **Article V: Elections**

1. Officers shall be elected annually the week following the undergraduate Spring Break. All positions shall be eligible for re-election.
2. Current and aspiring board members may vote for all positions, except their own. If applicable, voters must choose the following when casting their vote for any given position: "I currently hold or am actively seeking this position".
3. Each aspiring Board member shall prepare remarks (brief or comprehensive) regarding their hopes for the position and present said remarks to the rest of the organization.
4. Registered members shall vote anonymously on the desired Board member for each individual role in the opposite order that the positions were introduced at the beginning of the previous section.
5. If a position is uncontested, everyone should still vote or agree on the new Board member.
6. Once decided, the transition to the current Co-Chairs shall notify the incoming Board of their election. Once all incoming Board members have accepted their appointment, the outgoing Board shall announce the incoming Board to the general membership.
7. Together, the incoming and outgoing board shall decide a transition timeline to be executed before the official end of Spring semester.

## **Article VI: Meetings**

1. Board meetings shall be held on a regular basis (either weekly or bi-weekly) for the purpose of determining policy, activities, programs, and other business. Board meetings shall be open to the general membership unless otherwise stated (see 7). Special meetings of the group may be called by the Co-Chairs at any point.
2. General meetings shall be held once a month for the purpose of building community and promoting engagement. Policy and other administrative matters are not necessary, but not discouraged during these gatherings.
3. Either or both Co-Chairs shall chair all meetings. In the Co-Chairs' absence, the Social Events Coordinator shall chair.
4. The chair of the meeting shall share the meeting agenda at least 24 hours in advance of each meeting.
5. Notice of regular and special meetings shall be communicated to all members of the group by the Co-Chairs and/or on behalf of the Co-Chairs by an appointed individual.
6. All members shall have one vote with respect to any resolutions put forward during a meeting.
7. All members are encouraged to submit items for the meeting agenda if they so wish by contacting the Co-Chairs as early as possible in advance. All board members may have editing access on online agendas. Members attending open board meetings may be granted suggesting access to online agendas so that their contributions may be reviewed and recorded or stricken in real time.
8. Details from each board meeting will be recorded and made available to the general membership within one week following the meeting. Details of key discussions, decisions, and action items from the session will be included.
9. The board will hold at least one open forum per semester where general members can directly engage with the board, ask questions, provide feedback, and share ideas or concerns.
10. The board may also hold executive sessions closed to general membership when necessary to discuss sensitive matters, including but not limited to issues of disciplinary action, legal matters, financial information, etc. Decisions made during closed executive sessions may be disclosed, with some omissions to protect confidentiality. Members may request to attend a closed executive session by contacting the Co-Chairs. All attendees must be recorded in the agenda.



## Article VII: Amendments

1. Amendments to the constitution may be proposed by active members.
2. Proposals to amend the constitution shall be considered at all times and shall be deliberated by the acting board.
3. The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the group.
4. Proposals shall be filed in writing with the Co-Chair prior to the meeting so that the group may discuss and decide on the organization's response to the proposal.
5. Official communication regarding any changes to the Constitution shall be communicated to alumni members via alumni newsletters

## Article VIII: Conflicts of Interest

1. **Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:** a. All board members and candidates for board positions must disclose any potential conflicts of interest, whether personal, financial, or otherwise, that could influence their ability to serve objectively. b. Conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to, familial relationships with other board members, involvement with partner organizations, or personal business interests related to the organization's activities. c. Disclosure of conflicts must be made in writing to the Co-Chairs prior to elections or upon assuming a board position.
2. **Recusal in Decision-Making:** a. Board members must recuse themselves from any discussions, deliberations, or votes where they have a conflict of interest. b. The Co-Chairs are responsible for monitoring potential conflicts of interest and enforcing recusal when necessary. c. If a Co-Chair has a conflict of interest, they must recuse themselves, and the other Co-Chair or the Social Coordinator will oversee the matter.
3. **Independent Review Committee:** a. For any issues involving conflicts of interest or ethical concerns, an Independent Review Committee will be convened. b. The Independent Review Committee will consist of two general members and one external advisor (e.g., the La Casa Cultural Director) who have no conflicts of interest in the matter. c. The Independent Review Committee will investigate the issue, gather relevant information, and make a recommendation to the general membership for final resolution.
4. **Prohibition on Private Gain:** a. Board members are prohibited from using their position for personal or private financial gain. b. Any financial transactions or contracts involving board members must be disclosed and approved by a majority vote of the general membership.
5. **Violations and Removal:** a. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest or violations of the conflict of interest policy may result in removal from the board, as outlined in

Article VI. b. The Independent Review Committee will determine if a violation has occurred and make a recommendation for appropriate disciplinary action.