NEWS

"The superior man is distressed by the limitations of his ability."
CONFUCIUS PHILOSOPHER

'One Battle After Another,' with Paul Grimstad, wins big at Oscars

OSCARS FROM PAGE 1

an email inquiry from Warner Bros. was about composing a score. Instead, he learned it was to audition for an acting role. Although apprehensive at first, he "just jumped in."

"I was reading everybody," Kulukundis said. "I was looking at all sorts of different types of people, from retired actors to real-life technicians and composers and musicians and mathematicians."

Kulukundis said that she considered professional actors for every role in the film before shifting towards people with similar backgrounds to the characters.

"It's like he could be anybody," she said. "He has to have an energy battery, a life force that perhaps you know can come from a real person who you know feels a little erratic."

In a New York Times profile, Grimstad said, "I'm basically that guy," referring to his character in "One Battle After Another."

"I probably have some of the same nervous energy and volubility of the character, and even some of the tech-whiz stuff," Grimstad wrote in an email to the News, specifying his interest in electrical and audio engineering. "So it all kind of fit at the level of attitude and temperament. But I'm certainly not in favor of planting bombs and blowing up buildings!"

Kulukundis echoed similar sentiments, describing Grimstad as "fast-talking, fast-thinking, very opinionated, very passionate."

She said that Grimstad himself made the tone for the receivers that are used in the film to identify other members of the resistance group. In one scene with DiCaprio, Grimstad as Sommerville gives DiCaprio's character the receivers and new IDs to prepare him to flee with his infant daughter.

Grimstad said he worked with DiCaprio, whom he called "a genius," for about a week as they shot the scene.

"Leo at one point was like 'You're killing it, brother!'" Grimstad wrote to the News. "That was such a confidence building thing to hear from him, and dissolved some of the intimidation and imposter syndrome I was feeling!"

Grimstad filmed a different scene with another non-professional actor, James Raterman, who played the interrogator and second in command to the film's antagonist, Colonel Steven Lockjaw. Raterman is a retired Homeland Security Investigations special agent and security consultant. Grimstad said Raterman was, "despite his menacing presence on screen, a super nice chill guy."

Kulukundis said that Raterman, who previously appeared in the 2018 documentary "The Trade," had the right mannerisms for the role.

"There's a way certain people in the military and armed forces and even, you know, police and fire department speak, that is its own syntax. It's its own language," she said.

Kulukundis said that although actors can replicate, having people play roles close to their own experiences is beneficial for consulting about real life scenarios, like with the military operations in the film that mostly included military personnel and "real ICE agents."

"That is exciting and makes it raw and real all at the same time," she said.

She said using non-professional actors who have that experience invokes a "visceral reaction" when viewing, adding that the high schoolers were played by non-actors, which heightened the sense of fear in the scenes.

Kulukundis said she hopes the film motivates people to vote and become more engaged in the world around them.

"I think movies have a lot of power to do that," she said, emphasizing that "the more real" the roles are cast, the better a story is translated onto the screen.

Kulukundis said that she hopes the establishment of an Academy Award for casting will raise the standards for the practice.

She said there are a few people who can play any given role, and she screens for those few before casting the final role based on the direction of the film. Part of her job is to figure out where they "need that reality" on screen.

"It is an art form," Kulukundis said. "You're looking for talent, and then you can foster talent."

"One Battle After Another" won six Academy Awards.

Contact **KIVA BANK** *at kiva.bank@yale.edu.*

Berkeley dean leaves role mid-semester in second year on the job

BY OLIVIA WOO
STAFF REPORTER

Bárbara Cruvinel Santiago '17 left her role as dean of Berkeley College over spring break, Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis announced in a Tuesday email to the Berkeley community.

Cruvinel Santiago — a physicist who, according to the Berkeley website, is originally from Brazil — began her tenure as dean in August 2024. Her responsibilities have been assumed by an interim dean, Karina López GRD '25, who since November 2025 has served as interim dean of Branford College, Lewis wrote in the email.

"I'm leaving my role as Dean of Berkeley College and will now pursue other opportunities," read a message attributed to Cruvinel Santiago and included in Lewis' email. "It was the honor of a lifetime to support hundreds of Berkeley students through their academic and personal endeavors since 2024."

Cruvinel Santiago's departure comes as David Evans '92 prepares to conclude his decade-long tenure as Berkeley's head of college, leaving students unsure about who will fill their college's two senior most administrative posts for the coming fall semester.

During her time as a Yale undergraduate, Cruvinel Santiago served as a peer liaison for the Office of International Students & Scholars and a peer mentor for the Science, Technology and Research Scholars, or STARS, program. She led programs to enhance diversity and student wellbeing both at Yale and at Columbia, where she completed her doctorate in physics, according to the Berkeley website.

Cruvinel Santiago did not reply to questions about her leaving the role of dean that the News sent to the email address she used as dean and a separate one listed on her personal website.

An email from the News on Thursday to her primary Yale email was met with an automated response redirecting inquiries to Allison Van Rhee, an administrative assistant in the college. A Sunday email prompted a different automated response redirecting messages to both Van Rhee and López. Neither Van Rhee nor López responded to requests for comment.

Lewis declined to respond to the News' questions about the reasons for Cruvinel Santiago's departure.

"Although I can't offer any information about individual staff members, it's not unusual for deans and heads to announce their departures around this time of year," Lewis wrote in a Thursday email to the News.

Unlike other administrative roles at the University, according to Lewis, each residential college dean position is "urgently needed" to be filled and cannot be left empty for extended periods of time.

"If a residential college dean were to leave," Lewis said in a September interview with the News, "we would immediately start to fill that position."

Andrey Sokolov '27, who served on the Berkeley College Council during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years, said he was disappointed by Cruvinel Santiago's departure.

"I think that she definitely did make a massive effort in getting the University to feel more like home," Sokolov said in a Sunday phone interview with the News.

"If I ever had any sort of issues, she was more than happy to support myself in handling and navigating the Yale bureaucracy."

During her brief tenure as dean, which began only last academic year, Cruvinel Santiago hosted office hours with her golden retriever Fubá, which she dubbed "Pawffice Hours." She also ran an Instagram account featuring pictures and videos of her dog, Sokolov said.

"She made herself as accessible as possible. She tried her hardest to make the students feel less overwhelmed," he added. "Dean Santiago really was able to toe the fine line between supporting the students all the while ensuring that they also adhere to undergraduate regulations."

Residential college deans are considered the chief academic officers for every undergraduate student. Sokolov said that Cruvinel Santiago made sure that Berkeley students understood their academic "rights" and "responsibilities."

"I feel sad for her because of the fact she's no longer going to be part of Berkeley," Sokolov said. "And I also feel sad as a student because of the fact she was great at her job."

Harsh Patel '27, who works as a Berkeley College aide and also took a class taught by Cruvinel Santiago, wrote in a Sunday text message to the News that the dean "brought genuine care and understanding to Berkeley."

"She always notices things about her students, especially if they're not doing well," Patel continued. "I personally think her departure is a huge loss to the Berkeley community. I think the new dean will be amazing as well but Dean Santiago had made herself a cornerstone of the Berkeley community."

Patel added that Cruvinel Santiago brought a "unique perspective" to the role because she was an undergraduate "not too long ago."

Cruvinel Santiago was a student in Pierson College as an undergraduate.

Hailey Young contributed reporting.

Contact **OLIVIA WOO** *at olivia.woo@yale.edu.*

Alders vote to let city acquire English Station, but concerns persist

BY MICHELLE SO
STAFF REPORTER

The Board of Alders voted last week to give the city the power to acquire English Station, a decommissioned coal power plant — marking a pivotal step in Mayor Justin Elicker's plan to turn the contaminated island into a public park complete with an aquatic center and lazy river.

The proposal, which passed 17-5, authorizes the city to acquire the two parcels of land in Fair Haven on which English Station sits via negotiated sale and purchase or, if necessary, eminent domain. Eminent domain would allow the city to take the privately owned land — which is contaminated with carcinogenic polychlorinated biphenyls, asbestos and heavy metals — and convert it to public property.

"The City is working to acquire the English Station site and accelerate the clean up of the former power, which is the responsibility of the United Illuminating Company. Following acquisition and clean up, the City intends to create a new public park," Michael Piscitelli, the city's economic development administrator, wrote in an email to the News. "With the park at the center, future initiatives in the area include housing development, the Mill River Trail and the Grander-Grand Avenue project, all aimed to fully restore a vibrant neighborhood in the heart of the city."

The polluted plant on Grand Avenue has changed hands several times throughout the last century. Originally owned and powered by United Illuminating Co., the building transferred ownership to Quinnipiac Energy in 2001 and later to two private owners, Asnat Realty and Evergreen Power LLC, in 2012, according to Yale's New Haven Building Archive records.

According to United Illuminating's website, the company is committed to the island's remediation, since the company owned the property during the bulk of the pollution through the 19th century. However, a United Illuminating spokesperson told the News in February that the company could take little action with the current land owners not responding to or complying with the city's requests to sell the property.

In January, city officials unveiled new design plans for the site at a community meeting. That same month, the Roxanne and Henry Brandt Foundation, a New York-based private foundation, sent a letter to Elicker expressing potential interest in financing $10 million for the park, the New Haven Independent reported. Elicker then submitted a proposal to the Board of Alders for the city to acquire the English Station property, either through purchase or eminent domain, if necessary.

Ward 1 Alder Elias Theodore '27 said he felt hesitant about the project but ultimately voted yes after speaking with fellow alders, including Alder Amanda Martinelli of Ward 8, whose district contains English Station.

Theodore said he had received dozens of emails from community members and weighed their opinions before the vote, with most of the locals' sentiment being "positive towards the city purchasing this property."

"I think I'm really skeptical of building a public pool right now, when we're struggling to maintain a lot of other parts of our city," Theodore said in a phone interview.

Theodore stressed that last week's vote did not give Elicker's plans the full green light.

"I voted yes because all that we were voting on that day was whether or not the city should begin the process of seeing what it would take to acquire this property," Theodore said. "We are not committing to buying the property. We are not committing to any usage, any remediation, any expenditure. Right now we are just seeing, how much would this cost? Can we acquire through eminent domain? And to me, that makes sense."

Around 50 members of the public attended last week's public hearing, with 11 speaking in favor of the proposal and 15 speaking against, according to reporting by the New Haven Independent.

Lee Cruz, who chairs Fair Haven's community management team, publicly voiced his opposition to the proposal. His wife, Ward 14 Alder Sarah Miller '03, voted against the proposal at the Board of Alders meeting.

Cruz said he is concerned about the health impacts from a proposed demolition of the English Station plant.

"The building is hugely overbuilt," Cruz said in a phone interview.

Cruz noted that winds could blow harmful dust particles as far out as Branford, emphasizing the environmental harm the nearby Fair Haven neighborhoods could face. He noted that those neighborhoods are predominantly made up of people of color.

Cruz also voiced skepticism about the city's plans for the proposed park during the off-season, pointing out that the weather for most of the year would be unsuitable for outdoor swimming.

Rafael Fuentes Jr., a 54-year-old resident of Fair Haven and previous aldermanic candidate, has also been a vocal critic of the proposed park at English Station.

Fuentes, who used to fish near the island, said he has witnessed water oozing from corrugated metal along the sides of Ball Island into the Mill River. The contaminated seepage created iridescent rainbows as it hit the river water — which can be a sign of oil pollution, according to the Petroleum Service Company.

"I wouldn't recommend anybody having their child there," Fuentes said. "I wouldn't walk my dog there because the dog's paws are going to be in that dirt."

Cruz and Fuentes argued that remediating the land from a more lax industrial standard to a residential standard would cost the city more than what it has already spent on nearby remediation efforts.

In 2023, New Haven secured a $6 million grant to revitalize Grand Avenue, which runs perpendicular to Ball Island. The following year, the city received a $5 million Urban Act grant to "do some property acquisition of some key sites in the Mill River District for reuse, redevelopment, housing," according to Carlos Eyzaguirre, deputy administrator for New Haven's Economic Development Administration.

"It's gonna cost a hell of a lot more to remediate it," Cruz said of English Station.

Cruz and Fuentes also pointed to existing New Haven parks, including CriscuoloPark and Joslyn Park, which they said have been poorly maintained.

"What about the abandoned buildings that are dilapidated, the garbage, all this stuff?" Fuentes said. "Ball Island is an eyesore. But wait a minute, what about the eyesore of the syringes on the ground? What about the eyesore of the condoms on the ground?"

Fuentes said that cleaning up existing park sites and making public school pools operational should take precedent over English Station remediation efforts. As for the island itself, Fuentes suggested installing solar panels to feed energy back to the grid.

Cruz pointed to local nonprofit Manufacturing and Community Technical Hub, or MATCH, which turned a Mill Street property in Fair Haven into a job training center, as a possible alternative for English Station land.

"That's the future that we need: income generating, job creation, job preparation. That's what people are asking for, over and over again," Cruz said. "No one's asking for a pool."

The English Station Power Plant was constructed in 1894 by the New Haven Electric Company.

Contact **MICHELLE SO** *at michelle.so@yale.edu*