

Dear Students,

Wednesday night I sat down at my keyboard to compose a message to the community in the wake of the heated conversations concerning the Halloween e-mail from the IAC, reactions to that e-mail, and then the allegations of racial discrimination at SAE (allegations that my office takes seriously and continues to investigate). It was going to be the kind of message that one would expect of an administrator whose job it is to calm things down in situations like this.

That e-mail went through many drafts Thursday morning and afternoon, but I've discarded that message in light of yesterday's events. What follows, then, comes solely from my heart. I imagine that it will make some angry and convince others that I am captive to this or that set of politics. I am willing to take that chance, however, as I work my hardest to make sure that the community I love is welcoming to everyone.

At 12:30 on Thursday I went to the Cross Campus plaza to bear witness and to support the students who gathered to chalk their affirmations in honor of women of color at Yale. Shortly after arriving, students started to ask why I had been silent in the light of the events in the past week on campus. A circle gathered around me and I listened for almost two hours as students shared their disappointment in me and in the central administration for failing to act in clear and unambiguous ways to, at the very least, offer our support in what feels to many to be a poisonous atmosphere in which Yale does not belong to them.

A few hours later, I was in Woodbridge Hall where I joined President Salovey and Vice-President and Secretary Goff-Crews and listened to students who needed us to hear about their profound pain and, again, disappointment in the inactions of the administration.

I write too late for too many of you, I freely admit, to make it clear that I heard every word that was spoken and I watched every tear that was shed, whether on Cross Campus or in Woodbridge Hall. Let me be unambiguous, I am fully in support of the e-mail message that went out from the IAC to the Yale community. I understand that some, maybe many of you, found the tone off-putting or even pedantic, but the intention of the message was exactly right: we need always to be dedicated to fashioning a community that is mindful of the many traditions that make us who we are.

Remember that Yale belongs to all of you, and you all deserve the right to enjoy the good of this place, without worry, without threats, and without intimidation. I don't expect Yale to be a place free from disagreements or even intense argument; I expect you to disagree on a wide range of issues. In so many ways, this is the purpose of our institution: to teach us how to ask difficult questions about even our most sacrosanct ideas. While we do this, however, we must support each other.

This week's conversations don't affect only some of us; they affect and include us all. As you talk to one another, listen to one another, and sometimes disagree, do this knowing that I will uphold your right to speak and be heard and that I will enforce the community standards that safeguard you as members of this community. I do this as I hold us all, including myself, accountable to give what we seek: respect.

Yours,  
Jonathan Holloway