OPINION

GUEST COLUMNIST

MANU ANPALAGAN

Liberal elitism fails American universities

On Monday morning, the News published an opinion piece by Milan Singh '26 titled "Reject ideological affirmative action." In it, Singh argues that the lack of conservative voices at Yale can be explained by a simple reason: because conservatives are "less intelligent than liberals." He then repeats this claim several times, insisting that "conservatives are just not as smart as liberals," and concludes that any effort to address ideological imbalance would require lowering academic standards.

Singh is entitled to his views, but the tone and substance of his argument reveals a deeper problem that goes beyond a single op-ed. His piece exemplifies the elitism that has become increasingly common in progressive academic spaces, where political disagreement is dismissed as evidence of moral or intellectual inferiority.

Reducing nearly half the country to a deficiency in intelligence is not serious scholarship. It is arrogance that substitutes ridicule and mockery for intellectual debate. When disagreement is explained away as stupidity, discussion becomes unnecessary and democracy itself begins to look like an inconvenience rather than a shared project.

More troubling, however, is what such claims imply about entire cultures, religions and communities. Social conservatism is not a fringe ideology invented in America. Many of the world's major religions prescribe moral frameworks that emphasize values commonly associated with social conservatism. These include the centrality of the family, norms around marriage and personal conduct, obligations to community, respect for tradition and moral accountability. To describe conservatives, by and large, as dumb or less intelligent is not merely an insult directed at a segment of American voters. It's a dismissal of billions of people across cultures and continents whose beliefs do not conform to elite progressive norms.

This attitude is especially concerning at Ivy League institutions that pride themselves on global awareness and intellectual humility. Yale students are among the most privileged people in the world and the beneficiaries of extraordinary educational, social and economic advantages. When members of that group assert that their political views are the natural byproduct of superior intelligence, while claiming that dissenting views reflect cognitive failure, they reveal just how out of touch elite academic culture can be with the vast majority of Americans.

This sense of moral and intellectual superiority is quite dangerous. It creates a framework in which disagreement is immediately dismissed instead of being engaged with. Instead of arguing against conservative ideas on their merits, Singh's article suggests that those ideas can be ignored because the people who hold them are allegedly incapable of serious thought. That logic is a precursor to silencing.

We have seen this impulse before on the national stage. In 2016, Hillary Clinton LAW '73 famously referred to half of Donald Trump's supporters as a "basket of deplorables." In 2024, Joe Biden described Trump supporters as "garbage." The backlash that followed in both cases was indicative of the growing sense that elites no longer saw their fellow citizens as worthy of respect. Singh's argument belongs in the same camp, where political failure is explained not by flawed ideas or unpopular policies, but by the supposed defects of the people who disagree with you.

Conservatives at Yale are not asking for ideological affirmative action, as Singh suggests. We're not asking the University to lower standards or to admit students who are unqualified. We're asking for honesty about discrimination. Numerous conservatives have experienced firsthand the social penalties imposed on those who dissent from progressive orthodoxy in admissions, hiring and academic life. I've seen this myself as a conservative leader on a campus where many of my friends worry about the social, academic and career ramifications of expressing their conservatism publicly. In my experience, many students — afraid their grades may suffer if they voice the "wrong" opinions — feel the need to self-censor in the classroom.

Conservative students are not less capable, they are simply less welcome. And by insisting that intelligence explains ideological imbalance, liberals avoid confronting this uncomfortable reality. The narrative shifts from bias to biology. It's a convenient story — but a false one.

If Yale and other academic institutions truly want to commit themselves to intellectual diversity, they must reject the myth of liberal superiority and recommit themselves to genuine debate. That begins by treating conservatives not as objects of ridicule or diagnosis, but as equal participants in the pursuit of truth.

, Yale will be able to persevere and fulfill its mission of serving the "Publick" for another three centuries to come.

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GUEST COLUMNIST

GALEN JONES

Hegseth's break with universities insults our military leaders

Secretary Pete Hegseth studied at both Princeton and Harvard. Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll LAW '14 went to Yale. Navy Secretary John Phelan graduated from Harvard.

Last week, the Pentagon decided those schools are too dangerous for our troops.

Secretary Hegseth's decision to pull military officers from elite universities, including two fellowships at Yale, isn't a defense of the armed forces. It's an insult to their capability and deprives our leaders of a key training tool.

When I joined a U.S. Army Special Forces team at 24 years old, I was the only soldier in the room with left-leaning politics. For years, in the brutally honest atmosphere of a Special Operations team room, I faced every challenge imaginable to my ideas, every argument and technique one could imagine. In the morning, I would have heated political arguments pitted against up to four or five of my teammates. The same evening, we would go out to train, where I trusted them with my life.

After four years of ideological bombardment from fellow Green Berets whose views were often quite opposite to my own, did I emerge a newly converted conservative? Much to what I imagine would be Secretary Hegseth's chagrin, no, I did not. My views shifted slightly in response to ideological exploration, but the real transformation was in my capacity to fight intellectual battles: to understand opposing viewpoints, to stress-test my own and to sharpen my arguments against genuine resistance. In short, I became more mentally "lethal."

Secretary Hegseth's decision to cancel fellowship programs bringing active-duty military leaders to top universities ignores this truth, and in doing so, betrays the very warfighters he claims to champion.

Secretary Hegseth might believe that our top officer are wildly impressionable — that they will arrive at Harvard or Yale and return to their units indoctrinated. As a veteran who has spent nearly three years studying alongside active-duty officers, I can tell you: This is an insult to the professionalism and competency of our military ranks. These are mid-career officers and non-commissioned officers at the top of their fields. They are accomplished, disciplined and secure enough in their own convictions that a provocative professor or an unfamiliar idea is not a threat.

> AS A VETERAN WHO HAS SPENT NEARLY THREE YEARS STUDYING ALONGSIDE ACTIVE-DUTY OFFICERS, I CAN TELL YOU: THIS IS AN INSULT TO THE PROFESSIONALISM AND COMPETENCY OF OUR MILITARY RANKS.

Military leaders do not arrive on campus ready to mindlessly absorb whatever they hear. They bring years of hard experience, a finely calibrated instinct for threat assessment and a professional obligation to question and judge.

The strategic cost makes Secretary Hegseth's decision even harder to bear. Consider what is actually being dismantled. The Space Force chose Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies as its official graduate education partner for senior officers. Yale has hosted an annual Special Operations Forces Conference attended by leaders from across the Special Operations community. Massachusetts Institute of Technology operates the Department of Defense's single largest federally funded research and development center, producing the advanced technology that undergirds American national security. These are not institutions hostile to the military. They are institutions the military once chose.

If Secretary Hegseth truly wants to build stronger leaders, he should not shelter them from difficult ideas. Instead, he should send them directly into the fray. His decision doesn't just insult the service members it claims to protect. It dismantles partnerships the military spent decades building and deprives our most promising leaders of exactly the kind of intellectual combat that has always made them exceptional. If you want a sharp knife, you bring it to a whetstone. You don't put it back in the sheath.

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STAFF COLUMNIST

WILLIAM BARBEE

Reject intelligence, embrace education

There is only one adjective that could describe Yale at any point in its tricentenarian history: pre-professional. The University's charter of 1701 calls for the establishment of a collegiate school to fit young men "for Publick employment both in Church & Civil State," anticipating the stage for today's battles over Morgan Stanley internships and start-up loans.

Yet the character of such employment has undoubtedly changed since Yale's inception. The Yale of old sought to instruct students in the "Arts & Sciences" and suit them with the skills necessary to serve church and state — institutions with an inherently "Publick" identity. In contrast, what is the goal of a Yale education today? Late statements by both University students and administrators indicate something vastly different.

The author of a recent op-ed in the News made the argument that expanding political diversity on campus would be detrimental to the University because conservatives are "just not as smart as liberals." Citing a loose collection of studies, he claims that offering spots to conservative students and faculty would "lower" the university's standards and equate to a form of costly, unjust affirmative action.

I will not venture to combat the statistical claims made in the piece, as the infirmity of the evidence pointing towards such conclusions should be obvious to everyone. Those with more statistical chops than I may bear that burden. Instead, the onus falls upon me to argue from first principles that such belief in intelligence as the telos of education fundamentally misses the object of Yale's purpose as an institution.

Classicist and former Yale instructor Allan Bloom once wrote that the mutual contempt between social scientists and humanists stems from their different conceptions of man: the former claim him to be a predictable creature, while the latter claim that he is not. I fear that those who use tests and data to argue for the genetic predisposition of an individual's admission to Yale fall too far into the view of man as a mappable being.

IQ scores, cognitive abilities, verbal faculties — these quantitative measures are not the traits that make us human, and they certainly should not be the traits that make us qualified as Yale students. For 300 years, our University has instructed us to serve the "Publick" in occupations that require much more than raw intelligence to be executed successfully. Where does an adherence to manners, a proclivity to empathy, an orientation to faith and a sensitivity to beauty fit in this new scheme of things? In years past, the Yale gentleman served as the model for such an appropriate balance of mind, body and soul; in the wake of his death, we have yet to fill the moral void presented by his absence.

This mode of hyper-rationalist, optimization-based thinking cannot possibly create a flourishing society. At best, it rudely tears off all the "decent drapery of life" as warned by statesman Edmund Burke in 1790, creating a world devoid of "love, veneration, admiration [and] attachment." At worst, it leads to much darker places — places Yale inhabited in an all-too familiar way at one time in our recent past.

Researchers and columnists have documented such problems extensively, most notably David Brooks in a famous Atlantic article from 2024. I took his hiring as Yale's inaugural Presidential Senior Fellow as an indication that Yale was taking many of his criticisms to heart. Hence my disappointment to read in a recent interview that President McInnis' top institutional priority is the continued expansion of programs in "physical sciences and engineering." At Yale, the tally only continues to grow for those who believe in the predictability of man.

In order to balance the fight, Yale must recommit to favoring education over intelligence as the primary end of its institutional mission by ensuring its resources are applied to the institutions that offer the most to students and the broader community. From the implementation of a service requirement for all undergraduates to the continued funding of the Center for Civic Thought, from increased Chaplain's Office programming to the preservation of our world-class humanities departments, the administration must ensure that Yale not become, as Burke would label it, a place exclusive to "sophisters, economists and calculators."

Investing in the humanities does not require divesting from the social sciences, and I gladly welcome any academic improvement that would accompany further investment at Yale. Yet we must be watchful that our growth in intelligence serves only our humility and never our pride. With these things in mind, Yale will be able to persevere and fulfill its mission of serving the "Publick" for another three centuries to come.

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