

NEWS

"Don't even try to talk to me when I'm watching the moon. That's my moon, baby."

WENDELIN VAN DRAANEN

Sophomore and Pop-Up baker competes on Food Network show

BY KAMALA GURURAJA AND ANAYAH ACCILLEN
CONTRIBUTING REPORTERS

Tarek Al Hussein '28 is the youngest of twelve competitors on Season 12 of the Food Network's "Holiday Baking Championship," which premiered on Monday night.

The show, which splits bakers into "Naughty" and "Nice" teams, has a prize of \$25,000. Al Hussein, a sophomore, applied to the Holiday Baking Championship over the winter break of his first year and is the show's only non-professional baker.

"I know how to play the game," Al Hussein said.

Filming took place in Los Angeles over the summer. The head baker for Yale Pop-Up, a cooking club on campus, Al Hussein previously appeared at age 13 on Season 7 of the Food Network's "Kids Baking Championship," where he was the runner-up.

"Holiday Baking Championship" consists of eight weekly Monday night episodes at 8 p.m., with one person ultimately crowned Holiday Baking Champion.

Al Hussein had wanted to do another baking show after the Kids Baking Championship. While he did not compete on any baking shows in high school, he consistently baked, selling multiple cakes a week in the lead-up to college.

Al Hussein was prompted to apply to another baking competition show because one of the producers that observed him on the Kids Baking

Championship reached out to him personally. "I remember one of them asked me, 'How old are you?'" Al Hussein recalled. "And when I said 18, he said, 'Have you ever considered applying for the adults show?'"

To prepare, Al Hussein memorized many of his base recipes and important ratios, which he could then modify during the competition. He also did many practice bakes every day in the week leading up to the competition.

Al Hussein said he initially felt that the older bakers questioned his capabilities. But, he added, "at the end of the day, I can't blame them for that, because I would also be skeptical of a 19-year-old who isn't professionally trained either." Al Hussein ultimately grew very close with the other bakers, noting that they have a very active group chat to this day.

At Yale, Al Hussein is majoring in Economics and Global Affairs. He spends time outside of the classroom as the head baker for Pop-Up, a biweekly fine-dining experience.

Anika Shethia '27 works with Al Hussein on the Pop-Up baking team. She remembered interviewing him for the club during his freshman year at Yale.

"He was super committed. He'd already done the Kids Baking Championship, so we were like, 'Oh, he's definitely very skilled! We ended up taking him on the baking team, and he turned out to be more skilled than I even thought,'" Shethia said.

Pop-Up models its audition pro-

cess on "Chopped," another well-known cooking contest shown on the Food Network. Shethia added that the group created the role of head baker for Al Hussein specifically.

Roxy Jones '29, a new member of the baking team, said that beyond being an amazing baker, Al Hussein is "an even more amazing mentor and friend." Al Hussein has taught Jones how to take basic ideas and turn them into something that will appear on the next Pop-Up menu.

"He's just so original," Jones said. "He doesn't have that Gordon Ramsey ego," Jones added.

Shethia furthered that Al Hussein is a leader who takes action, advocating for more Pop-Up funds to be dedicated to the baking team.

Al Hussein said he has enjoyed the opportunity to be innovative thanks to Pop-Up's creative freedom.

"I remember at one of the openings, someone came up to me and was like, 'I've been to a lot of Michelin-starred restaurants, I've had a lot of Michelin-starred restaurant desserts, but this one is much better than a lot of the ones I've had,'" he said.

Looking forward, Al Hussein said he hopes to combine his passion for baking with his other interests.

"Baking is not something I want to have as a career because in past experiences I've had selling stuff in high school, I got extremely burnt out, and I started kind of losing interest," he said.

He pointed to the grueling hours and lack of job security as



PHOTO COURTESY OF TAREK AL HUSSEINI

Tarek Al Hussein '28 is the youngest and only non-professional baker in a show which premiered on Monday night.

other downsides of being in the baking industry.

"I definitely want to do something that's related to food in some capacity," he said. "Anything from restaurant consulting or investment banking working with food companies, consumer retail, a jump into food entertainment or publishing a cook book."

Al Hussein also emphasized the valuable professional connections he made with his competitors on "Holiday Baking Championship!"

"Every single one of them has offered, if I ever want to jump in the industry, I am welcome to text them and I could have a job in their kitchen," he said.

The first episode of the series featured a challenge where Team Nice team made hot desserts and Team Naughty team made cold ones.

Contact

KAMALA GURURAJA at kamala.gururaja@yale.edu and **ANAYAH ACCILLEN** at anayah.accilien@yale.edu.

Black sorority hosts panel on mass killings in Sudan

BY HANNAH LIU
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Students gathered on Tuesday for a "teach-in and donation drive" at the Afro-American Cultural Center, known colloquially as the House, to hear three experts speak on the humanitarian crisis in Sudan.

The event was hosted by the Yale chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a historically black sorority, in collaboration with the Sudanese Student Association at Yale and the Yale Black Muslim Students Association. It featured three speakers, two who spoke in-person and one via zoom. About 40 students attended.

"As a student in a space like Yale that comes with a lot of power and privilege, it's our responsibility to pay attention to these humanitarian disasters," Maryam Abbas '29 said

in an interview. "I believe there's a lot of power in student organizing and taking action. When we're seeing one of the worst humanitarian crises and famines in the world, really understanding these situations is important."

Host and moderator Ryen Eley '27 opened with a brief overview of Sudan's history and the recent conflict. Per Eley's presentation, Sudan experienced various civil wars in the close of the 20th century, the creation of South Sudan and the war in Darfur, which lasted from 2003 to 2005 and resulted in the genocide of over 300,000 people by the Janjaweed, a Sudanese military group.

After the Sudanese revolution in 2019, the current power struggle between the Rapid Support Forces, which grew out of the jan-

jaweed, and the Sudanese Armed Forces, erupted in April 2023, resulting in displacement, crisis and violence towards civilians, Eley said in her opening speech.

Caitlin Howarth, the director of conflict analytics at Yale's Humanitarian Research Lab, spoke about what her team at the HRL is working on, which includes the use of satellite imagery in the conflict and lab reports accessible to the public.

"This is a culmination of the genocide that began in the early 2000s," Howarth said. "It's never been more important for people to be not just inventive, but to think creatively about how to build that infrastructure within ways that cannot be easily torn down."

Ellen Bevier, a senior humanitarian policy advocate at the international humanitarian aid orga-

nization CARE, spoke about the conflict from the perspective of the humanitarian aid sector.

"It's a moment that requires us to practice responsible system citizenship, both here and around the world," Bevier said. "We must see the suffering of our fellow humans and rise to meet it in the ways we can, by fundraising, by spreading their awareness, and holding our policy makers accountable."

Eman Salih, postdoctoral associate from the Yale School of Public Health, shared her personal experiences relating to the conflict, having served in Sudan as the director of bilateral and multilateral relations at the Ministry of Health. She also noted the growing crisis of gender-based violence in Sudan, the prevalence of preventable diseases and the importance of using

social media to raise awareness about the crisis.

"I'm so proud to see this room full of young people standing for Sudan," Salih said. "I was there during the revolution, and I have seen what young people are able to do."

Following the speakers' presentations, students asked questions about ways to advocate for Sudan. Attendees also were invited to donate money to aid organizations and access templates to write letters to their government representatives.

The event is part of the sorority's broader Delta Week programming, which also includes a film screening, a book drive and a college financial literacy panel.

Contact

HANNAH LIU at hannah.liu@yale.edu.

YCC Senate passes condemnation of Yale gift to Israeli military backer

BY JOLYNDIA WANG AND MADISON AGUILAR
CONTRIBUTING REPORTERS

The Yale College Council Senate on Sunday passed a revised version of a previously proposed statement denouncing the University's November 2023 distribution of a \$1 million donation to the Friends of the Israel Defense Forces through a donor-advised fund.

In September, the Endowment Justice Coalition criticized Yale for the donor-advised distribution in an Instagram post. The Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, or FIDF, is a nonprofit that supports Israeli soldiers through financial, educational and well-being programs, according to its website.

Three weeks ago, the senate voted for the first time on the initially proposed statement, which ended with a tied vote of 12-12 and four abstentions in the first round of voting. Vice President Jalen Bradley '27 abstained from casting a tie-breaking vote, ultimately leading the proposal to fail.

On Sunday afternoon, through an anonymous vote, 19 senators voted in favor of issuing a revised public statement, while seven voted against condemning Yale's donation to the organization.

The revised statement now calls on Yale to "adopt an ethical standard for approving donor-advised distributions" that "would prohibit financial support to any organizations implicated in genocide, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, scholasticide, or other human rights violations per the United Nations and International

Court of Justice."

The original public statement called on the University to "issue a formal statement of accountability" and "commit to rejecting future donor-advised distributions" to organizations implicated in "genocide, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, or other human rights violations."

The revised statement also urges Yale to "act upon the results of last year's student-wide referendum." In December 2024, the YCC announced that a majority of students voted in favor of a referendum calling on Yale to disclose and divest from its holdings in military weapons manufacturers and act on its commitment to education by investing in Palestinian scholars and students.

At Sunday's meeting, students gave public statements supporting and opposing the revised public statement. On Saturday, Yalies4Palestine posted an Instagram story urging followers to attend the YCC meeting and show that "students are in support of passing its statement on Yale's Donation to the Friends of the IDF and Future DAF contributions," referring to donor-advised funds.

During the student commenting period, Gabi Bellin-Schonfeld '29 said that voting in favor of the proposal would give the "student body the power to make subjective judgments of what does or does not align with Yale's moral standards." He said it would set a "precedent for limiting free expression and negatively impact the same Yale students you represent."

"With the passage of this bill, you poke the bear that is the Trump administration and invite them to cut funding for research, block student visas and heavily fine the school for 'antisemitic and anti-conservative actions,'" he said.

Another student, Elijah Wiesel '28, urged senators to vote against the resolution and not issue a statement of "moral posturing." He cautioned against the senate turning political disagreements into resolutions, which he said would weaponize the student government and further divide the student body.

Diego Loustaunau '27, an organizer with the Endowment Justice Collective and a sponsor of the public statement proposal, spoke about Yale's responsibility as "legal custodian" of the donor-advised funds since the university has "veto power over what non-profits were eligible to receive that donation."

"In my time at Yale, I watched taxpayer dollars fund the bombs to destroy every university in Gaza, and I can now only wonder whether Yale put the pilot in the cockpit," he said.

Hassaan Qadir '26, another sponsor of the proposal, emphasized that the statement would set an example for Yale students, Yale student organizations or other University administrators that "follow Yale's endowment and donation policies."

Benjamin Barkoff '27, a senator from Trumbull College, said that he would vote against the statement and voiced



JOLYNDIA WANG / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Yale College Council senators voted 19-7 in favor of issuing a public statement calling on Yale to establish an ethical standard for approving donor-advised distribu-

concerns about setting "a very dangerous precedent for an organization that's meant to improve student life."

"Once we start condemning things, it means if we don't condemn them, we passively support them," he said.

After debate, the senate passed the proposal, which instructs the YCC president and communications director to publish the proposed statement on behalf of the YCC and communicate it to "relevant University offices."

Loustaunau said in an interview after the proposal passed that the

student turnout at the meeting and the passage of the proposal demonstrate the strength of student movements on campus.

"More and more students are recognizing that Yale has harmful policies, which must be subject to reevaluation and change," he said.

A donor-advised fund at Yale requires a minimum initial gift of \$5 million, according to a webpage on Yale's For Humanity campaign website.

Contact

JOLYNDIA WANG at jolyndia.wang@yale.edu and **MADISON AGUILAR** at madison.aguilard@yale.edu.