

Voice

GRADUATE EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS ORGANIZATION

GESO

15 JANUARY 2004



From Our New Chair:

Mary Reynolds, American Studies

As Chair of GESO, I will represent a new generation of leadership in our fight to build a democratic and just academy. Yale opened its doors to women in 1969-the year I was born. Despite the success of the women's and civil rights movements in creating more opportunities in higher education, I never thought I would pursue an academic career. I grew up working class in a small seaside town in England, where I had barely heard of Oxford let alone Yale University. Access to high quality education has completely changed my life and my expectations and I am determined to ensure that voices like mine, working class, anti-racist, and feminist, contribute to the critical discourse in the academy. But to be who I am and to do the academic work I want, I need GESO to succeed.

In our union's history, there have been strong moments and weak ones, divisions, controversies and successes. This semester we will be a powerful force for democracy on campus, be a creative and vibrant organization, and put enough public pressure on the university to win us a fair process agreement. The struggle to organize large numbers and to remain participatory and democratic while also remaining unified and powerful is an enormous challenge for a union. Over the past six months, GESO members took on this challenge in a new rigorous way: we built consensus and ratified our platform of issues and began an ongoing process of evaluating how our union can be democratic and transparent, and how our members can best organize their colleagues. Now we need to make legible how a union contract for graduate students will make the university more democratic and more accessible, especially for people like me, and prove that issues of fairness, equality, and diversity in our intellectual community resonate with all graduate students.

MLA overwhelmingly supports GESO resolution

Written by Jeffrey Boyd

In the wake of the hearing of the Academic Labor Panel, GESO has been working to reach out to the various professional associations regarding the right to organize and our concerns about the Yale administration's anti-union campaign. Resolutions have been proposed and overwhelmingly approved by the American Historical Association, the American Studies Association, the American Anthropological Association, the "Caucus for a New Political Science" of the American Political Science Association, and most recently the Modern Language Association. The text of the MLA resolution is as follows:

Be it resolved that the Modern Language Association recommends that all members of the Yale community concerned with the question of union representation of graduate student teaching assistants take steps toward finding common ground for dialogue and establishing an atmosphere of mutual respect, and

Be it further resolved that the MLA urges that the parties find a mutually acceptable forum for reaching some understanding about conduct that members of the Yale community regard as a genuine threat to their freedom of expression. That forum could be the NLRB if all parties so agreed or another forum devised by the parties.

As the proposer of record of the MLA resolution, I had the opportunity to speak to members of the Delegate Assembly at the MLA convention in San Diego over the winter holiday. I was impressed not only by their almost unanimous support of our resolution (130-4), but also their fervent commitment to seeing an organized unionized academy. Leo Parascondola, MLA Delegate and Radical Caucus member, told me, "The MLA is not simply supportive of unionization. In the recent past, the MLA Delegate Assembly passed a motion urging that MLA's Executive Council to advocate for unionization as the way to solve the problems facing the academy." Over the coming months, we will continue to mobilize the professional organizations around the right to organize at Yale. If you have ideas about the professional association campaign, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Inside: Election Results, Communications Committee Update, GESO in December, Photos and more!



On December 10th, 500 people gathered next to the Women's Table outside Sterling Memorial Library for a speak-out on childcare, dependent healthcare, and organizing rights. More than 100 women then committed an act of civil disobedience to highlight our commitment to changing this university (above).

December in GESO

Written by Mary Reynolds

At a recent GESO-sponsored forum on diversity, Vilashini Cooppan, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, described how discussions of race happen only in liminal spaces of the university, never in public. GESO members are determined to bring issues of diversity and accessibility into the public eye and, over the last few weeks of the semester, undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and union members called on the Administration to increase its support of Yale's women and people of color, and, in particular, its graduate parents.

On December 3rd, GESO released *The Few, The Proud*: a report on diversity at Yale (see www.geso.org for a link to the report). Among the report's findings, the authors note that, Yale's graduate population is less diverse than the national average (13.5% vs. 19.4%—see report for source). The report raises the concern that the University is creating a less diverse academy than the one that exists today. The authors also call the University to task for hiring more diverse faculty only in the least secure ranks of the faculty.

Concurrently, the GESO organizing committee of African American Studies held the "Women, Diversity, and Mentorship Forum" where faculty, undergraduates, and gradu-

ate teachers spoke about the difficulties they face in the academy.

The next evening, Linda Mason, a member of Yale's Corporation and the founder of a corporate daycare facility, came to campus to participate in a panel sponsored by the Women's Faculty Forum. There, members of GESO and Locals 34 and 35 presented her with a joint proposal to provide affordable on-site day care, more parental leave options, and adequate health coverage for families. We await her response.

On December 10th, 500 people gathered next to the Women's Table outside Sterling Memorial Library for a speak-out on childcare, dependent healthcare, and organizing rights. Jenny Carrillo, a graduate student in Psychology, spoke about the unaffordability of Yale's family health insurance for graduate families, and how she must rely on the HUSKY program to provide health insurance for her two children. Calling on Yale to educate according to principles of social and economic justice, Barbara Ehrenreich joined with 102 women in an act of civil disobedience to highlight our commitment to changing this university. Out in the street, we chanted "hey hey, ho ho, racism has got to go."

Pay Equity in the Humanities

Written by Ben Looker

Imagine a job interview where you're told that the pay package steadily decreases as you gain experience. Bizarre though it might seem, this happens to Yale's graduate workers in the humanities. From \$19,000 the first two years (while doing no teaching), stipends and wages careen downwards, until fifth, sixth, and seventh year teachers labor for \$13,500 and often far less, while struggling to finish a dissertation.

In a November 21st letter to Dean Salovey, thirty-three American Studies students urged the Graduate School to provide summer funding for all students, and raise teaching wages for fifth years and beyond to match the stipends of the younger years.

Dean Salovey came to the department on Friday, December 5th. He responded to upper-years' concerns over low teaching wages by proposing a competitive "honorary reward fellowship" for upper-year students who have excelled at teaching. Many students opposed solving upper years' dire financial problems with a limited number of competitive awards. Granting that competition is a part of academic life, several students argued that the teachers who are integral to the Yale College mission should not have to compete with one another for subsistence-level wages.

Dean Salovey indicated that he would continue to discuss these issues with the American Studies department. Nevertheless, students left with little hope that the administration would adopt our central recommendations—summer funding for all, and increased teaching wages—without a written and binding contract between graduate employees and the Administration.

From the Communications Committee

Written by Emma Ross

As the new chair of the communications committee, I wanted to clarify some of the confusion about the new ombudspeople positions that were ratified by the membership on December 10th. Over the course of many conversations in the summer and fall, the ombudsperson position was conceived as a point person with whom members and nonmembers could air their grievances, express concerns, and ask questions about the organizing process. Ombudspeople can intervene when conversation has broken down, and generally act as mediators and conduits for feedback. Confidentiality, whenever requested will be assured.

Given the demands of the position, the communications committee came to the conclusion that the ideal ombudsperson would have the following qualifications: the ability to listen and be impartial, some organizing experience, familiarity with the ongoing GESO program, and would reflect the diversity of the union itself.

In response to the concerns raised during the membership meeting, we recommend that: the ombudspeople either be self-nominated or nominated through the communications committee and confirmed by an annual membership vote. They are urged, like all members, to attend Coordinating Committee meetings when they feel it might be useful, though they themselves will not be coordinators. Finally, they will be members of the communications committee, but will address specific grievances independently.

We invite your feedback on this and other proposals made by the communications committee. We meet Monday nights, 5:30pm in the union office.

Letter to the NIH



Two representatives delegates from GESO, Qin Qin (left) and Shannon Anderson (right), met with Dr. Pat DeLeon, chief of staff for Sen. Inouye, on December 15, 2003.

Written by Shannon Anderson

This summer, over 100 life scientists completed surveys ranking issues of importance to their careers and academic lives. Career path issues ranked the highest. As has been reported in GESO's Too Casual too Blue report, it is increasingly difficult for life scientists to obtain a faculty position and, ultimately, tenure. Many fledgling researchers end up leaving science altogether, especially women. This is not a problem specific to Yale; this is a national issue. As the organizers in the Life Sciences, we feel that there are many concrete solutions to these problems that can be addressed with a union of graduate students.

Since the National Institutes of Health creates both the supply and demand for most of our research in the form of stipends and grants, they have an important role in determining the careers of life scientists. This summer, organizers in the Life Sciences drafted a letter to the director of the NIH asking for a meeting to discuss possible solutions to the career issues. One hundred and forty-four life scientists signed on to the letter and we sent it this November to the director. We have had no response yet. On December 15th, a few of us met with the chief of staff for Senator Dan Inouye of Hawaii, who is on the Senate Appropriations and Science and Technology committees (and has oversight power on the NIH) to discuss the letter and determine the next steps we could take. We received a positive response and discussed possibilities for moving these solutions forward.

Election Results from the December 10th Membership Meeting

Officers:

Chair: Mary Reynolds (American Studies) (193/4/ 1 write-in vote)
 Co-Chair: Melissa Mason (Political Science) (190/2)
 Secretary-Treasurer: Stefan Miller (Chemistry) (190/1)

Trustees:

Leah Eardley (Immunology) (180/1)
 Shafqat Hussain (Forestry) (181/1)

Standing Committee Chairs:

Healthcare: Ashley Riley-Sousa (History) (180/3)
 Teaching: Melissa Stuckey (History) (183/2)
 Accessibility/ Diversity: Uri McMillan (Af-Am Studies) (178/2)
 Communications: Emma Ross (History of Art) (179/1)
 Outreach: Stefan Miller (Chemistry) (180/2)
 Personnel: Elisa Mader (French) (170/1)
 International Students: Cong Huang (Statistics) (178/1)

Steering Committee:

Carlos Aramayo (History) (175/10)
 Rachael Barron-Duncan (History of Art) (174/5)
 Jeffrey Boyd (French) (174/3)
 Brenda Carter (American Studies) (182/1)
 Kathryn Clancy (Anthropology) (173/2)
 Jay Driskell (History) (167/15)
 Robin Herlands (Immunology) (174/1)
 Michael Mullins (History) (177/3)
 Lisabeth Pimentel (History) (176/4)
 Qin Qin (Engineering) (179/3)
 Mary Reynolds (American Studies) (183/2)
 Justin Ruben (Forestry) (179/2)
 David Sanders (History) (173/9)
 Anita Seth (History) (176/7)
 Kristie Starr (History) (169/14)
 Rachel Sulkes (German) (176/3)
 Beth Videlock (Chemistry) (175/1)
 Brendan Walsh (American Studies) (177/5)
 Wendi Walsh (Psychology) (180/3)

Coordinator elections will be announced departmentally.

The latest on the New Haven Savings Bank

Written by Brendan Walsh

On January 5, graduate students in GESO, along with other members of the Federation of Hospital and University Employees (FHUE), attended the second of two packed public hearings to protest the pending demutualization of the New Haven Savings Bank. Dozens of New Haven community members, including Mayor John Destefano, made personal appeals to State Banking Commissioner John Burke, asking that he block the NHSB's bid to purchase a pair of banks in Tolland and Manchester on funds generated from a public offering of stock in a larger, agglomerated bank called New Alliance.

The organized challenge to the NHSB's conversion has emerged for at least three reasons. First, the bank's board of directors received a federal waiver allowing them to proceed with their conversion plan without a vote of the bank's owners-the depositors. Second, the current conversion proposal offers no real safeguard against the acquisition of New Alliance's by a larger corporate entity with no ties to the New Haven community. Such a takeover could prove disastrous to a city that already suffers from extensive "redlining"-the disproportionate denial of bank loans to residents of poor and minority neighborhoods. Finally, community members are irate that members of the board of directors, several of whom also serve as trustees of Yale-New Haven Hospital (which has recently faced a community challenge to its aggressive pursuit of medical debtors in the New Haven area), stand to gain millions of dollars through the bank's conversion while the bank's depositors and other employees will receive little financial benefit.

Following the public hearings, the pressure on the NHSB remains intense. Local 35 President Bob Proto and leaders of Elm City Congregations Organized have promised to call for a boycott of the converted bank; and State Senator Martin Looney has promised to propose state legislation that would prevent the sale of a mutual bank without a vote of its depositors and limit the financial benefit insiders can gain from a converted bank's sale.

Voice

editorial info

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The **Voice** will be published at least once a month. It is the official publication of GESO, but all opinions expressed are those of the authors. Want to write for the **Voice**, or comment on something you read? Email geso@yaleunions.org. We reserve the right to edit submissions.