

Constitution of Despierta Boricua – 2025
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 translates to “*Wake Up, Puerto Rican.*” The phrase originates from a political chant used across generations of Boricua resistance, appearing in 1970s protest archives as “*Despierta, Boricua. Defiende lo tuyo*” to evoke an awakening to the legacy of anti-colonial struggle, community defense, and cultural pride. The best example of this phrase’s usage is in Puerto Rican music and storytelling in Andrés Jiménez’s “*Despierta Boricua*,” a song that honors the 1868 Grito de Lares, connecting historical resistance to present-day struggles.

In adopting this name, DB joins a tradition of urgent remembrance and action. We invoke this phrase not solely in Spanish, but in spirit, calling all members of the diaspora, regardless of language or background, to awaken our shared history, to advocate for the island’s wellbeing, and to nurture community wherever we are. Our name is a call to remember Puerto Rico’s existence, struggle, culture, and future.

Article II: Mission

Despierta Boricua (DB) unites members of the Yale community who identify with the heritage of the Caribbean island Puerto Rico to celebrate and uplift its culture, history, and traditions. We advocate for the causes of the Puerto Rican people, on the island and across the diaspora, through community-building, education, and activism that takes precedence immediately within Yale's campus and greater New Haven. As a founding organization of La Casa Cultural de Julia de Burgos, DB champions the broader Latine community at Yale while centering the experiences of Boricuas in New Haven and New England. We seek to build—not impose—relationships with local Puerto Rican communities, insisting on the existence and flourishing of our diasporic community. Whether through its visibility on campus, within the university, or through the public image of Yale University, Despierta Boricua and its members insist on one thing: ***estamos aquí y estamos despiertas.***

Article III: Membership

3.1 Eligibility and Inclusivity

Membership in this organization shall be open to all students currently enrolled in or affiliated with Yale University. 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 ability.

3.2 Rights of Members

All members of DB have the right to:

- Attend and participate in general body meetings and events
- Propose initiatives, programs, or amendments to the constitution
- Run for elected positions, subject to eligibility guidelines
- Receive regular communications from La Directiva, Despeirta Boricua's Board

3.3 Responsibilities of Members

Members are expected to:

- Treat fellow DB members and, broadly, members of the New Haven and Yale community with respect and care
- Engage with DB in good faith and uphold its mission
- Communicate clearly and honestly, especially when in leadership
- Support events and initiatives when possible

3.4 Membership Standing

DB does not enforce a formal attendance requirement for general membership. However:

- Consistent engagement is encouraged
- La Directiva reserves the right to mediate internal issues and reassess the standing of any member whose behavior undermines the wellbeing or integrity of the organization
- Membership will be retained during the vacation and recesses of the university.

- 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.

Article IV: Leadership

4.1 La Directiva

La Directiva is the elected leadership body of Despierta Boricua (DB), responsible for guiding the organization's direction, sustaining its mission, and nurturing the community.

La Directiva oversees DB's internal operations, facilitates external partnerships, ensures inclusive and consistent communication, and preserves the organization's institutional memory. Together, its members serve as caretakers of the community we build and continue to grow.

4.2 Branch and Leaf Model

La Directiva adopts a **"Branch and Leaf" model**:

- Branches are the core leadership roles. Branch members hold primary responsibility for DB's operations, strategy, communication, and outreach.
- Leaves are supporting roles. Leaf members are chosen by and assist Branch leaders in fulfilling their responsibilities, gain leadership experience, and help build continuity within DB. Leaves are not obligated, but encouraged, to attend meetings. Branches may have as many leaves as necessary. Being a leaf does not guarantee becoming a branch.

This structure is intended to foster DB's commitment to mentorship, distributed responsibility, and collective leadership rooted in care, collaboration, and continuity.

4.3 Purpose and Functions

The specific goals of implementing a La Directiva are as follows:

- Serves as a reliable source of support and guidance for member-driven ideas
- Maintains consistent communication with members and affiliates
- Promote community outreach through events and programming
- Secure operational funding from Yale and external sources
- Delegates tasks effectively to follow through on DB's goals
- Facilitates meaningful dialogue within the organization

- Preserves the organization's memory through documentation and archiving

As stewards of DB's vision and values, members of La Directiva work collaboratively to support member-led initiatives, coordinate programming, manage relationships within and beyond Yale, and uphold the wellbeing of the organization as a whole.

4.3 Board Structure: Branch and Leaf Roles

Each 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 election transitions that allow outgoing members to train incoming members as necessary. Leadership positions are subject to term limits of one academic year. While each position carries distinct responsibilities, La Directiva works as a unified team on broader projects and initiatives. The following roles make up La Directiva:

- **4.3.1 Co-chairs (Branch)**

Two (2) individuals share general oversight of DB's mission and operations such as

- Agenda setting for board and general meetings
- Maintaining the organization of the shared archives and google drive
- Attending affiliate meetings with La Casa's and AFAM's Associate Director
- Guiding 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
- Speaking at public facing events as needed
- Initiating, leading, and overseeing elections and board transitions

No fixed Leaf position; Co-Chairs may appoint assistants for specific projects and responsibilities at the start of their term.

- **4.3.2 Treasurer**

One (1) individual responsible for all financial matters such as

- Creating and managing a budget that will be provided to the university

- Applying to grants and funds (such as UOFC, SOAR, etc.)
 - Maintain secure access to bank account information
 - Oversee and approve event budgets
 - Develop long-term strategies for funding and sustainability (e.g., endowment)
- **Leaf: Finance Coordinator**
 - Collect and organize receipts and reimbursements
 - Assist with budget tracking for events
 - Support fundraising or donation efforts

- **4.3.3 Social Chair**

One (1) individual responsible for overseeing social, cultural, and inter-organizational events such as

- Planning a balanced calendar of focused events ranging from community, culture, education, and activism
- 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, the greater NHV & New England community, and Puerto Rice itself
- Organizing social gatherings, mixers, cultural celebrations, and other informal events that foster community building and networking
- Cementing the logistics and communication needed to bring such social events to life, such as solidifying the dates, times, locations, supplies, etc.
- Serving as the main point of contact for events hosted in collaboration with other organizations.

- **Leaf: Event Support Coordinator**

- Help plan and set up events
- Manage small details (equipment, food, decor)
- Assist with day-of execution and hospitality

- **4.3.4 Local Network Chair**

One (1) individual responsible for building and sustaining DB's relationships within New Haven and New England by:

- Cultivating partnerships with local Puerto Rican community organizations, cultural centers, and community leaders
- Developing programming that connects DB members with New Haven's Boricua community
- Organizing community service opportunities and collaborative events with local organizations
- Serving as primary liaison for DB's involvement in local Puerto Rican cultural celebrations and advocacy efforts
- Building a database of local contacts and community resources
- Facilitating mentorship opportunities with New Haven-based Puerto Rican professionals and community figures

- **Local Network Assistant (Leaf):**

- Help coordinate community outreach events
- Assist with maintaining local contact database
- Support logistics for community partnerships

- **4.3.5 External Network Chair**

One (1) individual responsible for developing DB's national and international professional networks by:

- Cultivating relationships with prominent Puerto Rican figures
- Coordinating high-profile speaking events, panels, and cultural programming featuring external guests
- Building partnerships with Puerto Rican organizations at other universities and institutions

- Managing relationships with supporters, artists, and public figures who align with DB's mission
- Developing opportunities for members to connect with influential Puerto Rican leaders and creators
- Exploring collaboration possibilities with national Puerto Rican advocacy organizations and cultural institutions
- **External Network Assistant (Leaf):**
 - Assist with event coordination for high-profile guests
 - Help manage communications with external partners
 - Support research and outreach for potential collaborations
- **4.3.6 Marketing Chair**

One (1) individual responsible for DB's internal and external communications

 - Disseminating information (such as through creating posters) about programming and operations relevant to the larger DB membership and relevant communities
 - Creating and regularly sending e-newsletters about current and anticipated events or other relevant news
 - Delegating the collection of content (photos, videos, etc) if not present to do so oneself
 - Creating and maintaining DB social media accounts, website, and online presence to inform the larger public in line with the DB mission and values
- **Leaf: Marketing Assistant**
 - Assist with creating flyers and posts
 - Organize event photos/videos for physical and digital archives
 - Help schedule social media content
 - Handles website updates
- **4.3.7 Cafecito Coordinator**

One (1) individual responsible for leading DB's informal, recurring community 'cafecitos' by

- Building community through conversation and shared cultural experience.
- Determining themes, discussion topics, or cultural spotlights for each cafecito in consultation with members and the Board.
- Handling logistics for cafecitos, including reserving spaces, arranging supplies (coffee, snacks, materials), coordinating any needed set-up or clean-up, and delegating others to help do so.
- Ensuring cafecitos are accessible and welcoming to all members, especially new or first-year students.
- Promoting cafecitos through DB's communication channels and personally encouraging attendance to foster engagement.
- Gathering informal feedback from attendees to help adapt and improve future cafecitos.

○ **Leaf: Cafecito Programming Assistant**

- Promote Cafecitos through DB channels
- Help brainstorm weekly themes
- Support setup, cleanup, and hospitality

○ **4.3.8 First Year Liaison**

One (1) individual responsible for being an advocate for first-year students and ensures their engagement by:

- Represent first-year perspectives within La Directiva
- Prioritizes accessibility and promotion of events, resources, and community goals to first years
- Be the point of contact to the La Casa and The House PL teams for students interested in connecting with DB
- Be the point of contact to first years during the EC Bazaar and Bulldog Days. If not available, this individual is responsible for assigning this task to other members.

- Regularly collecting feedback from first-year members about their experiences with DB and presenting this information to the board.

- **4.3.9 Graduate Liaison (Branch)**

One (1) individual responsible for connecting Puerto Rican undergraduate and graduate students at Yale by:

- Serving as point of contact for Puerto Rican graduate students across Yale schools
- Developing events and initiatives that bridge undergraduate and graduate students
- Partnering with student groups, faculty, and departments to co-sponsor events
- Encouraging graduate students to mentor undergraduates in academic, artistic, and professional growth.
- Documenting and sharing opportunities (auditions, cultural festivals, fellowships) with the DB community.
- Collaborating with the Network Chair to promote cultural programming to the broader Yale and New Haven communities.

- **Leaf: Graduate Programming Assistant**

- Helps coordinate event logistics and outreach to grad programs.
- Assists with program promotion and relationship-building with external partners.

4.4 Terms and Transitions

- Leadership positions are subject to term limits of one academic year.
- All elected Branch members serve for one academic year.
- Branches are expected to foster their Leaves and successors.
- Board transitions must include documentation, mentorship, and sharing of passwords or access as needed.
- Leaves may run for Branch roles in future election cycles.

- 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.

4.5 Accountability and Removal

- Any active member can submit a written complaint about another member to the Co-Chairs, detailing the grounds for removal.
- The Co-Chairs will convene amongst themselves along with two other board members, to investigate the complaint.
- A Review Committee will be formed and consist of the Co-Chairs plus the Treasurer and Social Chair.
- If any of these predetermined positions has a conflict of interest (personal relationship to the accused, direct involvement in the incident, etc.), they will be replaced by the next available board member in the following order: Marketing Chair, Local Network Chair, External Network Chair.
- If both Co-Chairs are involved in the complaint, the Treasurer will lead the Review Committee process.
- This Review Committee will meet with the accused member, give them an opportunity to respond to the allegations, and determine if removal is warranted based on majority opinion.
- The removed member will be notified in writing of the decision and the rationale within 5 business days.

Appeal Process:

- ii. Removed members have the right to appeal the decision within 14 days.
- iii. 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.
- iv. The Appeal Committee will review the case and render a final decision, which cannot be further appealed.

Article V: Elections

5.1 Frequency and Timing

Officers of La Directiva shall be elected annually the week following the undergraduate Spring Break. All positions shall be eligible for re-election.

5.2 Eligibility

Current and prospective board members may vote on all positions, except their own. When relevant, voters must choose the following when casting their vote for any given position: "I currently hold or am actively seeking this position".

First-year students are eligible only for the First Year Liaison position. Students in their second year or beyond may run for any board position

5.3 Candidacy and Nominations

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.

If a position is uncontested, everyone should still vote or agree on the new Directiva member.

5.4 Transition Process

Once decided, the transition to the current Co-Chairs shall notify the incoming Board of the election results. Once all incoming Board members have accepted their appointment, the outgoing Board shall announce the incoming Board to the general membership.

Together, The incoming and outgoing Boards will organize a transition meeting before the Spring semester ends.

Article VI: Meetings

6.1 General Body Meetings

General meetings shall be held once a month for the purpose of:

- Building community
- Promoting engagement
- Share organizational updates
- Foster open conversations about the organization and how we can better advocate for our own community and communities we stand behind.

6.2 Board (La Directiva) Meetings

- La Directiva shall meet **(bi)weekly** during the academic semester, or more frequently as needed.
- Meetings shall include policies and activities, updates from Branches and Leaves, and discussion of upcoming programming.
- All board members are expected to attend and participate. Absences must be communicated in advance.
- Board meetings shall be open to the general membership unless otherwise stated.
- Either or both Co-Chairs shall chair all meetings. In the Co-Chairs' absence, the Social Chair shall chair.

6.3 Emergency or Special Meetings

- Emergency meetings may be called by a Co-Chair or by a majority vote of La Directiva.
- Special meetings for crisis response, disciplinary issues, or time-sensitive decisions may also be convened.
- Notice should be given at least **24 hours in advance**, when possible.

6.4 Meeting Documentation and Transparency

- The chair of the meeting shall share the meeting agenda at least 24 hours in advance of each meeting.
- 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.
- All members shall have one vote with respect to any resolutions put forward during a meeting.
- 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.
- General highlights from each board meeting will be included in the regular organizational newsletter distributed to all members.

- Detailed meeting minutes containing full discussions, decisions, and action items will be distributed separately to active members, those partaking in a project or pursuit, within one week following each meeting.
- The Co-Chairs, in consultation with the Marketing Chair, will determine what information is appropriate for newsletter inclusion versus detailed minutes.
- 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.
- The board may hold closed sessions 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. Requests to attend a closed session must be submitted to the Co-Chairs. Attendees will be recorded in the agenda.

Article VII: Amendments

- Amendments to the constitution may be proposed by active members.
- Proposals to amend the constitution shall be considered at all times and shall be deliberated by the acting board.
- The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the group.
- Proposals shall be filed in writing with the Co-Chair prior to the meeting, a week in advance, so that the group may discuss and decide on the organization's response to the proposal.

Article VIII: Conflicts of Interest

a) Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:

- i) 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.
- ii) 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.
- iii) Disclosure of conflicts must be made in writing to the Co-Chairs prior to elections or upon assuming a board position.

b) Recusal in Decision-Making:

- i) Board members must recuse themselves from any discussions, deliberations, or votes where they have a conflict of interest.
- ii) The Co-Chairs are responsible for monitoring potential conflicts of interest and enforcing recusal when necessary. C
- iii) 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.

c) Independent Review Committee:

- i) For any issues involving conflicts of interest or ethical concerns, an Independent Review Committee will be convened.
- ii) 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.
- iii) The Independent Review Committee will investigate the issue, gather relevant information, and make a recommendation to the general membership for final resolution.

d) Prohibition on Private Gain:

- i) Board members are prohibited from using their position for personal or private financial gain.
- ii) Any financial transactions or contracts involving board members must be disclosed and approved by a majority vote of the general membership.

e) Violations and Removal:

- i) 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 IV.
- ii) The Independent Review Committee will determine if a violation has occurred and make a recommendation for appropriate disciplinary action.