

OPINION

GUEST COLUMNISTS

SIENA GROUF AND MERCURI LAM

Divest from Palantir

Five days before we returned to campus in January, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent murdered Renee Good, a 37-year-old mother of three, in Minnesota. Good was on her way home from dropping her child off at school. The agent shot her three times, including at point blank range through her Honda's side window. After watching Good's car crash, the agent called her a "f---ing bitch."

As is her practice, Yale President Maurie McInnis was silent about Good's murder. But the Advisory Committee on Investor Responsibility, an unelected group of university affiliates that makes recommendations on how Yale's endowment is invested, communicated Yale's position: five hours after Good was killed, the ACIR emailed students its refusal to divest from Palantir Technologies, a company critical to ICE's operations nationwide.

Despite the ACIR's refusal to divest, neither students nor the committee actually know how extensive Yale's investments in the company are. Most of the University's investments are not disclosed. Yet Yale has public financial ties to Blackstone, which bought into Yale's recent private equity portfolio sale, and has worked with Palantir to develop risk analysis technologies. Pantheon, another of Yale's asset managers, includes Palantir as a significant share of their portfolio.

Co-founded by Trump megadonor Peter Thiel, Palantir is essential to ICE's surveillance and deportation regime. Last April, the company entered a \$30 million contract with the Department of Homeland Security to build "ImmigrationOS," a software that builds data-mined profiles of immigrants, placing them on a map to be tracked and deported.

Palantir boasts nearly a decade of collaboration with ICE, with notable involvement during family separations in Trump's first term, and has provided vital support to Israel's military operations in Gaza, with CEO Alex Karp praising the company's "operationally crucial operations." The company's partners include Unit 8200, the Israel Defense Forces' cyberwarfare hub, developing technology to identify strike targets in Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Arguing that Palantir's surveillance and warfare technologies meet the "grave social injury" criteria for Yale divestment, students have twice called on the ACIR to recommend divestment from the company to Yale's trustees. Twice, the ACIR has refused.

In 2024, former ACIR Chair Heather Tookes said the committee would not recommend divestment from Palantir, but suggested that it might reconsider its decision in response to future evidence: "the ACIR recognizes technology is evolving," Tookes wrote. In November 2025, EJC presented in an open meeting on how Palantir's technology had evolved to empower ICE's reign of terror. Nonetheless, ACIR Chair Kenneth Gillingham

sent a formal denial for a divestment recommendation on Jan. 7.

Yale's ties to immigration enforcement technology reach beyond Palantir. Last year, Yale disclosed that part of its endowment was managed by General Catalyst, a venture capital firm and leading investor in Anduril. As the sole contractor for hundreds of AI-guided watchtowers along the United States' southern border, Anduril consistently coinvests in startups driven towards inhumane surveillance and subsequent deportation and family separation. Furthermore, TDR Capital, one of Yale's favored investment firms, manages a "significant stake" in the company behind one of ICE's largest children's jails — where preschooler Liam Conejo Ramos was abducted just weeks ago.

Yale's financial support for Trump's violent immigration crackdown is particularly reprehensible given increasing ICE violence in New Haven. Only a week after 100 New Haven community members protested the killing of Renee Good, ICE arrested a man inside the Connecticut Superior Court in New Haven. This came after the abduction and 44-day detention of a Wilbur Cross High School junior last summer. During a local protest in June 2025, a 13-year-old girl whose mother was abducted by ICE agents spoke directly to immigration enforcement, pleading, "You're causing a lot of pain to these families by taking them away."

On our own campus, a failure to divest is a failure to protect our peers. Immigrant students strengthen the diversity of our student body, yet Palantir, through its partnership with ICE, has aided the arrests of students and academic workers nationwide, including Mahmoud Khalil and Rumeysa Ozturk, terrorizing campuses and stifling the free speech that Yale purports to celebrate.

While Yale's leadership is silent, its endowment isn't. Refusal to divest is yet another instance of the Corporation choosing marginal benefits on a \$44.1 billion endowment over the mission it is entrusted to steward: "improving the world today and for future generations through outstanding research and scholarship, education, preservation, and practice."

We look to the example of local students, labor leaders and the struggle against ICE nationwide, and demand that Yale divest from all corporations enabling immigration enforcement's campaign of murder, deportation and detention. Such investments violate the University's mission statement and fly in the face of its obligations to students, New Haveners and the Yale community.

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GUEST COLUMNIST

EMILY HETTINGER

Be skeptical of Yale's financial aid changes

Late last month, to far-reaching acclaim, Yale announced that it would no longer charge tuition to students coming from families with typical assets and incomes under \$200,000.

Having worked extensively to expand access to higher education — in the Yale College Council, nationally with Class Action and as a Yale admissions ambassador in my hometown — I was initially very pleased with this announcement. And, having watched my financial aid package dwindle every year, so were my parents. Upon deeper investigation, however, I worry that this change is at best not a meaningful shift in favor of accessibility, and at worst, an exploitative public relations strategy to win back public trust.

Both the timing and target audience of this change are revealing. It is no secret that Yale is facing record low public trust. A big reason? Universities are becoming increasingly unaffordable for the middle class. Notice how Yale's announcement came with two parts: first, the university raises its full financial aid coverage to families making under \$100,000, and then, it stops charging tuition — but not room and board — to families making under \$200,000. While there has been some press about the first change, the headlines pushed by everyone from the New York Times to Gilmore Girls actress Lauren Graham have spotlighted the second. Because this change, or at least Yale's public relations effort around it, targets the shrinking middle class.

At the same time, Yale is facing an immense funding crisis. From cuts to federal research funding to the upcoming endowment tax increase

to a hiring freeze, Yale has made one message abundantly clear: now is not the time to spend. So where did they find the money to be so newly generous with financial aid? I don't think they did.

If you dig into the available history on Yale financial aid offerings, you can see that the change in total estimated cost for families in the income range between \$150,000 and \$200,000 is negligible. The median cost of Yale for these families in 2024 was just shy of \$30,000. In 2027, the total cost of housing, food, books, the student activities fee and personal expenses — what these families might pay under the changes to financial aid — isn't projected to be much different.

Now, even if it isn't a strong departure from the status quo, the publicity around these changes will make talented students from middle-class and lower-income backgrounds who might not be applying to Yale due to its exorbitant sticker price more likely to apply, which is a good thing, right? Well, yes, theoretically. But bringing in more applications from these groups will not mean much if Yale simply rejects them.

Though claiming to be need-blind, Yale accepts more students from the top 1 percent of the income distribution than the entire bottom 60 percent combined. Think about that for a second: if you were to walk up to a random Yalee on Cross Campus, you would be more likely to be staring at a member of the 1 percent than a middle-class or low-income student. Several factors go into making this a reality: legacy admissions, preparatory schools, student athlete recruitment and admissions standards that favor extracurricular activities to

which children of the 1 percent have disproportionate access, to name a few. Yet, with this announcement, Yale has made no public commitment to renegotiate these standards.

I think that the real goal behind this change, and the subsequent media blitz, is to encourage more middle-class students to apply — but not necessarily attend. Yale can accept public praise for this change, pocket application fees and lower its acceptance rate — which boosts its national rankings — all without accepting any more middle-class students. Yale has found an opportunity to circumvent public criticism while protecting its bottom line. I'm not going to applaud this move, and I don't think you should either.

But, there is hope. With this increased national attention on Yale's financial aid offerings, we, as the Yale community, have an opportunity to leverage this attention to open nationwide scrutiny into university financial aid and admissions writ large. Universities across the Ivy League and beyond have demonstrated that they respond to public pressure over affordability, and we can use this power to demand real changes that require actual financial sacrifice and imagination on Yale's part. Now is our chance to completely transform university affordability. But to do that, we need to make ourselves clear on one point: we are not satisfied. I hope you'll join me.

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GUEST COLUMNIST

TOM DAWBER

A preview of Chapel Street's future

I have been skeptical of the city's plan to convert several downtown streets to two-way traffic, including the narrow stretch of Chapel Street that runs from College Street to York Street. Speeders, bicyclists, electric scooters, panhandlers, jaywalkers and double-parkers already turn driving in this town into a frustrating adventure. I feel a migraine rising whenever I think about measures that, despite assurances to the contrary, seem guaranteed to increase congestion and traffic.

The recent snowstorm offers a glimpse of what's to come. New Haven's painfully slow snow removal effort has left piles of solid ice obstructing parking spaces along some of downtown's most-traveled thoroughfares, narrowing two-lane one-way roads into a single lane. And traffic has never been worse. The storm's effect on traffic presents a rare opportunity to see the impact of a proposed policy before that policy is actually implemented. The city must reconsider its misguided plan to convert Chapel Street from one-way to two-way.

During the week after the storm, I saw traffic backed up all the way down York to Chapel Street, a milk truck and a garbage truck locked in a game of chicken on York between Grove and Elm streets as the former tried to park and the latter tried to pass, and a large delivery truck unable to navigate the left turn from Elm onto York. Parked cars lined both sides of York Street, each one multiple feet from the curb because the snow still hadn't been removed. The truck struggled to turn into the narrow opening, eventually giving up and reversing back onto Elm and roaring off toward

the New Haven Green. The whole process took no less than ten minutes, obstructing an intersection that's already chaotic on its best day.

How in the world are trucks like that supposed to turn from York or College onto Chapel once it's converted to two-way traffic? The snow has finally been cleared — on some streets, at least — so the turn from Elm onto York is navigable again. But impossibly tight turns will be the new normal facing truck drivers downtown if the proposed changes go into effect. The plan is to maintain parking on both sides of Chapel. How will trucks stop and make deliveries to restaurants like Strega, Union League and Claire's without completely obstructing the flow of traffic?

Let's forget about delivery trucks for a moment, because they're far from the only vehicles guilty of double-parking on New Haven's streets. Passenger cars constantly stop within lanes of traffic, forcing everyone else to merge into one lane to get around them. Frustrated blares of car horns are the only repercussions these drivers face; in three years here, I have never seen a police officer ticket a double-parked car, and I see several double-parked cars every single day. Once Chapel is converted to two-way traffic and someone decides to double-park during rush hour to run into Starbucks, I hope for the sake of everyone behind them that they placed their order on the app ahead of time and will be right back out.

I don't know if the city's lackluster response to the snow was due to a lack of funds or a lack of will. But let's take this opportunity to learn from one failure and prevent another one.

Downtown streets like Chapel cannot handle two-way traffic.

Proponents of the plan are quick to point out that these streets all used to be two-way. But cars were smaller then and there were far fewer of them. I have to imagine that people were also less likely to double-park in those days. No delivery apps and less of a take-out-driven dining culture means fewer drivers were "just running in for one quick thing." Too many people now seem to have no qualms about inconveniencing dozens of others just to save themselves a few minutes. This won't change on two-way streets, but the consequences will be worse.

Selecting Chapel Street for two-way conversion doesn't make sense. The two lanes are already narrow enough that speeding isn't the problem it is on, say, Elm Street between York and the Green. Cars treat that stretch like a drag strip, racing down the three and four lanes and often running the red light at High Street. Any conversion of downtown streets should begin there.

I appreciate the goal of making New Haven a more pedestrian-friendly city by slowing the flow of traffic — or "calming" traffic, to use City Hall's buzzword. But needlessly increasing traffic congestion cannot be the answer. Unfortunately, the time to make New Haven less car-centric was before the streetcars were removed. Our 18th century streets can barely handle 21st century traffic as it is. Let's not make it more difficult, please.

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