

Thank you Mr. Speaker, and Dr. Summers – welcome to the Yale Political Union.

At Yale, we are given the remarkable opportunity to develop our minds by meeting people with diverse backgrounds and ideas. In the Independent Party, that is exactly what we do; we thrive by surrounding ourselves with people who think differently. We learn from each other to produce informed opinions and we shy away from close-mindedness in the name of ideological purity. My name is Michelle Bayefsky and I am the one hundred and fifty-fifth Chairman of the Independent Party.

We are a party of independent thinkers. The IP is unique in that it is affiliated with neither the Left nor Right of the Union; we are comprised of members of both coalitions. We contain libertarians, Leftists and neo-conservatives, but rather than clinging to labels or dogma, we each seek to cultivate our own beliefs by retaining an open mind. When faced with the question “what do you believe,” we recognize that the only appropriate answer is “about what?” The term “open mind” isn’t just a catch phrase for the Independent Party. Our members truly strive to listen carefully to others. We examine our own beliefs down to our first principles, and reach our own conclusions. Our open approach to debate attracts members from across the political spectrum, making us the largest and most intellectually diverse party in the Union.

We recognize that hearing a range of perspectives is the best way to form coherent, developed and defensible opinions. Unlike the other parties, we have both the resolve and the members to Hear All Sides. We debate a wide array of topics, from domestic and foreign policy like Kill the Death Tax and Aid the Arab Spring, to more abstract philosophy like Sacrifice Isaac. Our weekly debates challenge our assumptions and even change our minds.

Beneath our passionate disagreements on the debate floor lies an incredible respect that forms the basis for strong friendships. Our open and friendly community includes members who are not only some of the most interesting people at Yale, but also irresistibly quirky, disarmingly witty, and remarkably well grounded.

We engage in a variety of activities outside of debate – Friday lunches at Union League, after-debate milkshakes at Yorkside, Sunday dinners and Old Yale toasting sessions followed by the infamous after-parties. As part of our Sir Roger Lowe Memorial Lecture Series, we dine with some of Yale’s most renowned professors, such as Akhil Amar and John Gaddis. And once a semester, we journey to New York to meet with journalists and artists, government leaders and foreign policy analysts. In recent semesters we have met with Former New York Mayor Ed Koch, New York Times culture critic Edward Rothstein and Freedom House Research Director Arch Puddington.

So to those wary of simplified platforms provided for you, develop your own beliefs with the Independent Party. It is not easy to acquire the flexibility needed to let others help shape your convictions – it requires both courage and humility. Come see for yourselves – I invite you to join us this Wednesday at 7:30 in the Pierson Common Room as we debate Resolved: Earthly Justice is a Noble Lie.

Thank you.