

**Constitution of Despierta Boricua – 2026-27**  
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
- Ensuring that DB's programming, partnerships, and public engagements reflect the political principles outlined in Article IX

*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 and maintaining a balanced calendar of events that foster community, cultural celebration, and engagement
- Serving as the primary coordinator of recurring community spaces, including *cafecitos*, ensuring they remain welcoming, accessible, and culturally grounded
- Organizing social gatherings, mixers, and cultural celebrations that strengthen connections within DB, the Boricua community at Yale, and the broader New Haven and New England communities
- Managing the logistics and communication necessary to execute events, including coordinating dates, locations, materials, and outreach
- Serving as the main point of contact for social and community-centered collaborations with other organizations

- Collaborating with the Coalitions & Advocacy Chair to incorporate thematic programming into recurring gatherings, including guest speakers, teach-ins, and discussions connected to DB's broader partnerships and initiatives
- **Leaf: Event Support Coordinator**
  - Assist with planning and setting up events
  - Manage logistical details (equipment, food, materials)
  - Support day-of execution and hospitality
- **4.3.4 Coalitions Chair (Branch)**

One (1) individual responsible for building and sustaining DB's political relationships and community coalitions across all scales — from New Haven's Boricua community to national and international Puerto Rican movements and institutions — by:

- Building and maintaining relationships with local Puerto Rican community organizations, cultural centers, and leaders in New Haven and New England, as well as Puerto Rican and Latine student groups, national advocacy organizations, and cultural institutions
- Serving as DB's primary liaison and representative in coalitions, inter-organizational spaces, and advocacy campaigns aligned with DB's mission
- Coordinating opportunities for collaboration with external partners—including panels, speaker events, service initiatives, and other engagements—that connect DB with broader Puerto Rican communities, leaders, and movement figures
- Building and maintaining a living database of partner organizations, contacts, and community resources
- Maintaining records of DB's coalitional relationships, partnership histories, and advocacy engagements to preserve institutional memory across board transitions
- Collaborating with the Social Chair to introduce thematic programming into recurring community spaces (such as *cafecitos*), including guest speakers, teach-ins, and discussions connected to DB's broader partnerships and initiatives

- **Leaves:**

- i. Community Outreach Assistant (Leaf)**

- Assist with coordinating local community events and outreach
    - Help maintain the local contact and community resource database
    - Support logistics for New Haven-based partnerships and collaborations
    - Serve as a point of contact for local organizations during events

- ii. Political Advocacy Assistant (Leaf)**

- Research potential coalitions, campaigns, and political opportunities relevant to DB's mission
    - Assist with drafting public statements, advocacy materials, and coalition communications
    - Help coordinate logistics for political programming, panels, and movement-facing events
    - Track relevant political developments affecting Puerto Rico and the diaspora and report to the board

- **4.3.5 Marketing & Communications 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
- **4.3.6 First Year Liaison (Twig)**

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.
- **4.3.7 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 Social 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 may submit a written concern regarding another member to the Co-Chairs, outlining the nature of the issue.
- Upon receiving a concern, the Co-Chairs will initiate a review process by forming a Review Committee composed of 3–5 board members. Committee members must not have a conflict of interest in the matter.
- If a Co-Chair is involved in the concern, they must recuse themselves, and the remaining Co-Chair or another designated board member will oversee the process.
- The Review Committee will:
  - Meet with the involved parties
  - Gather relevant information
  - Provide the member in question an opportunity to respond

- Deliberate and determine an outcome based on majority opinion
- Possible outcomes may include mediation, warning, or removal from the organization or leadership, depending on the severity of the issue.
- The decision and its rationale will be communicated in writing within a reasonable timeframe of 5 days.

**Appeal Process:**

- A member may submit a written appeal within 14 days of the decision.
- An Appeal Committee of 2–3 board members who were not part of the original Review Committee will be formed to reassess the case.
- The Appeal Committee will review the process and decision, and issue a final determination. This decision is final.

**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 casting a vote, candidates must indicate whether they currently hold or are actively seeking the 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 candidate shall prepare remarks regarding their goals and vision for the position and present them to the organization.

If a position is uncontested, members shall still vote to affirm the candidate.

**5.4 Voting Process**

Voting shall be conducted by secret ballot, using a secure and accessible platform (e.g., an online form or equivalent system).

All active members present during the election period shall be eligible to vote.

A simple majority (more than 50% of votes cast) is required to win a position.

### **5.5 Quorum**

Elections shall require participation from at least a reasonable portion of active membership, as determined by La Directiva at the start of the election period, to ensure legitimacy.

### **5.6 Ties and Runoff Elections**

In the event of a tie, a runoff election shall be held between the tied candidates.

If a tie persists after a runoff, La Directiva may facilitate further discussion followed by a final vote.

### **5.7 Transition Process**

Once elections are finalized, the current Co-Chairs shall notify incoming board members of the results.

Upon acceptance, the outgoing Board shall formally announce the incoming Board to the general membership.

The incoming and outgoing Boards shall organize a transition meeting before the end of the Spring semester.

## **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.

**Article IX: Principles of Political Engagement**

**9.1 Political Identity**

Despierta Boricua understands itself as an inherently political organization. Our existence as a Puerto Rican student organization at an elite university is itself an act of resistance and affirmation. We do not claim neutrality on matters that affect the lives, dignity, and futures of Puerto Rican people. Our politics are rooted in:

- The recognition of Puerto Rico's colonial status and the ongoing struggle for self-determination
- Solidarity with the Puerto Rican diaspora, particularly working-class and marginalized communities
- A framework that centers the voices and experiences of Puerto Ricans on the island and across the diaspora
- Commitment to intersectional justice, understanding that Puerto Rican liberation is inseparable from struggles against racism, patriarchy, economic exploitation, and environmental destruction

## **9.2 Scope of Organizational Positions**

DB as an institution may take public positions on issues that directly and materially affect Puerto Rican communities. These include but are not limited to:

- Federal policy toward Puerto Rico, including fiscal oversight, disaster response, and debt restructuring
- Environmental justice on the island
- Language rights and cultural preservation
- Educational access and equity for Puerto Rican students

Positions on such issues must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of La Directiva, with opportunity for general membership input before any public statement is released.

## **9.3 Distinction Between Institutional and Member Positions**

DB's institutional positions do not bind individual members. Members retain full autonomy in their personal political beliefs and affiliations. DB will not compel members to publicly

represent positions they do not hold, nor will political alignment be a condition of membership or leadership.

#### **9.4 Framework for Political Action**

When DB engages in political action — including public statements, coalitions, demonstrations, or advocacy campaigns — La Directiva shall apply the following framework:

- **Rootedness:** Does this action center Puerto Rican voices and experiences, or does it subordinate them to a broader agenda?
- **Accountability:** Are we accountable to the communities we claim to represent, including New Haven's Puerto Rican community?
- **Proportionality:** Does the scope and visibility of our action match our capacity to follow through with integrity?
- **Solidarity:** Does this action build genuine relationships across communities, or does it perform solidarity without substance?

#### **9.5 Relationship to Yale as an Institution**

DB operates within Yale University and benefits from its resources and recognition. We acknowledge the tensions inherent in this position. DB reserves the right to critique Yale's institutional decisions when they affect Puerto Rican students or communities, while maintaining the organizational integrity necessary to continue serving our members.